

Redevelopment of Matalan site, Danestrete, Stevenage

Answers to principal questions raised during Webinar held on 24.9.20

Q1: What will happen to the Matalan store? Will they relocate?

A1: We are working with Matalan to keep them operating whilst the planning application is prepared. We understand that they are seeking new premises in Stevenage as they wish to retain a presence in the town.

Q2: What will be the proportion of affordable housing offered and what tenures and sizes of apartments will be offered? Will there be family-sized units which are needed locally?

A2: We propose a mixture of 526 one and two bedroom homes, across a range of tenures. Approximately half will be of an affordable tenure. On our current plans the affordable homes will be split between Shared Ownership and Affordable Rent. The remaining units, around half of the proposals, will be for outright sale.

Q3: Who will the new homes be targeted at – local people or commuters?

A3: The approved outline planning application offers less than 5% affordable housing to meet local needs. Guinness intends to increase this significantly, by up to 50%. This means that the completed scheme will provide a large number of homes for local people and represents a major improvement on the existing planning permission. The remaining homes will be for private sale. This does not mean that these will be purchased by people moving into Stevenage for the first time and commuting to work in London, although the close proximity to the upgraded railway station will be attractive. There is likely to be a significant proportion of existing Stevenage residents who may purchase the apartments.

Q4: Apart from the new homes, what else is provided in the proposal?

A4: We aim to create active ground floor uses around the edges of the site and the intention is to provide the potential for a number of uses such as shops, restaurants, managed workspace, leisure and community uses. The proposals will include approximately 700 m² of commercial space and 300 m² of community space. A significant amount. We do not have end users at this time, but we are confident that these spaces at ground floor level will be attractive to commercial occupiers as part of the site's and the town centre's wider regeneration.

Q5: What will be the ground rents that will apply?

A5: There will be no ground rents.

Q6: Will the social infrastructure e.g. education and health be able to cope with the influx of new residents?

A6: The redevelopment of the site is a longstanding commitment and has been included in calculations for future infrastructure for over 5 years. Council plans have taken into account the sites development. Financial payments are set in the outline planning permission and index linked. It is also located in a place where health and education facilities will be enhanced and upgraded in the coming years as part of the wider town centre masterplan.

Q7: A 20-storey tower is proposed. How does this fit in with the rest of the town centre and what is the justification for a building of this height in this location?

A7: The site is brownfield and in a highly sustainable location with good access to the bus station (immediately adjacent), the railway station (a short walk), the facilities of the town centre and the leisure park. These characteristics make it a suitable place for higher density development and fits in with the wider regeneration masterplan for the town centre.

The site is identified for a landmark building in the adopted local plan.

The tallest element of the proposals is located in the far corner of the site fronting Lytton Way and is the furthest point away from residential neighbours. Stevenage has to meet significant targets for housing provision and there are limited central brownfield sites. These scarce brownfield sites, if developed to their potential in a sensitive fashion, will take the pressure off greenfield sites on the edge of the town.

There is a need for new homes. This site is suitable for high density development because of its convenient and sustainable location. The Outline Planning Permission clarifies that up to 526 homes can be provided. As a result, the best way to provide this number of homes is to include a tower because we can keep the other buildings lower and have bigger gardens. The tower is located away from other homes and will be well managed.

The proximity to the station presents an opportunity for a positive landmark for Stevenage.

Q8: Are the courtyards open to the public? If not, how will they be secured to avoid anti-social-behaviour?

A8: The courtyards are private and will be secured by gates where access is obtained by a fob/card provided to residents only. It is appropriate for the courtyards to be for residents only, as it will be residents' main outdoor space and so should provide a tranquil, calm, and semi-private environment within landscaped gardens.

Q9: There is only very limited parking for the number of proposed new homes. How will this work and where will residents park?

A9: The approved outline planning application allows for up to 175 car parking spaces. The new draft proposals provide for 48. Local and national planning policy encourages lower parking provision in sustainable locations like this one. There is very good access to public transport and the facilities of the town centre. A car club will be provided and there is significant provision for cycle spaces. There are also some parking bays to allow for visitors. Local parking restrictions in the town centre limit on-street parking, so the other options for parking will be in the local public car parks where charges apply. Future residents will be aware of the parking that is available and those that require a car parking space on-site that cannot obtain one of the 48 available may choose not to live in the new development.

Q10: Can you give us any idea of the traffic movements that will be created by the development?

A10: The proposals will result in a reduction in traffic movements when compared with the existing site, as both the Matalan and Danesgate car parks will be removed. The proposals are forecast to generate approximately 50 vehicle trips in both the AM and PM peaks. These trips will be offset by the reduction in trips associated with the existing car parks, which alongside the removal of the Bus Station will significantly reduce the existing traffic flow along Danestrete and Danesgate. It is these reductions in traffic volumes that create the opportunity for the streetscape improvements proposed as part of this application.

Q11: Currently there is a key route for people cycling that passes directly through the site for this development - in a north/south direction between the carpark and the current Matalan building. Given that cycling is not allowed where the current shopping area in the Town Centre is paved, it is essential that this crucial cycling route is maintained and improved. Please could you confirm that this will be done? Additionally, please could you give details of access throughout the development for people travelling by cycle? Will there be secure cycle parking for both residents and visitors? Will cyclists be able to cycle directly from the Stevenage cycleway network through the development and to parking facilities without having to push their cycle?

A11: The existing cycle route that runs north-south between the Matalan Site and the car park will be maintained and will be significantly improved, however it will be diverted towards the boundary of the site to continue along Lytton Way. This is in accordance with the outline permission and enables the activation of the footway/cycle way along Lytton Way. Cycle parking for residents (approximately 800 spaces) will be provided throughout the development in accordance with the latest SBC standards. The cycle stores will be distributed across the site, they will be secure, well-lit and designed to a high standard with access at ground level from within the courtyards. The courtyards can be accessed from Lytton Way, Danesgate and Danestrete by cyclists. The proposals will also provide Sheffield Stands for visitors along Danestrete.

Q12: What is the expected timeline for this development?

A12:

