

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE AWDM/0423/26

My comments engage only with the current Application and the supporting viability study and do not repeat points already made relating to the previous application by this owner regarding the pub which, I believe the Council has already considered and accepted

The Applicant makes substantially the same application as that which was previously rejected by the planning committee save that the offending roof alterations have been abandoned

The Applicant seeks to bolster his application with what is termed a viability study by John Joseph Keane.

Mr Keane

His firm's website does not say what Mr Keane's qualification are to undertake such work. He is not, as he himself admits a chartered surveyor (para 29.5). This suggests that a chartered surveyor would normally be required to carry out a valuation of this type. His short statement on the firm's website reads :

I have been in practice since 1986 and have a wide range of experience in licensed property matters. I am as at home in handling an inventory valuation as a rent review or a rating appeal and endeavour to bring a high level of professionalism to whichever aspect of the licensed trade I am dealing with.

Significantly perhaps he does not claim to be "at home with" viability studies. His report is superficially thorough but contains significant errors, wrong assumptions and is not what it contends to be .

1.7 The Gardeners Arms closed for trading in August 2022. The leasehold was marketed by Sidney Phillips from October 2022. During the marketing, the property was re opened and was trading on a limited basis on Tenancy At Will (TAW) agreements. With no interest in the leasehold, the agents were instructed to also advertise the freehold from June 2024. The business was then permanently closed when the freehold was sold in August 2025. From 2022 to its closure in 2025, there were three separate tenants who operated the pub, all running at a loss.

This statement does not sit at all well with

28.9 In common with other ex-leasehold pubs trading accounts are not available

In other words, all Mr Keane's figures regarding turnover are guesswork. He has produced no evidence to support his claim that the pub operated at a loss.

I respectfully submit that this part of his statement be discarded for lack of proof.

THE REPORT

A detailed assessment of viability and the marketing has been carried out by Thomas E Teague and is submitted in order to address these matters in more detail.

That remark at best flatters the report. There are two areas where Mr Keane is in error

First he states:

28.2 The immediate local population is approximately 340 but the catchment within an approximately 800m radius is approximately 1,800. This is likely to grow over in the medium term with the West Sompting development on the western edge of Lancing. Page 21

He does not say where he gets this figure There is no official source to justify it. The population of Sompting is 8,000 approx.

He uses a radius of 800 metres as the catchment area for the Gardeners Arms without saying why. By contrast the other pubs he cites are over a mile away. If it is suggested that the residents of Sompting might use these other pubs then by the same argument the residents of Broadwater might use the Gardeners Arms. That substantially increases the number of potential customers . I live exactly 1 mile away and it's a pleasant 19 minute walk in decent weather.

The Gardeners Arms website page has over 800 members.

The football team used the Gardeners Arms for their personal social events as did other sports clubs

Incidentally all the distances to other pubs , there are only 3 proper pubs the other venues being members clubs, Mr Keane refers to are understated. Not by much but it's a repeated inaccuracy.

For example: The Old House at Home is 1.2 miles away (1.1 miles walking) not 0.8 miles away

The Cricketers is 1.4 miles away not 1 mile away

Valuation and Viability

There are two strands of argument. One relates to the resale value of the pub and the other to its turnover and profitability.' Only the second line of argument can be said to relate to viability, but that viability argument is used to support the argument that, given the assumed Fair Maintainable Operating Profit, the pub in its present condition makes it unattractive to purchasers. I have assessed FMT at £293,000 per annum exc. VAT which would produce an FMOP of £43,315. In my opinion and bearing in mind the estimated £200,000 post acquisition investment that would be required, that would be insufficient to attract an operator From a financial perspective, I think the pub is no longer viable.

The Valuation of The Pub

Mr Keane does not speculate on a sale price for the pub. Had he done so, any sale price would have to reflect the damage done to the pub by the current owner.

Figures used in the valuation of the pub are contained largely in the report at page 10 and moneys necessary to make required repairs are mentioned at pages 10 (para 12.2 £100,000) and

By page 22 this figure has increased "essential repairs, new fixtures and fittings, stock-in-trade and working capital, which I would estimate at a minimum of £200,000." Para

There is no explanation for this growth. If one adds the £65,000's worth of refurbishment costs to the £100,000 repair costs this is £165,000.

That's a fair distance from £200,000

£65,000 of the supposedly needed £165,000 is to replace the kitchen.

That kitchen was ripped out by the current owner, and it would be unfair that the owner, confidently preparing for conversion to a house, should benefit from his own vandalism. It is incredible that £20,000 should be allocated to "Flooring" with no explanation whatsoever for this figure.

When the Gardeners Arms closed it was a going concern.

Most of the trade inventory of furniture, fixtures, fittings, equipment and effects has been removed [by the current owner] and what is left is no longer serviceable. (my italics)

If items such as Bar Furniture approx. 70 chairs, 10 low stools are no longer present and are required, it is because the present owner has disposed of them. Again, he should not benefit from his stripping the pub of furniture. To the contrary, he has reduced the value of the pub and this would no doubt be reflected in any purchase price.'

Members of Save Gardeners Arms the group are aware of the repairs that need doing, many have been outstanding for some time but none prevented it trading before the current owners bought it.

It is noted that shortly before the present owner's bid being accepted there was another bid of £395,000 only £15,000 below the selling price. I believe that this potential purchaser had run the pub and fully intended to continue run to as a pub and in fact bought another pub. Within 12 months of the pub being sold to the current owner there were four other bids rejected. This does not show a lack of interest in the pub as a pub.

Trading Potential of the Gardeners Arms

This is by no stretch of the imagination a report on the viability of the pub. It is hotchpotch of speculation, based on fanciful figures entirely lacking foundation. The Save the Gardener's Arms Group includes two members who were partners in the pub when it was being run along with two others and they are confident of its viability based on past trading experience. On some occasions it took £3,000 a night and once when a local band was playing it took in excess of £4,000, wet sales only.

The Keane figure of £207,000 (para 27.2.2 p19) is significantly below the projected turnover generated by AI on assumptions set out below:

A community-owned pub in a semi-rural village of **1,800 people**, open **7 days a week**, typically supports **annual turnover in the range of £280k–£420k**, depending on food offer, events, and volunteer support. Below is a full set of **realistic trading figures**, built from UK pub benchmarks (CAMRA, PubCo disposals, Plunkett Foundation community pub data).

Projected Annual Turnover

Scenario A — Conservative

- Average weekly takings: **£5,500**
- Annual turnover: **£286,000**

Scenario B — Mid-range (most likely)

- Average weekly takings: **£7,000**
- Annual turnover: **£364,000**

Scenario C — Strong trading

- Average weekly takings: **£8,500**
- Annual turnover: **£442,000**

These figures are at least as valid as Mr Keane's and are more in line with the pub turnover witnessed by those individuals who worked there and had inside knowledge

Furthermore, Mr Keane's figures are based on the pub being owned and run on a wholly commercial basis with staff costs accounting for £79,000 of turnover (27.3.1) . It is noted that he uses a Rural Character pub in his calculation. The location the Gardeners Arms just off the A27 with a recently improved access road and within easy reach of the "newer" (1930s) housing in Sompting, contradicts this description. I have used the description semi-rural. What he does not take into account is that if the pub were purchased by the community a lot of shareholders would be willing to give some of their time on a voluntary basis .

I then asked AI to look specifically at the Gardener's Arms in Sompting

Here is a **full trading model specifically for the Gardeners Arms, Sompting**, based on:

- Its **building size** (large, multi-room)
- Its **location** (semi-rural, 1,800 population catchment)
- Its **historic trading pattern** (wet-led, community hub)
- Its **layout** (bar, snug, dining room, garden)
- Its **likely footfall** (locals + walkers + destination Sunday trade)

This is a **wet-led model**, with only a modest food offer — exactly how the Gardeners Arms historically operated.

Trading Figures for the Gardeners Arms, Sompting

Wet-led community pub, 7-day opening, population 1,800

1. Turnover Projection (Realistic Range)

Scenario	Weekly Takings	Annual Turnover	Notes
Conservative	£5,800	£301,600	Quiet Mon–Wed, strong Fri/Sat
Mid-range (most likely)	£7,400	£384,800	Good community support + events
Strong trading	£8,900	£462,800	High wet sales + strong Sunday food

Again Keane's figures wildly underestimate the turnover.

This is a viable pub that could once again serve the community either by the current owner opening it or by selling it to those who wish to keep it as a pub

In the latest report on community owned pubs that I can find by the Plunkett Foundation it states: "In 2021: The community pub sector grew by 11% with 15 new pubs opening during the year 146 known community pubs in total were trading across the UK at the end of year

No community pubs ceased trading in 2021. The overall survival rate remains high at 99%. "

ACV APPLICATIONS

14.1 The Gardeners Arms is not a listed building, but it is located in a Conservation Area. It is not listed as an Asset of Community Value and I understand that 2 applications to have it listed were withdrawn in April 2024 and February 2026 due to lack of evidence. Page 10

An ACV application was made circa December 2025.

I received a telephone call on 7th January 2026 advising that I withdraw the ACV application by a council officer and resubmit it due to an error relating to the lack of signed statements. The officer concerned was no doubt trying to be of assistance and said if the application were to proceed it would be rejected. Better it be withdrawn and resubmitted.

The correction she advised (there was one only) was, to the best of my knowledge made. However, as it turned out, her advice was incomplete. She did not work in planning. I refrain from naming her because I genuinely believe she was trying to help.

Having obtained statements, a further application was made and hand delivered on 5th March 2026. However nothing was actioned by the Council for around 6 weeks until 16th April 2026 when an email was received from a Council officer coincident with a member of the group attending at the Town Hall that same day to check on progress.

The email from a planning office clearly set out the defects with the ACV application and these have been actioned. None of these defects had been made known in the 7th January 2026 telephone conversation.

A new, revised ACV application was lodged at the Town Hall on 20th April 2026.

I ask that the Planning Committee upon their enquiry satisfy themselves that a valid ACV application is being considered and disregard the Keane remark. There is strong community interest in buying this pub.

Concluding Remarks

Key to the Application is the NPPF and Adur Local Plan H6 quoted below with which, of course, planning officers and members of the Planning Committee will be very familiar

“1. Development proposals should not result in the loss of key community facilities and public service infrastructure serving a local area unless:

- a. **It can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the facility being retained, due to there being insufficient community support for the service it provides, or it no longer being viable (in the case of shops and public houses where viability is an issue, evidence should be provided that reasonable steps have been taken to market the property for its existing use without success, for a period of at least twelve months);**

The applicant by the supporting statement acknowledges that the permanent closure of the pub would clearly entail the loss of a key community asset (the only pub left in Sompting as all parties agree). However I maintain that the conditions in (a) above are not met and that the Supporting Statement does not show that the pub is not a viable concern.

Paragraph 88(d) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable inter alia “the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship” and Paragraph 98(c) requires local authorities to “guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs”.

(Page 4/34 Paragraph 88d of the NPPF has nothing to do with community facilities it concerns green belt.)

The loss of the Gardeners Arms would be an unnecessary loss of a valued community service. I ask that the planning committee reject this planning application and preserve the pub.

Post Script

In the alternative and in passing, if the planning committee were minded to allow the Gardeners Arms to be converted to housing then the current plans do not make best use of the available space. One detached dwelling does not add to housing stock. If, unfortunately, The Gardeners Arms, is to become housing, it should at least provide more than one residential unit. The size of the building with its ample parking lends itself to three or four flats or small starter homes. That is not my preferred outcome of course, merely an observation

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Sompting

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