

# Inspirational Ipswich is getting so much right

by [Jackie Sadek](#) on 11 November, 2015 in [Local Growth](#), [localism](#), [Regeneration](#)



I was rather flattered to be asked to speak at the Ipswich Vision conference a few days ago, run by the very potent Ipswich Central Business Improvement District, which is actively working in partnership with a further six local authorities and agencies concerned with the wellbeing of the town.

It is a great success story.

The night before I stayed, as a guest of the hosts, at the Salthouse Harbour Hotel, in what was almost certainly the nicest hotel room I have ever been in: not just because it was beautifully furnished and comfortably appointed, but because it faces straight onto Ipswich Harbour (and frankly, in the early morning, I could have been in the south of France. Unexpectedly stunning). I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone looking to arrange a weekend away (only an hour or so up the line from Liverpool Street after all) and would seriously rate Ipswich as a destination for an impromptu (or even a promptu) staycation, to rival Bath or Dublin. And why not?

It was a great conference, with about 150 of the (very impressive total of 620-odd) members of the BID in attendance. The strategy for Ipswich looks to shrink the traditional east-west shopping axis of the town centre and integrate the traditional heart of the town with the (aforementioned) Waterfront by encouraging development along the “Saints”, Upper and Lower Brook Streets and Fore Street. I was able to tell the assembled businesses and local authority partners that, hand on heart, they really didn’t need too much help and advice from the government because they are already doing all the right things. And it is true: in Whitehall circles, Ipswich is seen as an exemplar of urban regeneration, and urban regeneration effected through localism. And the impact on the market by “Greater Ipswich” at MIPIM UK was palpable.

Ipswich Central chairman Terry Baxter said it was important that the conference was able to highlight the important improvements that were being made in the town centre. “What is important now is that people can start to see things happening at the Buttermarket and Tower Ramparts. We’ve seen new shops move in like Pandora and Tiger and many are excited by the prospect of Jack Wills moving into the former Croydon’s store”. Although he went on, rather poignantly, “I know that in the past things

have been promised which have not happened in the end – I think people know this time things are happening here.”

These kinds of success are always the work of many people, they demand a solid team spirit and an approach of partnership working, and if people don't all pull together then nothing much can be achieved. But there are two “stand-out” heroes of this new dawn for Ipswich: one is David Ellesmere, the leader of Ipswich borough council, and the other is Ben Gummer, the local MP. These two politicians (from different sides of the political divide) have shown passion and commitment, and have been gracious and elegant in working together. Together they are steering Ipswich into a new era, one of self-belief and growth.

The seven bodies that are promoting the vision have drawn up an ambitious timetable during which they hope the town will be transformed. They have put together a 21-point plan which they intend to implement by 2020, with the completion of the business corridor along Princes Street. The next two years should see some of the most intensive activity with “quick wins” to include the paving of Queen Street and Princes Street, the redevelopment of the Cornhill, and the opening of the Buttermarket Centre as a leisure venue.

I would tip Ipswich as hot. Seriously hot. And if you don't believe me, just ask LaSalle Investment Management how much they are investing into the old Tower Ramparts shopping centre, which is about to emerge, like a butterfly from a chrysalis, into the “Sailmakers Centre”, in another clever nod to Ipswich's defining waterfront.

- See more at: <http://www.estatesgazette.com/blogs/jackie-sadek/2015/11/inspirational-ipswich-getting-much-right/?sthash.ARI1zslW.EoDEOR2i.mjjo#sthash.ARI1zslW.P5S2EiTB.dpuf>