

Proof of Evidence

JRB ENVIRONMENTAL LTD REPRESENTATION ID 4995
CHICHESTER LOCAL PLAN 2021-2039 PROPOSED
SUBMISSION: SEPTEMBER 2024.

Mr John Blamire Director BSc MSc



1.0. Background

1.1 Mr John Blamire Director of JRB Environmental Ltd, graduated from Wye College of University of London in 1998 with a BSc Hons in Countryside Management and graduated from Portsmouth University in 1999 with an MSc in Environmental Resource Management. John worked for 4 years at the South Downs Board as the Rother Valley Project Officer. This was before starting his own business Countryside Agriculture Environment Ltd in 2006 this was initially giving advice on Agri-environment schemes to landowners and undertaking practical conservation/environment projects for local authorities. In 2008 the business name was changed to JRB Environmental Ltd to reflect the extensive variety of work that the business covers. Amongst this wide portfolio of work, since 2015 John has been both a consultant and contractor on sea defence and intertidal structures in Chichester Harbour undertaking work in a way that accounts for the sensitive habitats and species that make the Chichester Harbour National Landscape and its designated sites for nature conservation unique. John has extensive knowledge of coastal processes, management and protection as well as undertaking works and providing methods that account for the sensitive designated sites for nature conservation. John acts both as an environmental consultant and an environmental contractor.

2.0. Introduction.

2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 35, (c) requires policies to be effective and deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred. Our representation 4995 was principally concerned with whether NE11 Coastal development and its supporting paragraphs are effective and deliverable in terms of test of soundness as advised in paragraph 35 (c). of the NPPF.

2.2. Our representation suggested changes to paragraph 4.68 because we feel that in the day to day delivery of coastal policy there is a conflict between the hold the line policy of the North Solent Shoreline Management plan that (applies to the majority of private sea defences around Chichester Harbour) and those environmental policies that try to prevent coastal squeeze. Since the Natural England Chichester Harbour SSSI Condition Review 2021 confirmed that the Chichester Harbour SSSI as unfavourable declining there is a presumption in favour of managed realignment options being considered first and hold the line options only being considered when it can be demonstrated that there is no better alternative option to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations 2017 under the derogation test process.

2.3. It is imperative that a Coastal SPD is provided as part of this Chichester Local Plan policy to ensure that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are once again

delivered via planning policy rather than by individual landowners and property owners around Chichester Harbour through the planning application process. Currently each time a planning application or other licence application is submitted this process has to be duly followed because of the potential impacts on the Chichester Harbour SSSI. At the moment these applications are taking on average 2-3 years to process as they have to go through the derogation test process each time under the Habitats Regulations 2017. The North Solent Shoreline Management Plan is still current non statutory policy and it's our understanding that there is currently a shortage of compensatory habitat provision.

3.0.The Need for a Coastal Change Supplementary Planning Document for Chichester Harbour

- 3.1. It is our view that a Coastal Change Supplementary Planning Document for Chichester Harbour would be a useful umbrella planning policy document that could bring together the initiatives to identify suitable managed realignment locations that are deliverable and locations where it remains appropriate to hold the line. It's our view that it's important to have a document that all stakeholders can refer to that provide clear policy guidance as to how their property or land can be protected or adapted for climate change in the short, medium and long term.
- 3.2. A Coastal SPD for Chichester Harbour could help to deliver positive policy outcomes and help to deliver policy NE11 more effectively. This level of detail is imperative due to the complexity of coastal processes and ways to manage that particularly in the context of climate change, sea level rise and the resilience of areas to adapt. The current condition of the SSSI in Chichester Harbour as unfavourable declining has added another layer of complexity and therefore careful and sensitive planning solutions are required to ensure effective delivery of positive outcomes. This is particularly as the North Solent Shoreline Management plan future implementation or revision is still subject to funding as identified by Natural England in their suggested modifications to paragraph 4.68 of this Chichester Local Plan Submission.

4.0. Managed Realignment

- 4.1. Although widely promoted delivering Managed Realignment can be difficult within Chichester Harbour. For areas identified for managed realignment the presumption is to allow the land to naturally erode over time, rather than to create that habitat. It's often also not realised by members of the public and professionals alike that the purpose of managed realignment in some locations is not always to create habitat on site but for the sediment to naturally feed and create saltmarsh habitat in the overall intertidal area close by. Often when managed realignment sites are identified it is considered by most that the creation of saltmarsh on site will be the outcome of

the decision to realign but in reality this could take 50 years or more on the site itself even with other accelerating factors such as climate change and sea level rise. In these instances careful thought needs to be given as to how this land is managed allocated for realignment is used or protected while the erosion takes place in the longer term. Again this aspect should be covered in SPD.

4.2. Where sites become identified for managed realignment especially on agricultural land the local planning authority has a unique opportunity to ensure that schemes that go forward are viable financial propositions to the land owner. Section 106 agreements agreed through new schemes such as Bio Diversity Net Gain for priority habitats such as saltmarsh have to be financially viable to compensate the land for the loss of productive land currently deriving large incomes and enable replacement flood defences to be constructed behind the existing sea defence line. If schemes are not viable land owners will have no incentive to deliver these schemes. This results in fossilised sea defences old concrete walls and structures that inhibit naturalisation of habitats that this policy is trying to protect/promote. This can delay restoration of habitats for decades. Again this is why a Coastal Change SPD addressing these specific issues needs to be produced.

5.0. Saltmarsh decline in Chichester Harbour SSSI

5.1. The Coastal Change for Chichester Harbour SPD would also need to identify all the contributing factors to Saltmarsh decline as highlighted in the SSSI Condition Review and in policy NE11. More detailed policies to address water quality, the impacts of climate change, natural patterns and in growth and decline of saltmarsh for the harbour need to be reflected. In addition the value of positive management for habitat creation such as the shingle reef/islands in the Return of the Tern project to promote the Little Tern could equally be applied to saltmarsh.

5.2. The RSPB The Saltmarsh Creation Handbook a project managers guide to the creation of saltmarsh and intertidal mudflat by Albert Nottage and Peter Robertson 2005 show such positive saltmarsh habitat creation schemes, some examples date back to the 1960's.

6.0. Hold the Line and the responsibility of Public Safety with failing private sea defences

6.1. It is recommended as part of this Coastal Change SPD for Chichester Harbour that areas where hold the line is still appropriate should be identified. As highlighted there are some sites where managed realignment is not deliverable. In addition there needs to be stronger policy guidance on how public safety is managed when existing private sea defences fail. In addition to this there can be some sites where managed realignment options are not deliverable in the short term but maybe deliverable long term. In these instances repairs to existing sea defences should still be considered

particularly in light of delivering public safety and protection of existing businesses. The King Charles III Coastal Path review can be one way of perhaps achieving that to ensure the public still have the enjoyment of the Chichester Harbour National Landscape whilst still achieving the long term goals of managed realignment.

7.0. Conclusions

7.1. If its seen that a Coastal Change SPD for Chichester Harbour is not possible then perhaps a more detailed set of coastal change policies addressing the issues above could be included in an updated Chichester District and Havant Borough Councils Harbour National Landscape SPD to replace the existing Chichester District and Havant Borough Councils Adopted Joint Chichester Harbour AONB SPD 2017? This SPD does include some general guidance on sea defences and the purposes of the Shoreline Management Plan but was adopted prior to the Natural England SSSI Condition Review 2021. However its our view that a more detailed SPD or policy framework to address coastal change for Chichester Harbour is essential and the suggested amendments in our representation 4995 are necessary.