

# Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Maidstone Economic Development Group

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013  
The Gatehouse, Archbishops Palace, Mill Street, Maidstone, ME15 6YE

**Present:** John Taylor(JMT, Chair); Nick Rowell(NR), John Foster(JF), Mandy Bearne(MB),  
Cllr Malcolm Greer(MG), Keith Grimley(KG), Colin Davies(CD).

1.	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Bill Moss(BM), Jo James(JJ), Chris Blundell(CB), Rob Edwards(RE), Victoria Wallace(VW), Heather Nowak(HN), Allis Beasley(ABE).	
2.	<b>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</b> Approved.	
3.	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b> JF raised the question of the current Membership of the Group and suggested that this be revisited. JF also asked that the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership be discussed by the Group. JMT stated that these topics would both be Agenda Items at the next Meeting.	
4.	<p><b>PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT J8</b> The Meeting was attended by representatives of Gallagher Group (Nick Yandle), ADL (Paul Dodgson) and DHA Planning (David Hicken).</p> <p><b>ADL</b> – Paul Dodgson is the ADL Operations Director and he relocated from their Yorkshire facility to Marden about a year ago. He gave a presentation about ADL and the reasons why they wish to move to a purpose built facility at J8. A copy of the Presentation can found in Appendix A. The over-riding issue that came across was that ADL have outgrown their facility in Marden. Their future expansion and the requirement to combine their Yorkshire facility with the Marden business mean that they need to relocate to larger premises. As this cannot be accommodated in Marden then they have identified potential sites in Sittingbourne, Ashford and at M20/J8. To relocate away from the Maidstone area would cause major problems for their employees and uncertainty already exists until the location issue is finally resolved. They have to vacate the Marden site by mid-2016 and a decision on a new location must be made within the next two to three months.</p> <p><b>DHA Planning</b> – David Hicken distributed copies of the Environmental Statement relating to the J8 proposal, see Appendix B. He commented on the caution displayed by local Planners with regard to the proposal and how in any other part of the Country such an Application would be welcomed with open arms. Maidstone is fortunate in having four Motorway Junctions but seems unwilling to take advantage of this fact. He noted that the Application was tarnished by the earlier KIG proposal which was rightly rejected. The current Application falls within a different location and is geared to the needs of two local businesses rather than being purely speculative. The area already has three large employers; Motorway Services, Leeds Castle and the Mercure. The proposed site is not in the North Downs AONB and will actually reduce HGV movements within the Town Centre.</p> <p><b>Gallagher Group</b> - Nick Yandle said that they had been gently pushing for development in this area for some time prior to the ADL/Scarab proposal. A decision is now urgent as there will be 18 months of infrastructure work before any other development can take place. He pointed out that both ADL and Scarab will be purchasing the freehold to the site which emphasises their long-</p>	

	<p>term commitment.</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b> – MB asked if the number of employees at Scarab was known. DH said that it was around 350 most of whom were involved in manufacturing. MB asked what the expansion capability would be at J8; PD said that it would offer ADL four times their existing capacity. ADL also planned to open a Training Facility for their own apprentices and overseas customers. They expect their employee numbers to double over time.</p> <p>NR asked about current capacity issues for ADL in Marden and would they outgrow a new site at J8. PD said that they currently operated a three-shift system in Marden and after an initial growth spurt they envisaged that growth would then slow down.</p> <p>NR asked about existing congestion at J8. DH said that there was some queuing at 08.15 to 08.30 and that an improved roundabout would have a major beneficial impact as seen with the revised roundabout at the New Cut/Bearsted Road junction.</p> <p>NY said that he would be happy to return to answer questions at a future meeting and the visitors then left the Meeting.</p> <p><b>Discussion</b> – JMT said that this was a very important Planning Application for Maidstone and he felt that The Chamber should express an opinion. NR said that both Applicants were the kind of business that would benefit The Borough over a long time-frame. JMT said that the development reflected a critical need and that rejection would set a very bad precedent.</p> <p>MG said that rejection would result in the loss of 600 jobs to Maidstone, more than was being created by the KIMS Phase 1 development. He would support the Application. CD said that it was important to stress, unlike KIG, that the Application was of benefit to Maidstone,</p> <p>JMT said that one MEDG Member not present at the Meeting was vociferously against the Application but he could not see why the development would make current transport/travel issues worse. MG noted that the Highways Agency had no issues with the proposal.</p> <p>JMT said that he would create a draft response and circulate this to MEDG Members, excepting those representing MBC, for comment. JF said that this should be done speedily as the submission date had already passed. NR said the FSB had not been involved but would be in favour subject to mitigation of issues of concern to Leeds Castle and The Mercure. JMT noted that The Chamber was only involved through its own action as it had not been directly approached for comment by the Planning Department.</p>	
5.	<b>NEWNHAM COURT REDEVELOPMENT</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
6.	<b>LOCAL PLAN</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
7.	<b>TOWN CENTRE FUTURE</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
8.	<b>LOCAL ECONOMY UPDATE</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
9.	<b>ARMED FORCES COVENANT</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
10.	<b>BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRES</b> Deferred to next meeting.	
11.	<b>CHAMBER UPDATE</b>	

	CD said the Construction Expo at the Mercure/Great Danes Hotel had been a great success. He had also signed some significant new Members and gave MEP as an example.	
17.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b><u>MEDG Membership</u></b> – In addition to the item in Matters Arising JMT said that he hoped that Paul Dodgson of ADL would agree in due course to become a Group Member assuming they remain in Maidstone. It was noted that neither ADL nor Scarab Sweepers are currently Members of the Chamber.</p> <p><b><u>KCFG</u></b> – In response to a request for KCFG to provide a more detailed breakdown of their growth figures, JMT said that RE was hoping to supply this information.</p> <p><b><u>Permitted Development</u></b> – JMT said that he had received only a single response to this topic and this response had been neither for nor against.</p> <p><b><u>2013 Kent Property Market</u></b> – MB distributed copies of this annual guide.</p>	
	The meeting closed at 16:45.	

**Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014.**