

Comments for Planning Application 21/00345/FUL

Application Summary

Application Number: 21/00345/FUL

Address: Wheatsheaf Yard, The Wheatsheaf High Street Oxford OX1 4DF

Proposal: Conversion of first and second floors to create 9no. student rooms, shared kitchen and common area. Formation of 2no. front dormers in association with a loft conversion. Removal of 1no. window to front elevation. Alteration to 1no. window and 1no. door to front elevation. Insertion of 1no. door to front elevation. Provision of bin and cycle stores

Case Officer: Tobias Fett

Customer Details

Name: Dr Josephine Peters

Address: 38 St Marys Road Oxford OX4 1PY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Members of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- Effect on character of area
- General dislike or support for proposal
- Other - give details

Comment: I have serious concerns about the proposed planning application for the Wheatsheaf, which would close down one of Oxford's only remaining grassroots venues in the centre of town. Oxford Local Plan 2036 V7 says that Oxford City Council will seek to protect and retain existing cultural and community facilities - approving this application would be in direct contradiction of this commitment.

Oxford's cultural scene - in particular live music and comedy - are admired around the world and have produced a host of famous names. The Wheatsheaf has long been a core part of that scene, and has become even more important in recent years with other venues (such as The Cellar) closing down. The Oxford Imps comedy troupe, to which I belong, has been performing weekly at The Wheatsheaf since 2004. In that time the group has helped start the careers of several international award-winning comedians. Losing The Wheatsheaf would leave almost no options for grassroots comedy venues of a similar size in central Oxford, and leave a big hole in the local cultural scene.

The application suggests that alternative venues are available, which is simply untrue. Of the 29 venues listed in the application as "adequate supply of live music venues within walking distance," many are disingenuous. The Jericho Tavern is listed twice, and several others are either much larger, far from the centre of town (see Isis Farmhouse), or are part of college buildings (not even

public performance spaces).

The application also suggests that the venue is no longer viable given its financial returns in the last year. Using the last 12 months under the COVID-19 pandemic as a barometer for financial viability is done in bad faith to depress the revenues. Other pubs and venues have also been closed for most of the last year, but will still reopen when restrictions allow. The Wheatsheaf has operated as a successful venue for 21 years before the pandemic.