

## **Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger**

The site

**4.170** Folkestone Racecourse is located in the parish of Stanford in central Shepway, adjoining Westenhanger railway station with mainline rail services to London, Ashford, Sandling (near Hythe) and Folkestone; and within the strategic corridor. The site is bound by the A20 to the south, the settlement of Westenhanger to the east, and the railway and motorway to the north (beyond Westenhanger Castle). To the west a small part of the track is within Sellindge Parish, near the community of Barrowhill.

**4.171** The site has been home to racing since the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with the course now the county's only racecourse. The adjacent Westenhanger Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, ancient barns and Grade I listed manor house dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century is open for public access and various private commercial events, and has benefited from major restoration works in recent years. At present the historic setting of the castle is significantly compromised by the position of the racecourse grandstand, stables and other service areas.

**4.172** The Racecourse and Castle, like the railway station, are only accessible through Westenhanger (on the Roman Stone Street). This feeds onto the A20 near its junction with the roads to Hythe (A261) and Lympe at the settlement of Newingreen. Westenhanger is separated from the village of Stanford to the north by the M20 and railway, although bridge links provide some pedestrian access.

## **Policy SS8**

### **Spatial Strategy for Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger**

**Folkestone Racecourse is allocated for a mixed use development to include a reconfigured racecourse, grandstand, conferencing and associated leisure facilities and other rural employment, together with residential development of up to 820 dwellings, a primary school, community facilities, public open spaces and an enhanced setting for Westenhanger Castle and upgraded railway station facilities (including new access and parking).**

**Planning permission will only be granted where:**

- a. The quantum of residential development provided is only as a necessary part of a comprehensive approach for re-constructing the Racecourse facility as a high quality visitor attraction.
  - b. Development is appropriately phased to ensure benefits can be fully realised, so that a new Racecourse can be provided and racing resumes at the earliest practical juncture, and infrastructure improvements are delivered at a suitably early stage to ensure on-site facilities are available to foster a new sense of place and community, and to manage environmental impacts in relation to infrastructure capacity.
  - c. The development directly enhances the setting and access to Westenhanger Castle, fully considering any archaeological potential.
  - d. Deliverable solutions and a suitable programme of implementation are identified for major physical infrastructure requirements, including the critical Newingreen (A20/A261/Stone Street) junction, onward transport arrangements for users of the railway station, and strategic wastewater infrastructure.
  - e. The proposal includes on site provision of appropriate community infrastructure and services, including land for an (up to a two form entry size) primary school and appropriate financial contributions towards the school, as well as small shops necessary to meet the local needs of the neighbourhood, offices and local community facilities.
  - f. The design provides for a distinctive new neighbourhood which respects its surroundings and rural location, the immediate relationship with properties on Stone Street, and the height/scale and form of settlements within the wider North Downs area. Green infrastructure should be designed to be multifunctional and contribute to a new sense of place.
  - g. Residential development should seek to achieve a high level of environmental performance to a minimum standard of Code for Sustainable Homes level 3, with a minimum water efficiency of 90 litres/person/day. All buildings should be designed to allow convenient waste recycling.
  - h. Development delivers around 250 affordable dwellings subject to viability (or if the total residential quantum is less than 820 units, 30%) with provisions for prioritising local rural needs.
  - i. An access strategy is developed that maximises the potential for walking, cycling and use of public transport, in particular improving access to Westenhanger Railway Station, ensuring access for race goers is prioritised via train, and providing contributions to local bus route improvements and ease of access to bus services for rail station users and residents.
  - j. A programme is agreed to manage flood risk and drainage, and associated green infrastructure opportunities. The northern part of the development must be designed sensitively around the East Stour River and any culverting must be minimised.
  - k. Development proposals include an appropriate recreational access strategy to ensure additional impacts to local Natura 2000 site(s) are acceptably mitigated against, in accordance with policy CSD4.
  - l. Development must be landscaped and designed so as to respect the setting of the nearby AONB as well as the wider and immediate rural environment.
- Any detailed planning application submitted in relation to any of the site, will only be granted if it is supported

by and consistent with either:

A satisfactory masterplan for the whole site produced in line with this policy, or

An outline/detailed planning application for the whole site that provides satisfactory masterplanning in line with this policy including phasing proposals and necessary viability assessments.

### **The proposal**

**4.173** Folkestone Racecourse is unique as a facility within the county, and as a significant attraction within Shepway. Currently the Racecourse includes facilities reaching the end of their operational use, and it is important that investment is secured and the imperative to capitalise on district assets within the strategic corridor are maximised. It is a site specific proposal, that brings forward the redevelopment of a key visitor attraction and can provide housing in a sustainable rural location (36). Moreover, development offers the potential to tackle existing problems by enhancing the setting of Westenhanger Castle, one of Shepway's most prominent and precious heritage assets, and improving the poor accessibility and parking provision at the railway station.

**4.174** Development at Westenhanger would complement a growing concentration of investment in employment and tourist attractions in the western strategic corridor (including employment uses at Link Park, an adjacent new office building and Port Lympne Wild Animal Park). A new racecourse and potential conferencing/leisure facility, along with opening up Westenhanger Castle, would support a cluster of rural visitor attractions in line with policy CSD3.

**4.175** Additionally, development can contribute to overcoming existing physical infrastructure problems in the area relating to transport and local wastewater capacity (see Appendix 2). A substantial upgrade is required in connections to the Sellindge wastewater treatment works at the outset of development. Phasing should be carefully planned also to ensure that community infrastructure is prioritised to meet the needs of the development. Moreover, the requirement to deliver critical new junction improvements at Newingreen (A20/A261/ Stone Street) must be addressed in a timely manner so as to ensure nil detriment from the development.

**4.176** There is opportunity to both diversify and expand upon activities at the racecourse and redevelop part of the site for residential use so as to ensure the facility is retained in the long term as a major leisure and tourism destination within the district. The site can provide significant new residential development contributing to growth objectives in the strategic corridor, offering readily accessible public transport options and without harming the character and setting of the AONB.

**4.177** Key aspects of the current proposals are shown illustratively in figure 4.9 below and should be used to inform further master planning of the development. The exact extent of land allocated is shown in the plan in Appendix 4.

### **36 Folkestone Racecourse Update Statement and Appendices**

**4.178** The illustrated proposal provides an opportunity to reconfigure the course and locate the new facilities away from the Scheduled Ancient Monument and listed buildings of the Castle, enhancing both their immediate setting and views to and from the surrounding area. A primary rationale is to improve the setting, appearance and access of Westenhanger Castle, and any proposals must comply with this and national policy in agreement with English Heritage. In addition consideration must be given in designing and landscaping the site to longer views and in particular care must be taken to minimise impact on the nearby AONB.

**4.179** Development entails a new community at Westenhanger and the Racecourse. A primary school is required to meet the needs of the development, and this will not only limit private car journeys, but also provide a focal point for the neighbourhood. The exact size and means of provision of the school will be negotiated in discussion with Kent County Council taking in to account phasing and capacity elsewhere within the North Downs area. However appropriate land (up to approximately 2ha) to accommodate up to a two form entry school should be safeguarded and developed as required, together with financial contributions for pupil places to meet the requirements of the development.

**4.180** Residential development should be of a mix of dwelling sizes and forms. This is an accessible rural location within one of the most costly Local Housing Market Areas in East Kent (as identified by the SHMA(37)). Accordingly, higher values can be achieved than in many other area of the district. However it is also recognised that the reconstruction of the racecourse will be funded by residential land sales, and there are some significant physical infrastructure prerequisites of development.

**4.181** Homes should address local and rural needs and also be flexible to the changing needs of residents as they age; thereby ensuring a mixed community.

### **37 Strategic Housing Market Assessment for East Kent**

**4.182** To further ensure sustainable development and place shaping, it is vital that social and green infrastructure for the development is planned at the outset. This should be recognised within the masterplan following detailed research of need based on demographic projections of occupation. Development should deliver new public open space and playspace. A Multi Use Games Area could be located adjoining the primary school or within its grounds to maximise use. A central village green would also offer a natural focus and opportunities for local sports.

**4.183** Shared facilities with the Racecourse may be appropriate subject to a formal management and access agreement, for example flexible floorspace that can be used for conferences or local community activities. Such premises should be visually and functionally well-related to the heart of the neighbourhood.

**4.184** The community should take a loose knit form, with a central spine road through the settlement to the railway station. The design should follow principles of a more organic village pattern with a connected network of streets, lanes, greens and squares, creating a suitably characterful place. In order to create an active community the main new facilities should be grouped and informally clustered near the station.

**4.185** Opportunity exists for larger properties fronting the racecourse and green spaces, whilst the setting of Westenhanger Castle should be substantially improved by opening up views to the south and east, across an area of publicly accessible open space, and retaining open aspects to the west. Similarly, development should be designed in recognition of existing residential properties on Stone Street.

**4.186** The East Stour River flows through the northwest of the site, where the new racetrack is expected to be located. The proposals have been considered in relation to flood risk (38) and development is appropriate subject to further assessment and management. Nevertheless, development must apply policies CSD3-5, and identify on-site mitigation and enhancement. In reconstructing the Racecourse, there are major opportunities for biodiversity and water environment improvements and these should be secured in any development. Culverting of watercourses should be kept to the minimum necessary to construct the racetrack.

**4.187** The development lends itself to the promotion of standards of sustainable construction that are higher than current national requirements. This may include high levels of energy efficiency, decentralised/low carbon energy generation, local needs for grey water recycling/sustainable urban drainage systems, and buildings promoting communities with adaptable and healthy lifestyles.

**4.188** For the avoidance of doubt, any planning application should comply with other applicable elements of Core Strategy policy, including on the provision of Lifetime Homes and family dwellings within the mix of residential development (CSD2).

**4.189** Shepway District Local Plan Review saved polices hereby deleted: LR5