

KNEBORTH PARISH COUNCIL

VILLAGE SURVEY: THE STATION PUB

The Station public house is a prominent historic landmark in the centre of Knebworth. It closed in February 2017 and has been split into two sites. Planning consent has been granted to convert the garden area into apartments, with the building remaining as a pub.

THE STATION PUB IS UP FOR SALE THE PARISH COUNCIL WANTS TO TRY TO BUY IT

The Parish Council believes that having a working public house at The Station is an asset to our local community. Knebworth is a large village and is ear-marked for growth. A pub on this site provides more opportunity for our community to gather, socialise and entertain.

Why are we doing this now?

The current owner has put the pub building up for sale. We are currently in the middle of a six-month moratorium period where only community groups can attempt to purchase it and preserve it for the community. This includes the SOS PUB campaign and Parish Council.

We hope that this newsletter and survey helps you understand the situation and what we are looking to achieve. We need support from the Parish community to make a bid to secure its future.

Please return this form or do the online survey by Friday 7th June

What have we done already?

The Parish Council have set up a working party to consider the viability of making a bid. We have prepared a business plan and received some interest from potential tenants already.

Our initial plans indicate that this is a viable small business proposition, despite the loss of the garden. However this would not be viable for a large pub chain to be successful, as history has demonstrated.

The Parish Council and SOS PUB group are working together

The Parish Council and SOS PUB group have been working together to try and save The Station since its closure. We sought to protect it originally by listing it as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) and have representation in the SOS PUB group.

We have agreed that the best way forward is for both parties to develop complementary proposals and attempt to make separate bids.

SOS PUB group would seek to run it as a 'non -profit' community pub. The Parish Council would buy it and let it to a commercial operator. This is a different proposition to the SOS PUB proposal, but we are looking to explore all possible avenues.

We believe that both the Parish Council and SOS PUB need to make efforts to create viable proposals now and attempt to buy it. Having more viable offers made may lower the risk of the pub being redeveloped into accommodation in the future.

What happens next?

Central government makes funds available to Parish Councils for capital projects. We can apply for a low interest long-term loan of up to £500,000 repayable over many years. Permission is granted if central government are satisfied, based on a business plan, that the loan has a community purpose, support, and will be repaid.

IF WE SUCCEED IN OBTAINING FUNDING, WE PROPOSE
TO ATTEMPT TO BUY THE STATION PUB PREMISES AND
RETAIN IT AS AN ASSET FOR THE COMMUNITY

The current owner cannot be forced to sell it to any community group, but we can try. If we are successful, we would then lease the premises to a commercial pub operator as a freehold pub offer.

How much will all this cost us?

The Parish Council seeks to borrow the money to buy the pub and will also cover some initial renovation costs. The annual rent will pay off the loan. Therefore, loan repayments would not depend on Parish Council revenues. **Residents should not expect a precept rate increase in their council tax**, and there is no plan to do so. In the unlikely event that we cannot find any tenant or sell the pub there is a future risk that the precept would have to increase to cover costs. For context, however, the entire Parish Council precept is only 4% of total Council Tax bills (£74.71 precept for 2019-20 on a Band D property). Should the Council have to repay £500,000 over 35 years via the precept only, it could increase the precept by 15% (£11.53 a year on a Band D property).

We cannot say exactly how much we are willing to spend as we plan to negotiate with the owner. The pub is on the market for £595,000, but we believe that its value as a business is less than this.

NUMBER

SURVEY FORM

Please return this form or do the online survey by Friday 7th June

Please complete only if you live in Knebworth Parish and are 18+

Where do I return the survey?

Survey forms should be returned to post boxes at Village Hall, Village News, Lucas May, Village Stores (Stockens Green) or emailed copy to **office@knebworthpc.org.uk**. Copies of this paper survey as well the online survey are available on the Parish Council website: **www.knebworthparishcouncil.gov.uk**

SHOULD KNEBWORDH PARISH COUNCIL BORROW FUNDS TO PURCHASE THE STATION PUB AS A PUBLIC HOUSE AND VILLAGE ASSET?

YES

NO

Please place one tick in one box only

POST CODE

HOUSE NUMBER

Multiple votes are allowed per household – please use a separate form or use the online survey

The data collected is to obtain residents' views and will not be used for any other purpose. The survey is only open to residents of the parish aged 18+ so we need to collect the above data to verify this. The Parish Council privacy policy is available on the council's website at www.knebworthparishcouncil.gov.uk