

By: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 2 December 2014

Subject: London Paramount

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Divisions: Dartford and Gravesham

Summary:

This report provides a summary of the proposals for the London Paramount leisure resort at Swanscombe and highlights the potential economic benefits.

Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development & Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER the report and NOTE the actions set out under section 5 (Next Steps).

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The promoters of the proposed London Paramount leisure resort at Swanscombe Peninsula, London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH) launched a second round of consultation on the 5th November with the first of 12 events scheduled to take place between the 5th and 15th November. A list of these events is shown in Appendix A. The consultation has been organised by LRCH to provide an opportunity for the local community to find out more about the proposed leisure resort and seek the views from the local community to inform the emerging Master Plan.

2. The London Paramount Proposals

- 2.1** The emerging Master Plan that LRCH has on display at the consultation events presents a development that is unique to the UK and would create a major visitor attraction in Kent drawing people from a wide area. The proposed development would regenerate a major brown field site in North Kent and bring significant opportunities for employment and economic growth. These benefits would be felt not just in North Kent but across a wider region of Kent and there is the potential for spin-off benefits for local

traders and other leisure destinations in Kent.

- 2.2** The leisure resort could attract international as well as UK domestic visitors and LRCH estimate that, when it is fully operational, it could attract up to 15 million visitors a year. This number of visitors is not expected to occur from the day of opening. It is understood that LRCH plans to deliver the development in phases, probably over a 5-year period, with the number of attractions building up over this time.
- 2.3** The key features of the proposed leisure resort that have been highlighted by LRCH include: -
- A Core Entertainment Resort of around 45 hectares (111 acres) with over 50 rides and attractions; a 2,000 seat theatre, 11,000m² of exhibition space; 15,000m² of retail space; restaurants and a cinema/comedy venue.
 - A 20,000m² indoor Events Space to host conferences, exhibitions and musical/sporting events.
 - An indoor Water Park.
 - Hotels
 - A Creative Industry Hub providing flexible workspaces for small and medium sized businesses in the creative industry.
 - A Staff Training Academy
- 2.4** The traffic generated by the leisure resort will be one of the main impacts. LRCH expects that up to 60% of this traffic will arrive by private car and proposes a direct route between the resort and the A2 together with 10,000 visitor parking spaces. For the remaining 40%, LRCH has set mode share targets of 20% by rail, 15% by coach/bus and 5% by river.
- 2.5** In discussions with LRCH the County Council has been informed that they have agreed Heads of Terms with the major land owners but there are around 100 smaller properties to acquire mainly within the Manor Way Industrial Estate. It is expected that LRCH will seek Compulsory Purchase Order powers through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project process to secure the remaining land needed to develop the leisure resort.

3. Potential Economic Benefits

- 3.1** LRCH has estimated that the resort will create 27,000 jobs which it has broken down as follows: -
- Direct
 - 7,000 jobs at the leisure resort itself, and
 - 4,000 jobs at the hotels
 - Indirect
 - 6,000 jobs within the Creative Hub, and
 - 10,000 jobs in supporting development across the wider area
- LRCH has also estimated that some 6,000 jobs will be created during the construction period.

3.2 The employment opportunities created could cover a wide range of skills and LRCH has highlighted the following: -

- Hospitality & Catering
- Engineering & Manufacturing
- Technology
- Creative Arts & Culture
- Retail
- Finance & Human Resources

A focus on education and skills would be needed to ensure that the employment opportunities created can be largely met by local people. In this respect LRCH has identified a Staff Training Academy and expressed a willingness to work in partnership with local schools, colleges and education providers to develop and establish a suitable skills programme.

3.3 Both during its construction and operation the leisure resort is likely to require a significant supply chain. LRCH has identified the following sectors and further work should be carried out to identify how best Kent businesses can meet the demand created so that the economic benefits can be spread more widely.

- Construction
- Engineering & Manufacturing
- Food & Beverage
- Security
- Service providers
- Landscaping
- Telecommunications & ICT
- Utilities

4. Relationship with Ebbsfleet Garden City Development Corporation

4.1 The information displayed by LRCH at its consultation events shows a “red-line” boundary that encompasses the site for the leisure resort, a corridor for the proposed access road between the leisure resort and the A2 and the A2 junctions at Bean, Ebbsfleet and Pepperhill. LRCH has essentially covered an area over which it reasonably expects to have to carry out works which is normal for the submission of a planning application.

4.2 There is a degree of overlap between this “red-line” boundary and the proposed area for the Ebbsfleet Garden City Development Corporation that was included in the recent consultation carried out by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG). With the London Paramount development being designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (see below), the Development Corporation would not be the determining authority for the application. The inclusion of Swanscombe Peninsula in the area for the Development Corporation allows it to take account of London Paramount and covers the eventuality that the development might not proceed.

5. Background Information

- 5.1** Plans for a major theme park on Swanscombe Peninsula in North Kent were announced by LRCH on 8th October 2012. In the intervening period there have been a number of discussions with the County Council at both Member and officer level, with Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils, with Central Government and with other key stakeholders.
- 5.2** The County Council has consistently advised LRCH on the work that needs to be undertaken to support a planning application particularly in the areas of transport, environmental impact, employment opportunities and skills development.
- 5.3** On 9th May 2014, the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government gave a direction under s35 of the Planning Act 2008 for the London Paramount project to be treated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). This designation means that LRCH will submit an application directly to the Planning Inspectorate and, following examination, the decision to grant permission would rest with the Secretary of State.
- 5.4** LRCH carried out an initial round of public consultation in July 2014, principally to ascertain how the local community wished to be consulted on the proposals for the leisure resort. LRCH has stated that over 2,000 local residents and businesses came along to the events that were held in July.
- 5.5** In discussions with LRCH the County Council has been informed that there is sufficient funding for LRCH to acquire the land it needs and progress the development through the planning process. Further investment is being sought for the design, enabling works and construction stages of the development which would follow the granting of planning permission.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1** It is currently anticipated that LRCH will be submitting its application to the Planning Inspectorate around August 2015. LRCH is aiming for a start of construction in 2016/17 with the leisure resort being opened in 2020.
- 6.2** LRCH is planning further consultation events and workshops in the Spring and Summer of 2015 before the submission of a planning application to the Planning Inspectorate. This should constitute the formal public consultation required by the NSIP process.
- 6.3** It is understood that the planned workshops would focus on issues of importance such as transport and the environment. The NSIP process requires LRCH to reach agreement with the County Council on a number of issues prior to the submission of its planning application to the Planning Inspectorate. Principal amongst these being the mitigation of the development's transport impacts.

- 6.4** It is proposed that the County Council continues to engage with LRCH and its consultants to influence the development of the Master Plan for the proposed leisure resort. This will include further discussions regarding the proposed workshops with the purpose of identifying and developing these into specific work streams covering transport, environmental impact, employment opportunities, skills development, supply chain and tourism.
- 6.5** Whilst there are other theme parks these provide a more limited offer and are not of the scale being proposed for London Paramount. There could be some benefit to carrying out independent research into the potential impacts and benefits that could result from the creation of a leisure resort of this scale. At this stage this could be limited to a desk top study utilising the expertise of Visit Kent where appropriate.
- 6.6** The County Council will continue to co-ordinate its response to the London Paramount proposals with both Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils and Government departments and agencies where appropriate. An internal officer group has already been established and will continue to monitor the situation.
- 6.7** The County Council is already aware that the Highways Agency is discussing with LRCH the impact of the development on the A2 Bean and A2 Ebbsfleet improvements. The County Council is involved in the HA's work on the improvement of these two junctions and will continue to emphasise the importance of a co-ordinating the work of the HA and LRCH and use its influence as the local highway authority where appropriate.
- 6.8** The County Council has been formally consulted by the Planning Inspectorate regarding an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report submitted by LRCH. Officers are currently compiling a response to this which needs to be submitted by 9th December.
- 6.9** Any further developments relating to the London Paramount proposal will be monitored and reported to Members. Briefings will be arranged where this would provide a more effective forum for the exchange of information and views.

7. Recommendation

The Growth, Economic Development & Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER the report and NOTE the actions set out under section 5 (Next Steps) of this report.

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Background Documents:

[Direction by Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, 9th May 2014.](#)

[London Paramount Exhibition Displays for November 2014 Events.](#)

Click on links to open

Appendix A: List of Consultation Events

Appendix A

List of Consultation Events

Wed 5 th November	British Legion Greenhithe London Road, Greenhithe DA9 9EJ	11am – 2pm
Wed 5 th November	Eastgate 141 Springhead Parkway DA11 8AD	4pm – 7:30pm
Thurs 6 th November	Northfleet School for Girls Hall Road Gravesend DA11 8AQ	4pm – 8pm
Fri 7 th November	Dartford Council Offices Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford DA1 1DR	3:30pm – 7:30pm
Sat 8 th November	Swanscombe Leisure Centre Craylands Lane, Swanscombe DA10 0LP	2pm – 5pm
Mon 10 th November	Hazlitt Arts Centre (The Exchange Studio) Earl Street, Maidstone ME14 1PL	2pm – 6pm
Tues 11 th November	Bluewater (Lower Winter Garden) Greenhithe DA9 9ST	10am – 9pm
Wed 12 th November	Thurrock Civic Hall Blackshots Lane, Grays RM16 2JU	2pm – 6pm
Thurs 13 th November	The Woodville Halls Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU	4pm – 8pm
Fri 14 th November	St Botolphs Church Hall The Hill, Northfleet DA11 9EU	3:30pm – 7:30pm
Sat 15 th November	Ebbsfleet United Football Club (Match ticket holders only)	1pm – 3pm
Sat 15 th November	Dartford Football Club (Match ticket holders only)	1pm – 3pm