

7 August 2007

VINEYARD GATE DEVELOPERS BEGIN CONSULTATION PROCESS

Following the signing of a collaboration agreement with Colchester Borough Council earlier this year (2007), developer Vineyard Gate Developments (VGD) is progressing its plans for the regeneration of the Vineyard Gate site in the town centre. Under the terms of the agreement, a planning application for much needed new town centre shopping facilities is due to be submitted before the end of the year.

As part of its preparation for the planning application, VGD has begun a public consultation process about the scheme with local residents and businesses. In the first of a series of initiatives, the developer has been in touch with the occupiers and property owners who are likely to be directly affected by the development, providing them with an outline of the proposed boundaries of the new scheme. Recipients of the letter will have an opportunity to quiz the project team about the proposals and relay their feedback.

Further discussions with these and other interested parties will continue throughout the planning process. VGD will also be launching a website, publishing newsletters and holding a public exhibition about the scheme, which will be held in St James' House on Queen Street (the former Shoeworld store) from Saturday 1st September until Saturday 15th September.

VGD has also launched architectural competitions for three key parts of the new development. The winning entries will help to create an interesting and varied townscape that will be unique and relevant to Colchester.

A total of 10 of the UK's top design practices - some of which have worked on some of the country's most successful developments, including Birmingham's Bullring and the newly-refurbished St Pancras Station in London - have been invited to take part in the three competitions.

Each competition focuses on one aspect of the Vineyard Gate scheme, namely:

- the exterior of a new department store building overlooking the St Botolph's roundabout
- a new pedestrian bridge over Southway
- a new public space adjacent to the Town Wall.

Colchester people will get a chance to see and comment on the entries as part of September's public exhibition.

The competitions will be judged by a jury panel chaired by Peter Stewart, formerly Director of Design Review at the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment (CABE). The panel will take the public comments from the exhibition into consideration when deciding on the winners, who will be announced in late September.

Heritage specialists Feilden + Mawson are managing the competition process on behalf of Vineyard Gate Developments.

Commenting on the competitions, Richard Weatherhead of Vineyard Gate Developments, said: "We are looking forward to working with some of the country's best architects - including lead architect for the project, Colchester's own Stanley Bragg - to create a flagship scheme in the heart of the town that will dovetail a contemporary, dynamic shopping experience with the town's rich and diverse architectural heritage."

"The Vineyard Gate scheme is an important regeneration project for Colchester. It is an opportunity to extend the town centre, transforming an unattractive site, creating much-needed additional shopping facilities and providing a proper setting for the historic Town Wall. The scheme forms one of the key elements of the Council's Masterplan for the redevelopment of the St Botolph's district of the town centre and will be a catalyst for the delivery of the Council's wider strategic plans to provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits to the community.

“We want Vineyard Gate to be something that Colchester can be proud of and we are committed to a public consultation process that will enable the people of Colchester to provide their input. We look forward to unveiling our proposals to local businesses and residents in September as part of an ongoing dialogue about the project, and hope that as many people as possible will take an interest in the scheme and let us have their views.”

Councillor Brian Jarvis, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration said: “The public consultation process and design competitions are another opportunity for the people of Colchester to comment on the exciting plans for the development of the St Botolph’s area. The Vineyard Gate retail scheme is a key part of making Colchester a prestigious regional centre.”

ENDS

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Notes:

- Vineyard Gate Developments Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Caddick Developments Ltd. Established in 1979, Caddick is a leading developer with a strong track record of delivering high quality projects throughout the UK. The company is active in all sectors of the commercial and residential property market and has recently worked on major schemes in Leeds, Merseyside and Kings Lynn.
- Vineyard Gate will be a contemporary shopping scheme that will be fully integrated with the town centre. It will include over 65 new retail outlets over four levels (including a major department store), a variety of places to eat and drink, a new bus station, additional parking spaces and residential accommodation. The proposals will provide a proper setting for the Town Wall and retain and incorporate a number of other historical structures and buildings that positively contribute to the fabric of the town. Views to St Botolph’s Church and the Abbeygate will also be created from within the development, emphasising the scheme’s unique identity and strong local character. Furthermore, the development will create a new gateway to the town centre by improving links with southern parts of Colchester including the Garrison site.

- The following design practices have been invited to take part in the design competitions: Egret West, Hawkins Brown, Hakes, Chapman Taylor, Gross Max, awp, Chris Blandford Associates, MLM, Birds Portchmouth Russum and Price & Myers.
- Following the public exhibition about the scheme in early September, VGD expects to submit a planning application to Colchester Borough Council at the end of 2007. After proper consideration by the Council's planning department, the developer hopes that planning permission will be granted during 2008. If planning consent is granted, preparatory works would then begin and the three-year construction programme would commence in 2010. This timing, however, is dependent on a number of factors that are outside VGD's control and might therefore be subject to change.
- The Vineyard Gate project team includes:

Developer:	Vineyard Gate Developments
Lead architects:	Stanley Bragg Partnership
Planning:	Drivers Jonas
Environmental:	Waterman Group
Conservation:	Feilden + Mawson
Archaeology:	RPS
Transport:	MLM
Accessibility:	Turner & Townsend
Service engineers:	Halloran Payne Associates
Quantity surveyor:	Tillyard
Agents:	CB Richard Ellis

