

## Homes and Communities Agency & Ashford Borough Council

### ARTIST BRIEF AND COMMISSION FOR:

#### The Ashford Commercial Quarter (Dover Place and the front of International House)



### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The public realm development at Dover Place, Ashford, is intended to act as a catalyst for the regeneration and rebranding of this space as a business sector and office-based Commercial Quarter. It will provide the basis, infrastructure and public permeability to stoke interest in future development of the surrounding area as an economic hub. This commission has the opportunity to reinforce this sense of place, with the added potential for taking cues from the existing historic built landscape.

### CONTEXT:

The Commercial Quarter will be expected to bring jobs and major economic benefits for the town. A Development Framework/Masterplan for the Commercial Quarter was produced in 2012. Outline planning consent was granted in March 2013 for a mixed use office and retail development on land at the junction of Dover Place and Station Road, Ashford. In January 2014, the Homes and Communities Agency, working in collaboration with Ashford Borough Council, commissioned BDP to develop plans to improve the environment in Dover Place.

This is part of the first phase of the Council's vision to create new office development in the Commercial Quarter.

BDP has now developed proposals that will provide improved benefits for pedestrians, car users, local residents and traders, as well as an attractive setting that encourages new office development into the town centre. The development of Dover Place will also signify the continuation of the improved link between Ashford International Rail Station and Ashford Town Centre. The development includes new paving, new street lighting, tree planting, landscaping, and a general improvement of street furniture.

Ashford Borough Council, who owns the site, and the HCA are seeking to commission an artist, or arts organisation to enhance these works and to add a sense of place and purpose to the spaces.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE:**

The site is located 500m from the centre of Ashford and 200m from Ashford International Station to the south of the site. The extent of the site comprises Dover Place and the access road and parking area at the frontage of International House, an eleven-storey office block comprising of a number of commercial businesses. The site slopes down gradually from north to south and more noticeably from west to east.

Dover Place is currently fronted on the north side by a 2.5m high steel palisade fence which forms the boundary to an extensive surface car park. The south side of Dover Place is bordered by a succession of parking lots, delivery yards, small businesses, and garages. The area of the site at the frontage of International House is an area of parking, access roads and pavements and includes a small raised planting bed.

### **HISTORY:**

Since the 13th century, Ashford has been a prominent town in the south east of England. The growth of the High Street was sparked by a farmers' market in 1243 and this led to the establishment of a variety of new industries from carpenters and tanners to butchers and fishmongers. By the 1550s at least three sides of St Mary's Churchyard were lined with buildings, predominantly of timber construction and 2-3 storeys tall. The High Street formed the central spine of the town centre, as it does today.

In the 18th century its geographical situation was further improved as it became an important nodal point on the new turnpike roads that were constructed across Kent between 1762 and 1795. Improved travelling conditions and greater mobility enabled the markets and local businesses to thrive, leading to the gentrification of the town's architecture. Wealthy residents built large Georgian Villas and many older buildings were refronted with classically influenced brick and stone facades.



Through the early 19th century Ashford's steady growth continued dependent upon the street patterns that had developed around the medieval High Street. In 1842 the South Eastern Railway Company opened a railway line between Ashford and London that sparked a period of huge prosperity and growth that dramatically changed the townscape. Once again Ashford had become the centre of the strategic transport network. The South Eastern Railway Company built its engineering works to the south east of the town. The town's population grew from 3000 to 13000 by 1901 as it shifted from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Ashford's recent history has been shaped by the railway and, in particular, the large-scale train manufacturing works. Its identity, even after deindustrialization, remains forged around trains.

The immediate area around Dover Place developed quickly and grew as a modest industrial quarter in the town due to its close proximity to the railway. Dover Place was integrated with the railway tracks which lead directly up to the manufacturing businesses which made it easy to bringing in materials and distribute goods.



Dover Place once featured the Lion Brewery, Crowfords an engineering company producing coaches and Tannery businesses. The attached historic maps (appendix A) give an indication of this and the railway tracks that criss-crossed the surrounding streets. This theme remains etched in the built environment and could be a consideration for any public art proposals coming forward.



### **THE WORKS:**

The commission represents an exciting opportunity for an artist or arts organisation to create work within an exciting strategic development for Ashford and to help support make new connections for the town, both physically and theoretically. The brief is focussed towards working alongside the project partners and BDP (appointed architects and landscape designers) and in more depth - the appointed landscape contractors for the site (appointed in November 2014).

The brief asks for the appointed artist or arts organisation to come forward with proposals across the site, within the designated landscaping areas that takes into consideration:

- The history of the town, Dover Place and its environs
- The emerging Ashford brand as the “UK’s International Town”, alongside the plans to develop and grow the Ashford Commercial Quarter

- The desire of all partners to provide better connectivity and way marking between the International Station, the Commercial Quarter, and the Town Centre zones
- The developed site proposals by the architects; the areas allocated to the appointed landscape architects; the tight timescales for completion of their work; and the allocated arrangements for maintenance, repair and renewal

The appointed artist or arts organisation is required to carry out the following work, which will consist of two phases (below).

#### Phase One: Concept design and costings

A minimum of three design sketches demonstrating the proposed approach across the site. The development phase will incorporate a constructive process of discussion and revision through the collaboration between all partners, consideration towards physical implementation, and costs.

#### Phase Two: Implementation

Applying the approved design to the agreed specific areas.

#### The appointed artist or arts organisation will:

1. Obtain relevant specifications and drawings, including plans, elevations and 3D graphics, from the Architect, in paper and/or electronic format as required
2. Familiarise themselves with the specified site and consider how the proposals relate to other areas and the necessity, or not, of the work extending to these other areas
3. Research the history and planned future of Ashford, particularly in the environs of the site, assisted by project partners
4. Discuss and agree an approach with the Architect and project team before presentation of at least three concept designs for the artistic work, who, in conjunction with the artist or arts organisation, shall decide upon the preferred approach. The artist will then work up the preferred design to a final design sketch and help project partners present the preferred design
5. The Artist will (if required) produce text and possibly also graphics for an interpretation board to be mounted appropriately on site, explaining the artistic rationale behind the work
6. Advise the Architect of any detailed requirements for the work, or for where the work is to be applied

7. Advise and agree details with the Architect of reasonable requirements for access to the site to where the work is to be applied, subject to any constraints imposed by the needs of other work on site at the time such as construction
8. Apply the final design sketch to the agreed site, all works to be carried out safely and in accordance with the CDM Regulations to the satisfaction of the Council's Planning Supervisor

### **SUBMISSION AND SELECTION:**

Artists and arts organisations are asked to submit a CV, and a statement of interest including examples of their most recent works to: Chris Dixon, Arts & Cultural Industries Manager for by email: [chris.dixon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:chris.dixon@ashford.gov.uk)

A shortlist will then be drawn up and the selected artists or organisations will be invited to attend a panel interview.

The final decision will be made on the strength of previous work and interview.

### **ARTIST FEES:**

The fee for the artist for the work for Phase One: Concept design and costings is £3000 including expenses.

The fee for the artist for the work for Phase Two: Implementation is £7000 including expenses.

The budget for construction and materials for the work is guaranteed up to £60,000.

### **ESTIMATED TIMETABLE:**

Submissions to be received:	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2014
Interviews:	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2014
Artist appointment:	12 <sup>th</sup> December 2014
Start of Phase One:	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2015
Start of Phase Two:	TBA
Completion of the works:	TBA – likely to be June 2015

### **CONTACT & WORKING RELATIONSHIPS:**

Lead contact for this work is: Chris Dixon, Arts & Cultural Industries Manager, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL  
email: [chris.dixon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:chris.dixon@ashford.gov.uk) tel: 01233 330 352

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Ashford Borough Council:

Paul McKenner, Strategic Housing and Property Manager: 01233 330 419

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Mark Chaplin, Principal Urban Designer: 01233 330 240

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Matthew Nouch, Graduate Trainee Planner: 01233 330 589

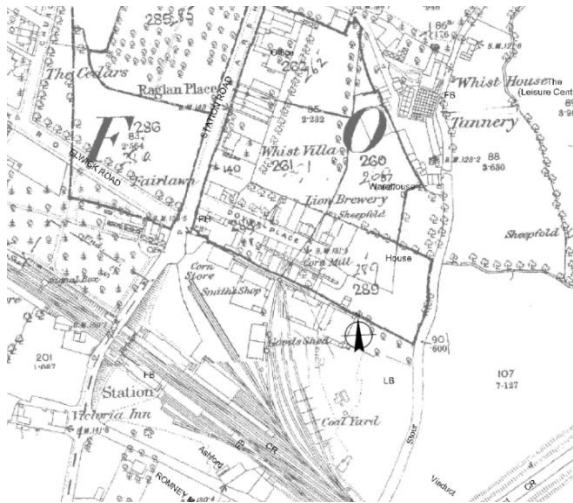
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BDP:

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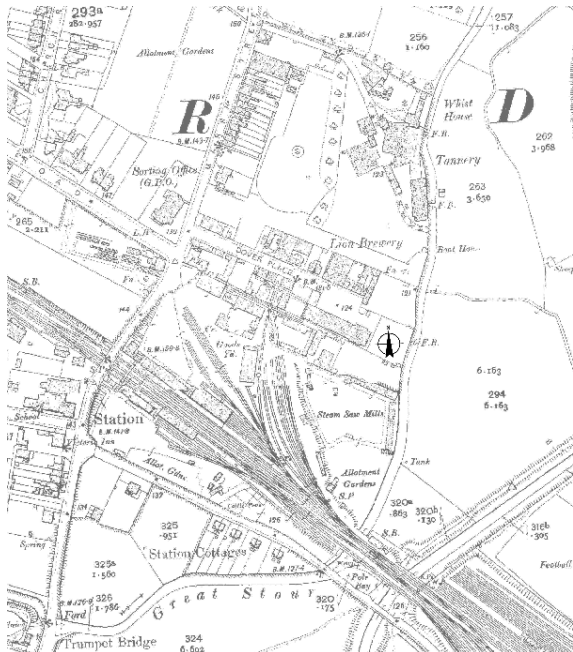
## APPENDIX A - HISTORIC MAPS:



1843-1893



1891-1912



1904-1939