



Awards for Planning Excellence Finalist

International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP)

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The RTPI North East Awards for Planning Excellence 2020

Summary

Rapid planning submissions and close working with the Local Planning Authority enabled the approval and construction of three bespoke manufacturing units to tight occupier deadlines.

IAMP, a regionally and nationally important project, will deliver 392,000sqm (4.2 million sqft) of industrial floorspace for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses and create around 7,850 jobs.

Splitting part of the site from the declared Development Consent Order boundary, enabled planning applications to be fast-tracked and three manufacturing units to be built to tight timescales, meeting an urgent requirement from Nissan for a locally based supply chain to increase production efficiency.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, one building has been rapidly adapted and fitted out as a regional Nightingale hospital.

Responsive, flexible and adaptable planning has been critical throughout.

1. Background

Outline the background to the project:

- Context and Timeline (including phase in projects, eg. In recognition that some planning work may have been done earlier

IAMP is one of the largest live commercial schemes in the country, spanning 150 hectares, and is expected to deliver up to 392,000sqm (4.2m sqft) of floorspace, creating approximately 7,850 jobs on-site and over £400m of private sector investment over the next 10-15 years. It will provide a bespoke, world-class environment for advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses across a range of industries. Its delivery is through a joint venture partnership between Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council (IAMP LLP) with its developer partner HBD.

The main development area was removed from the Green Belt through the IAMP Area Action Plan in 2017, with 110ha of land as an ecological and landscape mitigation area (ELMA). The IAMP was designated by the Secretary of State as a project of national significance, meaning that it must be implemented by a Development Consent Order (DCO).

However, in light of urgent requirements from Nissan for a locally based supply chain to improve production efficiencies and competitiveness, part of the site (known as IAMP ONE) was removed from the DCO boundary. The larger part of the site (IAMP TWO) remains nationally significant and is being progressed via a DCO.

Given the urgent requirement for premises, the design team and Local Planning Authority (LPA) worked closely together to deliver a hybrid planning permission for IAMP ONE (in May 2018) within 8 months of the team's appointment). The application was for 158,560sqm of floorspace (around 1.7m sq ft) and included full details for the first unit and the infrastructure works, with the rest of the site in outline. To ensure a balance between development and the protection / enhancement of the natural environment, IAMP ONE includes a 43.6ha ELMA.

The second phase of IAMP ONE (known as IAMP ONE Phase 2) was submitted in March 2020 and granted permission in June 2020.

The current situation is:

- Three bespoke manufacturing buildings have been completed, with two being occupied by Nissan's suppliers (SNOP and Faltec);
- One building, which is to be occupied by the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (CESAM), has been fitted out as a Nightingale hospital, in response to Covid-19;
- Site-wide infrastructure (drainage / highway) works will be complete in July 2020; and
- Seeding, planting and hedgerow restoration of the ELMA has taken place and its maintenance / management is ongoing.

Key dates are:

- Lichfields appointment – September 2017;
- IAMP ONE hybrid application submission (full EIA) – January 2018;
- Permission granted – May 2018;
- Commencement of development following discharge of relevant conditions – June 2018;
- Reserved matters submissions for two units – February 2019;
- Approval of reserved matters applications – April and May 2019;
- Completion of units / fit out- February 2020
- IAMP ONE Phase two outline application submission – March 2020; and
- Permission granted – June 2020

Excellent team working and problem solving working skills from all the planners involved and the wider team was essential for delivering this successful project.

2. Outcomes

Outline what positive impacts the project has provided for:

- the local community
- the economy
- the environment

The IAMP is delivering significant positive impacts from a social, economic and environmental perspective.

Local Community

IAMP ONE will create an attractive and pleasant working environment. Informed through a strict Design Code and Health Impact Assessment, it includes the creation of a 7.3ha central landscaped area with ponds and integrated pedestrian / cycle network.

Vehicular access along an existing road has been closed and a landscaped route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders created linking into the wider public rights of way network.

The overall IAMP project will include a community Hub, with uses that could include small-scale retail units, hotel, gym, education and training facilities, managed workspace for micro and start-up businesses, as well as child-care facilities. The Hub sits adjacent to retained local community facilities such as NELSAM and Air Cadets which will realise positive benefits from the development of IAMP.

CESAM, a hugely important building, was designed with flexibility at its core. This

flexibility was tested as the Covid-19 pandemic deepened and NHS and military planners began seeking a location for a Nightingale Hospital to serve the North East. Amid soaring infection rates and rising fears that hospitals would be unable to cope with the influx of Covid-19 patients, the Council and HBD were asked to accelerate completion of the building, allowing a speedy handover to the NHS.

Economy

IAMP ONE will deliver significant economic benefits to the Region and will contribute to the long-term economic success of North East England including:

- Creation of 3,100 jobs;
- £189m of additional economic output per year annum (measured as GVA); and
- Approx. £4m in business rate payments per year annum once completed and occupied and a total of £77.5m over an initial 25 year period.

The development is an important catalyst in the delivery of the Northern Powerhouse agenda and supported by the LEP. It is critical in providing large development plots to meet an urgent requirement from Nissan for a locally based supply chain.

CESAM is much more than just a building - it will look at developing competitive sustainable manufacturing as a catalyst for future growth and expansion in the region. Its Innovation Centre will help businesses to embrace and adopt manufacturing innovation.

Environment

The interface with the environment is an essential component of IAMP ONE. The direct landscape / ecological proposals include 7.3ha of soft landscaping and 2.5ha of aquatic habitat within the IAMP ONE site, plus 43.6ha of land for ecological and landscape mitigation, including species-rich grassland, new / restored hedgerows, skylark habitat, conservation grazing pastures, marshy grassland and wetland habitats within the ELMA. The ecological and landscape strategy was carefully designed to reflect the site-specific wildlife / habitats, with landscaping buffers designed and located to help reduce the visual impact. The mitigation will ensure that biodiversity net gain is achieved.

Seeding, planting and hedgerow restoration has taken place and long-term maintenance / management is secured through a Habitat Management Plan. Extensive landscaping has seen 908 new trees planted to date.

3. Planning contribution

The project has benefitted from the involvement of a planner or planners:

- providing strong and effective leadership and vision
- working in partnership with others
- managing implementation and delivery

Leadership and Vision

Lichfields has provided strategic advice and worked closely with the design team to ensure tight timescales were achieved when preparing the various applications and EIA submission. From the outset, a strong working relationship was established between all parties. This has been central to the successful and rapid delivery of this project.

Key tasks have included:

- chairing weekly conference calls and design team meetings – through this process team activities are monitored to ensure that key targets remain on track or necessary actions are identified;
- preparing project programmes to set realistic deadlines and to reflect critical paths and interdependencies;
- providing advice / guidance to the technical advisors; and
- overseeing the EIA work and providing advice on strategy and assessment work.

Partnership Working

From the outset, early and comprehensive discussions, as well as partnerships working with the LPA, has been critical in ensuring successful applications and timely decisions.

In addition to the weekly calls and regular meetings, the following took place:

- liaison with HBD to ensure their detailed design requirements were incorporated into the project, thus ensuring deliverable outcomes;
- attendance at IAMP LLP Board at key stages to help disseminate key information or to agree strategies; and
- close working with local authority specialists, consultees / stakeholders to help deliver solutions in a timely fashion, including with Highways England, Environment Agency, Nexus, and Public Transport providers.

A unique Highways Operational Management Plan was agreed with Highways England and the local authorities which manages shift change patterns in IAMP to off-set from those of Nissan, to avoid harmful impacts on the A19.

Through working with the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority, the approved sustainable urban drainage scheme solves an existing flooding problem on a Class A road.

Following a new requirement of Sunderland City Council to undertake Health Impact Assessments (HIA), workshops took place with representatives from the Public Health Department, Health Trusts, Planning Department and Northumbria Police to scope the assessment, and agree format and content. This was the first HIA to be submitted to Sunderland to comply with emerging policy and partnership working was essential to deliver a comprehensive HIA.

Managing Implementation and Delivery

All planners, from the project team and LPA, worked closely together to ensure the rapid preparation and determination of applications and discharge of conditions. This enabled construction work to proceed to meet contractor / occupier requirements. Work included securing permission for IAMP ONE within 8 months of appointment and a rapid turn-around for the two reserved matters application, with one being prepared within two weeks of appointment and them being determined within 6 and 11 weeks of submission.

As the site mobilisation work for the infrastructure works needed to commence in June 2018 (following a May 2018 decision), swift submissions were made and the LPA worked closely with consultees to gain their responses and discharge the conditions.

4. Sustainable development

Please outline how the project has supported:

- positive short, medium and long term public benefit
- a balance of economic, social and environmental objectives

- the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Achieving sustainable development is a central objective of IAMP. It will deliver excellent benefits, ranging from the short to the long-term, across the three sustainability objectives.

Most important ecological benefits will be delivered. The proposals include the delivery of 43.6ha of land as an ecological and landscape mitigation area (ELMA), including species-rich grassland, new / restored hedgerows, skylark habitat, conservation grazing pastures, marshy grassland and wetland habitats. A further 7.3ha of soft landscaping and 2.5ha of aquatic habitat are provided within the development area.

The 7.3ha landscaped area within the site will include an integrated pedestrian / cycle network which will provide a valuable recreational resource. Consideration was given to creating a network of routes across the ELMA. However, given the importance of this area for farmland birds, it was agreed not to open up this area to the public.

Part of the development and an existing Class A road (situated beyond the site boundary) were at risk of river flooding and lay within flood zones 2 and 3. Working closely with the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority, a 4.9ha flood compensation area has been delivered with three attenuation basins. This solves the problem of the existing road flooding, whilst also providing mitigation for the development.

Enhanced bus infrastructure will be delivered, with the feasibility of demand-led bus services being investigated by Nexus for IAMP ONE.

Immediate public benefits include the completion of the three bespoke buildings, providing 57,903sqm of floorspace, to support Nissan and the automotive / advanced manufacturing sectors. Additional industrial floorspace (98,937sqm) will be delivered from the short to the long-term which will further support the local and regional economy. It is anticipated that IAMP ONE will deliver around 3,100 jobs (whilst IAMP as a whole will deliver around 7,850 jobs).

A decision was made for CESAM which had not yet occupied their building, to adapt and fit out as a Nightingale Hospital at a time of national crisis given Covid-19. This resource is a most significant social benefit and its strategic location and accessibility was critical in meeting NHS requirements for the immediate term.

The CESAM building will contain workshops and an innovation centre providing education and training facilities, for up to 243 students. This will provide an excellent opportunity for 'engineers of the future' where they can learn the necessary specialist skills and gain the training required by industry.

In addition to the skilled jobs, the development will be accessible and genuinely attainable for local residents. A wide variety of roles will be provided, offering the potential for training and job progression. Access to employment provides people with the financial capabilities to further social wellbeing, improving quality of life and supporting the communities. Each occupier will deliver a Training and Employment Plan (TEMP).

The development performs well against the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the following: 'quality education', 'decent work and economic growth', 'industry, innovation and infrastructure', 'reduced inequalities', 'sustainable cities and communities', 'life below water' and 'life on land'.

5. Community benefit

Please outline how the project has provided:

- positive and constructive engagement and dialogue with local people and businesses

- a better quality of life for people, especially for disadvantaged communities
- tangible benefits for communities such as facilities, infrastructure, jobs, training etc

Positive and Constructive Engagement

IAMP LLP is committed to positive engagement and having meaningful dialogue with local people and businesses. Engagement commenced in 2015 on the IAMP Area Action Plan. Informal consultation was undertaken on the DCO in 2016/2017, whilst formal / statutory DCO consultation took place in 2019. This included a distribution of 20,000 leaflets. In each case, consultation took place through a series of public exhibitions and meetings in accessible locations. The LLP has a dedicated website which hosts important information on IAMP which is regularly updated.

For the IAMP ONE application, engagement with the local community was via a public exhibition in 2017 and also through notification via the website. Through this ongoing engagement, the development has been generally welcomed by local businesses and residents, with a handful of responses being submitted.

The occupiers of a farm located within IAMP had concerns about the proposed relocation of their access road, which ran through IAMP ONE, particularly in relation to accessibility by horse boxes. A series of meetings were held, various options were discussed, and a satisfactory access was agreed. Meetings also took place to explain the legal order and how their new road would be implemented with least disruption.

Some local residents raised concern about the closure of part of Follingsby Lane / Downhill Lane to motorised vehicles (except buses) as this could restrict access to their properties. A series of meetings took place to discuss alternative approaches, and a revised solution has now been proposed to address these concerns.

The IAMP LLP has a close working relationship with Nissan, who have been kept regularly up-to-date with the project. They submitted a letter of support in response to the application.

Quality of Life, Especially for Deprived Communities

The IAMP LLP recognises that the quality of life is very important and commissioned a Health Impact Assessment to identify and assess the potential effects of the development on the health of the population.

IAMP ONE is not located in an area of deprivation, given its agricultural / industrial context. However, the surrounding area lies within the top 20% deprived areas in England.

IAMP ONE will have a positive impact on the quality of life through:

- Enhanced green infrastructure corridors and well-considered access routes which will encourage physical activity;
- Local work experience, apprenticeships and training opportunities during the construction and operational phases which will increase access to employment, open-up job opportunities and will enhance the local skills base; and
- CESAM's learning space / training facilities will provide a first-class education resource for around 240 students.

Tangible Benefits

The local work experience, apprenticeships and learning opportunities directly provided by IAMP ONE, together with the new green infrastructure will provide tangible benefits for the community.

Furthermore, the development agreement between the IAMP LLP and HBD includes a number of employment / training related measures including that the equality of opportunity for employment is provided to women, persons of ethnic minority communities and people who are registered as having a disability.

6. Leading practice

Please outline how the project:

- is creative and innovative
- is an exemplar that is transferable across the UK
- promotes equality and diversity

A unique interactive planning process has led to the successful delivery of IAMP ONE to very tight timescales. This was the only way to meet the urgent requirement from Nissan for a locally based supply chain to improve production efficiencies and competitiveness.

The original intention was to deliver IAMP through the DCO process as a project of national significance. However, the tight turnaround could not be achieved through the DCO route and by agreement IAMP ONE was removed from the DCO and fast-tracked through the planning application process. This was a creative planning solution to address this urgent requirement. Close working with the client, project team, the Local Planning Authority and key consultees was essential, together with efficient project management from the planning perspective.

To ensure a comprehensive approach and to demonstrate that the early delivery of IAMP ONE would not prejudice the wider IAMP TWO DCO, a Design Code, including an overall indicative masterplan for IAMP, was submitted with the IAMP ONE application. This covered the delivery of key infrastructure (in relation to pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles, buses and sustainable drainage systems), as well as the delivery and phasing of up front ecological and landscape mitigation. The Design Code sets high design standards for future development across IAMP, with buildings needing to be of a high quality, robust and sustainable design; that are energy efficient and cost-effective to run; a layout that creates a sense of place and has a strong, positive and unique identity; all set within a strong landscape framework, that provides green spaces for recreational use; whilst ensuring that species / habitats are protected and enhanced and that the ELMA is delivered and appropriately managed / maintained in the long-term.

Further creativity has been demonstrated through the adaptability and flexibility of the CESAM building through its conversion to a Nightingale Hospital to serve the North East by NHS and military planners when the Covid-19 pandemic deepened. Amid soaring infection rates and rising fears that hospitals would be unable to cope with the influx of Covid-19 patients, the Council and HBD were asked to accelerate completion and handover of the building to the NHS.

The development agreement between the IAMP LLP and HBD is an exemplar in the promotion of equality and diversity. It includes a number of measures that seek to make employment opportunities available to those who are unemployed, those who are aged 16-18 and are unemployed, those who are seeking apprenticeships or those who are seeking work experience in the City of Sunderland and South Tyneside. This will provide employment opportunities (including skills and training) to unemployed or new entrants to the construction industry. The agreement also requires that equality of opportunity for employment is provided to women, persons of ethnic minority communities and people who are registered as having a disability.

Regional Significance

- Importance of the project for the North East of England

IAMP is one of the largest schemes in the country, creating around 7,850 new jobs over the next 10-15 years. This development is already taking shape with the completion of three bespoke manufacturing buildings totalling 57,903sqm. This represents over a third of the available space within IAMP ONE.

IAMP provides a bespoke, world-class environment for advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses. It is about delivering the space and ecosystem to enable businesses to accelerate growth, with purpose-built buildings, an interconnected supply chain and a power infrastructure capable of 55MVA. Sponsored through the Sunderland/ South Tyneside City Deal and with early infrastructure supported by the North East LEP it is a key component of the growing North East manufacturing base and the creative hub for advanced manufacturing.

As a net exporter, the North East's advanced manufacturing and engineering sector has huge potential for growth - its connectivity and local skills base have not gone unnoticed by companies outside the UK

Indeed, the IAMP is playing a vital role in providing suitable land to facilitate the expansion of the existing UK and North East automotive manufacturing hub, leveraging in private sector investment and supporting economic growth. The automotive sector is a key economic component of the UK economy, particularly the export market, and global companies, such as Nissan, have made commitments to retain investment within the UK. That can be evidenced by the automotive sector investment that is currently taking place at IAMP ONE.

The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (CESAM) is a major component of the IAMP. A hugely important building for education and hands-on training, CESAM was designed with flexibility at its core, able to adapt to a multitude of uses and comprising both high-spec warehousing and learning space. Both the quality of the build and its flexibility was tested as the Covid-19 pandemic deepened, and NHS and military planners secured CESAM for a Nightingale Hospital to serve the North East.

Post-Covid-19, CESAM will provide research, development and training facilities for advanced manufacturing companies across the North East, fostering world-class innovation and learning. It will provide space and expertise for manufactures where they can improve processes and efficiencies. It will also specifically tackle difficulties associated with introducing digital and manufacturing innovations across multiple supply chains and markets, working with businesses to scale-up, test, trial and prove technologies to industrial standard.

CESAM will be key to driving crucial inward investment, its capacity to attract international businesses to IAMP facilitating new connections and partnerships in advanced manufacturing. CESAM is much more than just a building - it will have a direct economic impact, providing youth training opportunities, addressing the skills shortfall in this sector and enhancing the region's capacity to innovate, with a positive knock-on effect for the rest of the UK.

Overall the IAMP will deliver a regionally and nationally important location for advanced manufacturing and Europe-scale chain industries set within an attractive working environment. Post Brexit, its role will become even more significant to the regional economy.