**Application to List Aldbury Village Store and Post Office as an Asset of Community Value**

To: Dacorum Borough Council
Re: Nomination of Aldbury Village Store and Post Office as an Asset of Community Value

I am writing to request that Aldbury Village Store and Post Office be formally listed as an Asset of Community Value under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. This nomination is supported by the reasons outlined below, which demonstrate the vital role that the store and post office play in maintaining the wellbeing, social fabric, and vibrancy of the Aldbury community.

**1. Essential Village Shop**

The shop serves as a key provider of essential goods, including fresh food, household items, and other necessities. This is particularly valuable to residents with limited mobility, the elderly, and those without access to a car. With the nearest alternative shop located approximately three miles away, and an infrequent bus service, the store is an indispensable resource, especially for those who cannot easily travel to nearby towns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shop was widely praised for its role in supporting vulnerable members of the community, including organizing home deliveries for the elderly.

**2. Hub of Social Interaction and Support**

The Aldbury Village Store acts as a community hub, providing a space for residents to interact, strengthen social bonds, and build a sense of togetherness. It offers a steady flow of customers, many of whom are familiar with each other and the staff, creating an important space for social contact, particularly for those who may otherwise experience isolation. The shop also serves an informal safeguarding role by keeping an eye on children as they return from school, contributing to community safety.

Additionally, the store plays a significant role in assisting local clubs and organizations by serving as a drop-off and payment point for village subscriptions, such as for the gardening club and village magazine. This fosters community engagement and facilitates communication between residents.

**3. Key Role of the Post Office**

The post office component is essential for Aldbury residents, providing access to postal services and banking facilities. With the closure of all local bank branches in nearby towns, the post office has become critical for managing day-to-day financial tasks, such as cash withdrawals, paying bills, and topping up energy keys. The increasing importance of parcel delivery and postal services, especially in recent years, has further solidified the post office’s role as an integral part of village life.

For many residents, particularly the elderly and those without private transportation, the convenience of the post office is invaluable. The alternative—travelling to Tring or Berkhamsted—would require lengthy bus journeys or car trips, both of which are difficult for certain members of the community.

**4. Contributions to Environmental and Social Wellbeing**

The presence of the village store helps reduce the environmental impact of frequent car journeys to neighbouring towns. By offering a local source for essentials, the store reduces unnecessary travel, which in turn benefits both the environment and the community by conserving time and energy.

Moreover, the store supports local charity efforts by selling plants grown by residents and collecting used batteries, which a resident then recycles through Cancer Research, raising funds for a good cause. These initiatives demonstrate the store’s commitment to both the village and the wider community.

**5. Social Impact During the COVID-19 Crisis**

The shop played a pivotal role in supporting residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering groceries to elderly and vulnerable residents and ensuring the continuity of essential supplies. The store’s efforts during this time were widely recognized and appreciated by the village, further highlighting its importance in times of crisis.

**6. Role in Fostering Independence for Young People**

The shop is a safe and accessible space where children can go independently, which fosters a sense of responsibility and social development. Without this local facility, young people would lose a key aspect of their independence, as there are no other nearby amenities to serve this purpose.

**7. Enhancing Community Spirit and Communication**

The shop serves as a focal point for village communication. It maintains a public diary of village events, a notice board for local activities, and sells the village magazine, helping to promote community events and foster social cohesion. The informal exchanges of information and interactions that occur within the shop contribute greatly to the village’s vibrant social life and help combat loneliness, especially for those living alone.

**8. Economic and Social Viability**

The Post Office, while economically challenged on its own, is sustained through the business generated by the shop. This synergy ensures that vital services such as banking and postal operations remain viable for the village. Without the shop’s support, the post office would likely cease to exist, further isolating the community from essential services.

**9. Recognized Importance in Policy**

The role of village shops as vital community assets is recognized in key local and national policy documents. Page 8 of *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act* highlights village shops as central to local life. Additionally, Dacorum Borough Council’s *Adopted Core Strategy* emphasizes the importance of retaining village shops, and the council’s website recognizes the opportunity for communities to save "much-loved shops" through the right to bid.

**10. Ageing Population and Housing Challenges**

Aldbury’s population is gradually ageing, largely due to the lack of new or affordable housing. As a result, few younger families are able to move into the village, and many of those who have lived here for years choose to stay due to the wonderful sense of community. The 2024 average house price in Aldbury is £889,000, which is unaffordable for most young people. This situation has contributed to a demographic shift towards a more elderly population. The latest census (2021) reflects this:

* **0-17 years:** 136
* **18-64 years:** 344
* **65+ years:** 128

Taking out the children, the adult population is made up of 37% over 60. When over 50s are included, this number is just under 60%. These percentages will only increase with each year. This profile of large proportion of elderly will only increase , making the need for the village shop even greater than now.

Additionally, data from the 2021 census shows that the number of residents aged 80 and over has grown to 33, further highlighting the ageing trend. The shop and post office are essential in meeting the needs of this ageing community, providing daily necessities and services without the need for frequent travel.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Aldbury Village Store and Post Office is far more than just a place of commerce—it is a linchpin of social and economic support for a diverse range of residents. The shop provides a vital service to the community, fosters social interaction, and supports local charities and clubs, while also playing a critical role in the village’s environmental sustainability.

I urge Dacorum Borough Council to recognize the significant contribution of Aldbury Village Store and Post Office by designating it as an Asset of Community Value, thus ensuring that this essential resource continues to serve the village for years to come.

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