



The George
Wickham Market's Community Pub



George Community Pub News Update

Planning permission – A day to remember!

On the 29th June 2021 East Suffolk Council unanimously granted planning permission for the restoration of The George Community Pub, Wickham Market

The George Management Committee (GMC) have been working on this project for the past 6 years and regard planning permission as a significant milestone towards the reopening of this historic pub which has been part of the fabric of our community for over 500 years.

There is still a way to go but we take the opportunity to thank all our shareholders, pledge makers and friends for their ongoing support. Our thanks also go to Purcell Architects and the many consultants involved in the design and specification for this renovation of a Grade II listed building in the centre of a conservation area.

Most importantly special thanks go to all the grant givers and in particular our mentor and major grant funder the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Without lottery players across the UK this sort of project would not be possible.

What will the George Pub be like?

The GMC has been staggered and impressed by the goodwill and interest shown in the future of The George but inevitably there has been a few comments from a handful of objectors that are not accurate or helpful.

We would like to clarify The George will not be a 'Gastro Pub' as claimed by some. It will be a typical village pub with draught beer on tap and a food offering that will be acceptable to the tastes and pockets of Wickham Market residents. The fully serviced upstairs rooms will be flexible and used for activities and events and the ongoing wellbeing of the village. Wickham Market has nothing comparable and The George will offer somewhere new, inclusive and accessible to its diverse community, complementing our already excellent facilities.

What is a 'Community' Pub?

Following a great deal of support from the community to do something about the unsightly derelict building that dominates our High Street a Community Benefit Society was formed to allow individuals in the community to have a democratic stake in a key village enterprise. The George Community Pub was created and when open will engage in village activities with a view to reinvesting any affordable surplus back into the community.

Shareholders of The George will be responsible for the election of the George Management Committee who are volunteers holding office on a rotation basis. The GMC will be responsible for managing the Society's finances and assets as well as giving support to the Pub Manager to ensure a viable and successful enterprise. There are currently 119 community pubs across the UK and none have failed.

Consultation

The submitted plans reflect the many consultations that have taken place in the village. Throughout the process the GMC have acted to make changes to meet the needs of the community and close neighbours. Where possible all issues and concerns regarding the designs have been incorporated into the Planning Application even at further cost to the project.

Consultation will be ongoing and a user group will be set up over the next few months that will allow more people in the community to input their views. The GMC are determined to ensure that we achieve a George Pub with which the greatest majority of Wickham residents will be pleased and proud.

Environmental awareness

The aim is to make the George a highly efficient and environmentally friendly destination with additional landscaping and installation of bird and bat boxes. We are also encouraging people to walk or cycle. Most of the 2,300+ villagers live within easy walking distance and there will be bike racks available. There are ample existing village parking resources if travelling by car from further afield.

Next Steps

The National Heritage Lottery Fund awards grants in two phases. The first is the development phase which is given to help fund the architects and the many specialist consultants that have created the building specification. We have already received and applied this grant to the project.

In August we will be applying for the second phase delivery grant for the building works. The funds have been earmarked by the Heritage fund but they won't be released until we meet their outcome requirements including evidence of our financial contribution. It is therefore crucial that we continue to raise funds with further pledges or donations. We have prepared our Heritage Fund application for August submission and will hear the result in November / December 2021 after which detailed designs will start to be developed.

Construction works will start late 2022 with Pub doors open for business late 2023.

Finally, to rescue this important Grade II listed building from dereliction and possible demolition will be an incredible success story for Wickham Market. A restored George Community Pub will unlock many economic and social opportunities for the whole community in the wake of Covid-19.

