

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

BLUE PLAQUE NOMINATION: ELIZABETH GASKELL

Report Reference ET-26-12
Meeting Date 30th September 2026
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by A Keppel-Green, Town Clerk



1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Town Council's Blue Plaques Scheme looks to help visitors and residents identify with the history of the town and aims to promote the recognition and awareness of people, places and events which have been of lasting significance in the life of Knutsford or more widely.

The Town Council encourages suggestions from members of the public for suitable plaques. A decision to install a blue plaque will be made by the Environment and Transport Committee following a recommendation of the appraisal panel.

1.2 COUNCIL POLICY

In order to be eligible for a commemorative plaque an individual must have been deceased for a period of 20 years OR the centenary of their birth has passed. Individuals must also:

- a) Have been an eminent member of their profession or calling OR made a significant contribution to human welfare or happiness
- b) Be recognizable to the well-informed passerby or deserve national recognition
- c) Have distinguished themselves by a significant public service, act of bravery or committed a notorious act.

For plaques commemorating buildings the building must be either locally or nationally known as of special significance and worth of lasting recognition.

When locating plaques, the policy seeks to ensure they are visible from the highway, that plaques for individuals are placed on a residence/site (not a redeveloped site) and the plaques should be installed on buildings rather than gates/boundary walls. A recommendation to locate a plaque which does not meet the three principles must be accompanied by sufficient explanation as to the reason it is deemed acceptable by the appraisal panel.

2.0 PROPOSED PLAQUE

2.1 PROPOSAL

A nomination was received from a member of an online supporter group for Elizabeth Gaskell

proposing a blue plaque for St John's Church to commemorate the marriage of Elizabeth Stevenson and A William Gaskell in 1832. The nominee noted:

This event is a highly significant moment in her biography and a major historical event for the town. While I know the church keeps a copy of the marriage certificate inside the church, many visitors and literary tourists passing by the exterior of the building are entirely unaware of this historic connection.

Thought managing these global communities, I know first hand the immense, ongoing interest in Gaskell's life. Our members frequently discuss literary tourism, and a visible marker at St John's would undoubtedly become a key point of interest for the thousands of enthusiasts who travel to see the real- world inspirations behind her writing.

2.2 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE WORKING GROUP

The Blue Plaques Appraisal Panel reviewed the proposal and agreed to recommend the plaque.

2.3 PROPOSED WORDING

The draft wording for the plaque is proposed as:

GASKELL'S KNUTSFORD
The marriage of
William Gaskell and Elizabeth Stevenson
took place here 30th August 1832

This is subject to refinement as the proposal progresses.

2.4 PROPOSED LOCATION

The proposed location is St John's Church, location to be agreed with the PCC/Diocese.

3.0 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The plaque would cost approximately £500, with the budget drawn from the street furniture cost code under the Environmental Projects centre.

The PCC was copied into the nomination email, and the Town Clerk has written to the PCC advising that the panel had supported the idea of the plaque and, subject to this committee's decision, was minded to explore installing a plaque as a reinforcement of the town's Gaskell connection. This request has been passed to the Clergy team for discussion. Subject to agreement of the PCC, it is anticipated that a listed building consent application will be required as well as a Faculty from the Diocese.

4.0 ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGY

4.1 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

The installation of blue plaques contributes to the delivery of objective H2 – initiatives which celebrate

and promote the heritage of Knutsford.

5.0 DECISION REQUIRED

The committee should decide whether to progress a blue plaque as outlined.