

New Local Plan: Spatial Options Consultation Paper 2021



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Summary of Consultation

This document has been published for consultation alongside a draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for a period of six weeks.

The consultation will close at **5pm on Wednesday 22nd September 2021**.

You can have your say in a number of ways, including: Using our online consultation portal at <https://rochford.oc2.uk>

- Emailing SpatialOptions@rochford.gov.uk
- Writing to Strategic Planning, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, SS4 1BW

You may find it easier to structure your representations around the questions set out in this document. These are indicated by a red box and pen icon, and begin “Q” followed by a number.

Please note, any representations made will be published online alongside your name. We are unable to accept anonymous representations and you should ensure any representations made are accompanied by your name, address and (where possible) email address. Representations not accompanied by these details may be rejected.

We are also unable to accept discriminatory or abusive representations.

The Council intends to hold a number of information events to help provide greater detail on the purpose and content of this consultation, including online Q&A sessions and outdoor “drop by” sessions. The details of these will be published on the Council’s website in due course. If you have difficulty accessing the Council’s website, you may call 01702 318043 to find out more.

If you require a copy of this document in a more accessible format, such as large text, you should advise the Council’s Strategic Planning team at the earliest opportunity by emailing SpatialOptions@rochford.gov.uk, or by telephoning 01702 318043.



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Introduction

What is the Spatial Options document?

The **Spatial Options document** is a consultation paper that forms the latest stage in the production of Rochford District Council's new Local Plan. Once adopted, the new Local Plan will set a new planning strategy for the District to 2040, helping to co-ordinate the delivery of much needed housing, employment and infrastructure, whilst ensuring that our natural, historic and built environments are protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy.

The Spatial Options document sets out a range of challenges and opportunities relating to how Rochford District can change and grow over the next 20 years. These challenges and opportunities relate to a number of important, interconnected themes that together will contribute to achieving a sustainable vision for the District. This consultation is an important step in exploring the advantages and disadvantages of different strategy options, alongside the contribution these options can make to fulfilling the objectives of the District and its diverse settlements.

This consultation builds on past consultations (set out later in this section), however it is not intended to revisit many of the issues explored in past consultations. The Spatial Options document will be exploring a more specific set of challenges and opportunities relating to key spatial issues (those relating to the use of specific areas of land and buildings). It will also provide an opportunity for us to consider specific issues that may have emerged since past consultations, either because they have been identified by new evidence, or a new requirement has been introduced by national policy.

It is important to recognise that the Spatial Options document is only a consultation paper and is not recommending a particular course of action. Instead, the document presents a range of different options that feedback is sought on. Options presented within this document are unlikely to be equally sustainable and further work, and consultation, will be required on the new Local Plan to ensure the options that are ultimately selected are the right ones for Rochford and its communities.



How have we got here?

This document is the second of an expected four stages in preparing the new Local Plan.

The Council has been working on its new Local Plan since 2015. Once adopted, it will replace the current suite of documents that make up our local development plan. These include the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011), the Development Management Plan (adopted in 2014), the Allocations Plan (adopted in 2014) and our four Area Action Plans (adopted in 2014 and 2015).

In 2016, the Council undertook a programme of local community engagement which was co-ordinated with local parish and town councils. This engagement provided useful local insight into the challenges and opportunities that exist within our towns and villages, alongside feedback on how current plans are or are not working for communities at a local level. The outcomes of this engagement programme can be viewed [here](#).

In late 2017/early 2018, the Council formally consulted on the first stage of its new Local Plan: the Issues and Options document. This document set out a comprehensive range of issues and options relating to the future of the District, and how the planning system could help deliver new opportunities. A range of issues were raised through the consultation which have influenced the direction of the new Local Plan since, and which will continue to be explored, alongside further consultation feedback, through the plan-making process. A feedback report was published on the Council's website and can be viewed [here](#), with a short summary of relevant feedback included in this and each of the thematic chapters within this document.

This will not be the last opportunity you have to influence the new Local Plan, with two further stages of consultation planned. However, it is important to make your views known on the plan at the earliest opportunity. Once the Council feels the Local Plan is ready, it will submit it for examination by a Government Inspector, which, if successful, will allow it to be adopted. It is recognised that the Government is currently proposing substantial changes to the planning system, including to the role of Local Plans and the way they must be prepared. Should these be changes be introduced, the timetable shown alongside this text may need to be revised.



Figure 1: Timetable for preparing the Rochford new Local Plan

What is a Local Plan, in simple terms?

Each District Council in the country must prepare a document for their area called a 'Local Plan'. The Local Plan sets policies, or rules, that state what different pieces of land can be used for (or what can be built on them).

Local Plans must meet certain rules to be approved. This includes needing to follow rules set by Government, needing to be justified by evidence and needing to provide for enough new development to meet local needs (including for housing).

What did you tell us when last consulted?

Between December 2017 and March 2018, we consulted on our New Local Plan: Issues and Options document.

The Issues and Options Document (and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal) set out the key challenges and opportunities that had been identified in relation to the future evolution, prosperity and vitality of the District. This included identifying and considering challenges and opportunities relating to a range of “themes” including housing, infrastructure, jobs and the environment, alongside more specific consideration of the policies used to determine planning applications.

In total, 554 responses were received to the Issues and Options consultation. A breakdown of the number of responses received by type of respondent is provided below:

- 473 from members of the general public (including residents, local businesses and Councillors acting in a personal capacity);
- 48 from landowners, developers or planning agents;
- 7 from Parish and Town Councils;
- 7 from neighbouring local authorities, including Essex County Council;
- 10 from government agencies and other public bodies;
- 6 from interest groups and trusts; and
- 3 from community associations and local action groups (where they are responding as an organisation on behalf of their members)

Many of these responses raised relatively more minor issues or showed preferences towards specific policy choices, however it was possible to identify a number of key themes raised by a significant number of respondents. These have been summarised in Figure 2.

- There were mixed views on how best to meet our development needs with some support for proportionate growth of towns, some support for brand new settlements and some feeling that we should not meet our development needs even if it resulted in an unsound plan
- There was a widely held view that maximising brownfield land should be prioritised before any Green Belt land is released for development
- An infrastructure-first approach to planning is required as there are existing issues with infrastructure capacity including in relation to roads, public transport, schools and healthcare facilities
- One of Rochford’s strengths is its rich historic and natural environment, and any future development strategy needs to protect and enhance these as far as possible
- Any future strategy should deliver meaningful infrastructure improvements as the amount of money being secured from recent developments towards infrastructure improvements has been insufficient to keep up with demand
- Many settlements have an identity and character that could be damaged by unmanaged development without appropriate infrastructure
- Rochford should consider every opportunity to meet its own housing needs within its own authority area, with a focus on genuinely affordable housing that meets genuinely local needs
- Rochford should work alongside other bodies through the Duty to Co-operate to make sure that the key strategic issues and opportunities affecting South Essex, Essex and the wider South East are addressed through the plan

What has changed since we last consulted?

There have been a number of significant changes to national planning policy and planning legislation since the last stage of consultation on the new Local Plan.

In particular, changes made to the NPPF in 2018, and further changes in 2019, introduced a range of new requirements relating to the role and content of Local Plans. Whilst many of these changes simply reinforced or restated existing provisions of the 2012 NPPF, or are unlikely to be material to spatial policy decisions, there are number of more significant changes that will affect the form and focus of the new Local Plan moving forward. These changes have been factored into the options presented in this consultation paper and are summarised below.

REFORM OF USE CLASS ORDER

On 1 September 2020, the Government reformed the Use Class Order, the primary way that the use of land and buildings are categorised for planning purposes. These changes are likely to provide greater flexibility to owners of land and buildings by meaning that some changes to the use of land and buildings that would have previously required planning permission, no longer do so. The most obvious example of this is with traditional 'town centre uses', such as retail, professional services, cafes, offices and light industry, which will now be able to change use freely to any other use in that list without requiring planning permission. This creates challenges in planning for appropriate uses by restricting the influence of policies in places like town centres and employment areas, which may see landowners and building operators pursuing the most profitable use as opposed to the most socially beneficial.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have a profound impact on the lives of local communities and businesses, and the associated restrictions have deeply affected the vitality of our local businesses and economy. These impacts are likely to result in permanent changes to the way we need to plan for the future, both positively and negatively, which were not foreseen at the time of the previous consultation.

CHANGES TO NATIONAL POLICY

- Strategic and non-strategic policies:

The NPPF now includes a requirement for Local Plans to make clear which policies are 'strategic' and which are 'non-strategic'. Strategic policies in particular must cover a 15 year time period and set out a strategy for pattern, scale and quality of development, making sufficient provision for housing, jobs, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation.

- Introduction of standard method for assessing housing need:

Changes to the NPPF, and PPG, in 2018 and 2019 introduced a new national standard method for assessing local housing need, moving away from the previous system of assessing housing need locally through studies such as Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs). The standard method does not set a binding target and is only the starting point for considering how many homes need to be built in an area, however it is clear that exceptional justification is required to deviate from it.

- Introduction of the Housing Delivery Test:

A new test which assesses whether enough homes have been built in a local authority area in the previous three years to meet requirements. Where this has not happened, a series of measures are put into place including a requirement to publish an action plan, or an additional 20% added to the number of homes that need to be built in the following five years.

- Small and medium sites:

A new requirement for at least 10% of an authority's housing requirement to be met from sites smaller than 1 hectare

- Affordable housing:

A new expectation that all sites larger than 10 dwellings will provide at least 10% will be provided as affordable home ownership products

- Biodiversity net gain:

A new requirement for plans to deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity

A group of approximately 15 people, mostly older adults, are seated in a circle of light blue plastic chairs in a large, bright room with high ceilings and large windows. A man in a dark suit is standing at the front of the room, presenting to the group. A woman in a white top is also standing near him. In the background, a green banner for 'Rochford District Council Making A Difference' is visible, along with a projection screen displaying a diagram. The room has a polished floor and a white door with a green exit sign above it.

Who will be engaged through the Spatial Options paper?

A wide range of stakeholders will be engaged through the Spatial Options paper, including:

- The Council has published [Statement of Community Involvement](#) which sets out how it will engage various stakeholders in the preparation of its planning documents. An update to the Statement of Community Involvement has also been published for consultation alongside the Spatial Options Paper.

The Statement of Community Involvement has been supplemented by a specific Consultation Strategy published alongside this consultation, which sets out how the Council will ensure it engages with the right interests in a way that is transparent and proportionate.

How does this relate to other plans and strategies?

Whilst the new Local Plan will be limited to the authority area of Rochford, it is important to recognise that the lives and livelihoods of local residents and businesses do not cease at our boundary. Our communities have strong economic ties to areas such as Southend, Castle Point, Chelmsford and Basildon, and further afield to London, whilst many residents of those areas enjoy visiting Rochford for its unique historic, coastal and natural spaces.

In Summer 2017, the Leaders and Chief Executives of South Essex councils (Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council) embarked on a process to develop a long-term growth ambition that would underpin strategic spatial, infrastructure and economic priorities across the region. This included establishing the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) and agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding setting out a positive forward vision for South Essex.

ASELA has since published a [Growth and Recovery Prospectus](#) which establishes a number of projects that will help to deliver economic growth and better standards of living across the entirety of South Essex.

One such project includes the creation of a South Essex Plan, a framework covering the six authority areas, including Rochford. The scope of the South Essex Plan is evolving over time, but it is likely to set a high-level framework for how South Essex will grow over the next 20 years, whilst addressing key cross-boundary issues and opportunities that cannot be effectively addressed by local authorities working alone. This project is supplemented by an emerging housing delivery partnership which seeks to unlock stalled sites.

The District also falls within the South Essex Foreshore area of the Government-backed Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Board, which recognises over the past few decades the Thames Estuary has been unable to deliver the same levels of economic growth as other parts of the UK. The Commission's vision for South Essex is that:

"The rich patchwork of places which form the South Essex Foreshore will be celebrated. Empowered by a statutory Joint Spatial Plan the area will go beyond 'business as usual'. Locally driven town centre transformation will help create lively places that people choose to work, live, learn and play in. These policies and local initiatives will see development unlocked, post-industrial landscapes restored, and the filling of empty business spaces to create a thriving and creative economy."

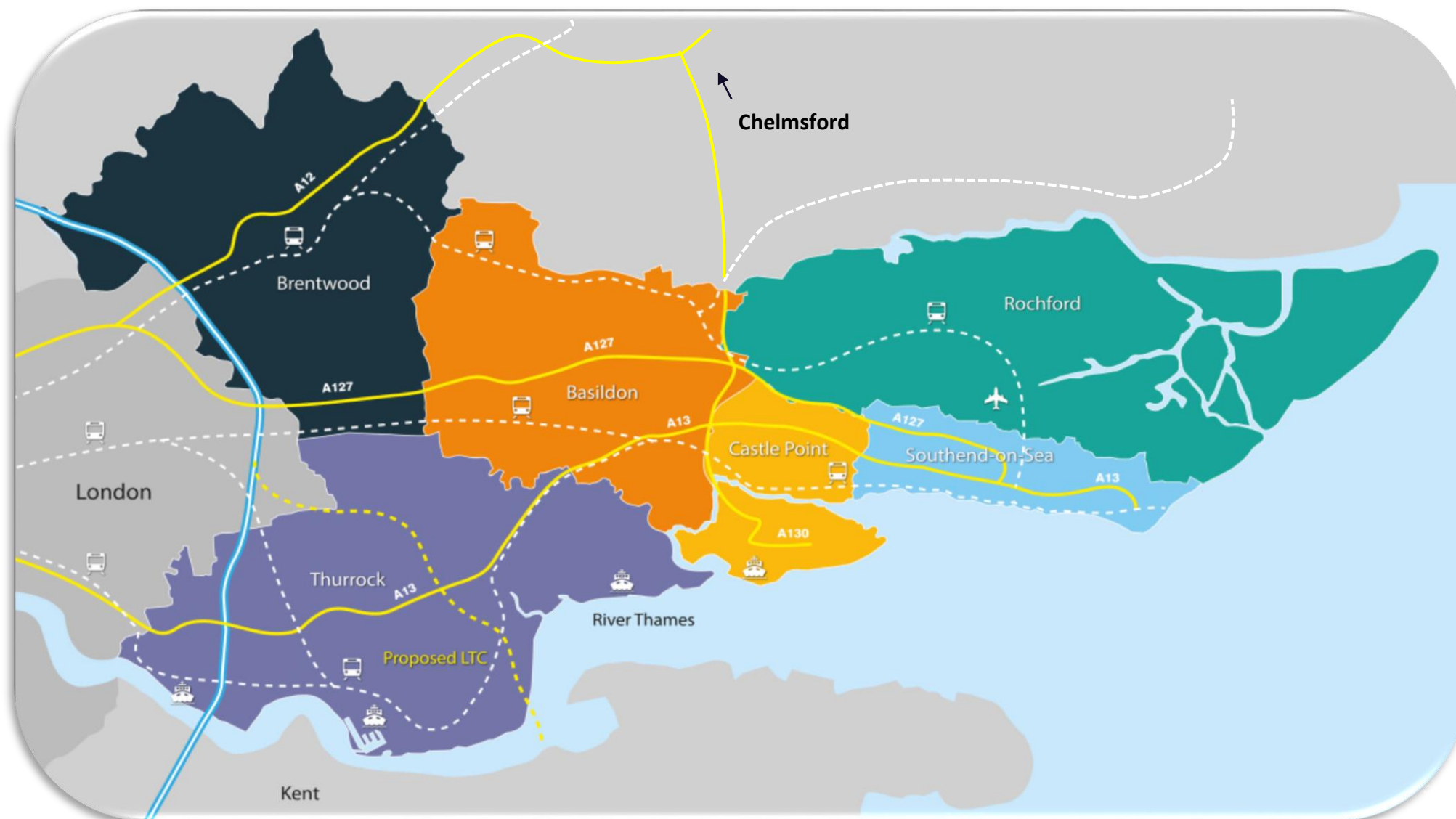


Figure 5: Map of South Essex and key transport corridors

The new Local Plan will only form one part of the development plan for Rochford. Figure 6 shows the relationship between the different documents that will together form the Rochford development plan. In order for the plan to be effective and co-ordinated, it is important that the Council continues to work constructively with both Government and neighbouring authorities, both in South Essex and beyond, to ensure that the plan can help to deliver transformational opportunities for Rochford and its residents.

Beyond plan-making, there are a number of important plans and strategies that the Council's plan will need to respond to under the Duty to Co-operate. These include:

- Working alongside Essex County Council, as the upper-tier authority for the District, to ensure that its strategies and investment priorities (including those relating to highways, sustainable travel, schools, early years and childcare, public health, flooding, minerals and waste planning and social care) are effectively co-ordinated with the Council's planning strategy and priorities
- Working alongside neighbouring local authorities to ensure that regional housing issues, including level and distribution of housing and the need for specialist accommodation, is addressed effectively
- Working alongside any neighbourhood planning groups established and supporting the delivery of sustainable, locally-led strategies through neighbourhood plans
- Working alongside the Marine Management Organisation to ensure the new Local Plan aligns and responds to the [South East Inshore Marine Plan](#)
- Working alongside neighbouring local authorities to ensure that the regional needs of traveller and travelling showpeople groups are effectively met, including exploring the potential for a transit site within Essex
- Working alongside neighbouring local authorities and SELEP to ensure that regional economic opportunities, including major inward investment and key assets like London Southend Airport, are supported through the planning system and elsewhere
- Working with Highways England to ensure that the potential connectivity and economic benefits of the Lower Thames Crossing for local residents and businesses are realised
- Working with Bradwell B to ensure that challenges and opportunities relating any long-term nuclear power proposals are resolved to the benefit of the District's residents, businesses and natural environment
- Working with infrastructure and service providers to ensure plans and investment are co-ordinated both locally and regionally to deliver transformational improvements wherever possible (including to the highway and sustainable transport network)

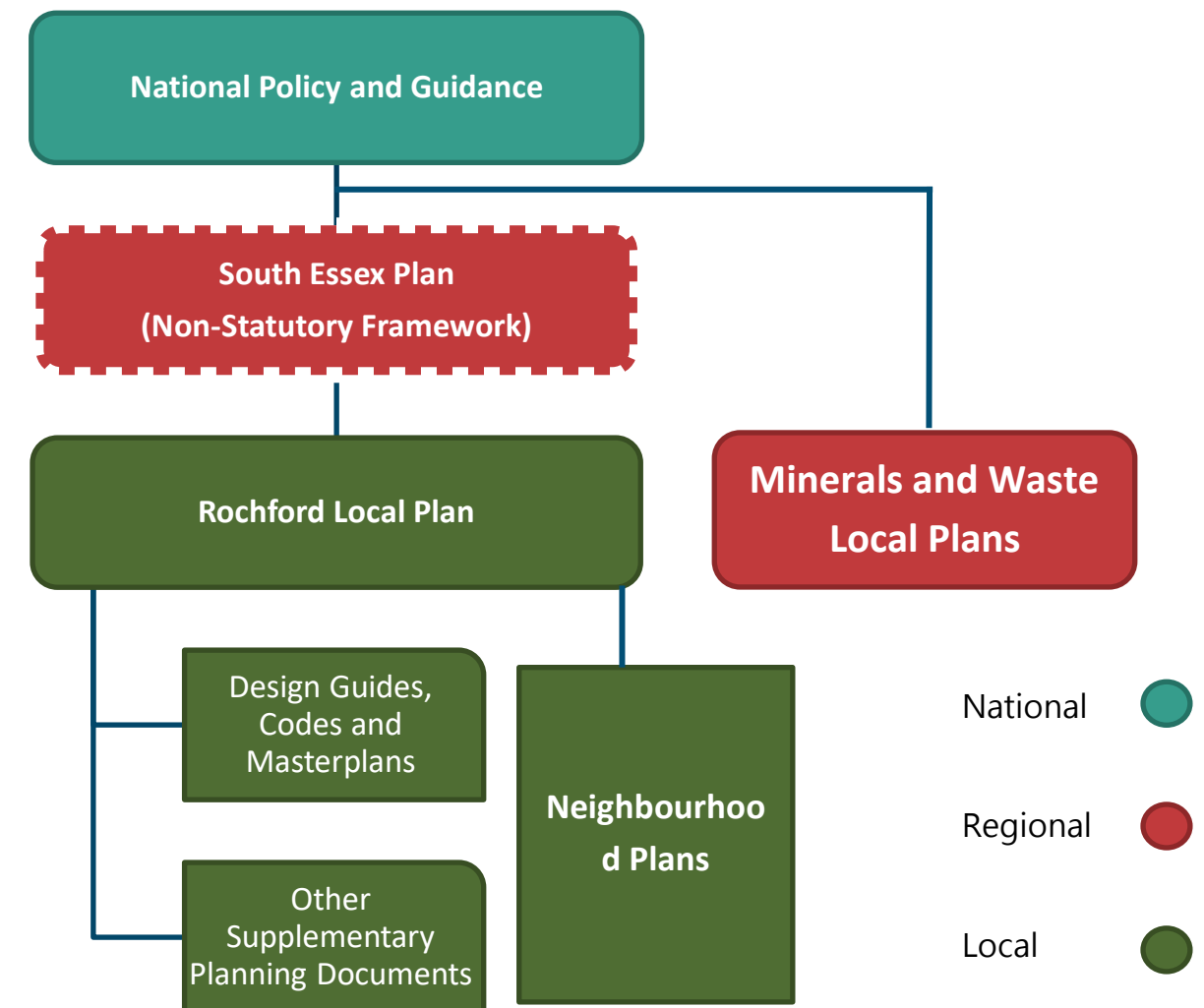


Figure 6: Relationship between the new Local Plan and other planning

What is the Duty to Co-operate, in simple terms?

The Localism Act legally requires certain public bodies to co-operate with each other to deal with important cross-boundary issues. If these issues are not dealt with effectively, a council's Local Plan might be rejected by the Government.

These cross-boundary issues are not set in stone but might include the need to provide enough houses and jobs in an area, or the need to address issues affecting infrastructure that is regionally-important (such as key roads) or nationally-important (such as power stations or airports).

What is the role of evidence and the Integrated Impact Assessment?

The new Local Plan will need to set a strategy for how Rochford District should grow and develop into the future. To ensure we make the right decisions, a wide range of evidence documents have been prepared, or will be prepared in the future.

The Spatial Options document has been informed by a range of evidence, including:

- Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) (*to be updated*)
- Green Belt Study
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
- Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)
- Initial Heritage Assessment (*to be updated*)
- Initial Transport Assessment (*to be updated*)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity Study
- Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
- Local Wildlife Sites Review
- Open Space Study (*emerging*)
- Playing Pitch and Built Facility Studies
- Settlement Role and Hierarchy Study
- Site Appraisal Note
- South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure Study
- South Essex Infrastructure Position Statement
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (*to be updated*)
- Urban Capacity Study

A range of evidence is also planned to be commissioned in the near future, to help support future stages of the new Local Plan. These include:

- Whole Plan Viability Study
- Infrastructure Delivery and Funding Plan
- Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Design Guides / Masterplans
- Green Belt / Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments

The role of this evidence is not to make decisions for the new Local Plan, but rather to analyse the planning issues that the District faces relating to a particular theme or topic, and to consider the relative impacts of different solutions. These documents are often of a technical nature, and the Council has published a series of topic papers to help summarise their key findings. These topic papers can be found at <https://rochford.oc2.uk>

The Spatial Options paper has also been informed by an **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**. The IIA will satisfy the regulatory assessment aspects of **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** and **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**, whilst also including an assessment of the health and equalities impacts of the new Local Plan. A draft IIA has been published for consultation alongside the Spatial Options paper and includes an assessment of how the options set out within the paper perform in sustainability and other terms. Information on how to provide comments on the IIA are set out in the next section.

SA is an iterative process which is closely integrated with the overall process of preparing a Local Plan. The Council has previously published an SA Scoping Report and an SA of its Issues and Options document. The role of the SA is to achieve sustainable development by assessing the likely significant effects of the plan and the extent to which the plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will contribute or otherwise to the achievement of environmental, economic and social objectives.

As plan-making progresses, the Council will also be required to prepare a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which will assess the new Local Plan's impact on internationally designated sites for nature conservation.

Q1. Are there any other technical evidence studies that you feel the Council needs to prepare to inform its new Local Plan, other than those listed in this section?



Why is preparing a new Local Plan important?

The Government has set an expectation in law, through the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, that every area must be covered by a (local) plan. More recently, the Government made clear its expectation that all areas should have a local plan in place by the end of 2023.

The Government provides a broad framework for national planning through the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF).

The NPPF states that **the planning system should be genuinely plan-led**. It requires that succinct and up-to-date (local) plans to provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

In addition to a range of development management policies, the NPPF makes clear that local plans should set a strategy for managing the pattern, scale and quality of new development and make sufficient provision for housing, employment, retail, leisure, infrastructure and community facilities, alongside conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments.

In order to be found sound, the NPPF requires local plans to be deliverable, consistent with national policy, positively prepared (meeting identified needs for housing and other development) and justified by evidence.

The Government has made it clear that it will intervene in local authorities which do not make satisfactory progress with plan-making. At the very least, it is expected that local authorities that fail to have a (new) local plan in place by the end of 2023 may face intervention, potentially losing local control over planning decisions. It is therefore important that the Council makes suitable progress with its new Local Plan to ensure that local discretion on planning issues can be maintained.

In addition to the potential for Government intervention, there are a number of other reasons why preparing a new Local Plan is important. These are:

- To ensure that policies are up-to-date and take account of local priorities at the time of decision-making (as opposed to the time the last plan was adopted)
- To ensure that there is a sufficient supply of development (including housing) to avoid the presumption in favour of sustainable development applying (whereby the council may be obliged to approve developments it would ordinarily refuse)
- To ensure there is a sufficient supply of local commercial premises to support economic growth and avoid established businesses leaving the District
- To ensure that new community facilities and infrastructure is co-ordinated with development through a robust and costed strategy, to avoid making ad hoc decisions based on out-of-date policies

In 2020, the Government consulted on *Planning for the Future*, commonly referred to as the “Planning White Paper”. This consultation included a wide range of proposed reforms to the planning system, including to the role of local plans and the process for preparing them. At the current time, it is not known how many of these reforms will ultimately be introduced, therefore it is considered prudent to continue preparing the new Local Plan within the confines of the existing system. However, there are a number of proposed reforms that are compatible with the process being followed, or which follow the same broad logic. As a result, wherever possible, the options within this paper have taken account of potential areas of compatibility under any new system to ensure the Council’s plan-making process is as resilient to change as possible.

What is the NPPF, in simple terms?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a document produced by the Government which sets out its priorities and policies for planning in England. These include requirements relating to how local plans must be prepared, alongside general rules for how the Government wants local councils to take certain issues into account when making decisions.

How can I have my say?

The Spatial Options document, and its accompanying draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), is out to consultation for a period of 6 weeks. The consultation will close at 5pm on **Wednesday 22nd September 2021**

You can have your say in a number of ways, including:

- Using our online consultation portal at <https://rochford.oc2.uk>
- By emailing SpatialOptions@rochford.gov.uk
- By writing to **Strategic Planning, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, SS4 1BW**

The document includes a number of questions intended to provide structure to your feedback. These are indicated by a red box with a pen icon. You are not required to respond to every question and may wish to focus on those which are of greatest interest to you.

The simplest and easiest way of returning comments is by using our online consultation portal. However, a feedback form has been created to help you structure your comments should you be returning them by email or post.

Please note, we are unable to accept anonymous comments, therefore you must ensure you include your name and contact details alongside your comments. Your comments will be published online alongside your name; however no other details will be included. We also reserve the right to reject abusive, discriminatory, or late comments.

Next Steps

Once the consultation has closed, we will consider all comments received and confirm those that are duly made.

We will publish a Feedback Report as soon as possible after the end of the consultation, summarising the comments received and providing an initial response to any issues raised.

To stay up to date, you are strongly encouraged to sign up to our planning mailing list at www.rochford.gov.uk/tellmemore



Rochford in 2021

District Profile

Our Social Characteristics

Rochford is a district that is home to around 87,000 people across a mix of urban and rural settlements. Our population has grown around 4% over the last 10 years and is projected to grow by a further 12% over the next 20 years. This would make our population around 98,000 people by 2040.

Over the same period, the age structure in Rochford is expected to shift notably towards an older population. By 2040, we expect there to be a 46% increase in over 70s, with the number of people living into their 90s expected to almost double compared to current levels. There are also likely to be slightly more children than currently however the number of economically active individuals is likely to decrease with fewer residents of Rochford being between the ages of 18 and 70 than currently. This could create challenges relating to dependency, with the number of over 65s per 1,000 working people likely to increase to around 450 by 2040, far above both the projected national average of 350 and the current Rochford rate of 390. Whilst general standards of health within older populations is consistently improving, a large dependent population relative to economically active people does present challenges locally in generating economic growth and will mean a likely a shift in demand for certain local facilities and services.

Rochford is currently one of the least deprived areas in the country, with only five out of 53 local neighbourhoods falling into the top 40% most deprived in the UK and 28 falling into the top 20% least deprived. There remain however small pockets of deprivation where income, education and healthcare outcomes are notably worse than the rest of the District, including small areas within and to the east of Rochford town.

Our general standards of health are one of our strengths with 96% of residents rating their health as very good, good or fair. Life expectancy is better than both local and national averages, whilst rates of excess winter deaths, cardiovascular disease deaths and cancer deaths are lower than national averages.

The standards of education locally are generally good with the majority of local schools rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted, with four rated ‘Outstanding’ and four rated ‘Requires Improvement.’ However the percentage of economically active adults with no qualifications (24%) is slightly higher than the national average (23%) whilst the percentage of economically active adults with a degree (20%) is lower than the national average (27%). Rochford also has a noted skills mismatch with a large number of the jobs available locally not matching the average skillset of our residents.

The vast majority of homes in Rochford are owner-occupied (83%) with a relatively modest rental sector. The dominant house types in the area are detached (33%) and semi-detached (46%) with a relatively modest proportion of flats and terraced housing. The affordability of all housing is an issue constraining the ability for residents to afford homes in the area. The average house costs around ten times to average annual income of a Rochford resident, which has increased significantly from around five times 20 years ago and is significantly above the national average.

Settlement	Population
Total	86,891
Rayleigh	33,663
Rochford and Ashingdon	18,420
Hockley and Hawkwell	14,343
Great Wakering, Little Wakering and Barling	6,225
Hullbridge	5,870
Other (including rural populations)	5,316
Canewdon	1,101
Rawreth	563
Sutton / Stonebridge	520
Great Stambridge	372
South Fambridge	265
Paglesham	233

Figure 7: Estimated Population of local settlements (2018)

Our Cultural Characteristics

Rochford has a number of settlements that date back hundreds of years, including our two largest: Rayleigh, which was recorded in the Domesday book, and Rochford, a historic market town with building dating back to the medieval era. Other important settlements include key centres of population in Hockley, Hawkwell and Ashingdon, large villages in Great Wakering and Hullbridge, and smaller villages and hamlets of Canewdon, Paglesham, Rawreth and Great Stambridge.

Rochford has a rich and diverse built heritage with over 300 listed buildings, including a number of centuries-old churches, halls and houses, and ten conservation areas protected for their architectural and historic importance. We are home to a number of unique and iconic buildings including the Dutch Cottage, an octagonal thatched cottage, the Old House, a medieval house dating back to the 13th century, and the Rayleigh Windmill, a one of a kind windmill turned wedding venue. The Grade I listed Rochford Hall is located to the west of Rochford town and has ties to the Boleyn Family. We also have a number of important archaeological sites, including 350 separate records on the Essex Historic Environment Record and a number of sites designated as scheduled monuments, including:

- Rayleigh Mount - the former site of a motte-and-bailey castle in central Rayleigh, now an open space managed by the National Trust
- Heavy Anti-Aircraft Gun Site, Sutton – the site of a heavy anti-aircraft gun built during World War II
- Mud Berth, Paglesham – the final resting place of the HMS Beagle, upon which Charles Darwin undertook his famous round the world voyage

In addition to our extensive heritage, we have a growing tourism sector that is supported by the unique cultural sights we can offer. With London Southend Airport being closeby and increased demand for nature-led staycations, our rural villages and sights such as RSPB Wallasea Island, are becoming increasingly attractive to date and short-stay vacationers.

The annual Wild Woods Day provides annual family activities celebrating one of the country's best protected ancient woodlands at Hockley Woods. The Discover 2020 festival is also a celebration in 2020/21 of some of the District's historic events, including the 200th anniversary of the HMS Beagle's voyage to South America.



Our Environmental Characteristics

Rochford is situated on a peninsula between the North Sea and the Rivers Thames and Crouch. The majority of the population live on the mainland, however Rochford is home to a number of estuarine islands, including Wallasea Island, an RSPB reserve, and Foulness Island, an active Ministry of Defence site. It is a generally rural district with over 12,400 hectares of land covered by the eastern extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt, in addition to the generally undeveloped area of Foulness Island which does not fall within the Metropolitan Green Belt but is nevertheless rural in nature.

Rochford is also home to around 12,000 hectares of in-land and marine habitats of international importance, mostly along the coast and eastern estuaries, with over 15% of our landmass covered by one or more biodiversity designations. These designations include the Crouch and Roach Special Protection Area, the Foulness Special Protection Area and the Hockley Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest. In addition, Rochford contains 39 sites of local wildlife importance, four local nature reserves, at Kendall Park, Marylands, Hockley Woods and Magnolia Park and a large network of public open spaces scattered throughout the district.

As a coastal area, with two main rivers running through it, Rochford is an area that faces threats from flooding from a variety of sources, including tidal (sea) and fluvial (rivers). Over 40% of Rochford's land area is at a greater than 1 in 1000 probability of flood risk in any given year, whilst the sea level rises that climate change is predicted to cause threaten our coastline, particularly to the east of the District.

Some areas have also been identified in the Essex and Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan as being appropriate for managed shoreline realignment, including at Wallasea Island and Paglesham.

Rochford also has some more localised environmental issues, including an air quality management area on Rayleigh High Street that was designated in 2015. An Air Quality Action Plan is now in place for this area, making targeted interventions to return air quality to a safe standard.

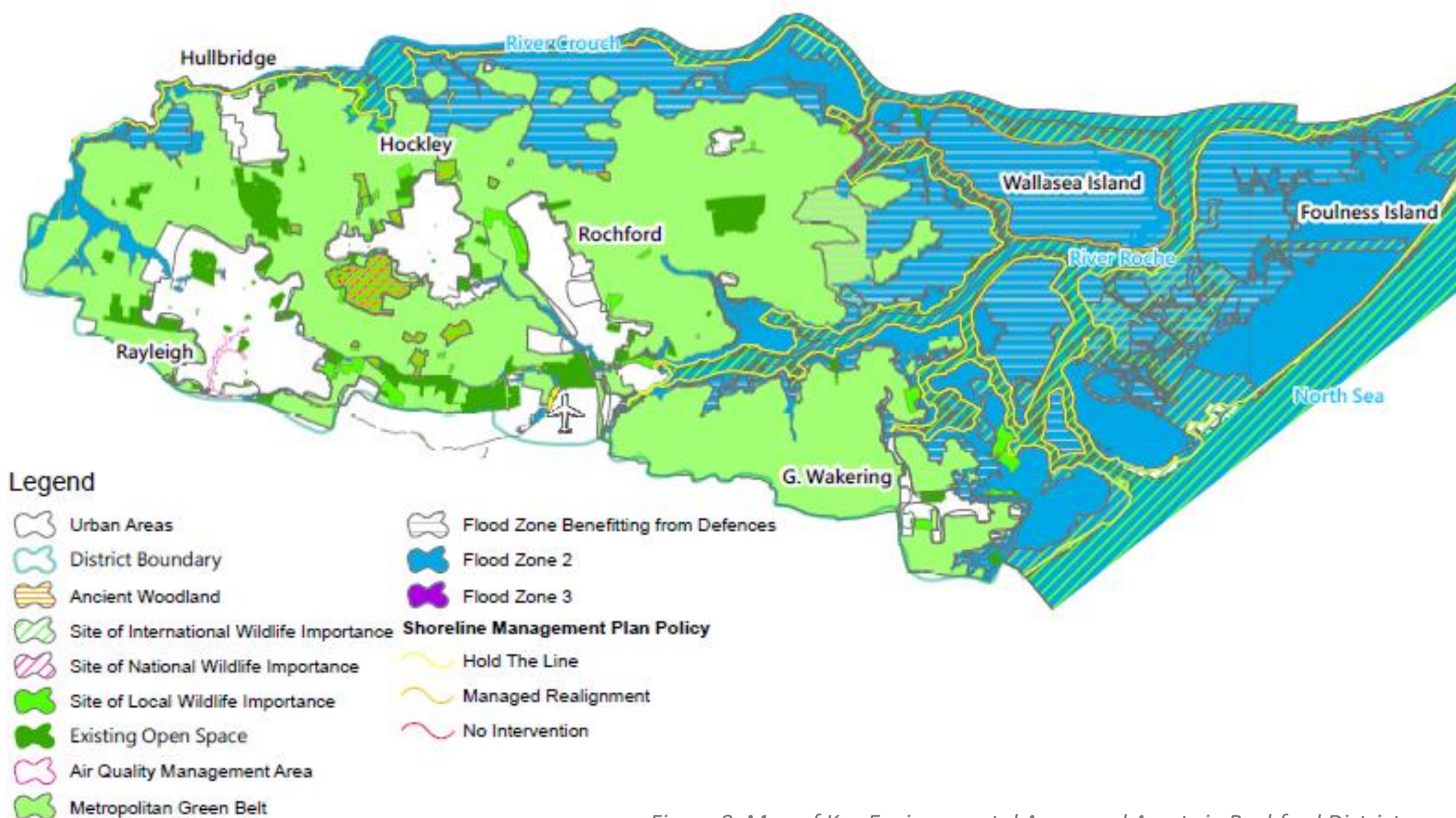


Figure 8: Map of Key Environmental Areas and Assets in Rochford District

Our Economic Characteristics

We have a small but productive local employment offer, with over 3,500 businesses of which 90% employ fewer than ten people. Our job density of around 0.59 jobs to every working age resident is relatively low compared to a national average of 0.87, reflecting our strong reliance on out-commuting to other areas including Chelmsford, Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and London. However, the average weekly earnings of our residents (£649) is favourable compared to the annual average of £569, reflecting again our relatively good access to high-paid skilled jobs in London and elsewhere. (Statistics from NOMIS 2019)

There are currently around 22,000 jobs located in Rochford. Our key sectors by number of employees include retail (around 16% of workforce), education (11%), manufacturing (10%) and construction (9%), with a notable clustering of specialist businesses in the aviation and specialist manufacturing sectors.

We are connected to the rest of South Essex and beyond by two main road connections: the A127, travelling east to Southend and west to Basildon and London, and the A130, travelling north to Chelmsford and south to Canvey Island and Thurrock. These roads connect further afield to important onwards networks including the A12, A13 and M25. In addition, our three main towns of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley, along with our growing regional airport, London Southend Airport, benefit from a regular rail services to London and Southend with further connections to the Elizabeth Line and Great Eastern Mainline from an interchange at Shenfield. Our local economy is supported by two notable economic assets, the passenger and commercial ports of London Southend Airport and Baltic Wharf. We are also strategically well-located to take advantage of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing and the creation of a new nuclear power station at Bradwell B.

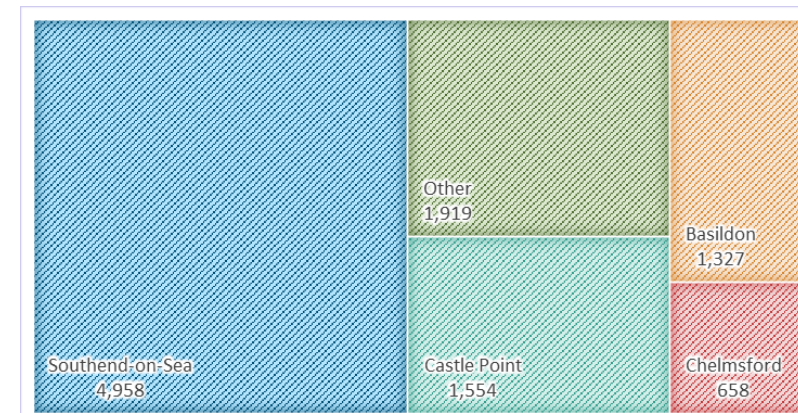


Figure 9: Main external origins into Rochford residents for work (2011)

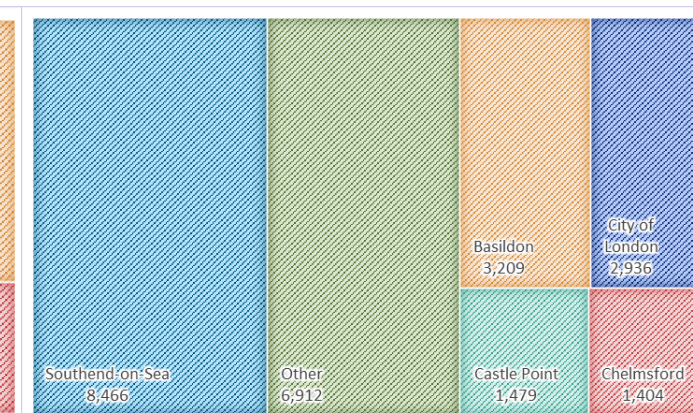


Figure 10: Main external destinations for Rochford residents for work (2011)

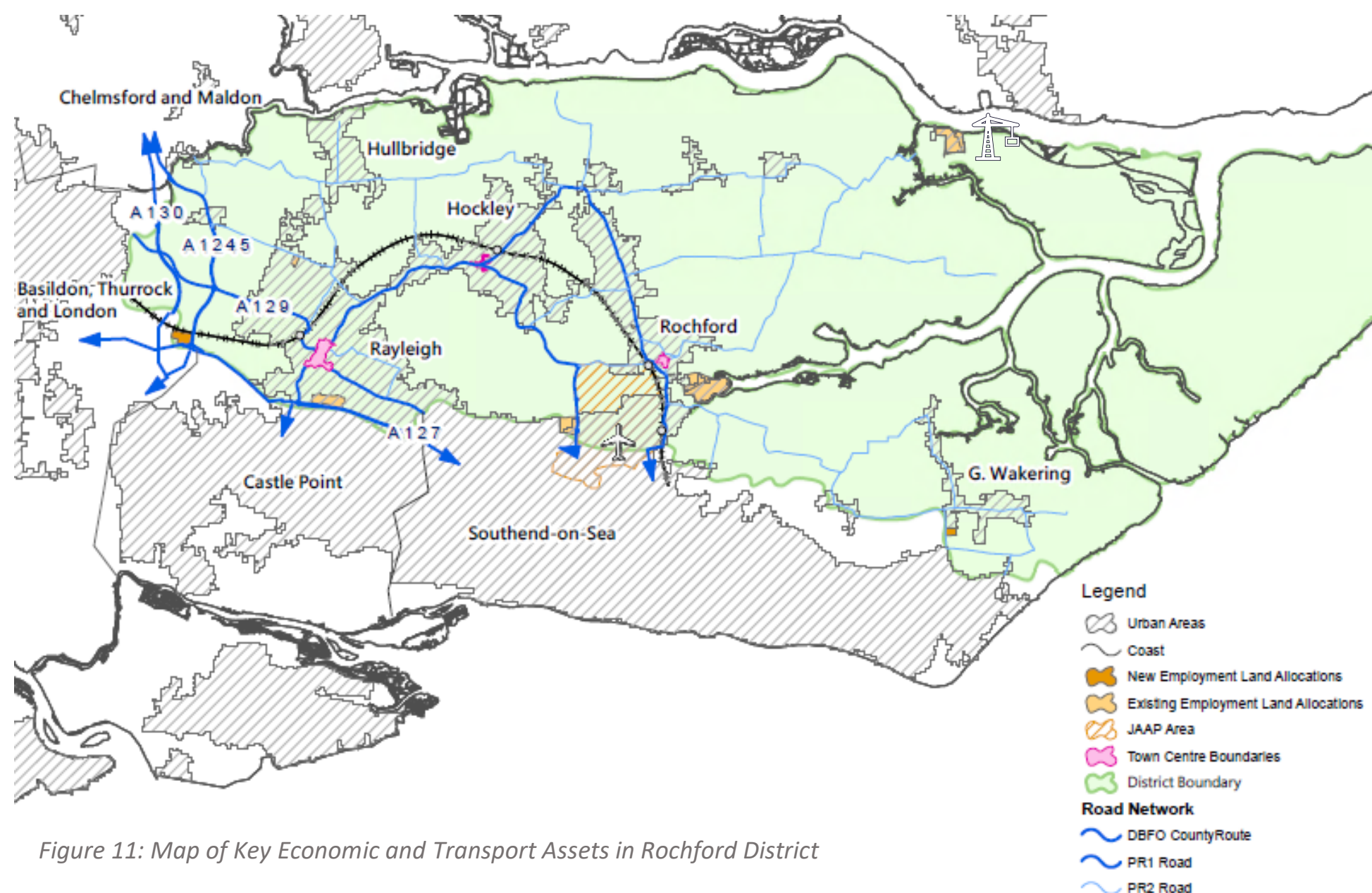


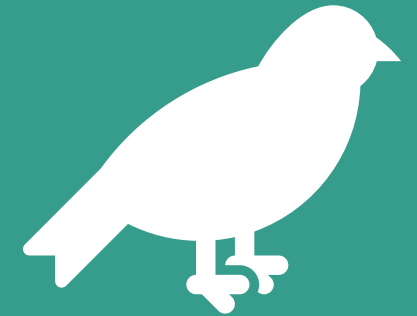
Figure 11: Map of Key Economic and Transport Assets in Rochford District

Did you know?

Rochford District is home to around 87,000 people living in 36,00 homes, an average of 2.4 people per home



Over 15% of Rochford's land area is covered by biodiversity designations, including around 12,000 hectares of in-land and marine habitats that are internationally important for birds



Rochford has a strong entrepreneurial spirit with one of the best survival rates in the UK for small start ups



Rochford is home to London Southend Airport which is consistently ranked amongst the best airports in the UK for passenger experience

Rochford has a rich and diverse history with settlements dating back to the pre-medieval period, and is home to over 300 listed buildings and ten conservation areas



Rochford is one of the least deprived areas of the UK, with life expectancy and standards of health better than regional and national averages

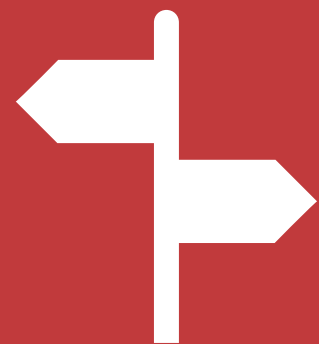


Our Spatial Challenges

A growing population, including a larger elderly population, is likely to place significant pressure on the demand for different types of housing and services over the next 20 years



Over 40% of our land area is at increased risk of coastal or fluvial flooding, creating a threat to our coastal communities with the potential need for shoreline realignment as a result of climate change



Our peninsula location creates issues for connectivity with relatively limited sustainable travel options available, particularly north-south, leading to notable congestion along key roads



Over 70% of our land area is protected under the Metropolitan Green Belt with over 15% protected for its biodiversity value, leading to a limited amount of unconstrained land available for development

The ratio of local house prices to earnings is far in excess of historic levels and above the national average, creating real difficulties for local people to afford a local home, particularly for first time buyers

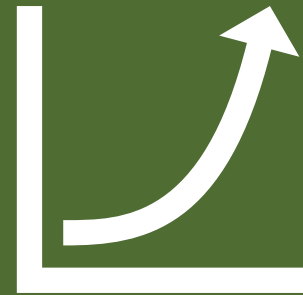


The percentage of jobs available per resident is much lower than the national average, leading to a greater reliance on out-commuting for our residents and leakage of spending and investment



Our Spatial Opportunities

Our proximity to London and the Lower Thames Crossing, and our key ports at London Southend Airport and Baltic Wharf makes us an economically competitive area attractive to inward investment



Our cultural sights and relative greenness make us an attractive destination for new residents, alongside green and heritage tourism, creating opportunities for local employment and investment



We fall within the Thames Estuary 'Growth Board area, the Government's 'Number One Growth Opportunity', which hopes to deliver transformational economic projects across the area



The scale of housing growth required in Rochford presents opportunities to do things very differently and harness much greater investment in infrastructure than has been possible before

Our rural and coastal environment makes us a great place to deliver new green and blue infrastructure for our communities close to where they live, including the eastern extent of a South Essex Estuary Park



Our entrepreneurial, small-business culture and rural-urban mix makes us a resilient and attractive place to do business, which if appropriately supported, can deliver local economic growth including to our rural communities



Rochford in 2050

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to identify the strategic priorities for their area in their development plan documents.

We feel it is important to take a longer-term vision-led approach to our new plan, helping to identify along the way how different strategy and policy choices can help us to achieve our vision. This vision is supported by a number of priorities and objectives that translate the vision into the key actions that we want to achieve in relation to different themes.

Previously we consulted on a draft vision as part of our Issues and Options consultation. We feel that this vision remains broadly appropriate for the plan as it is progressing, however we have made a small number of minor changes to our priorities and objectives to reflect feedback and to give appropriate weight to new and different factors that have gained in importance since we started preparing our plan.

This draft vision and objectives relate back to a number of important issues, including the Council's Business Plan 2020-2023, an excerpt of which is included overleaf. This Business Plan includes a number of planning-related priorities, including maintaining, protecting and enhancing green spaces, increasing the standard and availability of affordable housing, achieving and investing in sustainable town centres and high streets.

Figure 13 and the following tables show the Council's vision, strategic priorities and objectives for the plan.

<div> <div> <div>BUSINESS PLAN</div> <div>2020 2023</div> </div> <div> <div>Rochford District Council</div> </div> </div>			
<div> <div>OUR VALUES</div> <div>Customer focused: Maximising potential: Proactive: Innovative</div> <div>OUR VISION</div> <div>"Working to help shape your future"</div> <div>OUR PRIORITIES</div> </div>			
<div>BEING FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE</div> <div> <p>Despite continued budget constraints, we will manage our resources effectively to ensure we can continue to fund high quality services.</p> <p>We will invest in the future of the district to stimulate growth and prosperity as well as attracting investors and visitors.</p> <p>Wherever possible, we will support local businesses and organisations.</p> <p>We will improve our efficiency through modernising services and changing the way we work to meet residents' needs.</p> </div>	<div>EARLY INTERVENTION</div> <div> <p>Strong, vibrant communities are the foundation of strong vibrant economies.</p> <p>We will focus on early intervention and protection for the most vulnerable.</p> <p>We will support and invest in community level work which enables everyone to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives.</p> <p>We will work with partner organisations to tackle inequalities and enable more improvements in well-being to be delivered by communities.</p> </div>	<div>MAXIMISE OUR ASSETS</div> <div> <p>We will maintain, protect and enhance our many green parks, playgrounds and open spaces; creating greater opportunities for leisure and cultural enjoyment.</p> <p>We will be more environmentally conscious and strive to eliminate our carbon footprint.</p> <p>We will work with other councils across South Essex and Central Government to promote the district and create inward investment which will shape our landscape for the future.</p> </div>	<div>ENABLE COMMUNITIES</div> <div> <p>We will support residents, local businesses and organisations to create a district full of great life opportunities and choices, business growth and economic security.</p> <p>We will work with partners to build community resilience and public safety.</p> <p>We will engage with communities to meet our priorities and shape the future of the district.</p> <p>We will inspire our communities to make a difference.</p> </div>
BY 2023 WE WILL HAVE:			
<div>Provided best value for money for residents by delivering the services that matter most and making decisions to prioritise our limited resources</div>	<div>Continued to work with partners and communities to ensure our most vulnerable residents have felt supported to live well</div>	<div>Adopted a South Essex joint strategic plan and worked with neighbouring councils and Government to protect the district's built and natural environment, upporting both the local and regional economy</div>	<div>Worked with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to build capacity for meeting the needs of residents. Working together to make a difference to live better, safer, healthier lives</div>
<div>Regenerated and invested in more efficient sites for the delivery of council, community and leisure services</div>	<div>Worked together with communities and partners to prevent homelessness</div>	<div>Increased opportunities for residents to enjoy culture and leisure and created a strengthened visitor and business economy across the district</div>	<div>Worked closely with residents, communities and the police to maintain low crime levels and to improve residents' perception of safety</div>
<div>Made use of changing technology to become more efficient and ensure residents can contact us more easily and access more services on-line</div>	<div>Increased the standard and availability of affordable housing within the district</div>	<div>Protected the district for future generations by recycling and green policies aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2030</div>	<div>Worked with businesses and communities to develop plans to achieve and invest in strong, sustainable town centres and high streets</div>
<div>Taken a more commercial approach to generating income through investment of our resources, assets and use of existing council owned companies</div>	<div>Increased the number of residents actively participating in healthier lifestyles</div>	<div>Invested in our green spaces and community facilities to support our growing population's health and well-being</div>	<div>Reduced social isolation through strengthening connections within communities</div>

Figure 12: Rochford District Council Business Plan, 2020-23

Draft Vision

At the heart of our new Local Plan needs to be a vision, setting out the place we want Rochford to be in the future time. Whilst the new Local Plan will only set a strategy to 2040, we want to set a longer-term vision to 2050 to provide consistency and ambition in our future policy. We are also considering adopting a range of settlement-based visions to help apply the district-wide vision and objectives into a more localised setting, allowing the different needs and priorities of our different communities to be drawn out. We have prepared draft settlement visions as part of this consultation and have included a question in each of the settlement profiles asking you what you feel needs to be included in the vision for that settlement.

Our Draft Vision for Rochford in 2050

“Rochford District will be a green and pleasant place with a focus on business and high quality homes supported by accessible and responsive services and facilities, creating healthy and sustainable communities.”

Our Economy

We have made the most of our easy access to London, close proximity to neighbouring commercial hubs and the connectivity provided by London Southend Airport to become a key destination to do business. We have also supported the delivery of a leading regional centre in the science, medical and technology sectors at the Airport Business Park. We have worked with Essex County Council and other infrastructure and service providers to deliver meaningful improvements to areas of concern to businesses. We will be recognised as an entrepreneurial and enterprising area, continuing to build on our existing strengths to nurture and support our start-up, small and medium sized businesses and strengthening our rural economy through enabling diversification of activities to provide a viable green tourism offer. We have vibrant and distinctive town and villages centres that continue to meet the shopping and leisure needs of our residents. We have invested in our local education facilities and skills development to enable residents to work locally and reduce the pressure on our transport infrastructure.

Our Society

We have an extensive social, health, physical and green infrastructure network across our district which has been enhanced to support our changing population, and delivers health, well being and quality of life benefits for our residents. We have made efficient and effective use of suitable and available land to deliver new homes and jobs, focussing on delivering previously developed land first as a priority, including making appropriate use of our own public assets. We have ensured the delivery of a wide size and tenure of new homes which meets the needs of residents, and is supported by a range of infrastructure necessary to mitigate potential impacts on communities. We have worked with Essex County Council and other infrastructure and service providers to ensure that appropriate facilities and digital networks are delivered to support strong and sustainable communities, and provide residents and visitors with choice about how they live, work and travel.

Our Environment

We continue to be recognised as a largely rural area, with many accessible and high quality open spaces and significant stretches of coastline providing attractive and accessible leisure opportunities throughout our district along the rivers Crouch and Roach for our residents and visitors to enjoy. We have supported the development of the RSPB's Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project as the largest and most significant wetland project in Europe. We have protected and, where possible, enhanced our built, historic and natural environment, providing a network of locally, nationally and internationally important assets that are valued. We have retained our open character and extensive Metropolitan Green Belt designation, whilst providing for the needs of future communities, as far as possible. We have ensured that new homes and commercial premises respect local character and distinctiveness, are built to lifetime carbon neutral and high-quality design standards, and incorporate measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change.



Figure 13: Our Draft Vision for Rochford in 2050

Draft Strategic Priorities and Objectives

A total of 23 strategic plan objectives have been identified across five main strategic priorities. These priorities and objectives will help to direct decisions through the plan, by distilling our vision into a range of thematic 'tests'. National policy is clear that strategic priorities should be used to direct the formulation of strategic policies within the plan, with priorities that are non-strategic being reserved for non-strategic policies.

Strategic Priority 1: Meeting the need for homes and jobs in the area



- Strategic Objective 1: To facilitate the delivery of sufficient, high quality and sustainable homes to meet local community needs, through working with our neighbours in South Essex and prioritising the use of previously developed land first.
- Strategic Objective 2: To plan for the mix of homes needed to support our current and future residents, in particular viably addressing affordability issues and supporting our ageing population, including the provision of private and social care schemes.
- Strategic Objective 3: To build on the existing strengths of our local economy, effectively plan to meet changing business needs and strengthen our competitiveness through supporting our new and expanding home grown businesses, facilitating the delivery of more local job opportunities, enabling rural diversification and encouraging inward investment.
- Strategic Objective 4: To facilitate accelerated growth in our local economy through supporting the delivery of suitably located land which meets businesses needs at each stage of their lifecycle (including delivering grow-on space to enable local businesses to flourish), the continued functioning of London Southend Airport as a thriving regional airport, serving London and the South East, as well as supporting the continued growth and innovation at the Airport Business Park.
- Strategic Objective 5: To enable the upskilling of our residents to match skills with local job opportunities by supporting the provision of accessible, modern and good quality schools, higher and further education and bespoke training facilities to meet the expectations of employers and our local workforce.
- Strategic Objective 6: To ensure that all new homes and commercial premises are built to the highest attainable quality, design and sustainability standards with a good level of access to green space and the countryside.

Strategic Priority 2: Making suitable and sufficient provision for retail, leisure and other commercial development



- Strategic Objective 7: To support the vibrancy, vitality and distinctiveness of our local town centres through planning to meet local niche shopping and leisure needs in Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford.
- Strategic Objective 8: To support the continued use and sustainability of our village and neighbourhood centres which serve the local need of current and future residents.

Strategic Priority 3: Making suitable and sufficient provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)



- Strategic Objective 9: To ensure that all new homes and commercial premises are supported by appropriate, timely and necessary infrastructure to mitigate potential impact, including those relating to transport, utilities, telecommunications (including broadband), open spaces and greenways, flood risk, education, health and other community facilities.
- Strategic Objective 10: To work with our neighbouring authorities in South Essex and beyond, and Essex County Council, as the highway authority for our district, to deliver meaningful improvements to the strategic and local highway network.
- Strategic Objective 11: To facilitate a change in the way residents travel through encouraging walking, cycling and the use of passenger and public transport – and interchanges between them – reducing out-commuting wherever possible, and ensuring that all new homes and commercial premises are in accessible locations offering a choice of ways to travel sustainably both locally and within the wider network.
- Strategic Objective 12: To plan for effective waste management by encouraging adherence to the waste hierarchy, working with Essex County Council to make best use of mineral deposits resources and mineral and waste facilities, including safeguarding resources and infrastructure, supporting renewable energy generation and energy efficiency as part of all new homes and commercial premises developed, as well as supporting efficient water use.
- Strategic Objective 13: To plan for effective flood risk and coastal change management across the district and working with Essex County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority, Anglian Water, and the Environment Agency in the delivery of improved drainage infrastructure and sustainable drainage solutions, including effective use of SuDS

Strategic Priority 4: Making suitable and sufficient provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities



- Strategic Objective 14: To work with Essex County Council and healthcare commissioners and providers to ensure that our district's residents have access to good quality social and health and well-being services.
- Strategic Objective 15: To protect and enhance leisure, sport, recreation and community facilities and to support the delivery of a multi-functional green infrastructure network across our district and along the coastline, connecting to neighbouring areas in South Essex and beyond, to promote healthy and active lifestyles, and improve physical and mental health and well-being into old age.
- Strategic Objective 16: To support the development and promotion of our cultural and environmental assets, and diversification of rural activities, to strengthen our district's green tourism offer as a complement to neighbouring areas.
- Strategic Objective 17: To ensure that all new developments and the public realm are well designed and safe environments by balancing the principles of Essex design guidance with designing out crime and designing in community safety.
- Strategic Objective 18: To support the timely delivery of suitable primary, secondary, higher and further education facilities, and early years and childcare facilities, working in partnership with Essex County Council and other education providers.
- Strategic Objective 19: To support the vitality of our rural and village communities by harnessing the complete neighbourhoods model to improve the availability, accessibility and diversity of important local services, working to safeguard existing community assets and promoting strategies that would introduce new facilities and services into these areas

Strategic Priority 5: Making suitable and sufficient provision for climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape



- Strategic Objective 20: To protect, maintain and enhance our district's natural environment, geology and biodiversity, including our open spaces, recreational areas and our extensive coastline, as well as support wildlife, to create habitat networks and reduce fragmentation.
- Strategic Objective 21: To ensure that our district's Green Belt continues to serve its five purposes, in particular retaining the openness of the area, protecting valued landscapes, such as the Upper Roach Valley and our coastal areas, retaining the physical separation between our towns and villages, as well as those in neighbouring areas of South Essex and beyond.
- Strategic Objective 22: To preserve and enhance the quality of our district's built and historic environment, including within our 10 Conservation Areas, by promoting high quality design that responds to local character and distinctiveness to create a sense of place.
- Strategic Objective 23: To mitigate and adapt to the forecasted impacts of climate change, including the water environment, air quality, biodiversity and flooding, support more efficient use of energy and natural resources and facilitate an increase in the use of renewable and low carbon energy facilities.

Q2. Do you agree with our draft vision for Rochford District? Is there anything missing from the vision that you feel needs to be included? [Please state reasoning]

Q3. Do you agree that we should develop a range of separate visions for each of our settlements to help guide decision-making? [Please state reasoning]

Q4. Do you agree with the strategic priorities and objectives we have identified? Is there anything missing from the strategic priorities or objectives that you feel needs to be included? [Please state reasoning]

QUESTIONS



Strategy Options

Hierarchy of Settlements

In developing options for the strategy of the plan, it is considered helpful to categorise settlements in a hierarchy in a way that reflects their relative role and contribution to Rochford as a district. Our settlement hierarchy needs to reflect a range of different factors, including population, geographical size, availability and range of services and transport accessibility.

We commissioned a Settlement Role and Hierarchy Study (2021) to consider the individual roles of different settlements in Rochford and how best to categorise these for the purposes of planning. Our recommended settlement hierarchy is presented at Figure 14.

- **Tier 1** comprises our largest town of Rayleigh. Rayleigh has a significantly larger population (34,000 people) than any other settlement in Rochford, and contains by far the widest range of local and regional services, including two secondary schools, a large town centre, and a generous range of retail, employment and community facilities.
- **Tier 2** comprises our larger settlements of Hockley (including Hawkwell) and Rochford (including Ashingdon). These settlements have populations in the range of 10,000 – 25,000 people and contain a good range of local services, including a secondary school, modest-sized town centres, and a good range of retail, employment and community facilities.
- **Tier 3** comprises our larger villages of Canewdon, Great Wakering (including Little Wakering and Barling) and Hullbridge. These settlements all have populations in the range of 1,000 – 10,000 people and contain a modest range of local services, including single primary schools, small village centres and a modest range of retail, employment and community facilities. Whilst Canewdon is somewhat smaller than either Great Wakering or Hullbridge, it has a good range of facilities for a settlement of its size and benefits from a good degree of self-containment.
- **Tier 4** comprises our remaining villages, including Great Stambridge, Paglesham, Rawreth, Sutton, Stonebridge and South Fambridge. These settlements all have populations smaller than 1,000 people, often considerably smaller, and typically lack most day-to-day facilities

Beyond our borders, our residents and businesses have an important relationship with Southend, Basildon, Chelmsford and London, particularly for employing and accessing regional facilities (such as hospitals, major attractions and comparison retail). These settlements are all larger than any town in Rochford and contain a much greater range of facilities. In a wider context, these settlements are likely to be equivalent to a 'Tier 0'. Other nearby towns which provide some services to Rochford residents include Wickford, which is similar in size and role to Rayleigh, and South Woodham Ferrers and Thundersley/Hadleigh, which are similar in size and role to Hockley or Rochford. Whilst these settlements are not within Rochford, and have their own growth needs, understanding the role and function of these settlements across boundaries is useful for considering the impacts of our strategy on a wider geography and vice versa.

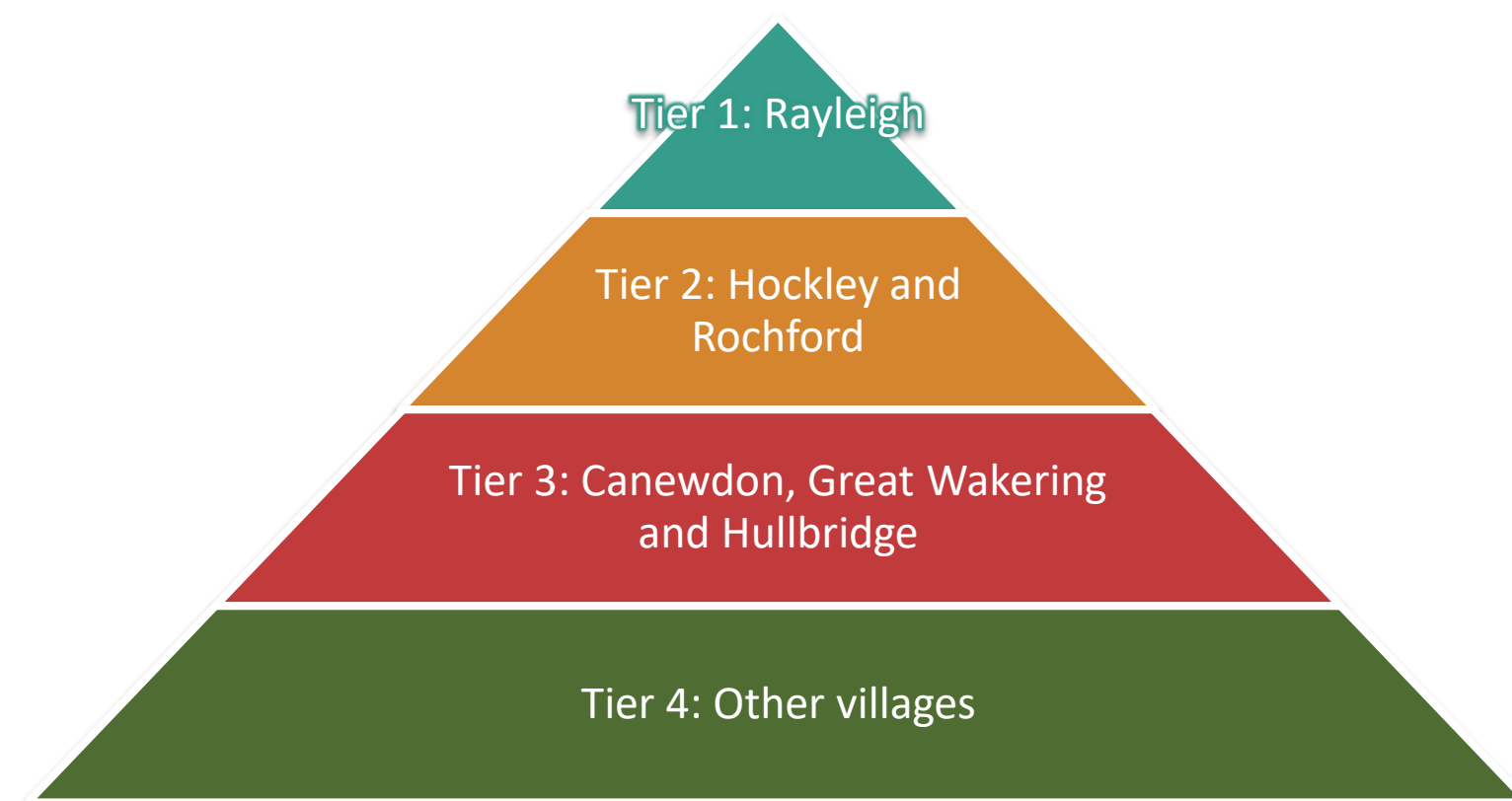


Figure 14: Proposed Settlement Hierarchy

Q5. Do you agree with the settlement hierarchy presented? If not, what changes do you think are required? [Please state reasoning]

QUESTIONS

Growth Scenarios

By 2040, Rochford needs to grow to ensure that the needs of existing and future communities can be met within our area. Failing to grow is likely to mean younger residents being forced to leave the District to find an affordable home and the District becoming less economically competitive as central government and businesses choose to invest elsewhere.

To meet our growth needs over the next 20 years, we are likely to need to plan for...

- 7,200 – 10,800 new homes of different types, sizes and tenures
- 7 – 40 hectares of new employment space of different types
- Up to 20,000 square metres of new retail space
- Transformational improvements to local road and sustainable transport networks, including long-term solutions for the A130 and A127, and working with partners to deliver an inter-urban rapid transit solution for South Essex and significant capacity improvements to existing bus and rail
- A masterplan for our town centres that encourages a more sustainable use class mix and supports their vitality in the long-term
- New local centres with accessible services
- A long-term strategy to reduce carbon usage to net zero and source energy from new renewable and low-carbon sources
- Significant new community infrastructure, including several new primary schools, at least one new secondary school and significant increases in primary care capacity
- Large areas of new open space and green infrastructure alongside strategic development sites

IMPORTANT NOTE



Whilst a range of growth scenarios have been presented in this section, the Council is not suggesting that these are equally sustainable and/or desirable. There remains significant work through the plan-making process to develop a strategy that successfully balances our need to grow with the need to safeguard our natural and built environments.

Planning for Housing Growth

The Government has made it clear that it wants to significantly increase the supply of new housing across the country. It has set a target of 300,000 homes to be built each year by the mid-2020s. National policy is clear that plans should meet local housing needs, unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. When determining how many homes need to be built in Rochford, national policy is clear that the standard method set out in Government guidance should be used as a starting point, unless exceptional circumstances justify otherwise. **The current standard method suggests that we would need to build around 360 homes per year over the next 20 years to meet our housing needs, which equates to 7,200 homes.**

National policy also requires Local Plans to provide strategies that accommodate unmet need from neighbouring areas where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development. Whilst the scale of unmet housing need from others' plans, including those from elsewhere in South Essex and London, is not fully known, it is possible that building more than 360 homes per year, if sustainable to do so, could help to accommodate some of this need.

Our Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2020 identifies a supply of over 4,300 homes that are already planned for. This includes existing allocations, sites with planning permission and an allowance for windfall development of around 45 homes a year. Windfall development is development which happens on sites which come forward unexpectedly and are not directly planned for in the Local Plan.

Planning for Economic and Retail Growth

The Council is part of the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) and South Essex Retail Study (SERS), both prepared in 2017. These assessments presented a range of scenarios relating to the future need for employment and retail space, respectively, over the next 20 years. It is recognised that since these assessments were prepared, the local and regional economies have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which is likely to have disrupted and accelerated different economic trends. Whilst updates to these assessments are planned, they are considered to remain useful for provided broad bookends for the likely need for economic uses through the new plan based on long-term trends.

The EDNA identified a potential need for up to 7 hectares of employment land by 2036, which rises to 16 hectares when making an allowance for churn and windfall. Compared against the District’s potential supply of new employment land, including the delivery of allocated sites at Michelin Farm, Airport Business Park and Star Lane, it is possible that no additional land will need to be allocated to meet Rochford’s future employment needs, and it may be that consolidation of employment land for housing can be justified in some locations. However, to ensure our growth strategy makes sustainable and well-rounded communities, there may remain a need to allocate land for specific or niche employment uses not being met by the existing market, such as grow-on space or flexible workhubs, which are considered in more detail in the Employment section of this paper.

The South Essex Retail Study 2017 identifies a need for around 13,000m² of new retail floorspace by 2037, if Rochford was to build 360 homes a year over that period. This is made up of around 11,500m² of comparison floorspace and 1,500m² of convenience floorspace. Whilst the Retail Study does not consider the retail floorspace needs of planning for an even higher housing figure, extending this figure proportionately results in a possible need for around 20,000m² of new retail floorspace if housing growth was around 590 homes a year.

Scenario	Explanation
Current Trajectory	<p>Approximately 4,500 new homes by 2040 can be delivered by maximising urban and brownfield capacity and windfalls. It may be possible for the remainder of Rochford’s growth needs to be met elsewhere, such as outside the Green Belt or in areas of less valuable Green Belt. However, it is a minimum expectation of national policy that local authorities plan to meet their identified needs which means this option may be unlikely to result in a sound plan if those needs cannot be met elsewhere.</p> <p>This scenario may also require around 7 hectares of employment land (based on EDNA combined scenario) and no new retail floorspace other than windfalls</p>
Standard Methodology	<p>7,200 new homes by 2040 would meet the Council’s housing needs based on the current standard method</p> <p>This scenario may also require around 16 hectares of employment land (based on EDNA combined scenario with allowance for churn and windfall) and around 13,000 m² of new retail floorspace (based on South Essex Retail Study)</p>
Standard Methodology + 50% Buffer	<p>10,800 new homes by 2040 would meet the Council’s housing needs based on the current standard method, with an additional 50% buffer which could help to drive local economic growth or address unmet need from elsewhere</p> <p>This scenario may also require around 40 hectares of employment land (based on maintaining existing employment allocations) and around 20,000 m² of new retail floorspace (based on Retail Study adjusted for housing growth)</p>

Figure 15: Growth Scenarios for the Rochford Local Plan

Why is it important to plan for the right amount of growth?

Planning for the right amount of growth is at the heart of a sustainable Plan.

Rochford District is an area with known housing challenges, many of which have been exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Our housing register has grown by 20% in the last year up to around 1,000 households and the ratio between house prices and local earnings is amongst the least affordable in the country. When new homes are built, around a third of these homes are built as affordable, typically discounted by at least 20%. By taking a positive approach to growth locally, we can help to create a more inclusive housing market, avoiding the emergence of housing-related issues including homelessness and concealed households, such as where younger people are forced to remain or return to their family home far longer than they would desire.

Planning for growth can also have enormous economic advantages, in terms of the local jobs created through the construction phase, the local spend created through population growth and new local premises which allow both local firms to grow and for other firms to locate in the area.

We recognise that planning for the right amount of growth is a balance, taking into account the capacity of both infrastructure and the environment. There is a clear and important relationship between the strategy within a Local Plan and the infrastructure that we can deliver, particularly as key 'big ticket' infrastructure such as transit systems, new roads or country parks would likely require funding from developments. Similarly, there is increased emphasis on development providing net gains for the environment and the planning for the right amount of growth in the right places can deliver environmental measures that secure improvements for flood risk, habitats, air quality and open spaces.

Figure 16 sets out some general assumptions about the level of growth that would be required to deliver different types of infrastructure, however the exact numbers will depend on a site-level assessment of infrastructure needs, taking into account existing infrastructure capacity.

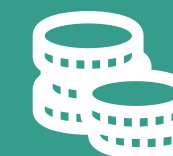
Every 10 homes built in an area, on average, generates:



3 homes available in
an affordable tenure



9 local jobs (created
or sustained)



£250,000 in local
spend per year from
new residents

In general, there are advantages to concentrating growth in fewer but larger areas as doing so can provide the "critical mass" needed to secure transformational new infrastructure, such as secondary schools, link roads or new transport systems.. The Government have also been clear in their funding decisions that they will help fund infrastructure where it is supporting their growth ambitions. It is also possible for this infrastructure to be funded by a number of smaller developments 'pooling together' towards common infrastructure. However, a strategy that relies on smaller sites, or sites spread more evenly through the District, may also be challenging to fund new infrastructure because developments smaller than 50 homes will typically not pay towards new infrastructure and the funds that are collected may be spread across too wide an area to be impactful.

Figure 16 – Typical Levels of Growth Required to Deliver Infrastructure

Type of Infrastructure	New houses required
Primary School	1,500+
Secondary School	4,500+
Healthcare Centre	3,500+
Open Space (amenity / play space)	500+
Local Centre	1,000+

Standards taken from Essex County Council Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions and other best practice

Spatial Strategy Options

At the heart of our new Local Plan needs to be a strategy that binds together our policies in a way that delivers the vision and objectives of our District and its individual settlements. A number of strategy options have been identified that could form the basis of the plan's approach to growth over the next 20 years and beyond.

The options identified are:

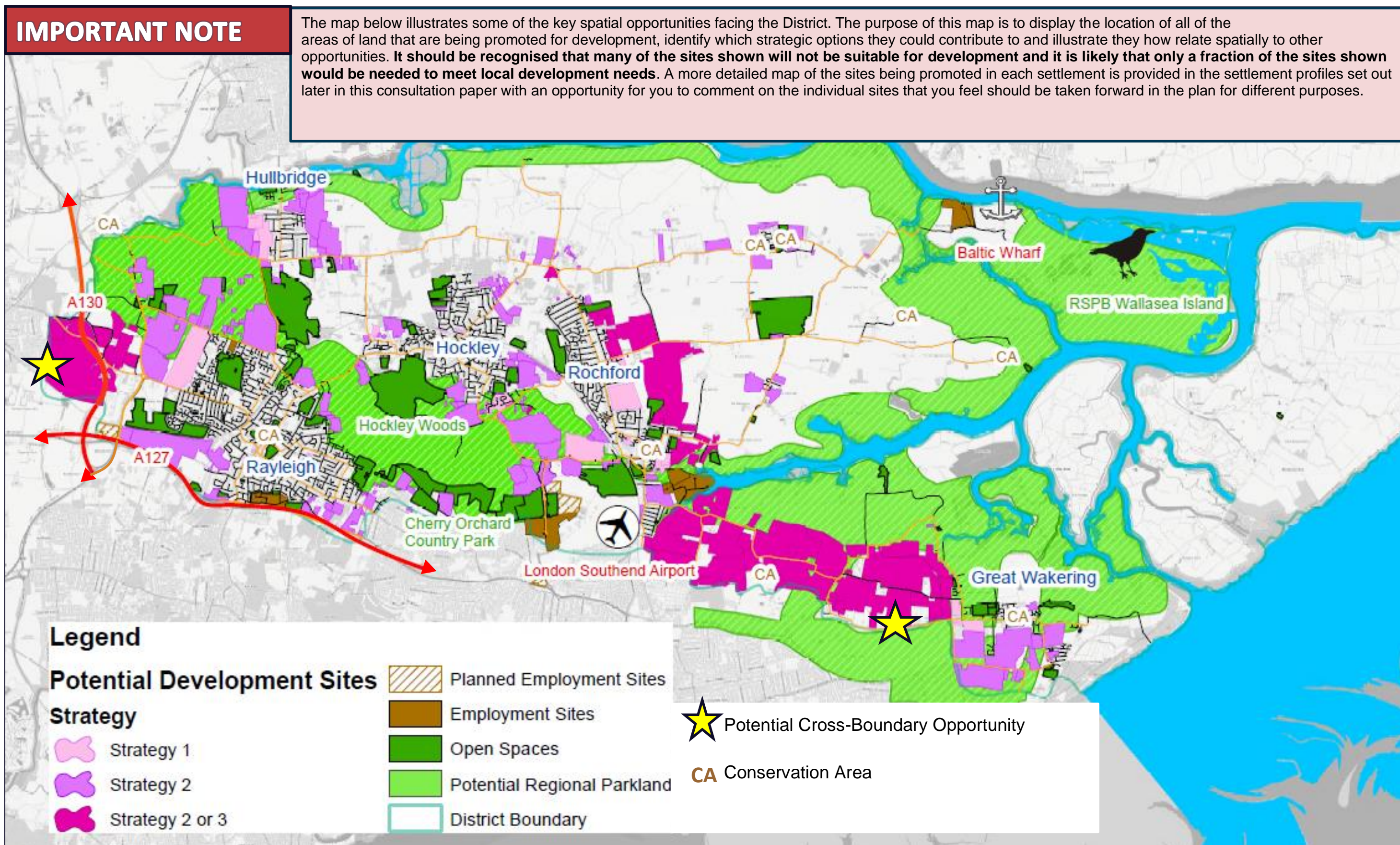
- **Strategy Option 1: Urban Intensification**
- **Strategy Option 2: Urban Extensions**
 - » Option 2a: Focused on main towns
 - » Option 2b: Dispersed to all settlements based on Settlement Hierarchy
- **Strategy Option 3: Concentrated growth**
 - » Option 3a: Focused west of Rayleigh
 - » Option 3b: Focused north of Southend
 - » Option 3c: Focused east of Rochford
- **Strategy Option 4: Balanced Combination**

A Strategy Option Topic Paper has been prepared to summarise how these options were identified. This Topic Paper can be found at <https://rochford.oc2.uk>

Figure 17 identifies how these strategy options relate to the sites that have been promoted for development as part of the new Local Plan, alongside other key spatial opportunities. It should be recognised that many of the sites shown will not be suitable for development and it is likely only a small percentage of the sites shown would be needed to meet local development needs.



Figure 17: Map of Key Strategy Options



STRATEGY OPTION 1: URBAN INTENSIFICATION

Option 1 is the minimum expectation of national policy and is likely to be required within every strategy option. This option would be to make best possible use of our existing planned developments, previously developed (brownfield) land and other under-utilised land, such as vacant buildings and contaminated land. A strategy based on urban intensification could also include taking a more permissive approach to higher densities in suitable locations (such as town centres and near stations). We expect that at least 4,200 homes will be built over the next 10 years under this option and our Urban Capacity Study suggests up to a further 1,500 homes could be built through a mixture of maximising the capacity of planned housing developments and taking a more permissive approach to higher densities in urban areas.

PROS +

- This strategy requires the least use of greenfield land and, by definition, would involve no further release of land from the Metropolitan Green Belt
- This strategy makes best use of where existing services are located, including sustainable transport links and is the least dependent on the provision of new infrastructure to achieve sustainable development
- This strategy can support existing businesses and the changing role of town centres by increasing their catchment population and supporting living neighbourhoods
- This strategy can support regeneration and revival of existing areas by directing development and investment into urban areas and infrastructure, rather than the relatively more viable sites on greenfield land on the edge of settlements

CONS -

- This strategy will not be able to meet our growth needs in full, which is unlikely to result in a sound plan and risks local people being unable to find or afford the home they need
- This strategy has the least scope for delivering brand new infrastructure and risks overloading existing services in urban areas
- Higher density buildings, such as flats, are relatively rare in our urban areas, particularly our historic centres, and may be damaging to local character in some places
- Urban and brownfield sites are generally less viable than greenfield sites, and therefore may be less reliable and less able to contribute towards funding infrastructure improvements

This strategy could deliver...



Existing planned housing developments, including sites with planning permission, sites allocated in our current plan and other urban developments, involving around 4,200 new homes of which at least 800 will be affordable



Existing planned employment developments, including sites with planning permission and existing allocated sites, and new high quality space at Airport Business Park and Michelin Farm



Potentially a further 1,500 homes by allowing higher density developments in urban areas and on existing planned housing sites



Capacity improvements to existing schools and healthcare centres, new on-site open spaces and sports facilities



Limited opportunities to deliver transformational new infrastructure as many of the developments would fall below the 50-home threshold to contribute to new infrastructure

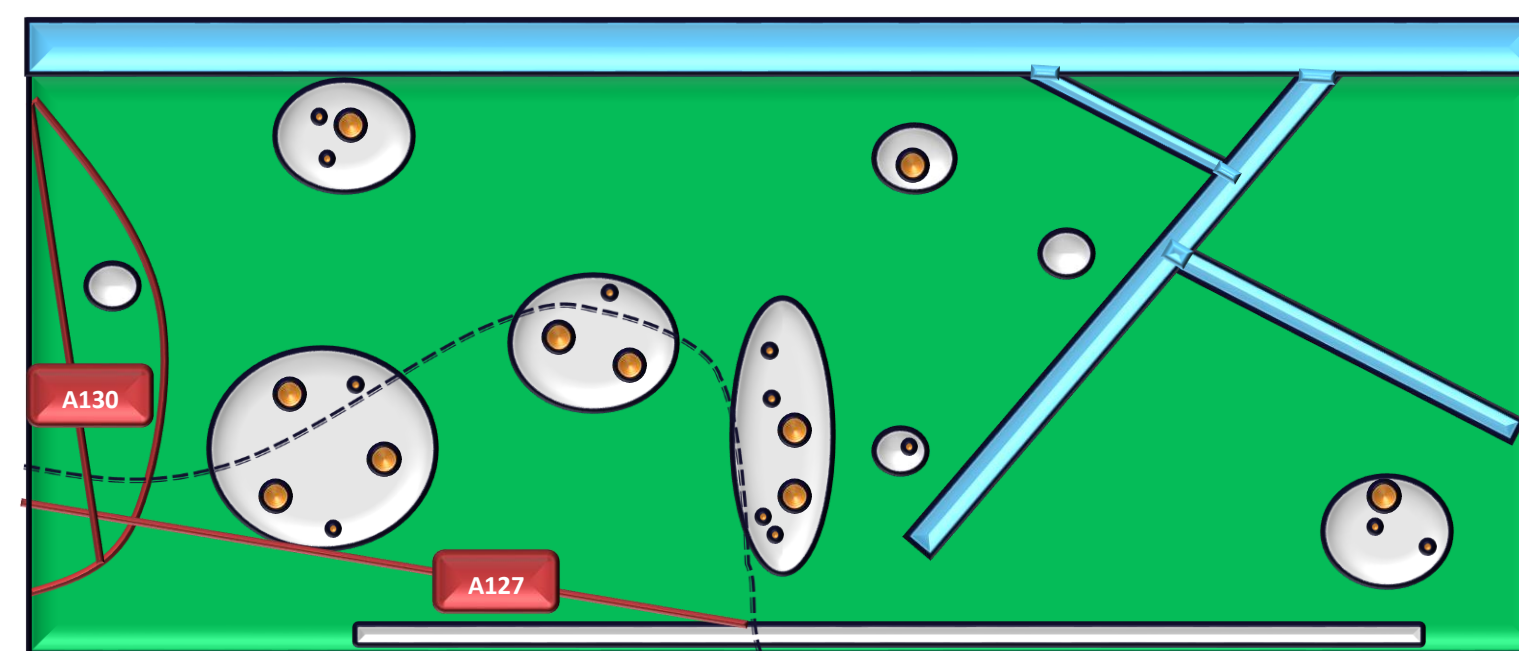


Figure 18: Indicative Illustration of Strategy Option 1 - Urban Intensification

STRATEGY OPTION 2: URBAN EXTENSIONS

Option 2 would be to spread development across a number of development sites of between 10 and 1,500 homes adjoining existing towns or villages. Option 2 has two sub-options which are,

- Option 2a: Urban extensions focused in the main towns
- Option 2b: Urban extensions dispersed to settlements based on hierarchy

This option would result in a variety of site size and location. Larger development sites could need to deliver their own services such as open spaces, shops and basic medical facilities.

Smaller sites may need to pool together to deliver new infrastructure.

PROS +

- Through larger sites and effective co-ordination of smaller sites, this strategy would have a reasonable 'critical mass' to be able to deliver new infrastructure in the form of primary schools, basic healthcare facilities, open spaces, shops and other community facilities
- This strategy provides an opportunity for smaller local developers to contribute to meeting local housing needs, spreading the risk of housing supply across a number of builders and containing more of the economic benefits of growth locally
- By involving a greater number of developers and site, this strategy may deliver more quickly and generate more diversity both in terms of design and uses
- This strategy is relatively more likely to be able to attract external investment into new infrastructure and community facilities than Strategy Option 1

CONS -

- This strategy may be relatively less able to deliver transformational new infrastructure, such as link roads, new bus routes or secondary schools, as there may be insufficient growth in one area to co-ordinate the necessary funding
- This strategy may create a cumulative population increase that it is more challenging to support with new infrastructure given the population growth would be spread across a wider area and relying on a greater number of sites, adding complexity and risk
- This strategy would involve significantly growing some existing settlements to a scale that may change their character and function in a way that existing residents do not agree with
- This strategy would require release of Green Belt land across a number of locations which may be more noticeable and harder to mitigate

This strategy could deliver...



An additional 3,000 – 5,000 homes relative to Option 1 of which at least 1,000-2,000 would be affordable



Up to 3 new primary schools, new medical facilities, open spaces, employment areas and transport connections



Opportunities to support rural services by directing some growth to villages with rural shops, schools or community facilities

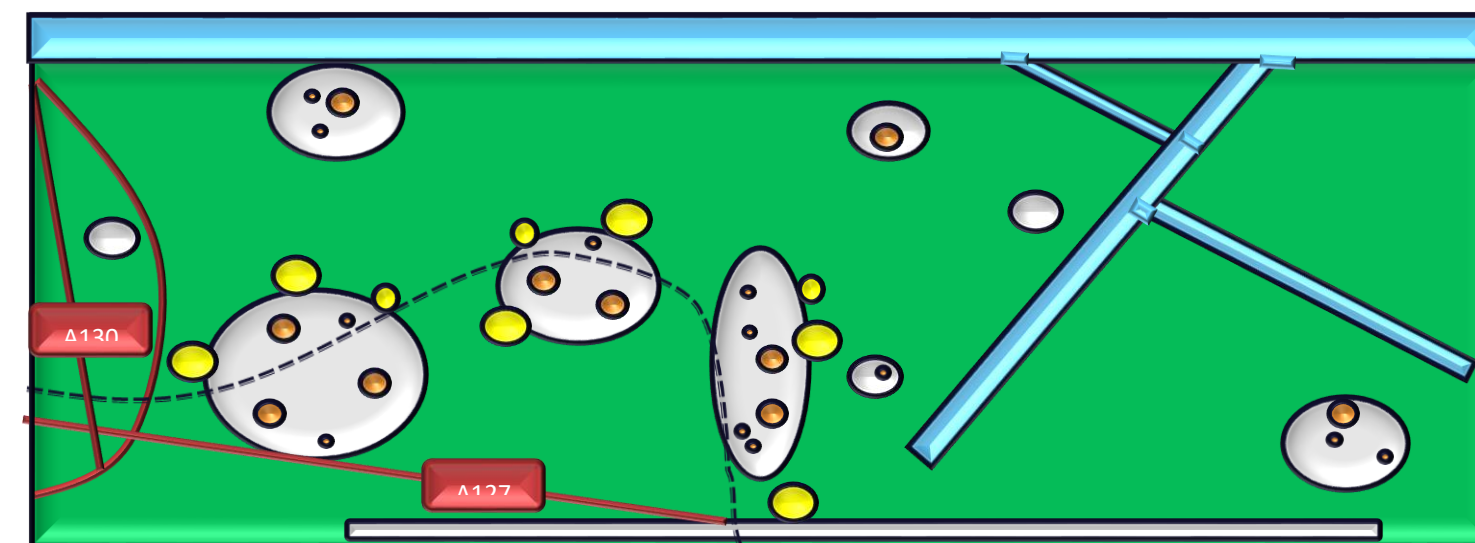


Figure 19: Indicative Illustration of Strategy Option 2a – Urban extensions focused in main towns

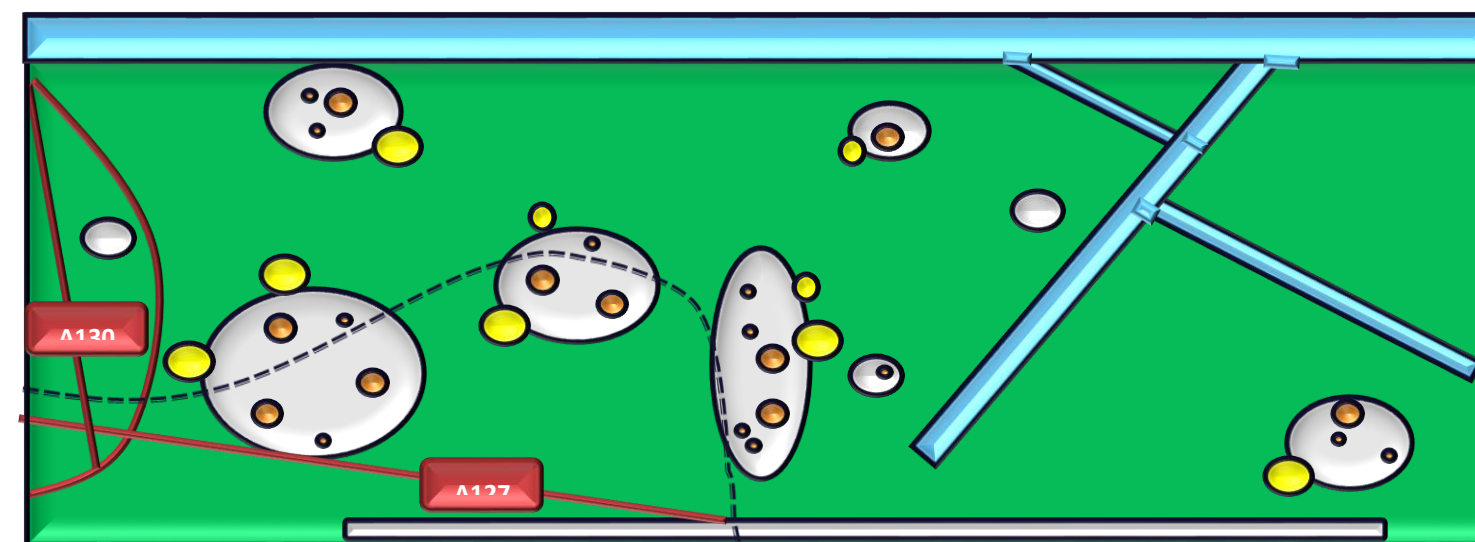


Figure 20: Indicative Illustration of Strategy Option 2b – Urban extensions dispersed to settlements based on settlement hierarchy

STRATEGY OPTION 3: CONCENTRATED GROWTH

Option 3 would be to concentrate growth in one or more locations of 1,500+ dwellings. Option 3 has three sub-options based on locations where there is likely to be sufficient land being promoted to deliver this scale of growth in a co-ordinated way:

- Option 3a: Concentrated growth west of Rayleigh
- Option 3b: Concentrated growth north of Southend
- Option 3c: Concentrated growth east of Rochford

This option could result in a new neighbourhood the size of a large village or small town. This neighbourhood would require major new infrastructure, including at least one primary school, a range of healthcare facilities, open spaces, employment spaces and potentially its own neighbourhood centre. It may also be possible to deliver a secondary school above 4,500 dwellings.

PROS +

- This strategy would provide the 'critical mass' needed to fund transformative new infrastructure, including new sustainable transport routes, link roads, schools, employment spaces and strategic green spaces, placing the least strain on existing infrastructure and services out of each of the options
- Development at this scale is more likely to attract external investment from the likes of Government to deliver strategic infrastructure improvements
- Development at this scale could deliver a series of unique neighbourhoods which are individually distinctive and which offer a diverse range of housing, jobs and characters
- There may be opportunities to deliver cross-boundary growth around Wickford (for Option 3a) and Southend (Option 3b) which could deliver even greater levels of infrastructure

CONS -

- This strategy would be more complex than Options 1 or 2 and require significant work over a period of time to co-ordinate delivery across multiple landownerships and phases of development
- This strategy would place "all of our eggs in one basket" meaning if the option does not come forward as expected it could undermine the delivery of the plan as a whole
- The benefits of growth for existing communities and businesses will not be spread across the District, and this strategy could deliver relatively little in the way of infrastructure improvements within existing settlements including villages
- This strategy would require a significant redrawing of our Green Belt boundary

This strategy could deliver...



An additional 3,000 – 5,000 homes relative to Option 1 of which at least 1,000-2,000 would be affordable



Up to 1 new secondary school, 3 new primary schools, new medical facilities, open spaces, employment areas and new link roads



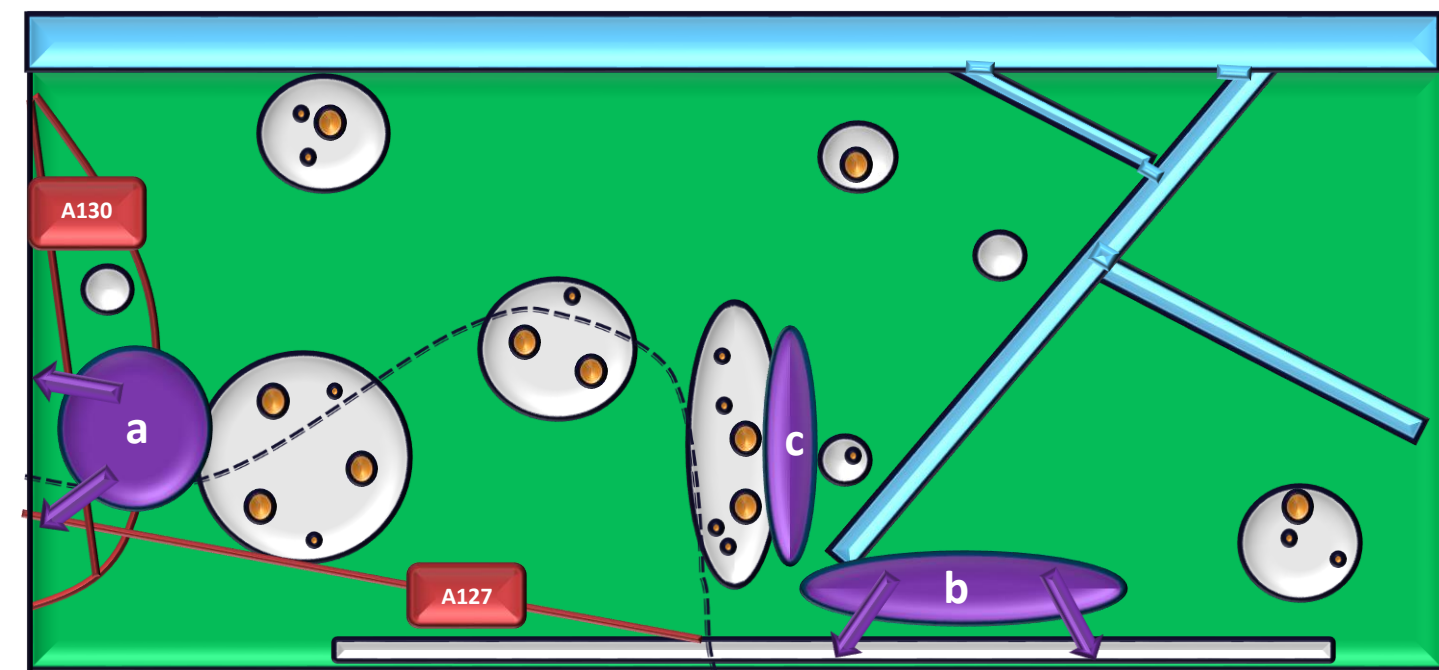
Greater opportunities to attract Government investment into existing and new infrastructure as part of the Thames Estuary Growth Area



Greater opportunities to work with Basildon, Castle Point, Essex and Southend Councils to co-ordinate funding towards transformational transport infrastructure projects such as a new inter-urban rapid transit system or new link roads



Opportunities to deliver the eastern extent of the South Essex Estuary Park forming a new coastal country park in the east of the District



STRATEGY OPTION 4: BALANCED COMBINATION

This strategy would see a mix of the previous 3 options based on the most appropriate balance to meet development needs. This could mean making best use of urban capacity (Option 1), building one or two large growth areas (Option 3) and a number of smaller urban extensions (Option 2).

Depending on the exact combination of strategies, this option could deliver a range of major new infrastructure, including link roads, secondary school, multiple primary schools, a range of healthcare facilities, open spaces and employment spaces.

PROS +

- This strategy could deliver many of the infrastructure advantages of both Option 2 and 3 by using Option 3 sites to deliver transformational new infrastructure, and directing Option 2 sites to the locations where infrastructure capacity can be most easily increased to support growth
- This strategy may spread some of the risk of maintaining a supply of housing by continuing to deliver housing prior to concentrated growth areas becoming available later in the plan period
- This strategy spreads the risk of under-delivery in Option 3 by having a more diverse mix of sites and locations
- This strategy spreads the benefits of growth across the District, including to where growth is needed to sustain existing services (such as rural shops and primary schools) or provide new services (such as new public transport)

CONS -

- This strategy would remain complex and require significant co-ordination to deliver, particularly in relation to new infrastructure in locations where multiple sites are expected to contribute to funding this
- This strategy retains some of the risk of Option 3 should larger growth areas still be relied upon to deliver a significant proportion of development needs
- This strategy would require release of land from the Metropolitan Green Belt that would be noticeable and may require significant mitigation
- Urban extensions to existing settlements may still grow existing settlements in a way that changes their character or which places stress on existing services

This strategy could deliver...



An additional 3,000 – 5,000 homes relative to Option 1 of which at least 1,000-2,000 would be affordable



Up to 1 new secondary school, 3 new primary schools, new medical facilities, open spaces, employment areas and new link roads



Greater opportunities to attract Government investment into existing and new infrastructure as part of the Thames Estuary Growth Area



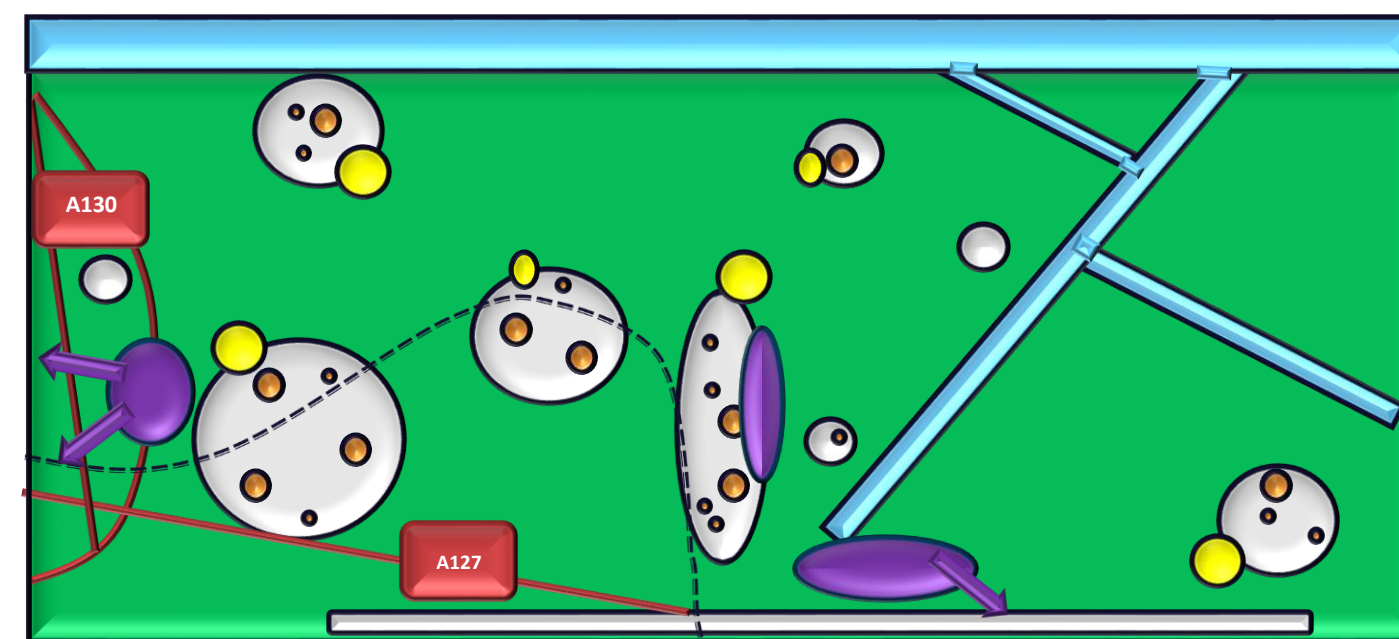
Greater opportunities to work with Basildon, Castle Point Essex and Southend Councils to co-ordinate funding towards transformational transport infrastructure projects such as a new inter-urban rapid transit system or new link roads



Opportunities to support rural services by directing some growth to villages with rural shops, schools or community facilities



Opportunities to deliver the eastern extent of the South Essex Estuary Park forming a new country park in the east of the District



In this section, each strategy option has been presented equally but with commentary relating to the overall ‘pros’ (opportunities) and ‘cons’ (challenges) that a strategy of the nature suggested is likely to face. It is recognised that each strategy performs differently against our vision and objectives and a balanced judgement of the consequences of each strategy in terms of meeting our needs for housing, jobs and infrastructure, growing and diversifying our local economy and protecting and enhancing our natural and built environments will be required when selecting a strategy.

Figure 23 sets out how the identified strategy options perform in sustainability terms as set out in the draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). A full appraisal of each option is set out in the draft IIA available at <https://rochford.oc2.uk>

Overall, Option 4 is noted by the IIA or its potential to perform better against other options in relation to the socio-economic IIA themes. This predominantly relates to the flexibility provided in a tailored approach, essentially combining the best performing aspects of each individual approach (urban intensification, urban extensions and concentrated growth). The potential for significant negative effects has been identified under all options except for Option 1, this is due to likely loss of high-quality soil resources and encroachment on the countryside as well as potential landscape impacts. Significant positive effects are considered likely for all options except for Option 1, this relates to significant delivery of new homes and supporting infrastructure, including new open spaces, to support a growing population, meeting housing needs in full (whilst risks are associated with concentrated growth options) and delivering new employment areas. Uncertain effects have also been identified across the IIA themes, relating to the uncertainty of housing supply under some options and the potential accessibility of some locations and reflecting the need to understand more precise locations of development as the new Local Plan develops.

		Option 1	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 3c	Option 4
Population and communities	Rank	4	3	2	4	4	4	1
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Rank	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Positive
Economy	Rank	4	3	3	2	2	2	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Transport and movement	Rank	3	2	3	1	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Landscape	Rank	1	3	4	2	5	5	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change	Rank	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Biodiversity	Rank	1	3	3	2	2	2	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Environmental quality	Rank	1	2	2	3	3	3	3
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Natural resources	Rank	1	4	4	3	3	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative

Figure 23: Sustainability Appraisal of Strategy Options (AECOM, 2021)

Q6. Which of the identified strategy options do you consider should be taken forward in the Plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q7. Are there any reasonable alternatives to these options that should be considered instead? [Please state reasoning]

QUESTIONS



Spatial Themes

We recognise that there is far more to good planning than simply housing and jobs. This section of the consultation paper considers a range of themes that together lead to sustainable development. These themes include important issues relating to our society, our economy and our environment. Each theme within this section sets out a range of facts, challenges and opportunities relating to planning for that theme, alongside a number of questions that seek your feedback on how you feel we should be planning for that theme.

A series of topic papers have been produced in order to set out useful background information relating to these spatial themes. These topic papers can be found at:

<https://rochford.oc2.uk>

Throughout this section you are encouraged to consider how the theme could be supported by your preferred Strategy Option from the previous section.

Q8. Are there any key spatial themes that you feel we have missed or that require greater emphasis? [Please state reasoning]

QUESTIONS





Figure 24: Diagram showing key spatial themes

Climate Change and Resilient Environments

Our local plan is one of the most important tools we have to support our transition to a more sustainable and resilient District, including in relation to flooding, coastal change and protecting landscapes.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires plans to include policies designed to ensure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. National policy makes it clear that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures.

There are a number of ways in which the planning system can contribute to creating a more resilient natural environment, including in relation to climate change. Examples are:

- Ensuring that the distribution of new development is safe for its lifetime and encourages use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling, and reduces reliance on private car
- Increasing the supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, by identifying suitable areas for energy creation and ensuring new development is sustainably built
- Promoting low carbon and energy efficient development, including ensuring buildings are energy efficient for their lifetime
- Encouraging responsible use of land in areas at risk of flooding and coastal change, and consider ways that development can help to deliver net gains for flood risk alleviation

Flooding is a relevant issue for Rochford, with much of the land along our coast and rivers being at more than 1-in-1000 year risk of flooding. National policy requires a sequential approach to be taken to development, prioritising areas at least risk of flooding. Where appropriate, development will need to deliver sustainable drainage systems, such as ponds, swales and soakaways. A Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared which will need to inform the plan's strategy in relation to the use of land in areas at risk of flooding. Once a strategy has been selected, a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk

Relevant Plan Objectives: ALL

Assessment will be required to consider the specific flood risk and mitigation of potential development sites.

In addition to flood risk from tidal, fluvial and other sources, Rochford is a district that is likely to be subject to a coastal change as a result of climate change. The Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan identifies parts of Rochford's coast which are subject to no active intervention or managed realignment, including around Wallasea Island and Paglesham. The plan will need to consider the implications of coastal change over a long period of time and ensure that current and future communities are. Plans are able to identify Coastal Change Management Area where rates of coastal change are likely to be significant over the next 100 years and restrict development which takes place in these areas.

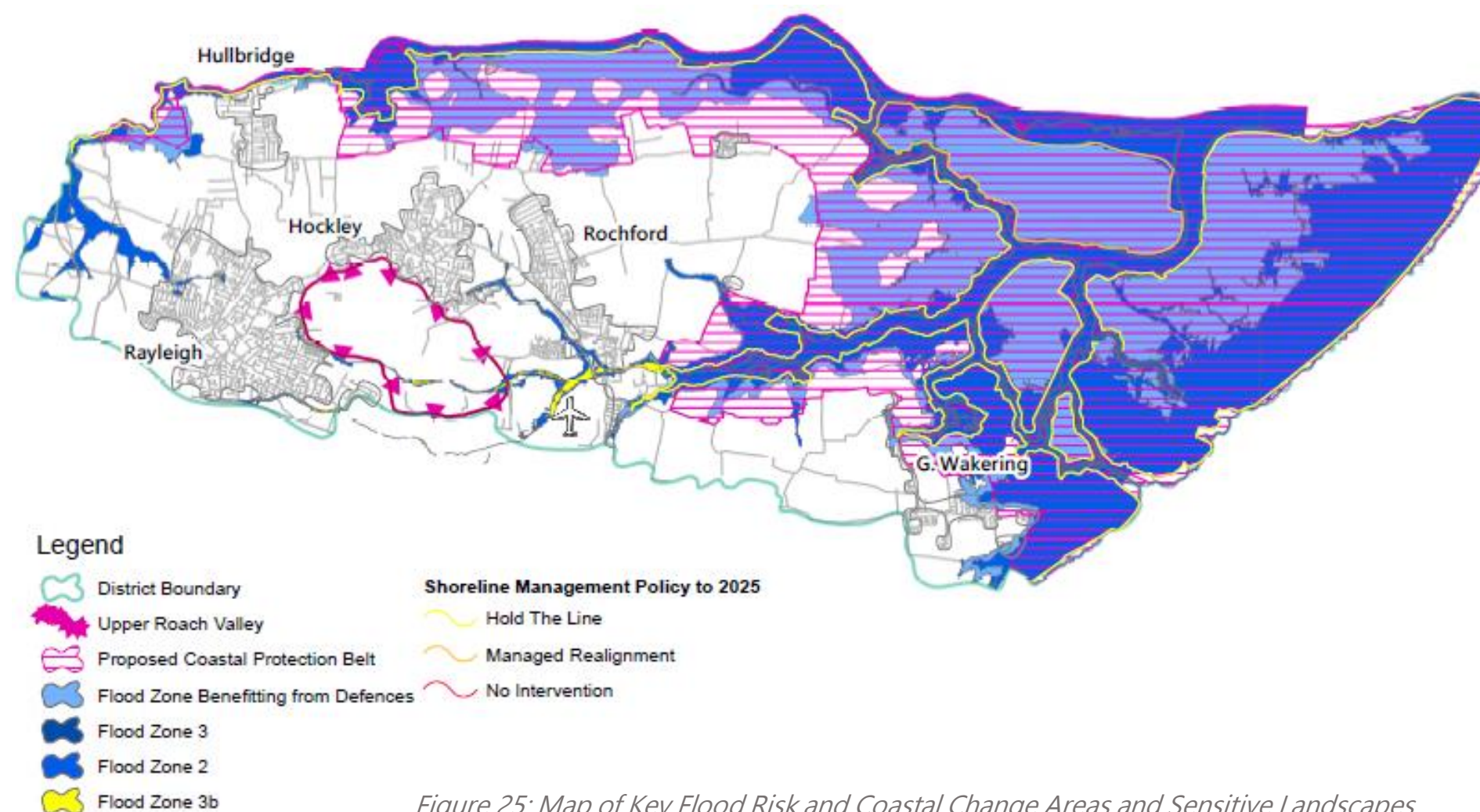


Figure 25: Map of Key Flood Risk and Coastal Change Areas and Sensitive Landscapes

There are a number of ways in which the planning system can encourage buildings to be built to low carbon and energy efficient standards. The Planning and Energy Act 2008 allows plans to set minimum standards for new housing that exceed the basic Building Regulations up to equivalency with Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and up to no limit for commercial development. Our current plan requires commercial buildings to be built to the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard, subject to viability. The same Act also allows plans to require a proportion of energy used in a development to be sourced from renewable or low-energy sources. The Government is considering introducing a Future Homes Standard which aims to mandate net-zero carbon homes by 2050, with 'zero carbon ready' homes expected to be standard by 2025.

National policy also requires plans to facilitate the sustainable use of minerals. Whilst minerals planning is undertaken by Essex County Council, the Council's new Local Plan will need to complement minerals planning policies, including the application of Minerals Safeguarding Areas and Minerals Consultation Areas within the District.

More broadly, a resilient natural environment will also require protection and enhancement of important local landscapes over the course of the plan period and beyond. National policy is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that plans should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important that plans identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Rochford is not home to any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Parks, but nonetheless has areas of locally special landscape character. These include the Coastal Protection Belt and Upper Roach Valley. We have prepared a [Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity Study](#) to consider the landscape character and sensitivities of different areas. The Study suggests that the Coastal Protection Belt should continue to be protected for its special coastal landscape value, subject to a modest redrawing. The Study also identifies the Upper Roach Valley area as the most sensitive non-coastal landscape in the District. This Study will be an important source of evidence in considering the particular sensitivities of different landscapes and how landscape should be managed through the plan, including when determining where development should be located.

Non-exclusive options for addressing climate change and resilient environments through the plan, include:

1. Ensuring that the Plan strategy takes a sequential approach to flood risk including to locate vulnerable development away from areas at greater risk of flooding where possible
2. Supporting the delivery of on-site sustainable drainage systems to ensure that new developments do not worsen flood risk elsewhere and, where possible, lessen the risk

3. Requiring certain new developments to source a proportion of their energy from renewable and low-carbon sources
4. Designating appropriate locations within the District for low-carbon and renewable energy generation projects
5. Identifying areas with special landscape character, such as the Coastal Protection Belt and Upper Roach Valley, and protecting them from inappropriate development through the plan
6. Ensuring the plan supports the principles of the Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan, including to consider designating coastal change management areas and ensuring the distribution of new development is compatible with planned coastal change
7. Requiring new development to be carbon neutral wherever possible, including as a first step requiring new houses to be built to an energy efficiency standard equivalent to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and new commercial developments to be built to BREEAM Excellent standard, and moving towards any net-zero standards introduced by Government at the earliest opportunity

Q9. Do you agree we should take a sequential approach to flood risk and coastal change in our plan, locating development away from areas at risk of flooding and coastal change wherever possible? How can we best protect current and future communities from flood risk and coastal change? [Please state reasoning]

Q10. Do you agree that the Coastal Protection Belt and Upper Roach Valley should be protected from development that would be harmful to their landscape character? Are there other areas that you feel should be protected for their special landscape character? [Please state reasoning]

Q11. Do you agree we should require development to source a percentage of their energy from low-carbon and renewable sources? Are there other opportunities in the District to supply low-carbon or renewable energy?

Q12. Do you agree we should require new development to achieve energy efficiency standards higher than building regulations? What level should these be set at? [Please state reasoning]

Q13. How do you feel the plan can help to support the local generation of low-carbon and renewable energy? Are there locations where you feel energy generation should be supported? [Please state reasoning]



Place-making and Design

Rochford is a visually diverse area with a unique mix of historic, natural and urban environments that help to create a distinctive local vernacular and character.

The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve (NPPF, Para 124). National policy is clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development which helps to create better places in which to live and work. National policy further requires plans to be clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, with effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

However it is important that the plan considers the issues that make a successful place beyond just the design of buildings and spaces. Successful place-making within both our existing and future communities will need to be at the heart of our vision for the District, alongside the vision for our individual towns and villages.

Successful place-making relies on a range of different factors coming together to create places that are **attractive, vibrant** and **safe**.

To help direct these different factors, the Plan could include a place-making charter, setting out a number of key principles for how development is expected to come forward in a way that contributes positively to its setting and wider environment. This place-making charter could form the basis for specific design policies, alongside one or more design guides (or codes) that set rules for how different parts of the District are expected to develop. These policies, guides and codes could set strict rules for some types of development in more sensitive locations, whilst allowing greater innovation and freedom for other forms of development in other locations. The scale and geography of these design guides and codes will be important to their success; a single guide could be prepared to cover the entire District, or we could prepare individual design guides and codes for specific settlements or areas.

Relevant Plan Objectives: ALL

A PLACE-MAKING CHARTER FOR ROCHFORD

New development will be required to...

- ✓ Deliver high-quality design and architecture in all buildings, streets and spaces;
- ✓ Achieve carbon-neutrality and, where possible, carbon negativity by promoting the use of renewables, providing for future methods of transport and minimising energy and water use throughout the lifetime of buildings;
- ✓ Provide opportunities and activities for all groups in the community;
- ✓ Improve health and wellbeing by encouraging active travel and securing access to multi-functional, accessible and connected green and blue spaces, including parks and coastal areas;
- ✓ Encourage low-levels of car reliance, with a focus on prioritising sustainable forms of movement including walking and cycling;
- ✓ Conserve and enhance heritage features and local character;
- ✓ Support the creation of walkable and complete communities through the co-location of community facilities and delivering appropriate and accessible social infrastructure, including for education, healthcare and energy provision;
- ✓ Design developments so they are inclusive and safe for all users at all times;
- ✓ Improve affordability and choice by providing for a mix of typologies and tenures in housing supply;
- ✓ Enable inclusive and sustainable economic growth for different types and size of business, including by enabling ultra-fast connectivity to homes and premises;
- ✓ Avoid worsening air quality and to improve local air quality wherever possible;
- ✓ Ensure all buildings are resilient to the potential future impacts of climate change throughout their expected lifetime;
- ✓ Encourage social innovation and opportunities for community-led projects;
- ✓ Facilitate the responsible long-term management and stewardship of places.

The Council has not prepared any specific evidence on design or place-making to inform its new Local Plan but may need to do so as plan-making progress. However, given the wide range of issues that contribute to successful place-making, it is likely that the evidence base will need to come together as a whole to inform our place-making and design policies, including evidence on housing need, green and blue infrastructure, viability and climate change.

Through the Issues and Options consultation, a number of options were presented including to retain existing District-wide policies and guidance, revise existing District-wide policies and guidance or to develop new area-specific policies and guidance. There was no consensus on a preferred way forward, but a number of common themes were identified including a widely held agreement that good design was central to successful place-making and the need to make best use of industry best practice on design, such as the UK Police Service's *Secured by Design*, Sport England's *Active Design Principles* and the *Essex Design Guide*.

Possible changes to the planning system being considered by Government include placing a much greater emphasis on design in the planning process, with each area having design guides or codes, alongside specific masterplans for large growth areas. Regardless of whether these changes are formally introduced, there are a number of existing and emerging guides that can help to inform the Council's approach to place-making and design, including those listed above, and those below:

- National Design Guide
- National Model Design Code (emerging)
- Manual for Streets

Non-exclusive spatial options for addressing place-making and design through the plan include:

1. Identifying a number of general place-making principles and policies through the plan, including a potential overarching 'charter', that:
 - a. relate to the District as a whole,
 - b. relate to individual settlements, or
 - c. relate to individual areas identified for growth
2. Preparing detailed design guides, codes or masterplans alongside the plan that:
 - a. relate to the District as a whole,
 - b. relate to individual settlements, or
 - c. relate to individual areas identified for growth



Q14. Do you consider that the plan should include a place-making charter that informs relevant policies? Should the same principles apply everywhere in the District, or should different principles apply to different areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q15. Are the principles set out in the draft place-making charter the right ones? Are there other principles that should be included? [Please state reasoning]

Q16a. Do you consider that new design guides, codes or masterplans should be created alongside the new Local Plan?

Q16b. If yes, do you think it is more appropriate to have a single design guide/code for the whole District, or to have design guides/codes/masterplans for individual settlements or growth areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q16c. What do you think should be included in design guides/codes/masterplans at the scale you are suggesting? [Please state reasoning]



Housing for All



Rochford is home to around 87,000 people living in around 35,000 homes. Rochford faces a number of housing challenges, both in terms of affordability and availability. Partly due to low housing completions over the last 15 years, the average local house price has increased by over 70% across this period, with growth in local earnings unable to keep up. This has created a housing market where many local people are priced out of the home they need and younger people in particular are likely to be living at the family home for longer, unable to move on. This is a problem that will continue to be significant if not addressed, as around 25% of our homes contain dependent children, which is above the average for Essex (23%) and England (22%). We also face challenges in delivering the right type of housing: The percentage of over 65s is expected to increase from around 23% to 28% by 2040, which is likely to create a particular demand for different types of housing, both for those in good health and those who may require an element of care.

Above all else, the demand for more housing in Rochford is locally-driven, with existing residents living longer and a large number of concealed households living in others' homes unable to find or afford their own home. Household projections suggest natural growth of around 5,000 households by 2040, with the Government's method suggesting around an additional 50% should be planned for to address affordability issues. Through the plan, we must ensure that current and future generations are able to find suitable, affordable and accessible homes that respond to their needs over their lifetime. Failure to do so will lead to younger people leaving the District to find a home they can afford, and other people living in homes that do not respond to their needs.

National planning policy states that local plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and that planning policies should ensure that a local authority's housing needs is met locally unless there is a strong reason for restricting the overall scale of development in an area, or if the adverse impacts of development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Within this context, the size, type and tenure of different housing needed for different groups in the community needs to be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

Relevant Plan Objectives: 1, 2, 6, 9, 19

(including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes). As set out in previous sections, our current housing need calculated using the standard method is around 360 homes per year. This overall housing need does not, however, take into account the need for different types, size and tenures of housing, which are considered further in this section.

Commentary in this section is largely based on housing market analysis undertaken across South Essex, including the [South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\)](#) and its [Addendum](#). Due to changes in national policy, we will be commissioning an update to the SHMA to gain an up-to-date understanding of the specific housing needs of different groups in the community. However, the figures contained within the SHMA and its Addendum are considered to remain useful for drawing broad conclusions on the likely need for housing of different types, sizes and tenures over the next 20 years.

The Need for Different Types and Sizes of Housing



Figure 27: Summary of Housing Need for Rochford District

The South Essex SHMA assesses the need for different types and sizes of dwellings over the following 20 years. Figure 28 below highlights that the District has a fairly balanced need for housing of all types and sizes, with the greatest need for small and mid-sized semi-detached housing, and smaller detached housing. There is also a not insignificant need for one-bed flats and larger detached and semi-detached housing. Whilst it is recognised that the types and sizes of housing delivered in often market-driven, it is nevertheless important that the plan puts measures in place to ensure the mix of housing delivered in the future actually provides the types and sizes of housing that current and future residents want to live in.

Figure 28 - Need for Housing by Type and Tenure

House Type / Size	Percentage of Overall Need
Detached	30%
3 bed or less	20%
4 bed	9%
5 bed or more	1%
Semi-detached	50%
2 bed or less	23%
3 bed	23%
4 bed or more	4%
Terraced	6%
2 bed or less	3%
3 bed or more	3%
Flat	15%
1 bed	10%
2 bed or more	5%

Rochford has high levels of owner occupation compared to other parts of the country and our private rented sector is relatively small. A private rented sector review was undertaken by the South Essex Housing Group in 2018 and established that growth in private rentals had overtaken owner occupation (+6.1% compared to -5.1%) due to an undersupply of otherwise affordable housing. A number of households in Rochford have been meeting their affordable needs through the private rented sector, whilst it has also become the tenure for frustrated “would be” homeowners, including families with children who cannot afford to buy and are not eligible for social housing. The increased demand for private renting has significantly inflated rents across all South Essex local authority areas including in Rochford. People who are reliant on housing benefit struggle to find accommodation that is within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

To date the private rented sector in South Essex has not contributed in any significant way to new housing supply but been reliant for growth on the conversion of existing owner-occupied stock. Evidence demonstrates that the District is generally unaffordable for first time buyers and those on lower incomes, highlighting the need for additional affordable housing in a range of tenures that meet the needs of income groups including aspirant homeowners. The private rented sector is smaller than the national average and there is an opportunity through the plan to support investors to boost supply where there is interest.

The Need for Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a particular form of housing available to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It is typically available at a discount of around 20% or sometimes more. National policy encourages local authorities to plan for those who require affordable housing, however effective provision is about the right type as well as quantity. There are several different types of affordable housing tenure, the most common being social rented, affordable rented, shared ownership and the new First Homes model. Rochford has a relatively active market of registered social landlords, with 9 present in the District.

The District has a significant need for more affordable housing across all tenures, with the 2017 SHMA Addendum identifying a need for 296 new affordable homes every year, falling to 238 affordable homes after five years. This is a large proportion of our overall housing need, around two-thirds based on the current standard method. As with all housing, we face different levels of demand for different sizes of affordable housing, with around 52% of new affordable home demand being for one-bed homes, with 27% two-bed and 19% three-bed.

The vast majority of our affordable housing is delivered through planning obligations on developments larger than 15 homes, with a relatively modest supply coming from dedicated affordable housing schemes. Our current policy requires 35% of all homes on developments larger to be 15 homes to be affordable. Because of this, it is important to recognise the role of market housing in allowing affordable housing to be delivered. Whilst it may be possible to increase the supply of affordable housing by incentivising the delivery of dedicated schemes, the most effective way of increasing affordable housing delivery is by increasing the delivery of housing overall.

The revised NPPF sets out that planning policies should expect at least 10% of homes on sites larger than ten homes to be available for affordable home ownership. This requirement would form part of the overall affordable housing contribution from a development site having implications on delivery of affordable rented homes.

There are a number of changes on the horizon in relation to planning for affordable housing.

- In May 2020, the Government made a Written Ministerial Statement setting out a framework for a new form of Affordable Housing, known as First Homes. This is intended to deliver discounted (at least 30%) market homes for local people who live or work in the community, struggling to purchase a home at market prices. Eligibility will include first-time buyers and key workers. Moving forward, First Homes will need to make up 25% of all of the affordable tenures captured through planning obligations with traditional tenures such as affordable rent or shared ownership reducing proportionately.
- The Government has also consulted on longer-term proposals to change the way in which developer contributions are collected. A National Infrastructure Levy is proposed with rates potentially decided by the Government. If introduced, affordable housing would be provided via this Infrastructure Levy, where currently it is provided through Section 106 agreements. Whilst the Levy rate will be set by Government, the prioritising of spending will be decided locally. These proposals may affect affordable housing delivery, depending on how these priorities are set.

The Need for Specialist and Supported Housing

In addition to affordable housing, we also have demand for specialist forms of housing which includes:

- Housing for those with disabilities, e.g., wheelchair friendly and adaptable accommodation
- Housing for young people leaving care
- Housing for people fleeing domestic violence
- Housing for those with drug and alcohol dependencies, or
- Housing for those at risk of becoming homeless

These forms of housing are again often provided by registered providers or other non-profit organisations within supported shared or communal housing schemes.

Other forms of specialist housing are those for older persons who may require health care support due to physical and mental health issues such as dementia, but who are not in need of residential care. Types of older persons accommodation will include sheltered and extra care sheltered housing. Such forms of accommodation are unique from each other and will in every case need to meet the needs and aspirations of residents, with good design, choice of tenure and be in sustainable locations, i.e. near to community facilities and services. Focusing on independence and social inclusion, specialist housing can contribute to the delivery of local health and social care services but will rely on effective joint working between multiple agencies, e.g. housing, health, and voluntary sector, as well as strategic planning.

Our evidence estimates that the additional demand for different types of specialist accommodation for older age groups is around 50 units per year, with the majority being from sheltered accommodation. In addition, the SHMA estimates a required provision of an average of 11 additional bed spaces per year within communal establishments (e.g. care or nursing homes). Whilst an update to the SHMA is planned, it is considered unlikely that the demand for older persons' specialist accommodation will have changed markedly but it will nevertheless be important that the plan provides a strategy to accommodate these needs.

The Need for Rural and Community -Led Housing

People living in rural areas can face housing challenges, particularly with supply and affordability. The NPPF sets out that 'planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs 'and that opportunities should be identified 'for villages to grow and thrive [to] support local services.'

Community-led housing projects are one way that rural communities can bring housing forward to suit their community needs, e.g. size, type, and tenure of housing, however the District's tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries restrict the supply of housing in these locations. Options for addressing the specific needs of rural communities is set out later in this section.

The Need for Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

Self-build housing is where a person is directly involved in organizing and constructing their own home. Custom-build housing is where a person commissions a specialist developer to help to deliver their home to a request specification. These processes enable people to be more

directly involved in meeting their own housing needs, and in so doing, reduce the reliance on the private market. The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 requires local authorities to maintain local registers of builders wishing to acquire suitable land to build their own home, and to permission sufficient suitable plots to meet demand.

This data can be analysed to establish the extent of local demand for this form of housing. **There are currently 83 individuals on the Council's register which is evidence of significant latent demand.**

The Need for Suitably-Sized and Accessible Housing

The Council's current plan previously required all homes to be built to the Lifetime Homes standard and a minimum size. However the Government has legislated that these standards can no longer be enforced and that compliance must instead be sought through Building Regulations, and use of the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), where justified. Authorities may only require adherence to a higher standard than the minimum where they have strong evidence that it is required to respond to an identified need, so the Council would need to justify continuing to use the NDSS in its new plan. The Council currently requires 3% of homes on developments larger than 30 dwellings to be fully wheelchair accessible. This is governed through Part M4 of the Building Regulations. If justified, the Council could seek a higher standard of accessibility for dwellings through mandating that new homes meet the standards set out in Parts M4(2) or M4(3) of the Building Regulations.

Non-exclusive options for addressing our housing needs through the plan include:

1. Meeting our need for different types, sizes and tenures of housing (including affordable housing and specialist housing) by requiring a standard non-negotiable mix of housing to be provided on all housing developments

2. Meeting our need for different types, sizes and tenures of housing (including affordable housing and specialist housing) by requiring a suitable or negotiable mix of housing that is responsive to the type or location of the development
3. Meeting our need for different types, sizes and tenures of housing by allocating specific areas of land for specific types, sizes and tenures of housing, including to:
 - a. Allocate entry-level 'exceptions' sites for first-time buyers
 - b. Allocate specific areas of land for affordable housing
 - c. Allocate specific areas of land for specialist housing
 - d. Allocate specific areas of land for self-build or custom-build housing
4. Taking a market-led approach to housing mix and not specifying the types, tenures and sizes of houses that need to be delivered through a specific policy
5. Requiring all new homes to be built to the Nationally Described Space Standard
6. Requiring all new homes to be built to Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations
7. Requiring a suitable proportion of new homes to be built to Part M4(3) of the Building Regulations

Q17. With reference to the options listed above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best plan to meet our need for different types, sizes and tenures of housing? [Please state reasoning]

Q18. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there areas or sites in Rochford that you feel require a specific approach to housing types, size and tenure? What is required to meet housing needs in these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q19. Are there any other forms of housing that you feel we should be planning for? How can we best plan to meet the need for that form of housing? [Please state reasoning]

The Need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation

National policy also requires plans to make suitable provision for travelling households who have specialist housing needs. The Government has published its Planning Policy for Travelling Sites (PPTS) making it clear how the planning system is expected to provide for the housing needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The PPTS requires local plans to:

- identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets
- identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 of the plan and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan
- consider production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying sites, particularly if a local planning authority has special or strict planning constraints across its area (local planning authorities have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries)
- relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population's size and density
- protect local amenity and environment

The PPTS is also clear that criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is identified need and to provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward.

The Council has prepared evidence to assess its future needs for traveller accommodation, including the [South Essex Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment \(SEGTA\)](#). This assessment identifies a need in Rochford for 18 additional pitches for travellers known to meet the planning definition of a traveller, 1 additional pitch for unknown travellers and up to 11 additional pitches for those that fall outside the planning definition but

nevertheless have identified specialist housing needs. The SEGTA identified that there was no requirement for additional travelling showpeople plots in Rochford.

Figure 29 shows how these needs are distributed over the next 20 years, with it being clear that most of these needs are immediate.

Figure 29 – Need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in Rochford

Years	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-22	Total
	2016-21	2021-26	2026-31	2031-36	2036-38	
Meet planning definition	14	1	1	1	1	18
Unknown	2	0	1	0	0	3 (25% = 1)
Do not meet planning definition	9	0	1	1	0	11

The Council's current policy position on traveller needs is to prioritise the delivery of a new permanent traveller site at Michelin Farm, which has capacity for 15 or more pitches, which would be sufficient to meet most of Rochford's needs. Feedback from the Issues & Options consultation was generally supportive of delivering a permanent site at Michelin Farm in preference to authorising or allocating alternative sites. However, this site is not being delivered as expected and the current landowner has stated that the site is no longer available for this use.

It is important that the plan makes sufficient provision for the permanent accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, and sets suitable criteria for the assessment of any traveller sites that could be allocated through the plan or which come forward unexpectedly during the plan period. Failure to provide sufficient land or permanent pitches for the needs of travelling households would be incompatible with national policy and risks unauthorised sites emerging, often in the Green Belt, where there is no suitable alternative for travelling households. The vast majority of Rochford's identified need arises from unauthorised pitches already present in the District, including a large site at Cherry Hill Farm, Rawreth siting over 10 pitches.

In addition to traveller sites for permanent accommodation, there may also be a need for sites for temporary accommodation for households travelling through the area. The provision of suitable temporary sites can help to reduce the number of seasonal unauthorised encampments by providing an authorised place for households to stop either overnight or for a short period.

Different types of temporary site can include:

- Transit sites - full facilities where Travellers can live temporarily (usually for up to a maximum of three months) – for example, to work locally, for holidays or to visit family and friends.
- Emergency stopping places - more limited facilities.
- Temporary sites and stopping places - only temporary facilities to cater for an event.
- Negotiated stopping places - agreements which allow caravans to be sited on suitable specific pieces of ground for an agreed and limited period of time.

The previous Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (EGTAA) identified a potential need for transit sites in Essex to address temporary accommodation needs of around 45 pitches at peak in a year. A Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site Assessment is now under preparation across Essex which may identify specific locations in the county where one or more transit sites could be located.

Q20. With reference to the options listed, or your own options, what do you think is the most appropriate way of meeting our permanent Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs? [Please state reasoning]

Q21. With reference to the options listed, or your own options, what do you think is the most appropriate way of meeting our temporary Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs? [Please state reasoning]

Q22. What do you consider would need to be included in a criteria-based policy for assessing potential locations for new Gypsy and Traveller sites? [Please state reasoning]

Non-exclusive options for addressing permanent accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople include:

1. Retaining the current policy position of delivering a permanent site at Michelin Farm, if it can be established that this site is deliverable within the plan period
2. Prioritising the regularisation of existing unauthorised sites where any environmental, transport and amenity impacts of doing so are outweighed by the benefits
3. Prioritising the regularisation and expansion of existing unauthorised sites where any environmental, transport and amenity impacts of doing so are outweighed by the benefits
4. Allocating new areas of land for permanent traveller sites, informed by a specific Call for Sites and site assessment process for potential locations for new traveller sites
5. Requiring new strategic housing allocation to set aside areas for permanent traveller sites within the general boundary of any allocation
6. Working with neighbouring authorities to meet permanent traveller accommodation needs in other local authority areas if it is established that needs could be better met by permanent sites located elsewhere

Non-exclusive options for addressing the temporary and transit accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople include:

7. Allocating new areas of land for temporary traveller sites, such as a transit site, informed by a specific Call for Sites and site assessment process for potential locations for a new transit site or temporary stopping place
8. Working with neighbouring authorities to meet temporary traveller accommodation needs in other local authority areas if it is established that needs would be better met by a transit site or temporary stopping place located elsewhere

QUESTIONS

OPTIONS

Employment and Jobs



Rochford District is home to a small but productive local economy, characterised by an entrepreneurial culture and strong start-up business survival rates. There is a high proportion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, from home-based lifestyle businesses to highly-specialised advanced manufacturing firms. A lower-than-average job density indicates that the number of local jobs available to working age residents is relatively low resulting in a strong reliance on out-commuting to destinations such as Chelmsford, Basildon, London and Southend.. The Council's *Economic Growth Strategy* identifies opportunities to grow the economy by supporting small business productivity and encouraging inward investment, as well as harnessing the growth potential of London Southend Airport.

The new Local Plan needs to ensure that enough employment land is available to accommodate the growth ambitions of businesses of all sizes in the District over the next 20 years, as well as to attract new inward investment. In this way, the right planning policies will help provide more local job opportunities for residents and support greater prosperity for Rochford District.

National planning policy emphasises building a strong, competitive and productive national economy by creating the conditions to allow businesses to invest, expand and adapt. The NPPF champions an approach where areas focus on their innate strengths, support innovation and counter weaknesses, whilst policies and decisions must address the locational requirements of different sectors of the economy. Paragraph 81 requires planning policies to:

- set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and
- be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

Relevant Plan Objectives: 3, 4, 5, 9, 16

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF also emphasises the importance of a prosperous rural economy, requiring policies and decisions to accommodate local business needs in a way which is sensitive to the surroundings and prioritises the reuse of existing sites and buildings.

Existing Evidence Base Position

To plan for the spatial requirements of businesses both now and in the future, the Council needs to carefully consider how demand for different types of employment land is projected to change, based on detailed evidence. Two key studies supporting these considerations are summarised below:

- The [South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017 \(EDNA\)](#) provides a comprehensive, evidenced analysis of the economic and employment land opportunities and challenges for South Essex, including employment land requirements to 2036 based on economic modelling of scenarios including growth of London Southend Airport and the relocation of businesses from Greater London to South Essex. Given recent national and global trends, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic but also the impending construction of capacity-building infrastructure projects (e.g. the Lower Thames Crossing), it is anticipated that the EDNA will be refreshed soon to take into account how demand for different types of business space across South Essex may be changing. Nevertheless, the EDNA is considered to remain reliable for drawing general conclusions on the need for different types of employment space.
- **The South Essex Grow-On Space Feasibility Study 2020** assesses the availability and status of 'grow-on space' (i.e. office/industrial units of 150-500m²) across South Essex. Grow-on space is considered a crucial component in growing the local economy, enabling start-up businesses to increase their output, employment and productivity, and consequently commercial provision is closely monitored, to determine whether the market adequately provides this product, or whether public sector intervention (through planning or economic development policy) is required to facilitate small business growth opportunities.

Key findings for the future of employment space in Rochford District are as follows:

- Modelling suggests that over the next 15-20 years, the most likely scenario for employment land demand, given the re-location of industries from London and the growth of London Southend Airport, an additional 7ha of employment land would be required, with the potential to support over 1,200 additional local jobs. This requirement rises to 16ha, when allowing for churn and windfall of existing employment sites (i.e. non-B-class uses having some presence on employment sites).
- Rochford has considerable potential to support business growth and attract inward investment, with strong transport links to London, strategic transport infrastructure at London Southend Airport and the region's ports, a skilled workforce and entrepreneurial culture contributing to this.
- Rochford District has the highest demand/lowest supply of office space across South Essex, with property spending less time on the market than in other areas. Demand for industrial space was similarly high.
- Vacancy rates across both office and industrial space were above average whilst rents were below average, implying overall quality of stock in Rochford District is of secondary/poor quality. In recent years, the supply of vacant industrial and office floorspace has fallen drastically across South Essex, due to rising business occupier demand, but also due to pressure to redevelop employment land for housing.
- Availability of grow-on space within the District is constrained. For workshops in this category, the level of demand is moderate, but quantum of existing stock quite low, and quality of the current supply very low. For offices, demand levels are moderate but again quantum is quite low and quality of available stock very low. If this supply issue is not addressed both in terms of quantity and quality, there is a risk that small business growth will be constrained, and that successful start-ups will relocate elsewhere.

long-established employment estates such as Purdeys and Brook Road Industrial Estates. The Core Strategy also identified a number of new sites for high-quality employment growth, including the Airport Business Park and Arterial Park proposals, both of which are under construction.

The EDNA places Rochford District's existing and future sites allocated for employment use into a number of clusters around namely London Southend Airport; Purdeys; Great Wakering; Wallasea Island; Southend Arterial Road; and Rayleigh, Hockley & Ashingdon. These total 112ha of employment land. However this does not include all sites currently in employment use within the District, as some sites were de-allocated for employment use but remain significant employment centres (i.e. Star Lane Industrial Estate, Rawreth Lane Industrial Estate and Eldon Way Business Park), whilst employment activities are prevalent on a number of other, informal sites, such as a number of farms and former agricultural sites.

Existing Employment Land Provision

The *Core Strategy 2011* set out a number of policies relating to supporting economic growth by allocating employment land, both on existing and new sites. A large number of local jobs are concentrated in

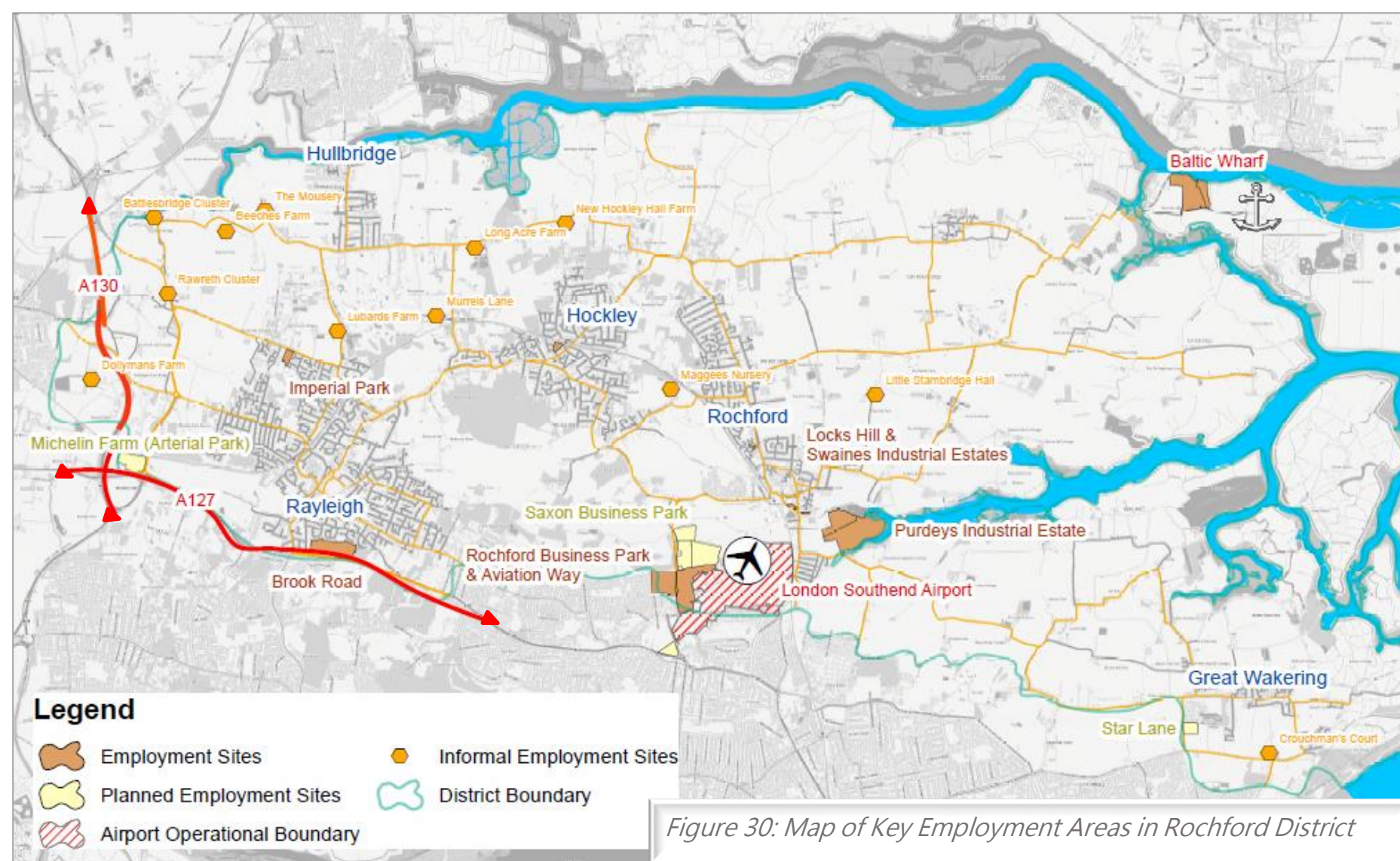


Figure 30: Map of Key Employment Areas in Rochford District

Foundations for Economic Growth

Adoption of the latest digital technologies is vital to ensuring local businesses and residents can access high-speed broadband, mobile and wireless networks, which in turn supports business productivity, economic growth, job creation and social inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the move to remote and hybrid working models and underlined the importance of robust digital infrastructure. Supporting such infrastructure across Rochford has the potential to help existing and new businesses work more effectively and grow their markets, whilst improved connectivity in remote rural areas creates new possibilities for running businesses and rural diversification. It brings opportunities such as the 'internet of things' (the networking of a wide range of devices, buildings and other items) and 'smart cities' (integrating technology to manage assets and provide data), enhancing possibilities for residents and businesses. It also benefits the local population, who may be able to access a wider range of employment opportunities that require less commuting and pressure on transport systems. Improving remote and home-working capabilities and reducing out-commuting in turn has the potential to benefit local high streets and retail by keeping more spending within the District.

Ultra-fast broadband coverage in Rochford is presently limited, with only 8% of homes and business premises benefiting from fibre to the premises (FTTP) and download speeds of 1Gbit/s, the lowest coverage in South Essex. It is vitally important that the new Local Plan lays the foundations for ultra-fast connectivity across the area if economic growth is to be delivered.

As part of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), the Council has been successful in securing a share of £6.9m central Government funding to deploy a Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) network to deploy gigabit-capability fibre broadband to the District's main towns and subsequently to villages and rural areas. With advances in mobile digital technology, it is recognised that securing full coverage of 4G and 5G (along with the required infrastructure) will be increasingly important in supporting a full range of future technologies in every part of the District.

Barriers to Economic Growth

Rochford District had a low unemployment rate of 3.6% in 2020, in comparison to the Great Britain average of 4.6%. However, the skills level of the working age population is below the national average, with the proportions of those having attained NVQ3 Level 3 and above and NVQ Level 4 and above being 57.9% and 33.1% respectively. This is in comparison with national

averages of 46.1% and 43.1% respectively. Full-time workers in the District earned an average weekly salary of £534.10, considerably below the East of England and Great Britain averages of £574.90 and £586.10 respectively. To help Rochford District's population have the opportunity to access high-quality local employment opportunities, and in turn to have a skilled workforce to attract inward investment, it is important to improve skills levels and access to educational opportunities. Such measures could help address known skills shortages in key local sectors, e.g., construction, engineering and advanced manufacturing. This could be achieved indirectly (e.g. supporting high quality broadband infrastructure and transport links to enable residents to learn remotely and access education facilities in neighbouring areas), but also by considering whether sites should be identified for the provision of new further/higher education or training facilities. This is likely to be a longer-term aspiration, and could either be delivered locally or by working in partnership with neighbouring South Essex local authorities to support a more strategic education institution.

It is also important to acknowledge the implications of a number of events that are likely to have a constraining impact on how employment needs can be planned for:

- **Changes to the Use Classes Order** mean that traditional employment uses in B1 (office and light industrial), along with retail uses in classes A1/A2/A3 and community uses in D1/D2, now form a new "Class E", with planning permission not required to move between such uses. This has implications for employment sites, with it being far more difficult to protect sites solely for employment use as buildings may be converted to retail or leisure uses without local authority oversight. This increased flexibility could generate some economic benefits but equally could make it harder to influence the quality and quantity of employment space through planning policies and decisions
- **The COVID-19 Pandemic** has the potential to impact demand for employment sites in a range of ways, with businesses in some sectors (e.g. hospitality and aviation supply chains) being vulnerable to the economic impact of the virus and restrictions, whilst in other sectors (e.g. logistics) there is potential that additional space will be required as a result. The acceleration of remote working practices as a consequence could reduce requirements for traditional office space, but also has the potential to see increased demand for flexible workspace outside major cities such as London, as businesses seek a professional environment closer to home.

In planning for future employment growth in Rochford District, it should be considered whether existing employment site allocations are sufficient to support the needs of businesses now and in the future, taking into account the need to accommodate whether this provides the right sites both to attract new business occupiers to invest, and to enable local businesses, particularly small enterprises and start-ups, to find the right workspace for them in terms of quality and affordability. Providing the right mix of sites will help support wider business growth and investment, and increase employment opportunities in the District.

Non-exclusive options for addressing our employment and skills needs through the plan include:

OPTIONS

1. Meeting future needs by allocating existing and new employment sites for specific employment uses (e.g. offices or light industrial)
2. Meeting future needs by allocating existing and new employment sites for more general employment uses allowing employment sites to flexibly accommodate both employment and other uses
3. Meeting future needs by prioritising the delivery of existing employment land allocations at Saxon Business Park, Michelin Farm (West of A1245) and Star Lane which may be sufficient to meet macro needs based on current evidence
4. Meeting future needs by prioritising the delivery of new employment space alongside any new strategic housing developments (e.g. start-up business centres/co-working spaces or planning for live-work units).
5. Meeting future needs by prioritising the expansion of existing employment sites, where adjacent plots can be easily developed to provide more workspace on established sites.
6. Meeting future needs by prioritising the regularisation of informal employment sites, such as those shown on Figure 30
7. Promoting the intensification of employment uses on existing sites (e.g. encouraging the replacement of open storage yards with business units)

8. Requiring new developments of employment space to set aside a certain proportion for 'start-up' (under 150m²) or 'grow-on' space, to meet identified needs for these types of smaller space
9. Re-allocating and promoting further development on former employment sites still in employment use (e.g. Rawreth Industrial Estate, Eldon Way or Star Lane), to provide extra capacity, potentially in place of allocating new land.
10. Working with partners to secure the delivery of ultra-fast connectivity across the District, including fibre-to-the-premises and mobile networks
11. Working with neighbouring authorities to identify land for higher- or further- education facilities where this would address current and future skills shortages

QUESTIONS

Q23. With reference to the options listed above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best ensure that we meet our employment and skills needs through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q24. With reference to Figure 30, do you consider the current employment site allocations to provide enough space to meet the District's employment needs through to 2040? Should we seek to formally protect any informal employment sites for commercial uses, including those in the Green Belt? [Please state reasoning]

Q25. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to deliver new employment facilities or improvements to existing employment facilities?

Q26. Are there any particular types of employment site or business accommodation that you consider Rochford District is lacking, or would benefit from?

Q27. Are there other measures we can take through the plan to lay the foundations for long-term economic growth, e.g. skills or connectivity?



Future of London Southend Airport

Rochford is home to London Southend Airport, which is a regionally important airport that operates passenger services to destinations primarily in Europe. The Airport also supports an element of freight and cargo movements.

National policy recognises the importance of maintaining a national network of airfields and requires local planning authorities to plan for any large-scale transport facility needs in their areas (including airports). The Aviation Policy Framework (2013) and Beyond the Horizon Report (2018) sets out the Government's ambitions regarding aviation, including:

- To make best use of existing runway capacity
- To ensure the aviation sector makes a significant contribution towards reducing global emissions
- To ensure communities surrounding airports share in the economic benefits and adverse impacts such as noise are mitigated wherever possible
- To limit and where possible reduce the number of people significantly affected by noise
- That Government, local authorities and airports should work together to improve air quality.

It is recognised that a new Government Aviation Strategy is expected in Summer 2021, and future drafts of the new Local Plan will need to reflect its implications for local plan-making.

The Council, jointly with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, recognised the importance of managing the airport's growth through planning in the preparation of the Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP), adopted in 2014. The JAAP was a joint development plan document, given that the Airport sits upon the administrative boundary of both Rochford and Southend-on-Sea. The JAAP itself sets out how the airport is expected to grow by 2031, including how development within the curtilage of the Airport itself will be managed, and how an associated business park, to be located to its west, is expected to come forward. The Airport Business Park will accommodate over 100,000m² of new employment floorspace, alongside supporting uses, and is expected to support around 5,000 additional jobs.

In 2019/20, the Airport served approximately 2.1 million passengers which was an increase of around 43% from 2019. The Airport has long-term plans to increase passenger numbers to 5 million and beyond, which we recognise will need careful management through the planning system. Whilst the Airport's patronage and short-term growth has been deeply affected by economic circumstances both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the loss of Flybe and the withdrawal of Easyjet from its hub base, the Airport remains well-placed to grow in the future, albeit it is recognised that this growth may now take place over a longer period than previously envisaged.



The Airport currently benefits from a planning permission which limits the number of air traffic movements to 53,300 per year with around 37,000 movements taking place in the 2019-20 financial year. Whilst the use of larger aircraft could allow passenger movements to increase to around 6-8m per year, any longer-term growth aspirations beyond 53,300 movements a year would require a new planning framework and agreement. This framework would need to weigh up the various benefits and challenges presented by the Airport's growth, including the strong economic benefits alongside air quality, traffic and noise considerations.

In light of the Airport's growth ambitions, it is important that a proper planning framework is in place to update and/or replace the JAAP as appropriate. The Airport has stated its intention to prepare a masterplan to consider its future ambitions and land requirements. The development of a new planning framework could include preparation of a new JAAP, jointly with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and in consultation with the Airport, Essex County and other stakeholders.

The Airport's growth to date has helped to deliver over 2,000 jobs alongside new infrastructure including a railway station and bus routes, as well as supporting successful funding bids for capacity improvements to the local road network. Further growth of the Airport would be likely to deliver several thousand more jobs and potentially transformational improvements to the local transport network. The current Surface Access strategy identifies that around 35% of patrons arrive using sustainable transport and it is clear any further growth at the Airport would need to be supported by even more ambitious volumes of sustainable transport usage.

The Airport's growth ambitions are likely to have a number of implications for the District which require careful consideration, including:

- The potential for significant job creation alongside improving the economic attractiveness of business space in the District (particularly spaces that are close to the Airport)
- The potential to make the District more attractive to inward investment that may have wider benefits for existing residents
- The potential to improve the access local residents would have to a wider pool of domestic and overseas destinations by air, for both business and leisure

- The potential impact that increased passenger numbers would have on vehicle traffic movements and congestion in the area and the extent to which this can be mitigated by investment in rail and bus linkages
- The potential need for a greater built footprint for the Airport, for both core operations and ancillary activities (such as car parking), and the impact this would have on land availability and amenity in the area
- The potential impact of increased aircraft movements on both noise and air quality and the extent to which any negative implications can be effectively mitigated

Given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the impact of Covid-19 on the aviation industry, it is not currently possible to identify precise land use requirements for the airport's growth. Nevertheless, there are considered to be a number of options available relating to planning for the future of London Southend Airport. These are:

1. To work alongside Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to prepare a new joint Area Action Plan, or masterplan, alongside each authority's respective new Local Plan, that contains a consistent policy approach to managing the Airport's long-term growth ambitions
2. To work alongside Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to ensure that policies contained within both authority's respective Local Plans maintain a consistent policy approach, as far as is practicable, to managing the Airport's long-term growth ambitions
3. To prepare a new Area Action Plan, or masterplan, to manage the Airport's long-term growth ambitions, with suitable partner engagement but without the status of a statutory document
4. To continue to make decisions based on the existing JAAP for the time being, but to consider developing a new Area Action Plan, or masterplan, after the new Local Plan is adopted or when the need arises

Q28. With reference to the options listed above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best manage the Airport's adaptations and growth through the planning system? [Please state reasoning]

OPTIONS

QUESTIONS

Biodiversity

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, national policy requires plans to: identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

It is important that the plan protects and enhances areas within the District that are of importance for wildlife and biodiversity. Similarly, the plan will need to deliver clear net gains for biodiversity through its strategy, helping to mitigate the impacts of growth on the natural environment and promoting the conservation of important species.

Biodiversity designations exist at a variety of levels, including:

- International, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites
- National, including ancient woodlands, national nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Local, including local wildlife and geological sites and local nature reserves

Relevant Plan Objectives: 19, 22

The District is home to a variety of these designations, including many international sites along its coast, an in-land SSSI at Hockley Woods, 14 areas of ancient woodland, 39 local wildlife sites and four local nature reserves. With the exception of local wildlife and geological sites, the designation of these areas is outside of the remit of the plan, but nevertheless their protection through the planning system is mandated by law and in national policy.

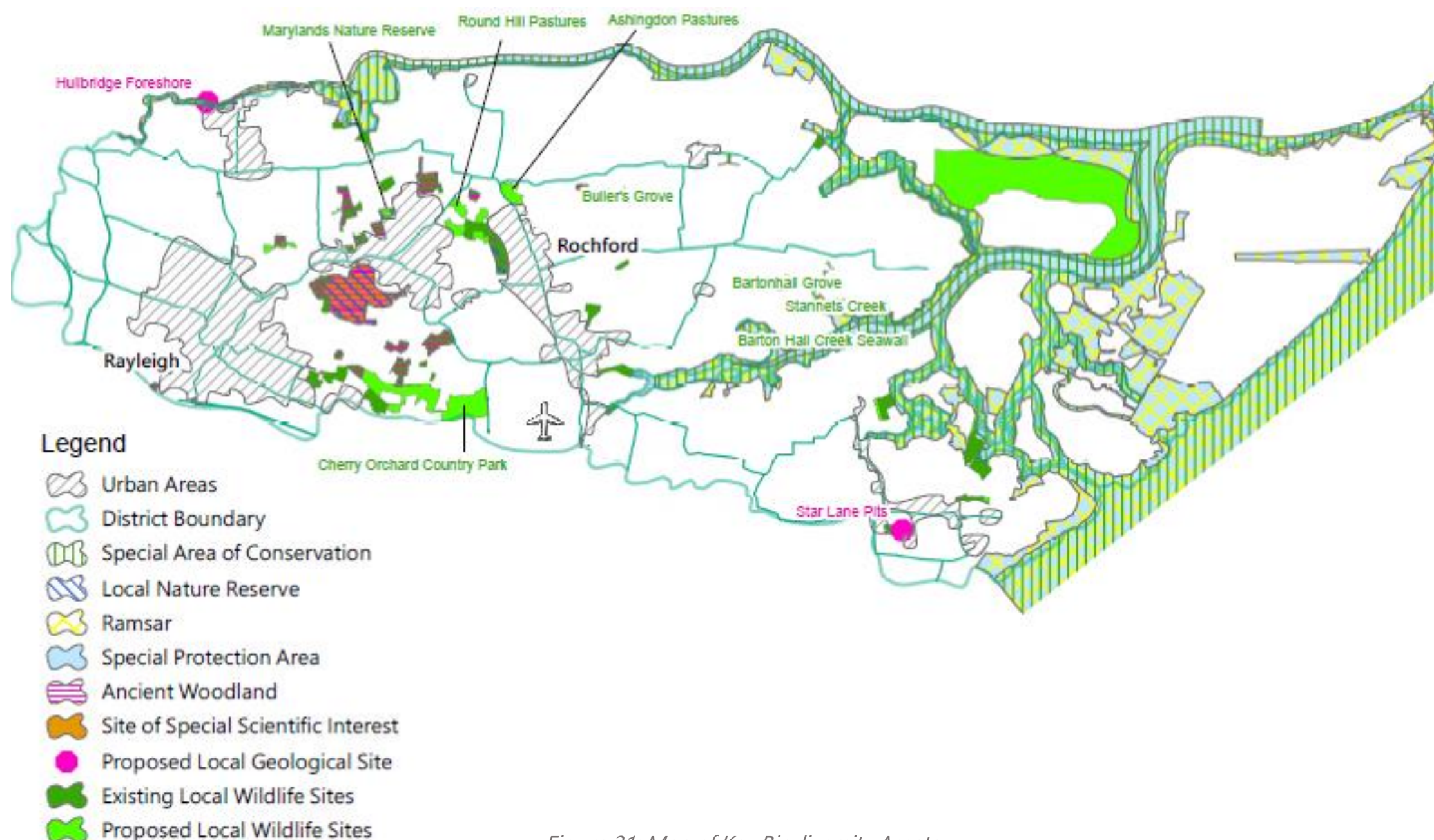


Figure 31: Map of Key Biodiversity Assets

The Council is part of the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) partnership which is a partnership of 11 local authorities in Essex aimed at appropriately avoiding and mitigating the impacts of new housing development on coastal habitats (through increased recreational disturbance). This partnership has already delivered a strategy and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which together aim to deliver a defined mitigation package financed through planning obligations. Over time, it will be important to update this strategy and mitigation package to ensure it takes account of the most up-to-date projections of housing growth across Essex. It is proposed that the plan supports the implementation of the Essex Coast RAMS strategy, and its updates, through an appropriate policy.

We have also prepared a Local Wildlife Sites review to survey our existing local wildlife sites to assess their condition, whilst also considering whether other areas of land are worthy of protection as either a new local wildlife site or local geological site. This review followed a set of criteria as set out in national planning guidance and concluded that 8 new local wildlife sites should be designated, at:

- Cherry Orchard Country Park
- Marylands Nature Reserve
- Buller's Grove
- Bartonhall Grove
- Stannetts Creek
- Barton Hall Creek Seawall
- Ashingdon Pastures, and
- Roundhill Pastures

The review also highlighted that one existing site (Doggetts Pond) had deteriorated in quality and no longer meets the standard for designation. In addition to local wildlife sites, the review also concluded that two areas of land were worthy of designation as local geological sites, at:

- Hullbridge Foreshore
- Star Lane Pits

Other amendments to the boundaries of existing local wildlife sites were also recommended through the review reflecting up-to-date site conditions.

It is recognised that an Environment Bill is expected later in 2021 which will mandate a new approach to securing net gains for the environment, including biodiversity. In anticipation of this

requirement, national policy now requires plans to actively pursue opportunities for biodiversity net gain meaning that over the course of the plan, the natural environment is in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. National guidance suggests that biodiversity net gain from development could be delivered on-site, off-site or a mixture of the two, and could involve measures such as new habitat creation or incorporating wildlife-compatible measures into new developments such as 'swift bricks' or bat boxes. There is therefore now a clearer requirement for plans to set a baseline for biodiversity quality, and make sure that new developments and the plan as a whole delivers net gain in a transparent way, such as using the Biodiversity Metric. It will be important that the new Local Plan demonstrably delivers a net gain, including through the appropriate combination of options below.

Non-exclusive options for addressing biodiversity through the plan, include:

1. Ensuring the protection and enhancement of a hierarchy of habitats sites through the plan, including national and international sites, and ensuring new development avoids or mitigates any generated impacts from the plan's strategy (including through the Habitat Regulations Assessment and Essex Coast RAMS)
2. Designating for protection areas of land of locally important wildlife or geological value as a local wildlife site or local geological site respectively where they meet the criteria for inclusion, having regard to the Local Wildlife Sites review
3. Ensuring that the plan delivers net gains for biodiversity alongside new development, including to:
 - a. Require new developments to secure biodiversity net gain on-site, such as through new habitat creation or incorporation of wildlife-compatible measures
 - b. Requiring new developments to contribute to off-site biodiversity net gain projects, such as habitat creation or restoration at existing wildlife sites

Q29. Do you agree that the plan should designate and protect areas of land of locally important wildlife value as a local wildlife site, having regard to the Local Wildlife Sites review? Are there any other sites that you feel are worthy of protection? [Please state reasoning]

Q30. Do you agree that the plan should designate and protect areas of land of locally important geological value as a local geological site, having regard to the Local Wildlife Sites review? Are there any other sites that you feel are worthy of protection? [Please state reasoning]

Q31. Do you consider net gains for biodiversity are best delivered on-site or off-site? Are there specific locations or projects where net gain projects could be delivered?

OPTIONS

QUESTIONS

Green and Blue Infrastructure



Green and blue infrastructure relates to our network of natural and coastal environments. These are spaces that can contribute to the health and well-being of our communities in a number of ways, including through providing opportunities for leisure and recreation, providing attractive environments for tourism and investment and encouraging more active, sustainable lifestyles by creating connections for both people and wildlife.

National policy is clear that plans should take a strategic approach to green (and blue) infrastructure to help promote active and healthy lifestyles, combat climate change and alleviate air quality issues.

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

Relevant Plan Objectives: 9, 11, 15, 16, 19

Our green and blue infrastructure network comprises a wide variety of different types of space, including formal parks of different sizes, informal green areas, the open countryside and coastal environments. This section is focussed on strategic green and blue infrastructure, including how all of these spaces are connected and function as a wider network. More specific commentary on local green spaces and spaces for biodiversity is set out in later sections.

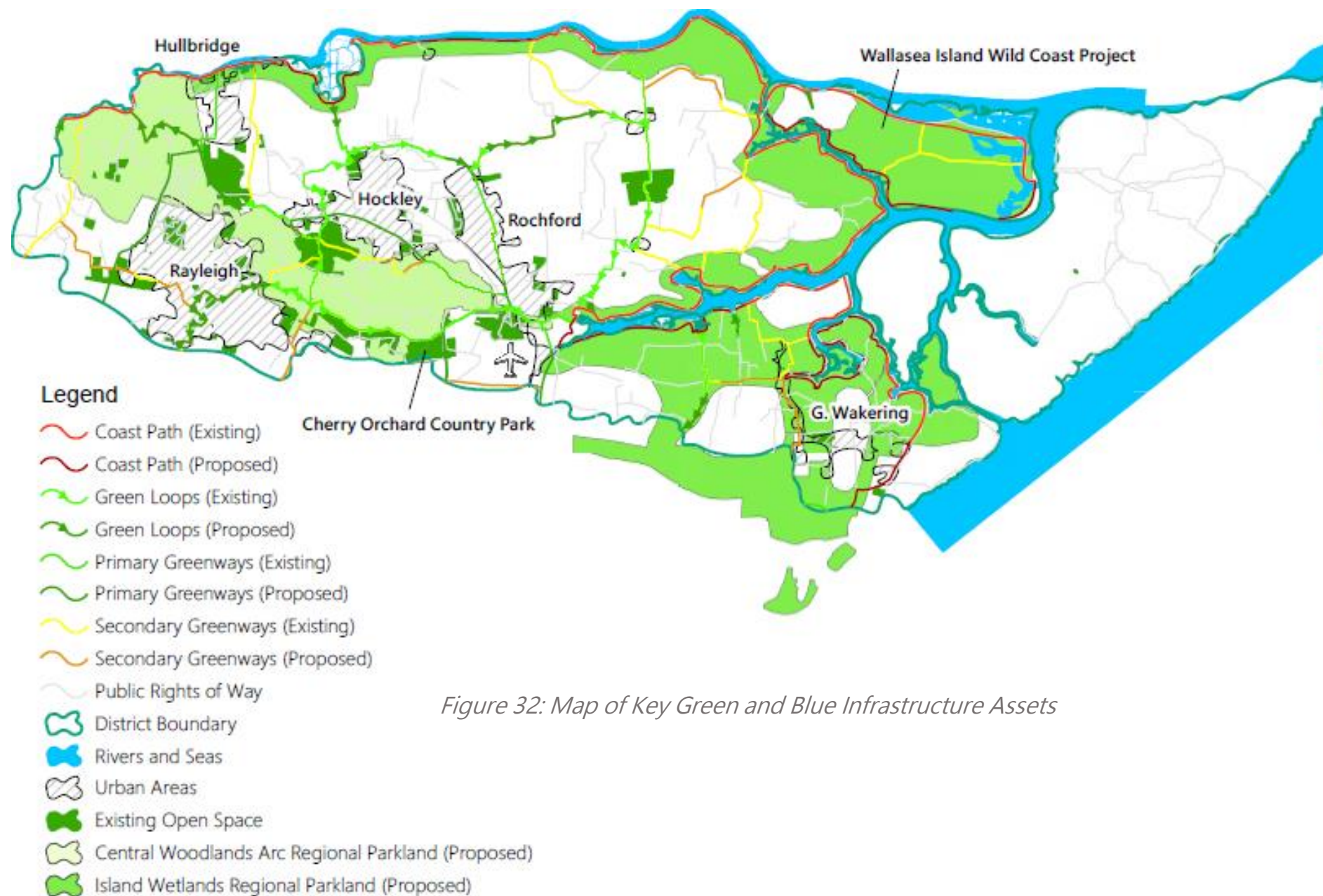


Figure 32: Map of Key Green and Blue Infrastructure Assets

Feedback from the Issues and Options consultation was generally supportive of improving green and blue infrastructure through the plan, with common concerns raised including:

- Severance and lack of connectivity between public rights of way means the existing network does not function as a reliable or coherent option for active travel
- Locational deficiencies in accessibility and provision have a direct negative impact on the health and well-being of residents
- A lack of facilities in spaces outside of the main settlements restricts their attractiveness as leisure and tourism destinations

The Council's existing development plan supports two key strategic green infrastructure projects, the **RSPB Wallasea Wild Coast Project** and **Cherry Orchard Country Park**. The establishment of these projects has been supported through the planning system and dedicated policies could be included in the plan to enable these projects to continue to be supported.

The South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (SEGBIS) identifies a number of additional projects across South Essex that can together help to address green and blue infrastructure in a strategic sense. This includes working towards a continuous South Essex Estuary Park, comprised of a number of regional parklands and proposed primary and secondary 'greenways'. These regional parklands include two main areas in Rochford, including:

- **The Central Woodlands Arc** – a swathe of land from the south of Rochford to the west of Hullbridge building from the existing, partially-connected green areas of Cherry Orchard Country Park, Hockley Woods and Grove Wood
- **The Island Wetlands** – a swathe of land from the north of Shoeburyness to the north of Canewdon building from a range of existing green and blue areas including Wallasea Island and the shorelines of the Rivers Roach and Crouch

Regional parkland does not necessarily mean that such areas would be entirely given over to public access but could be supported through the plan by restricting the influence of urbanising development and improving access through more connected and permeable rights of way.

Rochford is also home to part of the Government's coastal path project which aims to deliver a continuous coastal path around the country. Once completed, the coastal path project will open up parts of our coastal environments helping to support coastal communities and creating new opportunities for leisure and recreation for both existing residents and visitors from elsewhere.

Non-exclusive options for addressing green and blue infrastructure through the plan, include:

1. 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
2. Identifying general objectives for strategic green and blue infrastructure through the plan, and providing for the general enhancement and protection of this infrastructure through one or more general policies
3. Setting a strategy for the delivery of new and enhanced green and blue infrastructure, by:
 - 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
4. Working with neighbouring authorities to explore opportunities to address green and blue infrastructure across administrative boundaries

Q32. With reference to the options above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best deliver a quality green and blue infrastructure network through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q33. Do you agree that the central woodlands arc and island wetlands, shown on Figure 32 are the most appropriate areas for new regional parklands? Are there any other areas that should be considered or preferred? [Please state reasoning]

Q34. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to help deliver new strategic green and blue infrastructure? [Please state reasoning]



Community Infrastructure

National policy requires plans to make sufficient provision, through strategic policies, for community facilities (including health, education, and cultural infrastructure). The delivery of new community infrastructure to meet the needs of the local community is crucial to the development of Rochford District as an attractive and healthy place to live and visit, and to meet the needs of future generations. Community infrastructure will need to be delivered in locations that are accessible to both existing communities and future communities, and the Council will need to work closely with the providers of these facilities to ensure there is sufficient capacity.

We recognise from previous engagement with communities, including through the Issues and Options consultation, that many residents feel that the capacity of community infrastructure has not been able to keep up with population growth. It is therefore important that the Plan takes an infrastructure-first approach to planning, ensuring that any projected deficits in provision are addressed. The Council has prepared a joint [Infrastructure Position Statement](#) to identify the capacity of current provision.

Education

National policy requires that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. New housing and population increase will inevitably bring an increased demand for school places. The planning and provision of school education is the responsibility of Essex County Council (ECC). However, since the introduction of academies and free schools in 2010, the provision and operation of schools has shifted towards greater levels of institutional autonomy. Academy schools are independent of local authority control, and are instead funded directly by central Government, and sponsors. Free schools have similar levels of autonomy, however, can be set up by a range of groups, including charities, universities, parents, teachers, businesses, and faith groups. Although some schools have extra capacity, there may be need for more places to be made available or for completely new education facilities to be built. ECC publishes school capacity projections as part of its [10 Year Plan for School Places](#), which identifies some settlements with projected shortages in school places by 2030, including Rochford, Gt. Wakering and Hullbridge.

Beyond primary and secondary education, it is also important that the plan makes adequate provision for other forms of education including facilities

Relevant Plan Objectives: 9, 14, 18, 19

for early years and childcare, Post-16 and further education, special educational needs and disabilities, and adult community learning. Each of these services may require effective planning to ensure that adequate land and capacity is available to address existing and future demand, either within the District or as part of a wider education network.

Strategic growth locations are likely to require new education facilities (particularly primary education), so the lack of current spare capacity does not restrict areas being considered for growth. However, it may have an impact on the type of growth which is possible – for instance, urban intensification may not allow for sufficient sized sites required for additional education facilities. The [Essex County Council Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) highlights that developments with an individual or cumulative size of 1,400 homes are likely to be required to deliver a new two-form entry primary school, whilst developments with an individual or cumulative size of 4,500 homes or more will need to provide a new two-form entry secondary school. One of the most effective ways of addressing educational capacity issues is through the provision of new services funded by development. It is therefore important that new growth is not simply seen as creating additional demand for community infrastructure but also as one of the most effective tools at creating additional supply.

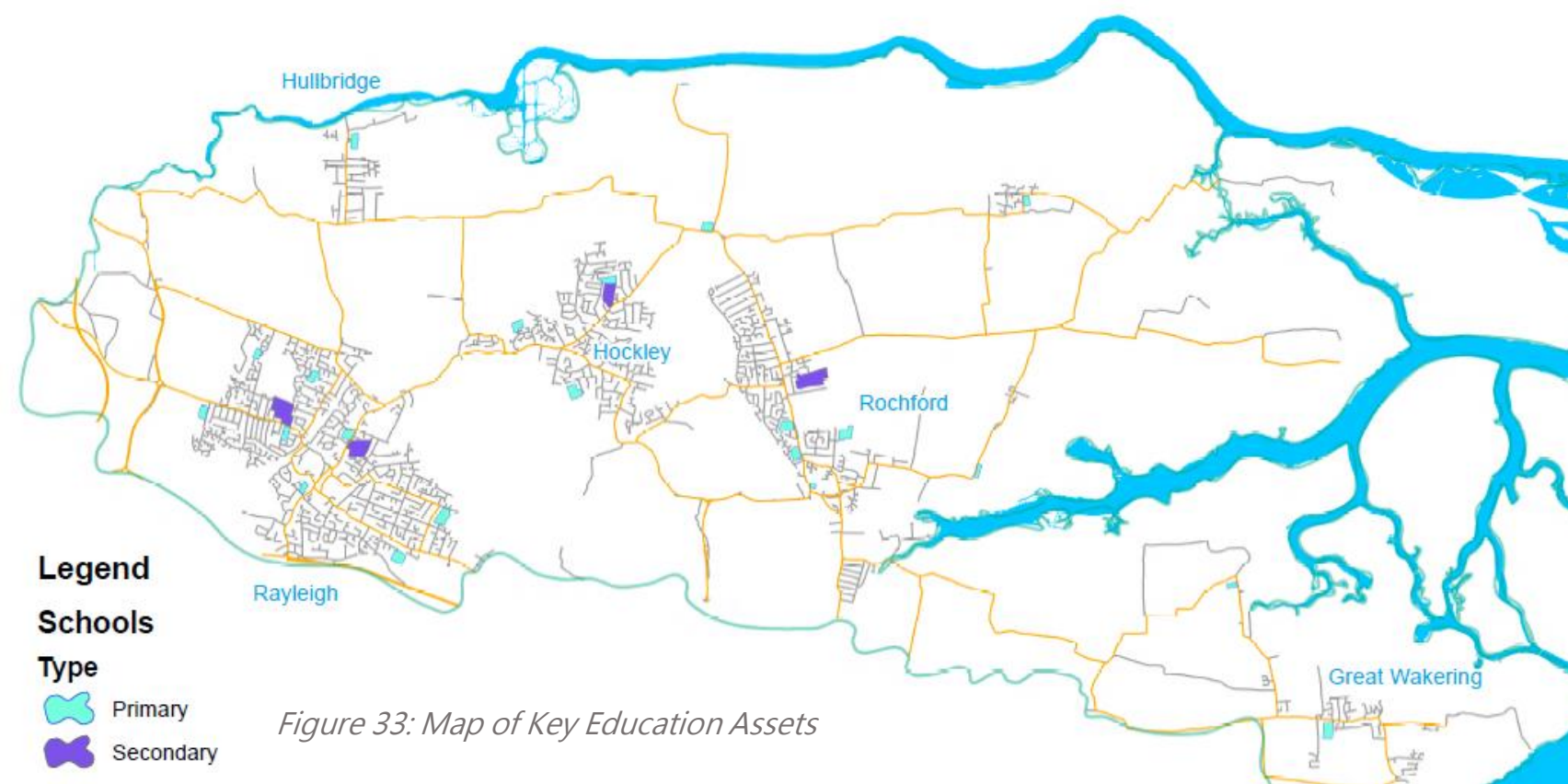


Figure 33: Map of Key Education Assets

Healthcare Facilities

With a growing and ageing population, provision of health and community facilities and services in the District is going to become even more important. There is a need to provide health care facilities that meet existing and future needs, including those arising from the population growth across the plan period. At this time, Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) hosts 28 practices, of which around half are in the District, which have an average practice list of around 8,000 residents, which, whilst lower than the national average, masks difficulties on some communities to access healthcare services as quickly as needed. A growing and ageing population is expected to exacerbate these issues and new models of care are being considered to mitigate these issues.

Future models of healthcare are likely to be less reliant on physically visiting a surgery, although that will remain an option, and a greater move towards online and digital consultations. Physical healthcare centres may also be consolidated into hubs which contain a greater breadth and depth of services. It is therefore important that we create additional capacity for healthcare services through the plan, which may mean the creation of new physical healthcare hubs but also by enabling healthcare services to become more digital by improving the availability of fast connections.

Shifting demographics and models of provision may have implications for the Local Plan, both in terms of ensuring that adequate land is available for healthcare services and in ensuring that the plan as a whole creates healthier outcomes across the population to reduce the need to access healthcare services as far as possible.

Community and Other Facilities

The planning system can also play an important role in ensuring there are sufficient community and youth facilities to serve residents. These spaces are important for public health, networking and nurturing active communities. The plan can play an important role in identifying where there is insufficient access or capacity in existing community and youth facilities and helping to deliver new facilities. This will be particularly important in any large-scale developments which will effectively create new communities and increased demand for hall and facility space.

These other facilities can include:

- Community Centres and Halls
- Libraries
- Allotments
- Play Spaces
- Waste and Recycling Centres

The Plan will need to ensure that local communities have adequate access to these facilities, ideally by sustainable modes of transport, and will consider co-locating these facilities where possible. Where new growth is planned, developments that are not well-served by existing facilities will need to make adequate provision for new on-site facilities or make contributions to improving the capacity or accessibility of existing facilities, such as those set out in the Essex Developers' Guide to Infrastructure contributions.

Non-exclusive options for meeting community infrastructure needs through the plan include:

1. Meeting future demand for community infrastructure by protecting existing school and healthcare sites through a specific allocation in the plan that allows for their managed expansion to meet changing demand for services
2. Meeting future demand for community infrastructure by identifying sites for the creation of new community infrastructure, where demand exists or will exist, which could include co-located and integrated community buildings funded by planning obligations from new development
3. Meeting future demand for community infrastructure by requiring new developments to deliver new community infrastructure on-site where it creates sufficient demand to sustain them
4. Helping to address existing shortfalls in community infrastructure access or capacity by improving the availability of existing community facilities to a larger group in the community, such as making school facilities available for public hire subject to reasonable conditions

Q35. With reference to the options above, or your own options, how can we address the need for sufficient and accessible community infrastructure through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q36. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to deliver new or improved community infrastructure? [Please state reasoning]

Q37. Are there areas in the District that you feel have particularly severe capacity or access issues relating to community infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities or community facilities? How can we best address these? [Please state reasoning]

OPTIONS

QUESTIONS

Open Spaces and Recreation



Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and facilities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. National policy requires plans to 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.

Open and green spaces can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. The District is currently home to around over 140 identified open spaces that exist in a mixture of public and private ownership. A diverse range of formal and informal recreation takes place on local playing pitches and in built facilities (such as leisure centres).

Through the preparation of the plan, it is possible to safeguard locally-important green spaces from urbanisation through the 'local green space' designation. In order to qualify as local green space, an area needs to be:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Spaces proposed for local green space status are identified in the settlement profiles later in this Paper.

In addition to local green spaces, there may also be other areas of land that do not hold unique local significance but nevertheless make a strong positive contribution to local well-being worthy of protection and enhancement, such as country parks and woodlands.

Relevant Plan Objectives: 9, 15

Feedback from the Issues & Options consultation was clear about the importance of residents having access to well-maintained and accessible open and green spaces. Feedback also highlighted the need for a qualitative and quantitative audit of both open spaces and recreational facilities to consider ways to enhance quality and access. Building from this feedback, the Council has since sought to undertake a number of studies to identify the current and future issues and opportunities relating to our open spaces and recreational facilities. The emerging **Open Space study** for the District has assessed the quality and accessibility of existing open spaces, including whether these open spaces may qualify as local green spaces. Through this evidence base it has been possible to identify areas of in the District that do not

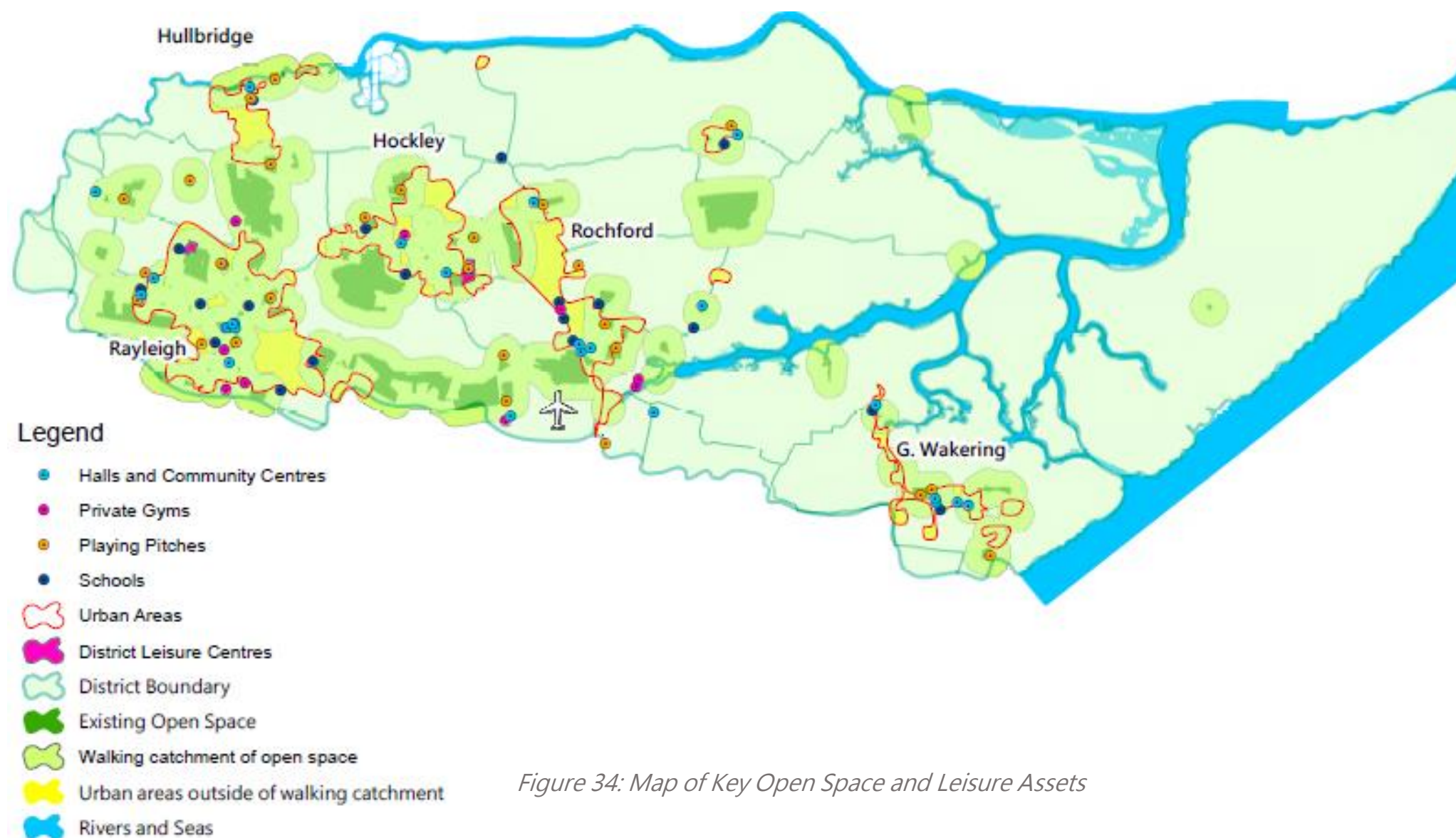


Figure 34: Map of Key Open Space and Leisure Assets

have suitable walking access to any areas of open space, including parts of central and eastern Rayleigh, northern Rochford, central Hullbridge and many of the outlying villages and hamlets. These communities are those that may benefit most directly from the provision of new spaces.

Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Studies have been prepared to assess the quality and adequacy of facilities for formal and informal sports and recreation. These studies suggest that facilities across the District are generally of good quality but that some local facilities could benefit from enhancement. Existing and projected overplay of pitches is a particular issue affecting the growth of local sports clubs. Assuming around 7,200 homes are built by 2040, Sport England’s Playing Pitch Calculator identifies an additional peak weekly demand for up to 18 match sessions for football at all levels, 1.8 match sessions for rugby union, 1.6 match sessions for hockey and 55 match sessions per season for cricket. However it is important to recognise that some of this additional demand can be met from improved utilisation of existing under-used pitches, whilst an overarching recommendation from these studies is to explore the potential for up to six new 3G pitches, which are generally able to sustain higher levels of use than grass pitches. A 3G Pitch Feasibility Study has now been prepared exploring opportunities at:

- Burroughs Park (Great Wakering)
- Clements Hall Leisure Centre
- Greensward Academy
- Hullbridge FC
- King Edmund School
- Rayleigh Leisure Centre

The Studies both advocate a hierarchy approach to planning for recreational facilities, tiering facilities as hub-sites and key centres with all other facilities being of local importance. Such an approach could be embedded into the plan in order to prioritise and direct investment and renewal to those facilities of greatest importance.

Category	For playing pitches	For indoor recreation
Potential ‘Hub Sites’	King Edmund School	Clements Hall Leisure Centre Rayleigh Leisure Centre King Edmund School
Potential Key Centres	Greensward Academy Sweyne Park School Westcliff Rugby Club Burroughs Park Rawreth Lane Playing Fields Rayleigh Sports and Social Club	Greensward Academy Sweyne Park School Fitzwimarc School

Non-exclusive options to meet our existing and future open space and recreation needs through the plan include:

- Designating and protecting locally-important spaces through the local green space designation where they meet the criteria for inclusion
- Designating and protecting other important open spaces through the plan which are not eligible for local green space designation but are still worthy of protection and enhancement
- Embedding a hierarchy approach into policy that seeks to prioritise and direct investment to the most important recreational facilities, including potential hub sites and key centres
- Ensuring our qualitative and quantitative open space and recreational needs are met within our area through the plan, and any supporting infrastructure delivery plan, by:
 - Requiring new developments to make suitable on-site provision for new open and green spaces, and/or sport and recreation facilities, or
 - Requiring new developments to contribute to improving the quality and accessibility of existing open spaces and recreation facilities in the locality, or contributing to enhancing open space or recreation facilities at existing hub sites and key centres
- Working with neighbouring authorities to explore opportunities to address our open space and recreational needs across boundaries (such as hub sites in other authority areas)

Q38. With reference to the options above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best meet our open space and sport facility needs through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q39. Are the potential locations for 3G pitch investment the right ones? Are there other locations that we should be considering? [Please state reasoning]

Q40. Are the listed potential hub sites and key centres the right ones? Are there other locations that we should be considering? [Please state reasoning]

Q41. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to help deliver improvements to open space or sport facility accessibility or provision?

Q42. Are there particular open spaces that we should be protecting or improving? [Please note, you will have an opportunity to make specific comments on open spaces and local green spaces in the settlement profiles set out later in this report]



Heritage

Rochford is an area with a rich and diverse history that is reflected in the large number of historic buildings and public spaces scattered throughout it. A settlement was recorded at Rayleigh as far back as the Domesday book whilst the Old House in Rochford can be dated back to 1270.

National policy sets a clear requirement for plans to set a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It also makes it clear how historic assets should be conserved and enhanced through the planning process.

Local authorities are able to designate certain areas to protect their historic character. This includes designating formal conservation areas where stricter rules on development will typically apply. The District currently contains 10 conservation areas at:

1. Battlesbridge
2. Canewdon (church)
3. Canewdon (high street)
4. Foulness Churchend
5. Great Wakering (high street)
6. Paglesham Churchend
7. Paglesham Eastend
8. Rayleigh (centre)
9. Rochford (centre)
10. Shopland Churchyard

Local authorities are able to designate new conservation areas where an area clearly holds special architectural or historic character.

Relevant Plan Objectives: 21

Each of the District's conservation areas is covered by its own [appraisal and management plan produced](#) in 2007. These documents should be regularly reviewed and it is likely that a review will be required as part of the process for informing the new Local Plan. This review can help to inform the specific content of policies within the new Local Plan. The Council is not currently proposing to designate any new conservation areas, however if potential areas are suggested through this consultation, the merits of designating new areas can be considered.

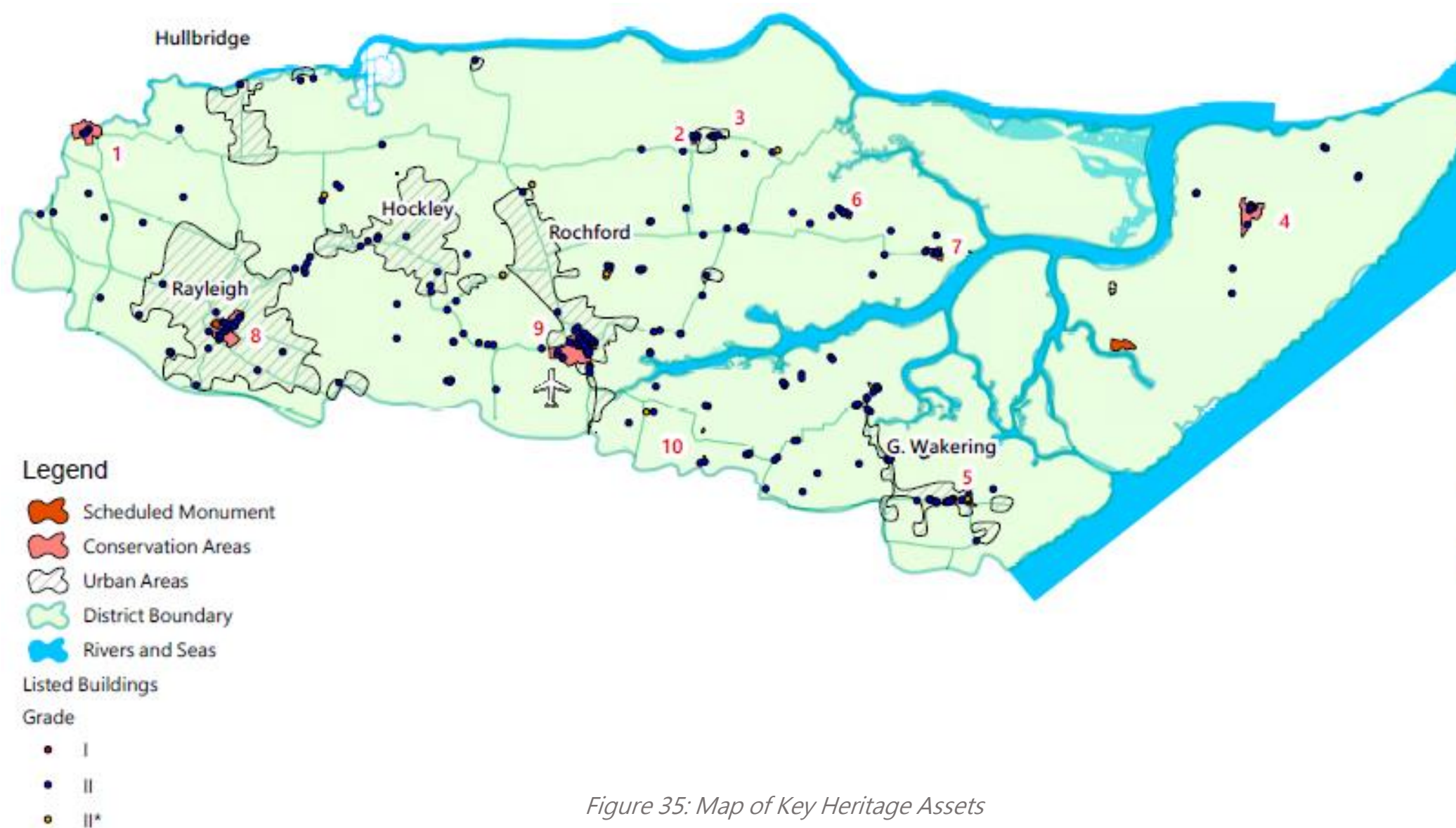


Figure 35: Map of Key Heritage Assets

In addition to conservation areas, there are a number of other designated and non-designated heritage assets that must be protected and enhanced through the planning system. This includes scheduled monuments, nationally important archaeological sites, and listed buildings, buildings designated by the Government for their special architectural or historic value.

Assets that are of important architectural or historic value, but that are not of significant enough value to be listed, can also be considered a non-designated heritage asset. Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. The Council currently has a [Local List](#) SPD that identifies a number of non-designated heritage assets throughout the District. Through the plan-making process, the Council could update this Local List to review the case for including existing non-designated heritage assets and considering the case for including new assets.

Feedback from the Council's Issues and Options consultation, including from Historic England, made clear that existing policies on heritage assets and the historic environment require updating to reflect changes to national policy. Furthermore, reflecting feedback, the Council is committed to preparing a Historic Impact Assessment (HIA) of the new Local Plan as it develops to ensure the impacts of strategy and policy decisions on designated and non-designated heritage assets are given appropriate weight. To support this, the Council has commissioned an initial site assessment of potential development sites, considering their impacts on built assets and archaeology, having regard to the Essex Historic Environment Record.

Non-exclusive options for addressing heritage through the plan, include:

1. Reviewing the list of existing designated heritage assets, including updating conservation area appraisals and management plans and considering the case for new conservation areas, providing for the protection and enhancement of these assets through one or more policies
2. Reviewing the list of existing non-designated heritage assets, including updating the local list, and providing for the protection and enhancement of these assets through policies



Q43. With reference to the options listed in this section, or your own options, how do you feel we can best address heritage issues through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q44. Are there areas of the District we should be considering for conservation area status beyond those listed in this section? [Please state reasoning]

Q45. Are there any buildings, spaces or structures that should be protected for their historic, cultural or architectural significance? Should these be considered for inclusion on the Local List of non-designated assets? [Please state reasoning]

OPTIONS

QUESTIONS



Town Centres and Retail

The District's town centres of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley, along with local and village centres, are fundamental to everyday life for most residents and businesses, and are important contributors to local economy, community and identity. They provide a wide range of both everyday (convenience) and specialist (comparison) retailers, in addition to food & drink, leisure, entertainment and service business, office accommodation; and key public facilities (e.g. healthcare, libraries and council services).

The NPPF states in Chapter 7 that planning policies should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

- define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability - by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;
- define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;
- retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;
- where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre;
- recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

Relevant Plan Objectives: 7, 8

Town centres and local centres play an important role in supporting vibrant and prosperous local communities. Town centres need to be multi-functional offering the right balance of comparison and convenience shopping, hospitality and leisure, community and civic facilities and residential. It must be recognised that retail-dominant town centres are struggling in light of ongoing structural changes happening in high streets and town centres across the country. As a result, a key determinant of successful planning for our local town centres will be their ability to adapt to new trends, technologies and practices, maintaining vibrancy in the face of change.

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a catastrophic effect on the UK retail and leisure industries, with a series of restrictions resulting in enforced closures for most retail and leisure businesses, along with additional costs and capacity restrictions as and when businesses have been permitted to operate. At the same time and as a consequence, demand for online retail has jumped considerably. The impact on retail and leisure has been severe, with the first half of 2020 seeing a net loss of 7,834 retail units, the highest on record, with national chains particularly hit. The pandemic is expected to accelerate ongoing trends of certain traditional town centre uses moving to online services, including banks and comparison retail. There is, however, some evidence that local town centres such as those in the District have seen less of an impact in terms of footfall and vacancies than larger cities and shopping centres, reflecting both a preference to shop locally and the trend away from commuting towards home-working.

It is important, however, to recognise that town centres were under considerable pressure prior to the pandemic, due to both growth in online retail and competition from out of town retail parks, shopping centres and supermarkets, with retail parks in particular having experienced lower vacancy rates in recent years. Town centres across the country are therefore being re-



imagined away from retail-led approaches towards more mixed-use approaches that see a greater proportion of food & drink, leisure, residential and community uses. These ‘experiential’ uses, along with services such as hairdressing and beauty, are more resilient to online shopping trends and can help drive wider footfall.

It is also important to recognise that the planning tools available to local authorities to influence the use of town centres are evolving with changes to planning legislation. The introduction of a new *Use Class E* has seen the consolidation of traditional town centre use classes A1, A2 and A3 (retail, professional/financial services and restaurants/cafes respectively), B1 (office and light industrial) and aspects of D1/2 (community uses) into a new single Use Class E, with planning permission not required to change the use of a building between any of those uses. Whilst the flexibility provided by the new Class E may help town centres become more resilient and adaptable, with entrepreneurs able to readily convert vacant units for new purposes and thus reduce vacancy rates, it introduces a challenge for Local Plan policies to promote or restrict particular uses in town centre or to prevent a clustering of certain types of undesired uses. This change, combined with the introduction of expanded permitted development rights which will allow Class E buildings to become homes without the need for planning permission, further restrict the scope of town centre policies to promote and restrict particular uses with town centres. This presents both opportunities and challenges for town centre planning, with increased levels of housing potentially increasing footfall for town centre businesses and making such places more vibrant and sustainable, but a lack of restrictions also risks the loss of important town centre businesses where residential development is likely to provide greater returns for the landowner.

The *South Essex Retail Study 2018 (SERS)* is a key piece of evidence that assesses current retail and leisure provision across the District, and calculates, based on expenditure and housing growth projections, how much additional space may need to be developed to provide the local population with a full range of shops and services they require. Over the next 20 years, Rochford District is estimated to need an additional **5,179m² of comparison retail space**, and **1,077m² of convenience retail space** as population and annual retail expenditure in the District grows. In addition, there is potential for an additional £40m of food and drink expenditure to be provided for, meaning a sizeable potential requirement for further food & drink space.

The figures above indicate a longstanding trend within the District in which development of retail and leisure space has not kept up with population growth which has led to only more basic needs being accommodated locally, whilst the need for more complex uses (e.g. larger supermarkets, premium restaurants or cinemas) has been met by residents travelling elsewhere.

This is reflected in the study, which indicates the potential for a niche cinema offer and further food & beverage provision alongside future housing growth.

As set out in the Study, Rochford District has one of the highest ‘leakage’ rates for residents travelling elsewhere for retail needs across South Essex, with 68% of residents going elsewhere for comparison shopping and 57% for convenience. Similarly, for food and drink leisure, the leakage figure is 33%. This is unsurprising, given the proximity of major centres such as Basildon and Southend, but does indicate additional potential for retail and leisure space within the District and a retention of a greater amount of retail and leisure spend.

As indicated above, Rochford is not self-sufficient in terms of retail, and sits within the context of wider South Essex retail area, with residents travelling to other local and regional centres for shopping and services, whilst the District’s centres in turn attracts residents from other areas to visit and shop. The SERS categorises South Essex centres by importance, from Regional (e.g. Lakeside Shopping Centre), through to ‘Major’ (e.g. Basildon and Southend), ‘Town’ and ‘Local’ centres, with the map below plotting these. Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley are all identified as ‘town centres’, however the absence of major or regional centres underlines Rochford’s relatively minor role in relation to retail provision across the wider South Essex sub-region.

National policy encourages plans to identify town centre hierarchies, with those centres at the top of the hierarchy those that are the most important for retail and leisure provision. Figure 36 below illustrates a local hierarchy for Rochford.

Hierarchy	Centres
Town Centres (Protected)	There are 3 town centres in Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley which house over 30 businesses
Local Centres (Unprotected)	There are a small number of local centres, including Hullbridge, Great Wakering and Golden Cross which serve local populations
Local Parades (Unprotected)	There are large number of local parades throughout the District, generally located in suburban areas

Figure 36 – Retail Hierarchy



Figure 37 – Hierarchy of Centres in South Essex (South Essex Retail Study, 2017)

The Core Strategy, through policies RTC1-6, follows prevailing national policy in encouraging retail and leisure uses to concentrate in the District's established town, village and neighbourhood centres, adopting a sequential test to restrict out of town development. Dedicated **Area Action Plans (AAPs)** were adopted in 2014 for Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley, with these seeking to protect and enhance each town's role as a retail centre, whilst promoting other uses and interventions to support their general vitality. In considering the District's future retail and leisure needs, it is useful to consider each of the District's main centres in turn, including their role in the context of the District and wider area, and whether the current AAPs have delivered the anticipated change.

Rayleigh

Rayleigh is a market town and the District's principal shopping destination. The SERS noted its wide comparison and convenience offer, which serves the town and the surrounding villages. It is ranked 716th nationally, according to the Javelin Research **VENUESCORE** system of ranking retail centres in terms of their offer. Rayleigh's AAP sought to strengthen the town's role as the District's primary retail centre, promoting the consolidation of retail along the High Street, along with promotion of town centre-appropriate uses (i.e. A2-5, leisure and cultural/community) in the surrounding streets. It also prioritised intensification of key sites for

mixed-use development and a series of public realm, highways and cycle/pedestrian improvements, to ease access around the town and tackle longstanding congestion issues.

In 2021, Rayleigh continues to be the District's main retail hub, with a February 2020 assessment of ground floor uses along Government-approved 'health check' principles indicating the town centre continues to be well-occupied, with a good proportion of A1 retail uses (both comparison and convenience), strong mix of supporting A2-5 uses and low vacancy rate (see map below). It is recognised that the Coronavirus pandemic has led to a small increase in vacancies since this mapping was prepared, including the prominent former Dorothy Perkins store.

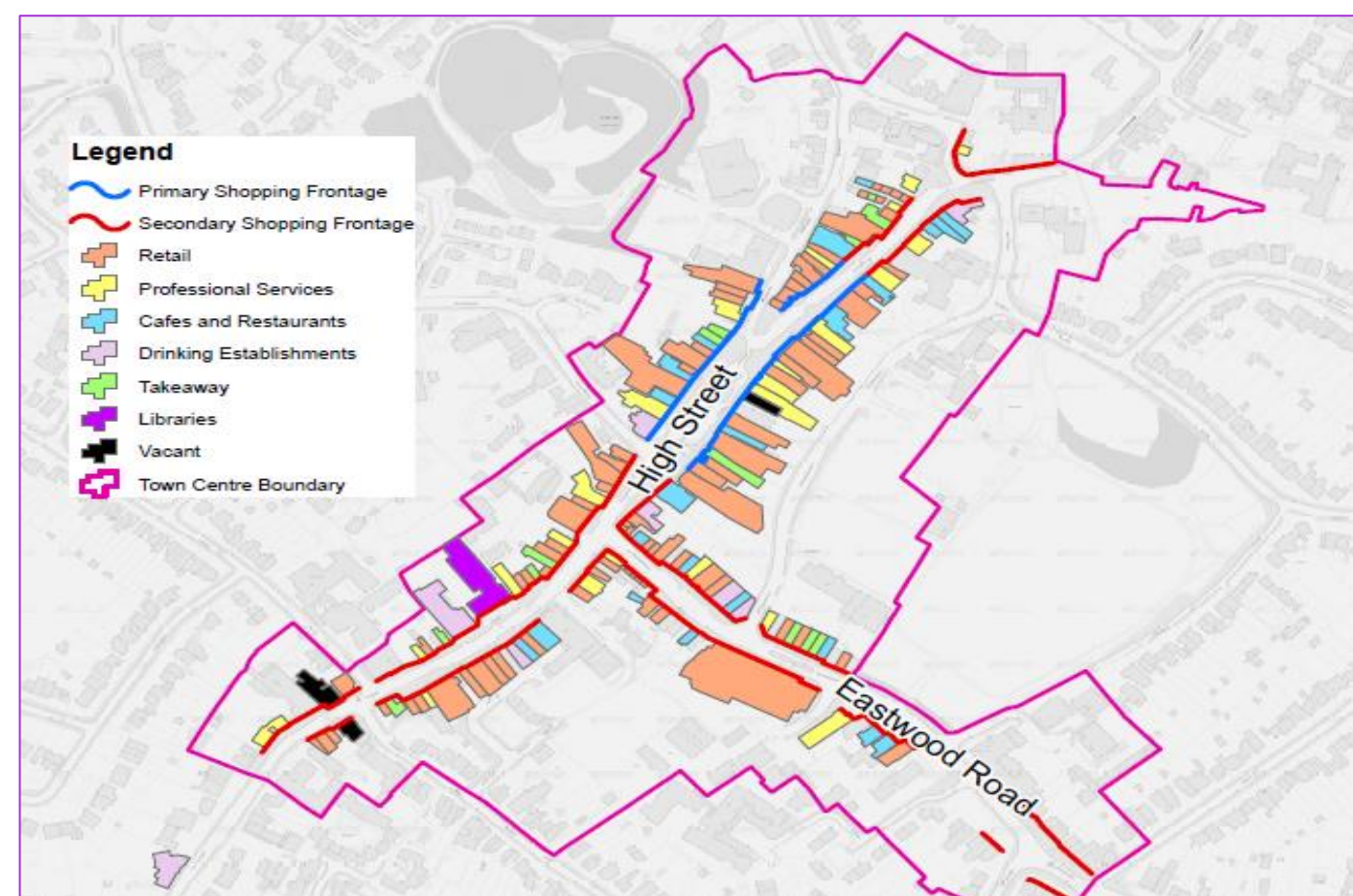


Figure 38 – Rayleigh Town Centre Use Class Mapping (2020)

Rochford

Rochford is a small market town with relatively high proportion of convenience floorspace reflecting its position in the retail hierarchy, Rochford has a localised catchment that includes the surrounding rural villages. Its national VENUESCORE ranking of 2,577 reflects it is considerably smaller than Rayleigh. The Rochford AAP prioritises the concentration of retail and supporting uses around the historic market square, West Street and North Street, whilst

proposing a range of public realm, highways and connectivity enhancements to support the historic core and attract visitors, including pedestrianisation of the market square. It also supports a stronger evening economy through encouraging appropriate uses, and intervention on key underused/unattractive sites to improve the overall built environment and support town centre vitality. Since the AAP's publication, there has been progress in some areas, including proposals to develop the former police station and underused space behind the Freight House, a historically-sensitive residential scheme on East Street proposals to redevelop the key arrival point on the junction of West Street and Union Lane. There has been more limited progress in other areas, with a 2019 Health Check carried out by Lichfields finding high vacancy rates of 14.5%, higher than previous surveys undertaken in 2008 and 2014, and above the national average of 11.8%.

Although work has commenced since the health check on some prominent vacant buildings (e.g. the conversion of the former Barclays Bank at 15 West Street into a pharmacy, and the former NatWest Bank at 32 West Street into office suites), the issue of vacant units remains considerable, typified by a longstanding empty former supermarket unit. In addition, the closure of 2 public houses since 2017 suggests that efforts to enhance the town's retail and leisure role have not advanced either. The map below indicates the prevalence of vacant units in Rochford Town Centre in 2019. Similarly, proposals to enhance the public realm of the market square and introduce connectivity improvements are yet to proceed. As with Rayleigh, the impending

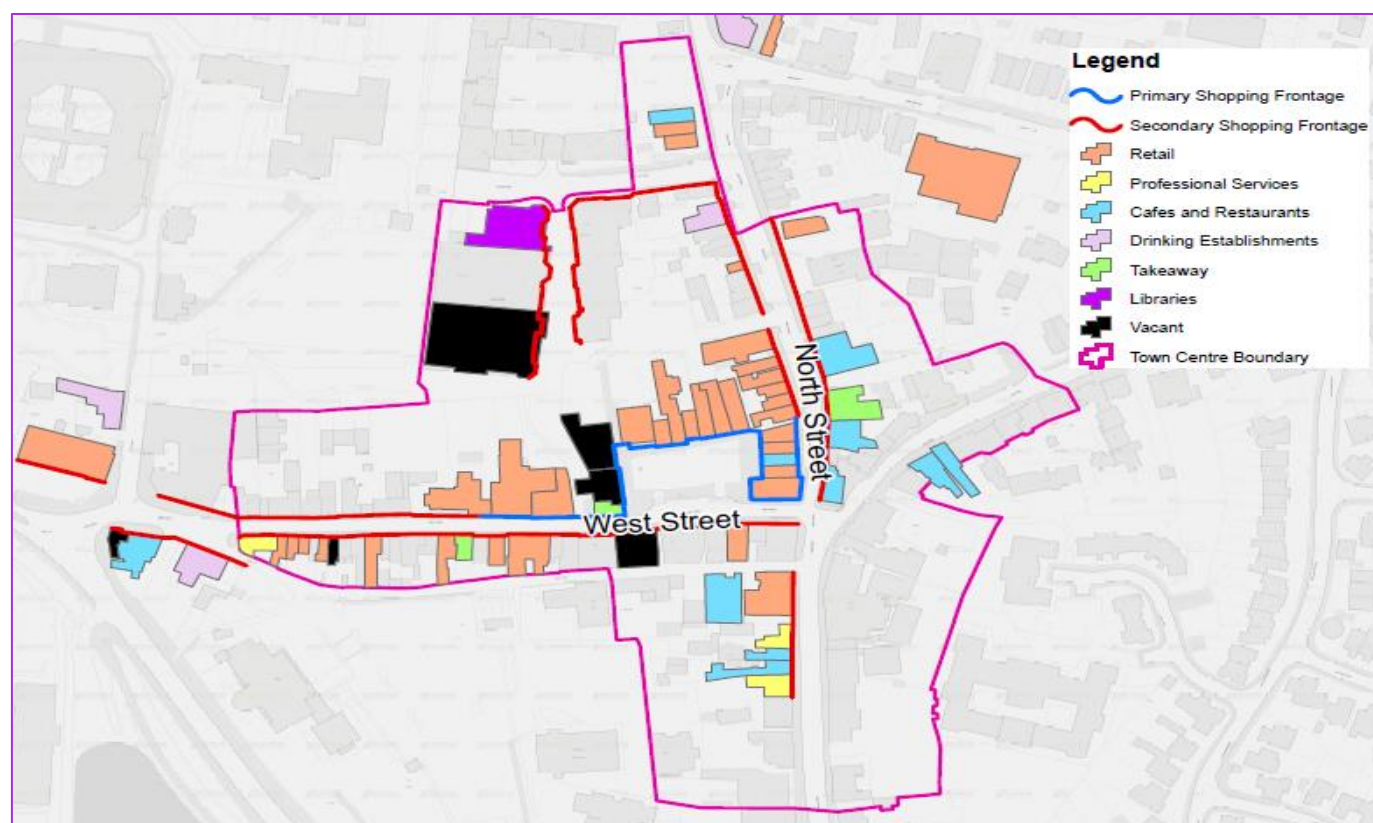


Figure 39 – Rochford Town Centre Use Class Mapping (2020)

redevelopment of a number of Council assets may enable regeneration objectives to be met, but may necessitate a revisiting of policies to create a more sustainable long-term mix of uses in light of the structural issues covered in this section.

Hockley

Hockley provides a smaller centre, described by the SERS as serving a largely localised catchment area, and as such does not have a VENUESCORE rank. Hockley hosts a number of important convenience retail, service and food & drink/leisure uses, and Hockley AAP identifies its adjacent Eldon Way Industrial Estate as being an opportunity site, due to its potential for mixed-use development. Combined with a location close to a railway station, Hockley Town Centre has considerable potential to support new residential, business, retail and leisure uses. The AAP envisages a Hockley combining enhanced retail for the local community, the mixed-use redevelopment of Eldon Way to deliver housing, town centre uses and public realm on previously developed land, and the retention of some employment uses. Some progress has been made through the opening of an additional convenience retail store (Sainsburys) to complement the existing Co-Op and Costcutter supermarkets, and vacancy rates are healthy. However, the key component of Hockley's transformation remains unachieved, with Eldon Way remaining as an industrial estate with a high proportion of leisure uses, and poor connectivity with the wider town centre persisting.

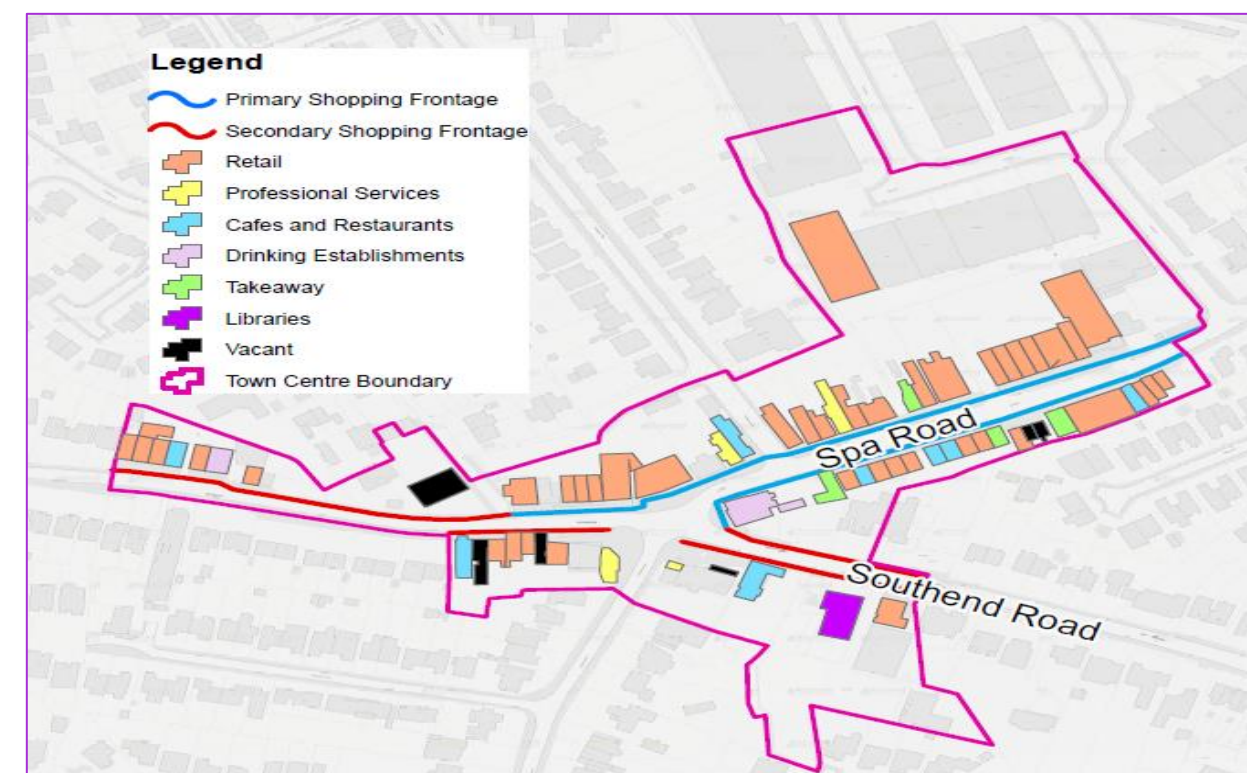


Figure 40 – Hockley Centre Use Class Mapping (2020)

Outside the three main town centres, it is important to acknowledge the District's other retail centres, each of which will require careful planning to ensure they support a long-term sustainable and balanced mix of uses.

- **Southend Airport Retail Park** - the District's main out of town retail centre, with a range of comparison retailers, e.g. homeware, furniture, pet supplies. It has a VENUESCORE rank of 1,709, and is a significant draw, despite only being accessible from Southend Borough.
- **Village centres and neighbourhood shopping parades**, such as Great Wakering; Hullbridge; Golden Cross; Eastwood Road; Southend Road; Grove Road; London Road; and Hullbridge Road. These centres fulfil important local roles, primarily for convenience retail, services (e.g. hairdressing) and food & drink. new housing development has the potential to benefit businesses in such centres.
- **Industrial estates, garden centres and farm sites**: although not formally allocated, the District's industrial estates host a number of retail and leisure uses, whilst garden centres and former nurseries within the Green Belt house others. Such sites fulfil a demand, but require careful planning to avoid exacerbating existing issues around traffic congestion, parking and environmental impact.

A number of non-exclusive options for addressing town centre and retail needs through the plan include:

1. Producing new dedicated masterplans or area action plans for Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley, updating these to reflect local and national changes and providing a new positive vision for uses within these centres
2. Incorporating specific town centre policies for Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley within the new Local Plan, reflecting local and national changes and providing a new positive vision for uses within these centres
3. Continuing to define boundaries, primary and secondary retail frontages for each centre and developing a policy approach that restrict appropriate uses within each type of frontage

OPTIONS

4. Continuing to define primary and secondary retail frontages for each centre but allow the market to determine the most appropriate uses for those frontages within Class E
5. Encouraging a greater quantity of housing within centres in support of Strategy Option 1: Urban Intensification (including using the brownfield register to define sites in town centres that are considered generally appropriate for residential development)
6. Ensuring any large-scale new housing or employment developments create new neighbourhood centres to serve them, or alternatively provide for sustainable connections to existing centres
7. Allocating land with town centres or other appropriate locations for new retail and leisure developments

Q46. With reference to the options listed above, or your own options, how do you think we can best plan for vibrant town centres in Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley? How can we also ensure our village and neighbourhood centres remain vibrant? [Please state reasoning]

Q47. Do you agree with the local centre hierarchy set out in Figure 36? If not, what changes would you make? [Please state reasoning]

Q48. With reference to Figures 38-40, do you agree with existing town centre boundaries and extent of primary and secondary shopping frontages in Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley? If not, what changes would you make? [Please state reasoning]

Q49. Should we continue to restrict appropriate uses within town centres, including primary and secondary shopping frontages within those centres? If yes, what uses should be restricted? [Please state reasoning]

Q50. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to deliver improved retail and leisure services in the District? [Please state reasoning]

QUESTIONS



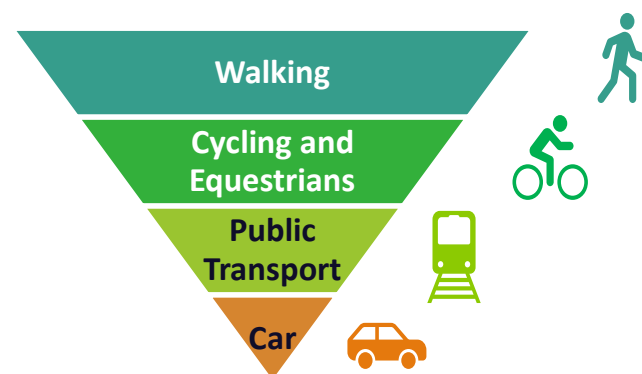
Transport and Connectivity



Due to its peninsula location, Rochford is an area that has a relatively constrained and varied transport network for walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicles.

Whilst many residents are dependent on use of private cars, it is important that we plan for a District that makes best use of more sustainable and active forms of movement. This is important for a number of reasons, including:

- To promote active and healthy lifestyles where private vehicles are not the favoured mode of travel for short trips
- To reduce congestion on roads and the emergence of consequential issues such as poor air quality and climate change
- To encourage a more positive relationship between public transport patronage, investment and reliability



National planning policy states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, so that:

- the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed
- opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised
- opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects; and
- patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

Sustainable Travel

The District has a relatively expansive public rights of way network both within settlements and in the open countryside. However our

Relevant Plan Objectives: 9, 10, 11

footpaths and bridleways are of varying quality and often do not reach the places walkers, cyclist and equestrian users want to go. We also recognise that our cycling network is particularly limited and requires expansion to better reflect the 'desire lines' of our residents and to become a realistic alternative to the private car for more people. The [Rochford Cycling Action Plan](#) identifies a number of potential costed routes, primarily to link Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley. One way we help to deliver these, and other, routes is by preparing a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) alongside the plan to identify and deliver specific improvements to these networks.

The District is connected to London and Southend by the Southend Victoria branch of the Great Eastern Mainline, with stations in Rayleigh, Hockley, Rochford and at Southend Airport. This rail connection forms an important commuting route for local residents and key asset for the local economy, however it struggles with capacity at key times. It is important through the plan that we consider ways of improving capacity both on trains and at stations, taking on board the



Figure 41: Map of Key Transport Assets

findings of the Great Eastern Mainline Study. However we recognise it is also important that this is considered against any longer-term economic trend towards home working, which may have been accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bus connectivity is relatively more varied with a number of routes serving the main towns of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley, with relatively more infrequent services in Hullbridge and Great Wakering. These bus services primarily provide inter-urban services to other towns and villages in the District, as well as to towns in neighbouring areas such as Basildon, Chelmsford, Castle Point, Wickford and Southend-on-Sea. There is a role for the plan in improving the frequency and reliability of existing bus routes, by locating development in areas which could benefit from these improvements, as well as ensuring developments have good access to viable existing and proposed routes to make sure these are a realistic choice for residents.

Road Connectivity

The District benefits from two main strategic routes, the A127 and the A130, which both act as economic corridors and provide connectivity beyond our borders to Southend, Basildon, London and Chelmsford via the A12, A13 and M25. These are supported by a network of important inter-urban routes, including the A129, A1015, A1245, B1013, Rawreth Lane, Ashingdon Road and Lower Road, which together connect our towns and villages to one another. Rochford's road network is known to have congestion issues primarily focussed along the main routes detailed above and at key junctions along those routes. Many of the District's congestion issues arise from the relatively few alternatives that residents have, particularly to make north-south journeys. In some cases, towns and villages are only connected by one viable route which often becomes congested at key times.

It is recognised from feedback from the Issues and Options consultation that many residents experience major congestion on our road network and feel that the road network has not kept up with increased demand in recent years. Whilst new developments can only mitigate their own impact, and not existing congestion, it is clear that a more ambitious approach is required to connectivity if we are to keep growing. We must work with Government, Highways England, Essex County Council and neighbouring local authorities to make sure we can attract investment to deliver real change, including a potential South Essex Rapid Transit system, new link roads and junction improvements. Plans already exist for improvements to the Fairglens interchange to improve journey time reliability when interchanging between the A127, A1245 and A130, whilst an A127 taskforce has been established to explore long-term options for improving journey

time reliability on this key corridor. Whilst road and junction improvements will be an important part of the plan, a strategy based solely around the private car is likely to simply reinforce current trends, and we must put in place complementary measures that deliver a modal shift in both existing and new communities towards more sustainable options wherever possible.

Non-exclusive options for addressing transport and connectivity through the plan are to:

1. Embed a sustainable movement hierarchy into the plan to ensure sustainable modes of transport are prioritised in favour of private vehicles
2. Prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan alongside the plan to ensure new development delivers meaningful improvements to transport networks, including to cycling, walking, public transport and road
3. Prepare a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan or Cycling Delivery Plan alongside the plan to identify and deliver specific improvements to our walking and cycling networks, including costed schemes highlighted in the Rochford Cycling Action Plan
4. Work with Government, Highways England, Essex County Council and neighbouring local authorities to deliver meaningful new transport options, such as rapid transit

Q51. With reference to the options above, or your own options, how do you feel we can best address our transport and connectivity needs through the plan? [Please state reasoning]

Q52. Are there areas where improvements to transport connections are needed? What could be done to help improve connectivity in these areas?

Q53. With reference to your preferred Strategy Option, are there opportunities for growth to deliver new transport connections, such as link roads or rapid transit? What routes and modes should these take? [walking, cycling, rail, bus, road etc.]



Green Belt and Rural Issues



Whilst the majority of Rochford's residents live in urban areas, the vast majority of Rochford's land area is rural in nature. We have an important agricultural heritage and a strong and growing rural economy.

Our rural areas have unique planning challenges compared to urban areas. Our rural communities generally have the poorest access to facilities, as the catchment population is not sufficient to sustain many services, whilst land uses in rural areas are often very different to those in the urban areas, with far more agricultural, horticultural and informal economic activity. Addressing these challenges is made complicated by the fact that the majority of our rural land is designated as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt meaning that new development is generally restricted, save for some exceptions for agricultural and forestry development.

Over 12,000 hectares of our land area is covered by the eastern extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Metropolitan Green Belt is a planning designation that restricts development in areas around cities to prevent urban sprawl and prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. Green Belt areas of the District which are sensitive for this reason include between Rayleigh and Eastwood, Rayleigh and Hockley, and Hawkwell and Rochford. National policy makes it clear that Green Belt boundaries should only be changed in exceptional circumstances. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, a local authority will need to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development, including to

Relevant Plan Objectives: 20

make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land; encourage higher densities in existing urban areas and check with neighbouring authorities whether they can accommodate our need for development in their area. Whilst no detailed changes to our Green Belt boundary are being proposed in this consultation paper, it is recognised elsewhere in this document that we are unlikely to have sufficient urban and brownfield sites to meet our need for housing, employment or community facilities, and neighbouring authorities have advised they are unlikely to be able to accommodate any of Rochford's needs themselves. We have therefore completed a Green Belt study to consider the contribution that different parts of our District make to Green Belt policy to inform an assessment of whether exceptional circumstances are likely to exist.



Figure 42: Map of Green Belt and Rural Villages

National policy makes it clear that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, national policy encourages housing to be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. However this needs to be balanced against the likelihood of the housing introducing or sustaining services. It is unlikely, for example, that building a small amount housing in a hamlet will improve the vitality of these communities. However, where there are clusters of smaller settlements in one area, such as to the east of Rochford, it is recognised that managed development in one village may benefit rural communities in a wider area.

Rural exception sites are small sites located in rural areas that are excepted from usual rules in order to allow affordable housing to be built. These are different from usual housing or employment sites in that they seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households or businesses who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. It may be possible to introduce rural exception sites in some of rural villages. Villages we believe could support rural exception sites are:

- Canewdon
- Paglesham
- Rawreth
- Stambridge

Rural exception sites are likely to be small and therefore are unlikely to be of a sufficient size to introduce new on-site services and facilities but they nevertheless can provide a source of new housing and employment that directly helps existing residents (such as local first-time buyers) alongside increasing the catchment population for rural facilities which may help to sustain less-profitable services (such as rural schools, shops and bus routes) or help those services to expand (such as a bus route becoming more frequent)

Non-exclusive options for addressing rural issues through the plan, include:

1. Designating rural exception sites on the edge of rural villages to provide affordable housing only
2. Designating rural exception sites on the edge of rural villages and allowing a mix of both market and affordable housing on these to improve deliverability and viability
3. Designating rural exception sites on the edge of rural villages and working with the community to deliver a community-led housing scheme potentially with self- or custom-build plots made available to local residents
4. Delivering exception sites in rural locations where these would benefit local businesses unable to find other suitable premises
5. Not designating any rural exception sites and instead considering whether to locate development in rural villages as part of a wider strategy

Q54. Do you feel that the plan should identify rural exception sites? If so, where should these be located and what forms of housing or employment do you feel need to be provided? [Please note you may wish to comment on the use of specific areas of land in the next section]

Q55. Are there any other ways that you feel the plan should be planning for the needs of rural communities? [Please state reasoning]

OPTIONS

QUESTIONS



Planning for Complete Communities

We recognise that Rochford's urban-rural mix is a key part of its character. Unlike more urbanised areas, Rochford is home to a number of distinct neighbourhoods each of which has its own strengths, challenges, character and sense of community.

Above else, we believe our new Local Plan should support the achievement of a wider vision for the District by understanding and achieving individual visions for our individual communities. We recognise that each community has its own natural, built and cultural heritage that should be understood both individually and as part of the wider District and region.

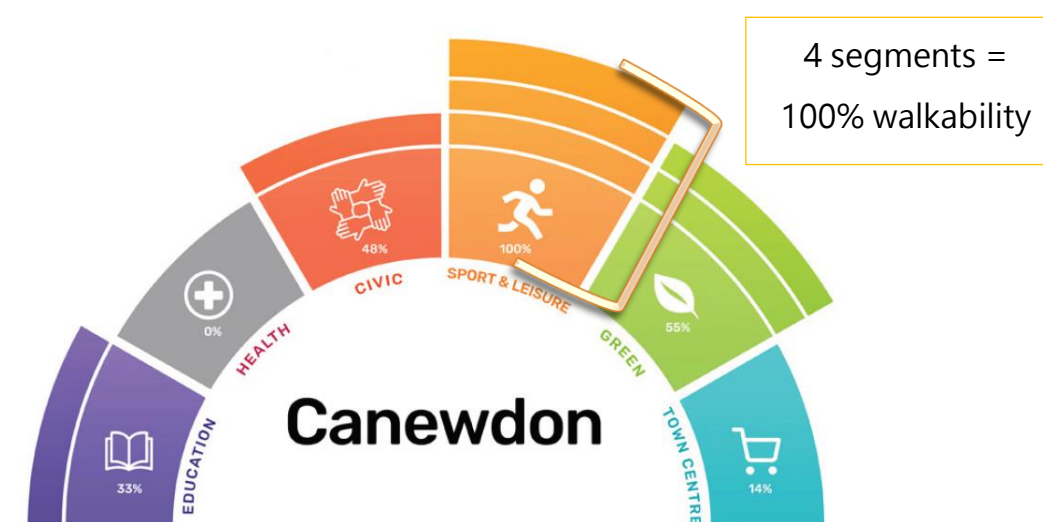
We hope to complement this community vision approach with adopting the core principles of creating complete communities. By complete communities, we mean create places that possess the necessary services for citizens to lead healthy and happy daily lives which are located close-by so that most of the community can access them on foot, cycle or by public transport. The more services a place has, and the easier to access those services are, the more complete that place can be considered to be. We have considered how complete our existing communities are using heatmapping, which is shown at Figure 43.

Whilst it may be possible to make communities more complete through supportive planning policies, it may be in some locations that new development can be tied to new facilities more directly and intelligently than before to make sure the benefits of development genuinely reach those already resident in a community. However, we recognise that some communities, particularly small villages, will never become 'complete'. Whilst residents of these communities are likely to benefit from having more facilities close at hand, there is not a sufficient population in these places to make service provision viable even with a small amount of new development. It is therefore important to consider our communities as a network and explore how improving the completeness of one community might help serve residents elsewhere.

The complete communities model we are looking at prioritises access to facilities by sustainable means. This means primarily through walking, but also through cycling and using public transport. We recognise that private vehicles are an important part of daily life and that the provision of new and improved roads will be an important part of the plan. Nevertheless, in thinking about how to make our communities more 'complete', we believe that relating the location of services with walkability and public transport nodes can help us achieve wider benefits for communities in terms of their health and wellbeing, reducing pollution within towns and nurturing more active communities.

In each of the following settlement profiles, we consider what the vision for that settlement should be and ways in which the completeness of the settlement could be improved. We also include a diagram displaying the existing level of completeness defined by the percentage of the settlement that has walking access to facilities. The diagram shows walkability to six types of facility: education, health, civic, sport and leisure, green and town centre, with each additional segment illustrating 25% walking coverage up to 4 segments demonstrating 100% of that settlement is within walking distance of at least one facility. See our Complete Communities Topic Paper at <https://rochford.oc2.uk> for more information.

Lastly, each profile includes a map showing the location of key assets and constraints, alongside land being promoted through the plan, to allow you to consider how the vision for your settlement can be supported by providing new housing, jobs and infrastructure on land in and around the settlement.



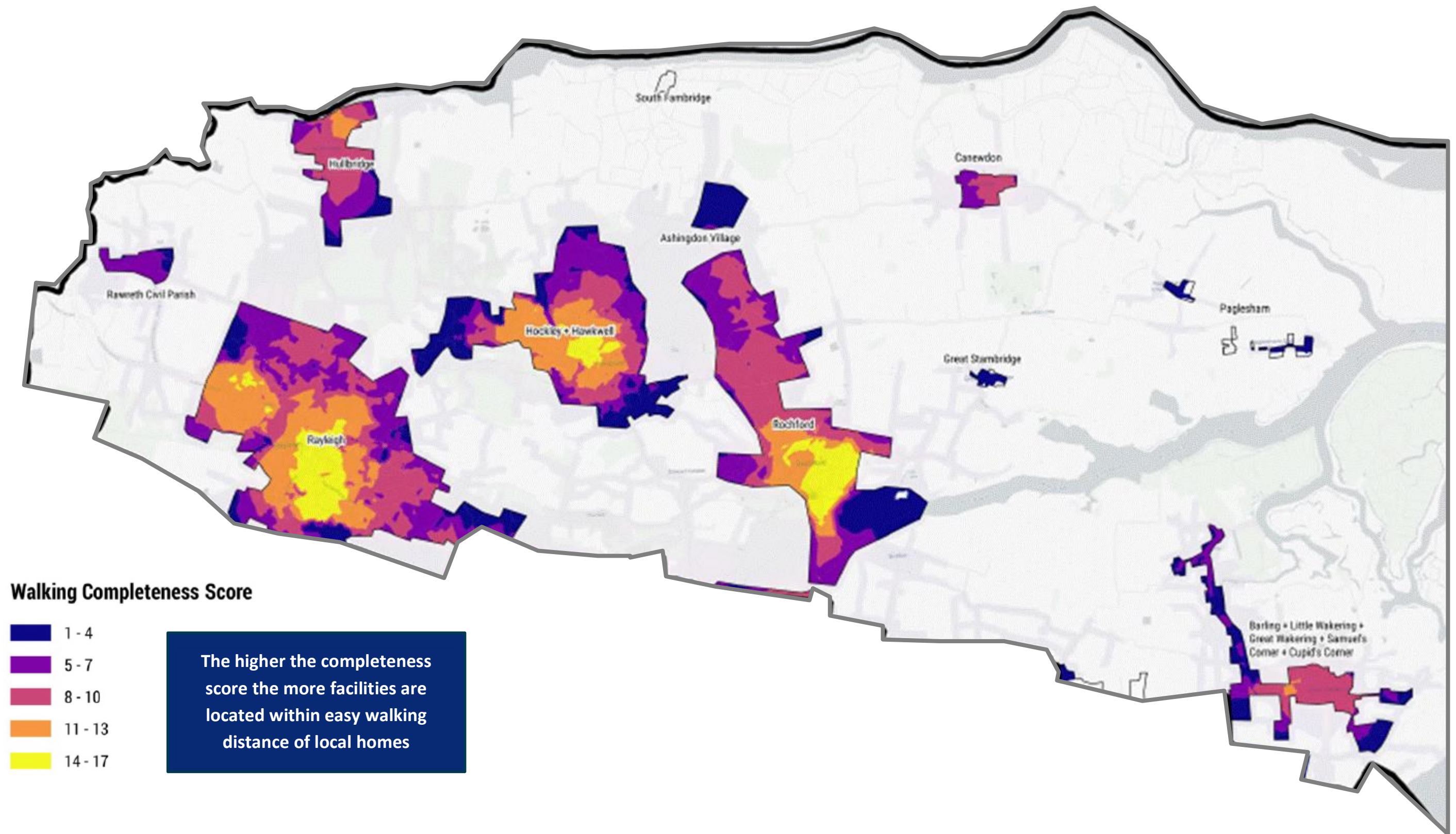


Figure 43 – Overall Completeness Mapping of Rochford District

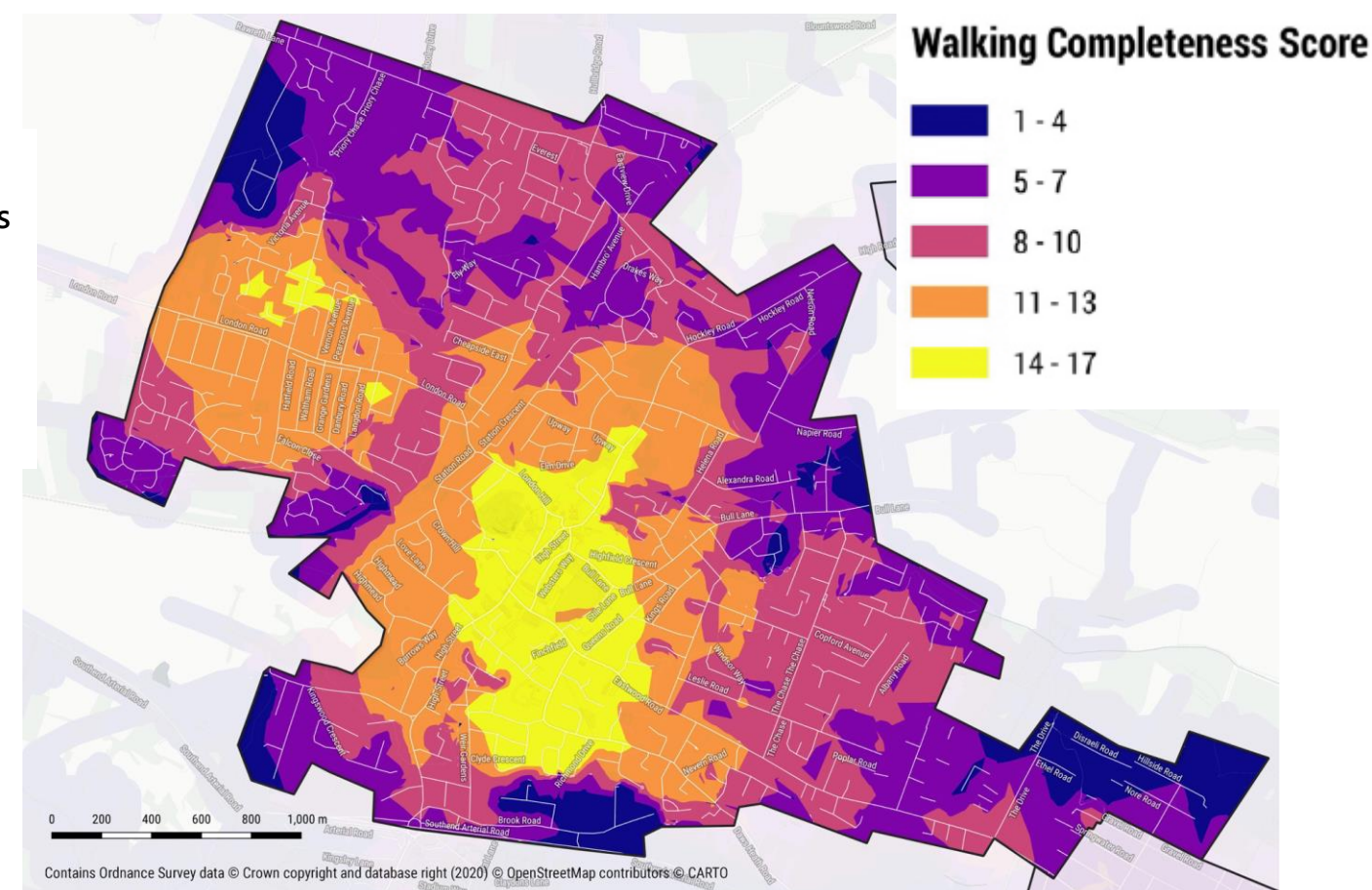


Rayleigh is proposed to be our only Tier 1 settlement reflecting its status as the District's main town, being home to the largest population and providing the greatest number and variety of services. Rayleigh is the principal centre of services for over half the District's residents and businesses, including large communities beyond its own boundaries in Rawreth and Hullbridge parishes. It is the District's largest retail centre and has the largest supply of business premises. Rayleigh has a demographic split that sits roughly at the District average, but has a particularly large commuting population, benefitting from its status as a hub for local rail and bus services, and its easy access to the A127, A1245, A129 and A130.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, Rayleigh benefits from a good standard of walking access to most day-to-day services. The areas of Rayleigh with the best walking access to services are around its town centre, with other strong areas to the west along London Road. Overall, even those parts of Rayleigh outside of the walking catchment of services benefit from good levels of access overall, particularly along the spines of Rawreth Lane, Hockley Road and Eastwood Road. Despite the good range of services provided, the capacity of infrastructure in Rayleigh is known to be a challenge, and opportunities to improve completeness through the plan are likely to be best targeted at improving the capacity and coverage of services, particularly within its suburbs.

Draft Vision statement for Rayleigh

In 2050, Rayleigh should be a thriving town with a wide range of shops and services, vibrant town centre, functional and reliable transport system with all residents living within walking distance of a local green space. It should provide for a diverse range of housing and job opportunities meeting the needs of all in the community, whilst retaining its strong historic and cultural character.



Q56a. Do you agree with our vision for Rayleigh? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

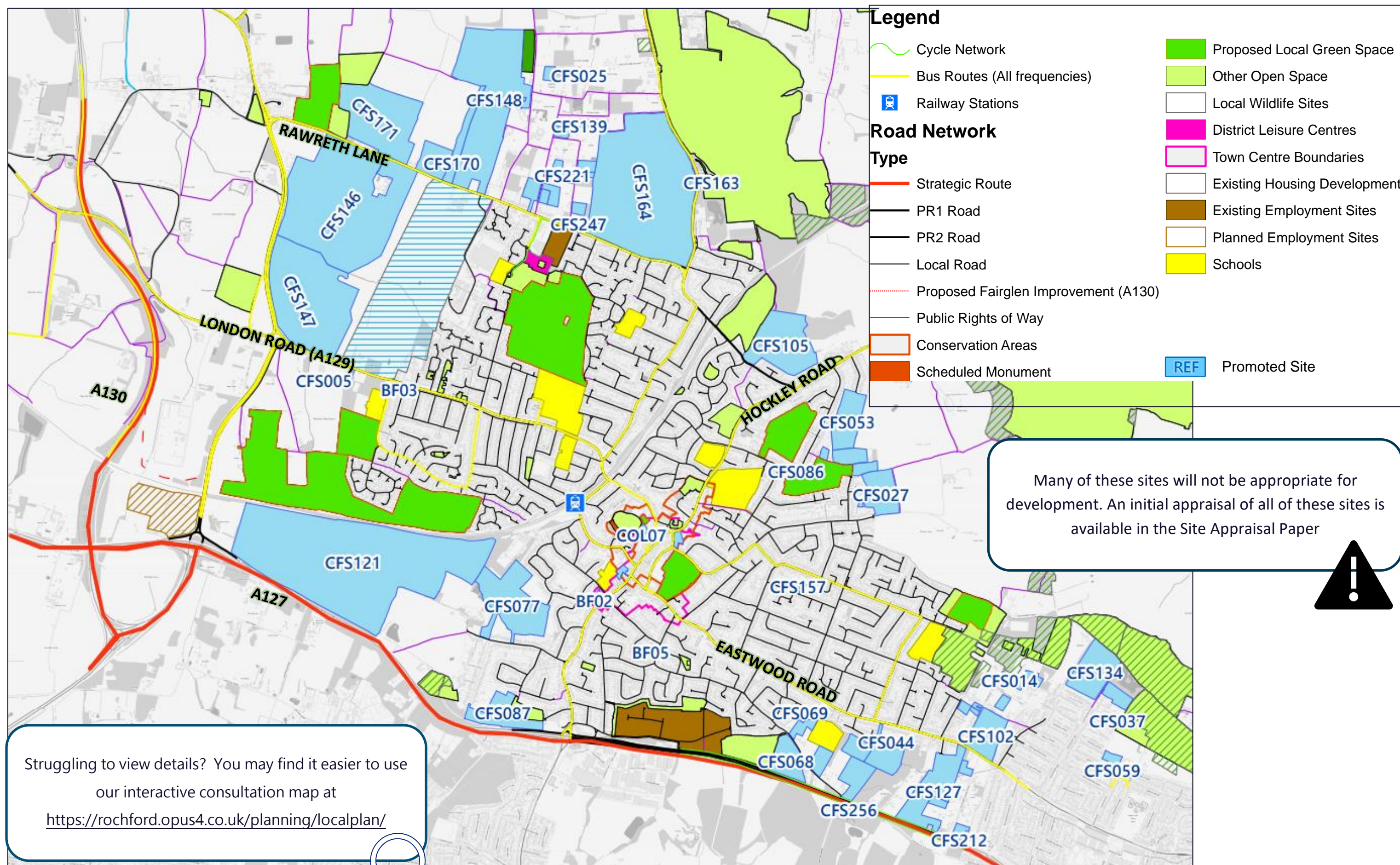
Q56b. With reference to Figure 44 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Rayleigh?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q56c. Are there areas in Rayleigh that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q56d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q56e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 44 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]



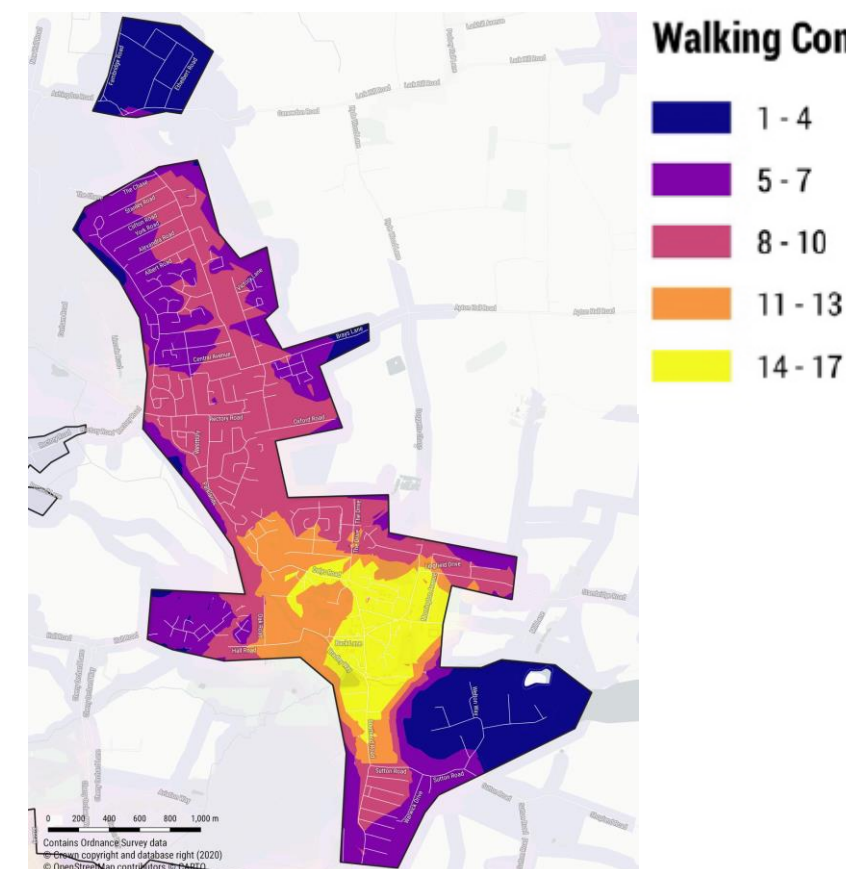


Rochford and Ashingdon together form a functionally-connected settlement home to around 18,000 residents. Between Rochford town centre and a number of neighbourhood centres located throughout the wider settlement, the settlement provides for a reasonably wide range of services and business spaces, including a number of specialist employment areas supporting nearby London Southend Airport. Beyond its immediate boundaries, Rochford and Ashingdon forms a particularly important service base for residents in the villages of Great Stambridge, Canewdon and Paglesham, including for both education and healthcare. Rochford and Ashingdon has a slightly younger population than the District average and has localised areas of deprivation where health outcomes fall below the District average.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, residents of Rochford and Ashingdon benefit from good walking access to most services, with the most complete parts of the settlement falling around and to the north of Rochford town centre. Walking access to services remains relatively good along the length of Ashingdon Road but dissipates into the residential area. The only parts of Rochford with particularly poor access to services are around Purdeys industrial estate and the residential neighbourhoods of Ashingdon village. Opportunities to improve completeness include in the provision of leisure services, addressing capacity issues and improving the reliability and frequency of public transport connections to nearby villages.

Vision statement for Rochford and Ashingdon

In 2050, Rochford and Ashingdon should remain the gateway to our rural countryside and grow its service base and sustainable connectivity to ensure all residents within its catchment are provided for and that localised deprivation can be reduced to near zero. Its town centre should be reimagined to become a more sustainable and vibrant space whilst retaining its historic character. It should make the most of its proximity to key employment sites and London Southend Airport to significantly grow its economic potential and the range of jobs it provides



Q57a. Do you agree with our vision for Rochford and Ashingdon? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

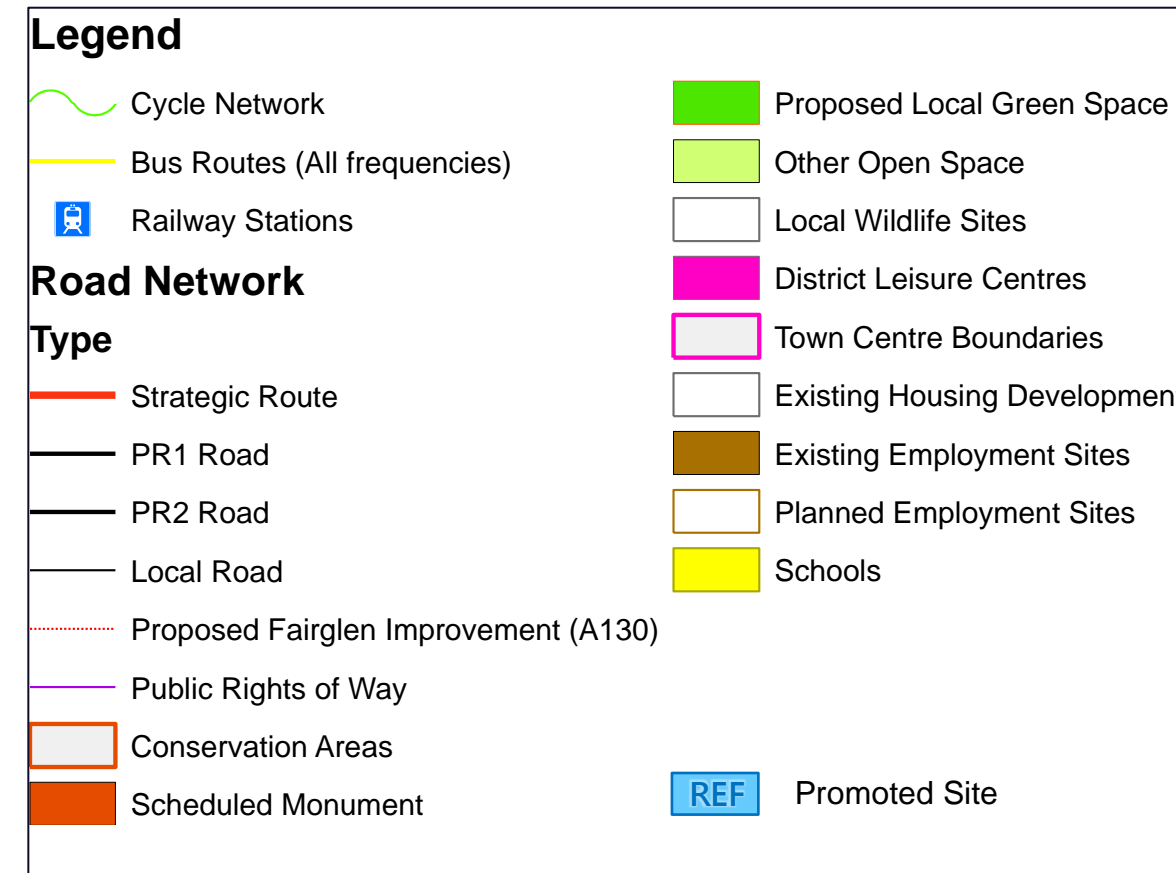
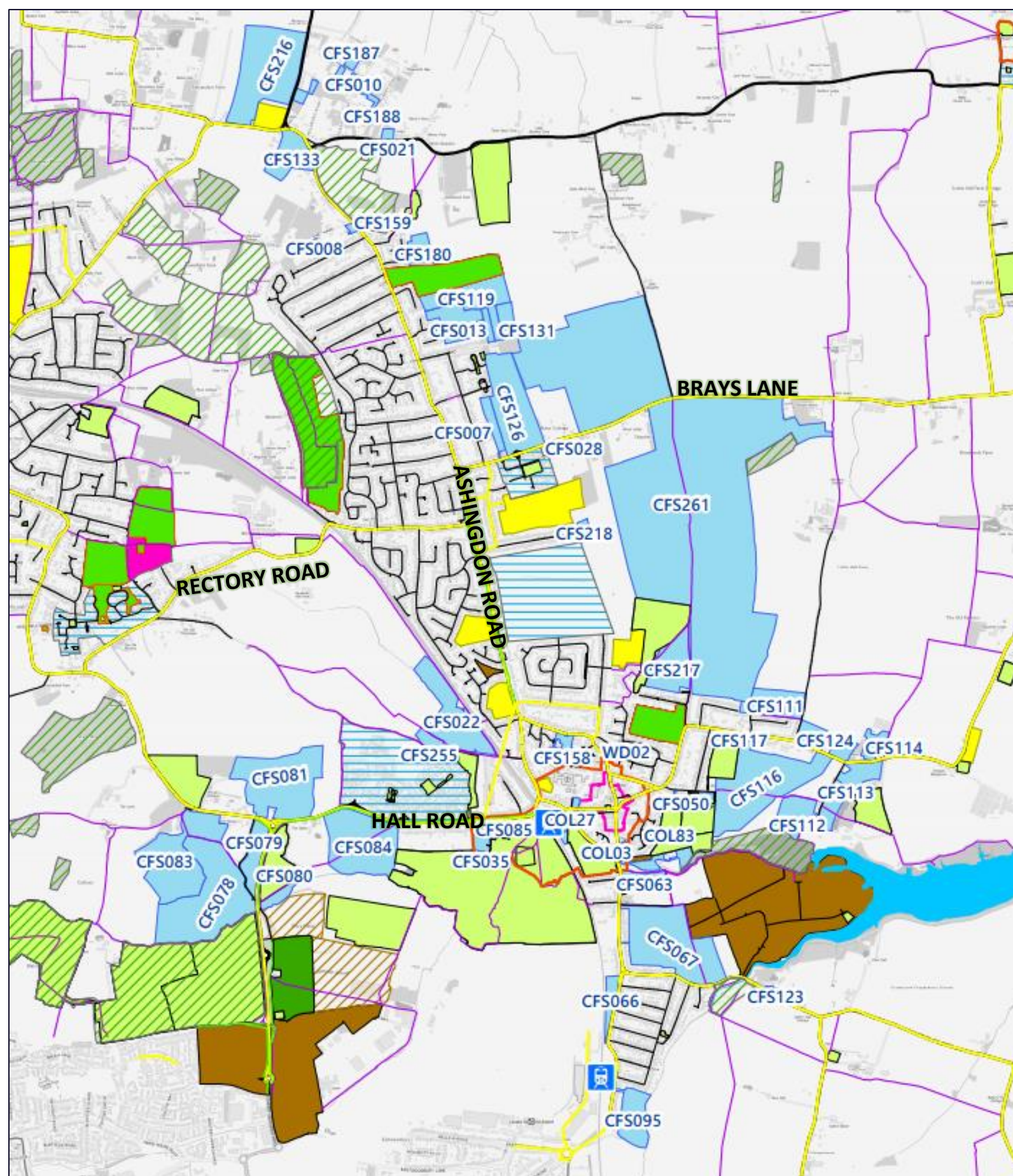
Q57b. With reference to Figure 45 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Rochford and Ashingdon?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q57c. Are there areas in Rochford and Ashingdon that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q57d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q57e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 45 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]



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Many of these sites will not be appropriate for development. An initial appraisal of all of these sites is available in the Site Appraisal Paper

Figure 45: Map of Rochford and Ashington

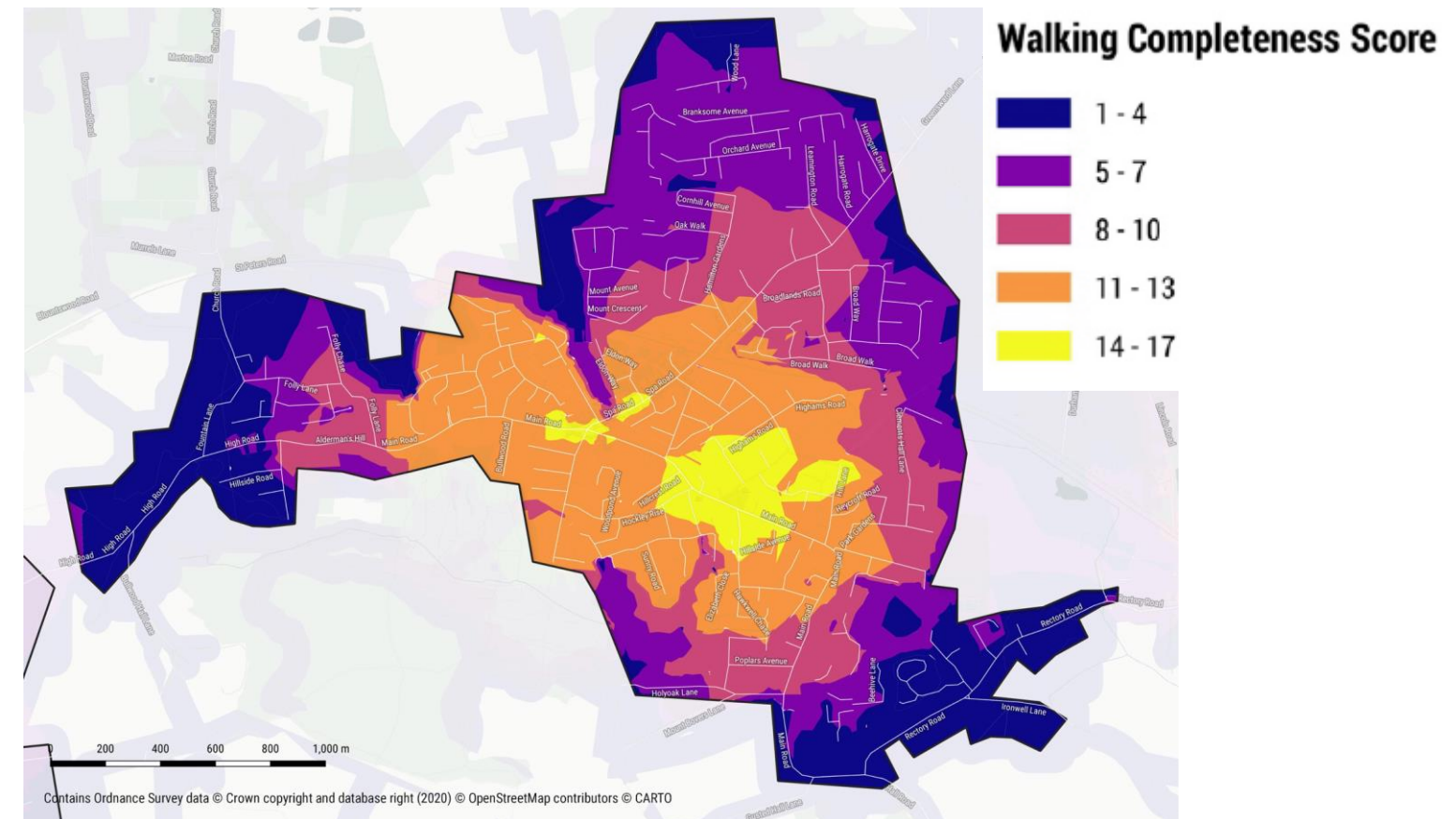


Hockley and Hawkwell are two distinct places that form a functionally connected settlement in the heart of the District. Home to around 16,000 people, the settlement provides for a reasonable range of services that serve both its own residents and a small number of villages beyond its boundary. These services include a small but busy town centre, a range of community facilities and a significant hectareage of natural space, including the largest remaining area of wildwood in the country, Hockley Woods. Hockley and Hawkwell are amongst the least deprived neighbourhoods in the entire District with housing availability and affordability a key issue in this part of the District. They are home to a slightly older population than the local average, but their overall demographic profile is similar to the District as a whole.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, Hockley and Hawkwell residents benefit from generally good walking access to most day-to-day services, with the best levels of access around the town centre and along Southend Road. The completeness of Hockley and Hawkwell does notably drop off along its periphery, however these areas are relatively less densely populated. Opportunities to improve completeness include improving the range of services provided within the settlement, addressing capacity issues and improving public transport connectivity to rural villages in its catchment.

Vision statement for Hockley and Hawkwell

In 2050, Hockley and Hawkwell should be the District's gateway to the green lung of the Upper Roach Valley, making the most of its access to ancient woodland and a network of nature reserves. Its town and neighbourhood centres should be vibrant places with an emphasis on independent businesses and providing for a diverse range of jobs. Deprivation should continue to be largely absent from Hockley and Hawkwell however housing affordability should have been addressed to ensure that local first-time buyers can greater afford to live locally.



Q58a.. Do you agree with our vision for Hockley and Hawkwell? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q58b. With reference to Figure 46 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Hockley and Hawkwell?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q58c. Are there areas in Hockley and Hawkwell that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q58d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q58e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 46 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]

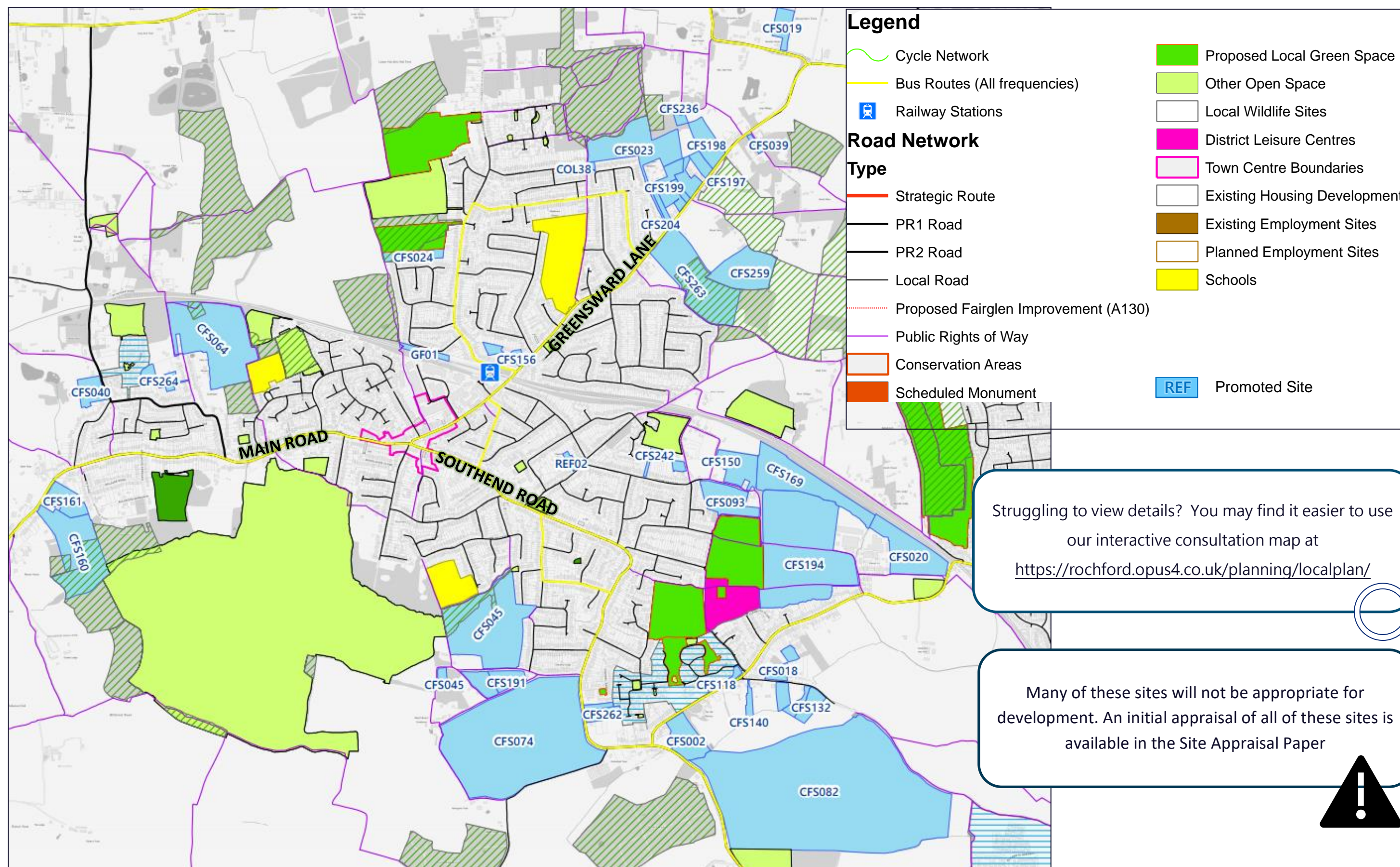


Figure 46: Map of Hockley and Hawkwell

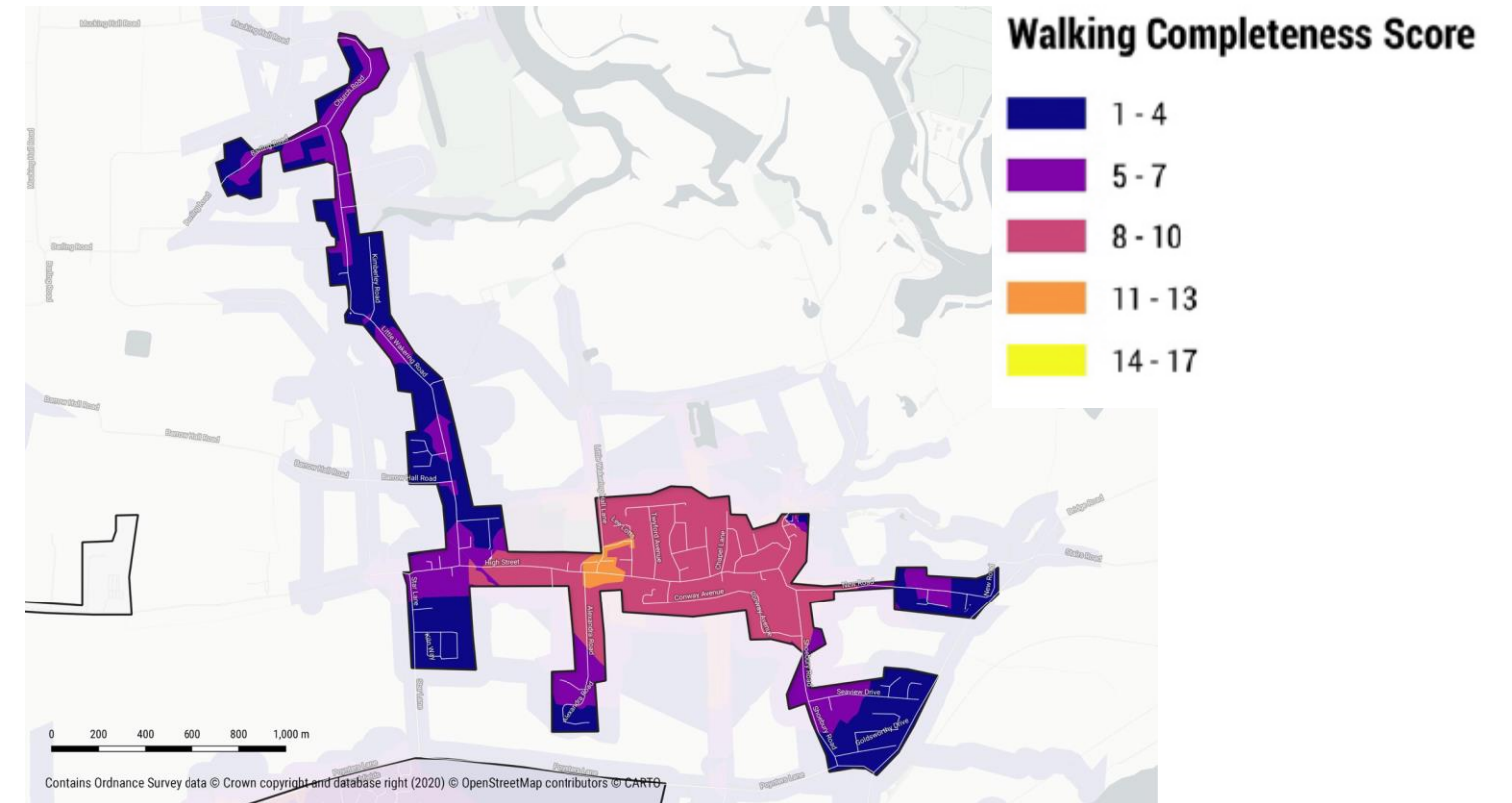


The Wakerings and Barling consist of a cluster of villages in the far eastern extent of the District. The villages stretch out along two main roads, Little Wakering Road and High Street, with a cluster of shops, a primary school and a medical centre concentrated on Great Wakering high street. Outside its centre, the settlement is largely rural in nature and benefits from its tranquil setting near the coast with the North Sea. Whilst the settlement has a good range of core facilities, these only serve local residents and most town-scale facilities, such as a secondary school and large-scale job opportunities, are absent. For this reason, the Wakerings and Barling are heavily reliant on nearby Shoeburyness and Rochford town for some day-to-day services. The population of the Wakerings and Barling skews slightly younger than the District average which may generate additional demand for housing and jobs in coming years.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, the majority of Great Wakering has reasonable walking access to day-to-day services. However, walking access dissipates rapidly towards the edges of the wider settlement, particularly within Little Wakering and Barling. Opportunities to address completeness in this settlement are both in improving the range of facilities available, including making secondary school provision more accessible, and improving sustainable connectivity to nearby towns.

Draft Vision statement for the Wakerings and Barling

In 2050, the Wakerings and Barling should have retained their rural village character and sense of relative tranquillity. More services should have developed locally to reduce its reliance on neighbouring towns, whilst any new services introduced should be located so that those located on the edges of the settlement are able to access them sustainably. The villages should have become more self-sufficient when it comes to homes, jobs and community facilities, including education. Development that takes place should be locally-responsive and aimed at meeting the on-going housing and employment needs of local residents.



Q59a. Do you agree with our vision for the Wakerings and Barling? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q59b. With reference to Figure 47 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of the Wakerings and Barling?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q59c. Are there areas in the Wakerings and Barling that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q59d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q59e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 47 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]

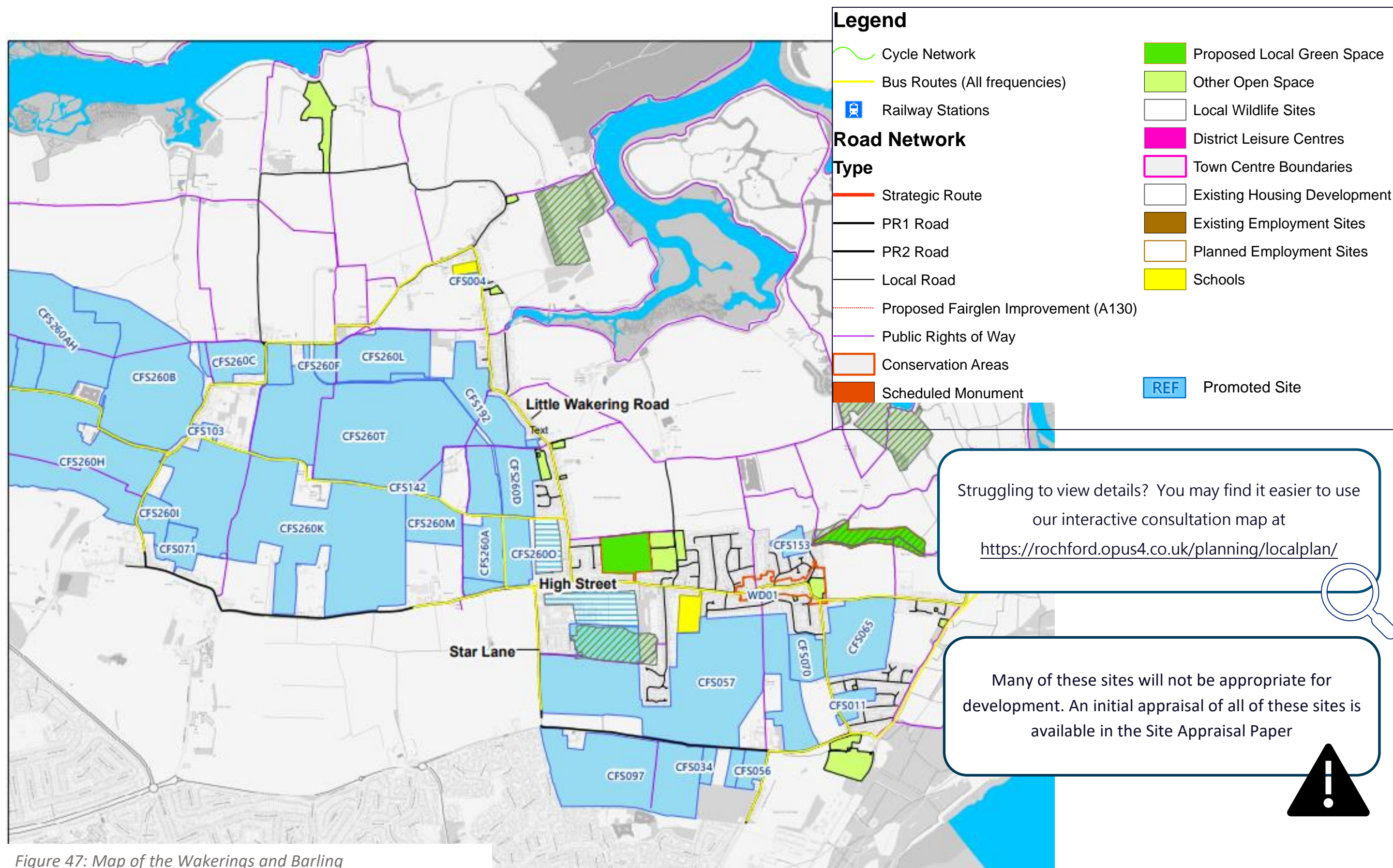


Figure 47: Map of the Wakerings and Barling

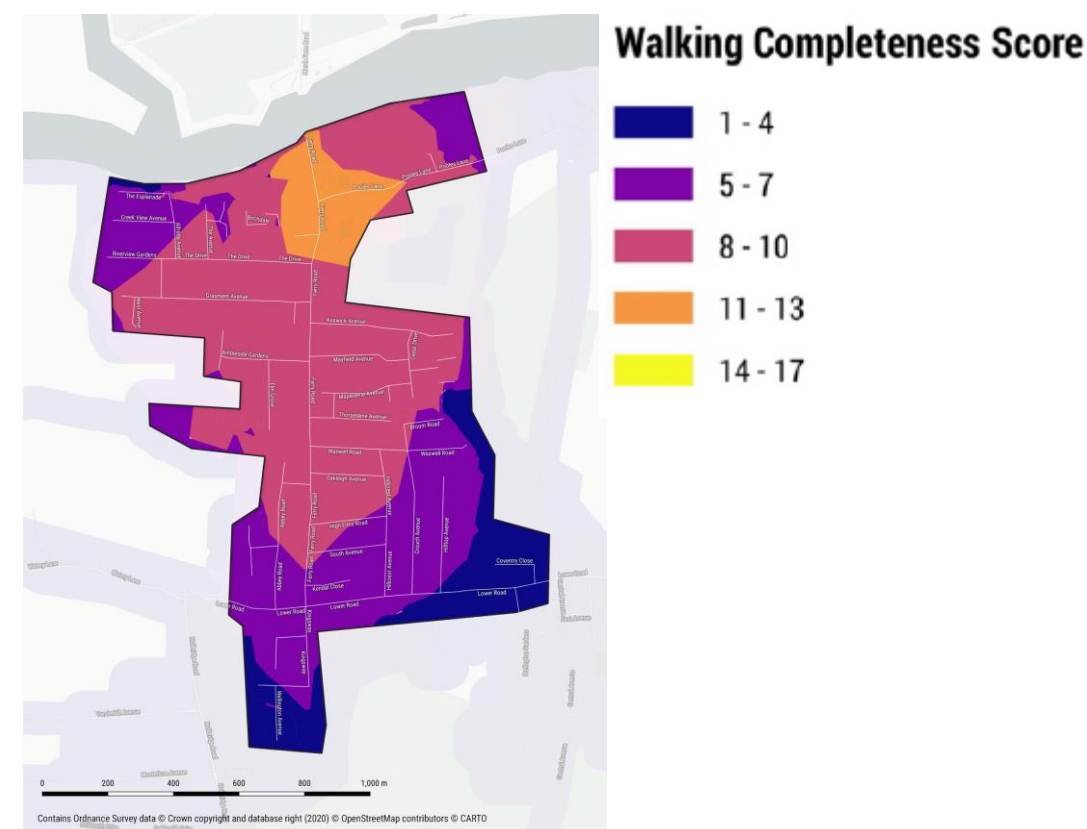


Hullbridge is a large village of around 6,000 residents located to the north-west of the District. It sits upon the course of the River Crouch and is home to a range of river-based enterprises and activities. The village provides for a range of basic services, including multiple shops, a primary school and medical centre. It has a relatively tight catchment but provides a base of services for local residents and some outlying villages, including Battlesbridge, and a number of rural caravan parks. Hullbridge is itself reliant on towns such as Rayleigh and Hockley for some services, including secondary schools and leisure. Hullbridge has a larger older population than the District average that is anticipated to continue to grow over coming years which may place demand on particular types of service close at hand.

The completeness mapping shows Hullbridge residents to have reasonably good walking access to most services, particularly to its north where a cluster of services lie, including a healthcare centre and primary school. Walking access remains relatively good along most of the central spine formed by Ferry Road but notably dissipates into residential areas and along its southern edge. Opportunities to improve completeness are improving the range and capacity of local services, including providing for more job opportunities locally.

Vision statement for Hullbridge

In 2050, Hullbridge should have grown its service base to become relatively more self-sufficient and accessible by sustainable means, including walking, cycling, river-based and public transport. It should have made the most of its location including opening up its coastline as a more attractive and usable space for both residents and visitors. Any development that takes place should be locally-responsive and aimed at meeting the ongoing housing and employment needs of local residents, including the housing needs of the local older population.



Q60a. Do you agree with our vision for Hullbridge? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

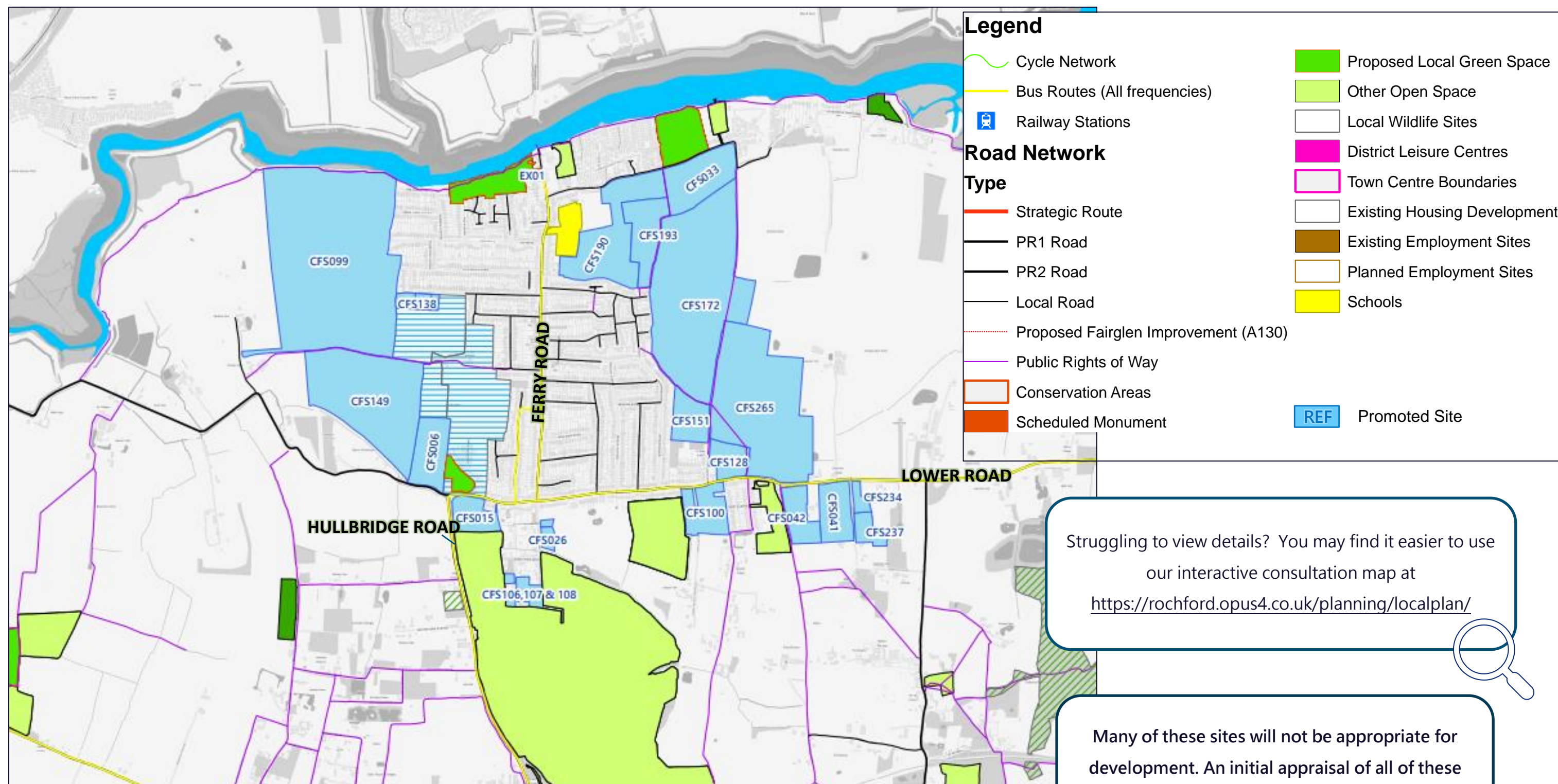
Q60b. With reference to Figure 48 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Hullbridge?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q60c. Are there areas in Hullbridge that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q60d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q60e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 48 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]



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Many of these sites will not be appropriate for development. An initial appraisal of all of these sites is available in the Site Appraisal Paper

Figure 48: Map of Hullbridge

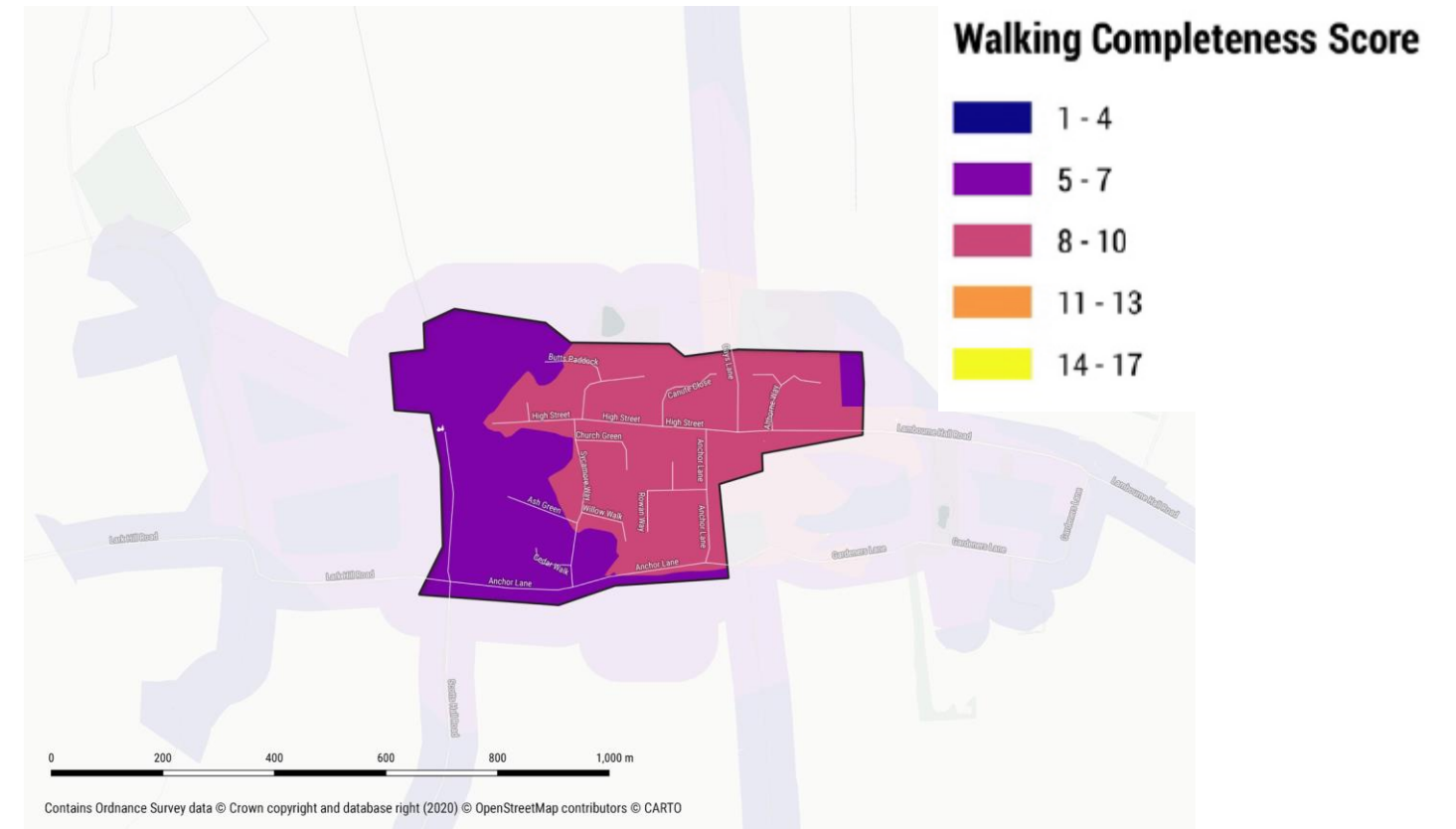


Canewdon is a relatively isolated village located in the rural north-east of the District. It is a relatively compact and self-sustaining village with reasonably good service provision for a population of its size, including a village shop and primary school clustered around its high street. These services primarily serve residents of the village, but also provide for rural residents in surrounding hamlets. Whilst its remoteness is one of its characterising strengths, it does also pose challenges in terms of generally poor connectivity both in terms of transport and digital services. Its demographic split largely reflects the District averages.

The walking completeness of Canewdon is reasonably good with the few services within the village being within reasonable walking distance of most of the village's residents. However, the village is relatively reliant on nearby towns, including Rochford, for a good number of day-to-day services, including healthcare, secondary education and employment. Opportunities to improve completeness include improving the range of services available locally, restoring lost services, particularly healthcare services, and improving sustainable connectivity to nearby towns, including Rochford, such as through a more regular bus service.

Draft Vision statement for Canewdon

In 2050, Canewdon should have retained its character as a relatively compact and self-sustaining village. It should have retained its existing services, including its primary school, and its residents' access to other services, including healthcare and jobs, should have been improved through a combination of improved transport connectivity and service provision. Development that has taken place in Canewdon should have been locally-responsive to meet the ongoing needs of local residents, including first-time buyers.



Q61a. Do you agree with our vision for Canewdon? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

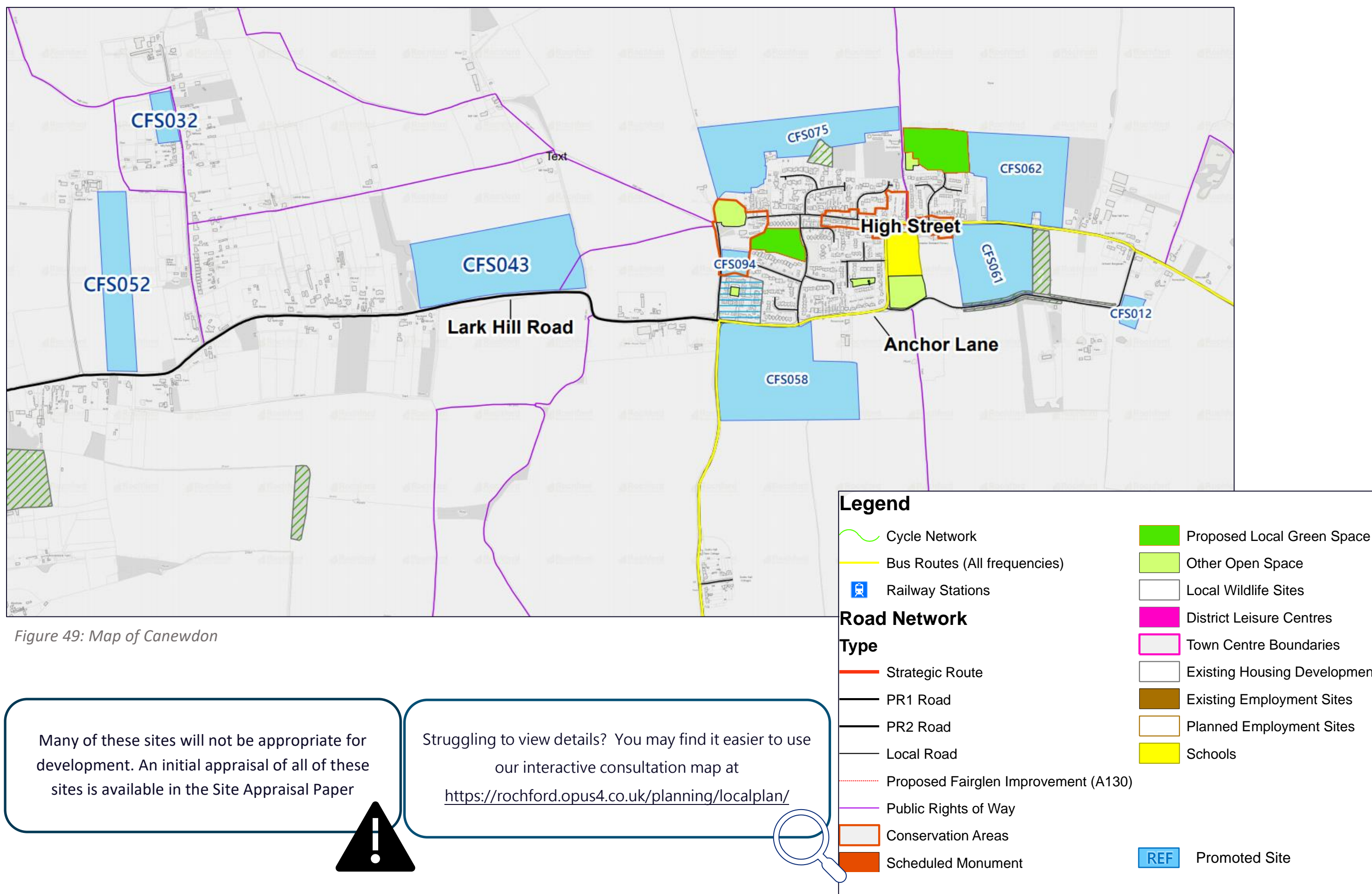
Q61b. With reference to Figure 49 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Canewdon?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q61c. Are there areas in Canewdon that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q61d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q61e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 49 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]



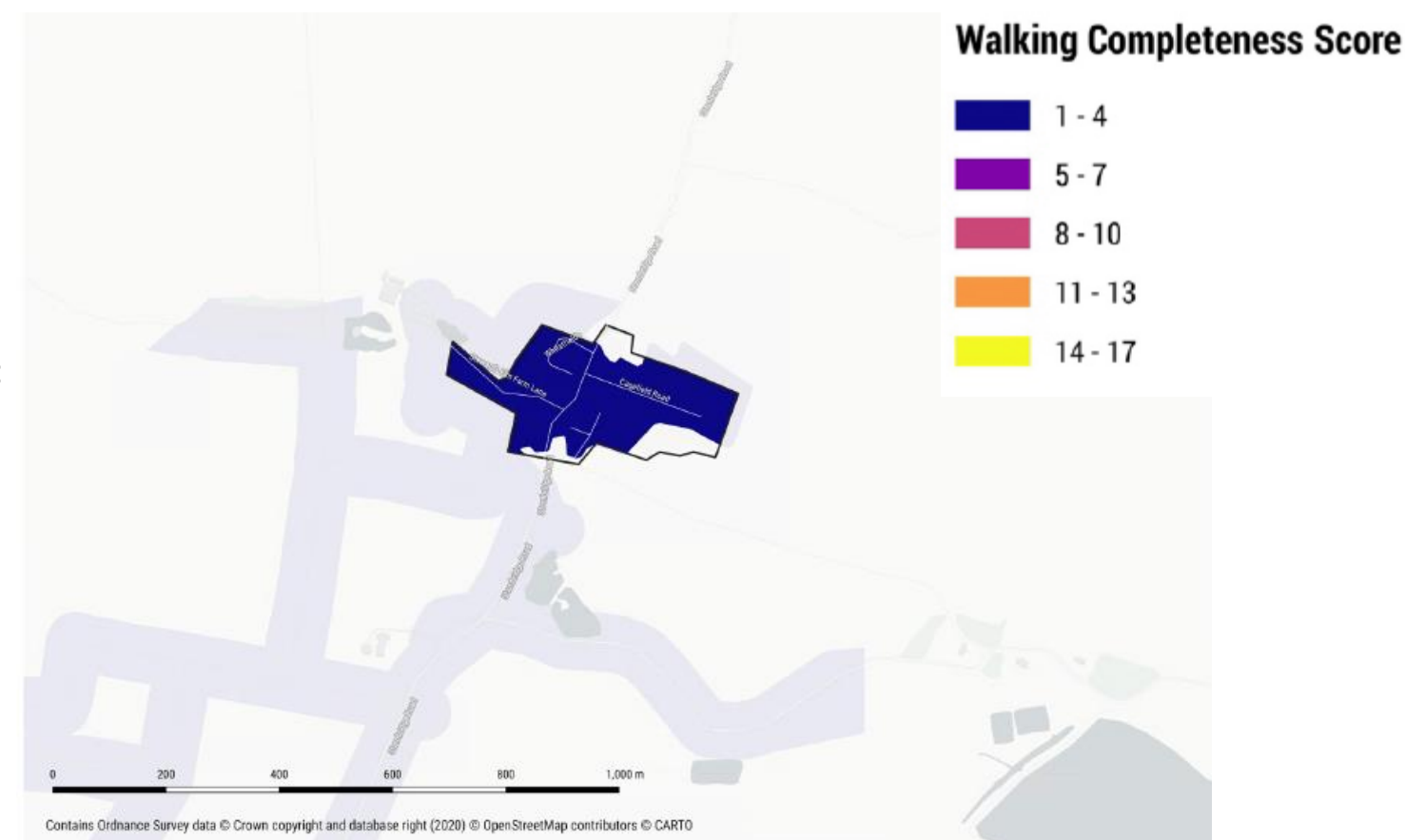


Great Stambridge is a relatively small village located to the east of Rochford town. It is home to around 400 residents, although its identifying population is significantly more when including rural populations and residents living on the eastern edge of Rochford town. The village possesses a good number of facilities for a settlement of its size, including a primary school, church and village hall, however the layout of the village means that these facilities are outside of the walking catchment of most of the village's residents. Due to its location, less than a mile from the eastern edge of Rochford town, the residents of the village benefit from a combination of relative tranquillity created by their detachment from the main urban area and easy access to all the services located in the town, including its job opportunities, retail outlets and railway station.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, the centre of population in Great Stambridge is relatively detached from the services along Stambridge Road and walking to these services is likely to be a relatively unattractive proposition to many residents. Opportunities to improve the completeness of Great Stambridge are less likely to be focussed on the provision of new services but on the enhancement of existing services, both in the village and in Rochford town, and improving their accessibility through sustainable means.

Draft Vision statement for Great Stambridge

In 2050, Great Stambridge should remain an independent village with its own character and sense of community. It should benefit from improved accessibility between its homes and services and its residents should be able to access the wider services in Rochford town with less dependence on the private car. Any development that takes place should be strictly in keeping with the character of the village and be of a form and type that responds to the individual needs of the village.



Q62a. Do you agree with our vision for Great Stambridge? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q62b. With reference to Figure 50 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Great Stambridge?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q62c. Are there areas in Great Stambridge that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q62d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q62e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 50 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]

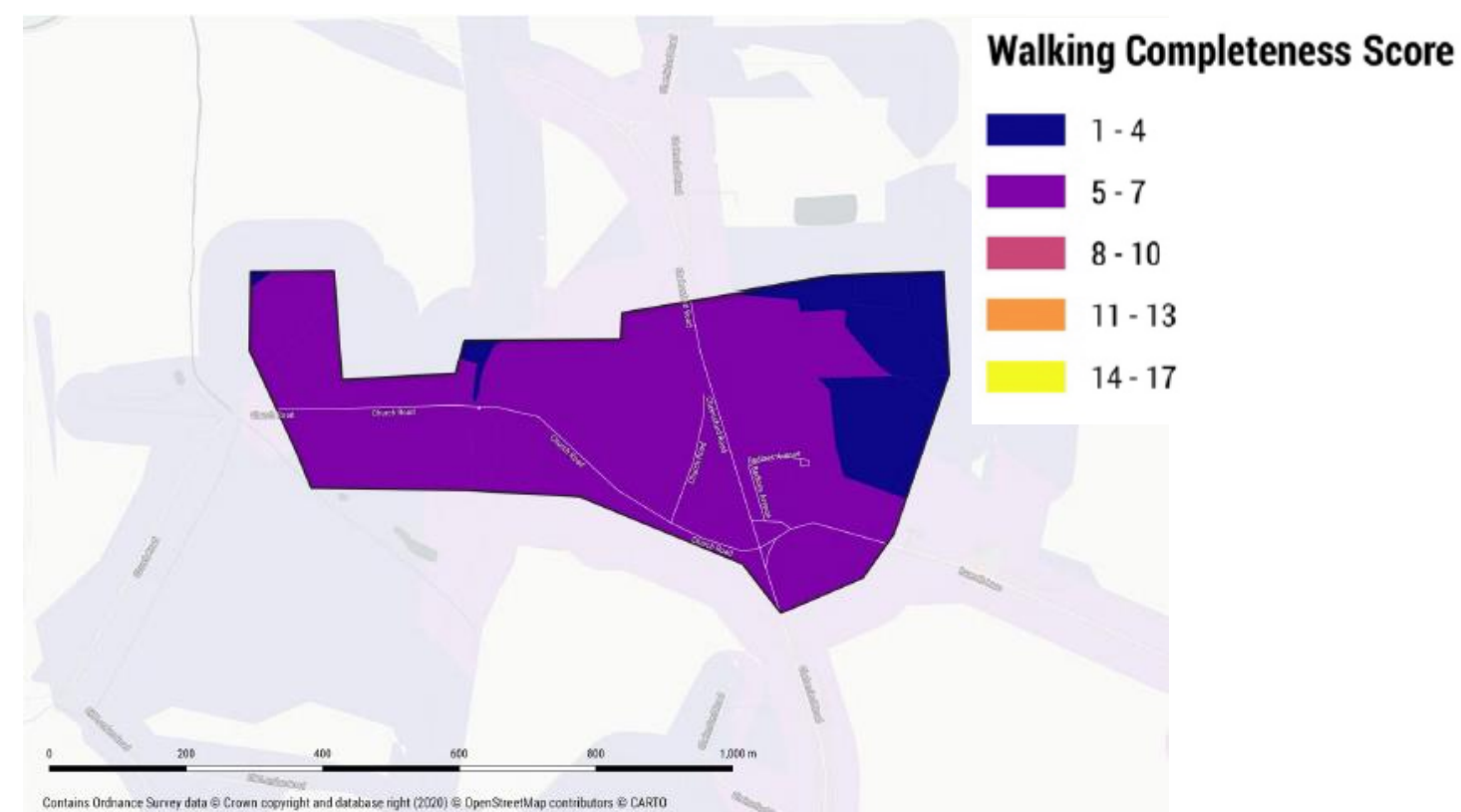


Rawreth is a village located to the west of the District, home to approximately 600 residents. It is located approximately halfway between the larger towns of Rayleigh and Wickford (located in Basildon Borough). Rawreth has a relatively good supply of services for a village of its population, including open space, a nursery and village hall, whilst it has reasonably good access to services in those towns. The village is well-located for accessing the strategic road network, with the main village envelope being located between the routes of the A130 and A1245, with nearby access to the A129 and A127. However, sustainable transport provision is relatively more limited, with residents of the village much more reliant on nearby towns for train and bus services.

Rawreth has a reasonable degree of completeness for its population however there may be opportunities to improve connectivity to nearby towns through sustainable methods, such as more regular bus services and new cycling and walking routes. A significant amount of land is being promoted near Rawreth, both adjacent to and beyond the existing village. An area to the south of the village is also identified as being a strategic growth option earlier in this paper. Whilst it is unlikely that this growth area, if taken forward, would adjoin Rawreth village itself, it may be able to help to improve the completeness of the village by providing new services nearby, including retail services, job opportunities and new public transport connections.

Draft Vision statement for Rawreth

In 2050, Rawreth should remain a functionally separate village with its own identity and sense of community. It should have retained and enhanced its core services and its resident should benefit from improved access to these by public and sustainable transport. Any development that takes place in the village, or nearby, should ensure it takes opportunities to improve the access of the village's residents to wider services, including to address relatively poor sustainable access to health, education and public transport services.



Q63a. Do you agree with our vision for Rawreth? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

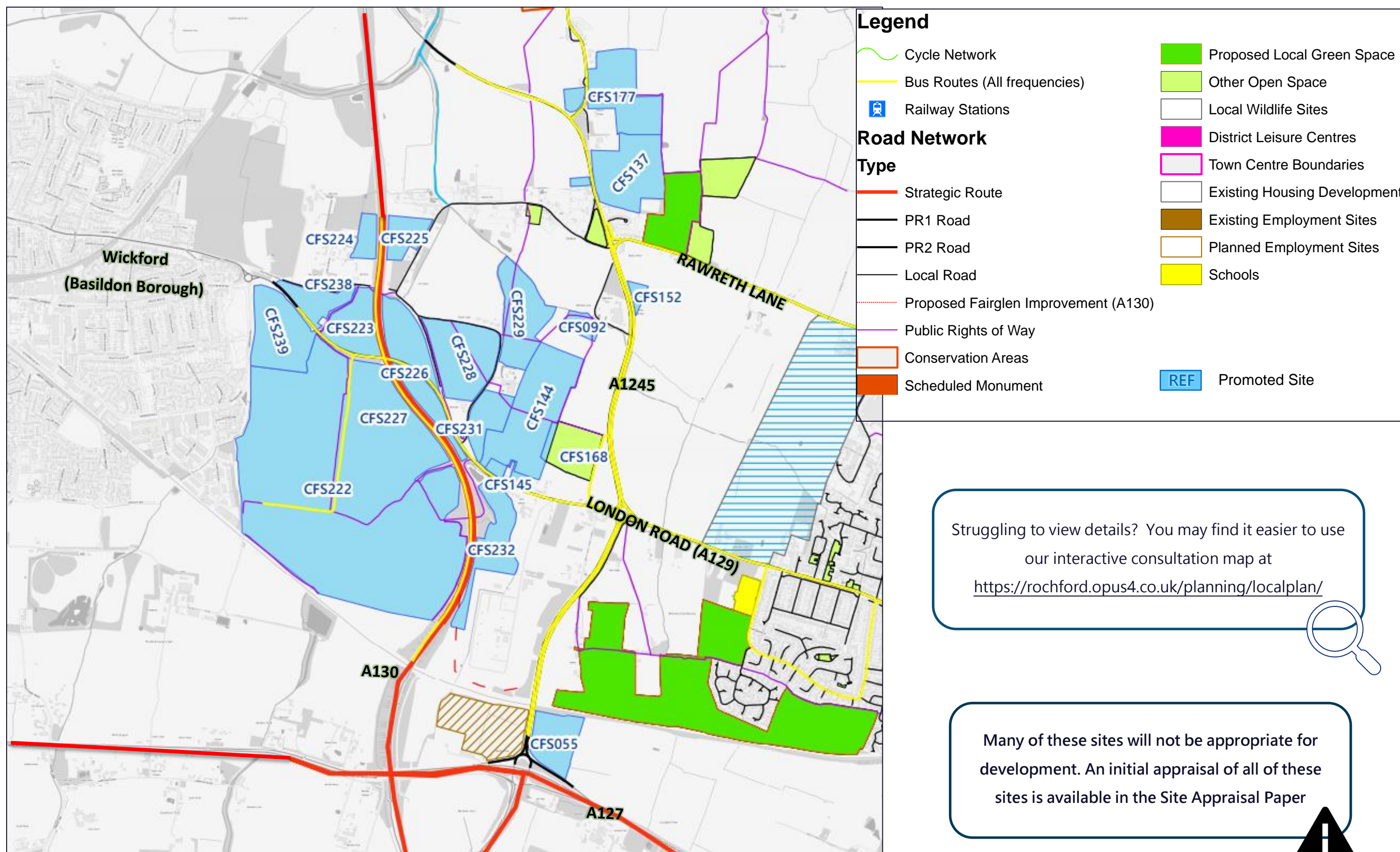
Q63b. With reference to Figure 51 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Rawreth?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q63c. Are there areas in Rawreth that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q63d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q63e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 51 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]



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Many of these sites will not be appropriate for development. An initial appraisal of all of these sites is available in the Site Appraisal Paper

Figure 51: Map of Rawreth

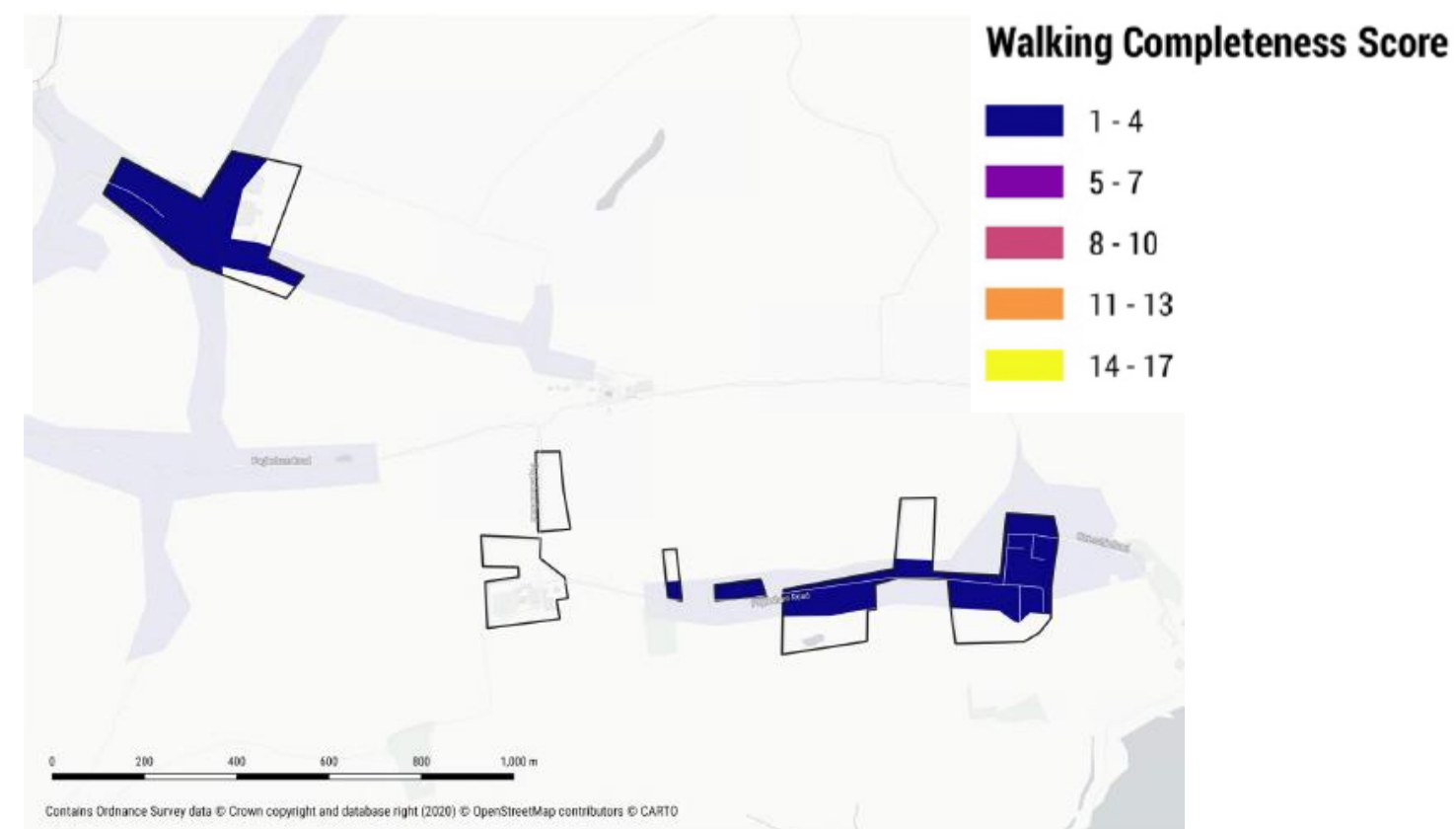


Paglesham is a cluster of hamlets located in the eastern extent of the District. Home to a combined 250 residents, Paglesham Churchend and Eastend are historic settlements, both covered by a conservation area. They are relatively remote from any of our key service towns and villages and do not benefit from any services but save for a public house and a small area of open space. Paglesham also benefits from its close access to picturesque areas of the coast.

As can be seen from the completeness mapping, Paglesham has relatively poor walking access to most day-to-day services, both due to the absence of those facilities and the distribution of homes being relatively dispersed over a wide area. Due to its low population, it is relatively unlikely that its completeness could be improved without a significant amount of new development, which itself is unlikely to be appropriate given its relatively remote location and large areas at risk of flooding. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities through the plan to improve the completeness of Paglesham through rural service models and improved sustainable access to nearby villages and towns, such as a more frequent bus service.

Draft Vision statement for Paglesham

In 2050, Paglesham should remain a tranquil and rural cluster of hamlets with the historic areas of Churchend and Eastend having been immaculately conserved. It should have retained its core services, including its public house and open space, whilst its residents should benefit from improved sustainable access to the services in nearby towns and villages. It should also have become a focal point for managed public access to the rural coast. Any development that takes place should be very small scale and in-keeping with the historic, rural character of the hamlets.



Q64a. Do you agree with our vision for Paglesham? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q64b. With reference to Figure 52 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Paglesham?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q64c. Are there areas in Paglesham that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q64d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q64e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 52 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]

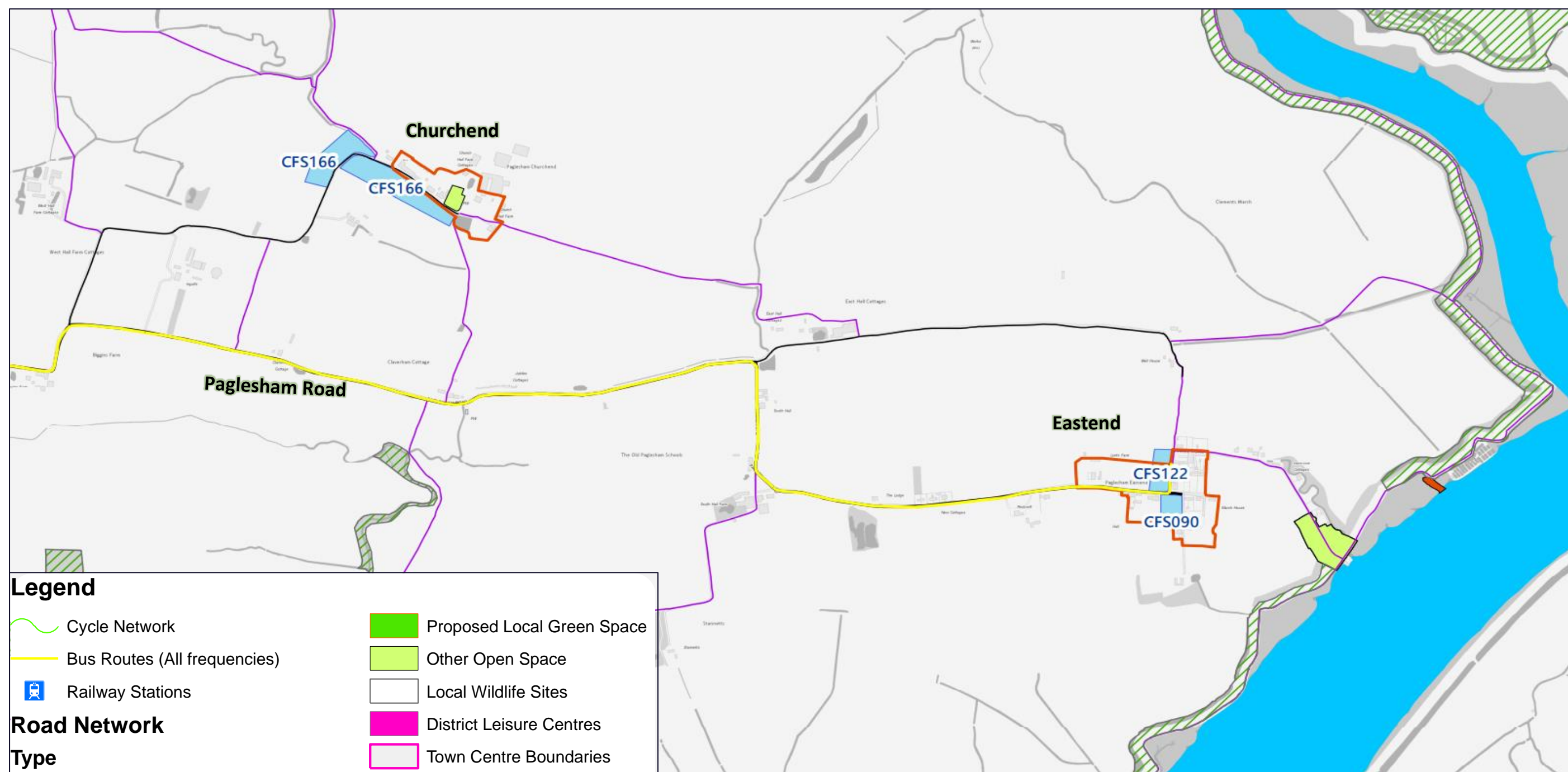


Figure 52: Map of Paglesham

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Many of these sites will not be appropriate for development. An initial appraisal of all of these sites is available in the Site Appraisal Paper

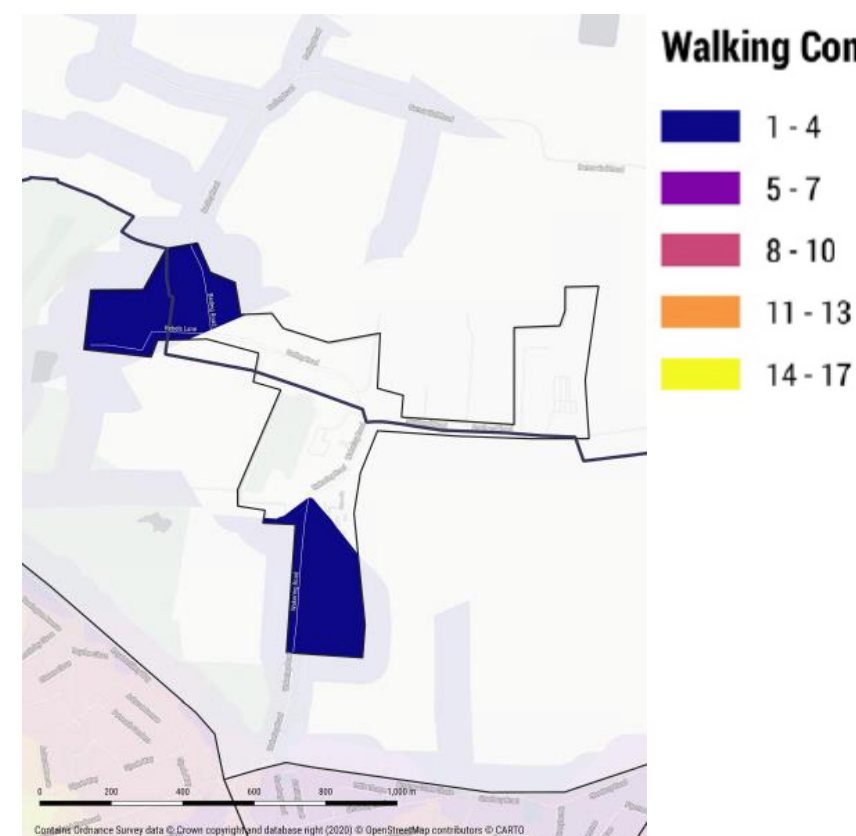


Stonebridge and Sutton are some of a number of sparsely populated hamlets located within a large and relatively open tranche of land to the east of Rochford town and north of the Southend urban area. There are very few services provided in this area and a majority of the land in this area is given over to agriculture. The largest area of continuous settlement in the area is Stonebridge, which extends over the administrative boundary into Southend Borough.

Due to the absence of any services, Stonebridge and Sutton has a very low level of completeness, with the only parts of the area with any walking access to services being those parts of Stonebridge nearest to the urban area of Southend. There is a significant amount of land being promoted in the area of Stonebridge and Sutton, both adjacent to existing areas of settlement and into the open countryside. This land is identified as a strategic growth option earlier in this report. Whilst it is recognised that the vast majority of the land being promoted in this area is not adjacent to existing communities, the development of areas of this land would provide opportunities to improve the completeness of existing communities in Stonebridge and Sutton by creating new services, including education, healthcare, retail and jobs, and providing an opportunity to improve sustainable connectivity.

Draft Vision statement for Stonebridge and Sutton

In 2050, Stonebridge and Sutton should still be recognisable places of their own right, however residents of these places should have greater access to services close at hand, including by sustainable means. Any development that takes place in the areas around Stonebridge and Sutton should respect and take inspiration from the individual rural and low-density character of these settlements.



Q65a. Do you agree with our vision for Sutton and Stonebridge? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q65b. With reference to Figure 53 and your preferred Strategy Option, do you think any of the promoted sites should be made available for any of the following uses? How could that improve the completeness of Sutton and stonebridge?

- Housing [market, affordable, specialist, traveller, other]
- Commercial [offices, industrial, retail, other]
- Community infrastructure [open space, education, healthcare, allotments, other]
- Other

Q65c. Are there areas in Sutton and Stonebridge that development should generally be presumed appropriate? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q65d. Are there areas that require protecting from development? Why these areas? [Please state reasoning]

Q65e. Do you agree that the local green spaces shown on Figure 53 hold local significance? Are there any other open spaces that hold particular local significance? [Please state reasoning]

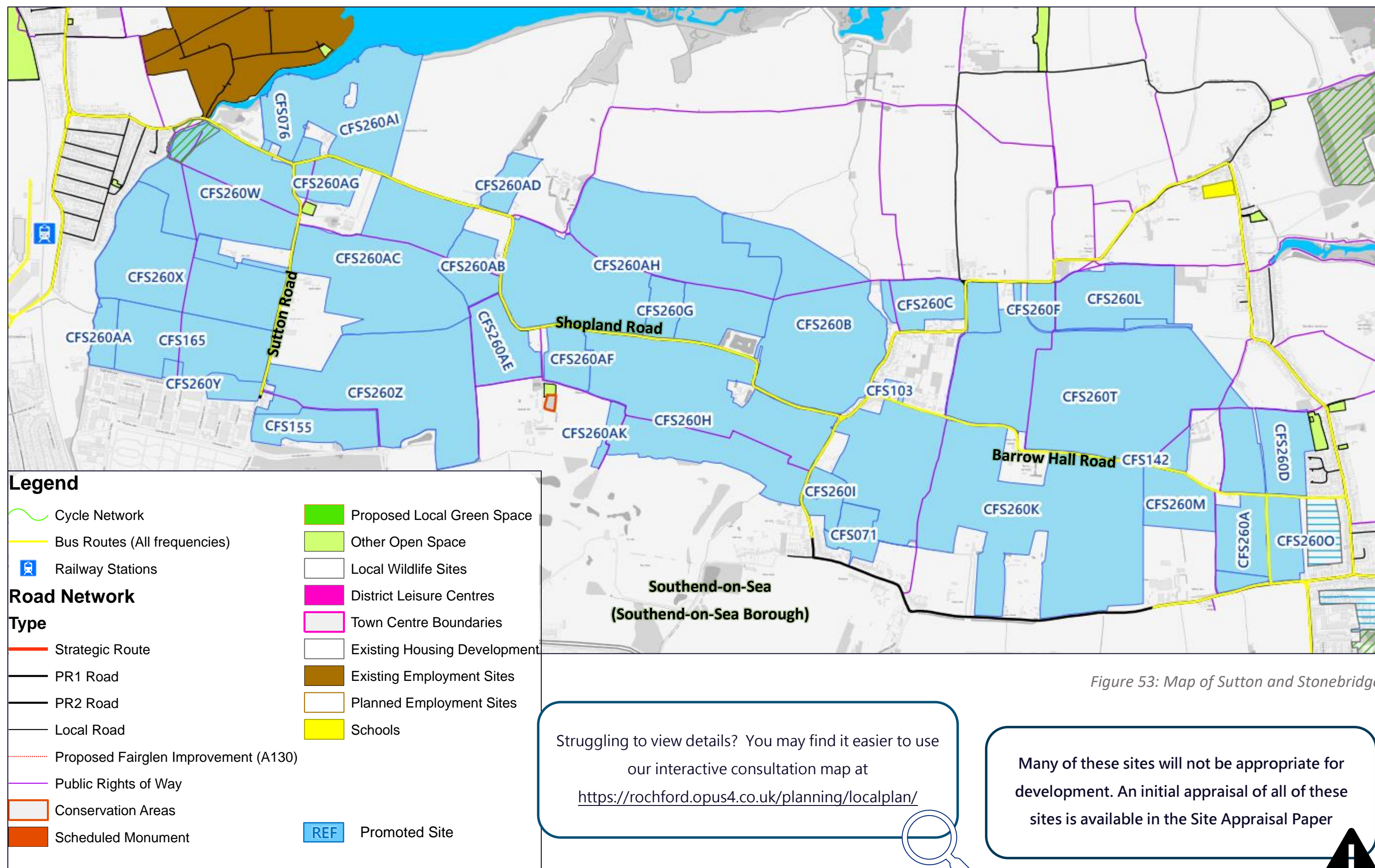


Figure 53: Map of Sutton and Stonebridge

Struggling to view details? You may find it easier to use our interactive consultation map at <https://rochford.opus4.co.uk/planning/localplan/>

Many of these sites will not be appropriate for development. An initial appraisal of all of these sites is available in the Site Appraisal Paper

Rural Communities

As recognised elsewhere in this document, Rochford has a unique mix of urban and rural environments which is reflected in the fact that over 5,000 of our residents live outside of the settlements identified earlier in this section.

These residents mostly live in rural housing beyond the boundary of recognised settlements. This includes small pockets of concentrated housing, including in plotland areas between our main towns, and more isolated housing spread out along inter-urban roads. More concentrated areas of population exist at Battlesbridge, South Fambridge, and Foulness Churchend. As these settlements have very modest populations, a general absence of services and do not have land being promoted nearby, it is generally considered unlikely that opportunities for significant change exist in these settlements. The more populated areas of Battlesbridge, in particular, fall within the administrative area of Chelmsford City.

As a result, we have chosen not to prepare individual vision statements for these settlements at this time. Nevertheless, we think it is important to consider a vision for all of our rural communities which can help to guide decisions through the plan that can benefit those not living within a recognised Tier 1-4 settlement.

Our vision statement for Rural Communities is set out below:

Draft Vision statement for Rural Communities

In 2050, our rural communities should have remained rural and the contribution these communities make to the character of the District should be safeguarded. The service needs of our rural communities should have been supported by an improved network of sustainable transport linkages, including in the development of new public transport, walking, cycling and equestrian routes. The needs of these communities should also have been taken into account when decisions are made about the provision of services in major towns and villages which rural communities are likely to depend on.



Q66. Do you agree that our rural communities do not require individual vision statements? Are there communities that you feel should have their own vision? [Please state reasoning]

Q67. Do you agree with our vision for our rural communities? Is there anything you feel is missing? [Please state reasoning]

Q68. Are there other courses of action the Council could take to improve the completeness of our rural communities?

Next Steps

The Rochford new Local Plan is still at an early stage and we are grateful to those who give feedback at this stage to shape future considerations and decisions.

The feedback provided to this consultation will be reviewed and taken into account when the Council makes decisions about the direction and strategy of its new Local Plan. However this will not be the last opportunity you have to shape the direction of the new Local Plan and further consultations are planned.

Once the consultation window has closed, the Council will prepare a feedback report providing a summary of the main issues raised and setting out an initial response to these issues. The Council will publish this feedback report on its website as soon as possible after the consultation.

Interested persons are strongly encouraged to sign up to the Council's mailing list should they wish to be kept informed of progress on the new Local Plan. The easiest way to be kept up to date is by signing up to the Council's planning alerts at www.rochford.gov.uk/tellmemore

