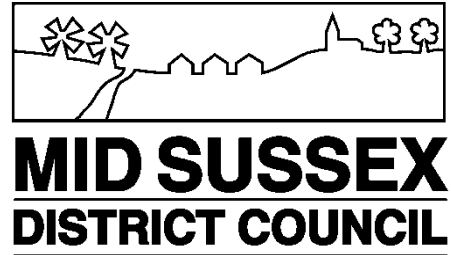


**Mid Sussex
District Council**



Site Allocations DPD

DC27 / SA9.18

Statement of Common Ground between:

Mid Sussex District Council

and

Vail Williams (SA9: Science and Technology Park)

14th May 2021

Introduction

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is between Mid Sussex District Council and Vail Williams (acting on behalf of the site promoters) related to Site Allocations DPD policy SA9: Science and Technology Park.

This SoCG relates to wider planning matters. A separate SoCG has been agreed [REF] between Mid Sussex District Council, Vail Williams, Connect Consultants, West Sussex County Council and Highways England related specifically to transport matters for site SA9.

Context

Policy **DP1: Sustainable Economic Development** identifies a broad location for a Science and Technology Park to the west of Burgess Hill. As set out in the Sites DPD (page 4) one of the aims of the Sites DPD is:

“to allocate a site for a Science and Technology Park west of Burgess Hill in line with policy requirements set out in District Plan policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development”.

The Sites DPD therefore proposed the allocation of a specific site, within the broad location identified in DP1. The specific site is land north of the A2300, which forms policy **SA9: Science and Technology Park**.

MSDC-01 (Q1) and MSDC-02e (Q5.1) set out the justification for this aim, the justification for a Science and Technology Park in principle, the site selection process, and reasons for selecting the site “north of the A2300” as the Council’s preferred specific location.

Mid Sussex District Council and the site promoters of SA9 (Vail Williams) have been working collaboratively since the Council determined the land north of the A2300 as the preferred site option. This has included sharing evidence on market need/demand, discussions on delivery and phasing, transport matters (as agreed in the transport SoCG) and next steps in the planning application process including in-principle agreement to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (subject to successful allocation within the Sites DPD) to assist with efficient delivery.

Common Ground

Both parties have submitted separate statements to the examination, in response to ID-02 “Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions” particularly in regard to Matter 5. Both parties have shared their responses and agree that:

- 1. There is a compelling economic case for the implementation of the scheme (Q5.1(i)).** Vail Williams agree with the strategic justification set out by Mid Sussex District Council, and Mid Sussex District Council agree with the market need and demand set out by Vail Williams.
- 2. The location of SA9: Science and Technology Park is fully in accordance with the broad location identified in DP1: Sustainable Economic Development (Q5.1(ii)).** In particular, the site is an entirely separate proposal to The HUB which comprises part of the allocation in DP9. We also agree that the location of the STP is within the Broad Location identified in DP1 and the adopted local plan proposals map and key diagram. The STP has not changed location but instead provides clarity over

a preferred site (within the Broad Location identified in DP1) has evolved through the Call for Sites, and Regulation 18 stages. The North of the A2300 is therefore the preferred location following these assessments and is supported both by the Project Newton Team evidence base and the MSDC Sites DPD evidence base.

- 3. The recent economic downturn in the Crawley/Gatwick area does not justify proceeding more cautiously or with a smaller scheme (Q5.1(iii and x)) –** the Science and Technology Park will be a regional catalyst of change and is of a critical mass that will assist with economic growth and recovery in the short term, and continue to deliver important economic floorspace longer term. Market Demand remains, despite any short-term economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Both parties agree that a critical mass of this scale, is required in order to attract the types of companies that fulfil the Science and Technology Park definition (from the SPA and stated in DP1) and provide the high quality environment with essential support facilities that are expected filling a gap in the regional market. The STP can do this as it is a different offer than those SEL locations identified, allocated or implemented in the region.

- 4. The evidence base identifies that any impact from physical infrastructure or environmental constraints can be mitigated (Q5.1(iv and v vii)) –** Both MSDC and the Project Newton STP team agree that policy requirements in SA9 will ensure sufficient mitigation is provided and the high level discussions already underway on planning strategy and next steps ensure that further evidence can be provided as part of the formal planning application process.

Both parties agree that there is no change in the allocation, in regard to both location as identified in the key diagram and Proposals Map, and no enlargement to allocation from DP1 as stated in the Adopted District Plan,


However, as further detailed design and mitigation assessment of all matters have evolved, the evidence base has informed illustrative layouts for the STP. The supporting text to DP1 indicated a floorspace of approximately 100,000sqm. The illustrative layouts indicate that a larger floorspace over 100,000sqm may be suitable and appropriate and deliverable with regard to site constraints and infrastructure requirements.

Illustrative layouts are included in both the Positioning Document SA9.1, and the new Phase One element of the masterplan. This May 2020 update is amended as result of more detailed highways mitigation for the hamburger junction, which has had an impact on its land take impact on Phase One as result of more detailed design. The new plans are appended to the response to the Inspector's MIQs from Project Newton Project team Matter 5.

This shows that 120,000sqm rather than 100,000sqm may be accommodated following more detailed illustrative layouts and assessments. There is however joint agreement that this does not conflict with policy DP1 but is consistent with the objectives of policy DP1, and any quantum of floorspace will be determined as part of the formal planning process for the site.

5. **Impacts on the highways network can be sufficiently mitigated (Q5.1(v and vi))**– More detail is provided in the Transport Statement of Common Ground [DC26] and supporting Mobility Strategy, demonstrating that partnership working exists and is continuing with Highways England, West Sussex County Council, as Highways Authority and MSDC as Local Planning Authority.
6. **The implementation of policy SA9 would not result in an excessive amount of employment in one location ((Q5.1(viii))** – both parties agree that the quantum of development is fully justified by the evidence base and a critical mass is required given the nature of the regional nature of the STP and this accords with DP1 aspirations.
7. **The new use classes change to Class E will not impact the STP.** The Science Park Association definition provides a mechanism to ensure that the STP constitutes science technology and innovative occupiers and uses and is a different offer than those under SA2-SA8.
8. **The Impact of Covid 19 on the local economy is not significant to warrant a change in policy position.** The unique impact of the pandemic and the effects of economic impact as a result, do not undermine the allocation, and the plan period allows for the cyclical nature of the property market. That along with C2C aspirations, developer and general occupier confidence, confirms the STP is still a regional requirement. The plan period also ensures that the longer-term phasing allows the necessary flexibility to allow the market to determine delivery in line with occupier demand.
7. **Vail Williams agree that the policy requirements set out in SA9: Science and Technology Park are required and proportionate to ensure any impacts of the Science and Technology Park can be mitigated. We also agree that the STP as identified in the SADPD will be a highly sustainable and accessible development building on the Northern Arc and HUB developments. The site and scale can be a catalyst for change and can attract important inward investment and jobs in line with central government aspirations to Build Back Better and boost the local economy.**

Signed:



14th May 2021
Mid Sussex District Council



14th May 2021
Vail Williams

