

[contact redacted]

RE: NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION CALL FOR EVIDENCE

I am writing on behalf of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) in response to the call for evidence on National Infrastructure needs.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

The EDC has been established by Central Government to deliver Ebbsfleet Garden City: a development of up to 15,000 new homes in North Kent, with new employment opportunities and supported by transport, utility and community infrastructure. Blue and Green infrastructure will also be an important and defining characteristic. The recent announcement of Enterprise Zone status and securing £310 million of funding to support infrastructure will result in a high level of activity in developing the garden city and since is now over 1.2 million square metres of commercial, retail and leisure uses consented across the Garden City resulting in both residential and commercial growth.

Ebbsfleet Garden City is to be delivered at pace aspiring to provide a high quality built environment. It is anticipated that the impact of the Garden City will be felt beyond the EDC's boundary, with a positive ripple effect locally (particularly in Dartford and Gravesham boroughs), both in the residential and commercial markets. Whilst it is not possible to quantify this as this time, anecdotally a positive uptake in the housing development and developer interest is being reported locally following the Garden City announcement.

Existing Strategic Context and Connectivity

From a transport perspective, Ebbsfleet Garden City is very well located; existing rail connections provide both high speed (HS1) and conventional rail services into London from three local stations: Ebbsfleet International, Northfleet and Swanscombe. Central London is therefore within 17 minutes of Ebbsfleet Garden City, with excellent connectivity into the wider Kent region too. The presence of direct Eurostar services additionally means quick and easy access to continental Europe.

Rail infrastructure is therefore one of the key attributes and requirements of Ebbsfleet Garden City as future destination for living, working and leisure. In response to the questions asked by the NIC the following key infrastructure improvements are hugely relevant:

Upgrading the A2

Upgrading the A2 is identified as one of the top 40 infrastructure items in the NIC under the strategic road network capacity heading. The delivery of the Garden City is heavily dependent on there being sufficient capacity in the local and trunk road network. Whilst the primary infrastructure of HS1 will take some of the strain for the commuting population, the homes under development at Castle Hill, the National Grid site, at Northfleet and at Ebbsfleet and the rest of Eastern Quarry, along with the advent of the London Paramount resort in 2021, will mean that an improved A2 needs to be functioning at optimum levels. The two crucial junctions are Bean junction and Ebbsfleet junction which unusually for a dual carriageway are within 1 mile of one another on the A2 to the south of the Garden City and the sites referred to above.

Ebbsfleet International Station

Following initial studies by HS1, there will be a need to upgrade the station building at Ebbsfleet International should the major international resort London Paramount come to fruition, to ensure that it has sufficient capacity to cope with future customer projections. This will include changes to facilitate pedestrian flow, way finding and both core and non-core facilities to ensure an excellent service and environment for all types of customers, noting particular that the London Paramount resort proposals will mean a more two way flow, as opposed to the current, near tidal operation.

Rolling Stock

Following initial studies, it is apparent that new rolling stock and train services will be required to cope with the large increase in future customer demand, particularly at peak commute times and during new weekend peaks created by the London Paramount Resort. The quality of service delivered along the track and at stations, both during and after construction, must be protected to prevent disruption to train operations and the travelling public.

Lead in times for procurement of rolling stock are lengthy and need to be planned accordingly to avoid the negative public perception of the railway and corresponding detrimental impact on the new developments and the Garden City.

Crossrail

A safeguarded Crossrail route already extends beyond Ebbsfleet from Abbey Wood to Hoo Junction. When seeking to deliver a garden city in the 21st Century this route is seen as an obvious opportunity that the EDC should pursue. The EDC feel that extending Crossrail from its current terminus at Abbey Wood to the stations at Swanscombe or Northfleet or Gravesend along the existing protected route would be extremely beneficial to growth in the vicinity. An extension into Ebbsfleet International Station would connect much of the rest of Kent into this service, particularly to Heathrow.

This infrastructure is imperative to attract development and investment in the Ebbsfleet area and as such the EDC has joined with Bexley Council, Kent and TfL in preparing a joint submission sent under separate cover. Provision of this Crossrail extension provides a further direct route from London, improving the Ebbsfleet location for commuters and hereby increasing housebuilder confidence in the location. It further increases commercial and employment potential in the area and continues to assist in opening up North Kent/ East London as future centres for development. North Kent's development plans and population growth form an attractive proposition for new companies from the UK and overseas to relocate or expand here. For this to happen road and rail infrastructure must be improved and capacity increased.

Yours sincerely,
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Director of Strategy

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