



ARTISTS' IMPRESSIONS: How Cultural Square could look, left, and a projected view of Memorial Square in Central Avenue

# £1bn scheme a step closer

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DREAMS of a £1 billion regeneration scheme for Sittingbourne are a step closer to becoming a reality.

Swale council announced this week that its preferred partner for the transformation the town centre is the Spirit of Sittingbourne consortium.

Proposals include a public square in front of Sittingbourne train station with a hotel and cultural facilities, including a performance venue and cinema, plus

a civic quarter based around Central Avenue with library, health centre, retail and new residential accommodation.

Spirit of Sittingbourne is made up of Essential Land, which is developing the old paper mill site, property developer Cathedral Group and financial fund managers Alyton.

The consortium was chosen by the council's interview panel because its approach was 'the one most likely to achieve long term regeneration in the way the council wants'.

Scott Hammond, partner at

Essential Land, said: "We are thrilled the council's regeneration panel unanimously decided to select Spirit of Sittingbourne as the preferred partner to regenerate the town centre.

"We know from the consultation on our Mill proposals that there is a lot of interest and enthusiasm for regeneration. The feedback we received inspired our proposals for the town centre.

"We want to create a town that people can be proud of and help enhance Sittingbourne as a destination in the region. This is a great

opportunity for people to participate in the improvements to their town and we hope to bring about these improvements quickly.

"We're making good progress on finalising our Mill proposals and will be submitting a planning application later this month."

Council leader Cllr Andrew Bowles said: "I am delighted that we are moving closer to an exciting agreement which will give the centre of Sittingbourne the regeneration which it so badly needs."

The Sittingbourne masterplan,

which was adopted in 2009, shows the closure of St Michael's Road with traffic diverted along Euro-link Way, a redesign of the High Street to allow two-way bus flow, a new learning campus, about 2,500 new homes, a mix of local independent traders and national chains and multi-storey car parking. It also includes the redevelopment of Milton Creek with 1,070 new homes and education in addition to health facilities.

■ A report on the Spirit of Sittingbourne plans will go to Swale council's cabinet for a decision on Wednesday.

## Get in the swim for heart charity

A SPONSORED swim to raise money for the British Heart Foundation is set to take place in May.

The event will be held at the Swallows Leisure Centre, in Central Avenue, Sittingbourne, at 6.30pm on May 7.

Children and adults are welcome to take part and can swim between one and 50 lengths.

Sponsor forms are available from the British Heart Foundation Shop in Sittingbourne High Street.

## Copper set on fire

POLICE are investigating after a reel of copper wiring was set on fire.

Firefighters from Sittingbourne were called to land between the Morrisons distribution centre in Kemsley and the nearby railway line just before 1.15pm on Friday, where the industrial cable was found alight next to a fence.

The fire was put out just after 2pm.

## Girl group surprise delights pupils



SNEAK PREVIEW: Girl group Wonderland who visited Fulston Manor School

A NEW pop group preparing to go on tour with Westlife and Boyzone have performed their debut single to school children.

Five-piece girl group Wonderland, who are managed by Louis Walsh and Westlife's Kian Egan, visited youngsters at Fulston Manor School in Brenchley Road, Sittingbourne, on Friday.

As well as giving the pupils

a sneak preview of their upcoming single, Not a Love Song, they sang other tracks. The girls are ambassadors for PC game The Sims 3 and they gave out Sims goodie bags to the children.

Performing arts teacher Kaylee Monaghan, who organised the event, said: "I couldn't be happier with the outcome. It was the best feeling to see the students

enjoying themselves so much. "Some even had the opportunity to go up and sing with the girls. We are hoping to hold even more events like this at Fulston Manor School as it helps promote success and achievement within the performing arts business, and the students get the opportunity to meet people like them who have worked hard to achieve their dreams."

## Man given a pauper's funeral

A PAUPER'S funeral was due to be held yesterday (Thursday) for a man found dead in his Sittingbourne flat.

Harold De Cort was found in his flat in Canterbury Road on December 7.

Police forced their way into

the AmicusHorizon property just before noon after concerns for his welfare were raised.

Despite two appeals in the Sittingbourne Messenger to trace the 66-year-old's family nobody has come forward.

As a result Swale council was

instructed by the coroner's officer to make arrangements for his funeral.

The service yesterday morning at the Garden of England Crematorium in Bobbing was expected to be attended by a few of Mr De Cort's neighbours.

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