

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**

**11 August 2022**

Application No:	SMD/2022/0220	
Location	The Red Lion Public House, Market Place, Leek, ST13 5HH	
Proposal	Listed Building Consent application for the fixing of a heritage style commemorative 'blue plaque' to the front elevation.	
Applicant	Hydes Brewery Ltd	
Agent	RLM Associates	
Parish/ward	Leek	Date registered: 26.04.2022
If you have a question about this report please contact: Chris Johnston tel: 01538 395400 ext. 4123 <a href="mailto:christopher.johnston@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk">christopher.johnston@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk</a>		

## REFERRAL

The application is before committee because the scheme is locally contentious.

### 1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

**REFUSE**

### 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The site comprises The Red Lion public house in the town centre of Leek and which faces the Market Place to the west and is characterised by white render walls and black painted windows. It was built in 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It is within a Conservation Area and is also a Grade II historic listed building built in the . It was listed on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1951 and the listing description is as follows:

*Originally built as private house, but with long history as inn. C17 core, extended and remodelled early C18. Stucco over brick and stone, roof not visible. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, 3-window range with central doorway flanked by full-height canted bays with 3-light stone mullioned windows with small panes in the upper storeys. 2 and 3-light transomed casement windows over courtyard entry to right. Central door in moulded architrave with console brackets carrying entablature, and cast-iron and glass canopy incorporating lettering. Parallel rear range has C17 mullioned windows surviving in gable wall to passage, coped gable with moulded kneelers above, and massive side wall stack. Further stack built into NE corner. The frontage block of the hotel incorporates a 2-storeyed building of the C17, raised in height, while retaining the earlier gable structure, during the C18.*

### 3. THE APPLICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 This is a Listed Building Consent application for a Blue Plaque to be inserted on the frontage of the listed pub facing the Market Place. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application gives the reason for the blue plaque:

*Leek and District Civic Society have assessed this building as being an important part of Leek's saved built heritage and history and wish to acknowledge the fact that the building and others around it were saved from demolition in the 1980's, by the efforts of many people, the campaign being spear headed by a local lady.*

*Janet Broome spear headed the opposition to the redevelopment of the central core of the town, whilst at the same time lobbying Government (National and Local) and gaining support from prominent members of society and the Architectural Profession.*

*The proposal is to fix a 400mm diameter, 12mm thick resin plaque using a maximum of 2 screw fixings placed within the bed joints between the masonry behind the facing render finish – its position is shown on Appendix 2, using a scaled sketch of part the buildings frontage with the plaque superimposed on it. Also attached as Appendix 3 is a hand drawn sketch elevation of part of the frontage as existing.*

*Appendix 4 shows the plaque to a larger scale with the suggested wording upon it.*

*The proposed wording of the plaque would read: **'Dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, The Red Lion & many other listed buildings of Leek Town Centre, were saved from redevelopment in the 1980's by a campaign spearheaded by Janet Broome (1934-2018), to whom this plaque is dedicated.'***

3.2 The statement includes a drawing showing where the plaque would be placed. This would be immediately to the left of the coach arch about 2.5 metres above the ground on the building fascia.

3.3 The Statement also contains newspaper articles about the building and the campaigner Janet Broome, who the plaque will refer to as "saving" the historic buildings of the town centre from proposed redevelopment. It also contains some information on blue plaque schemes elsewhere in the UK and an English Heritage guide to blue plaques.

3.4 The plaque has been endorsed by Leek & District Civic Society.

3.5 On 4<sup>th</sup> July, the Heritage/Justification Statement was amended to alter the paragraph which reads:

*Leek and District Civic Society have assessed this building as being an important part of Leek's saved built heritage and history and wish to acknowledge the fact that the building and others around it were **saved from***

*demolition in the 1980's, by the efforts of many people, the campaign being spear headed by a local lady.*

This now reads:

*Leek and District Civic Society have assessed this building as being an important part of Leek's saved built heritage and history and wish to acknowledge the fact that the building and others around it were **saved from full or partial demolition/alteration in the 1980's**, by the efforts of many people, the campaign being spear headed by a local lady.*

3.6 According to the agent, this amendment was to clarify that the Red Lion was “not to be demolished, but would have been affected by the redevelopment” and also added:

*“With respect I wish to confirm that the plaque is not essentially about the Red Lion - it is more about saving that area of the Leek's Heritage and the lady who helped to achieve that.”*

3.7 In addition to the newspaper articles in the Appendices to the Statement, the applicants agent also subsequently submitted more photo's of a number of local newspaper articles and newspaper letters from the 1980s about the town centre redevelopment and the campaigner with one about a petition started by Janet Broome with 7,700 signatures.

3.8 The application file including the drawings and details of the proposal together with consultation responses can be viewed on the Council website at:

<http://publicaccess.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=161084>

#### **4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 The blue plaque was previously applied for under applications SMD/2019/0622 and SMD/2020/0140 and both applications were withdrawn.

4.2 The site was included in Town Centre redevelopment plans in the late 1980's. The applications submitted were as follows:

87/00013: Approved under delegated powers.

87/00669: Withdrawn.

87/00782: Withdrawn.

88/00469: Approved.

88/00553: Refused.

#### **5. PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION**

5.1 The Development Plan comprises of:

- The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted Sep 2020)

## Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan - Sep 2020

5.2 The following Local Plan policies are relevant to the application:-

- SS1 Development Principles
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).- July 2021

Section 12: Achieving Well Designed Places

Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

### **6. CONSULTATIONS**

6.1 A site notice was posted and displayed outside of the site on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022. A press advert was posted in Leek Post & Times on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

#### **Public response to consultation**

6.2 A Letter of support was received from Cllr Cawley, the Town Mayor, which states the following:

*"I received an e mail from Mr McGuinness of RLM Associates asking me to support, as Mayor, the plaque on the Red Lion in memory of Janet Broome.*

*I was very much aware of the campaign led by Janet and others to save the town from the ill advised development in the 1980s which would have torn the heart out of Georgian and Victorian Leek imposing a late 20th century shopping centre on the town.*

*It was an appalling mistake to have even conceived such a plan and one wonders what Leek would now look like if the plan had been successful with a 1980s half empty, derelict shopping mall denuded of the brands like Mothercare, Dixons and Burton for which it was initially planned. One has to look at the Potteries Shopping Centre opened in 1988 as a wretched comparator. Incidentally the Red Lion which was empty from 1979 to the late 90s would have been demolished in the original plans.*

*The irony of rejecting a plaque for Mrs Broome on conservation grounds when the building was saved by Mrs Broome and fellow campaigners by their sterling efforts does not escape me*

*Jane Broome deserves her fight to be recognised and I fully support the application which was endorsed by a previous decision of the Town Council*

*With the exception of Lady Elizabeth Wardle we have a shortage of memorials to women in the town. Jane's blue plaque would be an addition to*

the

honoured

pantheon.”

6.2 A letter of support from another councillor, Cllr Wood, sent to the Leek & District Civic Society, was received and states the following:

*“I write to support the application to erect a blue plaque on the Red Lion public house in the Market Place in Leek. The plaque is to recognise Janet Broome who worked tirelessly to stop the Dixon development in the area of Silk Street car park. If the plans had gone through Leek would have been changed for ever and we would have lost that special atmosphere which makes our town the thriving community it is today. It is thanks to Janet that a development was stopped which would have devastated the town and been totally out of character in a place that is so rich in Architectural merit, especially the many buildings which we enjoy thanks to the Arts and Craft movement. I ask you to consider allowing this plaque to honour a courageous lady who was a real character of the town.”*

6.3 A letter from Stephen Wales, the former Mayor of Leek was also received and states the following:

*“As a former Mayor of Leek I support this application as it records a critical period for the Town. The preservation of important buildings was secured by the campaign lead by Mrs Broome has benefitted the town. Furthermore this plaque will remind and inspire others to act to protect the beautiful architecture we all enjoy and that brings so many visitors to Leek.”*

6.4 A letter of support was received from Roger & Janet Warrilow.

6.5 One letter has been received from a local resident which states that the building was not an Inn as claimed in the Design and Access Statement (the original version not the amended version) and was a residence in 1745 before becoming an Inn.

## **Parish Council**

6.6 None comments received.

## **Conservation Officer**

“Proposal for a Leek and District Civic Society blue plaque on the Red Lion, Market Place, Leek, to commemorate the life of a local heritage campaigner, Janet Broome. Whilst it is important to recognise the valuable efforts of local people there appears to be no direct link with The Red Lion which is a Grade II Listed Building. The legislation and guidance requires that any alteration to a Listed Building must preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic interest or better reveal its significance. Unfortunately the proposed plaque will serve none of these purposes and cannot therefore be supported.”

## **7. OFFICER COMMENT AND PLANNING BALANCE**

7.1 The main issues with the proposal are as follows:

- Whether or not the proposal preserves or enhances the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

7.2 The current heritage related planning policies in the Council's Local Plan and the government's NPPF seek to protect listed buildings and their character, appearance and setting. They require that any alteration to a Listed Building must preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic interest or better reveal its significance.

7.3 Officers recognise the campaign by a local resident, Janet Broome, to protect historic buildings in the town centre from town centre redevelopment proposals in the late 1980's and does not dispute her contribution in trying to save historic buildings in the town centre.

7.4 However, no evidence has been provided that the campaigner "saved" the Red Lion from demolition. The building was listed in 1951, affording it great protection at least 25 years before the campaign.

7.5 There were Council proposals to redevelop the town centre which could have affected historic buildings in accordance with a Development Brief produced by the Council. Planning applications were submitted by private developers in the late 1980s and were focussed on an area to the rear of The Red Lion in an area which is now the Silk Street car park and surrounding buildings. With regard to The Red Lion, the applications sought to demolish a rear projection to the pub, a later addition, possibly Victorian. The main historic part of the building including the frontage was not included in any demolition plans.

7.6 After researching Council planning application records which included Committee reports, the town centre redevelopment proposals in the late 1980s were applied for by two separate developers. The first scheme applied for (ref: 87/00013) was approved under delegated powers and therefore if there was a campaign against the proposal it ultimately failed but the obviously this proposal was dropped as two further application were submitted (refs: 87/00782 and 87/00669) and Council reports stated that amendments were requested but after negotiations between the Council and the developers, the developers withdrew the applications as they were "no longer interested in the project".

7.7 Another developer subsequently submitted two separate applications which were decided at the same Committee in the early 1990s. One of the applications (88/00469) was approved but the other (88/00553) was refused and the refused scheme involved the demolition of the rear part of the pub and the "redevelopment" of the main historic part facing Market Place (but not involving demolition) to provide a bar on the ground floor and flat on the first floor.

7.8 Although the application was refused and there was a significant amount of objection to the town centre redevelopment generally, the case officer for this current application could find no evidence in the Council records of the Red Lion itself being

“saved from redevelopment” by a campaign. As the building is now operating as a similar use to what was proposed in the late 1980s, i.e. pub/bar it is questioned if this would even be deemed to be a redevelopment given the building had been operating as a pub since 18<sup>th</sup> Century and no alterations or redevelopment would have been necessary to bring it back into use as a pub.

7.9 Overall, no evidence has been found or has been brought forward that the campaigner “saved” the building from redevelopment proposals. Comments provided informally by former Council officers have indicated that there was never any realistic prospect of demolition of the Red Lion and that such a proposal would not have been entertained by the Authority.

7.10 Although the blue plaque can be described as small, it would be placed on the primary elevation of the building at a height intended to be noticed by the public on Market Place outside of the pub. Its colour, form and height would make it a noticeable addition to the building. Although plaques are deemed acceptable on listed historic buildings where there is a direct link between a person and the building they are placed on, due to a combination of the physical form and the wording of the plaque, with no evident link between the person and the building itself (in particular the most historic part on the Market Place frontage), the plaque would not preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic interest or better reveal its significance.

7.11 It is considered a more appropriate location for the plaque would be on the fascia of a non-listed historic building in the town centre such as on Derby Street for example where the plaque would certainly be as visually prominent as on the Red Lion, due to the relatively high footfall. The proposed 1980’s town centre redevelopment scheme included a very large area including a number of non-listed buildings, to which a plaque could be attached without the need for planning or listed building consent and would still serve to commemorate the association between Mrs Broome and the campaign against the redevelopment scheme. This was suggested to the applicant’s agent but he has chosen for the application as submitted to be further progressed and determined.

## **Conclusion and Planning Balance**

7.12 The planning policies require that any alteration to a Listed Building (which can include the installation of a plaque on an external wall) must preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic interest or better reveal its significance. Although the efforts of Janet Broome in campaigning against the redevelopment of Leek Town Centre in the late 1980s involving historic buildings are recognised, there is no evidence of a link between this particular building and the campaigner and no evidence that the building was “saved” by her campaigning or was ever under any threat of demolition. There have been no proposals to demolish the original main historic part of the pub (only a later rear addition) and the proposed “redevelopment” took the form of using the ground floor as a bar and the first floor as a flat which given the historic and current uses of the building, does not amount to a significant “redevelopment”. The proposed plaque would therefore cause less than substantial harm to the significant of the building and, under Policy DC2 of the Council’s Local Plan and Section 16 of the government planning guidance in the National Planning

Policy Framework (NPPF) Listed Building Consent for the plaque should be refused unless there are public benefits to outweigh the harm. For the reasons set out above such public benefits have not been identified and on that basis the application is recommended for refusal.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

### **A. That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:-**

**1. Policy DC2 'The Historic Environment' of the Council's Local Plan (adopted September 2020) states the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting, in a manner appropriate to their significance. The Council does not consider the proposed blue plaque placed on a prominent part of the frontage of the Grade II listed historic public house facing a market place would achieve this, as there is no significant evidence of a link between the person the plaque is commemorating and the Grade II listed building onto which it would be placed. The level of harm of the proposal to the heritage asset is deemed to be less than substantial. However, there are no public benefits of the proposal that are considered to outweigh the level of harm. The proposal would also therefore not comply with Section 16 of the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).**

### Informative

1. The Council would advise the plaque be placed either inside the building or onto a non-listed building in the vicinity and that no planning application would be required for this.

**B. In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/in formatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Development Services has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Applications Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's Decision.**



