Ray Parker & Co Limited

Applicant Response to the Report submitted by KC Policy (Officer A Woodhead)

February 2024

This application is seeking outline consent to change the use of the Woolpack Inn from Licensed premises to 4 terraced residential units. The application was made in November 2022 (2022/93731).

This paper comments on the undated response from KC Policy unit. (Amy Woodhead)

The Policy Unit Response is not in numbered paragraphs but does contain two sub headers:

A). National Planning Policy and Kirklees Local Plan

B). Green Belt

We will respond within those two broad headings:

A. National Planning Policy and Kirklees Local Plan

1. The Woolpack is the only public house in Whitley village but NOT the only community facility. The Whitley Community Centre is a thriving facility less than 400 yards from the Woolpack. It is fully licensed, has kitchen facilities, is available for hire, is a hub for the community. It hosts many live and recorded music events, theme nights etc and because it is run by volunteers has a much-reduced cost base. This is and remains a well-used alternative community facility.
2. Within a 1mile radius there are 7 other public houses. Hare & Hounds (Liley Lane) , The Grange (Grange Moor), Blacksmiths (Grange Moor), Kaye Arms (Grange Moor), Shoulder of Mutton (Briestfield), Edge Top WMC (Whitley Road) , Black Horse (Whitley Road). Extend the radius to 5 miles and there are no less than 580 restaurants. (Source Trip Advisor.) Thus, alternative pubs and restaurants are readily available, near to Whitley.
3. Whitley does have a bus service which accesses Thornhill, Dewsbury, Grange Moor enabling residents to visit other public houses. It is also noted that there is a high car ownership in Whitley.
4. The Woolpack was purchased by Ray Parker & Co Ltd on 28 April 2016. It has been run as a managed business and since purchase has had two managers, the first from June 2016 to August 2019 and the second from August 2019 to December 2022. Despite many attempts to engage with the residents of Whitley the Woolpack remained as a destination pub serving customers from a wide geography, predominantly car born.
5. Our managers confirm that “regular” patrons form the village (we define regular as multiple visits of at least 2-3 per week) were no more than 7 people. This level of local trade points to there being no longer a local need for this facility, especially as there is the aforementioned community centre.
6. An application was made to list the Woolpack as an asset of Community Value. This was rejected by the Kirklees ACV Panel on 31st January. The panel determined that the nomination did NOT meet the criteria for listing. (***appendix 1***) It is noted that no further applications will be considered for the next 5 years.
7. PARA 17.7 Local plan – No the property has not been offered for sale as a licensed public house. The Woolpack has had a long history of failure. (***appendix 2***) In my professional opinion and that of colleagues in the industry the property will never be long term viable as a pub business. Offering for sale as a licensed outlet would be not render a realistic sale.

8. PARA 17.8 of the Local Plan – At acquisition of the Woolpack in 2016, the premises were operated on what is known as a temporary let management agency. The owners, Greene King were paying an agency to keep the premises trading. We purchased the premises on 28 April 2016. Following purchase, we closed the property and did an extensive refurbishment. We believed that we could sustain a business there because we operated without the head office cost of a national business. In hindsight, we failed to account for the pandemic, global conditions sending energy costs to a prohibitive level, double digit inflation, high interest rates and the sudden loss of the other anchor business in Whitley.
9. We operated this public house on 7 days a week basis with opening times 12 am to 11 pm. Food was provided from 12 am to 9 pm with a full menu, daytime deal menu (12 to 6pm), hot and cold sandwich menu every day. The pub could operate on 60 covers. Meals were all cooked from fresh with menus very similar to our other outlet, Blacksmiths Arms Kirkheaton. ***Sample menus are attached at appendix 3*.** We were able to use the same supplier base for both units thus helping to gain some additional discounts. You ask about the drink offering, The Woolpack offered a large range of draft and bottled beers and lagers, at least 3 real ales at any time, large range of spirits and wines, soft drinks and fresh ground coffees from a barista machine. We annually were accredited with a Cask Marque quality for beer dispense.
10. The target market was retired people in weekdays and family diners at weekends and evenings. The customer base had to be based predominantly car born as the size and demographics of the Whitley population could never sustain a public house. The experience we found was this location had some serious disadvantages :
    A). in winter with poorer weather and dark nights, the retired customer was put off by the narrow twisty unlit roads that lead to Whitley. (It was easier for them to find other pubs with an easier drive to).
    B). Car parking is across Whitley Road, and that deterred many older customers and families with younger children because of the safety risk in crossing a road.
    C). The brown tourist direction sign describing the Woolpack and its facilities at the Liley Lane junction was removed in 2019 and not replaced by the Council. This reduced the number of customers finding the Woolpack.
    D). The closure of the Charlotte Ice Cream parlour and children's farm in 2021 had a dramatic effect on the family weekend and school holiday trade. Pre the closure of Charlottes, many families called in for meals after or before a visit there. There was a complimentary trade between the two businesses which brought customers into Whitley.
    E). The local market walking to the Woolpack for a daytime or evening drink was very low indeed. Day time being on average 4 people and evenings could be up to 10 . At these numbers this was never going to be a locals pub.
11. Para 17.19 local plan – Yes, we did explore other income avenues. In 2019 we introduced a carvery offering on Sundays. This was initially successful drawing people in because there were no other carvery operations in this area of Kirklees. This was created with the additional investment in carvery ranges. However, the popularity faded after 8 months and the food wastage from a carvery operation mounted which caused us to cease that type of operation. In a bid to engage more locals we introduced quiz nights, but again local support waned quickly to the point where this was not a traffic builder but an additional cost to the business. In 2019 we refurbished 5 rooms for overnight stays, these we fitted with ensuite. You will see from appendix 3 that this produced very little additional income but brought with it additional operational costs for cleaning, linen, and breakfasts. We did persevere but even by 2021/22 this was still an unviable venture. There simply was no demand in this locality. The layout of the building does not lend itself to any other commercially viable

business as there simply isn't the footfall. The post office closed as early as 1993. As already noted, the only other business in Whitley, Charlottes closed in 2021. We did try to capitalise on that by introducing Yorvale ice cream to take away; again, that did not bring results – no footfall on Whitley Road.

12. In ***Appendix 4*** we set out the trading data for the past 4 years. [THE DETAILED MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS IN THIS APPENDIX ARE REDACTED FROM PUBLIC DISPLAY AS IT IS COMMERCIALKLY SENSITIVE DATA , AND A SUMMARY INCLUDED .] The accounts for Ray Parker & Co are consolidated across the three businesses, Woolpack, Blacksmith Kirkheaton and a Hospitality Property Consultancy. The appendix draws the data from the management accounts, and it should be noted, has made no additional reductions for the head office administration functions such as bookkeeping, wage and pension administration, procurement, regulatory control (Company House fees, data control, etc) .

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B. Green Belt

1. Para 150 of NPPF: It is agreed that the Woolpack is a permanent and substantial structure making the principle of conversion acceptable. Please note that the intend scheme for which outline planning is sought reverts this structure back to its original building use which was a terrace of small houses. Please see the photographic evidence. ***(appendix 5).***
2. Criterion b of LP60 : By way of additional information, the separate building proposed to be demolished is a modern (built 1991) structure which adds little to the placement of the older Woolpack Terrace. The result is to return the Former terrace of housing back to its original heritage and provide amenity space for proposed residents.
3. Criterion c of LP60 : We would suggest that the format and type of boundary fencing is left as a matter of detail to be approved at a later date.

C. Additional Commentary

It is widely reported and acknowledged that there is an acute shortage of housing stock in the UK, particularly starter homes. Whitley lacks the availability of starter homes. The commercial viability of the Woolpack is without question ended. The building was never a purpose built public house but a collection of terrace houses expanded into over many years. This has created a commercial property that can never meet today's customer needs:
It is not easy to access .
It has no open views.

Its structure is not easy to heat economically.
It is too close to residential property to be a music or night time venue.
The small beer garden is overlooked by houses, traffic and passers-by on Scopsley Road.
The small beer garden is not visible from Whitley Road – this reduces its kerb appeal for passing visitors.
The split levels in the kitchen / prep areas lead to uneconomic working patterns.
The kerb appeal as a public house is reduced by fronting directly onto the road.
Disabled access can only be reached from the back of the building thus not readily noticed by a passing visitor.

We believe this building would best serve the community of Whitley returned to its original build purpose of housing rather than remain a boarded building on the principal road through Whitley. We did envisage up to 7 small homes could be created but following discussions with the Planning Authority have scaled that back to 5. Our intention would not be to develop ourselves but transfer to a small builder (preferably local) . We would then reinvest the proceeds to further develop the Blacksmiths Arms increasing its appeal to a tourist market and offering further local employment.

The Directors Ray Parker & Co Ltd
February 2024

APPENDIX 1

Kirklees Council
Asset Strategy
PO Box 1720
Huddersfield
HD1 9EL

Tel: 01484 221000

www.kirklees.gov.uk

2 February 2023

Our ref: 471400675
Your ref:

This matter is being dealt with by **Alison Senior**, Ext. **73981**

IMPORTANT! THIS COMMUNICATION AFFECTS YOUR PROPERTY

Dear Mr Parker

COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID – LIST OF ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE
Part 5, Chapter 3, Localism Act 2011 | Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012

Nomination: **Woolpack Country Inn, Whitley Road, Whitley, Dewsbury, WF12 ONB**

Further to our letter dated 13 December 2022, we have determined that the community nomination received by the Council on 13 December 2022 does not meet the criteria for listing. The property will not be included on the Council's list of Assets of Community Value.

This means if you are the owner (as defined in Section 107 of the 2011 Act), you do not have to notify us if you wish to dispose of the property and I confirm that a local land charge and restriction at HM Land Registry have not been registered against the property.

The property has been added to the Council's 'List of Land Nominated by Unsuccessful Community Nominations' and will stay on the list for 5 years. Therefore, unless the use of the property changes we do not envisage having to consider further nominations for the property.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Alison Senior
Project Officer - Strategy
Asset Strategy Team

Appendix 2

WOOLPACK INN WHITLEY WF12 0LZ

Evidence of operational turnover and failure

I was Property Director of Laurel Pub Company in 2002 and the Woolpack was acquired from a free house operator for conversion to a managed house operation.

1. The property was purchased in 2002 and a large and costly refit and alteration programme undertaken. The site opened in 2003 and traded very badly indeed making substantial losses.
2. 2004 Laurel Pub Co sold the property to Greene King Brewers of Bury St Edmunds.
3. Greene King ran for managed for a further year, and the site continued to make losses.
4. 2005 Greene King switched to the tenanted stream where the property is let out on a tied tenancy
5. 2007 that tenancy failed, and a temporary let was sought with two temporary tenant in that year
6. 2008 another tenant but that failed also in 2009
7. 2010 a whole series of temporary tenants (4 trying to operate this unit)
8. 2011 another new tenancy again ending in failure
9. 2012 another new tenant lasting for 2 years before failure again
10. 2014 another short term let leading to another failure
11. 2015 Greene King used a temporary letting company whilst they marketed the property
12. 2016 Ray Parker & Co bought the property and ran as a managed operation but without the expensive overhead costs of a National Company.
13. 2022 After struggling pre pandemic, and through the pandemic, trade did not return to viable economic levels, losses mounted and the property ceased trading 5 December 2022

R Parker B.Sc. MRICS

This evidence is compiled from my knowledge of the site both as an employee of Laurel Pub Company and as a consultant to the brewing and hospitality industry from 2003 working for many national brewing companies, hoteliers, and restaurateurs. I am by profession a Chartered Surveyor and been involved in the Hospitality and Pub Industry since 1974. My expertise is as a valuer and estate manager of Public Houses, particularly in the north of England.

APPENDIX 3A SANDWICH MENU AND DAY TIME DEAL

APPENDIX 3B MAIN MENU SERVED 12 to 9pm MONDAY TO SATURDAY

APPENDIX 3C SUNDAY LUNCH

APPENDIX 4 ACCOUNT EXTRACTS 2018 TO 2023

APPENDIX 5 RESIDENTIAL USE OF THE WOOLPACK BEFORE ITS USE AS A PUBLIC HOUSE



Cellar Bar Servery Kitchen



Albion House now letting rooms
Woolpack Inn

former farmhouse now Local Authority to green space and children's play area