

REGENERATION UPDATE FOR SCRUTINY – 1st September 2011

SWINDON TOWN CENTRE

UNION SQUARE

General

Muse Developments Limited submitted their outline planning application on 28th April 2011 and it is currently being considered by Swindon Borough Council planners. The application is based on a slightly amended Masterplan which incorporated some changes following the downturn in the property market. They are also in the process of negotiating the Collaboration Agreement with the bus companies regarding the Bus Exchange.

Whalebridge

This is the first part of the infrastructure on Union Square. It involves the removal of a very unattractive, dilapidated 1960's series of underpasses and a roundabout to be replaced by a signalized junction which dramatically improves the public realm and slows the traffic. It also gives an all directions signalized junction from Gordon Road (the road in front of the Magistrates Court) and Princes Street which allows traffic to move southwards towards Regent Circus and Old Town. The scheme itself is costing approximately £4 million and Muse have appointed Bardon's to undertake the works. The money is coming from a £2 million grant from the HCA and a £2 million contribution from SWRDA contained within the Union Square Development Agreement. The contract is progressing better than could be hoped and the progress can be seen quite clearly on site. The following is currently happening:

- The subways have been closed
- The metal barriers and concrete surrounds have been broken up
- All the root vegetation has been removed
- The drainage has been renewed
- The fill is now up to the top
- Concrete is being poured into the subway areas
- The barriers along Princes Street have been removed
- The electrical works along Princes Street and into Gordon Road have commenced.
- The La Linia stone is being laid in front of Jury's Inn Hotel
- Black top is about to be laid

The contract is expected to be completed on 23rd December 2011 and will bring great benefits to the residents providing them with a design-led rather than a transport-led solution.

Phase 1

1. Residential – the internal layout of the units are being discussed by Green Square Housing Association and Muse in addition to their requirement for car parking. Green Square will receive a £50k grant per unit from the HCA for the 45 units.
2. Multi-Storey Car Park – SBC have agreed, subject to funding, to purchase the new 850 space multi-storey car park for £14.76 million (net of developer's interest). The

reasons for the purchase of the car park are to keep strategic control of all those in the town and to assist the regeneration in a very practical way.

3. Timescales – This is dependent on settling the layout, Muse entering into two contracts with SBC (the multi-storey car park) and Green Square (residential) which are only conditional on funding, the subsequent confirmation of funding and the confirmation of the land owning partners. However it is anticipated that an application will be submitted towards the end of September 2011 with a start on site in February 2012. The build period is expected to be between sixteen and eighteen months.

REGENT CIRCUS

The planning application, along with the Section 106 Agreement, has now been confirmed and this means that the works on site can now commence. The developers will be serving notice on SBC very shortly to ask them to vacate the surface car park which SBC occupy and commence the procurement process. The developers, Ashfield Land, anticipate a start on site before the end of the year. The development will take twenty months to complete.

The components of the scheme remain as before; a Morrisons supermarket of 50,000 square feet, a seven screen cinema, the operator of which they are shortly to announce and nine restaurants, three of which have exchanged contracts.

The scheme will reconnect Old Town with the new via the reopened Rolleston Street and will give Swindon town centre the leisure offer it so needs.

MECA

The “**M**usic, **E**ntertainment & **C**ultural **A**rena” has, since its opening in November 2010, gone from strength to strength. It is used for:-

- Live music
- Comedy
- Headline DJs
- Conferences
- Award Dinners
- Exhibitions

and it has given Swindon a venue which can accommodate just under 2,000 people. It has seen bands as diverse as Thin Lizzy, The Stranglers and Hot Chocolate perform, while also operating as a sporting venue for boxing promotions.

It is a fantastic use of an older building that had seemed to lose its purpose. With a small amount of financial assistance from SWRDA, managed by Forward Swindon, the appearance of the exterior has been transformed.

IGNIS (BHS)

The development has now been finished and currently occupying the superbly designed retail properties are BHS, Top Shop/Top Man, and River Island. A unit of 6,000 square feet is currently being fitted out by USC, a fashion retailer, who has taken a 10 year lease and expects to open in the latter part of this summer.

GENERAL UPDATE

- The former Burger King unit at the top end of Regent Street will be opened as a Co-operative supermarket towards the end of the year.
- Jessops have taken a prime retail unit on the crossroads of Canal Walk and Bridge Street.

PUBLIC REALM

- The Regent Street contract has been completed with the “gateway lighting features” currently being installed.
- The Green Wall on Canal Walk has been completed to great acclaim.
- The “Water Feature” has been installed and has given Swindon another talking point.
- Plans are being drawn up to look at the next two phases when money is available. These are Havelock Street and The Parade.
- The Station Forecourt works are due to start on 30th August 2011 with contracts currently finalised. The contractors have been appointed and are ready to start.

REST OF THE BOROUGH

Cavendish Square, Park North

This mixed use re-development scheme of the Cavendish Square District Centre is complete except for Phase 3. This area has permission for retail use as part of the District Centre, but market conditions have made delivery of this element impossible at present.

The owners, Leehampton Developments and Swindon Borough Council are currently looking at possible alternative uses for the site, which include a mixture of housing and retail.

Braydon Court, Penhill

The redevelopment of the local centre at Braydon Court with 3 shop units and 36 new (affordable) houses is now complete, and the units \ accommodation occupied. This scheme was led by SBC and Westlea.

Marlowe Avenue, Walcot

The re-development of the local centre at Marlowe Avenue with 3 shop units built out by SCS is now complete. The 23 new affordable houses, which are HCA grant funded, are nearing completion.

Lyndhurst Crescent, Park North

The Borough Council has constructed 13 new (affordable) houses – the first Code for Sustainable Homes, Code Level 5 houses to be built in the Borough. This scheme is now complete and the houses are all occupied.

Sussex Square, Walcot

Early discussions are taking place around the potential to redevelop the Sussex Square local centre along with new housing. The planning unit is slowly being assembled and to this end the Borough Council has recently taken ownership of the Bulldog public house, fronting Queens Drive.

The Circle, Pinehurst

Early discussions are taking place to re-develop the Pinehurst local centre to include 3 new shop units with residential above. An application is imminent from SCS.

HAB Scheme at the Triangle

The HAB team in association with Green square have built 40 highly sustainable, affordable houses on this site. All units are now occupied. The scheme centres round a 'village green' with community cottage gardens, includes a car club scheme and state of the art computer systems installed in all homes.

HAB scheme at Gorse Hill

A scheme is in the early stages of discussion on former allotments north of Gorse Hill. HAB are interested in working with the Council, (as landowner), on bringing forward this area for residential use. It is expected that this scheme will be the subject of a report to Cabinet at the appropriate time.

Former Headlands School

Headlands School was demolished in 2009 leaving playing pitches and a modern sports hall on the site. The sports hall is now occupied by a national gymnastics academy, Espirit Gymnastics. An outline planning application for 152 dwellings and the provision of 1 hectare including play equipment and open space and the gymnastics academy was granted (subject to S106). The displaced playing pitches are to be re-provided on and off site and will be secured for community use, which will increase the provision of accessible playing pitches in the area.

Former Zarlink Sports Pitches, Kingsdown

The Planning Committee recently approved a scheme for 92 homes on the former Zarlink sports pitches adjacent to Kingsdown School. The development mitigates the loss of these long redundant pitches with a 3G all-weather sports pitch at Kingsdown School, which will be able to be used by the school during the day, and with community access at other times. This proposal is currently with the National Planning Casework Unit who may call the proposals in to be heard at appeal in view of Sport England's objections to the loss of the redundant pitches.

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