

- **Leigh-Sara Timberlake, CEO, Business South**

Mister Chairman and elected members – on behalf of Business South, we wish to place on record our **strong support** for Packaged Living and Fiera Real Estate UK's plan to redevelop the former Toys R Us site.

This prominent location opposite Southampton Central station is a vital gateway into the city.

At present, visitors who arrive here are confronted with a derelict site that gives a very poor and misleading first impression.

This is particularly crucial given the City of Culture 2025 bid, and it could be said the clock is ticking to put this critical situation right.

At Business South, we believe The Maritime Gateway is the answer, and will transform this area into something of which Southampton can be justly proud.

The economic benefits are extensive with Grade A office space and retail units which together will provide several hundred much-needed new jobs.

As for the residential units, these will bring additional consumers into the city centre, boosting its economy by millions of pounds every year.

The council will also benefit from business rates and significant Community Infrastructure Levy payments.

There will also be a wider benefit with landmark public realm improvements including the International Maritime Promenade.

This will provide a far more inviting and appealing entrance to the city and give the right impression to visitors, especially those coming to Southampton for the first time.

When we examine the benefits to business, the benefits to residents, the benefits to the council, and the much-improved visitor experience, The Maritime Gateway is clearly a win-win for all concerned.

It would also remove a major eyesore from a prominent city centre location. Toys R Us was the right thing for Southampton in the 1980s, but in our increasing digital world where climate change and sustainability are vital issues, we need something new.

The Maritime Gateway is the answer, and with its superb public transport connections, it has the potential to be a truly sustainable and green scheme, making it fit for the future.

Business South believes this will make a huge difference, not just to Southampton's economy, but how the city is viewed and regarded.

We all hope the City of Culture 2025 bid will succeed, and if there's one thing this committee can do today to support that bid, it will be to approve this vital regeneration, providing a much-needed new gateway into Southampton.

Thank you for considering our submission.