

Developer's plans get thumbs-up

by Hayley Robinson
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A SKATE park and a chocolate factory were among the ideas put forward for the old paper mill site after plans of how it might look when completed went on show.

Despite the weather 248 people made their way to 1 to 5 High Street on Friday and Saturday to see the £30 million vision for the site in Milton Road, Sittingbourne, by London-based developers Essential Land.

Aspects of the scheme include homes, a Morrisons supermarket and a waterside park, plus a museum to commemorate the history of the mill.

Representatives of local groups, including the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway and the Sittingbourne Society, turned up as well as Cllr John Wright, portfolio holder for regeneration, and Cllr Adrian Crowther.

Eighteen people including ward councillor Ghlin Whelan also attended a private viewing held for Charlotte Street residents last Thursday.

Scott Hammond, partner at Essential Land, said: "We were very pleased with the turnout and we have obtained a lot of useful feedback.

"There was a strong interest and support for the leisure use on site, with a particular desire to see a cinema or ten pin bowling centre and a great deal of enthusiasm for Morrisons' arrival in the town.

"Numerous attendees wanted the proposals to include a skate park while one particular visitor wanted to see a chocolate factory on the site!

"Every single feedback form received showed support for the regeneration of the Mill and Wharf sites, something which is very rarely encountered with schemes of this scale; there is a palpable hunger for the early commencement of regeneration in the town."

All the feedback will be reviewed by Essential Land's development team and a full planning application is due to be submitted in January.

It has also been revealed that



ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE: Architect Justin Kelly, with Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway engineer Graham Collins and trustee John Hindle look at the plans for redevelopment of the old paper mill site

Picture: Andy Payton PD1790135

the landmark water tower could be demolished.

A spokesman for Essential Land said: "Our consultation hasn't revealed any significant support for the water tower to remain, and English Heritage has been consulted on this and deemed the structure to be not worthy of protection by listing. "The design team are looking at other ways to incorporate verticality in the scheme as a 'marker' for the site."

■ **To give your views visit www.sittingbournemill.com, Twitter or Facebook. Alternatively, write to Sittingbourne Mill Consultation, 7 Hertford Street, London, W1J 7RH.**

Positive response to proposals but still a few concerns

THERE were mixed views from people who attended the exhibition.

Resident Peter Morgan, 84, of Park Road, Sittingbourne, who is also on the management committee for Sittingbourne Heritage Museum, said: "The mill had to go so I think this is a very good replacement for it.

"I thought it was very impressive and I was very pleased with what I saw."

Cllr Ghlin Whelan said: "There's some good ideas although

nothing is ever perfect. There's lots of nice open spaces and lots of retail but this is only at the consultation stage at the moment.

"I'm a bit concerned about parking in Charlotte Street with the houses planned and I was disappointed that there was no overhead access from the site to the Sittingbourne Retail Park; I think that needs to be addressed.

"Let's hope we see something happen there soon."



Peter Morgan, as ever, very interested in the future for Sittingbourne

Buy a toy for the less fortunate

SHOPPERS are being urged to buy a toy or gift this Christmas for people less fortunate than themselves.

Collection points have been set up at Wilkinson and Superdrug in Sittingbourne High Street, so people can drop-off their donations for the toy and gift appeal which has been launched by the Salvation Army.

The gifts can be for anyone of any age but must be new and unwrapped.

Major Robert Jepson, from the

Salvation Army, said: "Teenagers are the age people don't seem to buy for so we need more presents suitable for teenagers. We also don't get many gifts for the elderly.

"The gifts are given out with the food parcels that we give to people who have been referred to us by various bodies and anyone we refer as well.

"We had 150 boxes of food donated by 10 or 11 schools following their harvest festivals, that food helps make up the parcels."

Local supermarkets are also being encouraged to help with the appeal. Cash donations are also welcome.

Major Jepson said: "We don't get a lot of Christmas food so we usually spend over £1,000 from the Salvation Army funds to buy these additional items, but if a supermarket said here's 200 Christmas puddings or 200 mince pies that would help us a lot."

■ **For more information or to help with the appeal call 01795 424170.**

Woman stole £5,000 in benefits

A BENEFIT cheat who claimed almost £5,000 more than she was entitled to has appeared in court.

Rachel Killington, 29, was given a one-year community service order with 80 hours' community payback after she pleaded guilty at Sittingbourne Magistrates' Court last Monday.

The court heard how on March 26, 2008, Killington, of Goodstone Road, Sittingbourne, made a false statement on a claim form for council tax benefit.

She also failed to notify the Department for Work and Pensions that she was living with her partner Anthony Carter between March 8, 2008, and July, 1, 2009, a change in circumstances which affected their entitlement to Income Support,

The fraud was established on July 1, 2009, when Killington was interviewed and details were obtained from an employer.

In total, £4,963.49 – made up of £1,105.44 council tax benefit and £3,858.05 in income support – was wrongly claimed.

■ **To report benefit fraud contact the council's fraud hotline, in confidence, on 01795 417714; go to www.swale.gov.uk; or write to Swale council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT.**

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