

Policy LE4: Access to the Coast and Countryside

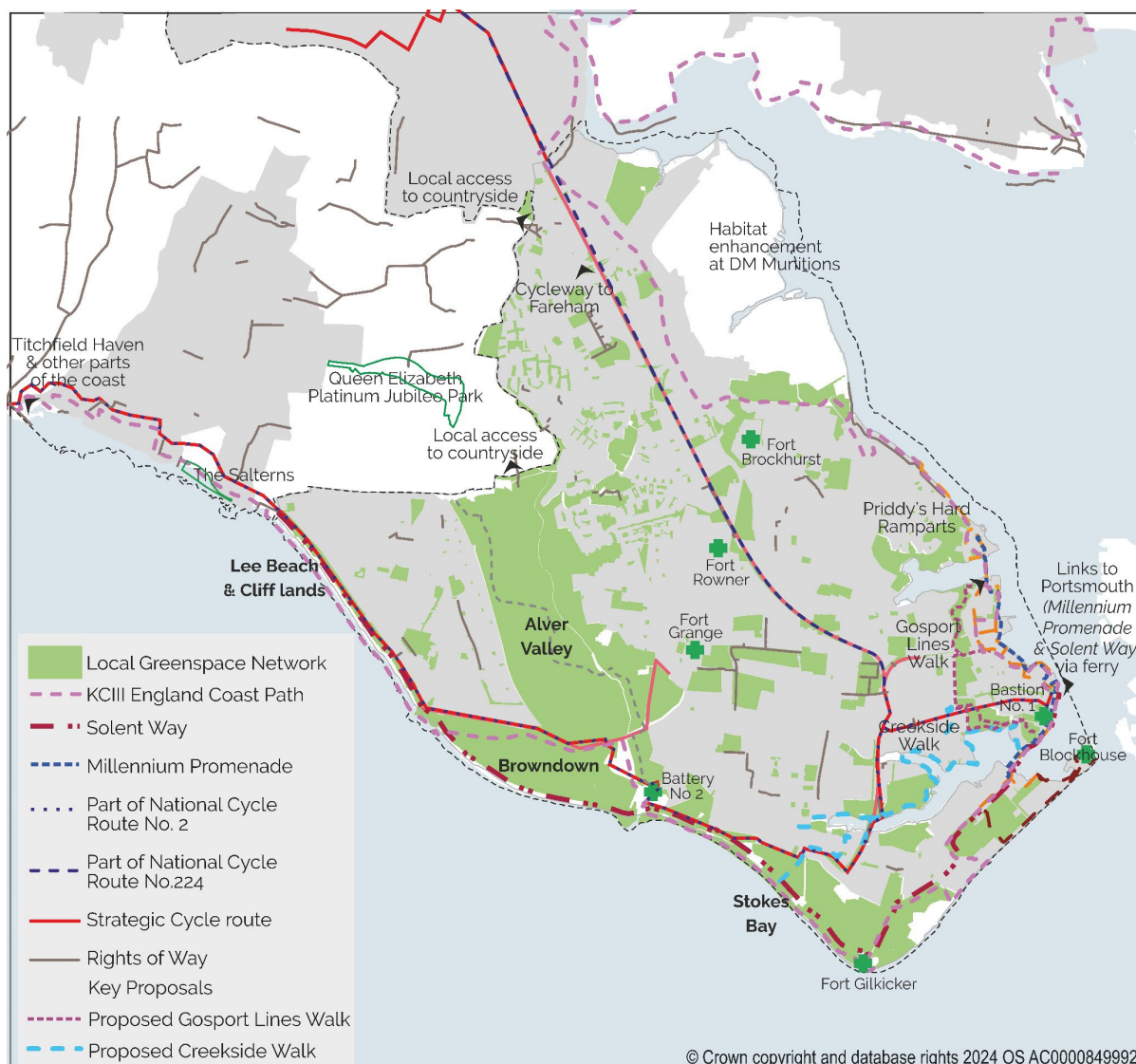
POLICY LE4: ACCESS TO THE COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE

- 1. The Council will promote public access to the coast and countryside. Planning permission will be granted for new development provided that:**
 - a) it will protect existing public access to the coast and countryside and the public rights of way network;**
 - b) public access is incorporated within proposals where possible, including taking advantage of opportunities to link to and enhance the Borough's existing access network, which includes:**
 - i. public rights of way, permissive routes and cycle paths;**
 - ii. Gosport's waterfront trail adjacent Portsmouth Harbour and associated routes;**
 - iii. long-distance routes including the Millennium Promenade, Solent Way, King Charles III England Coast Path, and the National Cycle Network;**
 - iv. public open space such as parks and gardens, Stokes Bay and the Alver Valley Country Park.**
 - c) access does not adversely affect important habitats and species through increased disturbance; and**
 - d) opportunities to create green corridors and achieve biodiversity net gain along access routes are taken, wherever possible.**

EXPLANATION OF POLICY LE4

- 10.40 The Borough contains a well-established and high quality access network composed of footpaths and cycle paths, public rights of way, and permissive and informal routes. The Borough also contains a number of long-distance routes including National Cycle Network Nos.2 and 224 routes, the King Charles III England Coast Path, which is a National Trail, as well as the Solent Way and the Millennium Promenade walking route (see Plan 23).

Plan 23: Rights of Way and Long Distance Routes



- 10.41 The Council recognises the multiple benefits of access routes for recreation, health and wellbeing, and sustainable travel purposes. It is one of the Council's Strategic Priorities for the Borough to have a high quality waterfront environment. Public access along the coast can enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.
- 10.42 Certain parts of the coast have good public access to the shoreline including Stokes Bay and the Lee-on-the-Solent beach and clifflands. The Borough also benefits from the King Charles III England Coast Path, which forms a continuous National Trail around the country's shoreline. The Council aims to further extend public access along the coastline as opportunities arise, particularly within the Gosport Waterfront Regeneration Area (see Policy RA1).
- 10.43 Access to certain coastal areas is constrained by the extensive MoD or defence landholdings at Fleetlands, Bedenham, Frater, Oil and Pipeline

Agency land and the Haslar Peninsula. Where opportunities arise, such as through redevelopment proposals on Haslar Peninsula (see Policy RA3-RA7a), appropriate public access will be sought.

- 10.44 With the improvement of coastal routes and the Alver Valley Country Park (see Policy D6) there will be new opportunities to improve linkages to the wider countryside as supported by the PfSH Green Infrastructure Strategy and HCC's Countryside Access Plan for the Solent. Improved links to the countryside to the north of the Borough will also be sought.

Protection and enhancement of public access (Point 1a-b of Policy LE4)

- 10.45 When considering planning applications for new development, the Council will aim to ensure that there are no adverse impacts upon the access network, including Public Rights of Way, National Cycle Network routes and National Trails, and that opportunities to enhance access routes are achieved, where possible. This could include securing on and/or off-site access enhancements, such as the dedication of new routes and links to the existing network, and contributions towards surface and planting improvements, and additional signage and interpretation panels. This includes specific improvements to the route of the Gosport waterfront trail alongside Portsmouth Harbour.
- 10.46 Regard will also be made to Policy S-ACC-1 of the South Marine Plan which states that tourism and recreation proposals within the marine area should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, a) avoid, b) minimise, and c) mitigate significant adverse impacts on public access. Additionally, Policy S-ACC-2 of the SMP supports proposals that enhance public access to and within the marine area such as physical, digital, and interpretative access and signage, and the removal of unsuitable access arrangements.

Protection of important habitats and species (Point 1c of Policy LE4)

- 10.47 Careful consideration will be given when improving access along the coast and to the countryside to ensure that proposals do not adversely affect important habitats and species, including along the coast which contains internationally designated habitats. Where applicable an appropriate assessment in accordance with the Habitats Regulations will be required and advice sought from Natural England regarding the suitability of avoidance and mitigation measures (see also Policy D5).

Creation of green corridors (Point 1d of Policy LE4)

- 10.48 As well as enhancing biodiversity, walking or cycling through green space, or even just viewing it, can help improve people's mental health and wellbeing³¹⁹. Access routes can also provide a key function as green

³¹⁹ www.who.int/sustainable-development/cities/health-risks/urban-green-space/en/

corridors, linking up different habitats. Enhancing health and wellbeing, and delivering a net gain in biodiversity are key national and local objectives. As such, the Council expects developers to take advantage of all opportunities to 'green' routes, such as through including green buffers in new routes, or providing additional planting along existing routes, where appropriate. This can assist in enhancing the Borough's Green Infrastructure Network (see Policy D4).

Further information

The following can be found online: www.gosport.gov.uk/GBLP2042

Playing Pitch Strategy (Strategic Leisure Limited, 2024)
Indoor Sport Built Facilities Strategy (Strategic Leisure Limited, 2021)
Gosport Children's Play Strategy 2007-2012 (GBC, 2007)
Local Open Space Standards (GBC, 2026)
Open Space Monitoring Report (GBC, 2026)

Other key documents include:

South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017-2034 (PfSH, 2018)
www.push.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/South-Hampshire-GI-Strategy-2017-2034-FINAL.pdf

South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan (PfSH, 2019)
www.push.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/South-Hampshire-Green-Infrastructure-Implementation-Plan-June-2019-.pdf

Countryside Access Plan for the Solent 2008-2013 (HCC, 2008)
www.hants.gov.uk/rh/countryside/access/solent.pdf

Hampshire Countryside Access Plan 2015-2025 (HCC)
www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/accessplan

South Marine Plan (MMO, 2018)
www.gov.uk/government/collections/south-marine-plans

Policy LE5: Locally Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Nature conservation

- 10.49 The following set of nature conservation policies must be read in conjunction with the strategic Policy D5 relating to the Local Ecological Network and internationally and nationally important sites (Section 2 of the Local Plan). This, and the following policies, relate to features that form part of the Local Ecological Network (LEN).