

Setback for Tower Hotel refurb plans

An Bord Pleanála has refused permission to The Tower Hotel for the demolition of a number of buildings to build new hotel rooms and a conference centre. The hotel had been granted planning by Waterford City & County Council last July to demolish a number of buildings on Lombard Street and number 36 The Mall in Waterford City, and to build a five storey extension consisting of 60 bedrooms and a conference centre.



Monica Leech has contended that the works will take place on lands to which the developer does not have full rights.

Earlier this year, The Munster Express reported that the planning decision had been appealed by Waterford business woman Monica Leech, a former chief executive of Waterford Chamber.

Ms Leech, who currently works as a PR consultant, had hired a forensic and litigation firm for the case and was contending the proposed works would take place on lands to which the developer does not have absolute title.

Michael Reilly Consulting Forensic and Litigation told the Sunday Times newspaper in April that “Ms Leech is not anti-development.” “She correctly feels that until her legal interests in these lands have been dealt with by the developer, this application cannot proceed,” a spokesperson added. Now, An Bord Pleanála has ruled that The Tower Hotel has failed to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist that would justify the demolition of the protected structures on the site.

It also ruled that the proposed development would materially affect the character of the adjoining Architectural Conservation Area; would be detrimental to the character and setting of the historic streetscape and visual amenities of the area; and would set an undesirable precedent. Given its prominent site in the city, the Board said the proposal would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area.

Monica Leech has had a high-profile career in Waterford, having served as chief executive at Waterford Chamber and Waterford Tourism. She also worked for Minister Martin Cullen as his PR adviser during his time as Minister for the OPW and at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

She won substantial libel damages against the Evening Herald and other outlets for the reporting of false allegations.