Coastal Partners

Coastal Partners Position Statement: Northney Farm to Chichester Road

September 2026

Version: 0.2

Position Statement

Northney Farm to Chichester Road

This position statement has been prepared by Coastal Partners to set out the existing and future flood risk at Northney, alongside the constraints, opportunities, roles and responsibilities for managing this risk.

It will be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect any amendments required.

Location

Northney is located in the northeast of Hayling Island, within Chichester Harbour (**Image 1**). The Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy (HICMS) was adopted by Havant Borough Council in 2024 and approved by the Environment Agency in 2025. This Position Statement refers to the coastal frontage of Coastal Unit ODU3 (Northney Farm to Chichester Road) as defined by the Strategy, which is also shown in **Image 1**. This frontage is approximately 1.8km in length.

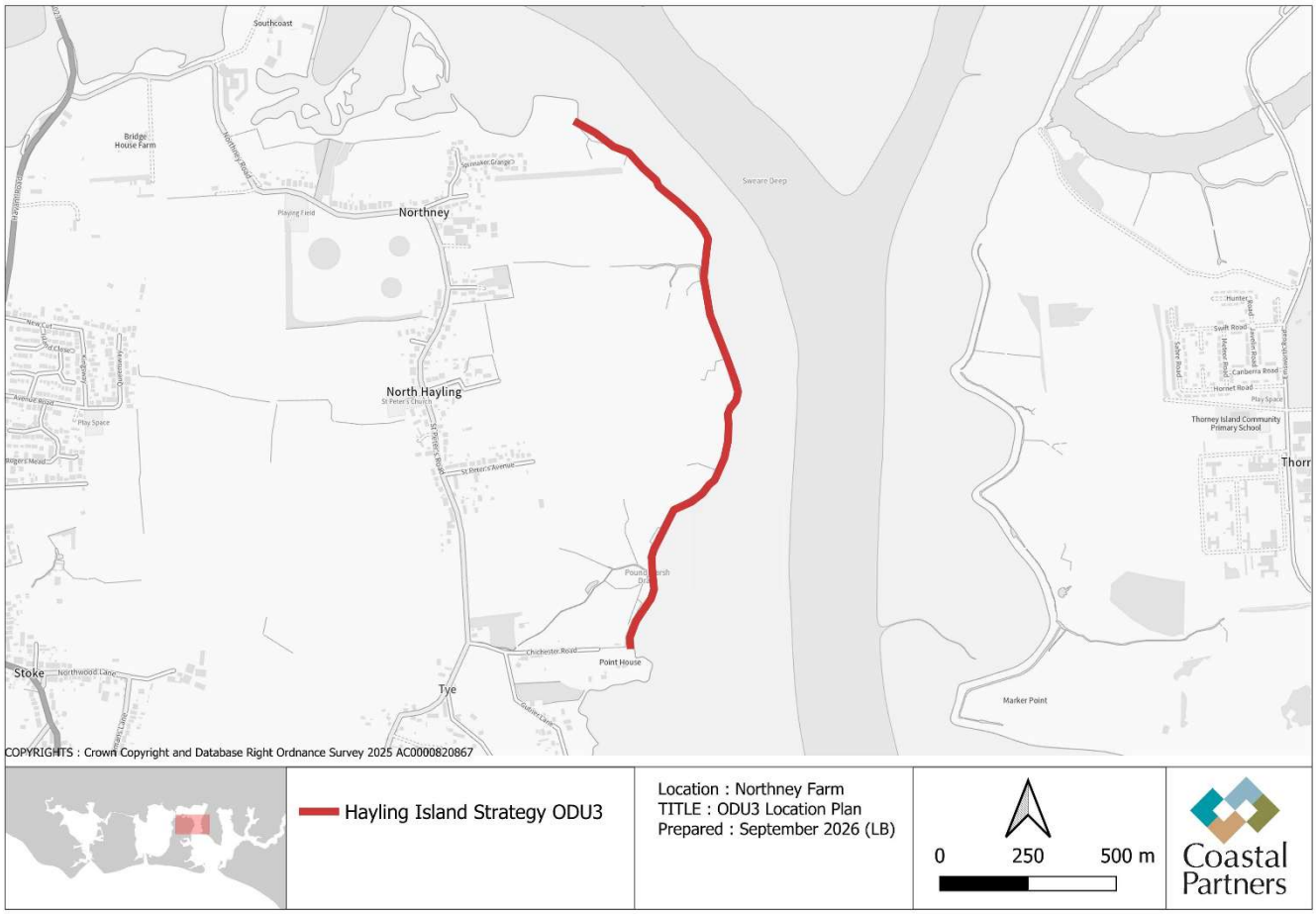


Image 1 – Location of Northney

Flood Risk

Image 2 shows the Environment Agency present day modelled flood extent at Northney from a 1 in 200 year (0.5% annual probability) flood event, as an indication of the extent of present-day flood risk. Further information of flood risk is available here https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change

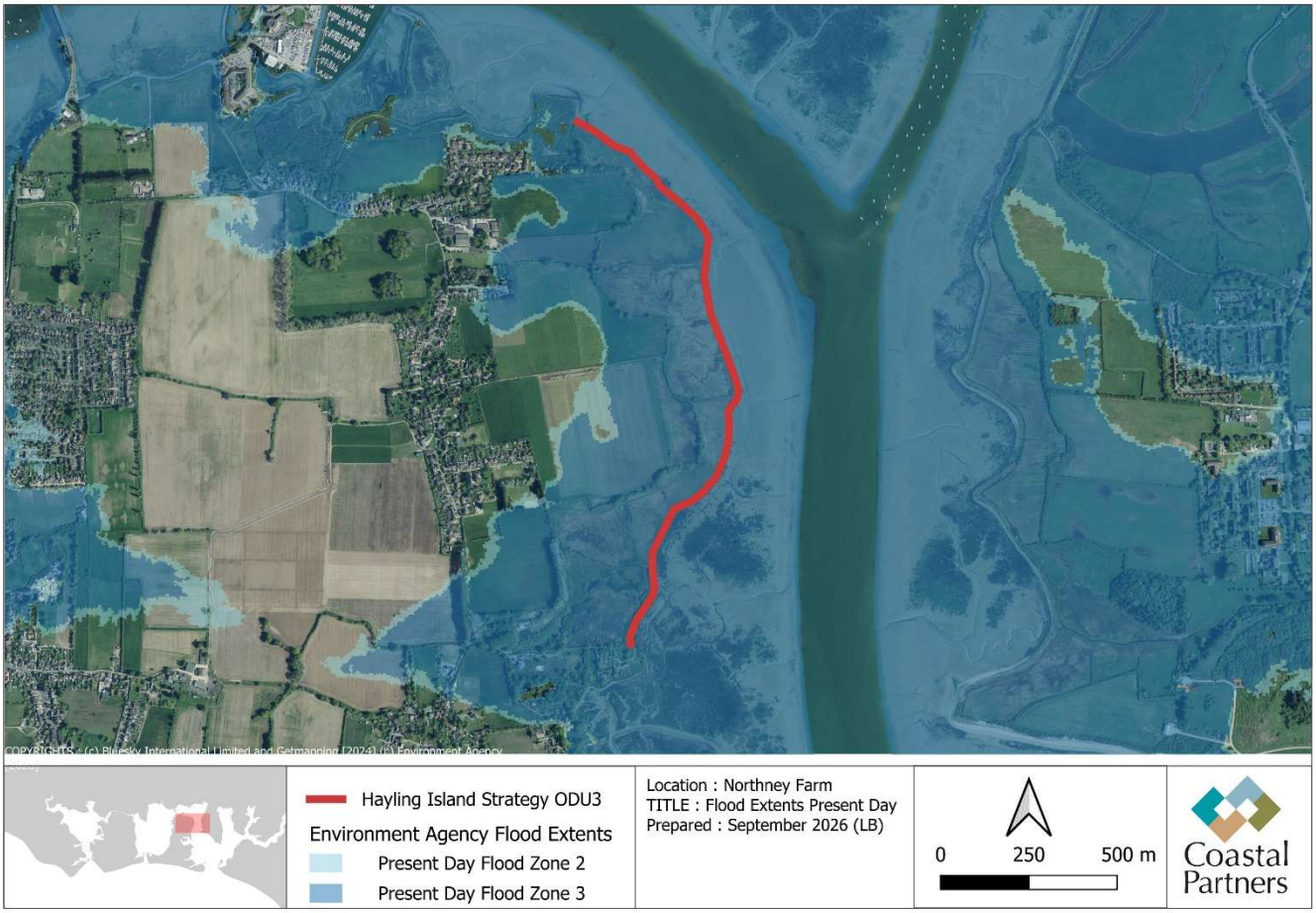


Image 2 – Present Day Flood Risk at Northney.

There are currently 11 properties at risk of flooding within the community at Northney village, increasing to 87 properties over the next 100 years in the absence of defences, taking account of predicted sea level rise.

Due to the current rules in place which determine how much Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) funding a flood defence scheme is eligible for, it is not possible to make an affordable case for funding to solely protect the homes due to the relatively low number of properties at risk of flooding, compared to the likely costs of designing and constructing a scheme (unless it can be balanced with the delivery of legally required environmental improvements).

Flooding remains a very real concern to the community at Northney who have experienced the devastating impacts of tidal and surface water flooding in recent years. A long-term plan for managing or living with flood risk is still necessary for Northney.

Constraints

Land along ODU3 is privately owned, not publicly accessible and used for agricultural purposes. There are existing flood defences and drainage assets along the 1.8km frontage in the form of embankments and sluices, however their condition has degraded over time due to coastal erosion and flood damage and there are localised failures. Maintenance of the defences has become increasingly difficult and expensive. The existing defences are low lying are not designed to withstand the impacts of overtopping and climate change including rising sea levels or larger storm events and, even if they could be repaired, will not provide a long-term solution for reducing flood risk.

Northney is next to the Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, and the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Some of the land is also environmentally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and features habitats such as saltmarsh and coastal grazing marsh. Due to these designations, assent is required from Natural England to undertake any coastal defence maintenance works adjacent to or within the SSSI.

The existing defences are also contributing to the declining condition of the coastal habitats through a process of ‘coastal squeeze’. Important intertidal habitats such as saltmarsh and mudflat become squeezed up against hard defences by rising sea levels and are lost. The Chichester Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is currently assessed as being in unfavourable declining condition due to ‘coastal squeeze’ and ‘inappropriate coastal management’ resulting in the loss of almost half of its saltmarsh since designation and a continuing loss of 2.5ha of saltmarsh per year.

Opportunities

Due to the low land elevation and existing habitats behind the existing defences, this location provides a significant opportunity for implementing a managed realignment project where new flood and erosion defences are built set back from their current position, releasing areas for saltmarsh and other habitats to recover and grow.

The Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy (HICMS) confirms that the leading option for this coastal unit (ODU3), is ‘adapting to the tides’ via managed realignment. This recognises the challenges and opportunities associated with this frontage and is the most sustainable solution available for managing this coastline. This approach has the potential to attract Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) funding if it can contribute towards the Environment Agency’s Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP) by creating new valuable intertidal habitats, landward coastal grazing marsh and bird high tide feeding and roosting habitats.

Since the adoption of the HICMS, early engagement has commenced with landowners to explore the potential for following this pathway. This early engagement is leading towards the submission of a business case to the Environment Agency, to request funding for an initial design stage, the first step required in the delivery of a potential Managed Realignment and Flood Resilience Scheme at Northney. This design stage will aim to explore and identify sustainable solutions, with the aim of unlocking the multiple benefits of improved flood protection to the community, an improved environment through realising the habitat creation opportunity, and appropriate renumeration to landowners impacted by the proposals. Further information will be made available depending on the outcome of this initial design Stage funding bid on the project webpages.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are a number of different stakeholders and interests at Northney.

Private Landowners

Private Landowners have ultimate responsibility for protecting their own property from flooding and erosion but must act within statutory planning regulations and other applicable legislation e.g., Coast Protection Consent. Defences which sit on privately owned land are assumed to be the responsibility of the Landowner to maintain.

For practical advice in relation to proactively managing your own flood risk, Coastal Partners have developed an information hub here: https://coastalpartners.org.uk/protecting-against-flooding/

Environment Agency (EA)

The Environment Agency are responsible for the strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion in England.

They are tasked with administering grant funds on behalf of Defra. They are a Risk Management Authority (RMA) and have permissive powers to undertake defence works (where there is a wider public benefit, clear economic benefit, and an achievable solution), but there is no legal obligation for the EA to undertake any works to protect property from flooding or erosion.

The EA do not own any coastal flood defence assets or water management structures at Northney along ODU3. The EA do have powers to carry out work to maintain river channels, flood defence assets and structures under their permissive powers and they are provided with funding from government to carry out this maintenance work. The purpose of the EA's works is to reduce the risk of flooding to communities from main rivers and the sea. Investment in flood and coastal risk management works is prioritised according to Government Policy. The watercourse that runs to the south of the site, just north of Chichester Road is categorised as 'Main River' and therefore the EA has powers to carry out maintenance, improvement, or construction work on this Main River to manage flood risk, where they have the resources and funding to do so.

The EA have not maintained the embankments and associated assets at Northney, at least since the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (NSSMP) (https://www.northsolentsmp.co.uk/), was signed off in 2010. It is understood that maintenance of these assets has since been undertaken by the private landowners.

The Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP) is a strategic programme run by the Environment Agency which seeks to replace habitats that are lost due to coastal squeeze or tidal inundation effects that arise from the management of coastal defences. The HCRP is the Government's agreed funding mechanism for delivering strategic habitat compensation for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to ensure compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations). The compensatory requirement passed on to the HCRP from Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) is the amount of habitat required to address the adverse impacts on European sites from the SMP policies due to coastal squeeze and saline inundation impacts.

Natural England (NE)

Natural England are the government's adviser for the natural environment in England. They have interest in the environmental designations and associated condition of the habitats.

Havant Borough Council (HBC)

Havant Borough Council is also a RMA and has permissive powers to undertake works (where there is a wider public benefit, clear economic benefit, and an achievable solution) under The Coast Protection Act 1949 and Land Drainage Act 1991. These are permissive powers and neither a legal obligation nor responsibility on the Council to undertake any works (maintenance or new defences) to protect property from flooding or erosion. Therefore, HBC does not have responsibility or any legal obligation to deliver maintenance nor new flood defences at Northney.

Coastal Partners, in fulfilment of their Coastal Management service on behalf of Havant Borough Council were responsible for the development and delivery of the HICMS and were able to undertake the enhanced engagement with landowners to explore the leading option identified in the Strategy. As confirmed earlier, this early engagement has led to the submission of a business case to the Environment Agency, to request funding for an initial Feasibility Stage, the first step required in the delivery of a potential Managed Realignment and Flood Resilience Scheme at Northney. Should this initial bid be successful, Coastal Partners will lead the delivery of the Feasibility Stage, with more detail to be shared on the project webpages in due course.