

Programme Document

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Version 2.0



Solent Gateway 2
Associated British
Ports

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared by Associated British Ports (ABP) (the 'Applicant') in relation to the Solent Gateway 2 development (the 'Proposed Development'), a proposed new automotive roll on-roll off port facility. ABP is proposing to locate the Proposed Development on the northern part of its landholding that is known as the Port of Southampton's Strategic Land Reserve (SLR), located on the western side of the tidal River Test to the south of the existing port facility at Marchwood which is located within New Forest District. The existing Marchwood port facility is operated by Solent Gateway Limited (SGL). The SGL site is under the ownership of the Ministry of Defence, but the Applicant has an appropriate agreement to operate the existing Marchwood port facility.
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development comprises a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which meets relevant qualifying criteria specified in section 24 of the Planning Act 2008, and associated development. It, therefore, requires Development Consent under section 31 of the Planning Act 2008. An application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) is currently expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport in June 2027.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with the Government's Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus (May 2024), the Applicant requested the Tier 2: Standard pre-application service tier which has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.1.4 This Programme Document has been prepared in accordance with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' guidance published in May 2024.

1.2 The Applicant and the Proposed Development

- 1.2.1 The Applicant, ABP, was established in 1981 following the privatisation of the British Transport Docks Board. It is the largest ports group in the United Kingdom ("UK"), owning and operating 21 ports and other transport-related businesses across England, Wales and Scotland, including the Port of Southampton.
- 1.2.2 The Proposed Development will be located to the south of the existing Solent Gateway port facility at Marchwood, which is itself an important part of the Port of Southampton.
- 1.2.3 The Proposed Development that will be the subject of an application for Development Consent is subject to scheme evolution and consultation in the usual manner but is currently envisaged, in summary, to comprise:

- A new marine facility consisting of a two-berth jetty for the handling of automotive roll on- roll off (Ro-Ro) cargo and a dredged pocket to enable vessels to be suitably accommodated;
- Landside terminal space;
- A new terminal access road from the new facility to the A326 and possible modifications to the existing rail facilities at SGL;
- Environmental enhancements, including new habitat, habitat enhancement and landscape improvements (on and off-site); and
- New and improved public recreation provision and improved public access between the settlements of Hythe and Marchwood.

1.2.4 **Plate 1-1** shows the extent of the Applicant’s landholding at and in the vicinity of Southampton. This area includes the Port of Southampton operational area, the existing Solent Gateway facility, the Port’s Strategic Land Reserve and other existing landholdings.

1.2.5 **Plate 1-2** shows the indicative Project boundary, which will be subject to ongoing evolution and changes as a result of scheme development, the outcomes of assessment work and responses to consultation and engagement. The boundary shown encompasses all areas currently being considered for onsite public realm and environmental enhancements as well as the area envisaged to be developed for the new port facility.

Plate 1-1 ABP’s Southampton landholdings

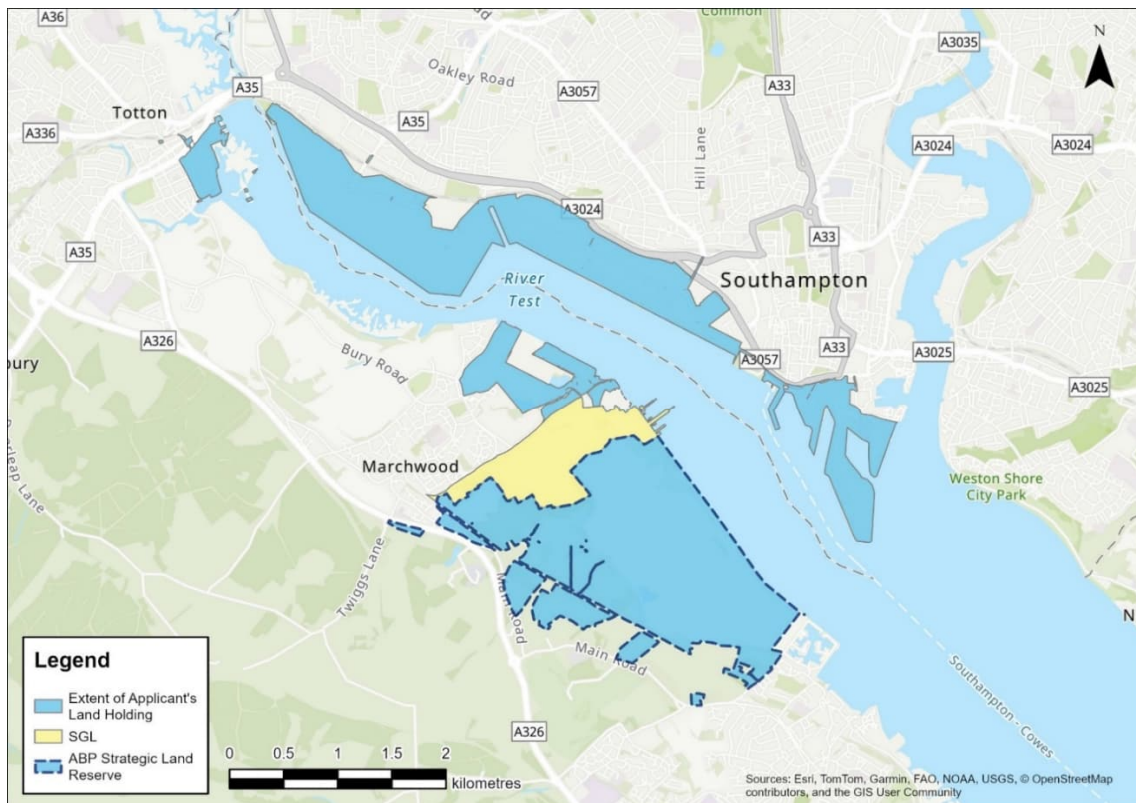
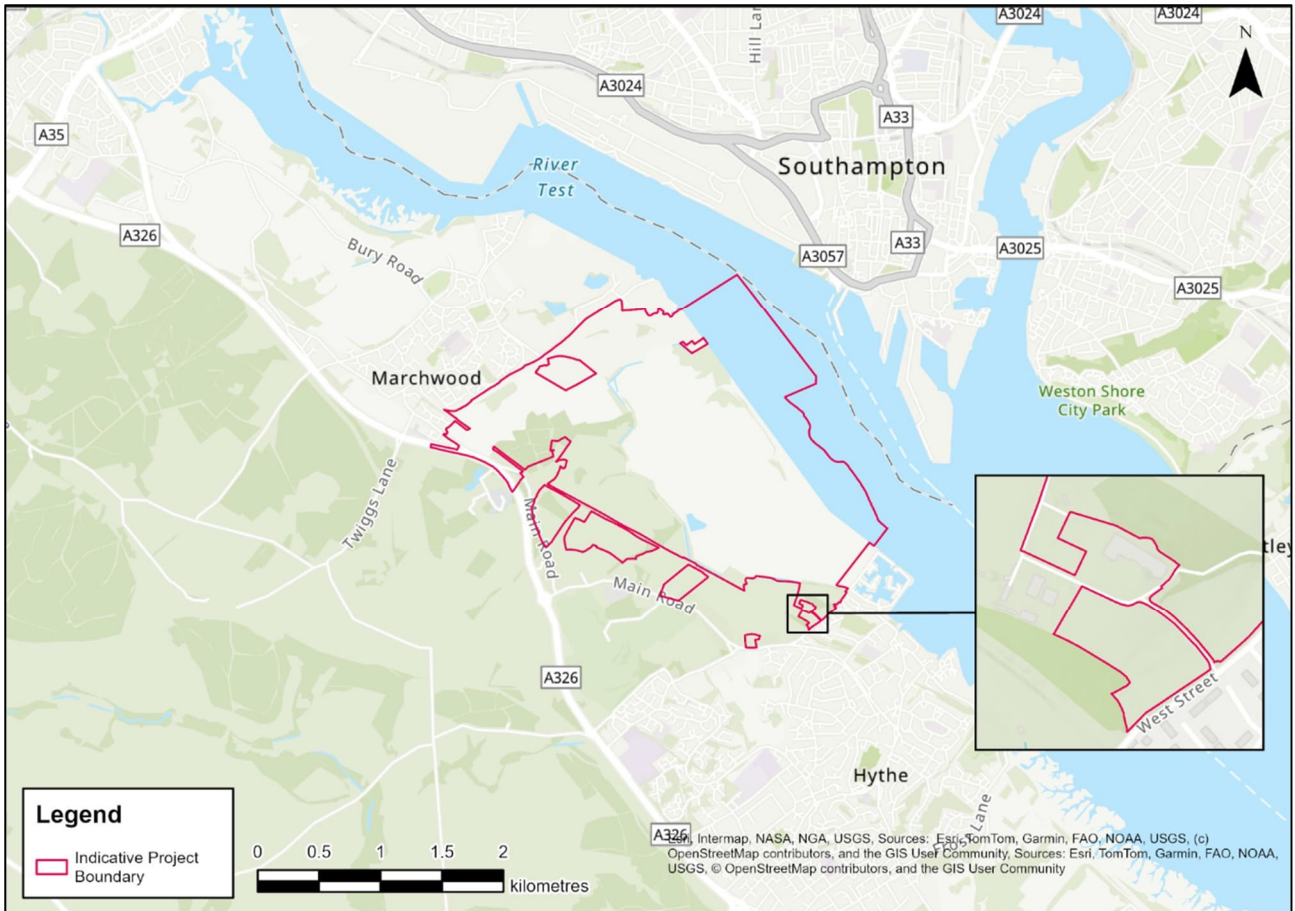


Plate 1-2 Indicative Project Boundary



1.3 Purpose and structure of the Programme Document

- 1.3.1 In May 2024, the Government published its ‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus’, which introduced a new pre-application service for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (‘NSIPs’). The new Prospectus is supported by updated guidance including the ‘Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects’ (MHCLG and DLUHC, 2024).
- 1.3.2 The Guidance advises that in order to “deliver a good pre-application process, including effective engagement and a well-prepared application”, Applicant’s should prepare a Programme Document at the outset to enable those engaged in the pre-application process to understand timescales and ensure their contributions are programmed into the pre-application stage at the most effective point.
- 1.3.3 The Programme Document is not a statutory requirement and is not for consultation. It should, however, set out the timetable and activities necessary for an effective pre-application process including the level of pre-application services from the Planning Inspectorate, and consultation envisaged with various parties required under the Planning Act.

1.3.4 The Guidance advises a Programme Document should include:

- the date the Applicant intends to submit their application;
- a comprehensive timetable of the Applicant's pre-application process, the main events with dates and milestones demonstrating how the pre-application process will be completed (using the maximum target of 2 years as a benchmark);
- the Applicant's view on the main issues for resolution and activities they will undertake to address those;
- the Applicant's proposals for engaging with statutory consultees and local authorities during the pre-application period and any intended financial support agreements, such as Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs);
- the Applicant's identification of risks to achievement of the pre-application stage and the process by which these risks are tracked and managed; and
- cross references to the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) required by section 47 of the Planning Act.

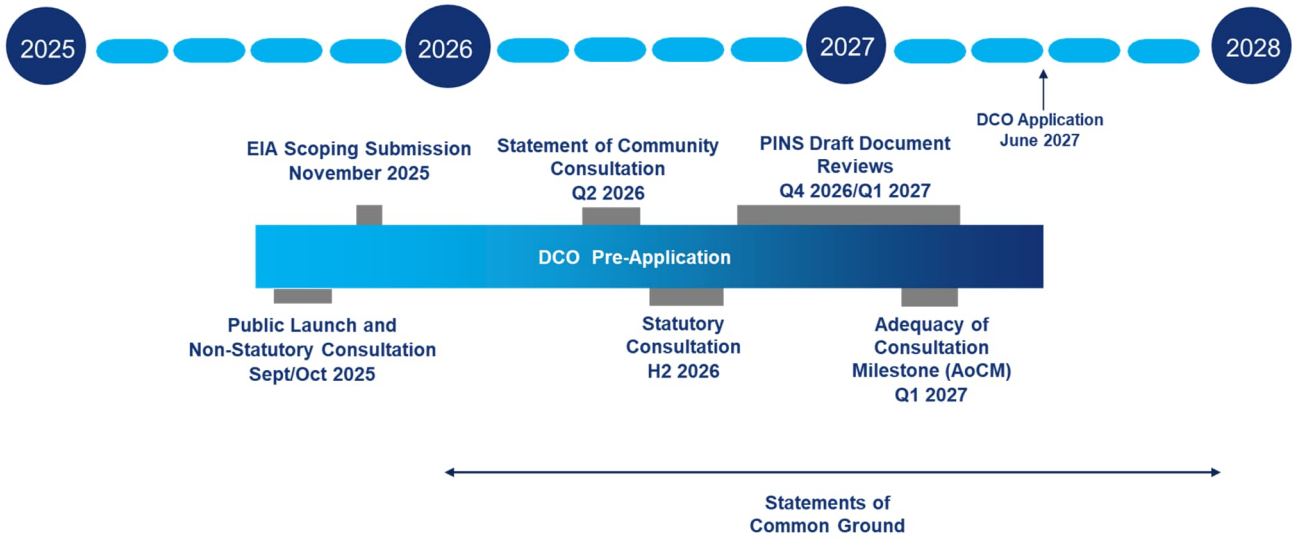
1.3.5 This Programme Document is structured around these requirements.

2. Pre-application Timetable

2.1 Key pre-application milestones

- 2.1.1 **Plate 2-1** sets out an indicative timetable of key pre-application activities proposed to be undertaken by the Applicant. These activities are based on current statutory requirements. At such a time as proposed planning reforms come into force, these activities and associated timeframes will be amended as required.
- 2.1.2 The Applicant is developing a detailed programme through to the submission of an application for Development Consent. The timescales shown in **Plate 2-1** (particularly those beyond the next six months) are, therefore, indicative only and will be further refined as the overall integrated project schedule develops.
- 2.1.3 The Applicant has to date:
- held its Inception Meeting with the Planning Inspectorate on 21 August 2025;
 - held a non-statutory consultation from 16 September 2025 to 13 October 2025; and
 - submitted its request for an EIA Scoping Opinion to the Planning Inspectorate on 7 November 2025.
- 2.1.4 The Applicant is now planning for:
- Ongoing technical engagement with stakeholders including, but not limited to, the tracking and resolution of identified issues, utilising the Statement of Common Ground process as appropriate;
 - Consultation on the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) in Q2 2026 (subject to proposed legislative changes);
 - Statutory consultation in the second half of 2026 (subject to proposed legislative changes); and
 - Submission of DCO application in June 2027.

Plate 2-1 Indicative pre-application timetable



3. Main Issues and Risks

3.1 Main issues identified by the Applicant

- 3.1.1 **Table 3-1** summarises the potential main issues identified at this point in the pre-application process by the Applicant and the activities to be undertaken by the Applicant to address those issues.
- 3.1.2 [Note: Table to be updated as issues are identified through engagement and consultation during the pre-application phase].

Table 3-1 Main issues identified by the Applicant

Potential Main Issues	Proposed Resolution
Further scheme definition and detail	<p>Ongoing scheme design work to be undertaken to take appropriate account of emerging assessment work and consultation and engagement feedback in the usual manner for proposals at this stage. This includes elements such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed Country Park; • Road access to the A326; • Crossing of the Fawley Branch Line; and • Approach to construction.
Delivery of Hampshire County Council (HCC) A326 (North) Waterside Improvements.	<p>Applicant is engaging with HCC on a regular basis to discuss the A326 (North) Waterside Improvements scheme and how it interacts with the Project.</p> <p>Applicant to continue to engage with HCC and support the development of the HCC A326 scheme as appropriate.</p>
<p>Likely direct and/or indirect effects on sites designated for their ecological value at a European and national level.</p> <p>These sites include, but may not be limited to, the Dibden Bay SSSI, the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar and the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA.</p>	<p>A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report is being prepared to assess the potential for likely significant effects (LSE) on European sites.</p> <p>A Compensation, Mitigation and Enhancement (CME) strategy is being developed with the objective of offsetting potential significant residual adverse effects and delivering biodiversity net gain (BNG) both onsite and offsite.</p> <p>In order to progress the identification of potentially suitable land on which to create these habitats, a series of high-level principles</p>

Potential Main Issues	Proposed Resolution
	<p>have been developed, together with a number of potential constraints which could affect the feasibility of successfully establishing and maintaining high quality habitats.</p> <p>These principles have been agreed with Natural England and the Environment Agency and engagement with these, and other statutory bodies, regarding the CME strategy will continue. The use of Evidence Plans is being considered and discussed with statutory bodies where appropriate.</p>
<p>Securing proposed Country Park against future development scenarios.</p>	<p>Issue raised by members of the community at the non-statutory consultation stage. ABP is considering future ownership and management issues.</p>

3.2 Pre-application stage risks

- 3.2.1 **Table 3-2** sets out the risks that could potentially affect the efficient undertaking of the pre-application stage identified at the current time by the Applicant and the process for tracking and managing these risks.
- 3.2.2 [Note: Table to be updated as pre-application phase progresses and risks are identified through engagement and consultation].

Table 3-2 Main risks identified by the Applicant

Risk	Resolution
<p>Programme risk due to changing legislative requirements resulting from planning reform.</p>	<p>A proactive approach is being taken through ongoing monitoring of any planning reforms and early identification of potential impacts on the project and mitigations. Flexibility will be built into the project programme as needed to allow the project to adapt to changes.</p>
<p>Lack of sufficient resource/ capacity within relevant Local Authorities and other stakeholder organisations to engage with proposals and pre-application process in sufficient detail.</p>	<p>Early and regular stakeholder engagement is being undertaken to share project updates and progress. Negotiation, completion and implementation of appropriate financial support agreements with organisations where reasonably required.</p>

4. Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.1.1 A programme of engagement with statutory bodies is underway. To date, the main focus of this early engagement has been to introduce key statutory bodies to the Project, to outline the key pre-application milestone activities and to commence discussions around the likely major/ strategic 'asks' of each stakeholder and any risks/ challenges associated with these asks.
- 4.1.2 Early engagement has been undertaken with, but is not limited to, the following organisations:
- New Forest District Council (NFDC);
 - New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA);
 - Hampshire County Council (HCC);
 - Southampton City Council (SCC);
 - Natural England;
 - Environment Agency;
 - Marine Management Organisation;
 - Historic England;
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB);
 - Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust;
 - National Highways;
 - Network Rail;
 - Office of Road and Rail;
 - National Trust; and
 - Parish Councils.
- 4.1.3 Engagement has now progressed to starting to discuss more technical matters and working through issues identified for the Project. Regular meetings are scheduled with a number of statutory bodies including NFDC, NFNPA, HCC, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

4.2 Financial support agreements

- 4.2.1 ABP is in discussion with a number of statutory bodies regarding the provision of financial support during the pre-application stage. These include the following:

- NFDC, HCC and the NFNPA – discussions held and a draft Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) has been provided for review. A Joint Planning Officer has now been appointed by NFDC to also cover the interests of HCC and the NFNPA in regard to the Project and further discussions are due to take place regarding a joint PPA;
- Natural England – Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) is in place;
- Environment Agency – Service Level Agreement (SLA) agreed and in place;
- Marine Management Organisation (MMO) – DAS is in place; and
- Historic England – negotiation regarding potential entry into a SLA is underway.

4.3 Future engagement with Planning Inspectorate

- 4.3.1 The Applicant has elected for the Tier 2: Standard pre-application service with the Planning Inspectorate. Following the Inception Meeting with the Planning Inspectorate on 21 August 2025, this pre-application service tier has been confirmed.
- 4.3.2 It is the intention of the Applicant to meet with the Planning Inspectorate at key milestones as shown in **Table 4-1**. As offered by the Tier 2 pre-application service, additional meetings with the Planning Inspectorate, or the Planning Inspectorates attendance at multiparty meetings not currently shown in **Table 4-1** may be requested by the Applicant. In these cases the Applicant would give the Planning Inspectorate sufficient notice of such a request to enable the Planning Inspectorate to plan accordingly.

Table 4-1 Indicative future meetings with Planning Inspectorate

Milestone	Proposed Meeting Timing
Post-Scoping, pre-section 42 consultation	January 2026
Post-section 42 consultation/ post-Preliminary Environmental Information Report	Q4 2026
Draft documents feedback	Q1 2027
Pre-submission	Q2 2027

References

Title	Document number or date
MHCLG and DLUHC (2024). Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Accessed June 2025: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-act-2008-pre-application-stage-for-nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects	2024

Abbreviations and acronyms

ABP	Associated British Ports
CME	Compensation, Mitigation and Enhancement
DAS	Discretionary Advice Service
DCO	Development Consent Order
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HRA	Habitat Regulations Assessment
LSE	Likely Significant Effects
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
NFDC	New Forest District Council
NFNPA	New Forest National Park Authority
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
PINS	Planning Inspectorate
PPA	Planning Performance Agreement
Ro-Ro	Roll on-Roll off
RSBP	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SGL	Solent Gateway Limited
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLR	Strategic Land Reserve
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation
SoS	Secretary of State
SPA	Special Protection Areas
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UK	United Kingdom

