# Villagers lose fight to save Llanharry’s last pub as Fox and Hounds set to become shop



Villagers in Llanharry, South Wales, are expressing outrage following a planning decision allowing the transformation of their only pub, the Fox and Hounds, into a shop. The landlord, Drew Donaldson, had previously issued a stark "use it or lose it" ultimatum before he closed the pub in December 2023, citing financial struggles and declining patronage. This closure not only severed a vital community connection but also ignited a passionate campaign among locals who rallied to keep the pub operational.

Initial proposals from Donaldson to convert the Fox and Hounds into residential housing met substantial pushback from the community. Local residents argued fervently that converting the pub into homes would dismantle the very fabric of village life. Consequently, they celebrated when their objections successfully thwarted the initial plans to change the property’s function to housing. However, the community's hopes of acquiring the establishment for communal management were dashed when Donaldson recently secured permission for a commercial conversion to a shop.

Gathering once again in their village fields, over 100 villagers protested, brandishing a 'Save the Fox' banner. Their demonstration, however, failed to affect the planning committee's decision. Supporting Donaldson, local councillor Barry Stephens suggested that community members bore responsibility for the pub's decline, highlighting the missed opportunities to rally behind the establishment when it was actively trading. "The Donaldsons worked very hard to try and keep the business running," he noted, pointing out investments made to enhance the pub's appeal with additional services such as a chip shop and children's playground.

The tension has drawn notable figures into the fray, including members of the Llanharry community council and local politicians Huw Irranca-Davies and Alex Davies-Jones. They expressed their discontent in a joint letter, underlining that a shop fails to provide the same social capital as a pub and lamenting the loss of the Fox and Hounds’ communal role. As Davies-Jones noted, "We share the disappointment... that this represents another step away from bringing the pub back into use."

Despite the community's collective action—including a Facebook group amassing over 600 members and a petition with 560 signatures—Donaldson’s claims of inadequate support hark back to a sentiment echoed in similar cases across the UK. Similar struggles have played out in other villages, such as Great Wolford, where locals rallied to save their Fox and Hounds from conversion to housing, raising significant funds to challenge planning decisions justified by claims of non-viability.

The wider context reveals a pattern: rural pubs face continual pressure from rising costs, shifting leisure habits, and urban economic trends. Donaldson, akin to other owners, cited the challenges posed by overheads and dwindling customer numbers, stating, "My costs were going up this whole time. You can't just go on losing money." Yet, his comments underscore a crucial inconsistency; while he decries the lack of patronage, many village residents insist that the support was constrained by the limitations of the pub's operation and his management choices.

Within Llanharry, the legacy of the Fox and Hounds as an asset cannot be overstated. Pubs like these serve as vital meeting spots, where local tradespeople and community members connect, fostering a sense of belonging. As Mike Meredith, a resident for over 60 years, poignantly articulated, a local pub is much more than a venue for drinks; it is foundational to the community’s heartbeat. "A pub isn't just a pub. It’s a meeting place, crucial for the local economy," he reflected.

The Fox and Hounds, listed as an Asset of Community Value, stands as a testament to the villagers' determination. Eifion Edwards, a key figure in the protest, emphasized the pub's potential, insisting that revitalisation could be achieved with fresh management, echoing sentiments held by many in the community. As the ongoing debate about the future of the Fox and Hounds illustrates, the struggle for preservation continues, raising critical questions about what is lost when a community pub transitions to retail—a contemplation that reverberates far beyond the leafy lanes of Llanharry.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
2. Paragraphs 2, 6, 7
3. Paragraphs 5, 8
4. Paragraph 9
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 8
7. Paragraphs 1, 8

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14727321/Landlord-village-pub-wins-permission-turn-shop.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.carmarthenshirenewsonline.com/nationalnews/local-community-rallies-to-save-llanharrys-last-pub-the-fox-and-hounds-from-residential-conversion/> - Residents in Llanharry, South Wales, are campaigning to prevent the Fox and Hounds pub from being converted into housing. The pub, a vital community hub, closed in early 2024 due to financial difficulties. A Facebook group titled 'Keep the Fox and Hounds as a community pub' has garnered 689 members, with 123 individual objections and a petition with 560 signatures opposing the conversion. Supporters argue that the pub's closure would negatively impact the village's social and economic life, especially given the limited public transport options to nearby pubs. Potential buyers emphasize the pub's commercial viability, suggesting it could thrive again with proper management. The planning application's outcome is pending, with objectors eager to voice their concerns in committee. The current landlord closed the pub after business failed to meet rising operational costs and claimed a lack of local support. The council received the planning application in July 2024, and the consultation period is ongoing, allowing residents to express their views. Once the consultation concludes, the application will be scheduled for determination by the Planning and Development Committee, with officers providing a recommendation to approve or reject the application.
3. <https://www.stratford-herald.com/business/warwickshire-campaigners-raise-8k-as-they-fight-for-future-9403501/> - Campaigners in Great Wolford, Warwickshire, have raised over £8,000 to challenge a decision allowing the Fox and Hounds pub to be converted into two homes. The Planning Inspectorate granted the appeal by the pub's owners in December 2024, overturning a previous refusal by the local council. The campaigners, comprising residents from Great Wolford and surrounding villages, have initiated a statutory review of the decision. They argue that the Planning Inspectorate used a written procedure instead of a hearing or inquiry, given the significant local interest, and failed to consider two offers to purchase the pub made in March 2024. The campaigners have set a fundraising target of £20,000 to cover legal and planning consultancy fees. The pub's owners, who took over in 2015 and invested £40,000 in renovations, closed it in 2016, citing its non-viability. The pub has remained closed since then, and the owners have been unsuccessful in selling it.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-28674942> - Residents in Deanshanger, Northamptonshire, were shocked to learn that the Fox and Hounds pub, which closed in summer 2014, is being converted into a Morrisons convenience store. Planning permission was granted earlier in the year for building work to enhance the vacant pub, and the building has now been leased to Morrisons. Parish councillor Andy Limbert expressed concern, stating that the village already has sufficient shops and that the community was unaware of the potential change. Morrisons stated that, as a tenant, it had no involvement with the approved planning application. The government website indicates that planning permission is not required when both the present and proposed uses fall within the same class, which would cover a change from a pub to a shop.
5. <https://www.stratford-herald.com/news/warwickshire-villagers-fight-to-prevent-pub-from-becoming-ho-9339401/> - Residents in Great Wolford, Warwickshire, are campaigning to prevent the Fox and Hounds Inn from being converted into housing. The pub, a 17th-century establishment, has been closed for seven years. The owners have applied for planning consent to change the pub into a house, but locals argue that losing the pub would remove the heart of their community. They are calling for stricter criteria before a pub can be deemed non-viable. The campaign is led by Stratford district councillor Sarah Whalley-Hoggins, who emphasizes the importance of the pub as a community asset and the need for its preservation.
6. <https://camra.org.uk/pubs/fox-hounds-llanharry-170238> - The Fox & Hounds in Llanharry, South Wales, is a pub that has been closed long-term since January 2024. The pub features a lounge with a log fire, a spacious bar area, a separate dining room, and a large family-friendly garden with a children's play area and football goal. It also has a large car park and is accessible by bus from Bridgend and Talbot Green. The pub is listed as an Asset of Community Value, indicating its importance to the local community. The last update on the pub was in January 2024, and it is currently being marketed for sale.
7. <https://ttspress.com/article/page/walesonline/news/wales-news/isolated-welsh-villages-something-truly-30813107> - In Llanharry, South Wales, residents mobilized to prevent landlord Drew Donaldson of the Fox and Hounds pub from converting it into housing. The community's efforts led to a heated planning meeting in 2024, resulting in the villagers winning the case. Mr. Donaldson stated that the pub's closure was due to changing consumer habits and rising costs, and that potential buyers would face the same issues. Eifion Edwards, a campaigner opposing Mr. Donaldson's plans, believes the Llanharry village could be the next owner of the Fox and Hounds. He highlighted the community's strong support for the pub and the legislative backing for their cause, emphasizing the importance of the pub as a community asset.