



SOUTHEND'S PLACES

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As with any borough, Southend is not a single homogenous place. Rather, it is a collection of separate and distinct places which have grown together over time to create a substantial conurbation.

Despite this coalescence the various places retain their individuality. This can be seen in the types of street pattern and architecture, the structure of centres and focal points and the names used to describe locations. In each case the history of the origins and growth of a place are crucial to the establishment of the later character and as has been noted previously in this study, elements such as the arrival of the railway in an area or the closure of the Garrison in the case of Shoeburyness can have a profound effect on the shape and character of a place.

This section of the study identifies eight different places within the borough which can be regarded as distinct places. Within each of these there are smaller neighbourhoods or areas of character. The definition of these zones has arisen from the consultation work undertaken with local groups but it is important to note that they are not intended as definitive boundaries - there are likely to be many cases where there could be significant debate over the placement of boundary lines. Rather they are used as a framework to present the key characteristics of each area and the key issues which they each face in terms of challenges to the existing urban character.

EASTWOOD



SOUTHEND



LEIGH



SOUTHCHURCH



PRITTLEWELL



THORPE BAY

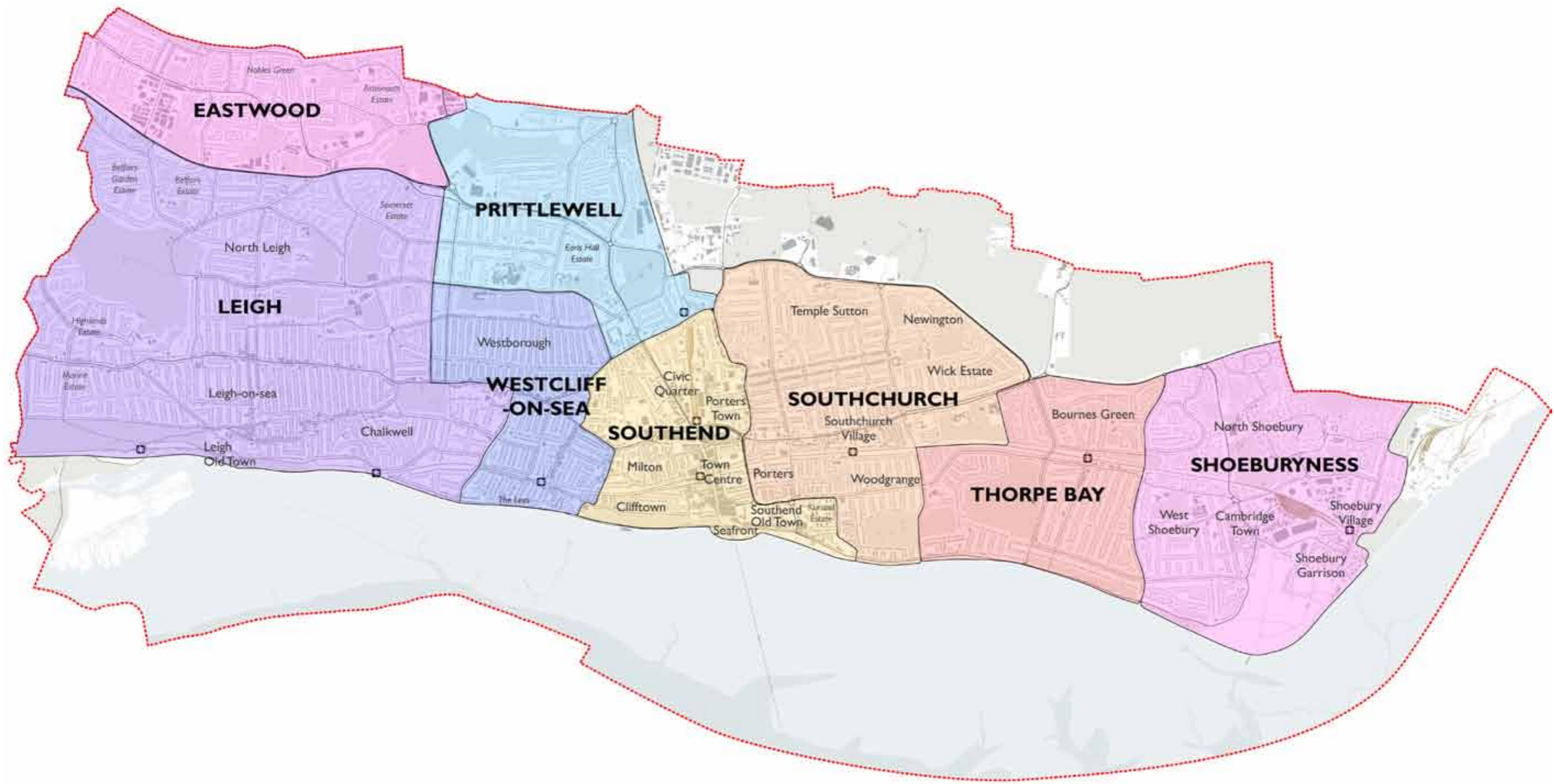


**WESTCLIFF
-ON-SEA**



SHOEBURYNESS





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EASTWOOD

Key characteristics

Eastwood is a relatively modern area of Southend, featuring mainly post-war buildings. It is defined to the south by the A127 Arterial Road which creates a strong boundary and has the effect of isolating the area from Leigh to the south to a large degree.

Areas of Eastwood feature the same variation between buildings as is commonly found in more mature areas of the Borough, suggesting that they were built in a piecemeal way either by individual owners or by builders working on small groups of plots. The style and format of buildings varies significantly, but includes a range of forms fashionable for the post-war period such as chalet style houses. Notably, the blocks in the western part of Eastwood are arranged in a regular grid pattern, with some of them unmetalled and unadopted

The northern part of Eastwood, known as Noble's Green includes a number of very large properties, some backing onto the green open space beyond the Borough boundary.

A substantial portion of Eastwood is laid out as cul-de-sac development, ranging in period from the late 1960s to the late Twentieth Century. These areas lack a clearly legible network of spaces and streets and particularly they lack the classic bone structure which defines a district centre and associated public realm. Instead, the focus is a Morrisons supermarket based on an out-of-town format.

Eastwood is perhaps most visible to non-residents as the location for the Progress Road industrial estate. This provides a significant body of employment and some retail/service counters for the general public and trade. However, it has also recently become the

focus for car retail fronting onto the A127. The recent Progress Road Estate Framework provides a design brief which is intended to gradually raise the quality and provision of employment by setting new standards and aspirations for the types of uses in the area and the quality of the urban environment.

Key issues

Eastwood contains few elements of significant historic value. It is relatively isolated from the core historic areas of the Borough and so there is little potential for change to have a significantly detrimental impact on the Borough.

By contrast, there may be a number of positive changes which may be sought over time. This could include reducing the impact of the A127 as a barrier which isolates Eastwood from its surrounding areas, and improving the network of streets and spaces to make the area generally more legible and permeable. Finally, there may be opportunities to redevelop the retail centre to provide an environment based more closely around public realm and which is better orientated towards pedestrians and cyclists.





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LEIGH-ON-SEA

Key characteristics

Leigh-on-Sea is a large area of Southend, really only defined at the northern edge by the A127 where it abuts Eastwood.

The southern part of the area is that properly known as Leigh-on-Sea and has its focus around the historic settlement on the hill-top overlooking the estuary. This provides a vibrant secondary town centre with a wide range of shops and services and a generally attractive environment. The suburbs which extend out from this core were largely built out during the Edwardian and Inter-war period and represent some of the most attractive and desirable parts of the Borough.

Old Leigh is the original coastal settlement, based around the shellfish beds along the estuary. The arrival of the railway line from Fenchurch Street cut it off from the rest of the area and despite the construction of a large fly-over in the latter part of the twentieth century it remains a microcosm of townscape from another age.

The London Road forms the spine of the area, providing a linear centre for local shops and services as well as specialist retail and businesses such as car show-rooms. It also acts as the dividing line between Leigh-on-Sea and plain Leigh to the north. Whilst the character of Leigh-on-Sea extends across the London Road it makes way for other forms of development including the public sector-built Somerset Estate in the north. This follows many of the same influences as privately built housing of the same period, with its layout being heavily influenced by garden city and Radburn planning. However, the buildings are much more plain and modest in their design and are generally grouped in

short terraces, creating an overall cohesiveness and homogeneity which distinguishes them from their private sector cousins.

Key issues

It is difficult to see how and where the built extents of Leigh might grow. Given that the area is largely characterised by mature suburbs in private ownership it is therefore likely to experience little change at a strategic level. Perhaps more significant is the potential for change at a plot-by-plot basis.

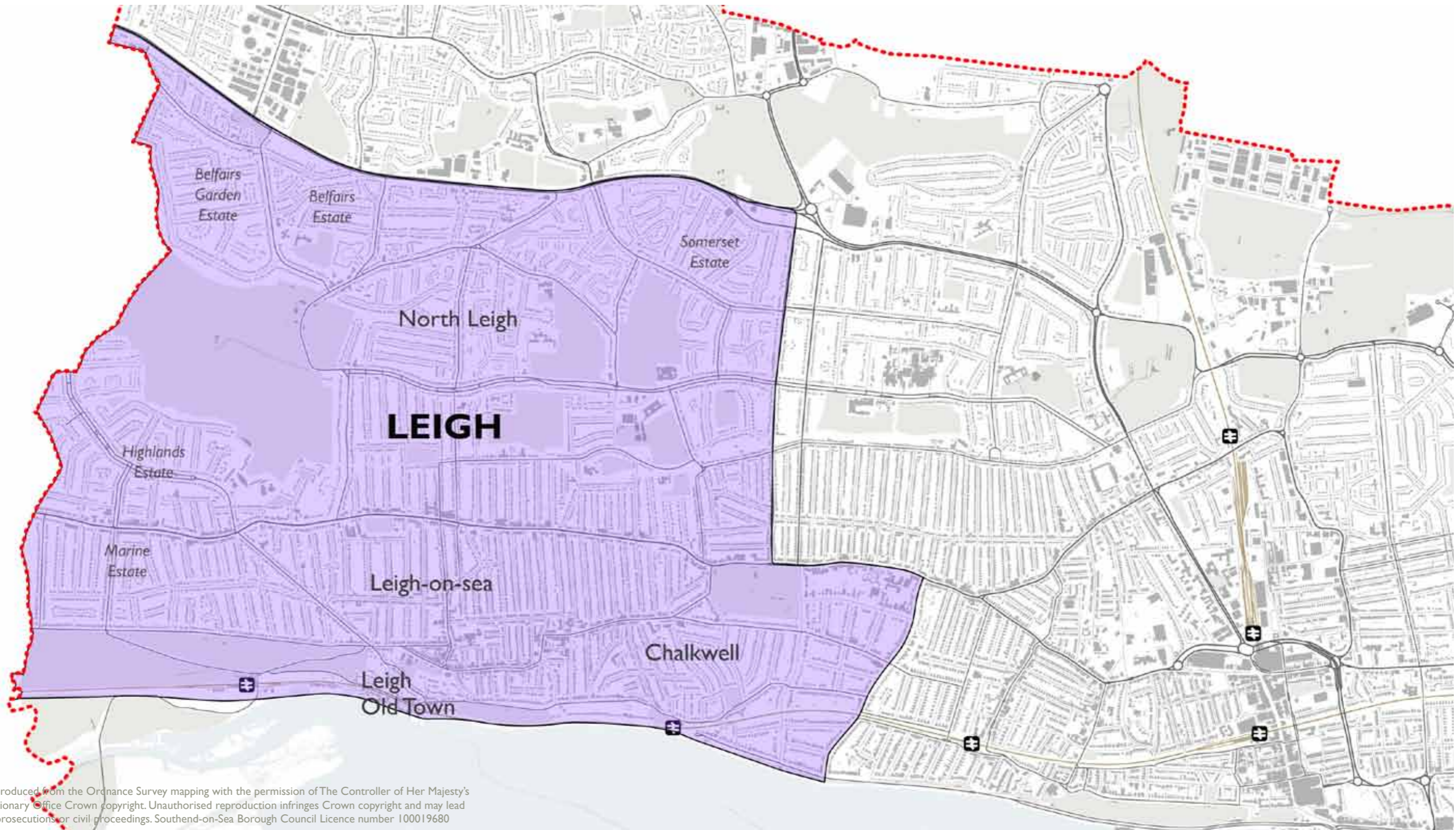
As in other areas there is pressure for extensions and loft conversions. This can have a particularly damaging effect in areas with semi-detached houses with hipped roofs which can lose their symmetry and affect the composition of the skyline through insensitive conversion;

In older suburban areas, designed without universal car ownership, there can be significant pressure for conversion of front gardens into parking, resulting in the loss of greenery and reduced definition of public and private space;

One of the strongest streetscape features in the area is the verge hedges and trees. These are at risk of removal to release land for parking. However, this would significantly affect the character of the streets and result in the loss of green infrastructure which contributes to sustainable drainage, biodiversity and climate change adaptation; and

Pressure for larger blocks of flats and more intensive development in local centres and along the London Road.





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PRITTLEWELL

Key characteristics

Prittlewell is located on the northern side of the Borough and effectively forms the gateway into the town centre of Southend for those travelling in along Prince Avenue, the A127. This road dominates the area, cutting it in half. Although the character of the road is softened with landscaping including wide verges and tree planting the volume of traffic and dual carriageway nature of the road has a significant impact, making it all but impossible to cross except at a few controlled locations or bridges. It is unfortunate that the very large Tesco store and car park on the A127 junction entering Prittlewell is one of the most significant and visible landmarks in the area.

Prittlewell is largely characterised by low and medium density housing. Whilst there is a strong inter-war component of this, particularly on key routes, there are also substantial areas of post-war housing including examples of system building (pre-fab housing) such as Hornby Avenue.

Prittlewell is the location for a number of elements which have significance for the wider area: Southend University Hospital is located in the southern part of Prittlewell and orientated towards Prittlewell Chase; Southend airport is also immediately to the north of Prittlewell, with the terminal buildings and hangers backing close onto residential properties in Wells Avenue; and Southend Football Club is located in the southern part of Prittlewell, although the club plans to move to new premises on the outskirts of the urban area. These significant functions do little to help Prittlewell establish a cohesive identity.

The most significant component of Prittlewell's origins and identity is the historic settlement which was focussed around the junction of East Street and West Street with the road now known as Victoria Avenue. The parish church is an imposing historic presence, but beyond this only a handful of pre-Victorian buildings remain to give a sense of what existing before the urban expansion of Southend. These are some of the oldest buildings in the Borough and are an important part of the town's history.

Prittlewell Priory (Grade I listed) is another significant aspect of the area's history, having been founded in the early twelfth century. It now houses a local museum and forms the centrepiece of Priory Park, a large and well landscaped area.

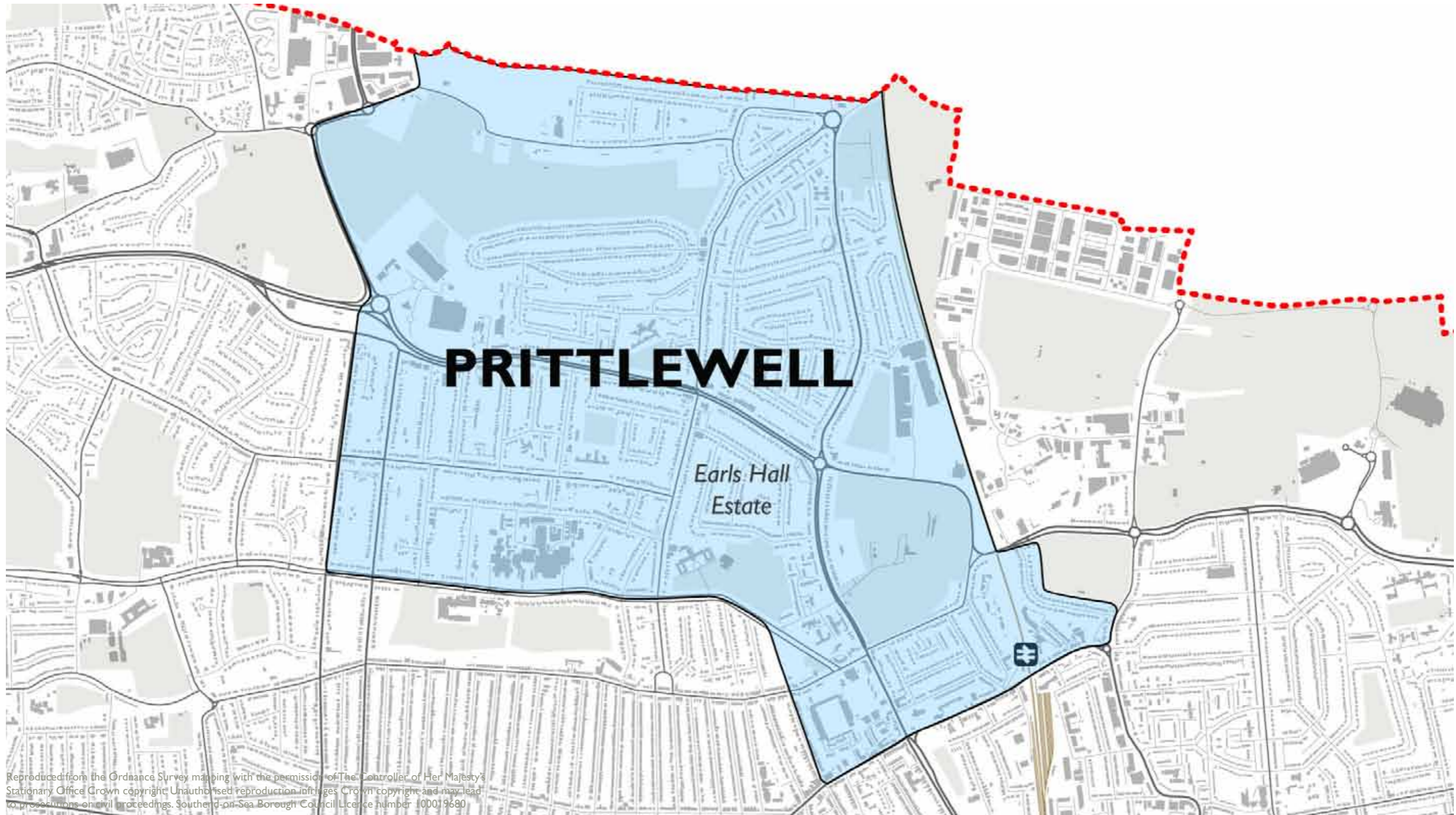
Key issues

As and when the new football stadium development is completed the existing stadium site will provide a large area of developable land close to the location of the historic core of Prittlewell. This presents an opportunity for well-integrated urban development;

The A127 will continue to have a major impact on the character of the area. However, opportunities might be sought to reduce the barrier effect it creates with a preference for at-grade crossings rather than over-bridges; and

In the long term, the character of the area will be strengthened by improving the key gateways, recognising their important role as the approach to Southend town centre. This work is already progressing through the Victoria Avenue Development Brief.





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WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA

Key characteristics

Westcliff-on-Sea lies between Leigh and Southend, and stretches from the coast in the south to the Prittlewell Brook in the north. It is bisected by the London Road which runs east-west through the area. This marks a clear change in the character of the street pattern and defines a distinct area in the northern part which is known as Westborough.

Most of Westcliff is a product of the late Victorian and Edwardian era, with most of the development taking place in the two decades up to and including the First World War. The key physical determinants which formed its structure were the London Road, the coast line, and the establishment of Westcliff Station. This set up a strong north-south axis in the form of Hamlet Court Road which has become the main shopping street for the area.

The character of the southern part of Westcliff, particularly in the areas closer to the seafront is a good example of vibrant Edwardian architecture, with strong modelling of the front elevations including external timberwork, bays, gables and balconies. The seafront itself is the most extreme example of this type, with large properties competing in scale and elaborateness.

By contrast, Westborough is a much more modest area, with smaller and more repetitive houses. It is noticeable on maps of the area for the exceptionally strong nature of the grid plan which is established, with 22 almost perfectly parallel streets.

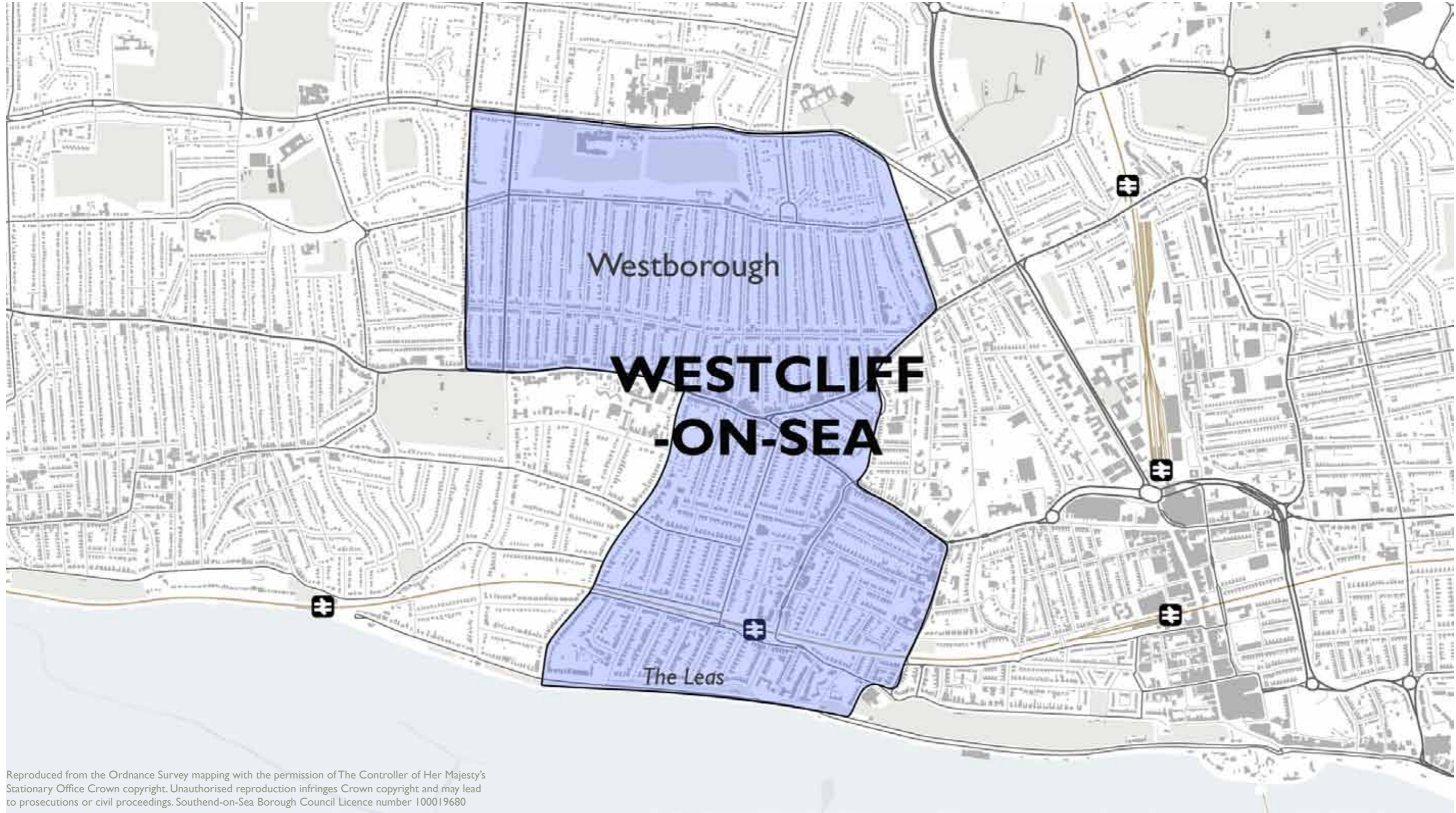
Key issues

Perhaps the most visibly pressing issue in Westcliff is the character of the seafront and the streets immediately inland. The attractiveness of the location has made it an extremely desirable place to live, and so there has been significant redevelopment of former large houses and traditional hotels to provide blocks of apartments and care homes. As well as the resulting loss of the attractive Edwardian architecture, the larger scale and massing of the new buildings is regarded as having a significant impact, particularly where plots have been merged to create larger sites. The increase in population density has also resulted in very high demand for parking spaces and increased pressure on local streets.

In residential streets a key issue is the loss of front gardens to parking and the gradual loss of original architectural features such as windows, both of which denude the streets of their consistency and appeal.

Hamlet Court Road is the historic shopping centre for the area and features a number of impressive Edwardian and inter-war buildings which have a particularly decorative character. This would benefit from a greater level of protection to promote preservation and enhancement of the buildings and may merit consideration as a conservation area.





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SOUTHEND

Key characteristics

The area regarded as central Southend covers a multitude of distinct neighbourhoods and quarters:

Town Centre - the main retail heart of the Borough and dominated by comparison shopping including shopping malls at the northern and southern end of the High Street;

Milton and Clifftown - early residential expansion of Southend, including some particularly attractive planned streets and spaces much of which is now conservation area;

Civic Quarter - a grouping of bulky post-war civic buildings along Victoria Avenue, including the library, law-courts and the Civic Centre itself (also reflected in the offices on the western side of the road);

Seafront - the entertainment heart of the Borough arranged along Marine Parade between Adventure Island and the Kursaal; and

Kursaal Estate - a post-war brutalist estate of slab blocks on the site formerly occupied by the Kursaal amusement park.

In addition to this there are a number of fringe areas such as Porters Town which include a mix of residential and other uses and which have a generally fragmented urban character.

The central area of Southend is largely cut off from its hinterland to the north and west by Queensway, a large urban bypass which cuts a swath through the area and has resulted in a very fragmented character.

The town centre is also the principal transport hub for the Borough, although it is noted that the two railway stations and the bus station

are isolated from each other although work is underway to address this.

Key issues

The central part of Southend is covered by an Draft Area Action Plan. The identifies a number of issues and opportunities. In terms of urban character the most significant potential lies in tackling the impact of Queensway (and to a lesser extent Chichester Road) and the sites around it. This covers key opportunities east of Victoria Station, sites on the margins of the existing town centre and the significant opportunities between Queensway and Marine Parade. Careful consideration needs to be given to the retention of any remaining historic fabric in any major project.

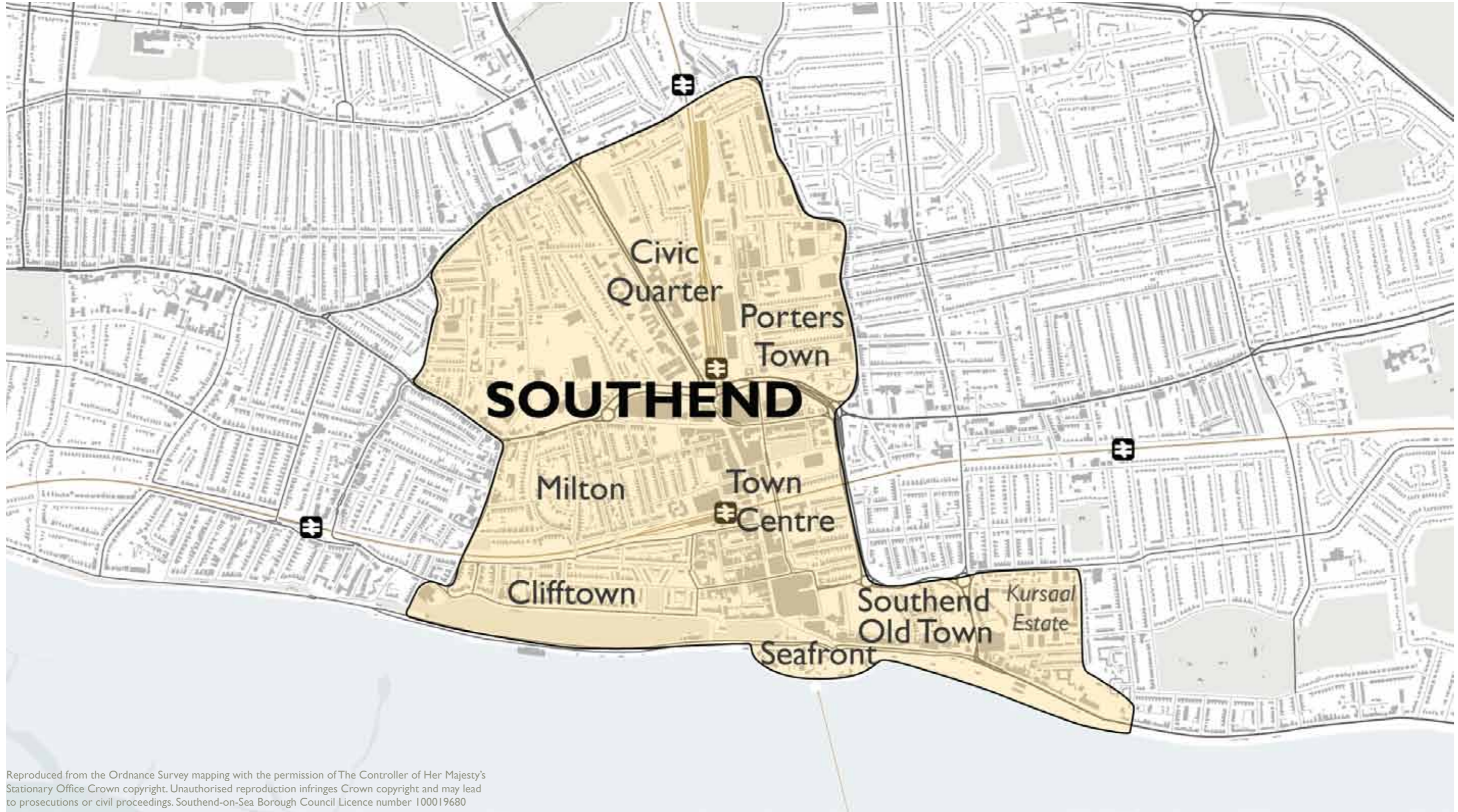
Milton and Clifftown both benefit from protection from conservation area designations. However, their close proximity to the town centre means that the transition to residential streets is becoming ever more stark as pressure on scale and density increases on sites such as Elmer Square/western car park sites.

Outlying areas of residential development, particularly north of the town centre feel very fragmented and would benefit from improved links into the town centre.

The seafront area has recently undergone major public realm improvements. However, the buildings along the seafront are under pressure for more intensive redevelopment - whilst this may be appropriate it will be important to maintain the historic character and grain.

As in other parts of the borough, pressure for parking has a major impact on the street scene,





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SOUTHCHURCH

Key characteristics

Southchurch is focussed around Southchurch Road, a linear centre which runs east-west and effectively forms a continuation of the A13 London Road on to Shoeburyness. The area in the few streets to the north of the A13 and the development along the seafront are the oldest neighbourhoods in Southchurch, showing a significant phase of growth in the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods. Over recent years this area has increasingly been referred to as Southchurch Village. As with other areas of Southend, there is a clear sense that the plots were sold off either individually or in small groups, resulting in a very varied character in some streets.

On the northern edge of Shoebury, the A1159 marks a clear line to the edge of the urban area. Whilst its main function was to provide a quicker bypass-style route to Shoeburyness, one gets the clear sense that the position of the road has been defined in an attempt to draw a clear line which will limit the expansion of the urban area. Whilst this has so far succeeded in terms of housing, there a growing number of developments outside this boundary, including sports, education and retail as well as the proposed location for the new Southend United Football Club stadium.

Housing in the northern part of Southchurch is distinctly more ordinary than the earlier and grander Victorian and Edwardian housing in the southern part of the borough. There is a strong flavour of public sector housing, both in the execution of some of the areas of buildings, but also in the form of the urban layout which features strong geometric shapes. This is particularly evident around Bournemouth Park Road, an area which features a high proportion

of bungalows mostly dating from the interwar period contrasting with the nearby residential towers.

A further number of streets running between Poynings Avenue and Southchurch Boulevard also feature a very high proportion of bungalows, with some streets being entirely single storey. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, there is considerable pressure for bungalows to have roof extensions or to be redeveloped as larger houses, usually on a plot-by-plot basis or in small groups.

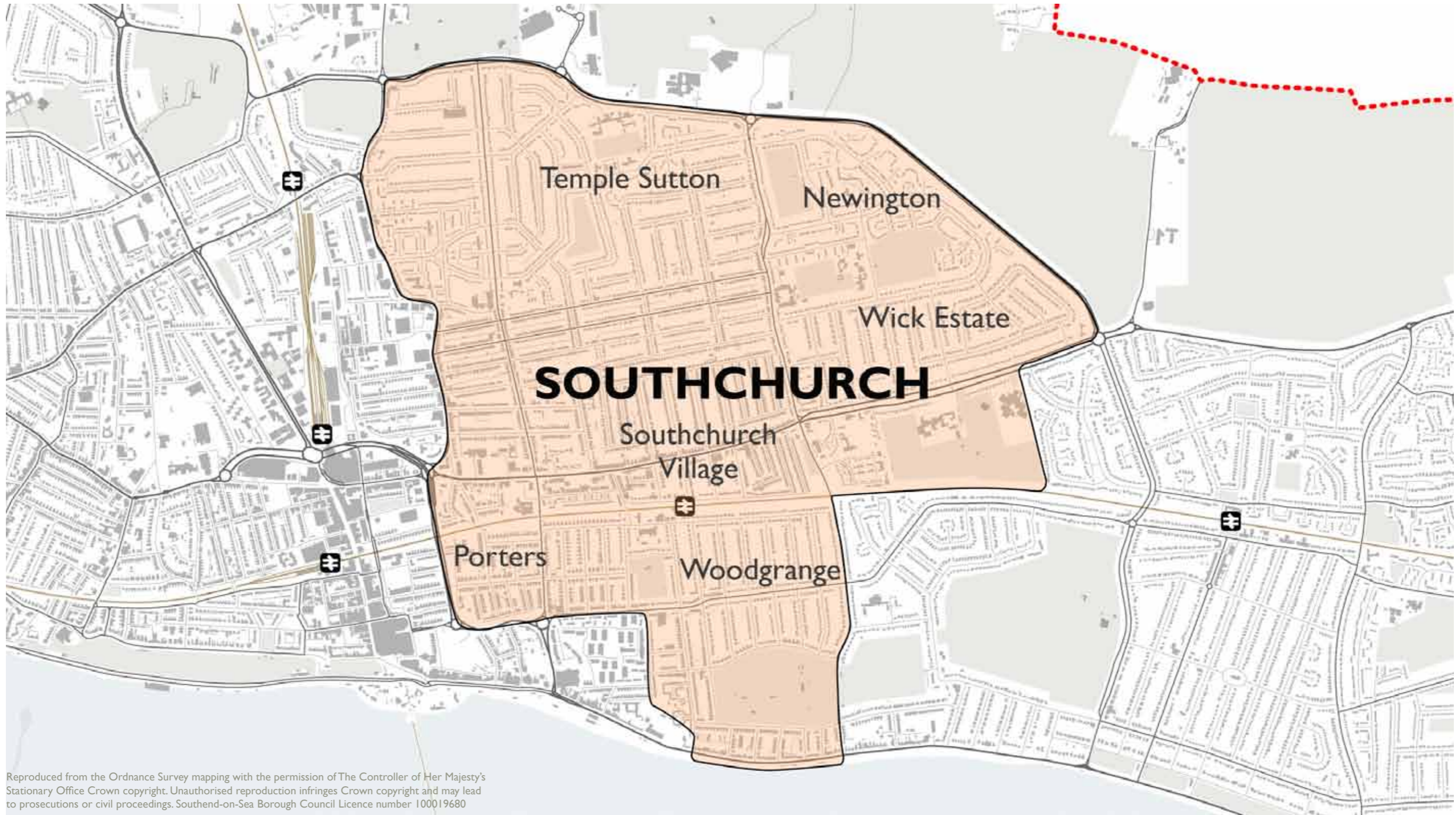
Key issues

Where there are large groups of bungalows, particularly as in the northern half of Southchurch as described above, the consistency of the character should be maintained. Whilst they are not considered to be areas which would merit a conservation area designation, significant changes to some plots would have a detrimental effect on the overall appearance of the street in a way which would not be apparent in streets with a more jumbled character.

Southchurch Road performs an important function as the centre for the area but suffers from being a very long centre stretched out along a key historic route. As a result it lacks some of the identity and focus of the more compact centres, particularly as it bleeds out over such a long distance.

As with other older areas of the Borough, Southchurch has a strong grid character in its central area. However a noticeable portion of this has a strong east-west grid rather than the north-south grid that prevails elsewhere and demonstrates the application of the form to suit local circumstances.





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THORPE BAY

Key characteristics

Thorpe Bay is one of the most affluent and low density areas of Southend and is also one of the last major areas of the borough to be built. Although the southern part of the area shows a strong Edwardian legacy the bulk of Thorpe Bay is a combination of interwar and postwar development.

The main body of Thorpe Bay to the south of the railway line is characterised by a very strong grid drawn to generous proportions and with wide plots. This has facilitated a number of very large Edwardian and interwar houses as well as a substantial phase of post war bungalows and houses. The areas has a very leafy and relaxed feel and benefits from an attractive centrepiece in the form of St Augustine's Church which sits in an oval at the centre of the grid. The sea front of Thorpe Bay is known for its attractive gardens which include a number of activities such as bowls and tennis as well as the colourful beach huts along the top of the beach.

To the west of this grid is a golf course and an area of largely post-war housing, a significant portion of which is located in a flood risk zone. The seafront in this area lacks the set back and gardens of the central Thorpe Bay area. The seafront is characterised by a somewhat muddled composition of Edwardian and interwar development with later flats, hotels and care homes.

North of the railway is Bournes Green. This is an area planned and commenced in the interwar period but finally built-out after the Second World War. This was a privately built enterprise, heavily influenced by the garden city movement both in terms of the rural design motifs seen on the buildings but also in the plan form of the development. Here, the structure

follows a loose grid of square-proportion blocks but with small cul-de-sacs in each block, typical of the plan form established by Hampstead Garden Suburb.

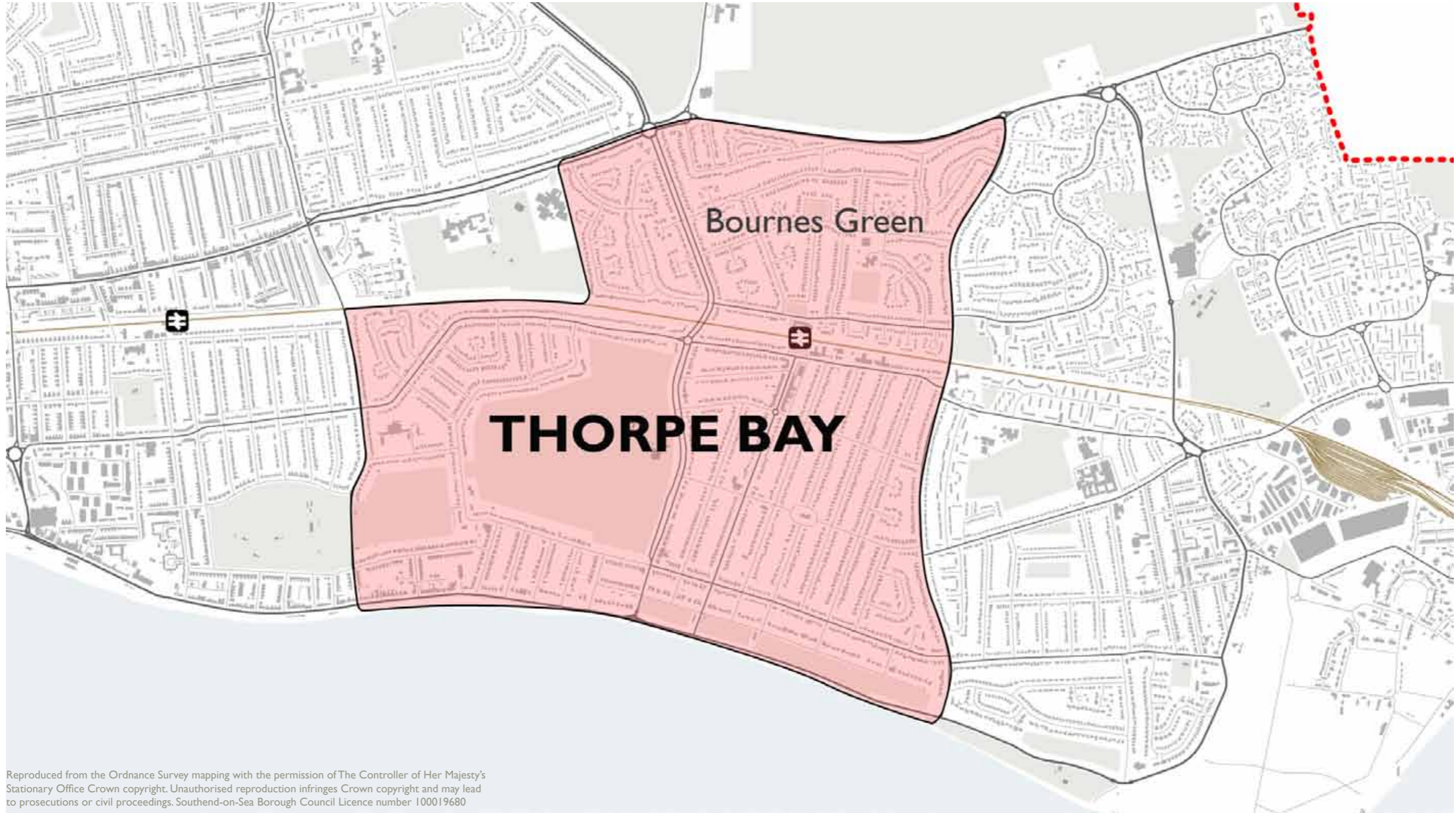
Key issues

The main area of Thorpe Bay, with its large plots and low density, faces the threat of increasing intensification over time, particularly in zones where bungalows predominate and appear to offer easy opportunities to increase the built form on a site. The main danger here is likely to be that as there are few very distinguishing architectural features which might be regarded as setting rules for development, affluence and opportunity will combine to create buildings which are out of scale. This could create a very fragmented street scene which would dilute the quality of the area.

In the western area, the main threat to the character is in the development of seafront buildings in new and bulkier forms, losing the Edwardian grain and scale.

Whilst the buildings in Bournes Green show a great deal of variation they are lent an overall cohesiveness by the arcadian style of the materials and detailing and the very strong landscape quality of the streets. This is helpful in enabling the area to accommodate change on a plot by plot basis provided it is not substantially out of scale or at variance with the overall architectural theme.





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SHOEBURYNNESS

Key characteristics

Shoeburyness is perhaps the most fragmented of the areas in Southend, displaying a wide range of spatial and architectural characters over a number of distinct zones.

Perhaps the most significant feature is the Garrison, an important example of Victorian military establishment design with a strong urban form and attractive robust buildings. This area is now undergoing considerable change following the sale of the site with large areas of new housing being developed to integrate with the original form.

There are two traditional high streets in the area - Shoeburyness High Street which essentially links the station to the entrance of the Garrison and West Road which provides the local shops and services for the area known as Cambridge Town which itself sits within West Shoebury. Shoeburyness has the more appealing historic character but otherwise the two areas perform similar functions. Both are affected by the impact of the modern district centre in the north of the area which includes a large food store and a number of uses but is dominated by car use and not well integrated with the surrounding housing.

The rest of South Shoebury presents a character which owes much to the influence of Thorpe Bay, with a gentle grid and relatively large plots which provide a clear and attractive network of streets.

By contrast North Shoebury has far less clarity, comprising two distinct character types of post-war planning, both of which lack a clear structure and sense of place. In the case of the older postwar development, the form follows the open plan-low rise format which

offers a high degree of permeability but very little clear streetscape. The later cul-de-sac based forms provide slightly more definition in terms of street but lack in terms of legibility or permeability.

Between all these areas lies the business/ industrial zones of Towerfield Road and Vanguard Way which are located either side of the substantial railway sidings.

Key issues

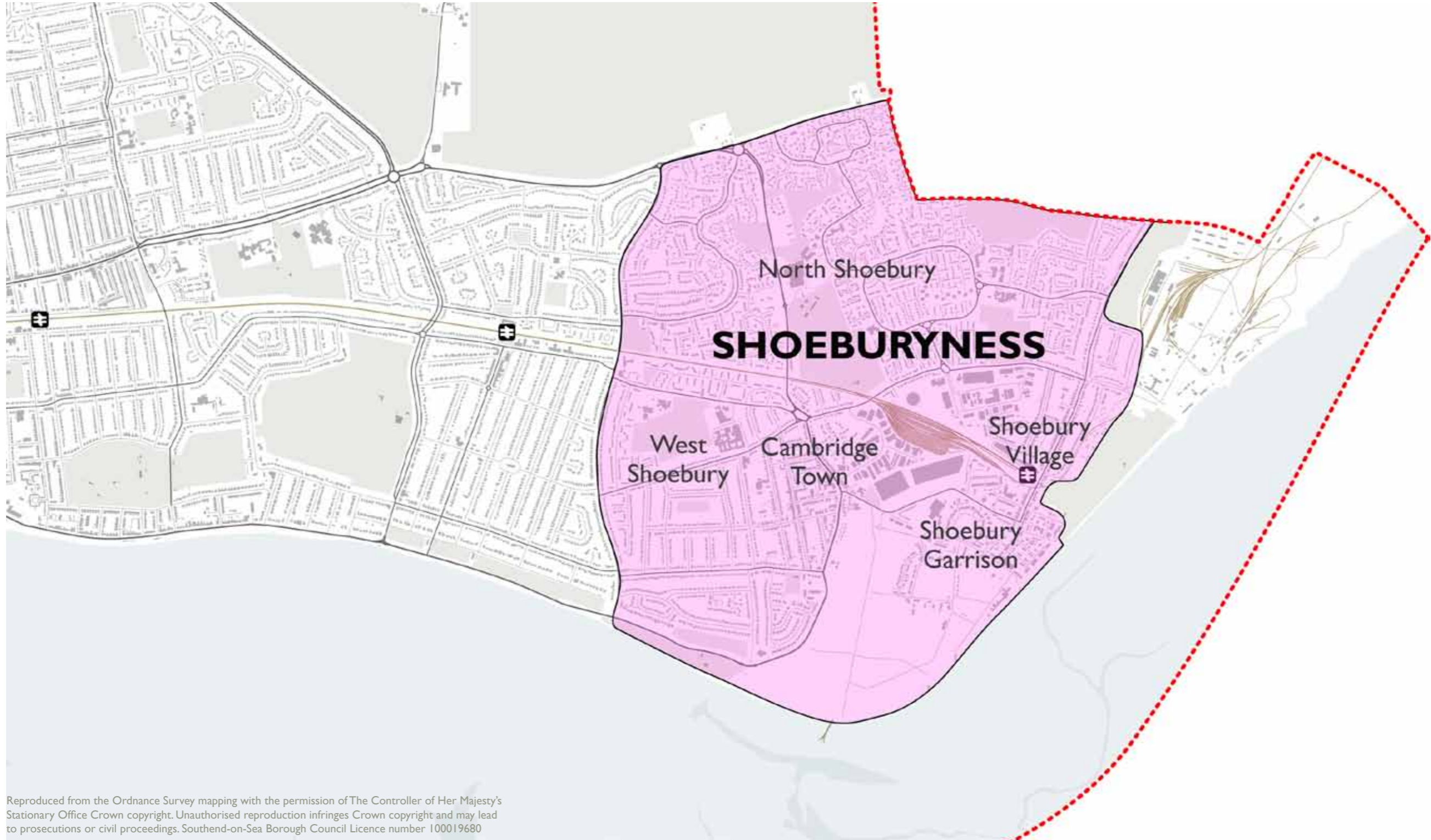
The Garrison development will offer an attractive new area with a strong built character which reflects the nature and historical significance of the original Garrison buildings. As the area occupies a prominent frontage to the estuary and provides significant open space for public access it will be vital to ensure that the existing surrounding areas are properly linked in to overcome any perception that the Garrison is somehow set-apart.

In the northern parts of Shoeburyness the main challenge is to overcome the legacy of the original street plan and form which lacks the clarity and legibility of the traditional perimeter block structures. Opportunities should be sought to better define property boundaries and clearer street-based routes.

The central component of North Shoebury is the large supermarket and shopping parade, presented in a very car-orientated form at the centre of the area. Opportunities should be sought to better integrate this with the surrounding streets and reduce the dominance of the car.

Shoeburyness suffers by being at the end of a very linear urban area. It would benefit from further connections which provide better access to the rest of the borough.





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