

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Planning Meeting held at 3.30pm on
Tuesday 25 August 2020 via Zoom

Present: Charlotte Britton - Chairman (CB)
Jane Cryer - Parish Clerk (JC)
John Curran (JDC)
Bill Paton (BP)
David Pratt (DP)
Sheila Roberts (SR)

In attendance: 8 Parishioners

Apologies: Michael Woods - Vice Chairman (MW)
Gordon Jones - Suffolk County Council
John Ward - Babergh District Council

20.8.1P APOLOGIES

See above

20.8.2P DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20.8.3P PUBLIC FORUM

The parishioners present expressed an interest in agenda item 20.8.6P - the Marquis planning application - and thanked the Parish Council for their work on this. In response to a question, CB said the application had not been refused; this was a re-consultation following the submission of additional information. In response to a further question, she said Babergh did not give direct feedback to the PC on planning applications, although in this instance some councillors had contacted Babergh for clarification on specific issues. One parishioner commented on the likely increase in traffic along Upper Street and Benton Street, which struggled to cope with the existing traffic flow. She was also concerned about an increase in noise levels, having had previous experience of living close to a wedding/events venue. Another parishioner commented on the potential harm to the landscape in a Special Landscape Area and close to an AONB.

20.8.4P DC/20/02588 - LONG PONDS, RANDS ROAD

It was noted that permission had been granted for change of use from agricultural land to residential.

20.8.5P DC/20/02159 - ANTRIM HOUSE, UPPER STREET

It was noted that permission had been granted for a single storey side/rear extension.

20.8.6P DC/20/01517 & 8 - MARQUIS OF CORNWALLIS, UPPER STREET

Re-consultation on the application for erection of extensions to provide additional facilities including reception, banquet hall, wellness centre, additional bedrooms; change of use of agricultural land to create a new car parking and formal gardens, including the removal of existing over-spill car parking and associated landscaping works. Application for Listed Building Consent.

Councillors had reviewed their original submission in the light of the additional information received. Again, the PC had taken the approach of a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with reference to Material Considerations.

The PC recognised that many parishioners had welcomed the original refurbishment of the Marquis and were happy with the existing site, which was an asset to the village. However, several areas of concern about the proposed new development remained:

- Size of proposed new development
- Design - inappropriate for a village location
- Noise
- Landscaping - maintenance
- Speeding
- Parking
- Lighting

Following a full discussion, the Parish Council voted by 4 votes to 1 to object to the planning application, on the basis that the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

The full submission is attached.

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PLANNING APPLICATION RE-CONSULTATION

MARQUIS OF CORNWALLIS, UPPER STREET - DC/20/01517 and DC/20/01518

Application for erection of extensions to provide additional facilities including reception, banquet hall, wellness centre, additional bedrooms; change of use of agricultural land to create a new car parking and formal gardens, including the removal of existing over-spill car parking and associated landscaping works. Application for Listed Building Consent.

COMMENTS FROM LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the additional information provided, Layham Parish Council has reviewed its original submission, taking into account National Planning Policy, Babergh Local Plan and associated planning guides, and National Government policy and frameworks on planning considerations. Reference has also been made to the development guidelines within Babergh Policy for development within Hinterland villages, the classification assigned to Layham. Again, we have taken the approach of a presumption in favour of sustainable development and reviewed the application to identify any Material Considerations, acceptable when deciding a planning application.

Material Consideration 1: Sustainability and Job Creation

The Parish Council welcomes the creation of new jobs, and recognises that some have already been created at the Marquis following the previous development. However, we are unable to see any clear justification for another venue of this type in this location, given the number of wedding venues in the surrounding area. Whilst competition is healthy, we question whether there is a need for any further development in this location. Also, the type of proposal - a wedding and events venue - is unsuitable within a rural village setting, with the inevitable impact on the residential amenity.

Although the proposed development refers to a 'wedding venue', we believe other types of events will need to be held on a regular basis in order to make the business sustainable. We would suggest that there should be clarification on the number and type of events planned.

Material Consideration 2: Design and Appearance

We recognise that some concerns have been addressed since the last submission. The banqueting hall, while large, will be tiered and therefore slightly less imposing. However, the size of the whole development is more than 100% larger than the existing site (please refer to the calculations in the Appendix). The existing Marquis, a village pub / boutique hotel, is appropriate for a village of this size and is a 'residential amenity'. It is the first building people see when they come into the village, and we believe that the proposed new development would dominate the street scene and be inappropriate and a disproportionate size for a rural village like Layham.

With regard to the car park, we recognise that the plan is to level this. However, we note the proposed surface is asphalt. We would seek reassurance that the surface of the car park would not be visible when viewed from the valley; if it were to be visible, we believe consideration should have been given to an alternative surface.

Material Consideration 3: Noise Pollution

The only change we have been able to find since the previous submission is that the application states they will 'operate a closed terrace door policy'. There is an events terrace planned next to the banqueting hall; we have doubts that a closed door policy could be enforced, especially during the summer months.

We recognise that money has been invested in noise mitigation, but this will only be effective inside the building. There will also be noise from the car park, especially with wedding guests arriving and departing at the same time. There has been little detail as to how the issue of noise pollution will be handled.

Material Consideration 4: Environmental Matters

The landscape appraisal report gives more detail; this is reflected in changes to the car parking area. We recognise that the current plans would improve biodiversity, but as stated in our previous submission, the development would result in the permanent loss of agricultural land within the Brett Vale Special Landscape Area and we continue to believe that a detailed maintenance plan for the site should be produced.

Material Considerations 5 & 6: Traffic & Parking

Traffic

The Parish Council has concerns about traffic coming in and out of the site at the same time - weddings start and finish at a certain time so everyone will be travelling at once. The survey commissioned by the applicant from a specialist company was conducted at off peak times only and presented data of 29 and 29.5mph. However, this limited survey is not a true reflection of the speed of motorists on the B1070 and, in our opinion, was carried out at the wrong time of day and in the wrong location. The Suffolk Highways survey carried out in October 2019, commissioned by the Parish Council, showed people's average speed is 40mph, not 30mph.

We realise that some of the guests may be using the accommodation at the Marquis; however, other guests are unlikely to travel to a wedding on foot or by bicycle, given the nature of the event. Travelling by bus, whilst an option for getting to the venue, is not an option for guests leaving as the service ceases at 1800 hrs.

Parking

The application allows no car parking spaces for the wedding venue. Following a challenge, the applicant has informed the Parish Council in a side letter that they now Class the wedding venue as D2 (one space per 20 sqm), allowing a total of 13 spaces for the 120 seat venue. We question why Class A3 or A4 was not used (one space per 5sqm) as this is more appropriate to the use it will be put to.

We note that the applicant in a side letter has increased the number of required car park spaces from 80 to 102. However, we believe certain areas have still not been looked at properly.

We believe a mistake was made by the applicant when calculating parking spaces for the Leisure Centre; it would appear that no allowance has been made for the changing rooms and toilets. It is also not clear whether the leisure facilities will be available to non-hotel guests; this would affect any diversity calculations.

Dining terraces - we calculate there is a need under the Suffolk Regulations for 20 spaces, based on one space for every 5sqm (some wedding guests would obviously be staying in the hotel, so this number could perhaps be reduced slightly).

From the above we would calculate the car parking requirements under the current SCC legislation to be 174 spaces rather than the 102 proposed.

There is no provision for 'green transport' as defined in SCC guidelines, ie electric charging points.

Unless the number of parking spaces is adequate, we are concerned that it would lead to guests parking on grass verges or in Old Orchard. Currently, the car park appears to be full at weekends.

Material Consideration 7: Light Pollution

The Parish Council is concerned about light pollution and the effect it would have on a considerable part of the Brett Valley. Government Policy stipulates the requirement to ensure that artificial light does not cause annoyance to people or adversely impact the natural environment. We were pleased to see that more information has been provided now. The proposed modern lighting units release minimum light upwards and are situated flush with the ground. However, the light provided by these units, whilst efficient, is also bright. The latest plans are for the new extension only; the present lighting is to be retained, as it is already covered within existing planning permits. However, there have already been complaints about this area of illumination, which should also be considered at this time.

Material Consideration 8: Impact on Amenities

It is an important consideration that the local amenities are not adversely impacted by the development proposals. If Babergh approves this application, then due consideration should be given to ensuring that the local sewage infrastructure is adequate.

CONCLUSION

The Parish Council would like to emphasise that many parishioners welcomed the original refurbishment of the Marquis and are happy with the site as it is now, an asset to the village. We note that several of our concerns regarding the application submitted in April 2020 have been addressed; however, there remain several areas of concern, as listed below and explored further in this submission.

- **Size** – despite being classified as an extension, the size of the proposed development is 1.5 times larger than the existing site
- **Design** – the proposed development is not appropriate to the village location
- **Noise**
- **Landscaping maintenance**
- **Speeding**
- **Parking**
- **Lighting**

Layham Parish Council therefore continues to object to the planning application, on the basis that the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

CALCULATIONS OF SIZE

We believe the issue is more about how the proposed new development would fit with the existing street scene, rather than all about calculations. However, we would make the following observations:

The current floor area is 882sqm, as stated in the current submission. However, our own investigations lead us to question this.

Referring to combined floor level, the increase from the existing premises is 150% (882sqm to 2220sqm).

If the total footprint is taken as a measure of size, the area has increased by 104% (507sqm to 1098sqm).

Compared to the original size of the building, prior to 2014, we believe that the new premises will be 413% larger (432sqm to 2220sqm combined floor area).