

Chapter One ♦ Introduction

OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This document is the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) for the London Resort ('the Resort' or 'the Proposed Development'). The report has been compiled by Savills with inputs from technical consultants identified later in this chapter, on behalf of London Resort Company Holdings Limited ('LRCH' or 'the Applicant').
- 1.2 The Resort will be a nationally significant visitor attraction and leisure resort, built largely on brownfield land at Swanscombe Peninsula in Kent on the south bank of the River Thames and with supporting transport and visitor reception facilities on the northern side of the river in Essex.
- 1.3 A detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided in chapter five of this report. The focus of the Resort will be a Leisure Core, comprising a range of events spaces, themed rides and attractions, entertainment venues, theatres and cinemas, developed in landscaped settings in two phases known as Gate One and Gate Two. The Gates will have entrance plazas leading to The Market which will offer ancillary retail, dining and entertainment facilities. The Resort will also include hotels, a water park connected to one of the hotels, a conference and convention centre (known as a 'conferention centre'), an e-Sports venue, creative spaces, a transport interchange including car parking, 'back of house' service buildings, an energy centre and utilities required to operate the Resort.
- 1.4 Substantial improvements are proposed to transport infrastructure. This will include a dedicated transport link between Ebbsfleet International Station, the Resort and a passenger ferry terminal beyond (serving visitors arriving by ferry on the River Thames from central London and Tilbury); a new direct road connection from the A2(T) and a coach station. On the northern side of the Thames to the east of the Port of Tilbury, additional coach and car parking and a passenger ferry terminal are proposed to serve the Resort.
- 1.5 The Proposed Development will involve an extensive restoration of land used in the past for mineral extraction, waste disposal and industrial activities including cement and paper production, with a comprehensive landscape strategy proposed, incorporating wildlife habitats.
- 1.6 The locations of the Proposed Development are shown in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. The Kent Project Site on the Swanscombe Peninsula and its transport connections to the south extend across the border between the boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham in Kent, and has a frontage on the River Thames. The Kent Project Site has an area of approximately 465 hectares (ha). The supporting transport and visitor facilities at Tilbury, in the unitary borough of Thurrock in Essex, would occupy a further 29.9 ha of land, giving a total Project Site area of 494.9 ha.

PROJECT STATUS

- 1.7 On 9 May 2014 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government issued a Section 35 Direction confirming that the London Paramount Entertainment Resort qualifies as a nationally significant business or commercial project for which development consent is required under the Planning Act 2008. LRCH must thus apply to the Secretary of State for a Development Consent Order (DCO), and has confirmed that EIA will be undertaken to help inform the Secretary of State's decision on this application.
- 1.8 Since then the Applicant has undertaken considerable site and environmental survey work. Four rounds of public consultation have taken place including a round of statutory consultation in 2015. Progress has also been made in securing land and signing agreements with intellectual property (IP) providers with a global profile to ensure that the rides, shows and attractions offered by the London Resort have genuine international appeal. Concurrently, extensive work has been undertaken on the testing of development layout options to enable the refinement of a master plan for the Resort.
- 1.9 LRCH intends that the DCO application for the London Resort will be founded on a workable master plan with a proven business case, informed by a thorough assessment of the development's environmental, social and economic effects, and which can be delivered once a DCO is made without the need for amendment.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND THE 'ROCHDALE ENVELOPE'

- 1.10 Environmental impact assessment is a process that aims to improve the environmental design of a development proposal and provide decision-makers with sufficient information about the significant environmental effects of implementing a project.
- 1.11 The results of the EIA process are set out in an environmental statement (ES). Where required, an ES is normally submitted with an application for planning permission or development consent, and provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development, its predicted environmental impacts and the measures proposed to eliminate or reduce any significant adverse effects.
- 1.12 For projects requiring development consent under the Planning Act 2008 and for which EIA is required, the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations 2017') are applicable. These regulations set out the procedural requirements for undertaking an EIA.

The Rochdale Envelope

- 1.13 For practical reasons LRCH wishes to maintain flexibility about the detailed design of elements of the project, including the content of Gates One and Two. At the same time, the developer acknowledges the essential need to provide sufficient information about

the project to inform the EIA and, if required, the assessment of trans-boundary effects and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (see chapter six below). To these ends, the EIA will be undertaken in accordance with what are known as ‘Rochdale Envelope’ principles.

1.14 These principles are explained in Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Nine: *Using the ‘Rochdale Envelope’* (version 3, July 2018). They arose from three court cases concerning outline planning applications for development requiring EIA. Based on the third of these judgements (R. v Rochdale MBC *ex parte* Milne (no. 2), 2000), paragraph 2.4 of the PINS Advice Note sets out the following ‘key principles’ that should be taken into account in the context of the DCO process:

- *the DCO application documents should explain the need for and the timescales associated with the flexibility sought and this should be established within clearly defined parameters;*
- *the clearly defined parameters established for the Proposed Development must be sufficiently detailed to enable a proper assessment of the likely significant environmental effects and to allow for the identification of necessary mitigation, if necessary within a range of possibilities;*
- *the assessments in the ES should be consistent with the clearly defined parameters and ensure a robust assessment of the likely significant effects;*
- *the DCO must not permit the Proposed Development to extend beyond the ‘clearly defined parameters’ which have been requested and assessed. The Secretary of State may choose to impose requirements to ensure that the Proposed Development is constrained in this way;*
- *the more detailed the DCO application is, the easier it will be to ensure compliance with the Regulations.*

1.15 Paragraph 2.5 of Advice Note 9 adds that:

It is ultimately for the decision maker to determine what degree of flexibility can be permitted in the particular case having regard to the specific facts of an application. The Applicant should ensure they have assessed the range of possible effects implicit in the flexibility provided by the DCO. In some cases, this may well prove difficult.

1.16 LRCH acknowledges that there might be elements of its scheme that will require detailed design in order for the environmental effects and any safeguarding mitigation to be understood. At the same time there will be other parts of the project for which flexibility will be sought in the DCO application, and for which the EIA will employ Rochdale parameters. This will be the case for development inside Gates One and Two at the heart of the Resort. From time to time LRCH will need to replace rides and attractions in keeping with changing customer tastes and expectations.

- 1.17 The Applicant will ensure that design details in which there might be continuing public interest will be the subject of safeguarding DCO 'Requirements' - similar to the planning conditions that attach to a conventional planning permission - so that such details can be submitted for approval to the relevant planning authority at a local level, once the DCO is made.

EIA SCOPING

- 1.18 LRCH applied originally to the Secretary of State for an opinion on the scope of the London Resort EIA in November 2014¹. The Secretary of State's Scoping Opinion followed in December 2014². LRCH's project team took the Scoping Opinion 2014 into account in subsequent assessment work but over time there have been various changes in circumstances that have led LRCH, in consultation with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), to conclude that the EIA scoping opinion issued in 2014 should be refreshed. These included the following.

- **Project evolution** – the proposals have evolved considerably since 2014 and now include land at the Port of Tilbury that was not taken into account in the original scoping report and opinion.
- **Regulations** - the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 introduced additional requirements for the EIA process, including provisions for the consideration of alternatives, human health, climate change and the risks of major accidents and disasters.
- **Changed circumstances** - the local environmental baseline has evolved considerably since 2014, with substantial new development taking place through the Ebbsfleet Garden City initiative and other infrastructure projects coming forward, including the Tilbury2 port expansion, a DCO for which was made in February 2019, and Highways England's proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing, a DCO application for which will be submitted later in 2020.

¹ LRCH's 2014 EIA Scoping Report can be viewed here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/BC080001/BC080001-000072-EIA%20Scoping%20Report.pdf>

² The Secretary of State's 2014 EIA Scoping Opinion can be viewed here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/BC080001/BC080001-000064-Scoping%20Opinion%20Report.pdf>

- 1.19 A revised EIA Scoping Report was submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2020³. This Scoping Report took into account the Secretary of State's 2014 scoping opinion for the project and consultation feedback provided then and since by consultees including local authorities, statutory agencies, affected communities and other interests. The Scoping Report also considered the revised site area, taking into account the Essex Project Site in addition to the previously considered Kent Project Site. The Secretary of State's updated Scoping Opinion is expected to be published at the end of July 2020.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.20 The 2008 Act requires public consultation to be undertaken by an applicant before a DCO application is made. As part of its pre-application consultation duties, LRCH published a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), setting out how the local community will be consulted about the Proposed Development.
- 1.21 In July 2020, LRCH commenced a statutory public consultation in accordance with sections 42, 47 and 48 of the 2008 Act. This PEIR has been prepared in support of this process. According to paragraph 41 of government guidance entitled '*Planning Act 2008, guidance on pre-application process*' (Department of Communities and Local Government, March 2015) paragraph 93), the preliminary environmental information prepared by a DCO applicant should provide:

'...sufficient preliminary environmental information to enable consultees to develop an informed view of the project. The information required may be different for different types and sizes of projects. It may also vary depending on the audience of a particular consultation...The key issue is that the information presented must provide clarity to all consultees.'

- 1.22 It is important to note that the information provided in this PEIR is, as the title suggests, 'preliminary'. LRCH is actively seeking comment from consultees on the PEIR, with the opportunity for both the EIA and project design to take into consideration any comments received through this consultation before a DCO application is made. The PEIR also assists consultees to understand the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development and to inform the context of consultation.

³ LRCH's 2020 EIA Scoping Report can be viewed here:

Main report: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/BC080001/BC080001-000225-LNRS%20-%20Scoping%20Report%20part%201.pdf>

Appendices: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/BC080001/BC080001-000229-London%20Resort%20Part%202%20Redacted%20-%20reduced%20file%20size.pdf>

1.23 In preparing this PEIR, regard has been had to advice and good practice guidance such as:

- Planning Inspectorate ('PINS') Advice Note Three: *EIA consultation and notification* (August 2017, version 7);
- PINS Advice Note Seven: *Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary environmental information, Screening and Scoping* (June 2020, version 7);
- PINS Advice Note Nine: *Rochdale Envelope* (July 2018, version 3);
- Guidance relevant to specific environmental topics, as described in each topic section of this PEIR.

THE APPLICANT AND PROJECT TEAM

London Resort Company Holdings

1.24 LRCH is a UK-registered company established specifically to promote the current project. It is led by a management team with considerable experience of delivering and operating some of the world's largest leisure, sports and entertainment developments, and is supported by international investors. LRCH has entered into licence agreements with UK and international film and television studios and is working closely with these partners to develop high quality and innovative themed attractions in the resort.

The project team

1.25 According to Regulation 14(4) of the EIA Regulations 2017:

(4) In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the environmental statement—

(a) the applicant must ensure that the environmental statement is prepared by competent experts; and

(b) the environmental statement must be accompanied by a statement from the applicant outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts.

1.26 LRCH's EIA team for the London Resort project comprises the specialist consultants identified in Table 1.1. The professional particulars of the leading individual specialists responsible for the EIA will be appended to the ES submitted with the DCO application.

Table 1.1: EIA project team

Consultant	Responsibility
Savills	Planning consultant and EIA coordinator
BDB Pitmans	Legal adviser
Volterra	Socio-economic effects, human health
WSP	Land and river transport
EDP	Landscape and visual effects, terrestrial and fluvial ecology and biodiversity
Buro Happold	Noise, air quality, noise, water resources and flood risk, soils, hydrology and ground conditions, waste and materials
Wessex Archaeology	Cultural heritage and archaeology

1.27 Contact details for the project are provided at the end of this chapter.

REPORT STRUCTURE

1.28 This PEIR is structured as follows.

- **Chapter two** summarises the legal and regulatory provisions potentially relevant to the assessment of the project's environmental effects.
- **Chapter three** summarises relevant national and local planning policy.
- **Chapter four** provides a summary of the alternative sites and master-planning approaches that LRCH has considered.
- **Chapter five** provides a description of the Project Site and the Proposed Development.
- **Chapter six** outlines the anticipated scope of the EIA and the general methodology, including the consideration that will be given to in-combination, cumulative and transboundary effects.
- **Chapters seven to twenty** describe the emerging assessment of individual environmental topics, including baseline environmental conditions, likely significant environmental effects and the measures being considered to avoid, minimise or

mitigate any adverse effects.

- **Chapter twenty-one** considers in-combination, cumulative and transboundary effects.
- **Chapter twenty-two** provides concluding comments.
- The PEIR is prefaced with a glossary of technical terms. A non-technical summary of the PEIR is also available.

YOUR COMMENTS

- 1.29 LRCH welcomes comment on the potential significant environmental effects of the London Resort project and the EIA methods described in this report. Comment is invited also on any other matters that should be addressed during the EIA and any sources of environmental information that would assist the EIA process.

Online feedback (our preferred method)

Please submit your feedback by completing our online feedback form on our website www.londonresort.info

Feedback by post

Alternatively, you can download the form and send it to FREEPOST: LONDON RESORT CONSULTATION. You do not need a stamp.

Feedback by email

You can also email your feedback to us at info@londonresortcompany.co.uk

The deadline for submitting feedback to the consultation is 11.59 pm on 21 September 2020.

Find out more

You can find out more about this consultation, and view all consultation materials on our website www.londonresort.info. If you have any questions about the consultation, would like to order paper copies of materials or the consultation feedback form, you can contact us by:

Telephone: 0800 470 0043

Email: info@londonresortcompany.co.uk

Post: FREEPOST: LONDON RESORT CONSULTATION

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Webinar events

We are holding a series of webinars throughout the consultation period. Members of the project team will present proposals and will be happy to answer questions. Dates and times of webinars are published on our website. Please follow us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/londonresortcompanyholdings/>) and Twitter @londonresort to stay up to date on our public webinar events.

Telephone surgeries

You can also arrange a time to talk to one of our team. These can be booked via our freephone telephone line, by e-mail or using the webchat facility on our website.