How to Contact Us

Planning Policy
Wealden District Council
Council Offices, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2AX

Telephone 01892 602008
E-mail: ldf@wealden.gov.uk
Website: www.wealden.gov.uk

Office hours Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm and Wednesday 9.00am to 5.00pm

You may also visit the offices Monday to Friday, to view other Local Plan documents.

A copy of the Wealden Local Plan and associated documents can be downloaded from the Planning Policy pages of the Wealden website, www.wealden.gov.uk/planningpolicy or scan the QR code below with your smart phone.
1 Introduction

1.1 Pubs can be considered as one of Britain’s oldest and most popular social institutions. A place for people from all walks of life to relax and socialise. They can be at the heart of the local community, contributing positively to social cohesion and well-being. However, many pubs are closing down due to a number of factors including changing consumer tastes, intense supermarket competition and the current economic downturn.

1.2 Despite the importance of public houses in the community, a survey conducted by CAMRA in March 2014 reported that on average, 29 pubs are closing down every week across the UK. This national statistic is alarming and this study aims to investigate the current situation locally in Wealden District and draw some conclusions that can be responded to through planning policy.
2 The Importance of Pubs

2.1 According to a study by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), pubs inject on average £80,000 into the local economy each year \(^{(1)}\). Pubs disproportionately generate more revenue and jobs per pint, than beer sold through supermarkets. They make a larger contribution to the public purse, as for every pint sold in a pub raises twice as much tax though the on-trade. Pubs also support local breweries which tend to be much more labour intensive and employ a greater number of people than the larger national brewers.

2.2 Similarly, the IPPR study found that pubs scored as the second highest location after people’s own homes for where people meet and get together with others in their neighbourhood (other locations included cafes, shops, leisure centres, parks). Pubs therefore play an important role in contributing to local community life, as they act as a hub for the development of social networks between local people. Pubs provide a place for people to come together and strengthen their existing social networks with friends and family, or extend their networks by meeting new people and acquaintances.

2.3 Public houses can also be important in contributing to the cultural heritage of the local area. They can be considered amongst the most loved buildings in England, with a rich history dating back to the medieval period \(^{(2)}\). Architecturally, public houses can boast high-quality craftsmanship both internally and externally, with decorative brickwork or timberwork, adding to the character of the local area. As a result, unique public houses may gain Listed Building status from Historic England and become a central feature of the historic environment. Many public houses are protected under conservation and heritage planning policies in local authorities across the country.

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3 Defining a 'Public House'

3.1 Before exploring the planning policies associated with pubs and the situation in Wealden, it is important to clarify some definitions. The term ‘pub’ or ‘public house’ have the same meaning and can be used interchangeably. For the purposes of this document, a pub or public house relates to the definition provided by The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is a UK based independent voluntary consumer organisation, whose intention is to ensure that pubs thrive in every community serving good quality real ale and ciders. The organisation is very active in promoting the protection of community pubs and regularly undertakes their own research and publications. CAMRA defines a pub as:

“The licensed premises must be open to and welcome the public without requiring membership or residency, allow free entry*, serve at least one draught beer or cider**, allow drinking without requiring food to be consumed, have at least one indoor area not laid out for meals, and permit drinks to be purchased in person at a bar***, without relying on table service.”

*Except when entertainment is provided on limited occasions

**Includes cask or keg beer or cider

***Includes also a hatch or specific service point

3.2 In reference to a ‘community pub’ which is recognised to serve the community better than other establishments, CAMRA defines these as:

“A licensed hub which encourages social interactions and puts something back into the communities it serves.”

3.3 Community pubs are those that encourage connections between family, friends, acquaintances and strangers, whilst also serving as a local facility for people to use and enjoy. CAMRA identifies that a good community pub organises things such as beer festivals, quiz nights, supports charities, hosts meetings and more.
4 Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012 and sets out the Government’s planning guidance for England.

4.2 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which encompasses the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental factors. Public houses contribute to all three of these factors and hence play an essential role in Wealden District. Pubs contribute to the local economy through factors such as employing local staff and buying goods from local businesses. Pubs act as a meeting place for social interactions and can create a sense of community cohesion. Pubs can also be integral to their local environment in terms of their historic value with many having Listed Building status. Therefore, it is vital to consider safeguarding pubs in order to warrant the achievement of sustainable development and communities.

4.3 The NPPF provides a number of general policies which relate to public houses. Paragraph 70 details how local planning authorities should create healthy and inclusive communities by delivering social and cultural facilities to meet the needs of local communities(5). 

- “plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, 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;”

- “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;”

- “ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community;”

4.4 In terms of public houses, they should be considered as valued community facilities that contribute to community cohesion and allowed to develop in a sustainable way that benefits the community.

4.5 Paragraph 28 relates to supporting a prosperous rural economy which is very relevant to the rural characteristic of Wealden:

“promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship;”
4.6 Paragraph 131 states how local authorities must provide a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. Many public houses in Wealden are listed buildings and policies must take account of:

- “the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;”
- “the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;”
- “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;”

4.7 Overall, public houses are considered to play a significant role within the community and local authorities should seek to plan for their provision, protection and enhancement.

Wealden Local Plan - Proposed Submission (August 2018)

4.8 The Council is keen to ensure that valued community facilities and services are not lost unnecessarily, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs. It is recognised that community facilities, such as public houses, provide for the well-being, social, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community.

4.9 Policy RAS 7 refers to protecting public houses and other community facilities, stating (6):

“Where planning permission is required, development which involves the loss of individual shops, public houses, village halls and other community facilities will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of a continued use…”

“…If permission is granted for a change of use or redevelopment, preference will be given to premises remaining in some form of community or employment use so long as this does not result in traffic, amenity, environmental or conservation problems”

4.10 Policy RAS 7 seeks to address the change of use of local community facilities. Proposals for a change of use that would lead to the loss of a community facility should be justified by evidence that the current use is no longer viable and that the service cannot be retained in another form elsewhere. In terms of public houses, this implies their use be protected unless there is clear evidence the unit cannot be sustained and where applications relate to a public house, the property should be advertised free-of-tie and
restrictive covenant. Applications should also have full regard to the provisions set out in the CAMRA Public House Viability.

Community Right to Bid

4.11 One of the key measures introduced by the Localism Act 2011 was the Community Right to Bid scheme, whereby communities have the opportunity to get actively involved in planning matters that affect them. The scheme gives local groups a chance to nominate properties, considered important to the community, to be registered by the local authority as an Asset of Community Value (ACV)\(^{(7)}\). The local authority then decides whether the nomination meets the criteria and may add the asset to a list of ACV’s in the area. If the property is then put up for sale by the owner, a 6 month moratorium period begins which allows a local group to raise funds and bid on the property. The Government introduced this legislation as it recognised how many communities lose local amenities and buildings that are of great importance to them, particularly public houses. CAMRA strongly promotes the ACV initiative, offering help and guidance for communities on how to nominate their local pub. A number of pubs have been registered as ACV in Wealden District and this is discussed in Section 5.5 Assets of Community Value.

Permitted Development Rights

4.12 Under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, public houses fall into use class A4 (drinking establishments). Previously, permitted development rights (PDR) allowed pubs to change from A4 to either A1 (shops), A2 (professional or financial institutions) or A3 (restaurants or cafes) without requiring planning permission. However, recent changes to legislation have come into force under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2017\(^{(8)}\) which has removed these permitted development rights for change of use and demolition of public houses. As a result, pub owners and developers are required to submit a full planning application for any change of use from A4\(^{(9)}\).

The Pub-is-the-Hub

4.13 In April 2016, Wealden District Council announced their partnership with the ‘Pub-is-the-Hub’ campaign. A non-profit organisation set up in 2001, the Pub-is-the-Hub is an organisation backed by HRH the Prince of Wales which encourages local authorities, communities, licensees, pub owners and breweries to work together to support, retain and locate services within rural pubs:\(^{(10)}\):

“Rural communities, and this country’s rural way of life, face unprecedented challenges. The country pub, which has been at the heart of village life for centuries, is disappearing in many areas. Providing services from the pub, such as a post office or a shop, keeps an essential service in the village.” – HRH the Prince of Wales.

\(^{(7)}\) Department for Communities and Local Government - Community Right to Bid Paper
\(^{(9)}\) with the only exception being a change of use to AA - drinking establishment with expanded food service
\(^{(10)}\) Pub-is-the-Hub - https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/
4.14 The campaign has helped provide a new lease of life to some pubs by offering a variety of community initiatives. Projects have included those at The Royal Oak and Castle in Pevensey which was given £300 from the campaign to start a book exchange programme. The funding allowed the owner to install shelving to create a small library where people can donate and borrow books. In addition, The Royal Oak and Castle hosted the theatre production group Applause who is supported by Arts Council England. Applause is a small scale theatre group who tour rural venues in Kent and Sussex. Another example would be The Foresters Arms in Fairwarp who hosted the Barclays Digital Eagles. Nicknamed ‘Tea & Tech’, Barclays set up free 7 week courses at pubs to help local people get online and a number of other pubs in Wealden have expressed an interest in hosting.

Neighbourhood Planning

4.15 Under the Localism Act 2011, communities have the opportunity to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood, with the power to set out planning policies to control the type and scale of sustainable development in their area through the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. Policies set out in a Neighbourhood Plan can include details for the protection of community facilities, such as public houses, and make it more difficult for developers to obtain planning permission for the loss and change of use of these facilities. Town or Parish Councils who wish to develop a Neighbourhood Plan cannot undermine or conflict with strategic policies set out in the Local Plan, but neighbourhood planning does provide a chance for communities to protect facilities they consider important.
5 Current Supply

5.1 Through analysis of Wealden business rate data, it is estimated that there are currently 119 open public houses in the District (this includes 5 in South Downs National Park). In addition to the analysis of business rates, by investigating past planning applications between January 2010 and December 2017, it is estimated that a total of 21 pubs have closed down in the District (see Table 1). Map 1 shows the distribution of open pubs across the District and it can be seen that they are relatively widespread with denser concentrations in the urban areas of Crowborough, Uckfield and Polegate. Map 2 shows the distribution of closed pubs across the District with the majority located in more rural areas.

Table 1: Open and Closed Pubs (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pubs in Wealden</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 1 - Open Pubs (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)
Map 2 - Closed Pubs (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)
5.2 The graph below (see Figure 1) shows the number of planning applications since January 2010 following pub closures, including the comparison between the demolition and conversion of the existing building. The graph shows that a greater proportion of planning applications were received by Wealden District since 2014, which suggests an increasing amount of public houses have closed down since then. In addition, the majority of applications propose the conversion of the existing building compared to fewer for the demolition, as this is more likely a cost effective option for landowners. It is important to note that all applications were approved, apart from The Beach Tavern in Pevensey Bay application (2017) which received numerous objections from the community against the demolition and erection of a three-storey apartment building.

5.3 Furthermore, Figure 2 (below) shows a breakdown of the type of planning application following pub closures. It is clear that the majority of applications are for residential development and further analysis of specific planning applications show there is a common trend for the conversion of the existing building into a single dwelling or subdivision into flats. Proposals often state that there is a desire to retain public houses for the community in principle, but reluctantly the loss cannot reasonably be resisted, with residential development deemed as an acceptable alternative.
Figure 1: Graph to show the number of planning applications (conversions and demolitions) following pub closures (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)

Figure 2: Graph to show the type of planning application following pub closures (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)
Heritage and Conservation

5.4 In Wealden District, 40% of open public houses have a heritage listed status which includes *The Chequers Inn* (Grade II*) in Maresfield and *The Middle House* in Mayfield (Grade I). As some public houses in Wealden date back before the medieval era, these buildings often play an important role in establishing a sense of character for the surrounding area. Listed status from Historic England indicates that these buildings have been recognised as having national historic importance and should therefore be conserved. However, since January 2010 a total of 4 public houses with Grade II listed status have closed and been converted for residential use. The conversion of these buildings must be sympathetically designed to preserve and enhance the listed heritage asset.

Table 2: Open and Closed Listed Pubs in Wealden (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listed Pubs in Wealden</th>
<th>Grade II</th>
<th>Grade II*</th>
<th>Grade I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assets of Community Value

5.5 Since the *Community Right to Bid* scheme was introduced by the Localism Act 2011, a total of 15 public houses in Wealden have been registered as an *Asset of Community Value* (ACV), which is approximately 13% of all open public houses in the District. Figure 3 shows how a greater number of pubs were registered as an ACV in 2016 which could be in response to the increasing number of pubs closing down since 2014 (see Figure 1). In addition, the partnership between Wealden District Council and the ‘*Pub-is-the-Hub*’ campaign was launched in April 2016 which may have encouraged the ACV registration. Map 3 shows the distribution of ACV pubs across the District.
Map 3 - ACV Pubs (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)
Figure 3: Graph to show the number of pubs registered as ACV (Jan 2010 - Dec 2017)
Wider Community Uses

5.6 Through analysis of the CAMRA ‘What Pub?’ online pub guide and researching individual pub websites, Table 3 and Figure 4 shows the different types of facilities or activities pubs offer at those currently open. This gives an indication of how pubs are contributing to community life and the ways in which they are maintaining a successful business.

5.7 Out of the 119 pubs currently open in Wealden District, approximately 97% of these provide a food service, either through an established restaurant or traditional ‘pub grub’. It would seem that the provision of food is an important factor for a working public house and the most common service. Many promote the use of locally sourced ingredients from local farms which has a wider positive benefit for the local economy. In addition, many pubs advertise special food nights, such as curry, steak or tapas as a way of generating more community interest and business.

5.8 Alongside the provision of food, nearly half of all pubs in Wealden offer games or live music. In terms of pub games, this includes things like pool tables or darts, with some pubs hosting local dart teams. Live music and open mic nights are also popular activities, with many pubs acting as a local music venue often on a weekly basis. A notably example is The Six Bells which is home to a folk and blues club in the small rural village of Chiddingly. Activities such as games and live music help contribute to community cohesion and well-being, especially if such communities are in remote or isolated villages. Similarly, but less common, are activities like quiz nights and televised live sports events which also positively add to community life.

5.9 Approximately 44% of pubs have a function room of some description in order to host social or business events. This provides the premises with an alternative source of income and facility for communities to use. In particular, The Greyhound Inn in Wadhurst supports the local community by offering free use of their function room for all sorts of activities such as salsa classes, choir practice and club meetings. Another alternative facility associated with public houses is the provision of accommodation, which is a less common occurrence in Wealden, with approximately 23% of pubs offering this service. A number of these pubs are part of a hotel business and therefore have the ability to offer accommodation.

5.10 Another way of generating business and community interest by public houses in Wealden is to host beer festivals either in the summer or during the German beer festival of ‘Oktoberfest’. More unique events include an annual Medieval muster at The Bulls Head in Wartling and a vintage car show at The Lamb in Piltdown.

5.11 It could be assumed that due to changing consumer tastes, intense supermarket competition and the current economic downturn, public houses in Wealden have had to diversify in order to remain open.
Figure 4: Graph to show the facilities or activities on offer at open pubs in Wealden

Table 3: Facilities or activities on offer at open pubs in Wealden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities or Activities</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub Games</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Music</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function Room</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports TV</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz Night</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer Festival</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Planning Policy Implications

What is the distribution of pubs across the District?

6.1 There is a relatively even and widespread distribution of public houses across Wealden District. There are slightly denser concentrations of public houses in the urban areas of Crowborough, Uckfield, Hailsham and Polegate, with each settlement having access to at least 5 pubs. There are also many public houses located in small, rural villages across the District. Some public houses are located in isolated, rural areas that are not linked to specific settlements and are only accessible by car. As a result, it could be argued that there is not a noticeable undersupply of public houses within the District.

Which settlements depend on pubs in their community?

6.2 Many small, rural villages or hamlets in Wealden District are in isolated locations. Public houses are potentially the only community facility other than things like a church or shop. The table below lists all the settlements where only 1 public house is located. Other settlements across the District have reasonably easy access to at least 2 or more pubs.
Table 4 : Settlement List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement Name</th>
<th>Golden Cross</th>
<th>Rushlake Green</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bells Yew Green</td>
<td>Golden Cross</td>
<td>Rushlake Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboys</td>
<td>Groombridge</td>
<td>Selmeston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodie Street Green</td>
<td>Gun Hill</td>
<td>Upper Dicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boreham Street</td>
<td>Hadlow Down</td>
<td>Vines Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadwater Down</td>
<td>Halland</td>
<td>Waldron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tunbridge Wells)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalvington</td>
<td>High Hurstwood</td>
<td>Warbleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiddingly</td>
<td>Horam</td>
<td>Wartling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowbeech</td>
<td>Jevington</td>
<td>Westham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross in Hand</td>
<td>Laughton</td>
<td>Willingdon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dean</td>
<td>Littlington</td>
<td>Wilmington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly</td>
<td>Maresfield</td>
<td>Windmill Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairwarp</td>
<td>Mark Cross</td>
<td>Withyham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Ash Down</td>
<td>Maynards Green</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Ashes</td>
<td>Golden Cross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletching</td>
<td>Groombridge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framfield</td>
<td>Old Heathfield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 There are two locations in the District where the public house provides an additional community facility in the form of a village shop. In Waldron, The Star Inn has an attached village shop known as ‘The Stores at Waldron’ which also hosts cooking competitions, a book club and French classes. In Bodie Street Green, The White Horse Inn has a traditional farm shop attached known as ‘The Sterlings Red House Farm’ selling locally sourced produce. It can therefore be considered that the prime function of most of the public houses is for serving food and drink, as well as an important community focal point for gatherings and events.

6.4 Where public houses do wish to diversify and provide additional community facilities such as a shop, post office or other suitable uses, planning policy should be supportive of this to ensure the sustainability of local communities.
How valuable in conservation terms are the existing listed pubs and are they afforded enough protection?

6.5 The majority of buildings are given listed status from Historic England for their architectural or historic interest. The details of the building are typically protected such as exterior features like brickwork, timberwork, roof or windows, as well as ornate interior features. In Wealden District, there are only 2 public houses of highest conservation merit, which includes *The Chequers Inn* (Grade II*) in Maresfield and *The Middle House* in Mayfield (Grade I). Given their status, planning permission to alter the structure and composition of these buildings are heavily restricted. The remaining public houses that have a heritage listed status in the District are Grade II (46 in total). This level of protection is not as high, and through analysis of planning applications for those public houses that have closed (4 Grade II Listed since January 2010), these show how development has been approved to alter the building sympathetically and preserve specific architectural features. What is important to note is that listed status from Historic England relates to the building architecturally and not the specific use. In other words, whilst a public house might be listed, the use of the property as A4 (drinking establishment) is not protected. Likewise, heritage and conservation policies relates to the retention of historical buildings, but not the use as a trading public house.

How easy can existing pubs be converted to other uses?

6.6 The changes to legislation that have come into force under the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2017* has removed permitted development rights for change of use and demolition of public houses. Owners must submit a full planning application for any change of use from A4. The viability of the pub to continue trading must also be assessed alongside any application, taking into consideration the availability of other community facilities and the potential amenity impact on the community. Therefore, the loss of pubs to other uses has been restricted and applications are treated on a case by case basis. Planning applications can monitored on an annual basis through the Monitoring Framework to assess short and long term implications on the provision of pubs.

How effective is ACV registration?

6.7 The *Asset of Community Value* (ACV) scheme gives communities a chance to nominate facilities important to them. However, the process does not necessarily guarantee protection. The community may apply for an asset to be listed, but the local authority determines whether the asset is registered or not. In addition, the *Community Right to Bid* process does not guarantee the asset is obtained by a community interest group. From the point the owner notifies the local authority they wish to dispose of an asset, a community interest group has **6 weeks** to make a written request to be treated as a potential bidder. If there is no request then the owner is free to sell their asset to whomever and at whatever price. If there is a request by a community interest group, a **6 month** moratorium period begins for a group to raise funds required to purchase the asset and make an offer. However, at the end of the moratorium, the owner may sell to whomever and at whatever price. The process requires an interest group to become mobilised and able to raise sufficient funds within a set time period which may be difficult for some
communities. In the case of public houses, if the property is successfully purchased by the community, considerations need to be made as to how the business will be managed and by whom.

Financial viability and competition

6.8 The closure of public houses is a result of a combination of factors such as changing consumer tastes, intense supermarket competition and the current economic downturn. The competition between public houses also plays a major factor in determining which are successful or unsuccessful. Public houses are firstly a business rather than a community facility and to remain open, these businesses must be managed efficiently and diversify their services. An applicant wanting to demolish or change use of a pub will likely claim that the pub is unviable, meaning that the business is ineffective. The financial viability of a public house can be assessed through the CAMRA Public House Viability Test, which considers the location, customer interest, competition, flexibility of the site, multiple-use potential, parking and public transport provision. Planning authorities can use this viability test in order to determine planning applications relating to public houses. In Wealden District, the majority of public houses that have closed have either been in reasonable proximity to other existing public houses or in isolated locations, which suggests the competitive economic environment of the area.

Is current policy protection sufficient?

6.9 There is an ‘in principle’ approach relating to the retention of community facilities. In the Wealden Local Plan - Proposed Submission (June 2018), Policy RAS 7 addresses the change of use of local community facilities. Proposals for a change of use that would lead to the loss of a community facility should be justified by evidence that the current use is no longer viable and that the service cannot be retained in another form elsewhere.

6.10 The competitive economic climate means that failing public houses should be allowed some flexibility and be encouraged to diversify their services. The changes to Permitted Development Rights (2017) help restrict the change of use of public houses and draws attention to planning applications which will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Planning officers should be mindful of the impact of pub closures on sustainable communities. An owner who seeks to change the use of a successful pub that is depended on by the community should be resisted; especially in rural villages where pubs are important facilities for the local community.

6.11 Neighbourhood planning can play a crucial role in identifying public houses that are important to the community, and by writing polices to the retention of specific public houses in the area will help prevent their loss. There are currently not many local examples of this being used, but it could be an appropriate tool if the loss of public houses is a significant issue for a neighbourhood. It is therefore considered that current policy protection for public houses is sufficient for Wealden District Council in order to sustain these important community facilities.

11 http://www.camra.org.uk/documents/10180/36197/PHVT/725c3a01-9c07-4b2b-b263-a1842bef09b7
Is there anything wider across Wealden that could be done to support pubs?

6.12 There are a range of funding and grant schemes to assist with the financial implications of starting up a business, growing a business idea or financial help for existing businesses and these are applicable for public houses in Wealden. In particular, the Pub-is-the-Hub has established their own Community Services Fund which can award grants of up to £3,000 to help projects\(^\text{(12)}\). The majority of the initiatives below also provide impartial support and advice for business:

- Locate East Sussex Grants and Loans
- South East Business Boost Fund (SEBB)
- UK Start-Up Loans
- UK Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS)
- Wealden and Eastbourne Small Business Loan (WELF£)
- Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership LEADER
- Plunkett Foundation: The Community Pub Business Support Programme \(^\text{(13)}\)

6.13 It is recommended that the Council seeks to review and monitor the location and importance of pubs across the District. Wealden District Council should look longer term at a strategy in order to support public houses as local hubs, providing wider community uses for the local population.

\(^{12}\) https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk More information can be found online. It is important to note that these schemes include separate terms and conditions.

\(^{13}\) https://www.plunkett.co.uk/more-than-a-pub