

Otterpool Park: update on progress by Shepway District Council as landowner

Work on planning for Otterpool Park has been moving apace since the submission of the Expression of Interest to government for the Locally-Led Garden Cities, Towns and Villages Programme in June 2016. This note provides an update on work that is currently underway by the council in its role as landowner and promoter. You may also be interested to read the note setting out work being undertaken by the Local Planning Authority.

Jeremy Chambers and Julia Wallace would be happy to provide further information and can be contacted by email at: -

Jeremy.chambers@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or Julia.wallace@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

1. Appointment of planning and masterplanning consultants

A consultant team led by Arcadis has been appointed for planning and masterplanning work for Otterpool Park. The team comprises: -

- Arcadis - lead consultants, covering all technical work (transport, landscape, water etc), project management and cost consultancy;
- Farrells - masterplanning;
- Property House - communications;
- Signet Planning – strategic planning advice; and
- Kevin Murray Associates – community engagement.

2. Programme structure and work undertaken so far

Arcadis has set out a series of workstreams for managing the technical and masterplanning work. These are: -

- Design, masterplanning and landscape
- Green infrastructure and biodiversity
- Water, flood risk and blue infrastructure
- Sustainability and resources
- Access and travel
- Site infrastructure, utilities and ground conditions
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Planning.

The work will be broken down into four stages: -

- Stage 1: Capacity and feasibility
- Stage 2: Framework masterplan
- Stage 3: Outline Planning Application
- Stage 4: post-submission of application.

Progress on stage 1

Arcadis has completed a baseline study that reviews all existing information available on the topics set out above, identifying particular risks or information gaps. Topographical and ecological surveys are now underway, as is a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

Farrells has been assessing the landscape character of the area, views to and from the site and local historic settlement patterns and routes. This work will help guide the

landscape-led approach to the masterplan. Farrells has started to consider different options for creating a landscape setting, which will help inform the options for the way that homes and facilities can be distributed (for example all consolidated into one area as opposed to creating a series of separate smaller villages).

Arcadis and Farrells will report on Stage 1 by 31st December 2016. It is intended that this report will be brought to Cabinet in January 2017, in advance of community design workshops taking place in February 2017 (see below).

3. Community engagement and communications

Initial community events are planned to be held in late November 2016 (dates tbc) led by Kevin Murray Associates (KMA). These will focus on providing an update on progress so far, and listening to the view of local people about what is important to them about the area and what they think could be improved. KMA will be hosting the events and acting as a neutral facilitator to represent the views of participants.

Community design workshops on emerging masterplan options will take place in February 2017. This will be a more in depth discussion around the technical issues and a chance for people to influence and give feedback on the masterplan options at an early stage.

Property House will be responsible for communications and liaising with local people and other stakeholders on behalf of the landowners. Communications messages will in the main be linked to community engagement events and approved through agreed protocols. Property House will set up a new website for Otterpool Park to provide a central point of contact and a source of information about future community engagement events.

SDC intends to develop a proxy community to hear the views of potential future residents and businesses about what would attract them to live or work at Otterpool Park. The nature of the proxy community is currently being scoped out.

4. Good practice study tours

A study tour to sites in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, including Letchworth Garden city, took place on 15 and 16 Sept to learn from large scale new communities past and present (participants included SDC officers and members; representatives of parish councils and Shepway tenant and leaseholder group). A second study tour to sites in Kent will take place on 3 Nov, including representatives from businesses and local schools. Further visits will be planned for early 2017 to Bicester, Poundbury and Ebbsfleet.

5. Land assembly and Planning Collaboration Agreement

A collaboration agreement has been signed between SDC and Cozumel Estates, owners of Folkestone Racecourse (wholly owned by the Rueben Brothers) to set out the principle of working together on a comprehensive masterplan for Otterpool Park. It includes the principle of equalisation for the whole area of search (ie land value will be the same across the whole site, irrespective of where housing is located).

Negotiations on the Heads of Terms for options with other landowners are well advanced. Savills are acting on behalf of the Council for this work.