



WNDC Board Report

Report by Director of Regeneration and Development

Paper Reference: 2010-06-06-01

Agenda Item: 6

21 September 2010

Subject: Regeneration Overview Report

Advice: That the Board:

1. **Note** the progress being made on key regeneration and development projects;
2. **Approve** WNDC's involvement on Groundwork North Northamptonshire's Board.

Summary:

- Good progress continues to be made on WNDC's key regeneration and development projects.
- Sandy Lane Improvement North is nearing completion and discussions are progressing on the second phase of Sandy Lane Relief Road.
- London Road Ransome Road junction improvements are programmed to start on site this autumn.
- Redevelopment of the Avon Nunn Mills site is a step closer following agreement of the Collaboration Agreement between WNDC and the landowners.

1. Grosvenor Centre

- 1.1 Following the appointment of the new Director of Implementation and Delivery a series of meetings have taken place with Northampton Borough Council and Legal & General to discuss arrangements for WNDC input and support to the delivery of the project. In parallel with this, discussions continue regarding the potential for public funding for the project. A Confidentiality Agreement has been agreed with NBC in order to assist with these discussions and to share commercially sensitive information.
- 1.2 A planning application for the new development is anticipated during 2011 and pre-application discussions with Legal & General will start soon.

2. Sandy Lane Improvement North

- 2.1 Construction of Sandy Lane Improvement North has continued and the new road is now nearing completion. An official opening is being planned for October. This project is being managed and delivered by Northamptonshire County Council.
- 2.2 Following the planning approval for Norwood Farm by South Northamptonshire Council discussions with the owners of the site and the Homes and Communities Agency are taking place to secure the early implementation of the second phase of the Sandy Lane Relief Road. This will connect Sandy Lane Improvement North with Phase 1 of Sandy Lane Relief Road and the already opened Upton Valley Way North in advance of new development taking place.

3. Avon Nunn Mills

- 3.1 The Land Owner Steering Group continues to meet to discuss strategic issues relating to the regeneration of the site and the previously prepared Strategic Development Framework is being used to progress master-planning and land use discussions with land owners regarding the scale and nature of development across the site. The terms of a Collaboration Agreement have now been agreed and the final agreement is being drafted for signature. This will enable the Compulsory Purchase of land in unknown ownership to be progressed and will remove a significant barrier to development.

- 3.2 The planning application for the Ransome Road site from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was approved at the Northampton Planning Committee on 14th September subject to s106 and other matters being resolved.
- 3.3 Treasury approval for the London Road Junction improvement works was received on 2 August. NCC, WNDC and the HCA are now progressing the project. The delay in securing Treasury approval for this investment has resulted in a revised forecast start on site of October 2010.
- 3.4 The utility diversions are now the key risks to maintaining the above dates. NCC has re-opened negotiations with the utilities regarding their programmes.
- 3.5 An extension to the planning consent for the junction improvement was granted by WNDC.

4. Becket's Park

- 4.1 The project continues to make excellent progress and the programme of works for the marina is on schedule to complete by the end of this financial year.
- 4.2 The planning application for the marina facilities building has been approved by WNDC. The construction tender for the facilities building has now been advertised and tenders were returned for evaluation on the 14th September. Once the preferred supplier has been secured construction is expected to commence during quarter three of this year.
- 4.3 The Construction Futures project continues to play a key role in successfully placing construction trainees on site for work experience. To date two trainees have successfully completed work experience.
- 4.4 The Clamber Art project in Becket's Park is now underway. During July and August, four successful community engagement workshops were held in Becket's Park and four workshops were held with a group of young people at the Education and Youth Services Centre in Northampton.
- 4.5 The final community consultation was held on Saturday 28th August where the artist (Joel Parkes) exhibited a number of design ideas from the previous workshops for the community to deliberate upon and discuss which would be worked up to final design.

- 4.6 The final designs will be signed off by the steering group by the end of September before fabrication works and installation take place during late November or early December.
- 4.7 During the project, an excellent partnership has developed between WNDC and Groundwork North Northamptonshire which has resulted in WNDC being offered a position on Groundwork North Northamptonshire's Board. **The Board is asked to agree WNDC's involvement on Groundwork's Board.**
- 4.8 Groundwork North Northamptonshire are an independent local Trust working locally, regionally and nationally to help the county explore and realise its potential. Groundwork work with and through local and countywide partnerships to build and deliver Sustainable Communities Strategies with a clear focus on transforming lives and places for communities.
- 4.9 There is a clear synergy in Groundwork's and WNDC's work and both organisations would benefit from working in partnership formally as would the communities that both organisations serve.
- 4.10 The Board is asked to agree to WNDC's involvement on Groundwork's Board. The Groundwork Board are responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the Trust, developing the organisations aims, objectives and goals. The position is an unpaid three year term. The Board meets four times each year.

5. Northampton Waterside

- 5.1 Meetings with National Grid continue in connection with the removal of the Gas Holders. Options regarding how both parties might work together to plan for the redevelopment of the Gas Holders sites continue to be discussed and are, inevitably, subject to the operational requirements of the gas supply business.
- 5.2 The Project team, which includes representatives from NBC and NCC, continues to meet on a regular basis in order to manage planning matters and site assembly. The Northampton Central Area Action Plan is scheduled for consideration at NBC Cabinet in October and it is anticipated that proposals for Waterside will be set out in the Plan.

6. Castle Station

- 6.1 Work is progressing on the full outline designs for the station and Multi Storey Car Park in line with the alternative design concept verified by the project Steering Group on 11 June 2010.
- 6.2 Ground investigations, used to inform the designs, are complete with the exception of investigations on the platforms. These were delayed when weekend possessions planned for the work were missed. Alternative arrangements are being progressed. Non-intrusive surveys, such as topographical, M&E services, structural and ecological reviews are complete.
- 6.3 Network Rail has issued the draft footbridge options report to WNDC. This was produced to satisfy London Midland that potential alternatives were fully considered. The report concludes that the original footbridge option agreed with Network Rail is the preferred option. The alternative, avoiding the need for a temporary footbridge, requires demolition of the existing station and a section of canopies, doubling the cost.
- 6.4 A planning meeting was held with NBC officers to introduce the scheme and to discuss any concerns they may have and potential requirements for a 'prior approval' submission under Network Rail's Permitted Development Rights. Further meetings are required to discuss and agree details of the scheme. It was agreed that a broader public consultation will need to be jointly considered going forward.
- 6.5 A Funding Group meeting was held recently with representatives from Network Rail, NCC and NBC. Network Rail are exploring potential rail industry funding, based on the increasing the regulatory asset base. This requires the support of both London Midland and the Department for Transport. The Regional Growth Fund was identified as a potential source of funding and this will be investigated further. All present agreed that funding the next stage of the project (detailed design) is an opportunity to maintain momentum on the project whilst allowing time to secure funding for delivery.

7. iCon

- 7.1 Works to the superstructure are continuing with good progress being made on site. The timber frame to the incubator block and the glulam frame roof deck have been completed. Roof works, cladding works to the incubator block and render to the curved facade have commenced. Following presentations utilising computer generated images it was agreed by all parties (including DCC and WNDC) that the external facade lighting will be situated on the render section of the external façade only. Light batons will be placed on every 7th fin and be full height (4m) where this is possible.
- 7.2 Much work has been undertaken on the building's renewable energy strategy. A final decision will be made shortly on whether to progress with alterations that may improve the buildings 'green credentials'.
- 7.3 Winvic, the main contractor, has been instructed to use the expertise of specialist firms, AVFM (audio visual), ACS (ICT) and Sandy Brown (Acoustics) to assist with the detailed design and enhanced fit-out items. Subsequent change instructions have been issued to Winvic.

8. Stronger Communities Fund

- 8.1 Since the last Board meeting the Stronger Communities Fund panel has not met.
- 8.2 During the last few months WNDC has been working with Northamptonshire Community Foundation to source local organisations which WNDC can support as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The organisations that will be supported on the 25th September as part of WNDC's CSR are Friends of Delapre Abbey and the African Caribbean Elders Service (ACES) where staff are volunteering their time to gardening and clearing at Delapre Abbey and setting up and helping deliver a local tea dance for the ACES.

9. Construction Futures

- 9.1 Up to this point the project has focussed on the creation of construction training placements, working with West Northamptonshire colleges and schools to ensure young people interested in or engaged in construction training have real life,

- construction site experience. However discussions are now underway with Carillion Construction Training Ltd. (a private sector construction training company and formerly part of Carillion Plc) to expand our offer to include longer term construction apprenticeships.
- 9.2 The proposal would see Construction Futures and WNDC's planning team identify development sites suitable for longer term training programmes (in practice, those offering more than 6 weeks continuous training on site). Those training opportunities would then be delivered as construction apprenticeships, with the apprentices placed by Construction Futures and drawn from West Northamptonshire but employed directly by Carillion Construction Training.
- 9.3 This allows us to overcome the main barrier facing construction apprenticeship programmes, namely the need to have the apprentice employed for an extended period of time by the developer or construction company – with the construction industry struggling the number of failed construction apprenticeships in the U.K. has risen rapidly in recent years. The approach we are developing minimises the risk to the developer and the financial impact of apprenticeships on site viability.
- 9.4 The role of WNDC's planning team in this enhancement of the Construction Futures model has been critical particularly in terms of the Planning Obligations Strategy.
- 9.5 Reflecting Construction Future's recent success in securing ERDF funding (via the iNet project), the team has been working with neighbouring East Midlands local authorities, considering their options for introducing construction training through development. Presentations to Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council have resulted in follow up visits from both authorities. Again, WNDC's planning teams had a key role to play, detailing how the scheme can be made to work via the planning system.
- 9.6 Construction Futures is also working closely with Northampton Borough Council's regeneration team on building construction training opportunities into the forthcoming Housing PFI programme.
- 9.7 Finally, a new business plan for Construction Futures is being drafted which indicates a move towards a project which is better able to trade as a stand alone entity, engaging directly with both public and private sector interests.

10. Moat Lane and the Watermeadows

- 10.1 The Moat Lane project is progressing on three separate fronts namely the planning application for the Moat Lane site ; the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) action; and the procurement of a private sector development partner.
- 10.2 The planning application was considered by the Towcester Planning Committee on the application on 15th September. The application attracted considerable comment in the local press, much of it centred on the proposal for South Northamptonshire Council to relocate to the site. The public consultation for the scheme ran from 15th July – 6th of August with public displays held on the 23rd and 24th of July, both of which were well attended by local people and businesses. The application was approved subject to s106 agreement and a number of detailed matters being resolved.
- 10.3 There is some concern over the continued delay in the Highways Agency's response which could have a significant impact on the CPO timetable and, potentially, the private sector partner procurement process. Discussions are underway with both the Highways Agency and the traffic consultants working on the scheme to try and minimise continued delay and impact on the scheme.
- 10.4 The CPO objection deadline has now passed and proofs are being finalised ahead of an Inquiry date. The Highways Agency's response to the planning application could have a bearing on when we would like to see the CPO inquiry. Meanwhile the policy of acquisition by negotiation ahead of any CPO continues, with deals to secure more of the outstanding properties and sites now close to completion.
- 10.5 On the procurement front, following the very successful Developers' Day and OJEU notice publication, the project has attracted considerable private sector interest. The Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) for the scheme has been requested by over 50 potential bidders, including some major U.K. development and construction companies. The evaluation of those PQQs will take place in September.
- 10.6 The management plan for the current Watermeadows has been finalised and the park continues to be well used by the public (with many positive comments on the park made at the Moat Lane planning application events held in July). An application for funding for the Watermeadows Phase 2 has been submitted by SNC for GAF 3

funding. This is being considered by the Executive team and discussions with SNC are ongoing.