Ebbsfleet
Garden City
Development
Report

BASELINE - June 2015

Department for Communities and Local Government
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This baseline report presents the findings of a desk-based assessment undertaken by AECOM on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It is intended to provide a single compendium of key background data and information relating to the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation area. It sets out the existing conditions and development proposals to assist the newly established Ebbsfleet Development Corporation in understanding the site and to guide future site masterplanning, design and development decision making.

0.1 Background
On 16th March 2014 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced proposals for a ‘locally-led’ garden city of up to 15,000 homes creating a new community in the Ebbsfleet, Northfleet, and Swanscombe areas of North Kent. To achieve this, the Government has established the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation to coordinate investment and drive forward development. The Development Corporation will develop a shared vision for the Garden City reflecting the views of local people. The Development Corporation will have planning decision-making powers over its designated areas. This baseline report provides a compendium of information to describe the current context within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary and its surrounding area, and identifies opportunities and constraints that will need to be addressed in the delivery of the Garden City.

0.2 Key Findings
With over 800 hectares of largely vacant land and excellent strategic accessibility, the Development Corporation area provides exceptional opportunity to deliver a 21st Century Garden City. The scale of the Development Corporation area is shown in Figure 0.1, superimposed on Central London.

Planning Policy Context
The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation area falls within two Local Planning Authorities - Dartford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council. Both Councils have adopted Core Strategies (Dartford adopted September 2011, Gravesham adopted September 2014). There is currently no single, overarching planning, design or infrastructure framework to guide the development in a strategic way. The Development Corporation has development control powers within its area, but no plan-making powers. The Development Corporation will need to determine whether any comprehensive development framework for its area is given formal planning policy status.

Development Proposals
Baseline
The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation area has a complex planning history, with a number of extant planning permissions across key sites. Planning permission exists for some 11,000 new homes, 670,000 sq m of employment floorspace, 192,000 sq m of retail and over 100,000 sq m of community facilities. In addition the proposed London Paramount leisure resort at Swanscombe Peninsula is anticipated to contain some 747,000 sq m of leisure related activities including up to 5,000 hotel rooms.

Main development areas, as shown in Figure 0.2 are as follows:
- **Site 1: Eastern Quarry**: Outline Planning Consent (granted in November 2007) making provision for 2,250 new homes and 231,000 sq m non-residential floorspace. Detailed reserved matter approval for 150 dwellings only on the Castle Hill part of the site.
- **Site 2: Ebbsfleet Green**: Outline planning consent for 950 homes.
- **Site 3: Ebbsfleet**: Planning consent for up to 3,200 homes, 493,700 sq m of employment floorspace and 163,740 sq m of hotels, leisure and retail.
- **Site 4: Swanscombe Peninsula**: London Paramount will be seeking planning consent for 750,000 sq m of leisure uses via a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) application later in 2015.
- **Site 5: Northfleet Embankment West**: Consent exists for up to 532 homes, 48,000 sq m of employment floorspace and a mixed use neighbourhood centre.
- **Site 6: Northfleet Embankment East**: No existing consent, the site is in mixed ownership including parts owned by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Figure 0.3 presents a composite ‘masterplan’ showing each individual scheme, based upon current planning permissions and proposals.

Sites built out/under construction:
- Springhead Quarter Phase 1 (located in Site 3) - 289 units
- Castle Hill East First Phase (located in Site 1) - 150 units

The predominant proposed land use within the permitted schemes is residential.

The density of permitted residential neighbourhoods is in the range of 30-60 dwellings per hectare (dph), somewhat higher than Unwin’s “rule of thumb” for the original Garden Cities of 30dph.

There is a significant employment footprint proposed, much of it anticipated to be office uses around Ebbsfleet Station (Station Quarter South), although a greater mix of employment uses can be expected in the sites towards the river.

There are a number of mixed use zones to the core of the residential quarters and educational uses distributed throughout. There may be an argument for greater co-location of work and living in future plans.

The proposed London Paramount Entertainment Resort on Swanscombe Peninsula will provide an unusual land-use that will require careful design to mitigate potential negative impacts on surrounding uses and communities.
Figure 0.1 Ebbsfleet Development Corporation Boundary superimposed on Central London
Figure 0.2 Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary and existing development sites

1. Eastern Quarry
2. Ebbsfleet Green
3. Ebbsfleet Valley
4. Swanscombe Peninsula
5. Northfleet Embankment West
6. Northfleet Embankment East
7. Bean Triangle
Future planning of the area should:

- Set out a clear economic vision and strategy for the Garden City to underpin the employment provision, particularly in light of the potential economic impact associated with the London Paramount proposal;
- Co-ordinate employment and training initiatives to promote employment opportunities for local people;
- Explore opportunities to rationalize/concentrate employment floorspace and integrate new jobs more closely with residential areas;
- Consider new patterns of community infrastructure delivery.

**Findings**

**Future comprehensive planning of the area should:**

- Set out an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, identifying funding/mechanisms for the delivery of priority infrastructure to unlock stalled development schemes. This could include review of existing s106 infrastructure obligations/triggers;
- Consider the policy status of any future comprehensive development framework, for example as a Supplementary Planning Document adopted by the two local planning authorities;
- Carefully consider the extent to which existing development proposals can/should be modified to accord with a vision/development principles for the Garden City. For example:
  - Creating greater connectivity between new and existing communities and between development areas;
  - Exploring opportunities for higher density development at public transport nodes, particularly Ebbsfleet International Station;
  - Delivering a variety of housing densities and typologies; closer integration/better access between employment areas and residential areas;
  - Delivering consistent/complementary approaches to landscape/public realm across the Garden City and/or within each character area;
  - Introducing more co-ordinated approaches to ecological mitigation or flood risk management.

**Socio-economics**

**Baseline**

The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary does not include significant existing residential communities. There are a number of existing communities adjacent to the site including Northfleet, Swanscombe and Greenhithe. The following characteristics are identified:

- The existing population within or adjacent to the Development Corporation boundary is 16,590.
- Northfleet North and Swanscombe wards have pockets of higher than average deprivation (in terms of Indices of Multiple Deprivation) and higher than average levels of population claiming income support and job-seekers allowance.
- Population within the Development Corporation area and adjoining communities is projected to increase by 31,664 people within the Garden City by 2031 (KCC iiFM).

**Findings**

Future planning of the area should:

- Additional education facilities will be needed to cater for new communities. Of three primary schools close to the Development Corporation area, two had a shortage of places (-40 and -55) in 2014.
- In contrast, in 2014, there were 669 surplus secondary school places across the wider study area.
- There is a significant shortage in provision of GPs across the wider study area. In 2014, there was a deficit of 36,996 patient spaces. Within 2km of the Development Corporation boundary, 8 out of 7 GP practices are over capacity.

**Transport and Accessibility**

**Baseline**

- Ebbsfleet has good strategic connectivity, with Ebbsfleet International Station providing High Speed services to Central London and Europe.
- The existing area has good regional-level accessibility through the motorway network/A2. However, these strategic highways, together with rail lines, do contribute significantly to local severance and poor local accessibility.
- The previous pattern of urban development has led to fragmented settlements, often poorly integrated with strategic transport networks.
- Traffic conditions in the study area are heavily influenced by the performance of the strategic road network and congestion on local routes is common.
- Significant public transport improvements are planned, including further Fastrack connections (an east–west route required by the Eastern Quarry permission) and a potential Crossrail extension.
- Significant highway improvements are proposed, but trigger points for delivery are often not clear and comprehensive review is required to reflect recent proposals such as London Paramount Park.

**Findings**

**Future planning of the area should:**

- Integrate existing and future communities through better connectivity by sustainable modes;
- Make the most of accessibility and value created by Ebbsfleet International Station and improve links east west by public transport;
- Improve local access to key sites from the North Kent Line and interchange with Ebbsfleet International Station;
- Assess the synergies and cost effectiveness of individual infrastructure proposals to provide access for the wider area;
- Review the transport infrastructure triggers across the Development Corporation area to understand constraints and opportunities and to capitalise on potential quick wins;
- Consider the need for further area wide modelling to understand the impacts of emerging proposals; and
- Integrate emerging transport and development proposals within a wider Ebbsfleet masterplan to achieve the vision for a Garden City.
Figure 0.3 Composite “Masterplan” within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary
Air quality in the local area is improving - The main source of air pollution is road traffic emissions. Significant steps have been taken through the implementation of local air quality management plans to improve air quality in recent years.

Archaeology of national significance – The area within and around the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary has a rich and varied history with areas of national archaeological significance including unique Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites, designated as Scheduled Monuments. Future development should promote archaeological and heritage interpretation.

Biodiversity of local importance – The area within and around the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary has a rich and varied ecology with a mosaic of habitats, some of which have been un-disturbed for a number of years. There are no designations of international or national importance. It is possible that the area could support species within internationally important sites such as the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar downstream.

There are significant opportunities for ecological enhancement within the Thames-side Green Corridors Biodiversity Opportunity Area including in particular, the enhancement of the River Ebbsfleet, Botany Marshes and Black Duck Marsh.

Flood risk – Parts of the areas within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary are at risk of flooding, primarily from tidal sources being within the Thames Estuary floodplain. Other key sources of flooding are fluvial flooding from the River Ebbsfleet and groundwater flooding, particularly as de-watering at Eastern Quarry has ceased.

The Thames Estuary 2100 plan (November 2012) considers there to be opportunities for combining flood risk management with the creation of green space on the Swanscombe Peninsula.

Ground conditions – The geology and past land uses within and around the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary present potential constraints to development. These include designated areas such as geological SSSIs and Mineral Safeguarding Areas, natural and artificial variations in the ground conditions and high potential for soil and groundwater contamination due to historical and current land uses. Some areas within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary have been remediated prior to redevelopment.

Findings The environmental baseline review identifies the need for future planning of the area to:

- Integrate ecological mitigation and enhancement schemes across the schemes with extant permissions (and new proposals, particularly London Paramount), to maximise ecological enhancement opportunities, particularly within the Thames-side Green Corridors Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- Assess if there are synergies between flood risk management measures identified for individual development schemes and identify whether Development Corporation-wide flood risk management measures would be more cost effective.
- Integrate landscaping proposals for individual development sites to ensure that they maximise landscape and townscape character enhancement opportunities across the whole Development Corporation area.
- Identify potential for integrated proposals across development schemes to support the progressive improvement of water bodies within the Development Corporation area to “good” ecological status under the Water Framework Directive.
- Investigate the potential to assimilate the heritage work undertaken for individual development sites to generate opportunities for heritage interpretation across the whole Development Corporation boundary, particularly in relation to Palaeolithic archaeology and the industrial development of the area.
- Contribute to the continual improvement of air quality within the Development Corporation boundary such as through maximising the use of public transport and other non-car modes.

Utilities

Baseline Utilities (comprising electricity, gas, waste and potable water and broadband) are provided to the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation area by a number of providers.

Electricity
- UK Power Network’s Regional Development Plan (RDP), which covers the period from 2015 to 2023, recognises the significant increase in demand expected at Ebbsfleet.
- Existing electricity capacity at Northfleet appears sufficient for the proposed scale of development. Physical constraints may present challenges to wider distribution of power supplies.
- Reinforcement of existing substations are proposed and an additional new primary substation may be required at Ebbsfleet. A site has been reserved at Ebbsfleet Green for a new substation.
- Due to uncertainties over magnitude of demand, timescales and location, no NAMP (Network Asset Management Plan) provision, has been made to contract a new primary substation.

Gas
- The supplier has stated that there is sufficient gas capacity in the network to support approximately 15,000 homes in the Ebbsfleet area.
- There is a possible “pinch” point in existing Medium Pressure (MP) feeder into Swanscombe.
- No specific gas infrastructure upgrades have yet been identified within or adjacent to the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation area.

Broadband
- Only limited locations within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation boundary have broadband connections at the present time. Services are typically average/poor compared to national levels.

Potable water
- The existing infrastructure serving the area is likely to meet demand up to 2035, but increasing pressures in the longer term is likely to require strategic interventions to manage water supply across resource zones.

Waste Water
- There are three operating sewage treatment works (STW) within the Thameside area – one of which (Northfleet STW) is located adjacent to Springhead Quarter and operated by Southern Water. Improvements to Northfleet STW have been planned to facilitate growth. Options for enhancements to the Northfleet STW has been considered previously, with cost estimates prepared in 2009 (£7.8 million to £34.5 million).

Findings Future planning of the area should:

- Identify a preferred location for any new Ebbsfleet primary sub-station, and undertake a route study to identify the preferred approach to distribution of available capacity from Northfleet;
- Clarify the preferred approach to increase capacity at Northfleet STW (in situ expansion or new facility elsewhere). The existing STW lies outside the Development Corporation boundary;
- Explore the cost/benefit and deliverability of undergrounding all or parts of the overhead powerlines across Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe Peninsula.