



Anne McDonald and Mark Simmons
North Hertfordshire District Council

By email

13 April 2021

THE CABINET, HIGH STREET, REED: APPLICATIONS REF 20/02430/FP & 20/01350/LBC

We are writing in response to the re-consultation on these two applications. Reed Parish Council objects to them both. Given that the subject-matter of the two applications is so closely related we are combining our observations into one document.

We have seen the written observations submitted by the Save the Cabinet Action Group, and also by the heritage consultant from Turleys. We agree with both.

We make reference to our written submissions in response to the first consultation on both applications and have the following to add.

Retention of fence

We endorse the view of the Council's conservation officer that the fence, dividing the pub garden and thus excluding the public from significant areas of the former trading area is inconsistent with the lawful use of the land, which should be as a pub garden.

The amended plans show that the patio doors previously in the south-facing wall of the restaurant area have been removed and boarded up. They would have afforded a view over the fenced-off part of the garden.

We wish to inform the Council that over the last weeks a new railing and metal gate has been erected around the patio at the front and side of the two-storey section of the building.

All of these works appear to have the intention of excluding the public from the garden and from part of the patio at the front of the building. These were important trading areas for the pub when it was open and these actions are inconsistent with use of the two-storey section of the building in a manner ancillary to the pub use.

Retention of kitchen store

We agree with the comments of the conservation officer in relation to the former smoking shelter, now enclosed and described as a kitchen store, which is of poor quality and which detracts from the special character of The Cabinet as a Grade II listed building.

Kitchen flue

We agree with the comments of the conservation officer that the kitchen flue is a bulky, incongruous addition, but those words hardly do it justice. It is an excrescence.

Since the original plans were submitted it has been extended and raised, making it uglier and more incongruous than ever. We find it difficult to imagine that anybody could seriously expect an erection of this kind to be granted planning or listed building consent in the context of a Grade II listed building like The Cabinet, which may explain why it was installed before any application for the necessary consent was made.

The flue is clearly visible from the High Street and across the meadows around which the Reed settlement is built. It clearly harms the appearance of the listed building and the wider appearance of the Reed conservation area. We agree with the comments in the letter from Turleys that there are other more sympathetic and successful ways of achieving the necessary extract requirements.

Other matters

Our attention has been drawn to the fact that a large former garage and store on the site has been converted to residential accommodation. We imagine that the Council will wish to pay special attention to what appears to be a further, serious breach of planning control.

In previous correspondence, the Council's enforcement officer noted (email dated 24 August 2020) that it was normal for businesses such as pubs and restaurants to have living accommodation within such properties, that the owner had advised that the head chef might stay in the building overnight, and that this could be seen as ancillary to the retention of part of the building as a pub. We suggest accommodating staff in an outhouse, particularly one which has been converted without planning permission, is a quite different

proposition which raises questions about whether the residential use of the main building is in fact ancillary to the pub use.

The Council are aware that there is particular sensitivity in Reed and neighbouring villages about residential annexes metamorphosing into independent residences. Any such conversion must be subject to appropriate planning control. As matters stand, no proper assessment has been made of the suitability of this building for its new purpose, let alone its relationship with the principal building.

Separately, we have not seen anywhere in the submitted plans or accompanying statements any reference to the siting of a large gas tank at the north of the building close to High Street. This is clearly visible from the road and without question affects the setting of the listed building.

We understand, too, that the Spice Cabinet sign requires advertisement and listed building consent. We have not been made aware of an application for either.

Lastly, the application for listed building consent seeks to regularise the internal and external works carried out so far. No proper attempt has been made to assess the heritage impact of the works carried out, and we agree with the professional opinion clearly set out in the letter from Turleys that the assessment made by the applicant manifestly fails to meet the statutory requirements. We remind you that many of the internal fittings of the building have been largely stripped out, including the pub bar, and no adequate details of materials used or their suitability have been furnished. The application describes addition of a damp-proof membrane under the old tiled floor in terms which suggest what is at best poor practice.

It would be wholly inappropriate for all these works to an ancient building to be regularised at a stroke without such proper assessment being carried out. We share the concern expressed by other parties that a decision should not be taken without a proper assessment of the cumulative effect of the project as a whole.

We note the professional opinion set out in the letter from Turleys that the current proposals, which would have the effect of perpetuating a significant reduction in the trading area of The Cabinet, raise important questions about long-term viability in that form. We share this concern, especially against the background of the finding of HM Planning Inspector following a three-day public inquiry in 2018 that The Cabinet in its entirety was capable of being viable as a public house.

We observe that no less than ten separate applications for planning permission or listed building consent have been submitted since the applicant took possession of the building in 2015, and that the majority of these have been retrospective. No single development has created more upset or concern in the Reed community in recent times, and the continuing strength of feeling is evinced by the number of objections submitted by members of the public to the present and to previous applications. There is continuing strong local support

for the restoration of the whole of The Cabinet as a village pub, and it is essential that the current applications do not lead to the effective lawful use of the building being lost by default.

We urge the Council to refuse these applications for planning permission and listed building consent.

KEN LANGLEY

Chair, Reed Parish Council