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CASTLEBAWN EXPO PROMISES HISTORIC REGENERATION AND 2000 JOBS

Images of a £250 million development in the heart of Newtownards which will create 2,000 jobs go on show tonight in a public exhibition at Newtownards Town Hall. Images and artists' impressions of the Castlebawn development behind Court Street show how the ten-acre area within the historic Bawn Wall will be designed in the Plantation style of architecture which is typical of old Newtownards.

Fearghal Eastwood, director of Castlebawn Ltd says the development will include a town museum, access to the Dominican Friary and enhanced Bawn Wall viewing platforms as well as modern shops, cafes and restaurants.

"Newtownards is a historic town whose heritage has been neglected," says Mr Eastwood. "What we are planning is a regeneration of the Court Street area which is rich in history and which will be attractive to visitors and shoppers. We are also paying for a major road system which will relieve the dreadful congestion in Newtownards centre by linking the Belfast and Portaferry roads south of the town."

"We have made significant progress in Castlebawn in recent months and along with the Chamber of Trade have established the principle of an eight-metre breach in the Bawn Wall at Court Street. We enjoy the unstinting support of MP Iris Robinson and many members of Ards Borough Council. In undertaking this public exhibition we are fulfilling another commitment we made to the council at the start of the year," says Mr Eastwood.

"There is still, however, much to do and I would urge the people of Newtownards to come out and see for themselves just how much Castlebawn promises to deliver to their town," he says.

Any comparisons to out-of-town developments are misleading as the Castlebawn development will provide 2000 car parking spaces and pedestrian access directly into the heart of the town, says Mr. Eastwood.

"This proposal is a town-centre and edge of town proposal, not an out-of-town shopping centre which would be detrimental to Newtownards. Ards Borough Council has indicated its support for the proposal as have the political representatives of the area. We have discussed our proposals face to face many times with the Chamber and many of its members have indicated to us their enthusiasm for the plans.

"Naturally there are some concerns and we understand that any new development and any change no matter how positive will always face some degree of resistance. schemes, the town's traders risk being left behind," says Mr Eastwood.

“But unless Newtownards keeps apace of its competitor towns’ developments and regeneration schemes, the town’s traders risk being left behind,” says Mr Eastwood.

The Castlebawn public exhibition will be held over two days including today (Thursday April 6 from 6.00pm until 9.00pm) and tomorrow (Friday April 7 from 10.00am until 4.30pm). Ends
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Editors’ notes:

- Castlebawn Ltd was created jointly by Eastwood Property and R& A Group who have worked together for the last seven years to acquire the land in Newtownards.
- ∑ Fearghal Eastwood, BJ Eastwood, Adam Armstrong and Bill Rush are the Castlebawn development principals.
- ∑ Belfast-based Eastwood Property owns and manages prime retail property in towns and cities across the UK.
- ∑ R&A Group is best known for residential development, primarily in North Down. Active for over 20 years and formerly based in Donaghadee, the R&A Group now operates from Jubilee Road, Newtownards.
- ∑ Eastwood Property owns the Tower Centre in Ballymena
- ∑ WDR&RT Taggart are the architects for the Castlebawn project. They also designed the successful town centre developments of Lisburn Square and Coleraine’s Diamond Centre.

CASTLEBAWN AND THE BENEFITS FOR NEWTOWNARDS

- £250m investment which will reposition Newtownards as a prime shopping and cultural destination
- 2000 permanent jobs to be created when Castlebawn is fully operational
- ∑ Reinvigoration of Newtownards’ town centre shopping offer
- ∑ Brand new ring road to relieve the town’s crippling congestion
- ∑ Up to 2000 free parking spaces within a short walk of town centre
- ∑ Marks the 400th anniversary of Newtownards with the start of the biggest regional town centre and edge of town centre development in Northern Ireland.