

Director of People & Place

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Our Ref: SC/EO

Contact Name: S. Cordon

Date: 07/06/21

Your Ref:

Tel No:

Dear Sir,

Ashall Projects Ltd

I am writing to provide an overview of our experience with Ashall Projects in recent years.

Ashalls first approached us to discuss their proposal to develop a Holiday Inn Express hotel in the centre of Barrow in 2015. Barrow has a strong manufacturing base and has benefitted in recent years from BAE's success in securing the contracts to supply the A state class and Dreadnought class submarines. As the supply chain for these contracts and other Barrow based companies includes a large number of companies all over the UK, demand for hotel accommodation is strong. Supply is limited. There are only two branded hotels, a Premier Inn and a Travel Lodge and some independent hotels in the area. As a result, we were very supportive of their proposal. The Council and its planning team worked closely with Ashalls design team during the planning process and approval was granted in November 2016.

The project itself was delivered on schedule and the results speak for themselves. The new hotel is the largest regeneration project in the centre of Barrow for many years and has gone a long way towards meeting the demand for quality hotel accommodation in the town from key corporates. The hotels management team have been quick to make an impact.

Shortly after the announcement of the first lockdown the hotel implemented the changes to procedures required to meet enhanced cleanliness and social distancing requirements and provided guests with a safe and secure stay. This enabled the hotel to open for key workers in June 2020. The hotels associated communications strategy, which included a video showcasing all the measures taken to protect staff and visitors from the perspective of the guest from arrival to departure, won a national Springboard virtual award for Excellence, for the best use of digital marketing to growth sales or service award. Shortly thereafter the hotel received Trip Advisors 2021 Travellers Choice Award for its overall performance.

Perhaps the hotels most exciting initiative which the Council is supporting is its Leisure Market Development Programme. Although there are a number of attractions in the Furness Peninsula, including Walney Island Nature Reserve and the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway, visitor numbers to the area have not been high. In summer 2020 the hotel sought to capitalise on increased staycation demand and its position as one of very few international branded hotels in Cumbria by launching its Great British Vacation campaign, which promoted local attractions and offered a competitively priced stay at a quality hotel with easy access to the Lakes. This was a resounding success and attracted 10,000 guests in 2 months.

This year the hotel's parent company, Ashalls, have sought to build on this success by launching Hi Explorer, a Staycation platform which provides information and offers on a range of attractions and hospitality outlets in the Furness Peninsula and South Lakes. We are looking to coordinate our own tourism and leisure promotion and communication activities with the hotel and Hi Explorer to ensure that we make the most of these initiatives.

Over the last 5 years we have developed a very good working relationship with Ashalls and, more recently, its hotel management team at HIEX Barrow. They are a very proactive and innovative partner, and we are confident that we can build on this solid foundation that has been laid thus far. I would not hesitate to recommend Ashall Projects as a partner or principal for hotel development and operations projects.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Cordon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

S. Cordon,
Director of People & Place