

<b>Board/Committee:</b>	<b>Regulatory Board</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>22/00064/HCC3 - COUNTY CONSULTATION - REGULATION 3 - CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW REPLACEMENT BUS STATION ON LAND ADJACENT TO FALKLANDS GARDENS AT MUMBY ROAD GOSPORT TOGETHER WITH A REPLACEMENT TAXI RANK AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES INCLUDING SHORT STAY CAR PARKING AND PICK-UP AND SET DOWN FACILITIES LAND AT THE EXISTING GOSPORT BUS STATION AND ADJACENT TO THE ESPLANADE AT FALKLAND GARDENS SHORT STAY CAR PARK MUMBY ROAD GOSPORT PO12 1AD</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Development Manager</b>
<b>Status:</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to consider a planning consultation received from Hampshire County Council (HCC) for a planning application to provide a replacement bus station on land adjacent to Falkland Gardens that currently provides a taxi rank, drop off area and short stay parking; the provision of a replacement taxi rank and drop off area on land fronting Mumby Road; and the provision of replacement short stay car parking adjacent to The Esplanade.

HCC is the applicant and Local Planning Authority for determining the planning application. Gosport Borough Council (GBC) has been consulted as part of the application process as the proposal is located in this Borough. The publicity for this proposal has been undertaken by HCC.

## **Recommendation**

Raise Comments:

The Borough Council supports the proposals for the replacement transport interchange and recommends that conditions are imposed in relation to ecological mitigation and enhancement, hard landscaping details, tree replacement, land contamination, a construction management plan and traffic management measures.

### **1.0 Background**

1.1 In 2020, HCC in partnership with GBC, Portsmouth City Council and the Isle of Wight Council, together with the support of Local Authorities and Transport Operators, were successful with their Portsmouth City Region bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a share of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF). An overall award of £55.6 million from the “Tranche 2” funding has been secured to deliver a broad package of transport improvement schemes across South East Hampshire. Being a multi-modal hub the Gosport Interchange improvements are a key scheme in the approved package and an important step in the continued development of a rapid transit network for the area. Since the award of funding HCC, working in partnership with GBC, have developed the proposed improvements.

- 1.2 Following the development of potential options for improvements the preferred option was subject to public consultation between July and September 2021 following briefings with Councillors and other key stakeholders. Comments received during the consultation have informed the final proposed designs that are the subject of this planning application. Prior to the detailed consultation on the preferred scheme for the Gosport Interchange, a survey to gain an insight into the public views on a rapid transit system for the area was held in September / October 2019, and evidence from this survey was key in the award of monies from the TCF.
- 1.3 The proposed scheme is to improve the facilities at the Gosport Interchange by providing modern, efficient and future-proofed infrastructure, whilst conforming to the objectives of the Adopted Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre SPD, preserving the setting of the adjacent Falkland Garden and being a stepping stone in the wider long-term regeneration of this part of the Borough. The provision of a modern transport interchange is also intended to contribute to improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions through improved modal share for public transport.
- 1.4 It is proposed to future-proof the bus station with enabling infrastructure for the later provision of charging for electric buses once the technology is available to facilitate rapid charging.

## **2.0 The Site & Proposal**

- 2.1 The application site is an irregular parcel of parcel of land that includes: the land between Mumby Road and Falkland Gardens that currently provides a taxi rank, drop off area and short stay parking; much of the apron of the current bus station and Mumby Road Bus Station Car Park; an area of land to the south of The Esplanade; parts of the carriage and footway of Mumby Road and South Street; highway land at the bottom end of the High Street; and, a small area of land falling within the current site of Gosport Marina. Most of the application site is owned by either HCC or GBC other than a small part adjacent to the existing short stay parking areas which is in the process of being acquired by GBC from the operator of Gosport Marina. The application site also includes the Coates Road Car Park off South Street which is proposed to be used to provide a contractors compound.
- 2.2 The application site is mainly laid to hardstanding for use by vehicles or pedestrians but does include a number of street trees, some of which would be lost with replacement planting included as part of these proposals. The submitted drawings indicate that up to seven trees would be removed with the same number being planted as replacements.
- 2.3 Much of the application site is located within the Waterfront Regeneration Area and is adjacent to but mostly outside of the High Street Conservation Area. The area of land to the south of The Esplanade proposed to be used to provide replacement short stay parking is designated as Existing Open Space in the Gosport Borough Local Plan. Parts of the site fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3. To the north of the site is the Locally Listed Castle Tavern Public House. To the north-east is Falkland Gardens that are also designated as Existing Open Space. Portsmouth Harbour to the east of the site is designated as a Special Protection Area.

- 2.4 The planning application comprises a number of elements. The replacement bus station would include an apron with six bays and an elongated glazed shelter providing cover for waiting passengers and would be sited between Mumby Road and Falkland Gardens. The shelter would measure approximately 30 metres long by 4.0 metres deep with a mono-pitched roof with a maximum height of 3.0 metres. The shelter would be oriented parallel with Mumby Road and comprise glazed panels in a grey metal framework with regular openings to facilitate passenger movements to and from buses. The shelter would include seating and real time transport information. There are two access points to enter the shelter and entry to the buses will be via six individual openings leading directly to the waiting buses.
- 2.5 The apron of the existing bus station and the adjacent Mumby Road Bus Station Car Park would be used to provide a taxi rank and drop off area to replace the existing that would be lost by the re-siting of the bus station. Vehicles would access both elements from The Esplanade and exiting onto South Street. The capacity of these areas would maintain the existing provision (for 20 taxis), and a comparable drop-off capacity with two lanes as in the existing situation.
- 2.6 Replacement short stay parking (9 spaces, including one disabled) would be provided in a bay on the southern side of The Esplanade with vehicles parking perpendicular to the highway. This element of the proposals would also include the provision of a turning facility.
- 2.7 The wider TCF proposals of which this application forms part include other works, notably the rerouting of buses through the Town Centre via North and South Cross Streets. However, these works would not require planning permission and are not part of the planning application.

### **3.0 Relevant Planning Policies**

#### **3.1 Gosport Borough Local Plan, 2011 – 2029:**

- LP1 Sustainable Development
- LP3 Spatial Strategy
- LP4 The Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre
- LP9A Allocations outside of Regeneration Areas: Mixed Use site
- LP10 Design
- LP12 Conservation Areas
- LP13 Locally Important Heritage Assets
- LP21 Improving Transport Infrastructure
- LP23 Layout of Sites and Parking
- LP35 Protection of Existing Open Space
- LP41 Green Infrastructure
- LP42 International and Nationally Important Habitats
- LP44 Protecting Species and Other Features of Nature Conservation Importance
- LP45 Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion
- LP47 Contamination and Unstable Land

#### **Supplementary Planning Documents:**

- Waterfront and Town Centre SPD (March 2018)
- Parking SPD (February 2014)

## 4.0 Principal Issues

- 4.1 The main issues for consideration are the visual impact of the proposals, any impact on highway and pedestrian safety, the effect on the nearby properties, any impact on ecology and the loss of an area of grass designated as Existing Open Space.
- 4.2 The application site is located in the Urban Area boundary where the principle of this type of development is acceptable. Policy LP4 of the Local Plan makes specific provision for the location of a new transport interchange in this area. The Waterfront and Town Centre SPD identifies the application site for a replacement transport interchange and highlights the importance of it being conveniently sited close to the Ferry pontoon and to incorporate bus services, taxis, a setting down/pick up area and a time limited vehicle waiting area. The SPD also sets out the need for a high quality interchange for bus passengers with a covered waiting area. The principle of the proposal would therefore accord with Policy LP4 of the Local Plan and the aims and aspiration of the Waterfront and Town Centre SPD.
- 4.3 The proposed short stay car parking on the southern side of The Esplanade would result in the loss of a small area of Existing Open Space extending to approximately 170 square metres. Policy LP35 makes provision for the redevelopment of part of such areas where this would enable the provision of a community facility. In this instance the wider transport interchange proposals are considered to be a facility that would contribute towards meeting the transport needs of the residents and visitors to the Borough that would justify the loss of a very small proportion of the 3,000 square metres of the grassed area between Hammond Court and Harbour Tower. The proposal will also facilitate the regeneration of the existing bus station site which will include associated further public realm improvements.
- 4.4 This area has a complex history of continual modification and change. For many centuries it formed the waterfront to the town with sea walls cutting through the proposed bus station site and built development fronting the proposed taxi rank area south of the High Street. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century boat building dominated sections of the waterfront, although more to north and south of the site in question. The area included a stone hard, aligned approximately to the High Street down to the present ferry pontoon (still believed to be intact beneath the current surface), and access to the chain ferry south of the hard and opposite the north-south alignment of buildings south of the High Street. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a number of transient structures have appeared and disappeared (mostly relating to ticket offices, public conveniences, and booths in the context of the chain ferry and gardens).
- 4.5 The proposals have taken account of the sensitivities of the broader setting in design and layout. The bus station is in fact reverting to its original location immediately west of Falkland Gardens, with the proposed shelter carefully designed to minimize its visual impact and purposefully located within the area of the original bus station. The light detailing and dominant use of glass panels beneath a slender roof form all limit the visual impact of the building. The associated landscaping respects the integrity of the Falkland Gardens with allowance for some bicycle stands within the footprint of a former building at the south-western corner of the 1922 Gardens. The linear form of the new bus shelter

will help to reinforce the boundary of the Gardens. By being kept low, with its light structure in recessive grey tones, its built form would not harm the setting of the Gardens.

- 4.6 The taxi ranks could not return to their original historic location as this would involve the loss of the southern part of Falkland Gardens. The proposed taxi rank and associated infrastructure is appropriately located south of the access path to the ferry, with convenient access and visibility from the High Street and ensuring that future redevelopment potential on the existing bus station site is not compromised.
- 4.7 The Heritage Statement clearly details and explains all historic and archaeological matters relevant to the site and its setting. The proposals will result in significant improvements to the interchange, in place of the unattractive and poorly designed existing Bus Station which has suffered from incremental change over a long period. Returning the Bus Station area to its historic location is positive in heritage terms and has the added benefit of improved landscaping in the context of Falkland Gardens.
- 4.8 The proposed surface materials are compatible with existing surfaces and will help to reinforce the boundary to Falkland Gardens and make public access to these Gardens from the north much clearer and safer. The soft landscaping also complements the wider setting and offers some positive enhancement.
- 4.9 Full details of the proposed railings, and wall and gateway along the northern edge of the development, will need to be submitted and agreed, and sample materials for all proposed surfaces should be provided. Additionally, sample materials for the bus shelter should be submitted for approval and clarity on the species of proposed trees will be necessary. Subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the above, the proposals are acceptable in design and heritage terms and comply with Policies LP10 and LP12 of the Local Plan.
- 4.10 The proposals would, in effect, exchange the existing bus station with the taxi rank and drop/off pick up area. As a result, the level of activity associated with the use of these facilities would change in location but not in overall intensity. The separation of the areas where vehicles manoeuvre from nearby residential properties would not be greatly altered such that no significantly greater impact on amenity would result. The proposed building is single storey and would be located over 40 metres from the nearest residential building and as such would have no impact on the amenities of occupiers of these properties. The proposals, given their nature, would not be likely to have any significant impact on the occupiers or users of other neighbouring non-residential properties. The proposals have been carefully designed to minimise any impact on the users of the adjacent Falkland Gardens. Overall the proposals are considered acceptable in amenity terms and comply with Policy LP10 of the Local Plan.
- 4.11 The layout of the proposed bus station has been subject to detailed design taking into account the number of bays required, individual bay sizes and the turning manoeuvres of the buses to ensure the facility is the optimum design for operational purposes, and meets the current and future requirements of the bus operator. The final design as proposed in this planning application has been refined such that the bus station apron and adjacent highway are able to accommodate electric buses, which are longer and have more onerous turning

requirements than the current bus fleet. With the inclusion of enabling infrastructure to provide future electric charging facilities it is considered the proposed design has been sufficiently future-proofed, and could also facilitate buses turning either way out of the Bus Station. Within the paved area to the east of the proposed bus shelter it is proposed to provide new additional cycle parking. 10 Sheffield style stands are indicated, which at the appropriate spacing would provide capacity for 20 bicycles. At this stage the existing cycle parking facilities are not affected and will remain in operation. Facilities enabling cyclists to leave / enter the highway from the approach to the Gosport Ferry are retained in their current layout. The existing servicing facilities for the adjacent Public house have been incorporated to the proposals.

- 4.12 The proposed taxi rank has been designed so as to provide the same capacity of queuing space as the existing facility, and the proposed design would allow the taxis to queue in their own dedicated two-lane facility without encroaching across other facilities as is currently the case. The Head of Environmental Health Partnership, in representing GBC as the Taxi Licensing Authority, has advised on the requirements and suitability of the proposals throughout the design process.
- 4.13 The replacement drop-off/pick-up facility has been designed with two drive-through lanes to discourage users from waiting for significant periods as per the operation of the existing facility, in order that the area is used efficiently. Unlike the current drop-off / pick-up area there will be continuity of footways between the new facility and the footways on South Street and The Esplanade to the other areas of the interchange, thereby providing safer facilities for those on foot. There will also be an upgraded pedestrian crossing facility in this location, with an island at the junction of The Esplanade with South Street.
- 4.14 The proposals also provide nine short-stay parking places on the southern side of The Esplanade, which includes the provision of a dedicated space for users with disabilities, together with a turning head for cars. It is envisaged that these spaces will be subject to a waiting restriction to encourage the turn-over of spaces so as to retain the facility for users needing to wait for short periods. These parking spaces have been designed to conform to the requirements of the Borough Council's Adopted Parking SPD. Should users wish to park for longer there are numerous short and long stay car parks in the Town Centre. The proposals are considered acceptable in highway terms and comply with Policies LP21 and LP23 of the Local Plan.
- 4.15 The application is accompanied by a comprehensive Ecological Appraisal which identifies that the site supports habitats of limited ecological interest or value. The nature of the proposal is such that it would not have any significant effect on any of the nearby designated sites, with the only real impact being the loss of trees and shrubbery, which could support nesting birds. This can be mitigated through the proposed replacement planting and the timing of certain works to avoid the bird nesting season. Subject to the imposition of suitable planning conditions the proposals would comply with Policies LP41 and LP42 of the Local Plan.
- 4.16 The proposed development is in an area of Coastal Flood Risk, including a small area in Flood Zones 2 and 3, however, this is similar to the existing situation. The intended land uses are classed as 'less vulnerable' in flood risk terms and appropriate for the level of flood risk present on the site.

- 4.17 The proposed development was subject to the Sequential Test as part of producing the Gosport Borough Local Plan, and this report has demonstrated how it meets the requirements of the Exception test. However, some coastal flood risk remains and it is expected that this risk will increase due to the effects of sea level rise. It is not reasonably practicable to incorporate additional defences as part of the current proposals.
- 4.18 The proposed development needs to be considered in the context of flood risks associated with off-site surface water flows, where rainfall exceeds the capacity of the drainage system outside of the site boundary, and whose flooding enters the site boundary. The proposed drainage strategy for the development follows the same principles as the existing situation by connecting to the existing Southern Water surface water sewer networks, and makes use of sustainable drainage principles (i.e. attenuating runoff near the source) where practicable to do so. The proposed drainage strategy also considers providing betterment in water quality, where practicable to do so, and should include a suitable oil interceptor to remove pollutants associated with the bus apron.
- 4.19 The proposed drainage strategy will ensure that any runoff from exceedance events will be directed in an appropriate manner that reduces risk to people and property. Overall the proposal is considered acceptable in flood risk terms and would comply with Policy LP45 of the Local Plan.
- 4.20 The site comprises elements of reclaimed land and as such has the potential to be contaminated. The application is supported by a Land Condition Report which concludes that, given the history of the site, the risk to human health or the environment is very low. Subject to the imposition of a planning condition to deal with any unexpected contamination, the proposals would comply with Policy LP47 of the Local Plan.
- 4.21 Overall the proposals are considered to represent a well-considered and designed replacement transport interchange that would be a significant improvement on the existing facilities. The proposals would contribute towards the regeneration of the Town Centre and Waterfront as set out in Policy LP4 of the Local Plan and the aims and aspirations of the Waterfront and Town Centre SPD.

<b>Financial Services comments:</b>	n/a
<b>Legal Services comments:</b>	Included within this report.
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	n/a
<b>Climate Change implications:</b>	The provision of a high quality transport interchange would promote the use of sustainable alternative modes of transport to the private car.
<b>Crime and Disorder:</b>	n/a
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	n/a
<b>Service Improvement Plan implications:</b>	n/a
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	n/a
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Low
<b>Background papers:</b>	Planning application and supporting documents
<b>Appendices/Enclosures:</b>	
Appendix 'A'	Location Plan
<b>Report author/ Lead Officer:</b>	Simon Barnett Ext. 5645

