

a vision for fort halstead

Based on the aspiration to develop Fort Halstead in accordance with local needs and ambitions, Hines have been engaging in dialogue with key local people. These pages set out the views that have emerged from these discussions.

The development team will be circulating this preliminary vision document as a starting point for further discussions, and as a backdrop to formulating development proposals for the site.



Cherish the high quality landscape

Green space

People in Sevenoaks District and the Fort Halstead area value the high quality landscape around the Fort with its Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations. The new development should be planned in recognition of this.

Skyline

The local skyline is a well-loved feature. The height of new buildings should respect this.

Wildlife

There is an interest in the status of

Promote community access and provide for leisure use

Whilst the site is treasured, current public access is very restricted. The development offers new opportunities to promote local enjoyment.

wildlife on the site and a wish for it to be respected.

The Fort as a public place

Opening up the Fort as a museum or public space is a positive prospect. This would help to connect new users to the locality, and give a public resource back to the existing community. Providing for increased public access will need to reflect due

care for ecology.

Recreation

There is also positive interest in scope for the new development to promote recreation provision for local people. This might include use for picnics and other outdoor leisure activities.

A mixed community / a range of housing

The vision is for a range of housing, backed up by the infrastructure required by a community – schooling, shopping, elderly care and medical facilities.

A rounded community

If the landscape were the only value, the obvious development pathway would be just a few large homes, as that would require little additional transport infrastructure.

Focus on young people

However, there is local resistance to the ethos of 'gated communities', coupled with a real shortage of private sector housing that people entering the housing market or earning local salaries can afford.

Whilst the District has many wealthy people, and social housing is available at the other end of the scale, many people in the middle band are disadvantaged in terms of access to housing, especially at the lower end of the mid-rung.

There is a strong aspiration for people who have grown up in the area to be able to live there as adults, without the requirement of a job in the City in order to do so.



Elderly people

Recent local consultations have shown a shift in concern. In addition to the needs of young people, which have been prominent, the needs of the expanding elderly population are now also beginning to feature.



Amenities to suit

Provision for a community requires the development of suitable amenities as well as public transport options for the new residents.



Retail

The retail component of such a development should provide for the basic needs of the residents and businesses without the need to travel further afield, as well as the potential for specialist stores, e.g., a quality baker, that would withstand the competing attraction of a car ride to a large supermarket,

Healthcare

Difficulties accessing medical care need to be addressed. There are reports that people moving into the area have experienced problems in finding a local GP surgery willing to take on new patients. This indicates the holistic nature of social and service infrastructure, at an appropriate scale, that should be integrated with the development at Fort Halstead



Conserving and promoting employment

There is a consensus that the main employment for this site should be knowledge-based. This will continue the kind of employment already accommodated at the Fort in the large number of buildings that already exist on this brownfield site.

Knowledge-based activity

'Centre of excellence' activity will accord with contemporary employment trends, and retain and promote high value work opportunities locally, offering a significant alternative to working in the City.

An associated benefit of this type of employment is its lighter demand in terms of travel patterns, as such work involves considerable discretion and variety both in people's work schedules and in their presence at the workplace

Conference / training use

Provision for conferences and training is an additional potential use for the site, that is appropriately aligned with knowledge-based activity. This may include scope for a hotel.



Varied opportunities

The high incomes of many in the Sevenoaks District are accompanied by a lack of plumbers, carpenters and other local suppliers to provide valuable services in the area. Alongside the primary focus on knowledge-based employment for the Fort Halstead site, there is scope for the development to offer some opportunities for local specialists.



Agriculture and ecology

There is also potential for some agricultural or ecological related use, both to build on local Kent tradition and to expand the employment options for local people. This could occur in association with contemporary leisure and retail uses. e.g. specialist merchants combined with bakery / outdoor cafe uses

Whilst this would be supplementary to the main employment focus, it has a positive role in sustainable development and responds to changing values, cultural trends and lifestyles

Social and physical infrastructure

It is important that the uses developed at Fort Halstead are supported by appropriate infrastructure. The key local concerns relate to physical access and education.

Traffic

Traffic in Sevenoaks District is viewed as a current problem, with associated issues of congestion, air quality and noise. Although a general shift to cleaner vehicle technology will help to offset some of these concerns, the development at Fort Halstead will need to address local impacts. With minimal capacity for road building in the South East, the limitations of the road transport network around the site will limit the labour force that can access the site.

Knowledge-based employment.

This indicates the relevance of knowledge-based employment. As people doing

high-level work typically follow their own schedules, this eliminates the heavy peak hour vehicle movements at either end of the day that are typical of traditional employment activity. In contrast, industry involving heavy vehicles is not regarded as appropriate for the site.

The nearest train station is Knockholt, and there is local interest in other employment sites in the South East where successful travel arrangements, such as shuttle bus services, have operated successfully for several years.

Mixed-use development

The conditions also favour mixed use development. Scope for people to *live* and work in close proximity can reduce the number and distance of vehicle journeys. Whilst the area's hilly nature and narrow access routes limit full reliance on cycling and walking, these will be feasible for some people who both live and work locally.



Road and transport infrastructure *Given*

Given that existing access is already regarded as under strain, the impact of the development on the access roads is a strong concern. The new development needs to consider this, and Polhill Road and the roundabout at the top of Polhill Road in particular.

Education

New development needs to heed the capacity of local schools and future projections of student numbers. With a sizeable new development, there is a perceived need to create relevant new school capacity.

There is also scope to incorporate provision for further education, based on a learning and skills strategy allied to the potentials of the site and the employment activity that will take place there.



Water

As Fort Halstead is located in the dry South East, there is a concern that development may result in water shortages. It would help if the source of water to Fort Halstead will not be competing with local supply.



Linked to adjacent villages: a distinct place

Identity

The local villages around Fort Halstead have separate, individual identities, with people valuing this individuality. Fort Halstead has always been a distinct place in people's minds. The new development should have its own Identity. It should achieve the balance between standing alone and connecting to existing local villages.



A good place to be

The clue to Fort Halstead's success is an effective vision with good local amenities to attract people reducing the number of journeys that they make further afield and with good design to deliver the vision

Making the Fort Halstead development a 'good place' that is designed with relevance to contemporary preferences can help to counter the pattern in the District of people 'always being on the move and in the car'.

The right mix of provision

A successful balanced community requires the content of development to meet its needs – in work, in homes, in education and play facilities and in the infrastructure for care.

Good Design

Good design has a pivotal role in creating a successful development. The example has been given of New Ash Green, where the housing has sustained its appeal for successive waves of young families, but where the shopping centre in the middle has fallen out of step with the contemporary trend to provide shopping and leisure

Community institutions

The Council has invested in 48 village hall projects in recent years, reflecting the importance of appropriate meeting and community space for villages. Churches are an important component of the social structure in Sevenoaks District, as evidenced by the extent of voluntary action providing services in the community, particularly for young and older people, The Fort Halstead development process should collaborate with local institutions.

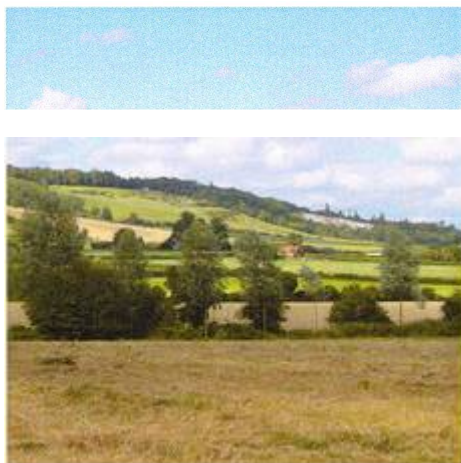


The Fort Halstead development offers opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of local people. This includes better access to high quality landscape, new leisure facilities and housing tailored to local needs.

Appropriate infrastructure

There is general concern that the connection between new and existing communities must be constructive, whereas this was not always the case with new housing to be delivered in the Sevenoaks District during the 1960s.

A key lesson that has been learnt is the need for new housing to be delivered with the infrastructure that it requires, avoiding pressure on existing local capacity. The development also has scope to offer new benefits to tile surrounding communities



Holistic design for sustainability

Creating 'a place'.

People in the Sevenoaks area are said to be 'always on the move' -- to their children's schools and to shop elsewhere. Fort Halstead could be conceived, designed and promoted as a place where 'being there' is more attractive than driving elsewhere. This is a relevant development aim.



A rounded mixed use development

Mixed use is seen as the strategy to achieve balanced development, a successful community and environmental benefits.

Energy conscious design

Whilst this was not a strong theme emerging in these discussions, Hines regard sustainable design as integral to current social concerns. Based on this view, the team has been researching best practice.



This analysis and preliminary vision has drawn on learning from, and shared notes of, dialogue with the following people, in January-October 2007:

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