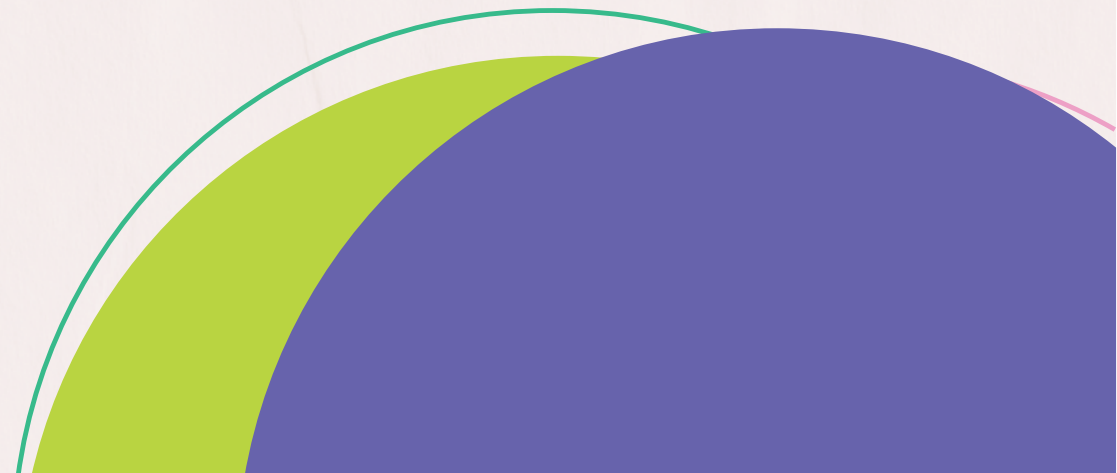


3. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - the areas, economies and partnership working

As a region, we are an economic powerhouse and a vital part of the UK economy, generating over £72 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) annually. With thriving sectors such as maritime, manufacturing, aerospace, education and tourism, our region is a key contributor to national growth and innovation.

The creation of four new unitary councils across mainland Hampshire, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent – centred around the population centres and economic hubs of Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton and Portsmouth – is the most effective model to unlock inclusive economic growth and deliver high-quality public services.

Developed through extensive engagement with partners and building on a strong legacy of collaboration and innovation, this proposal reflects a shared ambition to reshape local government in a way that is financially sustainable, resilient to rising demand and responsive to the complex needs of our communities.



3. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - the areas, economies and partnership working



An introduction to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Map of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight



Data table: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Key economic areas	Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth
Area	4,148 square kilometres
Population (2023)	2,035,872
Population (2028)	2,130,601
Households	858,860

Hampshire is a very large and strategically significant county on England's south coast, with the Isle of Wight situated on the other side of the Solent. It plays a vital role in the UK's economy and trade, hosting major ports in Southampton and Portsmouth as well as convenient access to London.

It is the fifth largest county in England for population – at over 2.1 million people (by 2028) – and ninth for geographical area at 4,148 square kilometres. It provides seamless connectivity to London and international transport hubs and ports – making it a prime location for economic growth.

The sheer scale and diversity of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a key driver for creating new unitary councils using the anchors of the four major population centres and economies of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke.

The Isle of Wight is uniquely placed to serve its own communities as an island unitary and will continue to remain independent under our proposal given its geography and specific needs. We do however recognise the need to ensure the Isle of Wight unitary authority remains sustainable for the long term, which is addressed in this proposal.

Each of the five areas have a unique set of characteristics and associated requirements which cannot be aggregated into even larger 'one-size-fits-all' unitary type solutions over bigger geographies.

Our proposals are best positioned to maintain the unique character and diversity of the areas, protecting residents' sense of place and local identity while driving economic growth. The four new mainland unitaries will be local enough to genuinely understand communities' needs and give them a real say in shaping decisions while being big enough to be financially sustainable for the future

with an average population size of 500,000.

Our economies

The region contributes a GVA of £72.6 billion annually to the UK economy, supported by approximately 130,000 registered businesses, including an estimated 12,000 voluntary, community, and social enterprises (VCSEs).

Although unemployment remains below the national average at 3.56%, notable disparities exist between urban and rural communities, including significant pockets of deprivation and under achievement. Our region benefits from thriving sectors such as manufacturing, aerospace and tourism and is anchored by four universities. This diverse and evolving landscape calls for a locally tailored, responsive approach to service delivery and economic development to unlock the area's full potential.

The areas covered by the proposed four new mainland unitaries are now discussed in more detail.

North Hampshire

North Hampshire boasts a dynamic and diverse economy with huge growth potential, strategically positioned along the M3 corridor, connecting Basingstoke, Fleet, Farnborough, and Aldershot. Unlike most of the rest of Hampshire, North Hampshire looks economically to the Thames Valley and Blackwater Valley (West Surrey and Berkshire) and London, benefiting from exceptional rail connectivity to London and Europe's busiest business-only airport, Farnborough Airport.

It is home to key industries such as aerospace, defence, tech, and financial services, hosting globally recognised businesses like QinetiQ, Serco, BMW, Fujitsu, Eli Lilly, AWE and, in Aldershot, a significant army garrison in addition to RAF

Odiham, home to three Chinook squadrons. The area offers unique opportunities for growth in its key industries, including the development of a defence and aerospace hub, leveraging its established industrial base, housing growth, connected labour market and innovation networks.

With a GVA of over £19.3 billion annually, North Hampshire combines economic vitality with a highly productive workforce, positioning it as a key driver of regional and national prosperity.

The creation of a new unitary council for North Hampshire is supported by the Chamber of Commerce and businesses of all sizes across the area. They fully recognise and support the unique opportunity a North Hampshire unitary council provides to drive and enable further economic growth, generating more high value local jobs with the housing they require and attracting and retaining talent in North Hampshire so that the area realises its immense economic potential.

Mid Hampshire

Mid Hampshire is a strategically positioned high-performing economy, generating £18.2bn in GVA annually. As a connected regional economy, it forms the natural link between the Solent's coastal economy, anchored by the Solent Freeport's New Forest waterside tax sites, and the Midlands' industrial base, offering seamless access to international markets and regional supply chains. The area is underpinned by nationally significant infrastructure. The M3, A34, A303 and M27 form the backbone of freight and business connectivity, while fast, frequent rail services link key towns to London in around an hour - boosting labour mobility, investment confidence, and access to talent.

This is an area built on enterprise and innovation, anchored by nationally recognised higher education institutions and sixth form colleges.

Mid Hampshire is home to global businesses such as IBM, Arqiva, INEOS, Estée Lauder, and Stannah, alongside a strong network of high-growth SMEs in digital, logistics, green technology and advanced manufacturing.

Mid Hampshire's two National Parks are not only custodians of landscapes of national and global importance - they are also active economic drivers. As centres of natural capital, they attract millions of visitors annually, support green innovation, and underpin land-based enterprise across farming, forestry, and environmental services. They also play a critical stewardship role, shaping sustainable land use and climate resilience across the area.

Agriculture and the wider rural economy are tightly interwoven with this landscape - supporting food production, skilled employment, and sustainable land management. SMEs in artisan food, hospitality, and creative industries bring innovation and energy to rural areas and market towns, driving economic vitality and resilience. The area's economic diversity is unique



across the proposed Hampshire unitary authorities, offering a balanced, resilient and adaptable economy at the centre of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region.

The area also plays a nationally strategic role in defence, with British Army Headquarters and Middle Wallop Flying Station (home of the Army Air Corps Headquarters) in Test Valley, the Tri-Service Defence College in Winchester and Marchwood Military Port in the New Forest. These sites underpin national security and logistics, sustain skilled employment, and reinforce long-term government investment across Mid Hampshire.

Mid Hampshire is primed for further growth. Strategic regeneration, levelling up investment, and the sub-regional potential of the Solent Freeport position it to deliver major housing, employment, skills and infrastructure gains that would serve both the wider region and the national economy.

South East Hampshire

South East Hampshire is a natural economic geography that is based around Portsmouth and stretches along the Solent coastline from Hayling Island in the east to the River Hamble in the west. Centre for Cities uses the Primary Urban Area (PUA) as the basis for its definition of cities and the Portsmouth PUA is based on the four existing local authorities of Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth, which have a shared coastal economy.

With an annual GVA for the area of £15.7bn, it is part of the wider Solent economy, with some common sectoral strengths including marine and maritime, advanced manufacturing, space and tourism with national agencies such as ONS based in the area. Historically Portsmouth, home to the Royal Navy,

has built an economy with industries and services associated with defence and support to the Royal Navy as opposed to the much larger professional services based in Southampton that developed alongside the commercial port.

As the home of the Royal Navy, defence is still an important part of the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire economy with Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport all having shore establishments. BAE's Warship Support Team is based at Portsmouth Naval Base and there are a number of other defence focused businesses throughout the area including Standard Aero and Autonomous Surface Vehicles. This supports the national Industrial Strategy and Defence Industrial Strategy.

The local economy is part of an internationally significant marine and maritime sector and also has a significant strength in advanced manufacturing and engineering, supporting the aerospace and space sectors, with companies such as Airbus, BAE, Eaton, Lockheed Martin, and Mitsubishi based in the area. Huhtamaki, in Gosport, and Cytiva, spread across



Portsmouth and Havant, are significant employers in other sectors. Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus, which straddles the existing Fareham/Gosport boundary, is a significant and growing employment hub with a large number of advanced manufacturing, marine and maritime and aviation and aerospace businesses located there, alongside a thriving general aviation airport. The cultural and creative sector is also important to the area, providing a strong sense of place, supporting employment opportunities and helping to create a vibrant feel. Major events also take place in Portsmouth, such as Sail GP and Victorious, a festival. The major national tourism attraction of the historic dockyard also pulls visitors into the area from across the country. Local government reorganisation provides an opportunity to ensure the geography of the new unitary reflects the actual economic geography for South East Hampshire while also addressing entrenched problems of inter-generational deprivation and poor health outcomes.

The University of Portsmouth, the Portsmouth University Technical College (UTC) and other further education colleges and providers supply a large number of highly skilled young people to support these advanced manufacturing businesses. However, there are challenges that need to be overcome within the area with a high proportion of school leavers underperforming compared to national averages and pockets of significant deprivation within the area.

Portsmouth International Port (PIP) is complementary to the larger commercial port of Southampton. Portsmouth is the second busiest international ferry port within the UK (behind Dover) with links to France and Spain (alongside routes to the Channel Islands). Portico Shipping, Portico Logistics and Portico Port Services, operating out of Portsmouth

International Port, provide a cargo and freight service. PIP is part of the Solent Freeport as is Dunsbury Park in Havant, with Portsmouth City Council as the developer.

The M27, M275 and A3M provide direct and indirect motorway access to London and other parts of the strategic road network with other A roads, such as the A32 or A27 linking to these roads. This supports the development of inward investment opportunities in the region. There are rail links between Fareham, Havant and Portsmouth with further links to London and to other parts of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The future delivery of transport infrastructure, to serve expanding employment areas and facilitate economic growth across the new unitary authority area, would be significantly enhanced by the transport/highway authority functions being brought into the same single unitary authority.

Centre for Cities Data – Local Authorities in Primary Urban Area

Portsmouth

Local authorities in PUA:

Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport, Havant



	Total	Rank	Rate	Rank
population				
Total population, 2023	532,519	(13 / 63)		
Population change, 2013-23			1.7%	(60 / 63)
business & innovation				
GVA (bn), 2022	£13.5	(15 / 63)		
GVA per hour, 2022	£36.8	(14 / 63)		
Business start-ups per 10,000 pop, 2023			36.2	(42 / 63)
Business closures per 10,000 pop, 2023			35.1	(48 / 63)
Business stock per 10,000 pop, 2023			305.3	(33 / 63)
New economy firms per 10,000, 2024			25.2	(21 / 63)
industrial structure				
Manufacturing jobs, 2023	20,625		9.4%	(19 / 62)
Private knowledge services jobs, 2023	20,500		9.3%	(42 / 62)
Publicly-funded services jobs, 2023	71,000		32.4%	(26 / 62)
Other private services jobs, 2023	90,000		41.0%	(33 / 62)
Ratio of private to public jobs, 2023			2.1	(37 / 62)
wages				
Avg. weekly workplace earnings, 2024	£694	(21 / 63)		
employment & unemployment				
Employment rate, 2024			78.2%	(14 / 62)
Claimant count, Nov 2024	12,560		3.8%	(37 / 63)
skills & education				
High level qualifications, 2023			40.3%	(41 / 63)
No formal qualifications, 2023			7.2%	(32 / 63)
GCSEs in Maths & Eng., grade 9-4, 2024			56.8%	(49 / 55)
living standards				
GDHI per capita, 2022	£21,135	(18 / 63)		
housing				
Housing stock change, 2022-23	887		0.2%	(62 / 63)
Average house price, 2024	£310,989	(19 / 63)		
Housing affordability ratio, 2024			9.2	(17 / 63)
environment				
GHG emissions per capita (t), 2022			3.4	(54 / 63)
Days a year of poor air quality, 2023-24	24	(4 / 63)		

Case Study: Leigh Park Youth Hub

Leigh Park, within the borough of Havant, is one of the most deprived areas in the country, facing significant challenges in education and health. The area has a low skills base, with 28% of the population having no qualifications, and life expectancy is significantly lower than in more affluent areas. Health issues such as obesity, heart disease, and mental health problems are prevalent. Recognising these challenges, Havant secured £500,000 for a research project to address health inequalities and received funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a Youth Hub aimed at supporting 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

The Youth Hub, launched in 2022, has supported 695 young people, with 316 entering paid employment and 353 enrolling in accredited training courses. It operates on three key strands: health and wellbeing, qualifications and experience and motivation and confidence, providing tailored help to support young people into employment. The hub also offers a job matching service to connect businesses with young talent, addressing skills shortages and supporting young people with additional needs.



The hub's innovative model has attracted interest from public and private partnerships, including prime employers like Lockheed Martin. An Economic Impact Assessment revealed significant benefits. Supporting 222 young people into long-term work costs £140,000 annually but yields a financial benefit of £6.1m to individuals and £9.1m to the government over five years. The reduction in crime saves £1.1m and NHS savings amount to £0.8m. The local economy benefits by £2.48m annually, with a total return of £25.7m over five years. The Youth Hub's success lies in its ability to transform lives and raise aspirations among young people facing barriers to education and employment.

South West Hampshire

The economic strength of this area is underpinned by its exceptional connectivity, integrated labour market, and high levels of functional economic integration, particularly south of the M27 corridor. This is an area with national significance. It is home to the UK's leading port for cruise and containers, a thriving Freeport, an international airport, and a dense network of rail and motorway connections that link it seamlessly to London, the Midlands, and other global markets.

Yet Southampton's urban geography, one of the south's primary urban centres, remains constrained by administrative boundaries that do not reflect how its population lives, works and accesses services. This disconnect inhibits effective spatial planning, infrastructure delivery, and public service integration at the scale required to be the engine of growth and unlock the potential of the broader Solent region.



Southampton is at the heart of a cohesive, interconnected economic geography that spans across surrounding areas. The Solent Freeport exemplifies the scale and ambition of this geography, projected to generate 26,000 direct jobs and £2bn GVA within the Solent area, with wider supply chain benefits, including 57,000 jobs and £3.6bn GVA across the UK. Over £1.35bn in private investment is being catalysed across tax sites in Eastleigh's Navigator Quarter and surrounding areas, supporting a globally significant trade and logistics cluster anchored by the Port of Southampton. This investment is enabling the port to double cruise passenger capacity from two million to four million annually by 2030, enhancing its role as a global gateway for trade and tourism.

Housing and infrastructure development are closely aligned with this economic geography. Eastleigh Borough Council's 'infrastructure first' approach ensures that highways, drainage and green spaces are delivered ahead of housing occupation, ensuring new communities are connected to jobs and services before they are built. Notably, 42% of Eastleigh's workforce commutes to Southampton, reflecting deep functional integration. This is a model of strategic, sustainable planning across boundaries, demonstrating the kind of integrated leadership needed to drive inclusive growth.

But governance has not kept pace. Southampton's administrative footprint is misaligned with its functional urban area, diluting accountability and limiting its ability to act at the right scale. This reduces efficiency, fragments public services and stifles the housing and infrastructure delivery required to meet future demand.

Local government reorganisation presents an opportunity to fix this misalignment - to right-size the new unitary's boundaries

to match its real geography and economy. This would:

- Unlock coordinated investment and growth across a wider area of opportunity.
- Enhance democratic accountability and resident voice across interconnected communities who currently don't get a say due to severance caused by administrative boundaries.
- Enable integrated public service reform at the scale needed to prevent crisis and reduce demand.
- Support the UK's shift to a more polycentric model of urban growth, where cities like Southampton drive regional and national prosperity.

Local government reorganisation also presents a unique opportunity to address entrenched deprivation across the wider geography, particularly in areas where poor health, low skills, and intergenerational poverty persist. By aligning governance with lived economic geographies, there is scope for more targeted investment, coordinated service delivery, and integrated prevention strategies that tackle root causes, not just symptoms, of social and economic exclusion.

Aligning governance to reflect the area's real economic and social footprint is not just about efficiency; it is a chance to unlock the full potential of the Solent region, deliver more inclusive growth and ensure that opportunity reaches every community within this vibrant, nationally significant area.

A guide to the current local government structure

Hampshire is currently served by 15 councils across upper and lower-tier authorities, including Hampshire County Council, 11 district and borough councils, as well as the three existing unitary councils of Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

As a result, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has the highest number of local authorities within a single county area (other than Greater London), again emphasizing the size and scale of the place.

Partnership working in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Local authorities and communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight work with key partners to deliver critical services for residents across our distinct geographies. This includes fire and rescue, police, health and care, and National Park authorities.

They have been central to the development of our proposals. We are grateful to all of our key partners and partnerships in helping to inform and refine our proposal. Our partners recognise the significant opportunities our proposal provides for enhanced service integration and transformation and delivering improved outcomes for our communities. For example, recognising the integrated care board landscape is changing, and that Frimley may become part of Hampshire and Solent Integrated Care Board in April 2026, we are working with them to align their changes with our work to ensure the opportunities for joint redesign, innovation and improvement are maximised.

Key partner	Description
NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board	Replaced the NHS Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group in July 2022. As part of the Integrated Care Partnership, it collaborates with Rushmoor Borough Council, other local authorities, the NHS, Healthwatch, and VCSE organisations to improve health and care outcomes for residents.
NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board	Covers the rest of the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, excluding Rushmoor. It works with local authorities via the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Partnership, bringing together health and social care partners to devise strategies that address healthcare, social care and public health needs.
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services (HIWFRS)	Operates under a Combined Fire Authority comprising representatives from Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council. It sets regional strategic priorities, approves budgets and develops risk management plans tailored to a mix of rural, urban, maritime and rural needs.
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary	Overseen by a single Police and Crime Commissioner, the constabulary delivers policing services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
New Forest National Park Authority and South Downs National Park Authority	Work in partnership with councils' other agencies to deliver joined-up planning, conservation, and community services within the park boundary of over 560 km ² (New Forest National Park) and 1,625 km ² (South Downs National Park covering East and West Sussex as well) of woodland, heath and coastline across South West and Mid Hampshire.

There are a number of key partnerships across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region that have played a key role in developing our proposal including:

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Leaders Group

The group is made up of all the council leaders and chaired by the leader of Winchester City Council. The group has overseen our process for the assessment of the options for unitary councils, using the government's criteria and locally agreed principles as the foundation, and the supporting work that has led to this proposal.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Public Sector Leaders Board

This group brings together the chief executives of all the councils, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, New Forest and South Downs National Parks, Chief Constable, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Local Government Association (LGA). The group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, has discussed the emerging work on local government reorganisation at each meeting

and helped to shape the process including further engagement that has informed our proposal.

Outside of these organisations and partnerships, there are many other stakeholders we have continued to engage in the development of our proposal such as coastal partners. In addition, at a new unitary configuration level, we have maintained local engagement with our partner groups to inform our proposal, recognising the distinct value they bring to the residents and ecosystems within their respective areas which are set out below.

North Hampshire

The three existing councils in North Hampshire already have a strong track record of working closely together across a range of areas including economic development and planning policy and the delivery of key services such as waste collection, street cleaning and grounds maintenance, licensing, legal and building control services.

Beyond council collaboration, there is a strong track record of wider partnership working in north Hampshire such as the Safer North Hampshire Community Safety Partnership. This is made up of statutory agencies such as local councils, health services, probation, fire and rescue and the police, as well as other co-opted members. It develops and implements strategies aimed at reducing crime, enhancing residents' quality of life, and increasing feeling of safety focused on



the specific needs and issues of north Hampshire. Only recently the police identified a rise in youth-related antisocial behaviour, with a specific group displaying signs of gang-like activity which was assessed as a high risk. The partnership worked together at pace to develop a problem-solving approach aimed at reducing community impact and providing tailored support for those coming to the attention of the police and other services. Through coordinated local action and timely intervention, the associated risks and community disruption have been significantly reduced.

North Hampshire showcases how effective collaboration can spark innovative solutions to address local issues. One example of this is Basingstoke's innovative solution to tackling rough sleeping. Historically Basingstoke had high levels of rough sleeping. But with a shared focus to address the root causes, the Basingstoke and Deane Social Inclusion Partnership, bringing together statutory partners and community, voluntary and faith sectors, has delivered pioneering and psychologically informed approaches to support individuals. This has seen the number of rough sleepers fall from 25 in 2015 to now consistently close to zero. This partnership approach has been commended by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and was featured on BBC South as an example for the rest of the country to follow.

In Rushmoor there has been a range of innovative partnerships with the NHS to address health and inequalities with a particular

focus on childhood obesity, and with the police and other partners to tackle antisocial behaviour in town centres and associated addiction issues.

Rushmoor and Hart already share a police command arrangement and a joint approach to policing priorities. Within housing, Rushmoor and Hart have a close relationship and in 2018 had a successful joint bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding. This secured resources for rough sleeper support workers who continue to operate across both areas and remain in post today. Both authorities have also worked hard to support their residents from the armed forces and have received the 'Silver' Award in recognition of their efforts regarding the Military Covenant.

Thanks to the well-established culture of partnership working in North Hampshire, our proposal has been shaped collaboratively through a series of workshops involving public sector bodies, businesses, voluntary and community groups, and town and parish councils. These sessions have been invaluable in helping us to develop the detail of our proposal and earned widespread support for the benefits a North Hampshire unitary council will deliver for communities through a focused approach to its unique opportunities and challenges as an enhanced leader of place.

The North Hampshire councils have appointed two professional advisers in adult social care and health and in children's services to support a new North Hampshire unitary in preparation for the transition to delivering these vital services. Both experienced directors in their field, they have been working with local NHS organisations and education providers to co-design the future shape of services – focusing on ensuring a safe and legal handover of statutory responsibilities but also ensuring that the model of care in both services delivers an

integrated, innovative and preventative-driven approach which is cost effective and financially sustainable.

Discussions have already begun with the local NHS organisations to design a new model in adult social care and health based on integrated neighbourhood teams, working with local primary care networks (PCNS) to identify meaningful populations within which the local community health care providers could work with social care as part of an integrated approach, building on the work being carried out with Public Health and the integrated care board.

Performance in the NHS system is currently under scrutiny and there is an appetite to transform services with local authority partners which North Hampshire is already engaging with, helped by our advisers having worked closely with system leaders previously.

As part of our work with the other local authorities in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to develop our proposal, the Directors of Adult Social Care and Health in the other unitaries have already begun to identify how they might work together to jointly commission, where appropriate in the market, to collaborate on providing low volume high-cost services, to develop joint recruitment and retention strategies and to support each other to improve services.

We are looking to best practice in other local authorities, including those who have recently gone through local government reorganisation and those where the models would align with the shape and size of North Hampshire. We know we have an ageing population in North Hampshire and higher than average costs of care for our younger adult population, both of which combine to create demand that we need to manage in an innovative and transformational way.

In developing a new model of adult care and health, we recognise the greater benefit a North Hampshire unitary council brings in terms of:

- community development, housing and homelessness services
- a genuine desire to focus on prevention and tackle health inequalities across our area
- the strong relationship with the voluntary sector and the more local democratic accountability across all public service provision
- the use of technology and digital to streamline and connect services, creating opportunities for easier public access and efficiencies in service delivery.

We will maximise these opportunities in North Hampshire, for a new council and with partners, to deliver a smarter, more-connected and community-driven future.

Mid Hampshire

Mid Hampshire has a proven track record of securing and delivering major investment through effective partnerships that unlock local potential and drive long-term impact. From transformative regeneration schemes to pioneering preventative health models, collaboration is embedded in how Mid Hampshire works. Across the area, the culture is defined by cross-sector collaboration, local co-delivery, and strong community engagement. This shared approach puts Mid Hampshire in a unique position to scale up proven models and deliver better outcomes as a new unitary.

Strategic regeneration exemplifies this. In Andover and Romsey, town centre transformation is being co-designed with residents and delivered in collaboration with local businesses,

cultural organisations, and design partners, demonstrating that real transformation is not just about capital, including from Levelling Up funding, but about building lasting local coalitions that deliver change. City centre regeneration in Winchester is leveraging significant private capital to support a sustainable future. Meanwhile, the New Forest plays a key role on the Solent Freeport Board, and across a wider waterside partnership, working with Associated British Ports, ExxonMobil, the New Forest National Park, colleges, and the community to deliver the waterside vision and ensure that the benefits of the Freeport deliver outcomes across the wider area.

Mid Hampshire's health partnerships are already delivering nationally relevant preventative neighbourhood models, which align with the 10-year NHS plan. In the New Forest, the Independence Matters and Just Got Home programmes support hospital discharge, adaptations, and independent living, reducing strain on acute services. In Winchester, integrated care with NHS and voluntary partners has improved outcomes for older adults and reduced delayed discharges. In East Hampshire, joint working with dementia organisations and carers' networks supports independent living and reduces hospital admissions. In Test Valley, joined-up working with NHS trusts and charities delivers home care, with the Andover Health Hub being a regionally significant example of best practice in integrated, place-based healthcare.

New Forest's Domestic Abuse Strategy and Winchester's Gold Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation exemplify the strength of Mid Hampshire's multi-agency partnerships. Developed with Stop Domestic Abuse, the Hampton Trust, Hampshire County Council and the New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum, it combines trauma-informed services, early

intervention, and local coordination to deliver national impact.

Mid Hampshire also takes a proactive, place-led approach to community safety. The community safety partnerships work closely with police and fire services to tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce rural crime, and protect vulnerable residents, using early intervention, shared intelligence, and local insight. Across the emerging unitary authority area (with variations across the three options), multi-agency tasking has already delivered targeted results, while strategic coordination enables a joined-up response across the area.

At the heart of Mid Hampshire's delivery model are strong partnerships with community-based organisations, including parish and town councils. These are not optional extras, they are essential delivery partners. Through local resilience forums, ward-level plans, and joint funding mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy, Mid Hampshire empowers communities to shape and deliver what they need. This decentralised model enables faster responses, more trusted services, and tailored solutions, particularly vital in rural areas where local knowledge and self-reliance are key.

Together, Mid Hampshire brings a mature ecosystem of partnerships ready to scale. With collaboration embedded across all four areas, and a skilled population that attracts forward-thinking employers, Mid Hampshire is not starting from scratch, it is building from strength.

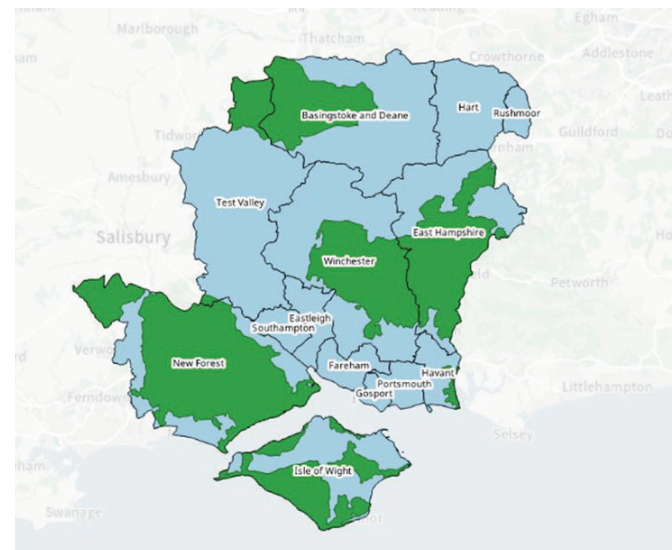
Case Study: World Class Environment

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight there are 38.5% of nationally protected landscapes and all 15 councils recognise our world class environment as a key strength in our interim plan. Local government reorganisation provides an opportunity to lead this agenda in bold new ways across some of the most exceptional landscapes in Europe. From our renowned marine environment focussed around the Solent to the large protected landscape, including two National Parks and two National Landscapes (Cranborne Chase and North Wessex), working with landowners, communities and businesses, we are committed to restoring nature, reducing environmental harm and increasing prosperity through natural capital.

The case for four mainland unitary councils provides an opportunity in options 1 and 1A for a Mid Hampshire Council that will form a single local authority administration to partner with the two National Parks Authorities that are partly based in Hampshire. The predominantly rural land-based economy forms a home for the great work across Hampshire on conserving and enhancing the purposes for which they were designated.



Nationally protected landscapes coverage across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight



This would build on experiences in delivering nature recovery and biodiversity net gain alongside a continued drive to innovate to provide mitigation to enable strategic growth both within the new council area, and also within more urban areas including across the coastal areas of southern Hampshire. With option 2, work would be undertaken to ensure the same focus from the two unitary councils with National Parks in their area.

Southampton is actively working towards becoming a National Park City, reflecting a strong commitment to protect and enhance its urban natural landscape. Unlike traditional National Parks that are predominantly rural and protected areas, a National Park City recognises the value of biodiversity, green spaces, and nature embedded within an urban environment, emphasising coexistence between people, habitats, and development. This is aiming to position Southampton alongside pioneering cities like London, the world's first National Park City. Achieving National Park City status means fostering a healthier, greener, and more connected city that enhances urban biodiversity and improves residents' quality of life. These efforts complement and create stronger links with the surrounding Hampshire natural landscapes, including the New Forest National Park, reinforcing regional ecological networks and recreational opportunities. Ultimately, Southampton's journey towards a National Park City represents a transformative model where urban and natural environments support each other. It promotes sustainability, climate action, and social inclusion, creating a city that is not only a better place to live but also a key part of the wider network of green spaces in Hampshire and beyond.

Nature Positive Portsmouth has secured £896,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of Nature Towns and Cities partnership. The project will build capacity for nature recovery and climate resilient green infrastructure in Portsmouth addressing health inequalities and creating collaborative strategies and plans which will draw in further investment. Match funding provides a total project budget of £980,000.

As part of our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model, we will build on the leadership model of the New Forest National Park and South Downs National Park Authorities to enable the new councils to deliver their duty to further the purposes of all protected landscapes. The New Forest 'Leaders' Panel' brings together system leaders to drive the implementation of the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan. Building on this framework for collaboration supports the joint work required to deliver our collective goals for climate, nature and the green recovery.

This focus will also support the Mayoral Strategic Authority to deliver its environment and net zero agenda, building on established partnership working across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight such as the Greenprint initiative, Bird Aware Solent and Nutrient Mitigation which are governed through the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), alongside the two existing Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

South East Hampshire

There is already excellent partnership working taking place across South East Hampshire with the four existing councils collaborating on a range of initiatives and schemes. Examples of the existing links include:

- Coastal Partners (see case study on page 52) which brings together the four authorities, alongside Chichester District Council, to protect 246 kilometres of Hampshire and West Sussex coastline.
- Building Control Partnership which was set up as a joint service between Gosport and Fareham around 20 years ago, with Portsmouth joining in 2015. Havant is also actively exploring joining the partnership. It has over 70% of the building control market share, built on strong relationships with regional developers.
- Fareham and Gosport Environmental Health Partnership which provides a joint environmental health service across the two authorities.
- Portsmouth and Gosport shared service arrangements with Portsmouth providing a range of services for Gosport Borough Council including the S151 function, Monitoring Officer function, communications support, property support and strong links with the housing services.
- Portchester Crematorium - a joint committee for the four authorities managing the operation of one of the UK's most active crematoria based in Fareham.
- There has been a range of work across the four authorities to support economic development, including:
 - The Portsmouth Harbour Economic Development Group, bringing together the four authorities, to discuss news, projects, and collaborative opportunities for inward investment monthly.
- Joint work on the Get Solent Working Strategy recognising the needs across the area.
- Collaboration between the four authorities and DWP on a redundancy package as we recognise that employers recruit across our borders.
- Through the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce Portsmouth and District Strategy Group, the four authorities work with skills providers and business leaders to discuss government policy and local initiatives and for a number of years have been running an annual business week, delivering support events across the south east area working with organisations including SBSS and all authorities.
- Activities and meetings to support the Solent Freeport.
- Portsmouth advanced manufacturing and engineering cluster (PAMAEC) is a well-established group of employers (all sizes) who work together in south east Hampshire with bi-monthly meetings hosted on employer premises.
- South East Defence and Security Cluster - monthly and quarterly meetings/events to promote defence contract opportunities for SMEs within the region. All of our local authorities attend and promote the sessions.
- Multi-agency Solent Enterprise Zone Strategic Board, working jointly to deliver highways, utilities and other infrastructure projects that drive growth within the Enterprise Zone.
- Supporting joint bids for funding, for example the Havant and Gosport partnership with Department for Business and Trade to support a defence contract bid from Lockheed Martin and Standard Aero.

- The four authorities in the south east are part of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) which supports sustainable development across the Solent area. The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified two housing market areas within PfSH, of which one was a Portsmouth housing market area covering the eastern part of PfSH. This has helped to provide a shared understanding of unmet needs within each of the local housing market areas, enabling individual councils to work together across their neighbouring areas to consider how to meet unmet needs.
- Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham and Havant Borough Council are signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant and form the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board (SAFPCB). This partnership approach to delivering the covenant within the Solent region of the wider county of Hampshire is supported through a joint needs assessment and action plan. It aims to raise awareness among serving personnel, reservists, and veterans of the support they can expect from local authorities, provide a broader understanding of the needs of the local veteran population as well as serving personnel during transition to civilian life, and evaluate the impact of these initiatives.
- The Portsmouth and SE Hampshire Partnership (<https://the-partnership.co.uk>), which is an organisation committed to improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the wider city region.

While the links with Hampshire Constabulary are not currently coterminous, there have been a number of changes over the years to the constabulary operating boundaries, and it would be possible for Hampshire Constabulary to make a further change if it wished to. For health, Portsmouth Health and Care Board includes providers that go across the geography

including a hospital catchment for South East Hampshire. While there is also cross Solent partnership work, e.g. through Solent Transport, this does recognise the different transport networks and housing market areas, around the two cities of Southampton and Portsmouth.

The move to the new unitary authority will provide opportunities for enhanced outcomes for local communities. Portsmouth Homes hold council housing stock in Havant, Fareham and Gosport and so for example, Portsmouth City Council is the landlord to council house tenants in their stock based in Havant. This means that the support of the landlord function is from a different authority than the services provided by Havant Borough Council or the social care services provided by Hampshire County Council. This support for tenants / residents would all be provided by the new unitary council.

Case Study:

Coastal Partners - Delivering multiple benefits for coastal communities

Coastal Partners was formed in 2012 and is a partnership of the four Portsmouth & South East Hampshire authorities. Chichester District Council also joined in 2022. Havant Borough Council acts as the host and employing organisation for Coastal Partners. Coastal Partners leads on coastal issues across 246 kilometres of Hampshire and West Sussex's coastline and provides a mechanism for areas to combine expertise, local knowledge and access to cost-effective solutions for managing the risks associated with coastal flooding and erosion.

Coastal Partners helps to protect thousands of homes, businesses, wildlife and infrastructure. The partnership manages flood and erosion risk, plans and designs new coastal defence schemes, inspects and maintains existing defences and works towards a flood resilient future.

Coastal Partners is involved in schemes across the area, including the design and delivery of the hugely significant Southsea Coastal Scheme. This scheme is worth £187 million and will provide 4.5 kilometres of defences that will protect 10,000 homes and 700 businesses.



With its knowledge and expertise, it can act as the single voice for the local authorities across the area and help to act as a focal point for different government departments/agencies including HM Treasury, DEFRA and the Environment Agency. This means that it knits together the local bodies and the central bodies which aids decision making and funding bids.

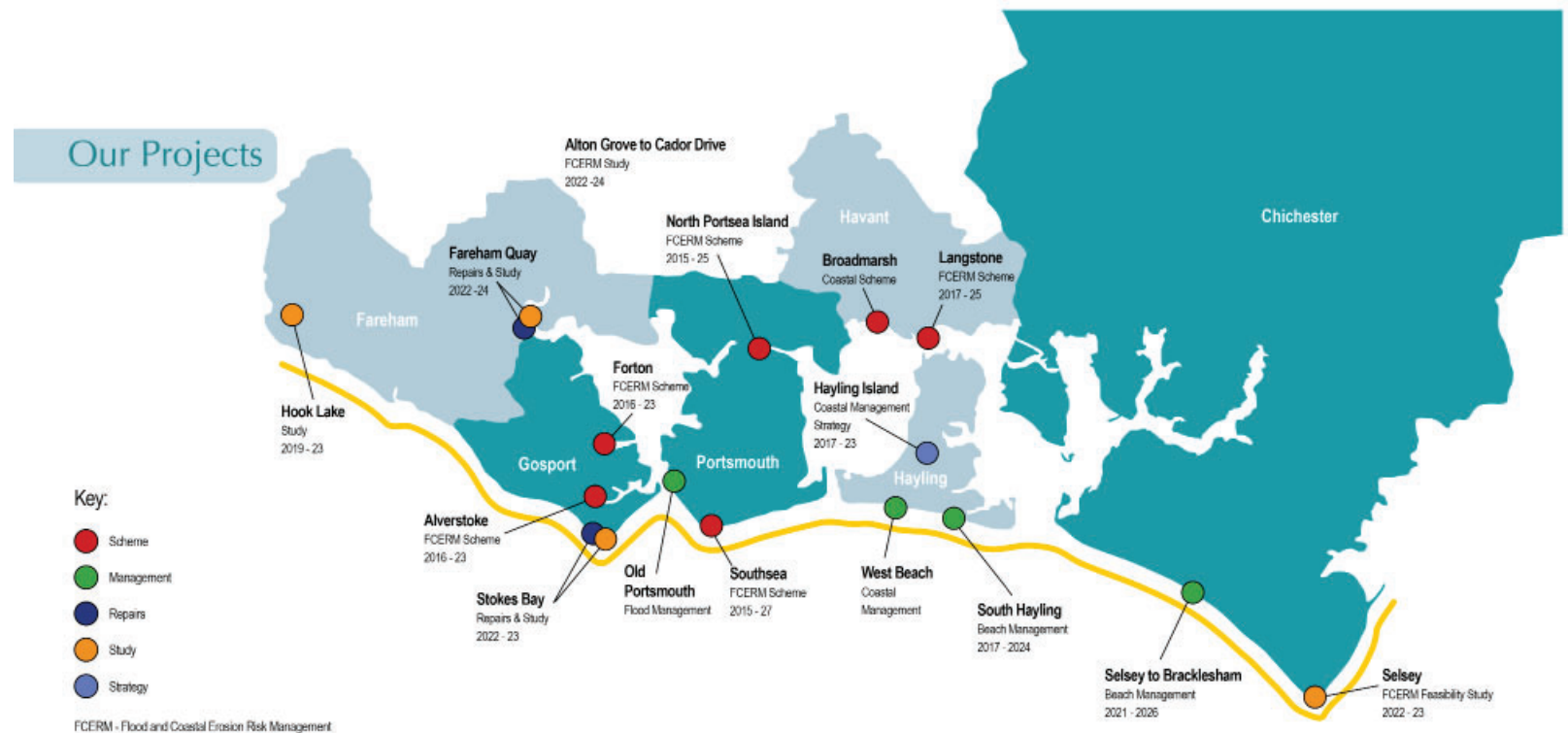
A further example of coastal partnership work delivering efficiencies is the Channel Coastal Observatory (COO), hosted by New Forest District Council (NFDC). It is the lead organisation for the delivery of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme (SE RCMP) and is one of six regional programmes that make up the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes (NNRCMP) and it leads the co-ordination and delivery of the NNRCMP.

Through the delivery of the SE RCMP, the CCO is supported by partner authorities across the south east of England. This programme has been in place since 2002 delivering high quality coastal data to support Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) across the country.

Through the delivery of its FCERM function, New Forest works with partner risk management authorities through the Southern Coastal Group to share and develop research, best practice and resources across the region. Partnering

work is also undertaken through the delivery of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) and coastal strategies. This has recently included Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council for the Christchurch Bay Strategy and the ongoing Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy. The latter is being undertaken with the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council and Natural England. By working together, more is achieved and potential duplication is reduced with resources more efficiently used across the local authorities.

Coverage of projects by Coastal Partners



South West Hampshire

Partnership working in the South West Hampshire area is exceptionally strong and has operated in many contexts, from regional to ultra-local. Given that the Solent area has long been recognised as a natural economic geography – including by governments over many years – much of the partnership work has been on a Solent or South Hampshire footprint. Organisations such as Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), which includes all of the councils in the South Hampshire area, have been a vehicle for successful co-operation for decades.

The PfSH work on successive spatial planning strategies is described further in Section 4 Criteria 1. For the South West Hampshire area, the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified two housing market areas within PfSH, of which one was a Southampton housing market area covering the western part of PfSH. This has helped to provide a shared understanding of unmet needs within each of the local housing market areas, enabling individual councils to work together across their neighbouring areas to consider how to meet unmet needs.

During the life of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, councils in the South West Hampshire area collaborated effectively with the LEP and local colleges to promote growth schemes such as the Solent Careers Hub (West) and the Central and West Hampshire Youth Employment Hub. Similarly, Solent Transport was for many years an effective partnership, co-ordinating transport policy in the South West Hampshire area and working together to secure investment in projects such as the Southampton City Region Transforming Cities Fund, which featured schemes to improve connectivity across three major travel corridors in and out of Southampton from

the Waterside, Eastleigh and Bursledon.

Local collaboration on cross-boundary schemes has also been strong, for example on the delivery of new and replacement sports pitch facilities associated with the North Stoneham housing development. Eastleigh Borough Council worked closely with Southampton City Council in engaging with the Football Foundation as pathfinders in their Parklife Football Hubs scheme. As a result, £8.9 million of grant funding was secured from the Football Foundation to create new football hubs at Stoneham Lane Football Complex in Eastleigh (completed 2019) and the Outdoor Sports Centre in Southampton (under construction). The two sites will be overseen by a charitable trust known as the Eastleigh and Southampton Football Trust, which will have representatives from both authorities as trustees.

Councils in the South West Hampshire area have always collaborated positively with the private sector where there are strong local interests to consider. A number of joint committees exist including the Southampton Airport Consultative Committee, the Port of Southampton Consultative Committee and the Solent Freeport Board. The Freeport in particular has a centre of gravity around South West Hampshire, featuring sites on both sides of Southampton Water and at Southampton Airport in Eastleigh, and has received strong and constructive support from all participating councils.

