



3. The Existing Policy and Strategy Context

3. THE EXISTING POLICY AND STRATEGY CONTEXT

- 3.1 This section summarises and analyses relevant policies and strategies relevant to marine activity within the study area, at national, regional and local levels. A detailed analysis of the policies and strategies is contained at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Planning and policy-making generally are in a state of some flux. Sweeping changes to the development plan system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, including the introduction of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Documents (LDD), have yet to fully work through to replace the existing system. The Government has recently suggested further changes, partly to simplify a system that many (including most of our consultees) find over-complex. Proposed measures include the establishment of a new method of considering applications for major infrastructure, which would include port and port expansion proposals
- 3.3 The Government is also currently reviewing 'Modern Ports', the present UK policy for ports, the conclusions of which will be extremely significant for the Solent, and for the Port of Southampton in particular. We have already noted that the failure of 'Modern Ports' to support the need for expansion of the Port of Southampton was a key factor in the refusal of consent for the Dibden Terminal proposals.
- 3.4 Implementation of European legislation affecting marine industries, in particular the Habitats and Water Framework Directives, is not yet complete. Lessons learnt from their implementation so far may yet change future planning policy interpretation and have direct implications for the viability of individual developments.
- 3.5 The recent Marine Bill White Paper has the stated aim of delivering the Government's vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. Proposals include a new UK wide system of marine planning that will involve the production of a new UK wide marine policy statement which will be implemented through a series of local marine plans applying to specific geographical areas. A new Marine Management Organisation ("MMO") is proposed, which would be responsible for future strategic planning. The proposed suite of proposals also includes a 'streamlined, transparent and consistent system' for the licensing of marine developments.
- 3.6 It is unclear how these proposals would connect with existing plans and strategies, for example existing local development plans. Proposals by marine industries frequently span the administrative divide between the water and the land. In these circumstances, the introduction of a new consenting body is much more likely to complicate consent procedures than simplify them. Marine industries may have cause to be concerned about the White Paper's emphasis on environmental protection, as it makes little concession to economic needs.
- 3.7 At the national level, existing land use planning policy for the Coast is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 20: Coastal Planning (PPG20). This PPG has remained unchanged for 15 years, a period which has seen the introduction of

most of the current environmental legislation and regulation affecting the coast and a substantial shift in the national and world economies. Consequently, PPG 20's appreciation of the value of economic use of the coast is severely dated. This contributes to our view that the overall balance of official policies for the coast is uncoordinated and generally significantly out of kilter with the reality of the economic significance of marine areas to the UK economy.

- 3.8 'Modern Ports' and its ongoing review does at least recognise the economic value of the ports industry to the UK economy and acknowledges that demand for port traffic is likely to exceed available capacity over the next decade. However, its convoluted style and lack of specificity reduce its effectiveness in supporting proposals for new development. Its support for efficiency improvements in existing infrastructure is understandable but, in our experience, is frequently used as an excuse to delay the provision of essential infrastructure.
- 3.9 The recent Ports Review Interim Report (July 2007) recognises that this could have the potential to significantly constrain future economic growth, as could congestion on port access routes and the wider inter-urban network. The Government's view is that commercial port operators are best placed to make decisions about where and when to invest in the port sector – i.e. the ports industry is market led. The Interim Report rules out the preparation of locally or regionally determinative ports policy, arguing that the Government's main responsibility is seen as to create the conditions in which investment is encouraged, and yet sustainability is ensured. Although there is support for safeguarding significant port facilities, there is no reference to specific facilities or individual ports. The indications are that it remains unlikely that any site-specific guidance or priorities for port related development in the UK will emerge at the national level as a result of the review of UK ports policy. Taken alongside the deficiencies in regional policy described below, this is a serious handicap to national support for growth of the Port of Southampton.
- 3.10 The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South East will establish Government policy for the region. When approved by the Secretaries of State, RSS will be replace RPG9 as part of the statutory development plan. A draft RSS has been examined in public and the Secretary of State's modifications are anticipated in 2008. The examining Panel's Report has recently been published and identifies several deficiencies in draft RSS's treatment of economic growth generally, in particular the vacuum on regionally significant development. The Panel recommends that draft policy (RE2) be modified to include a requirement for local authorities to identify significant employment land for those sectors showing potential for growth in that part of the region. In this context the Strategic Development Areas in Southern Hampshire and the regional hubs and gateways are suggested as potential locations for major employment development.
- 3.11 The Panel's report acknowledges the significance of this Study and the threats to marine industries on waterfront sites from higher value uses and the wider problems experienced by industries that it describes as "within the supply chain for marinas and ports". The Panel recommended strengthening draft RSS policy (RE2) to safeguard key marine-related sites in LDDs. Whilst this is a welcome conclusion, it is ironic that (in line with the Ports Review Interim

Report) the Panel was unable to recommend a similar policy for the growth and expansion of the Port of Southampton itself. However, in a separate decision, the Secretary of State, has recently extended the life of the policy in the Hampshire Structure Plan that allocates land at Dibden Bay for port uses requiring access to deep water.

- 3.12 Whilst no specific section of the draft RSS considers the coastal zone as a separate entity, general policies for the coast are included in other region wide policy sections such as 'Sustainable Natural Resource Management' (Policy NRM6). Where policies are provided for the coastal zone they concentrate on environmental protection, climate change and the effects on the coastal zone.
- 3.13 The emerging sub-regional policies relevant to the majority of the Solent coastline (the South Hampshire sub-region) also do not recognise the importance of marine activities within the area. The only mention of anything to do with marine activity is a recognition that the area has excellent transport links by sea, a policy requirement that the transport and planning authorities will work together to manage the strategic transport network for longer journeys (especially to and from the Ports of Southampton and Portsmouth and Southampton Airport), and statements that the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth are both international gateways and employers of sub-regional and local significance respectively. The emerging sub-regional policies themselves fail to identify the marine activity sector (irrespective of its overall importance) let alone encourage it to the benefit of the economy of the region.
- 3.14 Whilst the sub-regional strategy provides a brief (albeit, we think, inaccurate) description of the economic importance of the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth the suggested policies which follow concentrate on providing sufficient land to accommodate the general employment uses found within Use Class B1, B2 and B8. No economic guidance encouraging the specific aspects of marine activity to the benefit of the regions economy is provided. Regional policy, including that specifically relevant to the study area does not 'own' the marine activity that is occurring in this location.
- 3.15 At the local level, land use policies concentrate on specific detailed matters such as the provision of moorings or the principles of development on the developed or undeveloped coast. Some local plans do safeguard existing coastal sites, in particular in relation to boatbuilding activities, for uses requiring access to water. However, there are also restrictive policies for further marina and water-based recreational uses and development of associated marine infrastructure such as jetties, slips and pontoons with concerns about environmental capacity of the area to deal with additional growth. The emphasis on environmental protection and the interconnected pattern of environmental designations along the Solent coast means that in practice obtaining planning consent for any significant new coastal development would be a complex and difficult process.
- 3.16 Policies for the developed stretches of the coast facilitate a range of different uses and particularly seek to promote residential development or development for a mix of uses. As a consequence of the successive implementation of such policies, many urban-based marine employment sites are surrounded by residential development and mixed-use development with little room for

expansion and where expansion may be possible, there is a threat of development being refused where uses are viewed as have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby dwellings.

- 3.17 There are very few large strategic employment allocations in existing Local Plans with coastal access and even fewer potential future employment sites given the increasing coverage of environmental designation along the coastline and the loss of suitable land to other uses as a result of past land-use policies and decisions, perhaps most recently, the development of Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth for a mix of retail and leisure development.
- 3.18 There is limited recognition that marine activities cross local authority boundaries, the most extreme example being the statutory boundary of the Port of Southampton which includes parts of the coastline that are in seven different local authority areas but only referenced in two. As such there is no coordinated or particularly consistent approach to coastal zone planning at the local level.
- 3.19 The overall conclusion in respect of land use policy and guidance is that whilst the significance of the coastal zone is recognised there is an emphasis on safeguarding its environmental importance rather than on capitalising on coastal assets as an important contributor to the UK's future economic growth. There is no specific ownership of marine activity and little recognition of the marine sector and its component parts. Whilst the economic importance of specific marine activities are noted here and there, there is little in the way of policy guidance and support for the future development of such uses, hindered by an apparent lack of appreciation of the marine industry at national level and absence of clear and up-to-date guidance. Where there is local policy guidance, this tends to follow the national and regional line, which is generic and general, with little local creativity or promotion of marine activity at the local level as important strategic economic assets.
- 3.20 A range of economic impact studies has been carried out over the years but none have had a consistent methodology or comprehensive definition of the marine sector.
- 3.21 Against this background, it can readily be seen that there are no clear national or regional policy incentives or 'drivers' to support the growth of marine industries within the study area or to require local authorities to make provision for their needs. The single exception is the saved structure plan policy for Dibden Bay, subject to the satisfaction of criteria. However, its eventual incorporation into adopted RSS is not supported by the EiP Panel's report or national port policy. The saved structure plan policy for Dibden Bay will therefore remain part of the statutory development plan until RSS is approved by the Secretary of State including a policy that 'expressly replaces' it. There are, on the other hand, frequent references in plans and policy statements to the constraints on and difficulties associated with development in the coastal zone. In designated areas, the provisions of EC Directives, as interpolated into UK law by Regulations have mandatory force.
- 3.22 Objectives for the South Hampshire sub region as determined for the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) and reflected in draft RSS include ambitious employment and productivity growth targets in the period to

2026 – productivity increases of 2.3% per annum and approximately 59,000 additional jobs. The marine sector clearly offers significant potential to contribute both to employment and output growth increases in the sub-region over this period.

- 3.23 The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is built on the three key objectives of: *global competitiveness*, something which marine activities and facilities in the study area are well placed to deliver; *smart growth*, this includes the need for an increasing proportion of economic output to be attributable to new and improved products and services something to which the marine sector can make a significant contribution as is reflected by the importance attributed by the RES to Southampton and Portsmouth Ports; and *sustainable prosperity*, again something which marine activities in the study area are well placed to deliver.
- 3.24 For the 'Coastal South East' the RES identified a range of priorities including maximising the potential of existing technological clusters (including marine) and recognising the importance of high value manufacturing and knowledge based supply chains. The RES stresses the priority of investing in the long-term sustainable growth of key ports including Southampton and Portsmouth. It also highlights that regionally important sectors such as marine will require measures to be taken which will ensure an adequate supply of land and premises.
- 3.25 Research into the South East Marine Sector published in 2003 (Business Issues, Prospects for Clustering) indicates that the majority of businesses involved in the marine sector are small, but the overall employment in the sector is dominated by a small number of large companies. The research further concludes that the true magnitude and breadth of the marine sector in the Solent sub region has not been adequately represented either from a marketing perspective or by individual firms.