



Adoption of the Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7

Cllr Ruffell, Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

Report to	Cabinet
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	No
Appendix 1:	Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 (including track changes showing the alterations proposed following the consultation).
Appendix 2:	Consultation Statement on the Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 (including summaries of the consultation responses received and the council response).
Papers relied on:	Report to Economic, Planning and Housing Committee on 5 November 2020.

Foreword - Cllr Ruffell, Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

Planning well ahead for successful places, served by high quality infrastructure and protecting the natural environment, is of key importance to the borough council, recognising that service provision, investment and job creation needs to be provided in a co-ordinated manner with our partners.

In this respect, we sought views on a draft Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 for a period of consultation from November. The document sets out our ambitions and aspirations to deliver the types of places, the investment and the infrastructure we need to support our communities as well as providing a thriving local economy.

Consideration has been given to all of the comments that have been made and the Vision has been updated as a result. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to read and comment on the document and feel that this has helped to strengthen and improve the document such that I am content to recommend it be adopted.

This will stand us in good stead as we start work on the Local Plan Update and will provide clarity to residents, service providers and landowners on our ambitions for this part of the Borough. It also helpfully sets the scene for responding to our climate emergency declaration, to ensure that our partners and landowners are clear on our stance.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Notes comments made on the draft Vision document and proposed updates; and
- 2) Adopts the Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7.

Background, corporate objectives and priorities

The considerations outlined in this report will have implications for the delivery of each of the Council Plan priorities – planning for the future, protecting and enhancing our environment and strengthening communities. More directly it will have implications for the following priorities:

- *Responding to the climate emergency;*
- *Becoming a zero carbon council by 2025;*
- *Promoting more sustainable and better transport options and connections;*
- *Shaping high quality sustainable communities; and*
- *Being accessible and inclusive.*

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
ALP	Adopted Local Plan
EPH	Economic Planning and Housing
HCC	Hampshire County Council
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LPU	Local Plan Update
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit

Main considerations

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Recognising the expected increases in population in the future, the opportunities presented by Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 and the importance of articulating the borough council's aspirations for this area, a draft Vision document was prepared for consultation. This was intended to provide clarity to nearby communities, service providers and partners on the opportunities that this area provides and what the important components are to create a successful place. These issues are particularly relevant in light of long-term strategic thinking currently underway with key partners such as the hospital trust, Hampshire County Council as highway authority, as well as other infrastructure providers, including Highways England. It also reflects the Economic Recovery Strategy and associated actions considered by Committee in September and the associated job creation opportunities presented.
- 1.2 A draft of the Vision was considered by the Economic, Planning and Housing (EPH) Committee at their meeting on 5 November 2020, with consultation subsequently undertaken from 20 November 2020 until 15 January 2021.
- 1.3 During this period, extensive consultation was undertaken which resulted in 285 responses being received, which are summarised in this report with further detail in Appendix 2. Taking into account the comments made, a number of changes have been made to the Vision which are set out in Appendix 1. These changes mainly

reinforce the need for any development to be sustainable and enable a high quality of life for those living and working in the area. Accordingly, the Vision is now proposed for adoption and for future use to inform the Local Plan Update as well as other pieces of work linked to infrastructure provision as well as in discussions with landowners and local communities.

2. Background

- 2.1 Recognising development pressures arising in the area of Land North of the M3 at Junction 7, the need to articulate the council's overall aspirations were identified during the course of 2020. Accordingly, it was considered appropriate to ensure that early engagement to secure infrastructure investment and service provision was facilitated by the preparation of a Vision for this area. This was intended to form the basis of a discussion with partners, residents and landowners to understand their views and crystallise those of the borough council. This was considered to be particularly important in light of the 'call for sites' consultation undertaken in 2019 to inform the Local Plan Update (LPU) and other current planning proposals such as a distribution and logistics centre and the work underway by the Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust who are considering the future provision of hospital facilities.
- 2.2 As such a draft Vision document was prepared, taking into account information supplied by partners and the currently available evidence base which was considered by EPH Committee on 5 November 2020. This was subsequently updated to take into account comments made by the Committee with consultation undertaken from 20 November 2020 to 15 January 2021.

3. Vision Document

- 3.1 The Vision document includes a clear statement on the type of place that could be created in the future and the principles upon which this could come forward. It describes the type of uses that could be appropriate and key infrastructure required to support it. In so doing, it recognises that a number of sites in the area are being considered for different forms of development such as:
- A new hospital and health campus with supporting and complementary uses;
 - Employment uses as well as the scope for research and development associated with the health uses, potentially supported by a further education establishment; and
 - Future residential development and associated community infrastructure and services.
- 3.2 It reflects the characteristics of the local environment and the potential concerns of nearby communities through:
- The suggested inclusion of new strategic gaps around villages such as North Waltham and Dummer. These gaps could potentially provide the scope to assist in achieving other objectives such as landscaping and visual appearance as well as securing green infrastructure and benefitting the tackling climate change agenda;
 - The protection and enhancement of key features in the historic environment, such as nearby conservation areas and Scheduled Monuments;

- A recognition of the potential for green corridors linking key habitats, benefiting the natural environment and providing recreational opportunities for nearby communities; and
- Highlighting the requirement to ensure that future principles related to tackling the climate emergency are embedded in any emerging proposals.

3.3 Importantly, the Vision outlines the infrastructure issues that need to be addressed going forwards. These include:

- The provision of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) routes connecting the area to the town centre and bus and railway stations;
- The potential for a Park and Ride facility to provide the scope for longer-stay visitors to travel to the town centre via the MRT;
- A requirement to carefully consider the A30 corridor, including measures to facilitate the MRT as well as fast and direct routes for cyclists;
- The scope to consider Junction 7 of the M3 to ensure that it is fit for future demands that may be placed upon it;
- The requirement to consider in more detail local north/south connectivity in this area, to facilitate access to any new services from wider parts of the borough as well as avoiding the addition of further vehicles onto the Ringway and its junctions;
- The scope for improved connectivity locally, by foot and by bicycle, to key destinations as well as benefitting rural communities, including links to any new facilities to be provided in the future; and
- The requirement for engagement with other service providers, including the utilities to meet needs arising.

3.4 In terms of design and place-making, the Vision recognises that this is an important gateway to the town from the south west with the presence of nearby historic villages with their own distinctive identities. It highlights the need for mitigation to offset any impacts and ensure and locate any built form to take these issues into account.

4. Consultation

4.1 The consultation and engagement on the draft Vision involved the following actions:

- A specific briefing to local ward Members and parish councils in the vicinity.
- Ongoing engagement with Hampshire County Council (as highway authority), Highways England (as operators of the M3 and its junctions) and the Hospital Trust (in light of emerging proposals for a new hospital).
- A webpage on the Vision created on 20 November 2020, which attracted 3,192 views (excluding visitors who didn't accept the website cookie data collection) until the consultation closed on 15 January 2021.
- An online survey for residents and other stakeholders to provide their comments, with a booklet and paper survey available on request.
- A social media campaign over the course of the consultation, including posting into Basingstoke and local community Facebook pages. This was picked up by local groups, including local interest group SWAG (South West Action Group) who promoted this issue to those on their database.
- The distribution of posters and window postcards for shops to key locations in the vicinity of the vision area to highlight the consultation.

- Consultation information to stakeholders such as parish councils, local amenity societies, statutory and technical consultees, landowners and members of the public.
- News releases, before and during the consultation, sent to the local media, specialist media, parish councils and community magazines and websites for sharing. These releases were sent on 4 August, 28 October and 20 November 2020 and 7 January 2021.
- Two local radio interviews with the council's Leader.
- The Basingstoke Gazette's Leader's column in December 2020 focused on the consultation.
- The autumn 2020 edition of Basingstoke and Deane Today referred to the upcoming work on the Vision. Another article in the spring 2021 edition will focus on the next steps.

4.2 During this time, 285 comments were received which included 21 responses made from organisations and individuals in an official capacity. Most of the responses were made via the on-line questionnaire.

4.3 Consultation responses were received from the following organisations and from individuals in an official capacity:

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| • North Waltham Parish Council | • Southern Water |
| • Dummer Parish Council | • SGN Gas |
| • Hampshire County Council | • Hatch Warren Nature Group |
| • Cllr Diane Taylor (BDBC) | • Fuzzy Drove Conservation Group |
| • Maria Miller MP | • Cycle Basingstoke |
| • Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust on behalf of Hampshire Together | • Bloor Homes |
| • Highways England | • Taylor Wimpey |
| • Network Rail | • Wates Developments |
| • South Western Railway | • Southern Manydown landowners |
| • National Grid | • Newlands Property Developments |
| | • Society of Merchant Venturers |

4.4 The following sections summarise the key issues which have been raised through the consultation and how the Vision has been changed as a result. Appendix 1 is a track changed version of the Vision showing the changes the council is now proposing. The Consultation Statement in Appendix 2 presents the comments that have been received and how they have been taken into account in finalising the document.

General Comments

4.5 A majority (58%) of respondents to the online survey agreed with the concept of establishing a Vision for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 compared with 35% who disagreed. However, a majority of respondents (62%) to the online survey disagreed with the content of the Vision compared with 31% who agreed with it. Much of this concern centred around the urbanising effects of the Vision on the local area. There were a number of comments from parish councils, landowners, developers and public bodies such as Hampshire County Council (HCC) Local Highway Authority seeking detailed changes to the document.

Impact on the local area and environment

- 4.6 There is much concern, particularly from local residents, regarding the loss of countryside and wildlife habitat which would arise from the Vision and also regarding the impact of a large increase in traffic on local roads and existing residential areas. There was widespread support for the principle of new strategic gaps for North Waltham and Dummer. Concerns were raised about the pressure that additional development would place on local health and community services and infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage.

Proposed Developments

- 4.7 There was much support for a hospital in the Vision area given its proximity to Junction 7 of the M3. It was recognised that a new hospital could have a synergy with an education facility and science park to create a hub of excellence.
- 4.8 There was concern over the traffic which would be generated by a potential distribution centre by Junction 7 of the M3 and that much of this could use local roads instead of the strategic road network. It was thought that a distribution centre would cause air and light pollution which would affect the local area. In response, it is proposed to replace references in the Vision of a potential distribution and logistics hub with broader references to employment uses. This would not preclude the potential for a distribution and logistics use in the Vision area if this was considered acceptable in detailed planning terms.
- 4.9 It was considered important that new housing should promote sustainable living and that a strong green infrastructure and open space network should be a central part of any development.

Transport

- 4.10 There was much support for proposals to improve public transport provision such as Mass Rapid Transit routes and to extend cycling routes. Concern was raised that these sustainable modes of transport would not be successfully implemented.

Comments from specific organisations

- 4.11 The following list is a selection of comments from specific organisations together with a summary of the proposed officer response:
- a) North Waltham Parish Council proposes extending the strategic gap further to the east and south of the village and for it to become a woodland. In response, it is considered that the currently proposed broad extent of the gap, as indicatively shown on map four of the Vision, would suitably protect the landscape and heritage setting of the village. However, it is proposed to update the Vision to highlight the potential for the function of the gap to be enhanced thereby improving its landscape, biodiversity and public access. It can be noted that the designation of any new strategic gaps in the borough will have to take place through the Local Plan Update process. Proposals will be subject to an independent examination, where the relative merits of securing strategic gaps in this location will be considered.

- b) Dummer Parish Council expressed concern that the distance from the Vision area to Basingstoke town centre, existing and growing traffic congestion along routes such as the A30, and the potential lack of new facilities would make development in this location unsustainable. Concern was raised over how existing infrastructure constraints, such as in relation to electricity, water supply and sewerage, would be overcome in the event of significant increases in demand. In response, it is considered that the locating of a Health and Wellbeing Campus and employment uses by Junction 7 reflects the need for these uses to have good connectivity by road to the wider county and region. The provision of sustainable modes of transport such as Mass Rapid Transport will enhance connections with the town centre. The pressures on existing infrastructure are recognised; the Vision allows for infrastructure to be upgraded as the planning and development of the area evolves.
- c) Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust (HHFT), on behalf of Hampshire Together, welcomes the Vision and the concept of taking a strategic and coordinated approach to the future of this potential major growth area to the south west of Basingstoke. The Trust does question whether the extent of the gap with North Waltham might be excessive. In response, it is not proposed to alter the extent of the gap as shown in the Vision. The extent of the Gap is only indicative within the Vision and any detailed boundaries would have to be established through the Local Plan Update in due course.
- d) Hampshire County Council have proposed that the Vision reinforces the need for non-strategic road links to be established over the railway to the north, to link the A30 with the A339. On this basis, changes are proposed by officers to the Vision to accommodate these references as well as other minor amendments including the suggested changes in respect of facilitating walking and cycling in new developments.
- e) Maria Miller MP suggests that any consideration of additional development at Junction 7 of the M3 should not proceed until the choice of a hospital site has been finalised. Concern is raised over the growth in traffic associated with the Vision and how it is uncertain whether this could be sufficiently mitigated in due course to enable quick access to any hospital via Junction 7. In response it is considered that the Vision does not prejudice the role of the health providers: it is a framework for the delivery of a Health and Wellbeing Campus in the event that health providers identify this area as the preferred location. Detailed work on highway capacity, prepared alongside future planning documents and planning applications, will establish a comprehensive approach to the transport infrastructure of the area and ensure good access to any future hospital.
- f) The Hatch Warren Nature Group are concerned that the Vision does not sufficiently support the need for green infrastructure. It proposes that the Vision enables a link being created between the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Downs National Park. In response, it is considered that the Vision places great emphasis on the green infrastructure network. Opportunities to improve green infrastructure links through the area will be explored further through more detailed work. It is considered that the Vision provides a suitable framework for moving the agenda forward. The vision set out at the beginning of the document has been amended to reinforce the need to protect the natural environment.

- g) The housing developer, Taylor Wimpey, does not support the production of the Vision as they consider that it predetermines the spatial strategy of the Local Plan, and could impact the consideration of reasonable alternative patterns of growth. It considers that the Vision is putting the Local Plan Update at risk of being found unsound. In response, it is considered that the Vision is a council document with limited planning weight, which is being developed outside of the statutory planning system. It is considered that whilst the Vision will help to inform the Local Plan Update process by highlighting key issues for this area and helping to progress partnership working between key stakeholders, it does not prejudice the preparation of the Plan itself, making no decisions about where future growth in the borough will be located. The Local Plan Update is being progressed in line with relevant legislation, building upon a developing evidence base, through a separate and independent process.
- h) The Southern Manydown Landowners which represent Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) in their landholding capacity, and the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) support the production of the Vision, as do SMV in separately submitted comments. These representations propose a number of detailed alterations to the Vision including suggestions for the illustrative location of the Health and Wellbeing Campus, as shown on map 4 of the Vision, to be identified as an Employment Hub. Furthermore, these representations propose that the Health and Wellbeing Campus be shown as being located further to the south west. They propose that the Transport Interchange be located further to the north east to better link with Junction 7. In response, it is not proposed by officers to identify an employment hub due to the illustrative nature of the map and that this would be subject to a more detailed masterplanning exercise in due course. However, it is proposed by officers to move the Transport Interchange to the north east to be nearer Junction 7; the Interchange would occupy a portion of the land previously shown for the Health and Wellbeing Campus. To compensate for this, the previously shown illustrative location for a Transport Interchange would be occupied by part of the Health and Wellbeing Campus. These alterations would not affect the potential location of the Strategic Gap by North Waltham. Some minor amendments have also been incorporated in respect of transport to improve clarity.
- 4.12 In summary, it is considered that the principles set out in the Vision remain sound as a framework for the future of the area. The high-level view taken by the Vision does not make it an appropriate vehicle for the inclusion of detailed policies regarding precisely how it would be implemented. The proposed changes to the Vision are therefore not extensive. Updates focus on how the Vision can act as a broad framework to achieve high quality development in this area, if it is considered suitable through the Local Plan Update or other planning routes, whilst also setting out how any future change should be mitigated as much as possible. Proposed changes to the Vision increase the emphasis on creating successful and sustainable places.
- 4.13 Accordingly, an updated version of the Vision is set out in Appendix 1 which is proposed for adoption by Cabinet.

5. Associated Actions

- 5.1 In addition to the above, it should be noted that a number of other actions are underway with key organisations as summarised below:
- Liaison with the Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust to understand their aspirations for progressing a new facility to serve the town and wider area;
 - Discussions with the highways authorities (HCC and Highways England) in respect of improvements that may be required to the local and strategic road networks as well as technical studies that HCC are undertaking to support the delivery of the Transport Strategy, such as the Mass Rapid Transit study.
- 5.2 Work is also continuing in respect of the preparation of the Local Plan Update and it is particularly important to ensure, as this evolves, that relevant aspects of any agreed spatial strategy reflect the principles set out in the Vision. It is envisaged that these principles, together with other elements of the LPU evidence base currently being prepared, will assist in identifying the most appropriate locations for future development. The Plan will be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to describe in more detail the services and facilities required to support new development.

6. Options analysis

- 6.1 The appended Vision is intended to provide clarity to a range of partners and our communities and it is considered to be important to provide this in the context of successful place-making. The council could choose not to prepare such a document at this time and, instead, address relevant issues in the draft Local Plan Update, scheduled for publication in winter 2021/22. However, this may mean that opportunities are missed, such as investment in new infrastructure, or services being provided in alternative locations which are less accessible for borough residents.

Corporate implications

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The content of the Vision may be referred to by organisations with an interest in delivering services or infrastructure in this area, as well as landowners promoting their sites. It should be noted that the Vision document sits outside of the adopted Local Plan, as well as national planning guidance, and will therefore have limited planning weight. However, it will help to inform the approach and policies of the Local Plan Update.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

9. Risk management

- 9.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the council's risk management process and has identified no significant (red or amber) residual risks that cannot be fully minimised by existing or planned controls or additional procedures.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to consider the impact of impact of the implementation of a Vision for the land to the North of the M3 at Junction 7 on the protected characteristics groups and the implications for the Public Sector Equality Duty. This assessment concluded that the proposed Vision and uses for the site such as a new hospital and health campus, creating employment land, mixed-use development, provision of Mass Rapid Transit routes connecting the area to the town centre and station, a Park and Ride facility and so on would be positive for all groups. Making the site accessible is also central to the Vision.
- 10.2 More detailed equalities assessments will be carried out as components of the Vision come forward where relevant. Once adopted, the Vision will need to be communicated in a wide variety of ways to ensure that all key stakeholders are aware of the proposals.

11. Consultation and communication

- 11.1 As highlighted above, the development of the Vision was communicated through a number of channels, especially targeting local communities in the area. Communications from the council will continue to raise awareness of the Vision document with key partners, stakeholders, service provider, parish councils and community groups and residents, especially around its adoption and other key milestones.

12. HR implications

- 12.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report at this stage.

13. Climate Change

- 13.1 The preparation and adoption of the Vision is likely to have a **positive** impact in terms of emissions, provided that the components set out in the document embed principles which will achieve sustainable development and minimise emissions. In particular, there will be a need to ensure that transport and accessibility provides opportunities to travel by non-car modes, as well as zero emission vehicles.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 The Vision aims to set out a joined-up approach for Land North of the M3 at Junction 7 in order to provide certainty for this area for partners, residents and infrastructure providers, as well as being used in discussions around investment in the future. It identifies key issues for consideration and provides some direction on how this area could be developed in the future. The Vision covers issues associated with the types of services and facilities that are important to our residents, alongside job creation, climate change and preserving and enhancing the setting of rural villages.

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Confidentiality	It is considered that information contained within this report (and appendices) does not contain exempt information under the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and therefore can be made public.