



URBAN GROWTH

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Introduction

Southend has a fascinating history shaped by a number of practical, social and commercial factors. It has experienced periods of both organic growth and planned expansion, particularly responding to the arrival of new railway and road access.

This section of the report tracks the major period of growth in Southend's development, ranging from the Regency development in the 1790s which was the first steps in the urbanisation of the Borough through rich periods of late Victorian, Edwardian and Inter-war development which account for large areas of the Borough's buildings and which accommodated a massive increase in population from under 10,000 in 1890 to around 150,000 shortly after the end of the Second World War.

Historic maps have been used to create a series of graphics which show the process of urban expansion over time, along with railway lines and major roads, providing an easy tool with which to assess the patterns of growth.



Patterns of growth

Analysis of the historic maps of Southend reveals a particularly interesting aspect of the way in which urban growth took place.

The plans on this page show the development of an area to the west of Leigh-on-Sea town centre over a period of around 50 years, from 1890 to 1940. This clearly demonstrates the manner in which streets were laid out on an extensive scale prior to the sale of individual plots or small groups of plots for development. The middle plan from around 1920 shows the fragmentary way in which plots were built out, some as part of groups, others standing apart from the rest of the street until such time as the gaps were filled in by later development. The 1940s plan shows Leigh much as we see it today, with streets which display a variety of styles within very short distances of each other.

It is interesting to note that whilst plot depths remain relatively constant due to the block depth established by the street layout, the plot widths do vary. This removes the previous sense of homogeneity which earlier Regency and Victorian development imposed on areas. The variations do not exclude the typical narrow-format Victorian terraces but they do permit much greater experimentation with other forms including wider plots and buildings with more horizontal proportions.

c.1890



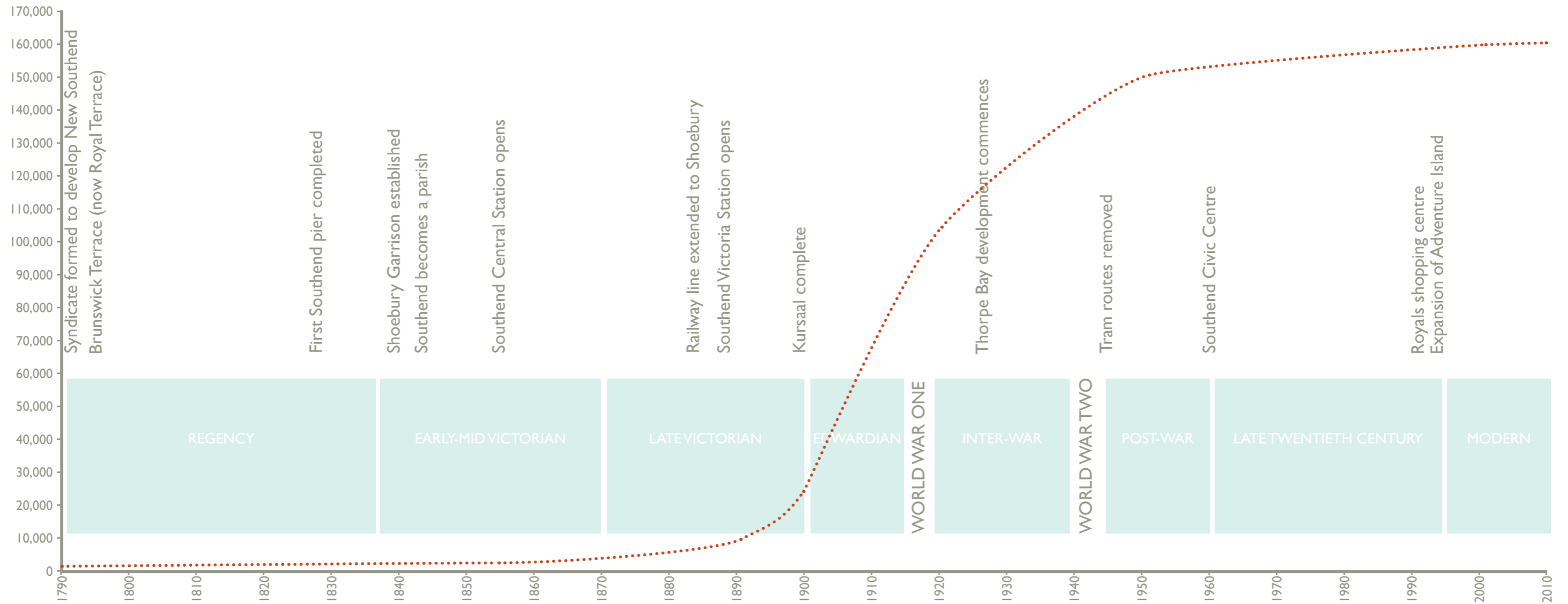
c.1920



c.1940



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REGENCY (1795 – 1837)

The Regency period in architecture is generally taken as being from the latter part of the reign of George III to the accession of Queen Victoria. It is associated with the classical revival and grand architectural gestures, such as the terraces of Brighton or the planning of London's West End by John Nash.

Southend was in its infancy at this period and the built legacy is consequently small, but of high quality. The prime example is Royal Terrace, on the cliff above the esplanade.

Royal Terrace is characteristic of Regency architecture in Southend - substantial brick houses built sequentially and varying in detail, but with common plot widths and sizes. The houses are mostly four storey including attics, and are three bays wide.

The terrace has an exuberant character, mainly because of the very fine wrought and cast iron balconies that adorn most of the houses. They are supported on columns and capped with concave lead roofs. The houses are tall, and the vertical effect is emphasised by the tall French windows at first floor level and slender sashes above and below. Door surrounds vary, but most are variations on classical themes.

The building materials are those that are common to other parts of London and the south east – yellow stock brick with stucco elements and painted stonework

A fragment of early seaside development clings on in the upper floors of the terrace where the early 19th century bow windows survive.



EARLY AND MID-VICTORIAN (1837-1870)

Southend grew steadily up to the arrival of the first railway station, and thereafter the town's expansion took off at pace.

Some of the first and best quality housing was built as a speculative venture around the central station, where at that time the Fenchurch St line terminated. Clifftown was laid out in the area to the west of Royal Terrace, reaching back inland to the railway line.

The development consists of terraced streets of ascending size (Fourth Class to First Class), from simple houses to larger, more elaborate properties nearer the sea. For those properties with as much as a glimpse of the sea, double height bay windows were commonplace and these provide a characteristic marker as well as a strong rhythm. Larger houses like those around Prittlewell Square had half basements, often used as kitchens or servants quarters.

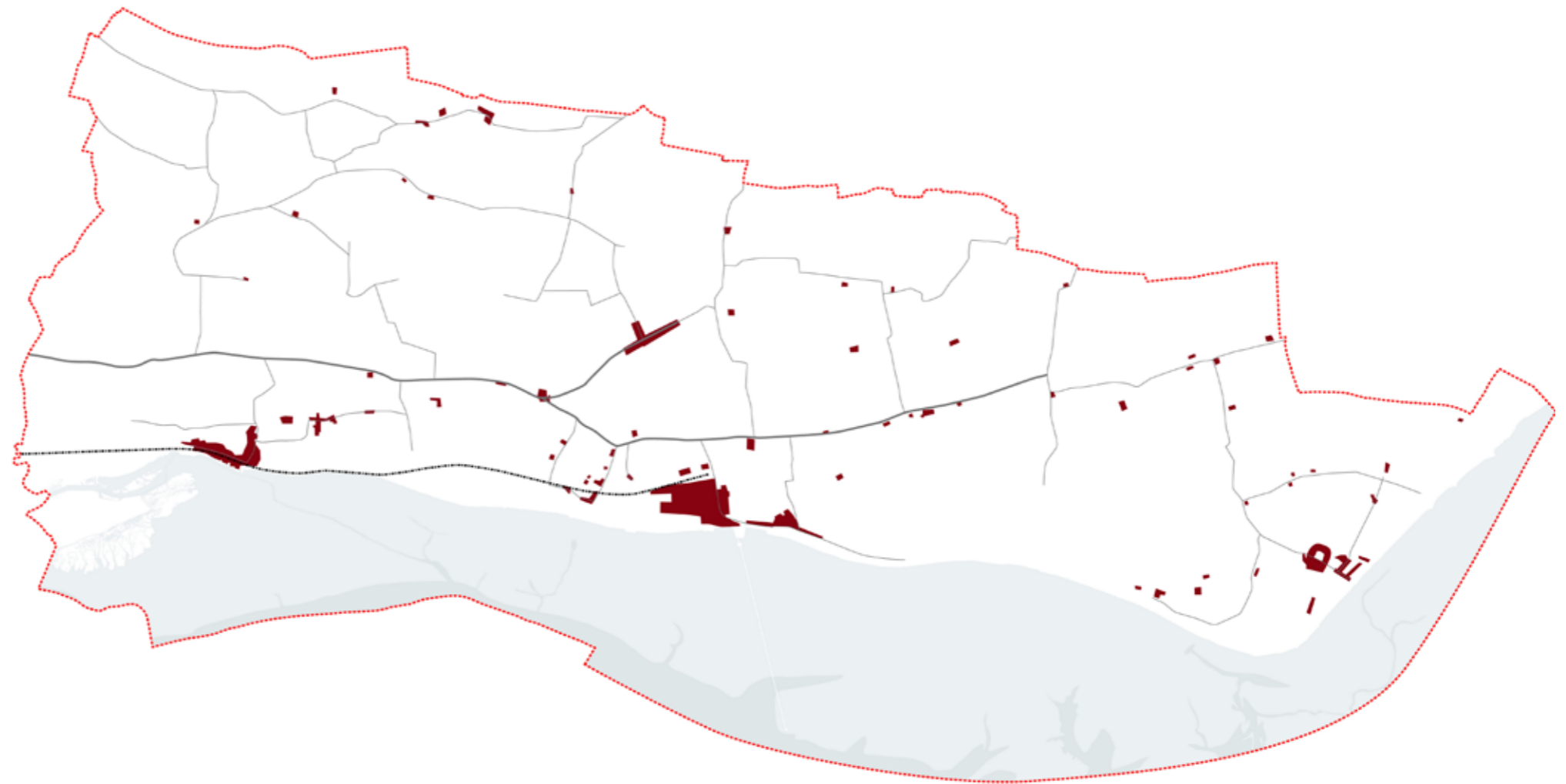
For the first time the railway network allowed cheap movement of building materials and the introduction of mass-produced components. Houses in Southend at this period were commonly built in yellow stock brick with welsh slate roofs and stone dressings. Cast iron railings were common, although many were scrapped during the Second World War. Cast iron panel embellishments above bay windows also add visual richness to the compositions



The plan from around 1870 shows the limited extent of the urban area in Southend, mainly comprising the historic cores of Leigh and Prittlewell but showing the Regency and early/mid Victorian growth of Southend.

At this point in time the railway line from Fenchurch was constructed as far as Southend Central, but the extension to Shoeburyness and the development of the Liverpool Street line were yet to follow.

Historical development c.1870
(Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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LATE VICTORIAN (1870-1900)

In the later Victorian period larger villas were built in Southend, often individualistic with corner turrets, employing a wider range of building materials including red brick.

Large areas of terraced housing was also built during this period, providing mass housing areas based on regular grids. Terraces from this period often have closely spaced square bay windows, with thick stone mullions and cast stone (concrete) mouldings creating closely spaced vertical rhythms in the street frontages.

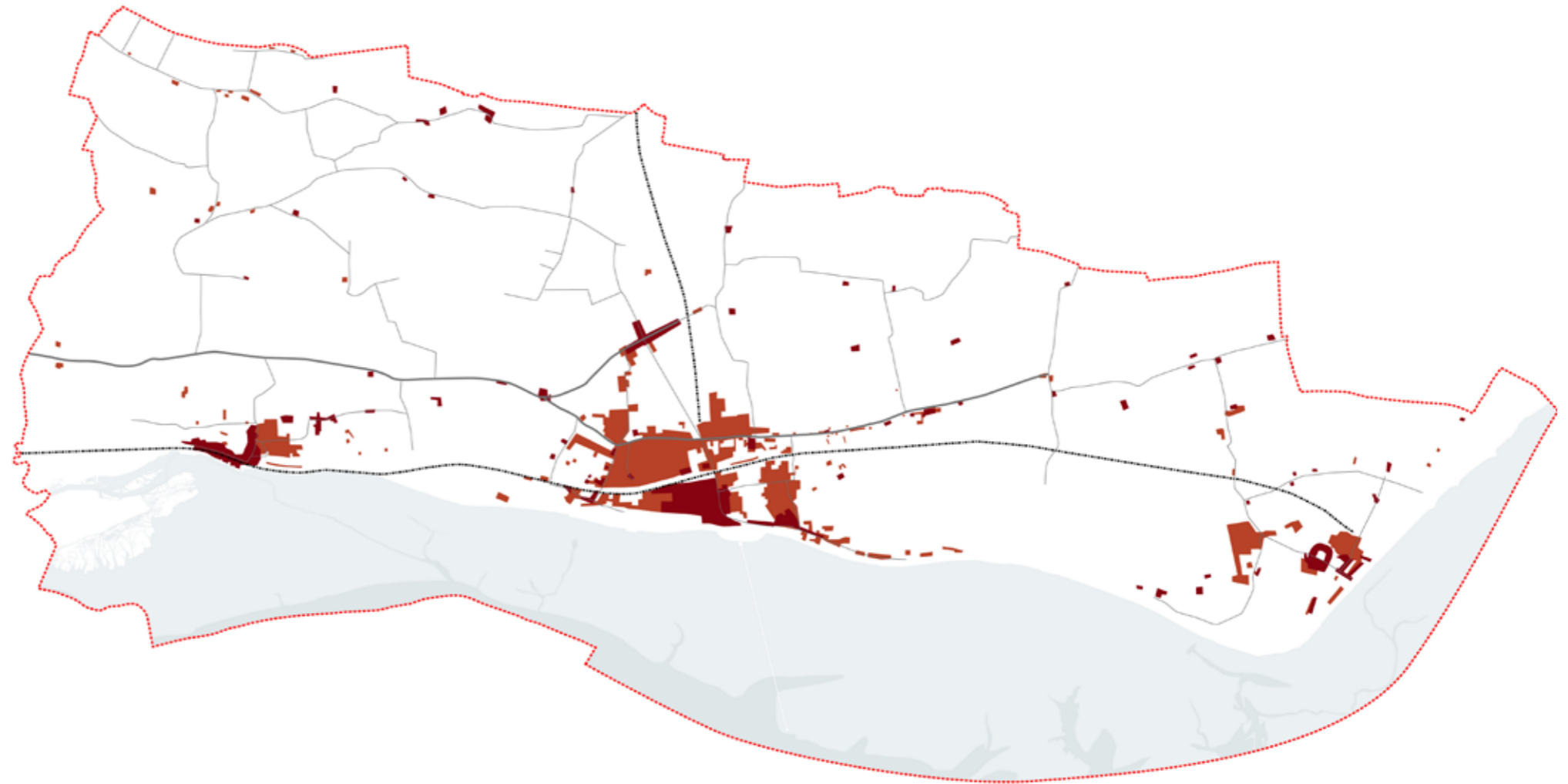
In some terraces the houses are 'handed' in pairs, with the plan of one house the mirror image of its neighbour. This sets up a longer rhythm of facades as doors and windows are paired up (AABBAAA instead of ABABAB).



This map captures the mid point of late Victorian growth in Southend and particularly highlights area to the north of Southend Central Station and Porter's Town as key growth areas, no doubt stimulated by the arrival of the Liverpool Street line and the station at Southend Victoria.

The expansion of Leigh-on-Sea to the east is notable, as is the establishment of the Garrison and the growth of Cambridge Town in Shoeburyness following the completion of the railway line.

Historical development c.1890
(Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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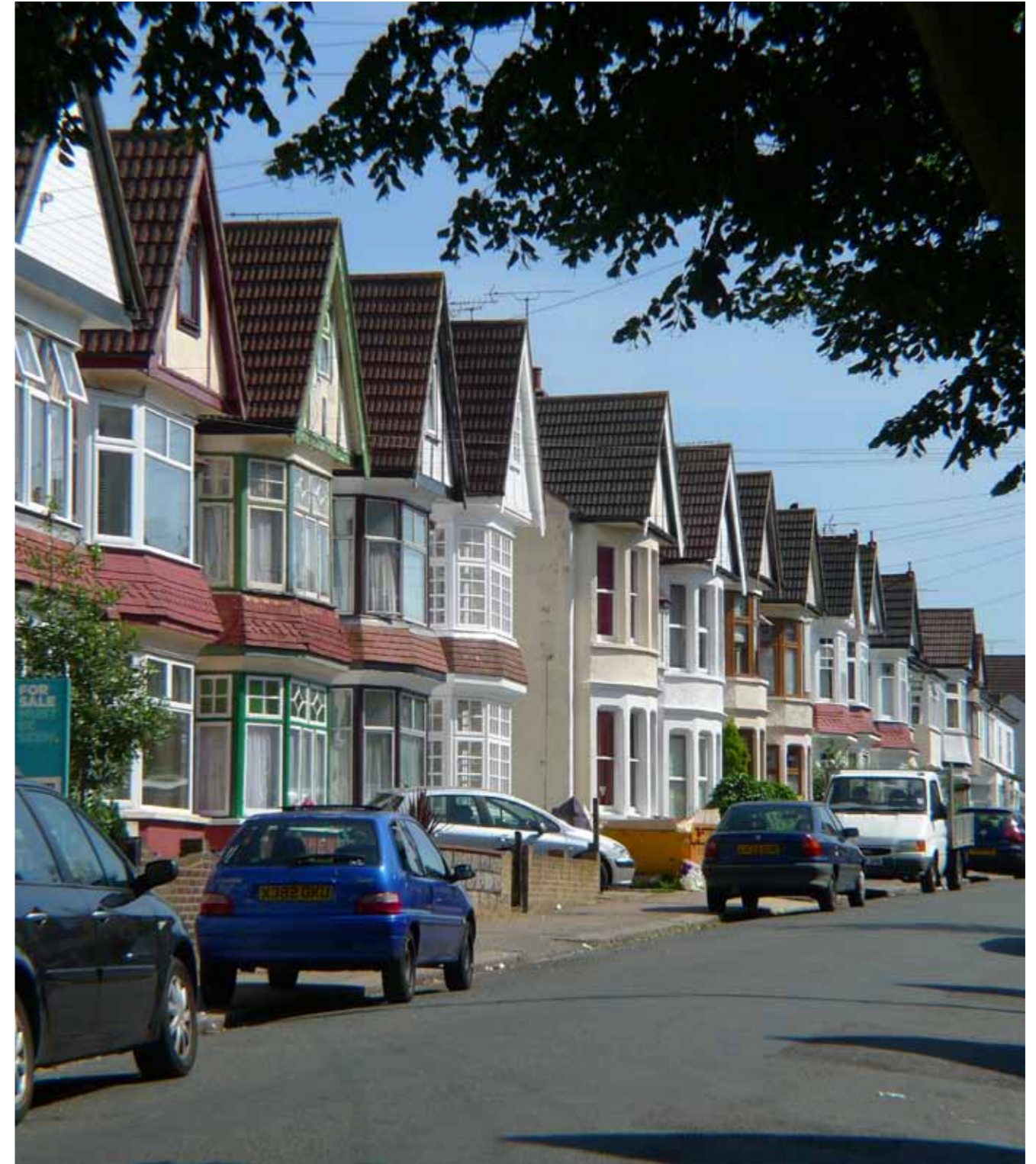


EDWARDIAN (1900-1914)

The Edwardian houses in Southend are immensely varied with a wide range of stylistic influences: Dutch renaissance, Queen Anne revival and Arts and Crafts, often with an eclectic mix of motifs. As a general rule, houses of this period are richly modelled in three dimensions, with irregular projections, bays, turrets and gables that lend a lively character to the street scene. In town the corner buildings such as pubs, hotels or banks are often given particular architectural flourishes, with entrances on the corner. Swags and garlands of moulded plasterwork (redolent of the East Anglian craft of pargetting) are found in this period.

The Edwardian period is also crucial in the way that it sets the tone for much of the following development. Areas of planned street network, either on a regular or flexible grid, were built out by a wide range of developers. Sometimes this was in planned groups or relatively large areas, but more typically houses have a strongly individual feel which reflects a fragmented pattern of development. This approach to development perpetuated past the First World War and there is a clear sense of continuity between the Edwardian and Inter-war periods.

A wide range of building materials are used – plaster, timber, lead, copper, red and yellow brick and pebbledash. Roofs, are often clay tile, although in many instances they have since been replaced by machine-made ‘Rosemary’ type red tiles.

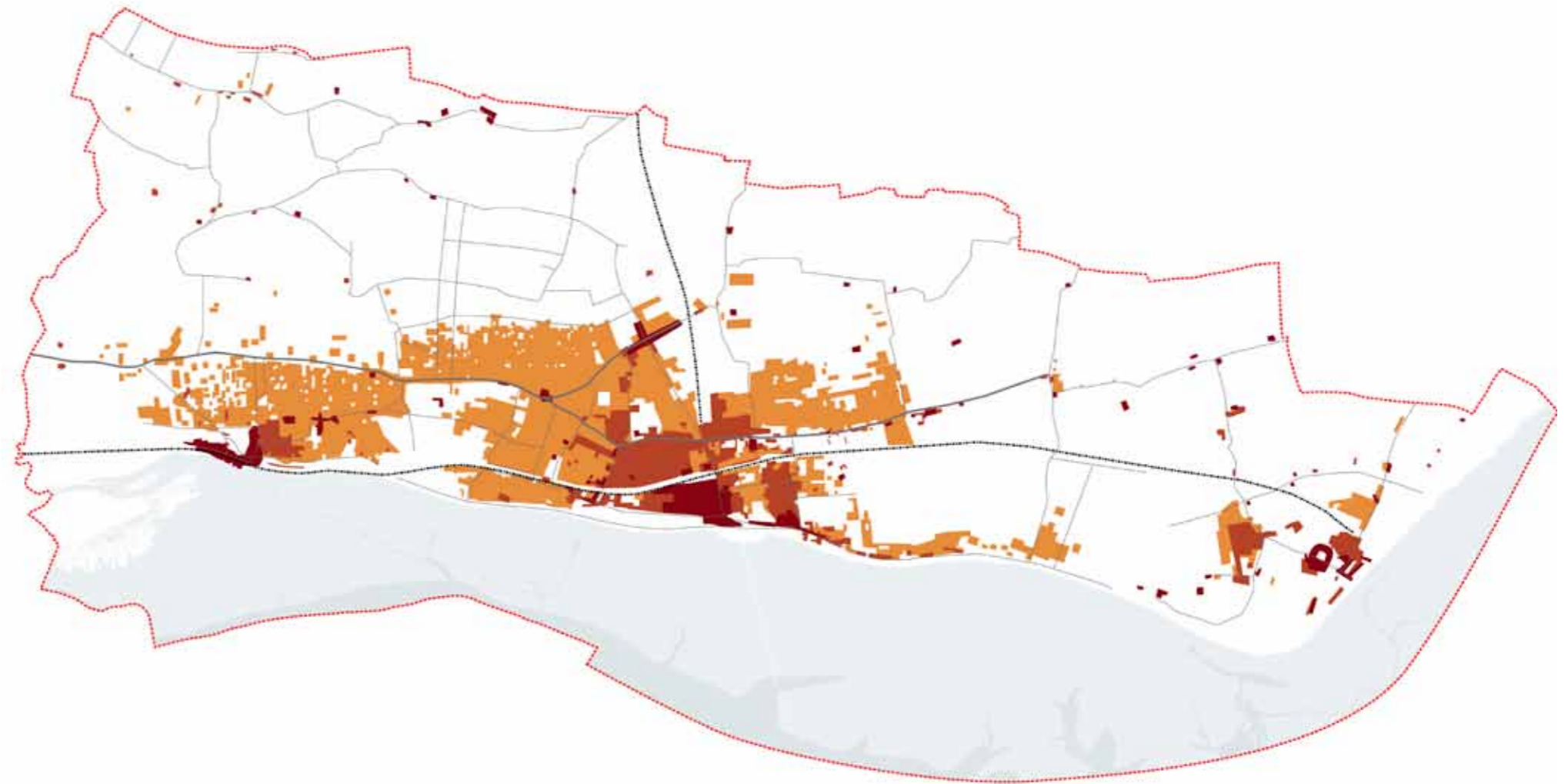


This plan captures a snapshot of the Borough at one of the most prolific periods of development in its history. It reflects the rapid expansion during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, but also elements of the development which took place during and immediately following the First World War.

The piecemeal pattern of development on a plot-by-plot basis can be clearly seen here, with expansion focussed on the areas to the north of Leigh-on-Sea up to the London Road and in Westcliff, Westborough and the southern part of Prittlewell.

This plan also shows the initial development of areas of Southchurch, both to the north of the railway but also along the seafront.

Historical development c.1920
(Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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INTER-WAR (1919-39)

The Inter-war period sees a clear divergence in approaches to housing, driven by the emergence of a major public sector housing movement.

Whilst the First World War is typically seen as a significant break in many aspects of social and political history there is a strong sense of continuity in many of the developments in Southend which straddle the early part of the century. Although development in style towards the quintessential inter-war semi is very visible, one also sees a number of post-war houses which are clearly Edwardian in feel, perhaps reflecting a conservative approach to design.

The classic house of this period is the semi, with wider, squatter proportions than its Edwardian and Victorian predecessors, curved bay window with strong projecting gable and hipped roof. Roughcast render is a common addition to brickwork. Tall chimneys make an important architectural contribution.

In the immediate post-war period there was a significant push to build new areas of housing, following Lloyd George's declaration that this must be a "land fit for heroes to live in". For a short while this was backed by a relatively well funded programme and it is in this context that the Chapmanslord Estate was developed, reflecting a strong Arts and Crafts influence and establishing a richly landscaped arcadian character in the style of the early garden cities. These returned to a simpler form of building with rustic, pre-industrial notes such as roughcast walls, casement windows and dark roof tiles in steeper pitches (perhaps hinting at the superficial appearance of thatch). Above all the relationship between the house, the front garden and the street – often wide enough to

accommodate grass verges or trees – became paramount.

As the public housing programme grew significantly larger, there was a general recalibration of the approach, recognising that if many more dwellings were going to be built cheaply and quickly they could not be to the same lavish specification. The development of interwar public sector housing took many of the guiding principles of the garden city movement including planned layouts, generous plots and wide fronted cottage-style houses and delivered it in a simple and cost-effective manner. This large dispenses with extraneous decoration or detailing, but does create areas with a generally harmonious character, now often sadly maligned as the 'council house' style.

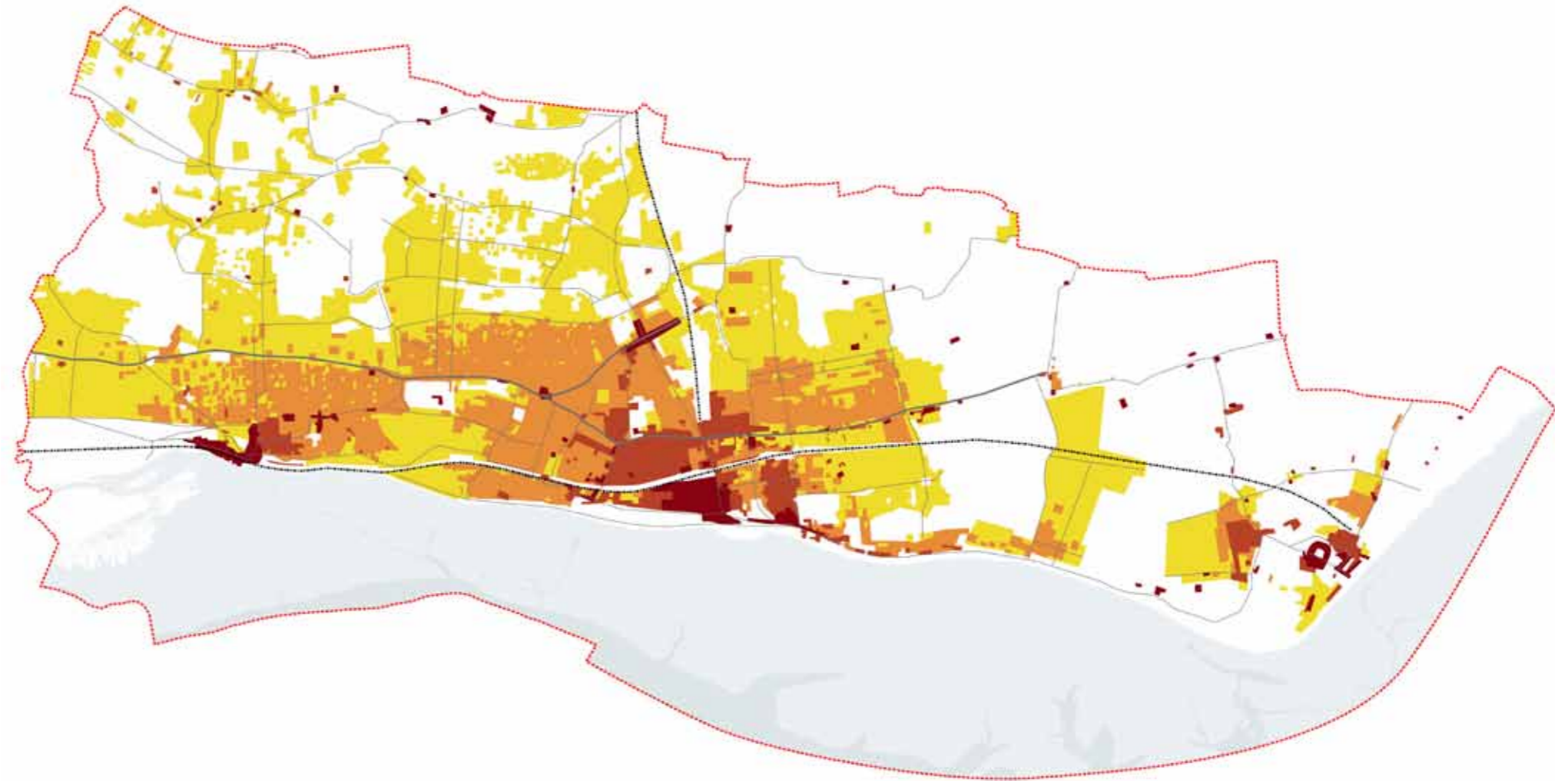
Art deco buildings are rare in Southend, but this block of flats above a corner shop in an area of 1930s semis with horizontal 'moderne' metal windows and flat canopies is characteristic of the type.



This plan, prepared in the early years of World War Two shows the extent of the inter-war development, taking in Leigh-on Sea, Southchurch and early phases of Thorpe Bay.

It is noticeable at this point that the development in the Borough is still primarily focussed around the seafront and the London Road.

Historical development c.1940
(Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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POST-WAR (1945-1960)

As with the period following the First World War the decade after the Second World War lent renewed vigour and urgency to house building. Initially, the problem which needed to be solved was one of speed and utility and a number of pre-fabricated building systems were developed to enable homes to be erected on site as quickly as possible. Examples of these are still evident in Southend today including most notably the north side of Cokefield Avenue.

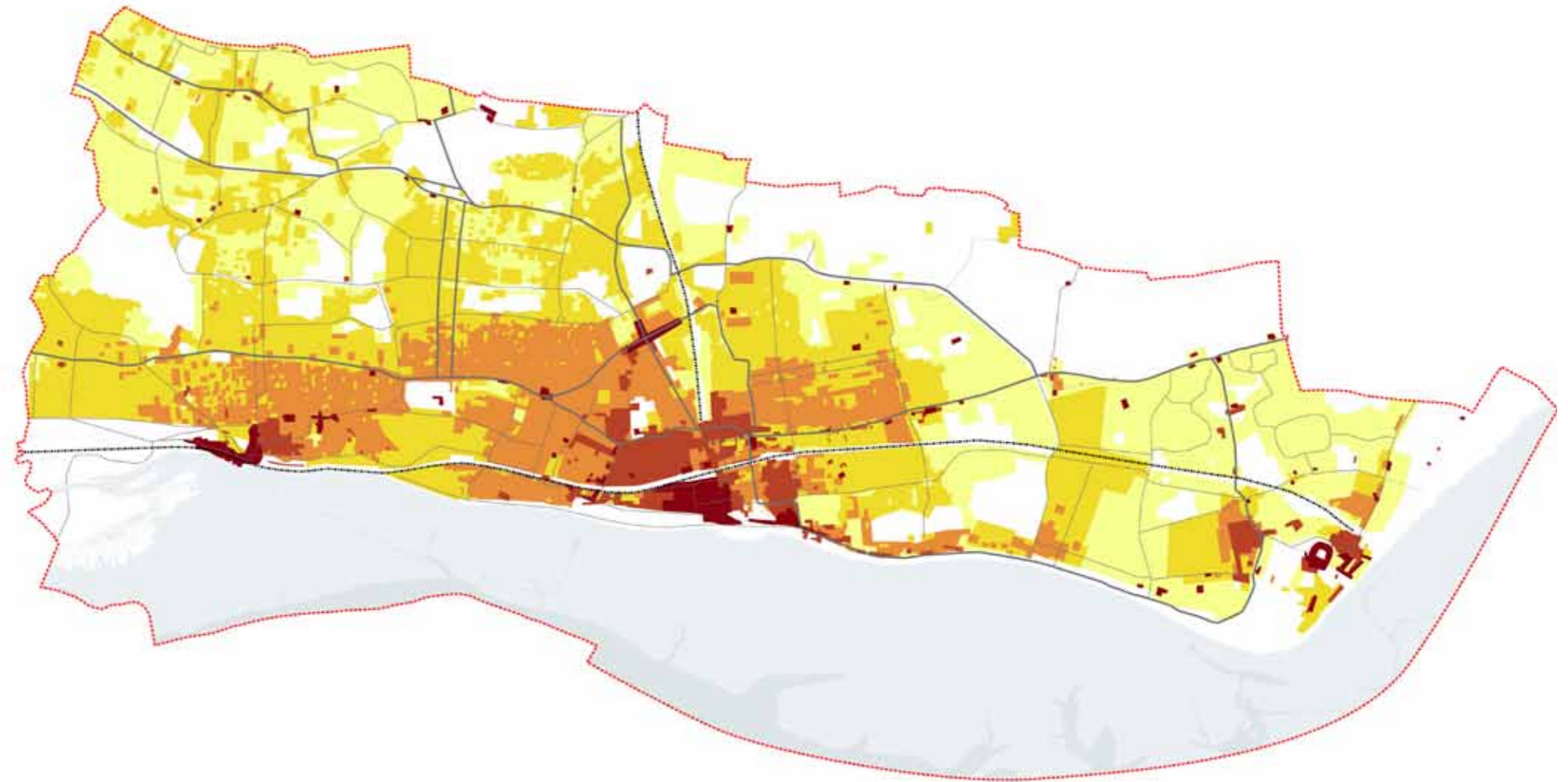
It was however, quickly established that the system buildings were not as well liked as conventional brick-built houses and these very quickly became the norm again, accounting for large areas of new development which owe much to the earlier garden city style housing for their design and planning influences. At this point, housing built by the public sector was still largely being planned with the expectation that residents were not likely to own cars and so many do not have specific provision for parking or garaging.



This plan shows the present-day urban extents of Southend, including the most recent areas of development in Eastwood, North Shoebury and the business parks to the north of the A127.

The key infrastructure addition during this period was the development of the A127 as a dual carriageway trunk road, providing a new focus for development and particularly industrial and business development, in the northern part of the Borough. The relative ease of access across the top of the Borough, effectively bypassing the congested London Road and central Southend also opened up much easier access to Shoeburyness, facilitating the development of substantial areas of post-war housing.

Historical development c.2010
(Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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1960S AND AFTER

In the later post-war years public sector housing continued to develop in more and varied urban forms, including layouts which largely dispensed with the traditional perimeter block model in favour of more permeable areas and a greater separation of vehicles and pedestrians. The buildings from this period show a more experimental and overtly modern style with irregular window positions and render, tile or timber infill panels. Roof forms also vary, including some examples with very low pitches and tight verge and eaves treatment alongside others which use a steep chalet-style roof and provide first-floor accommodation within the roof space.

Brick colours vary, including the use of stock red bricks. However, the characteristic colour is a pale, slightly grey, beige brick with a mechanical finish. Original timber windows are now largely replaced by uPVC.

Two other modern influences have a key impact during this period. Firstly, as car ownership grew to near-universal levels even the public housing areas began to feature garage courts and parking areas. Secondly, the arrival of central heating and the rapid decline in the popularity of solid fuels to heat homes resulted in the loss of the chimney as a common feature, rendering roof lines flat and less characterful.

In the latter part of the Twentieth Century modern housing largely entered a cul-de-sac, both literally and metaphorically. The housing designs from this period are generally derivative and feature limited materials and simple cheap details. This is the point at which the cul-de-sac reaches its apogee when compared to the original modest origins in the garden city movement. Here it creates complex and

illegible patterns with long winding cul-de-sacs leading off a major distributor road.

More recent development has seen a return to more clearly defined urban forms which relate to conventional street patterns, often using modern materials and detailing alongside a more traditional and contextual palette.





