

Innovation Park at Queen Margaret University moves a step forward



What is Edinburgh Innovation Park?

- A number of enterprise centre developments of 50,000 sq ft, each developed both speculatively and in response to market demand.
- Grow-on accommodation for companies graduating from the enterprise centres with facilities that can be sub-divided for multiple lettings.
- Stand-alone facilities for larger companies.
- University research centres and facilities.
- On-site amenities including retail, cafes, restaurants and a hotel.
- Using sample UK science and innovation park projects as benchmarks, QMU would expect Edinburgh Innovation Park to occupy the 50-acre site within a 20-25 year period.

LAST MONTH Queen Margaret University signalled its commitment to ensuring a 50 acre plot of land next to its campus by Musselburgh is secured for economic development purposes by retaining leading knowledge economy consultancy CAM-SCI to lead development of the detailed business plan. The £80million first phase of the development will include two 50,000sq ft enterprise centres. Fully completed, the innovation park is expected to create 13,000 jobs for the local economy.

Support for the concept of an Innovation Park gathered pace following a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) public consultation held during September 2015. At that time, members of the public and local community groups were invited to view the University's proposals during exhibitions held at the Brunton Hall in Musselburgh and at QMU's campus.

Edinburgh City Region, which embraces Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian and Fife, has significant national and international investment appeal and for that reason it was agreed to adopt Edinburgh Innovation Park as the working title for the proposals.

The development will include a National Food and Drink Enterprise Centre – a UK first - which will provide specialist facilities to support food science, research and development. A second facility will provide facilities for the very wide range of SME sectors innovating across all the services required by the food and drink sector – from design through to new materials. The park is also likely to attract SMEs in innovation sectors that are not connected to food and drink.

The proposals also include retail and leisure facilities for the surrounding local communities, innovation park users, and also University students and staff. These facilities will complement existing local provision.

View proposals online

You can view slideshow of the architect's proposals and send us your feedback online at www.edinburghinnovationpark.co.uk.

Formal consultation will take place as part of any future planning application process.



▶▶ The story so far

Attracted by the opportunity to create a sustainable community for learning, research, and knowledge exchange, QMU moved to East Lothian from the west side of Edinburgh in 2007. The proposals for Edinburgh Innovation Park are designed to maximise the potential offered by the campus relocation and to protect the future vitality of the region.

The proposals follow the newest best-practice global trends in that it brings together national and global centres of research and knowledge exchange excellence with commercial and community development.

Over the last decade, QMU has been building an international reputation in the food and drink sector particularly in relation to market ready research in the area of new product development and functional and healthy foods. The University recently won Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce's Innovation in Business Award in light of its work in food and drink, its Innovation Park concept and other projects.

How does the park stand out from other business parks?

Edinburgh Innovation Park will focus primarily on the fast growing SME end of the food and drink business sector. There has been less investment in food and drink innovation than in other innovation sectors. Where there has been provision, it has not come with commercial space and where there is non-food specific commercial space, it has not met the needs of small businesses. Today's consumers are focusing on provenance and product differentiation which means that the top 10% food and drink businesses together only have 15% of the market.

These development proposals are modelled on success. The recent trend for bioparks has arisen as large pharmaceutical firms have farmed out research and development, and the resulting growing number of smaller businesses have needed appropriate space. Similarly, Edinburgh Innovation

Park addresses a sector characterised by a growing emphasis on SMEs.

Employment linked to Edinburgh Innovation Park is likely to be greater than is usual with innovation parks as the food and drink industry relies heavily on external suppliers, for example packaging companies.



"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that takes advantage of a prime location, providing businesses – especially SME's– with access to national and international networks and expertise provided through the University and the wider university network. It is crucial that we safeguard the land next to QMU's campus to drive the future prosperity and vitality of the regional economy, and the importance of the food and drink sector cannot be understated. We have a bold vision of a vibrant connected community that advances regional and national aspirations for innovation and growth in the food and drink economy."

**Professor Petra Wend,
Principal and Vice-Chancellor,
Queen Margaret University**

Next steps

There is strong evidence that economic interventions, such as that which would deliver the Edinburgh Innovation Park, do much to help create vibrant city economies. Together with CamSci, QMU is now working on a detailed feasibility study and business plan that will provide a development pathway and robust funding model for the proposals.

The start of the project is dependent on funding, land procurement and planning issues and the development cannot happen unless the A1 junction at QMU is upgraded. The University is working to establish a three way public/private/community partnership approach to the proposed development which will be key to its successful delivery.

Creating up to 13,000 jobs

Successful science and innovation parks have recognised potential to generate significant new employment opportunities both directly by SMEs and larger occupiers on site, and indirectly through the delivery of a support services market and also the impact of increased levels of disposable income in the local community.

In its first phase of development the Innovation Park will focus on the specialist needs of the rapidly growing SME sector including specialist multi-occupied facilities delivering services and expertise to SMEs in the food and

drink sector. There will also be specialist food laboratories and food testing facilities linked to the expertise existing within the University.

In addition, facilities and services will be developed for innovating SMEs in pivotal supporting areas from engineering companies through to creative, digital, materials and communications organisations.

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