

Project	Southbourne, Chichester
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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Pell Frischmann has been appointed by the Church Commissioners for England (“the Commissioners”) to provide transport planning and highways advice in relation to the emerging Local Plan and Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD), and particularly the assessment of site options through the Regulation 19 process at Southbourne, West Sussex.
- 1.1.2 The Commissioners strategic landholding at Southbourne covers approximately 69.3 hectares (ha) of land to the west of Southbourne village (the ‘site’). It is located within the administrative area of Chichester District Council (CDC), the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The Local Highway Authority (LHA) is West Sussex County Council (WSCC).
- 1.1.3 This note has been prepared to review the transport evidence base insofar as it relates to the identification and comparative assessment of site allocations options, with a particular focus on the western site and its relative performance.
- 1.1.4 The purpose of this review is to consider whether the conclusions reached within the transport evidence are appropriately evidenced and whether the approach adopted provides a robust basis for differentiating between sites. It also considers whether any material transport considerations arise which would support an alternative approach to site selection.
- 1.1.5 The key documents reviewed as part of this Note include:
- Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document 2021- 2039, Assessment Framework, April 2026. (the Assessment Framework)
 - Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document Regulation 19 Submission, June 2026. (the DPD)
 - Southbourne Allocation DPD Transport Assessment, March 2024. (the TA)

2 Soundness and Policy Context

- 2.1.1 The NPPF is clear that plan-making should be underpinned by evidence, which is proportionate, transparent and capable of demonstrating that the most appropriate spatial strategy has been selected. This includes ensuring that transport considerations are fully integrated into site selection and that decisions are informed by a vision-led approach to movement.
- 2.1.2 In this context, the current evidence base does not fully demonstrate why the Council’s preferred allocation strategy (i.e. land to the east of Southbourne) has been selected over alternatives. In particular, limited weight appears to have been given to the ability of the western site to establish and support sustainable travel behaviours and reduce reliance on use of the private car.

2.2 Comparative Performance of the Western Site

- 2.2.1 From a transport perspective, the western site benefits from several inherent advantages which are not fully reflected in the assessment. These include its stronger relationship with the existing urban area, its proximity to established services and facilities and its ability to provide a vision-led strategic approach to addressing constraints on the existing transport network.

3 Application of the Assessment Framework (Transport)

- 3.1.1 In principle the Assessment Framework provides a clear and structured approach to comparing sites and represents a helpful basis for decision-making. However, in transport terms, there are some areas where the application of the criteria does not fully reflect how different sites are likely to perform in practice.

3.2 Active Travel Connectivity

Assessment Criteria	Scenario 1 (West)	Scenario 2 (East)	Scenario 3 (Mixed)
Transport and sustainable travel			
Providing active travel connectivity.	There are fairly limited opportunities to integrate the site with the rest of the village as things stand, and the only links are a long way north or a long way to the west of the main part of the village. A pedestrian/cycle bridge over the railway line would create the potential to connect with the proposed cycling route along A259 (Bourne Villages Active Travel Scheme). A pedestrian bridge over the railway line is essential from a safety perspective. However, it won't necessarily substantially increase the amount of connectivity, as the footpaths and at-grade crossings are already there.	There are multiple points of connection north of the railway, providing connections to existing network of lanes, PROW/pedestrian routes and there is an opportunity to improve connectivity across the railway with a new pedestrian/cycle bridge. There is the potential to connect with the proposed cycling route along A259 (Bourne Villages Active Travel Scheme).	There are multiple points of connection north of the railway, providing connections to existing network of lanes, pedestrian routes/PROWs and opportunity to deliver a full walking and cycling route around the village through the Green Ring and PROW. However, the connection points would generally be somewhat peripheral. There is the potential to connect with the proposed pedestrian and cycling upgrades/routes along A259 (Bourne Villages Active Travel Scheme).

**Extract from Council DPD (Assessment Framework)*

- 3.2.1 The framework places emphasis on the number and location of connections to the existing pedestrian and cycle network. While this is an appropriate starting point, the assessment itself acknowledges that, in the case of the western site, connections are relatively limited and located either to the north or west of the main part of the village, and that any new bridge provision would be in a peripheral location and would not necessarily result in a substantial increase in overall connectivity.
- 3.2.2 This indicates that the scoring is influenced primarily by the distribution of connection points, rather than how effectively those connections relate to key destinations within the settlement. In practice, the effectiveness of active travel networks is more closely influenced by the extent to which routes provide direct, legible and attractive connections to established facilities and services, and the degree to which they support internalisation of trips.
- 3.2.3 In this respect, the western site's proximity to existing community infrastructure, including the school (Bourne Community College), leisure facilities (Bourne Leisure Centre) and established residential areas, is a relevant consideration. While the number of connection points may be more limited, the ability of the site to integrate with existing trip attractors and support shorter, localised journeys is not explicitly reflected in the assessment.
- 3.2.4 By comparison, it is indicated that the eastern site benefits from a greater number of potential connection points; however, the assessment focuses primarily on their number and distribution rather than how effectively they serve key destinations within the settlement. As a result, the relative advantage associated with these connections may be overstated where they do not materially improve access to principal facilities or support a meaningful shift towards walking and cycling. In this context, it is considered that the RAG rating applied to the western site does not fully reflect the functional benefits associated with its relationship to existing community infrastructure.

3.3 Rail Crossing and Bridge Provision

Assessment Criteria	Scenario 1 (West)	Scenario 2 (East)	Scenario 3 (Mixed)
Transport and sustainable travel			
Potential for a bridge crossing the railway for <u>pedestrians and cyclists</u>.	There is the potential to deliver a pedestrian bridge west of the village where an existing footpath crossing is located. This would facilitate active travel, but there is an existing at grade crossing on this side of the village, so not necessarily a significant improvement in amount of connectivity. If the bridge is predicated on the existing footpath route then it would be on the periphery of the	There is the potential to deliver land for a pedestrian bridge to be on the eastern side, and there is safeguarded land available to assist with this. The land on which the bridge would need to be located is not owned by the main side promoter on the east, consequently, it is necessary to work with the other landowner and Network Rail. Based on the discussion so far, a pedestrian bridge is likely to be achievable. Incorporating cycling as	There is the potential to deliver pedestrian bridges on the western and eastern sides. However, there is no guarantee that these would be for bicycles as well.

	village, and not well related to the centre. Currently, it is understood that only a pedestrian bridge is likely on the western side. So, there would be no improvement in cycle connectivity.	well is more challenging and is not guaranteed at this stage.	
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**Extract from Council DPD (Assessment Framework)*

- 3.3.1 The framework appropriately considers the opportunity to deliver pedestrian and cycle crossings of the railway line. However, the assessment is necessarily based on a snapshot of what can be demonstrated at this stage.
- 3.3.2 The relative performance of sites in this regard is influenced by deliverability considerations and land ownership constraints. These factors may evolve over time and through the design process. As such, the scoring should be seen as indicative rather than definitive in terms of long-term connectivity outcomes.
- 3.3.3 The Assessment Framework assumes that the western bridge would be pedestrian only, when it is in fact proposed to be all modes and this should be factored into the improvement in cycle connectivity, particularly as it connects directly into the National Cycle Route 2.
- 3.3.4 It is also relevant that the western site is being promoted with a clear commitment to enhanced crossing provision / funding, supported by land control arrangements which would facilitate delivery. By comparison, delivery of a pedestrian and cycle bridge on the eastern side remains dependent on third-party land assembly and agreement with Network Rail.
- 3.3.5 While it is appropriate for the assessment to adopt a cautious approach at this stage, the differing degrees of delivery certainty between the sites are a relevant consideration. In this respect, the current scoring does not fully capture the relative deliverability advantages associated with the western site in relation to crossing provision.

3.4 Highway Impacts and Network Performance

Assessment Criteria	Scenario 1 (West)	Scenario 2 (East)	Scenario 3 (Mixed)
Transport and sustainable travel			
Impact of development on the local road network.	The site promoter has undergone pre-application discussions with the Local Highway Authority, who were satisfied with their submission. However, that was predicated on	The LHA had concerns about this proposal at Reg.18 stage. However, the site promoter has since responded to those concerns and resolved them to the satisfaction of the LHA (via their pre-	In light of the transport work and pre-apps which have been done regarding the two main options it appears likely that this option would be acceptable in highways terms.

	an all-modes bridge over the railway line. It has not been specifically established that a version of the allocation without a bridge would definitely be acceptable to the LHA. This option, without a vehicular bridge, can only be served by one vehicular access, which is likely to maximise the impact upon the Stein Rd Level Crossing and associated queueing.	application advice service). The site promoter has demonstrated that the site can be served by two different vehicular accesses, which will spread out the impacts and lessen the increase in pressure on the Stein Rd Level Crossing and associated queueing.	This option doesn't involve a vehicular bridge and so can't relieve the pressure on Stein Road. This option will mean all traffic relies on Stein Road and hence is likely to maximise the impact upon the Stein Rd Level Crossing and associated queueing.
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**Extract from Council DPD (Assessment Framework)*

- 3.4.1 The framework distinguishes between sites based on differences in access arrangements and traffic distribution, including the degree of reliance on Stein Road. These are relevant considerations.
- 3.4.2 However, the sensitivity of the assessment to underlying assumptions should also be recognised. In particular, the performance of the eastern site is reliant on achieving a relatively high level of mode shift, which is embedded within the modelling assumptions. As noted in the evidence base, this approach incorporates mode shift as a core assumption, but the extent to which this can be realised in practice is not fully evidenced at this stage. As such, there is a degree of uncertainty associated with the forecast traffic impacts.
- 3.4.3 In addition, the assessment identifies the need for intervention at the Inlands Road level crossing, with associated costs (£6 million). While this is considered to be deliverable, it represents a material infrastructure requirement and introduces additional complexity in terms of delivery. The extent to which this intervention addresses existing operational constraints, rather than providing wider network benefits, is also a relevant consideration.
- 3.4.4 The assessment of highway impacts is also closely linked to the overall development capacity of each site. In the case of the eastern site, the current configuration appears to be optimised around the delivery of the identified housing requirement, with a more limited degree of flexibility for future expansion. By comparison, the western site offers the potential for a more comprehensive approach to access and network integration over the longer term, subject to further design development.
- 3.4.5 In addition to improving local sustainable travel connections, the proposed all-modes bridge also responds to a wider strategic transport challenge in Southbourne. While development to the east has delivered a range of localised transport interventions, these measures have not been capable of addressing the underlying capacity constraints within the wider network. The bridge therefore has a broader role in improving network resilience and connectivity, helping to alleviate existing transport pressures whilst also supporting mode shift and enhanced accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
- 3.4.6 Taken together, these factors suggest that while the differences in traffic distribution between the sites are relevant, they should be interpreted with appropriate caution. In particular, the relative performance of the western site in this regard may be understated where the assessment places greater weight on short-term operational differences than on longer-term network resilience and adaptability.

3.5 Bus Accessibility

Assessment Criteria	Scenario 1 (West)	Scenario 2 (East)	Scenario 3 (Mixed)
Transport and sustainable travel			
Proximity of development to existing bus stops, with particular emphasis on those adjacent to the A259. This is based on a 400m distance as a benchmark.	Parts of the site would be within walking distance of bus stops on Stein Road, but not the more regular service which runs along the A259.	Parts of the southern-most sections of the site would be within walking distance of the bus stops on the A259, and a pedestrian bridge over the railway line would help with that. But ultimately, most of the site is not going to be within walking distance to existing bus stops.	Parts of the site would be within walking distance of bus stops on Stein Road, but not the more regular service which runs along the A259.

**Extract from Council DPD (Assessment Framework)*

- 3.5.1 The framework assesses proximity to existing bus stops, particularly those located on the A259. This provides a clear and measurable benchmark; however, it is based on the current network and does not fully reflect the relative potential of different sites to support enhanced public transport provision.
- 3.5.2 While it is reasonable to adopt a cautious approach at this stage, the assessment does not take account of how services may evolve in response to development. In particular, the ability to route services through new development and the operational performance of those routes are relevant considerations. In the case of the western site, the potential to provide more direct routing which avoids existing level crossing constraints may support more reliable and attractive bus services over time.
- 3.5.3 As such, while proximity to existing bus stops is an appropriate baseline measure, it understates the longer-term public transport potential of the western site where wider network functionality and service reliability are taken into account.

3.6 Access to the Railway Station

Assessment Criteria	Scenario 1 (West)	Scenario 2 (East)	Scenario 3 (Mixed)
Transport and sustainable travel			
Improvements in pedestrian / cycle access to the train station.	Limited opportunity to improve pedestrian / cycle access to and from train station. This is because the new pedestrian access points will be some distance from the station. In addition, a new pedestrian bridge would not be in close proximity to the railway station.	Opportunity to improve access for wider community through provision of land for a new pedestrian bridge. However, there isn't a direct route to the station utilising that bridge, so the benefits will be minimal unless a footpath around the rear of the school site can be created.	Pedestrian bridges on either side of the settlement are achievable. However, neither is in an ideal location for improving accessibility to the station.

**Extract from Council DPD (Assessment Framework)*

- 3.6.1 The framework considers both distance to the railway station and opportunities to improve access. This is appropriate.
- 3.6.2 However, as with other criteria, the assessment is based on current connectivity patterns. The extent to which new routes, improved crossings or changes to the local network could enhance accessibility is not fully explored at this stage, and this introduces a degree of uncertainty in differentiating between sites.

3.7 Summary

- 3.7.1 The Assessment Framework adopts a consistent set of assumptions across all sites. This provides clarity and comparability, but also means that the assessment is undertaken within a relatively fixed baseline.
- 3.7.2 In doing so, it does not fully explore how different sites could respond to, or support, a more comprehensive and vision-led transport strategy, including potential changes to public transport provision, demand management, or wider network enhancements.
- 3.7.3 As a result, while the framework represents a useful tool, it does not fully capture the relative ability of different sites to support long-term sustainable travel outcomes. In particular, some of the transport criteria appear to place greater weight on current network conditions and proximity-based measures, which may not fully reflect the relative performance of sites over time as connectivity and transport strategies evolve.
- 3.7.4 Greater weight should be given to the ability of development to unlock infrastructure that improves the operation, resilience and connectivity of the wider transport network over the long term, rather than focusing primarily on current active travel linkages.
- 3.7.5 Relying on an existing transport network and its constraints also fails to fully embrace a vision-led approach to planning, placing too much emphasis on the constraints of the existing network.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1.1 The transport evidence base, including the Assessment Framework, provides a structured and consistent approach to comparing site options and represents a useful tool in supporting plan-making. However, in transport terms, the assessment is necessarily undertaken within a relatively fixed baseline and places a strong emphasis on existing network conditions.
- 4.1.2 Greater weight should be given to the ability of development to unlock infrastructure that improves the operation, resilience and connectivity of the wider transport network over the long term, rather than focusing primarily on current active travel linkages
- 4.1.3 As set out above, while these factors are relevant, they do not fully capture the extent to which different sites can support a more comprehensive and vision-led transport strategy over the longer term. In particular, the ability to integrate development with existing community infrastructure, support internalisation of trips, deliver reliable and attractive public transport services, and provide adaptable connectivity solutions is not always fully reflected in the scoring.
- 4.1.4 In this context, the western site demonstrates a number of inherent transport advantages, including its relationship with existing facilities, the potential for enhanced crossing provision with a greater degree of delivery certainty, and its ability to support more efficient and resilient movement patterns over time. These are material considerations which should be given appropriate weight in the overall assessment.
- 4.1.5 It is also important that the transport evidence is interpreted proportionately, recognising that elements of the Assessment Framework represent a snapshot based on current assumptions and that site performance will evolve through subsequent stages of design development, infrastructure delivery and transport strategy refinement. Where sites perform less favourably against particular criteria, this should not be taken as evidence that those constraints cannot be addressed through the planning process, particularly where further mitigation, infrastructure improvements or transport interventions may be identified and secured as proposals progress.
- 4.1.6 Taking these factors into account, it is considered that the relative performance of the western site in transport terms is understated in the current assessment. A more balanced interpretation of the evidence would recognise the potential for the western site to perform at least as well as, and in some respects better than, alternative options when considered against longer-term sustainable transport objectives.

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