



# Southend Borough-wide Character Study

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WESTBOROUGH WARD

PRITTEWELL WARD

WESTVILLE WARD

SOUTHEND

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# INTRODUCTION

This study has been commissioned by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework, where it will inform and support the development of planning policy and development management decisions. It is intended to provide a description of the physical form of the Borough, its origins, places, streets and buildings to provide an understanding of the particular attributes which make Southend what it is today. As well as fulfilling the role of a formal planning document it is intended that it will become a general reference document for the council and local professionals working in the area. It is also hoped that it will be more widely read by local interest groups and the general public to develop a widespread appreciation of what it is that makes Southend special.

## Aims and objectives

The key aim of the urban characterisation study is to describe the form, character and special attributes of Southend-on-Sea Borough. Within this overall aim there are a number of key objectives:

- To identify and describe the key urban features which characterise development in the Borough and demonstrate how aspects of this character might inform the design of any future development, making it feel more closely ‘of the place’;
- To review the impact of piecemeal redevelopment of existing established neighbourhoods, particularly where this has an impact on bungalows;

- To consider the nature of bungalow development to the character of Southend, particularly in recognition of the fact that some areas of bungalow development are under threat from redevelopment in more intensive forms of development;
- To consider the nature of the seafront in light of the continuing pressure to build taller and bulkier buildings in prominent locations at the loss of historic character and grain;
- To identify areas where there is any close correlation between key indicators of social deprivation and urban typology, providing evidence for future policy considerations; and
- To consider ways in which the existing character of the Borough’s streets and spaces can inform an approach to climate change adaptation in the future, including the enhancement or introduction of greater levels of street tree planting and reinstatement of grass verges to improve sustainable drainage.

## Methodology

This study has been produced by a team of consultants from Urban Practitioners and The Landscape Partnership including the following stages of work:

- Detailed desk-top analysis of the Borough including analysis of digital mapping, historic mapping, socio-economic data and planning policy;
- Extensive site visits to the Borough including an initial tour of the Borough with council officers;

- An extensive photographic analysis of the Borough with over 2000 new images taken as part of the study;
- Use of site visits, aerial photography and web resources to build a comprehensive picture of the structure of the Borough and the arrangement of different urban typologies;
- An interim test and review workshop with the council team to agree the working method and emerging outcomes;
- Consultation with a group of over 40 stakeholders representing key local groups such as conservation area and residents associations; and
- Consultation with Southend Borough Council’s councillors.

## Report structure

**Southend today** - this section sets out an introduction to the Borough, its location and context. It then provides a description of the key physical and social characteristics of the Borough including:

- Topography, geology and flooding;
- Patterns of land use and green space;
- Planning and conservation designations; and
- Socioeconomic indicators.

**Urban growth** - this section provides an historical appreciation of the growth of the Borough over time, detailing the key events, architectural periods and population growth. Maps of the Borough have also been prepared from available historic mapping to show the process of growth over time.

**Urban typology** - the next section of the report details an approach to the classification of the various urban forms in the Borough. This defines a series of residential and mixed use urban forms to create a bespoke classification system that responds to the unique character and attributes of Southend. These types are described and illustrated in detail and accompanied by mapping to show how they are distributed across the Borough.

**Southend’s places** - this follows on from the mapping of the urban typologies and explains the structure of the Borough as a series of settlements and neighbourhoods and notes key features which act as landmarks, barriers, edges and so forth. This work draws on the consultation undertaken with local stakeholders.

**Conclusions** - the final section of the report identifies key features which characterise Southend, including elements such as the relationship between the urban areas and the estuary, the way in which historical development has influenced the urban and architectural style and the nature of key specific building types such as bungalows and tall buildings. For each of these concluding elements the report provides an assessment of how the character is relevant to planning and development today, the pressures that may be experienced and key lessons which might inform future thinking.

**Consultation** - an appendix to the document provides a detailed report from the consultation workshop which was conducted with local stakeholders to review the approach to the project and discuss the structure and character of the Borough.

