



WNDC Board Report

Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference:

Agenda Item:

20 March 2012

Subject: Chief Executive's Report

Advice: That the Board **endorse** the progress WNDC is making in respect of the growth and regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.

1. A fond farewell

- 1.1 Subject to parliamentary approval, WNDC's development control powers are being transferred to the local authorities next month. Following this transition, WNDC will focus on our core priority during the next two years – the delivery of major regeneration projects in Northampton town centre.
- 1.2 Since being established in 2006, WNDC's planning department has made an immense contribution to the regeneration of the area. It is important to remember that WNDC's development control team was originally established with a highly challenging brief. Not only did it need to be forward-thinking and ultra-responsive, it had to set new local benchmarks in terms of design, sustainability, speed, and process efficiency.
- 1.3 The team has achieved much, ranging from process innovations such as the Planning Obligations Strategy and the Manual for Design Codes, to world class developments such as Sainbury's Pineham and the iCon Innovation Centre. They have also carefully determined highly sensitive applications on challenging sites with a multitude of heritage and environmental issues.
- 1.4 The Director of Planning Services will provide a full overview of the team's wide ranging activities during the past 6 years. However, I would like formally to record our thanks and recognition for their skill, professionalism and crucial contribution to the regeneration of West Northamptonshire.

2. Northampton Alive

- 2.1 Working in partnership, the local authorities and WNDC have commenced an initiative to raise awareness, advocacy and interest in Northampton's key regeneration projects.
- 2.2 Known as 'Northampton Alive' the activity is initially aimed at local audiences but will evolve to engage external investors and developers in later phases. It is a new way of thinking and communicating about the regeneration of the town and will underpin related marketing activities over time, including campaigns for the Waterside Enterprise Zone.

2.3 A range of high quality communications collateral has been produced, including promotional literature, exhibition materials, and a fly-through animation based on WNDC's 3D virtual model of Northampton. A launch event was held at the Guildhall on 9 March which was exceptionally well received.

3. Alive with Enterprise

3.1 It has been a positive period for the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone.

In late January, Business Secretary Vince Cable MP visited Northampton and received a tour of Northampton's key development sites. This included the Waterside Innovation Centre site, which in January became the first building proposed for the Enterprise Zone to achieve planning approval.

3.2 Since then, WNDC's planning committee has approved a second building - a £20.0m bottling plant at Carlsberg's Northampton site. The 7,000 sq m scheme will create up to 60 new jobs, and follows the completion of a £40.0 million development of Carlsberg's site in October 2011.

3.3 In addition to these schemes, strong progress is being made on the two compulsory purchase orders that WNDC has commenced within the Waterside Enterprise Zone. A full update on our progress will be provided by the Director of Regeneration and Development

4. Sharing Best Practice

4.1 Alongside our physical regeneration projects, the Corporation's ground-breaking Construction Futures scheme continues to be a key priority. We are actively expanding the programme, which is the first of its kind in the UK, and is being successfully promoted to local authorities across the region.

4.2 In addition, the Corporation has been engaging with Government at the highest level, to help raise the profile of the Construction Futures approach. In January, Vince Cable met students from our Construction Futures scheme at a major housing development in Upton. The Business Secretary recognises the national potential of our model and publically endorsed its work.

4.3 Earlier this month WNDG gave evidence to the Business Innovation and Skills Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into Apprenticeships. There was recognition that the unique method we have established for Construction Futures could be rolled out nationally and into other employment sectors.