



**[The Bishopsgate Table Table](#) , GMEX  
Lower Moseley Street, Manchester  
Reviewed by [Simon Belt](#) August 2012**

Ever since I posted Helen Nugent's review of the [Table Table](#) pub restaurant near the GMEX in Manchester back in March, I've been meaning to pop in and see for myself if it really was as she described. You see, Table Table is a brand of Whitbread, and as I'm of a certain age, I associate Whitbread with their great [Trophy Bitter adverts](#) from the 70's.

I used the official opening (by the Lord Mayor of Manchester) of their redesigned bar area, to live up to the ethos of the Manchester Salon, and try and capture something of what's new and happening with city centre pub restaurants, and Whitbread's [Table Table](#) brand. Whitbread's beer producing days may be over, but their business acumen does give the distinct impression of being head and body above the rest - as those adverts used to pun home.

For those unfamiliar with the renamed Bishopsgate Table Table (previously Table Table Manchester Central GMEX), it is at the side of the Midland Hotel, on Lower Moseley Street, towards the Bridgewater Hall from St Peter's Square. It's underneath the Fitness First and Premier Inn, and next to Costa Coffee - low key in its signage and presence, though I did think that it was rather conveniently placed with all those brands around it, which I now realise is part of the quality branding as they're all Whitbread brands!

The renovation work Table Table has just completed was to open up the bar area at the front of the restaurant by removing the dividing walls, and turning it into a pub version of the Central Perks cafe in Friends. The space is now very open and functionally flexible - ideal for families with kids by day and hen parties by night, with the furniture and decor offering a subtle self-selecting approach for customers, based on the table height, chair design and fabric, number seated at each table, shade of wallpaper by each area with individual pictures finishing off the mood. And all driven by a regional manager with a passion and good handle on the city centre market for eating and drinking around Manchester.



In the middle of the space is now low level open seating with booths at the side, immediately inviting the family focussed customers with prams perhaps, whilst nearer the bar are the higher

tables with taller chairs drawing in the adult only audience. Complementing the occasional and subtle Costa Coffee signage is an inviting corridor door into the Costa Coffee cafe, separate to the bar area but blended into the space so you know you can flow between the spaces. With some high chair seating area just inside the doorway and immediately viewable to the street, this is a prime location for those sophisticates en route to the Bridgewater Hall to do some talent spotting as well as being noticed, or for that hen party to set themselves up for a night on the town.

The reason why I mention all this in a review ostensibly about the restaurant, is that the whole setup is such a clever and tight integration of the Costa Coffee cafe drawing you into the bar seating area where restaurant food is also available into the chillaxing restaurant area, onto the flight check-in into the Premier Inn room, including the complimentary use of the Fitness First gym. And as you do all that, you maybe book to return to one of the meeting rooms in the Touchbase suite, from where you'll have complementary Costa Coffee from the freshly ground coffee machine, going through to the restaurant for your buffet lunch, and thinking you'd like to return for a meal before going to your theatre.

Such a smooth and subtle blend of Whitbread brands working seamlessly together, and mutually reinforcing each other, there's a lesson for all aspiring entrepreneurs and their competition to learn here. This is corporate integration working well, yet without the heavy handed corporatisation, very web 2.0 customer focussed offering choices, albeit powerfully nudged and yet delivered with grace and a down to earth immediacy it's no wonder Whitbread is doing so consistently well.

After having a look around the Whitbread empire in microcosm and seeing the staff switch attentively from one functional role to another, including a bit of DJ'ing front of house by one of them, it was through to the restaurant and decision time on which table, chair and decor setup suited our mood from the variety on offer. We chose the velvety deep purple alcove with its

feeling of sophisticated dinner party dining at home - quite a funky space for a city centre pub fronted restaurant. And waiting staff that were extremely attentive and refreshingly relaxed about offering their view on the selections available.

After much debating over the extensive menu options, I opted for the sticky chicken goujons which were tender and moist, sealed in breadcrumbs, whilst my wife, Yvonne, selected the duck parcels. We shared these like teenagers on a date. Both were presented and garnished gracefully, a credit to the kitchen catering for a variety of customers and locations, were piping hot, and whilst the duck parcels may have appeared small they were packed with succulent duck, accompanied by a delicious chilli dip and surprisingly filling. The standard was set for the main to live up to.

I plumped for the Beer battered haddock and chips, as I wanted to compare against the standard set for me by Liz Longworth, the catering manager at [New Mills Golf Club](#) who prides herself on selecting the fish from market and delivery with a light touch batter. I went for the mushy peas option as recommended by our extremely friendly and helpful waiter Callum. Yvonne eventually succumbed to the Turf and Surf with chicken and chips as the main course, after what seemed like an eternity of deciding from the wide menu offerings.



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