

# 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: Mr Graham Hooper

Address: 2 Brookfield Crescent Headington Oxford OX3 0AZ

## 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
- Other - give details

Comment:Graham Hooper

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2nd March 2015

To whom it may concern

I am disturbed to hear about plans to convert The Wheatsheaf from one of Oxford's "music pubs" into student accommodation.

Perhaps I am not surprised, having witnessed the closure of many small music venues in Oxford over recent decades.

I am aware that, Oxford being a major centre of the education sector, there is a high demand for student accommodation. However, there is a lot of Oxford where student accommodation can be situated, including the suburbs.

Is it really a good thing for students to be billeted only one or two storeys from a busy street?

Could not a quieter location be found within walking distance or a bus ride from college? There are

frequent bus services to East Oxford, Headington and North Oxford and Summertown: surely students could be accommodated there and not in Wheatsheaf Yard?

Oxford Brooks University, for example, has provided accommodation in Temple Cowley, Botley and even Wheatley and there are suitable bus routes to cater for the residents. Surely a city or suburban accommodation solution could be found without sacrificing a popular Oxford pub and cultural facility.

There are not many small music venues left in Oxford, particularly where locally based and/or novice bands can play in a friendly and intimate setting. The Wheatsheaf is more-or-less the last of such a breed.

Yes, I know there are other music venues in the City - The New Theatre and the O2 Academy come to mind - but attending gigs at such places come at a high price price, quite unaffordable to those on low incomes. In comparison, one could go to Klub Kakofanney or other events at The 'Sheaf for a fiver and the cost of a few inexpensive beers.

Furthermore, the likes of The New Theatre and the O2 appear to only put on well established bands - e.g. Jethro Tull, Hayseed Dixie, The Fall whom I have enjoyed seeing there - or mostly tribute acts, with very little, if any, accommodation for local up and coming bands and artists. This probably has to be so, given the economics of large venues: but this is where venues like The Wheatsheaf become important, even vital.

The music at The Wheatsheaf is quite a variety, folk, jazz, all the many rock genres, and other styles besides, much of which would not be given time at a large commercial venue. There are few places left that offer such variety.

At the risk of labouring a point, I should point out that the Wheatsheaf is one of the last places in Oxford where new bands and artists - many creating original material and several in the early years of learning their craft - can perform their works to an appreciative audience and grow in their confidence and hone their talents. The experience in such a place is more of playing to, listening to and interacting with ones peers, a precious experience that cannot be replicated at a large venue or festival. In such a fashion, the 'Sheaf answers a need not only for musical experience but also - importantly - to create.

Thus, it is a great boon for creative people, a significant number of whom go on to create greater things. It could be becoming a cliché to mention that Supergrass and Radiohead performed some of their first gigs at the Wheatsheaf, the latter also spinning off to Johnny Greenwood's excellent filmscores.

I should declare an additional interest as I have attended the Wheatsheaf as an audience member, a band supporter and as a member of a number of bands who played there. I have witnessed at first hand the unique culture and its capacity to nurture and support creative talents, lift peoples spirits and provide community and - yes - life affirmation, much needed in these strange times.

Many people for whom music is a love, but who would not be able to afford weekly visits to the major concert places, can find a second home in the 'Sheaf. One acquaintance of mine has been a habitual attendee at events there, hardly missing one in several decades: I am sure that he is by no means alone in such devotion. To these people, the demise of the 'Sheaf would be a bereavement, as well as a loss to many other lovers of creativity.

Therefore, I ask, I urge you, I beg that you oppose these plans for the conversion of the Wheatsheaf. Please save it for music lovers, for musicians and artists, for the creative soul of Oxford.

It would indeed also be a huge loss, not only to the creative music scene in Oxford, but to Oxford's creative culture as a whole. It saddens and grieves me to witness the death of yet another creative outlet. I fancy that I perceive a withering of the civic soul as a city, formerly alive with creative activity, is slowly gelded and degraded to become a streeted zombie amenable only to consumption.

I remain yours sincerely,  
Graham Hooper