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THE vision to create an airport business park in Southend moved a step closer today with the announcement of Henry Boot Developments as the preferred development partner.

The decision is subject to a ten-day "stand-still" period which is required by the Official Journal of the European Union procurement procedure. Following this, the contract will be finalised and awarded.

Ron Woodley, leader of Southend Council, said: "I am delighted that we can announce a preferred development partner for the airport business park.

"This marks an important milestone in the life of this project and a major step forward in creating new skilled employment opportunities in Southend and [Rochford](#).

"We look forward to entering into a long-term partnership with Henry Boot Developments and to working with them on the exciting development which will create a vibrant new business community and help secure the long term prosperity of the area.

“We are able to bring forward this development thanks to the positive partnership work that has taken place with Rochford District Council on the joint area action plan. We will be actively discussing the details of the planning application with them over the coming months.

has finished, a development agreement will be refined and completed in early 2015.

"The council can then work with Henry Boot Developments to submit a planning application in 2015 with a determined aim to start work on site during 2016.

"As always public and stakeholder consultation will be an important part of the planning application process.”

The announcement coincides with the timetable for the adoption of the Southend and Rochford District Council's joint area action plan, which sets out the planning policies for the airport business park and surrounding area and is due for adoption in December 2014.

Adrian Schofield, head of the south east region of Henry Boot Developments said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Southend Council to bring forward this development opportunity and to realise the vision for this exciting project.

“Henry Boot Developments has a long and successful track record in delivering joint venture projects with local authority partners across the UK and will contribute considerable expertise to bring about real transformational change and economic prosperity to this part of south Essex.”