

## **CABINET**

**9 JULY 2013**

### **ROCHESTER AIRPORT – DRAFT MASTERPLAN**

Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Alan Jarrett, Finance Councillor Jane Chitty, Strategic Development & Economic Growth
Report from:	Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director, Housing & Regeneration
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#### **Summary**

This report seeks approval to undertake consultation on a draft Masterplan for development at Rochester Airport (attached as Appendix 2). Following consultation, the intention is to adopt a final masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the emerging Medway Core Strategy.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The proposed masterplan seeks to provide guidance on the development principles for investment and growth opportunities at land in and around Rochester Airport. This responds to the policy framework set out in the emerging Medway Core Strategy. The Core Strategy establishes the Council's planning policy for retention of the airport facility and supporting opportunities for further economic development activities in the area. The emerging Core Strategy forms part of the statutory Development Plan and is included in the Council's policy framework. Cabinet approval is required to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.2 The masterplan is being developed in partnership with BAE Systems, and the costs of doing so are being shared with BAE.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 A report regarding proposals for Rochester Airport was submitted to Cabinet on 18 December 2012. Proposals have subsequently been communicated through press and promotional coverage over the last few months advising residents and businesses that work is underway to negotiate a new lease for

the operation of Rochester Airport and to invest in the airport's improvement to secure its future and create jobs. As part of the site lies within the Tonbridge and Malling administrative area, Medway Council officers have been working closely with Planning officers at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in developing plans for Rochester Airport.

- 2.2 Policy CS17: Economic Development of the Submission Draft Local Development Framework Medway Core Strategy (2012) relates to the development of the Medway economy, including the *“provision of 935,998 sq m of employment floorspace and premises...to provide a range and choice of sites in terms of quality, accessibility, type and size, to meet Medway’s requirements up to 2028”*. The policy references Rochester Airport as a site that has the ability to develop a technology and knowledge based business cluster.
- 2.3 Policy CS24: Transport and Movement sets out the Council’s commitment to *“continue to work with the operator of Rochester Airport to objectively consider the future of the general aviation facility, bearing in mind its co-location with a strategic employment facility”*. The proposed masterplan responds to these policy drivers.
- 2.4 Rochester Airport is a strategically important site for regeneration and growth in Medway and has the potential to meet a significant proportion of the area’s future employment creation for higher-value employment uses that will contribute to meeting the aims of the Council’s Economic Development Strategy.
- 2.5 The Council appointed Tibbalds, a specialist Planning and Urban Design consultancy, in February 2013 to develop the masterplan. The purpose of the masterplan is to provide guidance on the design and development principles to achieve effective planning for the site. The draft document is in production, and the process has already included a two day staffed exhibition on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May and associated leaflet drop to local residents and businesses to obtain public reaction to the proposals. The Feedback Analysis Report is available at Appendix 1, which includes copies of the masterplan display boards used at the exhibition.

### **3. Options**

- 3.1 Options for progressing development of the Rochester Airport site include:
  - Develop and adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document, taking account of consultation responses received to date.
  - Do nothing and let the market lead the development
  - Rely on planning applications and planning permissions to guide development
- 3.2 Uncontrolled development could have negative consequences to the type and scale of employment provision at the site. There is potential for uncontrolled development to antagonise local residents and business operators that might be affected by the development. The masterplan process provides the

opportunity to seek views of local people and businesses and to take account of their points of view, and for residents and businesses to see the detailed, appropriate level of master plan information via a statutory consultation process.

3.3 Not proceeding with the master plan and proposals for development could adversely affect the realisation of employment targets in the emerging draft Core Strategy. It could also jeopardise the operational airport's long-term future, notably with its ability to meet CAA safety regulations.

3.4 Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to proceed with the masterplan process.

#### **4. Advice and analysis**

4.1 The Consultation Feedback Analysis Report on the initial public exhibition illustrates that a majority are in favour of development at Rochester Airport, in order to secure its future and to create local employment. There is particular support and affection for the work of the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS) and safeguarding of its future, and the creation of employment at the site.

4.2 Concerns raised through consultation included the potential for future traffic congestion on the immediate road network, increased volume of air traffic on runway 02/20 and the possibility of noise from larger commercial aircraft and the regulations to control the airport's activities.

4.3 The draft masterplan expands on the parent policy, CS17, in the draft Core Strategy. In particular, it aims to provide both the future local employment required in line with population growth projections to 2028 and a focus for Medway to generate higher value employment that will assist with the retention of more highly skilled local people.

4.4 Once adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the masterplan will become a material consideration in the determination of any planning applications for the Rochester Airport site. The development of Rochester Airport is estimated to take approximately 5-8 years and the plan will provide a consistent guide and framework for developers over this time period.

4.5 Procedurally the masterplan can not achieve formal SPD status until the adoption of the Core Strategy, as it will be subsidiary to Policies CS17 and CS24. The timetable for the adoption of the Core Strategy is currently unclear, but officers may be in a position to update members at the Cabinet meeting. In advance of the Core Strategy adoption, the masterplan can still have influence in informing planning decisions about developments proposed for the site. An adopted document that has been through the same full consultation and assessment procedures as an SPD would still be given weight in determining planning applications. As soon as the Core Strategy has been adopted, it is the intention to afford the masterplan full SPD status.

## 5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Poor quality development	Development on employment site is of poor quality and does not meet expectations to create high quality jobs	Master plan will set out expectations for high quality development	D4
Residents opposition to development at Rochester Airport	Airport becomes unviable and has to close	<p>Consultation on master plan and taking account of views expressed.</p> <p>Proposals for 25 year lease and Medway Council investment in airport</p>	C2

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 The input of the community is essential to ensure that the masterplan is able to achieve the site's development potential. A full programme of public consultation has been drawn up to inform the development of the masterplan. The site is bordered by significant residential communities in both Medway and Tonbridge & Malling, and business communities at Horsted and Laker Road. The Council organised a two week consultation in May 2013 on the emerging proposals for the airport. The staffed exhibition attracted a high level of interest and a number of responses, both at the exhibition and through the Council's website. The results of the initial consultation are set out comprehensively in Appendix 1, the Consultation Feedback Analysis Report.
- 6.2 As part of the development of the SPD, the Council is arranging a further period of consultation on the draft masterplan. This will form part of the formal requirements for the adoption of this planning policy document. In order to give sufficient time for responses over the summer period, consultation is scheduled over 8 weeks from 22 July to 20 September 2013.
- 6.3 The Council will notify local residents and businesses, including those affected in neighbouring areas in Tonbridge and Malling, of the consultation on the draft masterplan. Details of the proposals will be available to view on the Council's website and at staffed exhibitions in the local area. The Council will collate the results of the proposed formal consultation and set out its response to the views raised. This information will be reported to Cabinet as part of the development work for the final version of the masterplan.

## **7. Financial and legal implications**

- 7.1 The cost of the masterplan consultancy work and the public consultation costs will be met from the Rochester Airport capital scheme considered previously in this agenda.
- 7.2 Preparation of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, including the process of public consultation and consideration of representations, is regulated in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. Consultation must be in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 7.3 Once adopted, the Rochester Airport masterplan will be a Supplementary Planning Document, and will be a 'material consideration' in decisions on planning applications for Rochester Airport.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 That Cabinet agree the content of the draft master plan at Appendix 2 and authorise its publication for public consultation between 22 July to 20 September 2013.
- 8.2 That Cabinet authorise the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Strategic Development and Economic Growth, to agree any necessary minor amendments to the draft masterplan document prior to the statutory consultation.

## **9. Suggested reasons for decision(s)**

- 9.1 Cabinet is requested to approve this draft masterplan for consultation to progress work in bringing this site forward for economic development, and securing the future operations of the airport. The masterplan will provide the framework to guide development on the site to realise economic opportunities as well as addressing wider amenity issues.

### **Lead officer contact**

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### **Appendices**

Rochester Airport - Informal Consultation Feedback Analysis Report (Appendix 1)  
Rochester Airport – Master Plan, Draft Supplementary Planning Document  
(Appendix 2)

*Please note that Appendices 1 and 2 are included in Supplementary Agenda No.1*

### **Background papers**

Medway Core Strategy (Submission Draft), 2012:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Submission%20CS%20amend%209%20feb%202012.pdf>