

Chapter 12 Transport Connections

Guiding Principles:

Chapter 4 details all the guiding principles relevant to the overall management of the Harbour. Whilst all should be given some consideration the following are of particular relevance to transport connections.

Key Guiding Principle numbers: 1, 5, 20 and 21.

12.1 Overview

Poole Town and Harbour are relatively well connected to the main road network and are also served by national rail links, with a principle route connecting the town with London and Southampton to the east and Weymouth to the west. The Port itself is served by a branch line that connects to the main rail network. Transportation by ship has to some extent been covered in Chapter 11, however it is also important to consider the wider transport infrastructure that supports the Port and the surrounding hinterland. With predicted growth in population, combined with increasing visitor numbers and the possibility of higher volumes of port traffic following channel deepening, it is essential that local plans and policies continue to recognise the need for a robust transportation network to support the local area.

The Poole Local Plan and the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Structure Plan, both acknowledge and address the need to renew and develop the road and rail links for the region for the socio and economic benefit to the local inhabitants and the port itself. Both these plans support the Government's strategy for sustainable transport development, PPG13, which considers the need for integration of different modes, including the transfer of freight transport to shipping where possible. Local authorities are encouraged to promote the role of ports by encouraging access to them by rail and road. However it is acknowledged that the benefits of securing the economic prosperity of the port need to be balanced against environmental and recreational considerations with regard to due planning process and Habitat Regulations.

12.2 Strategic Highway Network

12.2.1 Background

Traffic in Dorset is forecast to grow by around 20% by the year 2011 and while it is recognised that the building of new roads can be counterproductive, local plans do highlight that some improvements to the strategic highway network are necessary. This is particularly true where there are strong economic reasons such as the movement of goods to and from the port and the regeneration of areas such as Hamworthy. The local road network also needs to be able to absorb and support the increasing numbers of tourists that visit the region each year and ensure that the Harbour and Port are as accessible as possible. The general inadequacies of current road link has to some extent hampered the Port's trading capability, where hauliers have tended to use more accessible routes to other ports in the Solent.

12.2.2 Links to the Port

There are currently major congestion problems caused by the absence of an adequate route between the A3049 dual carriageway in Poole and the A31 trunk road. By limiting access to Poole and the port the economic viability of the Borough is compromised and the local council is therefore committed to securing the A31 Poole link through the Local Structure and Transport Plan process.

There is also a proposed road network for the Hamworthy area, which contains a number of new road links, including a replacement A350 route to the port. This will allow traffic flows on Blandford Road to be greatly reduced by traffic management.

12.2.3 Poole Bridge Regeneration Initiative

Significant regeneration of land either side of Back Water Channel is proposed to enable land that is currently vacant or under utilised to deliver new homes, employment opportunities, community facilities and a second Harbour crossing. Approximately 25 hectares of land is identified for development and the catalyst is a new bridge, "Twin Sails", that is being promoted by the Borough of Poole. The new bridge will address the access issues that currently hinder reliable road movements between Hamworthy and the Poole Town side of the channel and will considerably improve communication links to the Port of Poole. The new crossing will form part of the primary transport route.

"Twin Sails" will be a lifting bridge that will operate in conjunction with the existing Poole Bridge to ensure whenever possible that there is one bridge open to road traffic. There may be occasions when both bridges will need to be opened together to facilitate the safe movement of vessels. This situation is provided for in the Transport and Works Act Order which allows the Harbour Master to direct that both bridges be lifted to ensure maritime safety is not compromised. A variable messaging system will be put in place to direct road traffic to whichever bridge is available for crossing while measures to ensure the safe navigation of boats through the two bridges will be implemented.



12.3 Rail Link

As has been mentioned the conurbation of Poole has good rail links to London and other parts of the country, making it accessible for both tourists and freight operators. In line with government initiatives Poole is working with neighbouring authorities and the train operating companies to develop and expand rail passenger use. The enhanced service is expected to include a Poole – Swanage service, promoted by the Purbeck Railway Partnership.

The branch line that links to the Port is currently under-utilised and is only used for freight. Government guidance states that sites should be identified and protected where they could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen choices for movement of rail freight. The Port rail link will be developed as the principal rail freight access for the conurbation and track capacity and materials handling facilities will be improved. It is also important that local authorities work with port and rail operators in seeking to achieve a major increase in the use of the Port rail link.

12.4 Port Services

The Port of Poole is significant in strategic and regional terms in providing ferry and commercial cargo handling services to continental Europe and the Channel Islands. The Government's strategy for ports is encapsulated within the document, "Modern Ports: A UK Policy". It highlights the economic role of ports and the contribution that shipping makes to sustainable transport. The UK economy depends on international trade and ports, such as Poole, to serve the national interests in supporting the competitiveness of national and regional economies. The Department for Transport are reviewing the national Ports Policy and are looking at the future of ports until about 2030. Among other things they are considering the likely future demand for port capacity and how smaller ports can realise their potential as businesses.

The Poole Local Plan identifies that there is sufficient deep water frontage and infrastructure in place to allow for an increase in ferry services and coastal shipping if required. This is a point reiterated in the Poole Core Strategy, adopted in February 2009, with the creation of policy PCS 3 – Poole Port. The increased versatility of the port afforded by channel deepening shows the commitment to supporting local and Government policies in promoting transport of passengers and freight by sea. Growth in this mode of transport will undoubtedly boost the economy of the region but this needs to be underpinned by the fruition of the aforementioned road and rail development proposals.