

The Dun Horse as an Asset of Community Value

"The decision made on your application does not prevent you from applying again, but you would need to demonstrate further in your application how the Dun Horse could potentially be used as a community asset going forward."



Note: the opinions expressed herein are my own and are not necessarily shared by any or all of those currently working to save the Dun Horse.

Community uses

Background

HDC were happy to register the Dun Horse as an Asset of Community Value when the North Sussex branch of CAMRA applied for ACV status in 2015. This is the information regarding the community use of the pub that was supplied to CAMRA at the time:

"...It is the only pub in the village. The nearest alternative pub would be the Hornbrook a mile or so away. The Mannings Heath hotel (which is actually marginally in Lower Beeding) has never really been used much as a hotel bar and it has recently been taken over, and it seems it will just be a wedding venue in the future. In any case it is a fair walk from the centre of the village with much of it being windy country lanes with no pavements. There is also a bar at the MH Golf Club on the outskirts of the village but this is also a fair walk from the centre of the village, again along roads with no pavements.

I know that there was a bar billiards team before the recent temporary closure and there also used to be a darts team but I'm not sure that still exists. They advertise music on a fairly regular basis and there was a pub quiz which I think will be restored once the future is more certain. The Nuthurst cricket team also used to use it on a regular basis before the recent issues. I will try and find out what else there may be – I think the recent upheavals at the pub may have had a negative impact on such activities."

The Plunkett Foundation has made the general case for the community value of pubs as part of its 'More than a Pub' initiative:

"Community pubs are thriving where private enterprise has failed; almost a quarter of privately-owned pubs have shut down since 2008 (Office of National Statistics, 2018), but community pubs have a 100% success rate (Community Pubs Better Business Report, 2018). Community pubs also play a vital role in reducing loneliness and social isolation, providing a range of community focused activities and services, as well as being a community space for all."

Plunkett Foundation case studies

Craufurd Arms Maidenhead:

Social impact

The Society believes the business is making a big impact and helps to:

- Improve people's health and wellbeing
- Reduce social isolation
- Provide better access to basic services
- Support greater community cohesion
- Engender community pride and empowerment

As well as morning drop-ins, a local autism group holds regular coffee mornings and social evenings at the pub for parents and carers of autistic children and young adults. The 'Maidenhead Memories' group have also held their first meeting at The Craufurd Arms and are planning to meet on the first Wednesday of every month. This group helps to bring together any isolated members of the community. The café and drop-in sessions have extended the service provided by the pub outside of traditional trading hours, offering not only a wider range of drinks and snacks, but also the opportunity for increased social interaction and community engagement. As well as enhancing the social side of the business, additional work opportunities have also been created through employment, work experience and volunteering.



In addition to its role as a village pub, The New Inn has a café and there are plans to open a local shop (linked to a nearby village store) in summer 2018. The pub also intends to offer a number of other facilities to local residents, the wider rural community, and visitors of all ages. The village has a number of elderly people and poor public transport so the creation of a local shop means those residents will be able to buy essential everyday items locally or even order. Other services will be available in due course – for example: a parcel drop off facility and a laundry and dry cleaning service. In the future the shop may also be able offer customers a range of home-made take-away meals.

34% of the village is over 60, with many young people under 18, and although Norton Lindsey is a relatively wealthy village, social exclusion is a risk for this community with its rural isolation. The pub encapsulates the meaning of community and it offers more than just food and drink – it is a vital social hub for everyone in the village.

Specific case study

The Abingdon Arms, Beckley

Direct contact has been made with a community pub in Oxfordshire to gain direct, first-hand, information about how a community pub can make a real difference. An example schedule of community events is included as an appendix to this document. One of the key members of the team that rescued this pub summed up some of the community benefits as follows:

"The community coffee mornings, afternoon teas, lunches and walks attract relatively few (6 to 15 say) people, but most are of our 'target' population which we work actively to engage - eg elderly, isolated, infirm. Other events, eg the talks, music, themed suppers bring in more - for example, 40ish at last weekend's talk about JRR Tolkein and 60ish at last night's jazz"

Note that the local population for Beckley is only about 600, so about half of that of Mannings Heath. If the pub could help 12 -30 elderly, isolated and infirm people in our community, this would be a significant and important achievement.

Rejected ACV - community section

This is the section from the most recent ACV application concerning community uses of the Dun Horse:

The Dun Horse Inn has been the only resource for meals out with drinks and socialising in the main village of Mannings Heath for hundreds of years and has served as a meeting place for residents and those of Monks Gate, as well as those travelling along the A281 or wishing to come a short distance out of Horsham for lunch or a pint of local ale.

The pub used to have a high utilisation for social events that included on a regular and ad-hoc basis:

- Musical evenings
- Dancing, including performances by local Morris groups
- Meeting place across generations for young adults and older and potentially vulnerable residents
- Children's parties
- Local societies and organisations for meetings and Wine Tastings
- Walking groups
- Family parties and meals
- Wedding receptions
- Local society meetings
- Respite for busy/stressed parents/carers
- Participation in the Chatty Café scheme
- Local beer, wine and produce promotion
- Fundraising events for charity
- Pizza or fish and chip nights

Previous licensees also held regular events that were well supported:

- Murder mystery evenings
- Quiz nights
- Book Club
- Special celebratory meals or drinks at Easter, Xmas and Midsummer
- Theatre evenings
- Darts league matches
- Bar Billiards league matches
- After match meeting place for Nuthurst Cricket Club who play home matches on Mannings Heath village green.

These events provide an opportunity for members of the rural community to keep in touch and communicate with relatives, friends and neighbours. CAMRA commissioned research from Oxford University which found that people who have a local pub are happier, have more friends and feel more engaged with their local communities. The Dun Horse Inn helped provide space for local people to meet, tackle loneliness, and strengthen the local community, particularly supporting mental health and the vulnerability of children and young people, the disabled and the elderly. The community action group of residents plan to look at enhancing these previous activities with business networking groups, shared parental learning support, a library corner and by engaging local volunteers and apprentices in the staffing arrangements.

The successful campaign to change attitudes to drink/driving over the last twenty years has meant the importance of a village pub within walking distance has become even greater. Mannings Heath and the nearby hamlet of Monks Gate contain the majority of the residents of Nuthurst Parish for whom the Dun Horse Inn is the only pub within a reasonable and safe walking distance. There have also already been a significant number of pub closures nearby along the line of the A281 from the Queen's Head in Horsham (undergoing redevelopment), the Tanner's Arms (undergoing redevelopment), the St Leonard's Inn (now a Tesco Express) through to the Coach House Inn in Cowfold (now a Co-op retail store), The Dun Horse Inn is the last remaining asset of its type in the Mannings Heath/Monks Gate community; its change of use to small flats and potential sale would be a huge loss. Local residents have been looking forward to its re-opening; now they know it is under threat, they are prepared to make that happen themselves.

Recent developments

Village Shop

Since the original ACV was successfully registered the Village Shop has been converted to a residence. This removes the only place other than the pub where village residents can meet up spontaneously for refreshments and a chat, thus making restoring the pub even more important than it was when the ACV was first registered.

Mental health

In recent months there has been an increased national focus on mental health and, in particular, the need to talk. Campaigns have been launched and supported by royalty, football and many others to stress the

need to avoid isolation. A vibrant pub, run by the community for the community, could make a very significant positive contribution in this area.

Additional evidence

- Attendances at new cricket pavilion coffee mornings – most recent attendance 50+
- Black Horse charity quiz night – attendances usually 50+ per week
- Cricket club keen for continued involvement with local pub
- Lack of age diversity in current community events. The right type of pub/hub could address age profiles that current events fail to.
- *UK pub sector expands for first time in 10 years - BBC News*. For the first time in 10 years more pubs opened than closed in 2019 suggesting the outlook for pubs is less bleak now than previously.

Conclusion

For the Dun Horse to be viable it would need to become a very different type of establishment to the one that closed several years ago. In particular, it would need the community to contribute to its rescue both financially and through extensive time and effort. In so doing, the community would establish a key stake in decisions as to how the pub is run. This would allow the pub to function as a social hub designed to serve a wide range of community needs, rather than just a misplaced town boozier. The case studies included give examples of how much other communities have benefitted from the successful struggle to save their pubs.

As discussed above, the need to fight social isolation has probably never been more evident and the right pub could play a key role in achieving this locally. Losing pubs in rural areas might seem to be of little immediate interest to some councils but could have a devastating affect on their social care budgets in years to come.

Viability report context

Quoted from the recent 'Review of the Viability Report on the Development of Dun Horse Inn...' by Bespoke Property Consultants.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Core Strategy for Horsham District Council

3.1.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in 2015 and policy 43 confirms the local approach to Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation.

3.1.2 Policy 43 confirms that

"1. The provision of new or improved community facilities or services will be supported, particularly where they meet the identified needs of local communities as indicated in the current Sport, Open Space and Recreation Study and other relevant studies, or contribute to the provision of Green Infrastructure.

2. In addition to supporting facilities or services located in accordance with the Development Hierarchy and Strategic Development locations, sites located outside built-up areas will be supported where this is the only practicable option and where a suitable site well-related to an existing settlement exists.

3. Proposals that would result in the loss of sites and premises currently or last used for the provision of community facilities or services, leisure or cultural activities for the community will be resisted unless equally usable facilities can be conveniently provided nearby. It will be necessary to demonstrate that continued use of a community facility or service is no longer feasible, taking into account factors such as; appropriate marketing, the demand for the use of the site or premises, its quality and usability, and the identification of a potential future occupier. Where it cannot be demonstrated that such a loss is surplus to requirements, a loss may be considered acceptable provided that:

- a. an alternative facility of equivalent or better quality and scale to meet community needs is available, or will be provided at an equally accessible location within the vicinity; or
- b. a significant enhancement to the nature and quality of an existing facility will result from the redevelopment for alternative uses on an appropriate proportion of the site.

This seems to indicate that Change of Use should only be granted if either point a) or b) above is satisfied. Is this the case and, if it is, do we have information from HDC as to their plans for achieving this should they decide to grant Change of Use?

Commentary on reasons for rejection

The Head of Housing and Community considered that the nomination form provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the land and building known as The Dun Horse Pun and Garden and shown edged red for identification purposes only on the attached plan ('the Property') Does not meet the statutory definition of an asset of community value pursuant to section 88(2) of the Localism Act 2011. The reasons for the decision are as follows:

Reason	Commentary
1. The property has not been used as a community facility/public house for over three year and is currently boarded up.	<i>This does not affect its future potential and is largely as a result of the HDC planning department's glacial rate of progress.</i>
2. The property would require significant investment to bring it back to community use.	<i>This does not affect the question of whether it is or isn't an Asset of Community Value.</i>
3. The pub garden has been sold with planning permission for residential dwelling.	<i>None of the likely community uses depend in any way on the use of a garden and anyway there is still a residual outdoor space that might be available to a re-opened pub.</i>
4. An application has been agreed for flats on the second floor and that an application is pending for change of use of the ground floor to residential accommodation.	<i>None of the likely community uses depend in any way on any interior area apart from the ground floor. The upper floor has not, in recent years, been available for public use and was run as B&B rooms, so the recent second floor (sic) application causes little change from the time when the ACV was granted.</i>
5. The property was previously an asset of community value but was removed from the list after it was sold. No community group expressed an interest in bidding to purchase the asset.	<p><i>This was because, since the pub was closed, it has consistently been marketed still as a pub. As long as there was an expectation that the council would abide by its duty to ensure that a purchaser acted in accordance with the planning permission granted, there seemed no immediate need to launch a community scheme to interfere.</i></p> <p><i>In fact, when the first purchasers of the pub after its closure floated the idea of replacing the pub, such was the pressure of local opinion expressed in a public consultation session outside the pub and in a subsequent questionnaire, that they changed their plans and applied for planning permission that included a refurbished ground floor pub.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the speed with which the community has acted once the pub was threatened with a change of use, and the response to the campaign, adequately demonstrates the interest of the local community in preserving the pub as an Asset of Community Value.</i></p>

Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society

The Abingdon Arms

'More than a Pub' programme - February 2020

February 2020			
Tuesday 4th	WOMEN OF BECKLEY LUNCH	12.30pm – first Tuesday of each month: Contact Sarah Smith for more information: beckleysarah@gmail.com	
Wednesday 5th	MEN OF BECKLEY LUNCH	12.30pm – first Wednesday of month: Contact Steve Smith for more information: barkbeetles@gmail.com	
Wednesday 5th	PUB QUIZ	7.30pm – first Wednesday of month: QuizMaster Peter Burt	
Friday 7th	COMMUNITY WALK	2.00pm from The Abingdon Arms: Chris White, Parish Path Warden, will lead a 2 hour walk checking on paths in the Noke, Beckley and Horton cum Studley parishes - come along and join him. For some walks we may meet at the pub, but then drive, sharing cars, to Noke or Horton – confirmation closer to the time: see www.bacbs.org or email Chris at cpcwhite@hotmail.com	
Sunday 9th	LITERARY TALK	6.45 for 7.00 - 8.30pm* <i>'Tolkien and the Origins of the Hobbit'</i> – Dr Mark Atherton, Lecturer in English, University of Oxford. So where did the Hobbit come from.....?	
Thursday 13th	COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING	10.00 – 11.30am Second Thursday of each month: <u>please note change of day</u> Coffee, cake. Come along, meet old friends, make new friends.	
Sunday 16th	JAZZ @theAA	6.30 - 8.30pm* - third Sunday of each month: <i>'The Latin Brew-Up'</i> : Pete Oxley (guitar), Keith Fairbairn (percussion), Frank Harrison (piano), Mark Hodgson (bass). Free entry, raffle. One of Oxford's most popular bands – expect Latin rhythms, creative riffs, lots of fun! <i>Email mike.jd.hobbs@gmail.com to reserve seats.</i>	
Wednesday 19th	HEALTHY COMMUNITY FAIR	11.00am - 4.00pm: a special event..... Healthy Community Fair , organised in conjunction with the University of Oxford's Dept of Primary Care Health Sciences. Being part of a community and engaging in social activities can be good for both our mental and physical health. Join us at the Abingdon Arms for a range of fun activities which may help you think about ways to improve your health and wellbeing, and that of your children. There will be activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a mindfulness session, • arts and crafts • museum object handling • a tap dancing lesson There will also be free refreshments.	
Friday 21st	COMMUNITY WALK	2.00pm from The Abingdon Arms: Chris White, Parish Path Warden, will lead a walk checking on paths in the Noke, Beckley and Horton cum Studley parishes - come along and join him. See entry for 7 th February.	
Wednesday 26th	COMMUNITY AFTERNOON TEA	4.00 - 5.30pm - last Wednesday of each month. Afternoon tea with family, friends, neighbours.... Tea, coffee, cake; and table games available too.	
Key -		More information at: www.bacbs.org/ The Abingdon Arms: 01865 655667 or www.theabingdonarms.co.uk/	
Food & Drink	Music	Talks, films	Activities
* = bar snacks available.			

