

Harbour Inn, Church Street (Mr Tim Jones) **12/1173/FUL** – to allow works to improve and expand the dining area and toilets incorporating an installation of a new external fire escape to first floor trade area  
**AMENDMENT**

Harbour Inn, Church Street (Mr Tim Jones) **12/1174/LBC** – Installation of a new external fire escape staircase and internal alterations **AMENDMENT**

**Axmouth Parish Council would like to register its objection to the above planning applications and would like to formally request that the applications be referred to the Development Management Committee for consideration. The Council considers that the applications are sufficiently contentious to warrant this course of action for the following reasons:**

- (i) The proposals will turn the existing public house into a restaurant with a bar – this is effectively change of use.**
- (ii) The proposals threaten the conservation of this Grade 2 listed building of exceptional historic special interest.**
- (iii) The proposals will have an adverse impact on the local environs in terms of increased parking and traffic flow.**

**The Council feels strongly that EDDC is not in a position to consider the applications without a formal DCC Highways assessment of the implications of the applications on traffic flow and parking in the village.**

**The Council is also concerned that the published plans are inconsistent and that up to date plans have not been publicly available for comment for the duration of the consultation period. If the plans are the same for both applications then the amended plans should be available through a search of 12/1174/LBC and 12/1173/FUL. Also, amended plans emailed to the Parish Clerk differ to those on the planning online system. A local resident has also contacted the Council to express concern that he has been unable to lodge a comment within the consultation deadline using the EDDC planning online facility. This is all very unsatisfactory.**

**The Council wishes to highlight the following points as part of its formal objection to the applications:**

- 1. The Council feels strongly that the original features and the existing timbers, fixtures and artefacts should be preserved to protect the unique character of this ancient inn. Proposals to ‘reinvigorate’ the existing bar area (Note 6) pose a grave risk to the building, especially the grit-blasting of timber beams and**

other wood. The Council requests that a condition be placed on any consent to prevent a conservation disaster. Any work on the timbers should be by hand and involve natural materials such as beeswax, otherwise the timber will be damaged and centuries of patina (and thus character) destroyed. The Council also requests that a condition be issued stating that existing artefacts be retained in the building. The 'bookcase' in the lobby bar is inappropriate. The character of this inn, as its name suggests, rests in ships and the sea, and, to a lesser extent, agriculture. Its existing pictures and artefacts are testimony to this heritage.

2. The Council is pleased to note that the damage to the old rear external wall (not internal as stated in the document) with a 4m opening for the bar will not now go ahead. However, the now proposed (Note 10) wider opening to allow access transit between the dining and bar areas will have the same effect of destroying the historic structure of the building. The doorways and cross-passage – a layout typical of Devon buildings – will be diminished. And consequently the intimacy of the inn's small cosy rooms will be lost.
3. The designers have recognised that a bar is an important asset to a community and have now suggested a dedicated area for local patrons. The Council is concerned that this area will in fact be a gloomy, poorly ventilated and poorly illuminated transit area to the toilets and entrance/exit. Effectively there will be no public bar available in keeping with this historic inn. The draw of the Harbour Inn is the great fireplace in which a log fire burns all winter. This area will now become part of the dining area, and it is difficult to imagine a fire so close to the diners. Without a fire for local drinkers, the pub loses its character and welcome. This pub is much loved in winter precisely for its cosy ambiance in which to gather.
4. In relation to the materials proposed for the lobby area, the Council requests that conditions are needed to control the specifications for the new flooring and timber partitions. EDDC could require full details of materials and designs to be submitted before approving the application in order to ensure that they are sympathetic to a building of this heritage value.
5. The Council continues to object to this application on the grounds that access under Disability legislation is compromised by steps (Note 2). If the Function Room is not used at this time, it does not mean that this once well-used skittle alley, private party, and concert venue will not be used in the future. Allowing these steps will mean the loss of a community facility.

6. No provision has been made for the extra car parking space that this expanded restaurant (doubling of the size) would create. At present, the current parking space for the inn soon becomes full and patrons use the private car park of the Village Hall without permission causing problems for use of the Hall. There is already congestion in the village whose through road, Church Street is narrow and also home to another busy pub, The Ship Inn. Furthermore, the village is continuing to struggle to absorb the extra traffic that Tesco has generated. The recent traffic surveys support this fact. Road side parking exacerbates this problem. The Council requests that a Highways assessment is carried out in conjunction with this application. Essentially, the existing parking capacity should dictate the number of tables available in the restaurant.

**Additional points:**

At one point in the documentation the pub is named the Ship Inn – this is a different pub in Axmouth.

Axmouth's Parish Plan (2011) included the aim of protecting the distinctive historic buildings of the village. In relation to the Harbour Inn, some of that historic character is social – the local gathering place for a drink or to play skittles. This would be lost by being squeezed into the anonymous and gloomy new bar area.

A second aim in the parish plan would be jeopardised, that of enabling the parish to benefit from sustainable tourism. Many walkers, birdwatchers, and cyclists stop for a pint and snack at the Harbour Inn. It will lose its country appeal if the changes go ahead in the form proposed, and many visitors on modest budgets will be deterred from entering what in effect a restaurant.