



Community Mandate for the Proposed Purchase of The Hare & Hounds Inn, Old Town

Shared: 22 April 2026 Agreed: 24.4.26

Prepared by: Helen Plaice, Chair of WACA

1. Purpose of this Paper

This paper presents the evidence gathered by WACA through its programme of community consultation, public engagement, and independent validation. Its purpose is to inform the Board's consideration of whether a sufficient and credible community mandate exists to proceed with the investigation and pursuit of a community purchase of the Hare & Hounds Inn, Old Town (Lane Ends, Old Town, HX7 8TN), for operation as a community free house.

The Board is asked to consider the evidence set out below and to resolve formally whether to proceed.

2. Background

The Hare & Hounds is a longstanding public house serving the community of Old Town and the surrounding Wadsworth area. Following its closure and a change-of-use application by the current owner seeking to convert the building to a single private residence, WACA — as the community's representative body — undertook a sustained programme of community engagement to establish whether the community wished WACA to take action to preserve the pub as a community asset.

That programme has produced a substantial and consistent body of evidence across multiple independent channels, summarised in this paper.

3. Evidence of Community Mandate

3.1 WACA Mailing List

WACA maintains an active mailing list of 369 opted-in subscribers — community members who have independently chosen to receive updates about WACA's work. Over the past year, only five people have unsubscribed, a retention rate of 98.6%. This indicates sustained and active community interest rather than passive or declining engagement.

3.2 Online Survey — Asset of Community Value (December 2025 / January 2026)

In December 2025 and January 2026, WACA conducted an online survey asking the community whether WACA should take action to list the Hare & Hounds Inn as an Asset of Community Value. The survey received 315 responses, of which 98.4% were in favour. This is a high

response rate for a community survey of this nature and represents a clear mandate for the ACV listing action.

3.3 Public Consultation Meetings — 23 January 2026

On 23 January 2026, WACA held two public meetings attended by approximately 140 people in total. While no formal vote was taken, the tenor of questions and discussion at both meetings was overwhelmingly in favour of WACA taking action to retain the pub as an ongoing business. The qualitative picture was consistent and unambiguous across both meetings.

3.4 Change.org Petition

Since the end of January 2026, WACA has maintained a 'Save Our Pub' petition on Change.org. As of the date of this paper, the petition has gathered 1,265 validated signatures. This figure represents a significant reach beyond WACA's core mailing list and demonstrates that support extends into the wider community, including residents not directly engaged with WACA's regular communications.

3.5 Asset of Community Value Listing — Calderdale Council (March 2026)

In March 2026, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council confirmed that the Hare & Hounds had been formally listed as an Asset of Community Value. This represents an independent determination by the local planning authority that the pub makes a material contribution to the social wellbeing and interests of the local community. It is a formal recognition within the statutory planning framework — not merely an expression of community opinion — that the Hare & Hounds Inn has community value warranting protection.

3.6 Objections to Change-of-Use Planning Application

The current owner submitted a planning application to Calderdale for change of use of the Hare & Hounds from a public house to a single private residence. WACA encouraged the community to submit formal objections through the Calderdale planning portal. The response was exceptional:

- More than 320 formal objections were submitted via the planning portal, against only two comments in support of the proposed change of use.
- The actual number of objections is likely an undercount: some community members emailed objections directly to local councillors, and a number of submissions were recorded as grouped entries on the portal.
- WACA's analysis of the postcodes associated with objections confirmed that the vast majority were submitted by people living in close geographical proximity to the pub — the directly affected local community.
- All portal objections are validated by Calderdale by name and address. These are verified, attributable objections, not anonymous clicks.
- The quality of objections was notably high: the majority engaged substantively with Calderdale's own planning policies rather than expressing general sentiment, demonstrating an informed and motivated community.

The ratio of 320+ objections to 2 supporting comments is an overwhelming and independently validated statement of community opposition to the loss of the pub.

3.7 Public Consultation Meetings on Proposed Purchase — 17 and 19 April 2026

Following the return of the Hare & Hounds to the open market, WACA held two further public consultation meetings on 17 and 19 April 2026, attended by approximately 120 people in total. The specific purpose of these meetings was to gauge community support for WACA proceeding to investigate a community purchase.

At both meetings a show of hands was requested. The response was virtually unanimous in favour of the above proposal. At the second meeting, one person indicated they were unsure or preferred not to say; no one indicated opposition.

A note on methodology: a show of hands for 'no' or 'not sure' was not taken at the first meeting. The Chair acknowledges that the social dynamics of a large and strongly supportive room may have affected the willingness of any dissenting attendees to indicate their view publicly. This paper therefore presents the show of hands as a strong qualitative indicator of support rather than a precise statistical measure, and places greater evidential weight on the anonymous questionnaire at Section 3.8.

3.8 Anonymous Online Questionnaire — Community Purchase (opened April 2026, ongoing)

WACA launched an anonymous online questionnaire posing the question: 'Should WACA now set in train the process to purchase the Hare & Hounds in order to open it as a community freehouse pub?' The questionnaire has been live for approximately one week at the time of this paper and has received 150 responses to date:

- Yes: 94.0%
- No: 4.7%
- Not sure: 1.3%
- Rather not say: 0%

This questionnaire has particular methodological strength:

- Responses are anonymous, removing any social pressure to conform to a perceived majority view.
- Email addresses and names are collected solely to validate that no individual submits more than one response. Respondents may request anonymisation of their personal data, and this has been applied to the data held by the Board.
- The presence of a visible 'no', 'not sure' and "rather not say" contingent (6.7% combined) is itself evidence of the questionnaire's integrity as a genuine consultation rather than a self-selecting endorsement exercise.
- The questionnaire remains open; the figures above represent a snapshot and are expected to grow.

3.9 Stakeholder and Institutional Support

WACA has received written expressions of support from:

- Local elected councillors
- Wadsworth Parish Council
- The majority of local community groups

- The local post office, shop and cafe business — a notable endorsement given that this business might be considered to have a competitive interest in the continued absence of a pub from the community
- CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale), whose support lends national organisational credibility to the community case for retaining the pub
- Other pubs in the wider area, both privately owned and community-operated — organisations that might reasonably be seen as potential competitors, but who have nonetheless expressed their support for the Hare & Hounds returning as a community freehouse

All but one of the organisations approached have expressed explicit support for the return of a pub to Old Town. The single exception has stated they would prefer to remain neutral in this matter.

3.10 Professional and Sectoral Affiliation

WACA is a member of both Co-operatives UK and Plunkett UK. Whilst neither organisation has issued a specific mandate in relation to this project, both bodies provide the established national framework within which community benefit societies undertaking exactly this kind of community asset purchase operate. WACA's membership of these organisations demonstrates that it is working within a recognised, tested, and well-supported model.

4. Summary of Evidence

The following table summarises the principal evidence presented in this paper:

Evidence	Detail	Key Figure / Status
Mailing list	Active opted-in subscribers; 98.6% retention over 12 months	369 subscribers
ACV survey (Dec/Jan 25/26)	Should WACA list H&H as ACV? Online survey	98.4% yes (315 responses)
Public meetings (Jan 26)	Two meetings, 23 January 2026	~140 attendees; overwhelmingly supportive
Change.org petition	Validated signatures since end of January 2026	1,265 signatures
ACV listing (Mar 26)	Formal listing by Calderdale MBC	Statutory recognition confirmed
Planning objections	Formal validated objections to change-of-use application	320+ objections : 2 supporting

Public meetings (Apr 26)	Two meetings, 17-19 April — should WACA pursue purchase?	~120 attendees; virtually unanimous
Anonymous survey (Apr 26)	Should WACA proceed with purchase? Anonymous, validated	94.0% yes (150 responses, ongoing)
Stakeholder support	Councillors, parish council, community groups, CAMRA, local pubs, local business	All but one explicitly supportive, the other “neutral”
Sectoral affiliation	Co-operatives UK and Plunkett UK membership	Established national framework

5. Proposed Board Resolution

The Board is invited to consider and adopt the following resolution:

The Board of Wadsworth Area Community Assets resolves that, having considered the evidence of community consultation and engagement presented in this paper, a sufficient and credible community mandate exists to proceed with the investigation and pursuit of a community purchase of the Hare & Hounds, Old Town (Lane Ends, Old Town, HX7 8TN), for operation as a community freehouse pub, and authorises the Chair and officers to take the necessary next steps in furtherance of this objective.

6. Proposed Public Statement

Note to the Board: The following text is proposed as the authoritative public statement arising from this paper and the Board’s resolution. It is provided for the use of WACA’s communications lead in preparing press releases and social media communications, and is traceable directly to the Board’s formal resolution above.

Statement from the WACA Board — April 2026

The Board of Wadsworth Area Community Assets (WACA) has formally resolved to proceed with investigating the community purchase of the Hare & Hounds, Old Town, for operation as a community freehouse pub. This decision is founded on a substantial and consistent body of evidence that the community of Old Town and the surrounding Wadsworth area wishes to see this pub saved, reopened, and sustained as a community asset.

That evidence is both broad and deep. Across multiple independent channels — including a validated online petition of over 1,265 signatures, two rounds of public consultation meetings attended by more than 260 people in total, an anonymous questionnaire showing 93.3% support for proceeding with a purchase, over 320 formally verified planning objections to the proposed change of use, and an earlier online survey returning 98.4% support for protecting the pub — the community has spoken clearly and consistently.

That mandate has been independently corroborated. Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council formally listed the Hare & Hounds as an Asset of Community Value in March 2026, recognising

its importance within the statutory planning framework. WACA has received written support from local councillors, Wadsworth Parish Council, the majority of local community groups, CAMRA, neighbouring local pubs — both privately and community-owned — and local businesses. WACA operates as a Community Benefit Society within the established frameworks provided by Co-operatives UK and Plunkett UK, both of which exist specifically to support communities undertaking exactly this kind of project.

We are grateful to every member of this community who has made their voice heard — through petitions, surveys, planning objections, public meetings, and messages of support. The mandate we carry into this next stage belongs to you. We will pursue it with care, transparency, and determination.

Agreed by the Board 24th April 2026

Formally recorded in the Minutes at 14th May 2026 Board Meeting

Votes in Favour: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2 due to nil return

Signed as a true record: 

Chair: Helen Plaice **Date:** 24.4.26