

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 30 August 2017 13:52  
To: Planning Policy Internet  
Subject: Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre SPD

Dear Sirs,

Members and Directors have read and discussed the above with interest and have prepared the attached response.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Baker-Jones

Secretary - Gosport Marine Scene

Tel: [REDACTED]

gosportmarinescene

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**Attachments:**



## Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Draft June 2017

### Introduction

Gosport Marine Scene (GMS) welcomes the Supplementary Development Plan (SPD) which sets out the first coherent and connected vision for the Waterfront and Town Centre (WF&TC).

Recent announcements of the release of Defence land at Fort Blockhouse and Royal Clarence Yard, together with the closure of the Immigration Removal Centre, create the first opportunity in several centuries for a co-ordinated approach to the development of the Gosport WF and the Haslar peninsula. GMS supports Gosport Borough Council (GBC) in bringing pressure to bear on the relevant government agencies to speed the release of these tracts and to do so in a way that respects the character of the Gosport shoreline.

Many of the elements of the SPD depend on private developers recognising and investing in opportunity sites whilst GBC has control of only some sites. However, GBC should use its influence and authority to set out and assert a clear picture of how the WF&TC should look and function, as part of a coherent programme to market the area. In particular, GBC should strongly resist any developments that threaten to cut off physical or visual access to the WF.

### Vision

Gosport has many fine assets that are neglected and under-recognised. Although the value of its services, heritage and littoral are recognised by those who know them, there has been no serious investment in marketing the WF&TC. The lack of a joined-up strategy for the promotion of tourism and economic development is very evident in the absence of a strong Gosport brand.

The consumer facet of the brand should emphasise Gosport as a Destination for maritime, heritage and family tourism. The business facet of the brand should distinctly promote its unique assets and services for the marine industries. GMS has piloted the latter but it is not in a position to lead an entire marketing programme. Shared administration with Portsmouth creates the opportunity to market the complementary nature of the offers of the Borough and the City.

Making a proper connection between the Water Front and Gosport Town Centre is essential. From the Ferry Gate westwards, there is no indication to visitors that this is a maritime town. There is a need to connect retail, leisure and heritage Gosport with boating Gosport. The

large numbers of boaters visiting during the summer months and major yachting events find nothing to draw them into the town, nothing that says boaters are welcome and wanted here.

The now-defunct Town Team spent much effort and money on re-opening retail units in defiance of economic realities. Retailers are beginning to recognise the importance of the boating pound and this should be supported and built upon.

## Strengths

A previous marketing campaign for Endeavour Quay had as its strapline 'Gosport has it all.' Although this was targeted at yachting services, it is true more generally; the WF&TC have an extraordinary range of services and attractions.

Gosport is the home of sail training with a very significant number of Sailing Training Organisations based here. These include the Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO), Sail Training International (STI), Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre (JSASTC), Clipper Round the World Sail Training and Alex Thomson Racing. TS Royalist (the Sea Cadets flagship), Ocean Youth Trust South, Little Brigs and Boleh Trusts sail trainers are all based in Gosport. Small boat training is provided by the Sea Cadets, Sea Scouts, St Mary's Junior, Hardway & Stokes Bay Sailing Clubs and an RYA Onboard Training Centre at Lee-on-the-Solent Sailing Club.

Gosport is a major centre for yachting services on the south coast. It's physical position at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour coupled with its 24 miles of waterfront and deep water access to the Solent makes it an ideal location for marine related businesses and leisure activities with over 2000 yacht berths available. The supporting infrastructure and facilities that are available to existing marine related businesses encourages others to locate to Gosport: these include the R&D facilities and premises options at Haslar Marine Technology Park, boat lifting facilities at Endeavour Quay, diving facilities at Blockhouse and slipways such as the one at the Daedalus Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone, covering 82ha, focuses on advanced manufacturing within the marine, aerospace and aviation sectors and, although not part of the SPD area, offers significant financial incentives to marine related business to relocate to the area.

Gosport's cultural and heritage assets are well represented by the outstanding annual Heritage Open Days, which include contemporary as well as historic maritime venues and spectacles. They are a model for promotion of the town.

Among Gosport's strengths is that, as a peninsula, it has not suffered from overdevelopment. The profligate holding of land for defence purposes, while hindering development, has also protected much that could otherwise have been swept away.

The WF as defined by the SPD contains much to fascinate residents and visitors alike. Gosport's wider littoral is remarkable, with its mix of creeks, marshes, wetlands, saltings, stunning bays and beaches. It is not a jest to say 'Think Stockholm without the gloom, Monaco without the bling, Venice without the smell'. Gosport has fine features that echo all of these remarkable places with few of their most obvious disadvantages.

Perhaps Gosport's greatest asset is its people and sense of community, which generates a huge amount of voluntary activity and shared endeavour.

## Weaknesses

The known and quantified spending power of the yachting community is neglected by retail Gosport. It should be a goal to encourage visitors to spend in Gosport rather than in their town of departure.

The failure to connect the Gosport Waterfront from Falkland's Gardens to Royal Clarence Yard (RCY).

Lack of hotel accommodation or conference facilities in the Town Centre.

Lack of regular events at Walpole Park, Falkland's Gardens or Timespace to encourage visitors to come to Gosport

We agree that there is no identifiable Gosport brand. Gosport needs to be perceived to be a Destination. While specific sites are signposted there is no statement about the town as a whole. Although straplines are transient, they have the effect of creating interest and expectations 'The Waterfront City', 'Sea City' for example.

Communications into Gosport are perceived to be a challenge, though they are not in fact worse than many towns and have some unique advantages, rail access to London and the east and west being one of them. Another that was prominent in the past but has fallen out of the picture is the ease of sea connections, now via Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight and the continent.

The latest transport plan fails to address the inadequate road access for commerce and industry to the eastern sector of Gosport, where most marine businesses are located. GMS remains critical of the highways authority and the LEP for failure to recognise and act on this.

Gosport's greatest weakness may be its lack of self-confidence, its readiness to be overshadowed by the neighbouring towns and its apparently limitless capacity for withering self-criticism. Confident and assertive leadership has benefited our neighbours; it could do the same the for Gosport.

## Opportunities

The new connection between GBC and PCC through shared administration is an important opportunity to think and plan across the Harbour. Portsmouth has big commercial and defence shipping; Gosport has small commercial and recreational vessels: both have high quality maritime heritage. A complementary offer for the whole Harbour is desirable and is at last possible.

Through the Coastal Community Team, GMS proposed a Marine Heritage Walk on the WF. The SPD takes this concept of interpretation and education and develops it further, which GMS welcomes.

Gosport's marine tourism offer is under-developed. GMS had some success in 2014 with presenting a joined-up picture, but it needs the support and resources of the Borough, City and County tourism services to market this properly.

For unclear reasons, perhaps to do with the loss of employment in the Dockyard, marine employment and recreation tend to have dropped out of the picture of their town of most Gosport residents. At the same time the stereotype of yachting being solely for the rich has gained ground. GMS and other organisations (Sea Cadets, Sea Scouts, St Mary's Junior Sailing Club, Lee-on-the-Solent and Stokes Bay Sailing Clubs) are working hard to redress the balance and assert that anyone can go afloat. The momentum these bodies are creating, along with that of Portsmouth Sail Training Trust, the 1851 Trust and others, is an opportunity to change the presumption about who can sail for pleasure or work.

Creating public access to the marinas while maintaining security requires imagination and collaboration between the operators and GBC. Gosport Marina offers close proximity to the boats while keeping them and their contents secure, while Haslar has successfully opened the Marina during the Gosport Marine Festivals. Hornet Services Sailing Club is very visible from Haslar Bridge but the site is closed to the public because of its defence associations.

Gosport has long been a focus for yachting services because of its location and littoral. With the resurgence of high-value yachting, there is an opportunity to develop this further. The location of BAR in the Camber, Alex Thomson Racing in Haslar, Clipper Racing at Gosport Marina and an increasing number of high-profile visiting teams create opportunities to increase the visibility of yachting as a spectacle. GMS has demonstrated its ability to turn out land-side support for marine events – P1 Powerboat racing, the 2014 America's Cup World Series, Alex Thomson's return from the Vendée Globe. The interest and goodwill should continue to be taken up.

GMS understands that there is demand for additional visitor berths with pontoons or moorings for visiting yachtsmen to the north and south of the Ferry. To the south of the Ferry terminal the moorings are leased by Portsmouth Sailing Club but are under-utilised for most of the year.

Developing appropriate sections of the WF for big yachts would encourage the service industries further. The retained area at Royal Clarence Yard (RCY) and Fort Blockhouse waterfront are prime candidates. Like the team racing events, these bring considerable activity and spend in their wake and should be cultivated.

GBC should build on the meetings convened by GMS between the commercial marinas (Haslar, Gosport Premier and Royal Clarence) and the services marinas (Hornet Services Sailing Club and defence sailing units, and Portsmouth Offshore Group/Civil Service Sailing Association). These were convened to discuss shared opportunities and interests, and potential sharing of facilities and it was clear that there is enough in common to make it worth the same group reviewing the SPD.

### Challenges

Royal Clarence Yard is often cited as an object lesson in mistakes, with the waterfront cut off from marina services, overdevelopment of housing and inadequate on-site services, insufficient parking and not enough resident population to guarantee the survival of the food outlets. At the same time the expansion of small marine business in the office and light industrial units is encouraging.

Inevitably developers will wish to extract maximum value from investments by building to the edge of sites and building as high as possible. The new McCarthy and Stone development beside Gosport Boatyard exemplifies the oppressive results. By producing a clear plan with wide public support and asserting its intentions forcefully and publicly, even without formal powers to prevent cavalier use of space and skylines, GBC can resist unwelcome development.

With only a few exceptions, Gosport's 160+ marine businesses have not benefited from development funding, which has tended to be targeted on larger enterprises, or to have onerous conditions beyond the resources of small businesses. GBC should press the Local Enterprise Partnership to give more support to the small marine businesses which contribute substantially to the local economy.

## Themes

### Theme B: Creating New Employment Opportunities

The takeup of office units by marine-related businesses at Haslar Marina and Royal Clarence Yard demonstrates demand for such space, which requires proximity to other marine enterprises rather than direct waterfront access. Development of an office economy as well as enhancing the marine economy.

### Theme C: Enhancing the Shopping and Leisure Experience

Relaxing the limit on non-retail use of units in the High Street would enable more marine-related businesses to relocate and help to change the character of the TC.

### Theme D: Providing New Homes

Careful zoning is required. Yachting services include non-intrusive trades, but light industrial yacht services may be incompatible with residential and leisure development.

### Theme E: Improving Accessibility

The number and frequency of bus services offsets to some extent the failure to complete the rapid bus route, but more emphasis should be given to the value of the 'to-and-through' route to and from Portsmouth. GMS supports to proposal to rename Portsmouth Harbour Station as Portsmouth and Gosport Station to help understanding of easy access to train services from the town.

Gosport's extensive and cheap car parks are under-utilised, have low levels of crime and vandalism and are insufficiently promoted. Encouraging boaters to use the car parks is a way of bringing the boating pound back into the town's economy. Shedding too much of the car parking capacity close to the TC&WF could be counterproductive in the longer term as new facilities and services are created.

There is a view that the A32 is not so big a barrier to the marine industries as is claimed, except when a major event or vessel launch requires an unusual number of trucks to come to the WF. Hamble, Cowes and Lymington suffer no less from their restricted road access. Though a major rebuilding programme is not on the cards for the medium term, and would be a protracted inconvenience, more determined marketing of Gosport's assets and benefits would be a good investment in the near term.

### Theme J: Creating a Healthier Town

"Those who use the water for sport and leisure will already know that a sailing environment promotes health and wellbeing and develops skills that improve a person's ability to succeed in life and work." Andrew Simpson Foundation.



Working with the national and regional sports bodies, GBC should seek support for creating one or more boating centres for young people. ASTO, the UK umbrella body for sail training is based in Gosport, together with a range of clubs and organisations promoting access to boating and the sea. These are great potential asset on which to build.

There is potential to make much more of the cycling opportunities in a town that is more or less completely flat. Visitors, especially those arriving by ferry or boat, could hire cycles to get around. Routes with maps or apps could take visitors and residents alike to the key heritage sites.

## Opportunity Sites

### Bus Station and Falkland Gardens

Falkland Gardens is an agreeable, rather retro, area whose character is worth preserving and even emphasising, with simple touches like marine plantings and marine street furniture such as ancient anchors, buoys and so forth. The Falklands connection could also be emphasised. The potential of a small performance space has been demonstrated during occasional events over recent years and would add to the period character. As the gateway to the town for visitors coming off the Ferry, the Gardens should embody the Gosport brand. When the Bus Station is reshaped there is an opportunity to enhance the gardens and their surroundings without losing the appeal. Plans for the redevelopment of the Bus Station, a genuine transport interchange, should be appropriate to the character and scale of the town.

The aspiration for a landmark building risks creating a statement that intrudes into the sightlines and WF access. Since GBC owns this land, it is a position to be assertive about the sort of development it wishes to see. Retail Gosport can be much more important to visitors: asserting the distinct, useful, workaday character of the High Street is much more attainable than trying to compete with Gunwharf Quays and brands.

Low rise restaurants and cafes would fit with the existing environment and usage. However, the aspiration to grow the night-time economy should be managed carefully; the area currently suffers from rowdiness, noise and litter between 2300 and 0400.

Exploiting the location by creating more upmarket residential/retail is desirable, but it would be a mistake to line the WF with upscale homes that Gosport's residents could not afford. There is already a risk of creating the sort of parallel economy seen throughout the Caribbean islands, where the wealthy live by the beach and the poor who serve them can only afford to live inland.

### Gosport Waterfront North of Mumby Road

Continuation of the Millennium Walkway along the front of Rope Quays would make it much easier to connect to Royal Clarence Yard.

### Royal Clarence Yard and the Retained Area

There is a view that the current site of Endeavour Quay is too close to the TC, residential buildings and barring the completion of the Millennium Walkway and waterfront access. If Premier Marinas were prepared to make the investment, RCY would be a better site with longer deep water frontage, more space for hauling out and servicing, and separation from residential housing. However, the existing site has strong historical connections, which could be reflected in a museum housing the Camper and Nicholson archive and other yachting heritage exhibits.

### Trinity Green Area

Seasonal pop ups and insets akin to the those on London's South Bank and other initiatives could enhance the flow and footfall along the Esplanade de Royan, Millennium Pier and Trinity Green.

Haslar Bridge gives vehicle access to the Haslar peninsula but it effectively bars seaborne access to an important stretch of water in Haslar Lake. Historically, its predecessors had much higher mid sections that allowed gunboats and sailing boats to pass through at certain tidal states. The creation of a lifting span in Haslar Bridge would open up more use of the water for sailing and use of the waterside even with environmental constraints.