

CLAIRE HOUSE AND JAMES HOUSE, LEATHERHEAD

Client: Mole Valley District Council

Property: Claire House and James House

Date: 3rd August 2018

PUBLIC EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

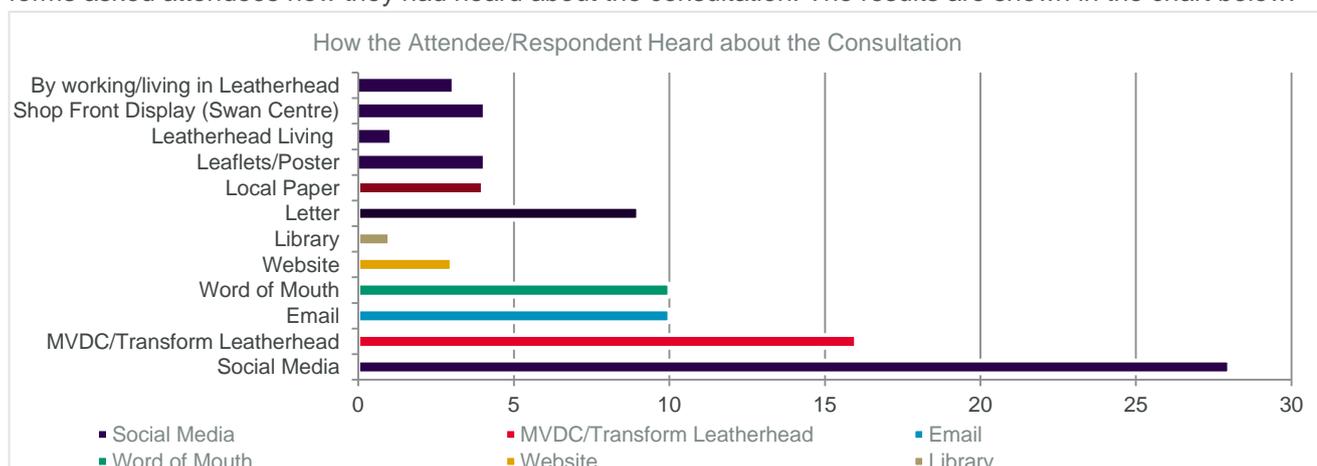
As part of the pre-application engagement with local residents and stakeholders, the applicant and associated consultancy team organised, publicised and staffed two public exhibitions during two dates in July 2018.

The events took place on Thursday 12th July between 4.00pm-8.30pm and Saturday 14th July between 10.00am-4.30pm. The selection of dates included a weekday evening and an all-day weekend event to encourage maximum attendance and ensure that as many members of the public as possible had the opportunity to view the proposals. The public exhibitions were held at The Leatherhead Institute, 67 High Street, Leatherhead, KT22 8AH. This venue was chosen as it was close to the town centre and was a size that could accommodate a large number of attendees. After the public consultation events, the boards were put on display in a vacant unit at the entrance of the Swan Centre between Monday 16th July and Monday 30th July. The exhibition boards were also hosted online between Monday 16th July and Friday 27th July 2018 on www.transformleatherhead.com/claireandjameshouse.

The aim of the public exhibition was to present the emerging proposals for the site, encourage feedback and understand the aspirations of local communities in relation to the site.

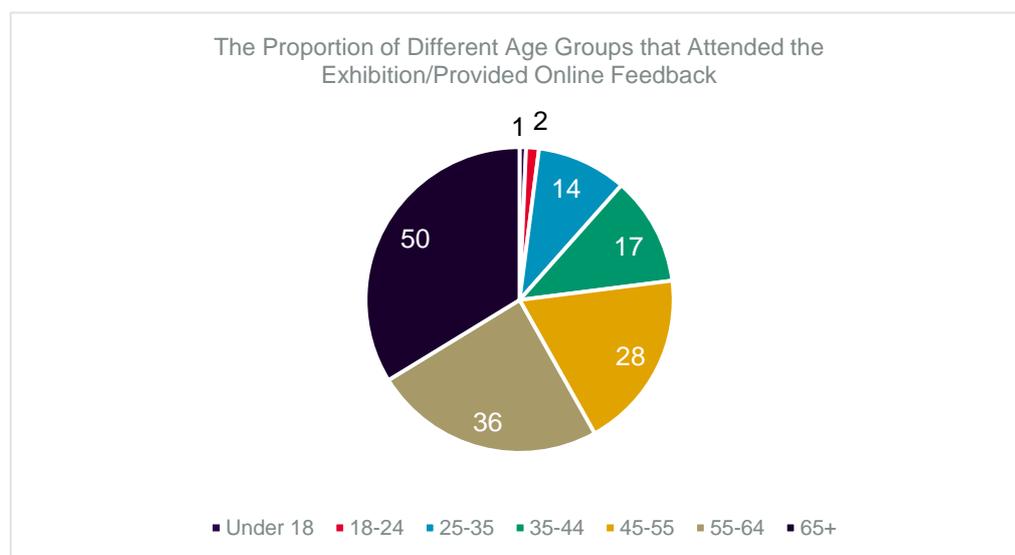
ATTENDANCE

In total, approximately 89 people attended the public consultation - 40 on Thursday 12th July and 49 on Saturday 14th July. A feedback form was designed to encourage feedback on the proposals presented on the boards. This was completed by 57 attendees. Approximately 61 people also completed feedback forms online. The feedback forms asked attendees how they had heard about the consultation. The results are shown in the chart below:



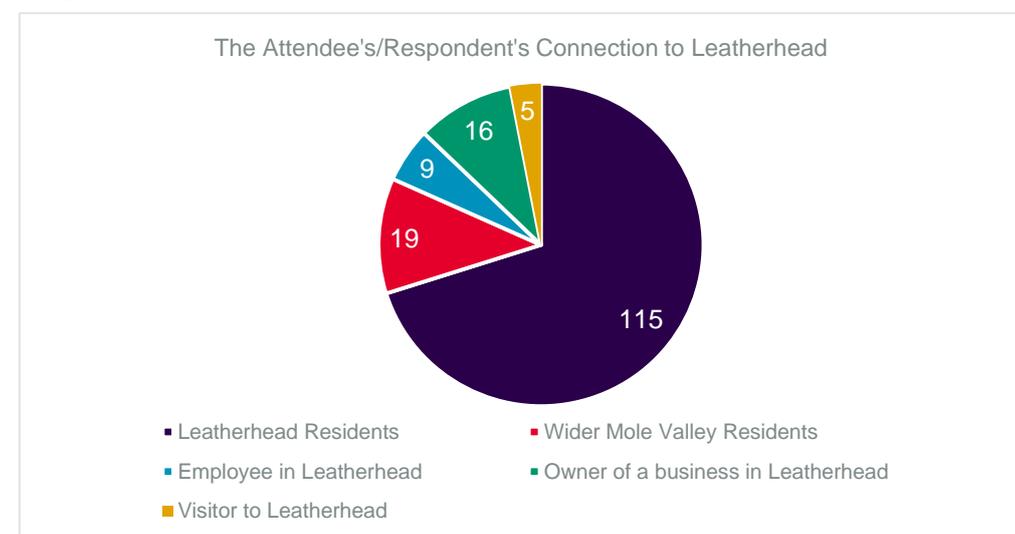
A variety of channels were used to promote the two public exhibition dates to ensure as many local people were informed about the event. The majority of attendees were informed of the consultation event via social media platforms (28 people), predominately Facebook, although some stated they heard about it through Twitter. Approximately 16 people indicated that they were informed of the consultation process through Mole Valley District Council or Transform Leatherhead (although it is unclear as to how communication was made) and 10 people respectively were aware of the consultation through words of mouth and email.

A sign-in sheet was used to record data on each person that attended the public exhibition. This was situated on a front desk and monitored by a member of the project team to ensure that all visitors were recorded. Attendees were asked to indicate the age bracket which described them; those providing feedback online were also asked to do the same. The chart below shows the age of the respondents who attended the public exhibition across both days and provided an online response to the proposals:



Overall there was a relatively poor representation across the age groups. Those who attended the public exhibition/provided feedback online were aged predominately 65 years and over (50 people). A large proportion of attendees were also aged 55-64 years (36 people). There were only three attendees aged 24 years and under.

Visitors were also asked to indicate their relationship to the site when they signed in or registered to comment online. The chart below represents the proportion of attendees/respondents who identified themselves within each category:



The breakdown of the chart is as follows:

- 115 people indicated they were a Leatherhead resident
- 19 people indicated they were a wider Mole Valley resident
- 9 people indicated they were an employee of a Leatherhead business
- 16 people indicated they were a Leatherhead business owner
- 5 people indicated they were a visitor to Leatherhead

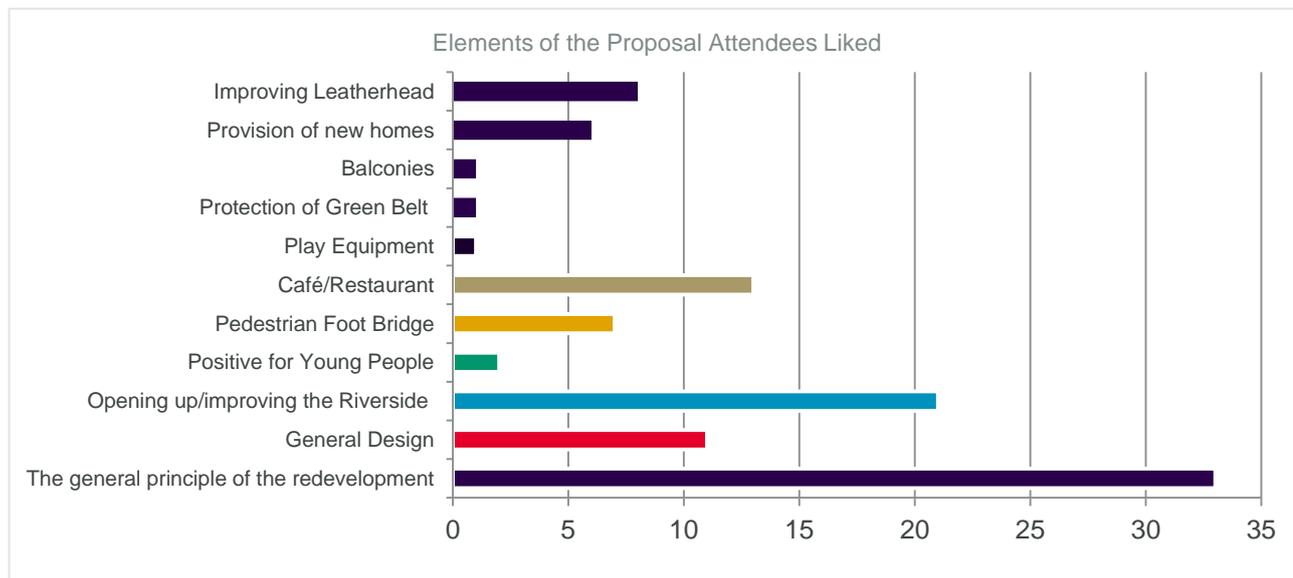
Note that in some cases, one person may have indicated they met the description of two of the categories (i.e. Leatherhead resident and Leatherhead business owner) so the total number of responses is higher than the number of people who attended the exhibition/completed a feedback form online.

FEEDBACK

The feedback forms received have been carefully analysed. Many people made comments regarding multiple issues in a single response and the key themes identified throughout the feedback forms have been extracted to capture these.

Overall, a mix of positive, negative and constructive feedback was received. In a number of cases, a completed feedback form set out overall support for the principle of the redevelopment or a positive comment regarding an element of the proposal but then went on to express a concern regarding a different feature of the proposal. This ultimately causes difficulty in identifying the proportion of attendees in support of the proposals and those against. Therefore, we have assessed the feedback by looking in turn at the positive comments and the negative comments rather than quantifying the number of people in support/against the proposed redevelopment.

A breakdown of the key positive comments that emerged from analysis of the feedback forms over the course of the two public exhibition dates and the online consultation period is set out below:



Many of the feedback forms offered positive comments on the proposals indicating that they were in support of the overall principle of the redevelopment of the Claire House and James House site (33 people). A high proportion of positive comments also referred to the ‘opening up’ and improvement of the riverside area (21 people), the design of the building (11 people) and the café or restaurant use at ground floor level (13 people). There were also a number of comments which welcomed the improvements the proposed redevelopment would bring to Leatherhead.

Examples of positive comments recorded on the feedback forms include:

“Love the design- like a wharf warehouse...better to be ten floors high and look out at greenbelt and fields than six floors and look at other homes”.

“I like the look of the scheme as I feel Leatherhead would benefit from a landmark building making better use of the riverside setting”.

“Feels a bit like the riverside developments in Kingston and Richmond which is just what we need. Go for it!”

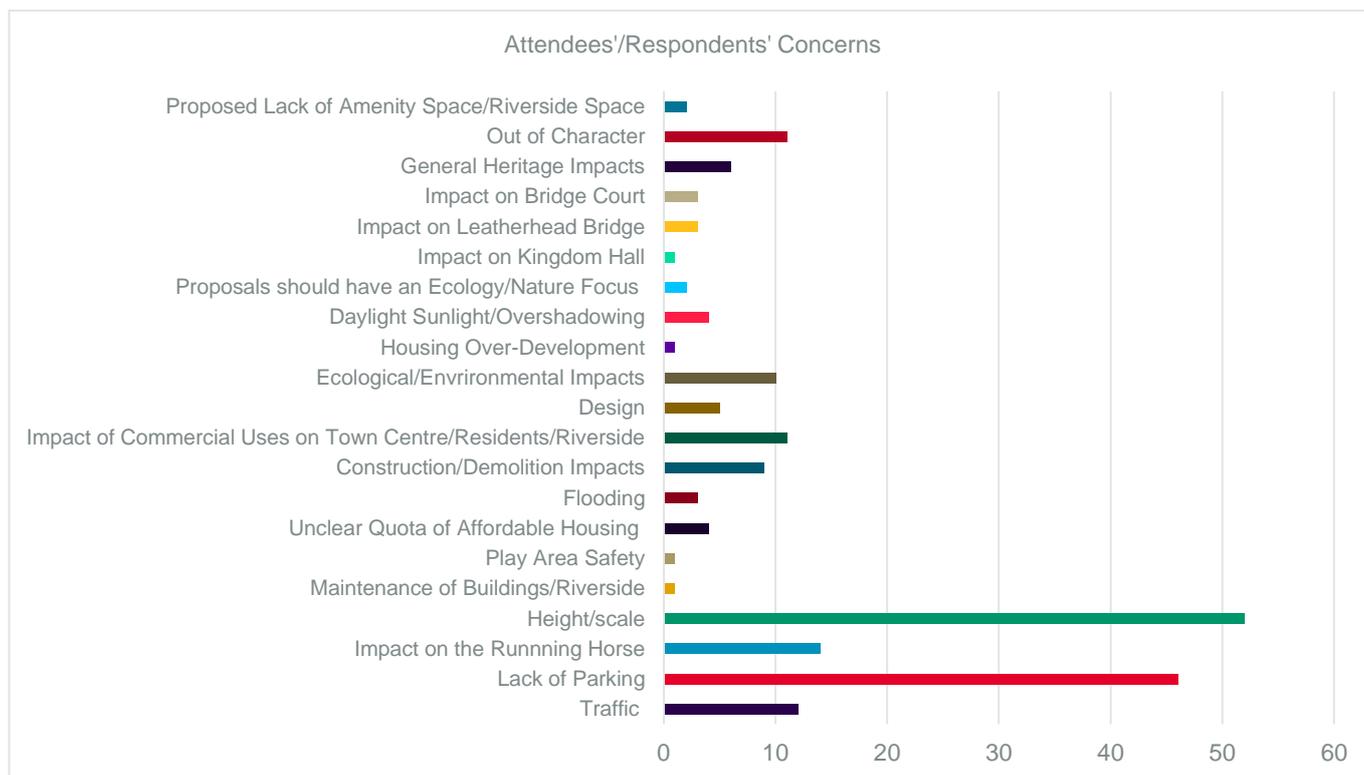
“The proposal is contemporary and modern which will bring in many young people/families into the town”

“From the information available at the consultation, this looks like a really great development- 48 apartments, many affordable is really positive for young people. The design looks good and attractive and it is really positive to see homes proposed in a sustainable location! Great proposal, really hope to see it come to fruition”.

“Generally good design in keeping with surroundings”

“Looks great. Just what Leatherhead needs”.

A breakdown of attendees’ concerns that emerged from analysis of the feedback forms over the course of the two public exhibition dates as well as from the online feedback forms is set out below:



The proposed height and scale of the new building as well as a perceived under provision of parking spaces were clearly the public’s main concerns as 52 people and 46 people respectively referred to these on their feedback forms.

In terms of the height of the building, the comments focussed on the 7-storey proposal being too high for the site and in a number of cases, attendees expressed further concerns as a result of this including the impact on the neighbouring Running Horse public house (this was referred to 14 times).

Many of the concerns regarding parking were based on the perceived lack of existing parking in the town centre for both residents and visitors to the town centre. Therefore many comments expressed apprehensions towards the proposed reduced residential parking levels and the lack of uplift in public car parking spaces given the proposed

café/restaurant use on the site. A number of the comments came from residents living in nearby properties including Bridge Court who claimed that their private car parks were already at full capacity and used by non-residents.

Attendees also commented on the proposals potential impact on traffic congestion in the town centre, construction/demolition impacts, the impact of a new restaurant or café could have on existing businesses in the town centre and the maintenance of the proposed new riverside park. There were also concerns around any impact to the existing ecology and environment including trees, wildlife and the general riverside area (this was referred to 10 times). Two responses made reference to the lack of ecology/nature focus of the proposal with suggestions for a nature reserve rather than a large residential development.

Examples of concerns recorded on the feedback forms include:

“I live opposite and hope the construction will be sympathetic to the surroundings and not too drawn out”.

“An exciting opportunity however it fails to address the need for increased parking for visitors that wish to make use of the new facilities. Demand for parking is likely to increase”.

“The building proposed is too tall and doesn’t keep within the look of Leatherhead- 1 to 2 levels lower and it would look good...more detail on how increased traffic will be dealt with around Leatherhead is needed. Traffic is hell during rush hour and adding more housing with limited spacing does not deal with the issue of traffic in leatherhead”.

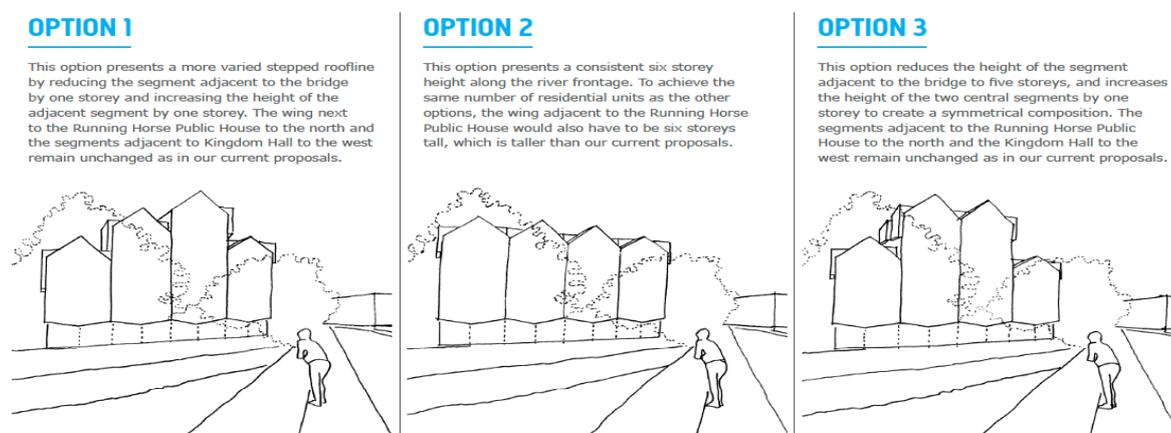
“More detail on what is ‘quota’ for affordable housing is needed”

“The café may kill the existing High Street restaurants”

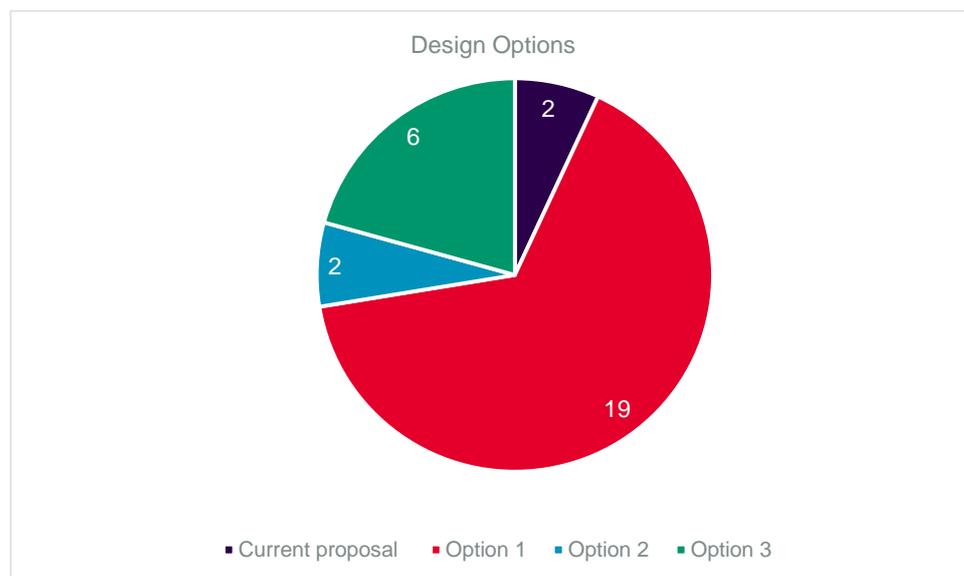
“There is no improvement of view of the river from the historic Running Horse pub It will overshadow the Running Horse pub The design does not fit in well with the historic buildings of Leatherhead e.g. Running Horse pub and Barton's bookshop”

“Please ensure the leisure elements don’t hinder the natural environment. One of the beautiful things about that area is that it is quiet and full of wildlife. If it becomes too popular with people the wildlife might look for other places to rest”

One of the exhibition boards presented three design options which could potentially be submitted as part of the later detailed reserved matters planning application. These options can be seen in the extract taken from the board below:



A number of the attendees/respondents that completed feedback forms made a note of their preferred design option as shown in the chart below:



There was a clear preference for option 1 with 19 people noting that they liked this design option in comparison to the current proposal which 2 people preferred, option 2 which 2 people preferred, and option 3 which 6 people preferred. Many of those who preferred options 1 and 3 noted that this was due to the variation in roof height in contrast to option 2 which presents a consistent six storey height.

LEATHERHEAD RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION

A letter was submitted by the Leatherhead Residents’ Association (LRA) to MVDC in respect of the proposals for the redevelopment of the site on 26th July 2018. The letter set out the following main points:

- There are no concerns as to the principle of the proposed uses
- The viability of the proposed café/restaurant is a concern due to expected reduced trade levels in winter months
- Concern regarding proposed height of the new building and how it would impact on the surrounding buildings. The LRA suggest a height of no more than 5 storeys, with a maximum of two storeys on the aspect facing the public house.
- Overshadowing of riverside area by the new building.
- Overdevelopment of the site.
- Under provision of parking.

Although the feedback received from the LRA is generally negative, the points raised are similar to those made on the feedback forms collected during the public exhibition.

RUNNING HORSE PUBLIC HOUSE REPRESENTATIONS

An objection letter was submitted by Shepherd Neame Ltd on behalf of The Running Horse public house. The letter set out the following reasons for the objection:

- The impact of the proposals on the setting of the Grade II* listed building and the Grade II listed Leatherhead Bridge.
- The scale, height and massing of the proposed building. The letter sets out that a 6-storey building would not be in keeping with the character and appearance of the local area.

- Increased flood risk. The letter states that a FRA needs to be undertaken at the pre-application stage to address this issue.
- The close proximity of the proposed flats could give rise to future noise and disturbance issues being raised by new residents in respect of the operation of the running horse.
- Increased traffic movements on the local road network and the impact this could have on the operation of the Running Horse's adjacent car park area.
- Daylight/sunlight, overlooking and loss of privacy on the Running Horse.

NEXT STEPS

The feedback is currently being reviewed by the project team and Transform Leatherhead Officers. The analysis of this feedback will be used to inform the development of the proposal going forward, including the scheme being prepared to present to planners at the second pre-application meeting.