

Objection to the listing of the Gardeners Arms Pub as an Asset of Community Value.

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Gardener Arms West Street Sompting BN15 0AR

As the freehold owner of the property and land related to the above address I am writing to formally object to the nomination of The Gardeners Arms West Street Sompting BN15 0AR as an Asset of Community Value under the localism Act 2011

The current primary use of the pub closed in July 2025 after a long period of operating at a loss as detailed in the particulars from Sydney Philips included in the viability assessment report (see attachment) Sydney Philips marketed the property unsuccessfully for almost 3 years with no offers from outside or within the community. Details confirmed from the covering statement by **Diane Aldridge DJA Planning, Chartered town Planner** representing myself Sarah Marshall for the current planning application **AWDM 0423/26**

'There is local support from some residents for the pub to continue. However, this has not translated into sufficient consistent patronage that, in turn, translates into financial viability for the different operators that have tried to make the pub a success in the context of a crippling national climate for the hospitality sector.'

'Whilst the local community has shown interest in nominating the pub as an ACV, it has not gone further than that and shown interest in purchasing or running the pub either as a going concern or as the base for some other local service for the community. There have been opportunities to express that interest since October 2022 when the marketing started, or before then, in August 2022, when the pub first closed. This would confirm that the pub is unviable as a going concern'

An extensive viability report. (see attachment) clearly shows a pattern of decline in both the business and the property itself which has become in a very poor state. (pictures below)

Extract **John Keane From Thomas E.Teague** Viability report dated 26th March 2026 confirming the pub is no longer viable.

Regarding demand and marketing the report concludes as follows: "The Gardeners Arms is an unopposed, poorly invested public house in a small village. The bar areas are poorly laid out, with the left-hand bar some distance from the servery. The toilet facilities are poor and whilst the external trading space is useful it is not as versatile as a garden. The parking facilities are adequate". "The pub is in need of significant investment. There are a number of outstanding repairs and the railway carriage to the rear of the site is in an extremely dilapidated condition. Removing it would be a necessity, but in doing so the customer toilet accommodation would be adversely affected. The bulk of the trade inventory has been removed and would need to be replaced before the pub could re-open".

“The pub has been extensively marketed by a firm of specialist licensed property agents for nearly 34 months and a new operator could not be found. The marketing was on a leasehold and a freehold basis and was unfettered. Whilst the pub was being marketed it was let to 3 temporary tenants, none of whom were persuaded to make the arrangement permanent”. “In common with other ex-leasehold pubs trading accounts are not available. Based upon my experience and other pubs that are on the market 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... the pub is no longer viable.”

Many of the concerns that are raised by the locals in regard to The Gardeners Arms Pub as being important to the social well-being and interests of the community are founded on memories and nostalgia of a thriving pub from years ago. The fact that several pubs in the local vicinity have closed in recent years is a sad reflection on changing times, as set out in the viability report and, as stated by **Diane Aldridge of DJA Planning**, if there was truly a community need for the pub then presumably the Gardeners Arms should have been thriving after the closure of these other establishments?

'In 2021 it was accepted that the village could not sustain the two remaining pubs and it was expected that The Gardners Arms would cater for the needs and demands of the community of Sompting. However, that has not been the case. The expectation that The Gardner's Arms would absorb the trade lost by The Marquis of Granby (and The Ball Tree and The Joyful Whippet before that) is logical, but has not happened in practice. Despite the best efforts of those operating the pub, with the usual draws of quiz nights, darts, cribbage, raffles and music events, the level of trade and community support has simply been too low to sustain the business.'

Most of the events that locals have concerns about in regard to a community meeting place could be undertaken in the local community centre, The Harriet Johnson centre (details attached) who have weekly and monthly events for the local community offering opportunities for locals to socialise and meet regularly within the community. It appears this is the main reason for the objections, the loss of a communal meeting place, rather than an actual need for public house. There also seems to be unreasonable interest in the loss of the car parking facilities, that those living in close proximity seem to feel is their right to use.

As much as it saddens me to see these pubs in decline, I took on the property with the intention of sympathetically restoring the building and saving it from further decline. In the current market a pub of this size with the money needed to get it up to any sort of operating standard is clearly not viable for a village the size of Sompting. Its clear, as supported by the Parish Council that the pub has been in steady decline for many years and I feel strongly that this application be rejected. The current application offers no substantive answers as to where funding or the patrons to pay for the building, re opening and maintaining of the pub as a viable business are to come from, either in the short or long term, and in the meantime the property will just further decline and become an eyesore on the village.

'several residents feel very strongly about the loss of the pub and the role it plays in the community. However, this is not a universal view of the residents of the village or the wider area and is not a view now taken by the Parish Council. Whilst disappointed about the loss of the pub, they acknowledge that it has been failing for several years and have accepted the reality that it is unlikely to re-open as a pub or community facility preferring to ensure the building is retained and converted rather than lost to demolition and redevelopment, as with other pubs in the village.'



Kitchen when I moved in August 2025 floor had collapsed after many years of water leaks and blocked pipework



Rotten floor Joists and infested with dead and live Rats. Drain outside the kitchen, again many years of neglect and lack of maintenance. Environmental health nightmare.



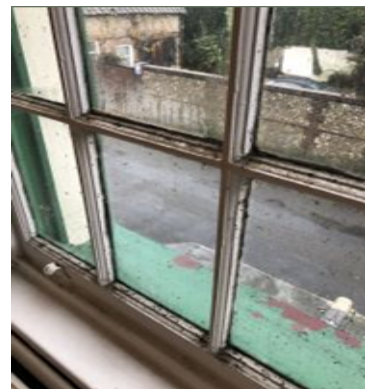
kitchen window which is completely rotten and loose, commercial extractor vent in very poor state and broken.



Further blocked drain outside rear door which resulted in water from the bathroom in the managers flat upstairs pouring directly into the cellar and foundations through the walls, again this is something that has been allowed to go on for some considerable amount of time with potential to cause extensive damage.



Exterior windows at the front all in similar condition throughout the building



Train Carriage in the rear of the car park area.Ceiling collapse upstairs bedroom at the rear, damp water leak in front bedroom.

sash windows all sealed shut and not working

