

Planning Department  
Adur and Worthing Council,  
Town Hall, Chapel Rd,  
Worthing  
BN111HA



Flat 4 Loxwood House  
Middle Road  
Lancing  
West Sussex  
BN159JG

27 APR 2026

21<sup>st</sup> April 2026

Planning Application  
AWDM/0423/26

Business Support

Dear Planning Department,

I would like to address the central issue in this application: **the claim that The Gardeners Arms is no longer viable**. This claim is the foundation of the applicant's case, and it is the point on which the previous refusal turned. Today, I want to demonstrate clearly why that claim does not withstand scrutiny.

First, **no financial evidence has ever been provided**. Not a single set of trading accounts, no profit and loss statements, no turnover figures, no barrellage, no food sales, no staffing costs, no utility bills. Nothing. The viability assessment itself admits this. Without financial data, it is impossible—professionally or legally—to conclude that a business is unviable. Policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan requires demonstrable evidence. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF requires clear justification before a valued community facility is lost. In this case, there is no evidence at all. A viability assessment without accounts is not an assessment; it is an opinion.

Second, the applicant claims there was "no demand". That is simply not true. **Multiple individuals came forward with offers to buy the freehold and continue operating the premises as a pub**. These were not speculative enquiries—they were serious buyers who had carried out due diligence, inspected the building, and were prepared to invest. The presence of credible buyers is, in planning terms, the strongest possible indicator of demand. It directly contradicts the applicant's narrative and completely undermines the viability argument.

Third, the marketing history is inadequate. Policy 33 requires that premises be marketed for a reasonable period, at a realistic price, and for their existing use. The previous refusal notice made it clear that this requirement had not been met. Nothing in the new application remedies this. A property cannot be declared "unwanted" when genuine offers were made and not pursued.

Fourth, the viability assessment relies heavily on national pub closure statistics and generalised commentary about the hospitality sector. But planning decisions must be based on **site-specific evidence**, not national trends. The Gardeners Arms is not an abstract pub in a spreadsheet; it is the last remaining pub in a village of over 300 residents, with a wider catchment of more than 1,800 people within walking distance. It

served a unique local function that cannot be replaced by pubs in Lancing or Worthing—especially when those alternatives are not walkable, and evening public transport is extremely limited.

Fifth, the assessment focuses on the condition of the building and the cost of repairs. But this is not evidence of non-viability; it is evidence of **under investment by the previous owner**. A building in need of maintenance does not justify extinguishing a community asset. Many pubs require refurbishment when ownership changes. That is normal in the sector. And again, buyers were prepared to take this on.

**The Council has already refused this application once**, specifically because the applicant failed to demonstrate nonviability and failed to show a lack of demand. The new submission does not address these failings. The core evidence is still missing. The conclusions are still unsubstantiated. And the community value of the pub remains unchanged.

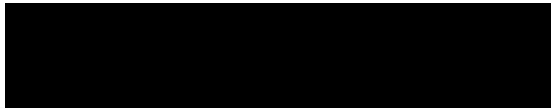
In summary:

- There are **no accounts**.
- There were **multiple offers** to buy the pub.
- The alternatives are **not accessible**.
- The pub served a **unique and irreplaceable community function**.
- And the applicant has **not met the requirements of Policy 33 or the NPPF**.

The application is asking for the permanent loss of the last pub in Sompting based on assumptions, not evidence. The bar for losing a community facility must be high. In this case, it has not been met.

I respectfully urge you to refuse the application.

Thank you.

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Martin Docherty.

Martin Docherty