



OTTERPOOL PARK

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ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
OP5 CHAPTER 3 - **DEVELOPMENT AND
CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES**

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March 2022

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3 Development Need and Consideration of Alternatives

3.1 Need for the Development

- 3.1.1 The application of the approach to housing requirements enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) (Ref. 3.1) reveals a pressing need for the development of a new garden settlement. This is further supported by additional Government statements and the evidence base that is being prepared by the planning authority relating to quantifying housing needs in Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC) up to 2037.
- 3.1.2 At national level, the NPPF (2021) explains that the overarching objectives of the planning system to deliver sufficient supply of homes include the need to:
- “support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay” (see NPPF paragraph 60) and*
- “supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities” (see NPPF paragraph 73)*
- 3.1.3 The recognition that new settlements following garden city principles could make a significant contribution to housing supply on a national basis was pursued in 2016 by the Government who asked for expressions of interest from local authorities in providing new garden settlements in their areas. F&HDC, having carried out an initial assessment of the potential capacity of its area to accommodate such a settlement, submitted an expression of interest to pursue a new settlement of up to 12,000 houses in the Otterpool Park area (Ref. 3.2). The Government announced in November 2016 that F&HDC had been successful in its expression of interest and therefore supports the Council in further considering the potential for a new settlement to be accommodated in this area.
- 3.1.4 Further national support for the principle of new garden settlements was put forward in the 2017 Housing White Paper entitled “Fixing our Broken Housing Market” (Ref. 3.3). This document refers in paragraphs 1.35 and 1.36 to the potential for new garden settlements to make a significant contribution towards boosting housing supply across the country in the long term. Paragraph 1.36 states *“The Government is already supporting a new wave of garden towns and villages and will work with these and any future garden communities to ensure that development and infrastructure development are as closely aligned as possible”*.
- 3.1.5 F&HDC has prepared the evidence base to support the Core Strategy Review (2022) (Ref. 3.4). The Council has reviewed the District’s minimum annual housing need figure using the NPPF standard method. This found that there is an annual minimum housing need of 738 new homes a year for the district. Applying this figure from 2019/20 to the end of the Core Strategy Review plan period (2036/37), means a total minimum figure of 13,284 new homes. The Core Strategy Review states at paragraph 4.43 *‘The Council considers that this this requirement will be delivered by development of the new garden settlement, other strategic sites, sites with planning permission and a number of small- to medium-sized site allocations in the Places and Policies Local Plan.’* An indicative housing trajectory is given in Appendix 3 of the Core Strategy Review.
- 3.1.6 Policy SS6 states that Otterpool Park shall provide for a minimum of 5,593 new homes within the plan period (2019/20 to 2036/37), and also recognises that Otterpool Park provides the potential for future growth to provide a total of 8000-10,000 homes within the site allocation area beyond the plan period. Housing needs beyond 2037 have not been specifically

identified in the Core Strategy Review, however, such needs will continue beyond that date. The proposed Development responds to this requirement.

- 3.1.7 Lichfields has prepared the employment evidence base work (Ref. 3.5) and identified that there is a need for employment space in the district. Lichfields has also reviewed the employment options for the Otterpool Park area (Ref. 3.6 and Ref. 3.7), which will help to meet this need. F&HDC has also published a Charter for Otterpool Park (Ref. 3.8) that sets out F&HDC's aspirations for the garden settlement. It expands on the principles set out in the Expression of Interest submitted to the Government in 2016 to provide more detailed guidance and advice on how the new settlement should be planned, built out and delivered so as to create the foundations for a truly sustainable new community.

3.2 Consideration of Alternatives

- 3.2.1 Regulation 18(3) of the EIA Regulations requires an Environmental Statement to include:

“(d) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed Development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment...”

- 3.2.2 Further Paragraph 2 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulation provides further detail as to what should be included in the consideration of alternatives as follows:

“A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.”

- 3.2.3 The proposed Development has been designed with the above factors taken into consideration as is explained further below.

Policy Context

- 3.2.4 The site is currently proposed to be allocated for housing within the Core Strategy Review 2022 under Policy SS6. The Core Strategy sets out a spatial vision and strategy for the sustainable growth of the Folkestone and Hythe District for the period 2014 to 2037. Policy SS6 identifies the proposed Development and wider Framework Masterplan Site for 10,000 dwellings and the proposed Development is expected to provide associated town centre uses.

Alternative Sites

- 3.2.5 The EIA Regulations refer to the requirement to assess reasonable alternatives considered by the applicant. The consideration of alternative sites and their relative merits was undertaken by the LPA. No alternative sites were considered by the Applicant due to the provision in policy following assessment by the LPA of both alternative sites and alternative strategies to meet the housing need in the area. The consideration of alternative sites was given at the CSR EiP hearings and the Inspectors Report (Ref. 3.12) confirms that the Inspectors concluded *“We are satisfied that the Council has genuinely sought to maximise the capacity for new housing within the context of the constraints that exist in the District and there is nothing before us to suggest that significant additional supply could be achieved from other suitable sites at this point in time.”* (Para. 102). *“The evidence demonstrates that only one area ... is able to accommodate the scale of housing necessary. This is the area identified for the New Garden Settlement ... There are no reasonable alternatives in terms of delivering the housing requirement.”* (Para. 69).

The ‘No Development’ Alternative

- 3.2.6 One alternative to the proposed Development is that of leaving the site in its current state. No development would occur, leaving a shortfall of homes from the requirement set out in Policy SS6 of the Core Strategy Review 2022. The site is currently allocated for housing within the F&HDC Core Strategy Review 2022. Policy SS6 identifies the site for approximately 10,000 homes and the proposed Development is expected to provide 8,500 of these, whilst the wider Framework Masterplan would make up the difference.
- 3.2.7 The Otterpool Garden Settlement was subject to Sustainability Appraisal (March 2018 and addendum November 2019) (Ref. 3.19 and Ref. 3.10) at the plan-making stage. Therefore, preferred options and the final choice of allocations and policies have been demonstrated to be the best of the reasonable alternatives for achieving the sustainable development objectives of the plan. The economic, environmental and social effects of the reasonable alternatives for achieving those objectives are reasonably expected to have been taken into consideration.
- 3.2.8 In the absence of the proposed Development it is likely that the site would remain in its current use, which is largely agricultural with a number of farm houses and buildings. Overall, it is considered that in the absence of the proposed Development the site would continue to support a similar suite of habitats and species. However, the site may be impacted by diseases such as ash dieback. Generally, no significant change to heritage assets would be expected, however, slow and continued degradation to the Barrow Scheduled Monuments and Romano-British Villa may occur due to the effects of arable farming, and degradation of military assets due to a lack of management. Improvements are expected to objectives such as water quality for the East Stour waterbody, as set out in its River Basin Management Plan (Ref. 3.11). Refer to Chapters 5-17 for further information.
- 3.2.9 The on-site Permitted Waste Facility (as discussed in Chapter 2: EIA Approach and Methodology) is not expected to be built out, as set out in the Infrastructure Assessment, Otterpool Quarry – Permitted Waste Facility (ES Appendix 2.7) submitted as a supporting planning document.
- 3.2.10 There are numerous potential environmental benefits that would be gained from the proposed Development proceeding that the ‘no development’ scenario would not be able to deliver. However, it is noted that the proposed Development may also give rise to negative environmental impacts.

Design Evolution

Site Constraints and Opportunities

- 3.2.11 The following section describes the main alternative design layouts that were considered prior to the final decision being made, taking into account a comparison of the environmental effects and the environmental constraints considered during the process.

Site Constraints

- 3.2.12 In order to inform the development of a residential-led masterplan for the site a number of site surveys were undertaken at the outset of the design in 2016 to establish the site constraints. A constraints plan was then produced, Figure 1.2 in ES Appendix 1.1 shows the surrounding context of the site. This constraints plan formed the basis to proceed with concept design layouts.
- 3.2.13 The key site constraints identified since 2016 which the wider Framework Masterplan area needed to respond to were as follows:

Landscape designations

- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and
- Special Landscape Area.

Geological Designations

- Otterpool Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Ecology designations

- Harringe Brooks Wood: Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

Water features

- East Stour River and its tributaries (including nutrient sensitivity).

Heritage assets

- Westenhanger Castle (Scheduled Monument and Grade I Listed Building);
- Listed buildings;
- Prehistoric Barrows (Scheduled Monuments); and
- Roman Villa (discovered later in the masterplanning process and which influenced the later designs).

Existing communities:

- Westenhanger;
- Lympne;
- Newingreen; and
- Barrow Hill, Sellindge.

Site opportunities

3.2.14 The proposed Development represents the following opportunities that were also considered in the design:

- Taking a landscape-led approach the masterplan which utilises the green space network as a framework for housing, influencing its location and form and creates attractive views from the Kent Downs AONB
- Connecting Otterpool Park to existing communities and the wider landscape through a network of existing and new open spaces by creating a green framework where new and existing residents can meet, relax, exercise and play and can access the surrounding countryside
- Providing a range of characterful homes which deliver adaptable, balanced and diverse communities and which meet local housing requirements
- Creating a town centre which is attractive and easily accessible for all and which provides a social and community hub
- Creating a distinct place through celebrating the history of the landscape and the heritage assets of the place, including Westenhanger Castle, the site of a Roman Villa, barrows, and WWII remains as well as a SSSI
- Connecting communities by opening up movement and access corridors and providing new infrastructure and facilities, such as schools, local centres and improved public transport links, that can be shared between the existing settlements and the new community at Otterpool Park
- Maximising on the opportunity for creating a walkable community - a 'Ten Minute Town' - by promoting sustainable travel by ensuring that all homes have facilities within walking distance (particularly primary schools), and attractive walking and cycling routes to all key destinations to encourage people to be active rather than use a private car
- Creating a place which is attractive to employers and will provide jobs local to where people live, reducing the need for having to travel or move outside the area for work
- Helping the existing ecosystems to perform better and support the town's ability to be resilient to the future effects of climate change.

3.2.15 Taking into account the above environmental constraints and opportunities, and the policy requirement to provide a minimum of circa 5,600 new homes, with a potential for future growth to provide a total of 8,000 to 10,000 homes in the area (Ref. 3.4), a series of masterplan options were developed for consideration which considered different options using different layouts of built development area and green spaces and their relationship with the nearby towns and villages.

Evolution of the application site boundary

3.2.16 Baseline studies of the Otterpool Park project commenced with a Study Area that was used for the initial desktop studies, surveys and masterplanning (Figure 3-1A). The application site boundary was further amended (Figure 3-1B) to create the Otterpool Framework Masterplan Area (OFMA) of approximately 765ha which was used for capacity testing, housing quantity studies and layout options. The OFMA or "Framework Masterplan", as referred to elsewhere in the ES, includes for up to 10,000 homes as a longer-term development area. Following this, the application site boundary was further refined (Figure 3-1C) and reduced to 580ha for the proposed Otterpool Park outline planning application based on 8,500 homes and associated uses as submitted in 2019. Figure 3-1D shows the application site boundary, which this ES is based upon.

The key changes to the site boundary from that of the 2019 planning application comprise the inclusion of Westenhanger Castle, additional land to the northwest of the site to accommodate water infrastructure and removal of land in the north-eastern corner of the site to reach a total of approximately 589ha.

- 3.2.17 Westenhanger Castle was included in the application site boundary following a series of discussions with Historic England, it was concluded that by including Westenhanger Castle the future of the Scheduled Monument could be more robustly secured.
- 3.2.18 The provision of waste water treatment has been subject to optioneering. Three potential wastewater treatment options were considered to manage the wastewater that is produced from Otterpool Park in the 2019 application. These comprised:
- Option 1: to dispose of the wastewater off-site to the Southern Water's existing Sellindge Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) that is located approximately 1 km northwest of the site. This would involve upgrading Sellindge WWTW.
 - Option 2: to dispose of wastewater by a new purpose built onsite WWTW in the northwest corner of the site itself, which could then be operated by a New Appointment and Variation company rather than incumbent Southern Water.
 - Option 3: involving the provision of a direct rising main connection between a new pumping station on site and the Southern Water West Hythe WWTW (which is six kilometres west of the site).
- 3.2.19 Option 2 was selected as the Applicant's preferred option for progressing development in the first phase and would provide the development with a nutrient neutral solution. Option 3 was discarded due to the technical complexities of upgrading the WWTW at West Hythe. Option 1 may come forward after the initial development phase of the WWTW following resolution of nutrient neutrality issues in addition to Option 2.
- 3.2.20 For this amended application, following the greater certainty on the preferred WWTW options, consultation determined that the north-western corner of the site would be preferable to maintain distances from nearby residents.
- 3.2.21 Additionally, since the 2019 application, a parcel of land has been removed from the boundary in the north-eastern corner of the site. This is as a result of landowner discussions.

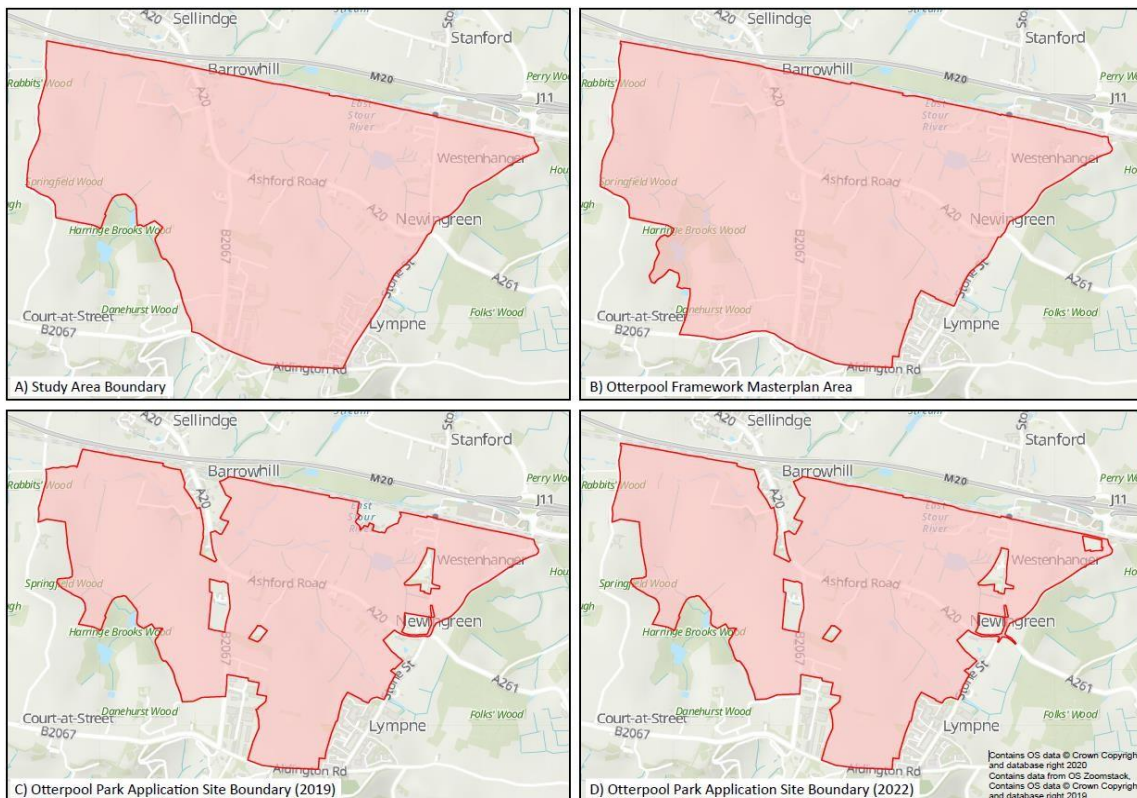


Figure 3-1 Evolution of the Site Boundary

Evolution of the Masterplan Design

3.2.22 Design layouts for the proposed Development have been based on key themes for the Otterpool Park Framework Masterplan in terms of its initial estimated capacity of up to 12,000 homes for the Garden Town, as set out below. These themes were based upon the “landscape-led” approach to the masterplan that formed a primary objective of the Garden Town, as set out in the initial guiding principles for the project. These principles were included in the initial proposals to the UK Government for Garden Town status and are linked to the sensitivities associated with the setting of the nearby Kent Downs AONB.

3.2.23 All design options sought to:

- Respect key views toward the site from the adjacent designated AONB which characterises the openness of the surrounding area as well as other key landscape designations, and
- Enhance the currently limited visual setting of Westenhanger Castle, a nationally significant monument in heritage terms which lies within the northern boundary of the site.

3.2.24 Design layouts have also been largely influenced by the site’s rich history of cultural heritage including archaeology, its ecologically valuable areas, and the known water scarcity in the southeast of England. The five main design options are shown below.

Design layout 1: Landscape buffers

3.2.25 The design approach for this option (shown on Figure 3-2) was based upon the creation of landscape ‘buffers’ of open space between existing villages and the proposed Framework Masterplan, as specified by the yellow shaded areas

adjacent to the existing communities of Barrow Hill, Sellindge, Lympe, Newingreen, and Westenhanger.

Advantages

3.2.26 The key advantages of this design layout were considered to be:

- The layout would separate existing homes from the proposed Development (the white areas in Figure 3-2 of design layout 1 indicating built development).
- Some opportunities to combine landscaping and habitat or flood mitigation comparative to other design options.

Disadvantages

3.2.27 The main disadvantages of this design layout were considered to be:

- The new development would be more fragmented, making the sharing of services more challenging.
- Separation between development would increase travel distances travelled and discourage walkability and sustainable travel modes.
- Less opportunity to combine landscaping and habitat or flood mitigation compared to other design options.
- Some development would be visible in views from the AONB and proposed landscaping is less effective for screening than other design options.

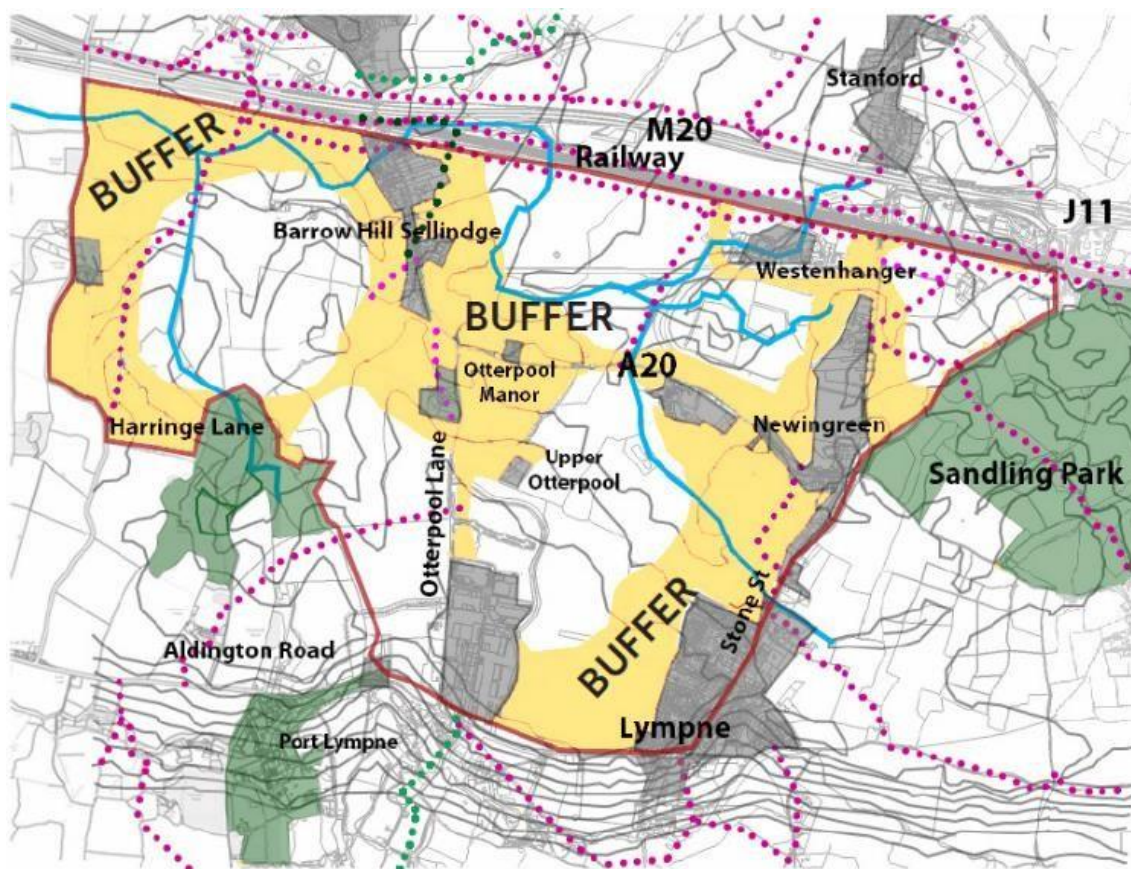


Figure 3-2 Design Layout Option 1 Landscape Buffers Between Existing and Proposed Development

Design layout 2: Landscape Ridges

3.2.28 This option (shown in Figure 3-3) considered the creation of green open space on topographic ridges that would act as a screen to the setting of the new settlement from the AONB to the north, with built development largely being on lower ground.

Advantages

3.2.29 The key advantages of this design layout were considered to be the following:

- Screens the proposed Development from some views within the AONB.
- Opportunity to combine landscaping and habitat mitigation in the same area.
- Potential for a large park in middle with enhanced woodland landscape.
- Less fragmented development.
- Potential for varied character in settlements

Disadvantages

3.2.30 The key disadvantages of this design layout were considered to be:

- Development conflicts with areas needed for flood mitigation.
- The existing homes would experience less separation from the proposed Development compared to other design layouts.
- Little landscape or open space protection of the setting of Westenhanger Castle.

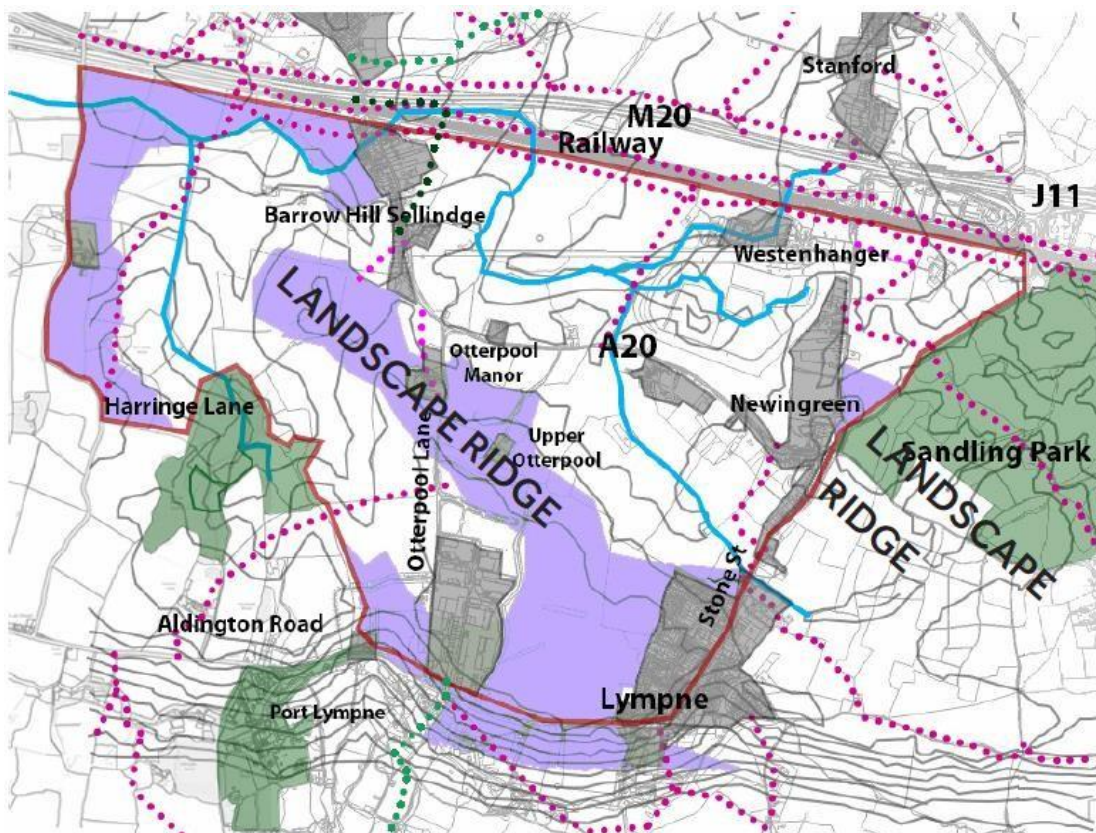


Figure 3-3 Design Layout Option 2: Landscape Ridges as Visual integration to new settlement setting from the AONB

Design Layout 3: Landscape Valleys

3.2.31 This option (shown on Figure 3-4) considered the creation of green open space in lower valley areas around the existing streams with built development on higher ground.

Advantages

3.2.32 The key advantages of this design layout were considered to be:

- The landscaping would provide natural features for necessary flood mitigation.
- There is potential for a large park or open space in the centre of the development.

Disadvantages

3.2.33 The key disadvantages of this design layout were considered to be:

- Built development would be more visible, particularly in views from the AONB as the landscaping in the valley would be less effective for screening.
- The new development would be more fragmented, making the sharing of services more challenging.
- Separation between development would increase travel distances and discourage walkability and sustainable travel modes.
- Some landscaping may be required where it is not needed for habitat mitigation.
- The existing homes would be less separated from the development.

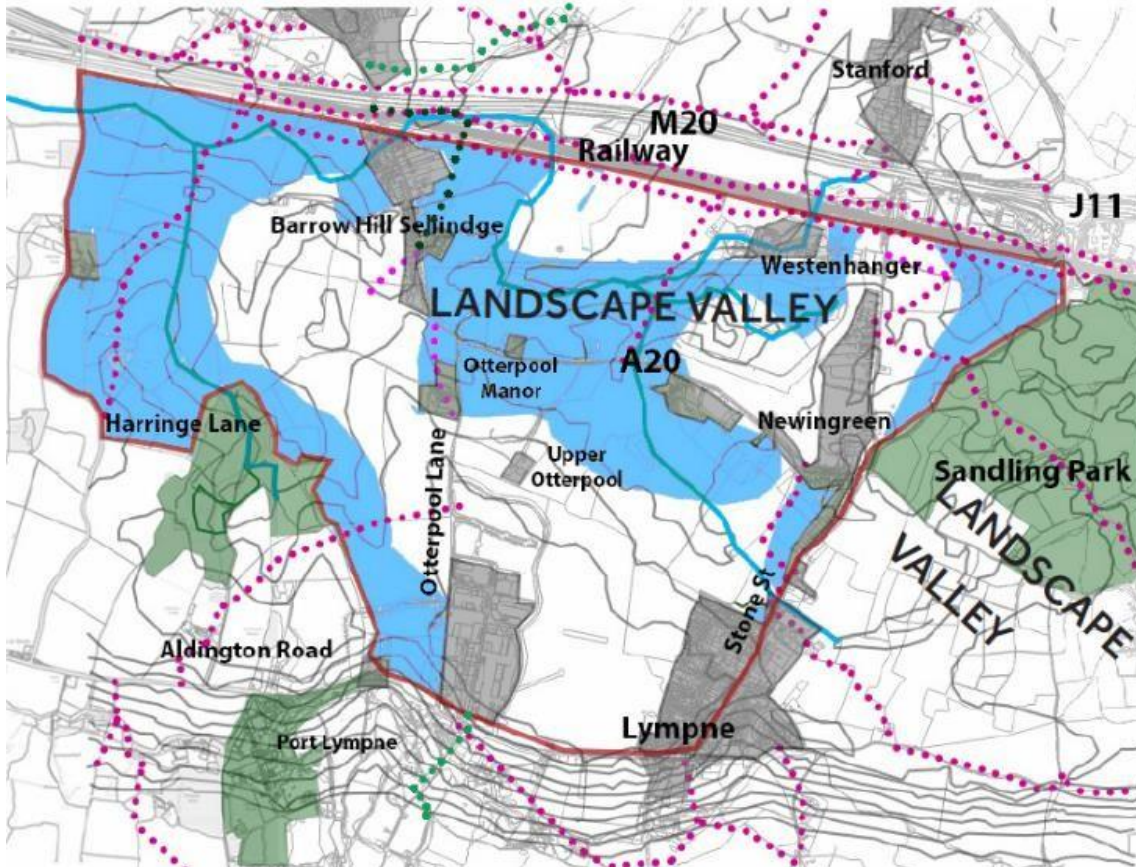


Figure 3-4 Landscape Valleys in lower areas with existing streams

Design layout 4: Urban and Rural Green Links

3.2.34 This option (shown on Figure 3-5) considered the creation of green links between new and existing urban and rural parks and woodlands.

Advantages

3.2.35 The key advantages of this design layout were considered to be the following:

- Landscaping can also function as flood and habitat mitigation.
- Improved protection of the setting of Westenhanger Castle through more open space and landscaping in its surrounds.
- Potential for open space to be provided at various levels across the site rather than specifically in natural ridges or valleys.

Disadvantages

3.2.36 The main disadvantages of this design layout were:

- The new development would be more fragmented, making the sharing of services more challenging.
- Separation between development would increase travel distances and discourage walkability and sustainable travel modes.
- Some of the built development would be visible in views from the AONB, with landscaping having less of a screening effect.
- Fewer existing homes would be separated from the development.



Figure 3-5 Landscape Urban and Rural Green Links

The Preferred layout

3.2.37 The preferred option (shown on Figure 3-6) was chosen largely on the basis of concept layouts 1 and 4 to create a landscape of connectivity providing buffers between new and existing settlements. The rationale behind concepts 2 and 3 in terms of ridges and valleys were also incorporated into the masterplan to create open spaces for parks and wooded areas that would enhance the area's distinct topography, heritage and water environment.

3.2.38 The overall benefits of the final choice of development layout compared with previous layouts were considered to be:

- It provides a connected landscape that will provide habitat mitigation.
- It has the potential to create parks and open spaces in upper and lower slopes of the development site.
- The landscaping in the north will provide appropriate screening of important views from the Kent Downs AONB.
- The landscaping has been retained in areas required for flood risk mitigation and will have a dual use of providing blue-green infrastructure for biodiversity mitigation and recreation.
- Appropriate open space can be provided to respect the historic landscape setting of Westenhanger Castle.

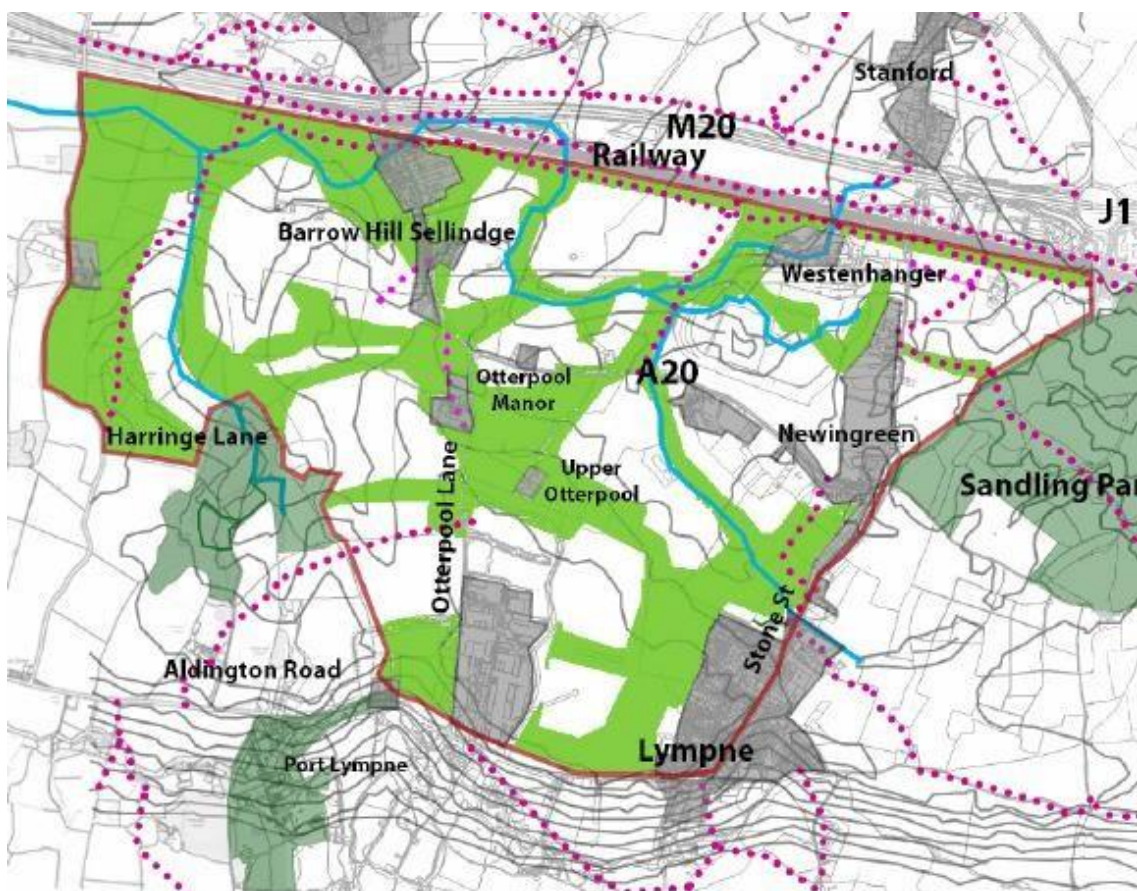


Figure 3-6 Preferred Layout: Connectivity and Buffers (Otterpool Framework Masterplan for 10,000 homes)

February 2019 – Outline Planning Application Submission

3.2.39 The chosen layout design for the 2019 OPA submission was then refined in site area from 765ha to 586ha to enable the delivery of up to 8,500 homes and associated town centre uses. The key features of the outline planning application submission in 2019 comprised:

- Up to 8,500 homes;
- Approximately 50% green infrastructure;
- Five primary schools;
- Five local centres; and
- One secondary school.

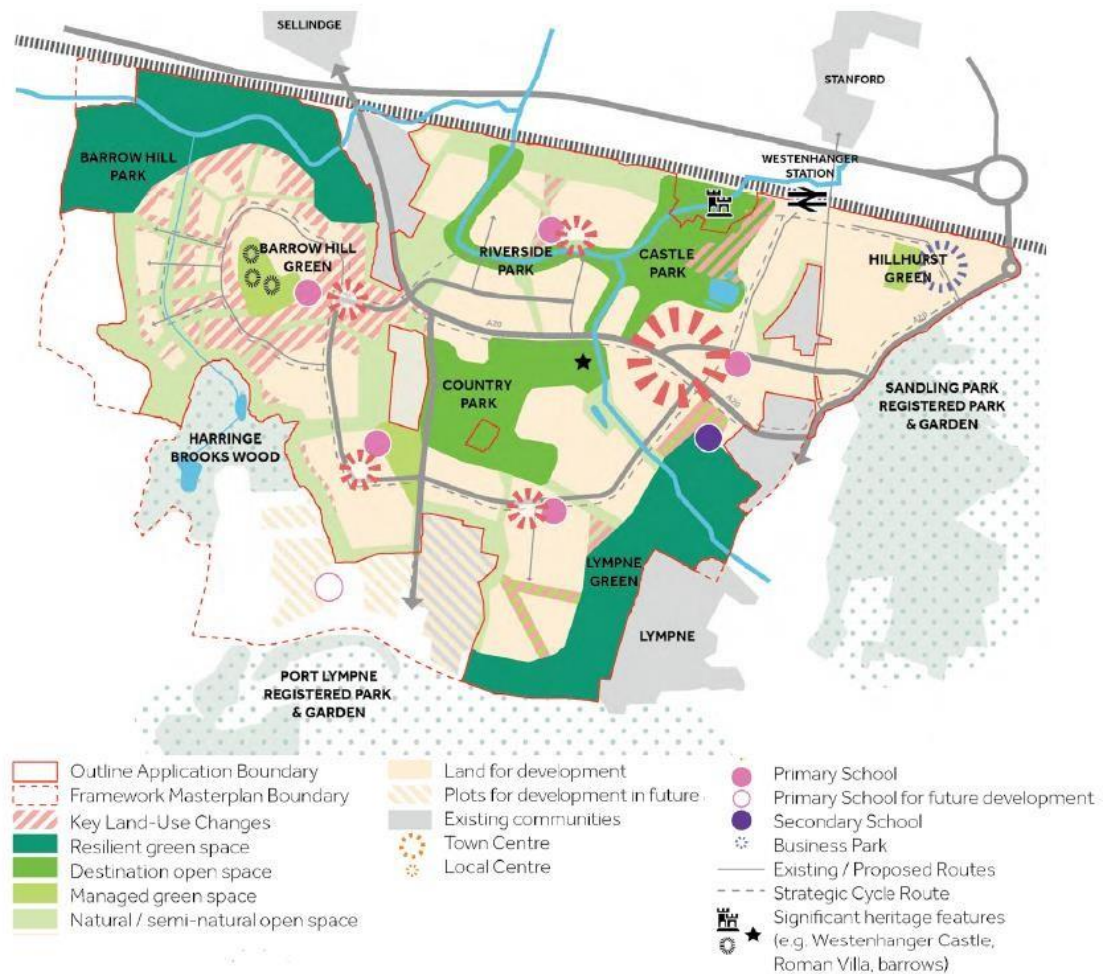


Figure 3-7 – Feb 2019 Framework Masterplan in support of Outline Planning Application Submission

July 2020

3.2.40 Following the Outline Application Submission, a few adjustments were made to the Illustrative Masterplan (ES Appendix 4.5). The main changes will create a clearer framework of mixed use spaces with a more legible hierarchy of centres, streets and open spaces, and better integration of Westenhanger Castle. The main areas of proposed changes are as follows:

- Clarifying the town centre as the main area of mixed use around the lake. The north south link across the A20 and the town centre street pattern will prioritise cycle links to the town centre, railway station and secondary school. The street layout provides a framework for pocket parks and paths linking to the schools.

- Reducing the number to two local centres by combining the south and west areas. These centres focus around two significant open spaces that link to the country park and Westenhanger Castle park to create a complete green spine. This will bring together heritage assets and create a distinct character for the masterplan vision.
- Barrow Hill Green realigned to retain the scheduled group of barrows.
- Two secondary schools.
- The triangle area of land east of Stone Street is replanned: retaining the Hillhurst farm buildings as a focal point within a triangular central green space which leaves regular shapes for development around the perimeter, also in response to feedback to mitigate sensitive views from the AONB.

3.2.41 The key features of the design are:

- Framework Masterplan (dashed red boundary) still delivers 10,000 homes
- Outline application for (continuous red boundary) for 8,500 homes, approximately 50% green infrastructure;
- Integration of Westenhanger Castle;
- One town centre and three local centres; and
- Up to 7 primary schools, 1 secondary with a potential site for a 2nd secondary school.

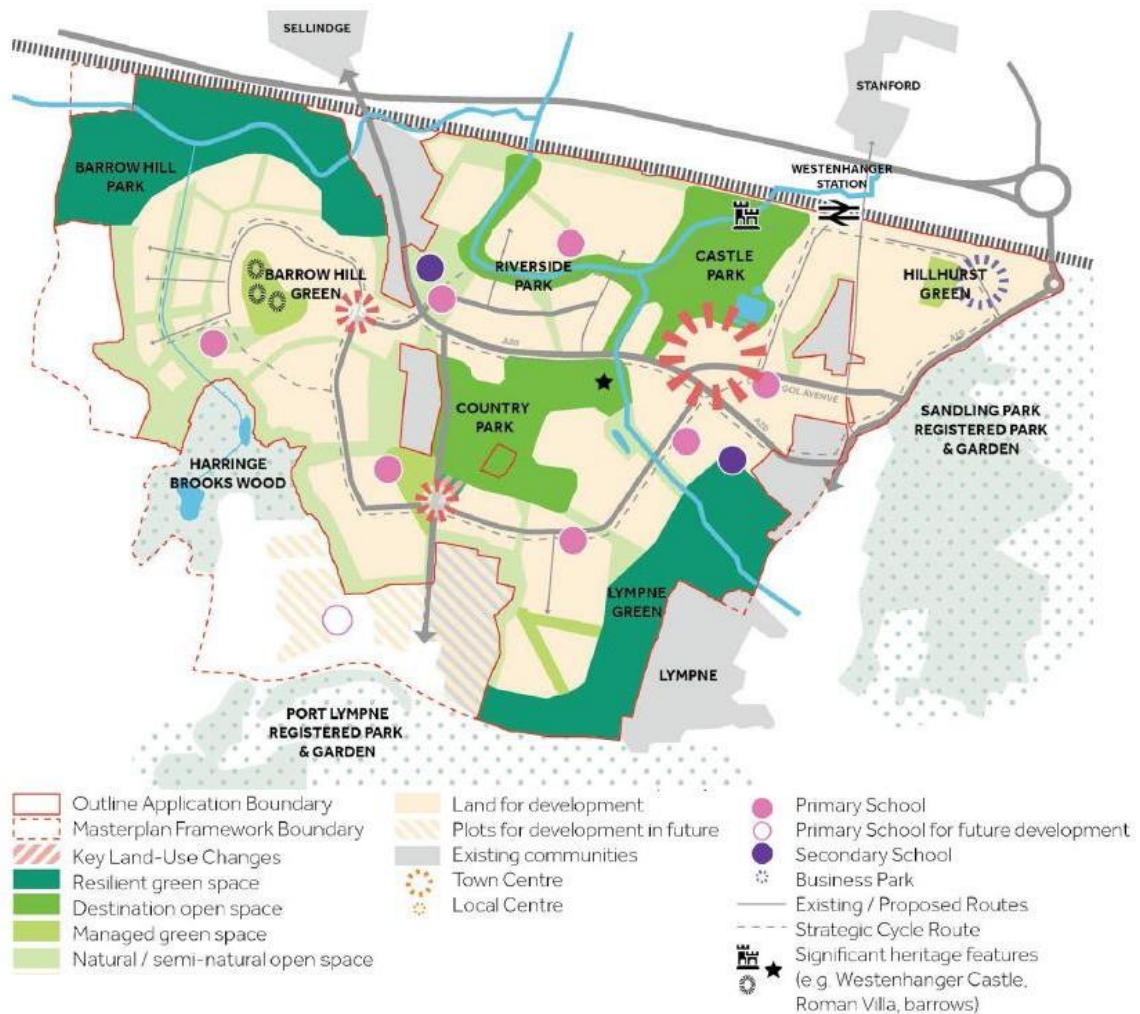


Figure 3-8 Framework Masterplan July 2020

Current Masterplan

3.2.42 Since the Outline Application Submission in 2019, additional consultation events and stakeholder meetings were held in Spring 2021. The masterplan has since been updated to reflect feedback from these engagements. These encompass:

- Additional detailing of Phase 1 of the development and the town centre, testing and adjusting key design principles for the masterplan.
- Progression of the concept design for Westenhangar Castle Park, enhancing points of arrival and linkages to the wider area, and ensuring all key facilities have been accounted for across the landscape.
- Minor updates to the application site boundaries around Barrow Hill Park, Newingreen junction and Barrow Hill Farm.
- Amendment to the site boundary to relocate the WWTW north of river stour in the north-west corner.
- Amendment to site boundary in north-eastern corner of the site.

3.2.43 In addition, changes have been made to the anticipated construction phasing of the proposed Development. In the previous application the construction duration

for the development was 25 years, this has now been shortened to 19 years, 2023-2042.

3.2.44 The key features of the design are:

- The Framework Masterplan (dashed red boundary) still delivers 10,000 homes
- Outline application (continuous red boundary) for up to 8,500 homes, approximately 50% green infrastructure
- Integration of Westenhangar Castle
- One town centre and three local centres
- Up to 7 primary schools, 1 secondary with a potential site for a 2nd secondary school



Figure 3-9 Current Masterplan

3.3 References

Ref	Title
Ref. 3.1	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021). National Planning Policy Framework
Ref. 3.2	F&HDC (formerly SDC) (8 June 2016). Otterpool Park: A Garden Town of the Future – Proposal. Available online at: https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s19822/rcatt20160608%20garden%20town.pdf [Accessed 05 July 2021]
Ref. 3.3	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (February 2017). Fixing our Broken Housing Market. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market [Accessed 05 July 2021]
Ref. 3.4	F&HDC (2022) Core Strategy Review
Ref. 3.5	Lichfields on behalf of F&HDC (May 2017) Shepway Employment Land Review: Final Report. Available online at https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/3775/employment-land-review-2017 [Accessed 01 October 2021]
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