

27<sup>th</sup> August 2015

Dear Resident,

**RE: Visteon Planning Application – Fold Housing Association**

We would like to provide you with an update on the planning application and the progress of work on the former Visteon site. As you will have seen considerable work has been completed to demolish the buildings and ensure the site is ready for development.

Fold Housing Association purchased the former Visteon site in June 2013, with the aim of providing social and private housing, community facilities and employment opportunities. This followed years of inactivity on the site, as it failed to attract commercial interest.

We submitted a planning application in December 2013 proposing a housing-led regeneration of the site. This unique housing and employment proposal was designed to meet the critical needs of local people by providing quality homes, access to workspace and community facilities. This £25m investment would see 244 new private and social homes, set amidst extensive open space and would represent an overall investment of £70m in the wider economy.

As part of our initial proposal we included a community facility and work has commenced with local community groups to identify how this opportunity can address a lack of resources in the area, so that we can provide a sustainable, integrated and usable resource within the wider west Belfast community.

In November 2014 the Planning Service requested that Fold reviewed the amount of employment space to be provided on site. We reviewed the existing proposals and this week submitted an amended planning proposal increasing the amount of employment space by 50% from 40,000sqft to over 60,000sqft. This space can accommodate up to 616 jobs, which is treble the employment at the Visteon factory when it closed.

We commissioned an independent study from leading UK chartered surveyors - Lisneys/Cushman & Wakefield. This report was submitted to DoE Planning as part of the overall application. The report assessed demand and current space available in west Belfast and concluded that there was no demand for workspace in the area around the former Visteon site. Belfast City Council commissioned a further independent report from Branniff Consultants. It confirmed similar findings to the Lisney report (both reports are available on [www.foldvisteonregeneration.com](http://www.foldvisteonregeneration.com)).

Our proposal submitted this week will provide an immediate boost to the construction industry with up to 300 jobs estimated in the initial building phase. Our intention will then be to provide jobs after construction, in all aspects of the upkeep of the housing scheme and facilities. We have exciting plans for apprentice schemes during construction as well as for long-term local employment opportunities maintaining facilities on site in the future. Key to our proposal and the sustainability of the project will be forming relationships with existing and neighbouring partners and community groups. Where gaps exist we hope to attract new partners, who can provide support, skills and knowledge-based training. This in turn will open new opportunities for local employment.

West Belfast currently has one of the highest housing waiting lists in Northern Ireland. More than 2,000 people are living in housing stress. Our proposal will see much needed homes for social rent alongside affordable homes for sale. In total, 244 new homes will be available for families seeking to settle in this area. Our proposal offers a choice of renting, taking an equity share, or purchasing outright with all occupiers living side by side. Under the Government's current right-to-buy scheme, all families choosing to live within the development's social rented housing will be able to purchase their properties after two years.

In summary, we believe our proposals will benefit the local community in many ways. We will help to alleviate exceptionally high levels of housing stress whilst providing immediate employment for the construction sector. Going forward excellent employment space will be available in line with demand. There will be community facilities for residents and these can be shared with the established neighbourhoods, not to mention play spaces and a linear park around the site focused on promoting health and wellbeing. We also see apprentice and facilities opportunities before and after construction. Regeneration of this most important site has attracted widespread support and will create a new and vibrant gateway into west Belfast.

We will hold a number of "drop in" information events at the Balmoral Hotel on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September between 2pm and 5pm and on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September between 5pm and 8pm when we would welcome your views. We would also welcome feedback from local businesses, schools and community groups and all those with an interest in the regeneration of the former Visteon site.

The amended application will be uploaded on to the Planning website in the coming days but to ensure the information is available to you immediately it is also on the website detailed below.

For further information on the regeneration of the former Visteon site, please to [www.foldvisteonregeneration.com](http://www.foldvisteonregeneration.com) or email us on [regeneration@foldgroup.co.uk](mailto:regeneration@foldgroup.co.uk)

Yours sincerely,



John McLean  
Chief Executive