

PRESS RELEASE

REED VILLAGERS CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THEIR PUB

Villagers in Reed have formed an action group to try to save the 400-year-old Cabinet at Reed – the only pub in the village – from being turned into a house. Reed Parish Council will hold a meeting on Monday 26 September at 8pm in Reed School at which the Cabinet will be discussed, and will give the public an opportunity to have their say.

Although The Cabinet has been closed for a number of years, villagers had been confident that a buyer would come forward to restore the building and re-open it as a pub. But after it was sold at auction in November, the owner made alterations designed to convert it to a house. Retrospective planning permission has now been applied for.

The action group has written to every household in the village asking them to object by the deadline of 6 October, pointing out that if planning permission is granted, Reed's only pub will be lost forever. A "Save the Cabinet" Facebook page has been set up.

Action group member Mike Howes said:

"The pub is essential to Reed. It's a centre of the community, a place for people to meet and socialise – something that gives the village its heart. The absence of the pub in Reed has been keenly felt. There are no other pubs within reasonable walking distance. We really need a pub in this village.

"The Cabinet used to be a thriving, attractive pub – a little gem which attracted visitors from miles around. In the right hands there is no reason why it should not be again.

"It's an iconic building – its image appears on the village sign, and whenever I say to people that I live in Reed they always mention The Cabinet. It would be a tragedy if it were lost forever."

According to the Campaign for Real Ale, 27 pubs close every week – many of these in rural locations.

Campaigner Edwin Kilby said:

"The national planning policy framework is supposed to provide protection for community facilities such as pubs – but it's quite clear that it isn't working. I have written to our local MP, Sir Oliver Heald, and asked him to take this up with the Secretary of State. Meanwhile we need as many people as possible who want to save The Cabinet to make their voices heard."

Sir Oliver has said he will ask North Herts District Council to take full account of the representations being submitted.

CONTACTS:

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Cabinet, a beautiful 400-year old timber building, was relatively recently a thriving and popular pub with plenty of local trade and a good number of visiting customers, especially hikers. Good beer

and wholesome food were central to its success, and it more than justified its marketing tagline, “A little gem”.

Unfortunately, the pub was turned unsuccessfully into a high-cost restaurant, and the local trade disappeared. Subsequent attempts to re-launch the Cabinet as a pub were plagued by mismanagement and lack of investment and about five years ago it closed altogether. Since then it has been allowed to deteriorate while it was put up for sale.

The pub was designated an Asset of Community Value, and the expectation among villagers remained that a willing purchaser would be found to renovate the building and re-open it as a pub.

In fact, the Cabinet was sold at auction in November 2015. The purchaser proceeded to make alterations to the building and convert it into a house, without seeking planning permission or listed building consent. He is now applying for permission for change of use, and only now is there a proper process within which the community can make its voice heard.

Section 70 of the National Planning Policy Framework¹, which sets out the Government’s planning policies and shows how it expects them to be applied, provides a measure of protection for pubs. It states, among other things:

70. To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:
- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
 - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs

More information about the crisis confronting pubs generally, the number closing and the role of pubs at the heart of the community can be found at www.camra.org.uk.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf