Rochford District Council

DRAFT CORE STRATEGY DPD

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CONTENTS

STATUTORY BASIS

This document has been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and the various relevant subsequent statutory instruments.

It was adopted by Rochford District Council on XXth Xxxxx 200X & came into effect on XXth Xxxxx 200X. It now forms part of the development plan for the Rochford district.

The following are also particularly relevant to the preparation of this document:

- **Under S.71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the local planning authority has a duty from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.**

- **Under S.39 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the local planning authority has a duty, when exercising its functions, to contribute towards achieving sustainable development.**

- **Under S.40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006, the local planning authority has a duty, when exercising its functions, to conserve biodiversity.**

GLOSSARY

The Council has prepared a glossary to be read in conjunction with this document. It can be accessed via our website or viewed in the Council Offices.

FOREWORD

The Core Strategy sets out options that the Council considers are realistic to shape the development of the district in the period until 2021 and beyond.

The Council has considered a number of options and has done more work in thinking around what appears to be the best solution. However, the consultation being undertaken to drive the process forward, will have a great impact on the direction and style of policy, together with the areas of policy that appear in the final version of this document.

In terms of process, the Council is preparing this initial draft for consultation. This will be followed by a wider and more formal consultation, on the preferred options that arise from the first part of the process, in the autumn. A formal submission will be made in the spring 2007.

This document is designed to stimulate discussion. We want to know where we have got it right and where we can make improvements. Have we forgotten any policy area that should be included?

It is important to note that the strategic development of the district will hinge on the content of this document and Council wants to get it right.

The Council has set out options for development under fourteen headings. The Council's preferred option in each case is shown in bold in a box. The options that the Council considers to be less satisfactory are also displayed, but these are not emboldened. The Council has commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment and this provides, together with the other key documents identified in the box following paragraph 1.6, a robust rationale for the preferred options.

Please complete the questionnaire accompanying this document and help the Council ensure that the Rochford district becomes the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit.

1 A SPATIAL PORTRAIT OF THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

1.1 The District of Rochford is situated within a peninsula between the Rivers Thames and Crouch, and is bounded to the east by the North Sea. The District has land boundaries with Basildon and Castle Point District and Southend–on–Sea Borough Councils. It also has marine boundaries with Maldon and Chelmsford Districts. It is ideally located within south Essex, with linkages to the M25 via the A127 and the A13 and direct rail links to London.

1.2 The Rochford District covers an area of 65 square miles. It is rich in heritage and natural beauty, with miles of unspoilt coastline and attractive countryside. There are more than 200 sites of archaeological interest, 14 ancient woodlands and several nature reserves across the District.

1.3 Rochford District is predominantly rural with three larger urban areas and a number of smaller settlements. The District's towns and villages are diverse in character reflecting their history, location and size. The character, layout and form of groups of buildings, streets and spaces make a significant contribution to providing a sense of place and adding to the quality of life in town and country. Residents have a strong sense of identity with their own settlement.

1.4 Home to around 78,500 people, the District is one with an ever increasing percentage of older residents. The District is considered to be reasonably affluent, except for a few small pockets of deprivation and has a low rate of recorded crime compared to the rest of the country. Unemployment is low at 2.1%[1]. The district has a workforce of 39,000, but only 21,000 jobs. Over two thirds of the district's workforce travel to work outside the district boundaries.

1.5 The Council communicates with the local community via a quarterly council-sponsored newsletter to every household and business. In September 2004, the Council was rated as a 'weak' authority following a Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It has subsequently been inspected and the Audit Commission state that "Rochford District Council is progressing well in priority areas." Building and Development Control was the subject of Best Value Inspection, which reported in July 2001. This report stated that the Council was "…providing a **'good',** two star service that has **'promising'** prospects for improvement."

1.6 The Council has made a good start on its Local Development Framework after discussions with the Government Office for the East of England and the submission of its Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement. It has also met the requirements for producing and submitting Annual Monitoring Reports. As part of developing the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and other Local Development Documents, the Council's planning team had regard to a number of local strategies and initiatives, including the following:

[1] As recorded in the 2001 National Census – National Statistics

- *Community Strategy* (2004) Rochford District Council
- *Crouch & Roach Estuary Management Plan* (2005) Crouch & Roach Estuary Project
- *Delivering the Future* (2003) Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership
- *Economic Development Strategy for Rochford District* (2005) Rochford District Council
- *Essex Local Transport Plan 2006-2011* (2005) Essex County Council
- *Draft East of England Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy 14)* (2005) – EERA
- *East of England Plan – Examination in Public – Report of the Panel* (2006) EIP Panel
- *Green Grid Strategy* (2005) Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership
- *Health & Opportunity for the People of Essex – Essex's Local Area Agreement* (2006)
- *Housing Needs Survey* (2004) Rochford District Council
- *Housing Strategy 2004-2007 Fit for Purpose* (2004) Rochford District Council
- *Putting Patients at the Heart of Everything We Do* (2004) Castle Point & Rochford PCT
- *Rochford District Replacement Local Plan* (2006) Rochford District Council
- *School Organisation Plan 2005-2010* (2006) Essex County Council
- *Three Year Strategy Plan 2006 – 2009* (2006) Essex Police Authority & Essex Police
- *Tourism Strategy* (2005) Rochford District Council
- *Vision for the Future* (2001) Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership

1.7 There are no remaining major new developments planned for the district in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan. The Park School site, on the western edge of Rayleigh, is currently being developed. This is a mixed use development incorporating a primary school, health centre, leisure centre and residential uses. A supermarket is under construction in Rochford, together with a number of residential units.

1.8 As a partner in the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, the Council has undertaken the role of providing the arts and culture opportunities for the area. This has been coupled to the provision of green tourism and leisure opportunities for the gateway. Such opportunities have to be considered against the restrictive green belt policies that apply within the district.

1.9 Within the district road infrastructure is poor. There are no designated Heavy Lorry Routes in the district and many routes are unfit for their current level of use. Away from the two principal roads (the A130 and A127), roads are often narrow and twisting. This creates problems particularly for remote businesses, such as those near Wallasea.

1.10 Public transport, outside of the existing residential areas, is poor. The level of service to certain parts of the district means they are inaccessible in the early morning, evenings or at weekends. This restricts the possibility of using public transport to travel to and from work in some settlements. The district has a railway line serving Rochford, Hockley and Rayleigh. A new station has planning permission to serve London Southend Airport.

1.11 London Southend Airport lies in the southern edge of the district. Recently the Council granted planning permission for a new terminal and associated facilities. The airport operator is looking to increase passenger flights from the airport, which had previously been restricted due to runway length issues. Today the airport is busy for freight and for aircraft maintenance, as well as private flying. Surface transport access issues will need to be carefully considered as the airport grows.

1.12 Close to the airport work is underway on the construction of the first part of the Cherry Orchard Way Business Park. This site is being developed as a specialist area for car dealerships and repair and servicing facilities. It is likely that further employment land will be required to satisfy the needs of aviation related business.

2 SPATIAL VISION FOR THE DISTRICT

2.1 The Council's Community Strategy Plan set out a vision for the future. This Core Strategy takes account of the Community Strategy and proposes a spatial vision for the next 5, 10 and 15 years to 2021. The Council has the following vision for the district:

"The Council's vision is to make Rochford the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit."

2.2 The Council has also adopted the following principal aims:

- Provide quality, cost effective services
- Work towards a safer and more caring community
- Promote a green and sustainable environment
- Encourage a thriving local economy
- Improve the quality of life for people in our District
- Maintain and enhance our local heritage

2.3 The following sets out the spatial vision for the district:

IN 5 YEARS… …WHERE WILL WE BE?

2.4 The Rochford District is one of the safest places in the country to live and work. A number of agencies and individuals are committed to working together, as partners of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, to maintain and where possible improve this standard, whilst also working to reduce the fear of crime that exists.

2.5 Residents will be able to enjoy the early development of the Thames Gateway Green Grid. This will lead to improvements in the provision and upgrade of green space, resulting in increased usage of these spaces and therefore healthier lifestyles. Enhancement of heritage sites and local facilities will provide opportunities for leisure and free time activities, improving the quality of life for many residents.

2.6 Residents will see new development schemes incorporating a mix of housing and required local facilities being constructed on several large sites around the district. There will have been improvements to roads, public transport and other facilities in the vicinity of these sites. The new homes will offer high quality design, and include rainwater retention measures and renewable energy features. A percentage of the new homes will be delivered as affordable housing. These development sites will be landscaped and connected to the Green Grid and public open space.

2.7 Residents will be making the most of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, following its expansion and the completion of car parking at the eastern end of the park, making access easier. The Wallasea Wetlands Project proves a popular destination for ornithologists, particularly during the winter months.

2.8 New jobs have become available as part of the automotive development on the Rochford Business Park, offering skilled and semi-skilled positions. Allied to this, passenger flights are increasing from London Southend Airport and some new jobs will be available from this early growth. The new terminal and railway station at the airport will be complete and a plan for improving surface access agreed.

2.9 In Rochford the redevelopment of the hospital site has been completed and high class, modern healthcare facilities are available to residents. Elsewhere in the district a new recycling centre complements the existing kerbside scheme available for residents. The new primary school on the Park School site is proving popular with parents and has been graded well by Ofsted.

2.10 A new satellite health care facility on a 4 acre site in Rayleigh will be nearing completion associated with one of the new mixed development sites.

2.11 We will be working with our partners to tackle the problems of traffic congestion, both within the District, and on routes in and out of the District. Improvements in an integrated public transport system, as part of the Thames Gateway regeneration, will also offer residents an alternative to travelling by car.

IN 10 YEARS… …WHERE WILL WE BE?

2.12 The regeneration of the Thames Gateway is a national priority for the Government. The Thames Gateway area includes east London, north Kent and south Essex (Southend Borough, Thurrock, Castle Point, Basildon New Town and a very small part of the Rochford District). Government ministers are leading this 25 year project, aiming to build the prosperity of the whole area so that it can compete more effectively in the global market and provide a better quality of life for all its residents.

2.13 The Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Framework document states "Of particular interest to Rochford is the potential to develop those themes which link to the vision in Southend, in particular developing the area for leisure, recreation and tourism activity. The area has a high socio-economic profile, high value housing and quality environment which balances the communities of south Essex, and provides an attractive inward investment proposition for business, particularly the developing service sector. " It continues by identifying key priorities including the promotion and enhancement of Rochford Town as a centre of "Arts and Crafts", and the development of walking and cycling initiatives. Leisure and tourism are sectors we plan to develop. Informal countryside recreation, in particular such pursuits as birdwatching, are potentially key to increasing visitor numbers.

2.14 Rochford District therefore has the opportunity to position itself to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the regeneration of the Thames Gateway area and ensure that residents benefit from the many future planned initiatives.

2.15 London Southend Airport is thriving. It has retained its high quality maintenance and servicing facilities and developed business and low cost aviation. An extension to the new terminal has been completed and the visitor centre has been opened to cater for the increased passenger levels. More jobs have been created directly as a result of this.

2.16 The new healthcare centre in Rayleigh is running well and is more than able to cope with the demands of existing residents and those proposed within its hinterland. This centre is well positioned so that it is accessible and it is being served by modern, clean public transport.

2.17 The Roach Valley has been opened up by the Council with the creation of new footpaths and bridlepaths linking Hockley Woods and the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park together and to the wider countryside. New public open space has been developed in conjunction with new housing developments and the deficit of playing pitch provision in parts of the district has been rectified.

2.18 A number of new green tourism initiatives have begun offering recreational opportunities for the Thames Gateway. Although many visitors only come to the district for the day, there are increasing numbers of bed and breakfast establishments, which enable stays in the countryside.

IN 15 YEARS… …WHERE WILL WE BE?

2.19 The regeneration of the Thames Gateway South Essex area will provide significant opportunities for the Rochford District. The identification of the District as "the green part of the Gateway", and the development of a Green Grid enables the District to take advantage of the regeneration by building on these strengths.

2.20 Residents will also be able to benefit from a wider range of training, development and employment opportunities throughout the Thames Gateway area. The potential increase of visitors to the District, to enjoy the local heritage or the unspoiled coastal areas will generate further opportunities for the growing tourism sector of the local economy. Small businesses from a range of sectors will find opportunities for development and growth within the thriving local economy.

2.21 Residents of all ages, throughout the District, will have a wider range of choices for their free time and leisure activities, both within the District and from the opportunities and facilities offered in surrounding areas. Healthier lifestyles leading to a fitter and healthier community will reduce the demands on local health services. It is intended to provide high quality integrated health services through a network of health facilities offering treatment, advice, guidance and support.

2.22 At the same time a growing number of the community will be older residents. Services will need to adapt to their changing needs, and there will need to be a variety of housing options, with different levels of care and support. Older residents will be supported to remain independent for as long as possible, with improved accessibility to support services and information.

2.23 It will be important to meet the housing needs of other groups within the community. Housing that is affordable for the children and families of existing residents will be required. Supported housing and a range of accommodation for people with disabilities, including mental health will also need to be developed, so that all the District's residents are able to live as independently as possible.

2.24 Pressure on existing infrastructure in the district has been eased with funding secured from new development. Road improvements around Rochford town centre have protected its historic core. Western Rayleigh has a high quality road network, with easy access to the A127 and A130. At Wallasea, the Essex Marina and Baltic Wharf have benefited from on-line road improvements, which has improved safety. Public transport is well used and has been enhanced by the completion of the South Essex Rapid Transit (SERT), which serves most of the population of the district.

2.25 The Council has reviewed various employment land options and has negotiated with landowners to relocate bad neighbour uses away from residential areas. As part of this process a new state of the art employment park has opened, which is accessible and well located to the South Essex Rapid Transit system.

2.26 High technology business has flourished in a new accessible employment area. Much of this growth has been underpinned by the availability of London Southend Airport and is related to aviation. Despite travel times to and from the airport increasing, the transit times through the airport make it an increasingly attractive departure point for low cost passenger flights.

2.27 Major housing in the district has been completed and these sites assimilate well with their surroundings. They are designed to a high standard and have maturing landscapes. They have become desirable areas in their own right.

2.28 Rochford District remains an attractive, historic area, full of character and is popular with residents, workers and visitors alike.

3 THE RELATIONSHIP OF DOCUMENTS IN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

3.1 The *Local Development Framework* (LDF) for the Rochford district is a 'folder' containing a collection of *Local Development Documents* (LDDs) that set out the spatial plan for the Rochford district up to the year 2021. Individual LDDs will be reviewed and amended on a regular basis.

3.2 The *Local Development Scheme* (LDS) provides an up-to-date explanation of which LDDs the Council intends to produce and review, and when they will be available. The policies in the existing adopted Local Plan will remain in force for three years or until they are replaced by policies in Local Development Documents. Initially, these LDDs will cover the period from 2006 until 2021 (in line with the 2021 end date for the draft *East of England Plan (RSS14)*).

3.3 The Council will encourage full participation by the local community and other stakeholders in the creation of Local Development Documents. This commitment to community participation is set out in the Council's *Statement of Community Involvement* (SCI). The Council will monitor the implementation and production of Local Development Documents through an *Annual Monitoring Report* (AMR).

3.4 Copies of all the current LDDs, LDS, SCI and AMR are available on the Council's website http://www.rochford.gov.uk and in local libraries or from the Civic Suite in Rayleigh or the Council's Planning Offices in Rochford.

WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

3.5 Some of the Local Development Documents in the LDF are known as "Development Plan Documents" because they are part of the statutory Development Plan. The statutory Development Plan for the Rochford district consists of:

- ***Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14)*** **[called the East of England Plan]** – prepared by the East of England Assembly, it sets the strategic aims for spatial development across the whole region, including how much housing each authority must provide. This document has been the subject of an Examination in Public and is under consideration by the relevant Secretary of State;
- **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** – prepared by Rochford District Council. These are required to be in conformity with *RSS14*; and
- **Minerals and Waste DPDs** – prepared by Essex County Council. They should also conform to *RSS14*.

ROLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.6 The national planning system is described as being '*plan-led'* because Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires development control decisions to be made in accordance with particular policies in the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The material considerations could include national planning policy or significant local issues that have arisen since the Development Plan was prepared.

RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY

3.7 This Development Plan is in general conformity with the draft *East of England Plan RSS14*. It also has regard to the recently reviewed Community Strategy Plan approved by the Council in 2004. The following six sustainability principles in the Community Strategy Plan have been a major influence on the plan:

- *To reduce both the level and the fear of crime and to make the District a safer place for people to live in, work in or visit.*
- *To protect and enhance the natural and built environment for present and future generations.*
- *To enable all residents of the District to access high quality education, training and skills development opportunities to ensure a thriving local economy now and in the future.*
- *To improve and promote the social, physical and mental health of everyone in the District by providing a variety of choices for leisure and free time pursuits and first class healthcare.*
- *To improve people's ability to get across and around the District.*
- *To promote active and responsible citizenship, creating a community inclusive of all groups, and enabling everyone to fully participate in activities that improve their quality of life.*

3.8 Taking the lead from the Community Strategy Plan, the principal aim of the plan is to promote sustainable development. This plan has been written to facilitate monitoring of its policies and proposals, with the intention of reviewing its outputs against agreed sustainability criteria.

USING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

3.9 The set of Development Plan Documents include:

Core Strategy
Sets out the spatial vision for the area over a fifteen-year period from 2006, together with key spatial objectives and strategic policies. This document will help readers to understand the Council's long-term spatial planning intentions. A Key Diagram illustrates the main principles underlying the Core Strategy;

Proposals Map with Inset Maps
Shows site-specific allocations, area action plans and other designations and constraints. Users should use the maps to check what proposals, designations or constraints are operating and proposed in particular areas of the district;

Allocations
Contains area and site-specific proposals for new development relating to the Core Strategy. These allocations are shown on the Proposals Map;
Development Control policies
A set of development control policies that apply across the whole authority area;
Area Action Plans
Show the areas of the district where significant development (including regeneration or conservation) are planned to occur. A Joint Area Action Plan covering land to the west of Rochford is programmed in the current draft Local Development Scheme. A further Area Action Plan for *Foulness and Surrounding MoD Land* is listed for preparation post 2010. These areas will be shown on the Proposals Map;
Supplementary Planning Documents
Contain policies, proposals and other details that amplify the content of the documents mentioned above. These documents are statutory but are not part of the Development Plan.

AVOIDING DUPLICATION

3.10 One of the primary reasons for changing the planning system was to reduce the size of the documents involved by avoiding duplication between local and national standards. This Core Strategy follows this premise. As sustainable development, general green belt policy and development in flood risk areas, for example, are covered by central government guidance, there is no need for the Council to repeat these policies in its own part of the development plan.

3.11 Instead, the Core Strategy concentrates on areas where there is a need for reflect national guidance on a particular local characteristic or issue, or where there is no applicable national or regional steer. The Core Strategy is also to be regarded as the most strategic document in the LDF and it therefore is not intended to be site specific.

Notes:

3.12 The District Council will use the relevant policies in all of the above Local Development Documents and the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan (until it is replaced) when offering advice and considering planning proposals. Thus, a suggestion for the use or development of land may be consistent with one policy in one particular Development Plan Document, but it may also be affected by other policies in the Local Development Framework.

2.29 *Anyone wishing to submit or comment upon planning applications is strongly advised to consult the general policies in the LDF on matters such as design, access, parking, and landscaping as well as specific policies and proposals. Wherever possible, the policies and proposals in the Development Plan Documents are worded in a positive manner to accord with government and professional advice.*

4 CORE STRATEGY ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Council considers that the following are the key Core Strategy issues. Whilst text relating to the issues is included, no policies are. If, following consultation, it is believed that the Council has identified the issues correctly, then detailed policies will be developed. The areas of policy are, in no particular order, detailed below:

- **The green belt & strategic gaps between settlements**
- **Protection and enhancement of the upper Roach Valley**
- **Protection and enhancement of special landscapes, habitats and species**
- **Housing numbers & phasing**
- **General development locations**
- **Affordable housing**
- **Employment**
- **Good design & design statements**
- **Character of place & the historic environment**
- **Landscaping**
- **Energy & water conservation and renewable energy**
- **Compulsory purchase & planning obligations**
- **Community, leisure & tourism facilities**

4.2 THE GREEN BELT & STRATEGIC GAPS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS

4.2.1 The Council considers that its policies hitherto have helped achieve the five green belt purposes, as laid out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 – *Green Belts (PPG2)*. The application of these has the combined effect of protecting the historic fabric of the district, preventing the further encroachment of development into the countryside and of safeguarding the countryside to provide for recreational needs and the protection of the natural features, flora, fauna and their habitats.

4.2.2 The Council also recognises that by diverting development and population growth away from rural areas to existing urban areas, green belt policy also assists in the achievement of sustainability objectives. This is recognised in the *East of England Plan*, particularly in policy SS1 and its supporting text. This confirms the need to maintain the green belt boundary and this approach is reiterated in policy SS7 and its supporting text. Whilst the need for a strategic review is identified, the East of England Regional Assembly have confirmed that this will not be required until after 2021.

4.2.3 The Council will include in the Development Control DPD policies to deal with the handling of specific applications. These will build on the policies already successfully rolled forward through the LPA's local plan.

4.2.4 The Council considers that there are a number of strategic gaps, maintained by the green belt, which are worthy of specific mention and enhanced protection. This will ensure that one of the principle reasons for green belts – the prevention of coalescence – is fulfilled. Indicative green belt boundaries and strategic gaps will be shown on the Key Diagram.

4.2.5 The development of previously developed land has restricted the need for green belt land to be released in a piecemeal fashion because of the good planning undertaken in the preparation of the 1988 Rochford District Local Plan. A similar exercise will be required for the preparation of the Allocations DPD. The Council still believes that the use of previously developed land has an important role to play in fulfilling housing and employment targets. The scope for the use of such land appears to be diminishing as many of the major sites have been used. The Council will prioritise the use of brownfield sites.

4.2.6 Following our initial consultation, it has become clear that the green belt is considered very important by the residents of the district and that its continued protection is warranted. The Council agrees with these comments and believes that by creating high quality developments at relatively high density, the loss of green belt land for other needs can be minimized. The Council will also look at releasing land where it fails to fulfil green belt objectives.

4.2.7 The Council's preferred options for the green belt are:

- **The Council considers that strategic gaps will be defined and protected by policy and included broadly on the Core Strategy Key Diagram. They will then be included in detail on the Proposals Maps. Their precise boundaries will be determined during the Allocations DPD process. The policy will include the following strategic gaps:**

  - **Great Wakering & North Shoebury (the area around the boundary with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council)**
  - **Hockley & Rayleigh**
  - **Hullbridge & Rayleigh**
  - **Rawreth & Rayleigh**
  - **Rayleigh & Eastwood (the area around the boundary with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council)**
  - **Rayleigh & Thundersley (the area around the boundary with Castle Point Borough Council)**
  - **Rochford / Ashingdon & Hawkwell / Hockley**

- **The Council proposes to continue its restrictive suite of policies for development within the green belt, in line with national guidance. The general extent of the green belt will be shown on the Core Strategy Key Diagram and in detail on the Proposals Maps. The policies affecting development control decisions on applications within the green belt will be laid out in the Development Control Policies DPD. However, there will be some relaxation for major developed sites, green tourism and renewable energy proposals in the green belt.**

4.2.8 Alternative options for the green belt are:

- A continuation of the existing restrictive suite of policies, based around Planning Policy Guidance Note 2, but omitting the green wedges concept.
- No relaxation for green tourism or renewable energy, instead relying on such schemes to justify their *very special circumstances*.
- Increasing the number of *major developed sites* in the green belt.

4.2.9 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.3 PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE UPPER ROACH VALLEY

4.3.1 The upper Roach Valley, including the area around Hockley Woods, is an area with special landscape characteristics. In the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan the area is designated as a Special Landscape Area and as an Area of Ancient Landscape. These designations arose from survey work carried out by Essex County Council.

4.3.2 There are fourteen ancient woodlands in the district and seven of them lie within the upper Roach Valley, south of the head of the valley formed by the railway line. There are also a number of wildlife sites, as identified by survey work commissioned by the Essex Wildlife Trust and shown with protection on the Replacement Local Plan Proposals Maps.

4.3.3 The Council is now committed to working on a Joint Area Action Plan covering London Southend Airport and land to the west of Rochford. This area includes part of the Upper Roach Valley. It is intended that this will deal with environmental and countryside issues as well as employment centred around the airport as a key economic generator. Enhanced protection will be required as well as improved access for informal countryside recreation, perhaps from Rochford town centre to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.

4.3.4 In the centre of the upper Roach Valley, the Council has established Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and is carrying out works to improve access to this area. The Upper Roach Valley is suitable for increased informal countryside recreation and the Council will be developing opportunities for such activities.

4.3.5 It is the Council's intention to reduce the linearity of the Country Park by purchasing additional land to enable vehicular access to the park. The park will also act as a gateway to the wider countryside and for circular walks through the Upper Roach Valley, including enhanced recreational opportunities in Hockley Woods.

4.3.6 Not all areas of the Upper Roach Valley will be suitable for significant levels of visitors. It is considered that some of the ancient woodlands and wildlife sites will not benefit from increased visitor usage. The Planning Policy team will work the Woodlands section to ensure that opportunities countryside recreation do not adversely affect biodiversity. The improved use of this area will be consistent with the Essex Thames Gateway Green Grid Strategy.

4.3.7 Following our initial consultation, it has become clear that the Upper Roach Valley is considered important to many people. It is valued for its role in countryside recreation and a green lung. The Council will examine how best to reconcile increase recreational opportunities with the protection and enhancement of the Upper Roach Valley.

4.3.8 The Council's preferred options for the protection and enhancement of the Upper Roach Valley are:

- **The Council will include policies providing for the protection and enhancement of the area and increased informal countryside recreation opportunities.**
- **The Council will identify land to be included in the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park on the Proposals Map and will include any further proposed extensions beyond its current allocation.**
- **The Council will prepare a Joint Area Action Plan covering land to the west of Rochford, which will work to ensure the protection and enhancement of the Upper Roach Valley, whilst enabling employment related development closer to London Southend Airport.**

4.3.9 Alternative options for enhancement and protection of the Upper Roach Valley are:

- There will be no additional country park allocation, instead keeping its current size with no proposals for expansion.
- The removal of this local landscape designation, allowing more general policies to determine the style and location of development.

4.3.10 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.4 PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPES, HABITATS & SPECIES

Coastal Protection Belt

4.4.1 The Coastal Protection Subject Plan, a statutory plan adopted in 1984, defined the extent of the coastal areas within Essex where there would be the most stringent restriction on development, due to the special character of the open and undeveloped coast. Policy CC1 of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan embodies the commitment to the Coastal Protection Belt.

4.4.2 PPG20 Coastal Planning provides guidance to Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) on planning for development and protecting the coastal environment (paragraph 1.2). This document is clear on the need to protect the undeveloped coast and this is especially true for the Rochford district, where much of the coast is covered by international and national nature conservation designations.

4.4.3 Paragraph 4.17 states that interested parties can cooperate to prepare estuary management plans. Rochford District Council has been working with a number of other bodies, including Essex County and Maldon District Councils and the Crouch Harbour Authority to prepare the Crouch and Roach Estuary Management Plan. This was launched in July 2005.

4.4.4 The *East of England Plan* contains a policy on environmental infrastructure. Policy ENV1 requires that LPAs safeguard green infrastructure, including landscape assets. The undeveloped coast is one of the most important landscape assets of the district, matching the special landscape areas. Views of the coast, across river valleys and from one part of the boundary to another are important elements of the Coastal Protection Belt, and largely contributed to the drawing up of the boundary, demonstrating the coastal character of the whole area. The indicative boundary of the Coastal Protection Belt will be shown on the Key Diagram. The Council has been actively involved in the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in the Thames Gateway South Essex and this too will be used to inform development decisions in the district.

Special Landscape Areas

4.4.5 Away from the coast there are three Special Landscape Areas (SLA). SLAs are areas of great landscape value resulting from a combination of features such as vegetation cover and landform. Their conservation is important to the district as well as the county's natural heritage and there is a presumption against development unless it accords with the character of the area concerned. The three SLA's, identified by countywide survey work, in the Rochford District are as follows:

i. Hockley Woods. This is a large unspoilt area, containing a complex of ancient woodlands and farmland on undulating ground between Hockley and Southend-on-Sea;

ii. Upper Crouch. This area is based on the River Crouch and contains numerous creeks, mudflats and saltings on either shore. It is a slightly less remote version of other coastal marshes and is relatively treeless and unspoiled; and
iii. The Crouch/Roach marshes. This consists of a large number of islands, creeks, and channels with salt marsh, mudflats, and drainage ditches predominating. Apart from the timber wharf and marina at Wallasea Island, the area is remote and undeveloped and supports a large bird population.

4.4.6 *Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7) provides for local landscape designations in Local Development Documents. Paragraphs 24 and 25 deal with this issue. The importance of the landscapes concerned is vital to the Council's fulfilment of the leisure and tourism role for the Thames Gateway in south Essex.

4.4.7 The Local Planning Authority will seek – throughout coastal and other special landscapes – high standards of development, including the location, siting, design and materials used, as well as ensuring that the proposal will contribute to the enhancement or, where appropriate, improvement of the character of the area in which it is proposed. Tree planting and landscaping schemes using native species appropriate to their location will be an important part of new development.

4.4.8 The indicative boundaries of the Special Landscape Areas will be shown on the Key Diagram.

Historic Landscape

4.4.9 In the early 1990s, the County Council identified a number of Areas of Ancient Landscape, being landscapes containing significant assemblage of visible features of pre-1600 origin. The ancient landscape of the Upper Roach Valley (which also contains the ancient woodland, Hockley Woods) is so identified. This designation is known in the Rochford District as an Area of Historic Landscape. The indicative boundaries of the Area of Historic Landscape and Ancient Woodlands will be shown on the Key Diagram.

Habitats

4.4.10 There are a number of designations used for nature conservation. In the Rochford district the following internally important sites have been designated:

Ramsar sites

Ramsar sites are named after an international conference held on wetland and wildfowl conservation at Ramsar in Iran, in 1971. The UK Government ratified the Convention on Conservation Wetlands of International Importance in 1976. The UK accepted responsibility to promote the conservation of wetlands of international significance within its territory with respect to birds, plants and animals they support. Ramsar sites are notified based on a range of assessment criteria. The criteria for waterbirds state that a wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds and/or if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species of waterbird. There are two listed Ramsar sites in Rochford District: Foulness and the Crouch and Roach Estuaries.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

1. The Crouch and Roach Estuaries SPA qualifies under Article 4.2 of the EU Birds Directive by supporting:
   - Internationally important assemblage of waterfowl (wildfowl and waders)
   - Internationally important populations of regularly occurring migratory species.
2. Foulness SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the EU Birds Directive by supporting:
   - internationally important breeding populations of regularly occurring Annex 1 species: sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), little tern (*Sterna albifrons*) and avocet (*Recurvirostera avosetta*).

Special Areas for Conservation

The Essex Estuaries candidate SAC (cSAC) covers the whole of the Foulness and Crouch and Roach Estuaries from the point of the highest astronomical tide out to sea. As such it relates to the seaward part of the coastal zone. The Essex Estuaries have been selected as a cSAC for the following habitat features:

- Pioneer saltmarsh
- Cordgrass swards
- Atlantic salt meadows
- Mediterranean saltmarsh scrubs
- Estuaries
- Intertidal mudflats and sandflats
- Subtidal sandbanks

European Marine Site

Where a SPA or cSAC is continuously or intermittently covered by tidal waters, or includes any part of the sea in or adjacent to the UK, the site is referred to as a European Marine Site. The marine components of the Essex SPAs and cSACs are being treated as a single European Marine Site called the Essex Estuaries Marine site (EEEMS). This extends along the coast from Jaywick near Clacton, to Shoeburyness near Southend-on-Sea and from the line of the highest astronomical tide out to sea. It includes the Maplin and Buxey Sands.

Effectively the whole of the District coastline is within the EEEMS, although terrestrial parts of the SPAs (i.e. freshwater grazing marshes inside the sea walls) are not included as they occur above the highest astronomical tide.

4.4.11 In addition to these Sites of Special Scientific Interest have been designated by the UK government. There are three SSSI's within the Rochford District:

i. Hockley Woods SSSI. A site predominantly owned by the District Council. The site is of national importance as an ancient woodland.
ii. Foulness SSSI. This comprises extensive sand-silt flats, saltmarsh, beaches, grazing marshes, rough grass and scrubland, covering the areas of Maplin Sands, part of Foulness Island plus adjacent creeks, islands and marshes. This is a site of national and international importance.
iii. Crouch and Roach Estuaries SSSI (previously known as River Crouch Marshes). This covers a network of sites (salt marsh, intertidal mud, grazing marsh, a fresh water reservoir) including Brandy Hole and Lion Creek, Paglesham Pool, Bridgemarsh Island and marshes near Upper Raypits. This site is of national and international importance.

4.4.12 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) support wildlife and natural features that are important at the local level. These sites provide opportunities for learning and enjoyment to local communities and are a valuable element of the hierarchical network of protective nature conservation designations across the district. The Council, under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, will declare further Local Nature Reserves where considered appropriate. To date four LNR's have been declared:

i. Kendall Park (Hullbridge Foreshore). Declared by the Council in 1995. Managed by Hullbridge Parish Council.
ii. Hockley Woods. Declared by the Council in 1995. Managed by the District Council.
iii. Marylands Local Nature Reserve. Declared by the Council in January 2000. Managed by Hockley Parish Council; and
iv. Magnolia Nature Reserve. Declared by the Council in March 1999. Managed by Hawkwell Parish Council.

4.4.13 An extension of the Southend on Sea Foreshore Local Nature Reserve into the Rochford District to include the Maplin Bund is due to be declared. In addition to these statutory sites Essex Wildlife Trust owns nature reserves at Lion Creek and Lower Raypits, Canewdon.

4.4.14 Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of local nature conservation importance. They are given protection by a Local Plan policy. The following sites lie within the district:

WOODLAND SITES
Bartonhall Grove, Beckney Wood, Belchamps Camp (Hockley Woods), Bett's Wood, Blounts Wood, Buller's Grove, Cottons Wood, Folly Wood, Great Hawkwell New Wood, Great Hawkwell Plantation, Grove Woods, Gustedhall Wood, Hambro Hill Wood, Hockley Woods SSSI, Hockleyhall New Wood, Hockleyhall/Crabtree Woods, Hullbridge Wood, Hyde Wood, Kingley Wood, Marylands Wood, New England Wood, Plumberow Wood, Potash Wood, Primrose Wood, Rawreth-hall Wood, Sloppy Wood, The Finches EWT Nature Conservation Area, The Scrubs, Trinity Wood, Whitbred's Wood & Winks Wood Complex.

GRASSLAND SITES
A127 Special Roadside Verge, Butler's Farm Field, Edwards Hall Fields, Great Wakering Common, Mucking Hall Marsh, Sutton Ford Bridge Pasture & The Dome Grasslands.
MOSAIC SITES
Blounts Mosaic, Creeksea Road Pits, Doggetts Pond, Eastwood Rise Lake, Rouncefall and Magnolia Fields & Star Lane Pits.
FRESHWATER AQUATIC SITES
Butts Hill Pond EWT Nature Conservation Area & Stannetts Lake and Creek.
COASTAL SITES
Brandy Hole Marsh Extension, Canewdon Special Roadside Verge, Foulness SSSI Lion Creek Seawall EWT Reserve, Lower Raypits Farm Seawall/Saltings part of EWT Reserve, Paglesham Seawall, River Crouch Marshes SSSI & Wallasea Seawall.

4.4.15 In addition there are 14 ancient woodlands in Rochford District, defined by the Nature Conservancy Council (now English Nature) as being woodlands over 2 hectares in size, known to have existed in 1600. These areas have evolved unique characteristics and qualities throughout the centuries and are vital for their scientific and amenity importance. The Council recognises that appropriate management is the key to their future success.

Species

4.4.16 The Council has adopted the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan[1] (BAP) and is committed to meeting the objectives and targets set out within it. The BAP identified four flagship species for the Rochford district, these are:

- Heath fritillary butterfly (*Mellicta athalia*)
- Common Cow Wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*)
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)
- Wild Service Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*)

4.4.17 The Council is committed to the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan objectives and targets, for all habitats and species, which seek to ensure that they are satisfactorily protected and managed.

4.4.18 Following our initial consultation, it has become clear that the attractive landscapes, habitats and species are features that are greatly valued by residents and visitors alike. The Council will continue its policy of seeking to protect and enhance these landscapes and biodiversity.

[1] Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (1999) Essex Biodiversity Project

4.4.19 The Council's preferred options for the protection and enhancement of special landscapes, habitats and species are:

- **The Council will develop policies that seek to ensure protection for the undeveloped coast. Any development proposed for the undeveloped coast must require a coastal location.**
- **The Council will develop policies which seek to ensure protection for the three Special Landscape Areas allowing only for development that has location, size, siting, design, materials and landscaping according with the character of the area in which the development is proposed.**
- **The Council will develop policies that seek to ensure protection of the Area of Historic Landscape and Ancient Woodlands from development that would adversely affect their historic importance, existing landscape character or physical appearance.**
- **The Council will develop policies that seek to ensure protection for Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats.**

4.4.20 Alternative options for enhancement and protection of special landscapes, habitats and species are:

- No protection for the landscape as this is an evolving feature and artificial designations create artificial landscapes.
- Freedom for agriculture, horticulture, equine uses, leisure and tourism to develop in these areas, whilst maintaining restrictions on general employment and housing uses.

4.4.21 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.5 HOUSING NUMBERS & PHASING

4.5.1 The housing provision for Rochford for the period 2001 to 2021 is specified in the *East of England Plan*. The Council will make site specific allocations in the Allocations DPD.

4.5.2 The Council will allocate sufficient land to meet the *East of England Plan* allocation of 4600 dwelling units, minus the 901 dwelling units between 1st April 2001 and 31st March 2006. This leaves the district an allocation of 3699 dwelling units. The site specific details included in the Allocations DPD will be determined by the settlement pattern (see section 4.6), the density of development and other appropriate factors.

4.5.3 The Council is reviewing its Urban Capacity Study, which was prepared in 2001. This is being reviewed taking into account sites that have been developed, changing criteria and urban capacity study preparation guidance.

4.5.4 In determining the amount of land required, the Council will take into account the number of housing units already completed and those granted planning permission. No allowance will be made for so-called windfall sites in existing urban areas. Windfall sites are defined as being those sites which are developed, but which are not on allocated sites. An example of this would be the demolition of a single dwelling and its replacement with a number of dwellings. It is believed that the intensification of existing urban areas has not greatly improved their character or the environment, although it has helped to restrict demand for green belt development.

4.5.5 Given that the Council wishes to continue to restrict green belt development, there is a significant role for the use of previously developed land. Such sites will generally be bigger sites within urban areas, rather than numerous small sites. This will reduce the reliance on windfall, and will allow for the maximisation of infrastructure improvements, consistent with the Council's approach for green field sites.

4.5.6 The Council will also consider the relocation of existing sites which are bad neighbour uses. This is the continuation of a current policy. Such relocations would free up land within existing residential areas and would improve general residential amenity. When such relocations are proposed the Council will ensure that replacement facilities are made available in advance of the relocation. This will also enable the enhancement of the Council's somewhat dated industrial estates.

4.5.7 The Council will specify the locations of proposed development in detail in the Allocations DPD. However, it is not intended that all of this development should come forward together. To meet the targets cascaded from the *East of England Plan*, all units will need to be completed by 2021. To enable the prioritisation of resources, sites will be allocated and phased, to reduce any losses of amenity to existing residents.

4.5.8 The development of the District is directly related to the availability of the necessary services and infrastructure and the processing of the required permissions. The development of the area needs to ensure that services and infrastructure can be phased to achieve development objectives in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. The rate and sequence of growth shall be phased in a manner as to ensure the logical extension of adequate services, such as schools and public open space, to accommodate growth.

4.5.9 From the initial consultation it was made very clear that housing numbers were considered to be too high. However, this is something over which the Council has little control. The Council has to ensure that at least 4600 new homes are built in the district between 2001 and 2021, in order to be consistent with the *East of England Plan* and to comply with the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*.

4.5.10 Respondents also made it clear that further intensification of the existing urban areas was not popular. Conversely, green belt releases were unpopular. In summary new homes have to be built and land has to be released to ensure that a land supply is available. The compromise for the Council is to release land from the edge of settlements, which does not have a significant impact on the green belt and to ensure development takes place at densities that reduces the land required, whilst still ensuring high quality development.

4.5.11 The Council's preferred options for housing numbers and phasing are:

- **The Council will ensure that enough land is allocated to accommodate the cascaded figure for homes from the *East of England Plan* for the period 2001 to 2021.**
- **The Council will prioritise the reuse of previously developed land in urban areas, on bigger sites, but will resist the intensification of smaller sites, by setting local densities in line with the guidance in *Planning Policy Statement 3 - Housing*.**
- **A timescale will be specified detailing the expected phasing of development, which will be at a slightly increasing rate from 2009 – 2021.**

4.5.12 Alternative options for housing numbers and phasing are:

- Relying on windfall development and urban intensification, to prevent the need for any green belt releases.
- Not allocating land to accommodate all the dwelling units and relying on a percentage of windfall development and urban intensification.

4.5.13 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.6 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS

4.6.1 The Council has a duty, under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004)* to promote sustainable development. This duty is further reinforced by *Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development*. The Rochford district is linear in shape and has significant out commuting for jobs and services. To reduce reliance on motorised transport and to place development close to facilities and services, a development pattern needs to be sought which reflects this.

4.6.2 The Council will allocate land in locations that are considered sustainable and such locations will be tested through the Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal process. The Council will not allocate sites which are considered sensitive due to landscape designations, biodiversity issues or where they may be at risk of flooding.

4.6.3 Within the district there are three tiers of settlement. The top tier is that comprising Hawkwell / Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford / Ashingdon. These are all settlements with a good range of services and facilities as well as some access to public transport. They are capable of sustaining some expansion, infilling and redevelopment.

4.6.4 The second tier comprises Canewdon, Great Wakering and Hullbridge. These are settlements with a more limited level of services which can accommodate only small-scale development or minor extensions that address specific local needs.

4.6.5 The third tier comprises all the remaining isolated green belt settlements, e.g. Stambridge and Paglesham Church End. These are settlements with few services, which cannot sustainably accommodate development other than for demonstrated local needs.

4.6.6 Taking into account such sustainability issues, the Council believes that the settlement pattern should be focused on existing settlements, with the main settlements in the district taking the majority of development required. The majority is defined as 90% of the housing development required. The main settlements are considered to be Hawkwell / Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford / Ashingdon.

4.6.7 Having considered this approach and believing that the balance is about right, although not evenly split between these top tier settlements, it is considered appropriate to state what this split will be. This is laid out below with an estimation of the approximate number units to be provided in each settlement.

4.6.8 Whilst the majority of new development will be focused on the most sustainable sites around these settlements, there will be minor extensions to Canewdon, Great Wakering and Hullbridge, accounting for around 10% of the housing total. For the remaining settlements, which are all islands in the green belt, no allocations are proposed. However, if there is a proven local need for affordable housing, the Council will retain an *exceptions policy* in the Allocations DPD. The first stage in identifying this local need will be the preparation of a village appraisal or parish plan.

4.6.9 The initial consultation made it clear that respondents felt that all settlements in the district has received more than their fair share of housing and that more should be allocated to alternative locations. There was some feeling that each parish or area should take an equal share of development. Such an approach falls well short of the Council's duty to deliver sustainable development.

4.6.9 The Council's preferred options for general development locations are:

- **The Council will set out a policy detailing a settlement hierarchy split into three tiers based on services and sustainability.**
- **The Council will set out a policy detailing a timescale for the expected phasing of development.**

- **The Council will set out a policy allocating the total number of housing units to the top (90%) and second tier (10%) settlements, to gain a smaller number of large sites which will deliver the greatest amount of infrastructure improvements. The split (with approximate numbers) will be as follows:**

HOUSING	UNITS
Completions 2001-2006	900
Rochford / Ashingdon	1000
Hockley / Hawkwell	400
Rayleigh	1800
Smaller settlements	500
TOTAL	4600

4.6.10 Alternative options for general development locations are:

- Greater dispersal making more use of settlements in the east of the district.
- Greater dispersal to minor settlements, enabling possible regeneration of local facilities.
- Focus solely on an expansion of one settlement, creating a significant urban expansion.

4.6.11 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.7 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

4.7.1 Affordable housing is defined in *Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing (PPS3)* as:

"Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should:

– Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.
– Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision."

4.7.2 LPAs must negotiate with developers for the inclusion of an element of affordable housing provision on larger sites, either through provision on the site or through a contribution so that houses can be provided elsewhere in the district where a need has been identified.

4.7.3 A Housing Needs Survey was completed in 2004, which established an outstanding net total need for 291 affordable homes per annum. This calculation took into account the Council's waiting list, homeless and concealed households, and requirements emanating from demographic changes. It is clear from the study that there is too little affordable housing in the district to satisfy local needs.

4.7.4 *The East of England Plan* contains policy SS13 on Overall Housing Provision, which provides guidance for LPAs on the level of affordable housing that they should seek. This level of affordable housing will be informed through the preparation of Housing Needs Study, but will aspire to a regional target of 35%. Given the backlog of affordable housing need and the need to provide for the current plan period, the LPA consider a rate of 30% to be appropriate for the district.

4.7.5 The implementation of this target will recognise the limited contribution that the district can make in terms of the regional picture. Recent guidance published by the government in Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing, makes it clear that local authorities should reflect affordable housing guidance on their areas, taking into account the regional target. The national indicative threshold for sites to provide affordable house is 15 units and the regional affordable housing target is 35%.

4.7.6 In the case of the Rochford district it is considered wholly appropriate to increase the production of affordable housing, this can be justified because of the severe shortage of such units and because the development of the district is likely to include the provision of units on a number of smaller sites. It is therefore suitable to set a local threshold at 10 units and a target percentage at 30%. This therefore means that a development proposed for 10 units will have to provide 3 affordable units as part of the dwelling mix. Such a threshold and percentage take account of the ratio between incomes and house prices and a realistic approach to developers needing to make a profit.

4.7.7 The Council will examine the details of affordable housing through other DPDs. It is intended that the Allocations DPD will provide a minimum figure for the number of affordable units to be completed on each of the sites specified. The Development Control Policies DPD will specify details relating to commuted payments (in lieu of affordable units on a site in exceptional circumstances) and for rural exceptions.

4.7.8 Government guidance makes it clear that the Council must meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The East of England Assembly is preparing a single issue review of Gypsy and Travellers accommodation that will result in specific allocations for pitch provision on a local authority basis. Essex authorities are examining the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the county, to input to the review.

4.7.9 Whilst any site specific allocation is for the Allocations DPD to detail, following the outcomes of the single issue review, the Core Strategy should include a policy detailing the Council's approach. Such an approach must be consistent with the tenets of *Circular 1/2006 – Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*[2].

[2] *Circular 1/2006 – Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites* (2006) ODPM

4.7.10 The initial consultation responses made it clear that respondents wanted low affordable housing to be provided for local people. Quite how *local* would be defined is subjective and not necessarily something that the planning system can currently resolve.

4.7.11 The Council's preferred options for affordable housing are:

- **The Council will have a policy ensuring that the level of affordable housing will be set at 30% on all developments of 10 or more units, unless such a site is considered to be a *rural exception* site.**
- **On *rural exceptions sites* all units provided will be required to be affordable. On all sites affordable units will be required to remain affordable in perpetuity.**
- **All Gypsy and Traveller needs will be accommodated as part of the mainstream housing site allocations.**

4.7.12 Alternative options for affordable housing are:

- 40% of all new homes on sites in excess of 15 units, will be affordable.
- No rural exceptions policy, because of potential sustainable development issues with rural housing.

4.7.13 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.8 EMPLOYMENT

4.8.1 In the past Structure Plans have cascaded a requirement to local plans detailing the amount of land that should be allocated for employment uses. *The East of England Plan* instead allocates a number of jobs for each sub-region to provide. Rochford district is within the Thames Gateway sub-region and policy TG/SE2 – Employment Generating Development details that the district should provide 3000 new jobs during the plan period.

4.8.2 The Council cannot assess what demand for jobs there will be in this area towards the end of the plan period. It would also be difficult to ascertain what employment sector such jobs would be created in.

4.8.3 Having said this, the Council believes that London Southend Airport has the ability to provide a further number of aviation related employment jobs. This is shown in the *East of England Plan* by the recognition of the airport as a key employment generator. Some of these jobs will be directly linked to the growth in passenger flights and some will be related to the continuing service and maintenance uses.

4.8.4 A number of jobs will be created on the Rochford Business Park, being created to the west of the B1013, on the boundary with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. The first phase of the development of this site is underway and this will focus on jobs within the motor trade. Car dealerships and associated servicing and repair facilities are expected to commence operation by 2008.

4.8.5 It is envisaged that about 2000 jobs will be provided within the district at London Southend Airport, Rochford Business Park and the remainder of the allocation being provided at various locations throughout the rest of the district. The preparation of the Joint Area Action Plan for land to the west of Rochford will enable a greater degree of control and the encouragement of appropriate businesses in this area, reinforcing the Council's approach.

4.8.6 The Council has a number of industrial estates in the district, which are looking tired and in need of investment. Some are also in areas that are prejudicial to good neighbourliness. The Council will consider the location and condition of existing industrial estates and may consider the creation of new employment areas in more sustainable locations. The Council will need to consider the relocation of existing bad neighbour uses to more appropriate locations.

4.8.7 The Allocations DPD will provide site specific allocations for employment purposes. The Development Control Policies DPD will include specific policies dealing with how the issues and challenges arising from employment uses will be handled, including transport and amenity issues.

4.8.8 The Council's preferred options for employment are:

- **The Council will allocate a total number of jobs to be created in the district, using the *East of England Plan* cascaded figure.**
- **The Council will prepare a Joint Area Action Plan, which will cover land to the west of Rochford, including the significant existing and possible employment uses in this area.**
- **The Council will programme employment development in advance of new housing, wherever possible.**

4.8.9 Alternative options for employment are:

- No jobs figure to be included, as it is too difficult to accurately provide for such a figure.
- Provide no details of the general locations, as it is unrealistic to plan for employment development in excess of ten years in advance.

4.8.10 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.9 GOOD DESIGN & DESIGN STATEMENTS

4.9.1 Development and building design in the past relied heavily on local tradition, building form and materials. However, more recently the adoption of modern standardised building materials and building design has, in some cases, begun to erode the character of the district. Good design is therefore clearly relevant when considering proposals that may affect older buildings, especially those that are listed due to their architectural or historic interest. Careful consideration must be given to the design of all new development. The Council has adopted the Essex Design Guide and will be working towards adoption of the Urban Place Supplement as a Supplementary Planning Document through the Local Development Framework.

4.9.2 Whilst it is considered that style is a matter of personal taste, or preference, good design is easier to define and forms a strong element of government planning policy and guidance in terms of buildings, their settings and the spaces around them. Design is therefore viewed as an important element in the protection of townscape character, as a means of enhancing environmental quality and as a way of ensuring a positive contribution is made by new development to the environment as a whole.

4.9.3 *Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development* states that development plans should include design policies that encourage good design and that local planning authorities should reject poor designs, such as those that are out of scale or character with their surroundings. Aspects of design that plan policies should concentrate on include scale, density, massing, height, location in relation to other buildings and overall relationship to the surroundings.

4.9.4 As referred to in PPS1, design statements demonstrate how schemes have been designed to respond positively to the character of the area in which they are proposed. Design statements should accompany those applications for development proposals as stated in the Supplementary Planning document (SPD) dealing with this issue - 7. The degree of detail necessary is dependent on the complexity or sensitivity of the application and the site, but it is anticipated that in most cases the design statement will be short and succinct.

4.9.5 The provision of a design statement, if undertaken appropriately, should aid the decision making process and will enable a wider audience to understand the rationale for adopting a particular design approach. There are three essential steps to producing a Statement. These are site analysis, identifying design principles and creating design solutions. SPD7 provides further information.

4.9.6 The Council's commitment to sustainable development will also be underlined by the inclusion of a policy specifying the need to comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes[3].

[3] *Code for Sustainable Homes* (2006) DCLG

4.9.7 On the 10th August 2006, Design and Access Statements became a statutory requirement for most planning applications. Developers are urged to consider the provision of a lifetime homes standard and the Council will promote this through the Development Control Policies DPD. This reflects the Council and government's commitment to this issue as demonstrated in the Essex Local Area Agreement.

4.9.8 The initial consultation made it clear that respondents value their environment and appreciated good quality design. The Council considers that it should – particularly in conservation areas – continue to strive for high quality design.

4.9.9 The Council's preferred options for good design and design statements are:

- **The Council will include a policy requiring 25% of all units provided to meet a lifetime housing standard.**
- **The Council will require compliance with the minimum standards, as set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes.**
- **The Council will prepare a policy requiring all new major development proposals to be accompanied by the Health Impact Assessment.**

4.9.10 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- No emphasis on design, as the market will decide whether the product is acceptable.
- No emphasis on lifetime housing, as homeowners can make changes in future years.
- No emphasis on sustainable design as Building Regulations will deliver sustainable homes.

4.9.11 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.10 CHARACTER OF PLACE & THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

4.10.1 The district has a distinctive character. As stated previously, all new development will be expected to make a positive contribution to this character and be of good design and quality. Quality and good design are important everywhere, whether it be to preserve the character of a conservation area or to bring about improvement and regeneration of an urban area. It is also essential to producing attractive, vibrant, sustainable places, in which people want to live, work and relax.

4.10.2 The appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings is a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals. PPS1 makes it clear that good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process.

4.10.3 The district has a unique character and appearance, much of which stems from the traditional buildings that still dominate the towns and villages. These are mostly of a simple form that is easily replicable. Design will be expected to enhance this local identity by being sympathetic to local needs and by building on local opportunities. Corporate identities, and 'in-house building styles', will be expected to be adapted to the local setting and not the other way around.

4.10.4 Many of the high quality built environments of the district have been designated as Conservation Areas. These areas have a distinctive character and the Local Planning Authority has commissioned Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for these areas. These areas also contain many listed buildings. These areas and buildings have statutory protection. The Council will adopt all the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans by the end of the 2007/8 financial year.

4.10.5 The Council dropped its Local List during the preparation of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan, but more modern guidance[4] [5] suggests that these lists do have a valuable role. There is now positive encouragement from the government through the recent white paper for the preparation of such lists.

4.10.6 The Council will reinstate its Local List and will update the List to take account of recent developments. Such a list will be a living document and will be photographic.

4.10.7 Responses to the Council's initial consultation made it clear that respondents value their local environment and believe that the historic character of the district is well worth retaining. However, it was also made clear that the Council should not over-concentrate on this issue.

4.10.8 The Council's preferred options for character of place and the historic environment are:

- **The Council will provide policies to ensure the protection of the district's identity and ensuring that new development respects the local character.**
- **The Council will prepare a Local List and a policy to give protection to buildings that demonstrate local, historic or architectural importance that would otherwise not be protected in their own right.**

[4] *Review of Heritage Protection: the way forward* (2004) DCMS
[5] *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century* (2007) DCMS

4.10.9 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- No emphasis on character of place, as over-emphasis will lead to pattern book designing and a lack of innovation.
- Prescriptive design guidance within policy to ensure uniform design and high standards.

4.10.10 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.11 LANDSCAPING

4.11.1 The local planning authority is committed to both maintaining and enhancing environmental quality in the district. To this end, developments must contain a well-considered and high quality landscape content, which can be properly and cost effectively maintained. Many developments requiring planning permission are enhanced by the inclusion of hard and/or soft landscaping - particularly new build or refurbishment. This is an integral and important design factor as relevant in considering an application as land use, siting, access and architectural design.

4.11.2 The landscape treatment of development sites is considered to be essential in order to integrate new development into its surroundings, improve the landscape character and appearance of a site and to fulfil the site's landscape potential. Landscape planning should be regarded as an integral part of the design process. Too often schemes are prepared for the buildings and roads before any consideration is given to the rest of the landscape. Consequently, landscaping elements are often poorly thought out, inappropriate to the particular area and opportunities to enhance the landscape may be lost.

4.11.3 In particular, proposals for new development should demonstrate that sufficient space is made for the introduction of new replacement trees, and the routes for service trenches should be clearly shown. It is to the advantage of the developer to treat the environmental aspects of the proposed development seriously and to take professional advice where necessary to comply with this and other local plan policies.

4.11.4 The local planning authority believes it is no longer acceptable to agree, or postpone by condition, landscaping details until after planning permission has been granted. This will enable the planning application to be progressed more effectively and increase the likelihood of a quick and favourable decision. Where environmental aspects are not well considered, delays may be experienced due to the negotiation of amendments, or a refusal.

4.11.5 The local planning authority will also use planning contributions under Section 46 of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* to seek appropriate local environmental improvements where these are necessary to support proposed development. Appropriate environmental improvements will include the provision of landscaping and open space of a size and layout appropriate to the development.

4.11.6 The Council's preferred option for landscaping is:

- **Push landscaping details to the fore of the planning application process and making them a prerequisite for determination for certain application types.**

4.11.7 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- No emphasis on landscaping, as this is not a major part of the development. In any event it can be tackled through the use of conditions.
- Continue determining landscaping details post-application and through enforcement work.

4.11.8 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.12 ENERGY & WATER CONSERVATION & RENEWABLE ENERGY

4.12.1 The local planning authority believes that given the climate and resources of the locality that there is a need to reduce energy and water consumption not only for the benefit of the local environment, but also for the global environment. This is the tenet of Local Agenda 21, which the Council supports.

4.12.2 PPS1 and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act have pushed sustainable development to the very heart of planning. Whilst local action may not be enough to resolve global challenges, the cumulative impact of such actions may.

4.12.3 The *East of England Plan* contains policy ENV8 and ENV9 which, together with their supporting text, provide a framework for supporting the Council's approach to this challenge.

4.12.4 Energy conservation is the efficient use of energy and the generation of energy from renewable sources will contribute towards the achievement of more sustainable forms of development. In February 2000, the Government published its initial conclusions on its new policy for renewable energy in the UK. In February 2003, the Government published its White Paper on Energy - *Our energy future - creating a low carbon economy*[6]. The Government's policy focus is the need for energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy.

[6] *Our energy future - creating a low carbon economy* - Her Majesty's Government (2003)

4.12.5 The Government has an initial 10 year strategy[7], in collaboration with industry, to help meet its aims. Specifically, it is proposing that 5% of UK electricity needs should be met from renewables by the end of 2003 and 10% by 2010, as long as the cost to consumers is acceptable. These targets are intended to act as a stimulus to industry and provide milestones for progress monitoring. However, the East of England Sustainable Development Round Table published a report in 2001[8] setting a target for the East of England of 14% and one for Essex of 9% for the same period.

4.12.6 The *East of England Plan* has a strong section on this issue; policy ENV8 and paragraphs 9.30 *et seq.* spell this out clearly. However, this does not take the issue far enough and it does not challenge developers to provide options on new development that will actually tackle the problem of climate change, given the likely nature of development in the Rochford district. The cost of such provision has fallen dramatically over the last ten years and there is now no reason why all development should not include renewable energy provision.

4.12.7 Since renewable energy sources can usually only be exploited where they occur the most likely proposals coming forward in and around the district relate to wind energy, tidal or wave action and solar power. Significant issues may be raised by offshore wind energy proposals which would be outside local planning authority control, but which potentially could have an impact over a much wider area.

4.12.8 Whilst recognising the contribution made by renewable energy, such forms of generation as wind turbines can have significant visual impacts, as well as other local impacts, in some cases, on the natural environment. The LPA will seek to balance the potential benefits of schemes against any adverse effects on local amenity that may arise. The location of such developments therefore needs to be carefully considered.

4.12.9 Responses to the Council's initial consultation made it clear that respondents were very strongly supportive of measures that increased water and energy conservation in all new homes. There was a strong feeling that more could be done at a small scale with regard to renewable energy generation, although there were concerns about the impact on the district of more major schemes.

4.12.10 The direction that the Council is moving in, ties in with the government's agenda and the *Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill*, currently being scrutinized by Parliament.

[7] *New and Renewable Energy - Prospects for the 21st Century*, Department of Trade & Industry (2000)
[8] *Making renewable energy a reality – Setting a challenging target for the East of England*, East of England Sustainable Development Round Table (2001)

4.12.11 The Council's preferred options for energy and water conservation and renewable energy are:

- **The Council will produce development control policies that reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of energy efficient transport.**
- **The Council will produce a policy requiring all new homes to be compliant with the minimum standards of the Code for Sustainable Homes.**
- **The Council will produce policies to ensure that all new development in the district is carbon neutral.**
- **The Council will produce policies that require all new homes to have water and energy conservation measures.**
- **The Council will produce policies covering small and large-scale renewable schemes.**
- **The Council will produce a policy ensuring that new development promotes the development of environmentally efficient buildings and the use of energy efficient heating, lighting, cooling, ventilation and other powered systems, together with water conservation measures.**

4.12.12 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- No need for a policy on sustainable design, as this will be delivered through Building Regulations.
- Push for any renewable energy uses in any location, despite possible landscape implications.
- Set a threshold for development size or number before requiring renewable energy to be included.

4.12.13 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.13 COMPULSORY PURCHASE & PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

4.13.1 Previous local plans have included policies on bad neighbour uses and non-conforming uses, in order to protect residential amenity. The Rochford District Replacement Local Plan does not have such a policy, as it was recommended for removal by the Local Plan Inspector. However, since this has happened there have been further developments in this area.

4.13.2 The *Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* has changed the way in which Councils can act with regard to compulsory purchase and the reasons for carrying out such activities are clearer. The Act states in Part 8, Section 99 that the Council can seek to compulsorily purchase land for:

"(a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;
(b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area;
(c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area."

4.13.3 The Council will consider using compulsory purchase powers to ensure residential amenity and may consider using such powers to ensure sustainable and long-term development opportunities for residential and employment purposes, together with further expansion of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park (if required) and informal countryside recreation opportunities within the Upper Roach Valley.

4.13.4 The government issued revised guidance to Local Planning Authorities on Planning Obligations in Circular 05/2005[9]. The Council has already outlined its intention to produce detailed guidance on this issue in its Local Development Scheme, where such a document is envisaged for production post-2008. The Council considers that it is prudent to deliver sustainable development using this mechanism and will deliver social, economic and environmental objectives using this approach.

4.13.5 The Council will use Planning Obligations to deliver compensatory or mitigatory measures in circumstances where a development causes demonstrable harm. Such measures will reduce the impact to a level where planning permission can be granted without a significant adverse impact. Further detail about the working of this document will be produced in the Local Development Document.

4.13.6 Responses to the initial consultation showed some considerable scepticism as to the ability of the Council to use compulsory purchase powers appropriately. The Council believes that such powers could and would only be used for the three reasons outlined by the *2004 Act*.

4.13.7 The Council's preferred options with regard to Compulsory Purchase and Planning Obligations are:

- **Set the framework to ensure that employment, residential, recreational and environmental enhancements for the district can be brought forward using compulsory purchase powers.**
- **Produce a strategic policy detailing the working of Planning Obligations in the Rochford District, from which the detail of the relevant Local Development Document can be delivered.**

[9] *Circular 05/2005 - Planning Obligations* (2005) ODPM

4.13.8 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- No compulsory purchase policy and attempt to use the legislation if required.
- Designate specific potential compulsory purchase sites, despite blight and/or cost implications.

4.13.9 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

4.14 COMMUNITY, LEISURE & TOURISM FACILITIES

4.14.1 There is a reasonable level of community and leisure facilities in the district, concentrated around the existing urban areas. In rural areas facilities are of a lower level and generally of a poorer quality. It is intended that development can help to redress this imbalance in certain circumstances.

4.14.2 Throughout the district there are few tourist attractions, other than the natural environment. The district has a good range of public houses, which provide sustenance for daytrippers, but there is little overnight accommodation. Hotels can be found in Rayleigh and Rochford, but in rural areas there is virtually no overnight accommodation.

4.14.3 *Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres* (PPS6) includes a sequential test. Hotels are considered to be a town centre use and therefore must comply with this test. However, it is thought that there is a need for bed and breakfast and guesthouse accommodation.

4.14.4 *Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7) sets out the national government policy on tourism and leisure in rural areas in paragraphs 34 to 36. There is a strong presumption that such facilities will be developed in existing settlements. PPS7 also states that development should take place in existing buildings wherever possible, particularly where it is outside of existing settlement boundaries.

4.14.5 This approach is further reinforced by *Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 – Green Belts* (PPG2). PPG2 makes it clear that certain types of development will be considered appropriate in green belt locations. PPG2 does however, allow for development to take place where it results in the re-use of an existing building. Many types of tourism and leisure facilities are unlikely to be considered appropriate, although they may make use of existing buildings. Annex D of PPG2 provides further advice on this issue. New housing associated with tourism and leisure uses will not be favourably considered.

4.14.6 The *East of England Plan* includes policy E13 on tourism, although this is not particularly relevant to the district, except in terms of ensuring that tourism and tourism development are sustainable. Also of relevance is the need to reduce seasonality of tourism in the region. The district could fulfil a niche role in catering for off-season breaks.

4.14.7 The selection of sites for community, leisure and tourism purposes will normally be a matter for the proponents of the schemes and applications for such proposals will be judged against material considerations. These forms of development will not normally be considered appropriate in the Green Belt.

4.14.8 The Council's preferred options with regard to Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities are:

- **The Council will provide a policy dealing with community, leisure and tourism proposals, which will provide clarity for developments.**
- **The Council will provide a policy dealing with healthcare facilities in the district.**

4.14.8 Alternative options that the Council considered are:

- Protect the green belt without providing any further guidance, leaving it up to central government in its review of Planning Policy Guidance Note 2.
- Reduce protection of the green belt to allow for community, tourism and leisure facilities.

4.14.9 These alternatives have been discounted because they fail to meet sustainable development objectives, the Corporate Vision and Principal Aims.

5 IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Rochford District Council will be the lead body for the implementation of the Core Strategy. However, the pattern and arrangements for service delivery are changing nationally. Rochford District Council is engaged with the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, Local Strategic Partnerships and is investigating what will be appropriate Local Area Agreements.

5.2 The Thames Gateway is a national priority for regeneration and growth and is identified in the Government's Sustainable Communities plan as one of the growth areas for new housing in the South East. The vision for Thames Gateway South Essex is focused on the creation of sustainable communities that make the most of the unique characteristics of South Essex. Rochford is recognised as an area for the developing leisure, recreation and tourism activities and in particular is key to the development and expansion of the green grid.

5.3 The Council is part of the Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership. Local Strategic Partnerships were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000 and have a critical role to play in delivering the Community Strategy Action Plan, particularly in relation to coherent service provision and the development of genuinely sustainable communities for the Rochford district.

5.4 A Steering Group is responsible for the development and implementation of the Community Strategy, membership of the Steering Group includes representatives from:

- Rochford District Council
- Rochford and Castle Point Primary Care Trust
- South Essex Partnership Trust
- Essex County Council and the district's Parish and Town Councils
- Business Representatives
- Essex Learning and Skills Council
- Essex Police
- Rayleigh and Rochford District Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS)
- Thames Gateway South Essex
- Faith groups
- Schools

5.5 In preparing the LDF development plan documents it is essential that there is close collaborative working with the LSP to ensure that the spatial aspects of the Community Strategy are implemented to best effect for the district. Therefore, the LSP will be involved at all stages of the preparation of development plan documents.

5.6 A key part of the developing strategy for enabling better public services to be delivered more effectively locally is to provide a new framework for the relationship between central and local government. Local Area Agreements are a new way of working to build a more flexible and responsive relationship between central government and a locality on the priority outcomes that need to be achieved at local level. Achieving this new relationship will require a significant shift in the way central and local government relate to each other and to other local partners.

5.7 Rochford District Council is committed to the Essex Local Area Agreement that is attended to achieve a step change in the delivery of public services in the County and this new agreement will influence the planning strategy and policies in the Local Development Framework.

5.8 It is likely that Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership will influence service provision during the lifetime of the Core Strategy.

MONITORING

5.9 The Core Strategy sets out the District's strategic proposals for the period to 2021. It is inevitable that issues will emerge whose implications will need to be considered during the plan period. Many of these issues will be of minor concern; however, where significant issues emerge that may affect any of the key objectives or proposals, the Council will assess the implications and consider the need for amendments. These will be handled as per legislation and the consultation procedures laid down in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

5.10 In order to keep track of the changes that may occur during the plan period and to assess how successfully the plan is attaining its aims, a number of regular checks or monitoring exercises will take place. The introduction of the 'Plan, Monitor, Manage' regime highlighted the importance of effective monitoring as an integral part of the planning process. At the same time new policy targets (such as for the re-use of previously-developed land), and new policy approaches (for example, the sequential approach) demand that monitoring becomes more sophisticated in the extent and detail of information captured.

5.11 The Council acknowledges the need for local monitoring systems and will implement such a system over the early part of the plan period. Rochford District Council is a member of the Essex Monitoring Group, which was set up and first met in May 2002. This countywide group was formed as a forum for discussions relating to the monitoring process; to promote good practice in plan monitoring; to facilitate the timely provision of accurate and relevant monitoring information and to share and co-ordinate data.

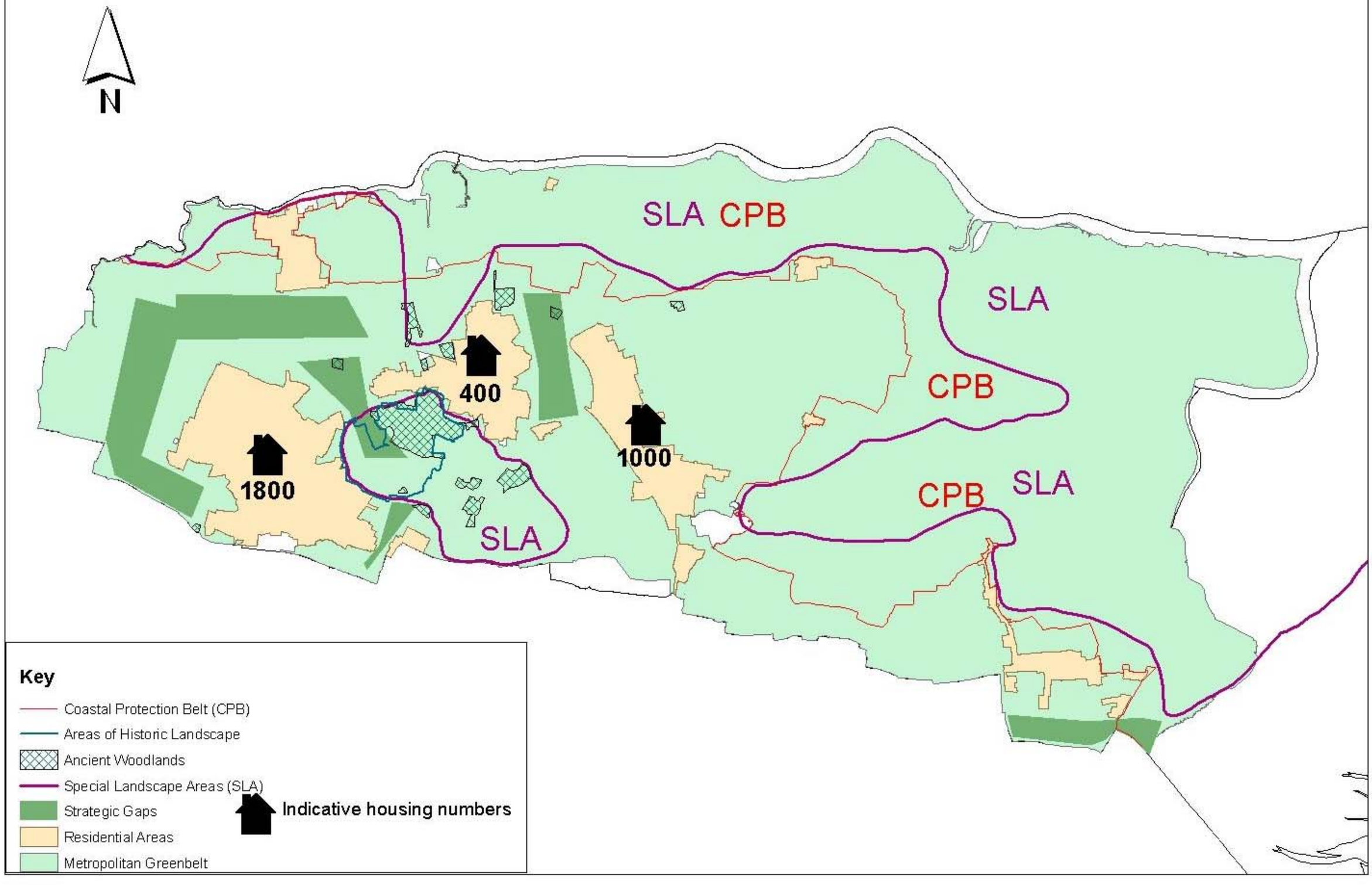
5.12 The Council has a Service Level Agreement with Essex County Council, whereby the latter provides some of the monitoring information required. Other information is likely to be provided by Essex Wildlife Trust, as part of a contract between the Council and the Trust. The majority of monitoring information will be produced in house and will be detailed in the Annual Monitoring Report required under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

5.13 The Council's Annual Monitoring Report is produced by the end of each calendar year for submission to the Government Office. As data is made available information on all of the relevant core output indicators will be provided. The current core output indicators are defined in *Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators*[1].

5.14 The Council will use the information gleaned from this exercise and will feed it back into the Local Development Framework. The Council's draft *Local Development Scheme*[2] contains a mid-term revision and outlines possible future work. This flexibility will enable local development documents to be updated to take account of changing circumstances.

[1] Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators (2005) ODPM
[2] Draft Rochford District Local Development Scheme (2007) Rochford District Council

KEY DIAGRAM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SLA
Key
Coastal Protection Belt (CPB)
Areas of Historic Landscape
Ancient Woodlands
Special Landscape Areas (SLA)
Strategic Gaps
Residential Areas
Metropolitan Greenbelt
Indicative housing numbers

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