

**From:** [furness history](#)  
**To:** [Planning Comments \(HPBC\)](#)  
**Subject:** The Soldier Dick, Furness Vale  
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Planning application HPK/2022/0170 - The Soldier Dick, Buxton Road, Furness Vale

Dear Sirs

On 28th April, I posted the following comment on the Facebook page of Furness Vale History Society, and in addition shared it to local interest groups in New Mills and Whaley Bridge:

*"Furness Vale Local History Society*

*Plans have been published for conversion of the Soldier Dick to residential accommodation. A 3 storey extension will be built to the side and rear creating 2 houses and 6 flats. The owner's statement suggests that the pub business is no longer viable".*

This Facebook post resulted in an extraordinary 200 comments. No doubt, some of those who responded will make direct representations to the Planning Department but I feel that I should make you aware of the huge strength of feeling in Furness Vale against the proposals to close the pub.

Many people who responded appreciated the current difficult climate in the licensed trade and recognised the fact that a small village is currently supporting two pubs and a social club. There was however, an overwhelming view that the current owners/licensees have made a very half-hearted attempt to make their business viable.

The owners' statement that accompanies the planning application paints a very different picture from that of our correspondants. Most people were of the opinion that the Soldier Dick should serve hot food in order to attract custom (its restaurant in the past had an excellent reputation and was very popular). The landlady closed her kitchen two or three years ago but this was after she had dismissed a succession of 4 or 5 chefs! The Soldier Dick has a number of en-suite letting rooms which once gave a substantial income. Breakfast is no longer offered and guests have to fend for themselves for food and drink. This is not going to encourage custom.

As recently as five years ago, the pub was attractively presented externally; well decorated and adorned with hanging baskets and planters. Inevitably, the decor needed maintaining but the present owner's attempts at decorating have resulted in a plain white frontage and a drab green gable end; it is far from appealing. The pavement display that is mentioned is no more than a scruffy free standing coffee advertisement. A very large number of customers have been banned from the pub. Whilst it is necessary to exclude troublemakers, the number is regarded as excessive and unwarranted and a further barrier to viable trading.

Furness Vale is not a "commuter village" as stated by the pub's owners as a large number of residents still find employment locally especially in the two trading estates. In common with most businesses, the Soldier Dick has suffered loss of trade due to the pandemic and is now losing further trade to the rejuvenated Crossings public house nearby. This other Furness Vale pub has set an example of how such businesses can thrive and it is firmly believed that the Soldier Dick could do likewise if some initiative were applied.

The above are the views of our correspondents including a past licensee of 17 years

experience but are not necessarily those of Furness Vale History Society.

On behalf of the Society, of which I am acting secretary, I would like to make the following observations:

The Soldier Dick housed the meeting rooms of the Oddfellows, a mutual society, a branch of which was founded here in 1829. They occupied the top floor where monthly meetings were held and in 1840, an artist, F. W. Roche was commissioned to paint a series of murals on the walls of this room. The paintings depicted scenes from historic wars such as the Civil War and Battle of Crecy. The Oddfellows continued meeting here until 1960. In the late 20th century, the upper rooms were converted to provide six letting bedrooms. The licensee at the time ensured that the builders carrying out the work preserved those paintings behind the new plaster board that was being installed. Those murals therefore still exist. Furness Vale History Society consider that those paintings should be conserved should alterations to the building take place.

The Soldier Dick is an historic pub with a unique name which reflects the legend of a lost soldier given succour when found lost on Whaley Moor in the 17th century. In closing the pub, we would lose this historical association. The Soldier Dick has played an important role in village life during the 217 years of its existence and it would be sad indeed if it were to close.

Given its prominent location on the A6 road and at the heart of the village, we feel that further consideration should be given to making the pub viable before granting permission for its closure.

Kindest regards  
David Easton Acting Secretary

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