

Creating our Hub with a Pub

Supporting Evidence

'Friends on Tap – The Role of Pubs at the Heart of the Community', January 2016 written for CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale),

details the results of 3 research studies into the health and wellbeing of those who attend a local pub on a regular basis. The conclusions demonstrate the high impact that pubs have, increasing social value through increased social networks and reduced social isolation on a personal level, and in terms of community engagement and the wider impact this has on the local community and beyond. It records;

“Nothing is more significant, both to our lives and to the national economy, than our health and happiness. A contented population is one that imposes fewer costs on the health and social services that cost governments and taxpayers increasingly frightening amounts of money. A contented population is one that works harder, that is more socially cohesive and politically engaged, less divisive, and more willing to pull together. It is also likely to be one that experiences less crime.”

The findings of this report agree with other papers of the same topic. Whilst we cannot say that a local pub will alone reduce social isolation and better connect communities, it is fair to say that it can make a large and positive contribution to this.

AlixPartners and CGA's latest hospitality market data

revealed a decline of 1,611 hospitality premises over a three-month period (the fourth quarter) of 2022. This, the findings showed, is representative of how the UK hospitality sector has been forced into closure with a 1.6% contraction – equivalent to nearly 18 venue closures each day. The sector now has 13,037 fewer sites than at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. It represents a contraction of more than 10% in under three years.

Ben Nelson from Real Estate advisers group Altus said: “Many publicans that I speak to are worried and really need certainty about future support. “High operating costs and low margins make plots attractive for alternative investment and use so continued support is vital to protect pubs as they play an important role at the heart of their local communities.”

The Pheasant Inn Britons Lane, Shropshire WV16 4TA

The owners of The Pheasant Inn wanted to convert it to a private dwelling, claiming it was no longer viable. The Council refused their application because it was the only pub in the village and they felt that the owners had not tried to diversify their business before selling it, such as by upgrading the food offer, adding a B&B, using space for a village shop or post office, etc. At appeal, the Inspector noted that the small immediate population and lack of public transport were negative factors in terms of viability. However, the pub did have potential to extend and to capitalise on its location in a tourist area. He found that the pub was indeed a valued local facility and could become a viable business in the future. Its loss would therefore conflict with local and national policies on the retention of community facilities. (ref APP/L3245/A/13/2192177)

National government planning guidance was formerly contained in various Planning Policy Statements which ran to over 1,000 pages. They were replaced in March 2012 by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which comprises of just 52 pages of mostly high-level guidance. NPPF policies take precedence where there is any conflict with Local Plans and will always be a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF was further revised in 2018. NPPF Paragraph 92 is especially relevant to planning applications which concern pubs. It requires LPAs to “plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments”. It goes on that LPAs must “guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs” and “ensure that established facilities and services....are retained for the benefit of the community.” Note that this policy applies to pubs in all communities, not just rural ones. Paragraph 91 states that planning policies and decisions should “aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places” which, among other things “promote social interaction.” For rural areas, paragraph 83 promotes “the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship” Paragraph 85 requires that “Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities.”