

Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger

- The site

4.173 Folkestone Racecourse is located in the parish of Stanford in central Shepway, 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.

4.174 The site has been home to racing since the late 19th 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 14th Century is open for public access and various private 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.

4.175 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 Lympne at the settlement of Newingreen. Stone Street is separated by the M20 and the railway, dividing this area from the village of Stanford to the north.

- The proposal

4.176 Folkestone Racecourse is unique as a facility within the county, and is a major visitor attraction within Shepway. Currently the Racecourse includes facilities reaching the latter phase of their operational use, and it is considered important that investment in retaining and improving the venue is secured given the Core Strategy's rural development objectives and the need to capitalise on district assets within the Strategic Corridor. It is a site specific proposal, there being no other leisure/tourism attraction of equivalent potential prominence in the district. Moreover, development offers the potential to tackle existing problems in terms of the setting of Westenhanger Castle and the poor accessibility and parking provision at the railway station.

4.177 Development at Westenhanger would complement a growing concentration of investment in employment and tourist attractions in the western Strategic Corridor (including an adjacent new office HQ building and Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, Lympne). 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.

4.178 Additionally, development can contribute to overcoming existing physical infrastructure problems in the area relating to transport and local wastewater capacity. 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 need to deliver critical new junction improvements at Newingreen (A20/A261/ Stone Street) must be addressed in a timely manner as set out in Appendix 4.

4.179 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 public transport options and without harming the character and setting of the AONB.

4.180 Key aspects of the current proposals are shown illustratively in figure 4.6 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.

Folkestone Racecourse Strategic Site

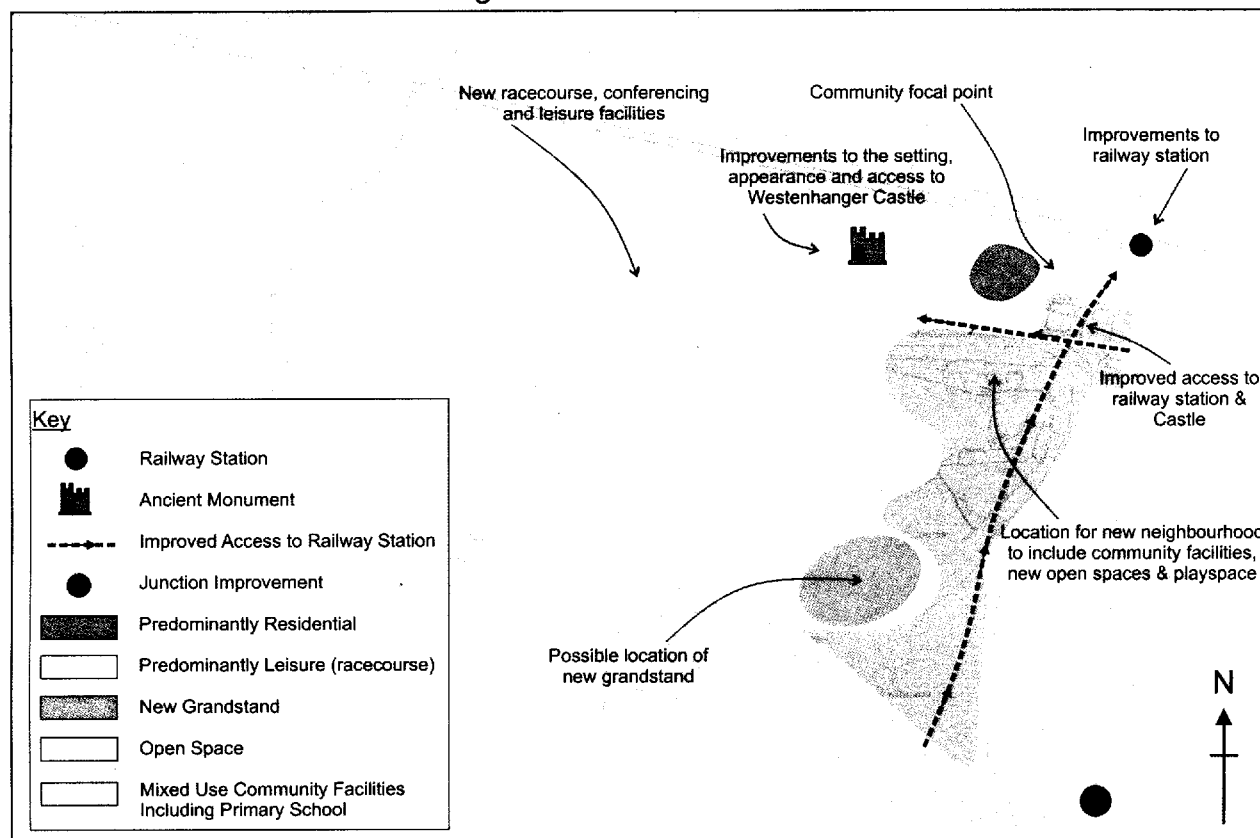


Figure 4.9

4.181 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 PPS5 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.

4.182 Residential development should be of a mix of 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). 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. A proportion of affordable housing totalling 30% should be included within the overall residential development unless it is demonstrated in an appropriate viability study that accompanies a planning application for the development, or a phase in delivering the site that this is not possible.

4.183 Development entails a new neighbourhood additional to 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 new community and sense of place. The exact size of the school will negotiated in discussion with Kent County Council considering capacity elsewhere within the North Downs area.

4.184 Homes should be flexible to the changing needs of residents as they age and to the demographics of the rural area; thereby ensuring a mixed community.

4.185 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.

4.186 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 new neighbourhood.

4.187 Development should form a loose knit, organic pattern that follows a central spine road through the new linear settlement to the station. So as to create a meaningful place the main village facilities should be grouped in an informal cluster to the south of the station. The design should follow principles of a more organic village pattern with connected network of streets, lanes, greens and squares, creating a suitably characterful place.

4.188 Opportunity exists for larger properties to the edge of the village and 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. Similarly, development should be designed in recognition of existing residential properties on Stone Street.

4.189 The masterplan should explore the impact on the wider green infrastructure and identify opportunities on site of mitigation and enhancement. In reconstructing the Racecourse, there are major opportunities for biodiversity and water environment enhancements and these should be delivered. Culverting of watercourse should be kept to the minimum necessary to construct the racetrack.

4.190 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, issues of grey water recycling/sustainable urban drainage systems, and buildings promoting communities with adaptable and healthy lifestyles.

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 1 or 2FE 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:

- Residential development is provided as a necessary part of a comprehensive approach for re-providing the Racecourse facility as a high quality visitor attraction.
- 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.
- The development directly enhances the setting and access to Westenhanger Castle, and respects setting of nearby AONB, wider and immediate landscape.
- 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 a new strategic wastewater infrastructure.
- New services are provided to include land and contributions towards a primary school, small shops to meet the local needs of the community, offices (Class B1), and necessary local community facilities.
- The design provides for a distinctive new rural neighbourhood which respects its surroundings and rural location, the immediate relationship with properties on Stone Street, and the height/scale and urban grain of village settlements within the wider North Downs area. Green infrastructure should be multifunctional and contribute to the new sense of place.
- Residential buildings achieve a level of water efficiency of 90litres/person/day or better, plus Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 or higher, and all buildings designed to allow convenient waste recycling.
- Development delivers 240 affordable dwellings subject to viability (or if the total residential quantum is less than 800 units, 30%) with provisions for prioritising local rural needs.
- 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 supporting the improvement of local bus routes and ease of access to bus services for rail station users and residents.
- A programme is agreed to manage flood risk and drainage, and any culverting must be minimised and water management designed to improve the EastStourRiver, and contribute to green infrastructure.

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

4.191 For the avoidance of doubt, any planning application should otherwise 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).

4.192 Shepway District Local Plan Review saved polices hereby deleted: LR5