

Progress report on Golden Valley Mill site development

A meeting took place on Thursday 6th October between Stronach Group (new owners for the site), Colliers International (agents for the site) and representative residents of Bitton. The purpose of the meeting was to understand the current status of the plans for development.

Participants

- Stronach Group: Michael Bumby
- Colliers International: Graham Connell and Marcus Plaw
- South Glos Councillor for Bitton: Erica Williams
- Bitton Residents: Marlene Gallop, Bridget Hetzel, Jon Booth, Sue Murtagh, Sue Nethercote, Mike Thomas and Andrew Ward

Conclusions from the meeting

- Stronach Group is the new owner of the site. It is within of a portfolio of properties owned by Mr Frank Stronach and the Stronach Group. Mr. Stronach recently relinquished his controlling interest in MID. MID was a publicly traded real estate development firm that had been spun out of Magna International, a company he built over many years.
- Michael Bumby expressed the desire of the Stronach Group to 'do good things' with the site. This was welcomed by all.
- Colliers International has been progressing with a new concept and detailed plan that takes into account some, but not all, of the comments expressed by the residents to the draft concept. The residents were not shown a copy of the revised plans because events, as below, have overtaken them.
- One item that the residents had requested but not included in the current plan was a village green space, including the Wesleyan Hall, facing onto the High Street. The residents expressed the importance of this in terms of both making one village rather than two and as a very attractive feature in the new heart of the village clearly visible by all who pass through Bitton. Mr Bumby has asked his team to have a good look at the location of this facility again.
- Recently, English Heritage has visited the site and has sent a note to South Glos expressing the need to preserve more of the heritage assets on the site. These include:
 - The Refectory
 - The Gatehouse
 - The wall
 - The Wesleyan Hall
 - The Decora Building (red brick facing the A431)
 - The foundry
 - A number of the factory buildings including the walls facing Mill Lane
- Although the existing plans retain all the assets identified as important by the BVRA it does not contain all of the above as this was considered impractical and, to some extent, undesirable.

- Further work is now required to modify the plan to meet, as far as possible, the requirements of English Heritage.
- This might make development of the site unattractive for Stronach Group.

Next steps

- The Stronach Group will consider their position and decide how best to proceed. This may be by progressing the proposals, seeking to sell the site to a major housebuilder or re-introducing industrial use for the whole.
- Colliers International will let the residents know the outcome of this decision.
- Assuming that Stronach Group progress with the project, Colliers International will keep in regular contact with the residents and will arrange a meeting for detailed consultation of the plans prior to submission to South Glos.
- It is not known when this might be as there is significant extra work to be done following the comments by English Heritage.

Summary

The residents attending the meeting thanked Michael Bumby and Colliers International for the meeting and expressed their hope that Stronach Group would be willing to continue with their ambition to 'do something good' on the site and looked forward to working with them to achieve this.



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