



Listening Learning Leading

Abbey House  
Abbey Close  
Abingdon-on-Thames  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 3JE

The Rt. Hon Angela Rayner, M.P.  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
Westminster  
London  
SW1 4DF

14 November 2024

Dear Ms Rayner,

I am writing on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council in relation to the crisis facing pubs across the UK.

South Oxfordshire believes that pubs form a significant part of the country's cultural heritage and community life. They are sizeable employers (especially for young people and/or those living in rural areas), important social hubs, make a substantial contribution to local economies through their supply chains and help to preserve/enhance many historic buildings. The council is, therefore, worried by data that shows that pubs within the UK are closing at a significant rate due to a combination of economic, regulatory, and social factors.

Unfortunately, when pubs shut, they are often particularly vulnerable to property speculators who target them for redevelopment. The closure of a pub, therefore, often leads to the permanent loss of a vital community space. South Oxfordshire, therefore, welcomes HM Government's proposals for a strong new 'right to buy' for valued community assets. We regard this as an essential contribution to protecting these treasured local amenities.

South Oxfordshire does, however, still have concerns about how pubs are currently recognised in the planning system. We would, therefore, urge you to ensure:

- that the national planning use class system has stringent mechanisms in place to prevent pubs being converted into other commercial or residential uses without explicit community support.
- that the national planning system ensures truly independently verified viability evidence is required for pubs being put up for change of use, including appropriate marketing and community engagement exercises.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Rouane', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

David Rouane  
Leader South Oxfordshire District Council