

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SAMLESBURY INNOVATION HUB OPERATOR - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

September 2025



MAKE



Lancashire County Council (LCC) invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from experienced and commercially minded organisations to operate the Samlesbury Innovation Hub, a new facility within the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone. The hub will be a focal point for cyber security, advanced manufacturing, and emerging businesses across Lancashire and beyond.

The Samlesbury Innovation Hub is a flagship development at the heart of Lancashire's Samlesbury Enterprise Zone, designed to support the growth of new businesses, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and emerging technology sectors across the region. The project will deliver a high-quality, multi-occupancy workspace aimed at fostering innovation, collaboration, and business growth among SMEs and scale-ups operating within high-value industries.

The Innovation Hub will offer approximately 20,000–30,000 sqft of flexible and modular floor space, capable of accommodating a range of occupiers including startups, research and development organisations, and commercial tenants seeking new high quality space. In addition to the core innovation space, private offices, hot/fixed desks, meeting rooms, demonstrator and event space, the development may include a range of complimentary & ancillary uses, which could comprise:

- Opportunities to incorporate ancillary facilities such as a crèche, gym, cafe or convenience store
- Potential inclusion of wet and dry laboratory space, depending on market appetite and demand

These complementary facilities aim to enhance the day-to-day experience of occupants and support a thriving innovation community. The scheme will serve as a strategic anchor for the wider development of the Enterprise Zone and is expected to meet high sustainability and design standards, with a focus on future adaptability, low operational costs and innovative building technologies.

Lancashire County Council are also currently carrying out early market engagement with potential building occupiers and sub-tenants. The details of which will be provided during the next phases of Operator engagement / procurement

Note any information, plans or images used within this report are subject to change and are for illustrative purposes only.

The purpose of this Expression of Interest (EOI) is to engage early with capable organisations in the workspace, innovation hub, and facilities management sectors to test the market and inform Lancashire County Council's operator procurement approach for the Samlesbury Innovation Hub.

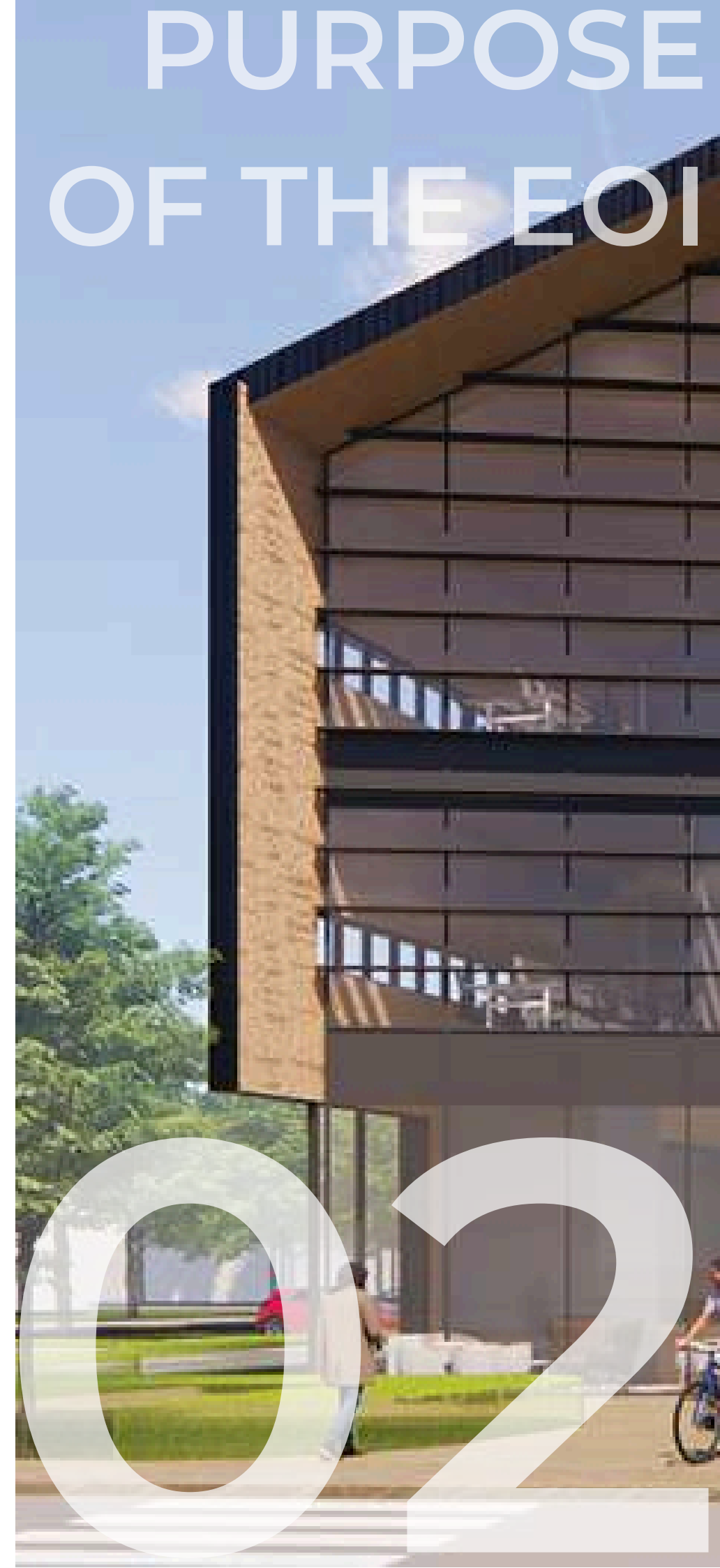
This is not an invitation to tender (ITT). This is a preliminary market engagement exercise intended to:

- Understand the level and nature of market interest in operating the Innovation Hub
- Gather intelligence on preferred business and financial models, including income structures and how operators would manage financial risk (e.g. occupancy, utilities, service charges)
- Solicit views on the viability and desirability of building features, including workspace mix, communal facilities, and potential for ancillary uses (e.g. café, crèche, gym, convenience store)
- Assess the operational appetite for managing specialist spaces such as wet and dry laboratories, including management implications, potential tenant demand, and rental pricing considerations
- Test assumptions on the innovation and tenant ecosystem, including how operators would curate occupier mixes, attract key sectors (e.g. cyber, advanced manufacturing), and develop gateway policies aligned with the Council's economic and community goals
- Clarify contractual preferences and operator appetite for assuming risk under a Full Repairing and Insuring (FRI) lease, a management agreement, or another structure
- Understanding of the potential contractual setup and parties to the contract

This EOI represents a valuable opportunity for potential operators to:

- Provide opinions on the development and operational specification of a strategically significant project
- Highlight innovative delivery models and partnership options
- Position themselves ahead of the formal procurement stage, expected to commence in late 2025 under the Competitive Flexible Procedure in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023

PURPOSE OF THE EOI





Client Brief

Lancashire County Council is seeking to appoint a high-calibre, experienced operator capable of managing and activating the Samlesbury Innovation Hub as a best-in-class innovation and collaboration environment.

The successful operator will be expected to deliver a comprehensive package of services, support wider strategic ambitions around innovation-led growth, and assume an agreed degree of commercial and operational risk.

The operator will be a long-term strategic partner, not just a facilities manager. The selected operator will:

- Manage the full building and oversee lettings, operations, programming, marketing, and maintenance
- Deliver innovation services and community engagement as per LCC's aims and objectives for the Innovation Hub and wider Enterprise Zone
- Take responsibility for financial performance, occupancy, tenant mix, and ecosystem development as per LCC's aims and objectives for the Innovation Hub and wider Enterprise Zone
- LCC are open to understanding potential joint venture contractual setups

Core Responsibilities

- Manage day-to-day operations, tenant liaison, maintenance, and compliance
- Market and let offices, desks, and event space to achieve high occupancy
- Deliver a programme of innovation services
- Promote the Hub regionally and nationally to attract users and investment
- Curate a high-quality tenant mix aligned with key sectors (e.g. cyber, digital, advanced manufacturing)
- Deliver a programme of innovation services, including:
 - Accelerator programmes
 - Challenge-led innovation calls
 - Investment and investor engagement events
 - SME support and mentoring
 - Ecosystem-building and cluster development

Submission Requirements

We invite EOI responses addressing the following:

1. Business and Financial Model

- Your proposed operating and financial model, including:
 - Income and risk approach (e.g. fixed rent, profit share, management fee)
 - Forecast occupancy strategy
 - Desk and office pricing models
- Indicate what type of contractual arrangement you would prefer
- Understand any opportunities for potential joint venture contractual setups
- Confirmation of the potential legal entity to be party to the contract

2. Relevant Experience

- Examples of running similar buildings (innovation centres, tech hubs, flexible offices)
- Any experience in delivering mixed-use or specialist environments (e.g. labs, manufacturing floors, public-private collaboration)

3. Operational Risk

- Your appetite for commercial and operational risk, including approach to under-occupancy, utility costs, statutory compliance, and maintenance obligations

4. Tenant Strategy and Gateway Policy

- Your proposed approach to tenant selection and gateway policies
- How you would define and target priority occupier segments



**SUBMISSION
REQUIREMENTS**

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submission Requirements - Cont.

5. Building Layout and Ancillary Uses

- Feedback on the proposed 20,000-30,000 sq. ft. inc layout and internal zoning
- Understanding on how the operator can feed into the ongoing detailed design via a mobilisation type contract
- Views on the proposed size and configuration of modular office spaces within the building, including what unit sizes (e.g. small, medium, large offices) are likely to be most in demand, and how the mix of these could support a sustainable tenant base and maximise occupancy
- Views on the viability and desirability of ancillary uses including but not limited to:
 - Crèche or childcare provision
 - On-site café or food offer
 - Gym/fitness provision (for the wider enterprise zone)
 - Convenience/retail store

6. Laboratory Space – Market and Management

- Your views on potential inclusion of wet and dry lab space within the building or adjacent zones:
 - Market demand you've observed for lab-style facilities (in cyber, R&D, manufacturing etc.)
 - Whether your organisation would be able and willing to manage such space
 - How you would approach rental strategy, specialist equipment requirements, and compliance needs (if applicable)

7. Innovation Services and Ecosystem Role

- Experience in designing and delivering innovation support (accelerators, mentoring, challenge events)
- Approach to community building and public-private collaboration
- Plans to embed regional skills, enterprise, and investment activity into the space
- Understanding of how the operator could manage or integrate with the wider SEZ and specifically potential Hybrid Onward “Workshop” units elsewhere within the enterprise zone

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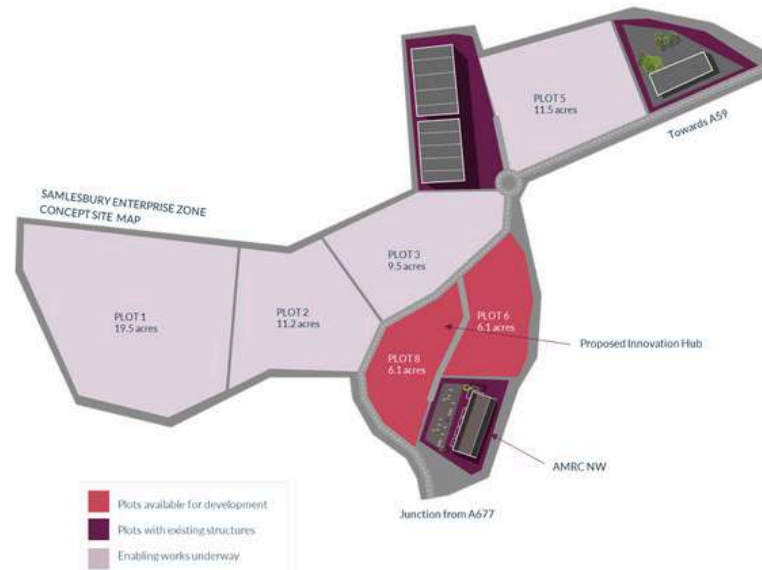
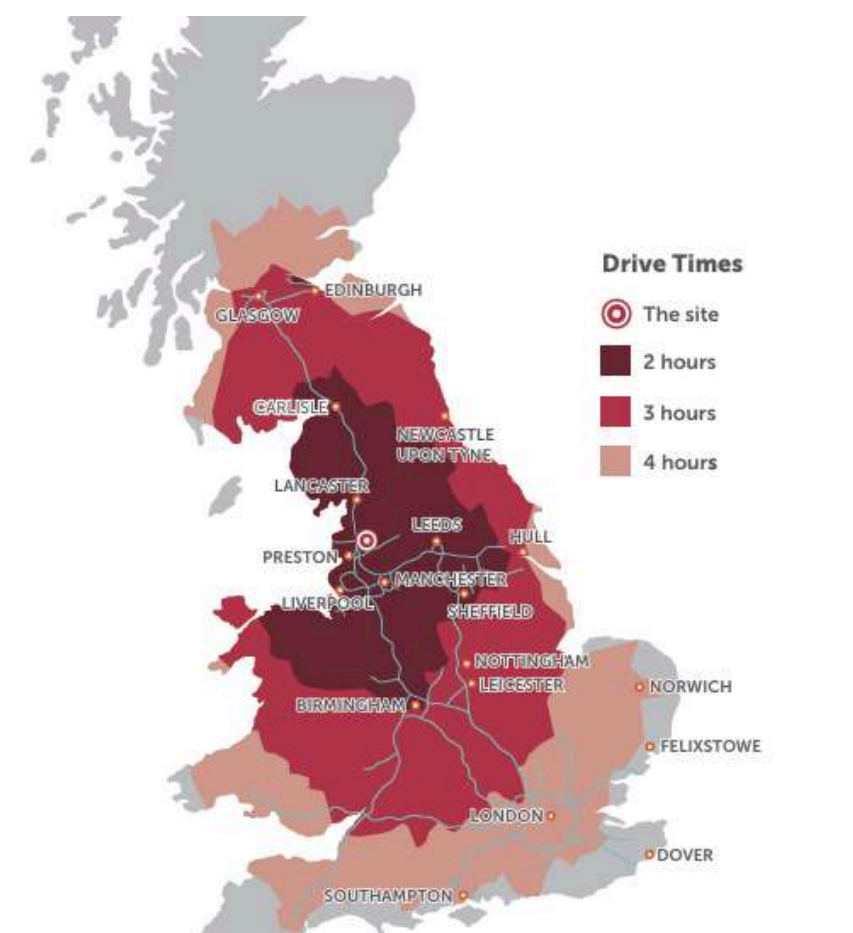
Samlesbury Enterprise Zone

Samlesbury is within easy reach of all major northern cities, as well as Manchester Airport and Liverpool SuperPort.

Samlesbury is much more than just a business park, it is a once in a generation opportunity to be part of a truly world class, leading edge collaborative environment. It is a new, high-quality development providing business units from 2,500 sq ft to 350,000 sq ft on the UK's newest Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing Park immediately adjacent to BAE Systems, one of the world's most advanced, technology-led defence, aerospace and security solutions companies and the AMRC (Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre North West).

Located in the heart of the largest cluster of aerospace production in the UK, with over 13,000 employees, it is part of a wider world class regional cluster accounting for more than a quarter of national production. Major employers in Lancashire also include Rolls Royce, Aircelle, Kaman, Senior, RLC and Magellan.

When fully developed, the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone will be a national centre of excellence for advanced engineering and manufacturing related companies, ranging from manufacturing, cyber security, specialist logistics and professional support services. Focusing on new and emerging market opportunities, Samlesbury will be a leading centre for world-class research businesses and supply chain partners.





FORECAST PROGRAMME

Project Status – Samlesbury Innovation Hub

- The Samlesbury Innovation Hub is progressing through its development phase and remains aligned with the strategic delivery programme.
 - A multi-disciplinary design and project team is in the process of being procured, with formal appointments expected in Q3 2025. This team will be responsible for refining the concept proposals into a fully coordinated detailed design, incorporating sustainability targets, operator input (where feasible), and end-user requirements. The detailed design phase is scheduled to commence in late 2025.
 - The finalised proposal will be submitted for planning approval in late 2025 in accordance with a simplified planning process known as a Local Development Order (LDO) which has been adopted for the site. The process for confirming permission under the LDO is 28 days. All site wide assessments and conditions have been undertaken and discharged.
 - Subject to planning approval, construction is scheduled to begin in 2026, with practical completion targeted for 2027.
 - This timeline is intended to provide prospective operators with clarity on the forward programme and enable early consideration of operational integration, fit-out planning, and long-term partnership opportunities. The selected operator will have the opportunity to influence key decisions ahead of construction, ensuring the building is delivered in a way that supports long-term commercial and placemaking outcomes.
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Proposed Next Steps

Interested parties are invited to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) by:

Deadline: **Friday 26th September 2025, 12:00 noon**

Submit to: **contractscorporate@lancashire.gov.uk**

Subject line: "EOI – Samlesbury Innovation Hub Operator (**Business Name**)"

Following receipt of EOIs, Lancashire County Council (LCC) will:

1. Review submissions to assess market interest, delivery models, and preferred contractual structures
2. Use responses to refine the operator specification, commercial terms, and tender documentation
3. Where appropriate, invite selected respondents to informal dialogue sessions during Autumn 2025 to explore key themes (e.g. lab space viability, innovation delivery, ancillary uses)
4. Proceed to launch a formal procurement process in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023
5. Publish the full Invitation to Tender (ITT) later in 2025, with operator appointment expected by Q1 2026

All organisations that submit an EOI will be notified of the outcome of this stage and updated on the next steps in the procurement timeline.



NEXT STEPS

FUTURE TENANTS AND OCCUPIERS

Opportunities for Future Tenants and Occupiers

The Samlesbury Innovation Hub, opening in 2027, will be a flagship workspace and innovation facility for Lancashire – offering premium, flexible accommodation for businesses operating across cyber security, digital, advanced manufacturing, health, robotics and more.

Whether you're a start-up, established SME, scale-up company, anchor tenant, or part of a larger corporate partnership, the Hub will provide high-quality space and wraparound innovation support in a collaborative environment tailored for growth and productivity.

Lettings will be managed by a dedicated operator appointed by Lancashire County Council. The Innovation Hub will foster a dynamic and inclusive community of innovators, creators, investors, and problem-solvers.

Registering Your Interest

If you are interested in:

- Leasing office or desk space within the Innovation Hub
- Being added to a tenant waiting list or early marketing list
- Staying up to date on the project timeline and launch

Please contact:

Email: strategicdevelopment@lancashire.gov.uk

Website: <https://samlesburyez.com/>

This site will be the main hub for project updates, launch announcements, and future tenant opportunities. Additional updates will also be shared via Lancashire County Council and Samlesbury Enterprise Zone communication channels.

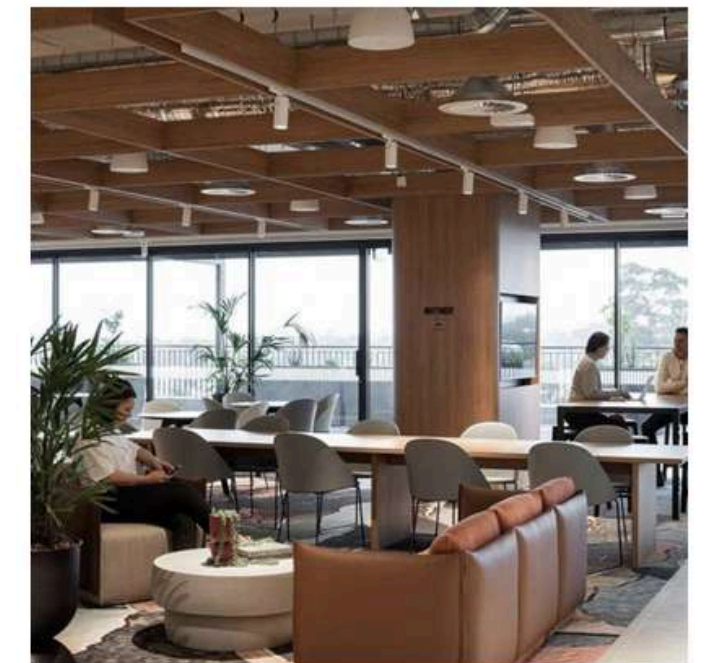
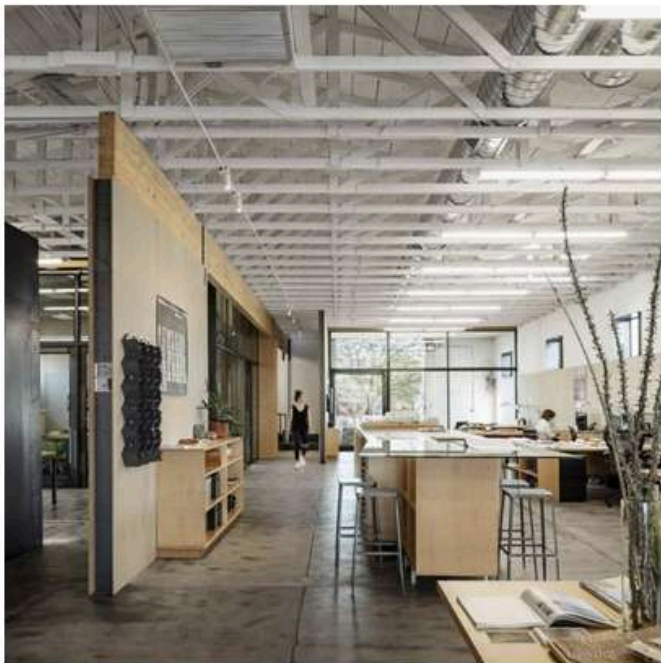
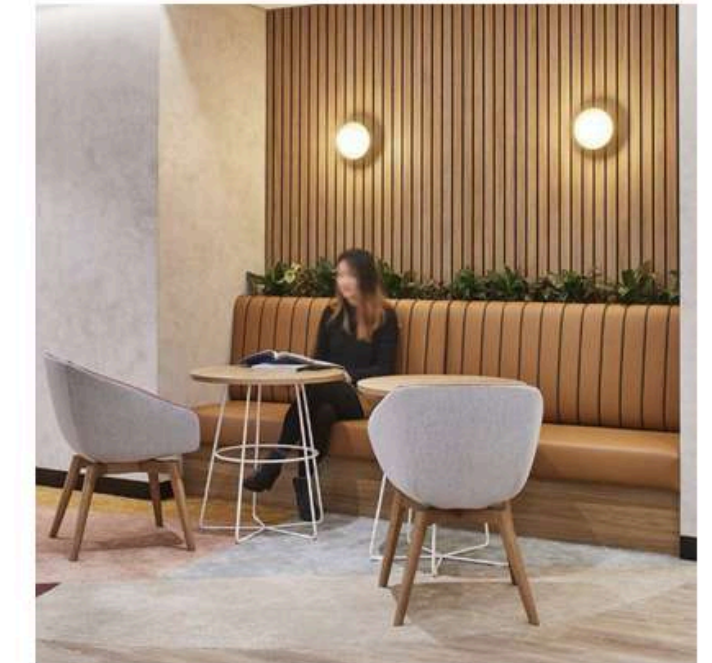
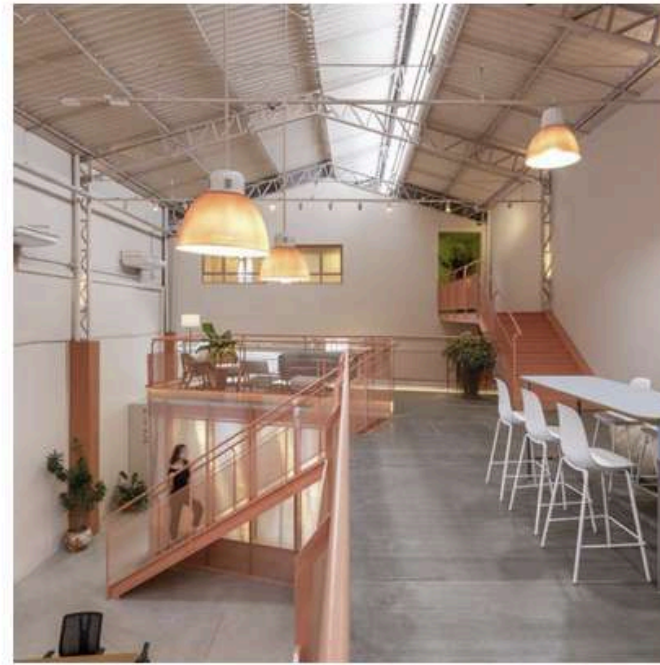


IMPORTANT NOTES

Important Notes

- This EOI does not constitute a formal tender or pre-qualification process. It is issued for the sole purpose of market engagement and information gathering to help shape the final procurement approach.
- Participation in this EOI is not mandatory and will not affect eligibility to participate in the formal procurement process once launched.
- Responses to the EOI will not be scored but will be reviewed by LCC to understand market appetite, delivery capability, and preferences regarding contract terms and risk allocation.
- Submission of an EOI does not constitute a contractual offer and shall not be construed as creating any obligation on the part of LCC to proceed with a formal procurement or to award any contract.
- LCC reserves the right to:
 - Make changes to the scope or timing of the procurement process
 - Hold informal engagement discussions with EOI respondents to clarify responses where required
 - Proceed or not proceed with the project at its absolute discretion
- All information shared in responses will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of refining the procurement strategy.
- All information issued by and provided to LCC should and will be treated as confidential and used only for internal purposes relating to project planning and procurement preparation.
- MAKE NW Limited is supporting Lancashire County Council with the operator EOI process for the Samlesbury Innovation Hub by providing technical, commercial, and procurement advisory services. Acting on behalf of LCC, MAKE NW's role has been to structure the EOI approach, prepare documentation, and manage engagement with prospective operators.





GET IN TOUCH

A STRATEGIC SITE OF
INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

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