



WNDC Board Report

Report by Director of Regeneration and Development

Paper Reference: 2011-02-07-01

Agenda Item: 7

14 March 2011

Subject: Regeneration Overview Report

Advice: That the Board

1. **Note** the progress that is being made on regeneration projects across West Northamptonshire.

Summary:

- Positive progress continues to be made on all projects.
- The Outline Design Stage for Northampton Station is nearing completion and will shortly receive Network Rail approval.
- Construction of the facilities building at Becket's Park Marina is well underway and plans are being developed for a River Festival event in August to mark the opening of the Marina as well as 250 years of navigation on the River Nene.
- Daventry iCon has reached practical completion stage and will be open for business in April.

1. Moat Lane, Towcester

- 1.1 The project continues to progress well with the focus of work being the procurement of a development partner. As part of the procurement process the project team have been involved in a series of design workshops which allow the bidders to showcase their current designs and gauge the views from the project team. A second bidders presentation day will be held at the end of March where all bidders will be able to present their final draft designs to the partnership. The final tender call is currently scheduled for the 18 April with the evaluation of tenders programmed for the end of April / beginning of May 2011.
- 1.2 In 2008 a Funding Agreement was drafted between WNDC, SNC and HCA (known as English Partnerships at the time) setting out the Public Public Partnership (PPP) role. Since 2008 the project has moved on significantly and the agreement needs to be updated to reflect this, particularly now that South Northamptonshire Council will be an end user in the development. WNDC are in early discussions with SNC with the support of Trowers and Hamlin to develop a collaboration agreement to reflect this position.
- 1.3 As reported at the last Board meeting the CPO Inquiry took place on the 18th January 2011 and the formal decision of the Inquiry is due on the 16 May 2011.
- 1.4 WNDC has approved £75,000 for phase 2 of the Watermeadows project which has been match funded by SNC by a further £75,000. This will extend the public open space by an additional 27.87 acres enabling visitors and local people to enjoy greater green amenity space.
- 1.5 Bury Mount has won a BALI (British Association of Landscape Industries) Award under the Land Renewal and Regeneration category for the restoration of the motte and bailey.

2. iCon Environmental Innovation Centre, Daventry

- 2.1 The project continues to progress well and is still on target to achieve Practical Completion (PC) on 9th March 2011. However, this does depend on the building being signed-off by Building Control.
- 2.2 All the planning conditions have been satisfied and are in the process of being formally signed off by WNDC.

- 2.3 The installation of the Toucan Crossing and associated works, are in the process of being completed on site. The works will then be inspected and signed-off by NCC.
- 2.4 Discussions are on-going with the University of Northampton in relation to handover of the building and completion of the fit-out. The certification of BREEAM “Excellent” is planned for 6 weeks after PC.
- 2.5 The transfer of the building from iCon (EM) to the University of Northampton has been approved by the iCon (EM) Board and the University of Northampton. Discussions are on-going to finalise the documentation required to complete the formal transfer.
- 2.6 There has been good interest from companies and individuals interested in occupying the incubator units. This is being managed by the University of Northampton and they have confirmed that the tenants will start to occupy the building from mid April.
- 2.7 Discussions are on-going with the main contractor, Winvic, in relation to the final account and it is hoped that this will be agreed within two months of practical completion. It has been agreed that Winvic will clear the site and their compound by the end of March 2011.
- 2.8 The iCon is one of a number of successes that the collaborative approach with Daventry District Council, the County Council and others has secured. Others include the Abbey Retail Park, highway improvements and a range of new community infrastructure initiatives e.g. the newly built Working Mens Club, the new Daventry Scouts building and the funding of the Phoenix Centre’s development plans.
- 2.9 Daventry District Council and its private development partners will be submitting a series of major planning applications this summer. These include the development plans for site 1 incorporating a major new shopping centre, new public open space and library; site 3 and 6 which include the Waterspace, new residential development and a hotel; and site 5 with a new food store and related car park.

3. Becket’s Park, Northampton

- 3.1 The main contractor for the facilities building (PGR Construction) has been on site since January 2011 and continues to make good progress. The Planning team have been working extremely hard with the Environment Agency to discharge planning conditions and good progress is being made. The construction of the facilities building

will take approximately 27 weeks and is scheduled for completion on the 22nd July; however boaters will be able to access the moorings after the 21st April.

3.2 The partnership is currently working together to develop the River Festival event which will take place on Sunday 7th August 2011 to celebrate the River Nene being navigable for 250 years as well as celebrating the new marina. A sponsorship pack has been developed for this event to help promote greater community involvement and to raise funds.

3.3 As part of the River Festival and the wider Becket's Park improvements, funding applications have been made to Northamptonshire Community Foundation's General Funding Programme and to the Heritage Lottery Fund – the outcome of these bids are not yet known. An application to Awards for All is also in development.

4. Avon Nunn Mills

4.1 The main focus of activity has been on the development of the plans for Nunn Mills Road. Following meetings towards the end of January with the local authorities, and the Environment Agency in early February, revised plans were drawn up. These formed the basis for a workshop held with the landowners. These will form the basis for the plans required to support the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process.

4.2 The Collaboration Agreement is in its final draft form, with checking ongoing in relation to the legal indemnity insurance that is being provided by Avon to ensure the relevant safeguards are in place for the Corporation's costs to be recovered. The costs to be covered relate to the cost of the CPO and any subsequent compensation claim should a claim be received from an unknown owner. The land referencing procedure is ready to proceed.

4.3 Once the Collaboration Agreement is signed WNDK will be in a position to move forward with the making of the CPO and progressing the "unresolved matters". These matters will include agreement on the details of layout, densities, massing and heights of buildings and mixes of use. There will also be an agreement of how costs of infrastructure will be shared across the site.

5. London Road / Ransome Road Junction Improvements

- 5.1 Work on the junction improvements at London Road/ Ransome Road are now well underway. Utility diversions are 30% complete with EoN and National Grid on site. Road crossings for these diversions have been completed in advance. The site compound is set up on HCA land to the south of Ransome Road. Enabling works to the Netto car park are complete and footpaths have been diverted.
- 5.2 The detailed design for the junction improvement works is substantially complete and awaiting sign-off. The approved design will be forwarded to the construction team for a target price for the works to be prepared and agreed. The Stage 2 Road Safety Audit is complete with comments incorporated into the detailed design
- 5.3 Overall completion date for the works remains December 2011 despite a small delay completing the detailed design.

6. Castle Station

- 6.1 The GRIP4 stage of work is now nearing completion. Network Rail has reviewed the completed outline designs for the station, footbridge and MSCP and final changes are being incorporated by Hyder. Sign-off by Network Rail is forecast for mid-March 2011.
- 6.2 The formal response by Northampton Borough Council to 'prior approval' planning submission is still awaited.
- 6.3 The project cost estimate has been produced by Hyder and is being validated by Network Rail's Estimating Manager. This should be available by early March. Other GRIP Stage 4 deliverables, including the project delivery programme, will be complete by mid-March. Network Rail's final review of the GRIP 4 Stage will take place shortly after.
- 6.4 Network Rail has reassured WNDC that the GRIP Stage 4 will be complete by the end of March and that the final cost will be within the total forecast in the Development Services Agreement between WNDC and NR.
- 6.5 The next stage of work on the Station is to secure the funding to deliver the project. Critical to this will be engaging with and aligning the priorities of Network Rail, DfT and the rail franchise process. A high level stakeholder engagement strategy is being developed and a series of meetings will follow. Positive meetings have already taken place with the local authorities and MPs. Brian Binley MP, as Chair of Northampton Rail Users Group has arranged a meeting with Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for

Transport to discuss the scheme and WNDC Chairman John Markham, has been invited to attend.

7. St Peters Waterside

7.1 Work is progressing with the land acquisition strategy for the scheme. Discussions are ongoing with both commercial and residential land owners on acquiring their interests and how the scheme can be developed together. Discussions with National Grid are ongoing to discuss the decommissioning and remediation of the gasholders.

7.2 A scope of services is being drafted with Broadway Malayan (one of WNDC's Framework Partners) for design work to aid the first phase of development. At the same time WNDC is working up proposals for the Northampton Innovation Centre, which could be provided on the former United Social Club site and is currently the subject of an East Midlands Urban Development Fund (EMUDF) bid.

7.3 Good progress has been made on that EMUDF bid in recent weeks, with continued positive support and feedback from the bid managers (King Sturge) and the Board overseeing the Fund. There is still much to be done before any formal offer of funding is made, not least confirmation of support and funding for the project from WNDC's Board and the University of Northampton's Board of Governors. However the financial viability discussions which have been ongoing between King Sturge, WNDC and the University for the past few months are beginning to bear fruit, with the risk profile for the project gradually being reduced which in turn is reflected in lower interest rates for the loan element of the proposal.

7.4 Broadway Malayan's design work will be jointly overseen by the University and WNDC with arrangements for a wider stakeholder group to advise the scheme now, under discussion.

8. Construction Futures

8.1 The Construction Futures team has been relocated to the main WNDC offices in Franklins Garden. The lease on the Daventry office has been surrendered.

8.2 Over and above the project's main work (which has continued to attract positive local press coverage), discussions on the "spinning out" of the project as a stand/alone company are progressing well. Anthony Collins Solicitors (a Birmingham based practice which specialises in regeneration and public sector work) is advising the project on

management and governance options. The intention is to create an organisation which can continue to work closely with West Northamptonshire Local Authorities beyond WNDC's operational life, whilst at the same time trading in areas outside the sub region with both the public and private sectors. A full report on the outcome of this work will be prepared for Board in the near future.