

The Queens Head Public House, Sarn
Application for designation as an Asset of Community Value
STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION ON BEHALF
OF THREAPWOOD PARISH COUNCIL



1. Introduction.

1.1. An Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting was held on 22nd March 2021 to discuss the future of the 'Queens Head' public house, Sarn, located beside the Wychbrook within the Parish of Threapwood. It was resolved that the Parish Council is extremely concerned about the future of the pub, known locally as 'The Sarn' and wishes to lend its support to local residents who are investigating the possibility of the public house being acquired by the community. It was further resolved that the Parish Council would make an application to Cheshire West and Chester Council for the public house to be designated as an Asset of Community Value, thereby providing additional protection to 'The Sarn'.

1.2. This Statement sets out the reasons why it is considered that 'The Sarn' is an extremely important asset within its local community and why it should be so designated.

2. Location.

2.1. 'The Sarn', defined as a causeway or road raised above water, is located beside the Wych brook, immediately adjacent to Sarn Bridge on the English side of the England/Wales border. The Wych brook adjoins the rear boundary of the pub and flows under the Sarn bridge. The hamlet of Sarn straddles the England/Wales border and merges Threapwood on the English side of the brook and Tallarn Green on the Welsh side. Whilst Tallarn Green and Threapwood could be viewed as separate communities, 'The Sarn' joins the two and serves them both. It is ideally located where the two villages meet at the bridge, thus providing a meeting place where residents of both communities have gathered for many years.

2.2. Threapwood has a population of approximately 400 persons whilst Tallarn Green is estimated as having a population of approximately 450 persons. This represents approximately half of the population of the Community Council area of Willington and Worthenbury, making 'The Sarn' a focal point of a combined community consisting of at least 850 persons. There are no other public houses left within either Threapwood or Tallarn Green - 'The Sarn' is the last and only surviving pub to serve regulars and the community drawn from the surrounding rural areas.

3. Current circumstances.

3.1. Records suggest that the Queens Head has been a public house at the centre of the villages since at least the early 1800's and probably much longer, it has, therefore, served its local community for well over 200 years.

3.2. In September 2020, after over 20 years' service, the most recent landlord retired. Regrettably, 'The Sarn' has been closed to the public since then, perhaps not surprising given that pubs nationwide have been closed for much of this period due

to Covid-19 restrictions and no potential landlords are realistically likely to take on a tenancy for a new hospitality-based business until the Covid-19 restrictions are significantly eased on, hopefully, a permanent basis.

3.3. It is important to note, therefore, that 'The Sarn' did *not* close due to its viability, the closure was solely related to the fact that the long-term landlord had reached retirement age when Covid-19 interrupted what might reasonably have been expected to be a normal transition from one tenant to another. It is clear the owners of the pub also recognise this to be the case as they have been advertising for a new tenant continuously since the last tenant retired; to expend effort advertising the pub's rental would be illogical if the pub were in any way unviable.

3.4. In addition, in the past three weeks the owners have decided to also advertise the pub for sale, raising the possibility that it might be sold to a developer wishing to extinguish the public house use. Such a possibility has caused significant concern in the local community and prompted this application so that the opportunities of retaining what is obviously an important and viable asset are maximised.

4. Why is 'The Sarn' an Asset of Community Value?

4.1. Over the years the communities of Threapwood and Tallarn Green have come under increasing pressure as other local facilities have closed; St Mary Magdelene's Church in Tallarn Green has closed, as has the local Post Office, and the village bus service ended over ten years ago. There is a remaining primary school (although there has been a question mark over its future for some years), two other churches, and a small village hall.

4.2. Against the background of pressure on local community facilities, it becomes even more important that the remaining facilities are retained, and this is particularly imperative regarding 'The Sarn' which has always, and we fervently hope, shall continue to play a key role in supporting community life:

4.2.1. It is very clear when talking to local people that 'The Sarn' has always been a very popular place for people to meet friends and to be introduced to new

friends – so many local people when asked where they met a particular person will refer to ‘The Sarn’ public house – it has been instrumental in establishing and cementing the links and friendships which make our community.

4.2.2. ‘The Sarn’ has always been a great place for people to stop or meet for a drink, to relax and to ‘wind down’. It has been a particularly welcoming public house with two bars and a water-side garden where both men and women, young and old, can pop in for a drink in groups or alone and always see a friendly face; locals will almost always see people they know and feel at ease. The pub provides a sociable, safe environment, warmly welcomes families and has a child and pet-friendly garden.

4.2.3. ‘The Sarn’ also has a small restaurant serving a variety of tasty meals inside in a cosy dining room and outside in the sunny beer garden, even during ‘Lock-down’ it continued to provide a ‘take-away’ service for patrons. It has renowned Friday night fish and chips, ‘pie nights’, whisky and wine tastings and Burns Night suppers, as well as providing a venue for memorable birthday celebrations, retirement parties, wakes from the two village churches and has always been the first choice amongst the villagers for local Christmas and New Year celebrations.

4.2.4. Over the years ‘The Sarn’ has run teams in local leagues for pool, dominoes and darts and, whilst Threapwood and Tallarn Green may not be a particularly large community, its prowess has been evident from the many trophies that have been won and put on show in both of ‘The Sarn’s’ bars. A small TV in the main bar showing popular sports matches engages village locals, especially elderly folk living on their own, encouraging them into, and to feel a part of, the community in a safe, convivial environment.

4.2.5. Inside ‘The Sarn’ advertises up-coming local community events and acts as a hub informing villages of what is going on. It hosts several money-raising charitable events, selling raffle tickets at pub quizzes, tractor meetings and local cycling clubs helping to raise hundreds of pounds for local good causes.

4.2.6. 'The Sarn' has hosted numerous indoor and outdoor live musical events having bands play for the entertainment of the villagers whilst also encouraging and supporting local musicians and artists. The popular and reliable 'Sarn' bar also mobilises to cater for other community events at the small village hall.

4.2.7. 'The Sarn' garden overlooking the Wych brook provides the community with a family-friendly summer beer garden, as well as heated, covered outdoor seating in the winter months ensuring locals are included in the community all year round. Otters, salmon and kingfishers have all been spotted from 'The Sarn's' garden beside the Wych brook - it provides a place of rest and tranquillity for locals and passes-by to sit and enjoy watching local wildlife thus benefitting their mental health and well-being.

4.2.8. In addition to providing employment for its landlord, 'The Sarn' has also provided employment for young people from the village, waiting on tables and helping in the kitchen, providing important work experience.

4.3. All the above illustrates what an important community focus 'The Sarn' has been for both Threapwood and Tallarn Green and there is absolutely no reason why it cannot continue to contribute so positively once it has re-opened.

5. Local concern and initiatives.

5.1. The scale of local concern about the future of 'The Sarn' can be measured by the dramatic increase in conversations between local people where news about the future of the pub is frequently the main topic of conversation. This is especially the case now that signs have appeared offering the property for sale, rather than solely for lease to another tenant.

5.2. Whilst unrelated to the Parish Council, the Council is aware that residents have begun to investigate the potential for the local community to acquire 'The Sarn' as a means of protecting its considerable community value. It is inevitable that this process, which will be widened out to involve the whole community very shortly, will take several months and designation as an Asset of Community Value will assist in

this regard, therefore the Parish Council is keen to make this application to support the community in safeguarding this vital asset.

5.3. Finally, the safeguarding of 'The Sarn' is, as has been described above, of importance not only to residents of Threapwood Parish, but also to residents of the neighbouring Willington and Worthenbury Community Council area of which Tallarn Green is part. The Parish Council is aware that the Community Council is in full support of this proposal and will be writing to you accordingly in the very near future.

5.4. In conclusion, for all of the above reasons, it is hoped that Cheshire West and Chester Council will agree that 'The Sarn' is an extremely important asset within and for its community and the Council will, therefore, designate it as an Asset of Community Value.