
Park Farm Rail Halt Update

To: **Ashford Joint Transportation Board - 8 March 2016**

By: **Engineering Technical Officer**

Classification: **For information**

Ward: **Park Farm South, Weald East**

Background Papers: **“Park Farm Rail Halt”, report to JTB 8th September 2015**

Summary: This report provides an update on progress to date regarding the Park Farm Rail Halt, including the outcome of the Rail Halt Procurement Stage 1 actions.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The section 106 agreement for planning application 10/01711/AS (Park Farm South and East) detailed four stages of actions necessary for the procurement of a Rail Halt at Park Farm on the Ashford to Hastings (Marshlink) line. At its meeting of 8th September the Board was advised that a consultant had been procured to carry out the Stage 1 actions, which are:

- Review Cannon Consulting Engineers document folders dated 15th January 2008 and 20th August 2011.
- Review current Network Rail new station/halt policy guidance and train operating company franchise.
- Meet Network Rail and any others they may identify as being necessary to discuss with them the policy and technical requirements that would lead to Network Rail agreeing the principle of the Rail Halt being provided.
- Providing a written report and a non-technical summary to the Council on the outcome of the 3 actions above

1.2 These actions have now been completed by the Consultant (Peter Brett Associates) and their report (including non-technical summary) is appended to this report for the Board's information.

2.0 Outcome of the Stage 1 tasks

2.1 An assessment of the previous work has highlighted that whilst the 2010 Kent Route Utilisation Study (RUS) published by Network Rail did not recommend increasing frequency or infrastructure improvements on the

Marshlink line, the RUS did not look at future development within the area, which would likely improve the business case for a station at Park Farm.

2.2 East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Arun District Council and the MP for Rye and Hastings are pushing for the Marshlink line to be electrified in order to bring economic and regeneration benefits to Hastings and the surrounding area.

2.3 Network Rail have indicated that the feasibility of a new station may be appropriate if linked with housing growth within South Ashford and the potential improvements on the Marshlink Line. Network Rail have also taken the view that such a station would need to provide a platform allowing for 6-car trains to stop.

3.0 Next steps

3.1 On the basis of this report, instruction has been given to the consultant to undertake the Stage 2 rail halt actions, which are:

- Preparation of the preliminary design and business case for the Rail Halt in accordance with the 2012 Governance for Railways Projects (GRIP), Stages 1 to 3. This work to be completed by the Consultant to comply with Network Rail standards and the requirements or Network Rail to be commissioned to carry out the work independently.
- Preliminary design work and business case preparation to follow NR 'Guide to Station Planning and Design' July 2011 and Network Rail Investment in Stations May 2011
- Submission of draft design and business case to network Rail and negotiating with them.
- Providing a written report and a non-technical summary to the Council on the outcome of the 3 actions above.

3.2 Officers remain in contact with Network Rail regarding the outcome of the Kent Route Study and any update on proposals to electrify the Marshlink line, and will report back any further information to the Board as it becomes available.

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Park Farm Rail Halt

Summary Report

On behalf of **Ashford Borough Council**

Project Ref: 35542/001 | Rev: A | Date: November 2015

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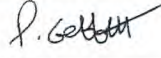
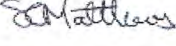
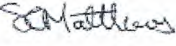
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Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved

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Non-Technical Executive Summary

Introduction

Peter Brett Associates was appointed by Ashford Borough Council in relation to Park Farm Rail Halt, Ashford, Kent. This Summary Report has been prepared to report on the findings of Stage 1 of the commission to Ashford Borough Council with the summary of information to inform their decision on the way forward.

The key tasks identified within the brief are:

- i. Review Cannon Consulting Engineers document folders dated 15th January 2008 and 20th August 2011
- ii. Review current Network Rail new station/halt policy guidance and train operating company franchise
- iii. Meet Network Rail and any others they may identify as being necessary to discuss the policy and technical requirements that would lead to Network Rail agreeing the principle of the Rail Halt being provided

Park Farm Rail Halt is a proposed new station on the Marshlink Line, located approximately 4km south of Ashford International Station and 5km north of Hamstreet Station.

The rail halt has been linked to large scale residential development to the South of Ashford and has been promoted by developers since 1997, and was supported during the Local Plan Inquiry in 1991/2.

The rail halt was included within the Section 106 Agreement when planning permission was granted for Park Farm South and East Development, 13th August 2014.

The Section 106 Agreement requires a contribution of £1.2million towards the delivery of a Rail Halt, which is index linked. The equivalent value of the payment at 2015 prices, is in the region of £1.8million.

Previous Work

Two project progress reports were produced on behalf of developers of Park Farm which set out the work undertaken, between 1997 and 2007 and between 2008 and 2010 (Appendices B and C).

The documents set out a timeline of correspondence and discussions with the Rail Authorities, in relation to Park Farm Rail Halt. The key points are summarised below;

1. Letters submitted to Railtrack and Connex South Central set out the background to station proposal and sought support from these parties for the Rail Halt (similar to the support received from British Railways in 1991 submitted to the Ashford Local Plan Inquiry).
2. Letter from Railtrack stated that they had no objections in principle, although it was recognised that there were a number of issues which would require detailed investigations. The letter suggests that should the planning approval for Park Farm development (including the station) be approved, then at that time more detailed discussions would be required.
3. The first planning application for the Park Farm South and East Development, including the Rail Halt, was submitted in summer 2000. In October 2000 they requested a works order to carry out feasibility work on the Rail Halt. In January 2001, Pelham Homes paid Railtrack £4,700 to enable them to carry out the initial feasibility study.

4. In August 2001 the original application was withdrawn and a new application submitted.
5. Negotiating terms of the Section 106 Agreement commenced April 2002. These became protracted during 2003 and 2004. An indicative layout of the Rail Halt was sent to Kent County Council in 2004 (Appendix A).
6. A letter to Network Rail was sent in January 2006, informing them that permission for the development including the station had been approved and seeking the status of the feasibility study. The request for the feasibility study was resent in May 2006. Network Rail response included Railtrack's initial feasibility report from October 2000. The document indicated that it would have been possible for some trains to stop, but not all in peak hours. It also states that minimum platform length would be 67m to serve 2-car trains.
7. In November 2007 a Network Rail Project Proposal Form was completed and minutes from a meeting held on 30th November 2007 noted the action to take the preliminary design through to the next stage.
8. Mid-December 2007, the developer was advised that DfT had expressed concerns with the viability of the Park Farm Rail Halt. Following this and further reasonably positive discussions between Network Rail and DfT, DfT would want to see the business case for the Rail Halt. Network Rail Project Proposal Forms re-issued for Park Farm for Network Rail to fund GRIP Stages 1 to 3 for two options, the proposed rail halt promoted by the developer and a larger potential station suggested by Network Rail.
9. In April 2008 Network Rail advised that the GRIP 1 to 3 work would be put on hold until the outcome of the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) was known.

The Kent RUS was published in January 2010. Options for increasing frequency in the Marshlink Line to 2 trains per hour were examined, however Network Rail were unable to recommend an improvement due to low demand and need for additional infrastructure, including improvements at Ashford Station, considered to be 'prohibitively expensive' and requirements to provide additional double track or passing loops.

A new station at Ashford South was not recommended at this time and dis-benefits were identified as:

- Impact negatively on journey times;
- Reduce viability of existing services;
- Does not fill any strategic gap on the rail network;
- No case for increased frequencies on the Marshlink Line; and
- Short journey by road to Ashford International.

Current Situation

The current service between Ashford and Hastings, on the Marshlink line is operated as a two-car diesel with a frequency of one train per hour. This has not altered since the feasibility of an Ashford South Station was undertaken to inform the Kent RUS. The full current timetable is shown in Appendix D.

Services on the Marshlink line are operated by Southern Railway, which is a trading name of Govia Thameslink Railways Ltd. The current franchise began in July 2015 and is essentially a management contract, undertaken on behalf of DfT. DfT get the fare revenue from services, with GTR getting performance related bonuses and any subsidiary revenue e.g. from car parking.

Network Rail is in the process of updating all the Route Utilisation Strategies and replacing them with Route Studies. As part of this programme work has just commenced the Kent Route Study. This will look at priorities for investment within Control Period 6, for the 5-years, post 2019. A draft study report is due out for consultation in Autumn 2016, with a final report due early 2017.

The Marshlink line will be included within this study and any likely infrastructure improvements, such as electrification and the issues with the link at Ashford International are likely to be examined.

At the meeting held with Network Rail, they indicated that a new station could be considered within the work currently being undertaken as part of the Kent Route Study and that the previous decision, does not necessarily bear any weight currently, due to changes in circumstances with potential Marshlink line improvements and growth within Ashford, in particular in the area around the station. Minutes from the meeting are included as Appendix E.

Electrification of the Marshlink Line is currently being heavily promoted by East Sussex CC, in conjunction with Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council. The current MP for Hastings and Rye, Amber Rudd, has also been lobbying within DfT for this to be considered. Electrification is expected to reduce journey times and provide extra capacity between Bexhill, Hastings and London, through potential extension of the current HS1 services from Ashford International to serve Hastings and Bexhill. The key driver is to support economic growth and regeneration in and around Hastings.

Station Feasibility

Feasibility for a new station would need to be viewed in the context of all current guidance and Network Rail's Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP) process.

To determine feasibility for the station these three questions need to be answered;

- i. Can the appropriate infrastructure be provided?
- ii. Can the station be served by a train service and will a TOC commit to stopping trains there?
- iii. Is the station commercially and economically viable?

Current requirements and guidelines for station design and feasibility are set out in a number of documents produced by Network Rail and DfT.

The Station Design Principles includes 12 criteria that have been identified as prime drivers and metrics for the design and enhancement of stations, these are described in detail in Section 6 of that document and include safety and security, sustainability, capacity and future proofing and inclusiveness and accessibility. A full list of the relevant legislation and guidance is provided within Appendix G (taken from Appendix B of the Station Design Principles for Network Rail).

The feasibility of the station would need to consider operations and performance, concept design and commercial and economic feasibility.

Operations and Performance includes elements related to strategic fit with current policy, type of services used by the line, potential to stop services and signalling.

Concept Design includes issues related to platform length, gradients, curve, location of station in relation to cuttings and embankments, access and footbridges.

The commercial viability and economic case for any new station will need to be demonstrated to all stakeholders including Network Rail, the TOC and DfT, through the preparation of a business case.

The development of a positive business case is essential to the success of a new station proposal. In order to develop a business case the promoter must understand the costs and the impacts of the scheme. This in its turn requires consideration of a number of commercial issues which are likely to influence the whole life cost of the scheme.

Network Rail has indicated that, given the potential changes on the Marshlink Line and the development growth in the vicinity of the station that any previous work is not relevant and a case could potentially be made for the station.

A more detailed review of the type of station that would be required to meet future needs and following the latest guidance as detailed above on station design. A high level cost estimate would need to be produced. PBA has been involved with the planning and delivery of similar stations with costs ranging between £6 and 12 million.

Potential funding sources include Local Growth Funding or New Stations Fund, which could be bid for to supplement the Section 106 funding.

Recommendations

The potential for a new station needs to consider the aspirations for growth in Ashford, and whether the station can be part of a wider sustainable transport strategy and act as a catalyst to growth and economic regeneration. The Adopted Core Strategy identifies growth in South Ashford and the push for electrification of the line and the improvements to be made at Ashford International, to allow HS1 trains to run through to Hastings, potentially open up these opportunities.

On this basis we would recommend the following:

1. More detailed costings based on current and future requirements considering planned development, should be determined.
2. The commercial and economic feasibility of the station should be examined based upon the potential future improvements of the Marshlink Line (including electrification) and planned development within South Ashford.
3. Understand how the station could support and unlock economic growth and regeneration in and around Ashford, whilst promoting sustainable travel.

1 Introduction

1.1 Appointment

1.1.1 Peter Brett Associates was appointed by Ashford Borough Council in relation to Park Farm Rail Halt, Ashford, Kent. This Summary Report has been prepared to report on the findings of Stage 1 of the commission to provide Ashford Borough Council with a summary of information to inform their decision on the way forward.

1.1.2 The key tasks identified within the brief are:

- iv. Review Cannon Consulting Engineers document folders dated 15th January 2008 and 20th August 2011
- v. Review current Network Rail new station/halt policy guidance and train operating company franchise
- vi. Meet Network Rail and any others they may identify as being necessary to discuss the policy and technical requirements that would lead to Network Rail agreeing the principle of the Rail Halt being provided

1.2 Key Documents and Stakeholder Consultation

1.2.1 In undertaking this Stage 1 work the following documents and studies have been reviewed and referred to in the course of this stage of the project:

- i. Park Farm South and East, Ashford, Park Farm Rail Halt Progress Note 1 1997 to 2007, Canon Consulting Engineers (on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Homes and Persimmon Homes), January 2008;
- ii. Park Farm South and East, Ashford – Park Farm Rail Halt Progress Note 1 2008 to 2010, Canon Consulting Engineers on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Homes and Persimmon Homes), August 2011;
- iii. Kent Route Utilisation Strategy, Network Rail, January 2010;
- iv. Park Farm South and East, Ashford Kent, Planning Application Documents (Application Reference (10/01711/AS) – including Section 106 Agreement (Dated 13th August 2014);
- v. Investment in Stations, A guide for promoters and developers, Network Rail, December 2014;
- vi. Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP), Network Rail;
- vii. Current rail timetables on Marshlink line; and
- viii. Emerging Kent Route Study (Draft expected in Autumn 2016).

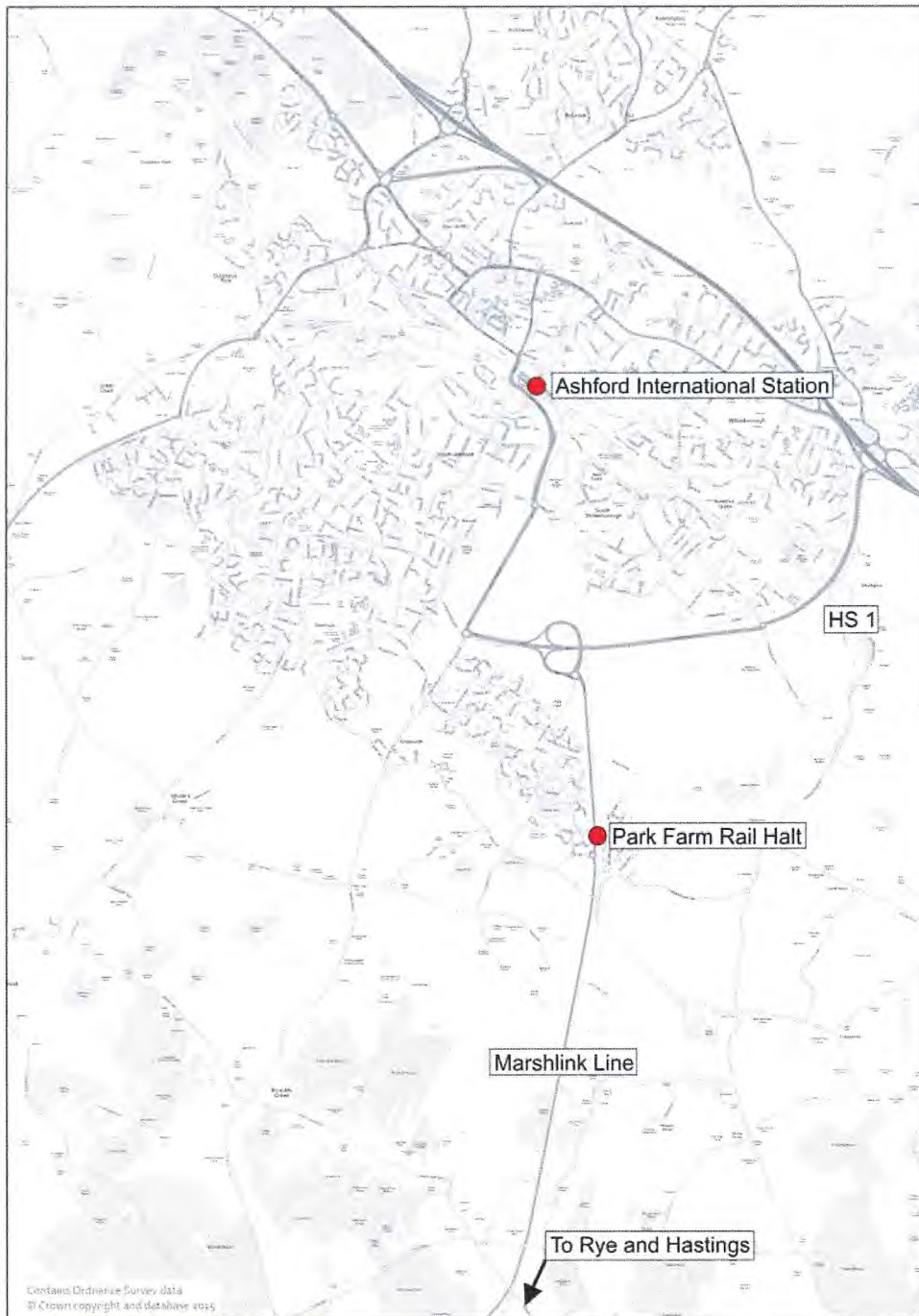
1.2.2 In addition the following meetings and discussions were held:

- i. Meeting with Network Rail, Monday 26th October 2015 at Network Rail Offices, Cottons Centre, London; and
- ii. Discussion with GTR (Train Operating Company), Tuesday 27th October 2015.

1.3 Study Context

1.3.1 Park Farm Rail Halt is a proposed new station on the Marshlink Line, located approximately 4km south of Ashford International Station and 5km north of Hamstreet Station. The Marshlink line links Ashford International to Hastings and Brighton, via Rye. The proposed location is shown on Figure 1-1 and is located adjacent to an existing farm accommodation bridge built by Kent County Council in 1994, which spans the A2070 and the railway line.

Figure 1-1 Park Farm Rail Halt Location Plan



- 1.3.2 The rail halt has been linked to the development of large scale residential development to the South of Ashford and has been promoted by developers since 1997, initially Pelham Homes and subsequently Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes. The rail halt had also been previously supported at the Local Plan Inquiry in 1991/2.
- 1.3.3 The preliminary layout of the station as develop within the previous study work and included within the planning application is shown in Appendix A. The design includes two platforms of a length to allow for 4-car trains, steps and ramps from the existing accommodation bridge, road access and parking facilities.

1.4 Section 106 Agreement

- 1.4.1 The rail halt was included within the Section 106 Agreement when planning permission was granted for Park Farm South and East Development, dated 13th August 2014. In relation to this particular study the Section 106 includes the following agreement in The Second Schedule, Part 10;

'10. Rail Halt

10.1 To pay to the Council

10.1.1 the Rail Halt Stage 1 Consultant Fee within one month of the date of this Agreement to enable the Council to employ an independent consultant to undertake the Rail Halt Stage 1 Actions; and

10.1.2 the Rail Halt Stage 2 Consultant Fee within one month of the receipt by the Owners of the Rail Halt Stage 1 Approvals to enable the Council to employ an independent consultant to undertake the Rail Halt Stage 2 Actions.'

- 1.4.2 The Section 106 Agreement requires a contribution of £1.2million to the Rail Halt, which is index linked. The equivalent value of the payment at 2015 prices, based upon the Road Construction Tender Price Index from the last quarter in 2004, is in the region of £1.8million.
- 1.4.3 This study pertains to that study referred to in the Section 106 Agreement paragraph 10.1.1.

1.5 Report Structure

- 1.5.1 Following this introduction, the report is set out as follows;
- i. Section 2: Review of Previous Work.
 - ii. Section 3: Current Situation.
 - iii. Section 4: Summary and Recommendations.

2 Review of Previous Work

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A review has been undertaken of all previous work undertaken with regard Park Farm Rail Halt. This section sets out the key elements from previous work undertaken on behalf of developers of Park Farm and the subsequent Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

2.2 Park Farm Rail Halt Progress Note 1 1997 to 2007

2.2.1 This document was produced by Canon Consultants, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes in January 2008. A copy is attached as Appendix B. The document sets out a plotted history of the rail halt project over the time period from 1997 to 2007 and includes correspondence documents from that time. The key points are set out within the timeline in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Park Farm Rail Halt – 1997 to 2007

Date	Item
November 1997	<p>Letters to Railtrack and Connex South Central (Train Operating Company (TOC) at the time) – seeking support for proposals for the Rail Halt being promoted through the Local Plan Review at the time.</p> <p>British Railways support for the proposal from the previous Local Plan Inquiry in 1991/2 was referred to.</p>
January 1999	<p>Letter to Railtrack referring to positive support from Inspector in January 1999 and decision to move forward for planning application to include Rail Halt. Letter also refers to items that need consideration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Track work and signalling ■ Limited track capacity ■ Possible future electrification ■ Continued use of old rolling stock ■ Platforms for say four car trains (92m) ■ Service efficiency with additional stop
September/ October 2000	<p>Letter from Railtrack Southern referring to items that would be required for approval of the station by Railtrack, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A property Agreement be concluded with Railtrack Property ■ An agreement with TOC to undertake day to day management of Railway Safety Case for the station ■ Agreement from TOC to stop some/all trains at the station ■ Need to initiate the railway industry Network Change Procedure and obtain the approvals of the Rail Regulator and Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate ■ Detailed timetabling – to ensure additional dwell time does not produce adverse impacts elsewhere <p>The letter also refers to the need to provide lifts as per The Rail Regulator's Guide for Disabled Access to Stations and the potential future electrification of the line.</p>

	<p>First planning application submitted. Railtrack responded requesting a works order to carry out feasibility work on the Rail Halt. January 2001, Pelham Homes paid Railtrack £4,700 to enable them to carry out the initial feasibility study.</p>
January 2001	<p>Third Party Works Request Form sent to Railtrack, plus fee of £4,700 for consideration of Railtrack appointing a project manager and developing a feasibility study.</p>
April 2001	<p>Meeting between Railtrack Southern and Pelham Homes (and consultants to Pelham Homes) – key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification that GoVia had taken over as TOC from Connex ▪ A study into possible electrification of the line had been undertaken ▪ Railtrack intention to explore engineering and technical feasibility of providing the halt. ▪ About 50 station/halts proposals in Railtrack system had been identified, and it was accepted that Park Farm was worthy of detailed consideration.
August 2001	<p>Original application withdrawn and new application submitted.</p>
October 2004	<p>Letter to Kent County Council referring to a number of items including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Travel Appraisal Report (TAR) from July 2001, prepared to support the Park Farm South and East planning application, setting out the advantages of the station location – including use of the accommodation bridge across the A2070 and the railway line built in 1993 – removing need to provide a new bridge structure between platforms; ▪ Reference to the Station in the adopted Ashford Local Plan (June 2000), Site 17: Park Farm with the rail halt directly referred to in policy item (g) – <i>“Provision of site and construction of rail halt to substantial completion of the extension site”</i> and in paragraph S17.6 <i>“the rail halt will need to provide cycle and car parking, bus access, drop-off facilities and good quality passenger waiting facilities”</i>; ▪ Reference to the TAR regarding the rail halt having two platforms, each with sufficient length for a four car train unit and that the rail halt is not envisaged to have a kiosk, manned by railway staff; ▪ Costs provided in the TAR at this time show the station costs at £1,091,301.80; ▪ A preliminary Rail Halt Arrangement was included within the TAR and is included within the documentation in Appendix A. <p>There was no further correspondence in 2004 or 2005 due to protracted Section 106 Discussions.</p>
January 2006	<p>Letter from Patrick Gurner on behalf of Taylor Woodrow and Persimmon Homes to Network Rail Southern, informing that the development had received planning permission on 22nd December 2005 and that Pelham Homes had sold the site to Taylor Woodrow and Persimmon Homes. The letter referred to the feasibility study that had been commissioned in 2001, but had not been received.</p>

<p>May 2006</p>	<p>Network Rail responded to Patrick Gurner (following a chase regarding his letter from January). This highlighted the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Property Agreement with Network Sales team in Euston would be required; ■ Network Rail would need to arrange a “Network Change” and seek all necessary consents, including Her Majesty’s Railway Inspectorate, if the construction is to proceed. <p>A copy of a report produced by Railtrack’s Assistant Timetable Development Manager from October 2000, was also included with this letter (included within the documentation in Appendix A), which indicated that at that time it would have been possible for some trains to stop at the new station, but importantly not all trains passing could stop during peak hours.</p>
<p>December 2006</p>	<p>Network Rail Response to the Ashford Core Strategy Consultation. In relation to a new station at Park Farm, included;</p> <p><i>‘1. Paragraph 11.19 details the limited potential of a new rail halt at Park Farm. Network Rail has no principle objection to this; but the proposal would need to be shown as operationally, technically and commercially viable.’</i></p>
<p>October 2007</p>	<p>Minutes from a meeting between Network Rail and the Developers Consultants. The following are the key elements from the minutes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In 2001 Pelham Homes, with Buchanan Consulting Engineers supporting, liaised with Railtrack to carry out preliminary feasibility work. This work concluded the rail halt was technically deliverable in principle.
<p>November 2007</p>	<p>A Project Proposal form was sent to Network Rail (Included in Appendix A), prior to a further meeting in late November.</p> <p>The minutes from this meeting included the following key elements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Network Rail Commercial Schemes Sponsor – Murray Motley (MM) expressed concern that the station was not necessarily fully supported by Ashford Borough Council, who had expressed a preference for a bus based strategy to deliver mode shift in Ashford; ■ MM explained some of the wider enhancement ideas that would benefit the Hastings to Ashford line including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passing Loop at Rye - Possible electrification from Ashford Station to Park Farm/Hasting - Turnaround loop at Park Farm - Straight through Charing Cross trains from Park Farm ■ MM discussed the need to contact DfT and discuss the proposal with them in relation to the Southern franchising in 2 years’ time. MM would not be able to approach the operator or consider inclusion of the schemes in the strategy for the line without DfT support. ■ MM explained the study would follow the National Rail GRIP process. The extent of initial investigations covers GRIP stages 1 to 3. ■ Agreement that NR will carry out GRIP Stages 1 to 3 in line with two key requirements;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Rail Halt consistent with the Park Farm Section 106 Agreement; and - A Railway Station taking into account the aims and objectives of the Network Rail – Ashford to Hastings Upgrade
December 2007	Ashford Borough Council and Ashford's Future Team contacted, with a view to presenting preliminary work for Park Farm Rail Halt to the Ashford Transport Delivery Group meeting in February 2008.

2.3 Park Farm Rail Halt Progress Note 2 2008 to 2010

2.3.1 This document was produced by Canon Consultants, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes in August 2011. A copy is attached as Appendix C. The document sets out a plotted history of the rail halt project over the time period from 2008 to 2010 and includes correspondence documents from that time. The key points are set out within the timeline in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Park Farm Rail Halt – 2008 to 2010

Date	Item
January 2008	<p>Murray Motley (MM) (Network Rail) informed developers in a telephone conversation that he had a reasonably positive meeting with DfT and they would want to see a Business case for the Station.</p> <p>Agreement in the form of an email from developer that they would fund both aspects of a study namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Stage 1 – being the consideration of feasibility and business case for the existing proposal of a rail halt at Park Farm in accordance with the planning permission; and ii. Stage 2 – a wider study and investigation into a larger potential scheme as proposed by Network Rail.
March 2008	<p>Email to NR regarding the work arrangements for above study – envisaged that NR would do all the work and Canon Consulting Engineers would act as the client representative to guide and check the output against agreed brief.</p> <p>Notes from MM following meeting in late March set out how the two strands of work would be undertaken in the view of NR.</p> <p>Strand 1 – Technical question – “Can a station be built here?” – Would be a Grip 1-3 study, fast-tracked with a two week slot booked with dedicated team including engineering. The output would be an option selection report – bought into by the various departments involved. NR Fee £25,000.</p> <p>Strand 2 – The Business Benefits – NR considered that this would be better done by a consultant. Fee additional to above.</p> <p>A ‘Brief for Railway Consultancy Study – March 2008’ was sent by Canon Consulting Engineers to Network Rail (included in Appendix B).</p>
April 2008	<p>MM highlighted in an email that he had spoken to NR Route Planners and flagged a major issue in that NR would not support any development unless it complies with the Strategic Rail Authorities New Stations Guidance document (September 2004).</p>

	<p>Email from NR Senior Route Planner (Southeast Territory), which set out issues to be addressed within feasibility study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Infrastructure – Is the station technically feasible? ■ Operational – Can the station be served with a train service? ■ Economic – Is there an overall economic case for the station? <p>The email stated the following, with regard the economic case;</p> <p><i>‘This is where we have concerns. There are widespread aspirations to reduce journey times on the Ashford – Hastings/Brighton route and the time taken up by any additional station call would go against this. It will therefore need to be demonstrated that the benefits provided by a station at Park Farm would be greater than the journey time dis-benefits to through passengers not using the station. This will need to be done in accordance with the DfT’s standard appraisal guidance, which defines the relative values of time in monetary terms. There will be other issues as well as journey times, for example consideration of the impact of this station on the usage of, say, Ham Street.’</i></p> <p>An email from Andrew Phillips of Ashford Borough Council following a meeting with Canon Consulting Engineers and NR sets out some discussion points for ABC to consider including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any further study should also look at wider economic benefits the station could bring; and ■ Whether the station would affect the viability of SMARTLINK. <p>Within the email it makes mention of a previous response from ABC to the Core Strategy EIP, stating that the response was <i>‘very negative towards the prospects for a halt/station’</i>.</p> <p>NR informed the developer that the Grip 1-3 study work would be put on hold until the outcome of the Kent Route Utilisation Study (RUS) is known. NR would not be able to endorse the Park farm Rail Halt until after the Kent RUS had been completed.</p>
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2.4 Kent Route Utilisation Strategy

2.4.1 The Kent Route Utilisation Strategy was published by Network Rail in January 2010. The RUS considers how best to meet capacity challenges on the railway, to 2020, for the mainline rail service, operated by South Eastern at that time, along with other passenger journeys in Kent and parts of East Sussex. The RUS sets priorities for investment within Control Period 5.

2.4.2 The RUS highlights that the Marshlink line performs less well than other routes within the Kent area. Paragraph 3.15.11 states;

“The structure of the Marshlink line affects its performance (as well as its capacity) as the single line and low frequency service does not facilitate intervention to recover the service in the event of incidents. A large proportion of delay is due to trains waiting for passing opportunities at Rye”

2.4.3 The RUS included consultation and paragraph 7.3.16 states;

“The Ashford to Hastings line generated particular stakeholder interest. The current 1tph was not believed to offer sufficient frequency for the area the line serves, particularly in light of connections with high speed services at Ashford. Stakeholders generally sought a 2tph service and many responses felt electrification and dual tracking of the line between Ashford and Ore should be implemented to provide improved operational flexibility. In addition, some stakeholders felt that direct services should be provided between the Marshlink route and HS1, though it is unclear whether it was appreciated that the track layout at Ashford International precludes this at present.”

- 2.4.4 The RUS looked at a number of options within the area. Specific options that would have a direct or indirect impact on the feasibility of a station at Park Farm at the time of the publication of the RUS are shown in Tables 2-3 and 2-4.

Table 2-3 Kent Route Utilisation Strategy – Demand

Gap B is between the planned train service within Kent (including linkages to adjacent areas) and the need to provide a train service consistent with future level of demand across all transport modes		
Option	Description	Recommendation
<i>Option 7 – Increasing Off Peak Frequencies</i>		
7.4	2 trains per hour between Ashford and Hastings	Not recommended at present due to insufficient demand and need for additional infrastructure.
<i>Option 8 – Providing new journey opportunities</i>		
8.6	Providing the Hastings Area with a direct service onto HS1	Not possible at present due to the track configuration at Ashford International. Infrastructure likely to be prohibitively expensive and would represent poor use of capacity.

- 2.4.5 The assessment of Option 7.4 indicated that introduction of a 2-train per hour service would result in a quantified Benefit Cost Ratio of 0.6. Infrastructure costs were not included within this calculation, despite the likelihood that these are significant. If double tracking some sections and new signalling were required, these would be at least £10m.

- 2.4.6 The RUS does state however that;

‘A substantial increase in the overall travel market in this area would be required to enable this option to be recommended potentially linked to regeneration and new development in the area. Ongoing use of the high speed services at Ashford International will strengthen the case as commuters relocate to the area, as would improvements to journey times if implemented’.

- 2.4.7 The suggestion being that large scale development along the line may lead to a different outcome of this option and could be linked to new development and a station at Park Farm for example.

Table 2-4 Kent Route Utilisation Strategy – Accessibility

Gap C concerns accessibility to the rail network		
Option	Description	Recommendation
<i>Option 11 – New Stations</i>		
11.3	Ashford South	Further development not recommended

- 2.4.8 The consideration of Ashford South station at the time of the RUS indicated the following;
- i. The site does not fulfil any strategic gap identified within the RUS.
 - ii. The route is served by an hourly 2-car diesel service and the RUS appraisal has not identified a case to increase frequencies on the route.
 - iii. The additional stop is unlikely to provide operational problems, however it counters aspirations to reduce journey times along the entire route.
 - iv. The viability of the station will be dependent on efficient connections with high speed services at Ashford International. However, given the relatively short journey by road to the new station, the incentive to wait for connecting services would be drastically reduced.
 - v. The existing low frequency service would reduce the viability of improved facilities.
- 2.4.9 The overall conclusion stated in the RUS that it does not propose further action unless a firm proposal is made given the dis-benefits noted.

3 Current Situation

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section sets out the current situation in relation to Park Farm Rail Halt and the Marshlink line. This summarises more recent work undertaken on behalf of East Sussex County Council and discussions held with Network Rail.

3.2 Current Level of Service on Marshlink Line

- 3.2.1 The current service between Ashford and Hastings, on the Marshlink line is operated as a two-car diesel with a frequency of one train per hour. This has not changed since the feasibility of an Ashford South Station was considered to inform the Kent RUS. The full current timetable is shown in Appendix D.
- 3.2.2 Performance on the Marshlink line is relatively poor, mainly due to the single track alignment on most of the line with trains being delayed at the Rye passing loop, if a opposing services are delayed.

3.3 Current Franchise Arrangements

- 3.3.1 Services on the Marshlink line are operated by Southern Railway, which is a trading name of Govia Thameslink Railways Ltd. The current franchise began in July 2015 and is essentially a management contract, undertaken on behalf of DfT. DfT get the fare revenue from services, with GTR getting performance related bonuses and any subsidiary revenue e.g. from car parking.

3.4 Network Rail Position and Kent Route Study

- 3.4.1 Network Rail is in the process of updating all the RUS and replacing these with renamed Route Studies. As part of this programme, NR has just commenced the Kent Route Study. This will look at priorities for investment within Control Period 6, for the 5-years, post 2019. A draft study report is due to be published for consultation in Autumn 2016, with a final report due early 2017.
- 3.4.2 The Marshlink line will be included within this study and any likely infrastructure improvements, such as electrification and the issues with the link at Ashford International are likely to be examined.
- 3.4.3 At the meeting held with Network Rail, they indicated that a new station could be considered within the work currently being undertaken as part of the Kent Route Study and that the previous work, does not necessarily bear any weight currently, due to changes in circumstances with potential Marshlink line improvements and growth within Ashford, in particular in the area around the station. Minutes from the meeting are included as Appendix E.

3.5 Marshlink Electrification

- 3.5.1 Electrification of the Marshlink Line is currently being heavily promoted by East Sussex CC, in conjunction with Hasting Borough Council and Rother District Council. The current MP for Hastings and Rye, Amber Rudd, has also been lobbying within DfT for this to be considered. Rye. The main aim for this is the potential to reduce journey times and provide extra capacity between Bexhill, Hastings and London, through potential extension of the current HS1 services from Ashford International. The key driver is to support economic growth and regeneration in and around Hastings.

- 3.5.2 Mott MacDonald have recently produced a report on behalf of these authorities with the main outputs showing that electrification could;
- i. Increase connectivity into the heart of London with reduced journey times of 68 minutes from Hastings and 78 minutes from Bexhill.
 - ii. Increase business investment and growth in Bexhill and Hastings with the improved image and perception of the area as a business location.
 - iii. Increase the attractiveness of Rother and Hastings as a place to work and live.
 - iv. 'Supercharge' the local economy, building upon existing regeneration successes.
 - v. Over 200 jobs created in the local visitor economy worth up to £7.6m per year to Rother and Hastings;
 - vi. Bring £19 million of benefit and 425 jobs in regeneration and economic benefits by 2028;
 - vii. Bring £354 million of benefit to the local area by 2044; and
 - viii. Contribute £123.7m to the national economy.
- 3.5.3 In light of this any future work looking at feasibility of Park Farm should be undertaken in the context of this potential improvement, which could offer anew opportunity to promote the station for Ashford.

4 Station Feasibility

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Feasibility for a new station would need to be viewed in the context of all current guidance and Network Rail's Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP) process.
- 4.1.2 To determine feasibility for the station these three questions need to be answered;
- i. Can the appropriate infrastructure be provided?
 - ii. Can the station be served by a train service and will a TOC commit to stopping trains there?
 - iii. Is the station commercially and economically viable?
- 4.1.3 Current requirements and guidelines for station design and feasibility are set out in a number of documents produced by Network Rail and DfT including:
- i. Station Design Principles for Network Rail, Network Rail, March 2015
 - ii. Design Standards for Accessible Railways, DfT and Transport for Scotland, 2015
 - iii. Investment in Stations – A guide for Promoters and Developers, Network Rail, December 2014

4.2 Network Rail GRIP Process

- 4.2.1 The GRIP process has eight stages which take a scheme through a series of 'stage gates', each requiring particular technical outputs. The summary GRIP process is shown in Appendix F.
- 4.2.2 In the case of the Park Farm project, the initial phase would be to get through GRIP stages 1 to 3, which are;
- i. GRIP Stage 1 – Output Definition – Aim: Define output for the project e.g. connect new terminal. Main Output: Define the needs and the requirements – the opportunity
 - ii. GRIP Stage 2 – Feasibility – Aim: Define the scope of the investment and identify constraints. Confirm that the outputs can be economically delivered and aligned with network strategy. Main Outputs: Identify solutions in response to the requirements.
 - iii. GRIP Stage 3 – Option Selection – Aim: Develops options for addressing constraints, Assesses and selects the most appropriate option that delivers the stakeholders' requirements together with confirmation that the outputs can be economically delivered. Main Outputs: Single option determined and stakeholder approval to option secured through Approval in Principle (AiP).

4.3 Infrastructure and Operation

- 4.3.1 The Station Design Principles is the guidance used by Network Rail in setting out design principles and to allow any design to progress is in line with any current legislative and policy guidance. The industry has classified stations into six categories that are determined by the frequency of usage and complexity of interchange. Table 4-1 provides a summary of the 2009 listing and revenue from ticket sales:

Table 4-1 Network Rail Station Categories

Category	Type of Station	Revenue Criteria per Annum
A	National Hub	Over 2m trips: Over £20m
B	Regional Interchange	Over 2m trips: Over £20m
C	Important Feeder	0.5-2m trips: £2-20m
D	Medium Staffed	0.25-0.5m trips: £1-2m
E	Small Staffed	Under 0.25m trips: Under £1m
F	Small Unstaffed	Under 0.25m trips: Under £1m

(Source: DfT Better Rail Stations Report, 2009)

- 4.3.2 It is very likely that Park Farm would fall under category E/F, small staffed/unstaffed.
- 4.3.3 The Station Design Principles includes 12 criteria that have been identified as prime drivers and metrics for the design and enhancement of stations, these are described in detail in Section 6 of that document and include safety and security, sustainability, capacity and future proofing and inclusiveness and accessibility. A full list of the relevant legislation and guidance is provided within Appendix G (taken from Appendix B of the Station Design Principles for Network Rail).
- 4.3.4 In relation to inclusiveness and accessibility and as part of the European TSI legislation for lines on the European Network, station buildings and facilities have to comply with the 'Persons with Reduced Mobility' (PRM) requirements which are captured together with other UK legislation in the DfT Code of Practice entitled Accessible Design Standards for Railway Stations.
- 4.3.5 The DfT code of practice is the UK government's code of practice for protecting the interests of users of railway passenger services or station services who are disabled (under section 71B of the Railways Act 1993).
- 4.3.6 The key issues when designing a new station at an early stage are set out in Tables 5.2 (Operations and Performance) and 5.3 (Design Concept) of the 'Investment in Stations' document, the key issues are listed below, with the full tables attached as Appendix H. Key comments relating to Park Farm are shown in bold, but all these will need to be reviewed if feasibility work is taken forward. At this stage the priority will be determining a realistic cost of the station.

Operations and Performance

- i. Is the new station proposal consistent with the vision for the route set out in the relevant route study? **This is not currently the case, but the new Kent Route Study may open up this opportunity if demonstrated that it may be feasible;**

- ii. Is the railway used exclusively by one type of service or a mixture (e.g. express, stopping, freight)? **Currently the line is used by stopping services and minimal freight trains, although this could change if electrification does take place in the future;**
- iii. In terms of destinations, timing and stopping pattern, do existing services passing the site 'fit' with the anticipated patterns of travel from the new station? **The current services are very limited and it has been demonstrated previously that the case for the station is not good, but this may change should upgrades to the line take place and offer new opportunities. Feasibility would need to be reviewed in this context and it is understood from discussions with Network Rail, that East Sussex County Council have undertaken some work looking at potential future timetabling with electrification, with a direct service of 55 minutes from Rye to London St Pancras, 68 minutes from Hastings and 78 minutes from Bexhill;**
- iv. Location of signalling equipment including signals at proposed site. **No information appears to be available within the 2000 Railtrack feasibility study, regarding signal equipment, so this would need to be reviewed in partnership with Network Rail.**

Concept Design

- v. Platform Length – should be at least the length of the longest train expected to stop. **Current Station proposal is for a platform length to facilitate 4-car trains, but Network Rail view is that there is a need for the platform to be provided to allow 6-car trains to stop;**
- vi. Are track gradients acceptable at the location of the proposed station? Railway Group Standard GIGN7616 states that wherever possible, platforms shall be located adjacent to track with an average gradient not steeper than 1 in 500. **The current proposed station appears to meet this requirement;**
- vii. Is the railway straight or curved at the location of the proposed station? Railway Group Standard GIGN7616 requires new platforms to be straight where possible. **The current proposed location appears to meet this requirement;**
- viii. How many footbridges will the station require? **The current location for Park Farm has been chosen to remove these need, by utilising the existing accommodation bridge;**
- ix. Is the railway in a cutting/on an embankment/difficult to access? **This does not appear to be an issue with the current proposed location;**
- x. Is road access available to the site/is adequate land available for parking? – Road access is essential during construction and operation. The size of car park will be linked to the promoter's and rail industry's view of the market the station will serve. **Access and parking have been included within the current design, but may need to be reviewed;**
- xi. Existing buried and exposed services. **No information appears to be available from previous studies and this will need to be considered.**

4.4 Commercial and Economic Feasibility

- 4.4.1 The commercial viability and economic case for any new station will need to be demonstrated to all stakeholders including Network Rail, the TOC and DfT, through the development of a business case.
- 4.4.2 The development of a positive business case is essential to the success of a new station proposal. In order to develop a business case the promoter must understand the costs and the impacts of the scheme. This in its turn requires consideration of a number of commercial

issues which are likely to influence the whole life cost of the scheme. The key considerations are set out in Table 4-2.

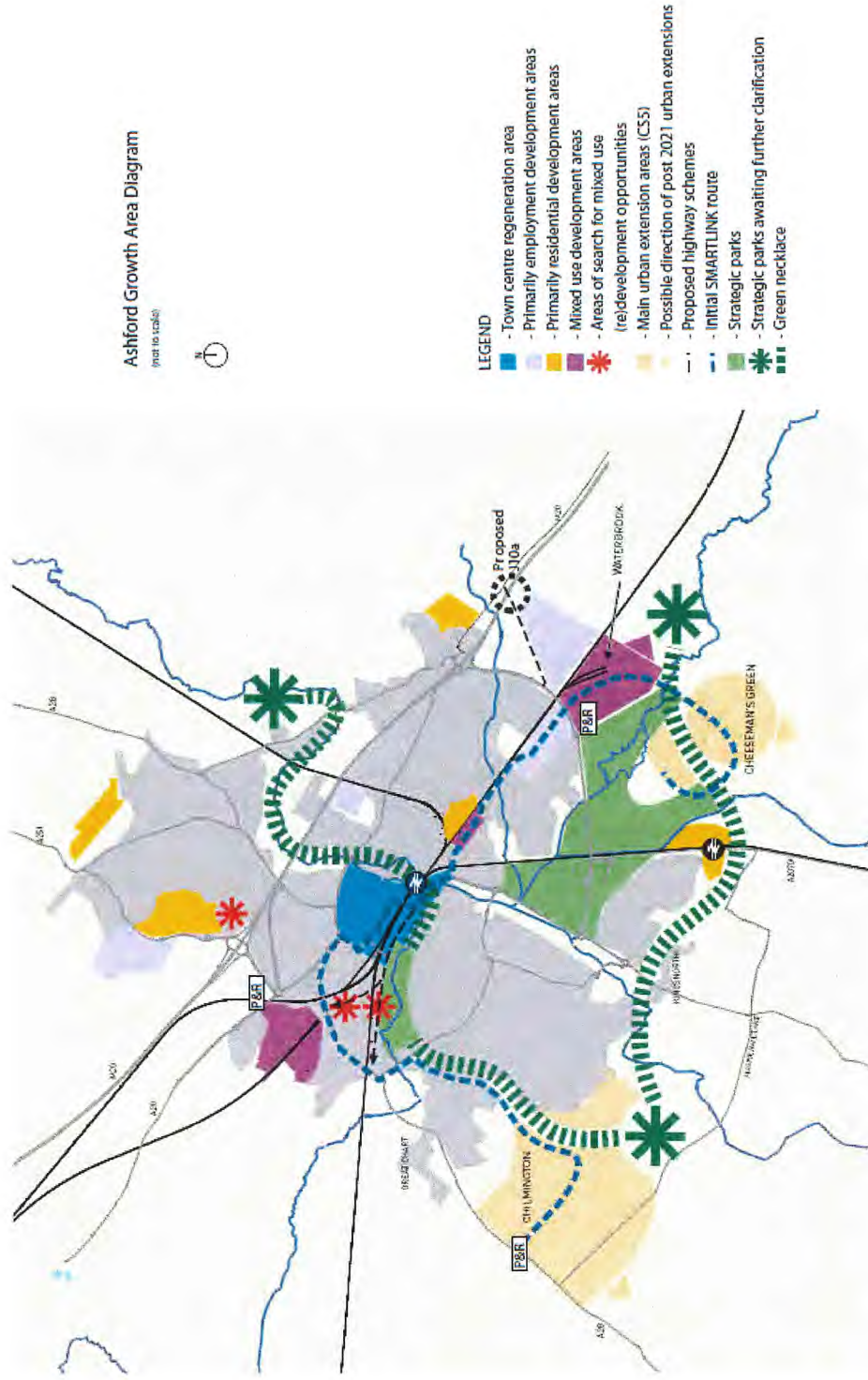
Table 4-2 Key Considerations for New Stations

Issue	Key Considerations
<p>What are the benefits associated with the opening of a new station?</p>	<p>These might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased revenue from higher passenger numbers • Benefits of encouraging a modal shift to rail • Benefits of providing greater accessibility to communities <p>Promoters must ensure that the benefits recorded relate to new markets captured by the investment rather than, for example, re-counting passengers who already travel by rail</p>
<p>What are the negative impacts that might be associated with a new station?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extended journey time associated with additional station stops can impact negatively on revenue. This will counter the revenue benefits gained from new passengers attracted to the new station. This should be assessed in the business case and economic appraisal that must be undertaken for the proposal. • A new station may lead to revenue abstraction from Train Operating Companies (TOCs) operating from nearby stations due to existing passengers being diverted to the new facility. This is unlikely to be an issue if the same TOC serving the new station exclusively serves other nearby stations.

- 4.4.3 The business case will need to be produced in line with the relevant guidance and reference documents including the Department for Transport (DfT) Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG) Unit A5.3 and the Association of Train Operators Council (ATOC) Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook (PDFH).
- 4.4.4 DfT will be concerned with the economic case for the station and to demonstrate that any capital investment will produce value for money. This assessment will be required for a 60-year appraisal period, as is standard with any major transport project. A benefit cost ratio (BCR) of above 2 will normally be necessary to demonstrate value for money.
- 4.4.5 Network Rail and the TOC will be more concerned with the commercial viability of the station and in particular that any newly generated revenue is greater than operation costs. This process is normally undertaken over a 30-year horizon.
- 4.4.6 The key element for demonstrating both the above is the demand forecasting for the new station and guidance on approaches to this are provided within 'Guidance Note on Passenger Demand Forecasting for Third Party Funded Local Rail Schemes', which is attached as Appendix I.

- 4.4.7 The demand for the station would need to consider forecast demand for the station and consider this in light of proposed development within the South Ashford area.
- 4.4.8 The Council's adopted LDF Core Strategy (2008) identifies the broad area of Cheeseman's Green and Waterbrook (located to the North East of Park Farm) to accommodate some 6,500 dwellings, 2,225 jobs, in addition to the Park Farm East and South and development further west at and Chilmington Green/Discovery Park.

Figure 4-1 Ashford Growth Area Plan – Adopted Core Strategy 2008



4.5 Station Costs

- 4.5.1 A more detailed review of the type of station that would be required to meet future needs and following the latest guidance as detailed above on station design. A high level cost estimate would need to be produced.
- 4.5.2 PBA has undertaken a number of recent station studies, many of which are of a similar scale to the likely station required at Park Farm, although all include the need for new footbridges, which would not be required at Park Farm. The cost estimates for these stations are provided below as an indication of likely costs:
- i. North Horsham - £10.0million – 260m platforms (12-car)
 - ii. Green Park, Reading Phase 1 - £10.7million
 - iii. Mitcham Eastfields – Opened 2008 – cost £6million- 170m platforms
 - iv. Thanet Parkway - £11million
- 4.5.3 Given the broad range of costings above and the current funding available through the developers Section 106 contribution detailed in Section 3.6, there is likely to be quite a short fall in funding to develop the station. Further funding would have to be sought elsewhere. Potential funding sources are discussed in Section 4.5.

4.6 Potential Funding Sources

- 4.6.1 Potential funding sources for the shortfall could include;
- i. South East LEP Growth Deal – It is likely that a new tranche of Local Growth Deal funding will be announced by the Government later this year or early 2016. In order to obtain funding this way, a positive business case would need to be prepared along with demonstrating that the scheme would be a high priority in meeting the LEP's objectives.
 - ii. New Stations Fund – At the meeting with Network Rail, it was suggested that there may well be an announcement regarding a second tranche of New Stations Fund at some point in the near future. The first New Stations Fund was launched on 24th January 2013 as an opportunity for railway station proposals in England and Wales to receive funding towards the capital cost of the railway stations. The Department for Transport advised that they received fourteen bids, worth £46 million. Five bids were successful, sharing £14 million between them.

5 Summary and Recommendation

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 A review of previous work carried out to study and promote a station halt at Park Farm Ashford has been carried out. Discussions with Network Rail have also been had to determine the current opportunities for the station/halt and the likely requirements for demonstrating a business case, in light of current guidance and procedures.

5.2 Previous Work

- 5.2.1 A new station to the South of Ashford has been mentioned since the early 1990's and promoted by developers of mainly residential development at Park Farm. The 'Rail Halt' was included within a successful planning application for Park Farm South and East and subject of the Section 106 agreement. The Section 106 includes a sum of £1.2 million towards the station (index linked), equivalent to around £1.8million at 2015 prices.
- 5.2.2 The proposed new station is located on the Ashford to Hasting line, known as the Marshlink Line. This line is currently mainly single track, with some sections of double track and a passing loop at Rye. Services currently operate hourly on the line, with additional services between Rye and Ashford in the peak periods. Current performance is poor due to issues with trains having to wait at Rye, if a service in the opposing direction is running late.
- 5.2.3 The track configuration at Ashford International was previously raised as a constraint to the delivery of a halt. The infrastructure required to improve this was identified as likely to be prohibitively expensive and would represent poor use of capacity.
- 5.2.4 Proposals for improvements on the line were examined as part of the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy, which sets out priorities for investment within Control Period 5 up to 2019. Options for increasing frequency and for infrastructure improvements were examined, but were not deemed a priority. It was considered that a new station at Park Farm/South Ashford would not be feasible at that time, as increasing the service frequency to 2 trains per hour did not offer good value for money and the additional infrastructure to connect to HS1, which was indicated to be prohibitively expensive.
- 5.2.5 The RUS did not look at future development within the area, which is likely to improve the case for a station.
- 5.2.6 A business case for the new station was not produced, as feasibility studies were stopped whilst awaiting the outcome of the Kent RUS, which as noted above, demonstrated that a new station was not considered viable at the time.
- 5.2.7 East Sussex County Council, along with Hastings Borough and Arun District Councils are pushing for the Marshlink line to be electrified. This would provide the opportunity for HS1 trains that currently run to Ashford International, to operate through to Ashford, thus reducing journey times to London. This is also supported by the current Rye and Hastings MP, Amber Rudd, who has been lobbying for this to be considered, to bring economic and regeneration benefits to Hastings and the surrounding area.
- 5.2.8 Recent discussions with Network Rail in October 2015 they indicated that the feasibility of a new station may be appropriate, if linked with housing growth within South Ashford and the potential improvements on the Marshlink Line.
- 5.2.9 Any future work would need to consider the new station in light of all the relevant policy, legislation and guidance that currently exists. This would include a review of the station design and particularly costings, as there is likely to be a shortfall in funding when considered against the available Section.

- 5.2.10 If pursued, a business case for the station will need to be developed. This would need to consider the commercial viability and economic case of the station, in light of the potential service improvements brought about through electrification and other infrastructure improvements. The case would need to be demonstrated against the aspiration for improved journey times on the Marshlink line which a new station would likely impact upon.

5.3 Recommendation

- 5.3.1 The potential for a new station needs to consider the aspirations for growth in Ashford, and whether the station can be part of a wider sustainable transport strategy and act as a catalyst to growth and economic regeneration. The Adopted Core Strategy identifies growth in South Ashford, in particular at Cheeseman's Green and Waterbrook. This, along with the push for electrification of the line and potential improvements at Ashford International, to allow HS1 trains to run through to Hastings, open up opportunities and is likely to enhance a business case for a station at Park Far/South Ashford.
- 5.3.2 In the first instance, it would be recommended that station requirements and costs are reviewed and high level costs for the new halt can be determined. This would be undertaken in conjunction with Network Rail and to plan a station that would meet current guidelines and is adequate for the potential future services that could use the station. This would help to identify any short fall in funding to determine whether there could be a case for seeking the additional funding elsewhere. This may need to include consultation with other stakeholders including Kent County Council and the South East LEP, to understand whether this would fit with their priorities and aspirations. The costs would also be required to inform a business case should this be pursued.
- 5.3.3 A business case would need to look at the commercial and economic viability of the station by determining demand forecasts. A case is unlikely to be made with the current service and infrastructure on the Marshlink line, the new station would need to be considered in the context of potential future improvements on the line and [planned development within the South Ashford area.
- 5.3.4 A revised Kent Route Study has just commenced and this will report in January 2017. Therefore, any work undertaken could be used to inform a response from Ashford Borough Council to this.