



Proposed Mayoral Development Corporation for Old Oak and Park Royal

Response to Consultation

1. Introduction

The Park Royal Business Group (PRBG) is pleased to submit this response to the consultation on the proposed Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) on Old Oak and Park Royal. Launched in January 2014 under the auspices of West London Business, Chamber of Commerce for West London, the Group has been established to provide representation for the business community of Park Royal. Its objectives are to provide a collective lobbying voice for the 2,000 businesses on the estate and to promote the area as a business location and investment destination.

2. Overview

In formulating this response PRBG has consulted with, or received input from, over 70 Park Royal businesses. The Group has also organised a briefing from the GLA (Michael Mulhern) and had follow up Q and A and discussions with the MDC. In principle, the PRBG supports the establishment of the MDC. We agree with its long-term aims and support the geographic area covered in the consultation document. We recognise that the MDC has the potential to provide Park Royal with a more integrated and sustainable development strategy than has been possible before. However, the PRBG believe that a number of critical issues exist that must be immediately confronted by the MDC to establish a platform for success.

Our general concerns revolve around the time frame for the MDC's establishment and implementation of plans. Businesses are worried about immediate day one problems, such as transport, congestion, the deterioration of public realm, utilities and security, which are deterring inward investment and business growth.

We need to see urgent action and implementation as soon as possible. We think regeneration planning should be aimed at facilitating individual businesses and landowners' growth, through improved infrastructure and services and flexible planning regimes, rather than trying a top down master-plan approach.

Here below we outline some of the major issues identified by businesses, which we would like the MDC to address.

3. Transport

Road congestion is considered unanimously as Park Royal's most pressing problem. Businesses feel that this is preventing new companies investing in the estate. The

major approach roads to the estate, such as the A406, A40 and A404 are invariably congested, and this causes serious delays to the flow of both personnel and goods in and out of the estate. Furthermore, the through routes within the estate are frequently grid-locked, delaying movement of goods in and out and hampering business efficiency. The roads themselves also need better maintenance and repair. They should be brought up-to-date and this would improve business efficiency. In addition, parking restrictions need to be robustly enforced to assist traffic flow. Connectivity to the outside and within the estate needs improving. The MDC has an opportunity to link Park Royal to the major new transport hub at Old Oak Common. Other solutions could involve better use of buses, improved cycle facilities and more parking options.

4. Utilities

Another major issue is the poor supply of electricity and broadband. Many manufacturing businesses do not enjoy sufficient quantity or regularity of power supply for their manufacturing processes. They complain frequently that the power companies demand extortionate additional payments to secure sufficient supply, or they have to generate their own supply.

Coverage of superfast fibre broadband across the area is very limited, a major competitive disadvantage when compared to other major metropolitan business hubs across the globe. This needs a collective strategic solution. Fast broadband is a necessity for businesses in Park Royal – not a luxury.

5. Planning

The MDC has the opportunity, in assuming planning powers, to reform planning procedures within the estate. Businesses are of the opinion that zoning regulations should be more flexible within the estate, particularly relating to the classification of sites within industrial zones. Current regulations are too rigid and too slow in allowing businesses to adapt or expand their accommodation and facilities. For example, businesses' own land assembly or alteration should be made easier. In addition, businesses have worries about housing strategy. We recognise the importance of building sufficient affordable housing, to accommodate a local workforce. But this should not happen at the expense of industrial land. It is vital for Park Royal's future that residential needs do not encroach on industrial zones.

6. Security

Crime and security remain ongoing issues for many businesses. Problems result mainly from poor lighting and lack of residential presence, which cause concern particularly to female staff members going to and from work at unsocial hours. There is also concern over the amount of industrial crime involving breaking in and stealing IT and other equipment. This could be ameliorated with improved street lighting and CCTV coverage, as well as a more overt police presence. The MDC should look at this as part of an overall strategic public realm policy.

7. Social Infrastructure

MDC master planning should look at the creation of one or more social hubs on Park Royal. There are no 'town centres' where staff and workforce can gather for recreation, shopping and hospitality. There is a lack of decent restaurants, bars and cafes and other facilities, where people can congregate and relax, or hold meetings

that might create an after-work economy for the area. As well as being attractive to business and investors, such facilities increase security by stimulating social activity, light and noise after hours.

8. Supporting Businesses

The MDC should also include within its scope of action certain business support measures, particularly around skills and recruitment. Park Royal would benefit from a strategic plan matching skills needs and vacancies with local job search and training facilities. At present this is very piecemeal and ineffective. Local Job Centres, Colleges and training providers need to be corralled into this!

9. Governance and Powers

PRBG recognises there are early discussions about the shape and form of the Board and management of the MDC. The PRBG feels strongly that it is essential that the business community is represented at the Board level, along with the boroughs and communities. The MDC must, at all stages of its development and planning, take account of the views of the business community, including SMEs, which represents the vast majority of Park Royal interests. We think the chair of the PRBG should be a permanent member of the Board, and that the PRBG members should be involved in the formation of strategy and action planning from early stages.

We also agree the boroughs should be represented. Local borough and community participation in local planning matters is important, but the MDC must have final say and control over strategic and larger planning decisions and infrastructure development. This will ensure a consistent, holistic and integrated approach to planning for Park Royal, and give the MDC more power to attract funding to implement improvements. We assume that the MDC will have the status to procure finance, assuming the business rates will stay with the boroughs.

Although municipal services (waste, roads etc) will stay within the boroughs' remit, the MDC should take oversight, and work with the boroughs to maintain consistency and quality, as these services impact directly on business efficiency.

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