

ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides further information about the early stages in the preparation of the Rochford Core Strategy, including initial ideas on the spatial portrait of the District and broad development options.
- 1.2 Members are requested to bring their papers from the meeting on 28 February and the plans of the District circulated at that meeting.

2 SPATIAL PORTRAIT

- 2.1 As explained at the last meeting of the Committee, one of the initial tasks for the Council is to think about a spatial portrait, which provides a focus for the preparation of a spatial vision and objectives.
- 2.2 The Council's Community Strategy, prepared in 2004 (soon to be updated), included a commentary about the District and provided a short, medium and long term vision for the future of the District.
- 2.3 An extract from the Community Strategy is attached as Appendix 1 to this report and it is suggested this may provide a focus for thinking about the spatial portrait and vision to be developed for the Core Strategy. Members will also need to take into account the outcomes for the recent visioning exercise (appended to the 28 February report). In addition, the priorities agreed in the Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA) also provide some areas of long term focus. A summary of the 14 priorities in the LAA is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.4 It is suggested that this information be used to inform the preparation of the spatial portrait and Members' views are sought on additional issues or matters that need to be considered.

3 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

- 3.1 A key part of the first stage informal community consultation on the Core Strategy will be the identification of development options. These are intended to provide a broad vision for the way the District will develop over the next 15/20 years, but avoiding a site specific debate about the detailed locations for housing, employment land, etc.
- 3.2 Development options will, of course, link closely with the vision, but it is possible to suggest some of the options that might be considered. It is important to bear in mind that a discussion of options at this stage should not revolve around their credibility per se, though perhaps it would be appropriate to exclude any really extreme suggestions. That having been said, it is for the

informal consultation stage to tease out the practicality and realism of options after which the Council can consider its preferred option. Having drawn out some possible options, the Council is required to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of them, and this process will play a key role in identifying the appropriateness of those options and ultimately the identification of the preferred option.

- 3.3 Options that Members might wish to consider are outlined briefly below.

Option 1 – all development should be concentrated within the existing urban areas.

Advantages – minimises the release of Green Belt land.

Disadvantages – will increase urban cramming and have significant impacts on residential amenity.

Option 2 – all development to be located in a new settlement.

Advantages – greater potential to ensure the provision of appropriate infrastructure.

Disadvantages – significant impact on the District and will not resolve any existing infrastructure issues.

Option 3 – new development to be provided as urban extensions to the existing settlements of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley.

Advantages – possible to consider infrastructure improvements for each of the main settlements and to ensure affordable housing provision contributes to identified need.

Disadvantages – smaller releases may be less sustainable and yield fewer infrastructure benefits.

- 3.4 The list of options is not intended to be definitive, but to provide a focus for discussion. In reality, following consultation, the favoured spatial option is likely to be more complicated and to take account of the arguments for releasing land for development and the implications of continuing intensification of the existing built up areas.

- 3.5 As a result, there are a number of alternative perspectives that might be applied to the options. For example, it might be considered that in making provision for housing and employment land allocations, whatever spatial option is selected, those allocations should provide for the 'full' allocation, without seeking to include an allowance for windfall sites. This would mean that town cramming might be better controlled on the basis that sufficient land had been allocated to fulfil the allocations. On the downside though, it may be that a greater area of land would need to be allocated.

4 INFORMAL CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Whilst the information consultation stage for the Core Strategy is not programmed to take place until the autumn, Members might like to consider an early consultation with the Parish/Town Councils.
- 4.2 There is no doubt that the views of the Parish/Town Councils will be an important contributor to the debate on development options and there would be much benefit to be gained from holding a Parish Forum or Summit to obtain views and ideas.
- 4.3 The arrangements for such a consultation would, of course, need to be carefully considered, given that direct questions about development will inevitably lead to negative answers. However, the allocations to the District are not for debate, but the spatial options for how this will be accommodated are. Therefore, if a consultation forum concentrated on a discussion of spatial options, much useful information is likely to be forthcoming to assist the debate.

5 DOCTORS AND DENTISTS

- 5.1 At the last meeting of the Committee, Members requested details of all the doctors and dentists surgeries, and schools in the District. A list of doctors and dentists is provided in Appendix 3 attached to this report. The information is also being transferred to a map, together with details of all the schools in the District.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

The timetable for the preparation of the Core Strategy is set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) and it is essential that work progresses on target.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None arising directly from the report, but crime and disorder issues will be included in the Core Strategy and other development plan documents.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Core Strategy will set out a spatial vision for the District over the next 15-20 years and environmental issues ranging from the protection of the District's key assets to the construction of environmentally friendly houses will be a central theme of the document.

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is little doubt that the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) to form the LDF will be more demanding of time and finance. At

present, the costs of preparation can be met from the Planning Delivery Grant, but this situation will need to be kept closely under review.

10 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Parish Councils will be expected to play an important part during consultation and community engagement in the preparation of DPDs.

11 RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To consider the spatial portrait of the District.
- (2) To agree the broad development options to be part of the informal community consultation (Regulation 25).
- (3) To agree the arrangements for a Parish Forum or Summit to discuss the Core Strategy.

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Background Papers:-

None.

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Appendix 1

Extract from Rochford Community Strategy 2004

Introduction

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 Districts and Southend-on-Sea Borough. 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.

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.

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.

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

Long-term 20 Years

Rochford District's position within south east Essex offers many opportunities for the future. Rochford District contains examples of the traditional Essex heritage and offers recreational possibilities within the countryside and along the coastline. These strengths have been identified by the Thames Gateway Partnership and the District can look forward to investment in their enhancement.

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.

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.

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.

Medium term - 10 Years

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The District is well located to benefit from any improved transport systems that are developed within South Essex. The London to Southend Transport Study (LOTS) has identified a number of transport infrastructure issues which the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership will be lobbying the Government to address.

Sustainable transportation options will be progressed and these should provide real alternatives for local residents, thus reducing traffic congestion.

Awareness and understanding of the importance of managing, in a more sustainable way, the use of energy, water and waste will be promoted through the appropriate agencies and better use of our naturally occurring resources such as wind, wave and sun will be further progressed.

High quality information services, based on the best available technology, will be used to improve the communication between agencies, supporting stronger working partnerships, improved services and maximising benefits to the whole community. It is probable that residents will be able to access a comprehensive range of information and other services easily, through digital television or other methods.

Rural settlements will feel less isolated. Their residents will be able to access services through the new technology on offer and alternative methods to provide services to these communities will have been developed.

Short term – 5 years

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.

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 local heritage sites, and a new sports centre at the former Park

School site will also increase opportunities for leisure and free time activities, improving the quality of life for many residents.

The Extended Schools Programme will increase the range of services available to young people in their schools, improving their learning opportunities. The development of citizenship education programmes will help pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to live confident, healthy, independent lives as individuals, parents, workers and members of society.

Addressing the youth agenda is one of the key challenges for the partners of the Local Strategic Partnership. The needs of other groups e.g. the growing number of elderly residents, will also be addressed. The Learning and Skills Council, Essex has commissioned a Strategic Area Review of Southend, Castle Point and Rochford which is due to be published in the summer of 2004. This should identify barriers to learning which will be important when planning the learning opportunities available for adults across the District. Colleges, Adult Community Learning Essex and training organisations will be working together so that they offer adults a wide range of learning opportunities, including part time, full time, day, evening, and weekend learning in a range of locations across the District.

The local voluntary and community sector will develop a wider range of services for people with disabilities, including those with mental health problems. Training and development programmes for the sector will need to support the growth of the number of services available and the development of the groups providing the services. Access to the Star Fund, currently being established and improved information about funding opportunities will have increased the funding opportunities for groups within the District.

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.

Appendix 2

Essex Local Area Agreement – Priorities

1. Reduce obesity.
2. Reduce the number of people who smoke in Essex.
3. Ensure development is designed to promote healthier living in the built environment.
4. Reduce the need for older people to go into hospital or residential care.
5. Generate inward investment and stimulate business development and innovation.
6. Increase the number of young people who take a job or stay on in education or training.
7. Raise educational attainment.
8. Keep vulnerable children and young people safe.
9. Save lives at risk from accidents from roads and fire.
10. Reduce crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and to reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime.
11. Build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour.
12. Actively manage our environment.
13. Empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services.
14. Improve the quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and ensure service providers are more responsible to neighbourhood needs and improve their delivery.

Appendix 3

DATA FROM THE CASTLE POINT & ROCHFORD PRIMARY CARE TRUST

DATA COLLECTED ON 10th MARCH 2006

DOCTORS IN THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

- 49 Rawreth Lane, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9QD
- 1 Leecon Way, Ashingdon Gardens, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1TU (with a branch surgery at 2 Hawkwell Park Drive, Hawkwell, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4HB)
- 57 Lascelles Gardens, Ashingdon, Rochford, Essex, SS4 3BW (with branch surgeries at 1 Village Green, Canewdon, Rochford, Essex, SS4 3QF & The Dome Caravan Park, Lower Road, Hullbridge, Hockley, Essex, SS5 5LU).
- 274 High Street, Great Wakering, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS3 0HX
- 55 Southend Road, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4PZ (with a branch surgery at Burley House, 15-17 High Street, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7EW).
- 57 Eastwood Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7JF
- 175 Ferry Road, Hullbridge, Hockley, Essex, SS5 6JH
- 83 London Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9HR
- Greensward Lane, Hockley, Essex, SS5 5HQ
- Southwell House, Back Lane, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1AY

Total of 10 surgeries (plus 4 branch surgeries)

DENTISTS IN THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

(Note - none are accepting new fee paying adult patients & only two are accepting children, these are indicated with an asterisk)

- 1 White Hart Lane, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4DQ
- Eastwood Copse, Aviation Way, Southend On Sea, Essex, Essex, SS2 6UN
- 35a High Street, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7EW
- 2 Woodlands Parade, Main Road, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4QU
- 369 Eastwood Road, Rayleigh, Essex, Essex, SS6 7LJ
- 9 West Street, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1BE
- 52 Spa Road, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4PH*
- 15/17 High Road, Rayleigh, Essex, Essex, SS6 7SA*

Total of 8 surgeries.