

Ashford Borough Council

'Preferred Options' Report – Core Strategy

Representation Form

NATURE OF REPRESENTATIONS BY IMPERIAL COLLEGE

Representation 1

Section/Paragraph: 1 and summary table  
Preferred Option: 1  
Page Number: 11, 12

Imperial College comments:

**Preferred Option 1 – Overall vision for the Borough**

We recognise the depth of work the Council has undertaken in determining the planning guidance and policy to date reflected in the overall vision for the Borough. As such we support the option to “retain the general approach set by the existing Plan’s Guiding Principles and Design Principles but to update and amend these as necessary.”

However, we feel that, as recognised by the Council, there are “compelling reasons” to depart from some of the work done to date. This departure would be pertinent given the emergence of the opportunity of national and local importance offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response.

Representation 2

Section/Paragraph: Summary table  
Preferred Option: 2  
Page Number: 14

Imperial College comments:

**Preferred Option 2 – The broad distribution of development**

We are in support of having a broad distribution of development and for the Council not to reach a fixed set of ideas or conclusion.

We would wish that development in the Ashford area is not limiting to that set out in the Masterplan, and could envisage an opportunity of national and local importance such as offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response.

Representation 3

Section/Paragraph: Options considered  
Preferred Option: 3  
Page Number: 19

Imperial College comments:

**Preferred Option 3 – Ashford Town Centre**

We recognise the importance of Ashford town centre in delivering sustainable growth to Ashford and the whole Borough. We support the need for the Council to “focus activity initially primarily on brownfield land opportunities within the town” and “the Council regarding the Ashford town centre as the appropriate location for significant quantum of new development in the LDF period”.

However we would wish that development is not limited to in the Ashford town centre given the opportunity of national and local importance offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response.

Representation 4

Section/Paragraph: Options considered  
Preferred Option: 4  
Page Number: 22,23

Imperial College comments:

**Preferred Option 4 – Ashford urban area**

We endorse the recognition that “there may be instances where proposals are of such importance that the Council is willing to consider approving them in advance of the full LDF framework being in place and finally adopted, and that there is an established route for doing this by advertising such proposals as formal departures from the adopted Plan alerting the Secretary of State to call in such schemes if he/she chooses.”

We consider the opportunity offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response being a proposal that is of such importance both locally and nationally that a formal departure from the adopted Plan is an altogether appropriate course of action.

### Representation 5

Section/Paragraph: 2.4 and Options considered

Preferred Option: 5

Page Number: 23,24,25

Imperial College comments:

#### **Preferred Option 5 – The Growth areas around**

We are in agreement that there is a need for growth areas around Ashford and that “there is inevitability that there would be a considerable green field requirement”. We also recognise the need for growth areas to:

- be of a size to have good prospects of creating a sustainable balance of homes, jobs and local services and the quality of place and living that comes with that
- anchor the public transport system
- include space for green areas and a range of local facilities within the development area
- provide appropriate infrastructure in line with the development and not lagging behind
- have quality as a pre-requisite of the development

We also endorse the fact that the Council recognises the “possible implications in future if the permission is implemented on land not in the final LDF proposals for the area”.

In this context we consider some enabling development will be required to deliver the opportunity offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response as a proposal that is of such importance both locally and nationally that could form a new growth area outside those identified in the GADF.

### Representation 6

Section/Paragraph: 2.5 and summary table

Preferred Option: 6

Page Number: 26, 27, 28, 29

Imperial College comments

We endorse the fact that the Council recognises the importance of Imperial College’s presence at Wye, *“In Wye it is crucial that the higher education, related research and business presence remains – both to help support a thriving, mixed local community but also as an important part of Ashford’s wider academic and business offer. Work on generating the jobs needed to support Ashford’s Future has repeatedly highlighted the importance of improved further and high education. This can improve local skills, create a skilled workforce for incoming investors and generate spin-off businesses arising from local research and development. Although it is clear that funding the*

*current agricultural science based facility at Wye is problematic, it is crucial that a strong link to this world-class academic institution remains in the Borough with a major Imperial College presence at Wye.”*

We are in support of the fact that Wye could be an area within the Borough suitable for housing development to “help maintain local jobs and services and reduce social exclusion that can be a feature of more remote communities”. In addition we support the fact that “there will be significant demand (and need) for some new development in the rest of the Borough”.

We consider the opportunity offered by Imperial College described in the Notes to this response being a proposal that allows Imperial College to retain a major presence at Wye, and is of such importance both locally and nationally that it should not be considered behind Tenterden but should be considered in the light of the full potential it can provide.

## NOTES

Imperial College London understands that the Ashford Future Board commissioned research to examine how the Borough can achieve its economic development targets and create 28,000 new jobs. This research clearly recognised the crucial importance of higher education to the Borough’s future and its associated research and business activity. There is therefore great potential in a vision for the Ashford area in which it is home to a world leading university.

Imperial College London has an important presence in the Borough through its campus in Wye, a place of learning since 1447. Imperial is one of the world’s top universities, ranked 14th by the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in its 2004 world university league table, and the quality of its teaching and research is repeatedly judged to be internationally excellent. Its staff and students have won the Nobel Prize 14 times, and the College has received the Queens’ Anniversary Prize three times.

Imperial understands that Ashford wishes to maintain and enhance Imperial’s presence within the area and that the Borough is keen to work in partnership with Imperial to explore ways in which the strengths of Imperial’s reputation and scientific leadership can be mutually developed.

Imperial believes that the best way that it can assist in the strategy for Ashford’s Future is to maintain a presence in Wye that is of a scale and quality commensurate with Imperial’s standing and reputation in the scientific world.

The potential exists to grow specific key research themes at Wye to create a truly world class science-based environment. This would enhance the existing campus to provide a facility of a scale rivalling the best in the world and create an academic, business and residential community of the highest quality. The combination of a world-class research facility and adjacent science park could act as a major catalyst in bringing global employers to the Ashford area and could help to deliver many of Ashford’s jobs at a highly skilled level.

Imperial believes that the creation of a facility of this international scientific standing can only be achieved by working during the coming months and years in close partnership with Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, the local community and central government. To fulfil its potential, substantial government funding would be necessary alongside an acceptable scale of enabling development to help bridge any funding gap.

A considerable amount of further work is needed to develop this vision and shape it with partners and the local community. Imperial College London would wish to see the potential of this vision recognised in the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework and a more detailed approach taken in a later Development Plan Document when the proposal is further advanced. Specifically for the reasons given, it is our representation that there should be an area action plan for the Wye area of the Borough.