



City Centre and Seafront Masterplans: Portsmouth Cycle Forum Response

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1 Introduction

Portsmouth Cycle Forum (PCF) welcomes Portsmouth City Council's new masterplans for the city centre and seafront. These documents set out a creative new vision for the future development of the city that is in many places compelling. There are many innovative ideas in these documents that we believe will help the city to grow and achieve its goals of economic growth and recognition as a European city break destination.

The documents set a framework for development over the coming 15-20 years and provide guidelines and stimulation for private development and investment, as well as outlining PCC's own development strategy. The documents have a very broad mandate and inevitably some themes are less strongly developed. Key amongst these weaker areas is transport.

1.1 General Comments on the Masterplans

For the city to grow economically and to attract visitors ease of access is paramount. Unfortunately Portsmouth faces some unique challenges here. The city is largely on an island with only 3 road links and a single rail link to the mainland. There is little or no space remaining in which to build new roads or to expand existing ones.

The current road and rail systems appear to be operating at full capacity. It would therefore seem essential, in a long term term strategy, to develop alternative means to increase the capacity of the city's transport system. Unfortunately this has not been done, and in our view this weakens the documents considerably.

The PCF considers that there are many more relevant considerations in the Portsmouth Plan Transport policy (PCS17) than are listed in the City Centre or Seafront Masterplans and there is much closer linkage to the overarching National Planning Policy Framework aspects of transport than are mentioned. For example, amongst the twelve NPPF principles are:

- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate ... contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable;



The objectives to reduce air pollution and congestion are further explained in the Portsmouth Plan and PCS17 e.g:

- 4.111: Interventions to promote active and public transport modes reduce the reliance on the private car, reduce the environmental impact of transport, and have an essential role to play in improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions in the city.
- 4.112: With the majority of the city being developed on Portsea Island, and only three roads linking Portsea Island to the mainland (M275, A3, A 2030), there is significant potential for congestion, with pockets of severe congestion at peak times, leaving the network vulnerable when unexpected incidents occur.

The only specific mention of PCS17 in either masterplan appears to be in section 2.5 of the City Centre masterplan. This states:

"Policy PCS17 - Transport, safeguards land for a reconfigured city centre road network to support the aim of a sustainable and integrated transport network for the city and improve the connectivity to and around the city centre, and safeguards land for the new interchange facility on Station Street."

Unfortunately there is no explanation of how this aspiration can be reconciled with the proposed new road systems.

Numerous PCC documents emphasise the role of cycling and walking in enhancing health and quality of life (e.g. by reducing obesity) and reducing pollution and congestion. An increase in motor traffic will increase pollution and carbon emissions whereas cycling and walking do not contribute to air pollution and do not create congestion. They also contribute to a healthier population.

1.2 The need for good cycling and walking routes

The Portsmouth Plan Strategy for the Future of Portsmouth explains in paragraph 2.30 that

"a main element of the strategy is to locate the additional development at key development sites, around the town centres and public transport hubs and routes to reduce reliance on the private car and to encourage residents, employees and visitors to access everyday services on foot, cycle or by public transport".

It is well established in numerous transport studies by the DfT, Highways Agency, Transport Research Laboratory and university research that poor cycling infrastructure is a significant deterrent to people considering making the change of mode from the private motor car to active sustainable travel.

The Department for Transport (DfT) criteria for assessing cycle routes are that they should be Convenient, Accessible, Comfortable, Attractive and Safe. A key element in providing safe cycle routes is that they should at least meet and preferably exceed the standards established by the Highways Agency and endorsed by the DfT. The DfT makes it clear in Local Transport Note 2/08 - Cycle Infrastructure Design that

"Wherever it is possible, widths larger than the minimum should be used. Practitioners should not regard minimum widths as design targets".

It is therefore apparent that the PCS17 objective of

"Promoting walking and cycling and improved integration with other modes"



depends on high quality cycle and pedestrian routes that will encourage people to choose cycling and walking.

PCF seeks assurance that the walking and cycling routes included in the new road layout will at least meet minimum national standards as established by the DfT and would welcome reassurance that these routes will exceed the minima. The PCF would welcome the opportunities to meet with the planners to be briefed on the proposed new road layout.

2 City Centre Masterplan

2.1 General

Sections 1 and 2 set out the high level vision for the masterplan and introduce the national and local planning regimes into which it will fit. Cycling is notable by its absence in this vision for the city. This absence is underscored in the very first paragraph of the document, paragraph 1.1, discusses the first impressions of the city given to people arriving by various means. Cycling is not mentioned.

A key theme of the city centre masterplan is pedestrianisation. There are proposed or existing pedestrianisations from Hampshire Terrace in the south, through Guildhall Walk, Guildhall Square, Commercial Road to the Northern Quarter. There is a risk here that all cycle routes from south of the city centre to the north will be broken by this string of pedestrianisations. Cycle access to and through these areas will be essential at all times of the day. The masterplan should assess at the outset how cyclists can ride conveniently and safely between the north of the city and the south, and between the east and the west.

The masterplan discusses a new road layout in some detail in section 3. Other transport modes, such as cycling, are not afforded the same attention. This raises the concern that the road system is already set in stone and cyclists will have to fit around it. This is likely to mean poorly routed paths, secondary (if any) consideration for cyclists at junctions (get off and walk) with lengthy waits.

Paragraph 3.28 states that roads have been designed to allow widened footways and/or bus lanes, which will provide space for cycle routes. This is not enough – cycling deserves more consideration than this as it offers comparatively fast access to the city at an extremely low impact. If this city is to reap the benefits of cycling more is needed than paint on pavements.

It is to be hoped that cycle routes, be they on or off the road, will be designed in accordance with the Department for Transport standards, as set out in LTN 2/08 and LTN 1/12. Most cycle routes in the city currently fall far short of these standards.

Paragraph 3.33 promises that the new road system will improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians. How it will achieve this is left to the imagination of the reader. More detail would be helpful here.

The city centre is linked to the mainland by National Cycle Network route 22. This is overlooked by the plans and the opportunity to expand a vision for the cycle connectivity between Portsmouth and the mainland is being missed. NCN route 22 is currently difficult to find and use and needs work to upgrade it.

The issue of air quality management will also need proactive management from the outset. The masterplan introduces a number of potential retail and residential developments located close to the redesigned road system, which will be carrying a high proportion of the traffic entering the city.



2.2 Area by Area Comments

Area	Comments
Commercial Road shopping area and north of Market Way	<p>The road system on Hope Street is discussed in several places, and increasing the capacity of that road is planned. This road is currently host to what is surely one of the worst cycle routes in the UK. The Hope Street path is intended to support two way cycling and pedestrians on a narrow pavement. It has a high wall on one side, fast traffic on the other and contains a blind bend and many obstructions. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.</p> <p>Extensive pedestrianised areas are introduced in this design – it is essential that either cycling is permitted in these areas or viable alternatives are designed. If this is not done the city centre will effectively block cyclists from travelling between the north and south of the city.</p> <p>Paragraph 4 .15 states that public transport and pedestrian access will be at heart of the new design – will there be any room for cycling?</p> <p>Lake Road corner – this is a bike theft hotspot. Special attention to the provision of secure cycle parking and CCTV should be made in this area.</p> <p>The possibility of out of hours cycling in the Commercial Road precinct is introduced, and indeed PCC already has plans to implement this. This is good but what is not discussed are facilities for cyclists in business hours. What if cyclists want to go shopping?</p> <p>The Commercial road tramlines are discussed as a design feature for the precinct. Perhaps these could be used to define the boundaries of a new cycle path.</p>
Station Square and Station Street	<p>The integration of cycling with public transport is key here to allow rail passengers to reach destinations across the city.</p> <p>The cycle parking discussed here does not go far enough in our view. This would be an ideal location for a bike hub providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure, covered, manned cycle parking; • Showers and changing facilities; • Bike repair, retail and hire. <p>These services could, of course, be chargeable. This would enable shop and office workers to cycle to work without needing changing and storage facilities at their places of work. It would also be invaluable to commuters and other visitors. Existing examples of such facilities are:</p>



Area	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leeds Cycle Point http://www.cyclepoint.org Leicester Bike Park http://bit.ly/Jh2K14
Guildhall area	Again, the issue of cycling through existing and proposed pedestrian zones is prominent here. This area will be key for cyclists from the south who wish to visit premises at the north of the city centre and vice-versa. It is essential that cyclists and pedestrians share these routes. The issue of cycling in or around Guildhall Square needs to be addressed, as this is already a barrier for cyclists.

3 Seafront Masterplan

3.1 General

The seafront masterplan states an aim to improve connections from the seafront to the rest of city and increase the number of visitors arriving at the seafront on foot, by bike or by public transport. However, the document contains no real discussion of how this can be achieved or of how the proposed developments will facilitate this. The document rules out cycling on the promenade but does not introduce any alternative.

The masterplan identifies that it is essential to encourage people to move along the seafront from West to East. There is no plan for how this will happen and this is a serious gap in the plan that should be filled as a priority. Page 20 of the plan has a general discussion of cycling, and identifies that a modal shift from private car to the bicycle will bring a number of benefits. However, this recognition is not carried on into the rest of the document.

Portsmouth Cycle Forum suggest that the new sea defences could be used as the base for a new seafront cycle route. This could keep cyclists off the promenade and provide an attractive route that would encourage cycling.

The stretch from the Esplanade and on westwards to the Gosport ferry is one of the few remaining breaks in National Cycle Network route 2. This long distance route spans the breadth of the south coast of England, and its completion should be integral to any plan to redevelop this area.

3.2 Area by Area Comments

Area	Comments
Old Portsmouth	Pedestrian connectivity between Old Portsmouth and the Clarence Pier area is currently good, with links along the promenade and past the Royal Garrison Church. Cycle connectivity is poor, with cyclists taken away from the seafront area and along Pembroke Road. Pembroke Road is narrow in places and the echelon parking presents a significant hazard to cyclists.



Area	Comments
Clarence Pier	<p>The transport interchange at Clarence Pier is another location where a bike hub could be considered, as discussed in section 2.2 for location in Station Square.</p> <p>A key issue here is the enforcement of parking and waiting restrictions for cars and taxis. This area is frequently inundated with taxis and cars waiting on double yellow lines which makes the area hazardous to cyclists.</p> <p>Cycle hire facilities are discussed in this area. It is reasonable to suggest that as these are likely to attract many novice cyclists then properly design cycle routes should be a priority here.</p>
Southsea Common and Southsea Castle	<p>Clarence Esplanade, west of Avenue de Caen, is narrow and intimidating to cyclists. The echelon parking is hazardous, off-putting to cyclists and contravenes DfT guidelines. This issue must be addressed in and future plan for the Seafront.</p> <p>Potential solutions, such as making the section of Clarence Esplanade one way or no-through road (with an exception for bikes and buses) should be considered.</p>
South Parade Pier and Canoe lake	<p>A key issue here is connectivity between the existing cycle facilities at the eastern end of Clarence Esplanade and the seafront cycle route east of South Parade pier. Currently cyclists are forced to cross and recross the A288, which can be very busy with fast moving traffic.</p> <p>The masterplan makes no attempt to sort out the highway network at South Parade Pier which is hostile to pedestrians and cyclists and forms a physical barrier between the seafront and rest of Southsea to the north.</p>
Eastney Beach Character Area	<p>This section alludes to the redesign and possible relocation of the seafront cycle route to make way for the proposed watersports hub. Portsmouth Cycle Forum is very concerned that this will result in a degradation of the route, which could result in cyclists being forced to stop, cross and recross the road. This would be extremely unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The diagrams in this section also point to the reintroduction of echelon parking, which is extremely undesirable as it presents an extreme hazard to cyclists and contravenes DfT guidelines.</p> <p>The opportunity to address the eastern end of the seafront cycle route should also be taken. At present the route stops near Eastney pool. Redevelopment in</p>



Area	Comments
	this area should enable a better route for cyclists to be found from the seafront to Melville road and onward towards Hayling Ferry,

4 Portsmouth Cycle Forum Recommendations

Portsmouth Cycle Forum therefore suggest that these masterplans must consider transport much more fully. We would suggest the following ideas for development into the masterplans:

- An integrated cycle and pedestrian network, compliant with DfT LTN 2/08 and LTN 1/12 that is designed at the outset of the new road system, rather than as an afterthought. This will enable the creation of safe, convenient routes that are able to attract new users and reduce the number of private cars using the road system. As they stand both plans have developed new ideas for road layout without incorporating any ideas for cycle routes. This will almost certainly lead to a hotch-potch of narrow cycle routes that are disjointed, hard to follow and inconvenient, being frequently broken by major roads that are difficult and time consuming to cross.
- Integration of the proposed Tipner park and ride with the city cycle network and provision of secure cycle lockers and bike hire at the park and ride. This will enable people to drive to the city and collect a bike (either their own or a hired bike) to make their way into the city centre or on towards the seafront.
- The UK has a national cycle network (NCN) and two NCN routes go through Portsmouth. These are NCN route 2, which is a long distance cycle route which, when complete, will link Dover in Kent with St. Austell in Cornwall and NCN route 22, which links to the Isle of Wight via Portsmouth. NCN route 2 is intended to run along Southsea seafront and NCN 22 traverses the city centre. Both routes are at present incomplete. These masterplans offer the opportunity to develop these routes and Portsmouth's connectivity to the mainland by bike. Portsmouth is currently one of the few remaining missing parts of the long distance NCN route 2. PCC should liaise with Sustrans, who manage the NCN, and formulate a joint strategy for the NCN in Portsmouth.
- Extension of the A3 zip corridor through the city centre and on to Gunwharf Quays. This could provide an attractive public transport route into the city and will also be of benefit to the city's cyclists.
- Development of bike hubs in the city centre and seafront areas. These are currently successfully operated in many UK cities (Leeds and Leicester being prime examples) and provide secure, manned indoor cycle parking, showers, changing facilities, cycle repairs and retail and cycle hire.
- Integrated tickets for public transport and a revised fare structure. A simple and cheap way of accessing public transport in the city will encourage people to switch from the car. Bus routes in the city are often little used, and that is due to the often prohibitive and confusing pricing.
- Portsmouth does also have links by sea to Gosport, Hayling, the Isle of Wight and mainland Europe, but these links seem to be largely ignored in the masterplans. It is worth noting that the car ferry services in particular seem to be designed specifically to get arriving passengers out of the city as



fast as possible – the possibility that people arriving on these services may want to visit the city itself seems to have been largely ignored. Much more can surely be made of these links.

These masterplans present an unmissable opportunity to transform our city. Portsmouth Cycle Forum urges the city council to give more thought to the transport problems in these plans – the success of the plans stands or falls by transport. PCC can create a city that is fit for cycling, and that will boost the health and happiness of everyone. Academic research in the Department of Economics at the University of British Columbia has shown that cities with the highest levels of cycle use are also the happiest. That should be simple to bring about in a flat compact city like Portsmouth and is surely is a compelling idea for future development of the city?

5 Conclusions

The masterplans for the city centre and the seafront present an ambitious and in many ways compelling vision for the future development of these areas. These plans are intended to drive economic growth, and establish Portsmouth as a European City Break destination. However, the viability of these plans hinges on the ability to increase the number of consumers being brought into these areas. The transport challenges of this are not adequately addressed in either of the plans.

Portsmouth City Council's own transport policy, as set down in PCS17, is not adequately considered in the masterplan documents. This calls into question the ability of the reconfigured city centre and seafront road systems to deliver on the aspirations of PCS17. The failure to provide a balanced and sustainable transport infrastructure will place the wellbeing and safety of the citizens of Portsmouth at risk, and seriously compromise the city's capacity for economic growth.

Portsmouth faces some unique challenges here. The city is largely on an island with only 3 road links and a single rail link to the mainland. There is little or no space remaining in which to build new roads or to expand existing ones. PCF suggest cycling could be a central pillar of a solution to this and looks forward to working with PCC to develop it.