

2 October 2007

## **FOSTER GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO BIGGEST EVER PLANNING APPLICATION**

Environment Minister Arlene Foster today announced that outline planning permission is to be granted for phase two of Titanic Quarter.

The scheme, which in terms of the development proposed is the largest application ever dealt with by the Northern Ireland Planning Service, will provide a total of approximately 3 million sq feet of new floorspace in the centre of Belfast.

Arlene Foster said: "I am delighted to make this announcement today. It is a major boost to Belfast and is a further indication that Northern Ireland is leaving its troubled past behind and is now very much open for business. I congratulate all involved in both the private and public sectors and, in particular, my own planners in the Belfast Divisional Planning Office and Strategic Projects Division, who all worked together to make it possible.

"I am particularly pleased that this major planning application, received at the turn of the year, was processed in such a timely and efficient manner. Extensive pre-application discussions took place between the applicant and the Planning Service to ensure that a good quality application which included the necessary environmental information was submitted. In addition, throughout the processing of the application, continual contact between the applicant and my planners ensured that issues were dealt with as they arose. This demonstrates once again that when an applicant submits a high quality proposal, and works with the Planning Service, a positive result can be produced with dispatch.

"This major proposal is a mixed-use development that will provide some 2000 residential units including affordable housing and an element of social housing. It will include a mix of employment, leisure and cultural tourism uses, with the latter centred on the Titanic Signature Project, the subject of a Lottery bid, which will showcase Belfast's maritime and industrial heritage.

"The development of this 16.5 hectare site, including the restoration of the Titanic and Olympic slipways, represents a further step in the development of the City. It is a major confidence boost for the economy and the building industry which will provide long term economic benefits to the whole of Northern Ireland."

Mike Smith, Chief Executive of Titanic Quarter, said: "We are delighted to receive planning permission for the next phase of development at Titanic Quarter. With construction of Phase One well underway we are very excited about getting started on Phase Two which incorporates the Titanic Signature Project, as well as additional residential, office, leisure and public realm space.

"In particular I would like to thank the Planning Service for their pro-active approach to the application. Over the years they have come in for much criticism but their interaction with Titanic Quarter has been very encouraging."

Len O'Hagan, Chairman of Belfast Harbour Commissioners, said; "As co-promoters of Titanic Quarter, we very much welcome today's announcement. This is a key milestone in triggering the process of attracting foreign direct investment to Titanic Quarter. It clearly demonstrates that public and private sector co-operation can achieve significant results for the City and regional economy. This approval is a further step in securing lottery funding for the Titanic Signature Project."

A Concept Masterplan has been developed for Phase II of Titanic Quarter that sets out the agreed development framework and will guide the detailed planning applications to follow.

### **Notes to Editors**

The outline application for Phase II of Titanic Quarter was processed in accordance with the Planning Service's new streamlined process which has been introduced to deal with strategic projects.

The process has involved the setting up of a special unit at headquarters to deal with strategic projects, and the introduction of processes such as pre-application discussions to ensure that good quality applications are submitted to speed up the planning process.

The Phase II site is 16.5 hectares in area and is the second phase of this brownfield development which will eventually cover the 75 hectares that makes up Titanic Quarter, the site of the former shipyard.

This proposal includes 200,000 sq m of residential development, 37,000 sq m of employment uses with 5,000 sq m maximum for offices, 23,000 sq m of leisure uses, 11,300 sq m of tourism uses including the Titanic Signature Project, 5,500 sq m local services and 15,000 sq m for vehicle parking.

The scheme also makes generous provision for public realm and open space as an integral part of the layout. The developer will provide off-site infrastructure in addition to the provision of a bus based public transport connection to the city centre.

Belfast City Council fully supports the proposal.

There were two objections to the proposal which are not considered to be of sufficient weight to merit the need for a public local inquiry.

For media enquiries please contact DOE Press Office on 028 9054 0014.