

**Rochford New Local Plan:
Spatial Options Consultation 2021**

Topic Paper 7: Green and Blue Infrastructure

Temporary Cover

Contents

1 What is this topic paper about?.....4

2 Introduction4

3 National Planning Policy4

4 What are the benefits of good green and blue infrastructure networks?8

5 What is the green and blue infrastructure context for Rochford?9

6 Issues for the Rochford new Local Plan to address17

Advisory Note

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was subject to a formal revision in July 2021, just before these papers were published. As a consequence, paragraph numbers and other references to the 2019 NPPF made in this document may no longer relate exactly to the latest version of the NPPF.

The principles set out in referenced paragraphs have not been subject to extensive change and references made are therefore still considered to be accurate reflections of national policy.

1 What is this topic paper about?

- 1.1 Rochford District Council is preparing a new Local Plan that will cover the period up to 2040. As a comprehensive and up to date evidence base is essential for plan preparation, the Council has prepared a range of technical studies, both in house and through external consultants, to support this process.
- 1.2 To help summarise the key topics that the new Local Plan will need to address, a series of 'topic papers' have been prepared to explain the national policy and legislative context for key topics and to set out how those key topics relate to local challenges and opportunities. These topic papers will be published alongside the Spatial Options consultation paper, allowing interested parties to understand these key topics in greater detail than what is contained in the consultation paper alone.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This topic paper has been prepared to assess the national and local policy context for green and blue infrastructure (GBI) to consider what should be incorporated into the new Local Plan, covering the period up to 2040.
- 2.2 It covers a broad range of issues relating to green and blue infrastructure and summarises the latest available evidence relating to these matters. It also suggests how the Local Plan should deal with any important issues.
- 2.3 Green infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. The term emphasises the provision of these spaces as a connected network by focusing on the strategic contribution larger spaces and connections between smaller spaces have on an area. Blue infrastructure is similar, referring to marine and waterside spaces serving similar purposes.
- 2.4 It is important to acknowledge that GBI includes and overlaps with a range of other issues, including both biodiversity and open spaces and recreation. For the purposes of these topic papers, the more 'local' aspects of these two topics have been separated out of GBI into their own topic paper. As a result, sections of this topic paper, including the national planning policy and context sections, only presents the more 'strategic' aspects of these topics. **It is recommended that the three topic papers are read together for a comprehensive understanding of GBI in the District.**

3 National Planning Policy

- 3.1 Local planning authorities are required to address various requirements set out in national policy and legislation in preparing their local plans, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019) and supporting National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 3.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

- 3.3 The NPPF and accompanying NPPG sets out a number of green and blue infrastructure issues that Local Planning Authorities must take into account in the preparation of their Local Plans. The green and blue infrastructure issues relevant to plan-making include the following:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
<p>Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for (inter alia) the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation (Paragraph 20)</p>
<p>Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages; b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>(Paragraph 91)</p>
<p>Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.</p> <p>(Paragraph 96)</p>
<p>New development should be planned for in ways that: a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; and b) can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. Any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the Government's policy for national technical standards. (Paragraph 150)</p>
<p>Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁵³; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries. (Paragraph 171)</p>

Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan. (Paragraph 181)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The design and use of the built and natural environments, including [green infrastructure](#) are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system (taking into account the changing needs of the population).

Public health organisations, health service organisations, commissioners, providers, and local communities can use this guidance to help them work effectively with local planning authorities to promote healthy and inclusive communities and support appropriate health infrastructure.

Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space (see National Planning Policy Framework [paragraph 96](#)). Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to [green infrastructure](#) (see National Planning Policy Framework [paragraph 171](#), as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development (see National Planning Policy Framework [paragraphs 7-9](#)).

It is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas. In carrying out this work, they should have regard to the [duty to cooperate](#) where open space serves a wider area. See [guidance on Local Green Space designation](#), which may form part of the overall open space network within an area.

Local highway authorities hold information about the location of public rights of way in the areas they cover. They are required to record the existence and location of rights of way on a definitive map. Natural England also has information about [public rights of way](#) and [National Trails](#).

Public rights of way form an important component of sustainable transport links and should be protected or enhanced. The [Defra Rights of Way circular \(1/09\)](#) gives advice to local authorities on recording, managing and maintaining, protecting and changing public rights of way. It also contains guidance on the consideration of rights of way in association with development. The Circular also covers the statutory procedures for diversion or extinguishment of a public right of way.

Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and ‘blue infrastructure’ such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies. References to green infrastructure in this guidance also apply to different types of blue infrastructure where appropriate.

Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.

Green infrastructure can help in:

- **Building a strong, competitive economy**
Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.
- **Achieving well-designed places**
The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.
- **Promoting healthy and safe communities**
Green infrastructure can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.
- **Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change**
Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of [water quality](#) and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural [flood risk management](#).
- **Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**
High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating [biodiversity net gain](#) and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.

Strategic policies can identify the location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks and set out appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement. To inform these, and support their implementation, green infrastructure frameworks or strategies prepared at a district-wide scale (or wider) can be a useful tool. These need to be evidence-based and include assessments of the quality of current green infrastructure and any gaps in provision. Existing national and local strategies – for example on tree and woodland

provision – can inform the approach to green infrastructure; and standards such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard can be applied when assessing provision.

The green infrastructure strategy can inform other plan policies, infrastructure delivery requirements and Community Infrastructure Levy schedules. In view of their potential scope and use, authorities need to collaborate with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders such as Local Nature Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships when developing green infrastructure strategies.

4 What are the benefits of good green and blue infrastructure networks?

- 4.1 As is identified in the planning practice guidance, green and blue infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.
- 4.2 Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and ‘blue infrastructure’ such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies..
- 4.3 Through the plan, it is important to consider where and what opportunities exist to grow and enhance our strategic green and blue infrastructure networks alongside future growth. By maximising opportunities for green and blue infrastructure we can help to achieve multiple benefits for our existing and future communities, including to:
- Provide a realistic and sustainable alternative to car use through a connected network of public rights of way and greenways
 - Help to mitigate the impacts of future development by securing net gains for nature and air quality
 - Improve the health and well-being of our residents by providing environments conducive to leading active lifestyles
 - Grow our rural and coastal economies by providing new opportunities for tourism and commerce

4.4 The PPG further identifies a range of planning goals that a good green and blue infrastructure network can contribute to, including:

- **Building a strong, competitive economy**
Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.
- **Achieving well-designed places**
The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.
- **Promoting healthy and safe communities**
Green infrastructure can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.
- **Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change**
Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of [water quality](#) and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural [flood risk management](#).
- **Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**
High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating [biodiversity net gain](#) and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.








5 What is the green and blue infrastructure context for Rochford?

- 5.1 Rochford is an area with a unique mix of green and blue spaces, including over X hectares of protected habitats, over X hectares of protected open spaces and a long estuarine and marine coastline along two rivers and the North Sea.
- 5.2 Some of our green and blue spaces have a bigger-than-local catchment. These spaces are strategically important to the health, wellbeing, biodiversity and economy of our District. The concept of a strategic green space is subjective, but could include widely used spaces such as Hockley Woods, Cherry Orchard Country Park and Wallasea Island.
- 5.3 Other green and blue spaces are more local in catchment, meaning they are typically only used by communities living nearby. These spaces remain very important, as these are typically the spaces communities use for exercise, recreation and relaxation.
- 5.4 It is important to recognise that green and blue infrastructure is not something that stops at local authority boundaries. Our residents, and those of other areas, cross

local authority boundaries every day to access important green and blue spaces, be them parks, nature reserves or coastal walks.

- 5.5 In light of this recognition, the Council along with five other South Essex local authorities commissioned a [Green and Blue Infrastructure Study](#) for the whole South Essex area. The purpose of this Study has been to describe an inspired vision, provide high-level objectives, strategic opportunities, and policies, and drive a coordinated approach that will steer, and be supported by, individual Local Plans. It will assist the strategic and local plan-making processes by informing the management and delivery of visionary, exemplary and high-quality green and blue infrastructure across South Essex. This involves an integrated understanding of landscape infrastructure, including, but not limited to, green networks, nature designations, open spaces, regional parks, and waterways within the study area.
- 5.6 The Study identifies a number of themes and challenges for South Essex GBI, including:

Figure 1: South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure Themes

THEMES	CHALLENGES
 Climate Change	Climate Change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, drought, and rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.
 Water Management	South Essex sits within the Thames Estuary, and on the coast of the North Sea. The area is under great threat of flooding. While the risk of flooding from rivers or surface drains is a concern, the tidal flood risk could be far more catastrophic. An effective plan must be in place to manage flood risk today and for future generations.
 Landscape Identity	Landscape identity is the perceived uniqueness of a place, and is an expression of how people and nature have shaped the land. South Essex is a place of variety and contrasts, of constant change, and vulnerable to the effects of its position within the Thames Estuary. Capturing its transitional history is key to revealing its essence.
 Natural Resources	South Essex's position within the Green Belt, and on the River Thames and North Sea, provides an optimal environment for harnessing the fertility of land, water, wind and sun. There is a large percentage of land allocated to productive purposes; however, the land could be used more efficiently and planned for resilience.
 Connectivity	Currently connectivity is challenging in the region, for people and wildlife alike, with many poor green and blue linkages between towns, villages, rural areas and waterfronts. Many existing routes, including the A13 trunk road and some railway lines create severance, while continuous active travel networks are under-provided.
 Conservation	The Earth is facing a dual crisis of rapid climate change and unprecedented biodiversity loss, including epic losses of wetlands worldwide. Both urban and rural areas must be planned with biodiversity in mind, and connectivity and adaptability must be improved to truly realise an interconnected and resilient network.
 Health and Wellbeing	Striking the right balance between social requirements, ecological systems and quality of life is a cornerstone of health across people, wildlife, and environment. However, quantity of green space is not enough; it must be high quality, easily accessed, inclusive, diverse, well-connected and well-managed.
 Growth and Development	South Essex is an area with great potential for growth; however, over the past few decades it has consistently been unable to deliver the same levels of economic growth as other parts of the UK. The aim is to deliver a minimum of 96,000 new homes and over 52,000 new jobs by 2038. Proposed building on floodplains is a risk.
 Sustainability	Living infrastructure requires management and maintenance, and constant review to ensure sustainability, resiliency and adaptability in the long-term. We must be stewards of the land, that utilise responsible conservation and sustainable practices to protect the fragile South Essex environment.

- 5.7 The Study incorporates extensive mapping, exploring existing levels of green and blue infrastructure provision across South Essex and identifying strategic opportunities and challenges.
- 5.8 At the heart of our green infrastructure network are our existing green spaces, including parks, gardens, sports facilities and nature reserves. Figure 2 maps green space provision and accessibility across South Essex.

- 5.9 It is important to emphasise that green and blue infrastructure is more than just parks and nature reserves, and also includes the networks that connect them. South Essex, including Rochford, has an extensive public rights of way network, including footpaths, bridleways and byways. Natural England have plans to create a complete path around England, which includes plans to better join up the existing coastal footpaths in Rochford and wider South Essex. Figure 3 maps public rights of way across South Essex.

Figure 2: Green Space Provision and Accessibility across South Essex

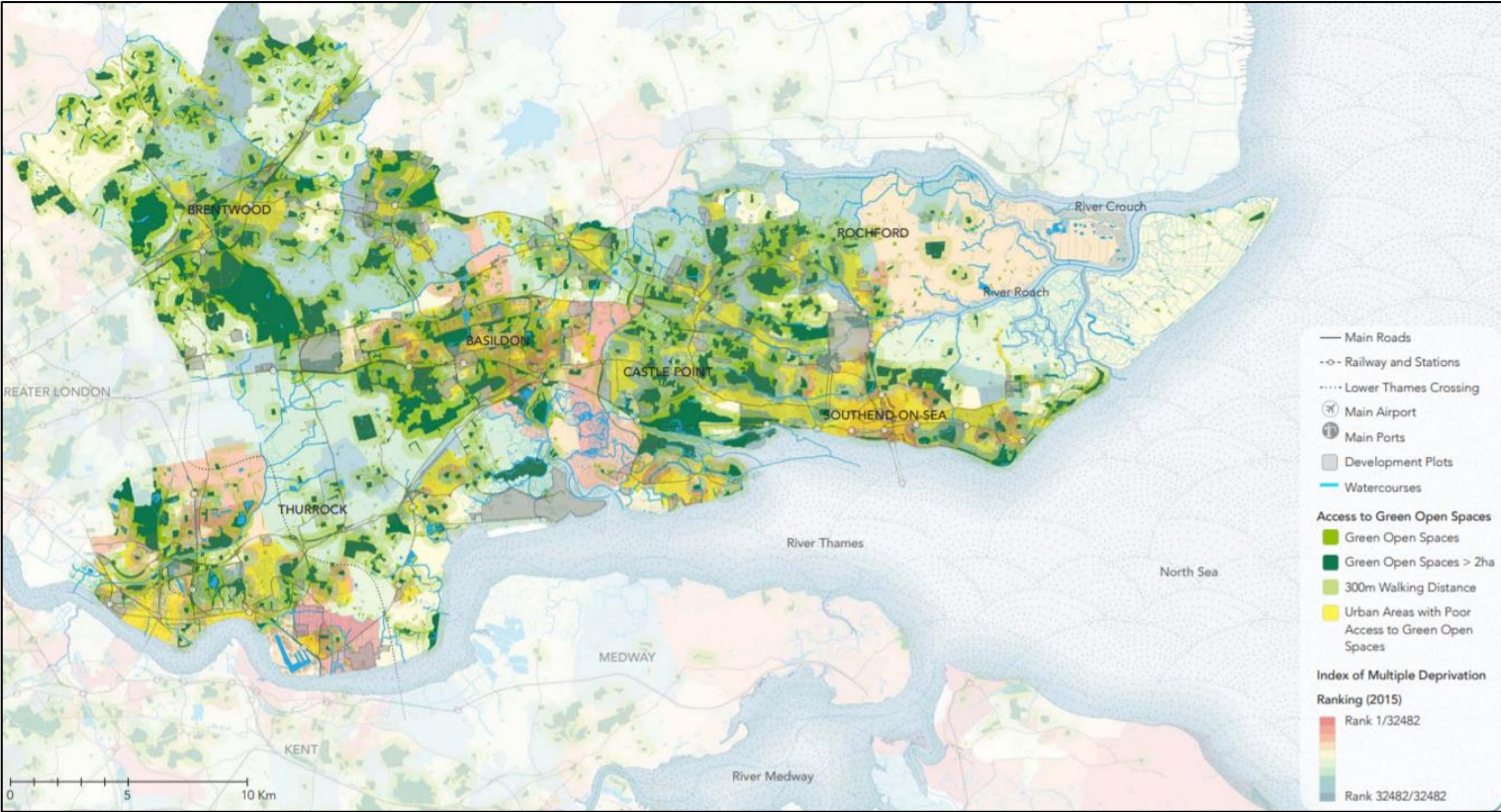


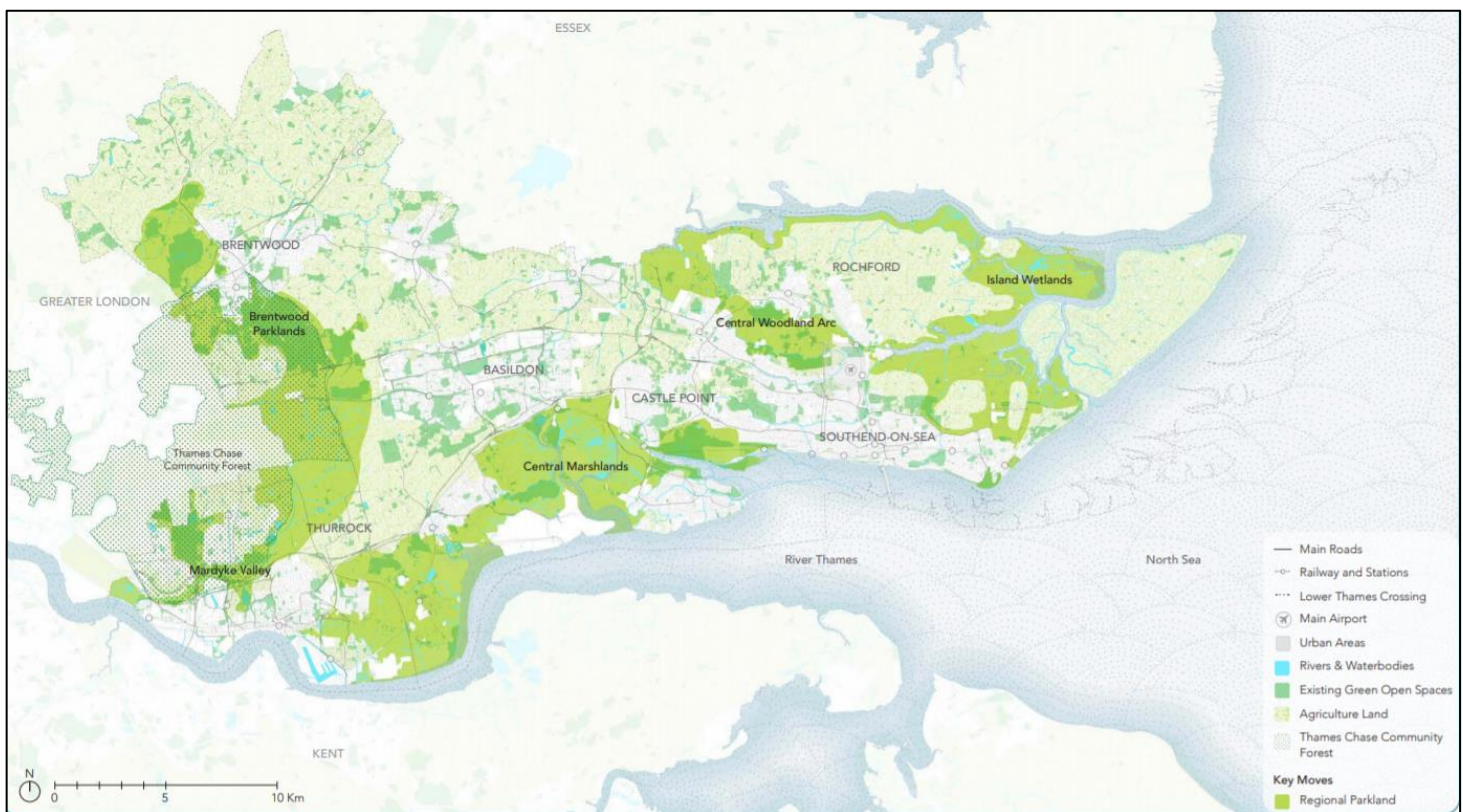
Figure 3: Public Rights of Way across South Essex



- 5.10 The Study identifies a number of key moves and interventions to help deliver a better integrated, high quality green and blue infrastructure network for South Essex. Many of these interventions can be delivered through planning, including the new Local Plan, using an appropriate combination of land allocations, permissive policies and planning obligations.
- 5.11 The Study's overarching recommendation is to adopt a vision to deliver a South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) across the area. This does necessarily mean converting thousands of hectares into public open space (although extensive new areas of parkland may form a part of this vision) but adopting key principles that help to improve connectivity, integration and quality across the area.
- 5.12 The key building blocks for the SEE Park are a number of key focus areas for regional parkland. In Rochford, these include:
- Central Woodlands Arc
 - Island Wetlands

5.13 Both areas are mapped on Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Proposed Regional Parklands in South Essex









- 5.14 These areas have been identified because of existing green provision in these areas. It is recognised that proposals to improve our green and blue infrastructure network would be more deliverable if starting from existing provision. For example, the Central Woodlands Arc already contains high quality green spaces including Hockley Woods,

Grove Wood and Cherry Orchard Country Park, while the Island Wetlands centres on the existing landmark RSPB site at Wallasea Island. Proposals to deliver these regional parklands could include more greening, i.e. adopting more land into these green spaces, and/or improvements to facilities, attraction and connectivity (e.g. creating new walkable paths between different spaces).

- 5.15 The Study identifies a large number of specific delivery recommendations which can be used to inform future plan-making. In particular, it identifies a number of policy recommendations, being:
- To Establish the Regional Parklands
 - To Build Landscape Connectivity
 - To Integrate Water Management Systems
 - To Optimise Agricultural Land
 - To Reveal Unique Landscape Features
 - To Plan for Growth and Development
- 5.16 In addition to the Study, Essex County Council (ECC) has prepared a [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) for Essex, including Rochford. The purpose of this strategy is to take a positive approach to enhance, protect and create an inclusive and integrated network of high-quality green infrastructure in Greater Essex, to create a county-wide understanding of green infrastructure – its functions and values, and to identify opportunities for delivering green infrastructure. The aim is to guide and shape planning and other services through setting principles that can inform plans and strategies, that will enable a coherent approach and partner collaboration in the delivery and long-term management of multi-functional natural assets, which will provide environmental, social and economic benefits for Greater Essex.
- 5.17 The Essex Strategy took a multi-staged approach, identifying general principles and proposals for how Green Infrastructure can be better identified and improved across Greater Essex. Figure 5 sets a number of objectives and proposals identified in the Essex Strategy.

Figure 5 – Objectives and Proposals of Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy

Focus	Objective	Proposal
Place 	Protect existing green infrastructure, especially designated sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight green infrastructure in Essex in terms of their multi-functionality and benefits – through rebranding Essex as Green Essex with 1,978 designations. Encourage and support the review of existing designations and local landscape designations to ensure their currency and maintain the accuracy of site information. Support the recognition and appropriate designation of new green infrastructure, e.g. Local Wildlife Site, Local Nature Reserve. Embed an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure. Coordinate the protection of internationally designated green infrastructure through Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategies (RAMS).
Place 	Improve existing green infrastructure so it is better functioning for people and wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Green Essex Network to develop, improve and promote Green Essex. Support the development of new Visitor Centres and facilities Better marketing & promotion of green infrastructure to increase use and income. Public realm green infrastructure improved to reduce pollution and improve character and sense of place. Create water gardens, green roofs and bio retention areas to absorb urban water. Continue creating green spaces which also function as natural flood management and Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) schemes. Encourage better management of green infrastructure to benefit locally native species, focussing on recognised nature conservation priorities.
Place 	Create more high-quality multi-functional green infrastructure, especially in areas of deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the coast path in Essex. Increase access to the Outdoor Pursuits Centres. Create green infrastructure in new developments such as Garden Communities. Establish green infrastructure as part of Minerals and Waste restorations e.g. Pitsea Landfill. Create town or village circular walks especially in areas of green infrastructure deficiency. Strategically identify priority areas for the creation or improvement of green infrastructure that could provide most benefit for locally native species of recognised nature conservation priority. Use planning policy to secure multi-functional green spaces within and beyond development site boundaries through the application of biodiversity net gain, biodiversity off-setting and the creation of compensation habitat and other green infrastructure promotion schemes. Strategically identify priority areas for the creation or improvement of green infrastructure to enhance local landscape character.

Focus	Objective	Proposal
Place 	Connectivity improvements connecting green infrastructure, people and wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use new green infrastructure provision to buffer or extend existing designated sites. Develop the coast path in Essex in a sustainable manner. Establish inter connecting paths between green infrastructure; that provides access for all. Restore and Promote Essex promoted paths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forest Way The St Peter's Way The Essex Way The Roach Valley Way The Coast Path (once designated as National Trail) The Stour Valley Path The Thames Estuary Path The Flitch Way The Saffron Way Blackwater Rail Trail John Ray Walk
People 	Increase use and inclusivity of green infrastructure across all user groups, social groups and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore environmental therapies and challenges across all social, demographic, ethnic and diversity groups and promote activities in green spaces e.g. mountain biking, Go Ape, Geocaching, orienteering, historic tours, arts and crafts, etc. Promote activities to raise awareness of green infrastructure and its benefits across all social, demographic, ethnic and diversity groups.
People 	Provide green infrastructure facilities to promote health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore environmental therapies delivered through mental health services. Develop and promote Healthcare and wellbeing through green infrastructure activities.
Economy 	Working with partners to build and secure funding, effective governance and stewardship for new and existing green infrastructure to ensure their long-term sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new facilities that will generate revenues. Create a Green Essex Fund for endowments, fund-raising bids, donations etc. in conjunction with the development of a Green Essex Network. Create a distinct Green Essex identity through the development of a Green Essex Network to encourage a strong community engagement.

5.18 The Essex Strategy identifies a number of principles to help guide planning decision-making, including plan-making. These are:

- Development is directed to the most sustainable and least sensitive locations.
- Planning and design of green infrastructure results in a coherent, meaningful and practical network of open green spaces.
- Combine green and grey infrastructure through planning the integration and coordination of urban green spaces with other infrastructure, such as highways and utilities, to facilitate the establishment of a well-designed and maintainable public realm.
- Greater awareness is achieved on the important contribution in responding to the impacts from climate change.
- Create connectivity to ensure there are good accessible links for all between urban, rural areas and green infrastructure widening the green infrastructure network.
- Deliver and enhance multifunctionality to provide multiple benefits (i.e. recreation, flood management), creating synergies, while reducing conflicts and trade-offs.
- The benefits of Green Infrastructure can be improved through the recognition of the value of ecosystem services.
- Once the impacts of development on biodiversity have first been avoided, mitigated and compensated, provides opportunities for biodiversity net gain.
- By locating developments in the right place and ensuring good early design, much biodiversity loss and damage through development could be avoided.
- Green infrastructure is designed to enhance, create and protect local landscape character and heritage.
- Deliver social inclusive processes that are open to all and incorporate the knowledge and needs of diverse parties. That results in safe and accessible green spaces designed to respond to changing population needs.
- Comply with the national and/or local open spaces standards set by Local Authorities for the quantity, accessibility and quality provision for their administrative area.
- Green infrastructure is at the heart of decision making at every stage in the planning and design process for all developments from the outset, thus green infrastructure is integral to place-shaping.
- Site management plans and funding for any development proposals should incorporate the long-term management and maintenance of green infrastructure and that these arrangements are agreed and secured alongside planning permissions to ensure that assets maintain their functions and benefits.

6 Issues for the Rochford new Local Plan to address

- 6.1 Rochford District is already home to a large amount of high quality green space, including our extensive parks, nature reserves and coastal walks. However, improvements to these green spaces to help deliver a more integrated and attractive green and blue infrastructure network could have a far reaching range of benefits for both existing and future communities. These benefits could include improved health and well-being, reduced congestion, improved biodiversity, improved air quality, and economic benefits from visitors. Green and blue infrastructure improvements in some areas could also help to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including reducing flood risk and managing coastal change.
- 6.2 The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to help deliver meaningful improvements to local green and blue infrastructure. New development could help to fund improvements to the quality or accessibility of green spaces or public rights of way through planning obligations or external investment from Government. Strategically located development could also provide an opportunity to increase the amount of green space made available to the public through the transfer of land within or adjacent to development sites.
- 6.3 The development of a strong vision for South Essex green infrastructure through the SEE Park proposals also provide a compelling opportunity for green and blue infrastructure improvements to be delivered across a wider geography, delivering benefits for a much larger population. This could see strategic new green infrastructure, such as a new country park, being used by residents from multiple local authority areas.
- 6.4 A number of options for how the new Local Plan could help to deliver an improved green and blue infrastructure network for Rochford have been identified as below.

Option	Explanation
Allocating specific areas of land for strategic green and blue infrastructure through the plan, including the RSPB Wallasea Wild Coast Project, Cherry Orchard Country Park and those areas identified as priorities in the SEGBIS, and providing for the specific enhancement and protection of this infrastructure through one or more specific policies	This option would see existing strategic green spaces and/or the new opportunity areas identified in the South Essex study allocated in the plan for strategic green and blue infrastructure and to ensure this land is protected as green and blue infrastructure through the plan. The new Local Plan would then provide opportunities for this land to be delivered and/or improved in an appropriate form (e.g. a new country park), including capturing funding from planning obligations associated with developments.
Identifying general objectives for strategic green and blue infrastructure through the plan, and providing for the general enhancement and protection of this	This option would be to not specifically allocate any land for strategic green and blue infrastructure but to rely on other allocations, such as existing open

infrastructure through one or more general policies	space, local green space or local wildlife site designations. The new Local Plan could still contain policies that help deliver improvements to green and blue infrastructure, including capturing funding from planning obligations associated with development.
<p>Setting a strategy for the delivery of new and enhanced green and blue infrastructure, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Requiring certain new developments to provide local green and blue infrastructure on-site, including to mitigate the specific local impacts of the development and contributing to the achievement of environmental net gains b. Requiring certain new developments to contribute to off-site strategic green and blue infrastructure projects, including enhancing the wider strategic green and blue infrastructure network to mitigate the impacts of new development and contributing to the achievement of environmental net gains 	<p>This option would be to require new developments, including new housing and/or commercial developments, to help pay for improvements to our green and blue infrastructure network by either delivering new green or blue spaces on the development site, or contributing to improvements to strategic green or blue projects elsewhere. These strategic projects could include existing strategic spaces such as Cherry Orchard Country Park or Wallasea Island, or new spaces such as the proposed Island Wetlands or Central Woodland Arc.</p>
Working with neighbouring authorities to explore opportunities to address green and blue infrastructure across administrative boundaries	<p>This option would be to continue working with neighbouring authorities to consider how a wider green and blue infrastructure network can be delivered and improved. This could include any of the other options set out in this section, but with an added component of working with other authorities and their respective Local Plans to help deliver improvements to the strategic green and blue network through a “boundary off” approach. This could mean developments in one area contributing to improvements in another area where this would deliver a higher quality network overall.</p>

