**Participant Information Sheet for digital companies**

**Study Title**: The role of the built environment in the development of digital technology clusters

**Researcher**: Marion Payne

**ERGO number: 29971**

***Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.***

**What is the research about?**

I am undertaking research as part of my PhD studies with Southampton University. I am enrolled with the Geography and Environment department, and supervised by Professor Peter Sunley and Dr Brian Hracs. I am a Chartered Planning and Development Surveyor with a Masters degree in Business Administration. I have had a full career in planning consultancy and economic development studies, but want to explore the emerging needs of the digital economy. I am particularly interested in the role of clusters in supporting business and the fact that clusters remain relevant despite the new virtual economy. With my background in the built environment, I have noticed that its role in the development and support of clusters has been neglected in the academic literature. The purpose of this research is to undertake exploratory case studies to develop a better understanding of the role of local land based mechanisms of the built environment, including the property market; spatial planning; broad band; transportation; housing supply; commercial rates and local grants in the evolution of digital technology clusters. It is anticipated that the findings will provide useful observations and recommendations to local authorities who, in the age of localism are at the forefront of local economic development.

In the UK today, the cyber security and digital games businesses are distinctive in that they tend to cluster in some locations. For this reason, these subsectors have been chosen for study, with four clusters in differing locations identified for case study research. This will enable exploration and comparison between the business and cluster dynamics of the sub-sectors and also whether the nature of the built environment has any special effect on cluster evolution. The differing locations will provide the possibility of comparing the differential effects of the built environment impacts clusters of the same sub sector. To summarize, the key research questions are: -

1. What are the reasons behind the clustering behaviour of some niche digital technology businesses?
2. What is the role of the built environment in facilitating effective cluster development?
3. How can the land related mechanisms of planning, business rates and local infrastructure provision impact cluster development?

To this end the research will comprise three parts, an interview survey of cyber security and digital games companies which focuses on the strategic and built environmental needs of the companies; an analysis of the contextual built environment focussing on the identified needs of clustering firms as described in the interview survey, and finally a consolidation of the results and comparison of case studies.

**Why have I been asked to participate?**

Eight case study clusters have been identified for study, four cyber security clusters and four digital games clusters. Your company has been identified as being located in one of these. Your knowledge of the company strategy, locational and built environmental needs, make you an ideal participant in the study.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate, I would like to organise an interview, preferably in person, but a skype call might also be a possibility. The questionnaire is attached. The questions are as open as possible, with a view to encouraging you to be full and frank with your responses. It should not take longer than 30 mins of your time. I will be taking notes long hand, but it would help me if you would agree to my recording the interview. Thereafter I will share a copy of the transcript of the interview with you, before I start on the analysis stage. There will not be any further inputs from yourself, but I will share my results with you at the end of the study. You can be in touch with me or my supervisor at any stage, if you would like to follow up on the interview.

**Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

The study will be a comprehensive exploration of the property, planning and infrastructure impact on digital companies such as your own. It is anticipated that the consolidated results, observations and derived recommendations will provide valuable inputs to your local authority economic development policies and processes. They may also be of interest to local commercial property developers, attempting to understand the local property market.

**Are there any risks involved?**

It is not anticipated that there are any personal or corporate risks as regards your participation in this study. Your response will be confidential. I will devise a coding system, so every interview response will only be recognisable through knowledge of a key code. The coding system will be kept separately to the interview data. In addition, should the venue for the interview be a concern, I am happy to meet wherever you feel most comfortable.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

Your participation will be anonymous, furthermore in the final dissertation, the individual results will appear in aggregated format, individual responses will not be identifiable. The interview material will be kept solely by myself under lock and key. The only other persons that may have access to this material will be my supervisors. No third parties will have access to the data. The interview material and transcripts will be destroyed once the project has been completed.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you are happy to participate in the study, please will you reply to this email. If affirmative, then we can proceed with organising the date for the interview to take place. Please let me know if you have any conditions or any questions.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

Please be aware that you can withdraw from participating in this study up until 1 year after the interview and associated data destroyed. Thereafter the results will have been processed and will be difficult to extract from the combined results.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results will be published in my PhD thesis and summary outputs shared. I may get the opportunity of publishing some articles based on the research in professional journals and may also be invited to undertake some presentations.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, Marion Payne, on: [marionpaynebird@gmail.com](mailto:marionpaynebird@gmail.com) or my supervisor, Professor Peter Sunley on: [P.J.Sunley@soton.ac.uk](mailto:P.J.Sunley@soton.ac.uk)

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

Should any issues or complaints arise please contact the Head of Research Governance, University of Southampton,

[rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)

+44 (0) 2380 595058

**Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research**

**CONSENT FORM**

**Study title**: The role of the built environment in the development of digital technology clusters

**Researcher name**: Marion Payne

**ERGO number**: 29971

***Please initial the boxes if you agree with the statements:***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I have read and understood the information sheet (9/11/2017/version 1) of the participant information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. |  |
| I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study. |  |
| I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw up until 1 year after the interview for any reason without my rights being affected. |  |
| I understand that my interview will recorded on an audio system. |  |
| I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that my name will not be used. |  |
| I understand my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research. |  |
| **Data Protection**  I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of ethically approved research studies. |  |

Name of participant (print name)……………………………………………………………………………

Signature of participant……………………………………………………………………………………….

Date……………………………………………………………………………………….. ………………….

Name of researcher (print name)

MARION PAYNE ………………………………………………………………

Signature of researcher ……………………………………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..