12th April 2012

EXAMINATION OF THE SHEPWAY
CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

INSPECTOR’S MATTERS, ISSUES & QUESTIONS:
RESPONSE OF FOLKESTONE HARBOUR COMPANY

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Appendices
1) Planning Performance Agreement
2) Land Ownership Map
3) Masterplan Evolution
4) Ferry Correspondance
5) Network Rail Correspondance
6) Walking Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Inspectors Query</th>
<th>FHC Response</th>
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</table>
| 4.2 a) | Are the location, boundary and proposed mix of uses in this strategic allocation adequately justified? | **Location:**

- The local plan referenced the area known as the Port of Folkestone as being integral to the town’s fortune and regeneration opportunities. Since the adoption of the local plan FHC have been working in conjunction with Shepway District Council (SDC) and Kent County Council (KCC) in bringing forward the seafront site for development. The site has evolved from being restricted to the Port of Folkestone to include all other parcels of derelict and unused land now shown by the strategic site allocation. A collaborative partnership has been established and a planning performance agreement (included at appendix 1) has been signed between SDC and FHC.

- The seafront site has been a key development site on the edge of Folkestone for many years and its regeneration is considered to be central to improving the town’s fortunes. It covers most of the sea frontage of the town and as such is integral to a coastal town’s identity and definition of itself.

- The vision for Folkestone set out within the emerging core strategy, which has been informed by an extensive public consultation exercise includes 3 strategic needs, set out within the emerging document as strategic need A, B and C referring to the need to improve employment, educational attainment and economic performance, to manage and maintain the natural and historic assets in Shepway and to improve quality of life and sense of place, vibrancy and social mix. In order to achieve these aims SDC seeks to rely upon several strategic sites including the seafront site as set out within emerging policy SS1.

- The existing seafront site consists of a large area of ‘blacktop’, derelict buildings and the redundant railway station, it is considered to be a brownfield site.

- Policy SS2 of the emerging core strategy sets out a housing target of 8,000 dwellings by 2025/2026 with at least 5,700 of these provided on brownfield land, based on an analysis of Shepway’s housing needs. The seafront site is capable of making a significant contribution to this requirement.

- The seafront site offers an opportunity to change the face of Folkestone. It is located immediately adjacent to the town centre with good existing linkages and the potential to improve upon these. The site could provide an attractive mixed use housing led development which draws upon the strengths of the town, its coastal and heritage assets and also seeks to provide a new focus in the form of a vibrant... |
harbour and sea sports/beach sports community attracting inward investment.

- The site would assist significantly in the regeneration of the town and in attracting key investment. The allocation of the site as a strategic requirement for the district is considered to be entirely sound and justifiable.

Boundary:

- The proposed strategic site boundary includes land owned by FHC and SDC. An ownership map is included at appendix 2 of this document.

- Paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that the planning system should perform an economic role, ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation (page 2, paragraph 7, and bullet point 1, NPPF).

- Paragraph 47 of the NPPF notes that authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites (our italics). Footnote 11 states that to be deliverable sites; “should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will delivered on the site within five years and in particular that the development of the site is viable”

- The strategic site boundary as put forward is in one ownership or that of SDC and the Parks Trust. This allows a far greater degree of certainty in terms of the site coming forward. If the site allocation was to include land owned by other parties there is far greater potential for complex S106 negotiations and disagreements which would ultimately affect its deliverability. The allocation of the strategic site as shown is considered to be entirely in accordance with government policy.

- It should also be noted that, in respect of the comprehensive development of all vacant sites to the north of Marine Parade, this has been considered in the production of the emerging Masterplan. The building line along the north side of Marine Parade, established by the existing (and grade II listed) terraces is approximately 20 metres from the building line of the proposed terraces along the south side of Marine Parade. This is considered to be an entirely acceptable degree of separation between potential development plots.

- The aim has been to ensure the proposed scheme would not prejudice appropriate development coming forward on adjacent sites at some time in the future and it is wholly feasible for the plots to the
north of Marine Parade to come forward for development in isolation from the strategically allocated seafront site.

- FHC consider the boundary as proposed to be sound and justifiable however as noted above FHC will work with SDC to produce a statement of common ground in respect of this matter.

**Mix of uses**

- The current emerging policy allows for the flexible use of the site and includes for a level of housing development. The maximum number of residential units, set out as 1000 within the emerging policy has been driven by SDC’s up to date housing needs analysis.

- The emerging core strategy sets out a housing target of a minimum of 350 dwellings per annum to 2026 (policy SS2) based on the population and demographic prediction.

- The strategic site allocation can make a significant contribution towards this need. The level of residential development proposed by emerging policy SS6 is considered sound on the basis of the supporting evidence submitted by SDC.

- The emerging Masterplan has developed over a long period of time and in consultation with the local community as set out within the submitted document ‘Folkestone Seafront, Proposed Emerging Masterplan, Supporting Statement’.

- The historic development of the Masterplan and the uses proposed on the site is detailed by Farrell’s at appendix 3 of this document. The mix of uses put forward seek to draw upon the natural attributes of the site and also provide a commercially viable scheme and FHC have been independently advised in this respect as set out in the submitted document ‘Folkestone Seafront, Proposed Emerging Masterplan, Supporting Statement’.

- SDC have clearly set out within their evidence base and emerging local plan the requirement for a mixed use development which will complement, not compete, with the town centre uses.

- It is considered the emerging policy reflects the strategic needs of Shepway district and is sound and justifiable on the supporting evidence base.

**What alternatives were considered and why**

- The Port of Folkestone is directly referenced in the existing Local Plan, the area is recognised by the paragraph 13.12 – 13.13 as being a part of the town that is capable of contributing significantly towards
were they discounted?

its vibrancy and vitality;

“The Council, however, recognises that the recreational use of the Port and surrounding area could be significantly enhanced and that the area provides a unique opportunity to contribute towards the creation of a new mixed use urban quarter and destination in its own right, capitalising on its maritime location. Successful redevelopment will however require some rationalisation / re-organisation of the area previously used for port activities.

A range of redevelopment options for different locations within and around the Port area, including Folkestone Harbour and the Rotunda Fairground / adjoining car parks, are identified to significantly improve its recreational use, vibrancy and appearance. In addition to criteria listed in Policies FTC5 and FTC6, redevelopment proposals affecting the Port area should also be consistent with a number of common objectives”

- Through its issues and options process SDC explored the potential of retaining the existing policies relevant to the seafront site or taking a different direction in terms of the regeneration of the area and removing the local plan requirement for an operational ferry and/or rail service.

- SDC comment in some detail on the different stages of its emerging development plan and on the public consultation in respect of the seafront site within their response to matter 4. FHC supports these comments.

- In developing the Masterplan as currently proposed FHC explored various options for development on the site seeking to take into account the results of the various public consultation exercised since beginning the process. Since the submission of the supporting Masterplan statement (January 2012) the full consultation analysis of the public exhibition held in December 2011 has become available and this is included at appendix 4. In addition to this report it should be noted that, as also published on SDC’s website, the seafront site has a dedicated website, additional material in respect of the public consultation exercise can be downloaded from this and/or provided to the Inspector as required.

- http://www.folkestoneseafront.com/consultation/

- In addition to canvassing for public opinion FHC has been advised by independent consultants in terms of the economic viability and deliverability of any scheme proposed. These documents contain commercially sensitive information and have not been made public however an initial viability appraisal was carried out by Capita Symonds and submitted to the Council in January on the condition that it
remained confidential. The ‘headline’ figures from these appraisal are referred to within the supporting statement submitted and the appraisal can be made available to the Inspector should this be required.

- A series of options for the seafront site in terms of the amount, typology and overall regeneration aspirations have been explored by Farrell’s in the development of the emerging Masterplan, these options are shown at appendix 3.

- The strategic allocation of the seafront site and the mix of uses proposed are considered to be entirely in accordance with Shepway’s identified strategic needs and on this basis are sound and justifiable.

- Options for a Ferry service and/or a rail service have also been explored by FHC; this is further examined below under question 4.2b).

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<th>Is the extension to the site boundary that is now being proposed by the Council considered necessary for soundness reasons?</th>
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| The site boundary is discussed above. Several iterations of a site boundary plan have been submitted to SDC during the course of the emerging Masterplan application. The redline boundary as shown within the July submission Core Strategy and the amended January version is considered to be sound however for the sake of clarity FHC and SDC intend to submit a statement of common ground on this matter.

- In order to improve deliverability of the seafront site it is intended that the proposed site allocation boundary will include all land that may come forward as part of the emerging Masterplan and includes those uses (such as Seasports) which are considered to accord with the Council’s aspirations for the site and will assist in place making and regeneration. |

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<th>4.2 b) Has sufficient consideration been given to the future role of the harbour itself and to existing and proposed linkages (notably the existing harbour rail link)?</th>
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- The Shepway District Local Plan Review adopted March 2006 contains three key policies in respect of the seafront site, policy FTC4, FCT5 and FCT6.

- These existing policies are examined in detail within the submitted document ‘Folkestone Seafront, Proposed Emerging Masterplan, Supporting Statement’.

- Policy FCT4 and FCT5 relate specifically to Port Operations and the Harbour Station.

- The Port of Folkestone was sold by Sea Containers in 2004 following a significant decline in profit. The area has not operated as a commercial harbour since. |
The potential for a new ferry route between Folkestone and Boulogne-sur-Mer was explored during 2008 - 2009 but rejected for viability reasons as detailed at appendix 2 of the ‘Folkestone Seafront, Proposed Emerging Masterplan, Supporting Statement’. A further two years was allowed to others who expressed an interest but they also failed to produce a viable plan as noted within the further dialogue between FHC and the parties interested in a Folkestone and Boulogne-sur-Mer ferry route as enclosed at appendix 5 of this document.

A separate group (The Remembrance Line) aspire to maintain the railway line which has been closed to scheduled services for many years and the line is under temporary closure notice. A copy of additional correspondence between Network Rail and FHC is included at appendix 6 of this document. Network rail have set out their intention begin consultations on the permanent closure of the redundant railway line that leads to the harbour.

FHC have formally started the process required to achieve a Harbour Revision Order which will allow the proposed Masterplan as envisaged to come forward. It should be noted that this requirement concerns the statutory duty of FHC to facilitate trade on the harbour arm through docking facilities for trading vessels. It does not affect the inner and outer harbours which FHC seek to maintain as existing with small craft and fishing vessels.

The last Hoverspeed craft operated out of Folkestone in 2000 when Sea Containers stopped the services due to falling passenger numbers when duty free was abolished. Cross channel ferries had ended a decade earlier.

A note setting out the technical and financial difficulties associated with providing a Ferry service has been submitted with the supporting statement submitted in January 2012. The cost of upgrading the existing infrastructure is considered to prohibitive and the amount of land required (customs facilities, waiting areas, parking facilities etc) would impact upon the amount of land available to provide the other uses required to ensure the site is a vibrant destination which positively impacts upon the regeneration of Folkestone.

To specifically require a foot or car ferry service within policy SS6 would restrict the comprehensive redevelopment of the area, the commercial viability of any proposed scheme and therefore its deliverability and the potential for the regeneration of this area. This would be contrary to the government’s policies as set out within the NPPF.
| **Existing and proposed linkages (notably the existing harbour rail link).** | • The viaduct that runs between the inner and outer harbour was grade II listed on 23rd January 2012. Policy SS6 should be updated to reflect the recent listing of the viaduct.

• Folkestone Seafront will continue to provide a role for the harbour in the future of the town. The inner and outer harbour's and the harbour arm are a key part of the envisaged Masterplan, as already noted the Masterplan intends to retain the use of the harbour for fishing vessels and pleasure craft and this area will provide a key ingredient to the place making and regeneration ideals as demonstrated within the Masterplan document.

• FHC is cognisant that land ownership may change as could any future Masterplan for the site; FHC considers the role of the harbour to be important.

• The current wording of SS6 is considered to be sound and justifiable and will allow the Council the flexibility to manage and control the redevelopment of the area. However, should SDC consider it necessary to make direct reference to the role of the harbour area within the site specific policy, wording which would be acceptable to FHC is suggested below;

  “Planning permission will only be granted where; Proposals recognise the importance of the inner and outer harbour as a key asset of the town and ensure that these are managed appropriately taking into account the wider community interest of these areas”. |

| **Existing and proposed linkages (notably the existing harbour rail link).** | • Current local plan policy FCT4 requires the retention and enhanced use of the Folkestone Harbour Rail Station, this plan was written before the closure of the railway and during a period when it was envisaged that a ferry service of some nature may be commercially viable.

• The railway line was last used in August 2008.

• Network Rail formerly put the line under temporary closure in March 2009 and this was renewed again in 2011. The current temporary closure ends in October 2012 and it is likely this will be renewed. Correspondence at appendix 6 confirms the intention of Network Rail to consult on closing the line permanently.

• It is judged that the commercially viable operation of the railway line was reliant on the ferry service. Neither service can viably exist without the other.

• A key issue is considered to be the connectivity of the site to the town centre and whether the emerging policy will ensure the reconnection of the site to the town. |
• The redundant railway line runs from the harbour, across the viaduct over the harbour and alongside the existing tram road to link up with the operational mainline services heading to Dover. It does not link with any stations prior to joining this line.

• Folkestone Central is the main station serving Folkestone; the other available station is Folkestone West. Folkestone Central is 1.5km or approximately 10 - 15 minutes walk from the seafront site (appendix 7).

• The connectivity of the site to Folkestone as a whole has been a key consideration during the development of the proposed outline Masterplan. This is explained in more detail within the Masterplan Transport Report at appendix 3 of the already submitted ‘Folkestone Seafront, Proposed Emerging Masterplan, Supporting Statement’ and is best demonstrated by the diagram below;

• The site is located to the south of the town centre; the redundant railway line does not connect to the town centre but to the main line to Dover. Folkestone is already served by two stations as noted above; these are on the main London to Dover route which provides excellent links to both destinations.
Emerging Policy SS6 as proposed by SDC already includes a requirement for any proposals to directly contribute to the regeneration of Folkestone by reconnecting the town centre to the seafront (bullet point 2, policy SS6) It also requires under bullet point 4 that 'sufficient contributions, highway improvements and parking arrangements are made to improve the connectivity of the seafront to the town centre.'

The site can currently be reached by pedestrians via the Lees Lift, the Road of Remembrance and Marine Terrace and Harbour Approach. The emerging Masterplan for the site envisages an additional pedestrian route over the viaduct for pedestrian access, this important link will connect the eastern end of the strategic site to harbour square, the creative quarter and the bottom of the Old High Street and Tontine Street.

By utilising the viaduct as a publically accessible pedestrian link the Masterplan is able to utilise the redundant harbour rail link in a meaningful way significantly improving the connectivity of the site.

It is considered that policy SS6 (under bullet points 2 and 4) as currently worded allows the Council the ability to judge any development proposals bought forward in terms of their connectivity and is therefore sound in this respect.
APPENDICIES