Otterpool Park - Combined notes of meetings with all Parish and Town Councils, August 2016

These notes are the compiled comments from a series of meetings with groups of parish and town councils and with KCC to discuss Otterpool Park during August 2016. All Parish and Town councils in the district were invited to a session - these were:

- Marsh Parish Councils
- Hythe Town Council
- Folkestone and Sandgate Town Councils
- North Downs East Parish Councils
- North Downs West Parish Councils
- Kent County Council Members representing Shepway wards.

(See list below of attendees – not all parishes attended).

The meetings follow from a previous meeting and presentation to five parishes most directly affected on 7 June 2016 – Stanford, Sellindge, Saltwood, Lympne and Postling (Monks Horton was also invited to join the initial group meeting). The five most local parishes have been offered individual meetings to discuss how best we can engage them in the ongoing work – meetings have been held with Sellindge and Postling PCs (23 Aug and 31 Aug respectively), and a meeting with Stanford PC has been arranged.

Overview

Many PCs and TCs expressed the view that they could see merit in proactively planning for a new community to provide homes and jobs, thus taking pressure from existing towns and villages for accommodating significant new housing numbers in the future. Some chose to reserve judgement at this stage. The importance of planning for infrastructure ahead and long term was recognised, particularly where services such as health are already under huge strain.

Things that matter most to people:

- the opportunity to plan properly for early delivery of infrastructure and services must be exploited;
- ensuring all the facilities that the new residents will need are catered for;
- provision of affordable housing (both for sale and rent) that is accessible for local people;
- Clearer understanding of how local people will benefit;
- Protecting and retaining the landscape character, especially the ancient woodland;
- Using sustainable sources of energy; and
- Improvements to the existing local road network, to address both existing problems of congestion and to cope with the additional traffic.

Potential opportunities to explore

Environmental:

- Solar panels on all houses and other green energy generation options, eg farm gas and anaerobic digesters
- Water conservation and recycling
- Could this be a low emissions zone, similar to those in London?
- Encouraging people to use their cars less.

Economic:

- Technology: broadband is essential, but OP could also embrace other new technologies such as power generation (eg improved solar panels; on-site small scale nuclear power plants); housing construction (such as a factory for offsite construction) or a science park;
- Creating apprenticeships and skills development, both during construction and within longer term employment offer; and
- Should look at employment opportunities related to Shepway's existing assets, such as its maritime community and tourism offer.

Social:

- Providing a range of affordable housing to buy and rent that is accessible for local people, and including council houses. Mechanisms to allow access to homes for local people first should be explored.
- Should include new sports facilities and sites for religious buildings.

Other points:

- Be clearer on what the specific benefits will be for existing villages.
- Communicate more clearly on the need for more housing.
- Explain how the unemployed and those in deprived circumstances living in Folkestone will benefit.
- Create distinct neighbourhoods within the town.
- Plan for further growth at OP, so that if the town expands in future its facilities will have the capacity to cope.
- Services (eg doctor's surgeries) should be additional to existing facilities, rather than replace them, particularly on the marsh which is struggling to retain its services.
- Job creation should be a priority – there are concerns locally about a large new population with nowhere to go and no jobs.
- Need to cater for shortage of crematoria and burial grounds.
- Concerns have been raised about where people will come from who will live at Otterpool Park. Priority should be given to local people rather than those coming from elsewhere.
- what can be done for existing villages and towns that need investment (eg drainage system at Elham, improving the road to Hythe)
- Need to liaise with health providers early about their future plans, as planning for health services will be vital.

- KCC has a sub-committee on utilities which could be helpful in liaison with providers.
- Must provide a supermarket to cater for the new community without people having to travel for food shopping, but a large scale retail area is not appropriate here.

Many lessons can be learnt from Hawkinge:

- School was undersized for the number of children living in the village
- employment land at Hawkinge failed as could not attract businesses
- the layout feels as if it wasn't planned
- Some areas work are more successful and with better quality homes than others
- The doctor's surgery has been very successful and has now expanded to meet increased demand.

Engagement and communications

- Have a change log on the website so people know what has changed rather than just updating and replacing existing documents, which makes it hard for the reader to track.
- Keep parishes notified of new information ahead of it going public.
- Flag up issues that are relevant to specific parishes (eg the marsh).
- Do a leaflet drop to all households to inform them of plans for OP and counter myths that are circulating.
- Involve young people, and also those in housing need/ can't get on the housing ladder in future plans for OP.
- Be clearer on the need for, and advantages arising from, more housing.

Actions:

- SDC to follow up with KCC on rural broadband supply and SDC ability to use its own transmitter.
- SDC to ensure officer and member protocols are accessible on SDC website.
- Individual PCs and TCs to contact SDC to arrange for SDC to attend future PC/TC meetings if it would be of value.

Attendees

- Derek Smith – Lyminge
- Kurt Stephens, Tim Prater – Sandgate
- Anne Berry, Neil Jones – Folkestone
- Vicki Dawson – Lydd
- Graham Allison, David Evans, Pamela Millen – St Mary in the Marsh
- Peter Coe, Marlene Worf, David Evans – New Romney
- John Heasman, Leslie Palliser, David Callahan, Tina Wiles – Hawkinge
- David Mellin, Tony Hutt – Swingfield
- Sylvia Scott, Sally Hayter – Elham

- Sally Coleman, Nigel Fursdon – Newington
- John Gabris, Michael Lyons, Keith Miles, Shirley Moberly, Paul Peacock, Dudley Shipton, Laura Sullivan, Ashley Tanton, Nick Hilditch – Hythe
- Martin Whybrow, Frank McKenna, Susan Carey – Kent County Council

NB the points included in this note are a composite captured across all of the meetings and do not necessarily represent the views of all individuals who attended.