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News

REGENERATION

Public inquiry holds key to future plans for Dreamland

By Ed Hill

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THE two-week public inquiry into the future of Margate's Dreamland began this week.

Thanet District Council wants to push ahead with ambitious plans to turn it into a multi-million pound heritage theme park.

The council originally served a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) on the site's owner, the Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company (MTCRC) in June, 2010, after negotiations about its future broke down.

The council believes Dreamland, which closed in 2005, is key to the town's regeneration and, along with Turner Contemporary, heralds its revival.

It is working in partnership with the Dreamland Trust to create a heritage amusement park of historic rides, side shows and cafés.

Cllr Clive Hart, leader of Thanet council, said: "We have done everything we can to negotiate



UPS AND DOWNS: Dreamland's Scenic Railway

with the current owners to redevelop the site, but regrettably we have been forced down the CPO process for the benefit of the town.

"We cannot have a such an important site in Margate blighted for much longer. The Turner gallery is making a big difference, but the sea-front is not looking its best.

"Hopefully this will be the catalyst for other businesses in the town."

The initial improvements to the site have already secured £10 million of public funding if the council gets control of the 16-acre site: £3.7m from the Sea Change fund; £3m from the council; and £3m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Work has already started on restoring the Grade-II listed cinema at the entrance to the park. The project also aims to make the Grade-II listed Scenic Railway rollercoaster, built in 1920, the centre of the attraction.

MTCRC has put forward its own regeneration plans for the site which includes an amusement park alongside 400 new homes. It argues the Dreamland Trust's scheme will not attract enough visitors and is not sustainable.

The inquiry is expected to end on January 25.

MTCRC's barrister at the inquiry Richard Glover QC said: "The council fails to show that it has the money to acquire the land and carry out the works it proposes. So it cannot provide any confidence that, if the order is confirmed, the scheme will happen."

A report from the Planning Inspector is expected in late February or early March.

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