
Importance: High

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Water&TownSDPSep17-LRA Response2.pdf

From: Planning-LeeResidents [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 September 2017 17:16
To: Planning Policy Internet
Subject: Document attached from Lee Residents Association
Importance: High

Please see attached letter for your urgent attention.

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Best regards
Lee Residents Planning Team

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Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre SPD Draft Consultation: Lee Residents Association response

Comments on the Vision

1. The Lee Resident Association (LRA) welcomes the stated ambitions of the Vision outlined in the draft SPD, particularly the cultural, community and retail facilities which can only help to bring residents living elsewhere in the peninsula into Gosport town as well as nurture a sense of pride and belonging. The vision supports our constitutional aims of endeavoring to improve the environment and make it an attractive place to live and work.
 - 1.1. The Association strongly believes that among the listed improvements good road and cycle access should also be included.

Comments on the stated Strengths

2. The LRA does not dispute the majority of the stated strengths listed in the SPD, particularly the acknowledgement of the maritime environment together with the harbour setting, heritage assets and the opportunities for tourists and visitors once within the town.
 - 2.1. Transport: The LRA believes that while some aspects of the transport facilities are strong – the ferry affording connection to Portsmouth and its rail terminus. None of the other transport links mentioned can be considered a strength. The long distance trails that pass through the waterfront are diverted and congested and connections with the National Cycle network are very nebulous. Nor are the present cycle track routes safe and viable due to lack of continuity and awkward mix of shared use with pedestrians and vehicles.
 - 2.2. The transport interchange, while its function is agreed as a strength, its crowded nature and frequent mix of pedestrian, cyclist, bus, car and taxi passengers is a design failing, perhaps due to historic usage patterns, which hopefully will be addressed in the new design.
 - 2.3. Each style of transportation should be afforded distinct separation so that all users can safely gain access to their desired mode of transport.

Comments on the stated Weaknesses

3. The LRA agrees with the listed Weaknesses in the SPD. However, we have the following comments to make:
 - 3.1. While it is true that hotel accommodation is quite limited in the town centre, this list of weaknesses may possibly be addressed if the proposed hotels in the high street and the Haslar development are realised. If a Seaward/Harbour Tower block could be adapted to provide a few top floors as a hotel topped by a revolving restaurant. This could achieve the both the landmark statement addressed in paragraph 6.3 below and be a noteworthy way of addressing the hotel bed shortfall. This partial change of function and modernisation would also help ameliorate the frequent criticism and purpose of the tower block structures





and with the removal of all the ugly external drain pipes (and presumably the elevate fire safety features to meet up to date requirements) it could achieve a tourist as well as the local landmark function sought.

3.2. Transport: The LRA considers transport to be a significant weakness.

3.2.1. Public transport: The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) does not effectively reach the Waterfront area.

3.2.2. The A32 link is notoriously congested especially where it reaches the SPD.

3.2.3. Cycle paths: Despite the prevalence of cycling within the peninsular there are no dedicated cycle routes and a dangerous mix of road routes, cyclist and pedestrians the closer you get to the ferry pontoon. The lack of coherent, joined up, safe, dedicated (not shared pedestrian) cycle paths particularly to the ferry terminal and around the area is a significant weakness.

Comments on the stated Opportunities

4. The LRA agrees with the Opportunities listed in this section. We would like to make the following additional comments:

4.1. Development the Blockhouse, Haslar and Royal Clarence Yard are particularly supported as long as the redevelopment does not detract from the heritage infrastructure and enhances the tourist and pride of heritage benefits.

4.1.1. Site specific comments are included later in this response

4.2. Transport:

4.2.1. The LRA supports the desire to improve opportunities to improve water links – particularly to link the various key heritage sites along in the Gosport Peninsular as well as to Portsmouth attractions.

4.2.2. The LRA would like to see the opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycle access and de-confliction with other road users included in this section.

Comments on the stated Challenges

5. The LRA agrees with the Challenges listed in this section and considers that the challenge from developers particularly wishing to build high rise apartments along the various waterfronts should also be recognised in this section.

Theme A: Creating an attractive townscape

6. The LRA is broadly in agreement with most of the stated objectives.

6.1. We welcome the recognition of the quality of the numerous Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and commend adherence to the Local Plan.

6.2. We also welcome the emphasis on the importance of good quality design.

6.3. We have concerns about the purpose of the proposed 'landmark buildings' on various sites. With many notable historic buildings already on the Gosport Waterfront, we are concerned that any new building(s) should have a clearly defined purpose and function. We don't believe that Gosport needs to replicate the Spinnaker Tower (for example), nor to create something which might soon be regarded as an expensive 'folly'. A Seaward/Harbour Tower block could be adapted to make a landmark statement; helping to ameliorate the frequent criticism and purpose of these out of place structures. This could be achieved if a top floors were to be converted in hotel accommodation supporting a roof-top revolving restaurant with all round views. Additionally removal of all the dated external drain pipes could help achieve the 'landmark status' being sought. This would be complementary to but it would





not it compete with the Spinnaker Tower of Portsmouth which only provides café services without on site accommodation.

- 6.4. We have strong objections to any more tall apartment buildings along the Gosport Waterfront. Such buildings are rarely architectural landmarks (ie the Seaward and Harbour tower blocks and the new block by Aldi) They also have a detrimental effect on the surrounding areas, casting shadows and restricting views of the harbour as well as creating a disincentive to cross the harbour when to potential visitor is viewing opportunities from the Portsmouth side.
- 6.5. The LRA welcomes proposals for the promotion of the historic character and maritime heritage such as the proposal to open up the former 'Gosport Lines' to create a walkway to link up with the Millennium Promenade as well as through events, activities and promotions.
- 6.6. We would welcome any children's play facilities in the High Street, as so successfully evident in Fareham, where the increase of families is always evident and rejuvenating.
- 6.7. The LRA welcomes proposals to improve the lighting in key areas such as the High Street and Millennium Promenade, and of the more impressive or new buildings providing that this does not cause undue light pollution or hazards to navigation.

Theme B: Creating new employment opportunities

7. The LRA is broadly in agreement with the stated objectives.
 - 7.1. Better use of brownfield sites for employment opportunity, more particularly for industry that would not bring extra traffic or commuting onto the feeder routes.

Theme C: Enhancing the shopping and leisure experience

8. The LRA is broadly in agreement with the stated objectives, particularly the objective to enhance the cultural offer at the Old Grammar School end of the high street.
 - 8.1. There is concern in the objective relating to the evening economy is that this should not encourage groups of drinkers to gather in public spaces and cause a nuisance to residents or passers-by. This is particularly important around transport interchanges, public thoroughfares and in the vicinity of the new bus station/ferry interchange. Drinking in transport areas seems to lead to a rapid descent to becoming an undesirable area and a huge disincentive to travellers and visitors.
 - 8.2. The LRA supports the proposals to increase the number and range of cultural events held in Gosport this could significantly enhance the use and vitality of heritage buildings and Conservation Areas.

Theme D: providing new homes

9. It remains vital that that new housing development should respect the stated objective to preserve the historic core and not encroach on amenity areas. It must also be recognised that additional housing will bring significant pressure on road traffic and parking.
 - 9.1. There is a distinct risk that with the removal of the stated 'over supply' of parking capacity coupled with the demands of parking space needed for the new residents it will eliminate the current availability of guaranteed and affordable parking at all times. Once lost, residents from elsewhere in the peninsular will need little persuasion to drive out to the free parking of the Hedge End stores or the shopping variety of Portsmouth and Southampton. This will remove the footfall to the ferry terminal and Gosport high street at





a stroke and risk an inevitable decline from out of town custom and business. The LRA consider this one of the most serious risks to the viability and future for Gosport.

- 9.2. The LRA has some concerns about proposals for additional residential development along the Waterfront and objects to suggestions that this could include any more tall buildings. The LRA has particular concerns about any development around Trinity Green, modern unsympathetic development has already encroached on the sanctity of this setting. What remains of the open nature and sight lines between Trinity Green and the harbour, already severely compromised, should remain sacrosanct.
- 9.3. The LRA has strong concerns about the proposal to allow an increase in the height of buildings along the High Street, which may be out of keeping with the historic core of the Town. It also risks that the High Street becomes a shaded and windy chasm, with the inevitable windblown dust and litter. Unattractive by day for shoppers and disconcerting for businesses and even more overbearing at night with the further risk of making gloomy corners where visitors would feel unsafe.

Theme E: improving Accessibility

10. The LRA welcomes the stated objectives to improve connectivity, crossings, cycle access, signage, wayfinding and street design. Gosport has a fearsome reputation for road users and the A32 is an exemplary example of congestion for drivers. Thus it is absolutely essential to improve accessibility to the area and within the SPD prior to any new business or visitor initiatives being realised.
- 10.1. The LRA welcomes proposals to enhance the cycle routes in the SDP area and ensure that they link up safely. Disappointingly the current cycle routes to the ferry and approaching the waterfront are not dedicated but shared road and pedestrian routes culminating in the pedestrianised high street or already congested mixed pedestrian, cycle and road user routes.
- 10.2. The LRA welcomes plans to enhance the Millennium Promenade and link this with the proposed Gosport Lines to create a circular walk linking some of the most important heritage assets in this area.
- 10.3. We would urge the Council to route the Promenade as close to the waterside as possible and not along either Mumby Road nor Weevil Lane. The segment which currently runs the whole length of Weevil lane could be re-routed through Royal Clarence Yard, which would have a beneficial impact on the businesses located in Cooperage Green and along the RCY Waterfront.

Theme F: Improving the public realm and green infrastructure provision

11. The LRA considers the present level of Green Infrastructure close to the Waterfront is already a minimum, particularly inside the Gosport Lines, so welcomes the stated objectives of this theme, particularly the aims to utilise the historic and natural environment and the creation of a possible 'Creekside Walk'.
- 11.1. The preservation of conservation sites within and adjacent to the creeks and spaces of historic interest is welcomed.
- 11.2. The LRA also welcomes the opportunity to create an identifiable 'Creekside Walk' to connect with the circular Gosport lines and Millennium promenade, as is the proposal for interpretation boards for both the historic and natural features along the route.
- 11.3. The LRA welcomes the proposals to retain and enhance the existing open spaces and to use some of these for cultural and other events to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy Gosport's historic heritage





- 11.4. The LRA supports the Council's ambition to facilitate and promote the proposed England Coastal path as it routes through the SPD Area.

Theme G: Managing flood risk

12. The LRA broadly welcomes the objective within this theme. We particularly endorse the objective that flood defence measures should enhance the visual appearance and functionality of the Waterfront, some measure of tidal foreshore can be attractive. There are already several ugly, concrete 'sea walls' along the waterfront and we would like to be sure that any future flood defences are designed with more sympathy for their surroundings, particularly in front of Listed buildings and within Conservation Areas. Whilst not within the SPD area the LRA generally supports other initiatives in the peninsular to prevent flooding or control semi-tidal areas although at present the details of proposed works remains sketchy.

Theme H: Providing appropriate infrastructure

13. The LRA agrees with this very broad objective to ensure that any new development must include measures to support the new uses fully without impacting negatively on existing users.
- 13.1. Separating sewage from surface run off should be mandatory in all new development and where ever possible be retrospectively corrected in non-seperated areas.
- 13.2. Some organisations supporting youth work might be very appropriate within the SPD area, play parks in the high street, as very successfully provided in shopping in Fareham. Also facilities to reallocate Youth Groups such as Scouts, Guides or Sea Cadets, providing young people and their parents a familiarity with the attractions of the area.
- 13.3. The LRA supports the Council's ambition to facilitate and promote the proposed England Coastal Path routed through the SPD area.

Theme J: Creating a healthier town

14. The LRA welcomes the objectives set out under this theme, the improvement of cycle routes into the SPD and ferry would significantly encourage residents from Lee to cycle into Gosport with the inherent health advantages.
- 14.1. We welcome the inclusion of much improved safe and dedicated cycle routes and separate pedestrian walkways; such provision would result in an immediate reduction of anti-social interactions as well as reduce the injury risks to walkers and cyclists.
- 14.2. The provision of adequate cycle parking facilities at attractions and particular in the ferry terminus is paramount.

Character Area 1: Bus Station and Falkland Gardens

15. The LRA broadly welcomes the proposals in the draft SPD for this area.
- 15.1. We have particular concerns about the suggestion that any further tall buildings will be introduced in this area and that the development of the bus station with licensed outlets will become a drinkers and vagrants haunt.
- 15.2. There needs to be dedicated cycle routes all the way to the ferry pontoon and adequate cycle parking nearby.





Character Area 2: Gosport Waterfront

16. The LRA broadly welcomes the proposals in the draft SPD for this area.
 - 16.1. Nonetheless we have particular concerns about the suggestion that any further tall buildings be permitted along the Gosport Waterfront for the reasons given under 'Theme A' above. It is suggested a Waterfront policy similar to the Lee "Marine Parade Area SPD" be produced to provide better guidance for new development.
 - 16.2. We also have concerns about the proposals for a potential tall 'landmark building' in this area for reasons given under 'Theme A' above, except for the possible improvement of Harbour Towers.
 - 16.3. The LRA welcomes the proposals to route the Millennium Promenade as close as possible to the waterside. We urge the council to make strenuous efforts to ensure that the route does not have to be diverted, as at present, inland along the Mumby Road.

Character Area 3: Royal Clarence Yard

17. The LRA welcomes the proposals in this section, particularly in the reunification of the former Victualling Yard as a heritage zone with a balance of residences, business, marina and associated parking arrangements all sympathetically incorporated. Its name and heritage as Royal Clarence Yard (RCY) should also be retained and celebrated.
 - 17.1. The opportunities to utilise the westernmost area, and the listed/heritage buildings for heritage tourism, ideally museums and visitor attractions and link coherently with the already developed part of RCY is welcomed.
 - 17.2. The proposed original plan for the Millennium Promenade contiguous through RCY and the proposed dedicated cycle routes should be paramount.
 - 17.3. The LRA welcomes the proposal to utilise the remains of Queen Victoria's Railway station as a tourism asset. Utilising the popularity of Queen Victoria and her links with Gosport should provide additional focus for the promotion of Gosport and heritage links.
 - 17.4. RCY should provide sufficient parking for residential, embedded businesses and their customers as well as the marina. This should all be within RCY but avoiding any parking that would restrict access or views from the Waterfront.
 - 17.5. The area should be clearly signposted and remain recognised as "Royal Clarence Yard" rather than any other marketing designation that supports the interests of developers as opposed to maintaining the heritage connection.

Character Area 4: North of High Street

18. The LRA welcomes the proposals for this area, particularly the ambition to respect and protect the heritage assets and their settings when considering proposals for redevelopment of these streets. Mindful that any development by increasing the height of buildings would be oppressive and could lead to windy canyons between buildings and restrict views of the harbour.





Character Area 5: High Street

19. The LRA has concerns about the proposals to allow an increase in the height of buildings along the high Street to provide additional residential and office space for the reasons outlined in 9.3 above.
 - 19.1. As stated above, The LRA welcomes proposal to develop a 'cultural quarter' to include The Old Grammar School.
 - 19.2. Facilities to encourage families into the high street such as a children's play area, similar to that in Fareham's shopping area, could be incorporated.
 - 19.3. In the event that shop outlets remain permanently empty there may be merit in converting the building for residential use providing the character of the original townscape is maintained.

Character Area 6: South Street

20. The LRA welcomes the proposals for this area, particularly the emphasis on the need to respect the pattern of the former Gosport Lines.
 - 20.1. The LRA has some concerns about the suggestion that taller buildings with 'landmark features' might be permitted at the junction of South Cross and South Street. Our concerns about tall/landmark buildings which are not in keeping with the majority of the townscape in the Town centre have been made above and are also relevant for the South Street 'Character Area'.

Character Area 7: Trinity Green Area

21. The LRA cautiously welcomes the proposals for this area, particularly the emphasis on the need to protect and enhance the setting of both the Grade II* listed Trinity Church and the Vicarage.
 - 21.1. We recognise that the locally listed Seaward/Harbour Towers, although not admired by many, could be enhancing if adapted and improved to provide a landmark attraction as outlined in 6.3 above, particularly as these towers are an over bearing feature of this site. Developing a plan which encompasses the need to respect these somewhat dated and clashing buildings and part of the older heritage within this area will always present quite a challenge.
 - 21.2. The proposed opening of Bastion No 1 should enhance the open space and done sympathetically would help redress some of the modern development around the Green.

Character Area 8: Haslar Marina

22. The stated development conditions for this site are fundamental: particularly the emphasis on the need to respect the setting of Bastion No 1 and the views across Haslar Lake.
 - 22.1. The LRA welcomes the proposal to include the whole of this area in the urban area boundary to ensure consistency of any developments and the need to respect the proximity of Haslar Lake.
 - 22.2. The LRA welcomes proposals to provide pedestrian links to the proposed Gosport Lines Walk.
 - 22.3. The LRA's concerns about the proposals for a 'landmark building' covered in earlier comments also apply equally to this area.





Character Area 9: Gosport lines

23. The opening up of the remaining parts of the former Gosport Lines to include a pedestrian route and cycle routes and links with the Millennium Promenade are commendable.
- 23.1. It remains vital to protect and conserve the historic structures and the natural environment.
- 23.2. It will significantly improve community and visitor access some previously overlooked heritage assets of the Town and along the Waterfront.
- 23.3. The LRA welcomes the proposals for the Northern (Forton) Ramparts, particularly the proposal to open up a tunnel through the Ramparts and link this with existing cycle routes and the Millennium promenade.
- 23.4. The LRA welcomes the proposals for the improvement of Arden Park and Walpole Park North, particularly the pedestrian and cycle routes link with the Gosport Lines and the Millennium Promenade.
- 23.5. The LRA welcomes the proposals for Walpole Park.
- 23.6. The LRA welcomes the proposals for enhancing and improving the routes to and through the Scheduled Ancient Monument, No 1 Bastion.

Concluding Comments: Concerns

24. While The LRA is broadly very supportive of the vision for the heritage and conservation assets contained within this proposal, we have concerns about the practicalities of the delivery of this vision.
- 24.1. Particularly in relation to ambitions for land which remains in private ownership and without any real incentive for land-owners to agree to some of these plans (eg routing of paths and cycle ways through their property).
- 24.2. The LRA also has concerns as to whether this vision is deliverable, given the Council's current financial and staffing constraints.

Any Further Comments?

25. As stated in the Comments under the Vision paragraph 1.1, the Association strongly believes that among the listed improvements **good road and cycle access** should also be included.
26. As stated in paragraph 9.1 above There is a distinct risk that with the removal of the stated 'over supply' of parking capacity coupled with the demands of parking space needed for any new residents it will eliminate the current availability of **guaranteed and affordable parking at all times**. Once lost, residents from elsewhere in the peninsular will need little persuasion to drive out to Hedge End, Portsmouth or Southampton. The loss of out of town footfall will risk an inevitable decline in Gosport's future. **The LRA consider this one of the most serious risks to the viability and future for Gosport.**

Contact details

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