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## **Former Talbot Hotel and adjoining car park, Ashbourne Road, Leek**

**Proposed change of use and conversion of former Talbot Hotel public house and the erection of a three - four storey extension to form a 63 bedroom hotel incorporating restaurant/bar and undercroft car parking (55 spaces) with associated landscaping, including Conservation Area consent for partial demolition and removal of trees**

### **Planning Statement**

**March 2013**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.01 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application for the proposed conversion of the former Talbot Hotel public house and the erection of a three storey, 63 bedroom hotel, incorporating a bar/restaurant and under-croft car parking (55 spaces) and associated landscaping at Ashbourne Road, Leek.

1.02 The application is made by Premier Inns Limited (part of the Whitbread Group plc) who will operate the site as a Premier Inn Hotel and a “The Kitchen” restaurant both of which are well-known and successful parts of the company.

1.03 The information submitted with this application comprises the following:

- Application Forms including Certificate B
- Plans as follows:-
  - Site Location Plan – red edged (Scale 1:1250)
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP01 – Existing Floor Plans showing Proposed Demolition
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP02 – Existing Floor Plans
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP03 – Existing Elevations
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP04 – Existing Site Layout
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP05 – Existing Site Location Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP06 Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP07 Rev A – Proposed First Floor Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP08 Rev A – Proposed Second Floor Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP09 Rev A– Proposed Third Floor Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP10 – Proposed Roof Plan
  - Dwg No. P1363 AP11 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan and Site
  - Dwg No. P1363 AV01 – Proposed Elevations
  - Dwg No. P1363 AV02 – Proposed Elevations
  - Dwg No. P1363 AV03 – Proposed B & W Elevations 1
  - Dwg No. P1363 AV04 – Proposed B & W Elevations 2
  - Dwg No. P1363 AV05 – Proposed Restaurant Façade
- Planning Statement prepared by Christine Roberts Planning
- Public Consultation Report prepared by Dr Darren Price, Place Art
- Design and Access Statement prepared by Allison-Pike Partnership
- Transport Statement prepared by Mr Simon Tucker, David Tucker Associates
- Heritage Statement prepared by Mr Peter Wardle, The Historic Environment Consultancy
- Bat Survey prepared by EMEC Ecology
- Structural Report prepared by Mr Giles Ward, HWA Structural Engineers
- Tree Report prepared by Cheshire Woodlands

## 2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

### THE SITE

- 2.01 The application site lies on the north side of Ashbourne Road, approximately 35 metres east of the junction (formerly a roundabout) of Ashbourne Road with Fountain Street, Derby Street and Haywood Street. It is roughly rectangular in shape measuring 85 metres long by 25 metres deep extending to 2256.26 square metres in area.
- 2.02 The site is occupied, at its western end by the disused former Talbot hotel public house with its un-surfaced car park (approximately 28 spaces) to the rear. The application site also incorporates a further area of land to the rear currently used as part of the car park to the Probation Office/Health Centre (39 spaces). (This land is being acquired from the County Council and it is understood that alternative arrangements are being proposed for replacement car parking.) The site is enclosed by a variety of walls and fences although the part of the site currently used as the car park to the Probation Office/Health Centre is open to the remainder of this car park.
- 2.03 Access into the former Talbot Hotel site is off Ashbourne Road whilst the Probation Office/Health Centre car park is currently accessed off Cross Street to the east of the application site. The levels of the application site rise up from west to east with the Probation Office/Health Centre car park being some 2-3 metres (approximately) higher than the western end of the site where the former Talbot Hotel sits.

### THE SURROUNDINGS

- 2.04 The application site is located on the eastern edge of Leek town centre. The area in which the site is located is mixed in nature, being predominantly commercial but with some residential properties at both ground floor level and above the various shops and offices. Immediately to the east of the application site is the Probation Office; to the north east is the Police Station; and to the north of the car park areas of the application site is a Health Centre and four-storey office block.
- 2.05 Immediately in front of the former Talbot Hotel building is a small cobbled street linking Fountain Street with Ashbourne Road (closed to through traffic) beyond which is the War Memorial Monument. Immediately to the north of the former Talbot Hotel building is the Memorial Garden and a small residential property (Cattle Market Cottage), with the Cattle Market public house beyond.

- 2.06 On the opposite side of Ashbourne Road are retail units (part of the Smithfield Centre); the White Lion public house (currently closed) and various community uses/offices, with residential above in Penny Bank House.

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY

#### NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 3.01 The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** was published in March 2012. This wide-ranging document sets out the Government's guidance on planning matters and replaces the previous Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's).
- 3.02 Government planning policy is firmly based on the principles of sustainable economic development. The NPPF states that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development where the proposal is in accordance with the development plan and unless there are significant and demonstrable reasons which outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.
- 3.03 The NPPF sets out a list of twelve core land-use planning principles including that local authorities should drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units etc; should promote good design and good standards of amenity; and should encourage the effective use of land.
- 3.04 The NPPF states that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity and it advocates that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
- 3.05 Local authorities are advised to apply a sequential approach to planning applications requiring main town centre uses to be within, or on the edge of, town centres. In respect of edge of, or out-of-centre, sites preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to town centres.
- 3.06 The NPPF confirms previous advice that hotels and restaurants are classed as main town centre uses.
- 3.07 The **Government's Tourism Policy** was published in March 2011. This document states that tourism is often underestimated but is a tremendously important sector for the UK economy. It is one of the country's six biggest industries and it contains over 200,000 businesses. It accounts for over 4.4% of national employment. Importantly, tourism creates wealth and employment in all parts of the country, not just within the south-east.
- 3.08 One of the stated aims of the Government, in respect of tourism, is to increase the proportion of UK residents who take holidays within the UK.

## LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 3.09 The local planning policy situation is constantly changing as it emerges and as various parts of the new Local Plan are published. The Development Plan for Staffordshire Moorlands is currently made up of The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Incorporating Phase 1) (January 2008); The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Adopted May 2001); and The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted September 1998).
- 3.10 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is a wide-ranging strategic document covering the whole of the region. Whilst the Government has declared that such documents are to be reneged, it is currently applicable and it sees the future of the region as being guided by the principles of, inter alia, sustainable development; economic diversity and success; good design; and urban renaissance and regeneration. The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan covers the whole of Staffordshire and the Stoke-on-Trent areas and is also predicated on the principles of sustainable development. It has, amongst its aims, the desire to increase prosperity and reduce unemployment; maintain and enhance environmental quality; and revitalise the image of the area.
- 3.11 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 1998 with some policies “saved” by Direction of the Secretary of State pending the publication of the Local Development Framework, now to be known as the new Local Plan. The Proposals Map shows part of the application site (the former Talbot Hotel building only) as being within the Leek Town Centre Conservation Area. Policy B13, is a “saved” policy relating to design is of relevance.
- 3.12 The new Local Plan (previously known as the Local Development Framework) is still in the relatively early stages of production with the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement published; the draft Core Strategy – submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in September 2012; the Draft Leek Town Centre Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document published consultation between October and November 2012. Whilst relatively little weight could be attached to these documents, in view of their early stages in the Development Plan process and the fact that they have not yet been adopted, the Leek Master Plan is of interest in the context of this planning application. Its principal objectives include identifying employment opportunities through the re-development of vacant and under-utilised land and property; identifying the potential to increase resident and visitor expenditure; and to strengthen the town’s role as a service and retail hub. It further states that the Council sees the War memorial Area, including the former Talbot Hotel and White Lion PH, as a “Key Opportunity Site” and identifies the potential of these derelict buildings for refurbishment for leisure or residential uses, to help create a good first impression to visitors entering Leek from the direction of Ashbourne.
- 3.13 The Nicholson War Memorial to the west of the application site is a Grade II Listed Building.

- 3.14 It is considered that the proposed development, included as part of this planning application, accords with national, regional and local planning policy.



#### **4.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

4.01 The following list represents the relevant planning history for the site.

- 04/01444/FUL - Conversion of public house to six flats and the erection of six new flats, plus access and car park. Permit with conditions - 28 February 2005
- 05/01391/CONSER - Demolition of single storey extensions within a Conservation Area. Withdrawn
- 05/01402/FUL – Conversion of public house/hotel into ground floor retail unit with conversion of first floor to apartments. Demolition of single storey extension and erection of apartments, Car parking for 19 vehicles and garden space. Withdrawn.
- 06/00426/FUL – Conversion and extension of public house to form retail unit at ground floor with 14 residential apartments on the upper floors together with associated parking, refuse storage, bicycle store and demolition of single storey outbuilding. Permit with conditions - 5 April 2007
- 06/00427/CONSER – Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of single storey extensions to all for the erection of a new apartment building. Granted.
- 07/00009/BOC – Enforcement Case Enquiry

## 5.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### GENERAL

- 5.01 Planning permission is sought for a three –four storey, 63 bedroom hotel incorporating a restaurant and bar with under-croft car parking and associated landscaping. Whitbread Group plc will operate the site as a Premier Inn hotel and a “The Kitchen” restaurant. Leek has been one of the company’s “target towns” for some time.
- 5.02 The company operates two basic models for its Premier Inn brand – in larger city centres and metropolitan areas they generally develop a “Solus” unit which are normally larger in size (100+ beds) with a more modest sized bar/restaurant within the building. The other model, is a hotel block alongside one of the company’s recognisable restaurants e.g. a Brewer’s Fayre or The Kitchen as proposed in Leek.
- 5.03 Premier Inn is one of the largest hotel operators in the country with around 600 sites in the UK comprising over 50,000 bedrooms. Currently, the closest Premier Inn hotels to Leek are at Macclesfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on Trent. These are all more than 12 miles away from Leek and are outside the Staffordshire Moorlands area.
- 5.04 Premier Inn operates a web-based booking system in addition to offering telephone booking. The company’s website attracts more than 1.5 million visitors each month. Potential guests can request any named Premier Inn or search for the nearest Premier Inn to a particular location or postcode. The website provides up-to-date information on room availability as well as information relating to possible alternative suggestions for other nearby Premier Inns.
- 5.05 The company prides itself on, and is well known for, providing high quality overnight accommodation at reasonable cost with a guarantee of a full refund if the guest is not satisfied with any aspect of the accommodation.
- 5.06 Premier Inns are generally busier during weekdays (Monday-Thursday) when many of the guests are travelling for business purposes. (Approximately 60% of Premier Inn guests are business clients.) The average length of stay is 1.3 nights and the average room occupancy is 1.2 people.
- 5.07 All hotels in the Premier Inn estate offer king-sized beds, good quality bedding and pillows, en-suite bathrooms, a television, tea and coffee making facilities, a hairdryer, heating controls and a desk area with broadband access. They offer family bedrooms, restaurant and bar facilities, universal access bedrooms, cots (on request) and 24-hour reception facilities. It is the consistent and high quality service which attracts many guests.

- 5.08 The company recognises the potential of the site in Leek to meet a strong demand for rooms throughout the entire week, from the tourism market in addition to their business customer base.
- 5.09 The “The Kitchen” restaurant will offer breakfast and a range of menu choices, including children’s menus, throughout the day, which will widen the dining choices available in the town for residents and tourists alike.

#### THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN LEEK

- 5.10 Full details of the proposed development in Leek can be found in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies this planning application.
- 5.11 Planning permission is sought for a three-four storey, 63 bedroom hotel incorporating a restaurant and bar. The majority of the bedrooms will be in the new extension to the rear of the converted, former Talbot Hotel. There are no public rooms (apart from the reception area) in the hotel – guests will take all meals in restaurant, which will also be open to members of the public. The proposed development will include 55 car parking spaces, including 3 disabled parking spaces, and associated landscaping. All parking and service areas are located to the rear of the existing former Talbot Hotel building, below the proposed new bedrooms in the under-croft area.
- 5.12 Access to the site will be from Ashbourne Road featuring an “in – out” arrangement for traffic, including service vehicles.
- 5.13 The proposed layout and design of the buildings has been the subject of discussions with Council officers since September 2012. The proposed development recognises the prominence and history of the application site in this part of Leek town centre. The resulting development retains and converts the existing former Talbot Hotel building and provides a modern extension for the majority of the bedrooms to the rear. The proposed scheme respects the location of part of the site within the Leek Conservation Area and its proximity to the Memorial Monument (a Listed Building) building and will make a very positive statement to the surrounding area.

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

- 6.01 The applicants and their representatives have been engaged in detailed discussions with the Council officers in respect of issues relating to the proposed development, particularly regarding layout and design, highways issues and ecological matters. An initial meeting was held on 14 September 2012 to discuss the proposal. A formal pre-application submission was made on 24 December 2012 and a further meeting was held at the Council Offices on 4 February 2013. Dialogue between the project team and Council officers has continued subsequently.
- 6.02 A public exhibition was held at The Foxlowe Arts Centre in the centre of Leek on Thursday 21 February 2013 from 3.30pm-6.30pm. A report concerning this public exhibition, by Mr Darren Price of Place Art, is included as part of the application.
- 6.03 The scheme has been discussed at the Council's Design Review Panel in February 2013 following submission of the pre-application enquiry.

## **7.0 APPRAISAL**

7.01 Discussions have been undertaken with Council officers over a considerable period of time and the key issues which have arisen in terms of the proposed development relate to the principle of the proposed development, design and the impact on the Conservation Area; highways; ecology; trees; socio-economic issues and sustainability and these are discussed in turn below.

### **PRINCIPLE**

7.02 This is a previously developed site within the town centre of Leek. Part of the site lies within the Leek Town Centre Conservation Area and it is situated immediately east of the Nicholson War Memorial which is a Listed Building. The site occupies a prominent gateway into the town with frontages to both Ashbourne Road and Market Place.

7.03 The Council has confirmed that the proposal largely accords with the Leek Town Centre Master Plan which has been approved as an Interim Planning Statement. This shows the site to be part of a larger Opportunity site, known as the War Memorial site for which a mixed use form of development is proposed including leisure, office and residential uses. The Master Plan recognises that the application site is a key gateway site to the town centre and that a high quality development/refurbishment is required to improve its definition and enhance its setting.

7.04 The Council officers have further acknowledged that the proposed development accords with the Leek Area Strategy (Policy SS5a) in the emerging Core Strategy which seeks to strengthen the role of Leek as a visitor destination through the provision of additional accommodation for visitors.

7.05 The Council officers have confirmed that there is, therefore, no objection to the principle of the proposed development.

7.06 The principle of the proposed development is also considered acceptable in the light of the recently published National Planning Policy Framework in that it is a form of sustainable economic development which the Government is actively encouraging. The proposed use also accords with the Government's Tourism Policy in that it will provide visitor accommodation and facilities.

### **DESIGN AND IMPACT ON THE CONSERVATION AREA**

7.07 An early pre-application meeting established the requirement for a scheme which retained and refurbished the former Talbot Hotel building but which could include a new-build extension to the rear to provide the majority of the proposed Premier Inn bedrooms. Throughout the discussions and progression of the scheme, the applicants have been

mindful of the need to ensure that the design respects the setting of the existing building within the Conservation Area and adjacent to a listed building and also reflects the prominent “gateway” location of the application site. The design of the proposed scheme has been amended several times during the pre-application stage to reflect comments received from Council Officers and as a result of the comments received from the public consultation exercise. In particular, the roof line behind the existing building has been hipped to reduce its visual impact and mass. The mass of the brick gable facing the Monument has also been reduced in scale by the introduction of a glazed vertical strip.

- 7.08 A full description and explanation of the proposed design is included in the Design and Access Statement prepared by the architects and submitted as part of the application. A Heritage Statement is also included as part of the application.
- 7.09 The proposal was considered, at the pre-application stage in February 2013, by the Council’s Design Review Panel. The applicants were advised that the Panel was “..... largely happy with the overall form and scale of the extension.” The panel had some detailed comments to make regarding the detailed design including in respect of (i) the loss of the single storey extension at the front – which they said was regrettable but on balance could be replaced with a structure of equal design merit with clean lines, glazing and powder-coated aluminium frames to give a contemporary appearance; (ii) concern about the proposed single-storey kitchen/servicing area to the north-east of the building which would be prominent from the War Memorial and close to an existing, and Conservation Area protected hawthorn tree; (iii) the projection of the proposed lift shaft which appeared unduly prominent and resulted in a cluttered effect; and (iv) materials – red brick (exact variety to be confirmed) was considered appropriate but glazing was preferable to the proposed timber cladding. These matters have been addressed in the submitted design including moving the lift shaft away from the existing building to reduce its visual impact and introducing glazing elements into the scheme.
- 7.10 It is considered that, notwithstanding the scale of the proposed extension, that the development will have a satisfactory relationship with the surrounding development which is a mix of commercial and residential uses. The Design and Access Statement includes reference to the 25 degree line from the nearest residential properties and demonstrates that there will be no adverse or overbearing impact from the proposed development.
- 7.11 The site frontage to Ashbourne Road will incorporate two sections of a proposed brick boundary wall (to the eastern end of the site beyond the site exit and between the site entrance and exit points) along with landscaping.

## HIGHWAYS

- 7.12 The planning application is accompanied by a Transport Statement prepared by David Tucker Associates. This has been prepared in consultation with the Council’s Highways Engineers.

- 7.13 The Transport Statement concludes that overall the site is well located in terms of public transport services and that the site benefits from good pedestrian linkages to other parts of the town centre, the bus station and local residential areas all of which are within acceptable walking and cycling distances of the site.
- 7.14 The Transport Statement demonstrates that the proposed development results in negligible increase in the morning and afternoon/evening peak periods – levels within the normal daily variation of the two-way traffic flows on Ashbourne Road. There will be no material impact on the safety or operation of the adjacent highway network.
- 7.15 The report establishes that the proposed development accords with national and local policy and concludes that there is no basis for refusal on high grounds.
- 7.16 Discussions are on-going between the applicant's representatives and the Council Officers in respect of a financial contribution based on traffic generation of the proposed development.

#### ECOLOGY

- 7.17 A Bat Survey Report, prepared by EMEC Ecology, is included as part of the planning application. The report outlines the survey undertaken on the former Talbot Hotel building and also includes reference to nesting birds. The survey found no evidence of the presence of bats or nesting birds but acknowledged that there were conditions present which could potentially provide opportunities for bats to roost and perch. Accordingly, to comply with regulations and planning guidelines, it is recommended that further surveys (evening emergence and dawn swarming) be undertaken in May (ie before the application will be determined) to confirm the situation. (The Planning Officer has confirmed that this course of action is acceptable.)
- 7.18 No demolition of the buildings will be taking place during the nesting season so there will be no breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) although a thorough examination of the building prior to any demolition works being undertaken will be carried out.

#### TREES

- 7.19 There are a number of trees on the application site. A tree survey has been undertaken and an Arboricultural Statement and Tree Constraints Plan is included as part of the planning application. The Arboricultural Statement concludes that the removal of a number of these trees will be required as a result of the proposed development although it states that the trees which will need to be removed are Category C trees and that their removal will not have a significant impact on the wider amenity of the area. Moreover, their loss can be easily mitigated and the Conservation Area enhanced by the provision of new trees and landscaping.

The applicants are happy to accept a condition for the submission, approval and subsequent implementation of a comprehensive landscape scheme for the site.

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC MATTERS

- 7.20 The proposed development will enable a derelict, brownfield site to be brought back into beneficial use to the benefit of the wider community. The proposal has significant job-creation benefits as a hotel of this size will create more than 30 jobs ranging from management positions, administration/reception posts, housekeeping, catering and waiting-on opportunities. The majority of new jobs will be recruited locally with the remaining posts providing opportunities for existing staff within the company to gain promotion and further experience. As a FTSE 100 business, Whitbread has a highly developed programme of recruitment and training including apprenticeships, so that new and existing employees progress well through their careers with ample opportunities for personal and professional development of all staff.
- 7.21 In addition to the creation of new jobs, the hotel will serve to attract and retain visitors in the town whilst the proposed restaurant/public house will provide an additional facility in the town centre for both residents and visitors.
- 7.22 Premier Inn's experience shows that approximately one-third of hotel guests will eat in the on-site partner restaurant; one-third will eat en-route to the hotel and the final third will eat out at other restaurants and public houses. With 63 bedrooms at an average 80% occupancy, the hotel will attract around 22,000 overnight guests to the site (63 bedrooms x 1.2 average guests per room x 80% x 365 days). Of these, approximately one-third i.e. around 7,300 would be expected to eat elsewhere in the town providing a substantial boost to the local economy. It is also likely that guests will also purchase other products and goods/services in the town whilst staying at the hotel thereby providing an additional income stream for other businesses.

#### SUSTAINABILITY/ENERGY MATTERS

- 7.23 Whitbread has a strong commitment to conducting all aspects of its business in a highly sustainable manner. The development will be undertaken to BREEAM "very good" standard. A copy of the Whitbread Sustainability Statement is available if required.



## 8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.01 The proposal accords with central Government guidance and local planning policy in that it is a sustainable form of economic development, within the settlement boundary and on previously developed land.
- 8.02 The proposed development represents a high standard of design and proposes the sensitive refurbishment and conversion of an iconic building as befitting the prominent location of the application site, at the gateway to Leek town centre and opposite the Nicholson War Memorial and partly within the Leek Conservation Area. The proposed scheme is the result of lengthy discussions between the project team and Council officers as well as extremely positive public consultation.
- 8.03 There will be no detrimental impact to traffic movements as a result of the proposed development. There is adequate car parking to serve the proposed development.
- 8.04 The proposed development will create more than 30 new jobs, the majority of which will be recruited locally. It will positively benefit the local economy through the provision of hotel bedrooms and a restaurant and bar facility for visitors and locals alike.
- 8.05 There is considered to be no detrimental impact on ecology or wildlife although a further bat survey will be undertaken at the appropriate time (before determination) to confirm this matter.
- 8.06 A small number of existing Category C trees on the site will be affected by the proposed development. Their loss will not have a detrimental impact of the character or amenity of the site or the wider area. A proposed landscaping scheme will more than mitigate for the loss of the trees and this will enhance the appearance of the site in the Conservation Area.
- 8.07 The applicants propose to commence the development as soon as possible once the application has been determined and, on this basis, it is respectfully requested that the application be approved.