

Council go-ahead to pursue bid to buy Grimsby's Freshney Place as cinema operator named

Plans for North East Lincolnshire to buy Grimsby's Freshney Place shopping centre have been approved.

Local authority councillors gave [the proposal](#) their backing after leader Philip Jackson told how the purchase was "vital" to ensure a healthy future for the town centre. He had warned that other potential operators could just oversee further gradual decline.

Full council gave its backing to the plan, which will see funds already secured from government to transform the western end diverted to make the acquisition. A further bid to Westminster will now be lined up, with Cleethorpes-based Parkway Entertainment Company revealed as the prospective new operator.

Read more: [Grimsby's Myenergi named as top 10 growth business in the UK](#)

National brand Cineworld had been involved in a previous failed scheme at the opposite end of Lincolnshire's largest undercover precinct.

Cllr Jackson said: "We needed to take this course of action to make sure we can continue to deliver our transformation of the urban heart of Grimsby. If we didn't agree to buy the centre, it could be bought by someone who is unwilling to invest and the decline of the heart of our town centre would be devastating."



North East Lincolnshire Council leader, Cllr Philip Jackson, pictured in the council chambers, in Grimsby Town Hall.

(Image: Rick Byrne / Grimsbylive)

The centre makes up 60 per cent of the town centre's retail offer, supporting one in five jobs within that area.

"To enable this regeneration to continue, Freshney Place, a huge space in our town centre, must have a stable future," Cllr Jackson continued.

"If this becomes council-owned, this would mean that we could take Freshney Place into account when we're looking at the transformation of the whole of our town centre, potentially bringing in different offers, using the centre in different and more modern ways to reduce its current over-reliance on retail."

The plan for the centre would be to appoint external asset managers with significant experience to run Freshney Place on a day-to-day basis with the council taking an 'arms-length'

strategic approach.

Cllr Jackson also expressed his delight at a local company coming on board for the cinema scheme, with more than 18,500 sq ft earmarked.

Parkway has the eight screen Cleethorpes venue as its flagship operation, with further cinemas in Louth, Beverley and Barnsley. Director Richard Parkes told [Grimsby Live](#): “We’re really excited to be part of this, and it’s a brilliant opportunity for us, as a local operator, to secure the space in Grimsby.



Flagship: Parkway Cinema, Cleethorpes.

(Image: GrimsbyLive)

“We’ve been in talks with the council for around 18 months now, bringing this project to life. For us, we’ve long had conversations and options to try and bring a cinema to

Grimsby, and Freshney Place has always been exactly the right place to do it.

“We are finalising the details and layout of the multi-screen cinema and how it will work in the space with the council. We look forward to being part of real change to the heart of the town.”

Parents Gerald and Denise started the cinema business in the 1980s. Both sons Richard and Gerrard continue within it.

“Our cinema has been part of the fabric of Cleethorpes for nearly 20 years now, bringing not only the big blockbusters and more adventurous films, but also a great space for parties, live shows and conferences too,” Richard added. “We’re a family business, founded by my mum and dad, and now run by my brother and me along with an amazing team who’ve been with us from the start.

“I’m looking forward to bringing that same, locally-led ethos to Grimsby. We want to be a community venue. A living, breathing presence in the centre of town that’s open to and accessible to everyone.”

The [shopping centre was placed into receivership earlier this year](#), and the deadline for bids for its sale closed last month. The council bid for the centre was submitted, and following the full council decision will be subject to further due diligence in the coming weeks. Cushman and Wakefield is handling the asset.

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