

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: Mx E-T Cresswell

Address: 86 Crescent Road Oxford OX4 2PD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Members of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- Effect on adjoining properties
- Effect on character of area
- Effect on existing community facilities
- Local plan policies

Comment: The upstairs performance space at the Wheatsheaf must not be compromised; to do so would displace the community that operates around the pub, affect nearby businesses, and would have a strong negative effect on the local music scene across the city. Furthermore, this action would act against the guidelines established in the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

The Wheatsheaf occupies a unique place in Oxford's culture, which cannot be replaced. To close the upstairs performance space would not just change the character of the neighbourhood, but would affect the culture of the whole city. The Oxford Local Plan 2036 "seeks to retain existing facilities, unless suitable and accessible alternatives are proposed" (para 1.68); though the application seems to believe that it presents "suitable and accessible alternatives", it does not. The Wheatsheaf is the only venue providing a substantial dedicated gig space to emerging artists. Of the venues listed in the appendix to the proposal, numerous do not cater for the same genres as the Wheatsheaf; others are not suitable for emerging, unestablished bands; many do not have a specific performance space separate from the bar area; and one is not actually a venue at all, but rather a weekly open mic club. After the closure of the Cellar, there are no other music venues with a central location that is accessible for residents across the city. Of the similar listed venues, none of which are located within the city centre, The Bullingdon and the Jericho Tavern are not able to support the grassroots music that the Wheatsheaf welcomes, while the Library is far too

small to accommodate the Wheatsheaf's crowds. The majority of performance spaces for emerging bands at present are bar spaces; the clientele in these spaces are often distracted, and the spaces themselves are unable to charge an entrance fee. This prevents emerging bands from being able to grow their following and from making money to support themselves. If the upstairs space at the Wheatsheaf were closed, its ability to host live music would be reduced to one of these spaces, which would severely diminish its reputation as a hub of live music and would destroy its ability to support emerging bands.

Converting the upstairs space to accommodation would also negatively affect the downstairs bar area of the Wheatsheaf; the venue has already been subject to noise complaints following the development of flats nearby, and it is unlikely that it would avoid complaints from residents living directly above it. The Wheatsheaf's clientele make up a large and dedicated community, and this community would be displaced if the character of this area were to be compromised. Because of this, this development flouts the conditions outlined in the "Public houses" section of Policy V6 ("Cultural and social activities"); this states that "Where a building is to be ... substantially re-developed; the impact on character, design and heritage and to the wider streetscape must be demonstrated to be insignificant", which is clearly not the case here. Any complaints may also affect the nearby House, a popular destination for Wheatsheaf customers after the Wheatsheaf itself has closed, and the Bear; both of these are small venues that depend on outdoor seating to accommodate their clientele, and thus both could be threatened by further accommodation built in the area.

In summation, the upstairs space at the Wheatsheaf is irreplaceable, and converting it to accommodation would be a monumental loss to the Oxford music scene and community.