

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

SOUTHAMPTON & FAREHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

RESPONSE TO ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS CONSULTATION
ON THE PORT MASTERPLAN – July – 14 November 2009

The Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce has consistently supported the expansion of the Port of Southampton since its establishment for this purpose in 1851 - and continues to do so. We see this expansion as vital to the achievement of the South East Plan, SEEDA's economic strategy and the PUSH initiatives for employment. Without the Port of Southampton achieving its full economic potential, the Chamber of Commerce doubts whether other sectors can adequately make up the shortfall and we would urge local authorities in South Hampshire to plan positively for the future for all sectors of the local economy.

In the foreword to the Port of Southampton Masterplan 2009, ABP state that when drafting the plan, they kept in mind three essential strategic objectives:

- the need to continue to attract investment and create jobs;
- the need to promote environmental and economic sustainability;
- the need to support the community that depends on us.

ABP go on to advise that shared vision and commitment have made the Port of Southampton the world class-port it is today and that they are looking to the masterplan to renew and extend that vision and commitment, thus ensuring that the Port remains Britain's gateway to the world, and the gateway to a sustainable and prosperous future for both the Port and the wider local community.

The Chamber fully endorses these key objectives, and the need for a proactive and on-going partnership involving Associated British Ports, Southampton City Council, key Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Stakeholders, the private sector (commerce and industry) and above all, the community to ensure that these objectives are attainable.

Turning first to the main body of the master plan document, with regard to the five specific policy statements embodied within it, the Chamber would comment as follows.

Policy 4.81 ABP will continue to advise planning authorities of the development needs of the Port and will work with them to implement statutory regional and local policies.

The Chamber strongly supports this in principle and would recommend amending this policy to make it clear that ABP will actively engage and work with the relevant planning authorities in order to deliver these aims.

Policy 5.121 As the UK's premier international gateway port, ABP will continue to protect, identify and where appropriate provide facilities to support the growth of deep-sea container hub port trade, trans-shipment and coastal container shipping, motor vehicles (ro-ro), cruise shipping, dry bulks, general cargo and semi-bulks.

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The Chamber supports this policy but would recommend amending this policy to make it clear that ABP will, wherever possible, actively work to seek and secure consensus views on necessary growth, and to deliver that growth in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner.

Policy 7.63 ABP will continue, in accordance with Government policy for the South East, to plan for and provide the infrastructure needed to maintain and enhance the Port of Southampton as an international deep-sea gateway port to the benefit of the sub-region, the region and the nation.

The Chamber welcomes this policy and would recommend amending this policy to make it clear that ABP will actively work to deliver the necessary infrastructure in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner.

Policy 8.54 ABP will work with network providers to ensure that the Port's future access requirements and needs are included in their policies and programmes.

The Chamber supports this policy and has already taken action with the rail freight industry to bring about the upgrade of the railway route Southampton to Nuneaton to join with the upgraded West Coast Line.

Policy 10.53 Through the application of the Infrastructure Requirements policy and the subsequent maintenance and enhancement of the role of the Port through the master plan period, significant socio economic benefits will be generated.

And Policy 10.54 ABP will continue to provide, within the wider statutory Port area, for water-based leisure activities and promote, as it is able, the City of Southampton and sub-region.

The Chamber supports these policies.

With respect to other more detailed matters, the Chamber would further comment that:

- the masterplan does not identify clearly that not all the area of Dibden Bay will be developed and the community aspects for the use of this land should therefore be more strongly emphasised in the document.
- Some very successful environmental work has been done in the Humber Estuary area. ABP should actively examine the options for opening up this work to a wider audience and demonstrating how lessons learnt/good practice established can be applied to proposals in and around Southampton Water.
- The cruise ships industry is now a major driver for the Port, the city and the sub-region. The partnership of those most directly concerned with this industry must take all necessary steps to ensure that the cruise industry stays with the Port, continues to expand in future, is seen as a flagship "international marker" for Southampton and that the local economy and community derive maximum benefit from it.

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Finally, the Chamber would strongly recommend that following completion of the Masterplan consultation process, ABP puts in place an on-going monitoring, review and updating procedure, incorporating regular liaison and dialogue with key stake holders and interested parties.

Further information to demonstrate the need for this is given in Annex 1, pages 4 and 5 following this consultation response.

James Chestnutt
Director General
Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce

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ANNEX 1

The Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce considers that whilst the ABP Master Plan provides a welcome indication of ABP's short, medium and long term aspirations for the port, the new National Policy Statement (NPS) on Ports will also be an important determinant of the future of the port. It is therefore essential that the key issues should be properly articulated and appropriately considered at every opportunity as illustrated in the following instances.

Draft National Policy Statement (NPS) on Ports – 9.11.09

The Draft National Policy Statement (NPS) on Ports was published by the Government on 9 November 2009. The imminent deadline for the ABP Master Plan consultation means that it has not been possible to analyse the NPS in full detail. However, the Chamber notes the advice set out in para. 1. 11. 12 that:

“.....the Government believes that there is a compelling need for substantial additional port capacity over the next 20-30 years, to be met by a combination of development already consented and development for which applications have yet to be received. Excluding the possibility of providing additional capacity for the movement of goods and commodities through new port development would be to accept limits on economic growth, and on the price, choice and availability of goods imported into the UK and available to consumers. It would also limit the local and regional economic benefits that new developments might bring. Such an outcome would be strongly against the public interest.”

Hampshire County Council

As noted in the Hampshire County Council Cabinet Report of 26 October 2009 responding to the ABP Port Masterplan consultation, the Port of Southampton is important to the national, regional and local economy. It is a major international gateway into the UK, and handles some 20% by value, of UK trade with non EU countries. The Port employs approximately 12,000 people, and in 2007 its overall contribution to the local economy was estimated to be £2 billion. It is an important part of the Solent maritime economy, which is estimated to support 77,000 jobs, and is calculated to generate a total GDP of £5.5 billion.

Southampton Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Inspector's Report

The strategic importance of maintaining the on-going economic success of the Port is further echoed by the Inspector responsible for conducting the recent examination into the Southampton Core Strategy Development Plan Document, who has observed that no one doubts the overall importance of the Port to the local economy, both now and in the future.

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New Forest District outside the National Park Core Strategy – Inspector’s Report

Within this overall context, the Inspector for the Examination into the New Forest District outside the National Park Core Strategy concluded that both national policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy clearly recognise the Port of Southampton as a major international deep sea gateway port with significant global and economic importance. He further advised that the reclaimed land known as Dibden Bay is the only area of land which is physically capable of accommodating significant expansion of the port.

The Chamber notes, however, that all parties to the far-reaching discussions concerning how, when and where future port expansion and growth should be accommodated, also believe, rightly, that an appropriate balance must be struck in terms of the need, within the context of the physical expansion of the Port of Southampton and amongst other considerations, to satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. This will involve demonstrating, for example, either that the proposals would have no adverse impact on the integrity of the international designations; or, if there is an adverse impact, that the alternative put forward for approval is the least damaging (regardless of economic considerations), that no other feasible alternative exists that would not affect the integrity of the site, and that there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Within this overall context therefore, it is disappointing to see the negative reactions to the Port Master Plan that are emerging before due planning process has yet begun in terms of any fresh proposals from the ABP Draft Master Plan and in advance of publication by Government of the National Policy Statement on Ports.

James Chestnutt
Director General
Southampton & Fareham Chamber of Commerce

ABOUT US

Your regional Chamber working for you locally

As the independent voice of local business, Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce is able to represent some 2,000 businesses in the South Hampshire region and further a field through Hampshire Chambers concerning the issues that affect their ability to grow and prosper. Their views are central to the Chamber's lobbying on issues of concern to our members and are the basis of our thinking on the many local, regional and national planning or government policy initiatives on which we are asked for formal comment as a business representative organisation. The volunteer Chamber members on the committees provide expertise and a wide knowledge of specialist topics which is used in formulating the **Chamber Viewpoint**, which is published monthly in the centre pages of our magazine and on our web site.