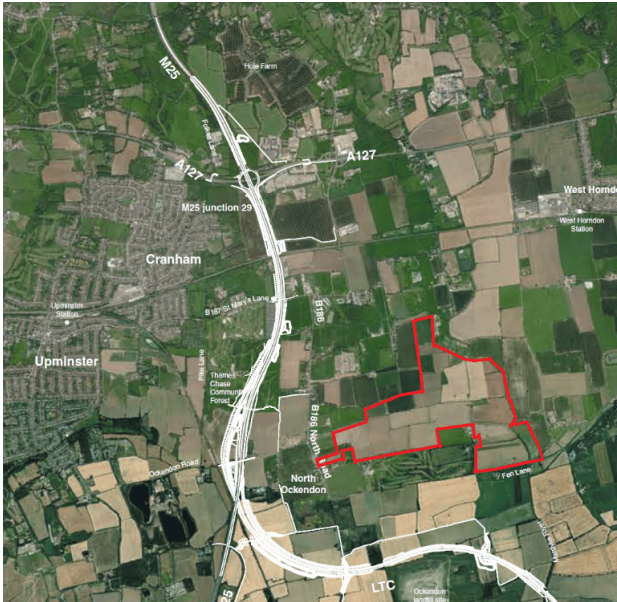


Cabinet endorse East Havering £5.3bn datacentre opportunity

3 years ago



Havering Council's Cabinet has agreed to move forward with the £5.3bn East Havering project, which will bring Europe's largest datacentre to the borough, delivering a major piece of national infrastructure.

At the meeting at Havering Town Hall last night (Wednesday 9 November) the Cabinet agreed for Council officers and their prospective partner, Digital Reef, to continue to develop the proposals to bring forward the East Havering site.

This decision means the Council in its capacity as Local Planning Authority can begin to take a view on the appropriate planning route for this project.

The project proposals include:

- building Europe's largest datacentre on a site of 499 acres
- supporting innovation in zero carbon energy, digital infrastructure and the monitoring of agricultural and other land use activity to improve the sustainability of the planet
- making Havering a world-leading centre for the development of green technology
- generating an estimated 2,370 permanent high value jobs for local people, a substantial skills legacy and wider economic benefits for years to come, amounting to a £694 million contribution to Havering's GDP during construction and an ongoing annual contribution of £456million during operation
- creating an ecology park and community forest across up to 300 acres of the site, contributing to the datacentre's carbon neutral strategy, and providing an open space for all to enjoy
- enhancing the biodiversity in the newly created habitats and attenuating storm water to help

alleviate flooding risks elsewhere.

The University of Leicester, who are working in partnership with Digital Reef, will conduct research on vertical farming, potentially creating low carbon food production that equates to 1000 acres of farmland production but uses only around 15 acres. This is a potential national trial to deliver greater food security to the United Kingdom, and therefore has much broader national significance and will compensate for any loss of some farmland at the site.

It is also an opportunity for the UK to both lead and collaborate globally in carbon-offsetting and greenhouse gas reduction incentives.

Councillor Graham Williamson, Lead Member for Development and Regeneration, said:

“This is a nationally significant project that will help to drive data security, energy and food security for the UK for decades to come.

“Although we will be using a small amount of greenbelt, this development represents substantial economic and skills opportunities for the borough. Currently this land is not accessible to the public, and this project will enhance the biodiversity of the area for residents to enjoy.

“It also has the potential to provide a boost to much-needed Council finances from new business rates payments, new jobs for Havering residents, developing training and skills, as well as opening up to 300 acres as a new ecology park for everyone to enjoy. All of which are opportunities for the borough and our residents, as well as the UK as a whole, that are frankly too good to pass up.”

Piers Slater, Co-founder of Digital Reef, said:

“We are extremely excited to be launching a project of this magnitude and ambition in the London Borough of Havering. This landmark project strengthens the UK’s digital, energy and food resilience whilst bringing significant inward investment and taking Havering on a pathway to net zero through the Zero Carbon Initiative.

“We are delighted that the project will deliver tangible benefits to the people of Havering through the creation of high value jobs, digital skills programmes, and the provision of publicly accessible, and ecologically rich, open green space. Through the Zero Carbon Initiative the London Borough of Havering will be the testbed for pioneering research and innovation driving the realisation of a Zero Carbon future for all. The project will also play a critical role in supporting the growing data and digital economy, with the economic growth generated resonating across the UK providing the platform for the government to deliver their Digital Strategy 2022 whilst cementing the country’s position as a ‘Global Science and Tech Superpower’.”

The news follows the publication of the United Kingdom prosperity index for 2022 by the [Legatum Institute](#), which ranks Havering as 14th in the top 380 local authorities for investment environments.