

# Southend-on-Sea Gateway Town Centre Strategy 2002-2012



Southend-on-Sea



*"We need... .. better quality shops"*

## LORD ROGERS OF RIVERSIDE

*"To stem a long period of decline and decay, pessimism and under-investment, we must bring about a change in urban attitudes so that towns and cities once again become attractive places in which to live work and socialise"*

**Towards an Urban Renaissance**

*"... a really good street market"*

## LORD FALCONER

*"If you listen to people talking about their area the complaints are often the same. They are about graffiti and vandalism. Abandoned cars, rat-runs and antisocial behaviour. Litter, safe parks and safe clean public areas.....These are not trivialities- but the thousand cuts that can easily lead to the slow death of urban communities."*

**Government Minister for Regeneration 20/09/01**

*"... a good hotel"*

## PASQUAL MARAGALL

*"It is critical to understand that improving public space is relevant to solving social and economic problems"*

**Former Mayor of Barcelona**

*"... better side streets with more interesting shops"*

**Quotes from Southend Residents**

# FOREWORD



Southend Town Centre cannot stand still, it must move forward. As part of Thames Gateway South Essex it is designated as the:

**"Cultural and intellectual hub and the higher education centre of excellence for South Essex."**

The Thames Gateway South Essex vision for Southend is:

**"To transform Southend into a thriving cultural hub for South Essex by developing its cultural strategy, beach facilities, resort and tourism facilities and leisure attractions, and the overall environmental quality of Southend and its environs"**

If we are to achieve our own agreed vision and that of Thames Gateway South Essex we must manage the challenges. The major priorities of this strategy will each help to improve the vitality and vibrancy of the Town Centre whilst at the same time many seek to manage the existing and possible conflicts.

I make no apologies for the challenges within this strategy. Southend has a formidable task ahead and it will be neither quick nor easy to realise both our vision and that of Thames Gateway South Essex. However with strong leadership, determination and a willingness to invest for the future, I believe that we will succeed. Indeed we must succeed.

**Cllr Anna Waite,**  
Chairman Town Centre Scrutiny Working Party

*"The work behind this initiative is clear evidence that we are determined to improve the Town Centre for the benefit of all the residents, businesses and visitors and I welcome this report."*

*Cllr Charles Latham*  
Leader, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

# CONTENTS

## SOUTHEND-ON-SEA GATEWAY TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY 2002-2012

	Page
Vision Statement .....	3
The Characteristics, Problems and Opportunities .....	4
Southend-on-Sea Gateway Town Centre of Tomorrow.....	6
SWOT Results.....	7
Themes and Major Issues.....	8
Priorities .....	19
Priorities expanded .....	10
The Themed Approach .....	17
Victoria Avenue.....	24
Vision - Victoria Avenue .....	25
The next five years .....	26
Environment- Victoria Avenue .....	28
Marketing- Victoria Avenue .....	30
Long Term - Victoria Avenue.....	31
Implementation - Victoria Avenue.....	31
Funding.....	32
Defined Timescale .....	34
The Next Steps .....	38
Glossary .....	40
Terms of reference .....	41

# SOUTHEND-ON-SEA GATEWAY TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY 2002-2012

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for Southend-on-Sea Town Centre is that over the next ten years it will become:

**"THE foremost town centre of South Essex, Thames Gateway and beyond, offering an increasingly vibrant mix of shopping, cultural and leisure activities, supported by thriving commercial, education and technology sectors."**

## OBJECTIVES

The new millennium brings new opportunities for Southend-on-Sea and challenges the town to re establish itself as the major player in the region. This strategic plan will:

- ◆ Identify the challenges and opportunities for Southend Town Centre
- ◆ Develop the vision for Southend Town Centre, encompassing both social and physical regeneration, based on consultation and learned good practice.
- ◆ Set out an agreed set of priorities for future actions and indicate projects that will help to realise the vision for Southend Town Centre.
- ◆ Endeavour to obtain the support of local stakeholders, business and key organisations to help sustain and enhance the town.
- ◆ Outline proposals and opportunities for public and private sector funding.
- ◆ Address the concerns of stakeholders, officers and members and outline a management strategy to further this report.
- ◆ Influence and have reference to the various local plans that have impact on the town centre.



# THE CHARACTERISTICS, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Southend-on-Sea is located at the mouth of the Thames estuary, in the South East corner of the East of England region.

Southend Town Centre has suffered from a lack of capital investment for a number of years. The main thrust of "modernisation" was in the sixties and seventies when a number of Victorian Buildings were replaced. The eighties brought the last major development, the Royals, which also resulted in the demolition of once fine Victorian architecture. The result is a High Street with little distinctive character that does not relate well to its side streets. Access and linkages within the Town Centre are weak and the surrounding area, which is within the scope of this strategy, has suffered accordingly. Poor quality flat conversions, a lack of investment in commercial property, traffic congestion, poor transport links with surrounding areas and the under utilisation of railways, are just a few of the problems that have faced the Town Centre.

In April 1998, Southend was accorded Unitary Authority status and is now responsible for all aspects of service provision for its residents, businesses and wider community.

The perception that Southend is a leafy, affluent seaside town masks the reality that it is the most densely populated Borough in the East of England region, with an average of 42 people per hectare, compared to the England average of 4.

Whilst acknowledging the enhancements which will occur through SSHAPE\*, the first and largest project to be approved as part of the East of England Region's Objective 2 programme. The Town Centre Scrutiny process is a direct result of the Council's aim to continue to propose improvements for the town centre, in the longer term.

- ◆ The strategy covers an area of 72 hectares in the Centre of Southend-on-Sea.
- ◆ Southend-on-Sea has a population of 176,900 predicted to grow by a further 4% by the year 2008.
- ◆ Southend-on-Sea has working population of 74,000
- ◆ Visitors per year amount to approximately 3 million
- ◆ Footfall over a day at one point in the High Street was approximately 9900
- ◆ Within the wider region there is a population of 336,900 within 20 minutes drive and 5 million within 1 hours drive.
- ◆ Basildon lies 12 miles to the West and Chelmsford 23 miles to the north. There is no direct rail link between Southend and Chelmsford or with the North of the region.
- ◆ Access is via two congested trunk roads the A13 and A127, both of which are shortly to undergo substantial improvements under the LTP.



# THE CHARACTERISTICS, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ London some 40 miles away is accessible by road 60+minutes and by two rail links the Fenchurch Street Line served by C2C and the Liverpool Street Line served by GER Journey times are between 45 and 65 minutes.
- ◆ Southend-on-Sea has 9 stations on the two lines, two of which fall within the scope of this strategy.
- ◆ London Southend Airport is just 2.5 miles from the town centre.
- ◆ Southend has the world's longest pleasure pier, 7.5 miles of beaches and numerous leisure activities.
- ◆ Southend aims to be the major cultural centre of Eastern region within 10 years.
- ◆ "Spruce up Southend" along with "Alley Attack" are initiatives that will assist residents to improve their locality.
- ◆ The York Road crime initiative is targeting a specific problem in York Road part of which is within the Town Centre area.
- ◆ Southend received a very significant grant award for CCTV and there is now a state of the art centre that can monitor the cameras around the clock and liase with the police and traders.
- ◆ The cliff gardens have received from the Heritage Environmental Regeneration Scheme an award that enable extensive improvements to the Cliffs.

Current Initiatives within the Borough of Southend include:

- ◆ The Local Transport Plan, this has been fully funded and incudes 3 major schemes to address transport issues in Southend including a new Travel Centre in the Town Centre.
- ◆ The Pier and Foreshore Scrutiny report has meant that SBC is now spending £3 million on the Pier over the next three years.
- ◆ The SSHAPE\* project aims to bring about a revitalisation of the town centre corridor, including the High Street over the next 3 years. It is part financed by EU Objective 2 funding.



# SOUTHEND-ON-SEA GATEWAY TOWN CENTRE OF TOMORROW

Positioned as it is on the northern shore of the Thames Estuary, Southend is a gateway to the Thames Region and the whole of the East of England Region. It could also be a gateway to Europe and to the North Kent region, there are currently proposals to expand Southend airport to offer regional and European flights and a hovercraft project to link Southend with the North Kent coast and towards London.

Southend has been included in the Government's "24 Towns and Cities" tackling urban renaissance, following publication of the Urban White Paper.

Southend has a strong cultural heritage and as the Cultural Strategy unfolds Southend will become a gateway for culture, which along with exciting educational and training opportunities will make Southend the principal gateway for culture and learning in South Essex.

Southend Town Centre is the focal point for shopping and related services, increasingly retail shopping is becoming a growing leisure activity. With the improvements that this strategy recommends in conjunction with the recommendations of the Pier and Foreshore Scrutiny, already accepted and being implemented, Southend Town Centre will become the leisure gateway for South Essex and beyond

Southend is the public transport gateway for the sub region with bus and train links across the South Essex region and into London. It is hoped that with Southend-on-Sea's inclusion in Thames Gateway South Essex it will now be possible to consider new links to the north and a lower Thames Crossing.





# SWOT RESULTS

## STRENGTHS

Strength of High St 'feel'/Pedestrianisation/Council Commitment/Two direct Rail lines/Resources written into Programme funding/Targeting staff if a need arises/Existing staff resources/Learn from past/Sub Regional Centre - Critical mass/Beginning of line/University/Competitive Rental levels/5.5/thousand car parking spaces/High St - well used - vibrant/Some attractive facades/Length of High St/Diversity of shops/businesses/Good atmosphere at times eg Christmas/Longstanding tourist centre - close to London/Good public transport links/Large town/Use our own people, they have talent - Societies/Large space links two ends of High St/CCTV/End of line - seafront/Nearness to London - nine railway stations/Established town - own clients/Seaside town - must sell ourselves - clean water - beaches - geographical/Political desire to improve (involve people to feel the same)/Combination of population/environment/Established transport link/Garden displays/Adequate parking  
Strength of education system/Low property prices/Good recruitment potential/Ownership of the airport  
Catchment area/Easy access/Most shops tenanted/Easy access to seafront/Good buildings which have scope for improvement /Some shops have good layout/Facades - like Gap/Range of facilities - eat/cinema/shops/Size of population/Airport/Transport (2 x trains + Buses)/CCTV/Compact/Commuter belt/Loyal community/Willingness of community/Seafront/Car parking - close/Reasonable variety retailers/Accessibility/Good profile - media coverage - TV/Location (if the roads are ok)/Seaside/No other centre has our combination of shops/sea/leisure etc./Trains bring day trippers/Poor roads keep people here/Longest pier in the world/Pedestrianised High St. - more space/Large residential area - loyalty/Good climate/Beaches

## OPPORTUNITIES

Desire into action - avoid stagnation/Desire for more local ownership - shops/Wholesale re-development Victoria Plaza/Covering part of High St/Link leisure/retail (foreshore & town centre) x 3/Potential for improvement/Objective 2 funding - structure/Able to put in anchor stores/College - to change High St x 3/Control of design of shop fronts/Making the town centre an 'experience'/To be more welcoming/Easier access/Use of media - encouraging people to Southend/University - student income x 3/Victoria Avenue - opportunity for high tech businesses/Opportunity to decide about Southend shopping/Making provision for all ages (seating for elderly, street theatre for the young, opportunity for the marina) x 2/Cleaning of High St in full (and the responsibility of shopowners) x 2/Lighting/Better and more events/Street furniture/To improve law and order/Make vibrant/To increase footfall -two railway lines/Recognise what we have got - linearity/Theming - eg gardens/Broaden cultural strategy/Speciality shops - quality shops x 1 Victoria Avenue - call centre/Improving all transport points eg taxi rank - bus stations (upgrading) x 1 - electronic signage/improve pedestrian links with seafront/To concentrate on where Southend is going/Brighton/Lanes/Hotels & conference centres/Trams - links down High St/New swimming pool/Fill office space - low/rents/Neighbourhood /Town Wardens/ambassadors/CCTV - reduce crime/Rationalise car parks/To change dilapidated areas eg/replace with residential/Heritage - Nelson St - Royal Terrace/Thames Gateway/Airport - increase use - bring visitors/Market as a short break place/Traffic flow - need deeping? -encourage flow back into High St - busy feel/Boarding houses - students/Develop design of Warrior Sq./Attracting people and getting them to stay/Trams

## WEAKNESSES

Fall in economic spending power -(disposable income)/Good quality shops have declined/No second big shops in centre/No centre (because of linear design)/Poor shop fronts  
Lack-lustre appearance/Not welcoming eg Plaza, under rail bridge, particularly evenings/High unemployment/Town centre is dirty (needs cleaning)/Street furniture needs improving/High Street is dead in the evenings/Lacking in speciality shops/Buildings are outdated for retailing/Untidy look of High St/Lack of focal point/Architecture/Parking - location/Lack of good big name shops/Lack of ambiance/Some buildings need to be 'bulldozed'/Lack of good hotel (conference facility)/Lack of public art eg Telford/Poor and fragmented transport links/Don't have a good environmental plan/links from Pier Hill to High St and side streets/Too many old buildings/Weather/Need to market/Pedestrian movement in High St/Consider how to get around town centre more/Commitment to develop town away from old image/State of Pier/Don't use all abilities we have Lack of individual business interests/Pier Hill/Royals - small compared to Bluewater etc./Length of High St/No private firms/Business confidence is lacking/All multiple stores/Empty units/Lack of space /Poor transport linkages/Lack of Community pride/Current links with Pier Hill/Length of High St/Isolation of two shopping centres/No hub/heart in High St/Poor parking signage & car park quality/High St done on the 'cheap'  
Poor co-ordination of resources/Myriad of landowners/Funding for staff on delivery/Under utilised shop fronts/Poor unit use in High St/Units/Offices do not all meet current market need/Poor environment and security - fear of crime /End of the line/Gateways into town are poor/Lack of 24 hour activity/Marketing - fragmented/Marketing seems 'seafront' biased/Road infrastructure (east/west only)/Traffic system (lack of cohesion)/Parking/Disrepair of High Street (poor paving colour)/Outside/external perception /Lack of awareness of sidestreet speciality shops/Pigeons/Signposting of shops/Perception re asylum seekers/Railway bridge cuts High St in half/Too many of same type of shops/Poor variety of stores - don't attract/Poor retail mix (eg too many mobile phone shops)/Overall ambiance of High St./Absence of transport top to bottom in High St/Loss of Tesco/People leaving pubs/clubs at same time/Poor variety of leisure/entertainment - eg jazz clubs/wine bars/Cruisers/Tired appearance/Access to High St./Split in High St + lack of connection with seafront/Not a 360 degree catchment /High St - no one in overall control/20 yards outside High St. - hit DSS land Lack of access for emergency services/Lack of residential accommodation

## THREATS

Lack of co-ordination management approach x 2 s/Other shopping centres (free parking)/Security - not feeling safe/Perception of asylum seekers/Lack of public transport (buses)/Leisure activities outside Southend/Poor publicity - (eg. Lack of investment)/Traffic congestion/Poor parking/Over supply outdated offices/Limited redevelopment opportunities/Fossetts Farm - pull visitors from seafront/Better range of shops/facilities in Blue Water/Lakeside/Traffic flow/Image/Fragmented freehold ownership/Potential for A130 development to pull away from Southend/Cost - pricing ourselves out (small businesses)/VAT De-registration outnumber Regs./Lack of policing - enforcement/Lighting - poor - feel unsafe/Exit from pubs and clubs at night/feel unsafe at night/Out of town/(edge) Retail shopping developments x 2/ignorance/failure to realise problem/Lack of law and order (especially at night) x 2/Linear structure of town centre (High St)X 2/Decline in GDP in Southend/Perception (Saturday night cruiser town - particularly for the elderly -wrong) x 2/Lack of confidence and business plan/Perception of lower quality shops (replaced good shops)/Loss of major stores and employers/Limited amount of space reduces ability to develop and operate/Wrong or no action taken - irreparable damage/Small national stores = 2nd class/Change in shopping habits (need new uses)/Victoria plaza design is threatening/Lack of Council cash/lack of leading/Perception of crime from asylum seekers/Failure of 2nd High St (Chichester Road) -missed opportunity/Discount shopping centres/Road links are poor (failure) x 2/Stagnation (years of talking and no doing)/External ownership of shops/Size of units/If don't change will lose out to other towns/Fossetts/Decline in 'seaside holiday'/ Poor accessibility from outside/Piecemeal development/Low Commitment by Businesses/Perception of people outside area/Community may not accept change/small scene/From out of town 'Centres' eg Chelmsford/Basildon/Too many small 'out' shopping centres which dilutes strength of Town Centre/Congestion

# THEMES

The Town Centre Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider five themes which came out of the SWOT exercises. Three SWOT exercises were undertaken with SBC officers, stakeholders and members. Also taken into account to arrive at the themes were previous consultants' reports and existing recent consultation exercises.

The five key themes which Scrutiny addressed were:

- ◆ **The 24 Hour Town?**
- ◆ **Connections and Movement**
- ◆ **Public Space & Environment**
- ◆ **Safety and Security**
- ◆ **Development Opportunities**

In addition to these five key themes and overarching them were the themes of -

## **Town Centre Management and Marketing & Promotion**

Town Centre Scrutiny undertook extensive consultation with all sectors including stakeholders and the general public on the five themes and a large number of issues were highlighted through this process. Following the consultation process it was apparent that there were a number of recurrent, major issues that spanned a number of the themes. The strategic priorities are the recommendations of Town Centre Scrutiny to address those issues and the challenges identified within each theme.



## THE MAJOR ISSUES:

- ◆ Pier Hill - the need to greatly improve it as a major link between a number of key areas.
- ◆ The new travel centre and possible development opportunities in this area, private car access and parking, and the need for a late night transport provision.
- ◆ Pedestrianisation- the need to review the current extent in both the High Street and side streets and possibly extend it during the day but to consider allowing very limited traffic into part of the High Street in the evenings.
- ◆ Victoria Ave, Victoria Station and the Victoria Plaza development and the current poor links, connections and impressions.
- ◆ The general standard of maintenance and cleansing, the relatively poor lighting throughout the Town Centre area and the levels of antisocial behaviour.
- ◆ Safety and security and poor perceptions of, which detract from achieving vitality and vibrancy.

# **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA GATEWAY TOWN CENTRE PRIORITIES**

A key purpose in undertaking this work and achieving a strategy for the Town Centre is to promote debate on its future as a sustainable, liveable, forward moving town centre. Central to this is the need to integrate the social, educational and environmental needs with the economic needs of the town. Combining these factors and having regard to them at each stage will help to achieve a sustainable urban renaissance.

This strategic plan sets out 12 major priorities which we would hope to address:

- 1. The development of Pier Hill to become a high quality public space and the hub that links the Seafront, The Town Centre, the Night Life and the Heritage areas.**
- 2. The remodelling of Warrior Square and Victoria Circus to provide high quality public spaces that link through to the rest of the town.**
- 3. The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street.**
- 4. The development of a "Pride in Our Town" scheme that will ensure that the Borough Council, stakeholders and the public, play their full role in maintaining and regulating the town so that they can be truly proud of their environment.**
- 5. The implementation of the Sshape project.**
- 6. Effective public transport arrangements to, from and within the Town Centre in conjunction with the proposed new Travel Centre and further investigation into a night transport service for those leaving the Town Centre during the night.**
- 7. The physical broadening of the High Street offer by a proactive approach to attract developers to development opportunities at two major locations (Victoria/Queensway and Tylers/York Rd) and several smaller ones.**
- 8. The integration of the proposed college and university campus development within the Central Station and High Street sectors.**
- 9. The adoption of the Victoria Avenue recommendations.**
- 10. A review of pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking improvements to provide a better and safer experience for both residents and visitors.**
- 11. Raising the profile of Southend Town Centre locally, regionally and nationally.**
- 12. The development of dedicated Town Centre Management.**

# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## **The development of Pier Hill to become a high quality public space and the hub that links the Seafront, The Town Centre, the Night Life and the Heritage areas.**

Pier Hill is accepted as being of prime importance to the regeneration of both the Town Centre and the Seafront. A Pier Hill workshop should be held, with residents, stakeholders and experts to investigate the possibilities and ways forward. Funding should be sought from Objective 2 to facilitate this. This priority should be given every encouragement from all concerned and the outcomes of the workshop carefully considered and improvements made to make a real improvement to this currently neglected area.

## **The remodelling of Warrior Square and Victoria Circus to provide high quality public spaces that link through to the rest of the town.**

### **WARRIOR SQUARE**

Warrior Square with its close proximity to the hurly burly of the High Street should offer a quiet retreat for workers, residents and visitors. Currently a "green space" surrounded by roads and parking, overshadowed by over mature trees and hedges, its potential is not being fully realised. Warrior Square will be redesigned to provide an attractive usable, safe public green

space with easy access from surrounding streets. A place where workers may enjoy their lunch break or shoppers a few quiet minutes, where young children and their parents can rest and play in safety.

### **VICTORIA CIRCUS**

It is considered important that public places belong to the people and that they have a sense of ownership of that space. An important aspect of this "ownership" is what it is called. Therefore the area of land which lies between WH Smiths and The Victoria Plaza Development and Barclays and HSBC should be known by its historical name of Victoria Circus. This same logic should apply wherever possible to all other areas within the Town Centre and all locations should display name signs.

Where once it was a vibrant junction of busy roads, well used by transport and pedestrians alike it has become an empty soulless void that people hurry across. It should be remodelled to provide a public area where people can meet and relax in, with a central focus to alleviate the blandness. It should become one of number of focal points throughout the Town Centre for public displays and performances.

It has also been highlighted by a number of stakeholders as being suitable for the site of a weekly street market extending into Broadway and this will be considered further.



# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## **The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street**

Fundamental to improving the Town Centre is the need to improve and integrate the side streets. It is in the side streets that local entrepreneurs can trade and make Southend individual, yet currently these side streets are the Cinderella of the Town Centre. They are important contributors to employment, regeneration and wealth in the Town Centre. The side streets off the High Street require attention to paving, lighting and sign posting which should be considered as part of the LTP. A number of the side streets could in part be pedestrianised towards their High Street end to assist with pedestrian flow and as mentioned under "THE 24 Hour Town?" a number of smaller policies would assist with this priority.

Side streets are also ideal streets for flats above shops to be encouraged and in general a more mixed use should be sought in those adjacent to or very close to the High Street.

It is not considered appropriate to mix any further Pubs or Clubs into EXISTING residential areas but to cluster these around the existing pub and club facilities or in new build areas.

## **The development of a "Pride in Our Town" scheme that will ensure that the SBC, stakeholders and the public, play their full role in maintaining and regulating the town so that they can be truly proud of their environment.**

"Pride in Our Town" should address the everyday issues of Town Centre maintenance, cleansing and appearance. Guidelines and expectations should be drawn up by SBC and stakeholders who should work together to improve the Town Centre Environment.

Every aspect from street cleansing, to flower baskets, from shop fronts to window displays should be considered and partnership arrangements put in place to offer annual awards for those complying.

It is also essential to ensure that public toilet provision is adequate and suitable for use by all.

Southend is a keen and successful competitor in the Britain in Bloom Awards and the Town Centre needs to build on this expertise to enhance the environment not only within the High Street but also in the wider Town Centre area.

This initiative should ultimately fall within the Town Centre Management portfolio.

## **The implementation of the Sshape project.**

Southend Seafront High Street and Pier Enhancement (Sshape) is the major objective 2 project. It will over the next 5 years introduce in excess of £15m into the town centre and will be the major catalyst for encouraging stakeholders, organisations and developers to back schemes large and small in the Town Centre.

Principally it refurbishes the High Street, improves facilities at the pier, including a new Pier Entrance and will support the Prittlewell Gateway scheme.

To be truly successful it must improve the economic viability of the Town Centre through encouraging more visitors and thus more spending and also act as a sound foundation for a forward looking Town Centre that will be attractive to inward investment.

# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## **Effective public transport arrangements to, from and within the Town Centre in conjunction with the proposed new Travel Centre and further investigation into a night service for late night clubbers.**

Southend has been extremely successful in receiving full funding (which will amount to £36m) for its Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the implementation of the LTP is vital to the Town Centre if both public and private transport is to improve. There is currently substantial road congestion at peak times and the public transport sectors need to provide the better service that is envisaged at the new Travel Centre. Long term other transport options should be considered to ease congestion but in the shorter term consideration should be given to a shuttle service part funded by the private sector to operate the Victoria Avenue, High Street, Seafront loop.

There should be increased dedicated on road parking for disabled badge holders. Shopmobility offers assistance to disabled visitors but to be truly effective it should be available within designated car parks that have reserved parking for disabled badge holders and those car parks should have adequate signage.

Southend should change to pay on exit car parks as soon as it is possible as this encourages visitors to remain longer.

In the early morning considerable numbers of clubbers are turned out of the clubs and pubs, and problems can ensue when transport is not easily accessible for the journey home. A partnership service should be considered to offer dedicated "clubber transport" to and from the town centre and major destinations.

Alongside this at the travel centre there should be a safe haven for those who have lost their money etc or need to wait for alternative transport. There will be CCTV at the travel centre.

## **The adoption of the Victoria Avenue Recommendations and Beyond**

Victoria Avenue is the gateway to the town for many residents and visitors. Commercial requirements have altered and many of the office blocks along Victoria Avenue no longer meet today's demand for floor plans and technology. Whilst Southend realigns itself as the leisure, tourism and cultural hub of South Essex, there will be other uses found for some of these blocks, others will remain, refurbished and technologically improved, as office space to meet the growing service industries and commercial needs of the town in line with our agreed vision for Southend Town Centre. A bid has been made for a regional innovation centre initiative to focus on Objective 2 localities throughout the region.

The Prittlewell Gateway around St Mary's Church, with its refurbished bell tower, will become an attractive, historical portal to the modern Gateway Town of Southend. It should provide for small artisan type units that will serve the flourishing entrepreneurial aspirations of residents. The renovation of the Blue Boar and Carlton Bakery are underway and will act as catalysts for further regeneration.

The South Eastern Sector of Victoria Ave should continue to be the "Civic" area with the Civic Centre, Museum and Library all playing an important role in the 24 Hour Town. Better links should be created over time with the High Street with the implementation of the development recommendations.

# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

**The physical broadening of the High Street offer by a proactive approach to attract developers to development opportunities at two major locations and several smaller ones.**

## **VICTORIA STATION TO VICTORIA CIRCUS (LONG TERM)**

There is an opportunity here to integrate the station concourse with a new development that links through to the High Street at Victoria Circus. It should enable the pedestrian to leave the train and arrive in the High Street through a quality development that either integrates with or replaces the existing Victoria Plaza. Transport links to the station should be well provided for and easily identified. The development here should also complement the Victoria Avenue recommendations and facilitate the museum, library, courthouse etc.

It is recognised that the existing Victoria Plaza urgently requires refurbishment and in the short term it will be necessary to make improvements and to facilitate access from the station through to the High Street. And this must be considered along side the greater development.

When considering proposals for new development it will be essential to ensure that there is an appropriate balance and mix of uses so as to ensure a vibrant Town Centre.

## **SOUTH EAST HIGH STREET QUADRANT**

This area, which encompasses the new travel centre, is ideally situated, close to the Sea Front, Seaway, Pier Hill, the Royals, Marks and Spencer etc it has excellent links to become a development opportunity. The travel centre, which is funded by the LTP, should be used as a catalyst to encourage a major redevelopment of the larger site to include a mix of uses as demand dictates including residential and car

parking. Whilst the centre of the site is in SBC ownership, the periphery is not and land assembly issues must not be used as an excuse for inaction. Partnership with the existing freeholders of the Royals and the High Street premises must be considered.

The Travel Centre and development should complement one another and whilst the travel centre will be ready in advance of any development plans its siting and design should not prejudice any other development which will greatly benefit the renaissance of this part of the town centre.

## **OTHER OPPORTUNITIES**

A number of other development opportunities have been identified, as shown on the plan, through indicating these in the Replacement Borough Local Plan, improved marketing of the Town Centre and a more proactive approach to attracting development, alongside partnership working, it is hoped that developers might be found to regenerate these areas.

## **WARRIOR POOL**

It is considered important to retain a pool within the Town Centre area that is easily accessible as it provides a service for residents and workers alike. However, the need for a larger professional pool is strong and it is considered that the location for this need not be in the Town Centre. The existing Warriors site and all the surrounding area could be developed around new leisure facilities which could include the retention and improvement of the existing pool to provide more fun aspects. Alternatively should another site be found for a leisure pool in the town centre or seafront areas, this site which could have direct access from Queensway is well situated for alternative leisure uses.

# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## CAR PARKS

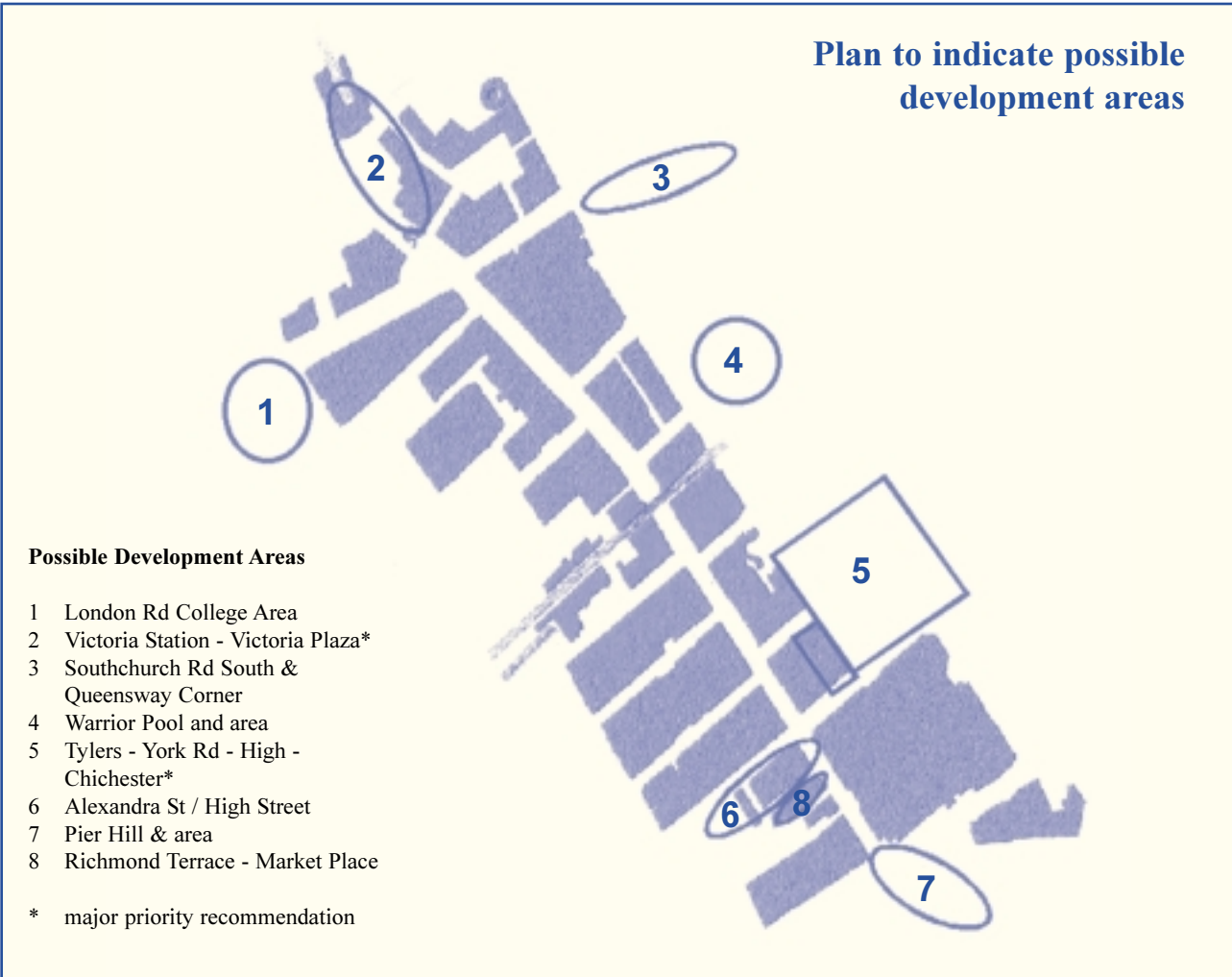
Most Town Centre car parks are owned by SBC and consideration should be given over time to some form of rationalisation of these, without the reducing number of spaces or ease of access, so as to enable the release of land for possible development. Access to car parks should where possible be achieved with a minimum of travel around or through the town.

## The integration of the proposed college and university campus development within the Central Station and High Street sectors.

This is an exciting opportunity for the Town Centre which will open up a currently derelict area to the immediate west of the central section of the High Street. With its proposed

development directly off the High Street and the creation of a new Square and Central Station North entrance it will greatly contribute to the physical regeneration of the Town Centre and will act as one of a number of catalysts to jump-start other developments. Evening classes will encourage life into the town when we most need it and the teaching and student population will generate greater numbers of Town Centre users.

Nevertheless the contribution that the proposed college and university campus development will make to the education and training of Southend residents and those from further afield is of a far greater importance and every support must be given to ensure that this proposal flourishes and expands over the coming years.





# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## **A review of pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking improvements to provide a better safer experience for both residents and visitors.**

The current "pedestrianised" High Street is dissected by two major road crossings and a further loop of road that is often used for parking. Side streets are not pedestrianised yet it has been proven in numerous other locations that greater pedestrianisation brings greater footfall and spending.

Southend has a particular problem in the evening when the High Street sometimes becomes unwelcoming due to there being few members of the general public about and the ensuing lack of vitality to be found there. It is considered essential to both reduce the levels of antisocial behaviour and to improve the public's perception of the town Centre in the evening. Only then will there be more vitality in the Town Centre. In Leigh-on-Sea and beginning in Hamlet Court Road there is a high level of evening trade and the areas are lively and vibrant, both have full traffic flows. There is little chance of significant increase in policing and their response is often hampered by access problems to the pedestrianised High Street.

Some car parks in the Town Centre are considered by users to be poorly laid out and lit, they have no "green" or softening aspects and in a number of them there is some risk attached to evening parking. The major multi-storey, Farringdon, which could significantly reduce parking stress at peak times, is the least popular of all Town Centre car parks. Considerable sums have been spent on Farringdon recently, it is now important to address the perceptions that people hold about it and perhaps to rename it e.g. "Town Centre West Car Park".

It is vital that appropriate signage is provided to guide the motorist to the car parks and to indicate their available spaces.

Pay on exit should be introduced as soon as possible as this is preferred by the motorist and would allow visitors to remain longer rather than needing to get back to avoid a ticket.

The current traffic circulation routes within the town are convoluted and congested. It will be necessary to review existing roads and routes.

**It is a priority therefore to review pedestrianisation with a view to both increasing it by day (and the means to allow for deliveries) and possibly reducing it by night to aid the vitality of the area, to reduce unnecessary traffic circulation and to improve aspects of the car parks to make the Town Centre a better, safer and more pleasant experience for all.**



# PRIORITIES EXPANDED

## **To raise the profile of Southend Town Centre locally, regionally and nationally.**

Southend has a lot to offer. It is better in many respects than other similarly categorised towns and cities. Yet Southend has an image problem. This must be turned around and all involved, including residents, should take responsibility for talking up what is after all "OUR TOWN" and ceasing to dwell on some relatively small poor elements that will themselves improve as the image is improved.

Southend-on-Sea is currently, quite effectively marketed, as a leisure town, given the financial constraints. The inward Investment section of SBC also undertakes limited but again effective marketing.

Southend has one very strong individual selling point (ISP) that its competitors do not have: Southend has both an attractive and vibrant retail offer that can be combined with the Seafront's attractions of the Pier, beaches, cliff gardens and leisure.

It is considered important that in future marketing includes the promotion of the Town Centre alongside the leisure aspects and that more partnership approaches are sought with stakeholders to enable this.

## **The development of dedicated Town Centre Management organisation.**

Southend Town Centre is currently not "managed" by any one department or portfolio, rather it is dealt with by various sections as need arises. This approach, today, is no longer adequate as it results in a piecemeal approach, does not enable stakeholders to be fully engaged and can limit what is achieved. Dedicated TCM should provide for an integrated and co-ordinated approach as described by the alternative options outlined later in this report. This is to ensure that all aspects of the Town Centre are managed in ways which are complimentary to each other.

Recently, with the opportunity to bid for Objective2 funding there has been some cross department liaison and there is now a co-ordinator in place to facilitate this.

It is important to have this co-ordinated approach to all aspects of the Town Centre from daily cleansing to festival and event promotion. This cannot be achieved by SBC alone. It must come through partnership working with stakeholders who have also strongly indicated that they want a far more proactive management approach.



# THE THEMED APPROACH

## THE 24 HOUR TOWN?

**Aim: To improve the overall resident and visitor experience, improve the town centre package and make it accessible in the widest sense.**

### CHALLENGE

This is perhaps the most challenging of the goals of this strategy. It is dependant on all the other priorities coming together. It is dependant also to a large extent on market forces beyond the control of SBC and local traders. There is also conflict here. Many do not want a 24 hour town, fearing it will cause noise and disruption at all hours. Others feel that 9.00 am to 4.00 am is more realistic. Many only understand the term a "24 hour" town to mean more pubs and clubs, yet it includes making all manner of services accessible around the clock to all.

Southend is an urban area with high densities in the Town Centre. There are bound to be concerns about the conflicting interests of each sector that use the Town Centre. It is managing these conflicts and mitigating the effect that is perhaps the prime challenge.

Work and leisure patterns are changing, more and more people have internet access. Shopping centres like Lakeside and Bluewater are open in the evenings, many people now shop on Sundays. Restaurants and cafes can remain busy into the small hours and clubs do not even get started until late.

A Town Centre cannot stand still, it must move forward so as to keep pace with its competitors. As part of Thames Gateway South Essex Southend is designated as the:

**"Cultural and intellectual hub and the higher education centre of excellence for South Essex."**

The Thames Gateway South Essex vision for Southend is:

**"To transform Southend into a thriving cultural hub for South Essex by developing its cultural strategy, beach facilities, resort and tourism facilities and leisure attractions, and the overall environmental quality of Southend and its environs"**

The major priorities of this plan will each help to improve the vitality and vibrancy of the Town Centre whilst at the same time many seek to manage the existing and possible conflicts.

Specific policies over and above the major priorities which will have an impact on the 24 hour town, will include a review of "mixed use", "flats above shops", "change of use" and car parking policies to allow a more flexible approach within development control that will encourage a greater diversity of use that will encourage more residents into the town centre both to live and to enjoy its offering at all times.

A number of smaller policies on for example "outdoor cafes", "shop fronts" and "lighting" which will seek to ensure that conflict is reduced whilst encouraging improvements. A more proactive approach to site identification for development with relevant planning permissions in place and assistance in its assembly will make Southend an attractive place for developers to consider.

# PUBLIC SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT

**Aim: To improve the quality of the public realm and to promote developments and improvements to the appearance and use of the town centre and its amenities.**

## CHALLENGE

In most Town Centres, public space, including streets, squares, parks and less well defined 'common areas' adds up to more than half the total area of land- the rest is occupied by buildings and infrastructure. Southend Town Centre is no different and it is essential that our public areas are attractive, safe, clean and usable spaces that both residents and visitors can enjoy.

Within Southend Town Centre, there are a number of opportunities to create or improve public open spaces, areas like Victoria Circus, Warrior Square and Pier Hill require major improvement and enhancement.

There are also the "heritage" areas like Royal Terrace and Royal Mews, which could be greatly improved. Better links need to be provided to Nelson Street and its surrounding areas. Central Station and Clifftown Road which border this area provide an opportunity to encourage a better use of open spaces that enhances the heritage sector. The areas and

streets of the Town Centre should link to provide a web of public spaces, which provides secure, easy access to the different and varied parts of the town.

A number of the major priorities will address this:

- ◆ The remodelling of Warrior Square and Victoria Circus to provide high quality public spaces that link through to the rest of the town.
- ◆ The development of Pier Hill to become a high quality public space and the hub that links the Seafront, The Town Centre, the Night Life and the Heritage areas.
- ◆ The implementation of the Sshape project.
- ◆ The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street.
- ◆ The proposed college development.
- ◆ The adoption of the Victoria Avenue recommendations.
- ◆ Pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking review.
- ◆ In addition to these major priorities it will be necessary to consider the heritage areas and to make improvements to them so as to restore a "heritage feel" and to better incorporate them within the Town Centre, promoting access and public use.



# SAFETY AND SECURITY

**Aim: To promote a safer more secure town centre environment in which all sectors of society can have a sense of ownership and pride. To address people's perceptions as well as the actualities.**

## CHALLENGE

Safety and Security underpins all else, no matter how the town develops if people do not feel safe and secure they will neither visit often nor extend their stay beyond the essential. Perceptions are important. It is not adequate to state "Southend is no less safe than...." or "Southend is safer than...." People must feel it for themselves. Statistically Southend is safer than Bournemouth and within Essex has shown the greatest reduction in crime.

The proposed Borough Patrol scheme should, during the day, offer a visible presence along with the Town Beat Police patrols. Southend has a very extensive, state of the art, CCTV system which is already assisting in reducing crime.

The town centre after about 6.00 pm is a very different place to that during the day. The shops are closed, the shoppers and shop staff have departed and the town centre becomes somewhat deserted but for the groups of youths and the occasional train passenger. This is seen as a major challenge to overcome.

Virtually all of the major priorities will help to achieve our aim, whilst the following will directly address the safety and security aspects of Southend Town Centre:

- ◆ Warrior Square and Victoria Circus enhancements
- ◆ The implementation of the Sshape project.
- ◆ The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street.



- ◆ The development of a "Pride in Southend" Scheme in conjunction with a Borough Patrol Scheme.
- ◆ The LTP, Travel Centre and evening transport proposals.
- ◆ The integration of the proposed college.
- ◆ The adoption of the Victoria Avenue recommendations.
- ◆ Pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking review.

However a number of specific priorities must also be considered here:

- ◆ The reclamation of the Town Centre in the evenings for general, people based, use and the reduction of antisocial behaviour.
- ◆ Closer liaison between SBC, Stakeholders, Police and other law enforcement agencies.
- ◆ The provision of a permanent, manned, Police and warden post/base in the High Street.
- ◆ A review of policies relating to design issues for example recessed entrances, lighting, street corner sight lines and natural surveillance issues.

# DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Aim: To achieve a better land use that meets, where possible, the demands of a modern town centre, to contribute to the other themes through identifying and making suggestions for development and use changes.**

## CHALLENGE

Design is very important, urban design determines the very shape of the streets and

public spaces which make up our town. It influences how easy and pleasant it can be to move from area to area. Architecture determines the shape, function and aesthetic quality of our buildings, it is important to establish a balance between the natural elements and buildings and the needs of the people.

**"For some suburban areas this could involve 'retrofitting' or recycling land and buildings to provide better local services at focal points, and improved public transport connections. It could also involve development densities and provision of facilities increasing in order to attract and integrate new residents within existing communities." (Towards an Urban Renaissance, Urban Task Force)**

There has been relatively little development of late in Southend Town Centre and the infrastructure is no longer adequate for the needs of a modern town. Modern retailers want properties of a size and design that is not readily available in Southend Town Centre. If we are to improve the retail offer we must consider the redevelopment of some existing areas. There is also substantial public demand for more small interest shops, yet numerous small shops in the side streets remain empty.

Two major development areas and a number of other sites have been identified as being suitable for redevelopment. As already mentioned under "THE 24 Hour Town?" a more proactive approach to attracting development into the Town Centre is necessary. It will also be necessary to ensure that the RBLP promotes and facilitates these recommendations.



# CONNECTIONS AND MOVEMENT

**Aim: To improve the overall experience, including access to and within the town centre, facilitate a variety of modes of transport and encourage exploration and use of side streets and adjacent areas.**

## CHALLENGE

To ensure that all the various connections of the Town Centre are well linked, easy to find and contribute to the quality and character of the Town Centre. That movement between the various sectors both within the Town centre and immediately beyond it is easy and attractive for all Town Centre users.

The Seafront is a major attraction for Southend, Pier Hill is a vital link between the Seafront and Town Centre and needs to be redesigned to make access easy and inviting for pedestrians and to provide for a better alternative access for those unable to climb the slope.

The heritage areas, as discussed under public space and environment, in the south western

corner of the Town Centre are disjointed and need to be better linked and sign posted.

The major priorities that will help to achieve this aim are:

- ◆ The implementation of the Sshape project.
- ◆ The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street.
- ◆ Developing Pier Hill
- ◆ The LTP, Travel Centre and evening transport proposals.
- ◆ The development of the two major schemes
- ◆ Pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking review.

The LTP should address a number of issues within the Town Centre over the next 6 years but consideration should be given to longer-term improvements in the vicinity of Victoria Station to facilitate better links to the High Street.



# TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT



Whilst Town Centre Management (TCM) is one of the themes along with Marketing there was no initial direct consultation on them. Nevertheless many stakeholders identified Town Centre Management as the key to the future development of Southend Town Centre and the inadequacy of it as being partly to blame for the current state of the Town Centre.

Town Centre Scrutiny visited Brighton, Norwich and Croydon each of which have to some greater or lesser degree separated TCM from the Local Authority and have found it to be beneficial though in some cases difficult initially. Town Centre Scrutiny considers that the adoption of dedicated TCM which can have a fully co-ordinated and proactive approach is essential to the future prosperity of Southend Town Centre.

Piecemeal attention on an as need arises basis is not adequate. Sshape has shown how the way forward has to be through co-ordinated Town Centre Management.

There are a number of choices that should be considered including:

- ◆ Controlled from within SBC but with partner stakeholders on the responsible committee.
- ◆ A full partnership with an equal share of responsibility between SBC and stakeholders.
- ◆ A stand alone not for profit company.

However, the exact model should be decided by those who will have to make it work.

It is realised that there are also numerous other challenges to overcome, stakeholder commitment, financial arrangements, sustainability, terms of reference and joint working etc.

The inclusion of the Central Seafront area in a TCM arrangement either initially or at a later date should also be carefully considered.



# MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Town Centre Scrutiny received a presentation from those officers currently involved in marketing both tourism and inward investment. It considers that the current marketing is, considering the financial restraints upon it, exceptionally good. However, current marketing is largely tourism and Seafront based and does not address the town centre in any major way, due not least to the lack of sponsors from the Town Centre.

Nevertheless it was strongly identified through both the SWOT and consultation exercises that Southend's strongest individual selling point (ISP) is that it can offer both a retail and tourist experience. By combining a shopping trip (which is now regarded as a leisure activity) with a visit to the Cliff Gardens, Seafront or Pier the visitor can enjoy something very different from our competitors.

Marketing the tourist and retail attractions as an ISP is essential if we are to forge an image for the Town Centre and Seafront that will encourage more visitors, both should support each other and with improved links and connections at Pier Hill this will be physically easier to achieve.

Funding is the main brake on future marketing and for this reason it is necessary to seek out partner stakeholders who may contribute to marketing funds especially if they can see a real return in increased trade. TCM may be able to facilitate this through stronger links with stakeholders and a more direct responsibility.

The marketing of the Town Centre and Seafront must be combined and if not the responsibility of TCM then it must work in partnership with it.



## VICTORIA AVENUE - HISTORY

**"Victoria Avenue" Office Study Area** report (Chestertons 2001) focused on the western side of Victoria Avenue (from Queensway up to northern boundary of Harcourt Av) and also Baxter Avenue running parallel to the rear.

**Victoria Avenue** consists of predominately 60's and 70's office blocks (7 to 15 storeys) fronting the main approach road to Southend and opposite Southend Borough Council, the Court House, Police Station, Library and main line station.

**Baxter Avenue** area comprises a number of car parks both multi storey and surface and some relatively more recent smaller office block developments (3 to 5 storeys) built late 70's and 80's.

**Over recent years** there have been difficulties in letting these buildings due to the size and structural limitations of the units, there being now a demand for smaller self contained, high quality units in business park environments. This has been compounded by "large" organisations both relocating and merging. The current commercial office rent in the town is insufficient to entice a speculative redevelopment.

**"A window of opportunity"** currently exists to do something bold in this area. Southend has a number of initiatives currently underway including Sshape, the Cliff Gardens, the LTP and the Cultural Strategy. There is also a Town Centre Scrutiny which will report in early 2002. Funding opportunities are also optimal at present with the possibility of Objective 2 monies for business support and Thames Gateway for improvements to infrastructure and major projects that will enhance South East Essex and Southend particularly in the culture and leisure fields which should become available in the not too distant future coupled with hopefully much needed improved accessibility.

**The current administration** has recognised that action is needed and has instructed an in depth report of area to be conducted in conjunction with EEDA, who are also keen to assist in the redevelopment of this area.

Based on information from the report, by Chestertons, current initiatives and on local knowledge we recommend the following approach.



# VICTORIA AVENUE - VISION

This area should positively contribute to the Vision of the Town Centre-

**"THE foremost town centre of South Essex, Thames Gateway and beyond, offering an increasingly vibrant mix of shopping, cultural and leisure activities, supported by thriving commercial, education and technology sectors."**

Therefore the vision for this area is-

**"To provide an attractive and vibrant gateway to the town centre, being complementary to the overall vision to ensure that Southend town centre is the foremost town centre of South Essex, Thames Gateway and beyond."**

# VICTORIA AVENUE - THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

## OVERVIEW OF PLANNING OBJECTIVES

To achieve the Vision there will need to be developed a quality office quarter with an emphasis on technology orientated businesses with complimentary uses such as A3 (food & drink), C1 (hotel), A1 (retail), D2 (leisure) and a smaller element of live/ work and residential units. However it will be important to ensure that this area compliments the other areas that comprise the town centre.

- 1. Over capacity of obsolete office stock -** Whilst there are currently some more positive levels of commercial use in some properties there is nevertheless overall an over capacity in the available office stock and a reduction in this is needed through change of use etc to increase competition for space with the effect of raising rental values to stimulate speculative development and to bring about a regeneration of the area.
- 2. Potential Office occupiers/ tenants target groups -** Southend must be realistic as to what it could attract bearing in mind current accessibility issues for

some sectors. We recommend that consideration is given to the following sectors that could be encouraged to take up space in Southend include-

- ◆ Web based industries including software design,
- ◆ Media technology (South East Essex College has recently become a Centre of Excellence in Media Technologies)
- ◆ Promotion and marketing.
- ◆ Management & Personnel Services.
- ◆ Fashion design and publications.
- ◆ Specialist call and contact centres.
- ◆ New technologies possibly linked to existing local businesses e.g. Key Med, Communication Companies.
- ◆ Film & Arts.
- ◆ Culture and leisure.
- ◆ Financial Services.

Many of the above are functions that are being outsourced by large corporates and even if those businesses are not based locally the nature of the outsourced function is such it is not crucial to location. This list is not exhaustive but appears to complement views expressed to date.

# VICTORIA AVENUE - THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

- 3. Innovation Centre** - SME's are the cornerstone of the UK and indeed more particularly our local economy. Currently the numbers of businesses being started up in this locality compare favourably with other parts of East of England Region but their survival rate over a 3 year period is not so good. We therefore need to support the achievement of a robust and sustainable business growth. It is recommended that the above diversification is spearheaded by a "state of the art" ideally purpose built business support/innovation centre. There is a possibility of OBJ 2 priority 1 match funding for a suitable project of this nature. EEDA are currently undertaking work to ascertain the need and viability of such a centre.  
It is recommended that in order to support the regeneration of Victoria Avenue that sectors requiring a more office-based facility should be located here. Other sectors requiring more industrial type facilities would be more appropriate for land development opportunities elsewhere.  
It is recommended that SBC actively pursue this opportunity with EEDA.
- 4. Residential** - It should be stressed that this area is seen as an opportunity to accommodate business, professional and entrepreneurial persons and not as additional social or family housing.  
It is recommended that consideration be given to the conversion of some office space on the upper floors to live/work units.
- 5. Quality residential rental accommodation** - There is currently a shortage in the town for accommodation of a type which is needed for young professionals in key sectors.  
It is recommended that SBC explores the possibility of addressing this by incorporating some of the ideals of the Rowntree Foundation's CASPAR projects. This would assist with recruitment and retention.  
There is currently a bidding round for Government monies to assist Key professionals to relocate and this funding pot should be explored.  
It is recommended that SBC considers a Partnership to deliver and administer this.
- 6. A3 (food & drink)** - It is very important not to encourage trade away from existing establishments and thus put the vitality of other areas at risk.  
It is recommended that SBC consider the scope for more A3 use. It is not envisaged that late night licenses would be appropriate other than on the occasional evening as this can be better accommodated within existing late night areas within the town and would not be compatible with an increased residential element.
- 7. D2 (leisure)** - In addition to the existing facility in Thamesgate House it is recommended that an additional change of use from office space to gym/pool be considered for a private members/residents facility.
- 8. A1 (retail)** - this again needs to be carefully controlled but it is recommended that a newsagent and or a mini super market aimed at those living and working in the vicinity should be permitted. It is not envisaged that many persons would travel by car to this facility. Ideally it would open extended hours and would offer a service that

# VICTORIA AVENUE - THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

would enhance the area and facilities for local residents. The case for a very small number or specialist retail units e.g. office equipment should be considered.

It is recommended that A1 use be accommodated under the existing Heath House structure at street level.

## DETAILS RE SPECIFIC SECTORS

1. **Zone 3** - The Southern Sector. We recommend the retention of zone 3 as 100% office space. This represents Alexander House, Portcullis House, Cumberland House (Baxter Ave) and their direct car parking.
2. **Zone 2** - The Central Sector from Baryta House to Premier House and related surface car parking sites at rear plus 2 office properties on Baxter Avenue. We envisage this as the area of most immediate change. Due to layout of these buildings, the current uses allowed and their position relative to the whole, we recommend that:
  - 1) Baryta House, currently 30% vacant, should be either redeveloped or refurbished as managed office space.
  - 2) Thamesgate House which currently has some mixed usage and is approx 35% vacant, would continue to house the Bar Victoria, the gym and the remaining space would be office use. The area behind Thamesgate House in Baxter Ave offers the largest amount of land and thus the greatest opportunity, with adequate access and signage from Victoria Avenue, to make a hotel successful. There is currently some clustering of mixed use in this area and it is therefore felt better to encourage an hotel into this area. It is also convenient for the Station, the Court House, The Civic Centre and the Town Centre. The Baxter Ave side allows for extensive landscaping, parking and building to be completed so as to considerably enhance the area.
- 3) Telephone House is currently unoccupied but has a planning consent for mixed use including residential, commercial and A3. Work is currently being undertaken on this unit and every encouragement should be given to implement its current planning permission.
- 4) Victoria House is predominantly occupied by Social Security and associated services and only has 15% vacant. Current usage, which offers an essential service to Southend, would it is felt be better accommodated elsewhere and it is recommended that SBC work with Social Security to find more suitably located premises.
  - i. Subject to a positive result from the EEDA survey, and in conjunction with finding alternative accommodation for the leaseholders and discussions with the freeholder

## DETAILS RE SPECIFIC SECTORS

we would recommend that Victoria House be demolished and in its place the innovation centre be built with access and parking from Baxter Ave. This site has several advantages over other possible locations- it is possibly the most dilapidated, it has a significant Victoria Ave frontage, and the tenants have a short notice period and could relocate within Southend and possibly to a site more suited to their needs. Current usage and the dilapidated building could detract from proposed regeneration of the area. Whilst Baryta House also shares some of these attributes its frontage is limited and it is considered important that this "new build" makes maximum impact.

- 5) Premier House is currently fully occupied, being the most recent build in Victoria Avenue, it was developed in 1982, and we recommend that this remain as office space.

3. **Zone 1** - Northern Sector. The Chesterton report suggests that this area from Heath House north to Harcourt Ave. could have as low as 60% office with 40% mixed i.e. A3, C1 (hotel) and other complimentary uses. The scrutiny working party consider this to be too high and recommend that careful consideration is to be given to alternative 70/30 and 75/25 splits. This will in part be influenced by the outcomes in Zone 2 and the future of the college site in Canaervon Road. Whilst we have recommended an hotel in Zone 2 adjoining Thamesgate House, for reasons that have been given, it should not be ruled out within this location (Zone 1) should a developer wish to provide one here. It is recommended that this zone is where we should permit the additional limited A3 use, the retail elements, the live work and the let key sector residential units.

## VICTORIA AVENUE - ENVIRONMENT

1. Currently the area is a disjointed warren of car parks, entrances, boundary walls and fencing. It is recommended that there should be a holistic approach to the street level to achieve attractive, soft public spaces that allow easy movement from car parks to buildings, from one building to another and that unites both Baxter Avenue and Victoria Avenue for pedestrian access. This is considered fundamental to the regeneration of this area. It is recommended that SBC should consider ways in which the street level area can be predominantly public open space with only very limited walling and fencing and where possible begin to implement this as soon as possible. The current slip road, which provides access for servicing and parking, on Victoria Avenue should if possible be incorporated into the scheme.
2. It is recommended that virtually all vehicular access should be from Baxter Ave where adequate public and private parking should be available. The parking for business and public use must be

# VICTORIA AVENUE - ENVIRONMENT

carefully calculated, balancing the proximity to public transport, current travel plan ideas in the LTP etc. and the need to attract business to the area. Portcullis currently has vehicular access from Victoria Ave and this should continue.

- It is recommended that whilst access is from Baxter Ave the building frontages to Victoria Ave be maintained and that care must be taken in the design, planning and development stages so that the Victoria Avenue frontages do not become "back doors" but remain as active frontages.

- Consideration should be given to enhancing the existing buildings on the East of Victoria Ave e.g. innovative night lighting of the Civic Centre and improvements at Victoria Station that should be encouraged to improve its appearance and facilities to include a secure covered cycle store. (See also page 14)
- It is recommended that SBC consider ways in which to achieve the above, including if necessary changes to the Victoria Avenue road itself.



*Figure 4.3  
Land  
Ownership*

- |                             |                     |                          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Carby House               | 8 Cheviot House     | 15 Cumberland House      |
| 2 Northfield/Harcourt House | 9 Victoria House    | 16 Multi-storey Car Park |
| 3 Suffolk House             | 10 Telephone House  | 17 Portcullis House      |
| 4 CE Heath House            | 11 Kingswood House  | 18 Alexander House       |
| 5 Rutland House             | 12 Telephone House  |                          |
| 6 Mobile Phone House        | 13 Thamesgate House | Source:                  |
| 7 Premier House             | 14 Baryta House     | Chesterton Survey 2001   |

# VICTORIA AVENUE - MARKETING

1. It is recommended that Victoria Avenue should be marketed in its own right. Whilst including Victoria Ave in general Southend Marketing initiatives would promote the area it is felt that this alone is insufficient and would preclude the specific targeting that is needed. It is recommended that marketing be proactive, based on current initiatives e.g. Sshape, Thames Gateway etc. Scrutiny recommends that positive aspects to market are -

- ◆ Proximity to trains and London two main line railways to service our travel to work area.
- ◆ Proximity to airport,
- ◆ Quality of life by the sea.
- ◆ Reasonable rent & rates (currently)
- ◆ Lower wages (currently)
- ◆ Available labour (skills?)
- ◆ Potential of link ups with University
- ◆ Rising retail reputation.
- ◆ Self help with upgrade of
  - (a) High St
  - (b) Pier & Foreshore
  - (c) Cliff Gardens etc.

2. It is recommended that SBC actively seek out entrepreneurs and directors of companies who live locally in South East Essex but operate their business in other localities and may consider expanding / relocating to Southend. The vision and the plan must be clearly marketed and sold to the relevant agencies both in Eastern Region and in Greater London that can influence inward development into Southend.
3. Currently there is a perception amongst Economic Development Agencies, Educators and Industry sectors that Southend lacks a vision, whether this is true or not the perception needs addressing and fast. It is recommended that Southend holds an annual - Southend Business Fair- to showcase its current companies and to highlight its forthcoming opportunities and plans to Regional, National and International Organisations and that partners are sought to deliver this.





## VICTORIA AVENUE - LONG TERM

In the 5 to 20 year scenario it is envisaged that office demand will increase and thus rental returns will increase. This will be due to a two pronged attack 1) the reduction of office space currently available in large unattractive units and in the change of use of the occasional smaller unit in the Town Centre and 2) an increase in the towns prosperity due to a regenerated Town Centre and Seafront with the

concurrent increase in a need for commercial space to service this growth sector. Once rental returns reach a certain level it will become viable for development companies to demolish and rebuild. This will also, hopefully, coincide with Thames Gateway South Essex coming on stream and SBC along with other partner organisations must be ready with a Master Plan for this area.

## VICTORIA AVENUE - IMPLEMENTATION

*See also the "The Next Steps" page 39*

There are a number of proposals and suggestions in this report that will need consents and permissions of various kinds from the Council and other authorities; it is recognised that putting forward those proposals does not prejudge their formal consideration where such consents are needed.

1. It is recommended that once the short term aims of this strategy Southend Gateway Town Centre- Victoria Ave, are accepted and underway that full consideration is given to comprehensive redevelopment of the Victoria Ave. area. Should the innovation centre and mixed use be successful then this paves the way for this more radical approach to be applied to the whole.
2. Scrutiny recommends that a development brief as mentioned in "The Next Steps" is drawn up to progress the recommendations as laid out in Southend Gateway Town Centre - Victoria Avenue, in conjunction with the other recommendations in Southend Gateway Town 2002-2012 .



# SOUTHEND-ON-SEA GATEWAY TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY 2002-2012

## FUNDING

The Town Centre Scrutiny was asked "to investigate all sources of appropriate funding and partnership needed and required and to make recommendations on the same".

Southend has been successful at securing funding which will contribute to the priorities, which will be necessary to ensure that the vision is achieved.

Funding streams are constantly changing, and there is no guarantee that the funding sought will be made available. However the SBC is in a strong position to prepare bids which may be successful.

Once Southend Gateway Town 2002-2010 has been accepted and the implementation plan established it will be necessary to begin to source funding for specific priorities. However, as part of Thames Gateway South Essex and one of the 24 Renaissance Towns and Cities

Southend will be well placed to attract possible funding. It is expected that priority will be given to regeneration projects from the 24 Renaissance Towns and Cities by the funding authorities and that it may not always be necessary to wait for funding rounds to occur.

A partnership approach is essential to secure external funding as "match funding" from other sources as this is usually a pre-requisite to bid approval.

Strong economic and development partnerships, possibly through the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership will need to be in place to secure funding for large-scale infrastructure projects, which will be necessary if a dramatic impact is to be made, through the implementation of this strategy.

The Main Funding streams that can make a difference are listed in table 1.

**TABLE 1**

Funding	Impact	Priority
DTLR LTP £36m - now to 2006 & then a new phase	To address the transport / infrastructure needs of the borough. The proposed Travel Centre will impact on opening up The High Street area for more "retail, leisure and mixed use" opportunities.	3, 6, 7,10,
UK Govt Thames Gateway Substantial potential funding over the next 20-25 years	The "Thames Gateway" badge will open opportunities for projects within the Thames Gateway area to attract funding from many other funding streams. Projects must make a significant difference to transport and infrastructure, investment, skills and employment, health and community, environment and marketing. These issues impact on the vitality of the town centre.	1, 7, 9
Home Office CRP (Incl. CCTV + Neighbourhood Wardens schemes)	Extension of CCTV and the introduction of Borough Patrol Officers will make a significant impact on the perception of safety and security in town centre locations.	4,

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Funding	Impact	Priority
EU Objective 2 ESF 3 2000 - 2006 Interreg + other community initiatives and partnerships	The SSHAPE project is one of a number of projects that will receive Obj 2 funding to enable major economic development projects to go ahead. ESF3 funds can bring training initiatives to the businesses (e.g. Business Themes and Champions bid) in this location. Other EU funds are still to be investigated.	5-funded 1,
UK Govt Invest to Save - now (Utopia project bid)	This project, part of the "e" agenda, brings together, public and voluntary sector organisations, through IT and web technology, to provide on-line information for the citizens of Southend. This will impact on the town centre, as many of the services sought by residents and visitors can be sourced and accessed through information points. This builds on the initiative started as part of the SSHAPE project.	4, 5, 8, 1, 2
SBC	A limited amount of funding is available annually for major projects such as the Pier and departments have a funding allocation for smaller initiatives.	1, 11, 12 & a number of smaller policy initiatives.
PARTNERSHIP	Partnership is essential for both a number of the other funding opportunities to be acceptable and for a number of the priorities to work effectively.	4, 7, 9, 11, 12
EEDA / DTI SRB 1997 - 2006  Single Programme from 2002	Community learning is a strong feature of SRB schemes that have been funded across Southend. They impact on the town centre as Milton and Victoria wards, covered by TCS are a key focus for 2 SRB schemes, each with projects that affect the town centre. From 2002, EEDA's funds will be in a single "pot" and there will be no further SRB rounds. However, funds may be available for e.g. an innovation centre and managed workspace, which could contribute to improvements in Victoria Ave.	9.
Lottery NOF Arts, Heritage	Lottery funding can be secured from a number of different lottery distributors. E.g.: NOF has funding for "green spaces", which could contribute to an enhanced environment in the town centre, as could funding from the Arts and Heritage lottery distributors.	1, 2,10
Urban White Paper: "24 towns and cities" to take forward urban renaissance.	Initiatives resulting from proposals in the Urban White Paper could make a significant impact on the town centre. Although funds are not currently specified, they may become available to the 24 partner towns and cities (of which Southend is one) recently identified. Business Improvement Districts and eased CPO powers may be appropriate tools to apply in the future, if appropriate.	1, 2, 3, 9
Other Strategies: Cultural Strategy Neighbourhood Renewal Local Strategic Partnerships Community Safety Strategy Borough Local Plan	Other strategies - current and those yet to emerge - will provide funding opportunities that may be accessible for the benefit of the town centre, both in the short term and into the future.  The Council also needs to have regard for current local and national strategies that may have an impact on town centre development.	

## DEFINED TIMESCALE

The terms of reference require that recommendations be made as to the timescale for achieving the vision. The Gateway Town Centre Strategy recommends 12 major priorities and a number of smaller ones that will be instrumental in achieving the vision and explains the rationale behind them.

A number of the priorities are closely linked to existing programmes of work and policy reviews that already have clearly defined timescales. However, it is essential to dovetail the Gateway Town Centre Strategy with these existing programmes and to have influence on the reviews if we are to:

- a) avoid redoing work recently completed
- b) make use of existing match funding opportunities
- c) produce sufficient impact and
- d) have clearly defined outcomes to influence future decisions.

Equally to be too prescriptive with regards to initiating and completing projects could result in conflicts and funding problems.

Southend Gateway Town Centre Strategy 2002-2012 is a ten year strategy. A number of the major priorities can and should be completed in the short term to 2005, some will be initiated within this period, but will only be completed in the medium term to 2008 whilst others will only start to come to fruition in the longer term 2008-2012 if consideration is given them fairly soon.

It is therefore recommended that priorities 1 - 4, listed below, which have close links with both Sshape and the LTP should be dealt with in conjunction with them and at the same time as Sshape and the LTP touch on the relevant areas.

- 1) A review of pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking improvements to provide a better and safer experience for both residents and visitors.**
- 2) The improvement and integration of the side streets along the High Street.**
- 3) The development of Pier Hill to become a high quality public space and the hub that links the Seafront, The Town Centre, the Night Life and the Heritage areas.**
- 4) The remodelling of Warrior Square and Victoria Circus to provide high quality public spaces that link through to the rest of the town**

◆ To enable this to happen it will necessary to undertake the review at 1) above and to have clear decisions before Sshape continues any further down the High Street which would be in February 2002.

◆ The LTP is also considering the central area early in the cycle and is already undertaking traffic surveys etc. It is therefore recommended that 1) should be fed into the LTP considerations immediately and be reflected in the RBLP.

◆ The improvements of the side streets, 2) above, this again has influence on and will be influenced by the LTP and each smaller area should be considered as the LTP cycle picks it up. Nevertheless it is recommended that all improvements to side streets be completed within the life of the current LTP and the majority by 2005.

## DEFINED TIMESCALE

- ◆ The development of Pier Hill, 3) above, should be initiated forthwith and completed within the life of Sshape, from which funding may be forthcoming.
- ◆ The Victoria Circus and Warrior Square priorities are not dependant on existing programmes but the need to link the areas effectively is relevant to the LTP and to the side street priority, 2) above. It is therefore recommended that the linkages are considered alongside 2) and that Victoria Circus and Warrior Square are completed by 2005.

The following priorities also need consideration in the short term:

- 5) **The development of a "Pride in Our Town" scheme that will ensure that the Borough Council, stakeholders and the public, play their full role in maintaining and regulating the town so that they can be truly proud of their environment.**
- 6) **The development of dedicated Town Centre Management.**
- ◆ There have been considerable discussions with stakeholders recently both as part of this consultation and strategy and through other means. It is felt that with the start of Sshape and the travel centre the time is right to initiate further talks with stakeholders with a view to progressing the two priorities 5) and 6) above. It is recommended that 5) be up and running to coincide with the completion of Sshape in 2003 and that 6) depending on the route taken would be fully operational by 2005.

- 7) **The physical broadening of the High Street offer by a proactive approach to attract developers to development opportunities at two major locations (Victoria/Queensway and Tylers/York Rd) and several smaller ones.**

- ◆ The York Road / Tylers Avenue quadrant should be considered alongside the Travel Centre, although it is recognised that it is unlikely to attract a developer that quickly. Realistically it will need to be planned and provided for at the earliest opportunity and certainly no later than plans are submitted for the travel centre and any road alterations in the vicinity. Land assembly issues will need to be considered and it is hoped that a developer could be found in the medium term of 2006-2008.

- ◆ The Victoria/Queensway development. Part of this would need to be included in the next LTP which will run from 2007. This is recommended for the longer term to 2012.

- 8) **Effective public transport arrangements to, from and within the Town Centre in conjunction with the proposed new Travel Centre and further investigation into a night transport service for those leaving the Town Centre during the night.**

- 9) **A review of pedestrianisation, traffic and car parking improvements to provide a better and safer experience for both residents and visitors.**

- ◆ These priorities 8) and 9) again should run concurrently with the LTP and discussions on the night transport element should commence in the first year 2002.

## DEFINED TIMESCALE

10) **The integration of the proposed college and university campus development within the Central Station and High Street sectors.**

◆ Unlike most of the other priorities 10) is dependent almost entirely upon third parties. Nevertheless it is recommended that all possible assistance be given to facilitate this priority to complete by 2007 or earlier.

*Also please see timescale table*



TIMESCALE TABLE

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Development of Pier Hill	plan	plan									
Warrior Square and Victoria Avenue	plan										
Improvement and Integration of Side Streets	plan										
“Pride in Our Town”	plan	ongoing									
Sshape	Action	Action	complete								
Public Transport / Night Transport	plan										
Dev opp Victoria / Queensway					plan						
Dev opp Tylers / York Rd	plan										
College & Uni Campus											
Victoria Avenue	plan	ongoing									
Review of Pedestrianisation, Traffic and Car Parking											
Town Centre Management & Marketing	plan	ongoing									
RBLP											
BLP											
Obj 2											
LTP											

# THE NEXT STEPS

Town Centre Scrutiny was asked to make recommendations to executive portfolio holders as to how they should progress the development and regeneration of Southend Town Centre.

## **I. The following recommendations are made with respect to Southend Gateway Town Centre Strategy:**

1. That the Economic Scrutiny Committee regularly monitor and review the progress of this strategic plan, make recommendations as to updates of this Strategic plan as required, on at least an annual or more regular basis as is necessary.
2. That a development brief is drawn up to progress the Warrior Square, Victoria Circus and Pier Hill Priorities so that they may be completed within the suggested timescale, to ensure that there is a dovetailing of the recommendations in this strategy with both existing and future initiatives, plans, policies and strategies etc and that funding for these priorities is actively sought.
3. That a development brief is drawn up to progress the Victoria Avenue and the side street priorities and to ensure that there is a dovetailing of the recommendations in this strategy with both existing and future initiatives, plans, policies and strategies etc. That funding for these priorities is actively sought so that they may be completed within the suggested timescale
4. That a partnership working party is formed to move forward on "The Pride in our Town," late transport and town centre management priorities.
5. That the appointment of a town centre manager is expedited to work on the above recommendations, to co-ordinate between the various departments, to source funding and liaise with stakeholders in the Town Centre and to be their "one stop shop".
6. That there is co-ordination within the LTP and implementation of the traffic, car park, pedestrianisation and major development priorities that will fall within the technical and environmental services department.
7. That the RBLP provides the planning guidance and structure that will promote and facilitate the recommendations of Southend Gateway Town.
8. That wherever possible the executive portfolio holders give priority to the Southend Gateway Town Strategy so as to enable it to be implemented as per the recommended timescale.
9. That consideration is given in forthcoming budget rounds to commit funding to progress this strategy and that funding is sought from external funding streams where necessary and appropriate.



# THE NEXT STEPS

## II. With respect to the development and regeneration of the town centre generally it is recommended that:

1. There should always be a co-ordinated approach, with consultation between the portfolio holders and senior officers prior to decisions being taken.
2. There is effective consultation with stakeholders at all stages and particularly in the initial stages.
3. A diversification of activities within the Town Centre should be encouraged, whilst maintaining and increasing active uses of ground floors especially along pedestrian routes.
4. Any new development and changes should ensure good quality design, good inbuilt safety, lighting and environmental aspects both for the structure and the immediate surrounds.
5. New development should be encouraged to address the current oversupply of outmoded office stock by developing new and refurbished accommodation that is flexible and suitable for a wide range of uses.
6. It is essential to maintain and attract a diverse range of commercial and business operators so as to assist sustainability and offer a wide range of jobs.
7. The Southend Gateway Town Centre Strategic Group consider the implications and opportunities of Thames Gateway South Essex at the earliest opportunity.
8. In taking forward all the steps, in order to give back good value to Southend-on-Sea there must be good quality, professional systems and procedures built in to the delivery of improvements.



## GLOSSARY

<b>BLP</b>	Borough Local Plan - The plan that provides planning guidance	<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnership
<b>RBLP</b>	Replacement Borough Local Plan - The draft plan which will provide planning guidance in the future and supersedes the current plan.	<b>RNLI</b>	Royal National Lifeboat Institution
<b>CASPAR</b>	City-centre Apartments for Single People at Affordable Rents	<b>SBC</b>	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
<b>CCTV</b>	Close Circuit Television	<b>SEEC</b>	South East Essex College
<b>CPO</b>	Compulsory purchase order	<b>SSHAPE</b>	Southend Seafront, High Street and Pier Enhancement - A major project to improve the central corridor from Prittlewell to the Pier, including Victoria Avenue and the High Street
<b>DTLR</b>	Department of Transport, Local Government and The Regions	<b>Shopmobility</b>	A scheme to provide access to wheel chair use in the Town Centre
<b>EEDA</b>	East of England Development Agency	<b>SME's</b>	Small and medium sized enterprises
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund	<b>Stakeholders</b>	The individuals, groups and businesses who have an interest and involvement in the issues arising in this report.
<b>GER</b>	Great Eastern Railways	<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
<b>ISP</b>	Individual Selling Point	<b>TCM</b>	Town Centre Management
<b>LTP</b>	Local Transport Plan - The plan that provides the direction for transportation developments up to 2006	<b>TIC</b>	Tourist Information Centre
<b>NOF</b>	New Opportunities Fund		
<b>Objective2</b>	The European funding stream which will provide grants for major Economic development projects in 5 wards in Southend		

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following terms of reference were agreed by the Economic Scrutiny Committee of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council as the basis for a review of the Town Centre and the preparation of this report.

- ◆ To determine within a defined timescale a realistic vision for the future of Southend Town Centre as a regional and sub-regional centre for shopping, leisure and commerce and to give recommendations as to how that vision can be achieved.
- ◆ To invite, receive and consider the views of all persons and bodies who and which have an interest in the future well being of the Town Centre.
- ◆ To consider and understand the major issues and problems affecting the Town Centre, and to make suggestions and recommendations to tackle the same.
- ◆ To consider and recommend on how to improve the vitality of the Town Centre on a 24 hour basis.
- ◆ To investigate all sources of appropriate funding and partnership needed and required and to make recommendations on the same.
- ◆ To issue a report to Council with recommendations as to how the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder or Holders should progress the development and regeneration of Southend Town Centre

The Scrutiny Committee will need to give consideration to all relevant policy, financial, legal, media and property considerations and may feel it necessary to visit other locations to see how problems of a similar nature have been tackled.

*There are a number of proposals and suggestions in this report that will need consents and permissions of various kinds from the Council and other authorities; it is recognised that putting forward those proposals does not prejudge their formal consideration where such consents are needed.*

**Report of the  
Economic Scrutiny Committee**

**Southend-on-Sea  
Borough Council**

**December 2001**



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