C11 Zone 11: Dibden Bay to Marchwood

This zone includes the open, reclaimed land of Dibden Bay, and the major industrial, military and public utilities installations on the coast of Marchwood. Public access to the shore is very limited, but there is a certain amount of recreational sailing activity. There is a need to improve the appearance of the shoreline in many places. Virtually the whole zone is subject to development pressures.

Features and interest

Description

C11.1 This zone extends from the northern boundary of Hythe Marina up to and including the Slowhill Copse sewage treatment works north-west of Marchwood. It covers the whole of Dibden Bay, together with the Marchwood Military Port, Husbands Shipyard, the site of the former Marchwood Power Station, the former Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD), Corks Farm and the sewage treatment works. A large area is predominantly flat and open, backed by the wooded borders of the New Forest. From the shore and inland, there are views up and down Southampton Water and to Southampton city and its docks. It is proposed to include a substantial part of this area, including Dibden Bay, in the New Forest National Park.

Nature conservation

C11.2 On the shoreline, there are saltmarshes only at the north-western end of the zone, adjoining Slowhill Copse. These form the southern tip of the Eling to Bury Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The remainder of the foreshore is composed mainly of mud and shingle, which because of its value as a coastal habitat is now proposed to be included in a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The foreshore in front of Dibden Bay is of much nature conservation value because of the invertebrates and bird life it supports, and is included in the Hythe - Calshot Marshes SSSI. Together with the Eling and Bury Marshes SSSI, it is in the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site.

C11.3 The reclaimed land at Dibden Bay has developed substantial nature conservation interest and along with the adjoining relic marshes is now a designated SSSI. Other aspects of nature conservation interest in this area are recognised by proposals to designate the reclaimed land, and the relic marshes as SINCs. The bund separating the land at Dibden Bay from Hythe Marina is also proposed to be a SINC, as are the mudflats in front of the Marchwood Industrial Park and Husband’s Shipyard.

Dibden Bay

C11.4 Dibden Bay lies between Hythe and Marchwood and comprises some 770 acres of land reclaimed by dumping of channel dredgings over a period of 20 years between 1948 and the late 1960s. The reclaimed area extends across the former intertidal zone, and well inland behind the old seawall, which is now entirely buried. The final level of reclamation, about three metres above the level of the surrounding land, makes this a very prominent feature of the shoreline. The area is flat, open and highly visible from Southampton Water. A public footpath extends from Hythe along the line of the old sea wall to a point just short of the Military Port, from where it turns inland to Veal’s Farm. There is no vehicular access to Dibden Bay apart from a minor farm track.

Flooding and Erosion

C11.5 The Western Solent and Southampton Water Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) coastal defence policy for the frontage extending from the northern boundary of Hythe Marina to the Royal Navy Armaments Depot (RNAD) is a ‘hold the line’ strategy. From the RNAD to Eling Creek the SMP recommendation is ‘Do Nothing’. The coastal defence policy options for Southampton Water will be reviewed through the second round of the Shoreline Management Plan process.
Marchwood Sea Mounting Centre

C11.6 Marchwood Sea Mounting Centre was established in 1942, largely on reclaimed land, and is operated by the Ministry of Defence. It is the only facility of its type in the country, and is likely therefore to remain in its current use for the foreseeable future. Tight security precludes public access to the foreshore. It is large, and visually intrusive from both land and sea.

Husbands Shipyard

C11.7 Husbands Shipyard comprises an area of existing industry fronting the coast at Cracknore Hard. The site is visually prominent on the coast. Vehicular access is via Cracknorehard Lane. Public access to the foreshore is currently restricted to Cracknore Hard, which has a public slipway. The site is subject to ongoing industrial and storage redevelopment proposals.

Marchwood Industrial Park

C11.8 The Marchwood Industrial Park occupies the site of the former Marchwood power station, which is very large (some 54.5 hectares) and is also very prominent on the coast. There remain some buildings on the site, but the power station itself was demolished in the early 1990s. The site is being redeveloped for power generation, coast-related industrial activities and general industry. It contains a number of features of landscape and nature conservation interest, including ponds and small areas of woodland. It offers no public access to the shore, but in permitting schemes for industrial redevelopment, public access through the site is being negotiated in accordance with a proposal in the New Forest District Local Plan.

Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD)

C11.9 The RNAD site is of some historic and archaeological value, and a number of the buildings and other structures on it are listed as being of architectural and historic interest. It is being redeveloped for housing. In one corner of the site, with access from Magazine Lane, the Marchwood Sailing Club has premises and there is a public slipway with a small parking area. A stream runs down one side of Magazine Lane.

Corks Farm

C11.10 Corks Farm is a small area of fields adjoining the RNAD site. Dumping of material in the past has raised the level of the southern section adjoining the distributor road, and the area is crossed by electricity cable and pylons. It is dominated visually by the incinerator. It is nevertheless important in the coastal scene, forming part of a continuum of undeveloped coast extending from Eling. It is to be used as a training ground for Southampton Football Club.

Marchwood incinerator

C11.11 The incinerator is highly prominent on the shores of Southampton Water, with its chimney visible from long distances around. It is owned and was run by Hampshire County Council, and was used for the disposal of refuse. It has now been closed and is to be replaced by the Energy-from-Waste installation on the Marchwood Industrial Park.

Slowhill Copse

C11.12 The adjoining Slowhill Copse sewage treatment works is well screened with trees. It is a major installation, processing waste from most of the eastern side of the District. On its seaward side, a small inlet and jetty served the sludge boats, which ceased in 1998 when dumping of sludge at sea was banned. There is public access to the shoreline next to the works, with attractive walks through coastal woodland around to Corks Farm.

Local Plan

C11.13 The District Local Plan includes the whole of Dibden Bay and the Corks Farm - Slowhill Copse area in Strategic Gaps, where development is severely restricted. The boundary of the New Forest Heritage Area (NFHA) extends to the old
coastline rear of the reclaimed land at Dibden Bay. RNAD, the Marchwood Industrial Park and Husbands Shipyard are included in the built-up area of Marchwood, and each has a site-specific policy controlling redevelopment. There is also a policy for the Military Port. There is a proposal to upgrade the footpath alongside Dibden Bay to a cycleway; there are also proposals for new and improved footpaths within the coastal redevelopment sites, through Corks Farm and alongside the sewage works to form a pedestrian route between Marchwood and Eling. The local plan contains a statement about Dibden Bay and the port proposals.

C11.14 The adopted Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Minerals and Waste Local Plan (HMWL) identifies Marchwood Industrial Park as a preferred location for integrated waste processing, which involves a range of activities including generation of power by means of incineration. The plan also indicates that if a new port is developed at Dibden Bay, 8 ha. of land should be reserved for crushed rock imports. If a port is not developed, a high capacity deep water wharf may be permitted provided that the local planning authorities are satisfied that the need for the development outweighs its impact on nature conservation, the New Forest and local communities. The Slowhill Copse sewage treatment works remains safeguarded as a site for the treatment/handling of sewage sludge.

Issues

Dibden Bay

C11.15 Dibden Bay is the most controversial area on the District's coast. It is in the ownership of Associated British Ports (ABP). The land is proposed to be included in the New Forest National Park, and is also the subject of current proposals by ABP for the development of a new port. Public Inquiries have recently been held into the National Park proposals and into the port development proposals. In partnership with Hampshire County Council and others, the Council presented evidence to the Dibden Bay Public Inquiry held Oct 2001 - Dec 2002 on a range of issues including environmental and community impacts. The outcomes of these two public inquiries are currently awaited.

Development sites

C11.16 Marchwood Sea Mounting centre: the District Council has no powers to control development within the Sea Mounting Centre while it is in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence; this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. However, the Council is consulted on such proposals, and there is a policy for the site in the District Local Plan aimed at providing a basis for the Council's response. It suggests that any development carried out at the port should be accompanied by appropriate environmental safeguards to minimise its visual impact on the coastline and on views from inland. While the port remains, there is clearly little prospect of improving public access to the coast in this location.

C11.17 Husbands Shipyard: the appearance of this site is currently somewhat intrusive in the coastal scene. In addition, difficulties of access, parking and turning, and poor quality environment mean that the public slipway at Cracknore Hard is under-used.

C11.18 The District Local Plan proposes redevelopment of the site for industrial uses, subject to criteria that include improvements to landscaping, pedestrian and vehicular access, parking and the public launch facilities.

C11.19 Marchwood Industrial Park: This site is being developed for industry and power generation. As this site has a wharf, it will be important to ensure so far as possible that industries permitted on the coastal frontage of the site are those which need a coastal location and can take advantage of the wharf.

C11.20 The former Royal Naval Armaments Depot: this site is prominent on the coast, and is distinguished by several listed buildings and enclosures, and mature trees and hedgerows. It is important both for its historic interest, and for the opportunity it offers for improving public access to the shore. The District Local
Plan provides criteria for its redevelopment that include retention of features of historic interest and the trees and hedgerows, and provision of public access to the coast in the form of a promenade along Southampton Water.

C11.21 Marchwood incinerator: the incinerator has been closed as it could not be upgraded to meet new emissions standards. Temporary planning permission until 31st December 2003 has been granted for the use of the site as a waste transfer station. The Contractor is requesting an extension of this until 31st March 2005, which it seems likely they will receive. Under the terms of the lease once they have finished with the site they are required to demolish the building and vacate, unless they have another waste use for it, which is not likely. The District Local Plan contains policies that would control the restoration and/or re-use of the incinerator site, and would preclude its use for power generation (other than as a renewable energy scheme). The incinerator building is large and highly visible in the coastal scene; if it is to be replaced it would be desirable for any new structure to be less obtrusive.

C11.22 Slowhill Copse wastewater treatment works: the Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Minerals and Waste Local Plan safeguards the Slowhill Copse wastewater treatment works at Marchwood for sewage sludge handling/treatment. Southern Water Services identified the need to increase their sewage treatment capacity, in particular the processing of sludge following the ban on disposal at sea that came into effect in 1998. As recognised in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan it will be important to ensure that any such activity does not result in an adverse impact on the Eling and Bury Marshes SSSI, watercourses, ground water, or marine environment.

Public launch sites

C11.23 Cracknore Hard and Magazine Lane offer public launching facilities, but both suffer from poor access, lack of car parking and low overall environmental quality, and hence are under-used. Whilst these launch sites are never likely to be as attractive as sites which offer direct access to the Solent, such as Lymington and Keyhaven, there is significant scope to improve the overall level of these facilities. The District Local Plan requires retention of and improvements to public access and launching facilities from the site. Improvements to launching facilities at the Marchwood Yacht Club are being made in association with the redevelopment of the RNAD site.

Coast protection and flood defence

C11.24 The intertidal mudflats between Cracknore Hard and Magazine Lane were reclaimed in the 1950's to build the Marchwood power station. This, combined with reclamation across the river at Southampton Docks, narrowed the river channel considerably, changing the tidal limits and steepening the channel gradient. The resulting increase in tidal scour probably reduced maintenance dredging costs but left the river banks needing substantial protection works.

Actions

In Zone 11, in the longer term, the District Council will seek to:

Z11.1 work with private developers and other agencies to improve public launching facilities at Cracknore Hard.

Z11.2 pursue opportunities to mitigate visual impact and improve the environmental quality of the coast, including development.

Z11.3 work with private developers to enhance public access to and along the foreshore and through the coastal development sites.

Z11.4 respond appropriately when outcome of Dibden Bay Inquiry and New Forest National Park Inquiry are known.