



Wetherspoons to open new pub in Bury St Edmunds Free 271224

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Bury St Edmunds is a step closer to getting a big new Wetherspoon's pub.

The chain has got the nod from St Edmundsbury Borough Council to convert the Corn Exchange into a pub for hundreds of drinkers.

There had been opposition from preservation groups who have concerns about the proposal.

"We've converted dozens of listed buildings and they still look beautiful," said Eddie Gershon, spokesman for Wetherspoon's.

In June 2010, the full council voted 22-14 in favour of pressing ahead with the pub option instead of other proposals such as turning the Grade II listed building into a children's play centre.

"We're very pleased," said Mr Gershon. "What Wetherspoon's has shown across the UK is that people

like our style of pub and it gives people choice.

“It brings investment to the area and they’re very well-run.”

Unwanted side effects?

Preservation groups including the Bury Society and Suffolk Preservation Society are opposing the plans.

“It isn’t the use that we wanted to see at what is quite a magnificent building,” said Alan Jary, vice chairman of the Bury Society.

“There were a couple of other ideas floating around. One of our own was for a business centre which we think would have been far more presentable.

“But the council is cash-strapped and has gone for the best financial offer.

“There’s always side effects. What we’re going to have now [with other pubs nearby] is a thousand people emerging on to the streets at 1 or 2am.

“That’s an awful lot of people for everybody else to look out for, to clear up if there’s trouble.

“We are worried. We think this is tipping the balance to the night-time at the expense of the day-time.

“We shall continue to lobby. Let us just stay for a little while and make sure we’re doing the right thing.”

‘Most financially acceptable’

The politicians at St Edmundsbury, which owns and leases the building, acknowledge there is opposition to the pub idea.

“Locally the people are fairly mixed in their opinion,” said Sarah Mildmay-White, Conservative councillor and deputy leader of St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

“Wetherspoon’s were far and away the most financially acceptable to the council.

“Over the years the Corn Exchange has been adapted and this is just the latest chapter.

“Bury St Edmunds has got some very successful pubs and I hope that Wetherspoon’s will attract new drinkers and families for their food.

“Bury has always had a vibrant night-time economy where people live, eat, work, sleep and drink and we very much hope that that will continue – hence the new development with our public hall [The Apex on the cattle market].

“I have every confidence that Wetherspoon’s will come up with some interesting plans for the top floor of the Corn Exchange.”

Wetherspoon's will now have to submit formal planning and licensing applications before St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

The firm estimates it'll spend upwards of £1m refurbishing the building.

The Fire Authority will decide on the new capacity of the pub.

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