

## **SITTINGBOURNE – UPDATE FOR MEMBERS ON REGENERATION ISSUES**

### **DRAFT      September 2015**

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I thought that with my impending retirement it might be helpful to update all Members on where we are with our regeneration proposals for Sittingbourne Town Centre and with other wider issues concerning regeneration in the town.

The following is a point by point synopsis of where we are at the moment.

#### **1.          SPIRIT OF SITTINGBOURNE**

##### **1.1.        Development Agreement**

We have a Development Agreement with Spirit of Sittingbourne which will enable us to transfer our land to them when certain pre conditions have been met. They have now resolved almost all of the pre-conditions necessary for the land transfer with a small number of relatively minor and process driven exceptions. The two main conditions still to be satisfied are obtaining vacant possession of the land off Fountain Street, which should be a matter of mere mechanics, and having a signed Agreement to Lease with a reputable cinema operator.

Negotiations to achieve that are still ongoing, but Heads of Terms were agreed with a national cinema group on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Agreement to Lease is being prepared by their respective legal teams. Upon completion of these matters and with a fully determined planning application subject to the outstanding matters identified below the Developer will then need to commit all of the necessary funding for phase 1. It is anticipated that the Agreement will go unconditional at the end of March 2016 and that construction work will commence immediately afterwards.

##### **1.2        Planning Matters**

You will be aware that members resolved to grant permission to the scheme back in March, provided that certain outstanding matters were resolved. We have been working through a long and fairly complicated list, but we are now left with resolving the S106 Agreement and with achieving certain relatively minor changes in design. However we are also dependent upon formal signoff from Kent County Council for highway matters and from Network Rail for the use of part of their land by the station for the public square and negotiations on both of those are progressing well.

##### **1.3        Commercial Occupiers**

I know that negotiations are at an advanced stage with restaurant tenants for the restaurant space surrounding the proposed cinema and also for retail occupiers of the big box retail site, recently vacated by Biffa.. For obvious reasons, we cannot release the names of the potential tenants until agreements have been duly drawn up and signed and legal work is ongoing with drafting heads of terms and agreements to lease.

## 1.4 Multi Storey Car Park

Members will know that we have committed ourselves to building a 310 space multi storey car park between the Tesco Forum Site and St Michaels Way in order to replace the car parking spaces which we will be losing because of the town centre development. We have appointed a German firm called Huber as our preferred contractor and were very pleased that their tender submission came in very professionally and below our budget.

As part of the project the Council is looking to provide a new footpath between St Michael's Road and numbers 48 and 50 the High street. This will help to support the Town Centre by providing a through route from the proposed multi storey site directly to the High Street and initial consultation is underway with the adjacent landowners and tenants and SBC Legal are preparing a footpath creation order for consideration by the Council.

## 2. BELL CENTRE

This long running saga remains an empty site now that Travelodge have formally stated that they do not intend to develop on it. The owners went into liquidation some two years ago and the official receiver has been trying to market the site but, as far as I am aware, with no success so far.

## 3. WETHERSPOONS

The Old Magistrates Court has now been converted by Wetherspoons, and I must say I think they have made an extraordinarily good job of it. It appears to be trading well and is an asset to the High Street.

## 4. THE MILL SITE

4.1 The remaining land on the Mill Site consists of two elements. The first is the land adjoining the existing Morrisons Supermarket, which is scheduled for around about 150 houses. Almost all planning obstacles have now been removed but the Section 106 remains to be finalised. There will still be a linear park separating the housing from Morrisons and there will be other contributions towards public realm.

4.2 The second element is on Lloyds Wharf, which is the land adjoining Milton Creek. There is outline consent for a leisure box and associated car parking, but as far as I am aware, no operator has come forward with any firm interest to develop.

4.3 On the rest of the Lloyds Wharf site there are plans for a Skate park, for which outline planning consent has been granted, and a Barge Museum, for which a planning application has been submitted which will shortly be determined. The intention therefore is to develop the entire site as a leisure complex, with a variety of different uses.

5. **FORMER MILTON PIPES SITE ON COOKS LANE**

A planning application for 162 houses and 80 flats has been submitted, is going through the planning process and will go before Committee by the end of the year.

6. **TESCO/SPENHILL LANDHOLDINGS**

Tesco are actively marketing the Forum and also their large landholding on the former Industrial Park north of the railway. I know that progress is being made, although the details must remain commercially confidential.

I hope this is a useful update.

With best wishes

**Pete Raine Sept 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 updated 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015**