

Last week two major projects received the go-ahead from government after being 'called in' for review. Following exhaustive and open public inquiries, Ministers have approved our decision to regenerate the former Parkside colliery site in Newton-le-Willows, and plans can also progress for major new investment and jobs at Omega West along the M62.

Various Parkside schemes have faced many hurdles since the pit closed three decades ago, but the hard work of our Labour council and councillors – working in partnership with Langtree, our MP Conor McGinn, and the Liverpool City Region – has paid off.

The first phase of development will see 93,000 square metres of new employment space built on the site, which will bring a range of jobs offering a variety of skills. The announcement also saw approval of the Parkside Link Road, and given that the site is also a major part of the City Region's bid for Freeport status the potential opportunities here are extremely significant.

At Omega West, Home Bargains will take the largest distribution unit – they're a fantastic employer and I warmly welcome them and this development to our borough. The project will create an estimated 1200 construction jobs in the development of the site, and more than 1000 new jobs – many high skill, high pay – when fully operational.

In addition to also providing £1.8m for Bold Forest Park and creating a new public nature conservation and woodland area adjacent to the site, Home Bargains are committed to a local employment scheme and are also contributing £750,000 towards a bus service from St Helens to Omega to help enable local residents to access jobs there. Given the scale of child poverty and job deprivation in this part of the borough, this is absolutely vital.

We will continue to do everything we can to attract new jobs, opportunities and prosperity to St Helens.

Finally, after a year's enforced absence it was emotional and humbling to be able to take part in Remembrance events again last Sunday.

It's one of the greatest honours I have as Leader of St Helens Borough Council to represent our Borough at these services.

My thanks and admiration, always, goes to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, and to all those who continue to serve us today. We will remember them.

Best wishes to all Star readers.