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## Council boasts of four development investments

# Regeneration plans worth up to £300m

Report by **Suz Elvey**

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UP TO £300 million will be invested in Sittingbourne in the next three years, that was the boast of Swale Council's director of regeneration Pete Raine who was referring to the combined investment of four proposed developments.

Mr Raine was speaking at Thursday's local engagement forum meeting. The town centre will be reshaped by Spirit of Sittingbourne consortium. Essential Land wants to redevelop the mill and wharf sites, Tesco has plans for land north of the

town and Bell Sittingbourne LLP is already working on the Bell Centre.

He said Spirit of Sittingbourne's proposals would result in a "figure of eight" layout, with development both north and south of the High Street.

It would increase footfall through the town centre, he said, supporting existing businesses.

Spirit of Sittingbourne consists of Essential Land, developer Cathedral Group and financial fund manager Altyon LLP.

Cathedral Group chief executive Richard Upton said the town centre development will create 1,100 jobs over the next 10 years.

He said a new square outside Sittingbourne railway station could provide "a welcoming shared space for pedestrians, cyclists, taxi drop-off, kiss-and-ride (where drivers drop off passengers wishing to use public transport and kiss them goodbye) and bus and rail interchange".

He said an eight-screen cinema could be included in a cultural quarter close to the station along with a performance venue, which could also be used for markets and sporting events.

Meanwhile, Essential Land has pledged to keep the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway running

through the wharf site and plans to combine a railway terminus with a heritage museum.

Mr Raine hoped a development agreement between Swale Council and Spirit of Sittingbourne would be signed by the autumn, allowing a planning application to be submitted.

Although he said it was too early for details to be finalised, Mr Raine revealed one consideration would be to part-pedestrianise St Michael's Road, to create a "circle of slow-moving traffic" or something similar to the "shared space" scheme in Ashford.

