

KIDS GO FREE TO BUTLINS

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What St Modwen has in store to transform town

Yesterday saw a £100m regeneration of Bognor Regis move a giant step closer.

Arun District Council and developer St Modwen Properties plc signed a development agreement for the Regis Centre and Hothampton sites.

It is intended both key locations will be totally transformed, with the town's economic prospects, by the deal.

Here, St Modwen's senior development manager Gary Morris answers important questions about the schemes posed by the *Observer*.

What guarantees can be given that Bognor will retain a theatre after the regeneration of the Regis Centre site?

St Modwen is committed to delivering the 'destination' film and performance venue, as recommended by Locum Consulting in May 2007. We are working with Arun District Council, Locum, Vision Group and Bognor Regis Town Council in a procurement process designed to select the best operator. Eight leisure operators declared an interest in managing the proposed facility and six have been shortlisted to submit detailed proposals. We are extremely confident that an operator will be identified by spring 2008.

Some residents fear that the seafront scheme will become just one big development of flats. What assurances are there that this will not happen?

The development agreement commits St Modwen to delivering a scheme based on its proposals submitted in

'Keep Regis Centre site free of flats'

Keep the Regis Centre site free of flats, Bognor Regis Civic Society again demanded this week.

The group marked yesterday's signing ceremony for the redevelopment of the key location by repeating the demands for no more residential accommodation.

St Modwen Properties' chief executive, Bill Oliver, and Arun District Council leader, Cllr Gill Brown, put pen to paper to seal the development agreement for the land and the Hothampton site off Queensway.

But the civic society

has written to Mr Oliver to remind him that 10,158 people had signed a petition a few years ago rejecting flats on the Regis Centre site. They wanted the land used for leisure purposes only.

This view was repeated at a packed civic society meeting in October when the proposal for 168 flats on the site included in St Modwen's initial proposals were rejected by those present.

No financial justification for the flats has been provided, says CiViC.

But they should be located on the Hothampton

site, if they should prove to be necessary, to leave the seafront plot free for leisure uses.

CiViC also reminded Mr Oliver that residents at the meeting voted to retain a performing arts/theatre on the Regis Centre site.

They also wanted The Esplanade to remain open and that the library should stay in London Road.

CiViC has also called for a prestigious landmark building to be placed on the Regis Centre site to provide a range of all-weather year

round leisure activities for residents and visitors.

Deputy chairman Hugh Coster said: "This could incorporate a high quality performing arts centre/theatre."

"It could also include other leisure activities, plus shops, cafes, exhibition and performance areas and much else besides."

He called on St Modwen to test the best architectural brains by holding a competition to produce a building to enhance Bognor and provide an eye-catching addition to the seafront.

with aspects of the plans when they go on show - in January - how much of them can be changed?

In January 2008, St Modwen will commence public consultation on its initial design proposals when the community will have an opportunity to have its say. A number of the fundamental uses for the site will be set, following Arun District Council's public consultation on uses for the sites and subsequently adopted development brief.

However, some building uses and detailed aspects of the schemes including design, location and height/density of buildings, plus public realm use and landscape design will be presented for consultation and public feedback will be encouraged.

Once the feedback from that consultation has been assessed by the professional team, the masterplan will be amended to reflect the best possible design solutions, based on the views expressed. Further public consultation on the amended masterplan will then take place again, most likely around spring 2008.

St Modwen understands there will be more questions posed by the public to the ones answered here. A questions and answers document will be available in community venues around Bognor Regis by the end of next week. Information on where they are available from Natalie Moore or Jo Sintern at M&N Communications on 01494 415 915 or n.moore@mnccommunications.co.uk

April 2006, which was for a mixed-use development, comprising leisure, retail, restaurants, health centre and some residential accommodation. St Modwen and Arun District Council believe that the regeneration proposals will only succeed if a fully sustainable mixed community is created.

If the theatre/cinema complex is excluded from the final plans, what will fill that space?

St Modwen is committed to delivering the 'destination' film and performance venue and has, therefore, at this stage not considered any other uses. St Modwen will not do so until every conceivable option to deliver the entertainment centre has been explored and exhausted.

How will the mixture of residential and entertain-

ment facilities co-exist when there is the potential for conflicts of disturbance?

St Modwen and its extensive team have vast experience in delivering complex mixed-use schemes. How the various uses and indeed users integrate is a fundamental criteria for quality design and one which we are confident of achieving.

When does St Modwen expect to sign the first tenants for the Regis Centre site?

Initial discussions with the key leisure operators are underway as is the procurement process for the Entertainment Centre. It is hoped to have tenants and operators selected in the spring of 2008.

When does St Modwen expect to sign the first tenants for the Hothampton site?

Discussions with the NHS

primary care trust and West Sussex County Council in relation to the new health centre and offices are well underway. As with the Regis Centre site, it is hoped that Agreements will start to fall into place in spring 2008.

The regeneration construction will obviously provide a lot of jobs for several years. What efforts will be made to fill them from the workforce around Bognor?

St Modwen's policy is to use local suppliers whenever possible and local businesses will be invited to submit tenders for the various work involved. Equally, we would expect that our appointed contractors will seek to employ suitably qualified labour from the local area.

How will you attempt to limit the disruption caused by what will be major

schemes?

Clearly, any significant development projects such as these will cause disruption to the town. However, before work starts on site, a detailed construction programme will be drawn up to ensure that all the work is phased to be undertaken as efficiently as possible and we will seek to minimise disruption to the local community.

Financial markets worldwide are in turmoil. How does this affect St Modwen's plans?

Any downturn in the world economy will have minimal impact on St Modwen's plans for Bognor Regis. In 2006, St Modwen posted record results for the 14th successive year and has significant pre-agreed funding sources available which it can draw upon if necessary.

If residents are unhappy

'Asda should set up in centre of Bognor'

ASDA is welcome in Bognor Regis - in the town centre, the town's regeneration supremo has stated.

Richard McMann told an audience of business representatives from Bognor and the Chichester that the retail giant would be a good addition to Bognor but only in the right location.

A planning application for the work is destined to be submitted to Arun District Council next month.

But Mr McMann said at the Business Futures presentation last week, he remained against the proposals in an area set aside by Arun District Council for industrial uses.

"I've nothing against Asda but not on the site they have chosen. If Asda

was in the town centre, I would support it," he stated.

"It would bring people into the town centre and increase footfall in the town. Morrisons, as the major supermarket in the town centre, needs competition to make sure its standards, products, 'offer' and service are as keen as they need to be."

Opening an Asda store in the town centre would also justify the argument that the goods on sale in its full range of products would stop residents travelling to Chichester and Littlehampton to do their supermarket shopping.

The effect on other town centre shops would also be significant as the extra shoppers spent money in them as well, he added.

Award puts Theresa in the picture



Top award - Theresa Bates with her staff at Frame of Mind

A PAGHAM woman has been recognised for her picture framing skills.

Theresa Bates was presented with the Fine Art Trade Guild's commended framer award. This acknowledges her excellent craftsmanship and service. Only 970 framers have earned the qualification after a thorough examination of their framing skills and knowledge.

Mrs Bates was handed the award by Bognor Regis and Littlehampton MP Nick Gibb last Friday. The presentation took place at the

community interest company, Frame of Mind, which Mrs Bates set up with her husband, Ian, in October 2006.

The firm offers adults with mental health problems and learning disabilities the chance to learn about picture framing and take part in everyday activities most people take for granted. Mental health services user Mrs Bates (43) said Mr Gibb's visit was a milestone for the Shripney Road-based organisation.

"It shows how far we have come in such a short time," she said.

Funds to help factory chickens

ALMOST £300 has been raised by a Bognor Regis couple to help factory farm chickens. Jonathan and Louisa Shearer decorated their Hook Lane home with a mass of Christmas lights in aid of the Battery Hen Welfare Trust.

Mr Shearer dressed up as Father Christmas to add to the festive atmosphere during last weekend. Their efforts resulted in £297.95 being raised for the charity as spectators turned out for the special nights in spite of the stormy weather.

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