

Elston Community Pub

More than a Pub – A Community Hub



Notes of the public meeting held on the 18th January 2018 in Elston Village Hall

There was an amazing turnout for this meeting, estimated at 140 from Elston and the surrounding area. The meeting started at 7:15pm and was chaired by David Pearson. The agenda was as follows:

1. Welcome and Introductions

David Pearson called the meeting to order.

David introduced the following groups and people:

- Steering Group formed to challenge the planning application for change of use and find options for re-opening the pub.

Jon Harris, Jim Sweeting, Charles Johnstone, David Pearson, Matt Dyer, Sue Dyer, Linda Fitzgerald, Sandra Wright, Faye Hemingway and Ann Sankey.

- Elston Community Pub Ltd. Management Committee consisting of 5 volunteer members of the Steering Group who have agreed to be the first members of the legally recognised Management Committee.

David Pearson, Jim Sweeting, Jon Harris, Ann Sankey and Linda Fitzgerald (secretary).

- Gordon Stewart from the Plunkett Foundation

2. Update on current position

Jim Sweeting gave presentation, taking simple questions as they arise but deferring others till later.

Where have we come from?

- The Chequers closed on New Year's Eve 2016
- The owners applied for change of use to a private residence in November 2016
- A public meeting was organised and volunteers from that meeting created a steering group
- A questionnaire was produced
- Elston Parish Council applied for and was granted an Asset of Community Value order on the pub 7th Feb 2017
- Planning application withdrawn Nov 2017
- Formal notification to sell the Chequers received Dec 6th 2017

What are we doing now?

- Support and some bursary funding has been obtained from the Plunkett Foundation
- A Community Benefit Society is in process of being set up
- A fundraising campaign will start shortly
- The Chequers is being valued by a specialist on 23rd January

Where are we going?

- If Elston Community Pub Ltd raises enough funding, we will enter into negotiations to buy the pub
- As this is a community venture, the Chequers will be owned by the community for the benefit of the local community, and its long term future will be safeguarded
- The aim is to make the Chequers a successful and sustainable business, once again providing a welcoming and enjoyable venue and social heart for our community

The Risks

- Even with an ACV, the owners are not obliged to lower their asking price or even sell it to us
- The pub can be sold to any buyer after the 6 month moratorium period
- The pub might be sold to a property speculator
- We might not raise enough funds to buy the pub
- **With your support we can save The Chequers - So let's have your ideas**

More than a Pub - A Community Hub

Give us your ideas about what you would like to include

- What about having a café venue open during the day - a place to drop in and have a natter with friends?
- A separate games room area for young people to hang out
- A safe area for children to play outside
- A quiet area for reading, business meetings
- There is still a skittle alley!
- Help us make the vision a reality!

The Vision

Enter (and win!) Community Pub of the Year 2019

- Good Food
- Good Beer (and wine, and gin....)
- Warm, welcoming atmosphere
- Live music (occasionally)
- Family friendly– provision for children to be safe and occupied without the need for them to be running through the pub

- Café by day with good wi-fi, coffee and cake
- Appeal to cyclists, particularly for Sunday morning breakfast
- + much more – **a pub and social hub for all**

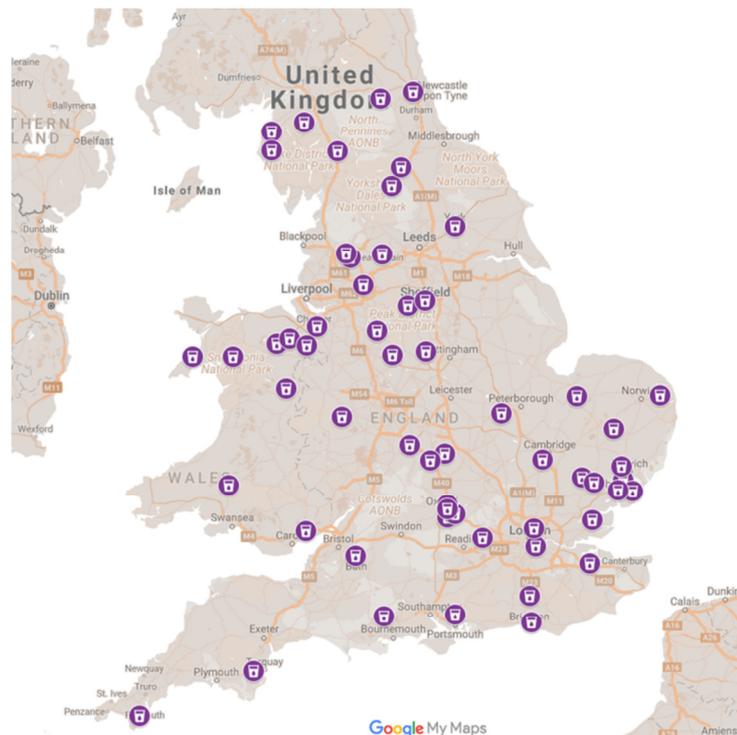
What can I do?

- Help raise finances - by buying community shares, giving donations, fundraising
- Spread the word about what we want to do
- Give us your ideas- about what the pub should offer- and how it can be done
- Keep in touch via the website www.elstoncommunity.co.uk, Facebook or Twitter
- Let us know if you want to help in practical ways
- Use the pub and other facilities when it opens!

3. Plunkett Foundation presentation

Gordon Stewart gave a presentation outlining the support and advice from the Plunkett Foundation give on co-operatively owned pubs, owned by the community, for the community.

As of January 2018, there are 58 co-operative pubs open and trading that have benefitted from support from the Plunkett Foundation: 100% success rate from start-up.



Plunkett advocate the co-operative approach. A co-operative pub is owned by a large number of people from within the community - typically around 200 to 300 people. Pubs saved in this way are governed democratically on the basis that each member gets one vote, regardless of how much money they invest.

This co-operative business model has been used to create a Community Benefit Society specifically for the community of Elston and surrounding villages. This society is called Elston Community Pub Ltd, and will be managed by a Management Committee. Elston Community Pub Ltd will be regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, will be able to raise funds to purchase The Chequers, mainly through the issue of Community Shares, as well as apply for grants and loans. As a co-operative business it will be able to negotiate the purchase of the pub, and thereafter run the business on behalf of the shareholders.

It is proposed that the share price is fifty pounds (£50) with a minimum investment of two hundred and fifty pounds (£250). There is a legal maximum amount individuals can invest: one hundred thousand pounds (£100,000). The business will operate strictly on a one member, one vote basis, regardless of how many shares you hold.

Investors will have a vote on motions and officer elections at General Meetings (typically annual), but it is the intention that Management Committee will oversee the day-to-day running of the business.

The shares will not pay dividends but you may be able to recoup your initial investment in the future by selling your shares back to the Company. To give the business a chance to establish itself, there will be an initial period during which time the buying back of shares will be restricted; this is still to be determined.

It was made clear that shares in the Company should be viewed as a social investment in our local community rather than a financial investment.

There could be some financial benefits from shares such as tax relief and the share prospectus will outline these. Investors should seek independent advice on this matter.

The CBS model allows for interest to be paid on shares to a limit of five percent (5%). This is at the discretion of the Management Committee, based on the performance and needs of the business, and would have to come from business profits and available cash generated.

The two options for running the pub are either:

- A manager employed by Elston Community Pub Ltd., managed by the Management Committee.
- A tenant, secured on a lease.

It has yet to be determined which route represents the best option for the business and the community.

For more information, please visit the Plunkett Foundation website:

<https://www.plunkett.co.uk/co-operative-pubs>

4. Q & A

David Pearson facilitated the Q & A session.

There are a lot of questions that still need answering and these will be addressed in due course. The Steering Group is working to determine the best and most viable options for initial purchase and also the on-going management of the business.

Below is a brief summary of questions asked from the floor and the answer provided. These are paraphrased rather than actual verbatim.

Q. Will the pub be food-led or wet-led?

A. The general consensus is that food will be supplied, but this may be on a limited menu basis initially to test the market

Q. How can we create more car parking?

A. The site is what it is and we don't have any meaningful options regarding this

Q. What is the financial benefit of investing in the shares in the pub?

A. It was made clear that shares not be viewed as a financial investment.

Any investment should be regarded as an investment in the community rather than a business venture.

There may be a benefit to individuals in terms of tax relief on shares.

There is the possibility of interest paid on shares to a limit of five percent (5%). This is at the discretion of the Management Committee and would have to come from business profits and available cash generated.

Q. What if an outside buyer came along, would we step aside?

A. Not necessarily: it would depend on the potential purchaser and their view on a village pub.

A community purchase would secure the pub for the community and all its needs.

An outside buyer may not have the same views and we run the risk of being in the position we find ourselves at present, should a new owner fail.

Q. What happens if we don't raise enough money?

A. There are other funding options – grants or loans – but fundamentally, we need to raise the funds from the community.

Q. Do the current owners have to sell it to us?

A. No. They are not obliged to sell to the community, though the Asset of Community Value (ACV) on the property means they are not allowed to sell to another buyer within the six month moratorium period: expires 5th June 2018.

Q. What happens if we cannot agree a price?

A. We have arranged for an independent valuation (Tuesday 23rd January) and will be guided by this figure.

The Steering Group discussed this and agreed that we will not purchase "at any price".

Q. What is for sale? Pub? Brewery?

A. The entire property is for sale. The brewing equipment is excluded from the sale.

5. Closing remarks and actions

- Closing calls to action from David Pearson
- Keep up to date on social media & website
- Complete Questionnaire and encourage others to do so
- Suggestions / comments / memories / volunteers to help, etc - to go on boards
- Vote of thanks for those who run the Hub – keeping the pub spirit alive

6. Networking

People stayed after the meeting closed to chat and discuss matters

MOVING FORWARD →

There will be a questionnaire distributed for the community to have a say on what it wants from a Co-Operative Pub in Elston. A summary of the results will be used by the Steering Group in order to evidence the needs of the community, and demonstrate the level of support for the project. This data is vital for funding applications.

The questionnaire can also be downloaded from the website <http://elstoncommunity.co.uk/downloads/>

If you would like to get involved, please contact one of the Steering Group, or send a message at the Contact tab on the website. <http://elstoncommunity.co.uk/contact/>

Stay up to date at:

Facebook group: Save The Chequers, Elston

Twitter: @savethechequers

Website: www.elstoncommunity.co.uk