

Junction 8 employment proposals - community update



In 2013 Roxhill Developments announced proposals to bring forward a new state-of-the-art commercial business park on land at Woodcut Farm, by Junction 8 of the M20.

The proposals, which would deliver 800 – 1,200 jobs, were subject to public consultation in December 2013 and February 2014 and have evolved in response to the feedback received. This update sets out the key changes to the proposals and the next steps.

Over recent months, as part of Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) Local Plan process, professional advice has been commissioned by the Council to inform its strategy for developing new employment land in the Borough. This advice concluded that there is a need for new, dedicated employment development in Maidstone. Further Council reports advise that demand is expected to be strong along motorway junctions and that the only available additional land at a motorway junction is at Junction 8 of the M20.

In accordance with this advice, Roxhill's proposals would provide a number of benefits, including;

- A multi-million pound investment in Maidstone through the delivery of a state-of-the-art employment park in a strategic and highly accessible location, delivering between 800 and 1,200 jobs and additional jobs during construction.
- A significant boost to existing Maidstone businesses through new job creation, associated spin off expenditure in the town and local businesses servicing the new development.
- Improvements to pedestrian and cycle links along the A20 between the site and Bearsted, alongside public transport improvements close to the site.
- A sensitively designed, highly sustainable development, with a comprehensive landscaping scheme within and around the site, including 7,500 new trees and 4,000 hedgerow plants.
- Landscaped buffer zone to limit the extent of development to the west.

Roxhill has evolved and amended the proposals in order to respond positively to feedback from the local community to deliver a high quality development in terms of landscaping, sustainability and ecology.

The key changes are as follows:

- A reduction in the floor area, reducing the development's total floor space from c.51,000 sqm to c.48,000 sqm of proposed employment space.
- A two-metre reduction in height of the two larger units (A1 + A2) from 14 metres to 12 metres at the roof eaves, better integrating the development within the surrounding landscape.
- A revised layout, utilising the car parking areas to provide more space between the smaller warehouse buildings, creating more opportunities for landscaping within the site.
- Enhanced native tree planting on the western and northern site boundaries, bolstering the screening of the development from nearby views of the site.
- An appropriate green colour scheme to the walls and roofs, combined with barrel vaulted roofs to the warehouse buildings, further blending them into the surrounding landscape.
- Gifting of a three hectare portion of the site to an appropriate local body, secured by a legal agreement. This would be in the north west corner and benefit from additional tree planting prior to its transfer.
- Additional seven hectares of land to the west of the site safeguarded in perpetuity by a legal agreement with Maidstone Borough Council, ensuring no further development immediately to the west of the site can take place. This would also benefit from additional native tree planting.
- A series of measures to improve access to the site via non-car modes of transport, including two new bus stops immediately outside the site entrance on the A20, combined with improvements to the footpath/cyclepath alongside the A20 up to the junction with Roundwell.
- A sympathetically designed lighting strategy using the latest technology, which provides a safe working environment and is sensitive to the surrounding landscape.



Illustrative Masterplan

- Key
- Units **A1-A2** and **B1-B6** = Storage & Distribution Units
 - Units **C1-C3** and **D1-D3** = Office buildings
 - Balancing ponds/existing stream = illustrated on the plan
 - 1** New oak tree planting to create parkland landscape
 - 2** Three hectare site gifted to appropriate local body
 - 3** Seven hectare site to be planted with trees and protected through a legal agreement
 - 4** Existing gas main under the site with grassland wildlife corridor
 - 5** Protected trees on Musket Lane to be retained
 - 6** Dense woodland planting to Ashford Road frontage
 - 7** Extensive landscape buffer zones alongside M20
 - 8** 20m native woodland belt



A sustainable development

A comprehensive landscape masterplan has evolved to soften and screen the development from within and outside the site. Approximately 7,500 new trees and 4,000 new hedgerow shrubs would be planted.

In addition to the major scheme changes and extensive landscape improvements, Roxhill's proposals would also incorporate a number of innovative green initiatives, including;

- Opportunities to provide natural green roofs on proposed office buildings where appropriate.
- Porous paving on the internal parking areas within the development to allow the site to drain naturally and reduce surface water run off.
- Rain water harvesting systems, allowing rainwater to be recycled and reused across the site.
- Air source heat pumps, which absorb heat from the outside air. This can then be used to heat radiators and hot water in the building.
- High quality landscape scheme, providing woodland, grassland and wetland to encourage wildlife biodiversity.

Kent International Gateway (KIG)

The KIG proposals were for an extensive rail freight and distribution depot between Bearsted and Junction 8. This would have covered 112 hectares of land and delivered 373,746 sqm of development.

In contrast, Roxhill's proposals are on an 18 hectare site (including landscaping) and would provide 47,752 sqm of development, which is less than 13% of the level of development proposed for KIG. Furthermore, at its highest point, the development is 11.2m lower than the KIG proposals and, crucially, provides the opportunity to legally secure no further development immediately to the west of the site, on land previously included within the KIG proposals.

Roxhill considers that the proposed site at Woodcut Farm is the best location for employment development at Junction 8. The Woodcut Farm site sits broadly at or below the level of the M20 and requires little or no excavated material to be removed from the site.



Illustrative image of woodland area

■ What happens next?

Roxhill will be shortly submitting an outline planning application for the proposals to Maidstone Borough Council. If you require any further information, please visit www.roxhill.co.uk/portfolio/maidstone, where a series of topic papers, plans and an FAQ provide comprehensive further information on the proposals.

If you would prefer a hard copy of the topic papers, or you would like to raise any queries or discuss the proposals directly with us, please call **0800 0803 168** or email roxhill-junction8@gka.co.uk