

TROWBRIDGE COMMUNITY AREA BOARD – 1 JULY 2010**Question for Trowbridge Area Board from Keith Hopkins:**

I would like to ask the Cllr with regard to the Vision of Trowbridge, when are they going to pull down the Peter Black building that is a complete Blot on the Landscape and actually DO something about the entertainment and leisure side of things for the town rather than putting up endless numbers of houses and Supermarkets?

Response from Adam Nardell, Vision Director, Trowbridge

Firstly I would clarify the role of the Vision for Trowbridge – the Vision is a Special Purpose Delivery Vehicle – a public/private sector partnership that advises the Council on and facilitates the regeneration of Trowbridge. We do not hold or own land. We completely agree that the Peter Black building a significant eyesore in a very high profile location that reflects very badly on the town. The site is owned by Parkridge Holdings and I have both spoken with and more recently written to them drawing their attention to the adverse impact the site has on the town's amenity. I have discussed potential solution with them either: Hoardings to completely screen the site or demolition and clearance. Their verbal response to this has been to reject the demolition solution on the grounds of cost (they will only do this in the event that they have full planning consent and a viable scheme) and to give consideration to screening. In the case of screening they are concerned over the cost and have agreed to look into this, although to date they have not responded to my written request (15 June) that they do so. If they do not respond positively to this, the Council has the option to pursue an Order under the Town and Country Planning Act and compel the improvement of the site. This is a very adversarial way to proceed and given that we have to work with Parkridge to secure the right development for this site it would be best to avoid this route; however this does not preclude threatening them with this measure as an incentive to act.

With regard to leisure and entertainment, this remains a central ambition of the Vision and the Council. It is worth pointing out how close we came to delivering this through the Waterside scheme - if it was not for the severity of the recession and the unwillingness of the banks to finance this scheme (as well as a number of others that Modus were delivering) Modus would not have gone into receivership and the scheme would be virtually complete at this time. At the time Modus folded the Waterside scheme was 60% let including the cinema, hotel, bowling and many of the restaurants. We know that these operators (as well as others) are still there and that they still wish to come to Trowbridge. However, they all require a developer to build out a site for them. At this time the only site available is the former Tesco site, St. Stephens Place which has just (only in June) been bought by Legal and General's Investment Fund. We have made it clear to them that commercial leisure is our priority and would add that the agreed Planning Brief for the site would allow for a cinema development. That said, there are significant obstacles to achieving this - it is a fact of the construction and commercial property market that it

costs more for a developer to build and fit out a cinema than they will ever make from it i.e. it is a loss maker to the developer. The cost of this must be generated by more profitable uses around it – normally this would be housing (this was a vital component of Waterside). However the depth and severity of the recession has “killed” the new build residential market and about the only profitable other use would be a very large supermarket and as Mr. Hopkins has rightly identified, the town does not need another of these, especially given that the new Sainsbury store is barely been completed. Thus, because of the market and prevailing economic conditions, we are probably going to have to wait for the housing market to recover before a leisure scheme could be cross-financed in this way.