



Colton Parish Council

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The following is a record of a **Public Meeting** concerning The Manor House pub, Oxen Park, held on Monday 27th February 2017 at 7p.m. in Rusland Reading Rooms.

Present: Cllr Colin Barr (Colton Parish Council and Chair), Cllr David Hoyle, Cllr Ken Dean, Cllr John Watson, Mandy Lane (Acting Clerk, taking notes) and 31 members of the public.

1. Welcome

Cllr Colin Barr welcomed everyone and summarised the background to the meeting: The Manor House pub in Oxen Park had been closed and had been put up for sale by Robinsons Brewery. Concern had been expressed that this community facility might be lost; the Parish Council had therefore held this Public Meeting to canvas community opinion.

2. Apologies

Colton Parish Councillors: Vanessa Champion, John Milburn, Walter Oates (and Karen Birch, clerk).
Also: Mike Farnworth, Nigel Grunshaw, Sara Grunshaw, Angus Adams, Helen Adams, Katie Stephens, Sarah Emslie, Christine Jackson, David Jackson, Richard Dobson, Giles Wingate-Saul.

3. Purpose of the Meeting

Cllr Barr explained the purpose of the meeting: To share information, to discover community views, opinions and ideas, to gauge the level of support for the Manor House as a continuing facility and to agree any next steps.

4. Sharing of Information

The following key information was provided:

- The Manor House pub had been closed and had been put up for sale with a guide price of £220K, and advertised as a 'Class A4 Drinking Establishment'.
- Cllr Barr had spoken to the LDNPA Planning Department who confirmed that a 'change of use' application would be required for the building to be used for any other purpose, and that the applicant would have to prove that there was no other community use for the building.
- The Parish Council was in the process of applying for 'Asset of Community Value' status (Localism Act 2011) for various community facilities and had recently submitted an application for The Manor House. Cllr Hoyle explained the ACV registration process: Parish Councils could nominate an 'asset' to the District Council, which then determined whether it could be formally listed. Registration would enable a community to express an interest in purchase, and to then to be given a 6 month moratorium on the sale, during which to raise the necessary funds. Vendors were not obliged to sell to the community.
- Mr Rick Emslie explained that he had been in contact with Robinsons Brewery and had formed a small informal group to talk about possibilities for the future of The Manor.
- The condition of the building was a concern: the roof was leaking in places and some ceilings had come down. The general facilities (kitchen, bedrooms etc.) were in a poor condition and in need of upgrading.

5. Expectations and Aspirations

- By a show of hands, there was overwhelming support for the Manor House to be retained as facility which included a pub, at least in part: it was a key community facility that should not be lost.
- Other facilities (e.g. the cinema) and businesses (e.g. campsites) in the area benefitted from there being a place to get a drink and a meal within walking distance.

- The interaction of the pub and the Oxen Park Reading Room was discussed: was there any conflict here? Mrs Gill McKinnon (Chair, Oxen Park Reading Room) felt there was no conflict: they had different roles and if anything would support each other.
- It was acknowledged that the traditional model of a pub that depended only on local trade was not viable these days, particularly in rural areas. This was particularly true for The Manor House, being located in a small hamlet which could never sustain a pub on its own. It was necessary to diversify and draw in trade from further afield and from tourism as a destination. There were opportunities for doing this, for example through being on a main tourist route to Grizedale Forest as well as being located within a National Park.
- Possible scenarios for the future of The Manor House were aired:
 - A 3rd party buys The Manor and develops it as described above, ie. a pub and eating place for the local community, but also into a desirable destination.
 - The community buys The Manor and runs it as described above, possibly with other facilities as a community 'hub'. There were examples of successful community-run pubs in Cumbria and Northumbria in small communities which were being run as viable commercial businesses.
 - That a 3rd party buys The Manor and develops it into some other use (supposing a change of use was permitted), for example a hotel, housing, industrial unit (not desirable and unlikely).
 - A small consortium buys The Manor on a private basis and converts it into a restaurant, pub, guesthouse.
 - That the community works with a local developer to build 2-3 affordable and/or local occupancy housing units together with a pub/café/restaurant; this would be dependent on change of use being permitted.
- Cllr Fletcher advised that the community should continue to press for the Manor to be listed as an ACV. Even if this were not successful, it was be very clear that the community wished it to remain as an asset and facility. He offered his support as the local District Councillor.

6. Next Steps

It was agreed that Mr Emslie and the local group of interested parties should be encouraged to conduct a feasibility study to determine some commercially viable options for the future of The Manor House.

Those present at the meeting would be kept informed of developments by email, and a further meeting would be called if necessary.

Cllr Barr thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.