

The George Hotel

Statement of Community Involvement

Prepared by Counter Context Ltd

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by Counter Context Ltd on behalf of Kirklees Council and Queensberry Ltd, hereby referred to as 'the Applicant'. It provides:

- An account of the pre-application consultation undertaken with local residents, local councillors and other key stakeholders about the proposals.
- A summary of the feedback received from these consultees.
- Evidence that this feedback has been considered in the development of the proposals.

The pre-application community consultation strategy was designed to reflect guidance within Kirklees Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2019) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021).

1.2 Site Location

The proposed site is located within Huddersfield town centre between John William Street, Railway Street and Huddersfield Station.



Figure 1: Site location image

1.3 Overview of the Proposed Development

The proposals for the George Hotel would see it renovated to become a high-quality hotel. The number of bedrooms would be increased from 60 to 91 and includes a conference space, a bar and a restaurant. It is envisaged that the ground floor could house the hotel's reception, lounge, restaurant and bar. The lower ground floor will provide a 100-cover banqueting suite for business events, receptions and weddings.

1.4 Policy Requirements

Conducting an early and transparent pre-application consultation is consistent with the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021).

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and outcomes for the community.¹

The NPPF goes on to state that:

[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.²

...

Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.³

This Statement of Community Involvement also fulfils a formal recommendation of the Local Planning Authority to provide people with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme at an early stage.

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Kirklees Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2019) states:

Plans should: ...be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.

In providing guidance to developers on how they should carry out pre-application consultation, Kirklees Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides the following advice:

The document seeks to promote involvement in planning policy at an early stage in order to work towards a consensus and thereby reduce the scope for delay at later stages. By getting involved and having your say in planning decisions you can help to shape the future of your area.⁴

In setting out clear guidance we aim to:

- *Increase public awareness of the planning process and how to get involved;*
- *Ensure a transparent process based on consideration of a range of options and local priorities and concerns;*
- *Provide an opportunity to help groups and individuals shape the local plan and make representations on its contents; and*
- *Help create a sense of ownership on planning issues.⁵*

The advice contained within Kirklees Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement was considered during the design of the pre-application consultation strategy. As part of this process, the

¹ Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2021, paragraph 39.

² *Ibid.*

³ Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2021, paragraph 128.

⁴ Kirklees Council's Statement of Community Involvement, December 2019, page 2.

⁵ Kirklees Council's Statement of Community Involvement, December 2019, page 4.

Applicants' team met with Kirklees Council Planning Officers and discussed the consultation strategy for the proposed development ahead of the commencement of the consultation programme.

In addition to the requirement for pre-application community consultation set out by national and local authorities, the Applicant recognises that local people can make a valuable contribution to the proposals by offering their local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered, in many cases resulting in a stronger set of proposals.

2. Engagement with Key Stakeholders

2.1 Pre-application Engagement with Ward Councillors

Prior to the start of the public consultation, officers presented an update on the proposals to an ad-hoc Scrutiny panel, chaired by Councillor Elizabeth Smaje on 22nd September 2022. No specific requirements were requested at that meeting.

Officers briefed Portfolio holders for Town Centres and Corporate. Cllr. Graham Turner, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, supports the recommendations and was briefed on the 6th and 21st September 2022, and Cllr Paul Davies, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Corporate, was briefed on the 6th September 2022 and supports the officer recommendations.

Details of the public consultation and how to leave feedback were included in Kirklees Council's weekly bulletin to all councillors on 25 November and 2 December 2022.

2.2 Huddersfield Civic Society

The Applicant has been in regular contact with the Civic Society regarding the proposals for the George Hotel since late 2019, holding quarterly catch-up meetings with the organisations Chair and Secretary. The Applicant shared high-level information with the Civic Society and provided updates about the progress of the plans.

In response to the consultation, Huddersfield Civic Society provided the following feedback:

Huddersfield Civic Society welcomes the intention to create a 'new' George Hotel and appreciates that, to be commercially viable, there need to be extensions. However, to properly comment, we need to see a proper planning application for what is actually being proposed and for this to include:

- *A Heritage Impact Assessment,*
- *Plans showing the current internal building layout at each level,*
- *How the design of proposed extensions matches the existing Italianate building design in terms of profile, fenestration, materials etc,*
- *How details of the interior of the listed building are to be preserved or changed,*
- *Arrangements for access: deliveries, drop-off parking, longer-term parking, emergency exits,*
- *Description of how services will be provided, e.g. location of onsite refuse storage,*
- *What constitutes the 'sustainability' mentioned.*

In summary, Huddersfield Civic Society would welcome the provision of fuller information on proposals for the George Hotel and will be happy to comment when these are made available.

3. Pre-application Public Consultation Activities

3.1 Introduction

This section of the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the range of activities undertaken as part of the pre-application consultation with local residents, businesses, community and interest groups. The pre-application public consultation period ran from **Friday 25 November to Friday 9 December 2022**.

The key aspects of the consultation activity plan are outlined below.

3.2 Publicising the Consultation

3.2.1 Press Release and Media Coverage

A press release was issued on Friday 25 November 2022. It provided information about the proposals and details of the public consultation, including how people could provide feedback. Articles subsequently appeared in online and printed publications, including the Yorkshire Post, Huddersfield Daily Examiner, Insider Media, the Huddersfield Times, Business Desk, Kirklees Together and Huddersfield hub.



Figure 1: Screenshots of print articles that appeared in the Huddersfield Examiner (left) and the Yorkshire Post (right).

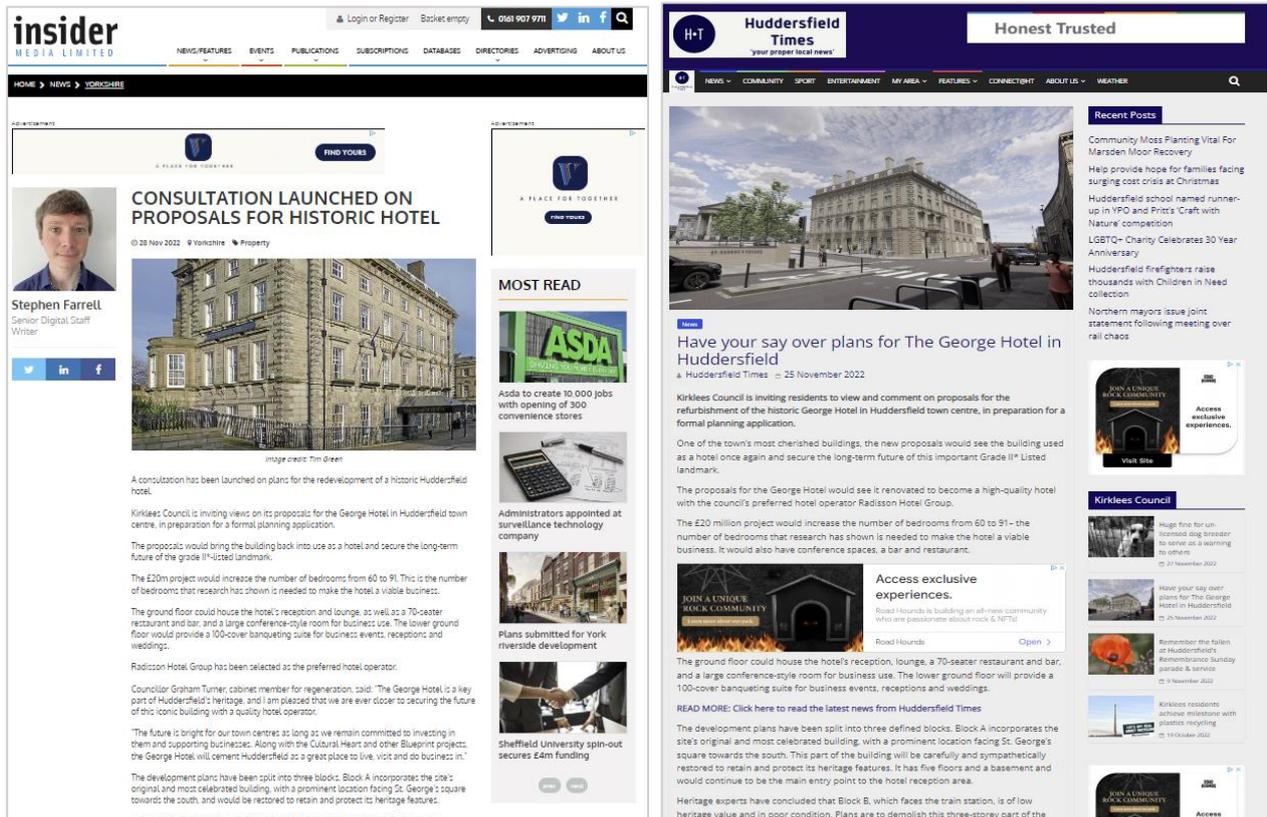


Figure 2: Screenshots of online articles that appeared on Insider Media (left) and the Huddersfield Times (right).

3.2.2 Social media promotion

To promote the consultation online, the Applicant posted about the consultation on 4 December 2022 on their Twitter account. The tweet provided information about the consultation, the link to the webpage, and encouraged people to get involved via the online questionnaire. The applicant’s Twitter account is followed by over 44,000 people.



Figure 3: Screenshot of the tweet posted by the Applicant on 4 December 2022.

The Applicant also publicised the consultation via Facebook at the start (25 November 2022) and mid-way (5 December 2022) through the consultation. The Applicant’s Facebook page is followed by 31,000 people.

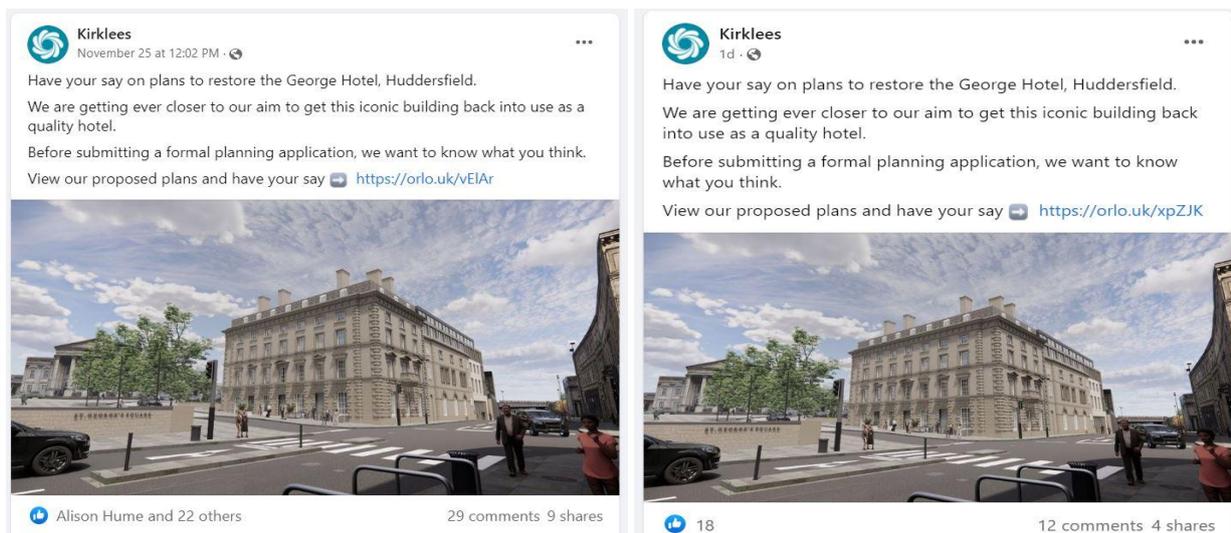


Figure 4: Screenshots of the Facebook posts publicising the consultation.

3.3 Consultation Webpage

A dedicated consultation webpage on Kirklees Councils' webpage went live at the start of the consultation period. The webpage (<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/huddersfield-blueprint/george-hotel.aspx>) provided information on the proposals and vision for the development. It also included a 'Have Your Say' section with a link to an online feedback form.

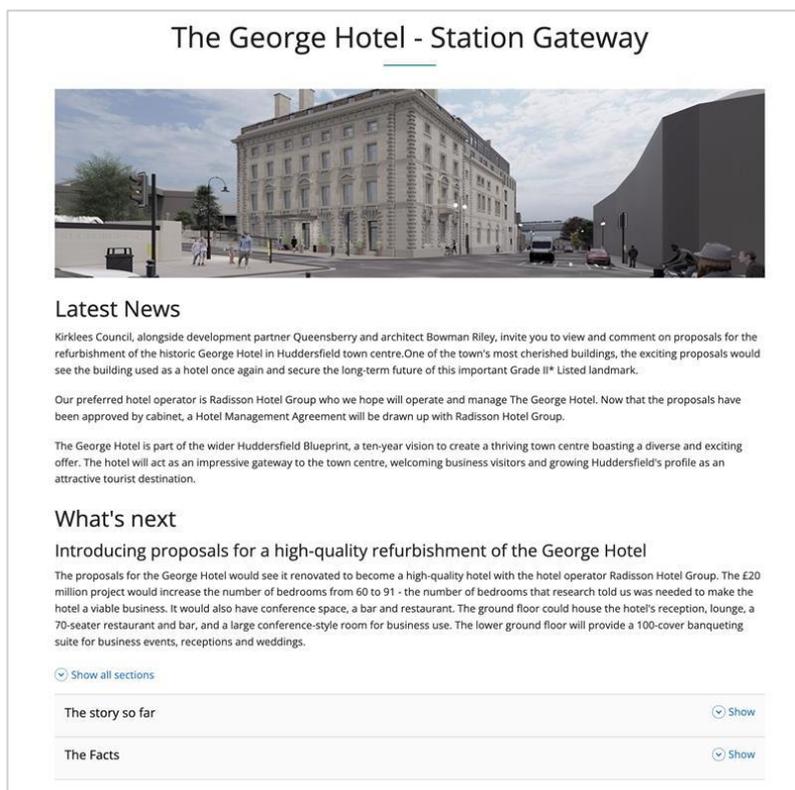


Figure 5: Screenshot of the consultation webpage.

3.3.1 Traffic to the Consultation Webpage

During the consultation period there were a total of 478 visits from 339 users in total. The average time each user spent on the page was four-and-a-half minutes.

3.4 Methods for Receiving Feedback

3.4.1 Online Feedback Form

An online feedback form was accessible from the 'Have Your Say' section on the consultation webpage. This questionnaire included a combination of closed, multiple-choice and open-text questions, allowing further comment and explanation.

4. Pre-Application Consultation Feedback

4.1 Summary of Feedback Received

In total, **80 responses** to the pre-application consultation were received via the online feedback form.

All the responses received during the pre-application consultation period have been logged and comments have been considered by the Applicant's team.

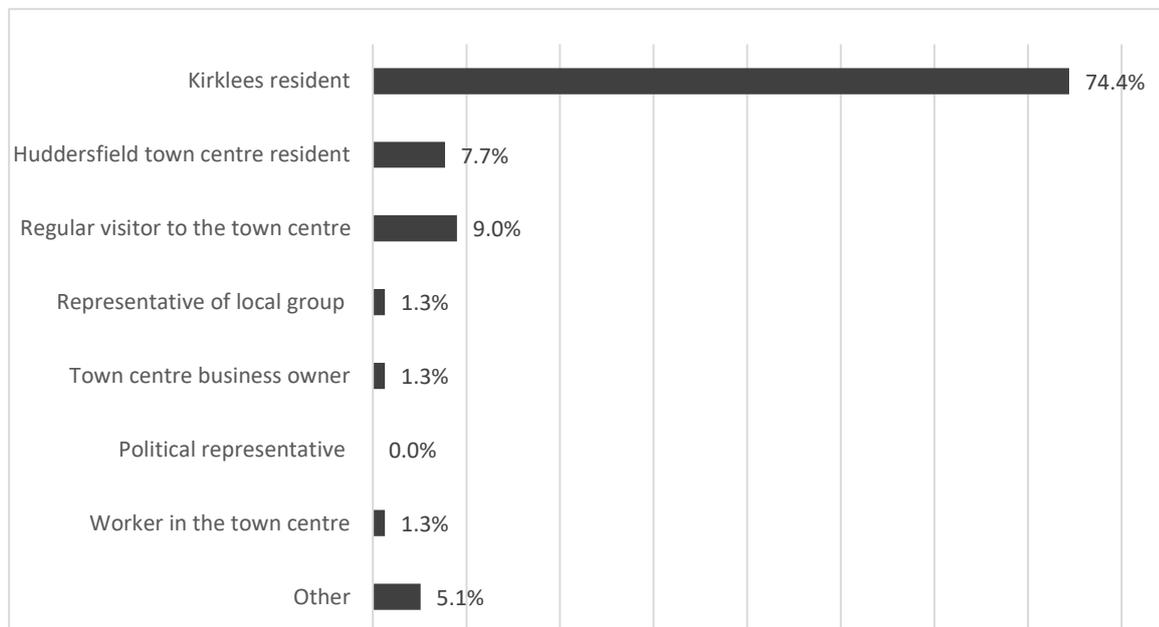
4.2 Analysis of Feedback Forms

The feedback forms included a series of multiple-choice questions and open-text questions about the proposals. Here follows a summary of the answers received through the multiple-choice questions asked within the feedback form.

Comments received through open questions in the feedback forms and by email are summarised and addressed in the table in Section 4.2.2

4.2.1 Responses to Closed Questions

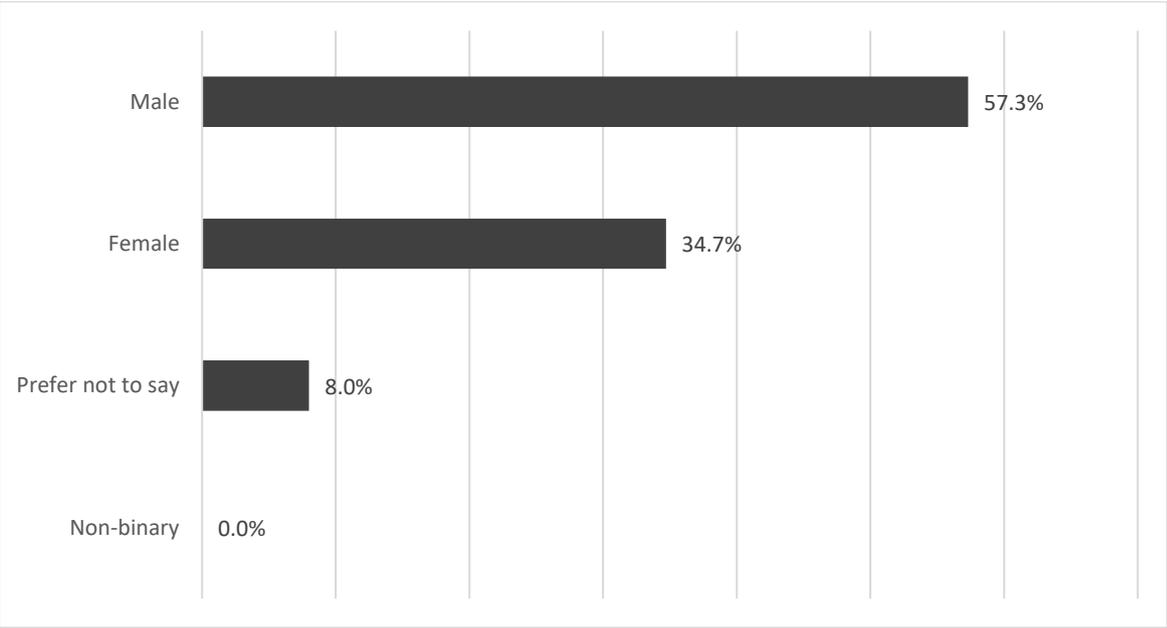
What is your connection to The George Hotel?



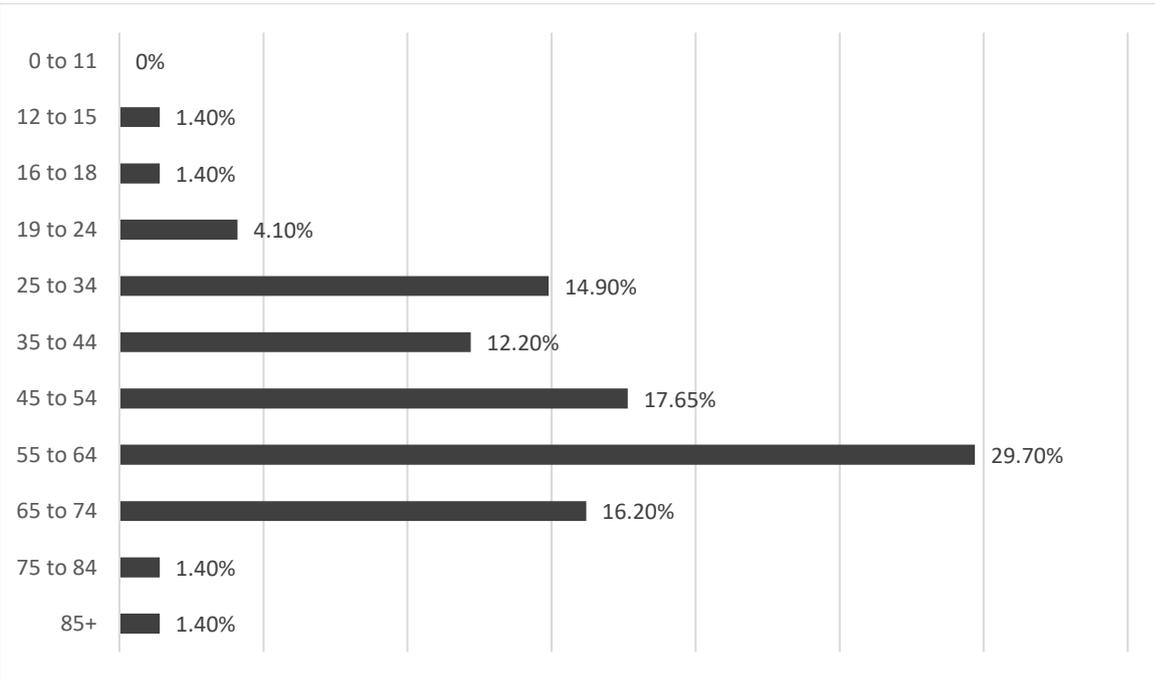
Those who selected 'Other' listed the following:

- *Huddersfield resident*
- *Rugby League fan*
- *Huddersfield Civic Society*
- *Huddersfield Town Centre Regeneration Group*

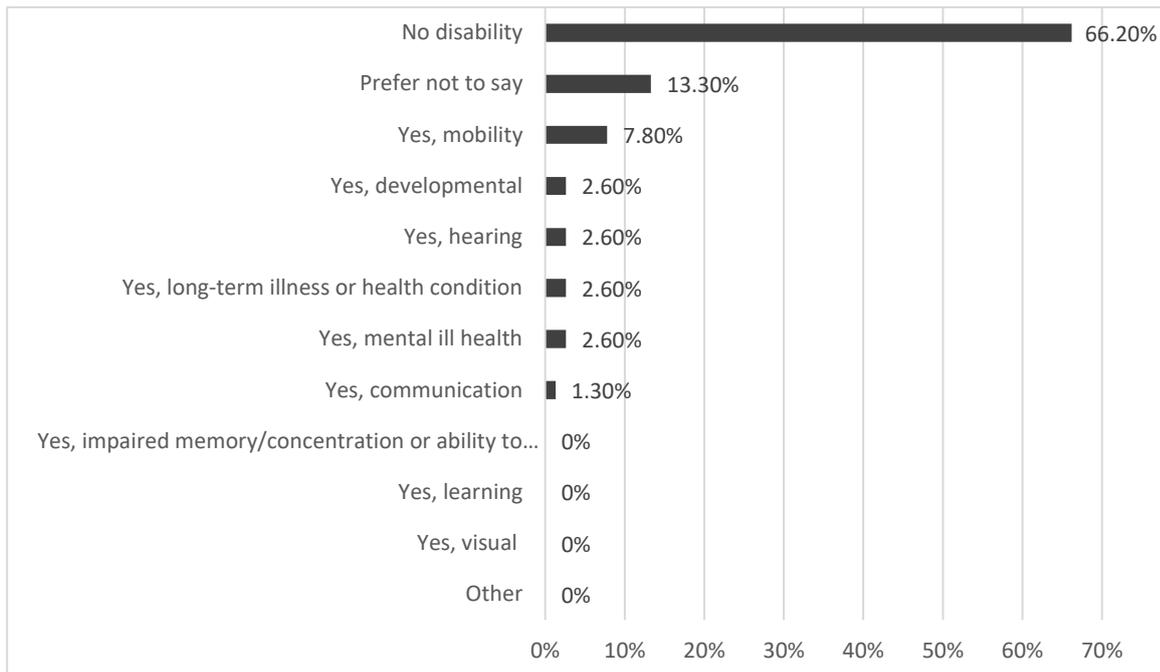
What is your gender?



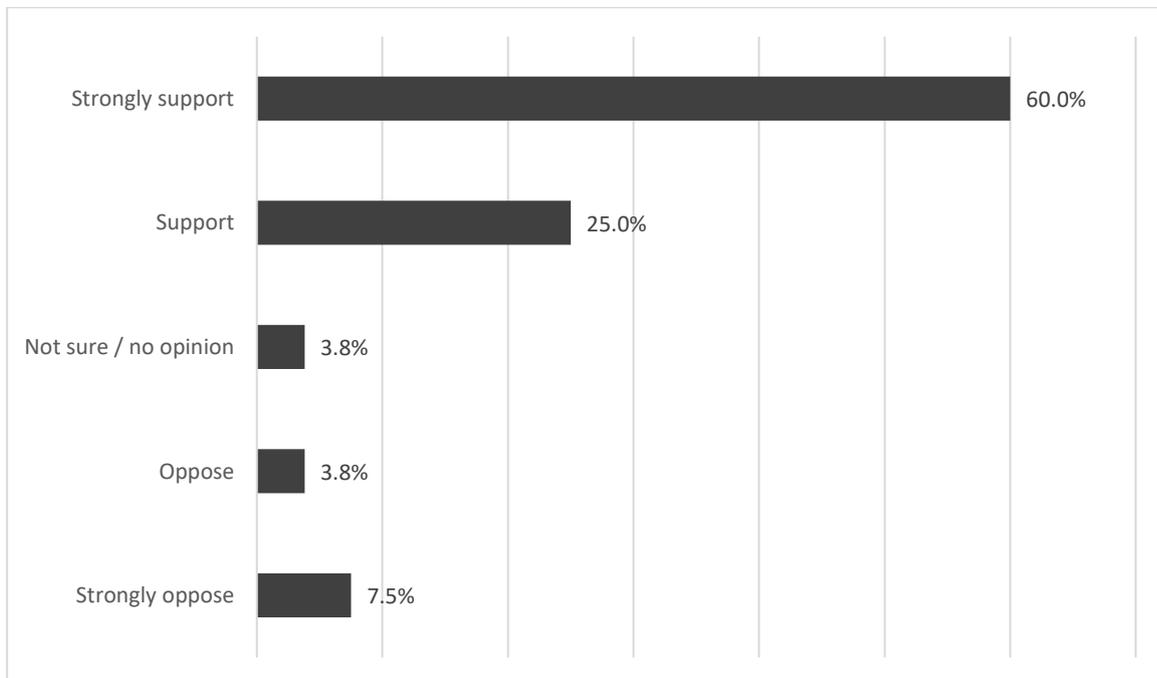
Which age bracket are you in?



Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

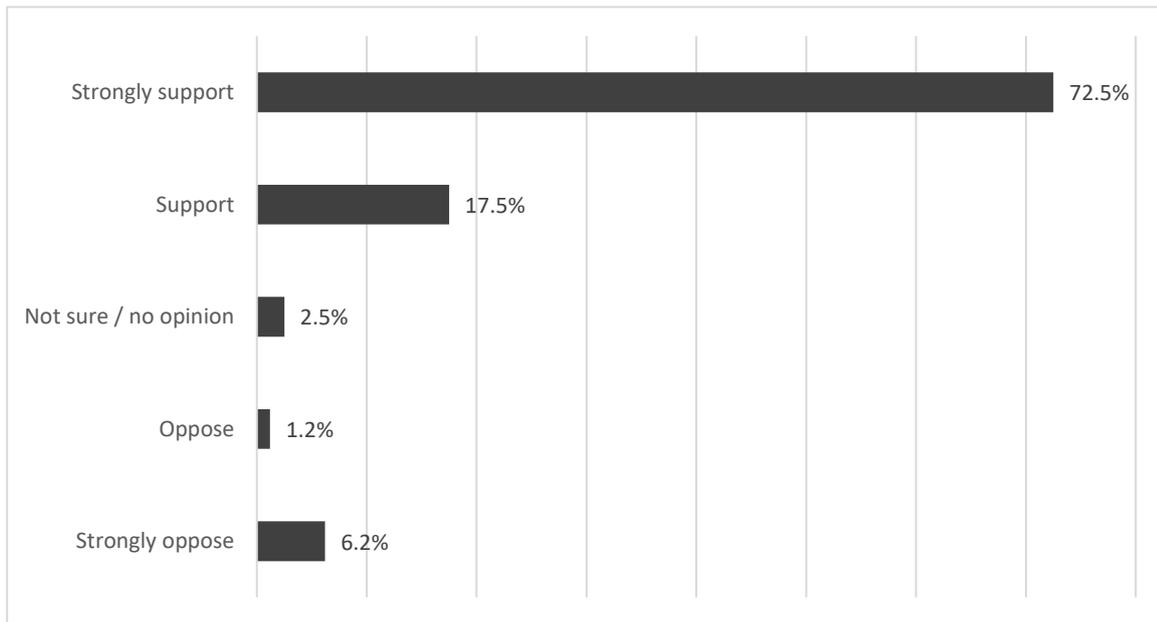


Do you support the plan to bring the George Hotel back into active use as a hotel, operated by the Radisson Hotel Group?



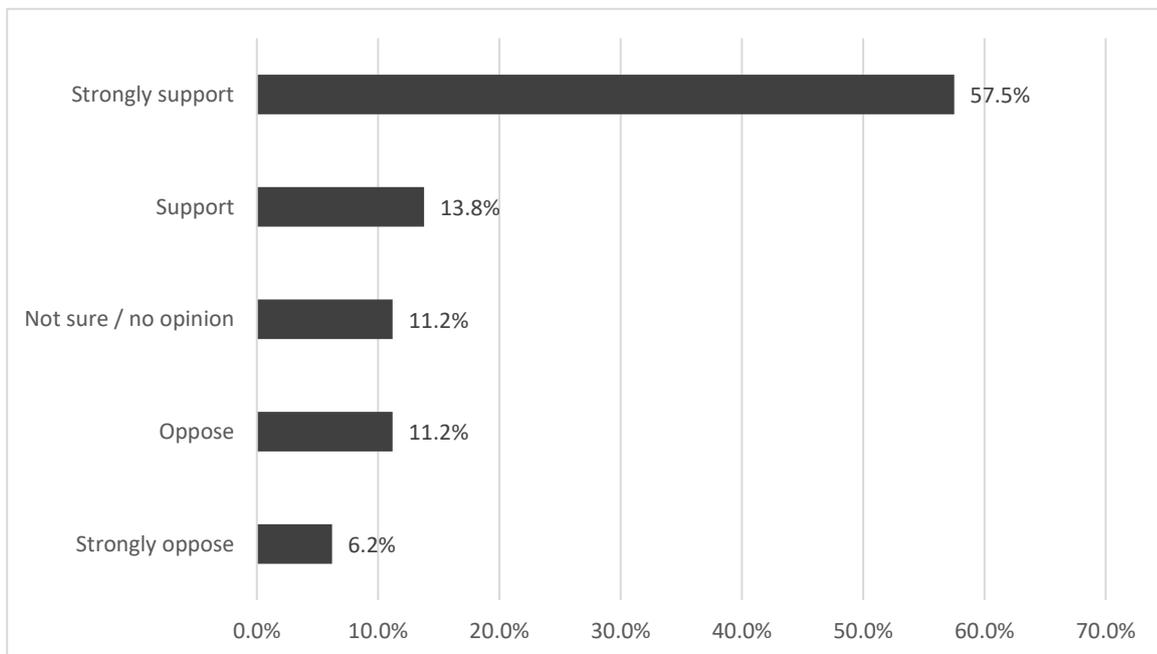
85% expressed support for the plan to bring the the George Hotel back into active use as a hotel, operated by the Radisson Hotel Group.

Do you support the proposal to sensitively refurbish the most historic parts of the building?



90% expressed support for the proposal to refurbish the most historic parts of the George Hotel building.

Do you support the proposal to sensitively redevelop the less historic parts of the building to create additional hotel rooms and a new restaurant space?



71.3% expressed support for the sensitively redevelop the less historic parts of the building to create additional hotel rooms and a new restaurant space.

4.2.2 Responses to Open Text Questions

An extensive summary of the issues raised by respondents through the open response field questions within the feedback form and those who submitted feedback via email, alongside an account of how they have been considered and responded to, is provided in the following table.

Topic	Applicant Response
Building Design	
Comments praising the design of the building.	The Applicant welcomes comments of support for the design of the building.
Comments supporting the retention of the original façade.	The Applicant welcomes comments of support for the retention of the original façade.
<p>Comments suggesting the design isn't consistent with the historic design of the existing building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comment the design of Block B and Block C is too contemporary and not in keeping with the streetscape, surrounding heritage assets nor the retained portions of the George Hotel - A comment suggesting the building should not be demolished and re-built. 	<p>The design creates a sensitive and deliberate juxtaposition between old and new elements in order to retain the prominence of the original building and heritage asset.</p> <p>This is achieved through sensitive alignment and massing of the new build against the original building elements.</p> <p>The upper levels are set back and of lightweight construction to further ensure the new additions are subservient to the existing.</p>
<p>A comment that the newly built sections should use the same materials as those used in the existing building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comments that this should be mandatory due to the building's Grade II* listed status. - A comment that this is required if the building falls within a conservation zone. 	<p>Careful choice of quality materials and suitable contrast between elements highlights the junction and difference between the old and new whilst retaining the overall quality of the building.</p>
A comment suggesting that if the building falls within a conservation zone, it should use the same stone material as the existing building and avoid using cladding.	
<p>Requests not to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - composite metal cladding or other such materials. - 'similar coloured materials', as noted in the Proposals, on the grounds that they would likely be cheaper and poorer quality. It was suggested that the existing material should be used given the building's Grade II listed status. 	
A comment that the roofline of the retained element of Block B is disfigured by the new build element and creates a clash.	The upper levels are set back and of lightweight construction to further ensure the new additions are subservient to the existing. When viewed from street level the perspective furthers this effect.
A comment that it should be a mandatory requirement to have extensive exterior lighting on the building to ensure its prominence.	There will be a lighting strategy to the external elevations to highlight the building's features.
A comment suggesting the latest iterations of the design are worse than what was previously shown, particularly Block B. It was suggested that the latest iteration:	<p>The design has been developed and the window locations have been returned to a regular rhythm.</p> <p>Careful choice of quality materials and suitable contrast between elements highlights the junction</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has fewer and smaller windows, many of which are randomly placed with no rhythm or order. - Poorer street interaction. - Poorer quality materials. 	<p>and difference between the old and new whilst retaining the overall quality of the building.</p>
<p>Comments criticising the John William Steet elevation.</p> <p>A comment that the John William Street elevation) completely dominates this elevation and overshadows the retained façade of the original building.</p>	<p>The upper levels are set back and of lightweight construction to further ensure the new additions are subservient to the existing. When viewed from street level the perspective furthers this effect.</p>
<p>Comments suggesting the design of the building should be pay homage to the story of Rugby League and other key aspects of Huddersfield's story - past, present and future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A suggestion for the Applicant works collaboratively with the council museums service, West Yorkshire Archive, Huddersfield University, the Libraries local studies services, Rugby League organisations and heritage partner 	<p>In March 2020, Kirklees Council purchased the building to secure its future and incorporate it within its long-term regeneration programme.</p> <p>After detailed consideration, the idea of the George Hotel becoming home to a dedicated Rugby League Museum was ruled out due to the extensive alterations needed to the Listed hotel building.</p> <p>A Rugby League Museum is still desired by the Council as part of the town's wider regeneration, with plans for the museum now focussing on other locations in the town.</p>
<p>A couple of comments criticising the grey fence shown in the plans.</p>	<p>This is an existing retaining wall.</p>
<p>A comment that there should be a minimum of two elevators in the building.</p>	<p>In addition to replacing the existing lift located near the hotel reception with a modern installation, the Applicant intends to provide a further two new lifts to serve the guests and staff.</p>
<p>A comment praising the inclusion of a living roof.</p>	<p>The Applicant welcomes comments of support for a living roof.</p>
<p>A comment that a skylight roof above the atrium should be included in the plans.</p>	<p>At this stage it is assumed that the roof to the atrium is to be a specialist subcontractor designed item. Therefore, at this stage no allowance has been included for structural support. It is envisaged that the preferred option for the roof form is likely to be a lightweight glazed framing solution. For cost estimation purposes, it is recommended to include for an allowance for structural support if this is introduced at a later design stage.</p>
<p>A comment suggesting the triangular shape of the building might cause issues with space and density.</p>	<p>The shape and scale of the proposed hotel development is in keeping with the existing footprint of the current structures located on site.</p>
<p>Rugby League Museum</p>	

<p>Many comments criticising the absence of any mention of Rugby/Rugby League given its significance to the history of the hotel.</p> <p>Comments that the significance of Rugby League to the hotel should be highlighted in the proposals.</p> <p>Many comments requesting that some of the building be dedicated to housing a Rugby League Museum.</p> <p>Comments that the proposals should be scrapped in favour of delivering a Rugby League Museum.</p> <p>Questions regarding why a Rugby League Museum is no longer being delivered in the hotel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One noted the commitment made by Kirklees Council to work with Rugby League Cares. - A comment noting that Kirklees council are liable if a museum is not delivered given that a bid wasn't delivered. <p>A comment that the council received funding for a Rugby League Museum.</p> <p>A comment suggesting that housing a Rugby League Museum would attract tourists to Huddersfield.</p> <p>A comment that the absence of Rugby League in the proposals is a factor in why Huddersfield only had one game during the rugby league world cup.</p>	<p>In March 2020, Kirklees Council purchased the building to secure its future and incorporate it within its long-term regeneration programme.</p> <p>After detailed consideration, the idea of the George Hotel becoming home to a dedicated Rugby League Museum was ruled out due to the extensive alterations needed to the Listed hotel building.</p> <p>A Rugby League Museum is still desired by the Council as part of the town's wider regeneration, with plans for the museum now focussing on other locations in the town.</p>
Accessibility	
<p>Question regarding the whether/what accessibility measures will be incorporated into the proposals.</p>	<p>Vertical Access: Compliant level access will be achieved throughout the site via lift or ramp. Staircases throughout the retained section of the building (Block A) will be rationalised. The existing heritage main stair in Block A is retained and a fire escape stair introduced in the new extension to the northern end of the building. The newly formed central atrium houses a new feature stair to allow access from ground level to the function suite at basement level.</p> <p>A new accessible lift will be installed within the existing lift shaft in Block A, allowing access to all levels. In addition to this, a feature glazed lift will allow guest access from basement level to all levels allowing views into the atrium space on ascent.</p> <p>Horizontal Access: Compliant level access will be achieved from</p>
<p>A comment emphasising the importance of providing disabled access.</p>	

	<p>Railway St/St George's Square into the main reception of the new hotel. Automatic doors allow access from the front lobby into main reception. The new extension to the building will, where possible have level access from the existing Block A. At ground floor level a level change is unavoidable due to the window locations of the retained façade in Block C, the glazed lift allows horizontal access between blocks B and C at this point. At basement level the new extension floor level is lower than the existing Block A level to achieve the required headroom to function spaces, a combination of a ramp and heritage 'step lift 'platform will allow free movement between the two areas.</p>
<p>A suggestion to include a disabled parking bay/drop-off spot.</p>	<p>There is a drop-off spot in front of the main entrance. However, this is Council property and not part of the hotel.</p>
<p>General support</p>	
<p>Comments suggesting the proposals would be a great addition to the town centre.</p>	<p>The Applicant welcomes the comments of support for its plan to restore the Grade II* Listed George Hotel, and reinstate it as a thriving, sustainable, hotel and hospitality development.</p> <p>It is Applicant's intention for George Hotel to kickstart the redevelopment of the building and the wider regeneration of St. George's Square.</p>
<p>Comments expressing enthusiasm to see the proposals come to fruition.</p>	
<p>Comments expressing support for bringing the building back into use.</p>	
<p>Comment expressing support for the proposals on the grounds that it will contribute to the modernisation of Huddersfield.</p>	
<p>Car parking, traffic and access</p>	
<p>A comment that there should be designated car parking for hotel guests.</p>	<p>The George Hotel is in a location which is highly accessible via public transport, directly adjacent to Huddersfield Train Station. As such, it is anticipated that a high proportion of hotel guests will arrive via public transport and will not require parking.</p> <p>The hotel requires a dedicated delivery bay, which has been incorporated into the adjacent parking area with minimum losses.</p>
<p>A comment expressing concern for the potential loss of car parking at the train station.</p>	
<p>A comment that more should be done to improve pick-up/drop-off at the train station.</p>	
<p>General opposition</p>	
<p>Comments criticising the council on the grounds that it shouldn't be funding a project that will financially benefit a private developer, particularly in the current financial climate.</p>	<p>The George Hotel is part of the wider Huddersfield Blueprint, a ten-year vision to create a thriving town centre boasting a diverse and exciting offer.</p> <p>The hotel will act as an impressive gateway to the town centre, welcoming business visitors and growing Huddersfield's profile as an attractive tourist destination.</p>
<p>A comment suggesting the high cost of the project will likely rise and cause the project to be scrapped.</p>	
<p>A comment that the proposals would ruin the town centre.</p>	
<p>On-site facilities</p>	
<p>A couple of comments suggesting that a pool be included within the hotel as part of the proposals.</p>	<p>The proposals for the hotel would increase the number of bedrooms from 60 to 91 – the number required to ensure its long-term financial viability.</p>
<p>A comment suggesting that a spa be included within the hotel as part of the proposals.</p>	

<p>A comment that a gym be included as part of the proposals.</p>	<p>The hotel will also include a restaurant and bar, banqueting suite and conferencing facilities, which are seen as key for this development given its location in the heart of Huddersfield town centre.</p> <p>Due to this, and the scale of the existing site, the planned development does not have the space to include any additional facilities.</p>
<p>A comment that the food court isn't suitable for Huddersfield.</p>	<p>This has been noted but is not seen as related to this project specifically.</p>
<p>Hotel occupier</p>	
<p>A comment that the hotel should be occupied by Raddison Blu.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The final 'Radisson Group' brand to be used in the George Hotel plans will not be decided until an official Planning Application has been approved.</p>
<p>Schedule of accommodation</p>	
<p>Comments suggesting the proposed number of rooms is too much given that Huddersfield isn't a popular tourist destination.</p>	<p>To ensure this George Hotel redevelopment is financially viable for the long-term, research from property experts highlighted that the number of rooms needed to be increased from 60 to 91.</p> <p>The George Hotel is just one part of the Council's wider Huddersfield Blueprint programme, which is seen as a key driver to growing the town's tourism appeal and visitor numbers.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<p>A comment that the consultation materials on the website aren't consistent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was noted that the design differs on the Survey page and Kirklees Council web page. 	<p>Any images used on the digital survey form were for aesthetic purposes only. All correct plans and images were featured on the primary consultation web page.</p>
<p>A comment that the hotel should included an air conditioning system for the summer months.</p>	<p>Having a mechanically ventilated and temperature-controlled building ensures that all areas of the building are adequately ventilated and always a comfortable temperature for guests and staff.</p> <p>All mechanical ventilation systems employed in the building will employ heat recovery technology, in order to reduce the heating and cooling demand on areas, and therefore reduce energy requirements.</p>
<p>A comment suggesting the Council allocate funding to ensure the leisure centre and swimming pool remains open.</p>	<p>This has been noted but is not seen as related to this project specifically.</p>

5. Influence of Consultation on the Proposals

The consultation has been undertaken in accordance with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and with Kirklees' Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2019). This document fulfils the requirement for a consultation supporting statement that summarises the methods used, the representations received, and any changes made to the proposals as a result of feedback submitted.

The overall level of response demonstrated a very strong level of support for the proposals, with 85% of the 80 respondents expressing support for the proposal to bring the George Hotel back into active use as a hotel, operated by the Radisson Hotel Group, and an even higher proportion expressing support for the proposal to sensitively refurbish the most historic parts of the building.

The comments received during the pre-application consultation have been considered by the Applicant's team on an ongoing basis to ensure that the issues raised could be addressed during the development of the proposals (see responses table in section 4.2.2 of this report).

The Applicant would like to thank all those who have provided their feedback during the pre-application consultation and looks forward to further constructive dialogue throughout the development process.