

# Moves on High St. site

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**REDEVELOPMENT of the Keith Motors site in Christchurch High Street may soon become a reality and in the meantime the present owners are hoping that land at the back can be released "almost immediately" for public car parking.**

The valuable site is still owned by Keith Motors who moved to their new premises at Roeshot Hill a year ago.

Since then the prospective developers Dean Property Holdings Ltd., of Bruton Street, London, have been in 'protracted negotiations' with the Planning Department of Christchurch Council.

But, following the publication of the long-awaited Healey and Baker Report on town centre planning, and growing public opinion that the Council must do something to improve the shopping state of the High Street, Dean Property Holdings are "very close" to becoming owners of the site.

Managing director of Keith Motors, Mr. Brian Woodifield, told the Times this week:

"The developers are on the brink of obtaining detailed planning approval after over two years of negotiations. We have every reason to hope that the development might commence in the very near future.

"I have been approached by the Town Clerk about the use of the land at the back for car parking, and have suggested an early informal meeting between the interested parties.

"I feel that this situation has arisen now because there is so much public feeling about our development and the way it has been handled. This was brought to the fore at the public meeting.

A public meeting was called a fortnight ago by the local Chamber of Trade as part of its Keep Christchurch Alive campaign.

"I see no reason why a solution cannot be reached to release almost immediately a considerable parcel of land at the rear of the site for car parking. It could accommodate something like 130 cars" Mr. Woodifield said.

Town Clerk Mr. John Macfadyen confirmed that he was hoping that the car park space could be used, but he thought that the space available could be reduced if Dean Properties complete the negotiations, and begin their redevelopment.

The rear of the site would then be used for plant and machinery, he thought.

When a planning application for the site came before Christchurch's Development Control Committee on July 31 last year, Planning Officer Mr. David Pratley was instructed to inform Dean Property Holdings that while the current application could not be granted because it did not include adequate provision for car parking, if resubmitted with acceptable car park provision, and subject to 12 conditions, it could be granted.

Since then negotiations have taken place between the planners and the Dean Properties.

Mr. Pratley told The "Times": Yes, the discussions have been rather protracted, but I don't think that finance has been available until now. I think now something could happen to the site very soon.