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£25m revamp for Preston's Fishergate Centre – including a cinema

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***An ambitious £25m revamp of Preston's Fishergate Shopping Centre, featuring a new Vue cinema, was unveiled today.***

One of the largest private sector investments in the city centre for more than two decades will create more than 250 long-term jobs, the centre's owner Benson Elliot said.

The redundant TJ Hughes store will be replaced with six modern shop units, a new mall linking to a feature entrance from the car park, and a family-oriented leisure offer of five restaurants and a fully integrated compact cinema.

The news comes on the same day as HGS Preston in Tulketh Mill revealed plans to recruit 300 new staff at its contact centre.



A planning application for Fishergate is about to be submitted to Preston Council and a public consultation exercise will be launched tomorrow. The proposed development also includes striking new double height retail facades at the rear of the centre to create a much more welcoming and inviting point of arrival.

As well as the long-term jobs, more than 150 construction workers would be employed during the development and building phase.

The comprehensive package drawn up introduces new floor space and fresh uses at the centre. Its owners say it will deliver a customer and visitor experience “comparable to other ambitious cities in the UK”.

The development is being supported by UK cinema operator Vue Entertainment, which is set to leave its site at Walton le Dale's Capitol Centre.

Peter Cornforth, director of retail at Benson Elliot, said the 21st century had seen a rise in the public's expectations of retail and leisure. He said: “Consumer expectations have shifted considerably and now it's time to catch up and equip Fishergate to serve Preston's community as they would expect it to. In this fast-moving internet-enabled world where shopping and leisure are fusing into a seamless activity, our plans enable a positive response to the challenges and offer the major brands at Fishergate and beyond the opportunity to plan for the future.”

He added: “Customers everywhere now expect great quality stores and brands, decent places to meet and enjoy something to eat or just relax and chat over a coffee, or spend the afternoon with the kids catching a movie.

“As a well-funded private sector investor, we are able to deliver this project without any recourse to the public purse and begin work as soon as planning permission is granted.”

Keith Mitchell, manager of the Fishergate Shopping Centre, added: “It’s important we provide our shoppers with places to eat, drink and relax to meet friends and family as part of their shopping trip, to enhance their overall social experience and present them with an engaging alternative to the convenience of internet shopping.

“We want to encourage people to spend and enjoy more time in the centre and the city.

“Reinforcing the city’s vitality and viability is crucial and building its early evening and mid-market leisure economy is a key part of that.”

Geoff Moore, property director at Vue Entertainment, said: “Vue has operated a cinema in Preston since the acquisition of the Warner Village circuit in 2003.

“We’re delighted to support this exciting new leisure and restaurant development at the very successful Fishergate Centre, providing our customers with a world class, state-of-the-art modern cinematic experience to replace our ageing cinema at the Capitol Centre.”

Mr Cornforth added: “The city centre is re-emerging with lots of great initiatives and ideas. We’re very excited about Winckley Square and the railway station’s new cycle hub.”

The plans will have to be formally approved by the council’s planning committee.

Preston Council deputy leader Coun John Swindells said: “This potential investment in the city centre is another sign of the growing confidence and development interest in Preston.

“The city and county councils are together improving Preston city centre, and this is already paying off as we start to see increasing interest in private sector investment, such as this.

“We are full steam ahead with our own cinema and restaurant proposals in the Markets Quarter and are excited about the progress that we’re making. We’re in advanced discussions with cinema operators regarding a large-format, high-fidelity cinema that will cement Preston’s role as a pre-eminent leisure destination.”

Details go on show at the centre tomorrow and at [www.fishergatedevelopment.co.uk](http://www.fishergatedevelopment.co.uk).