

# Residents call for reassurance over future of Five Bells pub, in Hessel, near Bury St Edmunds

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Worried residents are calling for reassurance after a bid to protect the future of a historic [Suffolk](#) pub was rejected.

Hessel Parish Council had applied for Asset of Community Value (ACV) status for the Five Bells, in the Street.

But the application, which helps preserve the future of the pub – closed since December 2015 – was turned down by Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) due to lack of evidence of community use over the ‘recent past’.



Residents are concerned about the Five Bells pub in Hessel. Pictures by Mecha Morton

The current owners say they are in the process of renovating the pub and intend to reopen it.

However, village residents are still concerned for its future. Resident Jacqui Spicer said: “Villagers are worried that the pub will not reopen as a result of the ACV application being turned down.



Five Bells, Hessett,

“Mid Suffolk Council said we could not show that there had been a need for the pub in over the last seven years, or so, but how are we meant to do that when it’s closed? There is a need for a central hub in the village and that’s where the pub comes in. We’d also like to know when it might open, if so.”

The pub was bought in 2018 by Nigel and Valerie Jackson, who also run the Chantry Hotel, in Bury St Edmunds.

Their son, Ben, a self-employed woodworker and boat builder, has been working to restore the building, after a planning application for this was approved that year.

He said: “We are absolutely committed to reopening as a pub. We have gone too far down the road for it not to be a pub.

“We have completely rebuilt the building, inside and out, and added a new WC extension. We need to do the fitting out and finishing, which is the expensive bit. We are currently stuck on that. It is a family project, also with my brother, and we are also busy with other full-time jobs.



Ben Jackson, who is restoring the pub

“I’ve heard all sorts of rumours but it will reopen as a pub. When we have said opening dates in the past then obviously we have just disappointed people, so at the moment are not willing to say. Also, any ACV only comes into effect if we sell it, which we won’t. It will be a pub.”

Mr Jackson added that Covid restrictions causing interruptions in the building trade had also slowed the project.

A spokesperson for MSDC, said: "We know how passionately our communities feel about protecting important buildings and we always carefully consider any ACV nominations in line with national legislation.

“On this occasion, there was no evidence that the community benefits outlined were current or sufficiently recent past, which is one of the requirements.”



Photos show the renovation inside: Picture: Ben Jackson



A bar is in place