

## **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE SAVE THE CABINET ACTION GROUP**

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### **Supporters turn out in force for Cabinet appeal**

A three-day Public Inquiry at Letchworth last week (6-8 November) heard a planning appeal by the owner of the 400-year-old Cabinet pub at Reed against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council to refuse retrospective permission to change it into a house.

Dozens of supporters of the campaign to save the pub attended each day of the Inquiry, which was presided over by Planning Inspector David Murray.

Both the Save the Cabinet Action Group and the Council resisted the appeal.

Speaking as a witness, District Councillor Gerald Morris noted that the current owner had paid over the odds for the pub with a view to converting it to a house. County Councillor Fiona Hill, who was a member of NHDC when the decision to refuse planning permission was made, pointed out that a pub like The Cabinet would draw in customers from much further afield than Reed village.

Other witnesses giving evidence for the Action Group included Ivan Titmuss, the tenant at the Fox and Duck in Therfield, Angus Martin, the former publican at The Cabinet, Philip Goddard, who had bid to buy the pub, Ken Langley, chair of Reed Parish Council, and Malcolm Chapman of CAMRA.

The Inquiry heard from expert witnesses on both sides as to the heritage value of The Cabinet, its viability if reopened as a pub, and the effect its permanent loss would have on the community.

Speaking after the Inquiry, Mike Howes, Chair of the Action Group, said

“We think our lawyers, experts and witnesses all did a good job and made a strong case – but we’re not going to tempt fate by predicting the result.

“If the appeal is dismissed, as we hope it will be, we’ll be looking to North Herts District Council to take immediate and effective enforcement action – as local authorities around the country have done in similar cases – to protect the property from further damage and enable it to be restored as a pub for the benefit of the community.”

The Inspector indicated at the close of the Inquiry that he expected to make a decision “within weeks rather than months”. The Planning Inspectorate is expected to give a target date this week (week commencing 12 November).

For more information about the campaign see the Action Group’s website:

[www.savethecabinet.uk](http://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, 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, which determines such appeals independently of planning authorities, has decided to decide this appeal by way of a public inquiry. This is a formal procedure with similarities to a court process. The Save the Cabinet Action Group has been granted “Rule 6 status”, which allows it to be represented at the appeal and have equivalent status to the principal parties – the appellant and the District Council.

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](http://www.savethecabinet.uk).

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