

Tony Hazel
The Whitehouse
West Street
BN15 0AP

Application Reference: AWDM/0423/26 - Gardeners Arms West Street Sompting
West Sussex BN15 0AR

I object to this application on the grounds that the applicant has still not demonstrated that The Gardeners Arms is no longer viable, nor that there is no demand for it, as required under Policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan and Paragraph 98 of the NPPF.

The Viability Assessment itself confirms that “there are no accounts available”. Without trading figures, turnover, barrellage, staffing costs or utility data, it is impossible to conclude that the pub was unviable. Policy 33 requires demonstrable evidence, not assumptions. The absence of financial records is a fundamental failure to meet the policy test.

The claim of “no demand” is also contradicted by the applicant’s own documents. The Planning Statement confirms the pub was reopened multiple times between 2022 and 2025, with three separate tenants operating it. A business with no demand does not attract repeated operators.

More importantly, once the freehold was finally marketed in 2024, several serious offers were made, including offers at and above the asking price from people who wished to keep it running as a pub. This proves that the building was both marketable and wanted as a public house. Had one of these offers been accepted, the pub would still be open today. This directly undermines the applicant’s claim that the pub could not be sustained.

There is also no alternative provision within Sompting. The nearest comparable pubs are nearly 2km away when walking, and with evening bus services now non-existent, this would isolate elderly and immobile residents. When the Marquis of Granby was approved for demolition, the Council explicitly relied on The Gardeners Arms to

continue serving the village. Removing it now would leave Sompting with no pub at all.

The proposal also removes a long established pedestrian route. Despite the applicant claiming there “has never been a pavement”, this frontage has been used by pedestrians for over a century and functions as a public right of way through long use. Blocking it with a wall would force pedestrians — including wheelchair users, mobility scooters and parents with pushchairs — into the road on a narrow, busy lane. This is a clear and unacceptable safety risk.

For these reasons — failure to demonstrate non viability, clear evidence of demand, multiple credible offers to buy the pub, lack of alternative provision, and the removal of a long used pedestrian route — the application does not meet the requirements of Policy 33 or national policy.

I therefore strongly urge the Council to refuse this application.

Tony Hazel