

## Roxhill Developments, Woodcut Farm, Junction 8, M20

### FAQs

#### *Principle of development*

#### **Q 1. What are you proposing?**

**A 1.** Roxhill is proposing to develop a new state-of-the-art commercial business park on land at Woodcut Farm, by Junction 8 of the M20. At this stage Roxhill will be submitting an outline application to establish the appropriate uses and access to the site. Although this is an outline application, Roxhill is also submitting detailed documents and illustrative plans to help inform the application.

The proposals comprise 47,752sqm of employment space, incorporating eight storage and distribution warehouse units and six high quality office units, creating between 800 and 1,200 jobs.

Access would be off the A20 and significant improvements to pedestrian and cycle links along the A20 between the site and the junction with Roundwell are proposed, alongside public transport improvements close to the site.

The proposals would benefit from a highly sustainable and comprehensive landscaping scheme within and around the site including over 7,500 new trees and 4,000 hedgerow plants.

#### **Q 2. Why Junction 8?**

**A 2.** Roxhill has undertaken market research which has shown a strong demand from regional and national companies for new employment space in this location. One of the main attractions for national and regional employers is that a proposed employment site at Junction 8 would provide excellent accessibility to and from the M20 / A20 and wider strategic road network, minimising the need for vehicles to use local minor roads to access the site.

At present there is no adopted planning policy position to support employment development in this location. However, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) has commissioned a Qualitative Employment Land Assessment prepared by professional property consultants GVA. The GVA Assessment, published in September 2014, concludes that “there is likely to be demand for a new high quality, well serviced mixed use employment development area that accommodates small business orientated space, standalone industrial and manufacturing provision (albeit likely to be a design and build demand) and smaller scale distribution and ancillary workspace and office space”. This finding is further supported by MBCs Draft Economic Development Strategy, published for consultation in September 2014, which advises that demand for logistics and distribution development is expected to be strong along motorway junction locations.

The GVA Assessment was reported to meetings of the MBC Planning, Transport and Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee (PTDOSC) and Economic and Commercial Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECDOSC) on 21 October 2014. At these meetings both the PTDOSC and ECDOSC resolved that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to develop a planning policy to mitigate damage and ensure appropriate constraints for any employment land allocation at Junction 8 of the M20.

The PTDOSC and ECDOSC resolved that if these thresholds were met they would, in principle, support development for employment land at Junction 8. In response, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development has requested outline work to explore options and mitigation strategies for Junction 8.

This policy position is still subject to approval by MBC prior to further public consultation on the draft Local Plan, but nonetheless provides an appropriate context for Roxhill to update the wider community on its development proposals and to bring forward an outline planning application to establish the appropriate uses and access at the site.

Roxhill considers that the proposed site at Woodcut Farm is the best location for employment development at Junction 8. Woodcut Farm sits broadly at or below the level of the M20. It therefore benefits from reduced visual impact and limited site excavation.

### **Q 3. Why is this plan different to historic proposals for Kent International Gateway (KIG)?**

**A 3.** 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 373,746sqm of development. In contrast, Roxhill's proposals are on an 18 hectare site (including landscaping) and would provide 47,752sqm 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.

### **Q 4. How many jobs would the Roxhill proposals create?**

**A 4.** Roxhill proposes a multi-million pound investment, creating between 800 and 1,200 jobs for Maidstone Borough. A significant number of additional jobs would also be created during the construction phase of the scheme, should planning permission be granted.

### **Q 5. How would the development benefit Maidstone?**

**A 5.** The proposals would provide a significant boost to existing Maidstone businesses through new job creation (between 800 and 1,200 new jobs), associated spin off expenditure in the town and local businesses servicing the new development. By providing a state-of-the-art business park in a strategic location it creates a new opportunity to market Maidstone as a business destination.

In addition to the economic benefits, a comprehensive landscape masterplan has evolved to soften and screen the development from within and outside the site. This would provide a number of landscaping and biodiversity benefits, including the planting of over 7,500 new trees and 4,000 new hedgerow shrubs. An additional seven hectares of land to the west of the site would be safeguarded in perpetuity by a legal agreement, ensuring no further development immediately to the west of the site can take place. Three hectares of land would be gifted to an appropriate local body and would benefit from additional tree planting prior to its transfer.

The comprehensive landscape proposals would deliver wide ranging ecological benefits. These include the retention and enhancement of the existing stream across the site, with native grass planting and wild vegetation to create wildlife habitats. Bird and bat boxes would also be fixed to mature trees and buildings.

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## Q 6. How much employment space is proposed?

A 6. 47,752sqm of employment space is proposed. This is broken down as follows;

	Areas for units are Gross Internal Area (GIA)		
UNIT	Warehouse	Office	UNIT
	sq.m	sq.m	Total
A1	13,935	696.77	14,632
A2	9,290.3	464.52	9,755
B1	2,647.7	264.77	2,912
B2	1,997.4	199.74	2,197
B3	1,765.2	176.52	1,942
B4	2,601.3	260.13	2,861
B5	1,486.4	148.64	1,635
B6	2,322.6	232.26	2,555
		<b>Office/ R&amp;D</b>	
C1		1,115	1,115
C2		1,115	1,115
C3		1,672	1,672
D1		1,905	1,905
D2		2,016	2,016
D3		1,440	1,440
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,046</b>	<b>11,706</b>	<b>47,752</b>

## Q 7. How would the development blend into the wider landscape?

A 7. The site is located immediately between the strategic and busy M20 and A20 roads, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link also in close proximity. Near to the site are the Biffa waste depot and a used car garage and caravan site.

Notwithstanding these nearby commercial and infrastructure developments, Roxhill has developed a comprehensive landscape strategy to soften visual impact and accommodate the development within its setting. As part of this plan, over 7,500 trees and 4,000 hedgerow shrubs would be planted across the site.

To assess the impact of the proposed development from key viewpoints, and to assist in the design work, verified CGI photomontages have been produced by specialist imaging consultants and can be viewed on the Roxhill website at [www.roxhill.co.uk/portfolio/maidstone](http://www.roxhill.co.uk/portfolio/maidstone)

The highest point of the development is 13.8m, albeit most of the proposed buildings would be lower in height. The proposed units would sit broadly below the carriageway level next to the M20. There would be the opportunity to provide natural green roofs on the proposed office buildings if appropriate. These measures would ensure that the proposals sit appropriately within the wider setting when seen from long distance views.

## ***Transport and accessibility***

### **Q 8. How many journeys to and from the site should we expect at peak/rush hour times?**

**A 8.** The expected car/van and HGV trip rates for the proposed site in the morning peak hour (08:00-09:00) and evening peak hour (17:00-18:00) are set out in the table below.

	Morning peak hour (08:00-09:00)			Evening peak hour (17:00-18:00)		
	Trips In	Trips Out	Total	Trips In	Trips Out	Total
Cars / vans	196	32	228	22	173	195
HGVs	7	7	14	3	3	6

### **Q 9. What impact would this development have on other local roads?**

**A 9.** Traffic assessments commissioned by Roxhill (based on the expected trip rates above) concluded that the main junctions closest to the site would operate within their capacity at peak times once the development was in place, with the exception of the traffic light junction at the A20 / Willington Street.

To mitigate any potential issue, the A20 / Willington Street junction would benefit from a new 25-metre dedicated left turn lane for left-turn movements into Wellington Street from the A20. This would significantly reduce queuing at this junction, even with the proposed development in place.

### **Q 10. Would the site be accessible by public and non-car transport?**

**A 10.** Roxhill is proposing a number of measures to encourage the use of public and other non-car transport modes to the site. Two new bus stops are proposed on the north and south side of the A20 in close proximity to the site entrance. These would be served by the existing 10X bus service and provide connections to the site from Maidstone town centre, Bearsted and Hollingbourne.

Roxhill would give consideration to a dedicated shuttle bus service which would operate to and from locations catering for the highest number of site employees. Plans for such a service would be put in place once the main occupiers are known and once demand is determined.

Roxhill would provide significant improvements to the existing narrow footpath on the A20 between the site and the Roundwell junction. This part of the footway would be widened to provide a footpath / cycle link, facilitating improved access to Bearsted village and the railway station. In addition, the proposals would include showers, lockers and changing rooms in all new buildings, with secured and covered cycle parking spaces provided at convenient locations across the site.

### **Q 11. How many car parking spaces would be provided?**

**A 11.** Approximately 560 car parking spaces would be provided across the site for those employees who do not use public transport. Incentives would be in place to encourage sustainable travel from the onset of occupation, such as measures to facilitate car sharing.

The two larger warehouse units would have approximately 40 HGV parking / loading bays.

## ***Sustainability and environment***

### **Q 12. How would the development make a positive contribution to the local environment?**

**A 12.** Three hectares of land in the north east corner of the site would be gifted to an appropriate local body, secured by a legal agreement.

An additional seven hectare wedge of land to the west of the site would be safeguarded in perpetuity by a legal agreement, ensuring no further development can take place. This land would benefit from tree planting prior to its transfer, creating a new

woodland copse in this protected buffer zone.

These measures would be accompanied by further native tree planting on the western and northern site boundaries to screen the development from close public views into the site.

**Q 13. How many trees would be planted as part of the development?**

**A 13.** Although this is an outline application, a comprehensive landscape masterplan has evolved to soften and screen the development from within and outside the site. Over 7,500 new trees would be planted across the site, alongside 4,000 new hedgerow plants. Ten hectares of land to the west of the site would be planted with native trees to create new woodland copses to provide surety against further development.

**Q 14. How would green roofs be incorporated into the development?**

**A 14.** Consideration would be given for some office units to incorporate green roofs. However, Roxhill works hard to ensure that the benefits of green roofs are not outweighed by the carbon impact of constructing them. Where green roofs are considered appropriate, these have numerous benefits for both the individual building and the wider ecological habitat. For example, green roofs can filter air pollution and provide a layer of insulation for the building below, effectively lowering the building's energy demand. Green roofs are also shown to absorb rainwater and create a habitat for wildlife, while providing an aesthetically pleasing building that blends into the surrounding landscape.

**Q 15. What sustainable water management initiatives are proposed?**

**A 15.** Permeable paving and rain water harvesting are proposed as sustainable water management initiatives for the site as part of a comprehensive sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS). Permeable paving allows rainwater to soak through the surface of the internal parking areas within the development to be channelled into balancing ponds located around the site. The water is then either drained from the site in a controlled manner or reused in place of mains water, for example in WCs and plant watering systems.

**Q 16. Would sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) be used?**

**A 16.** SuDS would be used on site to minimise the risk of flooding, improve the water quality, assist ground water recharge whilst also providing amenity and wildlife benefits.

**Q 17. What measures would be in place to reduce the impact of lighting on the surrounding area?**

**A 17.** To prevent nuisance from the light fittings, they would be of the type that does not emit any upward light and wherever possible lighting would be dimmed or switched off when not needed.

A variety of lighting units would be used, dependent on the required level of illuminance and the area to be illuminated, to ensure that light fitting heights are kept as low as reasonably practicable.

Additional shielding would be provided as necessary to those lighting units in close proximity to residential and ecological areas. Around the site, pedestrian footpaths would employ low level lighting bollards.

**Construction methods**

**Q 18. Would Cut and Fill be used during construction?**

**A 18.** The Woodcut Farm site would require only limited excavation and little or no material would need to be removed from the site during construction. The excavated material would be reused on the site to create the required ground level.

**Q 19. Would cranes and scaffolding be used throughout?**

**A 19.** Cranes and scaffolding would only be required to carry out the "superstructure" phase. This involves the construction of the upstanding structure of the buildings with a steel frame, brick and metal facades and a metal roof.

**Q 20. What materials would be used for the buildings?**

**A 20.** Concrete, steel beams, wood, glass, brick and metal would form the basis of the primary construction materials, but these would be subject to agreement with MBC should planning permission be granted. Where possible these would be sourced from the local area. Furthermore, a proportion of the timber would be purchased from responsible forest sources.

**Q 21. What would the working hours on site be during construction?**

**A 21.** Contractors would be limited to working 7am-6pm on weekdays and 7am-1pm on Saturdays.

**Q 22. What measures are in place to minimise the number of construction vehicles using public highways?**

**A 22.** A variety of initiatives would be put in place to minimise the number of vehicles delivering to the site during the construction phase;

- Construction material would be reused and recycled to control the level of wastage from the site.
- Vehicles would use permitted routes only (as agreed with Maidstone Borough Council) in order to avoid sensitive areas.
- Deliveries would be phased so that materials are delivered together and are controlled on a “just in time” basis - minimising travel time around the site and the associated noise.
- Car sharing would be available for operatives to reduce the number of vehicles visiting the site each day.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us via GKA, our community representatives, on 08000 803 168 or email [roxhill-junction8@gka.co.uk](mailto:roxhill-junction8@gka.co.uk).