



CABINET 3 OCTOBER 2001

RUSHINGTON GREENROUTE EXTENSION, TOTTON: PROGRESS REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The subject of this report is a site of approximately four hectares of land enclosed between mainline railway and the Rushington Manor area of Totton (see attached plan). The land is allocated as proposed public open space in the adopted Local Plan but is currently not accessible to the public and is not used or maintained.
- 1.2 The Council's Environment Services directorate has been working towards creating a link through the site from Bartley Park and the West Totton Greenroute network to the centre of Totton.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to inform members of progress on the project, to seek approval to proceed with further design work and local community consultations, and the release of £10,000 from developers contributions to continue this work.

2 BACKGROUND AND LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

- 2.1 The Totton Greenroute network is not only highly valued locally, but has also been cited as an example of best practice by the Planning Policies Research Group at Oxford Brookes University (see report 'Countryside Benefits from Developers Contributions, July 1999). The extension to the Greenroute at Rushington is identified as a priority project in the Council's open space implementation programme.
- 2.2 In accordance with decisions taken by Leisure Services Committee on 2 June 1998 and 9 November 1999, extensive survey and feasibility work has been carried out. Further feasibility and project development work needs to continue, and it is proposed that more detailed design work and public consultation should now be commenced.
- 2.3 Local Plan Policy TE20 allocates the land as proposed public open space and Policy DW-T14 proposes the creation of a new cycleway during the plan period to connect Bartley Park (West Totton Greenroute) to Brokenford Lane housing allocation via Bartley Water. Land adjoining the east end of the site is allocated for housing in the current local plan but is occupied by employment uses at present.

3 PROGRESS WITH FEASIBILITY STUDIES

Ecology

- 3.1 Ecological surveys carried out in autumn 1998 and spring 1999 confirm that the area is extremely diverse in species. It is this diversity, rather than any particular rare or uncommon species that make the site valuable from an ecological point of view. It is relatively unusual to find this many habitat types together in one place and not separated and interfered with by human activity.
- 3.2 Flowering grasslands, occasional flood meadow, permanent wetland, dry embankments, woodland edge, trees and woodland cover and running water all together offer habitat for a vast range of flora and fauna.
- 3.3 The site could provide a valuable educational resource and with interpretation and public involvement in management, the potential as an amenity for the enjoyment of local people is exceptional.
- 3.4 The introduction of public access means that a sensitive management plan will be necessary. It also means that the detailing of paths and fencing (to control level of access) will need to be considered in terms of the possible impact on this valuable habitat. Lighting and draining of the area would be detrimental to wildlife and are therefore not proposed (provision of lighting would also be contrary to the advice of the police - see paragraph 3.15 below).
- 3.5 Consideration is being given to the feasibility and implications of declaring the area as a 'Local Nature Reserve' (LNR) and/or a 'Site of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINC). Such designations can be helpful in protecting areas from development, facilitating the involvement of local people in site management decisions and accessing grant assistance in the future. On the other hand, formal designations might constrain the ability of the Council to determine the nature of access, construction, etc.

Engineering feasibility study

- 3.6 A study has now been completed by the Council's Consultancy Services division and the most practical route identified, along with a series of options for access into the residential area at Rushington Manor. The recommended route is shown on the attached plan (Drawing 'A'). There several options for crossing Bartley Water. A final decision will be taken following public consultation.
- 3.7 The land is owned by New Forest District Council apart from the areas adjoining either end. The engineer's report suggests bridges that could access the site from the Rushington side of Bartley Water. The Council has a right of access to the land from the Brokenford Lane area and the precise legal status of this is being investigated along with the ownership of the land to either end of the site.

3.8 The Environment Agency has indicated that it would impose the following conditions:

- Any bridges or other structures to be clear span with sufficient width of bank between the river and the abutments to allow the passage of mammals and the soffit of the bridge to be a minimum of 600mm above the top of the bank.
- Full details of the proposals to be submitted to the Agency for approval (a fee of £50 is payable).

3.9 Railtrack has indicated that it would require the following provisions:

- The Council to assume full financial responsibility for the future inspection maintenance and renewal of the flood arches utilised by the footway, while Railtrack reserves the right to make changes to the bridge structure should it be necessary in the future.
- Suitable wearing courses to be provided through the flood arches, while Railtrack reserves the right to disturb the surfacing if necessary in the future.
- Palisade fencing to be provided along the new common boundary between the path and the railway embankment.
- Construction and future maintenance of the path to be at the sole cost and risk of the Council. Railtrack to transfer its riparian liabilities to the Council where the path crosses the river.
- Details of the works to be submitted for Railtrack's approval before commencement.
- Consent of the Environment Agency to be obtained.

3.10 These suggested conditions and provisions will need to be considered by the Council's legal officers, and discussed further with Totton & Eling Town Council, Railtrack and the Environment Agency.

Public safety and personal security issues

3.11 The project has been discussed with the Council's Community Safety Officer and the proposed route has been walked with Hampshire Constabulary's Crime Reduction Officer and the local beat officer to ascertain any public safety or security risks.

3.12 The opening up of public land which is remote from the public highway and not overlooked by houses could potentially raise security issues. It is the view of the police that the route should be presented not as a main (strategic) cycle link but rather as an informal leisure route.

3.13 Issues of security where the path would pass through the flood arches have been discussed and possible design solutions suggested.

- 3.14 The issue of linking Hollyhatch Road to Bartley Avenue has been discussed. Connecting local neighbourhoods that are currently separate, although convenient and beneficial in some respects, could give rise to nuisance. Options will be explored further as part of the public consultation.
- 3.15 There are not considered to be any human rights implications in this project.
- 3.16 It is concluded that the route and access to the site generally should be viewed primarily as a leisure resource with access designed to provide for quiet enjoyment of a local nature reserve and a more pleasurable occasional route to Totton. Lighting, if provided, would encourage use of the path during dusk and darkness. Since the path would necessarily be remote, the provision of lighting would engender a false sense of security and is therefore not recommended.

Possible impacts of Dibden Bay port development

- 3.16 In the event that the Dibden Bay port development were to go ahead, a small area of vegetation close to the railway line would be removed to allow proposals for sidings improvements.
- 3.17 It is also understood that the Environment Agency would require drainage improvements, which could impact on the site in this area where streams currently run across the site to discharge into Bartley Water.
- 3.18 These proposals and the increase in traffic over the Fawley Branch Line bridge could affect negotiations with Railtrack over the opportunities to use their flood arches. There could also be a noise impact on the area

Views of Hampshire County Council's Cycleway Officer

- 3.19 Hampshire County Council's Cycleway Officer considers that there are several reasons against creating the route as an adoptable strategic cycle route:
- It would require lighting, which for reasons given above would not be desirable.
 - The route would need to be direct.
 - The route would need to be open permanently – the occasional closure of the route when the river is in full flood would not be acceptable.
 - The choice of materials and width of the path, if sensitive to flooding, silting and rural character would not accord with those required for a strategic route.
 - There would be additional cost implications, not as yet identified, to upgrade existing paths in Bartley Park and within the Brokenford Lane area to provide a fully connected route to adoptable standards.
- 3.20 This supports the suggestion that the route could best be created as a leisure route with the landowners giving 'permissive rights' for use.

4 VIEWS OF TOTTON & ELING TOWN COUNCIL

4.1 This project was confirmed by the Town Council in September 1999 as a priority scheme for implementation. Regular liaison and discussion with officers of the Town Council has informed the feasibility work to date. The project was considered by the Town Council at its meeting on 19 September 2001. Its views will be reported orally at the meeting.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Feasibility work undertaken to date confirms that the technical challenges involved with the railway and river crossings can be overcome, and that the exciting prospect of extending the Greenroute network through this attractive and ecologically rich area can now be realised. The opportunity now exists to secure the implementation of this important priority scheme in the Council's developers contributions open space implementation programme.

5.2 On the basis of the ecological survey and other technical advice, feedback from the police, discussion with Hampshire County Council's Cycleway Officer and officers of the Town Council, it is concluded that design and project development work should continue on the basis of an informal leisure route and provision of a local nature park to realise the amenity and educational potential of the site.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 These have been addressed in paragraphs 3.11 to 3.15 above.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The provisional budget estimate for the work is as follows:

Footpath construction	£177,000
Bridge construction (five allowed for, although possible that only four will be needed, depending on the outcome of public consultation)	£212,000
Fencing	£91,000
Ground modelling, signing, seating, etc	£25,000
Legal work, publicity and launch	say £10,000
total, say	£515,000

The above sums include professional fees @ 15% (covering engineering, landscape architecture/ management, safety planning supervision expertise to design, specify, cost and oversee the project) and 10% contingencies. The budget estimate will be confirmed when the scheme is brought back to

Members for approval following public consultation. The project would be funded from developers contributions for open space, the balance held for Totton as at April 2001 being £2.05 million.

- 7.2 It is proposed that £10,000 of this total should be released now to allow feasibility design work to continue and public consultation to be undertaken.

8 MAINTENANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 On completion, the scheme would be transferred to Totton and Eling Town Council. A management and maintenance plan will need to be agreed with the Town Council before handover.

9 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The scheme offers an exceptional opportunity to make an ecologically valuable area more accessible to the local community. Care will be taken to avoid impinging on the ecological value of the area. Sensitive design and management will ensure that an appropriate balance between the needs of people and the needs of wildlife is achieved. The route will offer an environmentally friendly choice of route into Totton, and will increase opportunities for local journeys to be made on foot and by bicycle thus reducing to some degree environmental damage from vehicular traffic.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

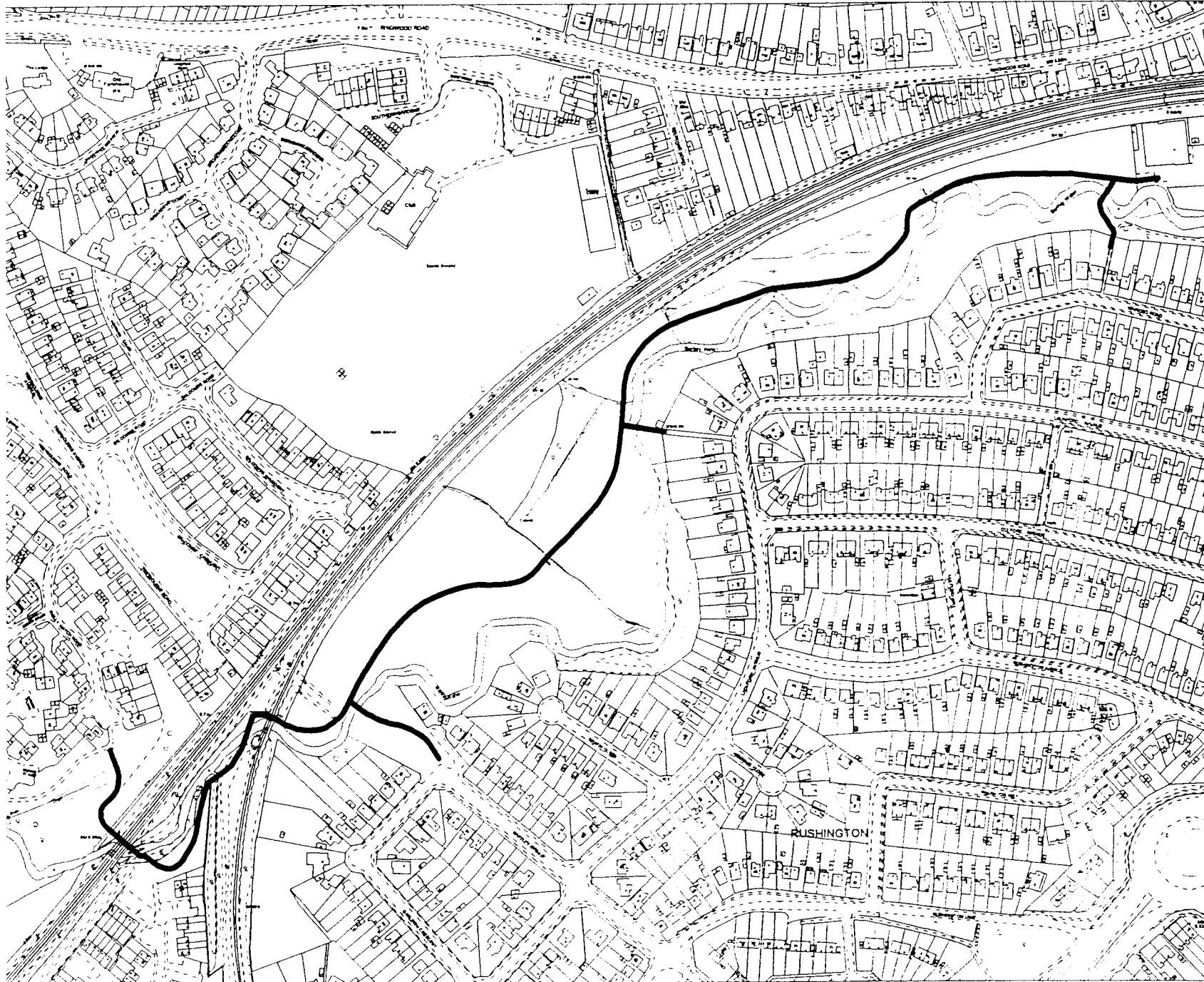
- 11.1 subject to further legal advice and negotiations with Railtrack and the Environment Agency, the provision of the route be pursued as an informal leisure route/ local nature park rather than as an adoptable strategic cycle route or formal public right of way.
- 11.2 further design work and public consultation be carried out and that £10,000 be allocated from developers' contributions for open space to fund this work.
- 11.3 proposals in accordance with the findings of the feasibility study be prepared and consultations with the local community be undertaken.
- 11.4 following the outcome of public consultation, detailed proposals be worked up, and subject to satisfactory outcomes of negotiations with Railtrack and the Environment Agency and to endorsement by Totton & Eling Town Council, be reported to Members for approval.

Further Information:

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Background papers:

- Report I, Leisure Services Committee 2 June 1998 (Minute 17)
- Report B, Leisure Services Committee 9 November 1999 (Minute 48)
- Rushington Amenity Land Feasibility Study
(Consultancy Services, Engineering Group)
- 'Countryside Benefits from Developers Contributions' (Oxford Brookes University, Planning Policies Research Group, July 1999)
- PDI File: 567.33.3



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**Rushington
Amenity Land
Proposed Footpath/
Cycleway
Feasibility Study**

Scale 1: 3500

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