



## **Report of Councillor Lizzy Bowen Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2021**

I am delighted to have taken on this challenging role with my first Induction meeting with officers being held on 24th June.

### **OVERVIEW OF TOWNS INVESTMENT PLAN/ NORTHAMPTON FORWARD BOARD**

The "Towns Investment plan" was submitted by the Northampton Forward Board with the key aim of rejuvenating the town, creating a thriving centre and strengthening its position within the Oxford, Cambridge Arc. This has been prepared in the context of a global pandemic and Northampton is considered one of the hardest hit parts of Northamptonshire county.

With a proud history of manufacturing and craft focussed on leather and shoe making, Northampton was the largest area shortlisted for the Towns fund.

It achieved £25m from this bid which will unlock £170m in match funding and private sector investment.

Full details of the Master Plan and projects within the Towns fund award can be found in the recent cabinet report for July.

### **NORTHAMPTON MUSEUMS**

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery in Guildhall Road reopens on 10th July having undergone an extensive £6.7m redevelopment programme. The museum has more than doubled in size, with the addition of a nine-metre-high glazed atrium extension, linking the original building to brand new galleries and activity space. The spectacular atrium includes a café and spacious outdoor terrace, which sits above the new Shoe Gallery, showcasing Northampton's internationally important shoe collection and the town's shoemaking heritage.

The museum recently won 'Best Project on a Limited Budget' for our sneak peek film and was shortlisted in 7 of the 8 categories we entered. The museum also won the "Northamptonshire Heritage Organisation of the Year" award

### **VULCAN WORKS**

Practical Completion is near and is due to be open later this month (July) This high spec building of historical significance has been designed to accommodate 59 small start up business units.

### **24 GUILDHALL ROAD (Contemporary Art Gallery)**

Works are due to start on site shortly. This will involve relocating NN contemporary Arts into the cultural quarter.

### **RENE MACINTOSH museum, gallery and restaurant**

I recently met with the MD and they have ambitious plans to extend the building with a glass atrium, part funded by the council's successful Towns Fund bid. They are also just about to

purchase the heavily forested land in front of the site and develop a woodland experience for education purposes.

Investigations have begun to identify a more suitable location for the LEATHER MUSEUM currently located in the Grosvenor Centre. I have visited the site and met with the team in my previous portfolio and Stuart Timmiss has subsequently been out to further discussions. The museum is currently sited up 4 flights of stairs with inadequate access for maximum footfall. The curator has ambitious plans to extend the number of workshops, events and craft making activities to make it a viable proposition.

## **MARKET SQUARE**

The much awaited Market Square project is building momentum, with Gillespie architects appointed, and surveys due to start shortly. Full details of the plan are being presented at Cabinet with approval for draw down of funds. This project is funded completely by the Future High Streets Fund to a value of £8.1m

## **OTHER PROJECTS IN THE PLAN ARE:**

41-45 Abingdon Street (former M&S building ) for mixed use

35-38 Abingdon St (former BHS site) to be redeveloped, but also reinstating the previous north-south pedestrian link to help enable future Greyfriars site development

Four Waterside (across the road from the train station), for which a masterplan has been prepared for a hotel, grade A office space, and some residential accommodation to be developed

Emporium Way creating a new pedestrian way between the Market Square and future Greyfriars

Marefair Heritage Gateway, and St Peter's and the Old Black Lion, which will enable a visitor centre that will make St Peter's fine Norman Church more accessible, and celebrate this historic part of the town

## **FUNDING**

The Welcome Back Fund action plan has been submitted to Government, and we await its response.

The Community Renewal Fund bid was submitted to Government, and we expect to hear back by the end of July.

The skills and social enterprise development fund bid has been submitting with the aim of providing more support to small start ups and social enterprises. The time frame has yet to be confirmed..

## **CHESTER HOUSE ESTATES**

I have been lead on this project for 2 years now. I recently met with senior directors and Helen Powell, Deputy Leader for North Northamptonshire. Sited near Wellingborough this £15.5m project is of huge archaeological and historical significance with 10,000 years of history and is now finally nearing completion. Originally acquired in 2002 it has been beset by challenges not

least the Contractor ceased trading in January 2019, leaving the site in a critically unfinished state.

Phase 1 of the site; the Archive and Storage Centre was opened in April. It is the 4th largest archive centre in the UK and will site most, if not all of Northamptonshire's historical archives. There are 20,000 boxes to catalogue and the Curator Ben Donnelly Symes has a team of volunteers to assist in this mammoth task. The 1st Archaeological Digs of the season are in progress with our Leicester University/ volunteer alliance in full swing.

Phase 2 will be open in the Summer with a weddings, food and retail offering, whilst Phase 3, which is the rest of site due for completion including the Interpretation Centre, Bridges over the River Nene will be open for October half term.

**Councillor Lizzy Bowen**

**Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth**