# Former landlords leave The Farmers pub after disputes and complaints in Norfolk



Colin Swindlehurst and Tracy Jones have ended their brief tenure as landlords of The Farmers pub, formerly known locally as The Jolly Farmers, in Ormesby St Margaret, Norfolk, following a series of disputes and complaints from local patrons. The couple took over the rural establishment on 27 March with aspirations to revitalise the venue through events such as bingo nights, karaoke, and a revamped menu. However, their management lasted barely two weeks, culminating in a termination of their tenancy on 10 April.

The Farmers, which underwent a £150,000 refurbishment in 2021, has been a community hub in the village of around 2,750 residents but has experienced several changes in landlords over the past year, along with intermittent closures that concerned locals about its future.

According to Mr Swindlehurst and Ms Jones, tensions arose early in their management when they introduced a policy requiring patrons to change out of muddy boots into slippers before entering the pub. This measure, previously implemented successfully by the couple in a Devon pub, aimed to maintain cleanliness in the rural establishment. Mr Swindlehurst described how they installed lockers outside the pub for footwear, but the move was poorly received by some locals.

The Daily Mail reports that local punters took to the pub’s Facebook page to voice their displeasure; comments included complaints about being asked to remove boots with nowhere else to drink and accusations of rude and abusive behaviour from staff. Rumours also circulated that a shotgun was present behind the bar, an allegation vehemently denied by the landlords. Mr Swindlehurst told the Daily Mail, "Anonymous people on Facebook, straight away, said that my partner was downstairs at the bar, drunk with a shotgun... If there was a gun, then why did the police not come? ... We don't even have a gun."

The situation escalated when a manager from Stonegate, the pub’s owners, visited the premises on 1 April to investigate the complaints. Mr Swindlehurst admits he lost his temper after hearing the manager had been told inaccurate stories about firearms on site and swearing. He acknowledged storming into the bar upon his return but denied any physical altercations. "When they said I went to punch him, I said 'Hang on, I'm not Stretch Armstrong'," he said.

Following the visit, Stonegate cited "multiple incidents of unacceptable behaviour towards both Stonegate colleagues and the pub’s guests" in the decision to terminate the couple’s tenancy. The manager reportedly received several threatening and abusive messages after the meeting that caused him distress. The pub was subsequently closed as the company seeks new landlords.

Mr Swindlehurst attributes some of the difficulties to cultural differences, noting, "We might have been a bit forward. We're northern... I say how it is. I don't do BS... But a lot of people don't like it. It's different up north." He contrasted their reception in Norfolk with a more positive experience in Devon, where locals eventually embraced their style.

Community response was mixed. One unnamed local described the requirement to wear slippers as "ridiculous" and said, "They were rude and you don't get far like that as a pub landlord." Another dismissed the firearm rumours but was glad the couple had departed. However, pub chef Tom Proctor defended the landlords, asserting, "There was no gun pulled out on anyone... All they did was treat me with kindness."

The pub has longstanding importance to the village, with only a few local establishments remaining open. A community group called "Save the (Jolly) Farmers, Ormesby" successfully nominated the pub as an Asset of Community Value, a status that highlights its significance and aims to protect it from closure or redevelopment. Kathryn Wendt, chair of the local parish council, stressed its value: "It was a community hub for quizzes and meet-ups... The parish council supported the application for Asset of Community Value and being able to keep the pub open but it's now up to the owners what they do about it."

Stonegate Group confirmed the termination of the agreement with the former landlords and noted the pub remains closed during the search for new management. According to their website, The Farmers is being advertised with a weekly rent of just over £800 and an expected annual turnover around £620,000. The listing highlights the pub's "well-equipped commercial kitchen" and "delightful garden and patio areas."

A Stonegate spokesperson stated: "This decision was made due to multiple incidents of unacceptable behaviour towards both Stonegate colleagues and the pub's guests, which we will not tolerate. Consequently, the Jolly Farmer has been temporarily closed while we recruit for a new publican. We are committed to reopening the pub under new management as soon as possible."

For now, the future of The Farmers pub in Ormesby remains uncertain as the owners seek new tenants willing to manage the property and sustain its role in the local community.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://qoshe.com/eastern-daily-press/harry-jackaman-pegg/northern-landlords-leave-norfolk-village-pub-after-spectacular-row-with-locals/182205397> - This article corroborates the departure of Colin Swindlehurst and Tracy Jones from The Jolly Farmers pub in Ormesby, Norfolk, following a short but tumultuous tenure due to conflicts with locals.
2. <https://www.hotsheet.com/news2024a.php?20766836&fsrc=3> - This news feed mentions Colin Swindlehurst and Tracy Jones leaving their position at The Jolly Farmers pub after just two weeks, aligning with the timeline and circumstances of their departure.
3. <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although the specific article is not listed, Noah Wire Services is cited as the source for information regarding the situation at The Farmers pub, including the community's response and the pub's status.
4. <https://www.stonegategroup.co.uk/our-pubs/the-jolly-farmers/> - This URL would typically be associated with The Farmers pub's listing on Stonegate Group's website, which would confirm its status, features, and the search for new landlords.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asset-of-community-value-nominations-and-protecting-local-green-spaces> - This government webpage provides information about the Asset of Community Value status, which The Jolly Farmers pub has been nominated for, highlighting its community significance.
6. <https://www.stonegategroup.co.uk/newsroom> - Stonegate Group's newsroom section might include press releases or statements about their properties, such as The Farmers pub, including updates on management changes or property listings.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14655669/Landlords-given-marching-orders-row-locals-rule-wear-slippers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data