Introduction

This note assesses the potential for providing a pedestrian connection from the Navigator Quarter development to the Itchen Navigation Public Right of Way (PROW) that borders the site to the south and east, and which roughly follows the route of the River Itchen.

At the present time, the Navigator Quarter site is private land with no public right of access to or across it. Access to the existing site is available from the west, via a gated access that connects to Southampton Airport's long stay car park. A separate access is also available to the northern field of the Navigator Quarter via a route underneath the railway, but this is also across private land and access to the Navigator Quarter site is currently restricted by a secured gate.

Aside from these formalised routes that provide access to the plots, there are no other recognised formal access points to the site and no public rights of way across it.

As part of the works to develop the Navigator Quarter, a new access road will be provided. This will form a continuation of Mitchell Way, which will extend past the end of the Airport Runway, through the site and form the first phase of the future Chickenhall Lane Link Road. This route will support cars and HGVs as well as active travel for cyclists and pedestrians. It is also proposed that, subject to future demand, a bus link will be provided to the site which will use the estate road.

There are some existing informal points of access from the Itchen Navigation to the site. These have been formed by trespassers to the site, including dog walkers, so whilst there are access points, these are through undergrowth and are not formalised in any way. For those accessing the plots now to walk their dogs, such a function will not exist in the future as the site is to be developed to accommodate new employment units for a range of occupiers.

The possibility of formalising these access route to the site have been considered and they cannot be made available as formal access points for the reasons set out in this note.

Security

The Navigator Quarter will accommodate new employment units, with self-contained service yards and areas for car parking. Service yards will be fenced and gated and some units will have gatehouses to control vehicles accessing the employment units. Security is therefore a consideration for occupiers that may come to the site, so whilst permeability is needed, controlling access to the site to reduce access routes into and out of the development plots is also needed to reduce the opportunity for crime. Any routes from the Itchen Navigation would open access points into the site which cannot be monitored. This therefore increases the risk of break-ins for site occupiers.

Due to the site's proximity to the airport, it is also feasible that the Navigator Quarter may accommodate occupiers that handle high value goods for import/export. Security will therefore be important for such occupiers and ensuring that access to the site is controlled in an appropriate manner will be important for them and their insurers.

Useability and Safety

If there were a PROW between the Itchen Navigation and the site, it would not act as a suitable route for year-round walking to the site. The route is not lit and during winter months it will likely be pitch black in mornings and evenings, which raises concerns about safety, particularly since the route passes ditches and bodies of water including tributaries of the Itchen Navigation. The PROW is therefore better suited to recreational walking during daylight hours, rather than as a route for employees (who may be working shifts that require them to access/leave the site outside of daylight hours).

Sections of the public right of way, which follows the river valley, also pass through land which is in Flood Zone 3 (see figure 1). During wetter times of the year, this land will either be flooded or very muddy, cutting the path off from use and making it an unreliable route for walking to the site.

At points, the path is also very narrow (less than 1m) and would therefore not be appropriate for cyclists.

Figure 1. Flood Risk Map of the area, showing Flood Zone 2 in Light Blue and Flood Zone 3 in Dark Blue. Tributaries of the Itchen Navigation are also shown as pale blue lines.

Archaeology

The response from the County Archaeologist to the layout and design of the Navigator Quarter supports the provision of a strong continuous landscape buffer to the Itchen Navigation. The consultation response received notes the following:

> *"I noted that the assessment did not consider the impact of development on the setting of the Itchen Navigation which defines the east side of the site. This is an early navigation and runs largely through a rural context. I am pleased to note on the layout that a 'green band' fringes the navigation as part of the layout. I think that care should be taken to ensure that the navigation-side treatment acts as a suitable setting and screen between the navigation and the development."*

If a formal pedestrian connection is to be established between the site and the Itchen Navigation, it would need to be implemented properly, allowing for a path width of at least 1.8m. To make way for this, clearing of woodland and vegetation would need to take place on either side of the path, to reduce the risk of encroachment from branches and roots. For the safety of pedestrians, lighting would also need to be fitted along the path, and so an appropriate amount of space would need to be provided for its cabling. The result of providing this connection would therefore create a clear, visible opening within the buffer, increasing intervisibility between the site and the Itchen Navigation, and therefore impacting negatively on its heritage setting.

Ecology

The Council ecologist supports the provision of vegetation and areas of soft landscaping around the perimeter of the site to provide a buffer to the adjoining designated sites. Encouraging pedestrian traffic in these areas would reduce the buffer by requiring a form of access in these areas, and encouraging foot traffic through. One of the objectives of the Council ecologist is to enhance these

buffers wherever possible and areas have been identified at the site to secure more vegetation, whereas providing a route to the Itchen Navigation would go against these objectives.

By providing a formal route through the buffer, woodland clearing would need to take place which would result in a direct loss of trees and plants. Routing through the woodland would also fragment the buffer, which acts as a wildlife corridor, and may therefore impact on habitats as well as the migratory and foraging patterns of wildlife.

Lighting would also need to be fitted along the footpath to ensure of its safety. In doing so, light spill would be generated which would impact on light-sensitive wildlife including bats and other nocturnal species.

Providing a formal connection between the site and the Itchen Navigation would encourage site workers to use the PROW, which given the safety concerns, is not something the developer wishes to promote. To somewhat alleviate these concerns, the developer would therefore need to provide lighting along the PROW, which would have ecological impacts for nocturnal species and migratory fish using the Itchen Navigation. The fitting of lighting would also require some level of woodland clearance to create a sufficient space for the lights and their cabling. In doing so, formalising the PROW would also contribute towards the urbanising of the natural setting of the Itchen Navigation's River Valley, which is also a SSSI.

Creating a formal link would also require some level of digging to ensure that the path is suitably surfaced. This would require the cutting of tree roots and may also contribute towards soil erosion. Soil erosion can further the loss of biodiversity and increase flood risk, as soil is an important absorber of water and reduces surface run-off. Given that areas next to the site fall within Flood Zone 3, preserving soil where its removal is not absolutely necessary, is considered to be especially important.

Landscape and Visual

The woodland buffer along the eastern boundary of the site provides significant natural screening of the site when viewed from the PROW and points throughout the Itchen Valley Country Park. The Itchen Valley Country Park is an attractive, natural asset within an otherwise urbanised area of South Hampshire. As stated in the Archaeological section of this note, opening sections of the buffer will increase intervisibility between the site and the Itchen Navigation and will therefore disturb attractive views and vistas enjoyed by users of the country park.

Conclusion

This note sets out the factors which have been considered to inform access points to the site. Providing a pedestrian connection between the site and the adjacent PROW has been ruled out for a combination of reasons, including security, useability, safety, archaeology and ecology as well as landscape and visual impacts.