

Chichester Southern Gateway Masterplan

Review of Freeflow Proposals

September 2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 This short paper has been prepared by David Lock Associates with input from Peter Brett Associates to examine the Southern Gateway proposals. This assessment has been undertaken in three parts:

- An overarching assessment of the suitability and desirability of the Freeflow proposals given the existing policy framework;
- A financial appraisal taking into account the likely impact on development potential, the need for additional land acquisition, and the additional infrastructure costs directly linked to the provision of the bridge; and
- A technical assessment of the practical implications of the proposed bridge and supporting roads.

2. The Freeflow Proposals

2.1 The Freeflow proposals entail a dedicated new road and bridge through the central part of the masterplan area and the closure of both level crossings, as well as the downgrading of Basin Road and Stockbridge Road in these locations. Access to the station would be via a shared surface. The Freeflow plans additionally propose the provision of an exhibition / conference / performance venue, as well as hotel, commercial and retail space and additional homes.

2.2 The Freeflow alternative vision for Chichester Southern Gateway impacts on a number of the development sites identified in the draft master plan (see Figure 2 overleaf), and will require the acquisition of additional land to enable the route of the proposed new road and bridge over the railway line.

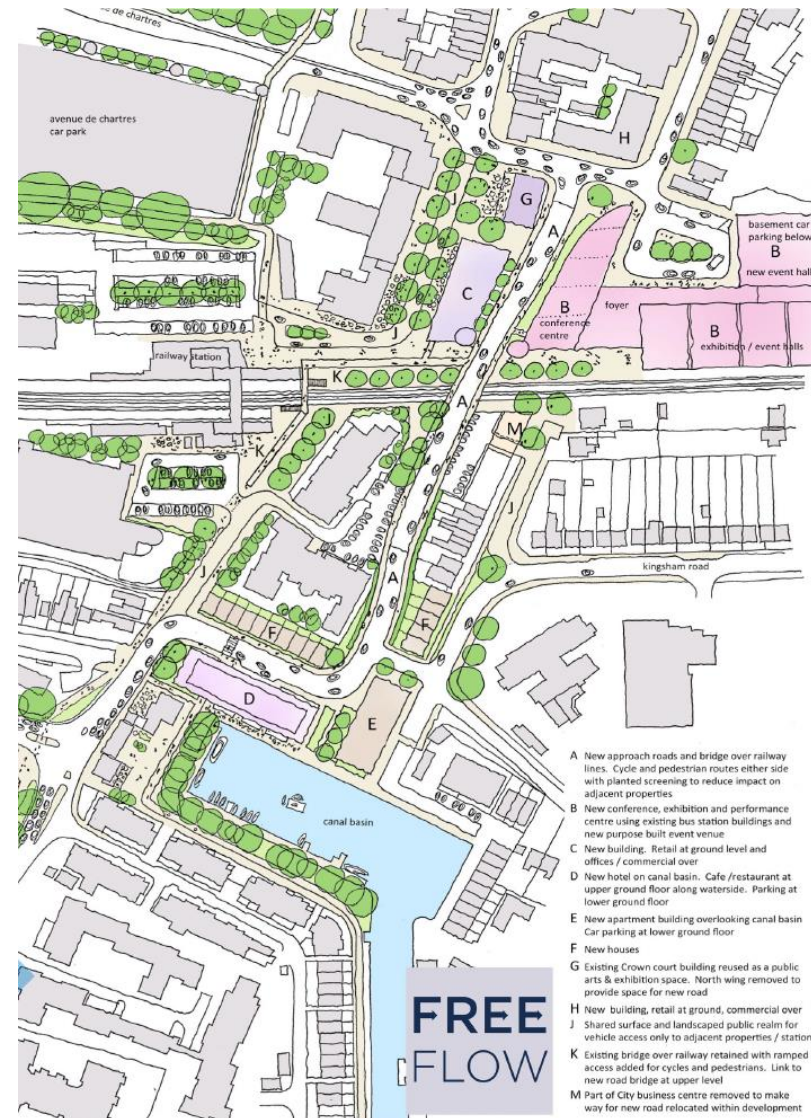


Figure 1: Freeflow Masterplan for Chichester Southern Gateway

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND PUBLIC REALM PRIORITIES COMPOSITE

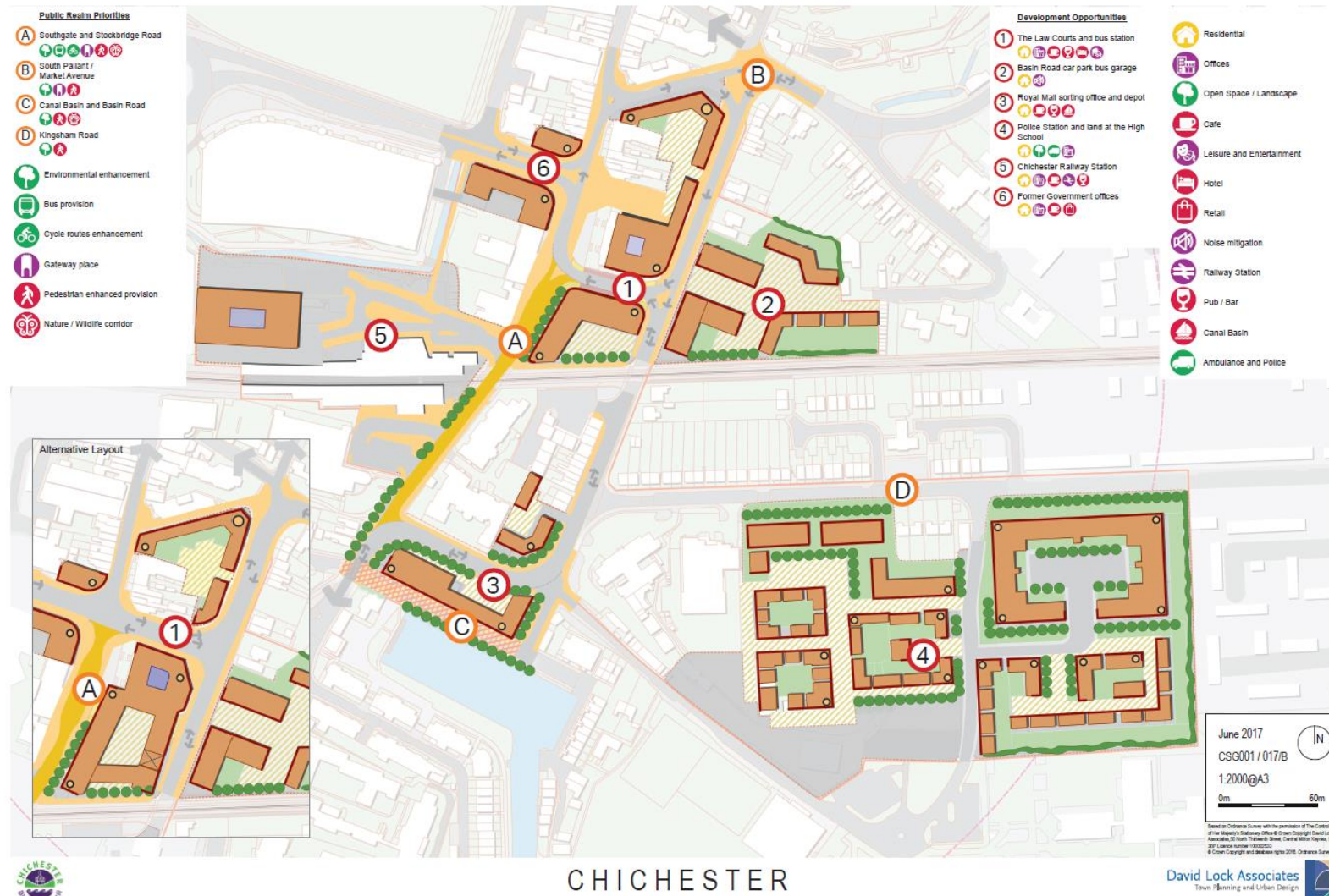


Figure 2: Draft Masterplan Plan

3. Acceptability of the Freeflow Proposals

Emphasis on motor vehicles

- 3.1 The Freeflow proposals focus largely on the provision of new routes for motor vehicles, and is likely to result in the increase of traffic flows into the south of the city centre. Furthermore, it is likely to increase traffic flows into a part of the city where it can't be accommodated, instead of utilising western access routes, for example using Via Ravenna (A259) to access the Avenue de Chartres car park. From discussions with Freeflow it is understood that no studies have been undertaken to examine the wider impact on the city centre of the newly proposed road, and indeed the wider consequences for the A27. Linked to this, there is also no evidence provided for the likely traffic generated by uses proposed within the Freeflow proposals, which, in relation to the new conference centre, exhibition and event halls, is likely to be considerable at times of peak usage.

Non-compliance with policy

- 3.2 The Freeflow proposals conflict with the increasing emphasis within the current policy environment, which is moving away from greater car dependence towards more sustainable transport modes. One of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is the need to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- 3.3 This emphasis is replicated within the vision in the adopted Chichester Local Plan Key Policies 2014 – 2029, which highlights that by 2029 the plan area will be a place where people can move around safely and conveniently with opportunities to choose alternatives to car travel. Furthermore, the local plan transport strategy aims to promote more integrated and sustainable local transport and to mitigate the cumulative impact of planned development on the highways network and other transport services. Specifically, in relation to the 'Southern Gateway', Chichester City

Development Principles highlight the need to provide potential for improved road layouts providing better cycling and pedestrian access to the city centre from the south.

- 3.4 A key objective of West Sussex County Council has been to achieve a significant shift in travel behaviour aimed particularly at reducing car use for short distance journeys. The West Sussex Transport Plan 2011 – 26 highlights the need to reduce unnecessary trips by motorised vehicles and to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and to adapt transport infrastructure to increase its resilience to the effects of climate change.

Chichester Vision

- 3.5 The Freeflow proposals are at odds with the approach contained within the adopted Chichester Vision 2017, which has been developed through extensive community engagement and highlights the public desire for fewer cars in the city centre. In particular, key Theme 1 entailing the creation of 'an accessible and attractive city' highlights the specific aspiration to calm and reduce traffic flows within the city centre and to reverse the priority from vehicles to pedestrians.

Meeting Southern Gateway Masterplan objectives

- 3.6 The Freeflow proposals do not meet many of the Southern Gateway masterplan requirements articulated by Chichester District Council in ensuring that the masterplan recognises the key attributes of the location, as follows:
- The provision of a substantial road bridge together with a focus on motorised transport is at odds with the need for approach that is sympathetic to the character of the area. Not only do Freeflow proposals cut through sites that were allocated for development, but they additionally cut through land not currently proposed for development, such as at the City Business Centre. This land is in third party ownership with no guarantee that it would be available to accommodate the proposals.

- The proposals do not effectively articulate a 'gateway' into the city from the South, along and around a major radial route such as Stockbridge Road, but focuses on the provision of access for the motor vehicle into the city centre.
- The Freeflow proposals do not provide an attractive pedestrian environment that minimises conflicts with other users and does not encourage increased footfall between sites and uses. The proposed road bridge and required ramps are likely to provide a barrier to east-west pedestrian movement in the southern part of the masterplan area, whilst the bridge itself is not likely to provide an attractive environment for pedestrians to utilise in moving north-south.
- The Freeflow proposals are likely to impact negatively upon enabling active frontages on main streets and pedestrian routes,
- The Freeflow proposals do not have effective regard to the wider setting of the city centre including the critical visual and functional relationships with the Cathedral Spire, the Market Cross, and the Canal Basin. There is no recognition of a major visual axis along the Canal towards Chichester Cathedral Spire, which is likely to be interrupted by the proposed road bridging and associated ramps.
- The Freeflow proposals do not meet the project objective of improving the character of Basin Road by providing more active frontages, public spaces and the provision of a more attractive public realm that will help to encourage people to walk to the canal basin.

Residential amenity

- 3.7 The impact on the existing residential properties to the south of the railway and in particular at Brampton Court and the rear of properties on the west side of Brampton Road is likely to be significant, in terms of visual amenity, noise impact, and air quality. There is likely to be no noise attenuation possible to mitigate the

impact, and a very real likelihood that those properties would be able to challenge the new road, which has no policy status.

Accuracy of Freeflow Drawings

- 3.8 Whilst recognising that the Freeflow drawings were produced as indicative sketches, they are not an accurate representation of the area when applied to an Ordnance Survey base. As a result, the Freeflow drawings attribute greater space than exists in reality to particular areas of the Southern Gateway area, such as the existing residential properties on Basin Road which are illustrated further to the east than in reality, and Avenue De Chartres which should be further to the north than shown on the Freeflow diagram.

4. Financial Assessment

- 4.1 Whilst the Freeflow proposals are imaginative and serve as a useful challenge to the draft masterplan, they impact negatively on overarching financial viability and deliverability of the Southern Gateway masterplan in the following ways:
- impact on development potential through loss of development land, untested and potentially unviable mix of uses, and loss of residential development value;
 - significant additional land acquisition costs and likely delays to implementation;
 - significant additional infrastructure and development costs.

Impact on development potential

Overall mix of uses

- 4.2 The draft masterplan identifies the potential for over 330 residential units, together with hotel, office and commercial uses of a scale appropriate to supporting and improving the quality of offer around the station and the Southern Gateway. The development of the uses is based on robust viability analysis and an assessment of deliverability.
- 4.3 The Freeflow proposal identifies a mix of hotel, commercial and office buildings, together with the major conference/exhibition venue addressed above, and an arts and exhibition space. There is no supporting financial analysis. The proposal includes only a very limited quantity of residential development, which will not underpin the financial viability of the commercial elements. It is therefore unclear how the proposed overall mix of uses will be delivered.

Impact on bus station, bus depot and law courts sites (Development Opportunity 1)

- 4.4 The indicative plan significantly reduces the land available for development through the introduction of a plaza, and the development of the bridge ramp, although a small sliver of land currently forming part of the existing road network is clawed back.

- 4.5 For these areas, the draft masterplan assumes a mix of hotel, commercial ground floor space, plus up to approximately 130 residential units, generating an estimated capital value of in the order of £10-£15 million, (dependent upon the exact mix). In contrast, the Freeflow plan assumes the provision of a commercial building providing ground floor commercial use with offices above, plus a public arts and exhibition space and a conference centre, exhibition and events halls and basement car parking, with no residential uses are proposed.
- 4.6 There is no supporting evidence to indicate the demand for or viability of a conference/events facility, and no supporting market analysis assessing the local supply provided by nearby universities, hotels, sporting venues etc to support such a use. There is also no analysis of how such a venue would compete with existing established conference locations on the south coast including Bournemouth, Brighton, and as proposed at Southampton, where there is hotel capacity to support such a use.
- 4.7 By way of comparison, the proposed conference and exhibition centre under development in Farnborough, which aims to meet the needs of the South East, will provide purpose-built event and exhibition space of circa 12,500sqm, 2500 conference seats and fourteen multiple purpose-built function rooms. The proposal has secured funding of £30million and will be supported by 2500 hotel rooms within a fifteen-minute drive.
- 4.8 The draft masterplan has identified capacity on the bus depot site for approximately 5,200sqm of development, and approximately 100 dwellings per hectare. This suggests that the site has nowhere near the capacity to cater for a competitive conferencing facility, let alone the associated car parking and access requirements. Consideration would also need to be given to the desirability of introducing such a use in Chichester City Centre, given the traffic movements this would be likely to generate.
- 4.9 In terms of financial viability, it is clear that if such a facility in Farnborough is dependent on grant funding, then this would be

likely to be the case in Chichester. The proposed Freeflow plan is therefore likely to impact negatively on deliverability, and on the overall financial viability of the development of the Southern Gateway area as a whole.

- 4.10 The Freeflow proposal also suggests basement car parking for the conference/exhibition venue (and the hotel adjacent to the Canal Basin). Basement car parking is very expensive to provide, with current costs typically ranging between circa £30,000 and £40,000 per space, assuming normal ground conditions. Here, the issue of the level of the water table would also need to be considered. To provide for example, 500 spaces in total, which is likely to be inadequate for the suggested conferencing facility alone, would therefore indicate an additional cost of circa £15-£20 million.

Impact on Royal Mail Sorting Office and depot (Development Opportunity 3)

- 4.11 The draft masterplan identifies the Royal Mail site as having potential for a development comprising approximately 1500sqm of commercial floorspace at ground level, 25 flats above, and a free-standing office opportunity extending to approximately 2100sqm. The indicative Freeflow proposal removes the opportunity for the office development, representing a potential loss of in the order of £1 - 1.5 million.
- 4.12 The Freeflow scheme also indicates that the site overlooking the Canal Basin as suitable for hotel development. Whilst hotel use is one of the uses identified and promoted in the draft Master Plan, it is our view that to maximise the value of the land fronting the Canal basin a mixed residential and commercial scheme would be more appropriate, with provision for a hotel nearer the station.

Land Acquisition

- 4.13 Significant further costs will be incurred in the acquisition of land interests to accommodate the proposed bridge and access ramps. This would require additional land to be bought including rear gardens to numbers 64 to 78 Basin Road (even), a significant part of the building forming the City Business Centre together with its car parking provision, and land and possibly part of the buildings comprising Brampton Court retirement development. This has a number of deliverability implications: Firstly, to secure site assembly may well require the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers, which could have a major impact on delivery timescales and costs, with the procedure alone likely to raise costs by over half a million pounds. Secondly, the impact of both the loss of garden land and the construction and operation of the bridge structure on the houses is likely to give rise to claims for blight, and for the acquisition of the houses themselves. The additional acquisitions could therefore add a further £5 million pounds to scheme costs.
- 4.14 There may also be additional financial consequences in terms of re-siting the City Business Centre, notwithstanding the wider argument that this is exactly the type of economic development which the Masterplan should be seeking to provide, not to displace. It is also anticipated that further land will be needed to enable access to the bridge and ramp structure for maintenance purposes.

Additional Infrastructure Costs

- 4.15 In addition to the financial implications identified above, consideration needs to be given to the actual cost of constructing the bridge across the railway line. Given the access ramps, and the height above the rails that would need to be achieved, this alone is anticipated to represent an additional infrastructure cost in the region of at least £10 to £12 million. This does not take into account the potential impact or costs associated with any other road junctions that may need to be upgraded to cater for the volumes of traffic the bridge might bring to the centre of Chichester.
- 4.16 By way of examples, the Tennison Road Bridge in Norwood, South London completed in 2015, was engineered for £10million. This involved a 53m main section of replacement bridge over railway lines, with ramps adjacent to residential development. The new Leigh Road Bridge in Slough was also completed in 2015 and entailed the provision of a 52 metre span bridge spanning the Great Western railway. This was also completed for £10 million and was privately funded. However, it should be recognised that both schemes had a road and bridge already, and that these were upgrades and improvement schemes, so the costs are likely to substantially increase for the Freeflow bridge proposal.

Overall financial impact

- 4.17 Without further quantification of the uses proposed in the Freeflow plan it is impossible to be specific about the impact on potential overall development value. However, by adopting a very conservative approach to the potential additional land acquisition and infrastructure costs and the loss of residential value, it is our opinion that in comparison to the draft master plan, the Freeflow proposal would generate a total negative financial impact easily in excess of £25 million. This would clearly challenge the overall deliverability of the proposal from a financial point of view.



Figure 3: Tennison Road Bridge, Norwood, South London



Figure 4: Leigh Road Bridge, Slough

5.1 A swept path analysis of the proposed Freeflow road arrangement has been completed, based on the tracking of a heavy goods vehicle. This clearly highlights the that the proposed road layout is unworkable. Not only are the junctions too small but the radii too tight, resulting in the need to make fundamental alterations to development sites. The east/west link between the Magistres Court and other buildings is likely to create major difficulties for two-way movement of HGVs. The kink shown at Southgate/Avenue de Chartres to avoid listed buildings would also adversely affect vehicle movement unless Avenue de Chartres is realigned further to the south. The Freeflow plans also show some very short connections between new layout and existing roads at the end of the ramps which would lead to junction queuing interactions.

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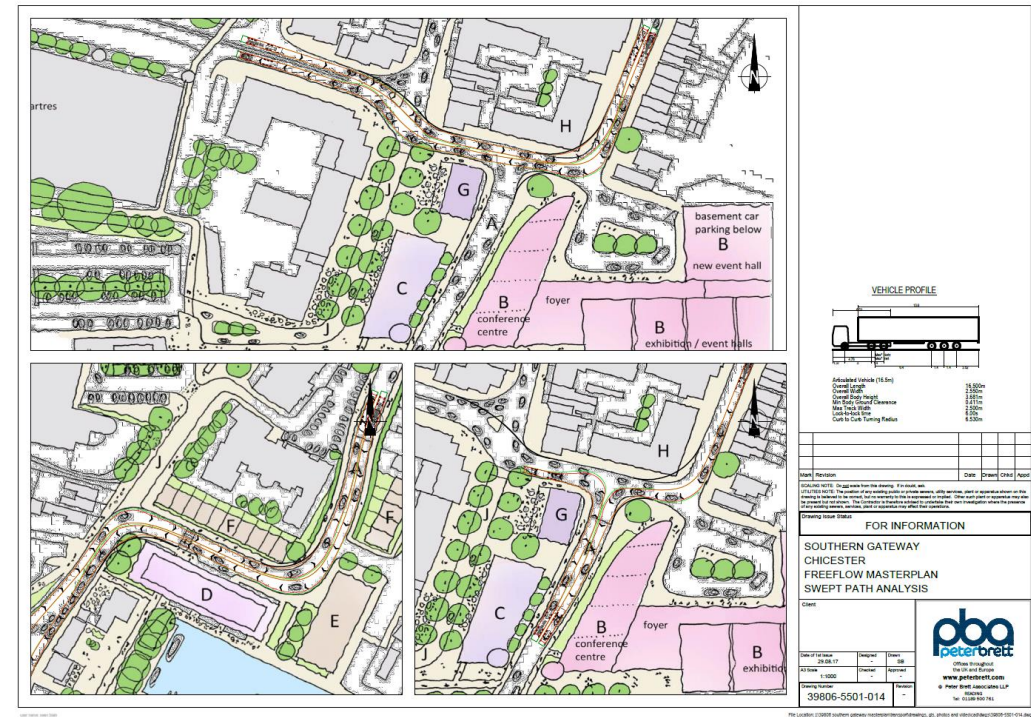


Figure 5: Swept path analysis

Assessment of proposed road bridge

- 5.3 Illustrations provided within the Freeflow proposals are considered to be misleading as a result of the new foot and road bridges being drawn smaller than they would be required to be in reality, in order to minimise the visual impact on the surrounding built environment. As currently drawn, it is likely that the ramp gradient will be too steep, for example to meet guidance for cyclist use (required to be 5% (1:20)).

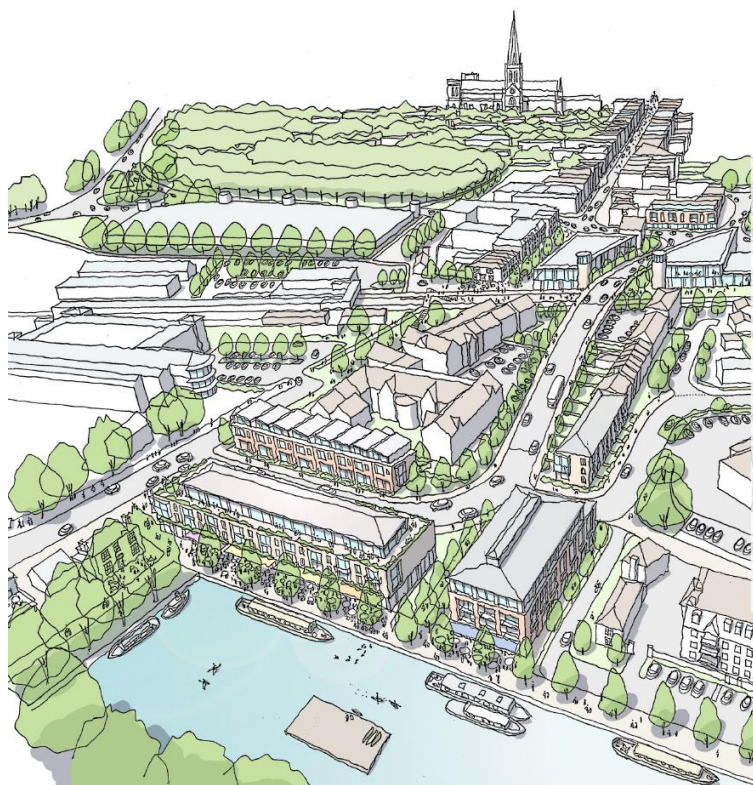


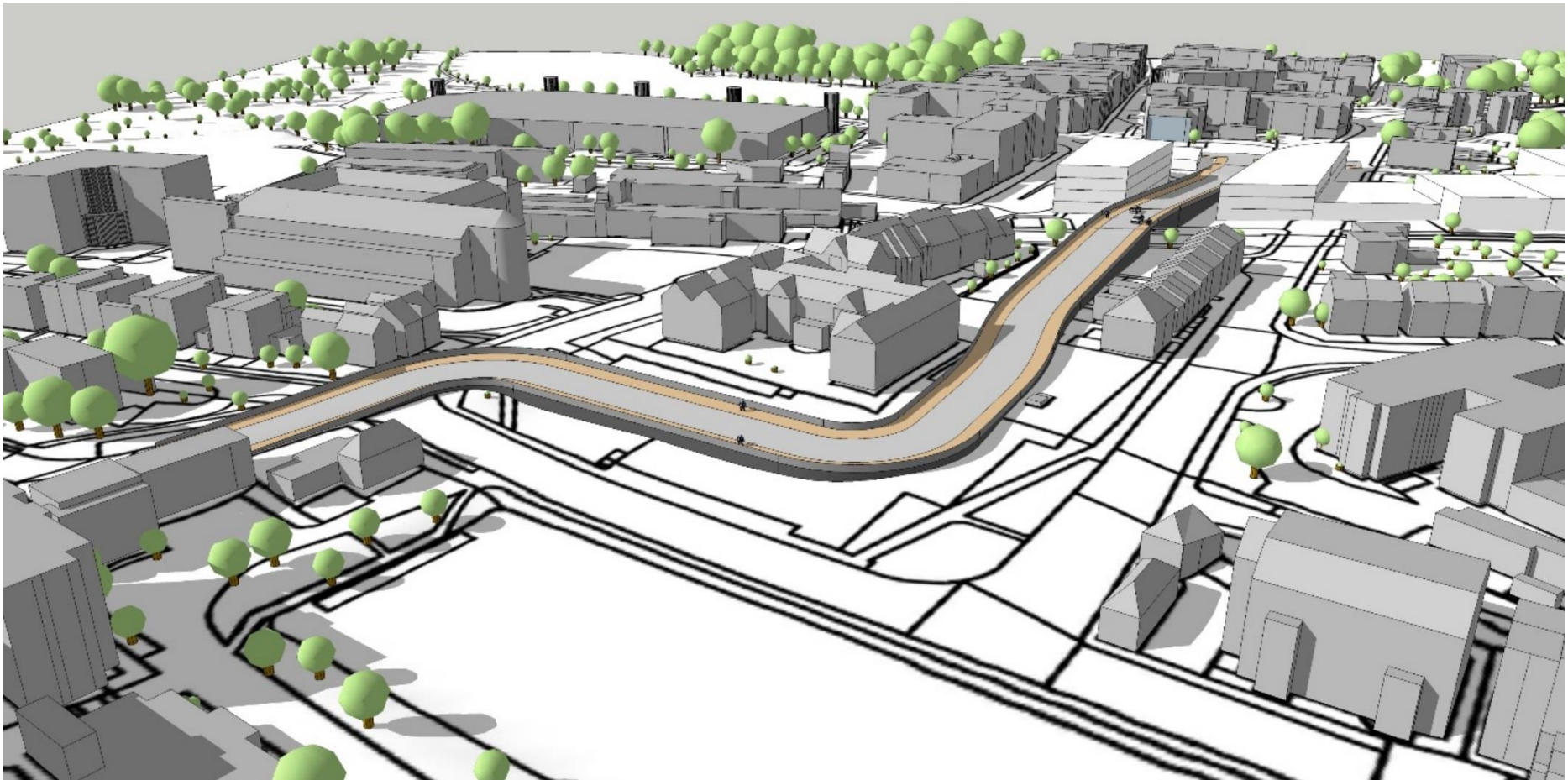
Figure 6: Freeflow drawing – looking north towards the Cathedral

- 5.4 The Freeflow plans and illustrations additionally underestimate the width that would need to be cleared to allow for the road bridge and don't take into account the permanent maintenance access that would be required to the sides and underneath of any bridge structure and the side of any retaining wall structure.
- 5.5 Three-dimensional modelling of the bridge and access ramps in the location proposed by Freeflow has been undertaken by David Lock Associates, viewed from a point over the canal basin – see page 12. The three-dimensional modelling utilises the highway and bridge dimensions indicated by the Freeflow plans, and is positioned upon accurate OS base data, topographical and building height data (including the location of existing trees). Crucially this modelling takes account of site topography which falls gently from north to south.
- 5.6 Based on the plans produced by Freeflow, the carriageway shown is 7.3 metres with a 3-metre combined walkway cycleway on either side. The height of the bridge over the railway is 4.8 metres – significantly shorter than the specified 6m requirement. It is worth also highlighting that over a railway, head-height walls are usually required to prevent accidents (as shown), and street lamp columns would also need to be added. The white building blocks indicate some of the proposed Free Flow structures in order to provide as accurate a graphical representation as possible.
- 5.7 Significantly, the modelling incorporates a bridge ramp gradient of 1:20 in order to meet minimum DDA requirements. As a result of this required ramp gradient, together with sloping site topography, this will mean the provision of a 20m long bridge span, with a 90m long ramp to the north, and crucially, a 250m ramp to the south before it reaches ground level at Stockbridge Road close to its junction with Terminus Place. This would represent a colossal engineering solution, and one that will also need to be accessed for maintenance along both sides (including along the rear of the listed cottages on Basin Road).
- 5.8 It also raises fundamental issues as to how development in this key location can be organised, such as how the new houses proposed

at Site F on the Freeflow proposals will be accessed. It will additionally make local access from this new raised road to premises on Stockbridge Road and Kingsham Road difficult without the need for further ramps and retaining walls.

- 5.9 This required bridge ramp is likely to create an unattractive adjacent pedestrian environment, and is also likely to negatively impact upon the proposed pedestrian crossing (between Freeflow development area D and E).
- 5.10 Any increase in height of the deck over the railway closer to the required 6 metres will fundamentally exacerbate the issues raised above. Significantly it will also increase the length of the ramp to the north, which as currently proposed does land in the broad location anticipated by Freeflow (with a 4.8 metre height bridge), but is likely to overshoot into Freeflow development area H to the north. This would render the proposed road layout including linkage with Avenue De Chartres unachievable.

Figure 7: Three-dimensional modelling of Freeflow proposals



6. Summary

6.1 In terms of the draft masterplan, the Freeflow proposals can be summarised as follows:

- It does not comply with the existing planning policy framework;
- It is not in line with Southern Gateway masterplan objectives specified by Chichester district Council;
- It will have a negative impact on residential amenity;
- It reduces the developable area of the Royal Mail site and proposes alternative uses;
- It requires the acquisition of considerable additional land between Basin Road and Stockbridge Road;
- It bisects the site of the existing bus station and law courts sites, and proposes alternative uses for the bus depot;
- It assumes an overall scheme that comprises entirely commercial and leisure/cultural uses other than a small development of town houses and a single block of apartments;
- It involves considerable additional infrastructure costs.
- The proposed road layout is not technically feasible;
- The proposed bridge ramps, when accurately represented, are likely to significantly impact upon existing and proposed uses.
- Conservatively, the proposed plan would have a negative impact on viability of in excess of £25 million.