

## **ROCHFORD ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISATION PROJECT**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides details of a recent study to analyse the historic environment within the District, which will inform the preparation of Development Plan documents, particularly the Rochford Core Strategy, currently being prepared.
- 1.2 A copy of the document has been placed in the Members' Library.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In 2004, English Heritage commissioned consultants to prepare a report on the historic environment of Thames Gateway. The Rochford project builds on the English Heritage work and provides a more detailed assessment of the historic environment of the District.
- 2.2 One of the key aspects of the new planning system is the requirement to ensure that policies and proposals are developed from a sound, comprehensive evidence base. Inevitably, that means there is a requirement to produce a much broader range of empirical evidence to support the new Development Plan documents. Members are already very familiar with some of the documents that contribute to the evidence base, the urban capacity and housing needs studies, for example. This study will help inform the historic environment and 'conservation' policies to be included in the Rochford Core Strategy and other Development Plan and supplementary planning documents.

### **3 CHARACTERISATION EXPLAINED**

- 3.1 Three separate characterisation exercises have been carried out for each strand of the historic environment:
  - historic landscape character;
  - archaeological character;
  - historic urban character.
- 3.2 These three strands have then been combined into a single Historic Environment Characterisation and the District has been broken down into 14 Historic Environment Character Areas. These are listed in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.3 In order to make the analysis more relevant to planning in Rochford District, the character areas have been broken down into smaller 'character zones'.

These are more capable of being used to consider the impact of development on the historic environment and the need for informed conservation, enhancement and mitigation.

3.4 Seven categories have been used to score the character zones:

- diversity of historic environment assets;
- survival;
- documentation;
- group value association;
- potential;
- sensitivity to change;
- amenity value.

3.5 A total of 41 character zones (see Appendix 2) have been identified across the District. An extract from the analysis is provided in Appendix 3.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 The report is intended to reveal the diversity, character and sensitivity of the historic environment within the District and act as a focus to bring a positive approach to the integration of historic environment objectives into spatial planning.

4.2 This is a valuable technical report and it is proposed that it be added to the growing list of Local Development Framework background documents and made available through the website.

4.3 The study will also be helpful in the delivery of the development control, albeit that at this stage it is not formally linked to policy.

## **5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an important piece of research that seeks to ensure that future decisions taken about development have proper regard to the historic environment of the District.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the Rochford Historic Characterisation Project be published as a technical document to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework.
- (2) That a press release be issued and notification sent to key stakeholders involved in the historic environment.

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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