

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 21 OCTOBER 2009**

**PORTFOLIO: LEISURE, TOURISM, HERITAGE, THE ARTS,  
CULTURE AND BUSINESS.**

**REPORT FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS  
MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To adopt the Economic Development Strategy 2009 – 2014 attached as Appendix 1 (note: the final published version will be in colour).

**2 FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE No: 07/09**

**3 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The economic well being of Rochford District is a major priority for the Council which is reflected in the corporate objective to “make a difference to our local economy”.
- 3.2 A clear and balanced strategy to manage the Council's economic development activity is of particular importance given that the Country entered into a period of recession in the latter part of 2008.
- 3.3 The Council has already agreed and actioned a number of shorter term measures to support businesses during the economic downturn.
- 3.4 The Council has had an economic development strategy in place for a number of years, updated on an annual basis and last year determined that a major refresh was required. An interim strategy was written and implemented. The new strategy has now been produced and will enable the Council to play a key role in addressing the significant challenges presented now and in the future.
- 3.5 The strategy sets a forward plan which is in line with the Council's overall vision, a framework to co-ordinate delivery thereof and identifies priority actions within 3 key themes;
- 1) Business Support
  - 2) People and Employment
  - 3) Employment land and Economic Drivers

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 To decide not to adopt the Economic Development Strategy 2009 – 2014.

- 4.2 The Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration includes a proposal that will require upper-tier and unitary local authorities to carry out an assessment of the economic conditions of their local area. As an alternative option, the Council could choose to wait for Essex County Council to produce Rochford's economic assessment. However, this is not likely to be complete until next spring at the earliest and the Council would be lacking strategic direction in respect of its economic development activity.

## **5 OTHER SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 5.1 This Economic Development Strategy succeeds the Interim Economic Development Strategy 2008 – 2009 which was adopted in August 2008.
- 5.2 The Strategy has been subject to consultation with business representative groups and other key stakeholders.
- 5.3 The document draws on a wide evidence base which has also been used in the formation of the Local Development Framework and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- 5.4 The Strategy will be reviewed and updated annually.

## **6 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposal for upper tier authorities to produce economic assessments and the pooling across Essex of the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) awards could affect the delivery of the District's own economic strategy.
- 6.2 The Council cannot deliver all services and improvements without its partners. Therefore the successful delivery of this strategy will be dependant upon their commitment. The Local Strategic Partnership has identified "encouraging economic development" as a priority in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Environmental considerations affecting businesses and the economy are reflected in the strategy.

## **8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Strategy will be funded through the existing Economic Development Budget and will be used in determining future spending decisions in respect of the Council's LABGI allocations.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Corporate Policy and Partnerships Manager**

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**Background Papers:** None

For further information please contact Jennifer House, Economic Development Officer on:-

Tel:- 01702 318195

E-Mail:- [jennifer.house@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.house@rochford.gov.uk)

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# Economic Development Strategy for Rochford District 2009-2014



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### Introduction

The Council's vision for the Rochford District is shared with that of the Local Strategic Partnership:

***To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here***

The Council cannot deliver all services and improvements without its partners. To that end we are involved in a range of partnerships. The overarching partnership for Rochford is the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which includes a range of partners. The LSP is responsible for delivering the Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2021 which identifies shared priorities for the District.

The LSP also links partners to the broader County Local Area Agreement. This is an agreement between central and local government. It includes a number of performance targets that the partnership works towards.

To support the Council's vision, the Authority the Council has four main corporate objectives for 2009-2013, these are:

- making a difference to our people
- making a difference to our community
- making a difference to our environment
- making a difference to our local economy

As with other local authorities within Thames Gateway South Essex, the policy context for Rochford provides an agenda for regeneration and wealth creation. We will do this by enhancing and improving on what we already have, by playing on our strengths and mitigating our weaknesses. Our key tools for achieving this will be via this strategy and the emerging Local Development Framework and its supporting documents.



## What is the Economic Development Strategy?

The economic development strategy sets a framework to steer the activities and action of the Council and its partners over the next five years in achieving the Council's objective to make a difference to the local economy. The Strategy:

- sets a forward plan for economic development which is in line with the Council's overall vision;
- sets a framework to co-ordinate the delivery of this plan in line with the Council's four corporate objectives;
- identifies priority actions and the resources necessary to deliver them and
- sets targets and a monitoring framework to measure ongoing progress.

The strategy draws on a wide evidence base which has also been used in the preparation of the Local Development Framework and Sustainable Communities Strategy. The economic overview contained in this Strategy highlights issues that need to be addressed and the strengths of the local economy that need to be protected and built on.

Using this information the Council has agreed a series of objectives and actions listed under three key themes:

- **Theme 1:** Business Support
- **Theme 2:** People and Employment; and
- **Theme 3:** Employment Land and Economic Drivers

Each theme has been influenced by two overarching principles: the climate change agenda and the recession.

## What have we achieved?

In February 2008 the Council adopted an interim strategy that gave short term targets in anticipation of this replacement strategy. It detailed commitments around business support and key economic drivers.

Towards the end of 2008 the country moved into a period of recession and in February 2009 the Council published a report outlining the immediate action it was taking to support small businesses. Here are some of the Council's economic development activities over the past year:

- Over 70% of eligible businesses are now receiving small business rate relief on their NNDR bills (business rates). The Council continues to encourage eligible businesses to apply.
- In February 2009 the Council paid 98% of suppliers within the District within 10 days of receiving their invoice.
- In 2008 we reported that the Council had spent 71% of its overall expenditure with businesses based in Essex – ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> in a league table of Essex Authorities compiled by the Federation of Small Businesses.
- Working with Southend Council, we progressed the London Southend Airport & Environs Joint Area Action Plan to "preferred option" stage.
- The Council successfully delivered two business breakfast events. The theme of the first event was "Internet for the small business", where businesses learned about modern, low cost and effective marketing techniques available through use of the Internet. The second business event supported

the Federation for Small Businesses' Keep Trade Local Campaign which looks at and lobbies to address key issues that are negatively affecting high street retailers.

- The Council delivered the Rochford in Business Initiative which saw six fledgling businesses receive grants to help get their business ideas up and running. Grants were given for a wide range of items and equipment but notably training for staff.
- In partnership with Enterprise in Education, the Council staged a Business Challenge Day for local students to sift out the young entrepreneurs in the District. Students from Fitzwimarc, Greensward Academy and King Edmund schools attended the day and put together business cases to re-brand a local leisure business. The winning and runner up groups received certificates and awards in recognition of their achievement.
- The spring edition of Rochford District Matters contained a business pull-out which gave key information on existing and new support services in response to the recession.
- The Council continued to provide grant funding and assistance to the local Chambers of Trade to be used to the benefit of the three main town centres.
- Consultation held with local business representative groups resulted in a freeze on car parking charges during 2009, apart from the daily rate, and charges being suspended on the four Saturday mornings leading up to Christmas 2008 – to encourage shoppers into the town.
- The Council has worked with sub regional partners in forming an Integrated Development Programme (IDP) for South Essex which is explained further on in this report.
- In 2008 the Council secured funding to produce Area Action Plans for Hockley and Rochford to look at opportunities for regeneration. Initial consultation on the Hockley Area Action Plan has taken place and the next report will be out for consultation in mid-2010. A discussion document on the Rochford Area Action Plan will be published for consultation in autumn 2009. It is anticipated that the final plans for both areas will be adopted in 2012.
- The Council has also allocated funds to produce a town centre study for Rayleigh which will look at opportunities for regeneration and improvement. A discussion document will be published for consultation in autumn 2009. It is anticipated the final plan will be adopted in 2012.
- The Council has secured funding that will be used to commission a feasibility study around establishing an Eco-Enterprise Centre in the District to support the development of sustainable businesses in the future.
- The Council has also progressed toward finalising the Core Strategy, a key part of the LDF. The plan was approved by Council on 9 September 2009 and following pre-submission consultation it is anticipated submission will be in the latter part of 2009. The Economic Development Officer and Planning Policy team have worked closely to

ensure that the views of the local business community have been fairly considered and represented.

- The Council worked with Thames Gateway South Essex partners to secure funding to deliver the Leading a Low Carbon Economy project which will help businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and increase resources efficiency.

### Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR)

The SNR was published by Government in July 2007 and has an important bearing on the structures responsible for delivering economic development in South Essex. SNR supported the empowerment of local authorities and groups of local authorities to promote economic development and to embed their ambitions in Multi Area Agreements and Local Area Agreements.

This was reaffirmed in the Government's response to the consultation document which also indicated Government would legislate for the creation of statutory sub-regional authorities for economic development called Economic Improvement Boards (EIBs). This economic development strategy, in part, forms the Council's response to SNR. The Council is committed to ensuring successful economic development in the District and will work closely with its designated Economic Improvement Board at the appropriate time. In the meanwhile, we will continue to work with partners to fulfil our economic development responsibilities.

SNR also promoted a more integrated approach to regeneration at the regional level in the form of new integrated regional strategies, amalgamating Regional Economic Strategies and Regional Spatial Strategies.

### East of England Development Agency

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA), one of nine English regional development agencies, is the driving force behind sustainable economic growth and regeneration in the East of England. EEDA's task is to improve the region's economic performance and ensure the East of England remains one of the UK's top performing regions.

Inventing our Future – Collective Action for a sustainable economy, the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the East of England, is structured to focus on eight key aims and a number of priority actions to deliver them. These aims are:

- Enterprise – improving Business performance and a stronger culture of entrepreneurship.
- Innovation – realising the value of innovation by bringing ideas to market .
- Digital economy – accelerating the use of digital technologies in public services, society and commerce.
- Resources efficiency – benefiting from a low-carbon, low-resource economy.
- Skills for productivity – developing skills for productivity.
- Economic Participation – opportunity for all in the sustainable economy.
- Transport – a transport system that fully supports sustainable economic growth.
- Spatial economy – sustainable places that attract and retain the people and investment necessary for a world-class economy.

EEDA are also responsible for delivering the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS) (May 2008) which seeks to provide a framework for the spatial implementation of RES. The plan sets out regional and sub-regional spatial policies including the location of development proposals including the growth of ports and airports, strategic employment sites, District housing allocations, job growth and infrastructure provision, including transport.

Rochford District Council's Local Development Framework is required to conform to the RSS. It sets out a number of policies which are applicable to the whole of the region and which the District must consider. In addition, the plan also contains detailed requirements for individual Districts and boroughs.

Those which are particularly relevant to Rochford and this strategy are:

- the provision of 4,600 additional dwellings between 2001 and 2021.
- the creation of no less than 3,000 additional jobs.
- the development of London Southend Airport as a driver for economic development.

EEDA is already starting to respond to the requirements of SNR and the Joint Implementation Plan (JIP) is currently being prepared. EEDA is also promoting an integrated approach to economic development, skills, transport and housing in the sub-regions, in the form of Integrated Development Programmes (IDPs).

### Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership

As one of three sub-regions which comprise the Thames Gateway Growth Area, Europe's largest regeneration

project, and one of the East of England's seven "engines of growth", South Essex is a national priority for investment.

Thames Gateway South Essex reaches across five local authority areas including the three District Councils of Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford within the County of Essex and the two Unitary Authorities of Southend and Thurrock. In 2001 the area was already home to 637,000 residents, with over 23,000 businesses employing 232,000 people. By 2021 the area is set to achieve growth of 55,000 jobs and 43,000 homes in high quality sustainable communities, as set out in the RSS.

The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSEP) is a sub-regional partnership of local authorities, regional and national agencies of government working with businesses, community and voluntary groups. The core partners are the six relevant local authorities and the East of England Development Agency.

Over the past year, TGSEP has undergone significant change and is currently developing its Business Plan for the period 2009-2011 which sets out a vision for the sub region, summarised as follows:

"Our overriding aim is to provide an improved quality of life for all the people of South Essex, and to allow the area to participate, via the Thames Gateway initiative, in the prosperity of the wider South East and East of England."

The Plan then identifies nine programmes of activity under the following four themes:

- (1) Supporting Physical Regeneration
- (2) Business Development, Enterprise and Innovation
- (3) Inward Investment and Business Retention
- (4) Skills

The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership is also developing an Integrated Development Programme for South Essex (IDP). An IDP is intended to provide a single delivery plan for capital led investment across a functional economic area. They are designed to promote a more integrated approach to sustainable development incorporating housing, economic development, transport, community infrastructure, health, training and education and environmental investments.

IDPs set out the investment priorities in a sub region and the critical projects and interventions required, without which growth will not be delivered on the scale necessary to meet regional targets. They are prepared in functional urban areas rather than administrative boundaries. The IDP will provide a framework for strengthening the relationship between local partners and with regional and central Government agencies. In particular, it is hoped to achieve a greater certainty of funding and early commitments from Government to deliver critical investment in infrastructure.

This has presented an opportunity to re-define the role of Rochford within the partnership by demonstrating a more substantial contribution than before. To do this we have advocated five potential development or regeneration opportunities as follows:

- London Southend Airport & Environs as set out in the Joint Area Action Plan, including the development of a related vocational training centre.
- Town Centre regeneration of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley.
- Establishment of an eco-enterprise centre.

- Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Wallasea Island wetlands project.

### Sub-region: Essex

The Essex Local Area Agreement is a joint agreement between Government and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP is the 'partnership of partnerships' which consists of main statutory agencies, voluntary and business sector representatives and key interest groups. The LSP also links partners to the broader County Local Area Agreement. It includes a number of performance targets that the partnerships work towards.

The LSP works to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) employed a Local Strategic Partnership Officer and Assistance in 2008 which led to the completion and launch of the new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) in April 2009. The SCS introduces a long term vision, aspirations and objectives for the District and has been developed with regard to national guidance and emerging national policy. Importantly, the SCS provides a focus for all organisations to work together for the benefit of Rochford.

The SCS has identified "Encouraging Economic Development" as one of its seven key priorities. As with this economic development strategy, the SCS seeks to generate higher skills levels in the working age population, assist the formation of sustainable businesses and increase employment opportunities for local people.

At present there is one LSP sub-group tasked with the economic development agenda and that is the Economic Regeneration sub-group. However, a review of all the thematic partnerships is underway to ensure that the purpose and



activity of the sub-groups is line with the ambitions and targets of the LSP as laid out in the SCS.

Each thematic sub-group will be expected to compile and agree an action plan that sets out the activities they plan to undertake, how that fits within the aims and objectives of the LSP and how the group plans to measure progress.

### Local – Rochford

The overall vision and four corporate objectives have already been outlined in the introduction to the Strategy demonstrating how this strategy contributes to the overarching corporate aims.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a portfolio of local development documents which together provide the spatial planning framework for the District up to 2021. One key element of the portfolio is the Core Strategy which sets out the vision for the District and the spatial planning policies required to deliver that vision.

Economic development and spatial planning are fundamentally linked in that spatial planning can hinder economic growth just as over ambitious growth or development can undermine local places and communities. There is a need to balance growth with the quality of life for residents and maintain our natural heritage and green spaces. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure a unified approach to the management of strategic development and the physical and built environment.

The third theme of this strategy looks at the areas of work where the two remits meet whether that is through town centre regeneration, relocation of industrial estates or the expansion of London Southend Airport. The Council has to plan

to ensure that the successful delivery of these projects reap benefits for the local community and economy.

The Core Strategy sets a vision for the District up to the period 2025. Whilst the Economic Development Strategy only relates to a five year period it is important to understand the longer terms aims of the Council and what the economic development remit is so that work can be planned and the necessary preparation take place. Further information can be found in Theme 3 of this Strategy.

### About Rochford

Rochford District is situated in south east Essex, within a peninsula between the rivers Thames and Crouch with the North Sea to the east. The District has land boundaries with Basildon District, Southend-on-Sea and Castle Point Borough Councils. It also has marine boundaries with Maldon and Chelmsford Districts. It has transport linkages to the M25, the A127 and A13 with direct rail links into London in less than an hour.

Approximately 85% of the District's 65 square miles is designated as green belt with many miles of coastline and nationally important areas of salt marsh. Foulness Island and some adjoining areas in the east of the District are under Ministry of Defence control.

Whilst a predominately rural area, there are three main towns Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley and a number of smaller settlements.

In the 2001 census Rochford District Had a population of approximately 79,000 people. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid year estimates in 2007 listed Rochford's population at 82,200 people; this is expected to increase to around 87,000 by 2021. Compared to the East of England, Rochford has fewer young children (0-4 years), fewer young adults (19-31 years), more older adults (52-69

years) and marginally more older adults aged 80 years and older. The population is among the older local populations in Britain. 27% of all households in the District are occupied by pensioners. It is estimated that the figure for those over the age of 85 is set to double by 2021.

Owner occupied homes constitutes 86% of households which is amongst the highest in the Country. Private renting accounts for approximately 6% of households. House prices are higher than the average for England and Wales.

Rochford is generally a prosperous part of the Country which is reflected in relatively low deprivation, ranked 316<sup>th</sup> least deprived out of 354 Districts. However, at ward and sub-ward levels there are pockets of deprivation with one Super Output Area in the top 10% most income deprived in the County. The most deprived ward, Foulness and Great Wakering East, ranks 2,680 out of 8,414.

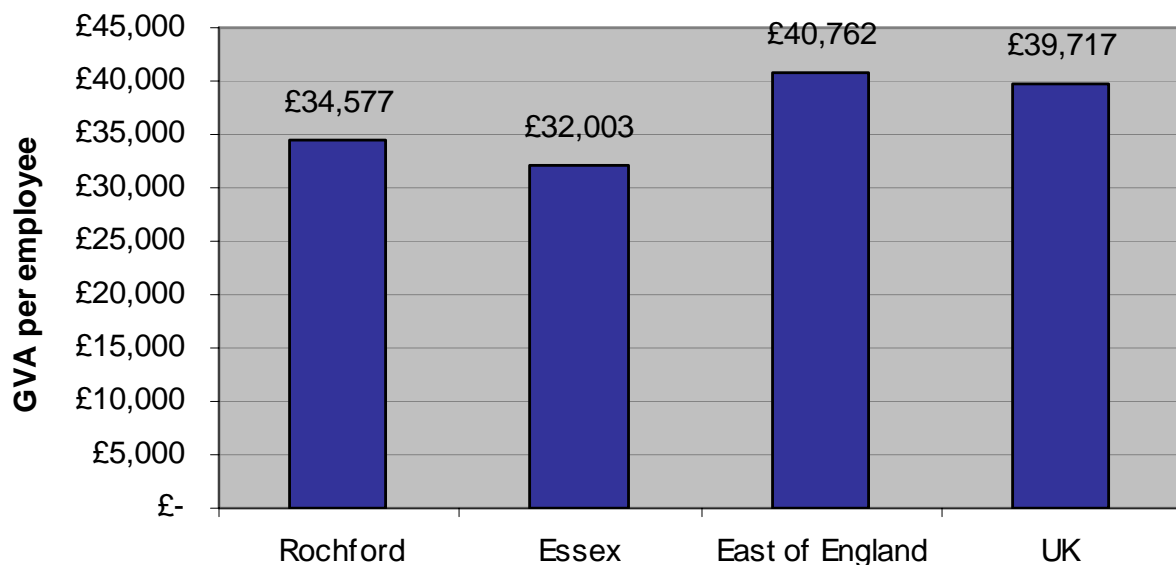
In 2009, a Halifax survey, which ranks areas for factors affecting quality of life, placed Rochford District seventh in Great Britain. The research was carried out for its third annual survey, detailing the thirty best locations in the Country.

### Economic Overview

Rochford's economy produced an output, measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), in 2006 of £852 million, an increase of 44.9% since 1992. To put this into context GVA in Essex is £24,467 million and has experienced an increase of 64.3% since 1992. In the East of England Region GVA was £93.5 billion, an increase of 55.5% since 1992.

GVA per employee, a measure of the productivity of an economy, shows that Rochford and Essex have similar levels, although Rochford's figure (£34,577) is notably lower than the regional figure of £40,762. This is shown below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Productivity in Rochford**



These figures highlight the strength of the East of England's economy and its growing influence within the wider UK economy, given that GVA per employee has grown faster than its national equivalent. It also demonstrates that Rochford, within a regional context, has a comparatively healthy economy even though it is still falling behind the Region and UK.

However, the gap in productivity between Rochford and the County and Region narrowed between 1992 and 2006 with Rochford experiencing a higher increase in productivity (35%) than the County (30%) and Region (32%).

The economy is lower value with lower workplace earnings, and less knowledge intensive employment than the County and the Region. In 2008 workplace earnings, in Rochford were £434 per week, compared to resident's average weekly earnings which were valued at £524. In 2007, weekly workplace earnings were valued at £444.50 and resident's £549.50 so both workplace and resident earnings declined in 2008.

Knowledge based employment in Rochford increased significantly between 1998 and 2000. It then stayed relatively stable before starting to decline again in 2003. Typically, wages for knowledge based employment are higher than normal as employees are more highly skilled or have integral "knowledge" or expertise in their field.

The proportion of knowledge based employment in Rochford is now roughly back at 1998 level, which is below the average in Essex, the East of England and the UK.

A lower proportion of knowledge based business means lower value jobs and the District's more highly skilled residents seeking employment elsewhere. The level of employment in knowledge based sectors is regarded a good measure of economic competitiveness and a determinant of current and future prosperity.

The qualification levels of Rochford's working age population are generally higher than Essex County but from NVQ3 and above broadly lower than the East and the Country. There is a 6% margin of error with regard to these statistics which is due to the fact the Office for National Statistics has to use a very small sample size for the Rochford District. We can see the impact of this in the fluctuating figures given since 2000 and particularly in 2007. Bearing this in mind we can still ascertain that on the whole the percentage of working age residents that have no qualifications is rising. Whereas Essex's performance is seen to be improving with a 3% decrease in the number of residents with no qualifications and an increase in more high skilled residents.

**Table 1 – Qualifications (Jan 2008 – Dec 2008)**

	<b>Rochford (%)</b>	<b>Essex (%)</b>	<b>East (%)</b>	<b>UK (%)</b>
NVQ4 and above	23.0	23.6	26.1	29
NVQ3 and above	41.5	40.9	43.4	47
NVQ2 and above	65.3	62.2	62.8	65.2
NVQ1 and above	79.9	77.9	78.8	78.9
No qualifications	10.3	14.1	11.8	12.4



Approximately 60% of the working population travelled outside of the District to work (2001). The most popular destinations are neighbouring Southend and elsewhere in Essex. Rochford also has high patterns of commuting to London; a reflection of the established transport links to Liverpool Street Station.

It has to be noted that the most recent travel to work data available is from the 2001 Census. Since then there have been significant changes to the working environment, with the pull of the City and Canary Wharf likely to have increased. Likewise, a drop in the average wage locally could encourage more residents to seek employment elsewhere.

**Table 3 – Travel to work patterns 2001**

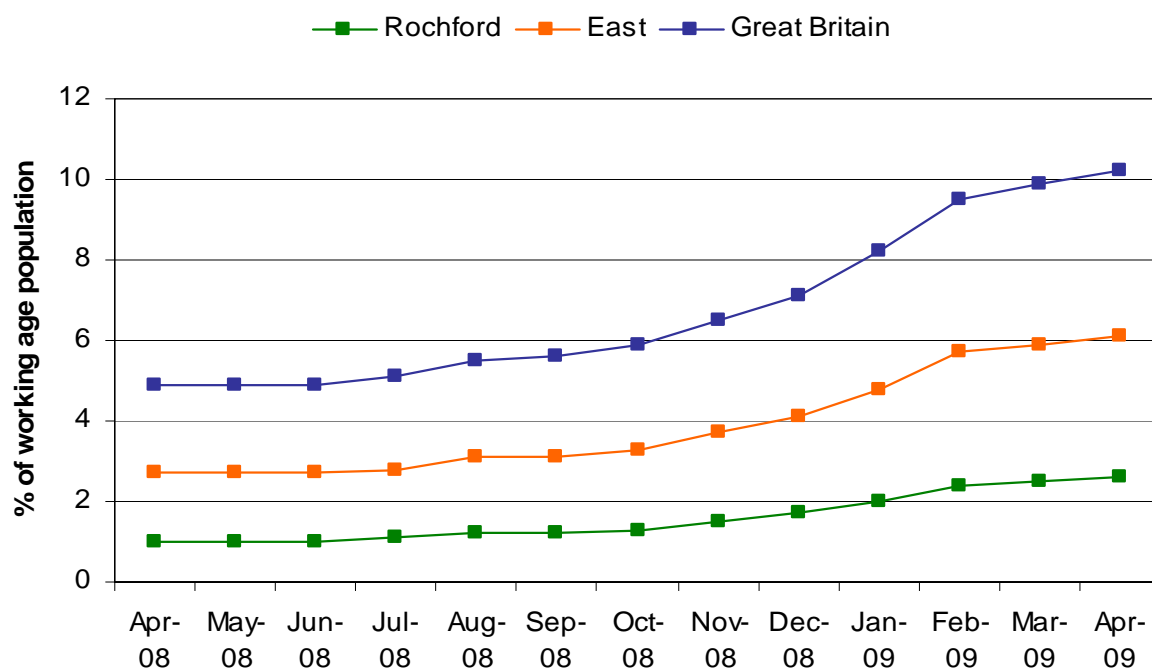
Area	To Rochford		From Rochford	
	#	%	#	%
Rochford	13,598	50	13,598	36
Southend	4,337	16	8,623	23
Elsewhere in Essex	4,120	15	7,892	21
London	352	1	6,731	18
Other	4,834	18	9,470	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,241</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37,691</b>	<b>100</b>

Almost half of the people who work in Rochford live in the District. There is a large number travelling to work in Rochford from elsewhere in Essex (8,457), half of which are from Southend-on-Sea Borough.

Estimated employee numbers in Rochford currently stand at 24,641 and employment growth was in line with the County and the Region between 1992 and 1999. After that time employment growth rates in Rochford, Essex and the Region started to diverge. Employment in Rochford began to decline, while growth in Essex, the East and the UK remained steady. Between 2005 and 2006 employment levels in Rochford increased again resulting in an overall increase of 7.5% between 1992 and 2006.

Now that the Country has gone into a period of recession we expect unemployment levels to rise significantly. The most recent unemployment figures available are for October 2007 to September 2008 and showed Rochford's unemployment level as 3.5% comparing favourably to Essex (4.3%), East of England (4.3%) and the Country (5.3%). However, we have more up to date figures in respect of Job Seeker's Allowance claimants. Whilst Rochford still compares favourably to the East and the Country, the take up of this benefit has increased drastically over the past year. Of the 1,254 individuals claiming in April 2009, 1,025 only started claiming this benefit within the last six months.

### JSA Claimants April 2008-2009



To try and estimate the actual rise in unemployment from the Job Seeker's Allowance claimant count is difficult; historical figures show no real pattern or correlation between the two. Not everyone who is out of work will claim Job Seeker's Allowance. However, it is still remains a clear indication that unemployment in the District is rising.

Our ability to address the issue of rising unemployment is hindered by the fact that Rochford already has low job density compared to County, the East and Country in terms of employment density, as shown in the table below. These figures include the employed, self employed, Government supported trainees and HM forces.

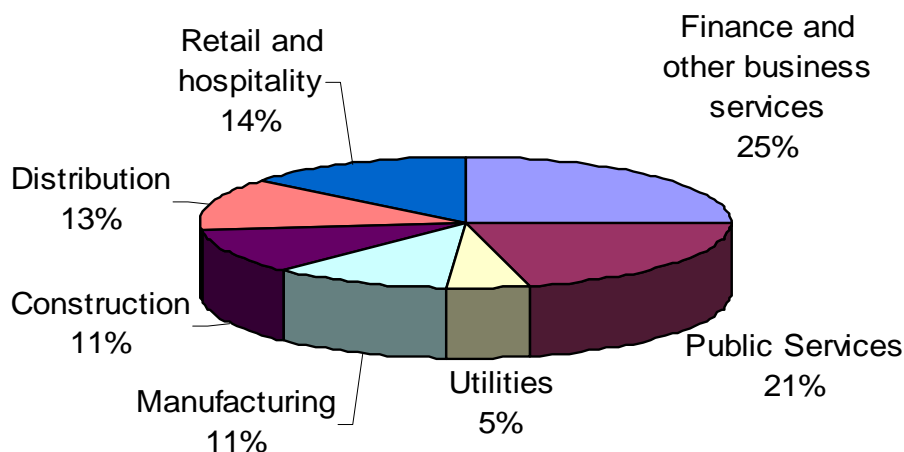
**Table 4 – Job Density**

	Rochford (jobs)	Rochford (density)	Essex (density)	East of England (density)	Great Britain (density)
Job density	25,000	0.52	0.76	0.84	0.88

The Employment and Land Study carried out in 2008 by GVA Grimley reported that business start up rates fluctuated considerably between 1994 and 2006. The District's start-up rates were 0.4% in 2006, compared to 2% in Essex and 1.8% in the East of England. However, in 2005, Rochford's figures were higher than those in Essex and the East of England respectively, indicating inconsistent levels of business creation.

More recent figures for start-ups in the Rochford District in 2007 are consistent with this theory. Historically these figures have also shown a comparatively high number of de-registrations to registrations. This would indicate issues around the sustainability of businesses that do form. At the same time Rochford saw an increase of 19% in the overall number of businesses between 1998 and 2006. This is the same as Essex and higher than the Region (16%) and Country (14%).

**Figure 2 – Rochford District Employment Sectors**



The Finance and Other Business Services (FBS) sector is the largest employment sector in Rochford (see Figure 2). Retail and Hospitality (14%), Distribution (13%), Construction (11%) and Manufacturing (11%) all have similar levels of employment in Rochford.

In relative terms (employment and output) the construction sector is overrepresented in Rochford. The relative size of employment and output of Retail and Hospitality, Distribution and Manufacturing sectors are roughly in line with the national average.

The three sectors Agriculture, Mining and Utilities (presented in an aggregated form under "utilities" in Figure 2) account for 5% of all employment in the District and for 8% of total output. While this is not very high in relative terms, employment is over 3.5 times higher than the UK average and output is over 2.5 times. This indicates the relative strength of rural employment within the District.

## SWOT Analysis

### Theme 1 – Business Support

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Higher rates of business growth than the East and the UK since 1998</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Productivity (measured by GVA) falling behind the East and the UK</li><li>Inconsistent levels of business creation</li><li>Relatively high numbers of business closures</li><li>Low workplace earnings</li></ul>
Opportunities – Impact of the recession	Threats – Impact of the recession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inclusion in Thames Gateway South Essex presents opportunities for economic growth</li><li>Develop a low carbon economy</li><li>Support rural diversification</li><li>Encourage the effective use of ICT</li><li>Stimulate and encourage innovation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Green belt restrictions</li></ul>

**Theme 2 – People and Employment**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High resident based earnings compared to the East and the UK</li><li>• Relative strength of Agriculture, Construction and Manufacturing employment sectors compared to national averages</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment growth is slower than the East and the UK</li><li>• Less knowledge intensive employment</li><li>• Reliance on Airport for locally provided jobs</li><li>• High levels of residents commuting out of the District to work</li></ul>
Opportunities – Impact of the recession	Threats – Impact of the recession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retain more highly skilled, higher earning residents in local employment</li><li>• Address issues around lack of knowledge intensive employment (higher value jobs) through the expansion of London Southend Airport and its environs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited transport links to some of the Districts more rural areas restrict employment growth</li><li>• Declining qualification levels of the working age population</li><li>• Rising unemployment</li></ul>

**Theme 3 – Employment Land and Economic Drivers**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low levels of deprivation</li><li>• Stronger industrial than office location</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some existing industrial estates are in a tired condition and are poorly located</li></ul>
Opportunities - Impact of the recession	Threats - Impact of the recession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant economic growth through the expansion of London Southend Airport and its environs</li><li>• Establish an Eco Enterprise Centre to address inconsistent levels of business creation</li></ul> <p>Through the Local Development Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider the location and condition of existing industrial estates</li><li>• Consider the creation of new employment land in more sustainable locations</li><li>• Consider restrictive approach to developing within greenbelt boundaries in relation to rural diversification</li><li>• Support town centres through effective planning policy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of investment in transport and road infrastructure</li></ul>

### Guiding Principles

There are two guiding principles to this Strategy which are explained below. They have been identified as such because they bear an influence all our priorities, objectives and actions.

### Climate Change Agenda

There is widespread scientific consensus that man-made greenhouse gas emissions are driving climate change, the effects of which are potentially irreversible. Many high-profile reviews and documentaries have addressed the subject and many of our everyday behaviours have already been influenced for the better.

The Council's actions to date have been many and varied, yet have often been taken independently of one another. Rochford District Council's Climate Change Strategy, which was adopted in November 2008, brings together all the strands of the Council, looks at its achievements and sphere of influence and begins to co-ordinate its efforts to maximise their effects and those of our future actions.

The Council, like its local and regional partners, want to lead in forming a low carbon economy. We want to be compared favourably with the Beacon Councils announced in the 'Tackling Climate Change' category earlier this year and will work with the community, businesses and our public and private partners to make this happen.

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), in 2005 Rochford District had the second lowest per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Essex – 5.6 Tonnes. There is more to be done to reduce this figure and we have been given a target of 5.1 Tonnes to be achieved by 2011.

The Council in partnership with other Thames Gateway South Essex local authorities has secured funding to deliver the Leading a Low Carbon Economy project across South Essex which will work to reduce businesses' carbon emissions and improve their resource efficiency.

### Recession

The economic downturn means that there is a heightened focus on economic development and regeneration measures which aim to address the issues around the recession. Whilst it is natural for the Council to respond to the needs of businesses and residents in the short term, it is just as important not to lose sight of the longer term vision for the local economy, remaining prepared and with necessary capacity to respond in the event of an upturn.

The actions of the Council and the commitments detailed in this Strategy show a balanced approach to the recession. We will continue to respond to the immediate needs of the community, whilst retaining the focus and capacity to achieve the longer term vision for the District.

### Theme 1: Business Support

Looking at the economic overview and SWOT analysis we can see a need to continue to narrow the gap in productivity and bring it more in line with the Region and the County. The Council will provide support and assistance that will help to generate more consistent levels of business creation and create more sustainable businesses for the future.

To increase productivity the Council will work with businesses to specifically promote the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and resource efficiency, which will also reap environmental benefits. The Council will continue to provide business support

services with particular interest in supporting local business innovation. In addition to the actions laid out below, the Council will continue to pro-actively seek out opportunities and secure funding to deliver business support projects in the District, with particular attention on ICT, Innovation and resource efficiency.

### **Objective 1: Improve the Council's business support offer**

There are a range of projects and support services available to businesses but it is recognised that businesses need assistance working their way through public sector business support. The Council recognises the need to effectively disseminate information to local businesses for support schemes to work.

In order to have more regular and quality contact with the local businesses the Council has now set up the Rochford Business Network (RBN). There has been a high level of interest in the network to date with 250 local businesses now signed up and added to an emailing list. This means that the Council can communicate with businesses more regularly and cost effectively. As part of RBN businesses receive invitations to free business breakfast networking events each year which provide relevant and practical information aimed to benefit businesses.

The Council will improve the existing offer of the Rochford Business Network and is currently working with Venture Navigator to deliver online business forums. Rochford Business Forums (RBF) will make RBN interactive and enable the Council to have dialogue on a "one to many" basis. Members will be able to network with other local businesses, have their own business profile, have access to news and event feeds, talk directly with the Council and its partners, seek advice and information and be made aware of key consultation opportunities. RBF will be free to use and available 24/7; a far more convenient and accessible way to engage with local businesses.

Due to the significant changes in the Council's business support offer the Council needs to update and change all its existing communication channels such as the economic development web pages on the Council's website. The Business Support Officer will map out all existing support services provided by the Council and its partners, update communication channels and put in place a referral system for businesses seeking support covering a wide range of topics including training and skills development, e-commerce, environmental awareness the effective use of ICT and business innovation.

It is worth noting the 2001 census showed that 3,355 people worked mainly from their home. The basic business support offer is available to all businesses but the Council needs to be aware of this when considering marketing and promotional activities. Those working from home should be encouraged to join RBN and partake in networking and training opportunities.

Action	Task	Target date
1.1	Continue to develop the Rochford Business Network and increase membership	Ongoing
1.2	Continue to deliver business breakfast programme – three events per year	Ongoing
1.3	Deliver Rochford Business Forums as part of RBN	February 2010
1.4	Map out existing business support services, develop a referral service and update all communication channels to reflect service improvements	February 2010



### **Objective 2: Work with business to reduce their carbon emissions and to increase resource efficiency**

The Council recognises that different industries and individual businesses may already be at varying stages and have different resources in place to become more environmentally sustainable. Rochford District Council wants to provide all businesses with sound, accessible advice and incentives to behave in an environmentally responsible manner.

Knowledge of the issues may also assist companies to spot opportunities in the marketplace, for example developing new environmental technologies, to grow their business.

As previously mentioned, the Council has worked with other TGSE local authority partners to develop and deliver the “Leading a Low Carbon Economy Project”. Through this initiative businesses will be supported in their efforts to reduce carbon emissions and increase their resource efficiency over a three year period.

A number of organisations will work with the businesses to assess their particular circumstances and to draw up an action plan of what can be done. There will be additional support for business that start to deliver against their action plan.

Action	Task	Target date
2.1	Work with partners to develop and deliver the three year TGSEP Leading a Low Carbon Economy project	Commence delivery by June 2010

### **Objective 3: Establish the feasibility of setting up an eco-enterprise centre in the District**

Having secured the necessary funding, the Council will now investigate the feasibility of establishing an eco-enterprise centre in the District. Enterprise centres, also known

as business incubation centres, provide an ideal, structured environment in which new businesses can grow.

They differ from other types of business support because they offer comprehensive, responsive and customised services to early stage businesses at the most vulnerable point in their lifecycle. The most obvious benefits are usually inclusive rents, short term tenancies and on site business support.

The Council believes that the establishment of an eco-friendly enterprise centre would help generate more consistent levels of business creation, reduce the number of business closures and help to educate new businesses about their environmental responsibilities. The Centre, which would be a flag ship, eco-friendly build will also act as a much needed inward investment draw, attracting new businesses to the area. It would become a central point for businesses seeking any kind of business support in the District.

If the centre is established, then the Council will work with landlords to develop appropriate grow on space for businesses moving on from the Centre. The Council will seek to implement service level agreements with local landlords who are prepared to meet the necessary criteria, which will include operating business friendly leases and meeting certain environmental standards. In return, their premises will be added to a list of recommended grow-on space for businesses moving on from the Centre. This influence will help to make best use of vacant stock and encourage landlords to consider their own environmental responsibilities. Developing grow on space will be integral to retaining businesses in the District.

Action	Task	Target date
3.1	Commission a feasibility study for the establishment of an eco-enterprise centre in the District	<b>Commission report December 2009 Report completed by March 2010</b>

### **Objective 4: Develop a greater understanding of the rural economy and rural business support needs**

Typically Gross Value Added (GVA) (one of the basic indicators of economic prosperity), appears considerably lower in the more remote and rural areas of the country than the national average. It is generally recognised that this impacts on the local economy as the scope to develop high skilled, high value enterprise is more constrained.

It seems that the key issues which affect rural areas arise from the fact that they can lack physical and social economic facilities such as good quality sites and premises, a good transport network, an adequate pool of skilled workers and effective higher and further education provision. Due to some of the economic factors referred to above it can be easy for a low wage, low skill equilibrium to evolve.

Remoteness may be a factor driving down GVA in mixed urban and rural areas. The Council wants to understand more about how the rural economy may be affecting the overall economic productivity of the District and depending on the outcomes of that research decide whether intervention is required. Information gained through this process will determine what support services are needed and how they might be provided and implemented into the existing business support offer.

Action	Task	Target date
4.1	Make recommendations to the Council around appropriate and relevant interventions	<b>December 2010</b>

## **Theme 2: People and Employment**

The qualifications and skills of the District's working population are important as each resident and worker is a contributor to the overall productivity of the District and in general terms, more highly qualified people work in more knowledge intensive jobs and therefore earn a higher salary. It is important to retain more highly qualified, higher earning residents in employment in the District, as it will increase the chances of their expenditure remaining within the local economy.

The characteristics of the local workforce are a significant factor for businesses considering where to locate their activities. Where new and appropriate inward investment brings employment opportunities, the Council and its partners will seek to facilitate programmes that adequately match or transfer the skills of local people to meet the requirement of the business. This will help to secure new business investment and ensure residents have the opportunity to benefit from new, higher value employment. This will increase overall productivity and work to reduce the high levels of out-commuting.

### **Objective 5: Work with partners to address declining skills levels and rising unemployment**

The economic overview and SWOT analysis show that Rochford is experiencing a decline in the skills levels of its working age population and due to the recession, a rise in unemployment. It is key that the Council and its partners start to address these issues in the near future.

Tackling Issues around skills and unemployment will require a multi-agency approach and a lot of resources. The Council recognises the importance of this need and will instigate, with agreement from the LSP Executive Board, the formation of a Skills and Employment sub-group.

As part of this group, the Council will work with a range of other partners including education providers and Job Centre Plus to minimise increases in unemployment. The group will deliver initiatives and projects that reduce the number of working age residents that have no qualifications, and increase attainment in NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4.

Additionally, the Council is committed to supporting young people by working with partners to ensure that they are given opportunities to develop their skills and increase their work prospects.

Central Government is currently running a campaign called Backing Young Britain which brings businesses and public and voluntary sectors together to ensure that the valuable skills and experience of young people are being harnessed and utilised. The enthusiasm and potential of young people will be vital as we start to move out of recession.

The Council will continue to deliver the Young Entrepreneur Programme which was run for the first time in 2009. In line with Backing Young Britain, the Council will seek private sector support both in terms of sponsorship and time spent with young people.

Action	Task	Target date
5.1	With agreement from the LSP Board, instigate the formation of a "Skills and Employment" sub group	<b>Group established by February 2010</b>

Action	Task	Target date
5.2	Continue to deliver the Young Entrepreneur Programme on an annual basis	<b>August – annually</b>

### Objective 6: Support employment sectors to help safeguard jobs

During a period of recession it is important to safeguard existing jobs and support key industries or sectors. To do this the Council will need to gain a better understanding of its key employment sectors and provide sector specific support and guidance.

Some of Rochford's largest employment sectors are the hardest hit in the recession and with low job density, the District cannot afford to lose jobs. The Council recognises that it needs to support its key employment sectors to help safeguard existing jobs.

- Finance and Other Business Services (25%)
- Retail and Hospitality (14%)
- Distribution (13%)
- Manufacturing (11%)
- Construction (11%)

Over the next year the Council will work to gain a better understanding of the specific needs of the key employment sectors. A report will be produced outlining key findings and making recommendations about the possible support services the Council can offer and the resources necessary to do so.

One small but good example of how this might work for the Retail and Hospitality sector. It is becoming increasingly important for retailers to have a competitive retail offer. The Council could offer support by working with Business Link to deliver training around

websites/retail offer and maybe link in with the Take IT On Initiative. This will strengthen existing business's offer, broaden their customer base and hopefully encourage growth; safeguarding existing jobs and possibly generating more.

Action	Task	Target date
6.1	Research each key employment sector and write a report that outlines key information, support needs, suggestions for how the Council can integrate into businesses support services and that looks at resource implications	Plan work programme, including timetable of activities for each sector by December 2010

### **Objective 7: Work to generate more high value jobs in the District**

There are a number of potential opportunities available through the expansion of London Southend Airport (detailed further in Theme 3), including the growth of Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) cluster which provides higher value jobs locally.

The airport site is already home to a significant number of Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) companies, which together support over 1,000 jobs. Many of these jobs are highly skilled, high value jobs unique to the aviation sector. Now that the Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) is at the "preferred option" it is envisaged that the number of MRO jobs will increase, as the airport expands. It is important that we secure additional high value employment through the expansion of the Airport.

At present the MRO sector is experiencing skill gaps and hard to fill vacancies. It is crucial to address the needs of the MRO sector to enable growth, increasing higher value jobs and safeguarding existing jobs. Renaissance Southend Ltd. is leading a

project to develop a vocational training centre. In the early part of 2009 consultants were commissioned to produce a feasibility study around the development and the potential for the site to become a regional centre of aviation excellence. The centre is due to be built and operational by 2011.

Simultaneously, Essex County Council is setting up a Group Training Apprenticeship Scheme which seeks to de-risk apprenticeships for employers and increase the take up of apprenticeships in certain growth or employment sectors. The scheme will take on the role of employer removing some of the burden. By acting as the direct employer the apprentice will be able to rotate apprenticeships around a number of different companies in the same sector. Essex County Council has made a commitment to support apprenticeships in the Aviation sector.

The development of Saxon Business Park will provide modern, sustainable, spacious office accommodation. It is envisaged that the new estate will provide space for a range of high-tech businesses, but with an emphasis on environmental technologies, and include space for new start-up businesses. This will assist the Council in its efforts to provide quality jobs for local people

These developments provide a unique opportunity to make a significant change to the local economy. They will generate interest from businesses operating outside the District and it is essential that the Council works to raise awareness of the new, high profile developments, and attract relevant and suitable businesses to the area.

Action	Task	Target date
7.1	Work with partners to establish an aviation related vocational training centre at London Southend Airport	Build complete by March 2011
7.2	Work with Essex County Council to deliver the Group Training Apprenticeship Scheme in Aviation Sector	To be fully integrated by March 2011

### Objective 8: Improve Rochford's inward investment offer

There are a number of opportunities arising in the future as a result of a number of spatial developments which are detailed in Theme 3 of this Strategy but they include:

- Town/village centre regeneration
- Relocation and improvement of poor industrial estates
- Expansion of London Southend Airport and its environs
- Establishment of an eco-enterprise centre

As and when each of these projects is delivered, Rochford has a significantly improved offer in terms of employment land. A relevant and proper inward investment service should be developed for each according to the aims of the Council. For example the Council aims for the new Saxon business park to attract high tech businesses, with particular focus on new environmental technologies and "green industries", to create higher value jobs in the District. A tailored inward investment service would show how Rochford is best placed to house such businesses; how the Council will ensure that the right type of workforce is available

and that additional support services are in place to encourage such businesses to locate in the District. The same formula applies to retail in the town centres and manufacturing and construction businesses on industrial estates.

Essentially, such services are about effective and focussed marketing activities. As such, time and resources need to be allocated to research, gather data and to build relationships with local commercial agents and landlords.

Action	Task	Target date
8.1	Make recommendations to the Council about how best to develop the inward investment offer and include any resource implications. The report should also include a timeline and forward plan which accounts for forthcoming developments such as the Saxon Business Park.	December 2011
8.2	Depending on the outcome of the recommendations made to the Council update the objectives and actions contained in the Strategy to adequately reflect the new work programme	EDS update in 2012

### Theme 3: Employment land and Economic Drivers

This theme differs slightly from the previous two themes as it has spatial implications and, for the most part, the projects detailed here are currently being led by the Council's Planning Department. It is important to identify what the economic development role is in each of the key areas.



The Core Strategy contains an Economic Development Chapter and the vision is as follows:

### **In five years**

- The Council are using the findings of the Employment Land Study to ascertain future employment provision to meet the District's needs, and to assist in identifying alternative locations for old and poorly located employment sites which are no longer fit-for-purpose.
- The long term future of the wharfage at Baltic Wharf as an employment area has been secured.
- Area Action Plans for Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley have been finalised and the first phase of enhancement opportunities are being implemented.
- The potential of London Southend Airport and its environs is beginning to take shape through the provision of a Joint Area Action Plan in partnership with Southend Borough Council.
- The Joint Area Action Plan seeks to realise the airport's potential as a driver for the sub regional economy, providing significant employment opportunities and ensuring the quality of life for its residents and workers.

### **By 2017**

- Sustainable, well used and strategically located industrial estates are being protected and enhanced, where appropriate.
- New businesses are being supported at the most vulnerable points in their lifecycle through the development of an Eco-Enterprise Centre.

- The Eco-Enterprise Centre is a flagship, eco-friendly building creating an inward investment draw which is bringing new businesses into the area.
- Appropriate uses within the District's commercial centres are being supported.
- London Southend Airport and its environs has become a driver for the sub-regional economy, providing a range of aviation and non aviation-related employment opportunities for the local population.
- A skills training academy within the vicinity of London Southend Airport and its environs has been established to provide high-skilled training in aviation-related industries.
- The Joint Area Action Plan supports and regulates the operations of London Southend Airport taking into consideration environmental and social effects, and residential amenity.
- A new airport terminal building at London Southend Airport has been completed and is operational following the implementation of an agreed surface access strategy.
- A new employment park in the west of the District with good links to the main access networks has been developed which caters for a range of employment types in a flexible manner that adapts to changes in the economy.

### **By 2025**

- Old, poorly located, "bad neighbour" industrial estates have been relocated to fit-for purpose sites in sustainable locations which meet the needs of businesses and benefits residential amenity.

- The new employment park is accompanied by a travel plan and is accessible to workers by a range of transport options.
- Over 3000 net additional jobs have been provided which meet local employment needs. A balance has been struck between the local workforce and jobs through the aviation centred skills training academy providing local workers with high-value, transferable skills.

Given the number of developments forthcoming this chapter of the Strategy has been broken down into the following sections for simplicity:

- Town and village centres
- Industrial estates and office space
- London Southend Airport

It is worth noting that the Council is in the early stages with most of these plans and projects. As these processes have not yet reached an outcome it is difficult to define the exact role and resource implications for the Economic Development Unit in the future. This will change as the projects move forward and detail will be added when the Strategy is updated annually to reflect progress up until the full re-write in 2014. Attached as Appendix 1 is a table which give some more detail and timings for the projects mentioned in this theme and which will also be updated annually.

### Town and Village Centres

Town and village centres have an important role to play in the District's economic development. Town centres that are attractive, well-designed, and well-managed, with a range of shops, arts and cultural uses, entertainment, good amenities, and good transport connections are engines for economic growth, providing a focal point for business and social

interactions. Vibrant town centres are good for business: they create jobs, attract investment and generate income. At their best, they create a local buzz and define the wider area, attracting people from near and far.

It is clear that the downturn is giving rise to challenges but turbulent economic times can also herald a period of remarkable innovation, energy and creativity. It is important to manage town centres well, building on a strong partnership between local people, local businesses, and local service providers. Town centres need a clear sense of their identity, a vision for their future, and strategies for achieving that vision.

### **Objective 9: Work with partners to create thriving, experience led town centres that residents and businesses can enjoy and be proud of**

The Council has an important role to play in enhancing the District's town centres, ensuring they are vibrant places. The 2008 Retail and Leisure Study indicated that there is significant leakage of retail spending to areas outside of the District. Shopping patterns vary across the District and by the type of goods bought. With regards to convenience shopping (e.g. food), 17.8% of main food shopping is retained within the District compared to 54.4% of top-up shopping. This pattern is not replicated consistently across the District. Rayleigh retains the most convenience shopping, retaining 37.8% and 75.9% of main food shopping and top-up shopping respectively. Other areas of the District leak considerably more.

Retail spending is projected to grow and it is important that the District ensures it at least maintains its current market share of spending – and continues to provide for the people who shop within the District – by ensuring there is adequate retail space allocated. The Council recognises that a proportion of spend will be attracted to

regional centres such as Southend but there remains an opportunity to reduce the amount of leakage by making town centres more attractive to shoppers, enhancing their vitality and vibrancy, and concentrating retail development within the District's centres.

The Council is looking at the form and function of Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh town centres through Area Action Plans and scoping the possibility for regeneration. Due to the amount of work currently being undertaken by the Council in respect of the District's town centres, the Core Strategy has set a separate vision and list of objectives to bring them to their full potential as follows:

### **In five years...**

- Area Action Plans for Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley town centres have been produced and adopted. The plans provide a clear framework, developed having regard to the results of community involvement, to guide the regeneration of these centres

### **By 2025...**

- The District's town centres are vibrant places containing a range of shops, services and facilities that meet local demand.
- The vast majority of new retail development has been directed to Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley. Some additional retail has been provided within the District's smaller settlements and within residential areas outside of the designated centres which provides convenient, accessible top-up shopping for local communities and reduces the need to travel.
- The leakage of retail expenditure outside of the District has been significantly reduced, with shoppers attracted to the District's town centres

not simply due to the provision of retail, but because of the range of activities and the quality of the environment.

### **Objectives**

- (1) To direct retail development to the District's town centres of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley
- (2) To enhance the centres of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley ensuring they are vital and vibrant places containing a range of uses and activities for all
- (3) To reduce the leakage of retail expenditure out of the District
- (4) To ensure that village and neighbourhood shops provide a service for local communities, particularly for those with limited access to transport.

There are a number of roles for the economic development team within this programme of work including ensuring that the business community are fully consulted and inform the production of the final regeneration plans.

Initial consultation with the business community around the area action plans has shown that businesses are concerned about the implications and consequences for them when actual development works start to take place. The Economic Development Unit will be responsible for liaising and supporting the business community at this time ensuring that any negative affects on existing businesses are mitigated as much as possible.

Recently, the Council has worked with a range of partners to launch Shop at My Local, an initiative designed to encourage residents to use and sustain local town and village centres. It is acknowledged that the successful delivery of this project will help to achieve a more co-ordinated approach to town centre management with key stakeholders and partners.



The Mission Statement for the Shop at My Local partnership (SAML) is:

- The Shop at My Local Partnership will deliver a range of projects and assistance that will encourage residents and businesses to buy locally and that will facilitate local supply chains.
- The campaign will work to ensure that the District's shopping areas meet their full potential by creating thriving community centres that offer a unique and enjoyable shopping and social experience.

The aims are to:

- Deliver initiatives and events that attract people to the District's main shopping areas
- Become a forum to engage local stake-holders in discussion and collaboration
- Shape and influence organisational agendas to develop a shared strategic approach to main shopping area and development
- Facilitate access to funding and resource opportunities to enhance shopping areas
- Help to deliver cleaner, greener and more attractive shopping areas

Although the initiative is embryonic, the partnership has worked to establish two income generators; the sale of advertising on the website and the sale of SAML produce. The partnership would like to move towards achieving social enterprise status and become fully self sufficient. Any surpluses that are generated through SAML will be re-invested to deliver the aims as laid out above for example funding town centre events or street furniture to enhance their attractiveness.

Action	Task	Target date
9.1	Continue to work with partners to deliver Shop at My Local and to ensure that the project generates income to be self-sustaining	<b>2009 onwards</b>
9.2	Assess the Council's existing town centre management role, how it could be improved and better co-ordinated in the future and also looking at resource implications.	<b>May 2011</b>

### Industrial Estates and Office Space (excluding JAAP area)

The Employment Land Study has identified the economic characteristics and opportunities for the District as a whole (excluding the area around London Southend Airport which has been looked at in detail as part of the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan evidence base).

The study notes that the supply of employment land within the District is tight, with little available land. Rochford District is currently a stronger industrial, rather than office location. The Study identified that generally there is a sufficient supply of employment land for industrial use, but that any de-allocation would have to be compensated for. The study also identified a need for an additional 2.2 hectares of office space. Land to the west of Rayleigh is the most suitable strategic location for additional employment land provision and the Employment Land Study recommends that land in this location comes forward for office development.

**Objective 10: Work to ensure that adequate industrial and office space is available in the District in line with the recommendations made in the Employment Land Study**

The Council wants to enable existing businesses to diversify, modernise and grow and so will protect employment land from alternative development that would reduce the quantity and/or quality of jobs in the District. Employment policies will maintain a degree of flexibility in order to ensure that sites can respond and adapt to changes in the economy.

The District contains several industrial estates which are looking tired and in need of investment. Some are also close to housing and have a negative impact on residential amenity. The Council will consider the location and condition of existing industrial estates and will promote the creation of new employment areas in more sustainable locations. The Council will encourage the relocation of existing “bad neighbour” uses to more appropriate locations. The Council will protect appropriately located industrial estates which are well used and sustainable with the potential for continued economic and employment vitality, and support the improvements recommended in the Employment Land Study, where appropriate.

The Economic Development Unit will work with planning colleagues to ensure that the relocation of industrial estates is economically viable and deliverable, to ensure that any intentions in this respect are effectively communicated to the business community so that they can plan for change and also to ensure that those businesses are adequately supported.

The Employment Land Study has identified that there is generally a sufficient supply of employment land for industrial use within the District, but that any de-allocation would have to be compensated for. The study also identified a need for an additional 2.2 hectares of office space.

For detailed information on which industrial estates are being considered for redevelopment or relocation, and with regard to new office space please refer to the Core Strategy. As and when these ambitious plans are being delivered the Economic Development Unit will need to work with businesses residing on the estates to ensure that they are adequately relocated and supported through the change.

Action	Task	Target date
10.1	The Council will work to ensure that adequate industrial and office space is available in the District in line with the recommendations made in the Employment Land Study	Ongoing – up to 2014

**London Southend Airport**

Located within the boundary of Rochford but on land owned by Southend-on-Sea Council, London Southend Airport is a crucial asset for the sub regional economy. The Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) is being prepared by Rochford District Council and Southend Borough Council in response to the challenges and opportunities offered by London Southend Airport together with an airport related employment cluster. The JAAP will provide the basis for coordinating a range of partners with an interest in the airport and its environs and establish planning policy until 2021.

The Airport is identified as a Key Centre for Development and Change within the East of England and is of regional importance. To move beyond its current operational model it is recognised that further investment is needed to increase the airport’s passenger catchment into the London market and make the airport more attractive to potential operators. The proposed Southend Airport railway station will also enhance this link with London and the sub regional market.

### **Objective 11: Continue to work with partners to support the development of London Southend Airport and its environs**

In February 2009, Rochford District Council and Southend Borough Council published the JAAP Preferred Options document which includes Policy ED1, which supports the development of the airport and environs.

The Airport provides significant economic development opportunities for the Rochford District. If expansion goes ahead at the high-growth option, the potential will exist to create a step change in the local economy. There the JAAP objectives are to:

- create sustainable and high value employment and other and uses with the study area;
- maximise the economic benefits of a thriving airport and related activity;
- ensure appropriate improvements in sustainable transport accessibility and facilities;
- ensure a high quality environment for residents whether expressed through noise pollution management or the protection of green space;
- maximise return on public investment through attracting inward investment; and
- efficient use of existing employment land resources.

There is an economic development role now and in the future, after planning policy has been established, to achieve the aims of the JAAP and to maximise the economic benefits of the development. This has already been alluded to in Theme 2 where the Council recognises the importance of the growth of the MRO sector and also the

need to generate a tailored inward investment service for the new Saxon business park. This will include skills development programmes, delivery of sector specific business support, the establishment of an appropriate inward investment service, lobbying for infrastructure needs and the establishment of an eco-enterprise centre. The Council will work closely with partners to make sure that this is planned and delivered effectively ensuring that the Airport reaches its full potential and regional significance

### **Tourism**

In recent years the Council has been exploring the possibility of enhancing the District's economy through the promotion of tourism. The District has been identified as the 'green' part of the Thames Gateway and as having the potential to be the arts and cultural opportunities area for the sub region. We have begun to actively promote the area as a tourism destination, having produced and circulated a District tourism guide.

The District's tourism opportunities are focussed primarily on the themes of heritage, countryside and coastline. The Council believes it will be possible to promote rural tourism in a sustainable manner which respects biodiversity and the character of the Green Belt (The issue of tourism in relation to the Green Belt specifically is discussed in Green Belt chapter of the Core Strategy). Government guidance on this issue contained within *Good Practice Guide on Planning Tourism* (DCLG, 2007) notes the potential for tourism to deliver economic benefits. The guide states that transport and accessibility is inherent to tourism. However, it also notes that public transport is often limited within areas with rural tourism potential and that other factors, such as the need for rural regeneration, need to be given weight.

The Council will continue promote the development of green tourism projects and the conversion of appropriate rural buildings to bed and breakfasts/hotels which do not adversely impact upon character of place or biodiversity. Whilst priority will be given to areas which are accessible by alternative means to the car, schemes that are in locations with limited public transport links will also be supported if such proposals are able to make a positive contribution to rural regeneration or the well-being of rural communities.

The Council recognises that extensive work needs to be done to bring Rochford to its full tourism potential. Historically, Rochford's offer in terms of "attractions", hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation and transport infrastructure has been limited. With the development of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park and the Royal Society for Birds' (RSPB) Wallasea Island Wetlands Project Rochford's tourism offer will become far more significant and tourism will become a growing issue.

### Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park

The need for more informal recreational space in South East Essex has been identified on numerous occasions over a number of years, including in the 1982 and 2001 Structure Plans and the 2005 Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy.

We have sought to help address this need through the establishment of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. Work began on the Country Park in 2002 and the park has been gradually expanded. Our approach to the Country Park is centred on ensuring the right conditions are in place in order for fauna and flora to flourish, and utilising the existing features of the landscape, all with the minimum of human interference. We are carrying out works to improve access to the Country Park and are currently looking at providing car-

parking facilities in a manner that minimises the impact on the landscape. Preparation for this phase is being planned through the Local Development Framework.

### Wallasea Island

The RSPB's proposed Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project has potential for tourism and leisure, as well as ecological, benefits. This project is adjacent to the recently realigned coast of Wallasea Island and involves the RSPB working in partnership with the Environment Agency to turn a vast area of arable land into an area comprising a plethora of wildlife habitats comprising 320 ha of mudflats, 160 ha of salt marsh, 96 ha shallow saline lagoons, 64 ha of brackish grazing marsh and 129 ha of pasture. The project also aims to incorporate improved access into the new landscape which will allow visitors to appreciate the area without adversely affecting wildlife.

At the same time, Essex Marina is located on Wallasea Island and the Council believe there potential to further develop waterfront recreation on the Crouch through the provision of additional marina facilities in this area. Opportunities are somewhat constrained by the lack of accessibility to Wallasea Island, in addition to the need to ensure that any increased levels of human activity are not detrimental to ecological and environmental interests, particularly given that the area is part of the Natura 2000 network.

At present the emerging Core Strategy's preferred option with respect to Wallasea Island is:

The Council will support the RSPB in delivering the Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project with the aim of enhancing the biodiversity value of the area. We will also promote recreational use and additional marina facilities in the area, along with access improvements. Such development will be supported provided there are no adverse impacts on ecological interests.



There is a need to set aside additional resources to put together a longer term strategy to develop the District's tourism potential. This programme of work should look at new and potential tourism developments in the area and look at timelines to see how and when all the relevant projects and developments come together. Only at that stage should the Council look at how it will promote itself as a tourism destination.

### Housing Requirements

The East of England Plan has set a target for 4,600 new homes to be built in Rochford over the period 2001 to 2021. Housing provision figures are determined by the Secretary of State as minimum targets. Rochford must increase its

provision of housing over the rest of the plan period to reach its minimum housing requirements.

Between 2001 and March 2008, a net total of 1,429 dwellings were completed in the District. As in recent years, one and two bedroom properties have constituted the majority of completions. These went some way to address the shortage of this size property that was identified in the Housing needs survey of 2004.

A housing trajectory has been prepared to estimate the number of completions that will take place up to 2013. Based on known sites in the District and the emerging Local Development Framework the following table shows the estimate net completions from 2008 to 2013.

Type of estimated gain	Year					
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total
Units under construction / with extant planning permissions	104	106	0	0	0	210
From sites where the application is currently under construction/where pre-application discussions have taken place/otherwise identified sites	10	0	229	226	41	506
Extensions to residential envelopes proposed in emerging Local Development Framework	0	0	0	125	350	475
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>1191</b>

The table above shows that a net total of 1191 dwellings are expected to be provided in the District between 2007 and 2012. Annualising the District's housing requirement between 2008 and 2021 an average of 250 dwellings will need to be developed each year.

The potential for developing new housing on "brownfield" sites within Rochford is becoming increasingly harder to meet. As almost all developed land is in current use creative responses will have to be adopted to meet Rochford's future housing need.

The Council sets out how it intends to manage future growth and ensure appropriate levels of affordable housing in its Housing Strategy (2008-2011) and through the emerging Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework.

### Infrastructure

At present, issues around investment in infrastructure are being dealt with on a County wide and sub-regional basis. This is because the County faces major challenges in the period to 2021 and beyond, which have been amplified by the economic conditions. As the key driver of economic and housing growth within the East of England, Essex is being asked to deliver 131,000 jobs and 127,000 homes in the period 2001-2021.

Essex has traditionally taken a significant proportion of the economic and housing growth without benefiting from the necessary infrastructure improvements to enable growth to take place in a truly planned and sustainable manner. It is estimated that the cost of delivery of infrastructure across Essex is £7.6 billion, with an identified funding gap of £6.5 billion. Clearly, if Essex is to deliver the levels of growth expected then this gap will need to be closed and far greater levels of infrastructure investment in Essex will need to be made.

The approved East of England Plan places a considerable emphasis upon Essex in terms of meeting national economic and housing growth targets. Within Essex, the Plan proposes the delivery of 127,000 homes and 131,000 jobs in the period 2001-2021. This in itself is a significant challenge particularly in light of the economic downturn.

Geographical location	Homes Target	Jobs Target
Key Centres for Development and Change	2001-2021	2001-2021
Basildon	10,700	11,000
Chelmsford	16,000	20,600
Colchester	17,100	14,200
Harlow	16,000	18,100
Southend	6,500	13,000
Thurrock	18,500	26,000
<b>Other locations</b>		
Braintree	7,700	14,000 (2008-2025 period)
Brentwood	3,500	4,000
Castle Point	4,000	2,000
Epping	3,500	3,960
Maldon	3,400	1,000
Rochford	4,600	3,000
Tendring	8,500	6,100
Uttlesford	8,000	9,050
<b>Essex Totals</b>	<b>127,000</b>	<b>146,010</b>

It is well documented that the housing and economic growth that Essex has delivered in the past 30 years or so has not been matched by sufficient infrastructure investment. The infrastructure needs are significant and wide-ranging, but the greatest need focuses on a range of significant transportation (road, rail and passenger transport) improvements, the delivery of which is critical to the longer term prosperity of the County and its ability to accommodate further growth.

To achieve regeneration success, it is vital that there is appropriate transport infrastructure in the County. Infrastructure alone will not solve the traffic issues, and it is recognised that demand must be managed and sustainable alternatives to car travel promoted. A programme of schemes is included in within the Thames Gateway South Essex Business Plan for transport.

These include:

- South Essex Rapid Transport
- A13/A130 Sadlers Farm Intersection
- A127 and A1159 Route Management Strategy
- M25 Widening junction 26 to 31
- Gardiners lane South Access Improvements A132/A176/A127 Basildon
- C2C line Capacity 12 car platforms
- Roscommon Way regeneration

- Fryerns/Craylands Regeneration Access
- A13 Passenger Transport Corridor
- London Southend Airport Railway Station
- Improved access to London Southend Airport
- Cherry Orchard Way Upgrade

The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership will be responsible for raising the profile of these significant issues and to lobby for the investment needed. Rochford District Council will continue to work with relevant partners to ensure that infrastructure issues are recognised and addressed.

### Monitoring Framework

Attached to this Strategy is an action plan which shows exactly how, when and with what resources the Council intend to achieve the objectives of this Strategy,

The strategy and action plan will be updated annually and the Council will report and show how it has delivered against the commitments made in this document using target dates and performance indicators as a measure of success.

A mid-year report will be written to advise of progress and action delivered by the Council.

## Appendix – Key Projects Details

	Project	Jobs*	Commercial (m <sup>2</sup> )	Other (m <sup>2</sup> )	Start Date	End date	Total Cost	Funding Gap
	<b>London Southend Airport (LSA)Expansion</b>	<b>1,600</b>						
	Rail Station				2009	Q2 2010	TBC	N/A
	Control Tower				2009	Q4 2010	TBC	N/A
Subject to securing planning permission for the runway extension								
	Runway Extension				2010	2011	TBC	N/A
	Eastwoodbury Lane link to Nestuda Way				2010	2011	TBC	TBC
	Upgrade to Cherry Orchard Way				Not yet known	2012	TBC	TBC
	Upgrade of Aviation Way				Not yet known	2012	TBC	TBC
	Park and Ride				Not yet known	2012	TBC	TBC
	<b>LSA additional employment land</b>	<b>6,200</b>	<b>109,000</b>					
	Saxon Business Park	4,950	99,000		Not yet known	2021	TBC	TBC
	Nestuda Way	500	10,000		Not yet known	2021	TBC	TBC



	Project	Jobs*	Commercial (m <sup>2</sup> )	Other (m <sup>2</sup> )	Start Date	End date	Total Cost	Funding Gap
	Aviation Way	750	15,000		Not yet known	2021	TBC	TBC
	<b>Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park</b>							
	Visitor's Centre	TBC					980,000	980,000
	Car Park	N/A					TBC	TBC
	New Access Road	N/A					TBC	TBC
	<b>Wallasea Island</b>	21						
	Main Works	21			2010	2015 -2019	TBC	N/A
	<b>Eco-enterprise centre</b>							
	Feasibility Study				2009	2010	25,000	0
	Full business case				2010	2011	60,000	60,000
	<b>Town Centre Area Action Plans</b>							
	Hockley final option				2008	2012	TBC	N/A
	Rochford final option				2008	2012	TBC	N/A
	Rayleigh final option				2009	2012	TBC	N/A





**Rochford District Council**

Council Offices South Street  
Rochford Essex SS4 1BW

Telephone: 01702 546366

Facsimile: 01702 545737

Website: <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>