1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Pioneer Park

Pioneer Park is identified within the Mayor’s Economic Action Plan - 2016-2020 as a priority project for Leicester. It is the objective of City Council to see Pioneer Park developed with a mixture of new workspaces for sale and lease that can accommodate innovative knowledge-based technology businesses.

The Pioneer Park is covered by a strategic masterplan which sets out how the area covered by this Brief, and adjoining locations, might be developed to create a coherent specialist business cluster. In addition Leicester is committed to taking forward; work space development, accessibility and public realm projects which fall within the Pioneer Park area.

These include the Dock 1 building, which was partially ERDF funded, opened in autumn 2013 and now accommodates a range of successful and growing knowledge based businesses. Dock 1 provides business support and acts as a hub encouraging the interaction between businesses which helps to develop the benefits of the cluster.

1.2 Opportunity

Leicester City Council now wish to bring forward two sites located on Exploration Drive for new B1 (business) office space with a specific emphasis on the provision of B1 (b) (research and development of products and processes). Development on these sites must be suited to the accommodation requirements of new, growing and established knowledge based businesses. The space provided should be compatible with and supportive of space currently available within the Dock 1 building as well as wider strategic objectives for Pioneer Park.

The two sites are located on Exploration Drive, which connects Abbey Lane (A6) to the National Space Centre. The sites are approximately 1.2 miles from Leicester city centre. The sites are separated from each other by Exploration Drive. The Site A is situated immediately to the north of the successful Dock 1 building and covers an area of approximately 1.008 acres. Site B is located to the west of Dock 1 and covers an area of approximately 2.93 acres. Both sites are roughly level with good access, frontage and visibility.

The Council is now seeking a developer with the skills and experience necessary to bring forward the development of the two sites.

Buildings on both Site A and Site B will need to include units with loading dock access in order to appeal to occupiers that might need to accommodate some light industrial functions. Both site developments will need to be designed in accordance with Leicester City Council planning policy and be compliant to existing standards.

It is anticipated that future Site A building will share telephony and management services with Dock 1 and that there may be scope for a physical connection between the two buildings.

Site B can accommodate multiple buildings each containing a number of operationally independent units (ie each with its own secure access).
1.3 Purpose of the Brief

The Brief aims to explain the opportunity provided by Site A and B by providing details of physical and policy context as well as by setting out Leicester’s aspirations. The Council recognise that the aspirations set out within this brief must be informed by the commercial requirements of the development and occupier markets and therefore could be subject to justified change.
2.0 SITE & CONTEXT

2.1 Regional Context

Pioneer Park is located approximately 1.2 miles (2.5 km) north of Leicester city centre. Leicester Railway Station, located on the edge of the city centre, provides regular services to; London (1 hour and 15 minutes), Birmingham (50 minutes), East Midland Parkway – for East Midlands Airport (30 minutes) and other UK destinations.

Abbey Lane (A6) situated to the west of Pioneer Park heads north out of the city towards Loughborough which is around 10 miles (16 km) away. The M1 motorway is located approximately 4 miles to the west of the site.

Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham and Derby are all within an hour’s drive of Pioneer Park.

The National Space Centre and the Abbey Pumping Station both provide navigational landmarks within this area of the city and combine together to provide a visitor attraction of national importance. Partially as a consequence of the success of the combined attraction car parking within the wider Pioneer Park area is at a premium. Leicester City Council is currently taking forward proposals which will increase parking capacity within the area. Both sites should aim to be self-serving with parking on site where possible.

The two sites together with Dock 1 are located to the south of the National Space Centre and are all accessed from Exploration Drive. The three storey Dock 1 building, now delivered and fully let, is situated on the eastern side of Exploration Drive with the residential properties on Discovery Road to the south and with Site A and the National Space Centre to the north.

The larger Site B is located to the west of Dock 1 on the northern side of Exploration Drive, close to its junction with Abbey Lane and directly opposite the Asda superstore and car park.

The River Soar is located to the east of Pioneer Park beyond which an extensive area of residential led regeneration is currently underway at Wolsey Island. Footpaths and cycle-ways along the western back of the Soar connect Pioneer Park to the city centre to the south and eventually reach open countryside to the north. A pedestrian bridge crosses the Soar to connect Pioneer Park to the Wolsey Island regeneration area to the east.

2.2 Local Context

The two sites covered by this Brief are both accessed from Exploration Drive which links the Abbey Lane (A6) to the National Space Centre together with its associated car parks and Corporation Road beyond.

Immediately to north of the National Space Centre is the Abbey Pumping Station which houses a museum of science and technology.
Exploration Drive
Abbey Lane
Wallingford Rd
River Soar
Exploration Drive
Pioneer Cl
Abbey Park Rd
Parker Dr
Menzies Rd
Blackbird Rd
Corporation Rd
River Soar
CONTEXT MAP

National Space Centre
Abbey Pumping Station
Wallingford Road public realm enhancement
Potential Car Park Expansion
Asda
Site A
Site B
DOCK
Wolsey Chimney
Wolsey Island Regeneration Area
Proposed Space Park
2.0 SITE & CONTEXT

2.3 Site A Description

Overview
The site is prominently situated between the Dock 1 building and the National Space Centre. This is a highly visible and prestigious location at the heart of Pioneer Park.

The northern section of the site is cleared, level and secured with boundary fencing and contains a number of mature trees along its northern, eastern and north-western boundaries. The southern section of the site is currently occupied for the Dock 1 surface car park and service yard.

Development History
A full planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, for a scheme comprising of B1 ‘move-on’ office and production space for Site A in December 2016 (Application No. 20161461).

Technical assessments associated with the above applications can be accessed via the Leicester City Council Planning Portal.

Site Area
The core site covers an area of 1.008 acres. There is the opportunity to extend the site boundary to incorporate the Dock 1 car park. Any development proposals for Site A will need to ensure dedicated Dock 1 car parking capacity is protected as well as providing additional parking for Site A.

Ownership
The site is wholly owned by Leicester City Council.

Flood Risk
The Site A falls within Flood Zone 1 (ie an area least likely to flood).
2.4 Site B Description

Overview
The site helps to define the gateway to Pioneer Park. This is a highly visible site with a long south facing frontage facing Exploration Drive. The site is cleared, level and secured with boundary fencing. The western site boundary includes an indent which accommodates the access road and turning head for the adjacent site.

The Exploration Drive boundary of the site is currently lined with street trees, which should be retained if possible.

Development History
Leicester City Council commissioned a feasibility which explored the development options for Site B which reported in April 2017. This study included a number of capacity and massing studies which were subsequently reviewed against design aspirations for site and the known technical constraints. No planning application for the site has been prepared or submitted.

Site Area
The site covers an area of 2.93 acres. This includes a small area of land highway land which provides access from Exploration Drive to the site.

Ownership
The site is wholly owned by Leicester City Council.

Flood Risk
The Site B falls within Flood Zone 1 (i.e., an area least likely to flood). A Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment (Riverscape Environmental Consultants, February 2018) commissioned by Leicester City Council concludes that the Site B is ‘less vulnerable’ in flood risk terms. A small section of the site may be at risk of surface water flooding which can be mitigated by localised infilling. This risk may be increased in extreme rainfall events. Lifting the development platform slightly would mitigate against this risk.
3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The Leicester Local Development Framework contains a number of policy documents which provide specific guidance and support for the continued development of Pioneer Park (Abbey Meadows Science and Innovation Park). Specific policies can be found in the *City of Leicester Core Strategy 2014* and in the *City of Leicester Local Plan 1996-2006 (saved policies version 2016)* (refer to policy PS08 and E15). In addition comprehensive guidance is provided on the Pioneer Park area within the *Leicester Abbey Meadows Supplementary Planning Document (April 2007)*. Links to these policy documents can be found in the Further Information section of this Brief.

City of Leicester Core Strategy 2014 contains the following:

**CS POLICY 10. Employment Opportunities**

*Science and Innovation Park (Extract)*

*Land will be retained within the Abbey Meadows Science and Innovation Park (Pioneer Park) for research, development and technology based business (Use Class B1b), Innovation Centre Building (Use Class B1 a, b and c); Associated Educational uses (D1) and Associated Research Institutes (No Use Class) which can demonstrate a need either to be located within the park or to be near the National Space Centre. Enterprising Leicester*. 
The Leicester Great City Economic Action Plan (2016-2020) sets out the Mayor economic priorities for the city. The Plan contains five broad inter-connected economic themes. Theme 1, Great Places, contains the following statement:

‘Pioneer Park has been established as a focus for innovation and technology businesses in the city. The award-winning Dock workspace is fully let with growing technology businesses. The development of further business grow on workspace and a new supermarket has also contributed to regeneration in this area. We are working on plans for a National Space Park with the University of Leicester to create a new academic and business hub focused on the potential of the space and space applications sector’.

Theme 4, Enterprising Leicester, contains the following priority Action:

‘Action EL6: Grow the innovation district at Pioneer Park, with Dock 2 (Site A) providing more than 50,000 sq ft of new workspaces for lease and sale to house-growing businesses and to attract new investment’.
5.0 VISION & OBJECTIVES

5.1 Pioneer Park- Ambition

Pioneer Park is located within the Leicestershire Enterprise Zone. The Pioneer Park section of the Leicestershire Enterprise Zone includes the National Space Centre which is at its heart with the Dock sites to the south and the proposed National Space Park to the north.

The Dock 1 building is already home to a diverse range of knowledge based industries and has helped to establish a successful specialist cluster within Pioneer Park which will be consolidated by the provision of new workspace for compatible expanding and established businesses. The delivery of Site A is a priority project (Action EL6) as set out within the Mayor’s Economic Action Plan (2016-2020).

The National Space Park is a collaboration between the University of Leicester, the City of Leicester and the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP) and is an ambitious initiative to develop a global hub and collaborative community based on space and space-enabled technologies.

Leicester City Council is currently reviewing the public realm treatment and car parking provision within Pioneer Park with a view to ensuring that the area as a whole can efficiently serve the operational needs of a growing number of businesses within an attractive physical environment.

5.2 Vision

The vision for the wider area within the Abbey Meadows Supplementary Planning Document (LCC, April 2007) states:

To create a highly attractive and successful Science and Technology Park; attractive residential and working environments and leisure destinations that deliver benefits for existing and future residents of the city; and to generate an essential boost to the economic and social prosperity of the City.

Pioneer Park (identified within the SPD as a Science Park) continues to contribute to the delivery of this vision which remains sound despite the passage of time and various interim masterplanning exercises.

The Strategic Objectives set out below are supportive of the vision and must be considered when developing proposals for Site A and B.

5.3 Strategic Objectives

- To create a world class home for knowledge based innovative businesses.
- To establish a sustainable and dynamic scientific cluster.
- To ensure that development is coherent and that new buildings and spaces work together to create a place with a distinct identity.
- To provide an attractive, legible and efficient environment which will provide a great place to work.
- To integrate with the wider area and to contribute to improving vehicular and pedestrian movement.
- To provide a diverse range of accommodation which can support the needs of businesses at all stages of their development.
- To provide flexibility within buildings, allowing them to efficiently adapt to the changing needs of occupiers.
- To ensure access and parking is matched to the needs of business and visitors.
6.0 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

6.1 Overview

The Development Principles which follow have been produced with the intention of assisting developers and designers.

The Development Principles aim to reduce the potential for designs being progressed which fail to gain the support of Leicester City Council. It is not the intention of the Development Principles to be overly prescriptive or to constrain creative and innovative design.

The Development Principles are presented in three groups; overarching principles, those specifically relevant to Site A and those specifically relevant for Site B.

6.2 Interpretation

Where developers or designers feel that the Development Principles might unduly constrain the development potential of the two sites they are invited to provide a rationale for departure together with a justification for any alternative design approach.

Site Boundaries

The southern site boundary for the Site A is flexible and might be adjusted closer to the Dock 1 building dependent upon the extent of external works to be included within a future application.

The Site B site boundary is illustrated as being inclusive of the highways land which forms the existing vehicular entry point from Exploration Drive.

6.3 Overarching Development Principles

Geometry

To keep construction, fit-out, furnishing, future adaption and operation efficient and pragmatic.

The plan geometry of the new buildings will be based upon an orthogonal grid unless site constraints and/or opportunities suggest otherwise. This approach should simplify construction, fitting out and furnishing. A plan based upon an orthogonal grid should aid future adaptions and/or extensions.

Flexibility/Adaptability

The new buildings must be designed to facilitate efficient internal adaption and change.

Building structure, services and internal layout must allow the efficient removal and/or relocation of internal separating walls between units that will ease the future expansion and/or contraction of occupiers. Consideration should be given to flexibility of the servicing strategy (water, power, telephony, etc.) and circulation.

Visual Hierarchy

The visual dominance of the National Space Centre must be respected and should not be challenged by new development within Pioneer Park.

The National Space Centre is the dominant landmark building located with the Pioneer Park area. Its distinctive Rocket Tower acts as an aid to navigation and legibility. This landmark function must not be compromised by the introduction of competitor landmarks which might disrupt legibility and confuse visitors.
Phasing

The development proposals can consider a phased approach to delivery. Should Site A and B be procured jointly the former should be the priority for early delivery.

Phased delivery would allow an income stream to be generated prior to overall project completion. Site A should form the first phase of development.

Expansion

Car parking pressure within Pioneer Park is such that both the Site A and B are likely to be low density developments with generous onsite parking provision. As area wide parking strategies and solutions are developed and implemented it may be that convenient off-site parking could become available. This may provide an opportunity to intensify development in future.

Coherence

The new buildings should relate to each other and the existing Dock 1 building as a coherent group.

Buildings located on Site A and B should respond to the visual language established by Dock 1. They need not replicate the Dock 1 architectural language but should respect it, interpret it and develop it.
6.0  DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

6.4  Site A

Frontage Hierarchy

The external treatment of the building should respond to opportunity and context.

The external treatment of the building should be conceived as a whole however it is appropriate for the design to respond to context and opportunity. The Exploration Drive elevation provides the prime public frontage to the building and must respond to this visibility. The eastern elevation facing the River Soar is secondary. The northern elevation is the least visible and can be considered tertiary. Not all elevations of the building will perform the same function and the façade treatment should respond to the nature of the accommodation contained within the building.

Height

The Site A development should relate in scale and massing of Dock 1 and should form part of a coherent composition with it. The Site A development should not exceed three floors of accommodation.

Views

Views from the new development should, where possible, respond to existing landmarks and other features of visual interest for the benefit of future occupiers.

The prime views from the site are towards the south-east. These views are framed by established trees, looking over the River Soar towards the landmarks located on Wolsey Island (ie the water tower and the retained chimney). Development should seek to exploit these views. Views to the west will include, in part, the Site B development and there should be a visual connection between both sites. There is the opportunity to create a semi-public or private space between the Dock 1 and Site A buildings. If provided this space must to overlooked. The northern elevation will have restricted views of the National Space Centre and provide less opportunity for good quality views.

Landscape

To provide landscape continuity and consistency to public areas which help to reinforce the character of the wider area as well as providing an attractive working environment.

Existing street trees along Exploration Drive should be retained where possible and where necessary supplemented. Existing tree planting along the northern and eastern site boundaries should be retained if possible or replaced using appropriate native species if unavoidable. Boundary planting must consider security and facilitate views where available. The space between Dock 1 and the Site A building will require appropriate hard landscape treatment and should incorporate planting subject to its scale and format.

Security

The perimeter of the building and its site must be secure.

The southern and northern boundaries of the site are relatively concealed and only observed by limited foot traffic. Boundary treatment should seek to reconcile the need to deter intruders with the need to avoid a perimeter resembling a defensible stockade. Any semi-public route or space located between Dock 1 and the Site A building must be defensible and should be gated.
Connectivity

The established footpath network which surrounds the site should be connected to and enhanced where possible.

Consideration should be given to pedestrian movements around and between the sites both new and existing. It’s recognised that this may conflict with security considerations and therefore may need to be treated as a private or a controlled and discretionary route. Landscape treatment and fenestration along the southern and eastern boundaries should facilitate passive surveillance of pedestrian routes.

Access and Servicing

Vehicular access to the site must be safe and compliant with the requirements of the 6C’s Highways Guidance in terms of visibility, position and design (and or the Draft LCC Highways Design SPD).

A single vehicular access point currently links the Dock 1 site and its associate car which is located to the north of the existing building on Exploration Drive. Consideration is needed around vehicular routes around and to the existing Dock building and Dock 2 (Site A) to avoid conflict for staff, visitors and servicing.

Parking

Car parking should be capable of accommodating the combined needs of the combined developments. Parking provision must be compliant with Leicester City Council’s Parking standards.

Parking should be concealed to the rear of development and should not compromise the relationship between buildings and Exploration Drive. The least visually sensitive location within the site is located along the northern boundary adjacent to the National Space Centre and this would be the optimum position for parking. It’s accepted that this will be marginally less convenient for Dock 1 occupiers than the current arrangement and therefore limited visitor and disabled car parking could be located along the Exploration Drive frontage.
6.0 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

6.5 Site B

Frontage Hierarchy

The external treatment of the Site B buildings should respond to opportunity and context. The Site B buildings will consist of multiple buildings and each should be differentiated within an overarching and unifying design language.

The external treatment of the buildings should respond to context and opportunity. Not all buildings need to be identical but should employ a unifying approach to design which helps to reinforce an emerging local character. The Exploration Drive elevation provides the prime public frontage to the buildings and they must respond to this visibility. The northern elevation is the least visible and is less sensitive.

Building frontages within the site will be visible from each other and will help to define new spaces. These will be located in private or semi-private area and should be considered secondary. Not all elevations of the buildings will perform the same function and the façade treatments should respond to the nature of the accommodation contained within the various buildings.

Height

The height of the Site B buildings can vary between two and three stories. Possible impacts of height upon residential neighbours should be considered.

Site B buildings should not exceed three floors of accommodation. The need to provide levels of car parking acceptable to the market will tend to preclude three storey development across the whole site. However phased delivery may allow off-site car parking to be provided reducing the need for on-site provision and thus allowing later phases to increase capacity and height.

Views

Views from the new development should, where possible, respond to existing landmarks and other features of visual interest for the benefit of future occupiers.

The gateway to Pioneer Park from Abbey Lane onto Exploration Drive provides a view of the National Space Centre Rocket Tower. This provides an important navigational landmark for visitors to the area and should be acknowledged and protected if possible. The views from the site itself towards the south are of the ASDA supermarket and its car park and could be enhanced by on site landscaping. Views to the east will include, in part, the Dock 1 building and the Site A development and there should be a visual connection between these sites and Site B. Immediate views to the north are poor however the Rocket Tower features in the distance.

Landscape

To provide landscape continuity and consistency to public areas which help to reinforce the character of the wider area as well as providing an attractive working environment.

Existing street trees along Exploration Drive should be retained and where necessary supplemented. There is currently no tree planting or landscape treatment within the site boundary however it would be desirable to provide a landscape buffer along the northern and western boundaries and to provide a landscaped area to separate new development from Exploration Drive. The on-site landscape treatment along Exploration Drive will moderate the visual impacts of the Asda car park. Spaces within the heart of the site located between buildings should be landscaped to provide external private dwelling areas and to mitigate the visual impact of parked cars.

Security

The perimeter of the building and its site must be secure.

The northern and western boundaries of the site abut neighbouring private land (car parking and yard space). Boundary treatment should seek to reconcile the need to deter intruders with the need to avoid a perimeter resembling a defensible stockade. Long term plans for the neighbouring land may influence the boundary treatment. Vehicular gateways to the site and any spaces and routes within the site will need to be overlooked and capable of being secured.
Access and Servicing

Vehicular access to the site must be safe and compliant with the requirements of the 6C’s Highways Guidance in terms of visibility, position and design (and or the Draft LCC Highways Design SPD).

A single vehicular access point currently links Site B to Exploration Drive. The scale of the site and the level of future vehicular traffic will require access to be reconsidered. It is likely that a new access point and a new exit point will be required which will connect one-way vehicle movement through the developed site. The detailed access and servicing strategy will ultimately be dependent upon the agreed development strategy.

Parking

Parking provision must be compliant with Leicester City Councils Vehicle Parking Standards SPD as a minimum requirement.

Parking should be concealed to the rear of development and should not compromise the relationship between buildings and Exploration Drive. The least visually sensitive location within the site is located along the northern boundary adjacent to the car dealership and this would be the optimum position for parking.

Development formats which do not include frontage or perimeter blocks (ie pavilion blocks or terraces) will need to house parking within the heart of the site.
FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on Pioneer Park please follow the links below:


The 6C's Highways Guidance
https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/leicestershire-highway-design-guide

Leicester City Council's Vehicle Parking Standards SPD
https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/179303/vehicle-parking-standards.pdf