



The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Mansham Street
London
United Kingdom
SW1P 4DF

10th May 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Basin3 – Planning Application to redevelop part of Chatham Docks Industrial Estate (MC/24/0154)

I am writing in relation to our planning application for Basin3, a new proposed business and enterprise campus on the Medway waterfront. As Managing Director of Peel Waters, part of The Peel Group, the landowner and applicant, I wish to address recent concerns raised by Matthew Brooks of ArcelorMittal in his letter to you dated 4th May 2024.

We have sought to provide a factual summary in the sections below, but we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or colleagues at your convenience to discuss the proposals in more detail and answer any questions you may have.

Basin3 – What Is Proposed?

Basin3 is a live planning application that was submitted in January 2024 for 300,000 sq. ft of sustainable employment space that will transform 18 acres of brownfield land at Chatham Docks Industrial Estate. The development is expected to treble the number of jobs on site, create a greener and more sustainable environment, improve pedestrian and cycle connections for neighbouring local communities and open the waterfront to the public for the first time in the sites history; all of which aligns to Medway Councils policies.

The site neighbours the University of Kent, University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christ Church, Medway Medical School and the Waterfront University Technical College, presenting a fantastic opportunity to build Edu-Business prospects, retain the extensive regional talent and knowledge, as well as attracting in new talent to the area.

Future-proofing the site against climate change is at the forefront of the plans. We will be improving sustainable travel options by creating over half a kilometre of new waterfront pedestrian and cycle paths and green public spaces, connecting existing residential communities for the first time ever. The land will also be raised to improve flood resilience against rising sea levels and all new buildings will utilise green technology and be at the cutting edge of energy efficiency.

Basin3 is strategically positioned to attract investments aligned with Medway's economic growth sectors, supporting its ambition to evolve into a vibrant waterfront city. The project has already received interest from potential investors eager to contribute to Medway's economic development.

The Current Planning Application

Before the planning application was submitted, we carried out the following process: - pre-application meetings with Medway Council; engagement workshops with an extensive list of local stakeholders; a letter drop to nearly 3,000 local and neighbouring residents which explained the proposals and listed ways to give feedback; we held an onsite public consultation day and evening that was well attended; we hosted a webinar with the option to pre submit questions or ask questions to us during the webinar; and we also created a dedicated website with the ability to send feedback both pre- and post-submission. The application has undergone thorough scrutiny by statutory bodies with no objections received. The proposal aligns with Medway's development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework seeking to promote a strong and competitive economy for the future.

As you will be aware, the application was due to be considered at Medway Council's Planning Committee on 8th May, meaning it would have been under consideration for more than the 13-week statutory determination period. As a result of our thorough communications and engagement the idea that the committee agenda had 'caught stakeholders by surprise' is untrue especially as many of the ArcelorMittal employees attended the public consultation events before it was submitted, and they have also made objections through the process.

ArcelorMittal is one of the primary tenants on the site whose lease expires in 2025 and appears to be the only party surprised by Medway Council's adherence to statutory timeframes for decision-making. In contrast, the other main tenant, Aggregate Industries, has proactively invested in a new facility at the Port of Tilbury, preparing to relocate and expand operations, thus supporting the job creation wider goals of the Basin3 project.

It is therefore essential that determination of the planning application is not unnecessarily delayed; as with other significant regeneration projects we have delivered, such as MediaCity, we have found that having an outline permission in place is the catalyst for securing investment and key partners.

Peels Track Record

We have an extensive track record of delivering major regeneration projects across the country including MediaCity (located on the former Manchester Docks site in Salford Quays, which is now a thriving creative, media and tech hub, home to the BBC, ITV, dock10 studios and The University of Salford, creating thousands of jobs and delivering exemplary placemaking); Liverpool Waters (located on part of the former Liverpool Docks site which is now an emerging district with thousands of new homes, workers and visitors, an international cruise liner terminal and is the site of Everton's new stadium, which is due to be completed in December) and TraffordCity, which has become the UK's leading retail and leisure destination employing 17,500 people in the area and attracting 44million visits per year.

Our largest regeneration project in the south, Chatham Waters, sits adjacent to our proposed Basin3 employment campus. To date, we have invested over £125million into our Chatham Waters scheme, delivered significant infrastructure improvements including over £7million of highway improvements, flood defence and land remediation. We have created 750 new jobs, built 237 affordable homes, another 391 homes for rent and sale, a large ASDA Superstore, a Marston's family pub and restaurant, retail units, The Waterfront UTC offering on-site stem-focussed education specialising in construction and engineering; and an elderly/care development is soon to start construction.

I am copying this letter to Medway Council to be completely transparent about our position as the Basin3 planning application is fundamentally an improved employment scheme on an existing employment site that is estimated to at least triple the number of jobs and bring significant benefits to Medway.

To conclude, we are passionate about regeneration and specialise in it, we are also committed to Medway and want to see the area succeed. We are happy to answer any questions you may have and to work with national and local government to continue delivering opportunities for the people of Medway.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Whittaker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JAMES WHITTAKER BSc (Hons) MRICS
Managing Director, Peel Waters