



[REDACTED]  
Programme Officer Core Strategy Review)  
Folkestone & Hythe District Council Civic Centre  
Castle Hill Avenue  
Folkestone  
Kent CT20 2QY

3 July 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam

**Core Strategy Review Examination – Homes England Response  
Main Matter 7 Garden Settlement Session.**

Homes England is the government's housing accelerator, with the influence, expertise and resources to drive positive market change. The Agency's mission is to intervene in the market to ensure more homes are built in areas of greatest need, to improve affordability.

The Agency is committed to working with the Otterpool Park LLP to realise the aspirations and aims of the new garden town. Homes England fully supports the proposed policy allocation as set out in the draft Core Strategy, and the ambitions as set out in the vision for Otterpool Park.

Securing the allocation of Otterpool Park garden town in the Folkestone and Hythe Core Strategy is a vital step required to deliver on the careful and considered progress made to date. In partnership with the Otterpool Park LLP and its advisors, Homes England will collaborate to optimise the delivery of much-needed homes, jobs, facilities and infrastructure as part of the garden town vision. The Agency will challenge traditional norms in the process to build better homes faster as the project moves into the important delivery phase.

As set out in representations dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Homes England acquired a large element of the Otterpool Park site in March 2018, comprising approximately 62 hectares of land between Lympe and the Lympe Industrial Estate. This was always included in the area that is the subject of the draft New Garden Settlement allocation as part of the draft Core Strategy. It is included in the application boundary for the outline planning application ref. Y19/0257/ FH.

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#MakingHomesHappen

Homes England's acquisition represented a significant milestone for the delivery of the new garden town settlement. It has brought major investment in terms of land; and the ability to deliver infrastructure and wider benefits within the application proposals. The Agency is committed to making sure that housing delivery is accelerated, and land is not held longer than necessary. Homes England is also supporting the project, and the Council's ambitions for quality placemaking including zero carbon, via the government's Garden Communities Programme.

The sustainable location is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which requires local authorities' planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites and the land between Lymyne and Lymyne Business Park meets these criteria. Its inclusion will assist Folkestone & Hythe District Council to meet the test of soundness defined in the NPPF; being positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Unlocking land is one of Homes England's core objectives as defined in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup>. Homes England is able to draw on expertise and professional skills within its Development; Investment; and Markets, Partners & Places directorates to devise and test innovative delivery models and financing options. For example, the following Homes England priorities support the accelerated delivery of large settlements:

- Infrastructure investment - Homes England has the ability to invest upfront in the land and enabling infrastructure that is necessary to unlock sites. In this way, serviced development plots can be made available to the market at pace.
- Methods of Modern Construction (MMC) – Offsite and modular building techniques have the potential to be significantly more productive than traditional building methods, encouraging low carbon technology and minimising environmental impacts. MMC allows homes to be built more quickly, addressing labour and skills shortages and improving the quality, consistency and energy efficiency of newly built homes. As part of the Agency's strategic objective to improve construction productivity, innovation, quality and sustainability, Homes England is encouraging the uptake of ambitious levels of MMC which are higher than the market norm.
- Diversification – Homes England is providing support for smaller builders and new entrants to create a more diverse, resilient and competitive market. Diversification is being encouraged by providing access to land and short-term development finance through the Home Building Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> [Homes England \(2018\) Strategic Plan 2018-2023](#)

Taken together, these initiatives will assist to create the conditions necessary to accelerate housing delivery at Otterpool Park. This aligns broadly to findings of the Letwin Review<sup>2</sup> which recommended more diversity of the type and tenure of new homes, to accelerate market absorption and the build out rate of large developments.

In its role as the government's housing accelerator, Homes England will add experience and endeavour working with partners in the delivery of the new garden community at Otterpool Park. The Agency will use its land, powers and influence to increase the pace, scale and quality of delivery across a range of tenures, typologies and sizes. Homes England will work closely with Otterpool Park LLP to show leadership on design, modernisation and diversity of new homes; alongside supporting the vision for jobs, facilities and infrastructure necessary to create a great place and deliver on the ambitions as set out in the vision for Otterpool Park.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature]

Senior Planning and Enabling Manager

[Redacted name]

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<sup>2</sup> [Letwin 2018. Independent Review of Build Out, Final Report. Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP, October 2018](#)