

## LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

### **Parish Council response to DC/23/2695/LBC and DC/23/2694/FUL The Ship Church Lane Levington Ipswich Suffolk IP10 0LQ**

Alterations and extensions to provide additional dining and upgraded kitchen facilities and an outdoor seating area.

#### **Headline**

In view of the concerns outlined below, based on the information we have received, Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council **OBJECT** to Planning Applications DC/23/2694/FUL and DC/23/2695/LBC which have currently been submitted.

#### **Introduction**

Levington is a small rural village overlooking the river Orwell and Levington Lagoon Nature Reserve:

*Simply one of the best places for estuarine birds on the Orwell. ....This sensitive site is a magnet for breeding, wintering and passage estuarine birds of which there are exceptional numbers and variety..... Levington Lagoon is cared for by Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

<https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/levingtonlagoon>

Levington village is designated a Small Village in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan - Policy SCLP3.2: Settlement Hierarchy; it covers 5km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 252, 43% of which are 60 years or older.

The Parish Council recognise The Ship is a valued entity in our community; it has a strong reputation both within the community and far beyond. Many residents frequent The Ship.

The Ship recognise the unique tranquillity of Levington:

*Embrace the essence of Suffolk at our beloved public house in Levington. Nestled amidst the picturesque landscapes and surrounded by the soothing waters of the River Orwell, The Ship beckons you with its timeless allure and inviting atmosphere. Indulge in refreshing ales, delectable seafood, and unforgettable moments with friends, all while soaking in the riverside charm of Levington. Come aboard and make memories to last a lifetime*

#### **Setting**

The Ship is a historic thatched building with Grade 2 listed status. It is located next to the church; these two buildings are the photogenic icons of the village of Levington, from both land and the river Orwell.

The Ship is located on Church Lane at the top of the hill leading down to Stratton Hall Drift. Travelling from Bridge Street, Church Lane is a narrow lane – less than two vehicles wide and involves a sweeping left-hand bend along the Church boundary which comprises of a very tall brick wall. As such, the bend is a blind bend. There is a narrow pavement on the opposite side of the road which begins at Trickers Wood and ends opposite The Ship.

Church Lane has a 30mph speed limit, with an advisory 20mph sign located before the bend at the entrance to Trickers Wood. Past The Ship, Church Lane towards Stratton Hall Drift reduces to one vehicle width, down a steep hill. This part of Church Lane and into Stratton Hall Drift is a designated Quiet Lane.

Church Lane is part of a designated cycle route, and in addition to cyclists, is frequently used by pedestrians and horses (there are several equestrian facilities on the outskirts of the village).

The Ship has a car park at the rear. It is accessed via a single-track driveway between the Church and The Ship. This driveway also provides access to the Church and a residential equestrian property. The junction of this driveway and Church Lane is a safety challenge. Vehicles exiting the driveway do not have a view to the right along Church Lane alongside the Church wall, and a very limited view to the left along Church Lane down the hill.

Directly opposite this junction is a track which comprises a footpath to the river and private vehicle access to the rear of properties on Church Lane. This footpath is very popular with walkers, many of whom use The Ship car park – the only parking available in the village (The Ship advertises - *Whether you're looking for a hearty meal after a long walk with your dog...*).

Pedestrian entry into The Ship is presently via the front door, meaning people who have just parked their car in the car park have to navigate the narrow driveway with vehicles trying to enter or exit, and its junction with the road is often busy with walkers exiting the footpath from the river.

Levington does not have any parking facility in the village except for The Ship car park. The roads are narrow and without kerbs. Roadside parking in any part of the village reduces the road width to one vehicle at best, in some places it is not possible without blocking the road. There is very evident damage to roadside verges caused by vehicles.

Levington does not have a train station and is served by one bus per day; most people have no option but to drive to or from the village.

## **Context**

The aims of the Parish Council Mission Statement:

- Ensure our historical, cultural, geographical, and natural assets are identified, protected and enhanced for current and future generations
- Establish and maintain a village plan that reflects the unique environmental and historic characteristics of our Parish and its surroundings
- Support initiatives to enhance the health, security and cohesiveness of our community, and to support individuals and families in need
- Ensure the Parish is welcoming to visitors who wish to enjoy its environment and surroundings and who contribute positively to its peace and prosperity
- Act effectively within the legal framework of local government to deliver these aims and ensure the social, economic and cultural needs of our community are met

Last year the Parish Council examined the issue of speeding in the village of Levington, the two main sites being the entry into the village along Bridge Street – a derestricted road to a 30mph limit, and

Church Lane outside the Church – a 30mph limit. Residents had informed of many ‘near-misses’ along Church Lane, both compromising pedestrian safety while using the pavement or in the section of Church Lane between Bridge Street and Trickers Wood where there isn’t a pavement and pedestrians use the roadway.

Suffolk Constabulary were consulted, and the problem was defined as 30mph being too fast for that section of road due to its width, the blind bend, the restricted access point to The Ship car park, and road use by pedestrians, horses, and cyclists. It was established that if the speed limit were reduced to 20mph this would not be enforced by the police; the only viable option was to create a 20mph zone which would involve the installation of traffic calming measures. This was not pursued as a) it was seen as urbanisation and contrary to our mission, and b) it would be an expensive venture that the Highways Authority would be unlikely to prioritise. The Parish Council were left without a viable solution to this problem.

The Parish Council has previously raised concerns with the Highways Authority in relation to road safety, which has resulted in a central white line being installed at two locations in the village. Church Lane was another site of concern – Highways could not install a central white line as, in their view, the road was not wide enough to constitute two lanes.

### **The outcome of the Parish Council Planning Meeting**

The Parish Council recognise The Ship as a valued entity in the village as well as the challenges of operating as a viable business in the present economic environment. However, it also recognised that The Ship is presently a bustling pub and recent alterations particularly to the beer garden have already increased capacity. Information was provided by residents of both the pub and the car park regularly being full.

The Parish Council recognise the existing capacity of The Ship as:

- 60 internal covers
- 64 covers on the rear patio
- 16 covers on the front patio
- 90 covers in the beer garden
- 230 covers in total

As such, it is recognised most patrons are from beyond the village.

The application seeks to increase the above by:

- 70 internal covers
- 60 external covers
- 130 covers in total – a 57% increase

The public and the Parish Council agreed they wanted to support The Ship, but the key challenges with the application as submitted are its scale and absence of detail of how resulting issues would be mitigated. To consider the question of ‘when does The Ship become too big for its surroundings’, it was agreed this application seeks to do that.

The Parish Council recognise the possible increase in employment at The Ship because of this application, and how that may be seen as compliant with Suffolk Council’s strategy for growth.

However, the Parish Council recognised that as is presently the case, these new jobs are unlikely to be desirable to residents, meaning most will be occupied by people outside of the community.

The Parish Council recognised the plans submitted with the application were vague at best and lacked any comment or detail on important and obvious issues such as traffic volume/road safety, car parking, limited access, noise, lighting.

One resident informed the meeting of their conversation with the architect about the plans that day. The architect acknowledged the plans needed significant remodelling, for example in relation to disabled toilet facilities and workable disabled access to the building. This remodelling when explained to the meeting by the resident evidenced the plans presently before the Parish Council for consideration were inadequate and were likely to change significantly.

It was disappointing that neither the applicant nor their representative were in attendance to help explain, reassure, and hear from the public.

The points of objection are:

1. Growth

This is an application for growth – a 57% increase in capacity. The SCLP vision contains some aspects relevant to this application:

*'Maintain and sustainably improve the quality of life for everyone growing up in, living in, working in and visiting East Suffolk'.*

*'Significant levels of growth which maintain the distinctive character and role of settlements, while conserving and enhancing the built, historic and natural environments will have been planned for and delivered.'*

*'The stronger and more diverse economy will provide more and better paid local earnings and job opportunities, ensuring that people can stay within their communities.'*

*'Appropriate growth in rural areas that will help to support and sustain existing communities.'*

The Parish Council is clear that this growth is not needed by and will not help to support and sustain our community, it only serves the commercial interests of a private business. Indeed, because of the subsequent points of objection listed, this application poses a key threat to the quality of life of the residents of Levington and detracts from, rather than improves the distinctive character and natural environment of Levington.

2. Traffic volume / road safety

A 57% increase in covers and associated deliveries, will naturally result in a significant increase in vehicular traffic and the Parish Council are extremely concerned about this. This will dramatically change the character of the village and the quality of life of residents – no longer will The Ship be “Nestled amidst the picturesque landscapes... and riverside charm”.

It was noted that Highways Authority had yet to submit a response to the application. This must be a key consideration for the Highways Authority.

The Planning Authority has pledged to not adjudicate on the application until receipt of Highway's response, and the Parish Council were offered an extension to their submission pending this. The Parish Council decided to continue and ask the Planning Authority to:

1. Keep to their pledge to await the Highways Authority's response before adjudicating
2. Provide a copy of this objection to the Highway Authority so they are aware of the detail contained prior to making their response.

The context of the location and associated road safety issues is recorded above.

## 2. Single-track driveway entrance/exit to the Ship

The absence of any acknowledgement of this as an issue is concerning; this must be a core consideration in this application. There are 2 key elements to this issue:

1. The safe transfer of the public into and out of the site presently is problematic, such an increase in covers and thus vehicles will exacerbate this and will create a backlog into the road affecting the road safety issue above, and altering the character of the village.
2. The safety of pedestrians using this access to transfer from the car park to the front door or to the footpath for a walk to the river; this should include disability consideration also.

The Parish Council have grave concerns about the inadequate access to the car park, the absence of acknowledgement and any mitigation intended.

## 3. Car Parking

Present information shows the car park is only suitable for the existing capacity of The Ship. No acknowledgement is made in the application of the additional car parking capacity needed because of the increase in the pub capacity, nor arrangements to mitigate this (extension of the existing car park). The public were particularly concerned about the car park being extended into existing meadow land and thereby it's destruction, should this become part of the plan.

Sufficient car parking is a core concern for the Parish Council – insufficient provision will push patrons onto the roads to park. The viability of this is recorded above, and the implications are an adverse impact upon road safety, and a change of character to the village, impacting on quality of life for residents.

The Parish Council request:

1. Highways Authority consider this when forming their view on the viability of the application
2. The Planning Authority require sufficient provision as a condition of the application

In conversation with residents the applicant / their representative has informed there is no intention of the car park being subject to charging, such is the case at other pubs in the Deben Inns group. The Parish Council would like the Planning Authority to consider a condition that if

charging is introduced, patrons are refunded the cost to prevent a motivation to try to park elsewhere to avoid charges.

#### 4. Light Pollution

Several residents informed of disturbance of existing lighting at night from The Ship into their homes / bedrooms, as flood lights are presently used by The Ship. Management at the Ship have been repeatedly informed about this, yet it continues.

The Parish Council recognise the reassuring comments in the Planning Applications about lighting, specifically that flood lights will not be used. Concerns about this are not resolved given existing practice.

#### 5. Noise Pollution

The Parish Council is concerned about additional noise due to:

1. The increase in traffic accessing to the Ship, including the likely horns and reversing due to the inaccessibility of the single-track driveway
2. The increase in traffic travelling over the gravel surface of the single-track driveway and car park
3. The addition of a new gate to the side beer garden and the noise it is likely to create open and closing with each pass
4. Increased vehicular associated noise - cars accessing and leaving the car park, car doors banging, additional noise from visitors' voices when accessing and leaving

The Parish Council would welcome some kind of mitigation to deal with the issue of noise.

#### 6. Sewerage

Levington and Stratton Hall parishes experience considerable difficulties with water and drainage problems. There is a history of sewerage backing up downstream of The Ship, such that Anglian Water had to install and maintain a one-way valve at one dwelling.

The increase in dining proposed by this application will create two pressures:

1. Increased toilet use
2. Increased kitchen sink waste

The Parish Council have grave concerns about the fragility of the sewerage system and request:

1. The Planning Authority include Anglian Water as a consultee to this application, with a copy of this objection to sight them on issues
2. The Planning Authority require the applicant to make provision in the application for congealed fat to be diverted away from the sewerage system

#### **Non-Material Considerations**

The Planning Applications do not provide sufficient provision for people with disabilities. This includes:

1. Access to the building from the car park – presently over a gravel surface
2. Access into the building

3. Toilet facilities
4. Access within the building to toilet facilities

### **Consultative process**

The Parish Council recognise key parties have not been included as consultees by the Planning Authority. These are:

1. Sarah and Fiona Heath The Paddocks, immediate neighbour (also owns the Holly Lodge)
2. St Peters Church Levington, immediate neighbour
3. Anglian Water – responsible for the sewerage system

The Parish Council request the above 3 parties are included as consultees by the Planning Authority.

In the expectation that the existing plans will be changed, the Parish Council request opportunity to be consulted fully on subsequent plans, including opportunity to hold another meeting with the public.

The Parish Council hopes the scale of the development as presented is recognised as being too significant, and that a further application is submitted of more appropriate size, together with recognition and effective mitigation of the above concerns.

Angie Buggs  
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council  
Telephone 07770575350  
14<sup>th</sup> August 2023