

Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1285/25

Recommendation – Refuse

Site: Gardeners Arms, West Street, Sompting

Proposal: Change of use from Public House with flat over into full residential dwelling including relevant internal and external changes and loft conversion with dormer, half-gable end and roof windows.

Date of site visit: 10 November 2025

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to the Gardeners Arms Pub on the south side of West Street within the Sompting Conservation Area. It is a two storey building with a pub on the ground floor and residential at first floor. An old railway carriage is attached to the rear of the building and can be accessed from one of the bars.

It is proposed to change the use of the pub to residential and to carry out works to enable its conversion to a single dwelling. The plans show the property will have 5 bedrooms on the upper floors including a room within the roofspace facilitated by a new dormer construction. The ground floor will comprise a lounge, kitchen, dining room, games room and snug. Internal works include the removal of the bar, removal of the existing staircase and construction of new staircase.

There are alterations to the windows and doors on the west elevation and the provision of a small front garden.

Relevant Planning History

Numerous applications relating to pub use

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The **Highways Authority** has no objection. The proposal will utilise the existing site access, with no alterations to the access proposed. The proposal is not anticipated to result in an intensification of use of the existing site access over the public house use.

The proposed dwelling will comprise 5-bedrooms, and will be provided with three off-street parking spaces. This is considered sufficient provision for a dwelling of this size and location.

Secure and covered cycle storage should be provided for the proposed dwelling to encourage sustainable transport methods and reduce reliance upon the private car. Details of this can be secured via condition

Adur and Worthing Councils:

Planning Policy: The site is within the Sompting Conservation Area, Local Green Gap and is designated as countryside. The application is for a change of use from a Public House to single residential dwelling.

In terms of heritage impact, the property itself is not a Listed Building. In relation to impact on the conservation area we understand from the information submitted that changes will be visually minimal to the front elevation.

The proposed change of use will result in the loss of a public house. Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 33 defines pubs as a social and community facility where evidence demonstrates they have a community value. There is no information submitted to demonstrate or otherwise that the pub served this purpose such as through hosting community groups etc. A nomination was received for the building to be included on the register of assets of community value on 14/11/2023 from Sompting Parish Council, however this was withdrawn 22/04/2024.

However, paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025 includes pubs within the definition of community facilities without any dependencies on the services and facilities they offer. Therefore we consider the loss of the pub as a community facility should be considered in determining the application.

The NPPF and Adur Local Plan set different policy tests when considering the loss of a community facility.

The NPPF requires that planning decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- c) 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;
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

(NPPF paragraph 98)

NPPF paragraph 98 part c) is therefore relevant to this application. Policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan builds on this and sets further detail for how this should be considered and assessed:

Development which would result in the loss of existing social or community facilities will only be permitted where:

- It can be demonstrated there is no demand for the facility within the area and the premises have been marketed for a reasonable period of time; or
- There is alternative provision available locally that is accessible, and at least equivalent in terms of quality; or
- The proposed development would provide an alternative social and community facility.

(Adur Local Plan 2017, Policy 33).

As there is no alternative provision available locally and the proposed development will not provide alternative provision this application needs to be assessed against bullet point 1 to be consistent with the Adur Local Plan and the NPPF.

Marketing information has been submitted to support the application which details marketing of the leasehold since 19 October 2022 and then the freehold from 5 June 2024; and therefore that the property was marketed for a period of 2 years, 9 months and 24 days without cessation.

However this does not seem to match with records that show that whilst the pub initially closed in August 2022 it reopened in January 2023 and remained open until the recent sale of the property in July 2025. This suggests that the marketing of both the leasehold and the freehold were successful.

Therefore without further evidence we do not consider that the information submitted demonstrates that there is no demand for the facility within the area.

However, the current owners have not continued its use as a pub and so it remained closed since the sale. It is unclear whether this has been due to lack of demand, viability or for the purpose of redevelopment. Marketing information submitted suggests this wasn't a viable business but no evidence has been provided to support this.

Consideration should be given to whether its use as a pub could be recommenced. This should also be balanced against its value to the local community in its current closed state and the potential benefits of reusing a currently under-utilised building for an alternative use.

Public Health: No objection

Archaeology: The building proposed for alteration has historic origins. It is shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map and is an example of a late nineteenth-century public house.

The proposals comprise extensive alterations to the interior of the structure, including the removal of the bar and current staircases, as well as altering the building's plan form via installation of new subdivisions.

The building is likely to contain historic fixtures or fittings relating to its historic use and evolution since its construction, and may also, as a community building, contain evidence relating to the social history of Sompting.

Given the historic nature and local significance of the building, I recommend that a programme of archaeological historic building recording is undertaken

in advance of any development works, to create an archive record of the building prior to its alteration.

RECOMMENDATION: Historic Building Recording

(1) No demolition, conversion or alterations shall commence until a programme of historic building recording has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to be submitted by the applicant for approval by the Local Planning Authority.

(2) No demolition, conversion or alterations shall take place until the satisfactory completion of the recording in accordance with the WSI submitted.

(3) The applicant will submit a report detailing the results of the recording programme to the Local Planning Authority for approval and confirm the deposition of the archive to an appropriate depository as identified and agreed in the WSI. This shall be done within 6 months of the date of completion of the archaeological fieldwork unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

A professional and accredited building recording specialist should undertake the work, which will consist of a programme of historic building recording undertaken prior to the development works commencing. A report detailing the results of this recording programme will be submitted to the local planning authority for approval.

An archaeological brief can be produced from this office on request. This would detail the work required and can be acquired prior to the production of a WSI

Surface Water Drainage Consultant: No objection

Southern Water: Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul water drainage disposal have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water.

In order to protect public apparatus, Southern Water requests that if consent is granted, the following pre commencement condition is attached to the planning permission; The developer must advise the local authority (in consultation with Southern Water) of the landscaping proposals in proximity of public apparatus in order to protect it in accordance with Southern Water's guidance, prior to the commencement of the development

We request that should this application receive planning approval, the following condition is attached to the consent: Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of surface water run off disposal in accordance with Part H3 of Building Regulations hierarchy as well as acceptable discharge points, rates and volumes have been agreed by the Lead Local Flood Authority, in consultation with Southern Water.

Sompting Parish Council: Support the application. Councillors acknowledged that although Sompting will have no public house, this had struggled to survive over many years. Councillors agreed it was preferable that the building was restored into a home as opposed to being knocked down and flats built. Councillors questioned where the defibrillator would be relocated too.

Representations

25 objections received plus request for pub to be considered as an Asset of Community Value (with 34 signatories):

- This was not a neglected, closed pub that had failed and fell out of use.
- It had been trading and appeared to be doing reasonably well
- It is untrue to say that it has struggled to survive over many years
- The last tenant wished to buy it
- Last pub in Sompting
- Traditional pub that provided a warm, safe and welcoming meeting place
- Fulfilled a vital need to bring the community together and to prevent social isolation
- Without it Sompting would be just a collection of houses with no central focal point apart from the village hall which opens occasionally
- Pub has a future as a valuable community asset
- Nearest pubs would be nearly 2km away
- Several hundred homes are being built in Sompting and there is no need to convert this pub to another house
- There is already a flat above the pub
- Need community assets as population grows
- No financial evidence that the business was unviable
- Loss of car park which was informally used by local residents due to difficulty of parking on the road
- Loss of pavement to front will make it dangerous for pedestrians
- Owner of proposed camping and glamping site close by was relying on there being a pub within walking distance
- Does not comply with Policy 33 of the Local Plan as there is local demand, there is no alternative provision and it will not provide an alternative community facility
- Marquis of Granby was only allowed to be converted because there was alternative provision in the village, i.e. The Gardeners Arms
- Have lost 3 pubs already in the village
- Work has already started on the conversion
- It was bought as a pub but with no intention to run it as such
- It only closed in July 2025

6 letters of support received:

- It is apparent that it is no longer viable as a public house
- Beautiful building that deserves renovation
- Conversion to residential is welcomed
- I have witnessed the slow decline of a once thriving well run establishment
- Last 4 years have seen 5 different landlords all failing to make a profit
- This was only the substantive offer
- Interior and exterior have fallen into a level of disrepair and it would require substantial investment to bring it up to a reasonable level

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policies 2, 3, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 33, 34, 36

'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising: Development Management Standard No.1 'Space Around New Dwellings and Flats'; No.2 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings'

Sompting Conservation Area Appraisal May 2024

Sustainable Energy SPD (August 2019)

WSSC Guidance on Parking at New Developments (Sept 2020).

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (DCLG 2015)

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

The site lies outside of the built up area, within the Local Green Gap and the Conservation Area. Policy 10 of the Adur Local Plan states that "Sompting village will not be expanded or intensified due to its linear and historic character, and countryside location within the Local Green Gap."

Policy 13 states:

"Outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (as shown on the Policies Map), development will only be permitted where the need for a countryside location is essential; it is for quiet informal recreation or the essential needs of agriculture or horticulture, flood management, or is otherwise consistent with this Local Plan (or subsequent DPDs). Improvements to green infrastructure, including enhanced pedestrian, cycle, and equestrian access (where appropriate), and better access for those with mobility difficulties will be supported. The extension of isolated groups of buildings or the consolidation of linear or sporadic development will not be permitted."

In this case, the proposal is not extending development onto undeveloped land, or consolidating sporadic or linear development. It is seeking to convert and extend an existing building into a single dwelling. The main considerations are therefore the principle of the loss of the pub and the impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

Principle of loss of pub

Policy 33 of the Local Plan states that:

"The Council will protect, and support improvements to, social and community facilities. Development which would result in the loss of existing social or community facilities will only be permitted where:

- It can be demonstrated there is no demand for the facility within the area and the premises have been marketed for a reasonable period of time; or
- There is alternative provision available locally that is accessible, and at least equivalent in terms of quality; or

- The proposed development would provide an alternative social and community facility.”

The application is supported by a Marketing Summary. It states:

“Sidney Phillips were instructed on 19 October 2022 to market the leasehold interest of the property to the open market on a nil premium basis, with rental offers invited for a new free-of-tie lease.

Following a prolonged period of marketing and no offers received, Sidney Phillips were on 5 June 2024 instructed to offer to the market the freehold interest of the property at an asking price of £395,000. This was a price recommended by us to the seller as specialists in leisure and hospitality property sales. Please note that there was no cessation of marketing during the transfer from offering the leasehold opportunity to the freehold.

At the time of instruction, the property was opening and trading on short-term Tenancy At Will agreements, until closure of the business in August 2025.

During this time there were two separate Tenants, both of whom were running at a loss.

Commencing on the date of instruction, Sidney Phillips undertook a full marketing campaign with local, regional and national exposure, in order to fully expose the opportunity to the market, which included:

- Entrance onto Sidney Phillips website.
- Regular E-marketing campaigns sent out to registered buyers on our database.
- Sales details sent by post and email following direct enquiries.
- Entrance onto Daltons website.
- Entrance onto Businessforsale.com website.
- Entrance onto RightBiz.co.uk website.
- Entrance onto Zoopla website.
- Entrance onto Rightmove website.
- Regular social media advertising via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Erection of a “To Let” board, and later, a “For Sale” board.

The property was sold to yourselves (the applicants) on 12 August 2025, when marketing ceased. The property was therefore marketed by Sidney Phillips for a period of 2 years, 9 months and 24 days without cessation. Please note that the property was not available to let or for sale through another agent during or before this time.”

There are concerns with the adequacy of the marketing information. The supporting statement explains that the property has been marketed for a lengthy period of almost 3 years. However, there seems to be some inconsistency in the information provided since the pub initially closed in August 2022 but reopened in January 2023 and remained open until the recent sale of the property in July 2025. This suggests that the marketing of both the leasehold and the freehold were successful. While the Statement suggests that the pub was operating at a loss no financial details were supplied.

It is noted that it was being run on a Tenancy At Will agreement. The most significant disadvantage of a such an agreement is that neither the tenant nor landlord has security regarding the occupation of the property. The tenant could suddenly find themselves without premises to conduct their business activities. As it offers less protection than a commercial lease it is not

conducive to a long term investment in the premises as the tenant could be removed at short notice. They may not as inclined to invest in improvements to the pub as a result. There are suggestions in the objections received that the former tenant made a bid to buy the pub to continue its use.

Whilst marketed as a pub, the applicants and current owners have not made any attempt to run it as a pub and appear to have purchased the building with the intention to change its use.

Therefore, without further evidence the Council is not satisfied that it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that there is no demand for the facility within the area. The number of objections and request for it to be made an Asset of Community Value suggest that there is a local desire to retain this community facility, particularly as it is the last pub remaining in the village. It is considered that the proposal is contrary to policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan and paragraph 98c of the NPPF.

Housing Delivery

In December 2024, the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024). This reintroduced requirements for local planning authorities to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, regardless of the age of the adopted plan.

The Adur Local Plan was adopted on 14th December 2017. Policy 3: Housing Provision makes provision for a minimum of 3,718 net additional homes in the period 2011 to 2032, equivalent to 177 dwellings per annum. As Adur District adopted its Local Plan more than 5 years ago the Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement uses a housing requirement based on the local housing need that is calculated by the standard methodology set out in the PPG. Updated data on national affordability ratio was published on 24th March 2025 which has subsequently resulted in a revised local housing need (LHN) figure based on the standard method calculation. The LHN figure has been amended to **549** (previously it was 547) **dwellings per annum for Adur**.

In 2018, the Housing Delivery Test was introduced against which housing delivery is measured. If housing delivery is below 85% of the housing requirement over the previous three years, a 20% buffer must be applied. The Housing Delivery Test 2023 (covering the monitoring periods 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23), published December 2024, indicates that Adur delivered **81%** of its requirement. As a consequence, the presumption in favour of sustainable development **no longer** applies; an Action Plan has been prepared and, in calculating the five-year housing land supply, a 20% buffer must be added. It must be noted that the HDT position has improved with the previous test result (December 2023) being 72%.

The revised 5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YRHLS) (2024-2029) position for Adur as at 01/04/2024 demonstrates that a total of 2,139 homes are deliverable within this period, equating to **3.2 years of housing land supply** against the housing requirement figure (as set by the Standard Methodology figure) of 549 dwellings per annum plus a 20% buffer = 656 dwellings per annum.

Given that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Land Supply of deliverable housing sites, this means that for decision taking, **paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF applies** which states:

'where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.'

Visual amenity, impact on Conservation Area and character of building

The proposal includes a number of internal and external alterations. Accommodation is proposed in the roofspace which includes the construction of a hip to part gable extension on the rear roofslope and a flat roof dormer on the south and east rear roof slopes. The dormer would be a bulky and inappropriate addition, out of keeping with the character of the Conservation Area.

The other changes include the removal of the access ramp from the west side, removal of rear pergola and alterations to windows and doors on the west side cause less harm.

Internally, extensive alterations are proposed, including the removal of the bar and current staircases, as well as altering the building's plan form via the installation of new subdivisions. The Council's Archaeological Consultant has advised that no work should be carried out without a there being an agreed scheme to record any historic features.

Residential amenity

The change of use of the building does not have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

BNG

The proposal comprises a change of use without a loss of habitat and is considered to be exempt from BNG requirements.

Sustainability

Being a conversion of an older building, the provision of sustainability/energy efficiency measures is more limited. Nevertheless, a condition requiring further details should be considered if the application is acceptable in all other respects.

Flood Risk/Drainage

There are no surface water drainage concerns with the proposal. Southern Water has requested further information however, to be secured by condition if necessary.

Highways

There are no highways concerns with the proposal. There is space for the parking of 3 cars to the west side of the building. The existing car park at the rear would be converted to private garden.

Recommendation

REFUSE

For the following reasons:-

1. The proposal would result in the loss of an existing community facility and it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that it is no longer viable, there is no demand for the facility within the area or that the premises have been marketed for a reasonable period of time. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 33 of the Adur Local Plan and Paragraph 98 of the NPPF.
2. The proposed rear dormer extension would, by reason of its size and design, be an unsympathetic addition which would be harmful to the character of the building and the Conservation Area, contrary to Policies 15 and 17 of the Adur Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising: Development Management Standard No.2 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings' and the NPPF

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? Y

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and determining the application within a timely manner, clearly setting out the reason(s) for refusal, allowing the Applicant the opportunity to consider the harm caused and whether or not it can be remedied by a revision to the proposal.

Case Officer: Peter Barnett

Date: 27 November 2025

Authorised by: Jo Morin

Date: 27.11.2025