



## **THE TALBOT HOTEL, LEEK - PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Proposed development of a 63-bed Premier Inn hotel with associated restaurant and bar, The Talbot, Ashbourne Road, Leek, Staffordshire

### **The Event**

“A Future for the Talbot”  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February  
The Foxlowe Arts Centre  
Market Place  
Leek

The event was organised prior to the submission of a planning application with a view to engaging the community, showing the latest designs and offering the opportunity to ask questions of the delivery team and comment on the proposals. Initially scheduled between 3:30pm and 6:30pm this was extended by an hour on the request of a local councillor who thought it may prevent those who worked some distance away attending.

In attendance were:

Nick Johnston – Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants  
Kevin Murray – Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants  
Steve Cuthbert – Saxondale Properties,  
Andrew Butcher – Saxondale Properties  
Simon Pryce – Allison Pike Partnership  
Christine Roberts – Christine Roberts Planning  
Darren Price – Place A.R.T

### **Invitees**

The consultation was a public drop-in event, free and open to all, but letters and an official invitation were sent to:

- All SMDC Cabinet Members
- All SMDC Councillors representing Leek wards
- Relevant Senior Officers at SMDC
- Representatives of community bodies including; Leek Chamber of Trade, Totally Locally Leek and The Foxlowe Arts Centre.

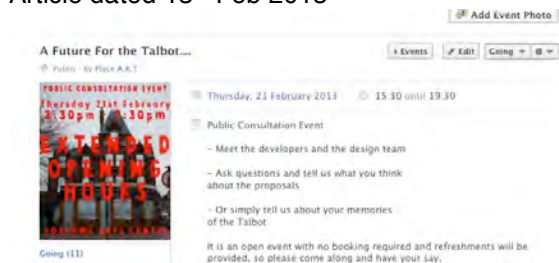
## Publicity

The event was publicised via extensive local networks but also by:

- Articles in Leek Post and Times (in both 13<sup>th</sup> Feb and 20<sup>th</sup> Feb editions)
- Posters located in town and at The Foxlowe
- A Facebook event page
- Twitter, from @Placeart using #afutureforthetalbot



Article dated 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013



Facebook Events Page



Invitation



Article dated 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013-02-25



Poster

Fig 1. A selection of the publicity material used for the consultation event

## **Attendance**

Although it was initially intended to sign in all those who attended this soon became impossible as a result of the volume of visitors. We did sign-in 45 people and the estimated head count is between **170 and 180 visitors** over the course of the 4 hours. Many visitors discussed the scheme with members of the team and a number left comments on the post-it notes provided (see below).

Included in that figure were at least 12 SMDC councillors (though it is entirely possible that there were more) and a number of the senior officers and other individually invited people. Overall, the attendance was excellent and the room was always full and buzzing with conversation.

## **The Feedback**

The response was generally very positive with the benefits to the town of a sizeable hotel being especially well received along with the decision to retain and extend the historic Talbot Hotel building. A typical quote – one of many similar ones reads:

*“Looks good, will vastly improve the entrance to the town.”*

Another visitor to the event was pleased to be asked and happy about the choice of venue:

*“It looks good! Will improve both the site and Leek’s prospects. Thanks for asking and thanks for using the Foxlowe.”*

*“I sincerely hope that this comes to fruition. It is an excellent project in a very sensitive area of the town.”*

The generally positive note was put most succinctly by one exuberant person, (albeit one with little understanding of the planning system) who stated:

*“Great Idea! Start tomorrow and get Lenny Henry to open it!”*

However, despite the tone of positivity there were some areas of concern and a number of useful suggestions, the size of the extension was mentioned by a couple of people:

*“Worried about the height of the new building behind the old building, that it doesn’t overshadow too much and dominate the skyline.”*

The way that the roof is handled also relates to the relative scale of the block and some visitors elaborated on this:

*“The flat roof is higher than the existing, maybe a parapet would decrease the scale of this block?”*

The use of a Mansard-type roof was put forward by a couple of people, both including illustrations:

*“Perhaps build a 3rd floor within a mansard roof with dormers”*

This point was expanded on by another emailed comment, which also touches on the treatment of the main elevations

*“...the proposals were a little bit boring and ‘planning-safe’; The proposal dwarfs the grade 2 listed buildings in the vicinity and towers above the rooflines of the Talbot. When a building is more than 3-storeys tall why compound the problem by adding pitched roofs?”*

*The elevation materials in predominantly brick are dull, the window rhythm is over repetitive and the modules are too small. The link to the back of the Talbot needs particular attention and so does the undercroft parking elevation to the street which at ground level is completely unacceptable as a gateway building in to the town.”*

The suggestion that the elevations to Ashbourne Road ‘needed more work’ was put forward by others:

*“Please do more on the elevations, don’t rely on just brick detailing.”*

*“A bit worried about the stark red brickwork behind the original hotel”*

Suggestions to alleviate this problem included:

*“Needs a break in the shed-like frontage to Ashbourne Road – say roof to ground glazing on the stairwell...probably the same re. link-building between old Talbot and new accommodation block”*

## **Overall**

The event was very well attended by a wide cross-section of local people. There was a very positive attitude to the development which was considered universally to be a positive move for the town. The retention of the existing Talbot Hotel was similarly welcomed. However, there were some relatively minor concerns about the proposals as presented with the most pressing of these being over the detail of the Ashbourne Road elevation and the scale – or perceived scale - of the extension accommodation block.



...and Finally

The Leek Post and Times article dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013:

This picture and below, inset, two of the architect's drawings of the proposed hotel. Right, Andrew Butcher from developer Saxondale, which presently owns the Talbot, with the plans to redevelop the premises.



## Good reception for hotel planned for old pub site

By Leslie Jackson  
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PLANS to build a 60-bedroom hotel in the centre of a market town received the thumbs up from residents when they went on public show last week.

Premier Inn, the UK's largest hotel chain, is looking to invest £4.5 million on redeveloping the former Talbot pub in Leek, which will create 30 job opportunities.

The development includes extensive refurbishment of the Talbot with a new building constructed along the side of Ashbourne Road.

Car parking will be underneath the new building and the company is to purchase a section of the adjoining land for extra spaces.

The consultation event at The Fodowe, organised by Whitbread, the parent company of Premier Inn, attracted a host of visitors who were eager to see and comment on the plans.

Carol Leedham, aged 55, of Cromwell Terrace, said the development would bring Leek into the 21st century.

She said "The Talbot is derelict at present. This will bring it back into use."

"I have stayed in some Premier Inn hotels when on holiday and they are very good. It is also bringing a well-known company into Leek."

Rose Kirkham, aged 65, of Rose Bank Street, said she was glad the present building was not going to be knocked down as enough of the town's heritage had already gone. She said: "This development is very good for Leek. It is great to see a company take it on."



Visitors were asked to put notes on design boards to outline their views of the proposed development. Those received included:

- "This will improve Leek"
- "Excellent plans"
- "Great idea, start tomorrow"
- "Best thing since sliced bread"
- "Good improvement"
- "Vital to conserve the old part of the town"

Leek town and district councillor, Barry Cowie, said: "There are only 32 rooms in the town for people at night. This will treble the capacity. My only concern is the wall at the end of the new build which faces the monument. This requires windows in the side to blend in with the present building."

Patrick Redmond, representing Leek Chamber of Trade, said the development would be good for Leek.

He said: "Leek has been crying out for a hotel. This will increase tourist trade as it is the gateway to the Peak Park."

"The only concern is that we understood that a combined large car park would be built for the hotel and shoppers, as we want an increase in car parking facilities in the town."

Architect Simon Pryce, of Allison Pike architects and designers, said: "There have been many good comments."

"The gable end has been mentioned, so we will look at tweaking this part of the building."

Darren Price of Place A.R.T. said: "The consultation event was very busy all day. People of all ages have visited the event as this is an important development for the town."

"We are taking comments and then the design team will look at them and tweak them where necessary."

"The comments have mostly all been very positive."

"We want to create a good relationship with people."

Work on the hotel scheme, first revealed by the Post & Times now relies on planning permission being granted by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

There is just the piece of the new building facing the monument that needs tweaking. If windows were put in the side to blend in with the Talbot it would be very good."

Nick Johnston, acquisition manager for Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants, said: "People have seen very supportive to the proposals as it will bring it people and tourists."

"Leek has always been on our target list as it is close to the Peak district and Alton Towers. The town also has a lack of hotels. This will help Leek's businesses and at the same time redevelop a derelict site."

Whitbread has appointed Leek-based urban design consultancy Place A.R.T. to manage the consultation on the Talbot proposals.

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