

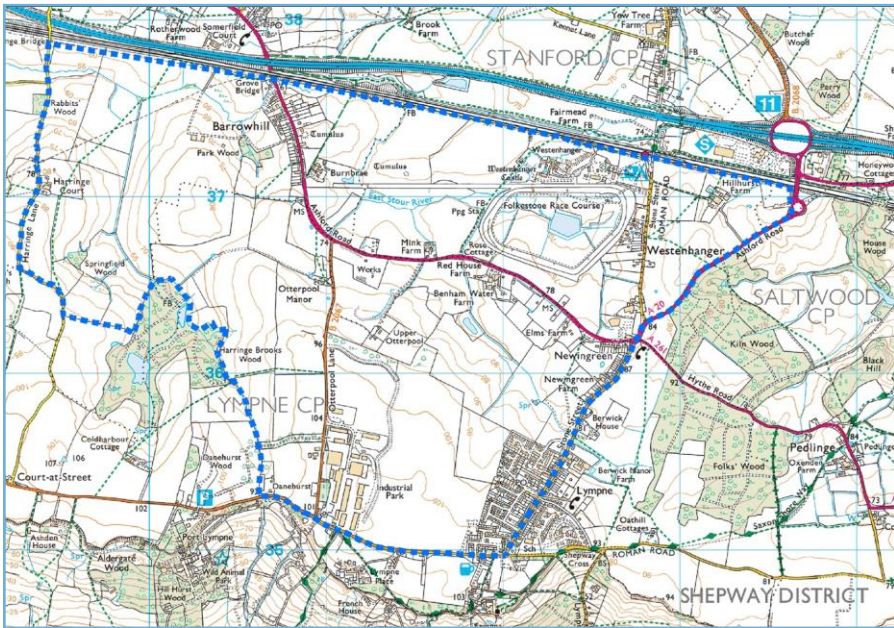
Your questions
answered

Otterpool Park

Folkestone
Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



www.shepway.gov.uk



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Otterpool Park sits to the south of the M20 and west of junction 11. It stretches from the village of Lympne to the south to Barrow Hill in the west. It covers around 700 hectares and includes the former Folkestone Racecourse, Newingreen and Westenhanger village and station. Much of the land is in agricultural use, but there are also several businesses, including the Link Park industrial estate and Holiday Extras.

The blue dotted line on the map indicates the area within which the plans for Otterpool Park will be drawn.

Dear Resident,

You may have heard that the Government has accepted Shepway District Council's bid for a new Garden Town at Otterpool Park. It will provide the new homes and jobs our district needs and the infrastructure needed to support them.

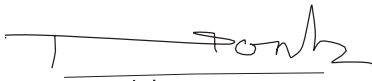
This booklet answers some of the questions that have been raised by your fellow residents about the project and I wanted it delivered to every home in Shepway so you can find out more about our plans for Otterpool Park.

We are just at the beginning of this 30 year project to build up to 12,000 homes but, from the outset, we want everyone to have the chance to help shape what is being proposed. I think it's particularly important that young people have their say.

My generation, on the whole, was able to buy a home at a price that was in reach of our income. Now it's our turn to build the homes and create the jobs for the next generation.

Of course, we could take an "I'm all right Jack" attitude and try to put a block on new homes and jobs coming to the district but I want our children and grandchildren to have the same chances as I did.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Monk', written over a horizontal line.

David Monk
Leader, Shepway District Council

March 2017

What is a “Garden Town”?

A Garden Town is a properly planned new settlement, which offers high quality homes and more jobs in a beautiful setting. It offers everything people need for a new community to thrive – including schools, medical centres, green space, public transport, new roads, community centres and shops.

That is why, last year, Shepway District Council expressed interest in being part of the government’s new programme of garden settlements. In November 2016, the Housing Minister announced his support for our proposal for Otterpool Park – a Garden Town of the Future.

Why do we need more new homes?

Our population is growing. More of us live alone and people are living longer. Sometimes four generations of one family need housing rather than just the two or three that used to need a home.

As a country we’ve not been building enough homes for 30

years. House prices continue to rise as demand outstrips supply.

Most young people cannot afford a home. Home ownership among 25 to 34 year-olds has fallen from 59 per cent just over a decade ago to just 37 per cent today.

Many older people may be happy to move to somewhere more manageable but there just are not the bungalows or specially designed homes to move to.

We now have more than 1,600 local people on the waiting list for a council house in Shepway.

These people are not ‘new’ people. They are here, now, and they need homes.

Why can’t you build all these houses on “brownfield” sites?

There simply aren’t enough “brownfield” (previously developed land) sites in our district to provide all the extra homes we need, although we are using as much of this land as possible.

We’re planning 150 new homes and a new swimming pool and

leisure centre at Princes Parade – a former municipal landfill site. This will also free up the present Hythe swimming pool site for further homes.

But brownfield sites can be difficult. Many are contaminated in some way, so take a long time to develop and provide homes, such as the former gas holder site in Folkestone.

Others are so scattered across the district in small packets that it is hard to provide infrastructure to support them.

Why not make developers build the houses that have planning permission?

Major developments, such as the Folkestone seafront, were on hold during the recession but building should start in 2017 and the Shorncliffe Heights and Martello Lakes developments are both now well under way.

There would need to be a change in law to enable us to compel developers to start building, but we do take action where we can. In December 2016, we bought a

10 acre housing site just outside Folkestone for £1.5 million.

The site already had planning permission but nothing was happening. Following our intervention, 77 homes (including 23 affordable) will start being built this year.

Aren't we building enough homes already?

The new homes being built will go some way towards meeting demand but by law we have to identify enough land to meet all of our local housing need.

We know from our Local Plan that 8,000 new homes are needed in Shepway by 2026 to meet demand for housing. Some of these have already been built and some are planned.

More recent data from the census and the Office for National Statistics, together with emerging findings from our Strategic Housing Market Assessment, indicate that just like the rest of the country, we will have to increase housebuilding targets.

What sort of homes will be built at Otterpool Park?

We want homes in Otterpool Park that meet the highest specification for people of all ages, needs, and means.

- **Starter homes** and apartments to help younger people get a foot on the housing ladder. This type of housing would be at a higher density with more communal green spaces.

- **Family homes** with space for growing families, within walking distance of the new schools at Otterpool Park. We know that buying a house is not within everyone's reach so some homes will be available for private rent.

- **Homes for older people** looking to downsize, and 'extra care' homes available for frailer elderly people, giving them the dignity to live independently. Residential and/or nursing homes are also an option.

- **Affordable homes**, to rent, to buy outright, or to buy a share, because we know that not everyone has the means to pay market rents or market prices.

In short, we want homes that meet the needs of a new, vibrant, mixed community, with an emphasis on quality design, in an outstanding setting.

Otterpool Park will provide enough homes of different types to make a real difference to people's lives.

What does 'affordable housing' mean?

Affordable homes are those provided at below market prices for people unable to afford to buy or rent homes on the open market without financial assistance.

In most cases, a local connection is required to qualify for affordable homes in Shepway.

The full government definition of affordable homes can be found here: [gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary)

Where are the new jobs going to come from?

Good access to the motorway, the fast rail link to London and continental crossings make Otterpool Park an ideal place for companies to locate.

Ultra-fast Broadband will not only help these businesses, but serve the growing trend of home working.

We intend to build offices for start-up businesses and already have a list of local companies who are interested in locating at Otterpool Park.

Building and fitting-out our new homes and business premises will also provide a steady stream of work for tradespeople and apprentices over, at least, the next 30 years.

Will there be the option to build my own home?

Yes, there will be plots available for people to build their own homes individually or with others. But you could also employ a builder and still benefit from the cost advantage of self build.

If you are interested in this possibility, you can register your interest now by emailing otterpool@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Will the new development look like everywhere else?

Otterpool Park will be planned and built to the highest standards. As we are a major landowner and partner with Cozumel, the other major landowner in the area, we can make sure of this.

We want a community that excites and inspires its residents, and the rest of our district, and we know from good developments elsewhere that new housing does not have to be ugly or cramped.

We will make the most of the existing historical buildings as well as provide access to the countryside. Currently there are only a few footpaths across the fields but we plan to create some great green spaces and parks that everyone can use.

How can you make sure the new homes go to local people and not people from London?

We would not want to, nor could we, stop people coming here. People have always moved here from London and elsewhere - many retire here and more young people are choosing to live here.

We will look into schemes that would give local people (including people with relatives here or with local jobs) the first chance to buy or rent Otterpool Park homes.

Council homes will go to local people on our waiting list.

Why can't every town and village take their 'share' of the new houses?

This is indeed a choice. We can either build the homes we need in one place and masterplan the roads, schools, and medical services that will be needed or we can designate every town and village to take their share of the growth.

This would put more pressure on existing services, and threaten the quality of life of increasingly crowded neighbourhoods.

Why Otterpool Park and not somewhere else in Shepway?

With much of our land within the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and large areas with a risk of flooding, there are severe restrictions on where homes can be built.

Otterpool Park is close to the motorway, has an existing railway station and is large enough to be able to create a settlement that has plenty of space for residents and visitors.

Hasn't this area seen more than its fair share of development?

The M20, High Speed Rail, Stop24, the converter station and Eurotunnel have already been built. Plans for an anaerobic digester, and the lorry holding area are in the pipeline owing to our strategic location.

A well-planned high quality garden town at Otterpool Park makes good use of land and secures it from other, undesirable developments in a way that no planning policy, campaign, or protest could ever do.

Why did you buy the land at Otterpool without consulting residents?

We bought our land in December 2015 for £5m as a strategic investment. If we had announced our intention to buy this land before signing a contract, its price would have rocketed and the investment opportunity would have been lost.

We intend to keep everyone up to date on Otterpool Park although some matters must remain commercially confidential, at least for a while. Everything that can be shared about Otterpool Park is put on the council website as soon as possible.

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/Otterpool-park>

Our doctors' surgeries and schools are too crowded already. How will they cope?

Otterpool Park will have new medical centres and schools within walking distance for the new residents.

We have a water shortage; won't Otterpool Park make this worse?

Adequate water supplies will be provided for the new settlement, and we will look to make better use of water by recycling it more effectively.

We know there are existing sewerage problems in the area but Otterpool Park would provide the scale to justify upgrading the system, which will benefit the surrounding community.

If farmland is used for Otterpool Park how will we feed ourselves?

The loss of this amount of farmland will not make a noticeable difference to national food production.

Small-scale, less intensive food growing will be promoted by new allotments for residents. Some early garden towns were planted with fruit trees. This is an option for Otterpool Park.

More than 85% of Shepway is defined as “natural environment” by the government’s mapping service – this will continue to be the case after Otterpool Park is built.

There are already too many cars on our roads. How will our roads cope with even more cars and more pollution?

Otterpool Park will be designed to encourage walking, cycling and public transport. It is common for new developments to have a

subsidised bus service in place from first occupancy of the houses. Such a service can link into neighbouring villages and be a benefit to existing residents as well.

Many of the new homes will be within easy walking or cycling distance of the station. Access to ultra-fast broadband for every home will make working from home a real option for many more people.

Electric cars are improving in range and cost and Otterpool Park will have plentiful charging points. We will also be looking for best practice on car share clubs and rapidly developing new technology.

It sounds great for the people who will live there but what’s in it for the rest of us?

The new parks, cycleways and play areas will be open to all. The new bus services will serve a wider area than just Otterpool Park and ultra-fast broadband would be of immense value to the surrounding communities.

Residents in Westenhanger and users of the railway station would benefit from a new car park and one option could be for a new road to serve the station so that Stone Street would be for residential traffic only.

A new roundabout at Newingreen would relieve the congestion at this complicated junction. It may also be possible to have a relief road for Sellindge.

The whole district will be relieved of pressure of incremental housing growth on its existing communities. There will still be some new homes built across the district but in much smaller numbers.

Local people will also be able to move to and work in Otterpool Park.

When will the first homes be built?

We have many more stages of consultation and planning to go through before the masterplan is completed and the detailed plans are then agreed. We will also want some of the schools and medical

centres in place to match delivery of the homes so we do not expect houses to begin to be built until 2020.

If you have any other questions about Otterpool Park please email otterpool@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or write to: Otterpool Park, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone CT20 2QY. Public exhibitions and presentations will continue as the project develops. You can find updates at folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/otterpool-park.

Front and back cover photos of Welwyn Garden City. Otterpool Park will be a 21st century interpretation of the garden city principles developed by Ebenezer Howard and applied to Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City in the early 20th century.



Find out more at shepway.gov.uk/otterpool-park