

Go-ahead for Chatham's new bus station

Plans for a new high-tech bus station in central Chatham have been approved by Medway Council's planning committee.

The striking, landscaped facility will be up and running on Globe Lane by Spring 2011, replacing the uninviting 1970s-built bus station inside the Pentagon shopping centre.

It will operate using real time travel information. Buses fitted with Global Positioning systems (GPS) will be tracked to provide passengers with up to the minute arrival and departure times on digital display boards, backed by verbal announcements.

Plans include public toilets. There will be a travel information centre and the White House on Riverside Gardens will be refurbished as base for drivers and management offices.

The project has been the subject of extensive public consultation and revision.

The revised plans include a significant investment in landscaping and tree planting to integrate the new facility with the retained Paddock open space.

The bus station, available to all operators, is being paid for by



D5 architects

■ Photo of bus station model by D5 architects

the Homes and Communities Agency from the Thames Gateway funding secured by Medway from central government.

Council leader Cllr Rodney Chambers, said: "This is very important to Chatham's future. In the years ahead, Chatham centre and the waterfront will see huge benefits from Medway's programme of regeneration – new homes, shops, cafes, bars, parkland and public squares.

"But major infrastructure improvements have to come first. We have to pave the way for investment and economic growth. That's why central Chatham's road system is being remodelled, improving traffic flow. That's why we're investing heavily in Chatham's retail environment. And it's why Chatham is getting one of the best bus stations in Britain – boosting the efficiency, appeal and future capacity of public transport in Medway."

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Robin Cooper, the council's director of regeneration, culture and community, said: "We can now say goodbye to one of the worst bus facilities in Britain at The Pentagon and provide a welcoming experience for the 60,000 passengers a week who

get on and off buses here in Chatham. This is very good news for the bus travellers of Medway." Kevin Hawkins, commercial director at bus operator Arriva, said: "We welcome the approval of the plans. Medway deserves a modern well-equipped bus station and we know

that passengers will benefit from the substantial improvements over the current outdated environment at the Pentagon. The new facility will enable us to run a more efficient network of bus services in Medway."

New route close to completion

Construction of Waterfront Way – the new ground-level bus, taxi and cycle route following the path of the former flyover - is nearing completion.



■ An artist's impression of the proposed improvements to High Street Chatham.

January's snow delayed progress but work is now in its final phase. This involves the installation of high-quality paving and kerbstones.

Once Waterfront Way is open, the temporary bus route will be closed to allow the reinstatement of the pedestrianised High Street. This involves paving and tree-planting on the High Street, as shown in the image (above) from the landscape architects working on the project.



■ Construction works in progress

Works underway at the Great Lines

Works started this month to transform the Great Lines into the Great Lines Heritage Park.

This follows extensive consultation throughout 2008, and a £2m cash injection from government. The first phase of works will see

- A brand new entrance to the park from Gillingham (opposite Medway Park sports centre)
- New footpaths connecting Gillingham and Chatham.
- Four hectares of previously fenced-off land opened to the public.
- The removal of the park's boundary in Gillingham, where boundary fences, hedges and walls will be replaced with a low gabion wall. This will reflect Medway's long military history.
- Scrub clearance to the escarpment area, removing cover for anti-social behaviour and opening up walking routes.
- A lighting scheme to illuminate Fort Amherst and the Naval War Memorial.
- New seats, waste bins and signage.

More works will follow next year, including a pedestrian bridge between Fort Amherst and the Naval War Memorial. As part of these works, Fort Amherst will become a free-to-enter public park from spring 2011. The Great Lines Heritage Park is the major benefit of Chatham's bid for World Heritage Site status for the Dockyard and its defences. To find out more, visit www.chathamworldheritage.co.uk.



Union Street

Investment in high-quality public open space is a key element of the plans for Union Street. There will be major improvements to its junctions with A2 New Road, Best Street, High Street and The Brook. The scheme will increase traffic capacity and create an inviting attractive space for pedestrians at this important entrance to Chatham centre.



Retail trade remains strong

The Pentagon Shopping Centre reports impressive results in 2009 despite the recession.

Centre manager Martyn Stone said: "Positive feedback has been received from a number of retailers who were encouraged by the level of trading. This is on the back of people feeling better about being able to spend money and major retailers investing in the area.

"Footfall has on occasions been above the national benchmark and in general terms has kept in line with national figures." In the last 12 months, 21 new shops have opened in central Chatham including JJB Sports and Primark.



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■ Medway Dragon and Lion
Dance Sports Association



Chatham's Chinese New Year celebrations for 2010 - the Year of the Tiger - starts at midday on Saturday, 13 February in Chatham High Street when lion dancers launch the celebrations.

Noon the next day - Sunday - sees the start of the Medway Chinese New Year parade when the Mayor of Medway and mayors from several areas of Kent will lead more than 150 people in Chinese costumes including dragons, lions, gods of fortune and Tai Chi.

Contact Medway Visitor Information Centre for further information:
01634 843666

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