

LILFORD CUM WIGSTHORPE THORPE ACHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 16th June 2026 at Barnwell Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor G Hopkinson, S Moffat, C Brooks, T Bird, T Wright

In attendance: Mrs N Phillips (Clerk) 9 x residents of Achurch and Wadenhoe,
CAMRA Representative, Chair of PSDW Parish Council

250.102	To receive and approve apologies for absence None
250.103	Public participation session See Item 250.105.
250.104	To receive declarations of interest under the Council's Code of Conduct related to business on the agenda. None
250.105	To hear residents' concerns re the planning application to convert the King's Head public house at Wadenhoe into private dwellings, and to consider what support, if any, this Council can offer within our guidelines. Concerns expressed about the loss of the Kings Head because of its community value, historic value, tourism value, change of village character, loss of moorings and access to the river including disabled kayak access and wild swimming, and that the proposed change to a private dwelling appears to fly in the face of planning and other policies including the Joint Core Strategy. Resolved: That LWTA PC would submit objections based on the above concerns.
250.106	To confirm the date of the next meeting as 14th July 2026 Date confirmed
250.107	To close the meeting The meeting closed at 8.12pm

Signed:

Dated:

26/00400/FUL|Conversion of former public house into a C3 residential dwellinghouse, demolition of rear single-storey extension and associated alterations

OBJECTION TO THE LOSS OF THE KINGS HEAD, WADENHOE

Given the strength of feeling amongst residents of the wider area LWTA PC must lodge objections to the proposed plans to convert the Kings Head Public House into private dwellings on the following grounds.

Lilford cum Wigsthorpe, Thorpe Achurch objects to any proposal that would result in the loss of the Kings Head Public House, Wadenhoe, whether through change of use, redevelopment or any proposal that would prevent its continued operation as a public house.

The Kings Head is a valued community facility which makes an important contribution to the social, economic and cultural life of Wadenhoe and the surrounding rural area. Its loss would conflict with both national and local planning policy.

1. Conflict with JCS Policy 11 – Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities

Policy 11 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy states that:

"Development in the rural areas will be limited to that required to support a prosperous rural economy or to meet a locally arising need."

The Kings Head contributes directly to the rural economy through:

- local employment;
- visitor expenditure;
- support for tourism within the Nene Valley;
- support for local suppliers and businesses;
- provision of an important destination for walkers, cyclists, waterborne visitors and others from outside of the immediate area.

The loss of the pub would not support a prosperous rural economy; it would diminish it.

For a village the size of Wadenhoe, the removal of one of its few community and visitor facilities would weaken the sustainability of the settlement and run contrary to the objectives of Policy 11.

2. Loss of an Important Community Facility

The planning system places significant weight on the retention of community facilities.

The North Northamptonshire development plan seeks to maintain and strengthen local services and facilities that contribute to community wellbeing and sustainable communities.

The Joint Core Strategy identifies the importance of maintaining the network of settlements and services across rural North Northamptonshire.

The Kings Head provides:

- a meeting place for residents;
- a venue for community events and celebrations;
- a social hub reducing rural isolation;
- an accessible facility for visitors and residents;
- an important part of village life.

In many rural settlements the public house is one of the last remaining communal spaces available to all residents. Once lost, such facilities are rarely re-established.

The permanent loss of the Kings Head would therefore have a significant adverse impact on community cohesion and social wellbeing.

3. Harm to the Rural Economy and Tourism

The Joint Core Strategy supports development that strengthens the rural economy. Policy 11 specifically recognises the need to support prosperous rural communities.

The Kings Head is not merely a drinking establishment. It functions as:

- a hospitality business;
- a tourism asset;
- a destination within the Nene Valley;
- a contributor to the local visitor economy.

Wadenhoe is recognised as one of the most attractive historic villages in East Northamptonshire. Visitors drawn to the village, nearby countryside, walking routes and heritage assets rely on facilities such as the Kings Head.

The loss of the pub would therefore result in economic harm extending beyond the site itself.

4. Historic Environment and Local Character

Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy requires the historic environment to be:

"protected, preserved and, where appropriate, enhanced."

The Kings Head forms part of the historic character and identity of Wadenhoe.

Even where a building is not formally listed (The Kings Head is Grade II listed), planning policy recognises that buildings can make a positive contribution to local character, heritage significance and sense of place. Public houses often possess social and historic value beyond their architectural importance.

The continued use of the Kings Head as a public house preserves not only the building itself but also its historic function within the village.

A change of use would therefore erode an important element of Wadenhoe's historic character.

5. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes:

- thriving rural communities;
- healthy and inclusive places;
- sustainable rural economies;
- the retention of valued community facilities and services.

The Kings Head clearly falls within the category of a valued community facility.

The NPPF emphasises the importance of planning decisions that support social, economic and environmental sustainability. The retention of the Kings Head contributes positively in all three respects.

6. Lack of Alternative Facilities

Particular weight should be attached to the limited range of facilities available within Wadenhoe. Where a settlement has only a small number of community assets, the loss of any one facility has a disproportionately severe impact on village life.

The Kings Head performs functions that cannot easily be replaced by facilities in larger nearby settlements. Requiring residents to travel elsewhere for social interaction and community activity would undermine the sustainability objectives of local and national planning policy.

7. Irreversible Loss

A further material consideration is the irreversible nature of the proposal.

Once a rural public house is converted to another use:

- the community facility is effectively lost;
- future reopening becomes highly unlikely;
- the social and economic contribution of the business ceases permanently.

North Northamptonshire Council should therefore adopt a precautionary approach and give substantial weight to retaining the existing use.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, the loss of the Kings Head Public House would:

1. Conflict with the objectives of JCS Policy 11 relating to prosperous and sustainable rural communities.
2. Result in the loss of an important community facility.
3. Harm the rural economy and visitor offer of Wadenhoe.
4. Diminish the historic character and identity of the village contrary to JCS Policy 2.
5. Conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's support for valued community facilities and thriving rural communities.

Accordingly, the proposal should be refused and the continued use of the Kings Head as a public house should be supported.

Wadenhoe (according to the Trusts website) is regarded as one of the prettiest villages in Northamptonshire and was once described as "*a little town streets going in all directions*". Many visitors are drawn and those that take the time to explore its many delights on foot see all that this little gem of an English country village has to offer.

In addition to the above please note that Major Ward Hunt and his wife, Edna were determined that the village should remain, after their deaths, as a living village and believed that setting up the Wadenhoe Trust was the best means of preserving the future structure and ownership of the village. Surely permanently removing the pub goes directly against all they stood for?

We therefore ask that all other possible avenues are explored for the retaining, and re-opening of the Kings Head.