

## **CABINET STATEMENT**

### **CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION – COUNCILLOR BICKNELL**

#### **Regeneration for Eastleigh Town Centre**

As you will all know the Council purchased the site of the Old Post Office once the Royal Mail decided to sell it along with many other sites across the country. Given its location the Old Post Office was deemed an important site with a lot of potential for regeneration while also improving the link from High Street through to Market Street. It also had the potential for regenerating and improving the public realm environment at the rear of the properties that back on to the service road which is a visually less appealing part of the town centre.

The design brief was reasonably straight forward; transform a dilapidated building that was not fit for purpose, maximise the potential of the site, introduce some green open space and to pick up on Eastleigh's heritage with the use of materials and subtle design features influenced by Railway architecture.

The planning application went to Eastleigh Local Area Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> January where it received overwhelming support and was approved. The application's details, including commentary on the design of the scheme, rationale behind the planning and artists impressions, can be found on the Council's website under planning number F/20/89125.

However, for those that haven't had the chance to view this, in summary, the scheme is to demolish the two buildings on site, replacing the Old Post Office with a 4-storey building at the front and a 6-storey building to the rear. Both will be linked with a courtyard public open space which will include new trees. The walkway will be opened to the public linking the High Street to Market Street. Both the ground floors are to be flexible commercial spaces with the floors above providing 28 high quality affordable accommodation units. Solar panels are to be installed on the roofs of the two buildings and the large bike store will have a green roof. With planning permission obtained the project can now move forward with practical completion planned to be July 2022.

This is an important step for the Council as it is the latest regeneration project in the town centre. As we all know town centres were changing well before Covid appeared and to survive town centres needed to adapt and transform. It is suggested Covid has sped that change up by about 10 years. More people than ever are now shopping online with an ever-decreasing number of items being purchased in actual shops on the High Street. Town Centres need to become much more "destinations" to socialise in, to eat out in or to access more community focused establishments such as libraries, health hubs, dentists etc. Equally more space in town centres need to be repurposed into accommodation to give town centres a viable population that in turn can service the cafes, bars, restaurants and nearby shops.

This regeneration project starts that process and proves the Council is very serious, and ambitious, about regenerating Eastleigh's Town Centre. It also demonstrates that Eastleigh Borough Council has every confidence in Eastleigh's Town Centre,

leading by example and setting a clear example of what quality development the Council will permit here. This in turn will act as a catalyst for further future development and regeneration both from the Council, with potentially future projects, and the private sector that will be encouraged to invest in Eastleigh.

All in all, this is an exciting project, providing quality affordable housing and flexible retail space and demonstrates once again that Eastleigh Borough Council is forward thinking, proactive and not afraid to take on projects that will benefit the Borough and its residents.