

# Former Wetherspoons pub to be turned into a soft play centre for children

A former Wetherspoons pub which sparked protests from hundreds of punters when it closed is to be turned into a soft play centre for children.

The new House of Fun soft play venue will convert the ground floor of Madisons bar, in Dalkeith, into a large play area for children aged from 0-12.

The pub, which used to be operated by Wetherspoons as the Blacksmith's Forge, saw the pub chain move out in 2021. It was briefly reopened as Madisons but closed its doors two years ago.

Now an application has been lodged by House of Fun soft play to open on the site seven days a week with space to accommodate up to 300 people at any time, including children, parents and staff.

The proposals would see a cafe area for families as well as a large soft play space and employ a team of 15 staff.

In their statement on the proposals House of Fun said: "We believe House of Fun will be a valuable addition to the area, offering a unique and enjoyable space for children to play and grow, while also providing job opportunities for local residents."

When Wetherspoons announced plans not to renew its lease of the pub, which is owned by Lidl who have a store next door, in 2021 nearly 400 locals signed a petition calling on them to change their minds without success.

Planning officers noted that not a single objection had been lodged to the pub being reclassified as a soft play venue.

Granting planning permission for the change of use, officers said: "The proposed use will be a sustainable re-use of a prominent building within Dalkeith town centre and would safeguard an historic building facade.

"The new use would encourage footfall within the town centre and bring a new use to the town centre thereby enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter