

Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy

Appendix 2: Case Study 3 Folkestone Racecourse

PROJECT: Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy
DOCUMENT NAME: Case Study 1: Folkestone Racecourse

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V01	INTERNAL DRAFT	B Found	25.01.18
Comments – First draft of text. No illustrations or figures or tables.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V02	INTERNAL DRAFT	B Found	07.03.18
Comments – Text updated. No illustrations or figures or tables.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V03	RETURNED DRAFT	D Whittington	16.11.18
Update back from FHDC			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V04	CONSULTATION DRAFT	S MASON	3 12 18

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V05			

Appendix 2, Case Study 3 - Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy: Folkestone Racecourse Case Study

Introduction

Folkestone Racecourse is largely situated within Stanford Parish, being located some 5 miles west of Folkestone, 3 miles north-west of Hythe and close to Junction 11 of the M20. A small part of the course extends to the west into the neighbouring parish of Sellindge. Folkestone Racecourse closed in 2012, with the final race (the 'Save the Last Race' For Eastwell Manor Handicap Chase), being run on Tuesday, December 18. The former racecourse site covers an area of some 75 hectares and in broad terms is bounded by the M20/HS1/domestic rail corridor to the north, by the village of Westenhanger and properties fronting Stone Street to the east, by the A20 to the south and agricultural land to the west, which separates the site from the village of Barrow Hill. Westenhanger Station adjoins the north-west corner of the site, whilst Westenhanger Castle, a scheduled monument with grade I listed buildings, is located immediately to the north of the racecourse.

In January 2012 the District Council submitted a draft Core Strategy to the Planning Inspectorate for examination that included a draft policy for the redevelopment of the racecourse, including an enabling development of up to 820 dwellings to help fund a new racecourse. Following a process of public hearings and prior to the plan's adoption the draft policy relating to the racecourse was withdrawn. Subsequently the district council has undertaken a number of studies relating to the economic development of the district and strategic housing needs. In March 2016 Government invited local authorities to identify potential areas for new garden settlements in order to meet an identified national need to build more houses. In May 2016 the District Council announced its intention to bid for a garden town in an area broadly surrounding Otterpool Manor Farm and taking in the former racecourse. An 'expression of interest' was subsequently submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government. Government support for a new town at Otterpool was announced in November 2016.

This case study is intended to provide a broad overview of the archaeological and historical development of Folkestone Racecourse and its environs. The case study is not intended to promote or identify what, if any, development should be undertaken at the racecourse site; instead it aims to highlight some of the key 'high level' issues and opportunities that should be taken into consideration in any future proposals for the site. The case study provides an overview of the site's landscape, archaeological and historical background, identifies some key issues that may need to be considered in any redevelopment or re-use of the racecourse site and suggests some potential outcomes and opportunities for enhancement. The case-study is based upon a rapid review of readily available information, including selected published sources, historic maps and information recorded in the Kent Historic Environment Record. Subsequent detailed assessment may identify additional issues and help to clarify those discussed below.

Landscape setting and site description

Folkestone Racecourse is located within the Greensand Vale broad landscape zone described in Theme 1b of this strategy. This broad vale is defined by the North Downs escarpment, which lies some 2.5km to the north-west of the racecourse and by the Lympne Escarpment, located around 2km to the south. The racecourse is located adjacent to a loop in the East Stour River, which rises to the north-west at Postling and flows through the western part of the racecourse site before turning to run westwards towards its confluence with the Great Stour near Ashford. As such the racecourse site occupies a relatively flat tract of land within the floodplain of the East Stour River, with the land rising gently to the south-west towards Barrowhill, Otterpool and Lympne and to the north and east towards Stanford, Postling and Sandling. There are clear longer-distance views to and/from the North Downs, whereas views to the south are more limited, being defined by the ridge of higher ground between Lympne and Barrowhill.

The racecourse site is located close to, but outside of, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Locally the AONB takes in part of the Lympne Escarpment and Romney Marsh to the south (south of the B2067), before turning north-west to include the swathe of land between Stone Street/A20 and Saltwood/Hythe – i.e. just to the east of the racecourse. To the north-east and north of the racecourse the AONB takes in the North Downs proper, including its southern escarpment, as well as land at the base of the escarpment between Stanford and Postling.

The racecourse site is bounded to the south by the A20 and to the north by Westenhanger Castle and the Domestic Rail/HS1/M20 transport corridor. To the east is the line of Stone Street, which approximately follows the line of the ancient Roman road running south from Canterbury towards the coast. The main entrance to Folkestone Racecourse was from Stone Street, whilst the course was also served by its own platforms near Westenhanger Railway Station, which lies at the north-east corner of the site. The modern village of Westenhanger takes the form of ribbon development alongside Stone Street. To the west of the racecourse there are agricultural fields, beyond which lies the village of Barrowhill.

Although now closed for over 5 years the broad layout of the racecourse remains intact. The principal ‘public facing’ racecourse facilities and buildings, including car parks, main grandstand, etc were located in the north-eastern part of the site between Stone Street/Westenhanger Station and Westenhanger Castle. The former stables are located on the south-western side of Westenhanger Castle and partly within the scheduled monument, with the ‘horse box park’ located immediately before the stables on the castle’s southern boundary. The course itself comprised a near mile-long east-west straight, with the main course being a right-handed sharp track. A large pond is located in the centre of the track to assist with course drainage.

Archaeological and historical background

The racecourse sits in a landscape that has the potential to contain a range of archaeological remains, but until recently this area has seen relatively little large-

scale systematic modern archaeological investigation. The exception being the various archaeological investigations and excavations associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL), now known as HS1, which examined in detail an extensive but narrow corridor through the landscape of the vale and demonstrated the breadth and spread of archaeological sites present in the area.

The underlying bedrock geology of the racecourse site comprises limestone and sandstone of the Hythe Formation and Sandgate Formation. The site's superficial geology includes extensive areas of Head/Brickearth along with alluvial sequences associated with the floodplain of the East Stour. There is some potential for fluvial gravels of Pleistocene date alongside the river, with any such deposits having some potential to contain Palaeolithic artefacts. Similarly, higher areas of Head/Brickearth have potential to contain Palaeolithic artefacts. The Holocene alluvial sequences of the East Stour have the potential to contain surviving organic remains and should be considered to have a good potential to contain palaeoenvironmental information and indicators.

The site's location adjacent to the East Stour, with ready access to a wide range of natural resources, including the high Downs to the north, coastal wetlands to the south and the forests of the Weald, would likely have been favourable for the transient peoples of the Mesolithic and in the Neolithic. Archaeological evidence from these periods is largely restricted to chance finds of worked flints and flint scatters recovered from the plough-soil. Examples of such finds include a Mesolithic blade or flake found at Westenhanger, a Neolithic flint axe found at the former Otterpool Quarry and a scatter of later Neolithic flintwork from north of the racecourse.

Just east of the racecourse site is the village of Barrowhill, seemingly taking its name from the presence of several Bronze Age barrows in and around the village. Several such barrows can be seen on LiDAR imagery and satellite aerial photographs, which demonstrate the presence of a number of individual monuments and/or monument complexes overlooking the East Stour. One such barrow lies just north of the racecourse straight, which was partially opened in the 1930s. This barrow appears to have been much reduced by ploughing, now surviving as only a very low mound. A more substantial probable barrow stands to about 2m high within the garden of a house in Barrowhill. Other possible barrows, all now ploughed flat, but visible as crop-marks can be seen to the north-west of the racecourse.

To the north of Westenhanger Castle, archaeological investigations for the HS1 rail-link revealed some evidence for pits and ditches of Middle Bronze Age date. It is likely that further evidence will survive in the broad area suitable for settlement and farming along the East Stour river and valley in the Bronze Age, perhaps focussed on slight rises close to the river.

Evidence is at present limited from the immediate area of the racecourse site for archaeological remains of Early to Middle Iron Age date, although agricultural landscapes and farmsteads of this date might be expected along the East Stour. Some evidence for activity of this period is recorded just to the north of Westenhanger. There is better archaeological evidence for activity of later Iron Age date, with extensive Iron Age activity recorded just north of Folkestone Racecourse, where several enclosures along with structures were recorded ahead of the

construction of the HS1 rail-link. Further evidence for activity of Late Iron Age date has been recorded at Hillhurst Farm, with activity here continuing into the Romano-British period.

The most obvious feature of Romano-British date near the racecourse is line of the major Roman road, Stone Street, which ran from Canterbury to Lympe. Several Romano-British farmsteads are recorded along the line of this road, with associated field-systems, such as those recorded at the Stop 24 services, where four distinct phases of field-system were recorded spanning the first to third centuries AD. These demonstrate the continued attractiveness of the lands of the East Stour for farming and settlement.

Archaeological evidence of activity or occupation in the early medieval period is very limited in the immediate area of the racecourse site. It is now well recognised however that Anglo-Saxon communities made active use of existing visible monuments in the landscape, most notably upstanding barrows of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, to serve as a focal point for their own burial grounds. Such an arrangement is well illustrated at the Saltwood Tunnel site on the HS1 rail-link. As such the known and potential Bronze Age Barrows near Folkestone Racecourse may also have acted as a focus for later Anglo-Saxon burials. Similarly, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are often found adjacent to existing communication routes, with many Anglo-Saxon cemeteries located close to former Roman roads, such as Stone Street.

Early medieval settlement evidence is scant in the area, but it is considered very likely that the medieval manor of Westenhanger may have had an early medieval precursor. An Anglo-Saxon charter of 1035 describes the still recognisable boundaries to a royal estate then known as Berwic which appears to be an early name for land now part of the racecourse. The northern part of the racecourse site close to Westenhanger Castle therefore has a good potential to contain early medieval archaeological remains. In general terms it has been suggested that the well-watered farmlands in the river valleys below the North Downs scarp would have been a favourable location for early Anglo-Saxon settlements. It has previously suggested that a series of parallel pit-like crop-marks, visible on an aerial photograph of 1940s date within the racecourse site, belong to a series of substantial halls of an Anglo-Saxon palace. This remains unconfirmed however, and more recent analysis of the aerial photographs suggest the features are more likely to be of recent (post-medieval or modern) date. Evidence for settlement of eleventh to thirteenth century date has been observed on the northern side of Westenhanger Castle, presumably related to the manorial settlement. The archaeology here included at least three buildings, corn-drying ovens and enclosures. Similar remains might be expected in the northern part of the racecourse site, close to Westenhanger Castle.

Westenhanger Castle

Immediately adjoining the racecourse site on its northern boundary is Westenhanger Castle, a moated quadrangular castle of the fourteenth century. In historic records the site is frequently referred to as Ostenhanger and this is interchangeable with the modern name Westenhanger. The castle's present situation and appearance belies its historical importance; in its Tudor hey-day it was an important royal residence set

within a deer park and was one of Kent's foremost great houses. The remains of Westenhanger Castle are designated as a Scheduled Monument and are grade I listed. The listing includes the existing Westenhanger Manor house in the castle's north-east corner. Separately listed (at grade I) are two conjoined barns within the castle's outer court.

The early history of the original manor of Westenhanger is uncertain. It has been suggested that the manor of Westenhanger has early, perhaps Anglo-Saxon origins. The estate of 'Berwic' described in the charter of AD 1035 (the Stowe Charter) seems to refer to Westenhanger, but it is not named as such and a manor house is not specifically mentioned. Nevertheless, the description of Berwic's boundaries does seem to be largely coincident with that of Westenhanger, suggesting they are one and the same. Some evidence for activity pre-dating the castle has previously been recorded archaeologically to the north of castle and from the presence of thirteenth century pottery within deposits subsequently cut by the castle's curtain walls. It is very likely, given its position alongside the East Stour, that any earlier manor would also have been moated, with the moats being subsequently reworked in the mid to late fourteenth century when Westenhanger was fortified. The shape of the castle is an irregular square lacking the strict uniformity of plan as seen at other places such as Bodiam and this suggests that it was not a *de novo* construction and that it is based on a pre-existing site probably with a moat, defences and buildings. The fabric of the gatehouse includes distinctive stonework, potentially originally part of a free-standing stone structure built at a time when the majority of the defences of the moated manor might have been formed of earth and timber. A church, dedicated to St Mary, is mentioned at Westenhanger from as early as the late thirteenth century, being decommissioned by the crown in AD 1542, and of which no above ground trace now remains. The site of the church is described by eighteenth century antiquarians such as Hasted and is said to have been located on the western side of the castle, outside the castle's principal entrance. Simple cross marked gravestones have been recovered from here.

The fortified house

A licence to crenellate was granted for Westenhanger Castle to its then owner John de Criol in 1343, although the castle we see today seems to have had its origins in the later fourteenth century, with building work perhaps having been delayed by the Black Death. In plan Westenhanger Castle is broadly rectangular, with a high ragstone curtain wall (partly lost) enclosing a courtyard some 60m across. Much of the southern curtain wall has been lost. Now accessed on its eastern side, the original entrance to the castle would have been via a gatehouse positioned centrally on the castle's western flank. Surrounding the curtain wall was a moat, with the walls of the castle rising directly from the waters. A large earthwork on the north side of the castle retained water in the moat. To provide such water a system of water management features was required, with water tapped from the East Stour fed in via a leat and a substantial overflow sluice required to balance levels within the moat and allow water to be returned to the East Stour. A mill is mentioned at the site, which was probably located adjacent to the overflow sluice. A bridge provided access over the moat and through the gatehouse guarded by a portcullis. Circular towers were provided at each corner with square interval towers located at the mid-point of the north, east and south sides. The north-eastern tower is notably larger and projects further from the curtain walls than those to the castle's north-west and

south-western corners. It was latterly adapted for use as a dovecote. Unlike the other corner towers, that on the south-east corner is square, albeit that only the base now survives, and it may be a later alteration of an originally round example. The most complete interval tower is on the northern side, and is known as 'Fair Rosamund's Tower', although an association of the site with the royal mistress of Henry II (AD 1133-89) is unproven and the fabric clearly later.

There would have been a range of buildings, built against the curtain walls, but the precise arrangements remain uncertain due to a lack of any significant archaeological investigation, but it would seem that the principal buildings, including a hall, were originally located along the eastern side of the courtyard opposite the western entrance. As a castle Westenhanger lacks the strength of defences necessary for it to have withstood a serious attack and it is best understood as a place of security designed to project the appearance of a castle. The range of buildings at Westenhanger Castle would have reflected the fact that the castle did not just fulfil a military role but was also important in conveying the social and economic authority of its owner, expressing contemporary aesthetic values and contributing to the maintenance of social order within the locality. The castle was a powerful expression of prestige and power and was designed to impress visitors, local people as well as guests. The range of buildings that would have been found within the curtain walls would probably have included a great hall that would be used for feasting, ceremonial occasions, judicial courts and an estate office, as well as other accommodation, suites, administrative and storage buildings.

Fourteenth century castles are often set within landscaped grounds designed for the enjoyment of their occupants and with contrived routes of approach designed to show off the castle to its best. The use of moats and water filled features to reflect the walls of the castle is common. The extent and form of the landscape contemporary with Westenhanger Castle is unexplored but based on similar sites it may have included formal gardens close to the castle and possibly hunting ground further afield.

The outer court

In the early sixteenth century, the castle was under the ownership of the Poynings family, who made many significant improvements to the castle. These included the addition of new accommodation ranges, as well perhaps as a domestic chapel within the walls of the castle dedicated to St John. Significant additions were also made in the form of an outer court, located on the castle's western side outside the main gate. The grade I listed east-west aligned barn, probably dates to the early sixteenth century and forms part of these works. The absence of a chamfered stone plinth on the far western end of the barn's southern elevation suggests a now demolished building extended south from the barn. Later mapping shows a building here, which may have been the 'little hall' mentioned in an inventory of 1635. The barn itself was probably originally built as a 'great stable' and as it lay on the approach to the gatehouse would have made an important statement about the owner's wealth on arrival to the castle.

The Deer Park and grounds

In 1542 Henry VIII took possession of the castle for use as a royal residence. Henry undertook little new building work, perhaps because of the extensive improvements

already completed by the Poynings family. Instead he focussed his energies and finances on extending and improving the estate to form a great 'deer park' around Westenhanger Castle. Hunting was the dominant fashionable pastime of aristocratic Tudor England and Royal accounts of the period show much expenditure on acquiring new lands to increase the size of the park at Westenhanger. The extent of this can be reconstructed with some confidence based on historic mapping and former field boundaries. Broadly speaking the bounds of the deer park extended from Barrowhill along the north-side of the Ashford – Hythe road (the A20) to the junction with Stone Street (at the Royal Oak Inn). Cheney writing in 1904 suggested the park continued east, nearly to Pedlinge, before turning north to follow a path through Sandling Park Wood towards Hillhurst Farm, and then heading (perhaps following the Parish boundary) to join Stone Street. Alternately the park's eastern boundary perhaps ran north from the Royal Oak, alongside Stone Street to the park's north-north-east corner, just north of the M20. The boundary then ran in a west-north-westerly direction towards Brook Farm, before returning in a south-south-westerly direction towards Barrowhill. Such a deer park would cover an area of at least 240 hectares (593 acres).

The deer park itself would have included areas of woodland, to provide good hunting, with the whole park probably enclosed by some form of fence and/or park pale (a park pale being referred to in a survey of 1559). Foresters/parkers would have managed the deer herds on behalf of the king and would have resided on the estate. As well as providing grounds for the management and hunting of deer it is likely that parts of the park may have included areas of pasture for the keeping of livestock, whilst game bird, such as partridge may have been managed within woodland, along with boar, hare and pig. Other food for the table may have come from managed rabbit warrens and perhaps ponds for the keeping of freshwater fish. A survey of Westenhanger Castle dating to 1559 refers to gardens, orchards, ponds and waters [areas of shallow water on the western side of the castle]. It is possible that these waters, which can be seen today as an area of distinct earthworks may have represented complexes of shallow pools and channels that were used for the farming of fish, most likely carp, for the table. Archaeological investigations might help to shed light on the diet and economy of Tudor Westenhanger and thus the role of the estate. As such the deer park surrounding Westenhanger was crucial to its day to day life. It fulfilled an important role in the social life of the castle, providing royal hunting grounds, but also through the combination of pasture, park, woodland, river and ponds provided a range of foodstuffs and materials to support the functions of the household.

As noted above the 1559 survey of Westenhanger Castle refers to gardens and orchards as forming part of castle's grounds. The precise location of such gardens is uncertain, although there is some evidence for these being located on the south side of the castle, partly within the racecourse site. Firstly, the high-status accommodation within the castle is thought to be on the south side of the courtyard which would have provided views over any formal gardens and there is the presence of a raised terrace, located within the scheduled area on the southern side of the moat. Such a location on the south side of the castle may have been a favourable situation for a private formal garden (a privy garden), such gardens would have been laid out in an ornate style and often featured a raised terrace to provide prospect views. The second reason to suggest an early garden on the south-side of the castle

comes from the presence of a substantial walled enclosure (latterly an orchard), which can be seen on historic mapping (e.g. the 1797 Ordnance Survey map and the Stanford Tithe map of 1839). This walled enclosure extends from the entrance drive along the entire length of the castle's southern flank (enclosing an area some 180m by 70m). Adjacent to the south-western arm of the moat (i.e. on the southern side of the outer court) a further walled enclosure is shown along with a pond. Both are now lost but may survive archaeologically.

Historically the entrance to Westenhanger Castle was via the gatehouse on its western side, outside which were the buildings of the outer court. Access to the outer-court was from the main Hythe to Ashford road, via a causeway forming a tree lined avenue – i.e. across the racecourse site. The causeway survives partially as an earthwork, cut through by the racecourse. Such an approach would have provided a much greater 'sense of arrival', than is currently afforded by the modern-day entrance to the castle, which is from the east off Stone Street. Arrival from the south would have crossed the extensive deer park, with views of the castle backed by the scarp of the Downs. The drive itself may have been tree-lined to form a 'long-walk'. Nearing the castle, the postulated formal gardens on Westenhanger's southern side would have come into view, before the entrance driveway turned through the outer court with its impressive stone barn showing the wealth of the castle's owners. Historic mapping suggests that an eastern access route may also have existed from Stone Street but with only the single access into the castle proper by its western gatehouse. A place name *Pound Cottage*, potential excavated archaeological evidence for the park pale and early twentieth century descriptions of a now demolished small but high-status house suggests that the home of the bailiff responsible for administration of the estate may have been located where this access road joined Stone Street

Later history

Westenhanger remained under royal ownership in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth I, who reportedly referred to Westenhanger as "her own house". In 1575 however, the estate of Westenhanger was acquired by Thomas 'Customer' Smythe, a business man and politician who quickly rose to become a wealthy and distinguished member of Elizabethan society. Smythe is said to have made many improvements and additions to Westenhanger, including works to the southern range of buildings within the inner court. It was probably Smythe (or his son Sir John Smythe) who built the impressive north-south grade I listed and scheduled barn in the outer court. The barn features an impressive hammer-beam roof, extended over the East Stour at its northern end (which is carried under the barn via a barrel-vaulted culvert) and with four projecting porches arranged in pairs with large doors big enough for fully laden waggons to pass through. On completion of Smythe's works Westenhanger must have rivalled any of the great houses in Kent, with perhaps only Knowle being larger. The castle remained in the hands of the Smythe family until the end of the seventeenth century when Philip Smythe, 2nd Viscount Strangford ('Customer' Smythe's great-grandson) fell into financial difficulties. Westenhanger would now begin a period of severe decline. Most of the buildings of this once great house were pulled down and sold off for building material by AD 1700 when under the ownership of Joseph Finch. What remained of this once great house was then sold to Justinian Champneis who formed a much smaller house in the north-east corner of the courtyard, leaving the rest of the castle as ruins. It is a

modified and smaller version of Champneis' house, built from part of the east range of the great house at Westenhanger, that now survives as the grade I listed Westenhanger Manor.

Today with much of the castle in ruins and with evidence of the very large deer park as created by its royal and high-status owners obscured by later changes, it is difficult to appreciate that Westenhanger is a lost great country estate, probably comparable to Knole, Penshurst or Leeds castle in terms of scale and appearance but lacking the eighteenth century and later phases seen at these sites. Under the ownership of the racecourse company the designated heritage assets became very neglected and the site was placed on the Historic England "At Risk" register. The castle was purchased by the Forge family in 1996 who have carried out an extensive programme of conservation, repair and restoration works. In 2003 the Forge family also acquired the sixteenth century barns, consolidating them into single ownership with the castle. Historic England (then English Heritage) have supported the repairs by the Forge family by using large amounts of public money delivered as grants. The efforts of the Forge family, working in close partnership with Historic England has resulted in Westenhanger Castle and barns being removed from the "At Risk" register. Westenhanger castle settled into use as a hospitality venue from which income could be earned to help sustain the site. This use was thrown into uncertainty by the now abandoned proposal for a very large lorry park to the north of the castle. At the time of writing it has yet to recover the sustainable position that it once had. Without meaningful income to help sustain the site there is a danger that in the long-term the castle could once again become "At Risk".

The railway

In the early nineteenth century there had been a series of aborted proposals to construct a railway line between London and Dover. In 1836 a Private Act passed through Parliament incorporating the South Eastern and Dover Railway (latterly more simply called the South Eastern Railway or SER). Various routes were considered, but although not the shortest, a route running via Tonbridge, Ashford and Folkestone was chosen for ease of construction. Work started on various sections of the line simultaneously and by 1843 the section between Ashford and Folkestone was operational. The tracks pass just to the north of Westenhanger Castle, and this started the process of separation that would see the northern part of the castle's former deer park become isolated from the rest of the estate. This sense of separation would be further emphasised with the construction of the M20 in 1981 and again following the opening in 2003 of the Ashford to Cheriton section of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL Phase 1 – now part of HS1).

As built, Westenhanger Station was a simple affair, typical of a rural SER station. It featured an 'up' and 'down' platform, laid out in a staggered arrangement and separated by a brick road bridge (which carried Stone Street over the line) that provided access to the two platforms. The station building was located on the 'up' platform and was initially a simple timber structure, with a smaller rudimentary shelter provided on the 'down' line. In 1861 the station building on the 'up' platform was replaced with a new two-storey brick-built station building. The station building survives, albeit now out of railway use. An unusual feature of the station building at Westenhanger is the use of two distinctly different brick types – one a typical yellow

stock and the other in a lighter crème fabric. The two types are not employed decoratively, rather one half of the building uses one type and the other the other.

Folkestone Racecourse

Westenhanger Castle, including its barns and remaining lands were sold by auction in 1887 and in 1898 Folkestone Racecourse (sometimes known as Westenhanger Park) was established, taking in a large part of the land south of the castle. The racecourse was superimposed over the existing landscape, with the racecourse straight cutting across the East Stour and the entrance causeway to Westenhanger Castle and requiring the removal of the walled garden (then an orchard) on the castle's southern side. As a result, a new entrance to Westenhanger was formed from the east, connecting to Stone Street adjacent to Westenhanger railway station. Other than these changes it is possible to trace much of the pre-existing landscape across the racecourse site and it is possible that some of the boundaries, ditches and earthworks still visible within the racecourse site have very ancient origins.

The course itself included a near mile-long east-west straight, with the main course being a right-handed sharp track, offering a circuit of 1 mile 4 furlong, alongside the 7 furlong straight course. This ultimately enabled Folkestone to offer a range of Flat and National Hunt races ranging from 5 furlongs to 2 miles 93 yards. Whilst Folkestone would never be considered among the south-east's 'great racecourses' (such as offered at Ascot, Epsom, Newbury or Sandown), it grew to become the premier racecourse in Kent and was held in some regard. The large surviving grandstand has at its core the grandstand from 1898 though this is now much altered. Construction of the racecourse required significant excavation for soil at Westenhanger Castle during which large numbers of architectural fragments were found (these are now lost). Various other buildings were gradually added to serve the new racecourse, which included smaller grandstands and hospitality buildings to the south-east and east of the castle. To the west, in the former outer court of Westenhanger Castle, various new stable buildings were erected which resulted in the levelling of a number historic features in this part of the site. These stable buildings are located within the scheduled monument, but not all benefit from scheduled monument consent.

The main vehicular entrance to Folkestone Racecourse was from Stone Street. To the south of the racecourse entrance, between the track and Stone Street and number of cottages were built in 'ribbon' fashion alongside the old Roman road. In the course of this ribbon development a 'very ancient house', recorded on historic maps as Pound House was demolished. Observations during the house's demolition suggested that it may have been of Tudor origin. The presence of ornate plasterwork, including work depicting the royal cypher has led to suggestions that this was a dwelling of a high ranking official (perhaps the bailiff) associated with Westenhanger Castle.

The popularity of the racecourse led to a significant increase in railway traffic on race-days. To accommodate racegoers a second, independent, set of platforms was erected to the west of the earlier station and north of Westenhanger Castle. These platforms had outer loops, so race-day trains did not interfere with the mainline. The

new platforms also had their own footbridge and direct access was provided to the racecourse.

Military role

In common with many racecourses the land at Westenhanger was used for early aviation most notably a meeting in 1910. The racecourse site was used for aviation purposes during both World Wars albeit at a relatively low level compared with nearby Lympne. Attempts were made to establish an airfield at Lympne in 1915 and by 1916 this was being used as an Emergency Landing Ground by the Royal Flying Corps. Hanger and technical buildings were erected and Lympne Castle was being used to accommodate the officers stationed there. In early 1917 Lympne took on two new roles, being home to the No. 1 Advanced School of Air Gunnery and being designated as No. 8 Aircraft Acceptance Park. In this latter role Lympne would act as a station for the delivery of aircraft to and reception of aircraft from France. New aircraft would be delivered to Lympne in knocked-down-kit form, for final assembly to be undertaken there. Aircraft were delivered to Lympne by rail, arriving at Westenhanger Station, before being transferred to a military spur that ran to Lympne across the racecourse site. The railway spur was lightly built and is shown on historic mapping running around the eastern side of the racecourse.

The great nineteenth century army camp at Shorncliffe became the base in World War One for the Canadian Expeditionary Force and large parts of this area of Kent were used for the training and garrisoning of these troops. This seemingly included land at Westenhanger and Folkestone Racecourse, where chiefly tented accommodation was provided. At the end of the war the owners of the racecourse put in a claim for direct losses to the Crown arising from the failure to hand-back the grandstand as agreed, as well as the cost of reinstatement works and 'dilapidation'.

In the interwar period the Westenhanger site returned to its pre-war racecourse use, but the airfield at Lympne remained in military use, with the Auxiliary Air Force, Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm all variously operating from the site. At the outbreak of the Second World War Lympne was taken over solely by the RAF. Due to its proximity to Lympne the racecourse site was used in 1940 to 1941 to act as an airfield decoy, the main straight being reminiscent of a landing strip, around which dummy aircraft were placed so as to look like an active site. Later in the war the racecourse, which had gained the name RAF Westenhanger was used for combined army and air force cooperation exercises. Accommodation at RAF Westenhanger again took the form of a tented camp.

The site returned to racecourse use following the war, a role that it continued to play until the site's closure. Initially to be closed temporarily, pending redevelopment of the course, the site has in fact remained shut since 2012.

Statutory protection and designations

'Westenhanger Castle' is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (list entry number 1020761) The scheduled area encompasses the walled enclosure of the castle and its moat and includes the area of the outer court and land north of the castle towards the railway line, where

earthworks associated with the castle's water-control system are recorded. Westenhanger Manor, all modern buildings, fences and surfaces are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them is included. The site was first scheduled 8 October 1952, with the most recent amendment to the scheduling entry being made on the 2 September 2002. The scheduled area partly extends into the racecourse site. Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser for scheduled monuments and administers on its behalf the process known as Scheduled Monument Consent as the means by which works to such a protected site are made lawful. Early engagement with Historic England is recommended for any proposed works affecting the scheduled monument and also for any proposal that might be harmful to the significance of the monument by virtue of change within its setting. Historic England publishes on-line guidance and Government's 2013 statement of its policy towards scheduled monuments is also relevant and available on line.

'Westenhanger Manor' is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at grade I (list entry number 1344223). The property was first listed 27 August 1952. The listing description suggests the listing covers the present manor house, along with the upstanding curtain walls, towers, gatehouse and ruined former ranges of the castle. The listed building lies entirely within the scheduled area. The listed Manor House lies just to the north of the racecourse site.

The 'Barns at Westenhanger Manor' are also listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at grade I (list entry number 1045888). The listing covers the two conjoined sixteenth century barns located within the outer court of Westenhanger Castle. The barns were first listed 27 August 1952 and are located entirely within the scheduled area. The listed barns lie just to the north of the racecourse site.

At the south-eastern corner of the racecourse site is 'The Royal Oak Public House', which is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at grade II (list entry number 1061067). The Royal Oak was first listed 15 May 1986, with the listing amended 3 March 2000. A grade II listed 1950s motel of innovative design formerly adjoined the Royal Oak, but this has been demolished (with consent) and subsequently removed from the list.

To the east of the racecourse (east of Ashford Road) is Sandling Park which is registered (grade II) under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (list entry number 1000262).

The Kent Downs AONB takes in part of the Lympne Escarpment and Romney Marsh to the south (south of the B2067), before turning north-west to include the swathe of land between Stone Street/A20 and Saltwood/Hythe – i.e. to the east of the racecourse. To the north-east and north of the racecourse the AONB takes in the North Downs proper, including its southern escarpment, as well as land at the base of the escarpment between Stanford and Postling. As such the site lies outside of the AONB but is within its setting.

Issues and opportunities

Within this section of the case study it is intended to consider a few of the potential issues that could arise as part of any proposal for the re-use or re-development of the Folkestone Racecourse site. These have not been produced in response to any specific development proposal and they are not intended to promote or identify what form any re-development or re-use of the racecourse might take. Rather, they seek to identify some of the historic environment issues that might need to be taken into consideration. For each identified issue a suggested preferred outcome is included; it is intended that these will help guide any future change at the site.

Issue 1: Folkestone Racecourse has the potential to include multiperiod archaeological remains and deposits. These remains could include deposits of geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest along the course of the East Stour River.

The site could contain a range of features, finds and deposits of archaeological interest. Such archaeological remains are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them. Any development proposals that result in ground excavation, piling operations or requires any other intrusive engineering operation or remediation action may cause harm to this archaeological interest.

It is recommended that appropriately detailed archaeological assessment and evaluation works proceed any proposals for redevelopment at the racecourse site. Such works should include consideration of any impacts on the site's geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest as appropriate. It is expected that such archaeological assessment and evaluation works will require a combination of operations, some of which will be required prior to the submission of any planning application (pre-planning works) and others that could be secured following determination (post-planning works). The precise scope and nature of such assessment and evaluation works would need to be informed by and be appropriate in scale to any development proposal.

It should be expected that such archaeological assessment and evaluation works will lead to the need for further archaeological mitigation measures, resulting either in the preservation of archaeological remains *in situ* or through a programme of appropriate investigation and recording (mitigation) so that archaeological remains are recorded, our understanding of their significance is enhanced and so that this information is made publicly accessible.

Given the broad archaeological potential of the site, the possibility that presently unknown archaeological remains exist within the racecourse site that are of high or even very high significance, and which would warrant preservation in situ, should not be ruled out.

Outcome 1: Development proposal have been informed by and take account of the site's archaeological interest. This archaeological interest has been used to shape the redevelopment and/or re-use of the racecourse site and the

information resulting from any archaeological investigations has been made publicly accessible.

Issue 2: *Bronze Age barrows – at least one barrow is situated just to the north of the racecourse straight, whilst a second example is extant to the west in Barrowhill. Further possible barrows are suggested on aerial photographs and LiDAR imagery close to the racecourse.*

Barrows are a type of funerary monument, most commonly of Late Neolithic to Bronze Age date – i.e. circa 2400 to 1500 BC, although (more rarely) such mounds were also erected in the Roman and later Anglo-Saxon periods. Bowl barrows in Kent typically take the form of an earthen mound, usually surrounded by a substantial ditch, with the mound covering single or multiple burials. It is not unusual for additional ‘satellite’ burials to accompany such barrows, located around the edges of the monument. Sometimes such mounds acted as a focus for burials in later periods, including extensive Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Very occasionally sites identified as barrows may in fact be later mounds such as those built for windmills, but without further archaeological investigation this can be hard to determine.

The barrow just north of the racecourse straight is much denuded by later ploughing, but some of the mound appears to survive, albeit reduced in height and spread by the plough. The barrow to the west in Barrowhill survives to a much greater height. The other tentatively identified barrows seen on aerial photographs appear to have been entirely ploughed flat and are visible only as crop-marks.

It is possible that the barrows form part of a barrow group that extends from the racecourse towards the modern-day settlement of Barrowhill. Any development proposals would need to give due regard to these barrows. This will require further research, so that the significance of these barrows, individually and as a group, is properly understood. This should include consideration of the contribution made by their settings, including the relationship of the barrows to their local landscape context within the valley of the East Stour and potentially any relationship with other more distant barrows. Such research will likely require a combination of desk-based assessment and archaeological field evaluation (both intrusive and non-intrusive).

There is a good possibility that the barrows here might be of a level of significance whereby preservation *in situ* would be an appropriate response. Such preservation *in situ* would require that consideration be given not only to the physical retention of the barrows, but thought may also need to be given to ensuring their legibility as a group and within their landscape context. Furthermore, any scheme for their preservation *in situ* will require measures to secure the positive on-going management of the monuments.

Outcome 2: *An enhanced understanding of the significance of the Bronze Age barrows has been secured by means of appropriate archaeological research and field evaluation. Resulting measures have been put in place to secure the positive future management of the barrows; their significance has been better revealed and made intelligible to the public.*

Issue 3: The need to ensure a long-term sustainable future for Westenhanger Castle. The castle is a site of national importance and it is essential that it is provided with a secure future. Development at the racecourse could harm the significance of the castle, including by change to its setting, and/or affect the future viability of the castle.

Westenhanger Castle is currently in the private ownership of the Forge family who have, in collaboration with English Heritage (now Historic England), carried out an extensive programme of conservation, repair and restoration works. Nevertheless, significant further work and on-going maintenance is still required. The family currently operate Westenhanger Castle as a wedding, hospitality and conference venue to provide an income contribution towards the site's upkeep. Such a use is heavily reliant on the site's inherent aesthetic attractiveness, desirable location and setting. As such the continued successful operation of the site as a wedding and hospitality venue is very sensitive to external change. It is understood, for example, that the possibility of the construction of a lorry park on land to the north of the castle has already had a considerable negative impact on commercial operation of the site. Future development, or the potential of development, at the racecourse site could have a similar negative impact on the on-going viability of Westenhanger Castle.

Development at the racecourse site should take account of the potential for harmful effects that could adversely impact future uses and activities at the castle. A collaborative approach should be sought so that redevelopment or re-use of the racecourse delivers constructive benefits to the castle, so that positive change can be delivered to ensure the site's continued use and enjoyment.

Outcome 3: Westenhanger Castle has a sustainable future. New or existing uses have been developed at the castle in co-ordination with the redevelopment or re-use of the racecourse site. The castle is being used in a manner that is appropriate to its significance, these uses include functions that promote and support public access. Owners, developers, local authorities, architects and engineers have worked together creatively as part of a multidisciplinary problem-solving team to deliver positive enhancements. Change at the racecourse has acted as a catalyst to trigger investment at the castle that has secured and sustained its future.

Issue 4: Redevelopment or re-use of the racecourse site might cause harm to the setting of Westenhanger Castle. In its hey-day the castle was one of Kent's great country houses set at the heart of a deer park. The racecourse site covers a major part of this former deer park, which made such an important contribution to the social and economic life of the castle.

The setting of Westenhanger Castle makes a major contribution to its significance; the ability to appreciate the castle as one of Kent's great country houses is greatly enhanced by being able to visualise the castle as lying at the heart of a substantial deer park. This deer park covered a considerable area, extending from the Hythe – Ashford road (the A20) northwards to beyond the M20 and from Barrow Hill in the west to Stone Street (or beyond) to the east. Under royal ownership the deer park

was considerably expanded, with Henry VIII focussing expenditure on the acquisition of neighbouring farms and land to extend the deer park.

Hunting was the dominant fashionable pastime of aristocratic Tudor England and possessing a deer park was a symbol of status and wealth. They were expensive and difficult to maintain and required the services of specialist foresters/keepers to maintain the park and herd. The deer park at Westenhanger was a key part of the social function of the great house. It would have been managed to provide an 'aristocratic playground', with the landscape being deliberately designed to provide attractive hunting grounds, with the required combination of dense woodland, wood-pasture and pasture. As was the fashion of the time the deer park surrounded the house, providing it with an attractive setting (earlier medieval deer parks were often separated from the house, rather than surrounding it). As well as providing deer hunting the park would have supplied Westenhanger Castle with a range of other natural resources and foodstuffs, including wood and timber for building and fuel and would likely have supported a range of other birds and animals that would have provided food for the table. As such the deer park was more than just the landscape that surrounded the castle, it was an essential component of the function of Westenhanger as a 'great house'.

Despite not being part of the designated heritage assets the land which once formed the deer park makes a large contribution to the significance of these assets and to the ability to understand the historic development and purpose of the castle. There is a high potential for heritage assets to be identified within the former deer park, either as visible features or as buried remains, and some of these may be of equal significance to a scheduled monument such that NPPF advice would be that these should be treated as if so designated.

The deer park at Westenhanger is now somewhat hard to visualise on the ground. To the north there has been the damaging and irreversible separation caused by the construction of the railway, M20 motorway and HS1. On the eastern and south-eastern sides, the buildings of the racecourse and development along Stone Street has encroached upon the former deer park. To the west and south of the castle the former deer park still largely survives as open undeveloped land; that to the west now largely farmland and that to the south taking in the former racecourse site. This openness makes it much easier to readily appreciate the size of the former deer park despite the changes to boundaries and land-use. The harm that has already been caused to the north serves to increase the relevance and importance of the land to the south to the setting of Westenhanger Castle.

The change that has already occurred to the north and east has increased the sensitivity of the land to the south and west of the castle. In this respect it is also worth noting that it was from the south that the castle was historically approached. As such this southern aspect makes a particularly important contribution to the significance of Westenhanger Castle, as here is the only place where the size of the deer park can be understood and the historic experience of arriving at the castle can be obtained. Any redevelopment or re-use of the racecourse site would require detailed assessment and consideration to be given to understanding the setting of Westenhanger Castle and the contribution that this setting makes to its significance.

It is suggested that a significant area of open space should be retained to the south of the castle. The precise form and function of any open-space would need to be agreed, but should be of sufficient size so that the existing expansive southerly views to and from the castle are retained. It should also take in the full width of the former deer park – i.e. it should extend in a transect from the castle to the line of the former park pale. Detailed analysis will determine the precise parameters for any such open space, but it should be a sufficiently great area to enable the former status of the house set within a large park to still be understood. The re-establishment of a southern access from the A20 to the castle as part of such an open southern area would be a significant beneficial enhancement.

The re-use or re-development of other parts of the racecourse needs to take account of the setting of Westenhanger Castle. It is essential that any new development does not encroach upon the castle to such an extent that it becomes crowded by modern buildings. If the existing approach to the castle is to be retained as the main access, then it is essential that the experience of arriving at the castle is not one of passing through dense development.

Outcome 4: A sufficiently great area of open-space has been retained to the south of Westenhanger Castle; the expansive southerly views to and from the castle have been retained. The former status of Westenhanger as a great house set within a large park can be understood and appreciated. The historic southern approach to Westenhanger Castle has been reinstated.

Issue 5: Establishment of the racecourse resulted in encroachment upon Westenhanger Castle and loss of historic features. This encroachment included the building of stables within the castle's outer court, severance of the historic southern approach and the removal and levelling of a walled orchard or garden on the castle's southern side.

Folkestone Racecourse was established at Westenhanger in 1898. The castle was formerly under the ownership of the racecourse and served as the headquarters of the Folkestone Racing Club and the house of the racecourse manager. To facilitate the racecourse several changes have been made to the site over the years. These changes have caused varying levels of harm to Westenhanger Castle. Some of the most significant and/or harmful changes include:

- The erection of modern stable buildings within the area of the former outer court of Westenhanger Castle. The stable buildings are of relatively recent date and are located within the scheduled monument. It is understood that some of the stable buildings do not benefit from scheduled monument consent.
- The racecourse circuit cuts across the historic principal approach to the castle which was from the south (off the A20) and crossed the racecourse site via a causeway to enter the castle on its western side. As a result, a new entrance was created on the eastern side of the castle from Stone Street.
- The establishment of the racecourse required the removal of the walled garden or orchard shown on historic maps on the south side of the castle. It is understood this area was levelled by landraising, including with material

excavated from the infilled moat. An area between the racecourse straight and castle was covered in hardstanding and used for horsebox parking and to provide access to the abovementioned stables.

Redevelopment of the racecourse site presents the opportunity to reverse some of these negative interventions and to secure alternative positive enhancement works. Removal of the unauthorised stables from the outer court would be a significant benefit and would substantially improve the setting of this part of the castle. Within the outer court area are the conjoined grade I listed and scheduled barns. The barns are under the ownership of the Forge family. One has been conserved and repaired, but the other awaits attention. Neither barn has a permanent long-term use, and both are currently used for ad-hoc storage. A collaborative approach that sees the removal of the unauthorised barns and potentially includes some sensitive and well-considered new additions that help support the sustainable re-use of the barns could be considered.

The historic southern approach to the castle was lost when the racecourse was established. The removal of the racecourse would present the opportunity to reinstate this lost access. This would allow visitors to the castle to experience arriving at the castle by means of the historic southerly approach in the way that was intended. Works to reinstate a southerly approach to the castle could be undertaken in tandem with the abovementioned enhancements to the outer court area.

The removal of the stables, racecourse and the reinstatement of the historic southerly access would in turn facilitate potential improvements to the area immediately to the south of the castle. Historic maps show a walled orchard or garden here and the reinstatement of this would be a substantial benefit and would greatly improve the immediate setting of the castle on its southern side.

The abovementioned enhancements could be secured independently or as part of a conjoined package of improvement works. In combination, the removal of the unauthorised stable buildings, reinstatement of the historic southern access and the re-establishment of the southern walled gardens would result in very significant benefits and could help facilitate the outcomes suggested to address issues 3 and 4 above.

Outcome 5: Positive enhancements have been made within the racecourse site through the removal of intrusive elements and the reinstatement of lost features so as to sustain and enhance the significance of Westenhanger Castle. The enhancement works form part of a package of measures that in combination have secured the castle's viable long-term future in a manner consistent with its conservation.

Issue 6: Ensuring that the site's recent history as a racecourse and focus of military activity during both world wars is not overlooked and forgotten.

The site was used as a racecourse for over 100 years (between 1898 and 2012) and has been used for military purposes during both world wars. The site's wartime uses for early aviation, as a tented encampment for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, as

a dummy airfield and for military exercises may have left little trace on the ground and may be difficult to detect archaeologically. Nevertheless, these activities played a role in events on the national and international stage and are an important component of the site's recent history.

Similarly, over 100 years of racing at Folkestone has had a relatively light physical footprint. The most substantial building at the course is the former grandstand, but otherwise the racecourse buildings tend to be relatively low-key, sometimes lightweight or pre-fabricated and few are of any architectural merit. Whilst Folkestone was never a 'top tier' racecourse it was well regarded; it was one of only two 'modern-era' racecourses in Kent (the other being a small oval course near Wye, closed in 1975) and was the last course to host thoroughbred racing fixtures in the county.

In terms of heritage assets, neither racecourse or military use has left physical remains of any notable significance. Nevertheless, both uses form an important part of the site's history. A role for this less tangible, but nevertheless interesting heritage should be found so that these stories and rich history can be used to help impart character and contribute to the local distinctiveness of any new development. This could be achieved, for example, through on-site interpretation, public art and community-led research projects.

Outcome 6: The rich history and heritage of the racecourse site has been used to make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the place. Opportunities have been sought to ensure the site's less tangible heritage, which was used to help foster a sense of place that is grounded in the history of the site.

Issue 7: Landscape character and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB – the racecourse site lies outside of, but close to, the AONB. Large scale development at the racecourse site could negatively affect the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB through change to its setting.

The site lies outside of the Kent Downs AONB, but will be visible from several locations within the AONB and there are clear views of the AONB from the racecourse site. As such the site should be considered fall within the setting of the AONB, which is defined in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan as being “broadly speaking the land outside the designated area which is visible from the AONB and from which the AONB can be seen”.

The landscape surrounding the racecourse is broadly speaking one that has an 'agricultural character', the exception being M20/domestic rail/HS1 transport corridor which intrudes on the tranquillity of the area. Nucleated settlement is largely focussed alongside Stone Street (Stanford – Westenhanger – Newingreen – Lympne) or the A20 (Newingreen – Barrowhill – Sellindge), otherwise the pattern is one of dispersed settlement, comprising numerous small farmsteads scattered across the landscape. The overall impression in longer views is a landscape dominated by agricultural fields, edged by remnant hedges and scattered large

woodlands. In this context the racecourse in its current form is broadly compatible and consistent with the surrounding landscape and does not intrude in longer distance views to or from the AONB.

The introduction of new development at the racecourse site has the potential to introduce elements that might be inharmonious in the context of the surrounding landscape and in turn negatively affect the setting of the AONB. Any development proposals would need to give due regard to the setting of the AONB and should be informed by detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

The scale, design, layout and landscaping of any new development will be critical in reducing the impact of any change at the racecourse site. Taking account of the grain of the landscape and retention and enhancement of existing landscape features could help reduce the impact of any new development. Understanding the characteristics, qualities and palette of the landscape and settlement of this part of Kent will be essential to ensuring any new development responds to the local character and distinctiveness of the area and thus minimises the harm to the AONB.

Outcome 7: Development has been informed by a detailed understanding of the landscape character of the area. The topography, historic character and existing features of the site have been respected and used to inform the new development. The impact on the landscape and scenic beauty of the area has been minimised.

Issue 8: The racecourse site is bounded by major historic routes in the form of Roman Stone Street to the east and the old highway between Ashford and Hythe to the south. The importance of these routes should remain legible.

The road along the eastern side of the racecourse approximately follows the line of the ancient Roman road from Canterbury (Roman *Durovernum Cantiacorum*) to the Channel port of Lympne (*Portus Lemanis*). This road, which is commonly known as Stone Street, is a branch of Watling Street, one of the great roads of Roman Britain. Stone Street can still be readily appreciated as a Roman road, with the modern-day B2068 following a near straight line to Canterbury.

The southern side of the racecourse is formed by the old highway between the medieval port and town of Hythe and Ashford. The precise origins of the route are uncertain, but it is shown on some early maps, such as Symonson's Map of Kent (1596). The principal entrance to Westenhanger Castle was off this road, which probably dates to at least medieval times. It is possible that a gatekeeper's house or lodge building for Westenhanger Castle may have once sat adjacent to this road.

Outcome 8: The historic importance of the ancient roads from Lympne to Canterbury and the route from Hythe to Ashford have been recognised and have been taken into account as part in the redevelopment and/or re-use of the racecourse site.

Conclusions

The former Folkestone Racecourse site has a rich history and will likely contain archaeological remains spanning the Prehistoric to modern-day. It is located adjacent to Westenhanger Castle; now a scheduled monument and grade I listed building. The castle once ranked as one of the greatest of Kent's great houses. In its heyday it was under royal ownership and was set in a substantial deer park.

Several issues have been identified in this case study which will be relevant to a greater or lesser extent depending on precisely what development or use is proposed for the racecourse site. In general, it should be expected that a range of detailed studies will be required ahead of any development proposal to identify the parameters of what might or might not be appropriate when considering the development potential of the site. Such studies will likely include Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, Field Evaluation, Setting Assessment, and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. It is very possible that the site will contain important, but presently unknown archaeological remains, potentially including archaeological remains that will require preservation in situ.

Special attention will need to be paid to the relationship between Westenhanger Castle and any new development at the racecourse. Any new development should be informed by a detailed understanding of the significance of Westenhanger Castle and following thorough assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the castle's significance. Focus should be paid in any development scheme to ensuring the long-term sustainable future of Westenhanger Castle and opportunities for enhancement should be sought and delivered.

Folkestone Racecourse was created out of a major part of the park surrounding Westenhanger Castle. If major new development is to occur, such as that currently being promoted through the Otterpool Garden Town proposals, then this nationally important heritage asset has significant potential for use under a place-making strategy, such that new residents might derive an identity from their homes being part of a location that has played such a significant role in the story of the nation.

Key development principles

- Use the historic character of the place to inform future development and create a sense of place
- Interpret, promote and celebrate the site's historic environment and encourage people to explore and appreciate the site's heritage assets and historic stories.
- Work collaboratively, so that development supports the long-term future of Westenhanger Castle
- Seek opportunities to sustain and enhance the significance of Westenhanger Castle; minimise harm to the setting of the castle and maximise positive and beneficial enhancements
- Develop a place-making strategy for the site.

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