

MEDIA RELEASE

Renaissance Southend Ltd

For Immediate Release

Breathtaking transformation planned for Warrior Square Gardens

Warrior Square Gardens, one of the few green spaces within central Southend, is set for a massive transformation as part of a £1.8 million¹ landscaping project designed to turn the area into a stunning and welcoming outdoor amenity the whole community can enjoy.

For the first time in decades, the entire area of just over an acre is set to realise its full potential, with new look Gardens capable of staging major public events. At the far end of the gardens in its own discreet area, will be an imaginative play landscape for the young. There will be breathtaking visual walks and gardens and an area for simply relaxing in a park atmosphere over a cup of coffee.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and regeneration company, Renaissance Southend – who are acting as project managers - have been working in partnership to take the Warrior Square Gardens scheme forward. Following extensive consultation last year, work is now expected to start early in 2010.

Landscape architects, Gillespies, have developed a series of highly imaginative designs based around the original Victorian concept to make the best use of this valuable community asset in the heart of the town centre. The landscape design scheme presents an appraisal and celebration of the grand scale and original design intent of these historic Gardens. Where possible the mature trees, so long a feature of Warrior Square Gardens, have been retained and turned into a “Lime Walk” with a raised walkway to reflect the Victoria concept of promenading. Linear custom-made seating will run along the extent of the “Lime Walk”. A play area has been landscaped to be undulating and will feature climbing poles, a bridge design and new seating.

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¹ Funding through the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) Thames Gateway regeneration budget

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To reflect a more modern slant, innovative and artistic use of lighting also means that the Gardens can be used for all types of outdoor events, even those that require big screens or stages to ensure that Southend can fulfil its commitment to culture and the arts.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Executive Councillor for Culture, Councillor Derek Jarvis says: "Safeguarding one of the few open green spaces within central Southend has always been a priority, but in this case we have been able to go that extra mile, working with our partners to produce a major town centre amenity for the benefit of the entire community."

Jon Akers-Coyle for Gillespies commented: "As designers, this revitalised Gardens scheme was all about creating an overall Garden experience – an inclusive and vibrant space that captures Victorian exuberance married with a contemporary twist. We see this as a grand unveiling, an unfurling of Nature within the town. We hope the scheme will be an invitation to Southend society to come and explore, play, promenade and appreciate this vital green space - a place to see and be seen."

A major architectural feature is a kiosk or café which has an innovative design similar to a giant petal, allowing it to open up like a flower when trading, to reflect the garden background. This is at the Chichester Road end forming an eye-catching entrance to the Gardens and creating a focal point from the High Street.

The Council will now seek a contractor for the delivery phase of the scheme, with work on site beginning by early 2010. Once started, work should take around six months to complete.

Once finished Warrior Square Gardens will have something for residents and visitors of all ages.

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David Pilkington, Director of Development, for Renaissance Southend, commented: “We’re very pleased with the design. The Gardens are a major amenity for all of us and we are now close to fully realising their benefit as one of the few green spaces within Central Southend. It is vital that the area is safeguarded for future generations and this is what the current proposals will achieve.”

² Only the kiosk element of the proposals are subject to Planning Permission

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Renaissance Southend was incorporated as a not for profit, private limited company on the 18th March 2005.

The Company is run by private and public sector Board of Directors who's Founder Members are Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (SSBC), East of England Development Agency (EEDA), Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), University of Essex (UoE) and South East Essex College (SEEC), supported by Government Office for the East of England and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.

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