

Briefing Note: Future Stewardship of Rothamsted Manor

The Manor is a Grade I listed building of outstanding historic and architectural significance. Ensuring its long-term care and preservation is essential. However, the substantial scale of ongoing and future investment required for the Manor sits outside the capabilities and charitable purposes of Lawes Agricultural Trust (LAT) and cannot be supported through LAT funds.

LAT is therefore seeking a new guardian to take on the stewardship of the Manor, while respecting its heritage, sensitivity, and historic importance.

Background

Lawes Agricultural Trust is the long-term guardian of the remarkable legacy of Sir John Bennet Lawes, founder of what is now Rothamsted Research, who was born at the Manor in 1814. LAT's activities and income exist to support his enduring vision by funding agricultural scientific research for the public benefit.

Over the past five years, LAT has explored a range of potential uses for the Manor, through our managing agent, Rothamsted Enterprises Ltd (REL), including as a wedding venue, events space, and filming location. While these activities have attracted strong interest and delivered a busy programme, they have not generated sufficient surplus income to fund the significant capital investment required over the coming decades to maintain and safeguard a Grade I listed building of this complexity and scale.

The Decision

This decision has been taken by the LAT Board of Trustees with care and sensitivity, following a detailed review and sustained efforts to retain the Manor within LAT's direct management. As a charity, LAT must ensure that its resources are applied in line with its charitable objectives.

Continuing to invest in the Manor at the required level would divert funds away from LAT's primary purpose of supporting agricultural scientific research for the public benefit.

Seeking a new guardian represents an exciting opportunity for the right partner to take on a unique historic building - bringing vision, expertise, and appropriate investment - to secure the future of this much-loved local asset.

LAT remains fully committed to its charitable purpose and mission. This approach will enable the Trust to uphold its governance responsibilities, continue funding agricultural research, and ensure that the Manor is cared for sustainably for generations to come.

FAQs

1. Are the Trust selling the Manor?

- LAT is seeking a party who will take on the Manor on a long leasehold basis, which will ensure the upkeep of the property while also ensuring that, in the long term, its ownership remains in LAT's hands.

2. What is the process?

- ⊖ LAT have appointed Savills as agents to market the Manor.

3. Who will be taking over the Manor? What use will they be putting it to? Are LAT limiting the type of occupier and/or use to particular areas?

- The marketing process is being undertaken by Savills and until that process has been undertaken we cannot comment. In order to ensure we comply with our charitable duties we are conducting an open process, but we are clear that any bidder needs to be respectful of and compliant with the history and heritage of the building and its Grade I listing.
- 4. What considerations does LAT have for selecting a preferred occupier? Is this about making as much money as possible?**
- As a charitable trust, LAT has a duty to safeguard its assets, which include not only the Manor but all other assets. LAT is under a statutory duty under the Charities Act to show that it has followed appropriate practices to get the best value from this transaction and that it is in the best interests of the charity. We are achieving this through ensuring an open and transparent marketing process through an independent and properly experienced third-party firm (Savills).
- 5. Is it just the Manor being marketed? Any other LAT properties?**
- This is subject to offers received, but we envisage that this would cover the Manor, the walled garden and ornamental garden, attached buildings and the outbuildings.
- 6. Why are the Trust not safeguarding this important local asset?**
- As a charitable trust, LAT has a number of duties, including to follow its charitable purpose and to maintain the value of its assets. Having reviewed the current position of the Manor, the ongoing costs for upkeep as well as renovation are significantly higher than that which LAT could commit to without compromising its charitable purpose. LAT therefore feels that it would be more appropriate to involve another party with the funds and expertise to properly look after and bring to life this wonderful building.
- 7. Can the Trust gift the Manor to someone who will be able to look after it?**
- As a charitable trust, LAT has a duty to safeguard its assets, which include not only the Manor but all other assets. LAT is under a statutory duty to show that it has followed appropriate practices to get the best value from this transaction and that it is in the best interests of the charity. Our agents will assess all offers and provide us with advice on these, to ensure we meet our obligations and duties. Any enquiries should be directed to them at cholborow@savills.com
- 8. LAT surely has plenty of assets – why is it not using these to protect / enhance / safeguard the Manor?**
- As a charitable trust, LAT has a number of duties, including to follow its charitable purpose and to maintain the value of its assets. Having reviewed the current position of the Manor, the ongoing costs for upkeep as well as renovation are significantly higher than that which LAT could commit to without compromising its charitable purpose. LAT therefore feels that it would be more appropriate to involve another party with the funds and expertise to properly look after and bring to life this wonderful building.
- 9. What protections are there to make sure the Manor is not damaged or allowed to fall into disrepair?**
- The Manor is a Grade 1 Listed building. This provides protection to ensure that any works to the building and/or its surrounds must be authorised by the relevant authorities. These protections will of course remain in place and a key consideration for assessing interested parties will be their ability and plans to comply with these restrictions and to ensure that the building is (at minimum) kept in a suitable state of repair.

10. Why are LAT / Rothamsted Enterprises / Rothamsted Research not able to keep operating the Manor themselves?

- As a charitable trust, LAT has a number of duties, including to follow its charitable purpose and to maintain the value of its assets. Having reviewed the current position of the Manor, the ongoing costs for upkeep as well as renovation are significantly higher than that which LAT could commit to without compromising its charitable purpose. We have over a number of years utilised the Manor for a number of activities (including as a wedding venue, events space, and filming location). While these activities have attracted strong interest and delivered a busy programme, they have not generated sufficient surplus income to fund the significant capital investment required over the coming decades to maintain and safeguard a Grade I listed building of this complexity and scale.

11. What are the costs for upkeep of the Manor?

- Costs vary depending on the uses, but there are a number of significant current and ongoing costs, due to the age of the building, its complexity, and restrictions relating to the Grade 1 listing.

12. Will the Manor be open to the public under the new occupiers, either permanently or for specific events, like the Heritage Weekends?

- We understand that this is an important consideration for many residents and others, and are keeping this in mind as a part of the marketing process. Until we have a preferred occupier in place, though, it is not possible to provide any answers or commitments in this regard.

13. What about the experiments in and around the Manor? Will these be protected?

- Park Grass (and Broadbalk) will not be within the demise offered for lease. Garden Clover is a separate issue given it is within the Manor grounds – we have flagged to our agents running the sale process that this experiment will need to be protected and ongoing access for LAT and RRes will be required. This will be one of the key considerations for LAT when reviewing potential lessors and their proposals.

14. Will there be an impact on traffic? What about environmental concerns?

Any long-term lease of the Manor will be subject to strict planning, environmental, and regulatory requirements.

15. Who do I contact for any more information?

- LAT have appointed Savills as agents to market the Manor. Any enquiries in relation to that process should be addressed to them at cholborow@savills.com.

FAQ for current customers of Rothamsted Manor

- What's happening with the Manor? Is it closing?
 - See Q1
- Who is going to be taking over/managing the Manor?
 - See Q3
- Will the heritage of the building still be protected?
 - See Q9
- Who can people speak to with questions?

- For an existing booking with Rothamsted Enterprises, please contact Rothamsted Enterprises. For further information regarding Rothamsted Manor, please contact Savills (cholborow@savills.com)
- **What's happening with the café that was planned?**
 - This will not be going ahead – see Q3.
- **What will happen with my current booking?**
 - Rothamsted Enterprises will be honouring all bookings up until September 2026, after which time their management contract with Rothamsted Manor ends and Rothamsted Manor will be handed back to the Lawes Agricultural Trust.
- **Why are we not taking bookings after September?**
 - As above.
- **Can people book with Rothamsted Enterprises now for post September and transfer their bookings with the new agent?**
 - See Q1
- **Will the Manor still be used as an event space?**
 - See Q3
- **Will you still be holding ticketed events this/next year?**
 - We are only hosting one event this year - The Lord Chamberlains' Men production of Othello on 7/6/26. Tickets available soon on [Manor website](#).
- **When is heritage weekend this year? Can't see any advertisements.**
 - See Q12