

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE SAVE THE CABINET ACTION GROUP

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Save The Cabinet Group launches petition to ensure an open and transparent appeal

Campaigners hoping to prevent the Grade II listed Cabinet pub at Reed being turned permanently into a house have launched a petition to The Planning Inspectorate with a view to ensuring the planning appeal is heard by way of a public hearing – and not just on paper.

The present owner of The Cabinet – a property developer – turned the building into a house without planning permission or listed building consent. He has now has appealed against the refusal by North Hertfordshire councillors of his retrospective application for planning permission for change of use.

The Save the Cabinet Action Group believes a public hearing or an inquiry into the appeal is essential, given the disputed evidence and the level of local interest in the case. The petition is available online at www.tinyurl.com/cabinet-petition.

Mike Howes, Chair of the Action Group, said:

“This case has become a real test of public trust in the planning system – not only in the way it protects pubs but also in the way it deals with developers who simply ignore the requirements of planning law in order to try to maximise their gains.

“It’s essential that the appeal in this case is held in public – and not just on paper behind closed doors – so that interested parties can attend and make representations. It’s also important that the planning inspector who hears the appeal has a proper opportunity to probe all the evidence in detail. That’s why we have launched our petition, and why we are inviting supporters to sign.”

More information about the petition, and the campaign more generally, can be found on the Action Group’s website: www.savethecabinet.uk.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Save the Cabinet Action Group was established in October 2016 to resist the application to turn The Cabinet at Reed into a house.

The Cabinet is a 400-year old building, and is considered a village icon – it even appears on the village sign. It is believed to be the only pub in Britain bearing the name.

The Cabinet was a thriving, popular pub, widely known as “a little gem”.

It closed in 2011 and was put up for sale. The Action Group provided evidence of several offers by financially credible parties to buy or rent the building and run it as a pub, which were refused by the then owners. It was eventually sold at auction in late 2015 to the present owner for £375,000. Documents before the Planning Control Committee suggested that the building was, as a pub, valued at no more than £250,000.

The kitchen was removed during 2015, and further works were commenced in mid-2016, without the requisite planning or listed building consents, and have been ongoing since. Despite complaints by neighbours and by Reed Parish Council, the planning authority, North Hertfordshire District Council, took no enforcement action.

Retrospective applications for planning and listed building consent were submitted in September 2016. Planning permission for change of use was refused by the members of the Planning Control Committee of NHDC in July 2017. The linked listed buildings applications have not yet been determined.

The developer has lodged an appeal against refusal of permission for change of use. The appeal will be heard by a planning inspector independent of North Herts District Council. The Planning Inspectorate are in the process of appointing an Inspector to the case. No date has yet been fixed for consideration of the appeal.

Planning appeals can be dealt with in three ways: in writing, by way of a hearing (at which the parties, including interested third parties such as objectors, may be represented), or by way of an inquiry (a more formal procedure during which evidence may be given on oath and the parties are typically represented by lawyers). The decision as to the appropriate procedure is for the Planning Inspectorate, which must take account, among other things, of the wishes of the appellant and the planning authority, and the level of local interest.

Under Section 9 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, carrying out work to a listed building without first obtaining the necessary consent is a criminal offence.

According to the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), 21 pubs are closing every week – see <http://www.camra.org.uk/kc2-pub-protection> .

More information is available on the Action Group's web site www.savethecabinet.uk.

The Action Group is also on Facebook, "Save the Cabinet at Reed", and Twitter @SaveTheCabinet.