

Phase 3 FAQ

Several issues have already been raised concerning details of the current plans. Rather than hold the same conversations repeatedly, it may be helpful to anticipate some of the questions that have already been addressed.

It should be appreciated that we have to work with what we have, both in terms of funding and the existing structure. The object of Phase 3 was to improve accessibility, increase the eating area (expanded café), bring the stockroom nearer to the shop and make it more secure, add a cold room for use of kitchen and shop, and where possible to improve energy efficiency. Any plan is a balance of advantages and disadvantages, or in other words, a compromise. In order to be valid, any objection to one element has to suggest an alternative layout that produces an overall gain. It is for instance no good asking for a bigger stockroom unless you can show how this it to be achieved without compromising other aspects of the plan.

Who has decided about Phase 3 and why have I not been consulted?

The current plans are the outcome of discussion over more than two years, including input from the changing personnel on the management committee, the managers and HOTV Members. Earlier plans were on display on the website and in the pub for about 18 months, with invitations to all to comment. Very few comments were received.

How much scope is there for changing the proposed plan

The funding we have been offered is contingent on the overall disposition of spaces being as shown. We could reconfigure the toilets for example within the space allocated, but we could not move them somewhere else altogether without having to reapply for funding.

When will the final decisions be made

Based on the current funding agreement, the work has to be started by April 2024. We would expect to assess feedback from the Open Day over the Christmas period and publish amended working plans by February at the latest, with work to start in March.

Is the new stockroom large enough?

The existing stockroom in the bottom half of the LH skittle alley is far larger than that of any comparable shop we are aware of. We appreciate that it is necessary to provide space to accept large Thursday deliveries, but we are limited by the structure and by the need to balance the size of the stockroom with that of the expanded café and of the cold room. There may be a way of reconfiguring slightly to accommodate incoming stock and we are actively considering this.

Why are there individual toilets instead of a communal Ladies?

The configuration of the toilets has evolved over many stages and is still being reappraised. It is necessary to understand the constraints, principally the width of the space available. Unless the divider wall between the two alleys is moved (which is an option but brings it's own disadvantages) there is no room to have a standard cubicle end on or to have two abreast. The advantage of separating them out parallel to the wall is that they can then be generously proportioned with their own washbasins.

Why does the gents contain only urinals?

This is also for reasons of space. It is judged that it would make little difference if men used the unisex accessible toilet for anything other than having a pee.

Why do the toilets need to be accessible from both directions?

The garden and terrace are a significant customer area in the summer. It makes sense to give customers direct access through the new french windows. One of our main goals from the start was to make the Oak fully accessible and wheelchair-friendly. Phase 3 finally achieves this goal in terms of the ground floor though there remains the insoluble problem of the slope in the main corridor. This is negotiable downhill by wheelchairs but assistance is needed uphill. For this reason too, an alternative route to the toilets was considered desirable.

What about the function room?

Ideally we would have included improvements to the function room in Phase 3, but in order to keep the grant application viable we limited it to the ground floor. Providing access to the function room is however a high priority and we are already looking for alternative ways to fund this.

Where will the stockroom go while work is in progress?

There are only two feasible options: either at the end of the LH alley in the area earmarked for office and storage, or in the RH alley with skittling temporarily suspended. Neither is ideal, but manageable we believe for the two months or so we expect the work to take.

Will we ever have two skittle alleys again, and why can't we use the LH alley?

The Oak has always been a skittling pub and it was an important element of our plan to keep it that way, but the Oak has to pay its way or there will be no alleys at all.

The LH alley has connections with the garden and the drainage system which make it more suitable for toilets and we simply cannot afford to give over the space to two alleys downstairs. We do have a longer term plan for installing a demountable second alley above the existing one if there is sufficient demand and funds are available.