



Deal struck with UK-Swedish development team for £25m Agora regeneration

Long-awaited regeneration of the Agora Centre and car park in Wolverton, Milton Keynes, has taken a major step forward with contracts being agreed for the sale of the site to a partnership between innovative UK developer TOWN and Swedish builder Trivselhus.

TOWN has been negotiating the purchaser of the Agora centre from current Agora owner Leyland Holding Company since summer 2017. In December 2017 Milton Keynes Council decided to sell TOWN the adjacent car park to facilitate a comprehensive regeneration scheme, with redevelopment of the 1.2-hectare site being a strategic priority for the Council.

The project will see proposals for mixed-use town centre regeneration come forward including:

- Demolition of the Agora Centre;
- Reinstatement of Radcliffe Street between Church Street and The Square;
- New local shops and services along Radcliffe Street and Church Street, including a small supermarket to replace the former Co-op;
- Over 100 new homes, including around 50 family 'smart homes' built with the super-sustainable Trivselhus timber building system, plus new apartments for affordable rent and shared ownership;
- A community energy microgrid; and
- Flexible on- and-off-site car and cycle parking for residents and town centre visitors.

Cllr Peter Marland, Leader of the Council and Wolverton ward councillor, said:

"The Agora has detracted from Wolverton town centre for years and I'm pleased to secure a developer with a track record of quality and an evident commitment to the town to regenerate this important site. The terms of sale of the car park allow the Council as landowner to approve the eventual scheme so that we can secure the outcomes local people have said they want through the Neighbourhood Plan."

TOWN has a long history of involvement with the site, with one of its directors having worked with Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and the local community to support the preparation of the Wolverton Neighbourhood adopted in 2015.

TOWN has been involved in a working group set up by Milton Keynes Council with local business and faith representatives, the Town Council and community enterprise Future Wolverton to study options for improving transport and replacing lost car parking when the site is redeveloped.

Neil Murphy, Director of TOWN, said:

"We've been working with local people on this key Wolverton site for over six years and are excited finally to be able to bring forward plans which we hope will change Wolverton town centre for the better. We've already consulted and built relationships with many parties and amassed a thorough understanding of the site, its constraints and how we can best deliver against the outcomes defined in the Neighbourhood Plan. So the good news is that we anticipate setting out detailed proposals for consultation with local people early in 2019 so that, once we've taken their views on board and secured planning permission, we can get cracking."

Trivselhus, who are also behind the successful Sommar Place development in Broughton, Milton Keynes, are already partnering TOWN in delivery of their award-winning cohousing scheme at Marmalade Lane, Cambridge. Ken Forster, Managing Director of Trivselhus UK, said:

“Wolverton is a fantastic place, very different from new-town Milton Keynes but just as progressive and forward-looking. It’s an ideal location for Trivselhus to be pursuing its largest UK investment to date, and a great opportunity to marry our Swedish sustainable ‘smart home’ approach with TOWN’s expertise in street-based design and place-making. With Milton Keynes having just celebrated its 50th birthday we hope this project will point the way to a new era of urban innovation.”

Consultation on detailed proposals is expected in Spring 2019 prior to submission of a full planning application in Summer 2019. The regeneration scheme is expected to cost £25 million and take between three and four years to complete.

Ends.

Notes to editors

1. Wolverton Agora is a shopping and leisure centre in central Wolverton built in the late 1970s by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. Since the early 1980s, the Agora Centre has been in a succession of private ownerships. It is currently occupied by a number of small retail businesses and a covered market. The Agora Car Park is owned by Milton Keynes Council and leased to the owner of the Agora Centre.
2. Milton Keynes Council identified the Agora as having “redevelopment potential” in a 2004 Wolverton Regeneration Strategy SPG and in 2013 adopted the Agora Development Brief SPD in 2013 to guide comprehensive redevelopment of the site.
3. The Council adopted the Wolverton Neighbourhood Plan in 2015. The Plan was prepared by Future Wolverton and Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council, with the regeneration opportunity presented by the Agora being the “principal reason” for the instigation of a neighbourhood plan. The Plan requires redevelopment to: follow the historic grid street pattern and reinstate Radcliffe Street; provide active retail frontage including to Church Street; incorporate public open space; retain views of St George’s Church; be between two and four storeys in height; and provide parking accessible to town centre users, including an element of on-street parking.
4. In 2016, the Council granted planning permission for a retail-led mixed-use redevelopment scheme which did not proceed.
5. In December 2017, Milton Keynes Council took a delegated decision to dispose of the Agora Car Park to TOWN, subject to TOWN acquiring the Agora Centre and to planning permission being obtained for an approved scheme.
6. TOWN (www.wearetown.co.uk) is a developer and custom-build enabler established in 2014 to deliver good homes in proper streets and neighbourhoods. TOWN’s work includes the planning and enabling of major new residential-led developments in Norwich and Cambridge in partnership with U+I plc, as well as smaller direct developments. TOWN’s first built scheme, delivered in partnership with Trivselhus, is [Marmalade Lane](#) in Cambridge, a custom-built cohousing development including 42 homes with shared facilities and gardens.
7. Trivselhus (www.trivselhus.co.uk) is a Swedish developer that has been creating sustainable homes of unrivalled quality for over 20 years. Trivselhus’s Climate Shield® system delivers a superior level of insulation, air tightness and energy-efficiency through the manufacture of closed panel timber frame walls in Sweden. Trivselhus is owned by Södra, Sweden’s largest privately-owned forestry cooperative, with over 50,000 members, 3,500 employees and annual sales of 17 billion SEK. SODRA is an ethically run, climate-positive company and it plants 3 trees for every 1 harvested. In addition to developing Marmalade Lane with TOWN, Trivselhus is behind the popular [Sommar Place](#) development in Broughton, Milton Keynes.
8. Future Wolverton (www.futurewolverton.org) is a membership-based Community Benefit Society with a mission to establish Wolverton as a thriving and sustainable town within the city of Milton Keynes. It does this by enabling an active and involved community to protect and celebrate the unique heritage of the town, whilst developing new business, housing and community facilities to ensure future prosperity.
9. The Wolverton Transport Working Group was set up in early 2018 to provide a forum for discussing issues related to transport and parking arising from the proposed redevelopment of the Agora Centre and car park. It included representatives from Milton Keynes Council, TOWN, the Town Council, Future Wolverton, Wolverton Business Forum and local churches. Proceedings of the working group are available on the Future Wolverton website.

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