

From: [REDACTED]
To: A303SparkfordtoIlchester@pins.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: Response from The Red Lion Inn for A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme (TR010036)
Date: 06 March 2019 10:08:57
Attachments: [Red Lion Babcary TR010036 Response.pdf](#)

Dear Planning Inspectorate case team,

Please find below The Red Lion Babcarys response as promised. Can you please confirm receipt.

I have also attached a PDF copy.

Many thanks and kind regards

Clare & Charles Garrard

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme (TR010036) Response to Examining Authority's Written Questions by Mrs and Mrs Garrard

In addition to answering the questions set to us by the Examining Authority, we would like to set out the history of our ownership and investment in The Red Lion Inn, Babcary, its value to the local economy and our understanding of why the proposed scheme is an odds with national economic objectives and planning policy in relation to the proposed impacts the scheme will have upon the viability of this rural business.

Investment History

The pub was purchased in December 2002 and fully refurbished with the addition of a fifty seater restaurant at a cost of £475,000. It was reopened in April 2003. Since then, we have continued to invest in the business to make it relevant to customer demands. In December 2011 the barn/den was constructed at a cost of £375,000 to provide accommodation and in May 2012, functions began to be held from the Red Lion Inn.

Takings prior to 2012 were approximately £250,000 less than they are now. We operate to an annual average occupancy level of 67%.

In addition to being a public house, restaurant, accommodation and function venue, the Red Lion Inn is a community resource. Not only do we employ twenty five people locally but our restaurant produce is sourced locally, for example all our breads come from the Bakery on the A303 and therefore we support additional local businesses. Each Christmas we hold a Farmers Market and Craft Fair which showcases local produce and crafts, all these small businesses are located within several miles of Babcary. We also run charitable events for local causes, such as a local homeless charity and the restaurant and public house helps to support holiday lets within the village. We are very much part of the community and we strive to be mutually supportive of other local businesses.

National Perspective on the Rural Economy

At every level the Government seems to support rural business, there are funding regimes and grants being offered to support community facilities and generally village life from the national level, Local Economic Partnership level and locally.

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. To achieve that sustainable development the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental. These are to be pursued in a mutually exclusive way. The economic objective is to help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The social objective, to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The environmental, to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural built and historic environment.

The NPPF seeks planning decisions to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas including tourism and leisure developments. The retention of accessible local services and community facilities is a planning objective, and the retention of rural public houses is specifically mentioned in paragraph 83.

The NPPF also promotes healthy and safe communities, places which promote social interaction. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to plan positively to provide facilities, including public houses that enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments and ensure that established facilities are retained for the benefit of the community (paragraph 92).

Local Planning Policy

The adopted South Somerset Local Plan recognises the contribution of tourism facilities and accommodation to the local economy. Local Plan Policy EP8 allows development that sustains the vitality and viability of tourism in the District.

Public houses are recognised as playing a vital role in local life and the loss of them is resisted on the basis that it would be a real loss to the community and Local Plan Policy EP15 seeks to prevent the loss of community facilities.

Case for the Scheme

The applicant sets out the case for the scheme at Examination Document 7.1 Case for the Scheme. Cited amongst this are numerous economic benefits, it appears totally contradictory to the “real” situation where local businesses will be adversely affected by the proposed scheme.

The Proposed Scheme Design

In the context of the policy guidance set out above, and the applicant’s case for the scheme, we believe that the design and layout of the proposed A303 does not achieve these objectives. The less direct route achieves the contrary in that it reduces the accessibility of the Red Lion Inn to the A303 and undermines the overall business viability which we have worked so hard to achieve.

The margins for viability are small. Increases in minimum wage, increases in VAT and a lack of rate relief all impact on the businesses. The viability of public

houses is continuously in the news, with 18 closing a week in Britain and the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) citing that Greater London and the South West of England being the hardest hit by closures, it feels to us that this scheme does little

Concerns and Issues for Consideration

We engaged with the applicant early on and set out our concerns, yet it feels like those concerns have not been given sufficient consideration. It is not explained why the access to Steart Lane that we proposed is not acceptable. The uncertainty that the proposed scheme

Examining Authorities Questions

These questions were set for Deadline 2 but were requested again at the Open Floor Hearing on the 27th February 2019.

- **Explain why the village of Babcary would be cut off from the south side of the A303 given the Steart Hill overbridge appears to provide access to Steart Hill.**

The proposed scheme layout does not “cut off” the village of Babcary from the south side of the A303, for as noted by the Examining Authority there is an overbridge to Steart Hill, the proposed scheme layout adds an additional 2.2 miles (or an 8 minute journey time) for anyone travelling from the east to the west along the A303.

This additional journey time and less direct access will have a negative impact upon the viability of the Red Lion Inn, especially as the existing signage which is currently sited on the A303 will be removed and there is no intention to replace like-for-like signage anywhere along the proposed route.

- **Set out, with evidence, what proportion of your trade comes from drivers using the A303.**

It is very difficult for an exact figure to be provided to the Examining Authority. We know that a large number of people who stay at the Red Lion Inn access us by turning right directly off the A303 and travelling along Steart Lane, and the only evidence we have of this is the comments made regarding the ease of access via the A303 (please see appended list of comments which go up to mid-2018, additional information can be obtained in necessary). We also know that this applies to local businesses and the summer lunch trade.

We can assure the Examining Authority that since the signs directly on the existing A303 were erected in 2012, lunch and function trade has considerably improved in the summer months.

- **Explain why you consider the scheme will adversely impact your business.**

The proposed scheme layout adds an additional 2.2 miles (or an 8 minute journey time) for anyone travelling from the east to the west along the A303. This additional journey time and less direct access will have a negative impact upon the

viability of the Red Lion Inn, especially as the existing signage which is currently sited on the A303 will be removed and there is no intention to replace like-for-like signage anywhere along the proposed route.

After reviewing the local route maps and using my sixteen years' experience of trading at the Red Lion Inn, is not unrealistic to assume that somewhere in the region of £75,000 could be lost to the business annually without this direct access.

Summary

We would like the Examining Authority to consider an alternative route to Steart Lane from the A303, and would like a clear understanding as to why this is not possible, as the future of our business could be in serious jeopardy. If this is not within the gift of the Examining Authority we would like the applicant to be required to replace the signage, and add additional signage along the route of the proposed A303 to ensure that potential customers are clear how to get to the Red Lion Inn at Babcary.

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