



The Nucleus

Market Opportunity to Provide Cafe Facility

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1 Overview

Located on The Bridge, a mixed-use development in Dartford, The Nucleus provides a purpose-built space and support for entrepreneurs, start-ups and grow-on companies, working in the technology and knowledge intensive sectors. Owned by Dartford Borough Council, The Nucleus is a central hub offering tailored support and space solutions for a collaborative business community.

The state-of-the-art office, meeting and virtual facilities are set within The Bridge, a Business and Innovation Park designed to protect and enhance the natural environment. The development includes retained wildlife habitat; sports facilities; three fresh water lakes; a primary school; the UTC technical college and a range of large commercial occupiers and residential properties. The Nucleus is situated at the heart of the commercial and residential development linked by a network of footpaths and cycle ways plus the FastTrack bus route.

The daily operations and management of the centre is carried out by Oxford Innovation Space (OI). OI manage a range of Innovation centres across the UK on behalf of building owners including local authorities, educational institutions and property investors. For more company information visit: <https://www.oxfordinnovationspace.co.uk/>

The Nucleus offers:

- Flexible office space
- Virtual office packages
- A range of meeting and conference facilities
- Business growth and innovation support
- Facilitated access to business and innovation networks
- Co-Working

There is a range of support services and other benefits for tenants and non-tenants including:

- Expert advice and support to help tenants develop and grow their businesses
- Additional specialist innovation development support tailored to meet needs of users
- Opportunities to meet and collaborate with like-minded innovative businesses

In addition, The Nucleus contributes positively to its local community by increasing the economic, social and environmental benefits locally through creating real and meaningful connections between The Nucleus, its customers and the local community.

2 The Proposal

2.1 Introduction

Integral to The Nucleus as a place for customers to innovate, collaborate and grow will be the establishment of a café as the focal point of the facility in the central communal hub on the ground floor.

The Nucleus is seeking expressions of interest from a suitably qualified operator to run the on-site catering facility as a “grab-and-go” style café to serve the requirements of The Nucleus customers who rent workspace, and to satisfy conferencing and meeting room requirements as requested, by The Nucleus customers and external organisations for their events. These events requirements primarily take the form of business breakfasts and lunches as part of training, seminar, workshop networking and community events.

The Nucleus is keen to work with a catering partner that will develop and share the aims and values of The Nucleus to establish a mutually beneficial relationship for customers and the wider stakeholder network.

The café will be based in the main communal hub on the ground floor. The Nucleus will provide a range of catering equipment although it is the operators responsibility to maintain all such equipment as detailed in the Service Level Agreement. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of equipment to be provided)

The successful operator will keep all income during the initial 12-month period whilst the operation is established and is liable for any losses (including perished stock.) During this initial term, a flat rate rental will be charged.

Subsequent renewals will continue to be offered to the Licensee on commercial terms agreed between both parties, provided always that they perform to the Service Level Standards defined and therefore subject to the SLA Scorecard. Warning notices and ultimately notice to exit will be issued should at any time such standards not be maintained.

2.2 Vision

The vision for the café is to provide a healthy, value for money range of refreshments for customers within the workplace and/or meeting or attending an event at The Nucleus.

The café, including the staff and the menu, will reflect the vibrant vision of The Nucleus and all that it offers. The centre strives to provide an innovative, collaborative environment whereby individuals can develop new ideas to bring to the market place and the vision is that the café environment has an influence on this process and provide customers a place to build relationships.

The café must offer a high standard of food hygiene and customer service within The Nucleus brand. (Brand guidelines document is available upon request). It is important that the café supports the brand ethos of the centre. Oxford Innovation will negotiate with the café operator to agree the permitted use of the café operator’s own brand in the café space and confines of the centre. The Nucleus endorse a “buy local/shop local” ethos that assists and supports local businesses to tap into the local supply chain to ensure that local businesses benefit directly from the existence of The Nucleus. As such there is an expectation that the café operator will follow this ethos and source products locally.

The Nucleus cannot prevent workspace customers using kitchen facilities or bringing their own meals to work. However, we expect the chosen provider (working with The Nucleus Senior Management and operational teams) to entice customers to avail of the café by being creative, flexible and innovative to present regular special café offers

and promotional menus that can be publicised within the centre, and via other channels including social media and The Nucleus website.

2.3 Opening Hours

The Nucleus is accessible to all workspace customers on a 24/7 basis and to wider stakeholders visiting the centre during the standard Nucleus staffing hours (8.30am - 5.00pm).

The required **regular** café opening hours are - Monday to Friday – 8.30am-3.30pm.

Occasionally and upon negotiation we may accept bookings that run outside the standard Nucleus staffing hours (8.30am - 5.00pm). For example, business breakfasts or evening business seminars and events. If the chosen café partner could not, and/or did not wish to provide for the additional events then The Nucleus would engage an alternative supplier, although first refusal would be offered to the incumbent café operator.

2.4 Catering Opportunities

The Nucleus and its customer base collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders and as a result host some events for organisations who use our spacious conference/training facilities and break-out areas from the public, private and community sectors. The building is fully accessible with disabled toilets and a car-park that accommodates up to 60 vehicles. In addition to the central communal café hub that can seat around 30 people in the café.

The Nucleus has the following facilities accessible to the café operator, including;

- 60 individual business units potentially accommodating up to 298 people
- 3 bookable training/meeting rooms/spaces accommodating up to 35 people

The chosen operator will be our preferred caterer to provide all catering provision for these events.

The Nucleus is currently 70% occupied with a further pipeline of 5%. One of our current tenants run training sessions for which they require ad hoc catering for their attendee's. Levels of footfall cannot be guaranteed, and the successful operator will be required to revise the catering provision from this point as occupancy increases. To maximise on opportunities, the operator should engage with the wider Bridge community to attract customers from the neighbouring businesses and home owners.

2.5 Health and Safety

That the operator must comply with all food safety legislation. A link to the Dartford Borough Council's Food Safety webpage is detailed below.

<https://www.dartford.gov.uk/by-category/environment-and-planning2/Environmental-Health-Homepage/new-food-safety/information-for-businesses>

It is a requirement that any food business operator appointed to run the café facility and any associated staff are adequately competent and qualified to do so. As such all relevant qualifications should be listed in the proposal submission section.

The successful operator is responsible for their own Health & Safety, including the PAT testing of all portable equipment purchased and owned by the café operator, and all relevant insurances and should make adequate arrangements to ensure full compliance in this regard.

3 Submission Process and Timetable

Circulation of Opportunity	Week commencing 29th September 2025
Contact Kim Stevens, Centre Manager at The Nucleus - Oxford Innovation to arrange site visit. This will include an overview of the licensing arrangements.	Week commencing 13th October 2025
Final date for receipt of Expressions of Interest	12 noon on 8th November 2025
Notification to potential providers to attend interview	5pm on 11th November 2025
Interviews with potential providers	26th and 27th November 2025
Providers appointed	5th December 2025
The Nucleus available for providers to set up	15th December 2025
Café officially operational onsite	Monday 12th January 2026

Oxford Innovation reserves the right to alter the above timetable and respondents will be notified if alterations are made.

4 Expression of interest

Should you wish to express an interest in this opportunity then please contact Kim Stevens, Centre Manager via email at k.stevens@oxin.co.uk or by telephone on 07763 568388 to arrange a site visit and to find out more.

5 Important Information

1. The catering provider will enter into a license agreement with Oxford Innovation and a service level agreement relationship with The Nucleus Senior Management Team on a 12-month license with the option to renew for a further 12 months. It is not envisaged that the term will be extended past a 2-year term as the commercial model / arrangement will be reviewed by The Nucleus depending upon occupancy levels.
2. There is £100 license fee to pay per calendar month by the provider for use of the café space. This fee includes all costs excluding any applicable business rates. This will cover all utility charges. Following the initial 12-month license a review of the business arrangement will be undertaken, including a discussion of financial performance including a full P&L review.
3. Providers must show how they could positively contribute to facilitating skills development, placement and/or employment opportunities.
4. Providers must demonstrate an outline 3-year business plan as part of the application process.
5. The catering facility is required to be in operation from 8.30am – 3.30pm Monday - Friday. However, the extension of hours is negotiable.
6. The Nucleus cannot prevent their internal customers from bringing their own food on-site or using the other kitchen areas to prepare their own food.
7. The operator must gain agreement on menu, prices, customer service, quality control, hygiene and health and safety with The Nucleus Senior Management Team.
8. The operator will retain all income and be liable for any losses (including perished stock) during the initial license term.
9. Daily cleaning of kitchen area and cafeteria, (under a height of 2 metres) will be carried out by the operator. The Nucleus will arrange a deep clean of the cafeteria facility once a year.
10. The equipment remains the property of The Nucleus although it is the operator's responsibility to maintain all such equipment as detailed in the Service Level Agreement. This will include but will not be limited to, planned preventative maintenance, calibration and cleaning.
11. The operator must agree to participate in a monthly review meeting with The Nucleus Management Team. These reviews will be used to review café performance as per the balanced scorecard and discuss further development plans.

12. The Nucleus reserves the right to terminate the contract with immediate effect if they identify serious breaches of the Service Level Agreement.
13. The operator must give The Nucleus three months' notice of their intention to terminate the license agreement.
14. A detailed Service Level Agreement forms part of the license agreement and must be adhered to.
15. Two references will be requested.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Equipment provided

- Back bar counter (with shelving)
- Front bar counter
- Commercial Oven
- Stainless steel worktops and sink in kitchen
- Commercial dishwasher
- Chest Freezer
- Coffee Machine
- 1 x Undercounter Freezers
- 4 x Undercounter Fridges
- 2 x sofas
- Coffee Table
- Dining Tables & Chairs

The current cafe provider is happy to negotiate a deal for all of their current fixtures and fittings.

Appendix 2 – Images of Café Area



