

# Business park only three years from lift off



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PLANS for a huge business park near [Southend Airport](#), creating thousands of jobs, are set to be go ahead within the next three to four years.

Southend Council has pledged its ambitious plans to create Saxon business park, off Cherry Orchard Way, will happen.

The aim is for the new business park to attract high-tech companies to move into the area and be a catalyst for businesses wishing to expand and employ more people.

[John Lamb](#), deputy leader of Southend Council, said: “We’re keen for all these businesses to come together as a nucleus, high-tech business park.

“At the heart of it will be Anglia Ruskin University’s MedTech campus. Ipeco, a company in Aviation Way which designs, manufactures and tests products for the aerospace and defence industries, are also keen to expand and bring in more people.

“The whole site will create a few thousand jobs “Things have been progressing in the background for years and are still moving forward. We are waiting to get the permission from the Government.”

The land is council owned and green fields at present, but has been earmarked for employment use with access from Cherry Orchard Way.

It falls in the borough of [Rochford](#) District Council, which has backed the proposal.

[Westcliff](#) Rugby Club falls within the earmarked site and the council would look to reallocate land for the club to use, as well as creating a public park.

The investment needed will run into the millions. Most of it will come from private investment with the university, and there will be Government money available.

Mr Lamb said: "It can't progress as quickly as we would like because there are a lot of processes to go through first, but I believe the site clearance and drainage and utilities work could start within 18 months to two years.

"It's an exciting time. It will all come off – it's just about timing.

"It's a prime site for the hi-tech companies we're talking about."

The next step is to set out a blueprint to smooth the way for future planning applications from private firms, by setting out what would be acceptable and what would not.

The aim is to bring in multinational companies, as well as helping start-ups and small enterprises.

Employment opportunities will be available for local people and Mr Lamb encouraged those with the right qualifications to stay up to date.

He added: "Local people are, of course, likely to apply for the jobs and suppliers are likely come from the local area, so it will be a huge economic boost."

The benefits were echoed by Anglia Ruskin University MedTech Campus director, Anita Thornberry.

Mrs Thornberry, who used to work at the council as head of economy, regeneration and tourism, said: "At Southend we are looking at 3,000 to 4,000 jobs, and it could be more. There will also be indirect benefits with support services used locally.

"There will be regenerative benefits to the town centre and job creation through the actual building. The knock-on economic impact is quite significant.

"Southend is a great fit. There is already a strong medical technology sector with Olympus [KeyMed](#) and Surgical Holdings, who have chosen to be in Southend, and the hospital is a strong innovator.

"The location is ideal, right by the airport and situated between London and Cambridge, with two train lines to the capital."

The Southend business park is one of three sites the university is aiming to develop as part of an investment worth half a billion pounds.

The other sites are in Harlow and Chelmsford. The campus will research and produce medical devices and products which can help assisted living for elderly and vulnerable people.