

Mike Cranney of Bar Wars:

Discussions with the community group first took place in October 2019.

Bar Wars was absolutely transparent with the group to the point of lengthy meetings dissecting the profit and loss accounts. It was clear that they had no experience of running a pub and I wanted to make sure that they had a good grounding in the facts and what was required to run a successful pub.

We discussed holding a meeting at the pub, inviting the local community to explain the possibility of a 'community take over'; it was hoped that we could ascertain the appetite for such a project. This meeting took place in January 2020.

I attended the meeting and was available to answer any questions. Shortly after the meeting Punch Taverns made their interest known. I discussed the terms of the offer from Punch Taverns with the community group and explained that there was a time limit on the offer. At this point the community group explained that they needed more time to pull an offer together, but were extremely confident that they would have an offer very soon and they were determined to 'Save The Windmill'. After further discussions, I decided that the community group were a favourable option and I believed in their commitment. The confidence the group displayed was a contributing factor to rejecting the Punch offer in order to give the community group time to raise finance. However, on the 20th August 2020, I became aware through the local press that the community group had failed to raise funds. At many points in the negotiations with the community group, I offered a solution to enable the community group to 'Save The Windmill' through the offer of a leasehold arrangement. The last time this was discussed was in April 2020. The community group did not express any interest in a leasehold.

Communication with myself and the community group broke down following an appeal by the community group to the local community via social media (post Covid-19) explaining that my dire financial circumstances would mean that I would have to sell the property for a much lower figure than market value. I felt that this was in poor taste given the circumstances."