

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET

19 March 2019

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Executive Non Key Decisions

#### 1 INNOVATION PARK MEDWAY – MASTERPLAN

**This report provides information on the consultation exercise undertaken on the Innovation Park Medway Masterplan and seeks approval to adopt the document for economic development and marketing purposes.**

##### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Innovation Park Medway is part of the wider North Kent Enterprise Zone, which is made up of numerous sites across three main locations – Kent Medical Campus (Maidstone), Ebbsfleet Garden City and Rochester Airfield, now known as Innovation Park Medway – which went ‘live’ in April 2017.
- 1.1.2 The site is being promoted as offering “high-value technology, engineering, manufacturing and knowledge-intensive businesses the opportunity to grow in a bespoke commercial development with a collaborative business environment”. In addition, a key aim is for it to become a catalyst for research and innovation, building upon existing university links through the Innovation Centre Medway.
- 1.1.3 This site is a key regeneration priority for Medway Council, who are leading the project and own the majority of the site. Administratively, an area of the site falls within Tonbridge & Malling Borough. As such, any work undertaken by Medway Council to progress the masterplan and the comprehensive development of the site requires the agreement of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
- 1.1.4 Consultants LDA and Carter Jonas were appointed in February 2018 to prepare an indicative masterplan for the Innovation Park Medway site, and to fully capitalise on the Enterprise Zone status. A draft masterplan was consulted on during September and October 2018 and the comments received from this consultation have been reflected in the final masterplan document (Appendix 1).
- 1.1.5 Whilst Medway Council are looking to adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document, the Borough Council is seeking to adopt it for economic development and marketing purposes.

## 1.2 Consultation Exercise and Outcomes

1.2.1 A full overview of the consultation exercise is provided as Appendix 2.

1.2.2 Having been approved for consultation by the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 05 September 2018, the draft Innovation Park Medway masterplan was consulted on for a six week period between 17 September 2018 and 29 October 2018 and sought the involvement of a wide range of consultees. The following measures were undertaken in order to gain feedback and comments during this period:

- **Websites** – Medway Council had three pages dedicated to the consultation setting out the overall proposals, the indicative masterplan and the details of the consultation and a link to a questionnaire. The Borough Council had a webpage which directed visitors to the Medway Council website in order to ensure all feedback was collated in one place.
- **Community Hubs** – hard copies of information and questionnaires were supplied at various venues across the local area. One of these locations was the reception area at the Borough Council offices in Kings Hill.
- **Engagement Events** – 2 information drop-in events took place at the Innovation Centre Medway – on 01 October 2018 and 20 October 2018.
- **Statutory Consultees** – the following organisations were also consulted in order to gain feedback: Kent Downs AONB, Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, Highways England, Kent Highways and Sport England.

1.2.3 The level of traffic to the website suggested a high degree of interest, with 2,902 unique views during the course of the consultation period. In total, 42 questionnaires were received from the local community, offering a mix of positive and negative feedback, often within the same response.

1.2.4 When assessing these questionnaires, the main areas of **support** were:

- The general principle of development and the focus on high quality modern commercial premises.
- Open space provision and the allocation of space for sports, health and wellbeing. This was received positively and acknowledged as bringing benefits to the local community.
- The design principles were supported, and the emphasis on sustainable development and energy efficiency were welcomed.

1.2.5 When assessing these questionnaires, the main areas of **concern** were:

- Traffic and Parking – especially concerns about the increased congestion that could arise and the loss of existing parking (on BAE Systems land and on-street parking)

- Airport Operation – particularly regarding the desire to retain the entire site for airport use and resist any redevelopment.
- Ecological Impacts – impact on local wildlife and loss of green space.
- Neighbour Impacts – particularly loss of views for adjoining residential premises.
- Heights and Scale – concerns over impact on the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Existing Employment Sites – that investment should be made in existing employment sites rather than creating new ones.
- Community Need – the site should be used for community uses, such as a hospital, instead.
- Noise and Air Quality – especially in relation to traffic congestion.

1.2.6 Statutory Consultees highlighted a handful of key issues including:

- Building Heights – in relation to the potential impacts on the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Air Quality – Natural England highlighted the need to consider the potential impact on the North Downs Woodlands SAC.
- Highways – Both Kent Highways and Highways England raised concerns with the capacity of local roads and junctions, and highlighted the need for robust assessment. Highways England also highlighted the cumulative impact on the M2 and M20, and the need to assess the safety impact of the closure of Runway 16/34 which would be required to facilitate these proposals.
- Parking Provision – suggested as being excessive as number of spaces proposed is based on the upper levels of Medway's Parking Standards.
- Flooding/Drainage – encouraged additional modelling for 1 in a 100 year event and confirmation sought on whether infiltration techniques could be used.

### 1.3 Response to Feedback Received

1.3.1 When considering the feedback received, the Consultancy Team have highlighted the following in response to some of the key points:

- Strategic transport modelling has been undertaken to ascertain impact on the local road network, with the modelling identifying appropriate mitigation measures.
- The no build zone and the heights of the proposed buildings have been designed to ensure the proposals and the continued use of Rochester Airport can operate together well.
- A noise assessment has been undertaken which concluded a negligible impact on nearby premises, with all noise generating plant to be subject to enclosure, acoustic louvres and silencers where necessary.

- A more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken to assess the impact of building heights and scale on the Kent Downs AONB, identifying that no significant effects would arise.
- Noise and Air Quality assessments have shown that the proposals would have only a negligible effect on local levels.
- A strategic surface water drainage solution has been prepared for the proposed development based upon a range of infiltration techniques

1.3.2 Although the majority of these issues have been addressed in the masterplan document, Medway Council has highlighted that Highways England have not yet been able to confirm that they are fully content with the masterplan. This despite the fact that additional work has been undertaken for Highways England and Kent Highways to demonstrate the impact on the network. As such, Highways England has advised Medway Council that final adoption of the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document should be subject to their response. As such, Medway Council have recommended that any minor amendments be addressed through delegated authority, with any significant amendments being dealt with through an additional report back to their Cabinet.

## **1.4 Innovation Park Medway - Masterplan**

1.4.1 The masterplan itself sets out a vision for the site – to deliver a high quality, innovative commercial space – which is underpinned by a number of key concepts:

- Fostering a supportive community that is founded on the principles of collaboration, promoted through public realm
- Mixing up different uses to encourage collaboration
- Delivering on a strong and clear identity for the site
- Ensuring flexibility so that the site can respond to change
- Futureproofing to allow for growth

1.4.2 The illustrative masterplan proposes the site be brought forward in a number of phases, with the first phase development taking place in the far north-west of the site and the area directly to the south of Innovation Centre Medway. Both these sites are entirely sited within Medway. Sites within Tonbridge and Malling will come to fruition during Phases 2 and 3.

## **1.5 Adoption**

1.5.1 As Medway Council aim to adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document, this consultation has been undertaken in accordance with best practice as guided by national planning policy and guidance. This means the Masterplan will expand on Medway Council's adopted planning policies to provide more detailed information and give guidance to the public, applicants and developers when making planning applications

- 1.5.2 The situation is different for Tonbridge & Malling, with the Borough Council aiming to adopt it for **solely economic development and marketing purposes** – that is, being a useful tool to help promote the borough as a business location and attract inward investment. The reason for this difference is that there is currently no site specific planning policy context for the part of the site that falls within our borough.
- 1.5.3 This means that by adopting it for economic development and marketing purposes it does not have the same level of ‘weight’ when considering planning applications as a Supplementary Planning Document would have, but would still be a material consideration when considering application on the site.

## 1.6 Next Steps

- 1.6.1 Should there be agreement to adopt the Innovation Park Medway Masterplan for economic development and marketing purposes, then the Borough Council would look to work collaboratively with Medway Council in bringing forward Local Development Order (LDO) coverage for the site.
- 1.6.2 LDOs are intended to enable local planning to be simplified under certain circumstances. LDOs aim to attract investment to an area and support existing businesses by giving certainty for developers, reducing timescales and reducing the costs associated with making a planning application. They are often used as an additional tool to attract investment in Enterprise Zones and have the effect of granting planning permission across an identified site so that there becomes no need for developers to seek any further planning consent. An LDO is often described as providing a local form of permitted development. It is important to note, however, that an LDO usually has conditions and limitations included to control the parameters of a variety of matters, for example the height of buildings.
- 1.6.3 A separate LDO would need to be formally adopted by each Council in their capacity as Local Planning Authorities and would be the subject of local and statutory consultation. The LDO can be linked to the masterplan and in so doing, a more flexible planning regime can create efficiency but also deliver a high quality of development.
- 1.6.4 Medway Council are looking to undertake this consultation in June 2019 and as such, the current intention is to bring a further report to Cabinet shortly after the Elections to obtain approval to consult on a draft Local Development Order.

## 1.7 Legal Implications

- 1.7.1 As set out in this report, under Section 1.5, the proposal is to adopt the masterplan for economic development and marketing purposes rather than as a Supplementary Planning Document. This means that it is used chiefly as a promotional document, with some planning ‘weight’, rather than being enshrined as planning policy.

**1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.8.1 There are no financial and value for money considerations directly arising from the adoption of this document.

**1.9 Risk Assessment**

1.9.1 There are no risks directly associated with the adoption of the Innovation Park Medway Masterplan for economic development and marketing purposes (subject to Highways England confirming they are content with the masterplan)

**1.10 Recommendations**

1.10.1 That the Innovation Park Medway Illustrative Masterplan **BE ADOPTED** for economic development and marketing purposes, subject to Highways England confirming they are content with the masterplan.

1.10.2 That delegated authority **BE GRANTED** to the Chief Executive to address any minor issues raised by Highways England and approve minor changes to the masterplan prior to publication for the purpose of presentation or improving clarity.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Economic Regeneration  
Officer

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive