

**Title of meeting:** Traffic and Transportation Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Subject:** Solent Connectivity: the Network Rail Solent Continuous Modular Strategy Plan

**Report by:** Tristan Samuels, Director Regeneration

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the recommendations for the future development of train services in the Solent area (Portsmouth – Southampton/Eastleigh) contained in “Solent Connectivity”, the Solent Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) study.

**2. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation:**

**2.1 Notes the contents of this report**

**2.2 Endorses the CMSP recommended train service specification:**

- **Portsmouth – Southampton: additional 2 trains per hour giving 4 trains per hour; and**
- **Portsmouth – Eastleigh: additional train per hour giving 2 trains per hour.**

**2.3 Supports in principle the following CMSP recommended infrastructure measures that will be required in Portsmouth to facilitate the new services:**

- **Reinstatement of track in platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour station, bringing the platform back into use; and/or**
- **Provision of an additional platform at Portsmouth and Southsea station, adjacent to the low-level platforms 3 and 4.**

### 3. Background: the Solent CMSP study

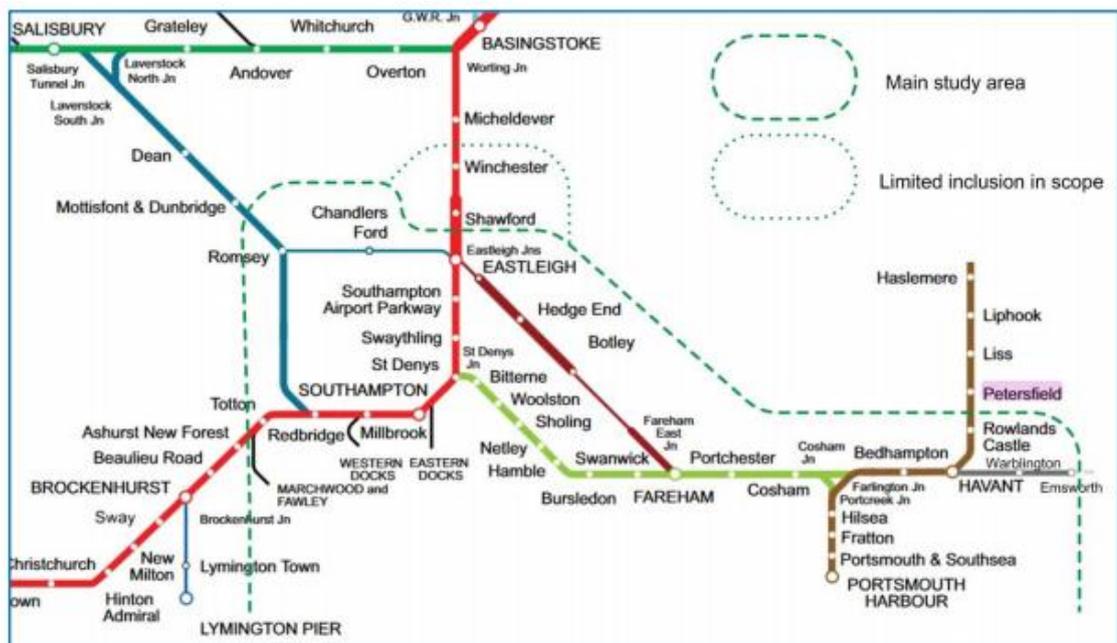
3.1 In the rail industry planning process more locally focussed Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) studies have replaced the large “Route Utilisation Studies” formerly used to develop specifications for rail service plans.

3.2 Network Rail owns, manages and maintains the National Rail network in Great Britain. Network Rail work in partnership with Solent Transport, and have undertaken a Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) study covering the following routes in the Solent area including:

- Portsmouth/Havant – Southampton;
- Fareham – Eastleigh/Winchester;
- Southampton – Totton;
- Southampton – Romsey; and
- Eastleigh – Romsey.

3.4 Figure 1 below shows a map of the Solent CMSP study area. The study area comprises of 70 miles of route with 31 stations.

**Figure 1: The Solent CMSP study area**



3.5 The aims of the CMSP process are:

- To work closely with local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to identify current and future transport needs in specific areas;

- To identify how rail can better serve these transport needs;
- To focus on the transport needs of rail customers; and
- To improve Network Rail’s engagement with the train operators.

3.6 The Solent area has a high level of car dependency and currently a lower use of rail than might be expected for its population size – only 2.3% of commuter trips are made by train. Achieving a mode shift from car to rail travel could contribute to the delivery of a range of transport, economic and environmental policy objectives.

3.7 The travel markets with the greatest potential for a shift to rail, and where the benefits of such a shift would be largest are:

- “medium distance” journeys between the Portsmouth and Southampton city regions and their city centres;
- “medium distance” journeys between the city regions and key employment hubs such as Whiteley; and
- Journeys between the two city regions.

3.8 In the morning peak period rail travel times are quicker than those possible by car for many of these journeys. However, the relatively low train service frequencies at many stations make rail travel unattractive. Increasing service frequencies to reduce passengers’ waiting times, could be more beneficial than running faster trains. Physical constraints on infrastructure development would preclude a substantial increase in train speeds. Increasing train service frequencies is therefore prioritised.

3.10 A long-list of 27 train service options was considered. The local authorities provided input to the service option development process based on their Local Transport Plan priorities. Key performance statistics were calculated for each option including the differences between the car and rail travel times for the travel markets listed in Section 3.7. High-level assessments of the option feasibility and costs were also made.

3.11 The five best-performing options, were subjected to a more detailed appraisal. The options which performed satisfactorily were recommended for further development to build the case for implementation.

3.11 The infrastructure measures that would be required to facilitate the services were identified. Outline feasibility assessments of the infrastructure assessments were undertaken to verify their deliverability.

3.12 However, the travel data used to assess the options pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic. Future travel patterns may be different but are unknown at present. The options are likely to be reappraised when travel data is available, to verify the position.

## **4 The Solent CMSP recommendations**

4.1 The following service changes are recommended:

- Portsmouth – Southampton: additional 2 trains per hour giving 4 trains per hour, which are to run semi-fast;
- Extension of some trains to terminate at Totton instead of Southampton; and
- Portsmouth – Eastleigh - Winchester: additional train per hour giving 2 trains per hour.

4.2 These service changes would deliver the following benefits to Portsmouth:

- Quicker overall rail travel times (including wait time) to Southampton from Portsmouth Harbour, Portsmouth & Southsea and Cosham stations with a 20% improvement in passengers' end to end journey times between the cities through reduced waiting times;
- Quicker rail travel times (through reduced wait times) for journeys between Portsmouth stations and major employment centres such as Whiteley, Solent Business Park via Swanwick station;
- Quicker rail travel times (through reduced wait times) for journeys to Portsmouth city centre and Cosham from significant population centres such as Woolston, Locks Heath (via Swanwick station) and Hedge End;
- More frequent trains from Portsmouth to the employment centres of Winchester and Basingstoke;
- Reduced car traffic into Portsmouth as more frequent and convenient train services attract some motorists to rail travel; and
- Increased investment in Portsmouth as greater rail connectivity would expand the labour market catchment, making the city more attractive to business.

4.3 It is likely that the additional services into Portsmouth would be electric powered or bi-mode, rather than diesel. This will complement the Air Quality Local Plan for the city.

4.4 In order to facilitate these service changes, the following infrastructure measures would be required. Please note that only infrastructure measures (i) and (ii) would be located in Portsmouth.

- (i) Reinstatement of track in platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour station, bringing the platform back into use, as shown in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Reinstatement of platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour station**



- (ii) Provision of an additional platform at Portsmouth and Southsea station, adjacent to the low-level platforms 3 and 4, as shown in Figure 3 below. This could be an alternative to reinstatement of platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour, or it could be additional, if further extra terminal capacity is required for increased services from London in future.

**Figure 3: Additional low-level platform at Portsmouth & Southsea**



- (iii) Provision of a bi-directional through platform at Fareham by means of conversion of the current bay platform. This would enable trains to overtake, significantly improving timetable flexibility and service resilience on the Solent area routes. This platform would be extended to accommodate longer trains than at present.

- (iv) Reinstatement of double track on the Fareham - Botley – Eastleigh section to increase line capacity.
- (v) Electrification of a siding and closure of a level crossing at Totton. This would enable trains to terminate at Totton instead of occupying a through platform at Southampton Central.
- (vi) Changes to the signalling for Platform 1 at Eastleigh to enable operation as a bidirectional platform and associated track layout changes. This would enable its use by southbound trains from the Chandlers' Ford line and increase the capacity of the station and the line towards Fareham and Portsmouth.

4.3 These measures are to be progressed through the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process.

4.4 Measure (ii) the provision of an additional platform at Portsmouth and Southsea station, would require the acquisition of some land currently outside of railway ownership, and its protection from future development. Portsmouth City Council is considering providing planning protection in the next Local Plan to prevent development of the required land. This will need to be progressed through Portsmouth City Council's Planning Department and Transport Department, working with the present landowner(s) and Network Rail with the view to potentially safeguarding the required land as part of any future overall site allocation policy in the draft Local Plan.

## 5. Links with other plans/strategies

5.1 Given the significant transport benefits that could be delivered by introducing the CMSP recommended train services, this process would support the following Portsmouth City Council plans and strategies:

- The emerging Local Transport Plan 4;
- The emerging Portsmouth Local Plan;
- The emerging Public Transport Strategy;
- The emerging Parking Strategy; and
- The Portsmouth Air Quality Local Plan.

5.2 It would also support wider environment, economy and planning strategies and plans for the city.

## 6. Next Steps

6.1 The support of Portsmouth City Council for the Solent Continuous Modular Strategic Partnership study recommendations will be forwarded to Network Rail and Solent Transport.

6.2 The possibility of providing planning protection in the Local Plan for the land adjacent to Portsmouth and Southsea station that would be required for a new

rail track and platform, will be investigated by the council Transport Planning Team and Planning departments working with the landowners and Network Rail.

- 6.3 When the present Covid-19 pandemic has passed, and more information is available about future travel patterns in the Solent area, the recommended train service options will be reassessed. This will determine whether the appraisal results remain valid and that the service improvements would still deliver the anticipated benefits.

## **7. Reasons for recommendations**

- 7.1 Portsmouth City Council officers have contributed to the development of the CMSP study. As a key member of the Solent Transport Partnership, it has part-ownership of the study and its recommendations for rail service improvements.
- 7.2 If delivered, the rail service improvements would deliver significant transport and economic benefits to the city, as described in section 4.2 above.
- 7.3 The CMSP recommendations for rail service improvements will form part of the emerging Portsmouth City Council Public Transport Strategy, which is a supplementary document of LTP4.
- 7.4 Endorsement of the CMSP recommendations and support for the associated infrastructure measures by Portsmouth City Council is sought to demonstrate local support for the proposals and is necessary to progress towards delivery of these proposals.

## **8. Integrated impact assessment**

- 8.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been made of the CMSP recommended train service options. This is provided in Appendix A.

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from endorsement of the CMSP recommended rail service options, as the council is not a signatory to any rail franchise agreements.
- 9.2 The provision of Planning protection in the Local Plan for the land adjacent to Portsmouth and Southsea station that would be required for a new rail track and platform, would have implications for the statutory Local Plan process. This will be investigated by the Transport Strategy and Planning departments. Any issues would be addressed through the Planning Department, the owner(s) of the land affected and Network Rail.

9.3 As noted in the body of the report, the endorsement of the options as recommended is considered to be consistent with the City Council's emerging policies in relation to local transport, public transport, parking and air quality.

**10. Director of Finance's comments**

10.1 There are no immediate direct financial implications as a result of approving the recommendations within the report.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

**Appendix B: Solent Connectivity: Continuous Modular Strategic Planning**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Solent Connectivity: Continuous Modular Strategic Planning. Network Rail & Solent Transport, May 2020	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by: