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Sent: 18 January 2025 14:17
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2024/0509 Site Address: The Old Court House High Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5DZ Leek Comments by: Jacob Lawrence Barrow
From:

Submission: Objection

Comments: I am writing to formally object to the proposed redevelopment of the existing building at The Old Court House, High Street, Leek. While I understand the need to optimize housing in our area, this particular proposal raises several significant concerns that I believe warrant serious reconsideration.

It is deeply troubling that the current plans for this redevelopment appear to take no meaningful consideration of accessibility for individuals with disabilities. As outlined in the Equality Act 2010, it is a legal obligation to ensure that buildings undergoing significant redevelopment are made inclusive and accessible to everyone. This includes incorporating features such as:

- Step-free access to all entrances and throughout communal areas.
- Adequate lift access to all floors.
- Accessible parking spaces.
- Properly designed units suitable for individuals with mobility challenges.

Failing to include these elements not only violates best practices in urban planning but also undermines the values of inclusivity and fairness that should be at the heart of our community. This omission is both discriminatory and short-sighted, given the increasing number of individuals requiring accessible housing options.

The housing crisis in our community, and indeed the wider region, is well-documented. It is therefore imperative that any redevelopment includes a substantial proportion of social and affordable housing. This ensures that the project benefits all members of the community, not just those who can afford premium-priced properties. The absence of social housing provision in the current plans is unacceptable and represents a missed opportunity to address critical housing shortages.

Additionally, I am concerned about the strain this redevelopment may place on local infrastructure, including parking and the lack of oversight regarding the current use of the building as an arts and creative hub within the local community and its protection. The proposal does not appear to include sufficient provisions to mitigate these impacts, which could significantly affect the quality of life for existing members of the community.

Furthermore, the building in question is currently being used as an arts and creative space, which serves as a vital hub for local artists, cultural activities, and community engagement. The proposed redevelopment would destroy this invaluable resource, depriving the community of a space that fosters creativity, collaboration, and cultural expression. Arts spaces like this are rare and irreplaceable, and their loss would be detrimental to the cultural fabric of our area.

The focus of any redevelopment should be on addressing the local housing crisis, preserving community spaces, and fostering inclusivity. It is vital that developers work collaboratively with local authorities, residents, and organisations to ensure that their projects truly benefit the area and its people. Transparent communication, local engagement, and a commitment to community priorities are essential to building trust and delivering meaningful outcomes.

I urge the local government to reject this proposal in its current form and to require the developers to submit revised plans that:

- Prioritize inclusivity by ensuring full compliance with accessibility standards.
- Include a meaningful proportion of social and affordable housing.
- Address the potential strain on local infrastructure.
- Allocating dedicated spaces within the building for studios, workshops, or galleries.
- Partnering with local arts organizations to ensure the continued operation of creative programs.
- Providing affordable rents or grants to sustain the arts community within the development.

Allowing this redevelopment to proceed without these critical adjustments would be a failure to uphold the values of equality, fairness, and community well-being.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my objection. I hope the council will act in the best interests of all residents by demanding significant improvements to the proposed plans.

Yours Faithfully

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