From:	Peter Kent-Baguley
To:	Planning (SMDC)
Cc:	Roberts, Paul (CLLR); Bayliss, Gillian
Subject:	APPLICATION NUMBER: SMD/2019/0621
Date:	23 October 2019 11:31:16

Dear Planning Officers, Ms Gill Bayliss, Conservation Officer and Cllr Paul Roberts, Chair of SMDC Planning Committee and the Conservation Liaison Panel,

As the owner and occupier of The Old Stone House, 62 St Edward Street, Leek, I am responding to your invitation to comment on the Planning Application SMD/2019/0621 for a Blue Plaque to be placed at Les Hetres.

I object to the application for a Blue Plaque to be placed at Les Hetres for the following reasons:

1 Although much reduced from the original (given below, *italics*) the submitted wording is a) too long, b) both speculative and subjective, c) the building is not sufficiently historically significant:

"Les Hetres attributed to Architect R.Norman Shaw 1831-1912 and built by Hugh Sleigh in 1885, was beautifully restored by the owners Nixon & Reeves - recognised and celebrated by the Chimney Pot Preservation Trust."

"Recognised and celebrated by the Chimney Pot Preservation Society reg. Charity No 1120862
A (grade 2) listed building (attributed to / possibly by) Architect R. Norman Shaw 1831 - 1912 "Les Hetres" was built for Hugh Sleigh in 1863. Roof scape and building beautifully restored one hundred years later, by the new owners Nixon and Reeves. The Chimney Stack/Pot WOW factor of Leek."

Various briefer versions have emerged via email exchanges but the substantive issues remain:

a "Attributed: by whom? Blue Plaques, if remotely in conformity with English Heritage Blue Plaque criteria should convey historical facts.
b "Beautifully restored"? What precisely? According to which criteria? Whose evaluation?
c English Heritage criteria state at (g) "Proposals can be considered for commemoration of buildings that have a historical significance worthy of public notice - other than a particular association - either because:
(i) a historical event of particular importance occurred there, or
(ii) the building had an important historical significance that is not obvious from its present appearance, use or any existing commemoration.

2 Furthermore it appears that this application has been submitted by an interested party (ie owner) and not the Leek & district Civic Society, although the Agent making the application is the same person who makes the Blue Plaque submissions on behalf of the Civic Society and this opens the way for further ill-considered, insufficiently researched and inadequately processed applications and I submit that such a likely proliferation can only lead to the diminution of the integrity of the Blue Plaque Scheme and the Leek & District Civic Society.

3 Having received various critical responses, The Civic Society Committee meeting on

Monday 14th October 2019 agreed the dissolution of the Blue Plaque Committee which I initiated several years ago while a member of the Civic Society Committee. I chaired the BP Committee and invited Faith Cleverdon, Cathryn Walton, Geoff Browne and Roger Warrillow to be members. We produced a Consultative document setting out the reasons for establishing a Blue Plaque Scheme in Leek and distributed it widely to facilitate the receipt of the widest possible views of the local community. The overwhelming response was positive so the BP Committee set to work on producing a Scheme of 15 Blue Plaques with considerable historical research. We made no provision for further suggestions for Blue Plaques at that time because we thought the Civic Society would have more than enough to deal with for the time being, and so it proved because the Scheme remains to be completed.
The principle was established that as far as possible the owner of the building receiving a Blue Plaque should finance the process since the CS lacks sufficient funds to do so. The possibility of seeking grants was agreed.
I have included this brief historical overview of the genesis of the BP Scheme in Leek to underline the systematic and professional manner in which it was conceived and developed.

4 At their 14th October meeting the Committee also agreed that a Protocol should be established for the administration of the Scheme:

Blue Plaque Protocol

a. Ideas for blue plaque sites may be submitted to Leek and District Civic Society by individuals or organisations.

b. Any such ideas will be considered by the Committee and approved or rejected on their merits. Approval or rejection to be determined by a majority vote of Committee Members.

c. If approved in principle, the Civic Society will do the necessary research to establish historical accuracy by consulting relevant documentary evidence and drawing on the expertise of local historians. Following this, exact wording on the plaque to be agreed and production of the plaque instigated.

d. The most appropriate position for the blue plaque on the building will be decided.

e. At this stage, planning permission will be sought from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

f. If planning permission is granted, a suitable date and time for installation will be agreed between Leek and District Civic Society and the property owner. Press coverage will be organised if appropriate.

5 It will be seen that more detail is required for it to provide a professional framework. Particularly crucial is the need for CLEAR, PRECISE CRITERIA for Blue Plaques so that individuals or organisations wishing to make suggestions do so from an in formed position. Likewise the CS Committee will be working within a consistent framework where historical fact and significance are central.

6 I am a passionate supporter of the Leek & District Civic Society and of course of the Blue Plaque Scheme. I wish to see both prosper in their commitment to the historical wealth of the built environment, working in a professional manner embracing all elements of the local community.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Kent-Baguley