

**Rayleigh Area Action Plan Informal Consultation 13 June – 8 August 2013:
Numerical Breakdown of Responses to Questionnaire**

Informal consultation took place on the a draft proposed submission version of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan between 13 June and 8 August 2013. This document sets out the results of this consultation.

In addition, copies of the responses from consultation bodies are appended to this document as follows:

Appendix 1 – Rayleigh Town Council response

Appendix 2 – English Heritage letter

Appendix 3 – Essex County Council letter

Appendix 4 – The National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Committee

Q1 What kind of shops would you like to see in Rayleigh town centre?

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
Class A1	28	3	0	0	0	0
Class A2	1	10	4	5	4	0
Class A3-A5	0	6	8	6	1	0
Class B1-B2	0	0	0	0	5	0
Class C3	1	0	3	2	3	10
Class D1-D2	3	3	11	6	3	0
Class Sui Generis	0	1	0	6	5	11
No response	7	17	14	15	19	19

Others?
Heritage Centre
Deli
Sheltered accommodation. Toilets and signage
Shoe shops, speed control, free car parks
No more late night venues
Shoe shop, electrical shops
Butchers, Fishmonger
Butchers, Pharmacy, Ladies / Gents outfitters
Short stay parking, heritage shops in Bellingham Lane area
Mix of shops not all cafes and hairdressers as now

Q2 Where do you think the core High Street area (or primary shopping frontage) of Rayleigh should be located?

	Start			End
Berry Arcade	28		Crown Hill	3
NatWest Bank	2		Eastwood Road	8
Town Clock	6		Library	14
Taxi rank	2		Post Office	12
<i>No response</i>	2			3

Q3 Where do you think the periphery High street area (or secondary shopping frontage) of Rayleigh should be located?

	Start			End
Holy Trinity Church	14		Crown Hill	3
Berry Arcade	11		Post Office	5
Church Street	3		Eastwood Road	7
Windmill	8		Rayleigh Clinic	21
<i>No response</i>	4			4

Q4 Are you happy with the existing layout / condition of the High Street?

Yes	19
No	20
<i>No response</i>	1

Q5 Would you like to see the following improvements on the High Street (Figure 9 in the document provides an artist's impression of the potential for environmental improvements to the High Street area outside the Library)?

	Yes	No	No response
Widened pavements	17	3	0
Rationalised taxi rank	14	4	2
Bus stops retained	18	2	0
Traffic management regime unchanged	14	6	0
Improved pedestrian crossings	10	10	0

Q6 Do you agree with the different character areas identified in the Rayleigh Area Action Plan (please refer to figure 11 in the document)?

	Yes	No	No response
Central High Street	32	3	5
High Street North / Bellingham Lane	27	5	8
High Street South / Eastwood Road	25	6	9
Websters Way	27	6	7

Q7 Do you think there should not be more than two immediately adjacent non A1 (non retail) uses of the same kind on the High Street?

Yes	31
No	7
No response	2

Rayleigh Town Council Response

Rayleigh Draft Area Action Plan (2013)

Purpose of this document

This latest document entitled Rayleigh Draft Area Action Plan (issued May 2013), follows on from the original documents that have already been viewed and reported on. These were entitled; Rayleigh Town Centre Issues and Options and Draft Appraisal of Rayleigh Area Action Plan Options.

As the Rayleigh Area Action Plan (RAAP) is a topic many Councillors have expressed views on at previous meetings, it was agreed that Cllr J Burton, Cllr E Dray and Cllr J Lawmon would review the updated document and report our initial thoughts, comments and views to the remaining Town Council members.

The latest report is shorter, and primarily focuses on specific issues that were mentioned in the original Appraisal document. This report looks at the following:

1. Introduction
2. Rayleigh in Context
3. A Framework for a Better Rayleigh
4. Proposals, Plans, Shopping Frontages and sites
5. Rayleigh Character Areas
6. Delivering a Better Rayleigh

General Observations & Comments

In line with other reports of a similar nature, many times throughout this latest report, it refers to Rayleigh as being the Primary/largest shopping destination in Rochford District and the principal centre for the same area.

There are sections in the report that specifically make reference to the town's historical evolution, conservation area status, historical buildings and 'market town' tradition and feel. These are also mentioned at other times during the report and it is pleasing to see that these important factors have been taken into account and form an important part of the RAAP.

There are a lot of current pictures of the town in this report. In addition, there are several maps showing primary and secondary shopping areas, traffic flows, current building locations and improved town centre layouts. There is also an interesting computer generated image of what part of the High Street could look like (looking towards the main High Street from the Police Station).

Interestingly whilst there are sub-sections of the report that specifically talk about 'working with our community' and 'working with our partners', there is no mention of Rayleigh Town Council anywhere in this report.

Appendix 1

Introduction

This section explains the purpose of the latest document.

It briefly explains the reasons behind the RAAP and how it works in conjunction with the Core Strategy.

It talks about what has already been done, discussed and proposed, and also mentions some of the feedback that was received following the initial and previous stages.

It talks about the 'Public Exhibition' that was held between 15th and 29th January and reports on feedback received from 44 completed questionnaires. Notable feedback was the resistance to a retail-led development of Websters Way car park and the construction of a multi-storey car park. We have since found out that this proposal has been shelved. It also reports that any large –scale development should be for leisure use such as a cinema, swimming pool etc.

It also mentioned how RDC is working with 'our partners' who include Essex County Council as their main partner.

Rayleigh in Context

This section starts by describing the 'strategic location and local setting' of Rayleigh as well as talking about the historical and conservational aspect of the town.

It refers to the original 'Issues and Options' document and basically gives a brief overview of the issues affecting the town and the options that could be implemented to address them.

It does also refer here to various appraisals/studies which have been conducted:

- **Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan (2007)**
- **Retail & Leisure Study (2008)**
- **Employment Land Study (2008)**

Whilst I am sure these were/are interesting and relevant 'reports', as these are now 5-6 years old, the content may not be so relevant to Rayleigh in 2013/14 and perhaps RDC should consider this with a view to updating them?

The sustainability Appraisal (SA) that was carried out in 2012 also makes a couple of interesting observations. Although brief, one point the SA found was "that (the) option which sought the full or partial pedestrianisation of the High Street would only shift current transport issues elsewhere within the AAP area".

A Framework for a Better Rayleigh

This section basically talks about how Rayleigh is already a successful town, more specifically; offering good shopping facilities, excellent public realms, historical assets & local character, high quality natural environment, good accessibility etc.

It sets out 'it's' vision for Rayleigh which is: **"Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as the District's main centre. By 2026, the town centre's retail and leisure offer will be improved through the provision of additional retail floorspace, as well as accommodation for complementary uses, such as leisure facilities, offices and homes. Further environmental enhancements will create a high**

Appendix 1

quality public realm, encourage investment and ensure that the town centre is highly accessible by foot, public transport and private motor vehicle. All new development will help to enhance the town centre's historic setting and respect it's existing character, including that of nearby suburban, low-density neighbourhoods.

This section specifically mentions the provision of new accommodation which should be suitable for both large national retailers & small independent shops & a greater range of leisure facilities to increase Rayleigh's vitality.

It also discusses:

- Improvements being made to the route into town from the railway station
- Creating better connections between historic assets
- Delivering public realm improvements (on a small scale)

Interestingly this section also mentions that the current economic climate is more challenging than at the beginning of the RAAP process, and that land that was previously believed to be available for re-development no longer is. It is regretted that there is no longer the potential for a new healthcare centre to be sited in Rayleigh.

It discusses reducing the overall size of the taxi rank, replacing formal crossings with greater number of informal crossing points, footway repaving, landscaping and lighting enhancements, extending the High Street Improvement scheme in all directions including Eastwood Road & Websters Way, enhancement of pedestrian and cycle links between the town centre and other locations such as Castle Road car park, Rayleigh Station and Websters Way. The total estimated cost is shown as being between £3,350,000 and £4,450,000

Proposals, Plans, Shopping Frontages and Sites

Retail Development – RDC will support development proposals that retain or strengthen Rayleigh's position in the local retail hierarchy. New retail-led development will be permitted generally.

Proposals for A1 retail uses will be acceptable. Proposals for change of use for non-retail (non-A1) will be permitted provided it meets with guidelines set out regarding this. RDC will generally seek to retain 75% of Rayleigh's primary shopping frontage and 50% of its secondary shopping frontage in retail (A1) use.

It highlights the need for retail units to be supported by non-retail units such as cafes, pubs, offices, & banks.

Rayleigh Character Areas

Historic character of the town to be protected and enhanced where possible.

For the purpose of the RAAP – 4 character areas have been identified. These are as follows:

- **Area A – Central High Street**
- **Area B – High Street North & Bellingham Lane**
- **Area C – High Street South & Eastwood Road**

Appendix 1

- **Area D – Websters Way**

The report looks at each area separately and lists approx. 4 or 5 points on each area. Brief details are as follows:

Area A – Central High Street

- A1 Retail use on ground floor encouraged, supported and desired
- Prevailing buildings heights of 3 storeys
- New public space at the centre of High Street & reduction in size of taxi rank
- Strengthening pedestrian links within the RAAP area

Area B – High Street North & Bellingham Lane

- Development that protects and enhances historic townscape
- Prevailing building heights of 2-3 storeys with taller prominent landmark buildings
- Shopping frontages a mix of; A1 Retail, leisure, cultural, evening & night time economy
- Development of building backs (infill sites)
- Development & improvements in Bellingham Lane area inc. front of Mill Arts & Events Centre

Area C – High Street South & Eastwood Road

- Development more suited to accommodating larger floor-plates
- Shopping Frontages a mix of A1 Retail, leisure & community facilities
- Area considered most appropriate location for additional convenience retail floorspace
- Strengthening of pedestrian links between Eastwood Road & Castle Road car park
- Development should NOT result in loss of overall public parking in this area

Area D – Websters Way

- Development of building backs (infill sites) that would not impact on operation of units fronting the High Street
- Opportunities to make better use of & deliver environmental improvements to lanes between Websters Way and High Street i.e. the lane by the side of The Spread Eagle (pop-up retail stalls & events)
- Strengthening of pedestrian links between Websters Way & High Street & KGV Playing Fields
- Development should NOT result in loss of overall public parking in this area

Delivering a Better Rayleigh

This section closes the report. It talks about how RDC will continue to work closely with partners, landowners and other stakeholders to realise the successful implementation of the policies of the RAAP.

It specifically mentions working with ECC and the financial viability that has been considered.

Importantly, it talks about Community Infrastructure – developers contributing towards off-site strategic infrastructure i.e. highways & public transport improvements.

Appendix 1

RDC will monitor legislation & local policy and will produce further monitoring reports.

It concludes with a table on implementation, delivery & monitoring and gives brief details about the potential risks involved, risk mitigation and monitoring of each RAAP Policy

Summary

Most of what is contained in this report has been mentioned in previous reports. There is nothing 'new' in this report.

Most of the potential improvements, developments and changes that are proposed or are considerations, are reasonable and support in favour of these should and will be carefully considered by Rayleigh Town Council at the appropriate time.

Whilst the Town Council recognises that changes are needed within the Town Centre area, one of the most important factors when considering future developments, should be whether the existing Historic features alongside the 'Market Town' look and feel will be retained and/or enhanced and it is pleasing to see that reference to these factors is made several times in the report.

Several possible changes will divide opinion, namely; reduction in size of taxi-rank, full or part pedestrianisation of the High Street & Infill Sites and RTC hope that RDC will actively seek the opinions of Rayleigh residents & RTC before finalising plans. Both RTC and RDC should be prepared for negative feedback.

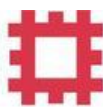
Of course, RTC supports the retention of A1 Retail use within the High Street & surrounding areas, however, the creation of additional A1 Retail space, should be carefully considered in order to prevent a number of new or existing units being left un-occupied as there are already several un-occupied units currently.

I think it is the overall opinion of RTC that aesthetic improvements to the area including, additional tree planting, new paving, new and improved street furniture, cladding to existing building etc. would be welcome and generally supported. As would practical improvements such as new or improved bus stops, street crossings and signage.

RTC are keen to retain and expand the current weekly market and would generally support improvements that would encourage this.

RTC are very pleased to see plans for a multi-storey car park and large retail unit in Websters Way, have essentially been scrapped, which we believe is the right decision and one that the residents of Rayleigh will also support.

THE END



ENGLISH HERITAGE

EAST OF ENGLAND

Velda Wong
Planning Department
Rochford District Council
Council Offices
South Street
Essex
SS4 1BW

Direct Dial: 01223 582746
Direct Fax: 01223 582701

Our Ref: HD/P 5218
Your Ref: RayAAP2013

15 August 2013

Dear Ms Wong

Rochford Local Development Plan: Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP)

Thank you for your letter dated 13 June 2013 consulting English Heritage on above document, and for the opportunity to discuss the plan with you on 6 August 2013.

The Draft AAP for Rayleigh proposes a single Policy identifying 5 key elements.

1. A consolidated and strengthened primary retail core along High Street

English Heritage has no objection to this, but in light of the changing patterns of retail and the growth of internet shopping, English Heritage considers it may be prudent for the District Council to update the 2008 retail study to ensure it remains valid.

2. Opportunities for new and intensified retail and other mixed-use development as sites become available

It might be more helpful to identify specific sites where redevelopment could provide additional townscape enhancements as well as intensified retail and other mixed use opportunities. Such sites might include buildings identified as having a negative impact on the conservation area and those that close the vista looking southwest along the High Street.

3. The promotion of appropriate proportions and concentrations of uses other than A1 including A2-5, leisure, cultural and community uses, particularly in

locations outside the primary retail core, including Bellingham Lane and Eastwood Road

Bellingham Lane is an important street within the conservation area that also lies within the AAP. Currently the buildings fronting the east side of Bellingham Lane present a negative appearance, with a pronounced lack of active frontages. Existing and new retail users should be encouraged to explore options for double fronting their units (so that they open onto both the High Street and Bellingham Road. Towards the north end of Bellingham Road there is a small alley of shop units linking through to the High Street. There is a significant opportunity to enhance the Bellingham Lane entry into this alley.

4. New and improved routes within the AAP area and linking the centre with the railway station and the surrounding area.

As well as improved linkage to the railway station, opportunities for improved connectivity could be explored to link through from Bellingham Lane to the High Street from the small green outside the theatre, and to better link the Websters Way car park with the High Street. The latter might include enhancing the existing pedestrian alley with improved active frontages facing in onto the alley and enhanced public realm at the Websters Way end.

5. New and improved public realm and environmental improvements throughout the centre as identified on the spatial framework

From a visit to the town it is clear that there is great potential for enhancements arising out of improvements to the public realm. We note the suggested improvements listed in Table 1, but suggest that a starting point might be to undertake a street clutter audit, to see what early, easy wins might be obtained through the rationalisation of existing signs, poles, bollards and fencing. We welcome the suggested enhancement of the central High Street area; the need for such a large taxi rank in this location must be questioned. In addition to the public realm enhancements identified in Table 1 the town would also benefit from further improvements where the pavements have been widened at the north end of the High Street to the south side of the church, and through further enhancing the green space between the theatre and Bellingham Lane (possibly through creating a pedestrian priority raised table on Bellingham Lane at this point). The Town appears to be relatively well provided with surface car parks and there may be scope to reduce the parking provision in the car park adjacent to the windmill, so as to provide an improved public realm that would enhance the setting of the windmill. Further opportunities exist to enhance the public realm such as outside the Job Centre, while at the northern end of the High Street consideration might be given to removing the on street parking immediately outside the end of the shopping alley that leads through to Bellingham Lane, so as to locally widen the pavement at this point. Once all the opportunities for enhancement of the public realm have been considered, it would be helpful to prioritise the work to ensure it does not remain an aspirational wish list, but that at least parts of the plan are delivered within the medium term.

In addition to the above points, the Management Plan incorporated within the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal identifies other issues that need to be addressed and consideration should be given as to how these might be incorporated within the AAP. For instance, the management plan highlights the issue of poor shop-front design and

Appendix 2

advertisements and consideration might be given to preparing a shop-front design guide which could also include guidance of advertisements and signage within the AAP area.

Rayleigh Conservation Area and Management Plan

The benefit of having a suite of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans to inform the Area Action Plans currently being prepared is evident, and we welcome this. As discussed when we met, there were some minor points arising from our visit that we thought might merit minor changes (at an appropriate time) to the Rayleigh CAA. We realise that this is an adopted document and therefore any amendments may not be suitable at the present time.

In section 11 of the CAA, providing evaluation of individual buildings, we noted as follows:

- At the north end of Bellingham Lane (west side) some Victorian properties are marked on Figure 14 as making a neutral contribution to the conservation area. We felt these should be identified as contributing positively.
- To the west of the church, we note the job centre is marked on Figure 14 as making a neutral contribution to the conservation area. This is a pleasant twentieth century building which, in our view, should be identified as making a positive contribution. Enhancement of the paved area in front would be of benefit here.

I hope these comments are useful.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Fletcher
Historic Environment Planning Adviser, East of England

Appendix 3

Spatial Planning Environment, Sustainability and Highways

Essex County Council
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1QH

EssexWorks.

For a better quality of life

Planning Policy Team
Rochford District Council
Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex, SS4 1BW

Your Ref:
Our Ref: RGL/ROC/RayAAPInf0613
Date: 7th August 2013

Dear Sir,

INFORMAL CONSULTATION ON RAYLEIGH ACTION AREA PLAN INFORMAL CONSULTATION, JUNE 2013

Thank you for inviting Essex County Council to comment on this stage of consultation on the Rayleigh Action Area Plan.

The response of Essex County Council is appended. The County Council would particularly wish to have early discussion with the District Council on the transport aspects of the Plan. Key matters for discussion are set out in the appended response but reference should also be made to the County Council's previous response on the Issues and Options document in October 2011.

Yours faithfully,

Roy Lewis
Principal Planner

Please reply to Roy Lewis at the above address

Telephone: 01245 437578

Email: roy.lewis@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council response to: Rayleigh Action Area Plan, Informal Consultation, June 2013

1. Overview

Essex County Council welcomes the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Rayleigh Town Centre. The Plan should enable a clear strategy to emerge that will maintain and enhance the role and status of the town centre in a sustainable manner that contributes positively to the needs of the local community. Further detailed response to the consultation document is set out below. Nevertheless, the County Council would particularly wish to have early discussion with the District Council on the transport aspects of the Plan, before publication of the formal Submission Document.

2. Highways and Transport

The County Council, as Local Highway Authority believes it to be vital that, with the District Council, it develops a clear joint understanding of the highway and transport implications of the Plan. In particular, the Highway Authority would wish to review, with the District Council, the technical feasibility of the highways and transport proposals having regard to their impact on the functioning and safety of the highway network and the cost and deliverability of proposed highway and transportation requirements. The key matters influencing such a review are,

- Traffic Circulation - the proposed traffic circulation changes, including full or partial circulation, as well as the reintroduction of two way traffic in all areas, need to be treated with caution. As referred to in the Sustainability Appraisal, highway configuration changes have the potential to shift traffic elsewhere. A full traffic modelling exercise (for instance, S Paramics) should be undertaken to assess the effect on traffic movements and the feasibility and deliverability of associated works to achieve the proposed traffic circulation changes. Experience of other town centre schemes suggests that the process to test and agree the proposed changes could prove lengthy and be too costly to implement when compared with the benefits of the scheme. The Plan highlights congestion at junctions as a cause for concern. With the above in mind it would most likely be more effective to consider signal upgrades and local junction changes.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that,

- the A129 is a major strategic route and for this reason the Highway Authority would be unlikely to support measures to reduce either traffic flows or capacity on the route. Reference is also made to traffic speeds, however it is unlikely due to the strategic nature of the A129 that any form of vertical deflection would be considered.

Appendix 3

- bus operators should be consulted at the earliest opportunity to avoid conflicts with bus routes and possible removal of affected routes by commercial operators. The aim should be to improve local bus services, including enhanced links to the rail station.
- the proposed increase in the number of informal pedestrian crossings should be treated with caution. For instance, it is unlikely to be effective on the A129 due to the volumes of traffic and the consequent congestion. Improved traffic signal crossings would direct pedestrians and general motor traffic more efficiently and minimise conflicts.
- Taxi Rank Layout - the proposal appears to be for a reduction in the number of taxis as well as consolidating the rank into one area. Whilst there is merit in further examination of this proposal it should be noted that the provision of taxis is regarded as a sustainable form of transport because the greater the number of taxi users then less pressure is placed on the town centre car parks. The potential impact of the proposal should be studied further and linked to any impact that the proposals for the town centre may have on future passenger transport services in general.
- Cycling - the proposed provision of cycle racks and parking facilities is welcomed. However, the cycling element of the plan should be considered further to include enhanced directional signage for routes, to enhance permeability of the town centre, and to consider cycle storage as part of the role of cycle/bus interchanges. In terms of the reference to improving cycle, early liaison the Highways Authority Cycling Officer would assist identification of the most suitable routes, as well as provide an opportunity to capture feedback from the existing local cycle user groups.
- Previous Consultation Response - reference should also be made to the County Council's previous response on the Issues and Options document in October 2011.

3. Historic Environment

Overall, the document well represents the above ground heritage assets of the plan area - including the listed buildings, Rayleigh Mount and the windmill. However, the below ground historic environment assets are not identified. Consequently, the following specific amendments should be made to the Plan to ensure that this element of the historic environment is appropriately represented within the document,

- Page 4, Section 1.5, Paragraph 2: the following sentence should be added, 'The area covered by the Action Area Plan contains the full extent of the medieval town of Rayleigh.'
- Page 16, Section 3.1, Paragraph 4: the following sentence should be added as the second sentence of the paragraph, 'Archaeological deposits relating to the development of the medieval and post medieval town are likely to survive.'
- Page 32, Policy 4: to ensure that archaeological deposits are appropriately considered, add a fifth principle to read, 'Any new proposals must ensure appropriate consideration of below ground archaeological deposits.'

The caption to the photograph on page 26 should be amended to read 'Rayleigh Mount'.

4. Environment Strategy

Appendix 3

The Rayleigh Area Action Plan makes no reference to the importance of all development proposals considering the impacts of climate change. To remedy this omission and to complement the statements within the Core Strategy (Section 8.3, page 77) and the Development Management Document (Section 2.5, page 16), an additional fifth paragraph could be inserted at Page 16, Section 3.1, to read,

‘Building resilience against a changing climate – Rayleigh, despite having good transport networks and a small scale enterprise economy, will, like many other Towns, be vulnerable to unavoidable climate change and extreme weather events in the future. To ensure the resilience of Rayleigh in the long-term development proposals will be required to take account of the expected changes in local climate conditions, throughout the proposed lifetime of the development, by allowing future adaptation or flexibility. In accord with the Core Strategy, all new developments should reduce predicted CO₂ emissions using a combination of building performance improvements, small scale on-site renewable energy and/or efficient supply of heat, cooling and power.’

5. Sustainability Appraisal

It is understood that the Rayleigh Area Action Plan Issues and Options Document was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in February 2013, the findings of which have informed the current informal consultation document. However, it is unclear from Section 2.9 whether this informal consultation document has itself been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. A Sustainability Appraisal should be undertaken on the Submission Document, with a Sustainability Report, which fulfils the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC (‘the SEA Directive’), being published alongside the formal Submission Document.



THE NATIONAL TRUST

RAYLEIGH MOUNT LOCAL COMMITTEE

7, Lonsdowne Drive,
Rayleigh,
Essex,
SS6 9AL.

28th June, 2013.

Velda Wong,
Planner,
Rochford D.C.,
Council Offices,
Rochford, SS4 1BW.

Dear Madam,

Rayleigh Draft Area Action Plan

Thank you for your letter of
13th June giving details of consultation events
regarding the above document.

Please note the following comments
with regard to this document:

Policy 1, item 4

Figure 5 (page 17) indicates a new/improved route
along Francis Walk and into Rayleigh Mount. It
has already been pointed out in a previous
consultation exercise that the locked gate at
the end of Francis Walk is not currently an
access point for the general public into Rayleigh
Mount, and is available only to key holders living
in the bungalows and flats in Francis Walk and the

Castle Bank flats in Crown Hill, and that the National Trust would not be in favour of this arrangement changing. It is therefore disappointing to note that this route still appears in the current document.

It should be noted that the National Trust will not permit this entrance point to Rayleigh Mount to become available for use by the general public, and that, therefore, this proposed route is unviable, and should be deleted from the Rayleigh Area Action Plan.

Figure 6 (page 19) indicates an improved visitor route between Bellingham Lane and Castle Drive, via Rayleigh Mount. There are some limitations regarding this route which need to be considered:

① Rayleigh Mount has set opening hours, and outside of these times the pathways on the property are not available for use by the general public. In addition, the Mount may be closed at other times. For instance, it will be closed during periods of icy or snowy weather for reasons of public safety. It will also be closed during periods of very strong winds,

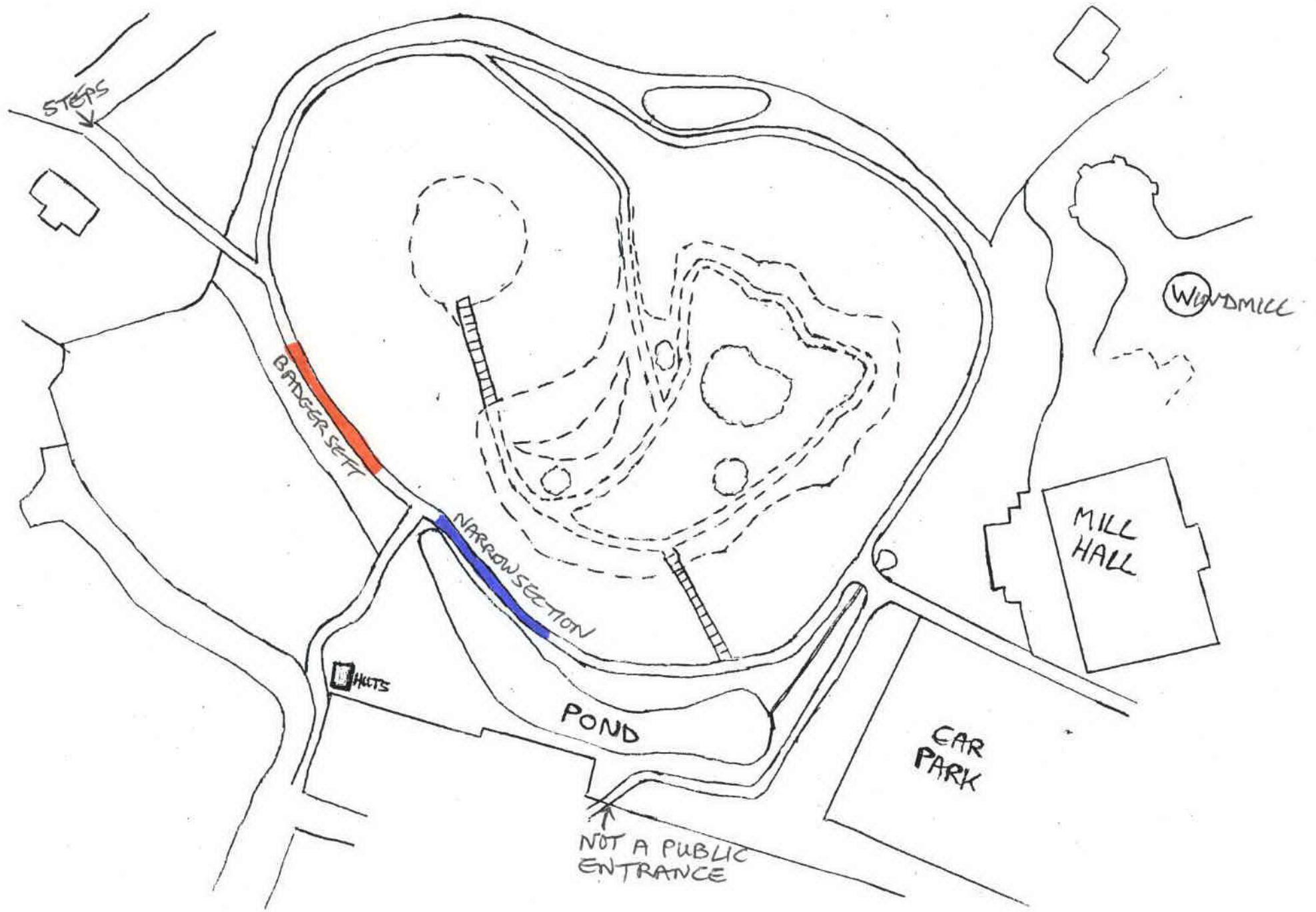
again for reasons of public safety as there is a danger of falling branches from trees on the property. The Mount may also be closed for some events, e.g. Shakespeare play performances, when a charge is made at the gate. Thus, this route is not going to be available to the public at all times.

② There are steps at the Castle Drive entrance to the Mount, making it unsuitable for wheelchairs or prams (and extremely awkward for pushchairs). It is difficult to see how the steps could be eliminated, as there is a private driveway to a house immediately in front of them so they could not be extended outwards into a slope. The path beyond them is already steep, and regrading this to create a slope in place of the steps would result in an excessive gradient. It would also compromise the fences of the private houses on either side of the alleyway. There is a question mark over the ownership of this alleyway.

③ The pathways on the Mount can become extremely muddy and slippery in wet

weather, particularly along the section marked red on the attached maplet, where there is a large badger sett with multiple holes on the bank right next to the pathway, resulting in spoil from the holes frequently being deposited on the path. Also, because, in places, there are steep slopes on either side of the pathway, there is rain run-off onto the path with nowhere for the water to go. This can result in temporary puddling.

④ One section of the pathway (marked blue on the maplet) beside the moat pond, is also very narrow (being no more than a metre across at its narrowest point - not wide enough for two people to pass each other comfortably). It is difficult to see how this could be improved, because the bank rises steeply on one side of the path and falls away sharply down to the pond on the other side. Rayleigh Mount is a Scheduled Ancient Monument site, so any regrading of the land profile would require consent from English Heritage. There is only very limited access for small vehicles into the Mount, so



bringing materials onto the site is very difficult.

⑤ The cost of maintaining the Mount is entirely the responsibility of the Mount Committee, without any contribution from the National Trust centrally, and the committee's funds are meagre. Greater use of the pathway would increase wear and tear on the property, but would not result in any additional money to deal with the resulting problems.

Policy 4, item 4

Improved pedestrian signage at the railway station indicating the route to Rayleigh Mount would be welcomed. Regarding signage in the High Street, there is currently a sign reading "Rayleigh Mount and Castle" before the turnoff into Bellingham Lane. This is rather misleading for visitors as, of course, there is no longer a castle on the Mount. It would be better if this sign could be replaced by one reading "Rayleigh Mount and Windmill", which would highlight both of the Heritage attractions in Bellingham Lane. Rayleigh Mount is also

mentioned on the street name plate for Bellingham Lane at its junction with the High Street, but this name plate is in a very dilapidated condition, and is almost unreadable at present. It should either be repainted or replaced (again, replacement might allow the opportunity for the windmill to be included on it, as well as the Mount).

Policy 6, item 6 & item 5

As the pedestrian walks up Bellingham Lane from the High Street and reaches the corner of Homeregal House, the entrance to Rayleigh Mount becomes visible, but the windmill does not, as the trees on the open space outside the Mill Arts and Events Centre block the view towards it. A clear view to the windmill from this point would help visitors locate it.

Unfortunately, the document does not give sufficient detail about how exactly Rayleigh Mount may be affected (in particular, what improvements are envisaged for the route through the Mount) for the Mount Committee to give a full response to this consultation. For this reason,

7.

it would be most helpful to have a meeting with either yourself, or a suitable alternative member of the planning staff, so that more information could be obtained. If this is possible, please contact the chairman of the committee, Mike Stone (phone 01268 775328) to enable arrangements to be made.

Yours sincerely,
S. A. Skinner

Honorary Warden,
Rayleigh Mount.