

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: Mrs Xanthe Messenger Bevis

Address: 63 Knowlands Highworth Swindon SN6 7ND

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Members of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- Effect on character of area
- Effect on existing community facilities
- General dislike or support for proposal
- Local plan policies
- Other - give details

Comment: This plan contravenes several aspects of the Oxford Local Plan because it means that the famous and popular Wheatsheaf city centre music venue will be closed. For example part 8 which states policies regarding making sure Oxford is a vibrant and enjoyable place to visit. Following the pandemic, people will be keen to revisit popular music venues such as this one to support up and coming bands. The Wheatsheaf is perfectly positioned in the centre of Oxford with great transport links and pedestrian access and it forms a key part of the vitality of the city centre night-time economy. Oxford has a proud history of a music scene that has catapulted the likes of Radiohead to international stardom - the Local Plan talks of "Building on Oxford's economic strengths and ensuring prosperity for all." In 1998, the Cowley Road was selected for the Radio1 Sound City venue in reflection of the strong music scene, a scene which has not abated and continues to turn out talented musical acts of which the city should be proud. Local Plan policies such as V1, V6, V7 would be breached if this application were to go ahead. The Local Plan at V7 states that "The City Council will seek to protect and retain existing cultural and community facilities. Planning permission will not be granted for development that results in the loss of such facilities unless new or improved facilities can be provided at a location equally or more accessible by walking, cycling and public transport." It would be almost impossible to find a similar venue that were not so perfectly located for

accessibility by pedestrians, cycling and public transport. The nature of the live music events taking place within the Wheatsheaf is not suitable for the larger venue of the Town Hall which has a quite different acoustic and sound system; this venue is not comparable and would not be in a position to meet the same needs of the community and economy. The Cellar venue has now closed down so the Wheatsheaf remains the only key viable live music venue within the city centre. Additionally there are plenty of opportunities for student accommodation elsewhere; the world famous city centre, as part of a wider strategy to retain tourism interest following the pandemic, should maintain a mix of facilities not become an unsafe, quiet, dormant place. I am objecting to the proposal on these planning grounds; I also do not like the fact that the Wheatsheaf venue would be closed. My connection with this proposal is that I served on Oxford City Council from 1996-2000 during which time I sat on a range of committees including the Employment and Economic Development Committee which took a keen oversight over maintaining the viability and vitality of the city centre economy. Although I have had to move away from Oxford, were there not a pandemic I would visit the city centre via public transport to see live music. I played in a band in the 1990's which gigged in Oxford and we played many gigs in the Wheatsheaf which is a very fine venue for live performance. It would be an act of cultural vandalism to allow it to be closed down and would contribute very negatively to the long term vitality of the city centre economy.