

A Future for the Baker Arms

Our objective is to secure a viable, sustainable and community-owned future for the Baker Arms.

As the community benefit society established to pursue that goal, we have spent the past two years working with McMullen & Sons, local residents and other stakeholders to explore ways of bringing the pub into community ownership and securing its long-term future.

The decision on planning application **3/25/0914/FUL** therefore marks an important moment in that journey. While many people invested considerable time, effort and goodwill in developing the proposals, the Council's decision reflects planning policies that many residents value and support, including the protection of the Green Belt and the setting of our Grade II listed village pub. These policies play an important role in safeguarding the character of Bayford and the qualities that make it a special place to live.

Over that period there have inevitably been differences of opinion, but there has also been a great deal of dialogue and engagement between the parties. We acknowledge the time and effort invested by Tom McMullen and his team in developing proposals for the site and engaging with the community. Although there were significant differences of view on some aspects of those proposals, both parties shared a desire to see a village pub remain part of Bayford's future.

We ultimately supported the scheme in principle because we believed it represented a serious attempt to maintain a pub at the heart of village life. However, the application has now been tested and refused on planning policy grounds. Having reviewed the decision, we have concluded that we would not support an appeal. We do not believe that extending the process through a further round of planning proceedings offers the most realistic path to a successful outcome.

Today, community ownership is no longer simply an aspiration. We have an established community benefit society, strong local support and a clear mandate to continue pursuing our objective. There is growing recognition of the role that communities can play in safeguarding valued local assets and shaping their future for themselves.

We therefore believe this is the right moment to look forward rather than back: to focus on practical opportunities that can deliver a sustainable future for the Baker Arms while working constructively with all those who share that ambition.

A great deal has changed over the past two years. What has not changed is the community's determination to see the Baker Arms thriving once again at the heart of village life.

This chapter may have closed, but the story of the Baker Arms is far from over.

Oliver Riley
Chair

Bayford Community Benefit Society

www.friendsofbakerarms.org

6th July 2023