

Supporting Statement from the CEO of Chickpea Group Ltd (Ethan Davids)

The only way to safeguard the Silver Plough as a public house is to add guest accommodation. Chickpea Group is committed to doing this.

Chickpea Group is an independently owned hospitality business based predominantly in Wiltshire, with premises throughout the Southwest.

It has a proven track record of restoring closed and dilapidated country pubs, bringing them back to life, and creating viable businesses as a result.

The Group now employs over 400 Wiltshire residents alone. Around 50% of these people are under the age of 25.

Chickpea pubs are a lifeline for their local communities. They provide significant local employment, a place for residents to connect, and visitor spend that flows into the wider village economy.

The Silver Plough is no different, but it is financially unviable in its current format.

In 2026, the viability of a country pub depends on whether it has bedrooms.

The economics of hospitality have changed. Wages, energy, food costs and business rates have risen sharply. The cost-of-living crisis has put significant pressure on demand. Collectively, this means that food and drink sales alone can no longer sustain a rural pub.

Letting rooms are now central to viability — they are increasingly the difference between a pub that trades profitably and one that struggles to remain open. Chickpea's own estate financials illustrate this.

Letting rooms will futureproof the Silver Plough as a community asset and local employer. The income they generate will keep the pub open to serve Pitton and surrounding areas for decades to come and importantly keep the pub open seven days a week.

The addition of the new letting rooms will utilise disused and dilapidated space and create ten full-time jobs that don't currently exist.

Our bedroom feasibility study makes clear there is significant demand for high spec guest accommodation in the local area. Creating this accommodation will create ten new jobs – five full-time housekeepers, three full-time front of house assistants, and two full-time chefs.

The space proposed for these bedrooms – baron land behind the pub, a disused and dilapidated function room, and upstairs accommodation which is not fit for use – is totally disused and adds nothing to the business or the local community.

From a commercial perspective, there are four immediate options available to us.

1. Proceed with the proposed plans.
2. Reduce the pub's operating hours to three days per week.
3. Seek change of use of the whole site to residential. This would release our capital to acquire a pub with rooms (or the potential for bedrooms) elsewhere. The last 12 months financials shows the business in its current format is not viable.
4. Sell the pub in its current format. The viability challenge would pass to a new owner rather than being resolved, and the pub's future would depend on their ability and appetite to invest.