

6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the protection of pubs from change of use and demolition.

While current permitted development rights allow the change of use from drinking establishments, which includes public houses, to shops and supermarkets, without the need for a planning application, planning reforms made by the Government already enable local authorities and local communities to remove these permitted development rights when they deem it appropriate and when then protect local assets.

However, I recognise that there is passionate support to enable local communities to consider planning applications for the change of use of a pub of particular local value. I am pleased, therefore, that the Government has recently said that it will bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity, so that the listing of a pub as an Asset of Community Value will trigger a removal of the national permitted development rights for the change of use or demolition of those pubs premises.

This will mean that in future, where a pub is listed as an Asset of Community Value, a planning application will be required for the change of use or demolition of the pub. This will then provide an opportunity for local people to comment and enable the local planning authority to determine the application in accordance with its local plan, any neighbourhood plan and national policy. The local planning authority may also take the listing into account as a material consideration when determining any planning application.

I welcome the fact that 600 pubs are now Assets of Community Value and I am confident these changes will lead to many more becoming so. I also believe these proposals provide the right balance between protecting pubs, but avoid blanket regulation which would lead to more empty and boarded up buildings.

With regards to EDMs, I make a general rule of not signing these. They have no legislative effect, are almost never debated in Parliament, and cost the British taxpayer over £600,000 annually in printing and publication costs alone. I do not feel that this represents a good use of public money, especially given the size of the current budget deficit.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**