

## About the application

Application number: 2022/93731	
What is the application for?:	Partial demolition and alterations to convert public house to 5 residential unit
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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<p>I strongly oppose the planning application in relation to the Woolpack. I have read a number of objections which have already been submitted by other Whitley residents and would echo the observations that have already been made about the obvious and permanent loss of a valuable community asset.</p> <p>My own comments on the application are as follows:</p> <p>I grew up in Thornhill Edge a few minutes away from Whitley and for the past 5 years have lived on Scopsley Lane with my young family.</p> <p>Myself and my family have been regular visitors to the Woolpack for decades. As a child I remember it being the fashionable place to go in the area and it was always busy. I remember the years that the Woolpack was owned by Greene King – we got to know some of the landlords/ladies well and despite making a success of things they were forced out by imposing disproportionate increases in rent. Over the last 5 years my family have been weekly customers of the Woolpack. This is because, despite the obvious issues with the running of the pub, we want to support a local business. We have organised family and social celebrations at the pub.</p> <p>What is clear to me is that the residents of Whitley and the wider area are very keen for the Woolpack to flourish – we would like nothing more than to have a thriving, well run pub in the village. I have seen that the current owners have posted messages on Facebook which found their way into the Dewsbury Reporter, bemoaning the lack of local support for the pub. I do not think this is fair. I think that customers have gradually been put off from visiting the pub due to way that it has been mismanaged in recent years.</p> <p>Many in the local area compare the Woolpack with its sister pub, the Blacksmiths in Kirkheaton, which appears to be thriving. The 2 pubs have some similarities in that they have a rural location and are largely dependent on customers walking to or driving to the pub. Where the two pubs appear to differ is that the Blacksmiths has seen significant investment from the owners, not just in terms of finances but also time, effort and initiative.</p>	

and initiative.

This has caused frustration to Woolpack customers who have seen the pub becoming more run down and seeming to lack anywhere near the same kind of investment – take the rear conservatory for example which has been an eyesore for years. The absolute bare minimum for a successful pub is to serve good food and good beer/drinks. Sadly, increasingly so over recent times, the food has been bland and the beer is poor. The manager is rarely seen in the pub – it is largely run by young girls behind the bar who are very pleasant but the Woolpack has lacked the presence of a proper visible landlord

The current managers of the pub have done nothing to engage the local community or provide any reason for people to visit. They have abandoned any weekly events which brought people into the pub three examples of which are the Sunday carvery which was hugely popular, the quiz night and the Friday fish and chips deal. They have shown little initiative or imagination to try to get people back into the pub following Covid. They do not even have a website to advertise the business to prospective customers and the Facebook page has barely any updates compared to other local pubs (21 posts in 2 years).

Potential customers are unsure whether the pub will be open at all given very erratic opening hours and for some time they have not served food. Sadly the most investment and effort that the current owners have put into the pub is the hurried boarding up of the doors and windows over the last week or so.

The Woolpack should be a gold mine for owners – a significant business opportunity appeared to have been missed when the very popular Charlotte's ice cream parlour shut down just up the road. The pub could easily have filled the gap in the market. Efforts should have been made to refurbish and promote the accommodation to customers

There is an appetite within the village for social events and groups which could easily have been tapped into. The pub has not had any presence at community events and fundraisers which might have built relationships with the community. The bottom line is that if the pub serves good quality and sensibly priced food and good drinks then people will come.

The current owners say that the business is not viable. Whilst I recognise that Covid and rising energy prices have made things tough for hospitality businesses I do not for a second think that is true if properly run. It is clear from the full car parks and tables of other local pubs and restaurants that there is still money to be made.

The planning application seems to be on the basis that they are not making any money from the pub and therefore their only option is to turn it into houses. That of course is not the only possible option. They could install more experienced and/or enthusiastic managers to run the pub who would be more willing to engage with the local community. They could rent the pub to new landlords who knew how to run a successful pub. They could sell the pub as going concern – I am unaware of the pub being put up for sale at all. All other options should be explored before taking any decision to remove a valuable community asset

My biggest frustration about this application is that the current owners bought the Woolpack at a very reasonable cost (in the region of £385,000) given the size and potential of the business. I am sure that the price they paid reflected that the site could not be used for anything but a pub.

they are now saying that the business is not viable and therefore stand to make significant profit from a change to residential use. In the process they would deprive the local community of a longstanding valuable asset. Once the pub is gone it is gone forever. This cannot be right. I would urge Kirklees to refuse the application.