

INTRODUCTION

Strategy and Resources

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INTRODUCTION

Strategy and Resources

The Borough of Southend-on-Sea

- 0.1 The Borough of Southend-on-Sea lies forty miles to the east of Central London on the northern bank of the Thames estuary. It is the largest town in Essex with approximately 165,000 inhabitants living within an urban area of 4,163 hectares stretching from Shoeburyness in the east to Leigh in the west, and including Westcliff, Eastwood, Southchurch and Thorpe Bay.
- 0.2 Tourism and the coming of the railway gave Southend much of its impetus for growth during the latter part of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries, centred on the town's most famous landmark, the Pier. As a result of this the town has some outstanding examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture, interspersed with many mature parks and gardens.
- 0.3 To the north and west of the town lies open countryside, although those undeveloped areas lying within the Borough boundary are now very limited. This countryside separates the town from the neighbouring settlements of Hadleigh and Benfleet in the Borough of Castle Point, and Rayleigh, Hockley, Rochford and Great Wakering within the District of Rochford. The majority of this countryside has been designated Green Belt to ensure its preservation, and this combined with Southend's extensive seafront to the south provides for a wealth of recreation and leisure opportunities. The Southend foreshore is also of international importance for wildlife.
- 0.4 Southend town centre is the principal shopping area for South East Essex, with over 120,000 square metres of retail floorspace. The Borough also has a number of local shopping centres and is an important employment centre, with over 200,000 square metres of office floorspace and 100 hectares of purpose built industrial estates (all gross figures).
- 0.5 The Borough has good communication links to London and the motorway network via the A127 and A13 roads, which are mostly dual-carriageway standard. The M25 is situated just 20 minutes away. Frequent rail services from Southend's nine stations also give rapid links with the City of London. Southend Airport, owned by the Borough Council but situated predominantly within the administrative District of Rochford, provides air services for passengers and freight within the UK and to the Continent. Tilbury seaport is within 15 miles and provides excellent container facilities and roll on/roll off services to the Continent.
- 0.6 Southend has grown into a major commercial, residential and leisure centre, serving the needs of a catchment population of over 300,000 people living in South East Essex, and providing resort facilities for some two million day visitors during the tourist season.
- 0.7 The Borough of Southend in its sub-regional context is illustrated on the back cover of this document. The larger scale map overleaf (Map 1) depicts the urban settlements comprising the Borough of Southend-on-Sea and the town's relationship to the adjoining Borough and District of Castle Point and Rochford.

Need for the Plan

- 0.8 There has never been a greater need for a comprehensive development plan for Southend. The

town is reaching the limits of its potential for both outward expansion and the more intensive use of existing land and buildings. However, it continues to experience pressure for development and increasing levels of traffic and parking. At the same time, some new homes, jobs and amenities must be provided to meet the continuing needs of local people.

- 0.9 Increasingly, therefore, proposals to provide much-needed local facilities must be considered in terms of their impact on an already intensively developed town. The challenge facing Southend is to create the right balance between meeting people's needs, promoting a healthy local economy and improving local facilities through new development, and sustaining a pleasant and attractive environment for residents, workers and visitors.
- 0.10 This requires careful planning and clear guidance to potential developers. The adoption of this Borough Local Plan will help to meet this challenge in accordance with the provisions of the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act, which makes the preparation of district-wide local plans mandatory for all areas as part of the Government's aim to achieve a more effective, plan-led land use planning system.

Purpose of the Plan

- 0.11 The principal purpose of this Plan is, therefore, to establish on a firm and comprehensive basis, the pattern of development considered to be most appropriate for Southend in the foreseeable future. It covers the period up to the year 2001. In particular, the Plan aims to achieve an appropriate balance between meeting the long-term development needs of the town, and protecting its character, environment and natural resources.
- 0.12 To accomplish this, the Plan contains a number of policies and proposals which set out the main considerations on which planning applications for development will be decided and appropriate development opportunities promoted. In this way, the Plan provides detailed guidance to all those interested in the future planning of the town and the way in which it is to develop. However, for the Plan to be effective, it needs the support of local people, the development industry and other agencies. To ensure this, extensive consultation has been carried out as part of the process of preparing the Plan.

Plan Preparation

- 0.13 The Borough Local Plan has been developed over a number of years, in accordance with statutory requirements and having regard to the many representations made by statutory bodies, government departments, local associations and the general public.
- 0.14 Draft Plans were first published for consultation purposes by the Council in February 1987, namely the Draft Southend-on-Sea District and Town Centre Local Plans. These were amended and amalgamated to form a single Borough wide Local Plan which was placed 'on deposit' for public inspection and representation in May 1991. After considering representations on the deposit plan, the Council published a number of pre-inquiry changes. A public inquiry to hear all outstanding objections to the Plan was held before an independent Inspector from 10th March to 3rd April 1992. As a result of the Inspector's recommendations to the Council, proposed modifications to the Plan were published in March 1993 for public comment. Following further minor changes to the Plan in August 1993, as a result of this consultation, the Plan was officially adopted by the Council on 1st March, 1994 (see Appendix 11).

- 0.15 In addition to public consultation, the Plan is required to take into account government guidance and the provisions of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration which has been prepared by the Essex County Council. The latter document lays down the strategic planning framework for the County and was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in July 1991. Having been adopted by the Council, the Borough Local Plan now supersedes the former statutory Development Plan (First Review) for Southend - which received government approval in 1970 - and provides, with the Essex Structure Plan, the development plan framework for the town during the 1990's.

Relationship to Essex Structure Plan

- 0.16 The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration rolls forward the policy framework of the first Structure Plan for the County, to cover the period from 1986 to 2001. It is concerned with the general distribution over Essex as a whole of additional housing, employment, shopping and associated facilities during the 1990's. Within this strategic framework, District and Borough Councils such as Southend are required to prepare more detailed local plans for those areas in which change is planned to take place and where there is a need to define the precise boundaries of areas of restraint.
- 0.17 The County Strategy, on which the policies of the Structure Plan First Alteration are based, may be summarised as follows:-
1. *to encourage economic growth by expanding existing businesses and attracting new employment, so as to redress the imbalance between workers and jobs;*
 2. *to cater for the County's own housing needs and to meet some regional demands, but to restrict most housing growth to land already committed for development;*
 3. *to concentrate new development in existing towns and to keep town centres as the urban focus;*
 4. *to concentrate retail development in or adjoining existing centres to ensure their economic viability;*
 5. *to protect, as far as possible, the County's natural resources, including high grade farmland, attractive landscape and wildlife habitats;*
 6. *to maintain the Metropolitan Green Belt; and*
 7. *to improve existing transport systems to an acceptable standard.*
- 0.18 With regard to Southend, the Structure Plan First Alteration provides for the following:-
1. *the maintenance of the Metropolitan Green Belt and the protection of areas of high amenity and natural resource value around the built-up area of the town;*
 2. *all new housing development to be provided only by the use of committed land, small sites and recycled urban land within the built-up area of the town;*
 3. *the promotion of leisure, recreation and tourism facilities, including the consideration of a marina scheme;*

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4. *the expansion of employment opportunities in the town; and*
 5. *the concentration of retail facilities within the town centre and existing district centres.*
- 0.19 In approving the First Alteration to the Essex Structure Plan, the Secretary of State indicated, however, that the Essex County Council should re-examine its housing provisions in order to take into account revised regional population and household projections, and should also take a further look at its shopping policies in order to improve their consistency with each other and with national policy guidance. In the light of this requirement, the Essex County Council has prepared a Second Alteration to the Structure Plan which was placed 'on deposit' for public consultation purposes in July 1992. An Examination in Public (EIP) to hear all outstanding objections was held in March 1993. The Second Alteration also includes minor amendments to the policy relating to sites of archaeological importance, following the release of new government guidance on this subject. The objectives and proposals of the Second Alteration have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this Local Plan.
- 0.20 The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration cannot define precisely where new development is to take place within the County because it is not site-specific. In the same way, the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt and other areas of long-term restraint are only indicative in the Structure Plan. A local plan is therefore needed to make specific land allocations and boundary definitions to give detailed local effect to the proposals of the Structure Plan, in accordance with the wishes of the Borough Council. In addition, the Council's former statutory Development Plan was over 20 years old. In view of the many changes which have taken place since its approval and the many new development pressures which have emerged, a fresh statement of the Council's policies and proposals for the promotion and control of development was required. This Plan provides such a statement in a single comprehensive document.

Relationship to Local Plans in Adjoining Local Authorities

- 0.21 In formulating a new plan for Southend, the Council must also ensure that it is compatible with the plans of neighbouring authorities. Rochford District Council adopted a District-wide Local Plan in 1988 to guide development proposals up until 1991. A First Review of this plan is currently being prepared which will roll its policies and proposals forward to cover the period to 2001. Castle Point Borough Council published a Consultation Draft Local Plan for its area in December 1992 which will also cover the period to 2001. Once adopted, this will complete local plan coverage for South East Essex. The provisions of these documents have been taken into account in the formulation of this Local Plan. The Borough Council will continue to monitor their progress through to adoption, and make representations where appropriate, to ensure their compatibility with the Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan.

Aims of the Plan

- 0.22 With limited land and property resources now available, continuing development pressures are having a significant impact on the character, environment and amenities of Southend. At the same time, there is a continuing need to provide jobs, new homes and better community facilities for local people. The levels of unemployment, out-commuting and housing need are consistently high, whilst the provision of sports and recreation facilities for a population of 165,000 is manifestly low.

- 0.23 The principal purpose of the Borough Local Plan is therefore to indicate ways of meeting these needs which also enable the establishment of a realistic and defensible Green Belt around the town and which protect its urban and natural environment. This involves striking a proper balance between identifying and promoting opportunities for desirable new development and safeguarding or enhancing the Borough's natural and built resources. In order to achieve this balance for both residents of and visitors to Southend, the Borough Local Plan pursues the following principal aims:

Environmental Safeguards

- AIM 1 - to safeguard and enhance areas of urban and nature conservation interest and protect attractive townscape, urban green spaces, open countryside and the surrounding coastline, without stifling that development essential to the future prosperity and well-being of the town.
- AIM 2 - to make optimum use of the existing dwelling stock and available land to meet local housing needs, without reducing the quality of established residential areas or resorting to 'town cramming'.

Economic Development

- AIM 3 - to promote the development of those functions which will secure a sound economic future for the town in the retail, leisure, commercial and industrial business sectors, by exploiting the town's unique seaside location, sub-regional shopping centre and proximity to London whilst creating an attractive environment for people living in or visiting the town.

Infrastructure Support

- AIM 4 - to make specific provision for improved sport, recreation and community facilities to overcome identified deficiencies and meet local needs.
- AIM 5 - to facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods within the town in ways which safeguard the environment and which increase road safety.

The above aims are translated into specific objectives in the relevant chapters of the Plan before being further refined into detailed policies and proposals.

- 0.24 In addition, the Council recognises the increasing public concern with more general environmental issues and the ecological effects of policy decisions made by both the public and private sectors. As a result a Charter for the Environment has been adopted by the Council to establish a broad context for all of its activities and policy considerations. The policies and proposals within this Plan take into consideration the aims of the Charter where they relate to town planning issues and where they can contribute to an improvement in environmental quality for local residents and visitors to the town. The aims of the Charter are set out below:-

1. *To encourage all sections of the community to be aware of environmental issues and to play an active part in making the Borough a more attractive and healthy place.*
2. *To protect and improve the quality of the Borough's natural and built environments.*
3. *To improve the quality of life for residents and visitors by:*

- (a) *seeking to minimise all forms of water, air, soil and noise pollution affecting the Borough;*
- (b) *ensuring compliance with controls for the use, storage and transport of all toxic and hazardous materials within the Borough;*
- (c) *encouraging the reduction and making provision for the satisfactory disposal of litter, refuse, graffiti and all waste materials;*
- (d) *encouraging the conservation and good management of natural resources, including the recycling of materials;*
- (e) *encouraging fuel efficiency and energy saving measures including the increased use of public transport;*
- (f) *encouraging a healthier environment.*

0.25 In pursuing the aims of the Charter for the Environment, the Borough Council will also have regard to the need for development and growth to be sustainable (i.e. that man-made and natural resources are utilised in such a way that the expectations of future generations are not prejudiced), in accordance with Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 (PPG12 - Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance, February 1992).

Implementation and Resources

0.26 The financial and economic climate in which local government is presently operating dictates that the Plan must be implemented primarily by the private sector. Many of the policies are principally intended to set out the criteria against which all proposals for development will be assessed through the process of development control. However, the Borough Council will also seek the early incorporation of more specific proposals in the expenditure programmes of private and public utilities and other services, particularly with regard to sewage disposal, education and highway provisions.

0.27 Such policies and proposals may have financial consequences for the Borough Council itself. The long-term nature of much of the Plan, and the need to overcome identified problems and deficiencies make it essential that these policies and proposals are included within the Council's expenditure programmes, to be implemented as resources and priorities permit. Priorities will be determined with due regard to the identified aims of the Council's Charter for the Environment. In seeking to pursue these aims the Council will ensure that all its Committees regularly monitor the environmental and ecological implications of their policies and activities, and major planning applications with significant environmental implications will be assessed in accordance with Circular 15/88 (Town and Country Planning - Assessment of Environmental Effects - Regulations). In addition, the Council will actively seek the co-operation of local residents, local organisations and the business community in planning, funding and implementing worthwhile environmental projects.

0.28 The effective use of the Council's existing assets - especially land holdings - and financial programmes will be necessary for the satisfactory achievement of many proposals. Their early implementation may also be achieved by or in partnership with the private sector, where they can be incorporated within commercially viable schemes, or by the use of compulsory purchase powers. In order to implement this Plan, therefore, the Borough Council will:

1. *have regard to its policies and proposals in considering all planning applications for development;*
2. *undertake a financial audit of the Plan to ensure that those policies and proposals dependent for their implementation on Council action are incorporated within the Local Authority's expenditure programme as resources and priorities permit;*
3. *encourage the private sector to implement the Plan's policies and proposals, including the provision of public facilities as part of commercially viable developments;*
4. *seek the incorporation of the requirements contained in relevant policies and proposals in the expenditure programmes of public and private sector services at the earliest opportunity, where appropriate on a joint provision basis;*
5. *consider the development or use of its own land holdings and other assets or the acquisition and management of additional land, where necessary in partnership with the private sector;*
6. *in appropriate circumstances seek to use compulsory purchase powers in order to bring sites forward or to achieve a satisfactory form of development; and*
7. *exploit all appropriate grant aid opportunities.*

0.29 In addition to the above, it is the Borough Council's intention to expand the scope of the Plan in due course to include detailed consideration of specific areas of the Borough. In particular, policies and proposals such as G6 and P1a (Nature Conservation and Southend Foreshore Local Nature Reserve); C4 (Conservation Areas - enhancement schemes); C5 (Leigh Old Town), H12 (Environmental Improvement of Residential Areas), E6 (North Road/Salisbury Avenue); S8 (Improvements to Primary Shopping Frontages); T8 (Traffic Management and Highway Safety); T9 (Town Centre Parking - Off-Street); and T10 (Town Centre Parking - On-Street), will depend for their effective implementation on such additional work. The Plan also recognises the need to prepare a local assessment of the Borough Council's recreation and playing-pitch requirements at the earliest opportunity, in accordance with advice and methodology contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17 - Sport and Recreation, September 1991) and publications by the Sports Council (see Chapter 7).

0.30 To promote 'best practice' in the implementation of the Plan's policies and proposals, the Borough Council will publish appropriate topic based guidance notes and conservation area design guides. It will also publish planning briefs (Policy C20) for important development sites.

Monitoring and Review

0.31 With Southend now reaching the limits of its potential for outward expansion, no fundamental change in the Plan's general strategy and the pattern of development proposed seems likely in the foreseeable future. Economic and social circumstances and attitudes do, however, alter. New problems and new forms of development will arise. As such changes occur, new policies will be required and existing ones may cease to be relevant or lose public and government support.

0.32 Following the introduction of new legislation aimed at achieving a plan-led land use planning system, all relevant planning decisions are required to be in accordance with the Local Plan

unless material considerations indicate otherwise. One of the principal material considerations is the extent to which the Local Plan is up-to-date. Therefore, if the Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan is to achieve its stated objectives, it will be essential to ensure that regular monitoring of the Plan is carried out to evaluate its effectiveness and the continuing relevance of its policies and proposals.

0.33 Regular monitoring of the Borough Local Plan will be carried out by the Borough Council's Development Department and will be achieved by:-

1. monitoring planning permissions for new housing, industrial, commercial, retail and leisure developments. Monitoring will also include the loss of dwelling and industrial units in redevelopment schemes and the maintenance of comprehensive records of industrial and office floorspace provision;
2. monitoring appeal and planning enforcement decisions;
3. analysing building control records and carrying out surveys in order to monitor development starts and completions for new housing, industrial, commercial, retail and leisure schemes;
4. monitoring the impact of planning permissions on the environment of residential areas;
5. surveys of Conservation Areas and Historic Buildings to monitor the effectiveness of policy and grant provision in seeking to preserve and enhance such areas and buildings;
6. monitoring the provision of landscaping and protection of trees.

All the above will form part of the on-going monitoring process. In addition, the following specific survey work will be undertaken:-

7. surveys of major house builders, estate agents and householders in new dwellings to ascertain types and prices of property and a profile of the occupants, as part of a comprehensive corporate housing needs review and assessment - three yearly review cycle;
8. surveys of estate agents for details of vacant industrial and commercial premises to include floorspace and rental levels - bi-monthly publication;
9. surveys of industrial and commercial premises to include new premises and relets to ascertain types of firms and numbers of employees - annual publication;
10. surveys of all employers in the Borough to ascertain details of types of firms, types and number of employees - annual publication;
11. surveys of retail and commercial frontages to monitor changes in occupants and development trends - annual basis;
12. retail surveys to gauge the impact of 'out of town' superstores on established shopping centres - three/five year basis;
13. surveys of hotel/guest house and other tourist facilities to monitor changes in provision and trends - annual basis;

14. monitoring provision of indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure facilities - annual basis;
15. liaison with the Highway Authority to assess the effectiveness of traffic management measures;
16. monitoring of development trends having regard to the above and the initiation of original survey work where deemed appropriate, e.g. to gauge the adequacy of off-street parking standards.

The above monitoring process will be supplemented by external information sources, in particular government, demographic and employment data.

- 0.34 In order to evaluate comprehensively the effectiveness of the Plan, the Borough Council will publish an Annual Monitoring Statement for public comment. Such a statement will also take into account the effectiveness of the Council's Charter for the Environment and any changes to planning and related legislation and to national strategy as may be indicated in Planning Policy Guidance Notes published by the Department of the Environment. Alterations to the Regional and County strategy as a result of further studies by SERPLAN (The London and South East Regional Planning Conference) and reviews of the Essex Structure Plan will also be taken into consideration. Where the statement indicates the need for additions or changes, the Borough Plan will be amended in accordance with statutory procedures. In view of the complexity of these procedures, a complete review of the Plan is not envisaged until at least 1996/7, although this will be dependent on any major changes that may be made to national or regional guidance in the meantime.

PART ONE Error! Bo

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS

AIM 1 -to safeguard and enhance areas of urban and nature conservation interest and protect attractive townscape, urban green spaces, open countryside and the surrounding coastline, without stifling that development essential to the future prosperity and well-being of the town.

AIM 2 -to make optimum use of the existing dwelling stock and available land to meet local housing needs, without reducing the quality of established residential areas or resorting to 'town cramming'.

CHAPTER 1

Green Belt and Natural Resources

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CHAPTER 1

Green Belt and Natural Resources

Introduction

- 1.1 The majority of the Borough of Southend is either already developed or supports many types of open space uses within the urban area. Apart from Belfairs Woods, agricultural smallholdings near Southend Airport and Two Tree Island, the only substantial area of undeveloped land within the Borough is a tract of open countryside north of Eastern Avenue and Bournes Green Chase.
- 1.2 The limited extent of the town's rural hinterland increases its value in providing a contrast to the intensively built-up residential and commercial part of Southend. It is considered essential, therefore, that the remaining areas of high quality countryside, farmland, woodland and foreshore around the town remain open in character and are protected from inappropriate development. One of the primary objectives of this Plan is to set out policies to restrict the outward expansion of the town and to ensure that, where appropriate, remaining rural resources are conserved.
- 1.3 The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration contains a number of policies to control the growth of settlements and to protect and conserve valuable natural resources in the countryside, including high grade agricultural land; Nature Reserves; Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other important wildlife habitats; Special Landscape Areas; Landscape Improvement Areas; and the rural coastline. All of these policies affect land on the perimeters of the Borough, and the precise areas to which they apply are defined in this Plan. This provides a broad set of constraints which together establish the long-term limits to the development of Southend.

Objectives

(See Introduction, Aim 1)

- 1.4
 1. To define the detailed boundary of the Green Belt around Southend.
 2. To protect the open countryside from inappropriate development.
 3. To identify and protect areas of importance for agriculture, nature conservation and landscape, including the undeveloped coastline.
 4. To encourage the improvement of areas of poor landscape quality.
 5. To seek the proper management and maintenance of sites of nature conservation value, including important wildlife habitats.

The Green Belt

- 1.5 The Metropolitan Green Belt has been successful in resisting the outward sprawl of London and in maintaining an attractive area of open countryside close to the capital. The areas of open countryside separating Southend from neighbouring settlements, namely Hadleigh, Rayleigh, Hockley, Rochford and the Wakerings, are an equally important local resource. In approving the Essex Structure Plan in 1982, the Secretary of State for the Environment acknowledged the need for a general extension of the Green Belt to include the countryside around Southend to prevent settlements from merging, and to protect the very limited areas of rural land which remain. An "interim" Green Belt, based on boundaries put forward by the

Essex County Council, was adopted as a holding measure by the Borough Council in September 1980, pending the preparation of comprehensive detailed long-term boundaries in this Local Plan.

- 1.6 Circular 14/84 (Green Belts) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2 - Green Belts, January 1988) confirm the continuing importance attached to Green Belts by the Government and underline their five essential objectives -
1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 2. to safeguard surrounding countryside from further encroachment;
 3. to prevent neighbouring towns from merging;
 4. to preserve the special character of historic towns; and,
 5. to assist in urban regeneration.

It is also clear that, where practicable, Green Belts should be several miles wide to provide an appreciable rural zone around towns, and to allow for access to active outdoor pursuits and passive recreation for urban residents.

- 1.7 The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration is only able to define the general extent of the Green Belt in the vicinity of Southend. Policy S6 states that "as a general indication ... the boundary should (then) run west of Foulness Island to meet the Thames Estuary and thence westwards, excluding existing built-up areas, as far as the County boundary with Greater London." It is one of the primary purposes of this Local Plan to delineate the Green Belt boundary around Southend in detail, thereby replacing the "interim" boundaries established in 1980.
- 1.8 PPG2 and Policy S7 of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration require that Green Belt boundaries should be permanent and drawn carefully to exclude land that is required for long-term development. It is therefore necessary to take into consideration existing developments and foreseen longer term land requirements for Southend in defining such boundaries. In the past, developments which have exceptionally been allowed on the northern fringes of east Southend have been those which provide a buffer between the urban area and the open countryside and which have a minimal impact on visual amenity and high grade agricultural land. They include such uses as hospitals, secondary schools, sports centres and country clubs. With limited land resources within the Borough, it was clearly advantageous to locate uses requiring large grounds outside the urban area of the town, provided that the environmental impact and site layout were acceptable. These developments have predominantly taken place on land adjoining Eastern Avenue which forms part of the "interim" Green Belt.
- 1.9 Having regard to these developments, the proposal for a food store on land adjoining the Wellesley Hospital (see Proposal P5e, page 97), and the identified need for a range of indoor participatory sports and leisure facilities in this locality as part of a comprehensive leisure park (see Proposal P7d, page 124), a small area of land on the Eastern Avenue frontage is excluded from the Green Belt in this Plan.
- 1.10 Beyond the end of the Plan period few, if any, opportunities will remain for further development, even by redevelopment, infilling or conversion in the existing urban area. There is, therefore, likely to be substantial pressure for expansion into the rural fringes of the town and the need for effective policies to resist this. In considering the extent to which further expansion of the urban area of Southend is acceptable in the future, regard has to be had to the objectives of Green Belts as defined in paragraph 1.6 above.
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- 1.11 The open countryside separating the town from neighbouring settlements is now so limited that any substantial reduction in its area is likely to prejudice its ability to function as an effective Green Belt. Moreover, almost all of the undeveloped land around Southend's built-up area is either of high amenity and nature conservation value or of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural value. Beyond the Borough boundary to the north of the town, Rochford District Council has designated most of the adjoining land as Green Belt in the Rochford District Local Plan, adopted in 1988. In effect, therefore, with the implementation of proposals within this Plan, Southend will have reached the limits of its development potential.
- 1.12 In the light of all these factors, Southend's Green Belt boundary has been defined to include all those areas of open countryside surrounding Southend which the Council considers should be kept permanently open and protected. This provides a defensible boundary that should endure beyond the Plan period, and which is delineated on the Proposals Map.

Development Within the Green Belt

- 1.13 To maintain the open character of the Green Belt, it is essential that future development proposals within its boundaries are strictly controlled. Policy S9 of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration only permits development within the Green Belt in the most exceptional circumstances, unless it is connected with agriculture, mineral extraction, forestry, outdoor recreation, cemeteries or involves institutions requiring large grounds. The following policy will, therefore, be applied to proposals for development within the Green Belt.

POLICY G1 - DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT

Within the Green Belt, permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use, replacement or extension of existing buildings, other than reasonable extensions to existing dwellings (see also Policy G4). Proposals for such extensions which significantly increase the building envelope or do not reflect the scale, design and materials of the existing dwelling out of scale and character with its neighbours will not be permitted.

Permission may, however, be given to development proposals for the following purposes;

- (i) agriculture, mineral extraction or forestry;**
- (ii) small scale facilities for outdoor participatory sport and recreation;**
- (iii) institutions requiring large grounds;**
- (iv) cemeteries or similar uses which are open in character,**

provided that all buildings contained within such developments are of such a scale, design and siting that the appearance of the countryside and the character of the Green Belt is not impaired.

Policy Cross Reference : G4 Special Countryside Area, page 15.

Agricultural Land

- 1.14 Agricultural policies established after the war sought to provide the nation with a reliable source of food at a reasonable price and the farmer with a reasonable return. These policies were strengthened when the U.K. joined the European Community and resulted in increased output and food surpluses. Following a review of agricultural policy by Government, the objective now is to foster the diversification of the rural economy. As a result, land is being taken out of agricultural production for the first time this century. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (PPG7 - The Countryside and the Rural Economy, January 1992) identifies the need for landowners to look at a range of options for the economic use of their land, including expanded woodland planting, recreation and leisure enterprises.
- 1.15 PPG7 also recognises the importance of safeguarding the best and most versatile land. Over half of the agricultural land in Essex is graded 1 and 2 in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Land Classification, which is more than any other county except Cambridgeshire. Land graded 1 and 2 is of the highest quality and comprises only 17% of the total agricultural land in England and Wales. The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration contains policies to control the loss of land graded 1, 2 and 3A and the sterilisation or disruption of commercial farmland (policies NR1 and NR2). Much of the undeveloped land around the northern perimeter of Southend is of high quality - the majority being Grade 1. Most of this land is in agricultural use or proposed for open recreation and leisure. It is important that, as a national resource, this land continues to be protected from irreversible forms of development. The following policy will therefore be applied to land shown as being of high grade agricultural quality on the Proposals Map.

POLICY G2 - LAND OF HIGH GRADE AGRICULTURAL QUALITY

With the exception of those development proposals which may be permitted in accordance with Policy G1, schemes which would result in the permanent loss of Land of High Grade Agricultural Quality, as identified on the Proposals Map, will normally be refused, unless it can be shown that no suitable alternative site of lesser agricultural value is possible and there is an overriding need for the development.

Policy Cross Reference : G1 Development Within the Green Belt, page 13.

Landscape

- 1.16 Essex is a county of landscape contrasts resulting from the changing and generally increasing demands made upon it. Recent developments in farming practice have resulted in some very marked changes in the Essex landscape. Nevertheless, many of the features of the old landscape remain, and it is becoming increasingly important that these are protected as far as current planning law allows.
- 1.17 South East Essex has only limited areas of open countryside and undeveloped land. Moreover, because of the removal of many natural features, such as woods and hedgerows, in the interests of farming efficiency, parts of the landscape need improvement to enhance its rural character. The undeveloped northern fringes of Southend have, in addition, been affected by the loss of trees by disease. Any proposals for development will, therefore, be required to retain and, if feasible, to improve the natural features of the landscape within areas of open countryside in the Borough. Planting trees in field corners and along streams,

replacement of important hedgerows and the screening of ugly buildings will be encouraged. In accordance with the objectives contained in Policies NR10, NR13, NR14 and NR15 of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration, the following policy will be applied:

POLICY G3 - LANDSCAPE PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT

Within those areas defined as Landscape Improvement Areas on the Proposals Map, development proposals likely to cause permanent loss or damage to the natural beauty and traditional qualities of the landscape will normally be refused. Any proposals for development will, in addition, normally be required to retain existing trees and hedgerows and to incorporate new tree planting schemes to improve vegetation cover and landscape quality. The use of native trees and shrubs will be encouraged.

- 1.18 Within that part of the Green Belt in the vicinity of Bournes Green in East Southend, it is considered that built development of any kind would adversely affect the open character of the area and all forms of development should be resisted. This is a policy which the Council has followed for a number of years, following the Secretary of State's decision in 1983 to dismiss a planning appeal seeking development for educational purposes on part of the site. Further expansion of the town in this locality would detract from the special countryside value and visual amenity of this wide open expanse of farmland. Accordingly, the area as defined on the Proposals Map has been designated as a Special Countryside Area, and no built development will be permitted within its boundaries.

POLICY G4 - SPECIAL COUNTRYSIDE AREA

Permission will not be given for built development of any kind within the area defined as a Special Countryside Area on the Proposals Map, in order to preserve the visual amenity of this wide open expanse of countryside.

- 1.19 In addition, there are certain areas of Essex, defined by the County Council as Special Landscape Areas, which are particularly valuable. Their high quality landscape is a result of a combination of natural features such as vegetation cover and relief. The conservation of these areas is important to the County's natural heritage, and it is essential that they should be protected from development which detracts from their character. The boundaries of these areas are indicated in the County Council's Countryside Conservation Plan, and they include part of the Borough within the Hadleigh Marshes Special Landscape Area. In addition, the Hockley Woods Special Landscape Area lies immediately to the north of the Borough boundary at Eastwood, in the Upper Roach Valley. This Council considers that the southern boundary of this area should include the Green Lane Ancient Highway, a wooded public bridleway running along the top of a ridge overlooking the Upper Roach Valley and Hockley Woods and with views north-eastward across the valley to Rochford and Canewdon. This amendment would bring an additional small area of the Borough within a Special Landscape Area.
- 1.20 The Essex Structure Plan First Alteration contains a more stringent conservation policy for these areas (NR12) which is supported by the Borough Council and is reflected in the following local plan policy:

POLICY G5 - SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Within those areas defined as Special Landscape Areas on the Proposals Map, in addition to the requirements of Policy G3, development proposals will be refused unless their location, siting, design and materials, and landscaping accord with the character of the area in which they are proposed.

Policy Cross Reference : G3 Landscape Protection and Improvement, page 15.

Nature Conservation

- 1.21 Essex contains six nature reserves which are designated as being of national importance, one of which lies within the Borough at the eastern end of Two Tree Island and extends over adjoining mudflats. Part of Gunners Park, a new area of public open space at Shoeburyness, and the Belton Hills area of open space at Leigh have also been set aside as Local Nature Reserves. Great Wood to the west of the Borough was the first educational nature reserve to be established by a local authority in this country. It is regularly used by Southend schools. These sites have all been established to protect particular flora and fauna which they support.
- 1.22 In order to promote nature conservation interests within those parts of the foreshore not subject to intensive leisure use, the Council proposes to declare a new Local Nature Reserve on an extensive area of the mudflats (see Proposal P1a, page 20).
- 1.23 In addition, there are many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) in the County, two of which cover the mudflats, saltings and some open grassland between Benfleet and Hadleigh Marshes and Foulness. These represent key ecological sites which contain a diversity of flora and fauna and form part of the most important feeding ground for brent geese in Britain. English Nature considers that they also meet the criteria for inclusion in the list of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and for designation as a Special Protection Area under the terms of the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. Accordingly, English Nature has applied to the Secretary of State for the Environment for formal designation.
- 1.24 English Nature has published the following descriptions and reasons for notification of these SSSI's:

Benfleet and Southend Marshes SSSI

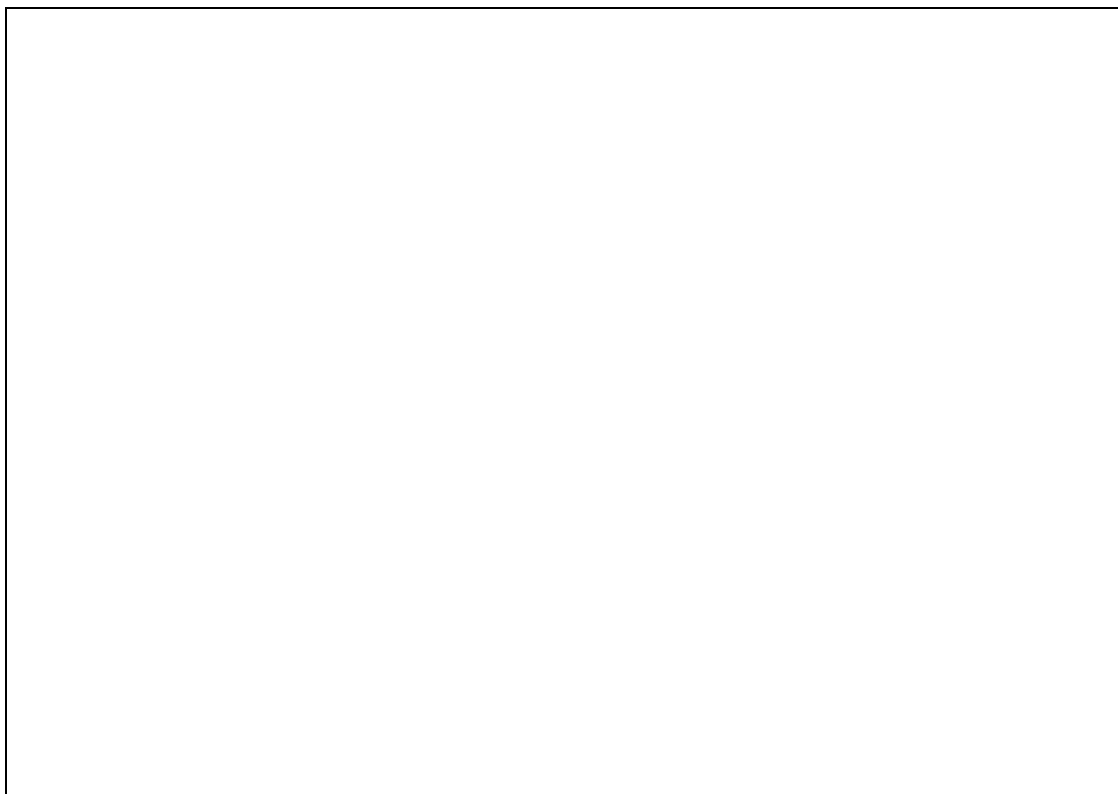
"Benfleet and Southend Marshes comprise an extensive series of salt marshes, mud-flats, scrub and grassland which support a diverse flora and fauna. The south facing slopes of the downs, composed of London Clay capped by sand, represent the line of former river cliffs with several re-entrant valleys. At their foot lies reclaimed marshland, with its associated dyke system, based on alluvium. Outside the sea walls there are extensive salt marshes and mud-flats, on which wintering wildfowl and waders reach both nationally and internationally important numbers. Nationally uncommon plants occur in all of the habitats and parts of the area are of outstanding importance for scarce invertebrates."

Foulness SSSI

"The site is frequented by large numbers of waders and wildfowl. The rough grass land is

important for passage, overwintering and nesting birds. The area forms part of the most important feeding ground for brent geese in Britain. The cockleshell spits are of considerable physiographical interest and support the largest colony of little terns in Britain. A number of uncommon insects and plants are also present. The site has been extended to include Shoebury Common, a vegetated enclosed beach with many old records of shingle beach flora, and a further area of improved and unimproved grazing marsh on Foulness and Potton Islands."

- 1.25 Local planning authorities are required to consult English Nature on any planning applications submitted within SSSI's and National Nature Reserves and to consider the effect of proposals on sites adjoining SSSI's. Notification also places certain statutory duties on the owners of the land. English Nature has proposed further protection for SSSI's by designating areas around them as Nature Conservation Zones. These zones are areas in which English Nature would wish to see existing farming methods in general continued, with all semi-natural vegetation, especially wetland, woodland, heathland and grassland retained and public open spaces provided where appropriate. The following two areas are those which English Nature consider should be Nature Conservation Zones, small parts of which lie within the Borough: The Coast (Stour Valley to Stanford-le-Hope); and Hockley and Hadleigh Woods (including the Roach Valley).



The Foreshore at Leigh-on-Sea designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve. Belton Hills, a Local Nature Reserve, lies to the south of the built development whilst Hadleigh Castle Country Park is to the west (see pages 122 and 125). Photo by Edward A. Clack.

- 1.26 In order to give these various areas the protection they require, the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration contains the following policies:
- NR6 There will be a presumption against any development which would adversely and materially affect designated National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

- NR7 Proposals for new nature reserves in appropriate locations will be encouraged and existing nature reserves will be protected from development as far as possible.
- NR8 Development prejudicial to the retention and management of important wildlife habitats and their inter-relationship will normally be refused.
- 1.27 There are, therefore, areas of great importance to nature conservation around the edges of the Borough, which in accordance with Circular 27/87 (Nature Conservation) must be protected from harmful or unsympathetic development. Other areas may not be of sufficient national status to warrant statutory protection or be of sufficient size to enable their management as a local nature reserve. They may, nevertheless, have local importance for various species of flora or fauna. Such areas might, for instance, be in churchyards, highway verges, parts of the Borough's parks and gardens or in sites left undeveloped for a number of years. Some have been identified by the Essex Wildlife Trust as non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's). The Council will keep under review these local wildlife sites and ensure where possible that their management, maintenance and use respects their flora and fauna. The Council will also seek to ensure that development proposals are compatible with their continued existence as local wildlife sites.
- 1.28 Two areas of ancient woodland within the Borough have been identified by English Nature. They are part of Great Wood and part of Oak Wood and are defined on the Proposals Map. They have existed as woodlands since at least 1600 AD. Ancient woodlands are a living record of the biological effects of traditional management practices such as coppicing. Their natural vegetation and associated animal life and other features are an irreplaceable asset. The Council will protect and maintain the intrinsic character of these areas.
- 1.29 Having regard to the above considerations the following policy will apply:

POLICY G6 - NATURE CONSERVATION

Development will not be permitted in those areas delineated on the Proposals Map as being within a Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest or Ancient Woodland, or which are subsequently notified as such, unless it can be shown that there will be no adverse effects on plants or animals in their natural surroundings and that physical and natural features will be protected. The Council will also seek to protect wildlife habitats identified elsewhere as being important to nature conservation.

The advice of relevant nature conservation agencies and local organisations will be sought in relation to proposed development affecting identified wildlife habitats. The Council will also seek the proper management and maintenance of sites identified as being of nature conservation value, in particular Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodlands.

Coastal Protection

- 1.30 It has long been the policy of local planning authorities in Essex to control development along the rural coastline and estuaries in order to safeguard their natural attractions. The Essex coast and estuaries are of national and international scientific importance, and most of those areas which remain undeveloped are included within Sites of Special Scientific Interest. It is

essential that the previous policy of strict control is continued in order to conserve the character and wildlife of these internationally important areas in accordance with the provisions of Planning Policy Guidance Note 20 (PPG20 - Coastal Planning, September 1992). The policy of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration is as follows:

NR18 There shall be the most stringent restrictions on development on the rural and undeveloped coastline outside built-up areas and any development which is exceptionally permitted shall not adversely affect the open and rural character or wildlife.

- 1.31 The precise boundaries of the areas to which the above policy applies are defined on the Proposals Map. Included within this definition are Belton Hills and Leigh Marshes/Two Tree Island, areas of rural coastline which constitute a special resource in their own right in addition to being of high amenity and scientific value. At the same time, this Council has long-standing proposals to use the western area of Two Tree Island and the reclaimed marshlands (only parts of which lie within the Borough) for recreation and open space purposes. The County Council has stated that, in relation to Structure Plan First Alteration Policy NR18, the recreational use of the western half of Two Tree Island would be acceptable "if open and informal". The Borough Council has recently supported this view by resolving that the area should be incorporated within the Hadleigh Castle Country Park.

POLICY G7 - COASTAL PROTECTION

There shall be the most stringent restrictions on development in those coastal areas of Belton Hills, Leigh Marshes and Two Tree Island delineated on the Proposals Map. Proposals for recreation development will be permitted within these areas only if they are open and informal in nature and do not adversely affect its rural character and wildlife or important local views.

Unstable Land

- 1.32 Parts of the Borough contain land affected by slope instability or mineral (brickearth) extraction, or which have been landfill sites. Where new development is proposed, the responsibility for assessing the ground conditions of a particular site rests with the landowner or developer. However, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 14 (PPG14 - Development on Unstable Land, April 1990), the Borough Council will advise prospective developers of the existence of potentially unstable ground conditions in appropriate circumstances. Most of the land affected by instability in the Borough on which there are proposals within this Plan is currently in Borough Council ownership.

Minerals (Brickearth)

- 1.33 There is a small-scale brick-making industry in Essex which obtains part of its supplies of mineral from the area around the northern perimeter of Southend. The industry has indicated that additional supplies of brickearth will be required during the life of this Plan and that workable deposits have been identified within the Borough. However, the brickearth soils also comprise the highest quality agricultural land found anywhere. It is essential that the loss of this scarce and irreplaceable resource is avoided and the amount of land devoted to brickearth extraction at any one time minimised. The current method of working and restoration leaves good quality agricultural land, with little or no reduction in quality. It does, however, also result in an extended timescale of operation which may sterilize the land for other valuable uses not involving an irreversible loss from agriculture.

- 1.34 The Essex County Council is the authority responsible for dealing with planning applications for the winning and working of minerals. It will be for that authority to decide whether to grant planning permission for any further brickearth extraction within the Borough. Any such decision will normally be made in consultation with the Borough Council, and the following considerations will guide the Borough Council's response:
- (i) Potentially workable mineral deposits may be safeguarded from surface development that would sterilise the minerals or prejudice their working. In considering this, the Borough Council will have regard to the economic importance of the mineral deposit, the timescale and the environmental impact involved in its extraction, and the value of the site for other uses.
 - (ii) Applications for mineral working which would raise the area of land devoted to such operations above the minimum required to ensure continuity of supply or which would destroy the high quality of the land will be opposed by the Borough Council. Where Essex County Council intends to grant planning permission for mineral working on high grade agricultural land, the Borough Council will seek a requirement that the land be restored within a reasonable time scale and as nearly as possible to its former agricultural quality.

Proposals

- 1.35 In order to promote nature conservation interests and to provide for appropriate management measures, the following proposal is made:

PROPOSAL P1a - SOUTHEND FORESHORE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

The Council proposes to declare an area within the Benfleet and Southend Marshes and Foulness Sites of Special Scientific Interest - defined more precisely on the Proposals Map - as a Local Nature Reserve.