

To: Adur & Worthing Planning Department

Reference: AWDM / 0423 / 26 - Peter Barnett

Subject: Opposition to loss of a community facility under Adur Local Plan Policy 33 and NPPF Paragraph 98.

I am writing to **oppose the application for change of use to residential** for the Gardeners Arms. After reviewing the viability assessment, it appears there are several inconsistencies and gaps in the data that suggest a different conclusion. In fact, **much of the evidence included in the report actually supports the pubs viability**, though it seems to have been presented to suggest the business is no longer sustainable.

- **Misrepresentation of Market Demand**

The applicant's claim that a "new operator could not be found" is fundamentally contradicted by their own data (Section 25.2):

- **Rejected Full-Price Offer:** The report admits three separate parties made offers to retain the building as a pub. Most significantly, one party offered the full asking price of £395,000, which was declined. A facility cannot be "surplus to requirements" when a buyer is willing to pay full market value to continue its use.
- **The Marketing Period:** The claim of a "34-month marketing period" is misleading. The Freehold was only offered from June 2024. Generating four serious buyers in that time proves high market confidence and that the pub was viable.
- **Management Resilience:** The report admits the pub was kept open by three different managers until July 2025. Finding consecutive operators willing to manage the pub while it was **on the open market** and subject to **pending sale** is clearly an indicator of operational potential.
- **Financial Reality vs. The Assessment** The report appears to suppress potential income while inflating startup costs. The applicant estimates a total turnover of **£298,000** (£207,000 wet sales and £91,000 food). However, the **HMRC/VOA Rateable Value** – a matter of public record – suggests that a "Reasonably Efficient Operator" is capable of turning over closer to **£390,000 per year**. This -£92,000 gap in projected revenue significantly skews their viability conclusion.

The "Opening Costs" of £200,000 also seems unnecessarily high for an independent operator. A realistic start-up cost would be closer to **£55,000** if the focus remained on essential safety repairs and professional second-hand equipment. Non-essential works, such as window-frame repairs or cosmetic upgrades, do not prevent the pub from opening and can be funded later as profit accumulates. Also before the pub was sold it was fully operational and able to carry on serving its customers efficiently.

Furthermore, the applicant's supposed wage bill of £79,000 assumes a fully-staffed managed house. In a traditional independent model, where **owners work the core hours themselves**, the paid-out wage bill significantly drops. When you combine these realistic figures. The "Net Profit" jumps from the applicants pessimistic £20,300 to well over **£100,000**, making this a very lucrative opportunity for a professional operator.

3. Evidence of Proven Trade and Local Demand+

As a former partner of a management group operating the pub, I can verify well witnessed, evidential facts that refute the report's estimations:

Capacity Trading: The restaurant was frequently fully booked for Sunday lunches, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas. Sunday evenings saw all three bars at capacity for community raffles and cash prize games.

There are over 800 followers on the **Gardeners Facebook** page.

Variable Labour Logic While busier periods require more staff, the surge in revenue vastly outweighs the extra staffing cost, driving higher net profit.

4. Loss of Local Synergy and Ecosystem

The Gardeners Arms is an **unopposed facility**; the report (Section 28.5) admits there is "no other pub within easy walking distance" therefore an important facility for locals.

The A27 Barrier and Accessibility: All alternatives in the assessment requires crossing a major trunk road (A27) or navigating unlit routes. Crucially, there are significant sections of the surrounding route with no pavements, making pedestrian access dangerous. This environment makes disables/wheelchair access impossible without a car, effectively isolating a large portion of the community from alternative pubs.

Local Synergy: For years, the pub, the Alishaan Indian restaurant, and local Bed & Breakfast establishments have supported each other's trade. Unfortunately, since the pub's closure the Indian Restaurant has suffered a loss of customers.

Employment and Community Roots: The pub has historically been a significant local employer, providing jobs for residents within the area. This local employment naturally attracts further custom from friends and family, strengthening the pub's position as a community hub.

Trade Support: The pub historically utilized local tradesmen for maintenance; these tradesmen provided daily custom and often offered reduced rates for work done, further demonstrating deep-rooted community support.

Losing the pub destroys this vital, sustainable local economic cycle.

5. The Community Model (The Unexplored "Plan B")

The assessment ignores the viability of a Community-Run Pub. There is currently an active application from a community group for an Asset of Community Value (ACV) status, which clearly demonstrates community support, and a strong demand for the pub to remain open. By thereby increasing profit further, ensuring long-term sustainability and giving the village true ownership of its last remaining social hub.

In conclusion the evidence suggests that with the right management model, the Gardeners Arms is well-positioned to succeed. The interest from buyers and the site's unique position in the community indicate that it remains a fundamentally viable and valued asset. I request that the Council refuse this residential application and preserve the Gardeners Arms as it is an essential community hub, and allow it the opportunity to continue to serve the community and the opportunity to thrive in the future.

Yours faithfully

Linda Collin