



**OTTERPOOL PARK**

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# Vision for Otterpool Park Phase 1B Community Planning Day Summary Newsletter

September 2023



Artist's impression - view of the green gateway to Phase 1B

## The Vision

Attractive, healthy neighbourhoods reflecting local character and responding to the landscape context to provide “the best of town and country”; high quality, energy efficient homes in a landscape setting with leisure space, community gardens, orchards and allotments, and enhanced space for nature; community hubs within walking distance with a mix of community amenities, and employment opportunities; a network of walking, cycling and bus links, connecting within Phase 1B and to the landscape and heritage assets of the local area; a mix of homes for households of all sizes, for all ages and all incomes; a focus on creating strong, integrated and creative communities, and; a continuing process of engagement with existing village communities as the proposals develop. These are just some of the ideas to emerge from the Vision for Otterpool Park Phase 1B Community Planning Day (CPD) held at Sellindge Village Hall on Saturday 9 September 2023.

## Background

Planning for a new garden town at Otterpool Park started in 2016, when Shepway District Council, now Folkestone & Hythe District Council, secured central government funding to help meet the housing needs of the area over the next 30 years. The new garden town will provide for a properly planned, sustainable settlement that includes not just homes but all the community services, such as schools and health provision that will be needed. In addition, a significant amount of land will remain as green

space for people and nature. Extensive engagement with communities and stakeholders helped to shape the proposals and outline planning permission for Otterpool Park was granted in spring this year.

## Community Planning

Otterpool Park LLP is now developing proposals for new neighbourhoods with around 3,000 homes in Phase 1b, a significant part of Otterpool Park covering approximately a third of the total area. JTP has been appointed as lead masterplanners and to facilitate the Community Planning Day (CPD) which was an opportunity for the community to share local knowledge and help co-create a Vision, which will inform a comprehensive masterplan and Design Code for the neighbourhoods.

## Vision Report Back

Following the CPD, the Otterpool Park team reflected on and summarised the outcomes and drew up an illustrated Vision for Otterpool Park Phase 1B, which was reported back to the community on Wednesday evening, 20 September at Westenhanger Castle. This newsletter is a summary of the Vision and the full presentation can be seen at [OtterpoolPark.org/Phase-1b](https://OtterpoolPark.org/Phase-1b)

## Next Steps

After the report back of the Vision, the Otterpool Park team will continue working with stakeholders and the community to develop a masterplan for the new neighbourhoods and draw up a Design Code setting design rules and requirements for the development.

Email [community@otterpoolpark.org](mailto:community@otterpoolpark.org)

Find out more about Otterpool Park Phase 1B at [otterpoolpark.org/phase-1b](https://otterpoolpark.org/phase-1b)





## Illustrative Masterplan

The Vision for Otterpool Park Phase 1B was drawn up following the Community Planning Day public workshops.

- 1 Nature recovery network:**  
1 The masterplan is underpinned by a nature recovery network. Green corridors which connect wetlands, woodlands, meadows and parkland. Protecting spaces for nature and bringing people closer to wildlife and greenspace.
- 2 Barrow Hill Green:**  
2 Heritage features are retained and protected by buffers within the green network, most located within Barrow Green.
- 3 Links and connections:**  
3 The primary access to Phase 1B is from the A20, a primary street passes through the new neighbourhoods and connects to Otterpool Lane.
- 4** A bus route loop is provided through the neighbourhood, with a bus only connection to the south of Barrow Hill Green.
- 5** Encouraging active travel, linking to public footpaths and the cycle network, connecting to Harringe Lane and the wider countryside.
- 6** Existing public rights of way across Barrow Hill (A20) will ensure connectivity to the wider masterplan.
- 7 Homes for all:**  
7 A variety of homes with a mix of sizes for all generations and life stages creating a balanced community.
- 8 Mixed use neighbourhoods:**  
8 A cluster of mixed use buildings at the gateway to Phase 1B marking the entrance to the new neighbourhood.
- 9** A vibrant local centre supporting a mix of uses centrally located and fronting onto Barrow Hill Green.
- 10** Two Primary Schools serving the local community, located on green corridors to encourage walking and cycling to school.
- 11 Recreation and activity:**  
11 Active green space for all the community, space for sports and adventure play.
- 12 Growing and gardens:**  
12 Encourage cultivating, sharing and cooking food grown locally in the new allotments, community gardens and orchards.
- 13 Wetlands and wildlife:**  
13 Marshy wetland ponds enhancing habitats for wildlife and addressing sustainable drainage and biodiversity in a natural environment.
- 14 Views to countryside:**  
14 Sunset view from Barrow Hill to the south west across the rolling countryside, fields and woodland.

*“My dream is a life in balance with nature that has great civic pride in the town, schools and community.”*  
Community planning participant







Artist's impression - view from Barrow Hill Green to the south west



Artist's impression - view of the Phase 1B local centre

Wet and wild response to the valleys creating organic edges



Concept section of how Phase 1B will address the slopes

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## Key Themes

The Otterpool Park Phase 1B Community Planning Day gave local people the opportunity to help shape the masterplanning and design of new residential neighbourhoods forming the western side of the garden town. The following key themes represent a summary of the views of the participants through the community planning process. All quotes are from participants of the process unless otherwise stated.

### Well planned, attractive neighbourhoods serving existing villages and new residents

The local area has much to offer – including Westenhanger station, Lympne Castle, stunning views, beautiful sunsets and misty vistas, as well as proximity to the Saxon coast. Though participants expressed concerns, including about traffic congestion on the A20 and pressure on already stretched community infrastructure, there was recognition that the new town has great potential to create attractive, characterful and healthy neighbourhoods responding to the local context and providing *“the best of town and country”*. Participants saw the potential for the garden town to help deliver improved linkages to the local assets described above and for the range of new facilities and green open spaces in Phase 1B (and Otterpool Park as a whole) to provide benefits for existing and new residents and help deliver a strong sense of community in the future.

*“Create a joined up community with state-of-the art facilities – health and education for all to access cradle to grave!”*

### Character and identity

Existing village communities surrounding the site should retain their distinctiveness and their local Kentish character and identity should be reflected in the design of *“clusters”* of new housing at Otterpool Park so that it becomes *“a town with a village feel”*. Phase 1B should incorporate contextual design elements, including use of local building materials, such as ragstone and flint, and local landscape design features. Neighbourhoods should include community focal points such as a hall, shop, village green and playing field, to mirror the familiar

features of village communities nearby. It is important to ensure a high quality of new build, with varied densities of residential layout providing a mix of homes to suit all needs and create balanced communities.

*“Integrate new and old, but the new place will build its own character in the end.”*

### Landscape and environment

The new neighbourhoods will be designed to ensure a green landscape setting is a key feature of Phase 1B. Parts of the new development will be visible from the North Downs AONB and with good design, appropriate layout and tree planting, the distant views will not be just of new rooftops. The new neighbourhoods should benefit from the inclusion of community gardens, orchards and allotments, and, as well as producing local food, such activities will help foster inter-generational community integration. Enhancing habitats to achieve *“biodiversity net gain”* is a key aspiration. There was concern that there may be threats to wildlife when domestic animals are introduced, so good management and maintenance of green and blue infrastructure will be important.

*“My dream is a life in balance with nature that has great civic pride in the town, schools and community.”*

### Getting about

Connectivity will be a key component of the new neighbourhood, with a network of walking, cycling and bus links within Phase 1B and to the wider area including the improved railway station at Westenhanger. Cars should be catered for within the balanced provision of sustainable travel options throughout Phase 1B. There was support for Harringe Lane to become a route dedicated to walking, cycling and horse-riding. Sustainable travel mobility hubs should be located around the new neighbourhoods, along with appropriate car parking arrangements. The intention will be for cars to be present but not to dominate the environment.

*“I’d like to see an airy, friendly, green open town with all the necessary support facilities (shops, pubs, clubs) and transport connections.”*





## Key Themes (continued)

### Variety of housing

Phase 1B will be primarily residential and, rather than a bland housing estate, participants wanted to see village communities of different densities and character areas, with a mix of homes for households of all sizes, ages and incomes. This will include affordable housing and participants identified in a particular need in the area for homes for young people with disabilities and special needs and a desire to see retirement homes, including alms house type homes, like the ones at Saltwood.

*“All members of the community, all ages, all backgrounds should be integrated into the community.”*

### Barrow Hill

Residents of Barrow Hill, which lies south of the Grove Bridge pinch point on the A20, are concerned about the impact of new development, including the potential increase in traffic along the A20, loss of parking, and loss of green space around them. In particular, residents are keen to see the integration of a green buffer to the rear of their properties and it was proposed that further meetings with the residents should be arranged to consider design and layout of Phase 1B adjacent to Barrow Hill in more detail.

*“Will Barrow Hill be given the buffer zone we need?”*

### Infrastructure

Development on this scale will require considerable investment in infrastructure which must be costed and planned well in advance of any building. There was concern about how water supply and wastewater treatment will be provided sustainably. Participants wish to see the new housing area benefit from well planned, resilient infrastructure e.g. fast broadband, electric vehicle charging, well managed new landscaping with well drained paths, rain water capture and grey water harvesting, local energy production through photovoltaic, heat pumps, etc.

*“Making things sustainable is not just about climate, it’s about everything!”*

### Employment

Otterpool Park will provide around 9,000 jobs once completed and participants were keen to understand when and how the jobs will be delivered over the

period of the town’s development. Whilst Phase 1B will be residential-led, the intention will be to provide community hubs with a mix of uses, such education, health, shops and community provision, all providing employment opportunities. With changing working patterns there is an opportunity to consider the provision of workspace within new homes and co-working office and workshop space and business support throughout the neighbourhoods.

*“What comes first - the buildings or the jobs?”*

### Creating community

Creating a strong sense of community will be key to the success of the new neighbourhoods and it was felt this could be “seeded” by community leaders and others who currently live in adjacent villages. Early residents will likely make use of facilities in existing villages, and as new facilities and social hubs are built in early phases, these in turn will provide a focus and serve both Otterpool Park residents and surrounding villagers. The creation of walkable neighbourhoods linking homes to schools and community hubs will be key to promoting social interaction. The issue of local governance and stewardship was discussed, and with the Otterpool Park site area being currently situated across five different Parish Councils, there is a discussion to be had about the governance arrangements for the garden town, including the option of a new town council.

*“During the early days people will migrate to things in the surrounding communities, but if a community hub is created on the site, then this will attract and integrate new and existing residents.”*

### Continuing community engagement

There was a strong desire for the process of community engagement to be continued. The opportunity for the community to be involved in the development of the Design Code for Phase 1B by setting up a community review panel should be explored and further meetings should be arranged with Barrow Hill residents to discuss how proposals for Phase 1B adjacent to their homes are shaped. It was also agreed that the process would benefit from input by more young people, and it was suggested one or more young people could be invited to join the Otterpool Park Board.

*“People will shape the place in the long term!”*

