

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

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| Decision Maker: | Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy |
| Date: | 7 November 2022 |
| Title: | Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan |
| Report From: | Director of Economy, Transport and Environment |

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the transport strategy and action plan for the Waterside area of the New Forest which is attached as Appendix A. It has been developed by Hampshire County Council in partnership with key stakeholders and following a public consultation and builds on the interim policy statement agreed in 2017.
2. The strategy and action plan are a transport response to the Waterside Vision statement prepared jointly by Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority and published in 2020 which sets out ambitious plans for the regeneration and economic development of the Waterside area.

Recommendations

3. That the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy approves the proposed Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan.
4. That the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy commends the Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan to New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority for endorsement within their relevant policy frameworks.

Executive Summary

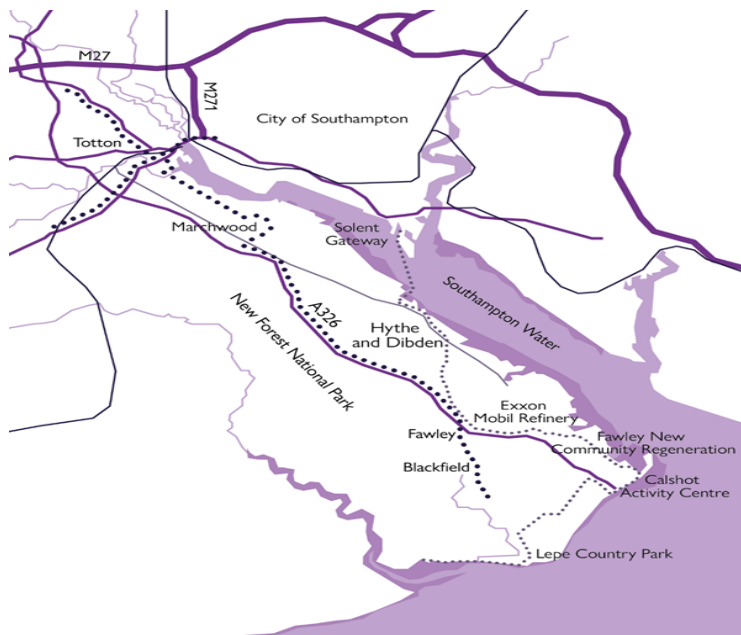
5. This paper seeks to set out a transport strategy and action plan for the Waterside area of the New Forest and create a framework for the formulation of transport schemes that support the economic, social and environmental needs of the Waterside area and the people who live, visit and work there.

Contextual information

6. The Waterside Transport Strategy area covers a part of the New Forest district between Totton in the north and Calshot to the south, including the settlements

of Marchwood, Hythe and Holbury /Fawley. It also includes a part of the New Forest National Park as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Fawley Waterside area.



7. The Transport Strategy and Plan is in part a response to the existing movement needs of the area but also the agreed Waterside Vision, published in 2020 by Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority which identified opportunities for significant redevelopment and economic growth. These include:

- Fawley Refinery (ExxonMobil) – the UK’s largest refinery, representing 20% of UK capacity;
- Fawley Waterside – the former Power Station and one of the largest brownfield development sites in the South of England, with plans to deliver a new sustainable community and centre of marine and maritime innovation;
- Marchwood Military Port (Solent Gateway) – the UK’s only combined military and commercial port, with plans to deliver significant commercial space utilising existing on-site rail infrastructure and deep-water dock capacity;
- Port of Southampton expansion (ABP) –proposals to develop a deep-water port providing extra capacity for the UK’s leading export port; and
- new homes – offering development capacity for 5000 new homes.

8. Since the publication of the Vision, planning permission has been granted for the Fawley Waterside redevelopment and for changes to the Solent Gateway site to enable further expansion of commercial operations at the military port. The Solent Freeport proposal has been submitted to Government and includes four sites on the Waterside (Solent Gateway, ABP Land Reserve, Fawley Exxon Refinery and Fawley Waterside). The Solent Freeport Outline Business Case has been granted Government approval, and Solent Freeport has recently considered expressing an interest in an investment zone to secure the same tax

benefits on its existing tax sites, while retaining the Freeport environmental protections.

9. The key transport challenges the strategy and plan set out to address are:
 - the peninsular-like geography which creates a long linear transport corridor which is heavily reliant on the A326 road for access;
 - ensuring the transport infrastructure can accommodate the impacts of growth as it occurs;
 - the accessibility of services and life opportunities for Waterside residents and for those wishing to visit the waterside. Some local communities and neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived in the UK; and
 - developing a plan and measures that respect the high-quality natural environment of the Waterside.
10. The County Council is the local highway authority and has a role to play in ensuring the growth is well planned and that local movement needs are improved. This is challenging in light of significant uncertainty over exactly how the Waterside will develop over time.

The Waterside Transport Strategy

11. The Strategy builds upon the Waterside Transport Study Phase 1 that was adopted by the County Council in 2017 as an interim policy statement. It has been informed by a strong evidence base which has helped to highlight the key transport challenges and opportunities, recent transport studies and assessments and a public and stakeholder consultation. The Evidence Base and the Report of Public Consultation have been published as supporting documents to this report at the following webpage; [Waterside Strategy | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/waterside-transport-strategy) and the Waterside Transport Strategy itself is appended to this report.
12. The Strategy has been designed to cover the period up to at least 2036 to align with the New Forest District Council (NFDC) Local Plan period. It has been developed with regard to the Hampshire Vision to 2050, the emerging Hampshire County Council Local Transport Plan 4 and the national policy context which includes the Department for Transport's, Transport Decarbonisation Plan, 'Gear Change' document which set out ambitious targets and plans for increasing levels of walking and cycling and 'Bus Back Better' which seeks to improve bus services in the UK. Regard has also been given to the Transport for the South East Regional Transport Strategy and subsequent draft Strategic Investment Plan.
13. The Waterside Transport Strategy includes a vision, seven priority themes which have been used to help prioritise interventions, a framework strategy which responds to different growth scenarios, and associated action plans for each. Key initiatives include road enhancements to the A326, new walking and cycling facilities, bus priority and other infrastructure measures. The plan also considers a specific scenario where the Network Rail scheme for reopening passenger rail services between Totton and Hythe, is successful in securing funding.

14. The strategy and plan scenarios are called base, base plus and base plus rail. Each assumes a slightly different and scalable development future and then lists the measures considered necessary for each. The base should be seen as a short to medium term look and includes approved development. The base plus is a medium-term view and considers a scenario where there is development of the strategic land reserve and more housing. The key difference between these two scenarios is the inclusion of the A326 road improvement and related measures in the base plus. The base plus rail is simply the addition of passenger rail services and complementary measures.
15. As the strategy has been developed a number of transport projects have been advanced at the same time. The most notable of these are the delivery of measures funded under the Transforming Cities Fund, the Redbridge Causeway major maintenance scheme, junction improvements for the southern section of the A326, and feasibility and design work for the A326 Road Improvement as well as Networks Rail's proposals for reopening passenger rail services on the Waterside.

Public Consultation Response

16. A public consultation on the draft Waterside Transport Strategy and potential scheme elements was undertaken during summer 2021. A series of Member briefings was held. In addition, online live Q&A sessions for the public were held. The consultation was advertised online, via social media, online press, and posters in local areas. Information packs were provided, and public opinions were sought via an online response form on:
 - the Draft Waterside Transport Strategy;
 - A326 Improvements (between Totton and Applemore);
 - Waterside Passenger Rail;
 - Totton Level Crossing Improvements; and
 - Waterside Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
17. Almost 1000 responses were received from the public and stakeholders which can be considered a robust number. These included responses from parish and town councils, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority and other key stakeholders. A full and detailed analysis of the response forms and comments has been undertaken and is published as a supporting document at [Waterside Strategy | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/waterside-strategy-transport-and-roads).
18. There was broad support for the proposals set out in the draft strategy. Key findings to note were:
 - Respondents would like to see the special qualities of the New Forest National Park being protected as the Strategy is developed. This is reflected throughout the survey, with a high level of respondents expressing views that road and other infrastructure improvements should enhance the natural environment. The A326 road scheme is being developed with a view to designing it so as to create a biodiversity uplift but also to include complementary schemes that lock in the traffic reduction benefits on some

country lanes through their designation as “green lanes” or similar type measures.

- The principle of re-introducing passenger rail services was well supported. However, a more recent public engagement undertaken by Network Rail has just taken place and when the analysis is available it will provide a more detailed and thorough overview of public opinion on this proposal.
 - Improving traffic flow on the A326 was well supported but not at any cost. There was a clear view that enhancement to the road should also reduce the severance caused by the road for those wanting to cross it by non-car modes, with support falling if these issues were not addressed. This response is now influencing the detailed design of the A326 road improvements under development.
 - Downtime at the Totton Level Crossing was considered by some respondents as a concern.
 - Respondents supported the walking and cycling routes and zones set out in the LCWIP plans with respondents stating they would walk or cycle more often if they were delivered.
19. New Forest District Council (NFDC) provided a response to the consultation that “support(s) the work being done to identify improvements to the transport network in Totton and the Waterside” and commits to “continue to work with Hampshire County Council to deliver a Waterside Strategy”.
20. The New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) also provided a response that highlighted the importance of the environmental designation in the area and the need to carefully design any transport improvements.
21. All the consultation findings have been incorporated into the final strategy and will continue to influence how schemes in the action plan are developed and brought forward.

Equalities

22. The Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan considers outline policies and proposals and at this stage has no direct impacts on people with protected characteristics. As such the strategy and action plan is considered to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics. As proposals are further developed, they will be subject to their own Equalities Impact Assessments.
23. It is worth noting that Hampshire County Council’s adopted position statement of the reopening of passenger rail services is conditional on Network Rail considering how concessionary pass holders will be charged for using rail services.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

24. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies

and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

25. As a statement of general strategy direction for the Waterside area of the New Forest, with limited planning status, it is not considered appropriate or necessary to complete the climate change tool and carbon assessment at this time. A carbon assessment may be required as the proposals of the strategy and action plan are endorsed by the local planning authorities, and schemes and studies are developed schemes prior to delivery.
26. A general carbon neutrality consideration is included in the strategy approach to the local road network and sustainability. It reflects the fact that recent audit work undertaken by the Carbon Trust for the County Council has identified that transport contributes 37% to carbon emissions from all sectors. Transport is also the sector which appears hardest to reduce when compared to other sectors like energy. It therefore places a high level of ambition on developers and the Local Planning Authority not only to look at a traditional approach to transport mitigation but also how that mitigation can support adopted carbon neutrality targets from the transport consequences of development. It also suggests developers look beyond their immediate boundary to offset their carbon impact by retrofitting transport measures in Waterside communities that reduce existing carbon impacts from transport.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

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| Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity: | yes |
| People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives: | yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment: | yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities: | yes |

Other Significant Links

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| Links to previous Member decisions: | |
| <u>Local Transport Plan 4</u> | 10 March 2022 |
| Waterside Vision-2020-09-29-Cabinet (hants.gov.uk) | 29 Sept 2020 |

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

| <u>Document</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| None | |

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan considers outline policies and proposals and at this stage has no direct impacts on people with protected characteristics. As such the strategy and action plan is considered to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics. As the proposals are further developed, they will be subject to their own Equalities Impact Assessments.