

Project Cowes public exhibition

"Project Cowes"
... investing in the Medina Valley



April 2003



Introduction to Project Cowes

Project Cowes is a dynamic, exciting and unique project to secure a vibrant and prosperous future for the Medina Valley, a powerhouse of the Isle of Wight economy. It is about developing a new vision for the area and putting in place a Strategic Development Framework to guide new investment and development opportunities. The aim is to attract new investment to provide the opportunities, facilities and attractions that both local people and visitors can enjoy. This investment will enable the growth of local businesses and the attraction of new businesses.

The Medina Valley is a major gateway to the Island, the home of Cowes Week and the centre for much of the Island's employment. The area has undergone some economic changes in recent years and now faces a unique opportunity to undergo a 'step change' in the economy and to secure new jobs, services, facilities and attractions.

The Isle of Wight Council, Isle of Wight Economic Partnership and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) are promoting Project Cowes. It is also supported by a number of key individuals, organisations, local companies and landowners with interests in the area.



Project Cowes is consistent with the themes of the Island's Community Strategy relating to quality of life and sustainability, supporting jobs and the local economy, developing tourism and encouraging quality in the built environment. It is also consistent with a range of policies within the Council's Unitary Development Plan, and the project supports and helps to fulfil some of the Council's strategic objectives, set out in its Corporate Plan 2002-2005 of:



- encouraging job creation and economic prosperity;
- creating safe and crime-free communities;
- improving public transport and the highway infrastructure;
- protecting the Island's physical environment; and
- improving the health, housing and quality of life for all.

During November 2002 we asked local people specifically about their priorities for the Medina Valley, using an exhibition and questionnaire. Your views were analysed and used to inform the draft Strategic Development Framework. This exhibition presents the draft Strategic Development Framework. We would like your views on the framework so that a version of it can be adopted by the council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Please take some time to consider the exhibition, and complete a questionnaire. Your views are very important.



Your views

A public exhibition was launched on 20 November 2002 to an invited audience of key stakeholders and Council members, and was subsequently publicised and open to all. The exhibition was accompanied by a questionnaire which provided an opportunity for respondents to comment on a series of priorities and objectives for Project Cowes. Both the exhibition and questionnaire were available via the internet on the dedicated Project Cowes website www.projectcowes.com. The questionnaire responses were used as the basis for developing a draft strategic framework for the Medina Valley.

The questionnaire was designed to establish the priorities of local people for the development of the Medina Valley in accordance with six strategic themes. The questionnaires also enabled respondents to express their views in writing. The analysis of the results of the returned questionnaires are summarised below. Percentages refer to the proportion of participants selecting particular options.

The six strategic themes were ranked by respondents in terms of priority. Your top three priorities were:

- 'enabling economic growth' (21%);
- 'fostering a mix of uses along the waterfront' (19%); and
- 'strengthening town centres' (16%).

Theme 1: Creating a sense of place

You were asked which features best defined the Medina Valley. The most popular responses were:

- 'water related industries' (21%);
- 'yachting' (20%); and
- 'natural environment' (18%).

Theme 2: Enabling economic growth

You were asked to identify the most important dimensions of the future economy of the island. Your top priorities were:

- 'sailing events' (19%);
- 'tourism/leisure' (19%); and
- 'hi-tech industries' (17%).

Theme 3: Strengthening the town centres

East Cowes town centre is clearly an extremely important priority for local people. You thought that it would benefit both from new community facilities and from new attractions.

Theme 4: Creating high quality public spaces and buildings

You were asked to identify priorities for public spaces in the Medina Valley. Your priorities emerged as:

- 'public access to the waterfront' (20%);
- 'a new town square for East Cowes and/or an improved public space outside the Red Funnel ferry terminal' (16%);
- 'a maritime heritage trail along the banks of the River Medina' (14%);
- 'a regenerated Newport Harbour with public space, cultural facilities, mixed employment and residential development' (14%); and
- 'a landmark hotel and leisure building in East Cowes' (14%).

Theme 5: Fostering a mix of uses along the waterfront

You were asked about priorities for the waterfront. The key uses local people would like to see are:

- 'boat-related activity' (13%);
- 'public access to the waterfront' (13%); and
- 'visitor attractions' (12%).

Theme 6: Enhancing the environment

Finally, you were asked about the most important aspects of the Medina Valley's unique environment. Your priorities are:

- 'enhance existing habitats' (32%);
- 'enhance public access' (29%); and
- 'promote understanding of Medina's environmental assets' (29%).

Conclusions

The results of the first stage of consultation were clear, Local people value the diversity of the Medina Valley, its natural beauty, world class reputation for sailing, the town centres, which are the heart of community life, and the employment opportunities the area provides. These priorities have formed the cornerstone of the Project Cowes draft Strategic Development Framework.

A vision for the Medina Valley

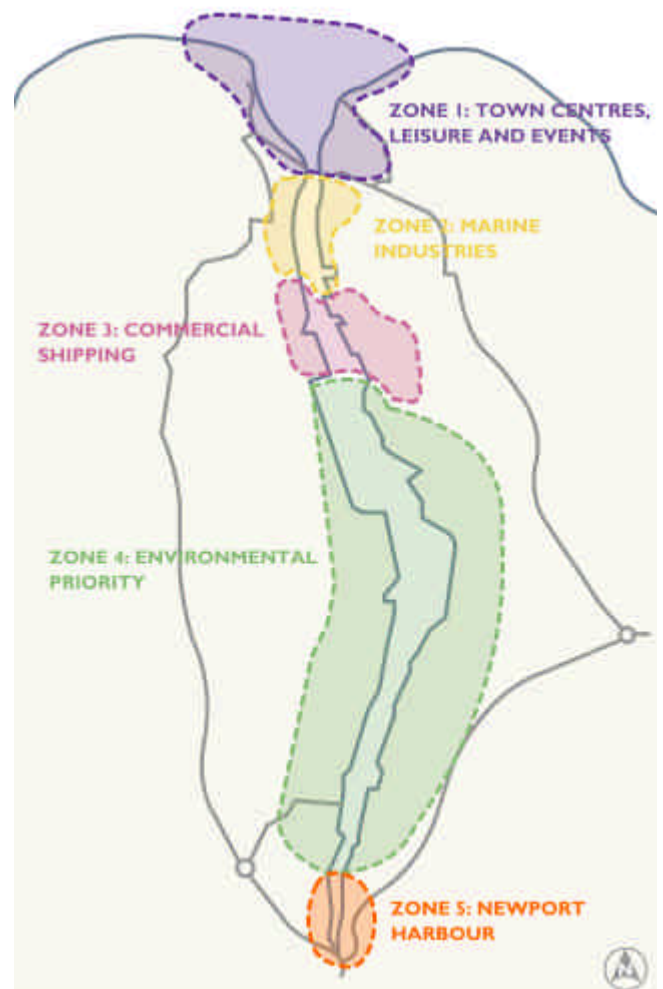
A vision for the Medina Valley has been developed building upon the area's existing strengths and aiming to diversify the Valley's economy, in order to maximise new opportunities and enhance sustainability. The Project Cowes strategic development framework recognises the special and unique nature of the Medina Valley, particularly in relation to its international reputation for yachting. The aim is to raise the profile of the Medina Valley, boost its status as a powerhouse of the Island's economy and secure new opportunities for local people.

The draft Strategic Development Framework sets out the vision for Project Cowes, and a detailed programme of exciting and innovative projects. The Framework focuses on a number of key priorities, identified by local people during the first consultation process and necessary to facilitate the desired economic step change. These include the following:

- The creation of new employment opportunities and the release of suitable employment sites, responding to existing and future demand;
- An improvement in the perceptions of Cowes and East Cowes as two of the main 'gateways' to the Isle of Wight, and world class visitor destinations;
- Capitalising on and strengthening Cowes' status as an international centre of yachting excellence and as the 'home' of UK sailing;
- Ensuring that key waterfront sites are made available for those uses which genuinely require a waterfront location, and that the most appropriate uses are located on the limited number of sites which benefit from deep water access;
- Strengthening and capitalising on other growth areas in the island's economy such as the manufacture of composite materials, and renewable energy related industries;
- Increasing the Medina Valley's contribution to the role of tourism in the wider economy of the island, and ensuring that the island benefits from its large number of visitors;
- Supporting and strengthening the existing communities and town centres in the Medina Valley;

- Providing - where appropriate - additional residential accommodation, having particular regard to ensuring a suitable mix and adequate supply of affordable housing for local residents;
- Maintaining and enhancing the substantial unique environmental resources of the Medina Valley; and
- Improving linkages with the mainland, and cross-Medina links.

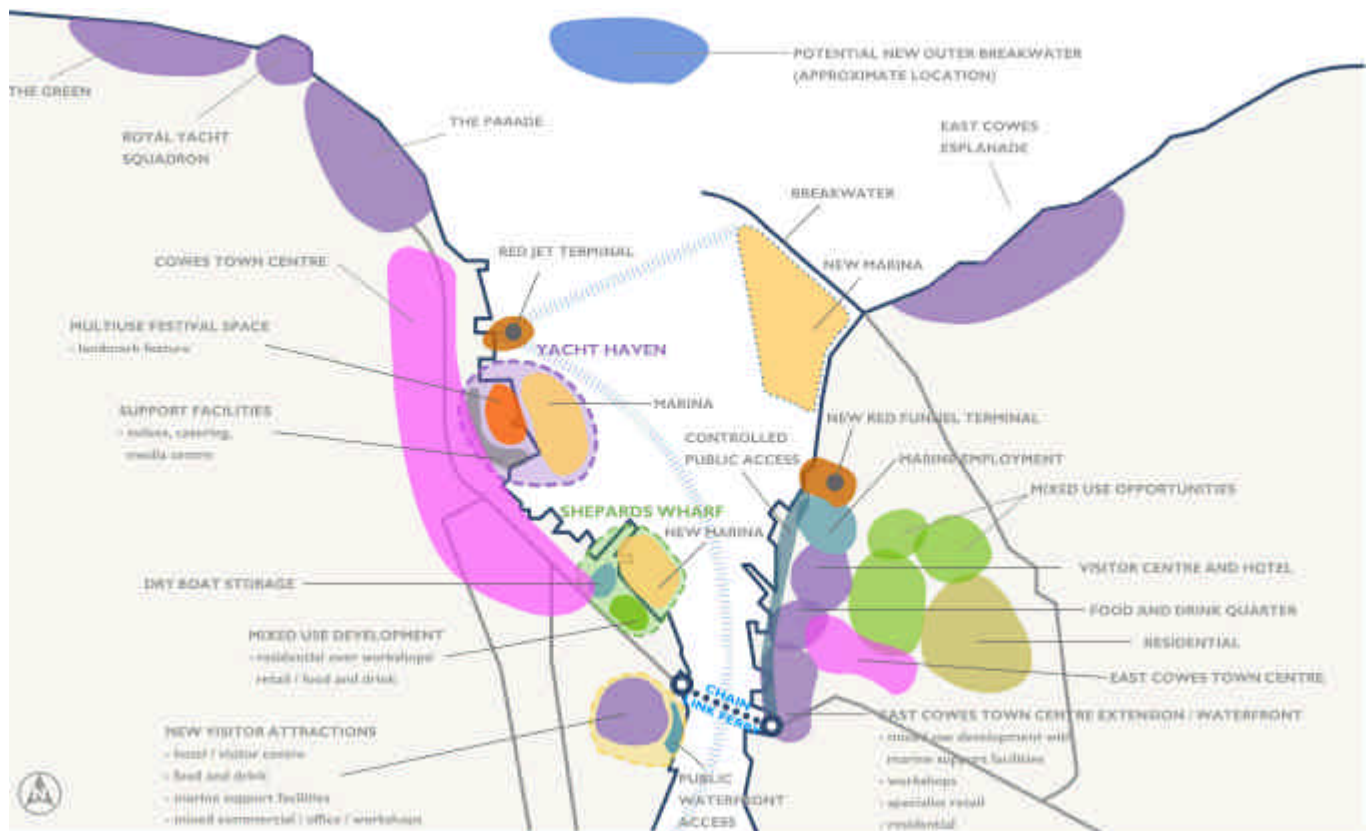
The Strategic Development Framework identifies five key activity zones in the Medina Valley, reflecting both the existing roles of each zone and the potential for these roles to be enhanced as new investment occurs, and as regeneration is delivered both on key sites and across the Medina Valley as a whole. The zones are set out in the diagram below.



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Zone 1

Town centres, leisure and events



- Specialist marine facilities
- Commercial shipping (operators port)
- Mixed-use
- Residential
- Leisure
- Employment: uses not requiring waterfront access
- Town centres
- Visitor berths
- Chain ferry pier
- Links with mainland
- New river bus service (tide permitting)
- Main roads
- Cycle path/footpath

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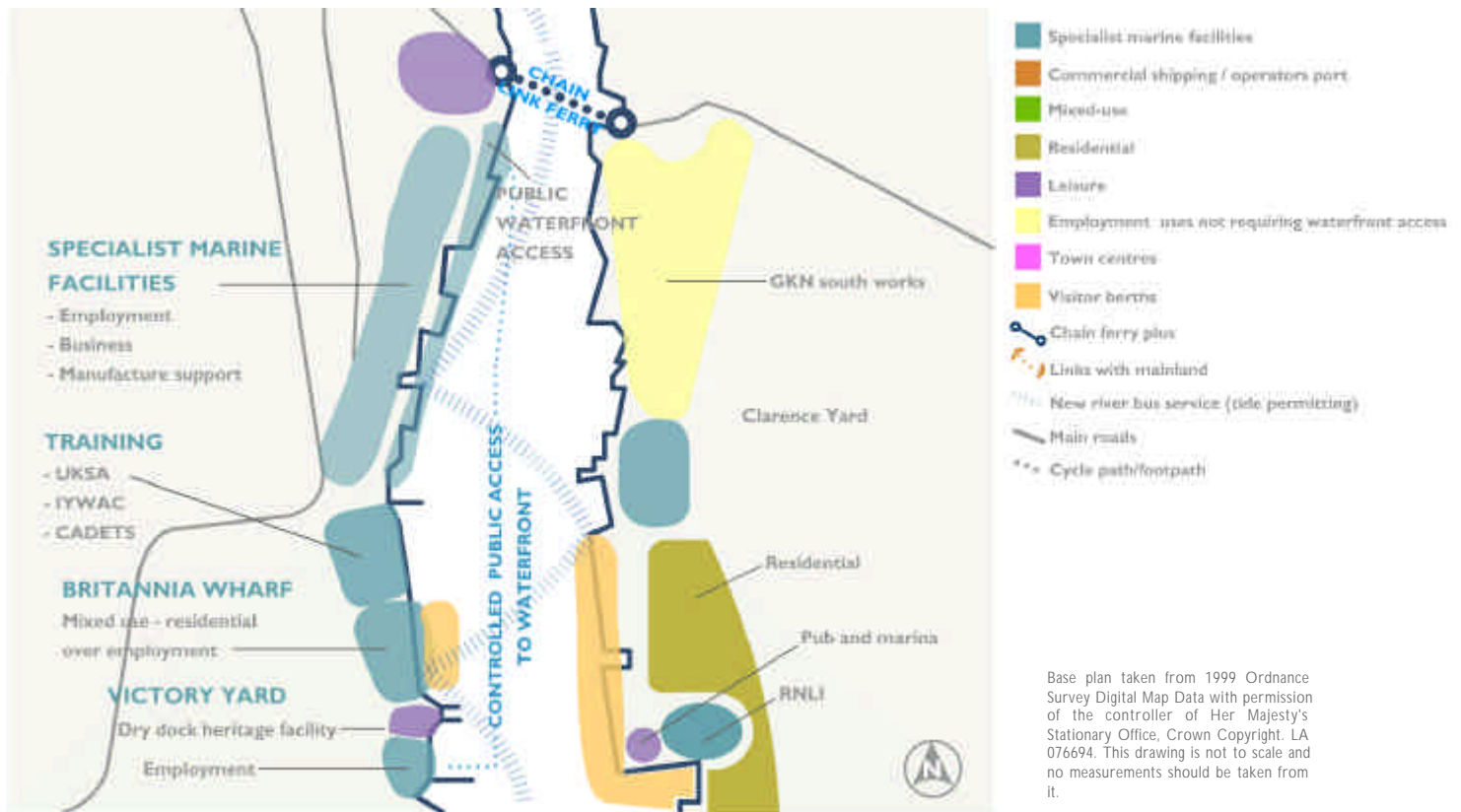
Zone 1 encompasses the existing town centres of Cowes and East Cowes and their associated waterfronts, as far south as the Chain Link Ferry, and as far north as the Green on the western side and East Cowes Esplanade on the eastern side. The drawing shows the range of potential economic uses for this zone, which focus on strengthening the existing town centres, enhancing the waterfront and providing new employment opportunities.

Key opportunities in this zone include:

- Improved linkages to Yacht Haven and High Street;
- Improved public transport interchange at Cowes;
- A high profile 'gateway' at the Yacht Haven;
- New waterfront access;
- Additional shops, cafés and restaurants and flexible pavilion space to service the peak yachting season;
- New marina facilities;
- Relocation and expansion of Red Funnel terminal;
- New mixed use development - hotels, visitor centre and retail;
- Comprehensive redevelopment and strengthening of East Cowes town centre; and
- Some new residential development, where appropriate.

Zone 2

Marine industries



Zone 2, to the immediate south of the chain ferry, on both sides of the river, acts as a focus for a range of employment uses, particularly those uses which require a waterfront location, and which provide specialist yachting or marine related support services and associated businesses. The diagram shows the range of potential uses for this zone.

New opportunities in this zone include:

- New waterfront employment uses;
- Support for new businesses;
- Enhanced workshops for marine businesses;
- Restoration of the listed dry dock;
- Improved public access to the waterfront;
- A potential park and ride facility at Osborne Works;
- Improved cross-Medina links via a new river bus; and
- New berthing facilities.



Zone 3

Commercial shipping



This zone, comprising principally PD Wharf and the Kingston Power Station sites, together with the adjacent employment land allocation, is a focus for commercial shipping activity within the Medina Valley. In particular, it is the home of a range of bulk storage and handling facilities, principally dealing with aggregates, grain and fuel oil. In both physical and functional terms, it is less closely integrated with Cowes and East Cowes (on whose fringes it is located) than Zones 1 and 2. There are opportunities for residential development, and for employment which does not require waterfront access, on the eastern side of the river.

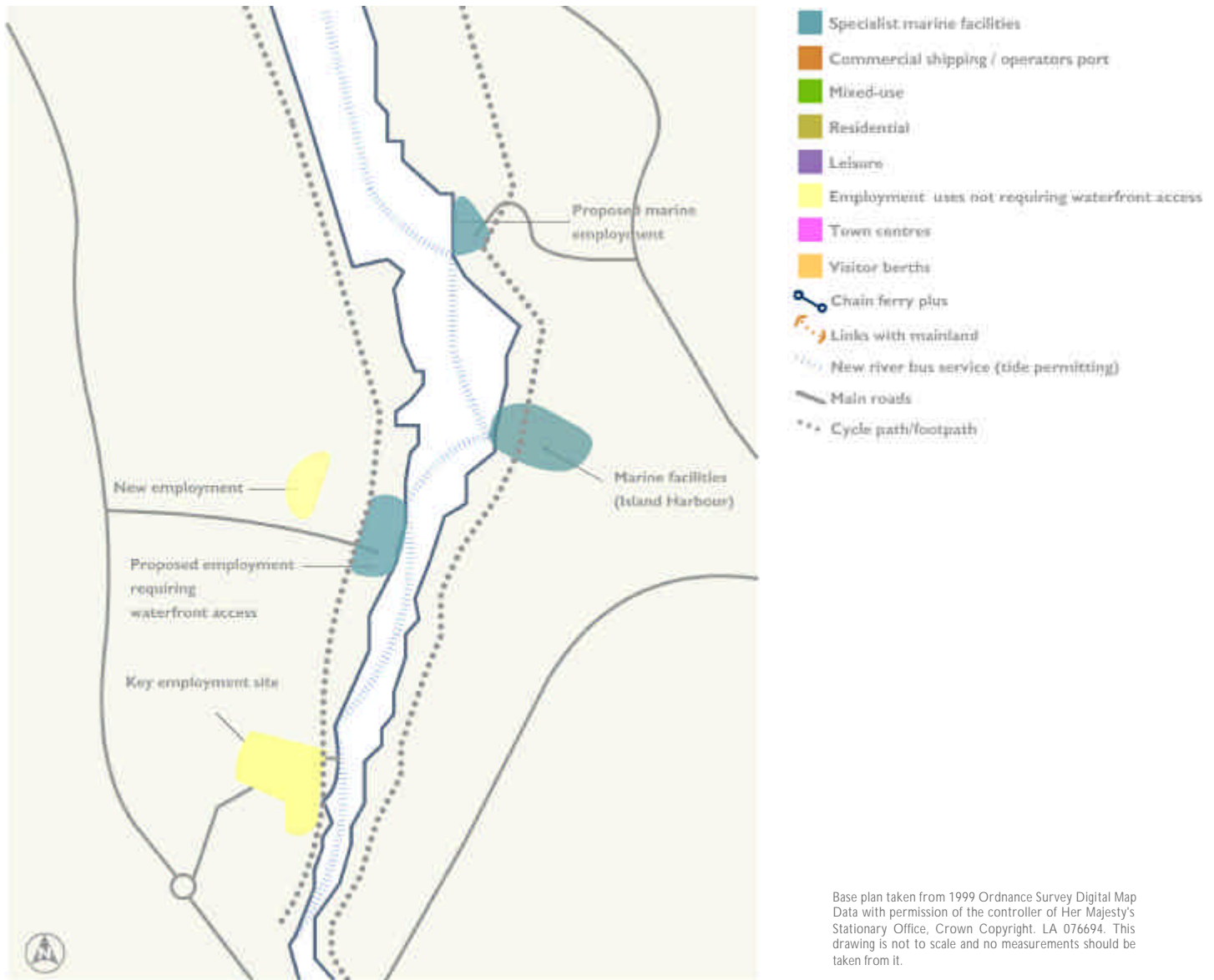
Key opportunities in this zone include:

- Retain existing aggregates and grain storage facilities and rationalise Medina wide aggregates uses;
- New workshops / business units;
- Rationalisation of aggregates uses to free up other potential development opportunities;
- Approximately 3.2 hectares of boat storage, to meet significant current demand; and
- Additional employment uses.



Zone 4

Environmental priority area



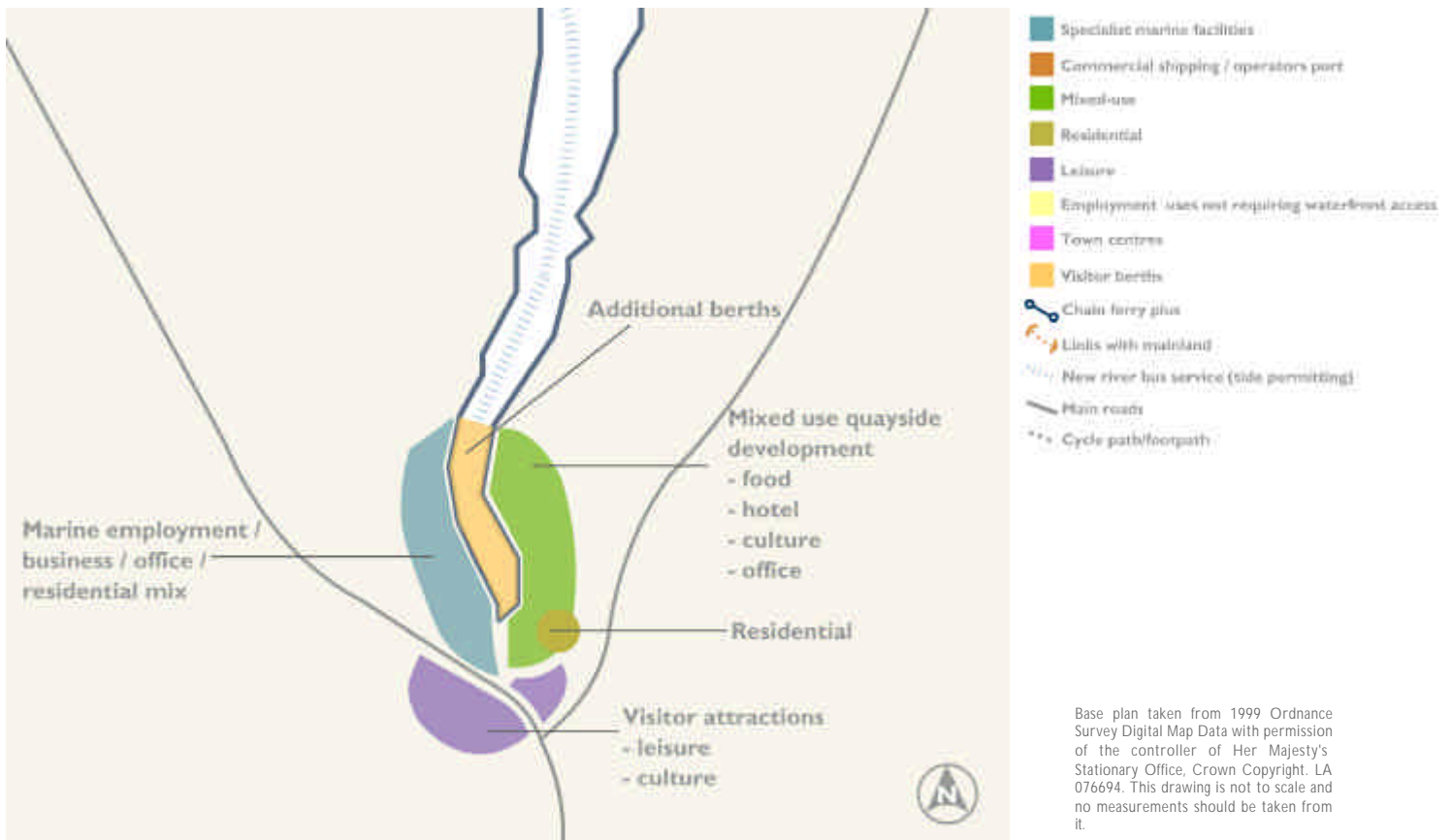
Zone 4, which follows the length of the Medina between Cowes/East Cowes and Newport, is principally rural in character and includes many of the most environmentally sensitive locations in the Medina Valley. The predominant concern within this zone will be the preservation and enhancement of the substantial environmental assets of the area. However, the zone also includes four sites, including important brownfield sites, which have the opportunity to accommodate employment uses, including specialist waterfront/marine related uses and these economic opportunities should be grasped, with careful attention to environmental enhancement in every aspect of development. In the future, it is hoped that this environmental 'corridor' can also enhance north/south linkages along the Medina Valley.

Key economic opportunities for this zone include:

- A low cost/low intensity facility for boat maintenance, repair and storage at the SARO site;
- Provision of new employment work space at West Medina Mills, particularly for uses requiring waterfront access;
- Continued development of the successful St Cross Business Park for offices, high tech manufacturing, and employment; and
- Improved access to the sites via a new river bus.

Zone 5

Newport Harbour



Zone 5 provides a major opportunity on the edge of Newport town centre, to create an attractive mixed use environment which will incorporate employment, visitor/tourism/arts related uses and new residential development, further developing the existing mix of uses and recent successes such as the Quay Arts centre and the recent Travel Inn development. This is an important zone of character, which successfully uses the historic fabric of the area to accommodate new uses and visitor attractions in a vibrant waterfront setting.

Key opportunities in this zone include:

- Redevelopment in line with the Isle of Wight Council's Development Brief for Newport Harbour, including a new mixed use 'quarter' with residential and employment uses, and evening uses in an attractive high quality environment;
- Additional berthage; and
- Improved access to the harbour via a new river bus service.



Supplementary planning guidance

Existing policy context

The Project Cowes strategic development framework is consistent with the policies in the Council's Unitary Development Plan (adopted May 2001), which are relevant to the Medina Valley. These include a number of strategic policies, such as concentrating new development within urban areas, encouraging development on previously developed land, encouraging large scale developments in or adjacent to main towns, protecting the countryside from inappropriate development and ensuring that new development conserves or enhances a number of designated areas. In addition, there are a number of key topic policies in the UDP, which are also relevant to the Medina Valley.

The Project Cowes strategic development framework provides more detailed and specific guidance for development in the Medina Valley, which takes account of the area's special characteristics and the importance of its role within the Island's economy.

Supplementary planning guidance criteria

It is recognised that there are both significant aspirations and development pressures at work in the area, and in order to enable decisions to be made effectively and consistently in the area a number of key criteria have been identified, against which new developments will be assessed following the adoption of the strategic development framework as supplementary planning guidance. These are set out below:

- (i) Is the site proposed for a particular use in the UDP? If so then this should be the primary use of the development.
- (ii) Is the current or last use of the site for employment/industrial uses? If so then the site should continue in this use unless it is genuinely not able to continue in that use or are there better uses for the site contributing to the aims and proposals of the development framework.
- (iii) Can any current uses be relocated to alternative better or more appropriate sites without prejudicing those sites potential future role within the framework?
- (iv) Does the proposed development have a long term requirement or the flexibility to adapt to future needs? If it is specialised is it meeting an identified specific longer term need? i.e. is it capable of contributing to the longer term economic betterment of the island.
- (v) Does the site have existing or potential access to deep water? The framework identifies such sites as a scarce resource. Does the proposed use/development need to have such access? Is the depth of water accessible from the site appropriate for the proposed use? If not then the proposed use should be located elsewhere. There is a need to recognise that the required depth of water accessible from a site will vary with use and be greatest for say international class yachts and least for leisure or dinghy training vessels. The scarcest sites should be reserved for the most demanding uses.
- (vi) Does the proposal provide for a particular development or facility identified within or associated with the development framework? Is the site the most, or one of the most, appropriate location for that facility? Is or should that facility be provided elsewhere?
- (vii) Does the development proposal have a potential impact on the functioning of the estuary or features of nature conservation interest? If so have those impacts/changes been considered as part of the wider study? Are there opportunities for on site mitigation or mitigation with the site owners land?
- (viii) Do the proposals provide opportunities to open up the waterfront either visually or physically to the public without prejudicing operational requirements? Does such access relate to linkages between sites or other public realm improvements?
- (ix) Do the proposals provide enhancements to the public realm through high quality design and the use of appropriate materials? Schemes should be rejected if they are not able to contribute to improvements to the urban fabric.
- (x) If the proposals include enabling development is this genuinely needed to ensure the provision of required facilities? Is it the minimum required? The enabling development should not prejudice what should be the primary function of the site. Does the enabling development have to be provided on the site? It may be that it could be better provided elsewhere and cross funding solutions should be sought.
- (xi) Does, or should, the proposal contribute to the provision of uneconomic facilities or infrastructure provision elsewhere within the development framework area?
- (xii) Does the development provide new visitor attractions or promote or attract new economic activity within the area?
- (xiii) Will the development contribute to the education, training, interpretation and understanding of yachting, sailing, Cowes, or the island?
- (xiv) Will the development enhance the image and reputation of the island?

Next steps



Thank you for taking the time to view this exhibition. This is an extremely exciting time for the Medina Valley. Your views are very important to the preparation of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Medina. We would be grateful if you would spare a few moments more to complete a questionnaire. Please return your questionnaire in the box at the exhibition. The questionnaire can also be downloaded from the project website, www.projectcowes.com.

The questionnaires will be analysed and the results will be used to inform the development of a future vision and plan for the Medina.

The timetable for Project Cowes will be as follows:

April	2003	Public consultation on the draft Strategic Development Framework
June	2003	Strategic Development Framework considered as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Council

A dedicated Project Cowes office is now open at the Yacht Haven and can be reached at the following address:

Project Cowes Office

Yacht Haven
Cowes
Isle of Wight
PO31 7AY

You are welcome to visit the office to view the Project Cowes display. If you have any questions please contact Mike King, Project Cowes Director, on 01983 535841.

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.PROJECTCOWES.COM

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