Address: Quebec Cottage Whitley Road Dewsbury WF12 0LY

About the application

Application number: 2022/93731	
What is the application for?:	Alterations to convert public house to 5 residential units
Address of the site or building:	Woolpack Inn, Whitley Road, Whitley, Dewsbury, WF12 0LZ
Postcode:	WF12 0LZ

User comments

Type of comment: An objection	
Do you wish your comments to be published on the website anonymously?	No

Whitley Community formal objection to the change of use application for the Woolpack Country Inn
The owners of the Woolpack Country Inn have requested Outline planning permission to convert a public house to residential use, they are firstly seeking planning permission for a change of use. The change of use will be from “sui generis” to use class C3 (dwellinghouses).
As a resident we expect Kirklees council to assess this proposed five dwelling planning application and we would after consideration of the relevant evidence ask Kirklees to refuse this application.
Residents Key planning issues with this proposal
We don’t feel that this application meets with the policies in force in our local area.
The woolpack Country Inn is central to Whitley Village, we would ask that Kirklees council take the following key planning issues into account when considering its change of use to residential:
Effect on local community facilities
Like village halls, sports venues and places of worship, the Woolpack Country Inn should be considered to be a type of community facility. At the national level, planning policies seek to retain and improve community facilities wherever possible.
When it comes to the change of use from public house to residential, the effect on our local community facilities is by far the most critical planning issue and we would ask that Kirklees Council consider the social effects on the community. Whilst the community social value is an important factor in this decision it is not the only objection proposed.
Furthermore, since the year 2000, around a quarter of all UK pubs have permanently closed and this has had unfortunate social and economic consequences. There is a general agreement across political divides that efforts should be made to halt or at least slow this trend.
Kirklees and our local council should adopt their own policies to resist the conversion of pubs to other uses. Councillors should ensure the specific, strict criteria is clearly met; we would ask Kirklees council to consider the following requirements which are common to such matters.

We do not believe the property has been actively marketed for a reasonable period without serious interest
There is no evidence in this application that the Woolpack Country Inn has been marketed for sale, the planning application merely identifies a business failure, generally as described by the applicant as a result of a real lack of focus and investment, we would expect Kirklees Council to request and see evidence that the current owners have genuinely tried to sell the property as a public House without success. We would ask Kirklees council sets a specific marketing time period, of up to 2 years. If the current owners asking price is too high or they have turned away any reasonable offers, Kirklees council should not support its change of use.
In accordance with the relevant local policy Kirklees Council should require the property to have been marketed. As a minimum, the evidence should normally contain the following information:
• Date the property was first placed on the market (and date removed, if relevant)
• Copy of sales particulars
• Asking price and any reductions
• Number of enquiries, viewings and offers
• Reasons for turning down offers (if relevant)
• Letter from the Property Agent providing their professional opinion of the unsuccessful marketing exercise (e.g., location is undesirable, property is unsuited to pub use).
The application seeks to proport There is no longer demand for the public house Kirklees council should in granting this application satisfy itself that there is no clear demand for the public house. Please be advised that the local community strongly objects to the loss of the public house, the council should consider this to be evidence of demand, the councils own traffic surveys show that the Woolpack Country Inn can be a venue for destination, it has approximately 2300 cars per day passing the public house, a large carpark and a prominent position in the village.
It has suffered from a lack of advertising , marketing offers, internet marketing and during recent months the main trade has reduced because the present owner has failed to invest in this food and drink venue, the full time chef was not replaced, the exterior and interior of the public house left to deteriorate, no holiday cover led to a drastic reduction in footfall at the start of 2022 . The community continued to support this public house but reduced opening times and the lack of food has caused a drastic decline of the owners own making.

The current owners advise the pub is not financially viable
They state that there is no reasonable prospect of a pub remaining (or becoming) financially viable. However, this has not been adequately demonstrated. The local community have seen that the neglect of the owners has contributed to the lack of trade. Kirklees council should pay particular attention to the following matters:
• Is the evidence the pub's financial situation unbiased and convincing? For example, has it been prepared by an independent specialist based on facts and financial accounts?
• Is there still a good chance changes could make the pub again? For example, internal refurbishments, changes in management or offering (like changing opening hours or adding food back to the menu).
The Councils local policy requires evidence that the pub is not financially viable, if the owners are seeking to rely on this as a material planning consideration, they should

submit a financial viability assessment with their planning application.
This should include the business's financial accounts over previous years, not just post covid. Ideally, it should also apply CAMRA's Public House Viability Test which seeks to establish the trade potential of the premises. (See Figure A)
The local community are unanimous in the opinion that there are not enough similar facilities in the area
We would ask the council does not support the c