

## The Forge Inn - Parish Council Update

The Parish Council would like to acknowledge complaints by residents on the state/condition of The Forge Inn. The owner has responded to a request from the Parish Council asking for permission to cut the grass and tidy the carpark to the front of the property at no cost, permission has not been granted but the owner has said they will arrange for the work to be undertaken.

As a reminder, or for those new to the village, an overview of the key points of an Asset of Community Value process can be found overleaf.

An Asset of Community Value (ACV) was placed on The Forge Inn in November 2019, by Northumberland County Council (NCC) at the request of the Parish Council. This allowed a moratorium period for the community to put forward a bid to purchase once the property was offered for sale, in this case was September 2023. Following a public meeting and village survey, Ulgham Community Benefit Society (UCBS) was formed and following an independent "Business Buyer and Market Appraisal Valuation Report" UCBS submitted two bids February and March 2024, both of which were rejected by the owner. The bids were significantly above the formally assessed market value stated within the valuation report, but below the £500,000 asking price for the plot. The asking price is understood to be based on the asset's potential value as a residential development plot and not its current/last use as a pub/restaurant.

Northumberland County Plan, under ACV's page 299, states:

*"it will be necessary to demonstrate, with sufficient documentary evidence, that the asset has been marketed at a price reflecting its current or last use as a registered Asset of Community Value for a period of not less than six months prior to the date of submission of any planning application for its demolition, redevelopment or change of use, and that no reasonable offers have been received to continue the current or last use of the asset."*

Whilst the criteria for any change of use approval as detailed above has clearly not been met to date, the Parish Council have been approached by one of our village residents who is a managing director of a local property development company (SinCera Retail Solutions Ltd). Their plan, as a compromise to allow the owner to receive nearer their asking price, is to provide a small pub for the village and use the remainder of the land to develop 4 detached 4 bed houses and 2 semi detached 4 bed houses.

The Parish Council would prefer the whole site to remain as a pub/hub, providing daily services to our community and not just a pub. However we are conscious of the state of the building and the effect it is having on the village and therefore would be willing to consider a compromise should an acceptable solution be identified and agreed by all, including the village/parish.

Even with a compromise the Parish Council need to consider the renewal of the ACV which is due in November 2024.

Based on the village survey undertaken last year, which showed overwhelming support for the ACV, the parish council will seek to renew the ACV through NCC when required to continue to protect the asset for the community. The asset being the pub/hub whether that be the full pub plot as it currently stands or moved to a potential smaller compromised pub offering, protecting the 'new' asset from redevelopment for future generations. Any area potentially approved by NCC planning for residential development will obviously not be constrained by an ACV. The ACV is purely on the 'community' aspect, which would be the pub/hub.

If anyone has any questions or concerns regarding the content above, please contact any of your parish councillors or email: [ulghamparishcouncil@outlook.com](mailto:ulghamparishcouncil@outlook.com)

## Reminder of the Asset Of Community Value (ACV) process

Northumberland County Council maintain a register of “Assets of Community Value (ACV)” for the county.

In order to be listed as an asset of community value, a building must be deemed to have community value, this can be;

- The building currently, or in the recent past, furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.
- The use of the building will continue to further the social wellbeing or interests of the local community
- Meeting the interests of the community must be the principle purpose

Once accepted onto the ACV List, the asset remains on the list for a period of 5 years. Leading up to the expiry of the ACV, to remain on the ACV List, a further application must be made to the Local Authority within a specified period before the expiry date.

According to Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011, when listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives local community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset. These provisions are also known as the community right to bid.

- The right to bid only applies when an asset’s owner decides to dispose of it.
- There is no compulsion on the owner to sell it, and when they sell the property they may sell to whomever they choose.
- The ACV does not restrict in any way who the owner of a listed asset can sell their property to, or at what price.
- It also does not confer a right of first refusal to community interest groups.
- The ACV does not place any restriction on what an owner can do with their property, once listed, so long as it remains in their ownership.

Important to note with regard to Change of Use –

NCC Planning policy determines permitted uses for particular sites. The fact that the site is listed as an ACV may affect planning decisions. However, it is open to the Local Planning Authority to decide whether listing as an asset of community value is a material consideration should an application for change of use be submitted.

### Policy INF 4

#### Assets of Community Value

1. Proposals that involve the loss, redevelopment or change of use of any registered Assets of Community Value, or any part of that asset, will not be supported unless:
  - a. alternative equivalent provision of the services and facilities provided by the asset is secured to meet community needs; or
  - b. it can be demonstrated that the continued use of the asset for its current use is no longer needed to meet community needs; or
  - c. it can be demonstrated that the continued use of the asset for its current use is no longer viable.
2. In applying parts 1(b) and 1(c) of this policy it will be necessary to demonstrate, with sufficient documentary evidence, that the asset has been marketed at a price reflecting its current or last use as a registered Asset of Community Value for a period of not less than six months prior to the date of submission of any planning application for its demolition, redevelopment or change of use, and that no reasonable offers have been received to continue the current or last use of the asset.

In essence - An ACV does not prevent change of use, but provides weight to the argument against change of use.

The **Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036** – Adopted March 2022 (available on the NCC website) supports the ACV process and specifically the Policy “INF4” copied opposite.