

ADOPTION OF THE RAYLEIGH CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval to adopt the Rayleigh Centre Area Action Plan (Appendix 1) as a Development Plan Document forming part of the Development Plan for Rochford District.
- 1.2 Once adopted the Rayleigh Centre Area Action Plan (Rayleigh AAP) will form part of the Development Plan alongside other Development Plan Documents, including the Rochford Core Strategy and Allocations Plan. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 applications for planning permission must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Rayleigh AAP is one of three Area Action Plans (AAPs) that the Council has prepared for the District's main centres of Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford. Once adopted, the AAPs will form part of the statutory Development Plan for Rochford District.
- 2.2 The Rayleigh AAP focuses on managing and guiding development within Rayleigh town centre, and the surrounding local area, during the current plan period to 2025.
- 2.3 The Rochford Core Strategy states that the Rayleigh AAP will deliver the following:-
 - Improved accessibility to and within the town centre;
 - A safe and high quality environment for residents and visitors;
 - A predominance of retail uses, including intensification of existing retail uses, which cater for a variety of needs;
 - A range of evening leisure uses; and
 - Promotes the provision of community facilities, including exploration of potential locations for a health care centre and, if appropriate, delivery of such a facility.
- 2.4 Once adopted, the Rayleigh AAP will be used as a framework for the future development of Rayleigh town centre and in the determination of planning applications. It will be subject to the normal processes of monitoring and review.

3 PREPARATION OF THE PLAN

- 3.1 The Rayleigh AAP has been through a number of iterations, and been the subject of community involvement throughout its production.
- 3.2 A Placecheck event was held in July 2009, with members of the Citizens Panel invited. Feedback from this event – alongside relevant aspects of the Council's planning policy evidence base – was used to help generate issues and options. The Issues and Options Document was subsequently prepared which set out site specific options for a number of identified potential opportunity sites within the wider spatial options. Different levels of intervention were identified for the town centre as a whole. This initial iteration of the plan was subject to wider public consultation between 5 November 2009 and 30 January 2010.
- 3.3 There were a number of important issues raised during the consultation as follows:-
- The links between Holy Trinity Church and the town centre need to be considered;
 - Parts of Eastwood Road and the High Street are peripheral areas to the core area;
 - The rear of the shops backing onto Websters Way could be better utilised;
 - The town centre should not be pedestrianised;
 - The recommendations of the Retail and Leisure Study and the Employment Land Study should be endorsed;
 - A multi storey car park is not appropriate for Websters Way;
 - Although it was suggested that the taxi rank should be relocated, it was highlighted that relocation could make this service less accessible for some;
 - The town's heritage should be promoted and any new development should not negatively impact on the character of the town centre; and
 - Some of the options proposed for the development of potential opportunity sites in the town centre are too drastic.
- 3.4 Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners – a specialist planning and regeneration consultancy practice – were commissioned to produce the draft pre submission version of the Plan, having regard to the results of community involvement and appraisal of the Issues and Options Document.

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- 3.5 However, given the time delay since the publication of the Issues and Options Document, a further consultation exercise was carried out between 15 and 29 January 2013, which sought feedback on the proposed planning policy framework for Rayleigh town centre, and possible specific proposals.
- 3.6 The main components of the emerging framework for Rayleigh included:-
- A. High Street retail focus – retaining the town’s retail focus around the High Street;
 - B. Promoting an enhanced evening economy – allowing a greater mix of uses on town centre sites that are not located along the core High Street, including leisure uses, cafés, restaurants and bars;
 - C. Websters Way car park retail-led development opportunity – promoting the re-development of Websters Way car park and any suitable adjacent sites for a mix of uses, including a food store and the re-provision of existing car parking through a decked structure;
 - D. An improved pedestrian experience – creating better links, including between the High Street and the Websters Way car park site, Castle Road car park and rail station, and improving the north-south route along Websters Way; and
 - E. Enhanced public space on the High Street and Bellingham Lane – exploring the potential for fully or partially relocating the existing taxi rank to a Websters Way location to allow for the creation of a new public space on the High Street, and expanding the existing public space on Bellingham Lane.
- 3.7 Responses to this additional stage of consultation and comments received on the Issues and Options Document informed the preparation of a further informal iteration of the plan – the Proposed Submission Document - which was subject to public participation between 13 June and 8 August 2013.
- 3.8 Following concerns expressed during the previous consultation stage that a retail-led re-development of Websters Way car park and construction of a multi storey car park would cause visual harm, have a negative impact on openness and the potential to undermine the vitality of Rayleigh town centre, this proposal was not carried forward to this iteration of the plan.
- 3.9 The results of this consultation were fed into the draft Pre Submission Document, which identified the following factors as being of particular importance:-
- 1) Provision to meet shopping needs locally and within the District;
 - 2) Excellent public realm;
 - 3) Conservation of historic assets and local character;

- 4) A high quality natural environment; and
 - 5) Good accessibility.
- 3.10 These factors underpin the framework and range of policies suggested within the draft Pre Submission Document, which was published for a six-week consultation period between 22 January and 5 March 2014 prior to submission to the Secretary of State. A total of 6226 letters/emails were sent out inviting comments on the draft Pre Submission Document. 25 representations were made at this stage in respect of the soundness of the Plan by 11 different respondents.
- 3.11 However during the preparation of the Consultation Statement to accompany the Pre Submission Document on submission to the Secretary of State, it became apparent that several issues that had been raised by Essex County Council Highways during the earlier Proposed Submission stage had not been carried forward into the subsequent stages of the consultation process to the satisfaction of Essex County Council.
- 3.12 Consequently the Council sought to rectify this issue by working with Essex County Council Highways to evaluate and consider their recommendations prior to the submission of the Rayleigh AAP. The Council then produced a table of modifications to the Plan based on the outcome of discussions with Essex County Council Highways.
- 3.13 The draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013) was then amended in December 2014 to take account of the representations received during the pre submission consultation and further discussions with Essex County Council Highways, as appropriate. The Submission Document (dated December 2014) was submitted, alongside the representations and other evidence, to the Government for consideration as part of the examination of the Plan (see below).

4 ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

- 4.1 Sustainability Appraisal is an important part of the plan making process. It assesses the environmental, economic and social implications of policies and options in the production of plans. The Sustainability Appraisal forms part of the evidence base for the Rayleigh AAP and, alongside other evidence, is issued to aid decision making.
- 4.2 Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken for the 2009 Issues and Options Document iteration of the Rayleigh AAP. This appraisal was published on the Council's website and comments were invited on this draft document between February and April 2013.
- 4.3 Generally the Sustainability Appraisal found that the higher the level of intervention proposed, the more positive the effects are likely to be against the Sustainability Appraisal objectives relating to communities, housing, the

economy and townscape. However, the re-development of unsympathetic buildings, particularly in large blocks, would also add an element of uncertainty. Although higher level intervention has the potential for negative effects on a number of Sustainability Appraisal objectives in the short term during construction, it is considered that suitable mitigation measures are available at the project level to address adverse effects.

- 4.4 The movement of traffic through the town centre is a key sustainability issue. The Sustainability Appraisal found that options which sought the full or partial pedestrianisation of the High Street would only shift current transport issues elsewhere within the AAP area. The option that sought to work within the existing network and provide improvements to pedestrian crossings at roundabouts and improved capacity at junctions was considered to have the potential for the greatest benefits compared to the others, as it will not shift transport issues elsewhere in the area and will not increase the levels of traffic along the High Street.
- 4.5 The comments from this consultation were included within the final Sustainability Appraisal for the Rayleigh AAP draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013), and subsequently updated on submission for the Submission Document (December 2014). Overall the Sustainability Appraisal found that the Plan would help to resolve a number of key sustainability issues in Rayleigh town centre and would also play a role in improving sustainability in the wider Rochford District. Significant positive effects were identified for communities, economy and employment, accessibility, landscape and townscape and cultural heritage.
- 4.6 An addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal was produced that considered the impact of the Schedule of Modifications (see below). The Sustainability Appraisal found that the changes generally had either no impact or a minor positive impact on sustainability objectives.
- 4.7 Sustainability Appraisal of the Rayleigh AAP draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013) is provided as Appendix 2. Sustainability Appraisal of the Schedule of Modifications is provided as Appendix 3.

5 EXAMINATION AND INSPECTOR'S REPORT

- 5.1 Following pre submission consultation, the draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013) was amended and submitted – together with the results of the consultation – on 5 December 2014 to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector.
- 5.2 The Council may only adopt the plan if the Inspector conducting the examination recommends adoption.
- 5.3 In response to the submission of the Rayleigh AAP Submission Document (dated December 2014) the Planning Inspector provided his preliminary observations to the Council. In his preliminary observations the Inspector

asked for clarification regarding some issues and made several suggestions on how the Council should proceed. The Inspector observed that the changes to the Rayleigh AAP draft Pre Submission Document (dated November 2013) suggested by the Council constitute main modifications to the Plan rather than additional modifications. Main modifications are those that are required to satisfy legal or procedural requirements or to make the plan sound.

- 5.4 As such, the Inspector suggested that it would be more appropriate from a procedural point of view for him to carry out the examination based on the original draft Pre Submission Document published in November 2013. This would allow potential representors the chance to comment on the proposed modifications after the hearing, if they are deemed necessary.
- 5.5 An examination hearing session focusing on the Inspector's identified matters and issues for discussion with the draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013) took place on 19 February 2014. Four main issues were identified and discussed during the hearing session, including the rationale for the modifications proposed in the Submission Document (December 2014). Following this hearing session the Inspector provided his interim views on the soundness of the plan.
- 5.6 The Council considered the Inspector's interim views and produced a consolidated list of main modifications to the draft Pre Submission Document (November 2013) called the Schedule of Modifications. The Schedule of Modifications was subject to Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 3) which considered the impact of the proposed modifications on social, environmental and economic objectives. The Schedule of Modifications and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal were consulted on between 27 April and 22 June 2015. The results of this consultation were submitted to the Inspector who considered them before preparing his final report on the soundness of the Plan.
- 5.7 The Planning Inspector has issued his report (Appendix 4) on the soundness of the Rayleigh AAP. This report states that the Rayleigh AAP is sound, subject to the modifications proposed, meaning that following the examination and consideration of all the evidence, the plan has been found to be:-
- Positively prepared (it meets objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements);
 - Justified (the plan is informed by evidence and is the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives);
 - Effective (the plan is deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities); and
 - Consistent with national policy (the plan will enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework).

- 5.8 As such, the Council may adopt the Rayleigh AAP with the proposed modifications.

6 ADOPTION

- 6.1 Once adopted, the Rayleigh AAP will form part of the Development Plan for the District, alongside other Development Plan Documents, including the Core Strategy and Allocations Plan. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 applications for planning permission must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

- 6.2 Any person who is aggrieved by the decision of the Council to adopt the Rayleigh AAP may make an application to the High Court under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 on the grounds that:-

- (a) the document is not within the appropriate power;
- (b) a procedural requirement has not been complied with.

- 6.3 Any application to the High Court must be made no later than six weeks from the date of adoption.

7 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Failure to have an up to date adopted plan in place that addresses Rayleigh town centre may leave the Council in a position whereby it finds it difficult to resist planning applications for development, even if the Council does not consider such proposals appropriate. Government policy – as contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states (para.14):-

“At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking...

“...For decision taking this means...

“...where the Development Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:-

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this [National Planning Policy] Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this [National Planning Policy] Framework indicate development should be restricted.”

- 7.2 Conversely, failure to provide certainty as to what forms of development would be considered acceptable in Rayleigh town centre through adoption of the Rayleigh AAP may discourage future investment in the town.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Rayleigh AAP would impact on the local environment, in particular Rayleigh town centre, as set out within the Plan itself and appraised through the Sustainability Appraisal.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** to adopt the Rayleigh AAP.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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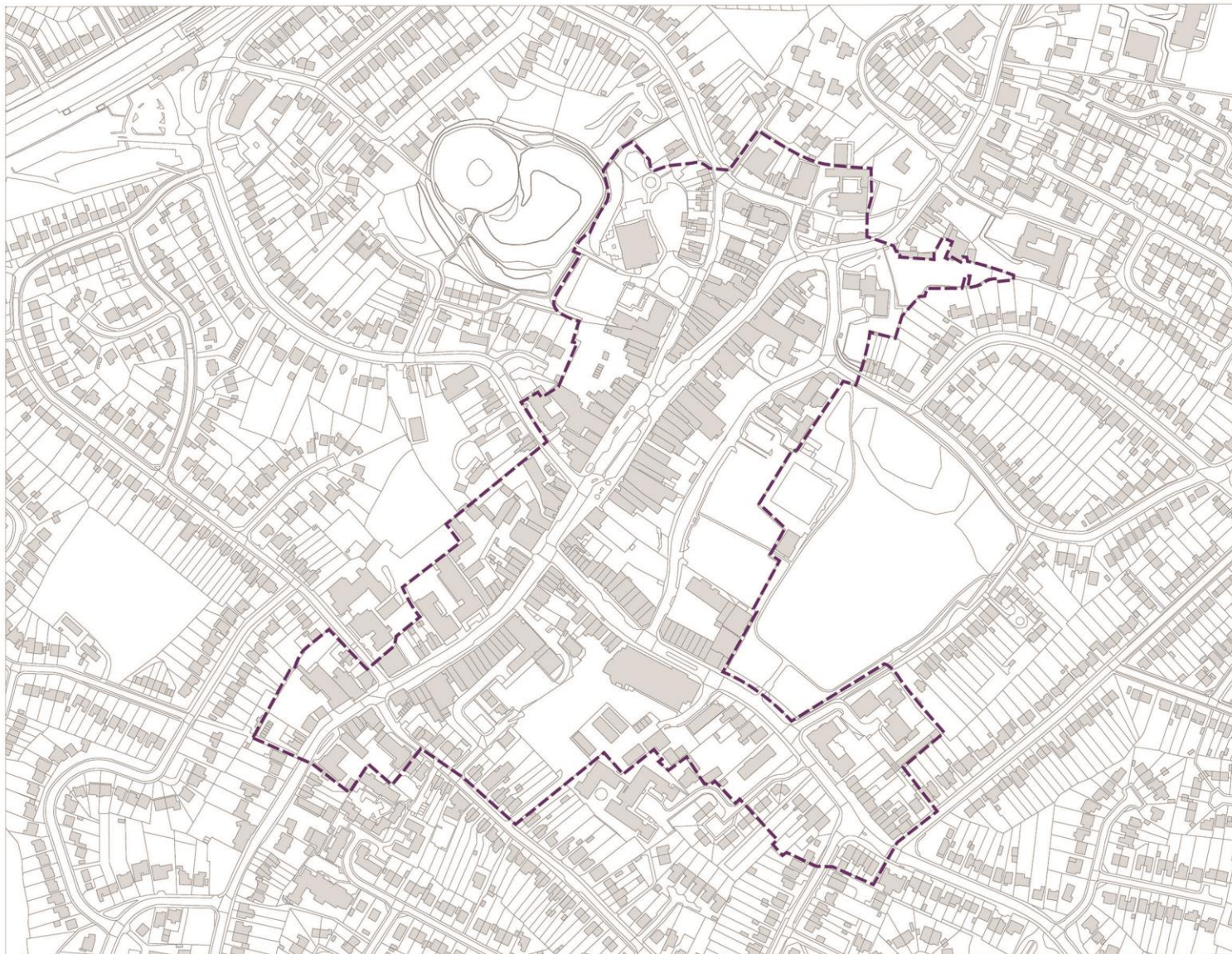
Rayleigh Centre Area Action Plan

Full Council 20 October 2015

Contents

1.	Introduction	6
1.1	The big picture.....	6
1.2	Next steps.....	6
1.3	Working with our community.....	6
1.4	Working with our partners.....	8
1.5	The AAP area	8
2.	Rayleigh in context	10
2.1	Strategic location and local setting	10
2.2	Historical evolution and Conservation Area	10
2.3	Policy context	10
2.4	Retail issues.....	14
2.5	Employment issues	14
2.6	Land ownership context.....	14
2.7	Property market overview	14
2.8	Movement issues	16
2.9	The Sustainability Appraisal	18
3.	A framework for a better Rayleigh.....	21
3.1	What makes for a sustainable Rayleigh?.....	21
3.2	Vision and objectives	21
3.3	Arriving at a framework	23
	Policy 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan framework.....	25

3.4	The movement framework.....	25
4.	Proposals plan, shopping frontages and sites	34
4.1	Rayleigh town centre boundary.....	34
	Policy 2 – Retail development in Rayleigh	34
	Policy 3 – Rayleigh’s shopping frontages.....	34
4.2	Retail development.....	37
5.	Rayleigh’s character areas	40
	Policy 4 – Rayleigh’s character areas.....	40
	Policy 5 – Character area A: Central High Street	42
	Policy 6 – Character area B: High Street north and Bellingham Lane	44
	Policy 7 – Character area C: High Street south and Eastwood Road.....	46
	Policy 8 – Character area D: Websters Way.....	48
6.	Delivering a better Rayleigh.....	50
6.1	Working in partnership	50
6.2	Working with Essex County Council.....	50
6.3	Financial viability.....	50
6.4	Community infrastructure	50
6.5	Monitoring change	50



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Figure 1 – Rayleigh town centre and AAP area

1. Introduction

1.1 The big picture

Rochford District Council is committed to preparing Area Action Plans (AAP) for its three main centres of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. The AAPs will form part of the statutory development plan for Rochford District. This document focuses on guiding the development of Rayleigh town centre, and also considers its immediate surroundings, during the current plan period to 2025.

The Core Strategy recognises the existing successes of Rayleigh town centre, including its role as Rochford District's principal centre and strong retail sector, and high quality, historic environment. Although it is made clear that radical changes to the town centre are not necessary, the Core Strategy does set out the need for additional leisure uses and extra retail floorspace. It is important that the AAP provides a framework for development that will build on Rayleigh town centre's existing strengths and allow for development that will enhance its current offer.

The AAP will, if adopted, form a part of the District's Development Plan. Alongside the adopted Core Strategy and other key planning documents, the AAP will eventually replace the Replacement Local Plan (2006).

1.2 Next steps

Once adopted, the AAP will be used as a framework for the development of Rayleigh and in the determination of planning applications. It will be subject to the normal processes of monitoring and review.

1.3 Working with our community

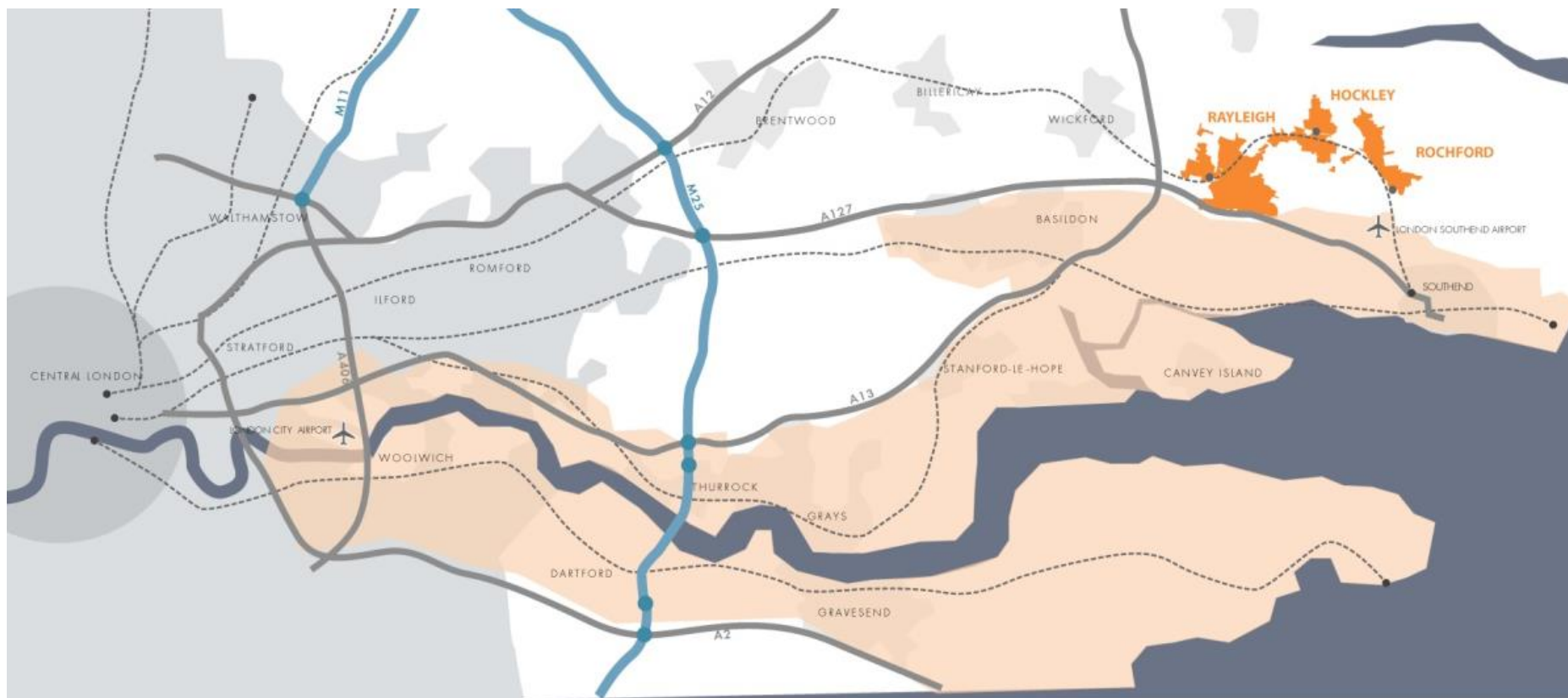
In recent years a series of community engagement and consultation exercises have been undertaken in relation to Rayleigh. These have been in support of the production of the Rayleigh AAP and the Core Strategy for the District. The AAP has been informed through its various stages by the responses received to these exercises, which have included:

- A Placecheck and letter drop, as well as additional meetings with Council Members, undertaken to inform the preparation of the Rayleigh AAP Issues and Options paper.
- Consultations on the proposals set out within the Issues and Options paper.
- A consultation on the District's Core Strategy Submission Document that yielded feedback specifically related to Rayleigh.

A further stage of consultation was held on the planning policy framework for Rayleigh that had emerged following the Issues and Options report. This was a public exhibition, which was held between 15 and 29 January 2013. A total

of 44 response questionnaires were received as a result of the consultation and the key messages were that:

- Most of those that responded agreed that the planning policy framework should seek to strengthen Rayleigh's role as the District's principal town centre, and that retail uses should be focussed on High Street.
- There was resistance to a retail-led redevelopment of Websters Way car park and the construction of a multi-storey car park, which was considered likely to cause visual harm, have a negative impact on openness and cause security problems.
- A number of those that responded suggested that any large-scale development, if it does take place, should be for a leisure use, such as a cinema, swimming pool or another sports facility.



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Figure 2 – Rochford's regional context

- It was highlighted that the Council's recent Retail and Leisure Study demonstrated that there is no need for additional convenience retail in Rayleigh and that any allocation should be for comparison retail only.
- There was support for measures that would encourage and support small, independent shops and more market traders.
- Some of those that responded expressed their concern over the impact that more economic activity in the evening might have on crime rates and the fear of crime.
- Although there was strong support for enhancements that would help to promote the town's strong group of historic assets, there was opposition to Rayleigh Mount being used as a through route between High Street and the rail station.
- There was some support for the reduction in size of the taxi rank on High Street and its potential relocation, although some felt that the taxi rank's current location is appropriate and that it may need to accommodate more taxis in the future.
- There were mixed views over whether High Street should be pedestrianised and if traffic calming should take place or not, though it was generally agreed that traffic flow should be improved if new development does take place.

- Many considered that there was a need to ensure that the town centre would have enough car parking to allow it to compete with other destinations, especially out-of-town shopping centres.
- It was suggested that the planning policy framework should promote bus travel as a way of increasing the number of shoppers whilst avoiding extra pressure on car parks.

1.4 Working with our partners

Rochford District Council has worked closely with its partners to ensure that the strategic and cross-boundary implications of the Rayleigh AAP have been fully explored and that any discussions have been fed into its positive preparation. The Localism Act 2011 sets out a 'duty to co-operate', which requires such a process.

The main partner in relation to the AAP is Essex County Council (ECC), in relation to its role as Highways Authority for Rochford District and much of the wider area. In particular, conversations with ECC officers allowed for the project team to identify new or proposed developments with a significant highways impact.

1.5 The AAP area

The AAP area is the same as the existing town centre. It includes the main section of High Street, Bellingham Lane, Websters Way, and Eastwood Road, as far as Queens Road. It also includes some sections of adjoining streets and the town's largest car park on Websters Way.

Rayleigh is Rochford District's principal centre and the retail offer in the AAP area reflects this status. Most of the ground floor units on High Street between Eastwood Road and Hockley Road are shops; other sections of High Street, in addition to Bellingham Lane and Eastwood Road, accommodate supporting uses, such as cafés, restaurants, pubs, other leisure uses and professional services. Websters Way and, to a lesser extent, Bellingham Lane play an important role in helping to provide access, servicing and car parking for buildings located on High Street.

Rayleigh Mount immediately adjoins the AAP area and forms a group of important heritage assets at the north end of High Street, with Holy Trinity Church and Rayleigh Windmill, which are within the area. The Dutch Cottage is also just outside of the AAP area, on the south side of Crown Hill.

The rail station is situated a short journey from the town centre itself and the AAP area, and can be accessed most directly via Crown Hill. It has a closer relationship with surrounding residential development than the town centre itself.



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Figure 3 – Rochford's district context

2. Rayleigh in context

This chapter sets out the planning and policy context within which the Rayleigh Centre AAP will operate, including a review of key sections of the local planning evidence base.

2.1 Strategic location and local setting

Rayleigh is located on a peninsula bounded by the River Thames to the south, the River Crouch to the north and the North Sea to the east. It is to the north-west of Southend-on-Sea and east of Wickford and Basildon.

The town is the largest in the District and has relatively large residential areas to its south-east and north-west. Although it is closely related to other nearby residential areas within the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, it is surrounded by Metropolitan Green Belt. Within the District, Hockley and Rochford are located to the east of Rayleigh.

The Greater Anglia rail connection between Southend-on-Sea and London Liverpool Street has a stop at Rayleigh and supports commuting into central London. The A127, A13 and A130 roads meet to the west of Rayleigh and provide access to the wider region, the motorway network and local attractors, including Southend-on-Sea, Basildon and Chelmsford.

2.2 Historical evolution and Conservation Area

Rayleigh grew up as a settlement at the foot of the Mount, which was the castle of Swein of Essex and mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book. It is likely that Rayleigh was deliberately planned within the castle's earthworks.

The town's market dates back to before 1181, when it was first recorded, and would have traded locally produced goods such as pottery. The local economy was founded on the market. This explains the width of High Street, which was laid out to accommodate stalls; the presence of Holy Trinity Church at one end of the marketplace is also a characteristic feature.

Despite the Mount losing its military significance before the end of the 13th Century, the town spread as far as Eastwood Road in the south and the start of Hockley Road in the north during the medieval period. During the 17th and 18th Centuries, however, Rayleigh failed to prosper in the same way as other similar nearby towns located on major roads, such as Billericay and Chelmsford, and growth was relatively slow. It was not until the arrival of the railway from London Liverpool Street in 1889 that the town attracted commuters and began to expand dramatically up until the start of the First World War. This growth resulted in farms, estates and the grounds of large house being sub-divided for development.

Following the Second World War a large number of unsympathetic developments took place, in an attempt to replace the existing smaller shops with more commercially suitable modern buildings. There was local concern at this pace of change and Rayleigh Civic Society was founded in 1963 to oppose inappropriate proposals.

Rayleigh Conservation Area was first designated in 1969 and originally included the Mount, High Street and Bellingham Lane, as well as Websters Way and other adjoining roads. It has since been revised to exclude some outlying areas, most notably the Websters Way car park and King George V Playing Fields. It is likely that the formation of the Civic Society and designation of the Conservation Area acted to prevent the wholesale replacement of Rayleigh's historic fabric.

2.3 Policy context

The Rayleigh Centre AAP has been produced taking into account national and local planning policy, in addition to the various studies that supplement and inform this framework. This is to ensure that the AAP provides a robust policy framework for the future development of Rayleigh.



Rayleigh character

1. Holy Trinity Church, parts of which date from the 12th century, is a prominent landmark in the town
2. High Street and its taxi rank
3. The lower end of High Street, from outside the Police offices
4. High Street has a wide range of architectural styles
5. The Old White Horse on High Street is grade II listed
6. The Dutch Cottage, a Grade II listed building, in Crown Hill (outside the conservation area) was restored in 1984

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is expanded upon by a number of core planning principles and more detailed policies.

In particular it is noted that the NPPF (Section 2) emphasises the importance of ensuring that local planning policies support the vitality and viability of town centres, and their role at the heart of communities. Practically this means that local planning authorities should promote a diverse retail offer and adopt a town centres first approach, which requires retail, leisure and entertainment, office, and arts, culture and tourism uses to locate in centres ahead of other alternatives.

Rochford Core Strategy (2011)

Rochford District Council adopted its Core Strategy document in December 2011. This sets out the overall development strategy for the District until 2025.

The Core Strategy's approach to centres and retail development is set out in policies RTC1 and RTC2. Respectively, these seek to strengthen and improve the retail offer of the District's main centres, including Hockley, and direct new retail development and other main town centre uses towards these locations through a sequential, town centres first approach.

The key Core Strategy policy in relation to the AAP is Policy RTC 4. This states that Rochford District Council, with partner organisations and landowners, will produce an AAP for Rayleigh's town centre, which retains its role as the District's principal town centre and delivers the following:

- Improved accessibility to and within the town centre.
- A safe and high quality environment for residents and visitors.
- A predominance of retail uses, including intensification of existing retail uses, which cater for a variety of needs.
- A range of evening leisure uses.
- The promotion of the provision of community facilities, including exploration of potential locations for a healthcare centre and, if appropriate, the delivery of such a facility.

Rayleigh Area Action Plan Issues and Options report

An Issues and Options report was published for the Rayleigh Town Centre AAP in 2009. This provides an analysis of the town centre's strengths and weaknesses and discusses a number of possible improvements for various key sites and locations. The options discussed included:

- A package of potential smaller-scale interventions, such as improvements to the public realm, alterations to building façades, the creation of better quality bus stop environments, the enhancement of gateway sites and the relocation of the existing taxi rank.
- The potential development of six key sites, with a range of options for different scales of change from low-level improvements to major redevelopment.
- More retail space, including a new supermarket and units suitable for smaller shops.
- The potential for new developments that would create an active frontage along Websters Way, through the redevelopment of existing parking and service areas.
- The redevelopment of the existing Websters Way surface car park to provide a mix of uses and a multi-storey facility.
- Changes to the local road network and traffic circulation, with a focus on options for High Street, such as the creation of a shared space, its partial or full pedestrianisation, or the reintroduction of two-way traffic.



1



2



3

Rayleigh character

1. The established plane trees along High Street contribute significantly to its townscape character
2. The Millennium Clock in Rayleigh
3. Holy Trinity Church

Allocations Plan (2014) and Development Management Plan (2014)

The Council adopted its Allocations Plan and Development Management Plan in 2014.

The Allocations Plan includes Policy TCB1, which defines Rayleigh's town centre boundary and primary and secondary shopping frontages. However, the supporting text makes clear that the AAP may amend these allocations.

The Development Management Plan includes policies that deal with the development of the town centres. These include policies that seek to control the mix of uses, as well as the conversion of upper floors to residential accommodation.

Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2007)

An appraisal and management plan was produced for Rayleigh Conservation Area in 2007, to assess its character and identify any potential improvements.

The appraisal identified Rayleigh's special character as being that of a "traditional market town which was established at the gates of a Norman castle". It notes the exceptionally wide High Street, and the good condition of the Mount and Holy Trinity Church. However, it also highlights the negative impact of unsympathetic 20th Century development on

High Street and areas of poor quality townscape on Websters Way and Bellingham Lane.

The management plan includes a number of recommendations that would improve the Conservation Area. These include enhancements to shopfronts, improvements to the streetscene and the sensitive use of architectural style where new development takes place.

2.4 Retail issues

A Retail and Leisure Study for Rochford District was produced in August 2008 to form part of the local planning policy evidence base. It identified Rayleigh as the District's strongest town centre and demonstrated a significant future requirement for additional comparison floorspace.

Indeed, its key recommendation was that the Council adopt a supportive approach towards intensification within Rayleigh's town centre boundaries. It was also recommended that the Council supports the development of a greater range of supporting leisure facilities, provided that these are of an appropriate scale.

2.5 Employment issues

An Employment Land Study was produced for Rochford District in September 2008. This considered the current supply and quality of, and future need and demand for, employment space within the District. It forms part of the

evidence base for Rochford District Council's local planning policies.

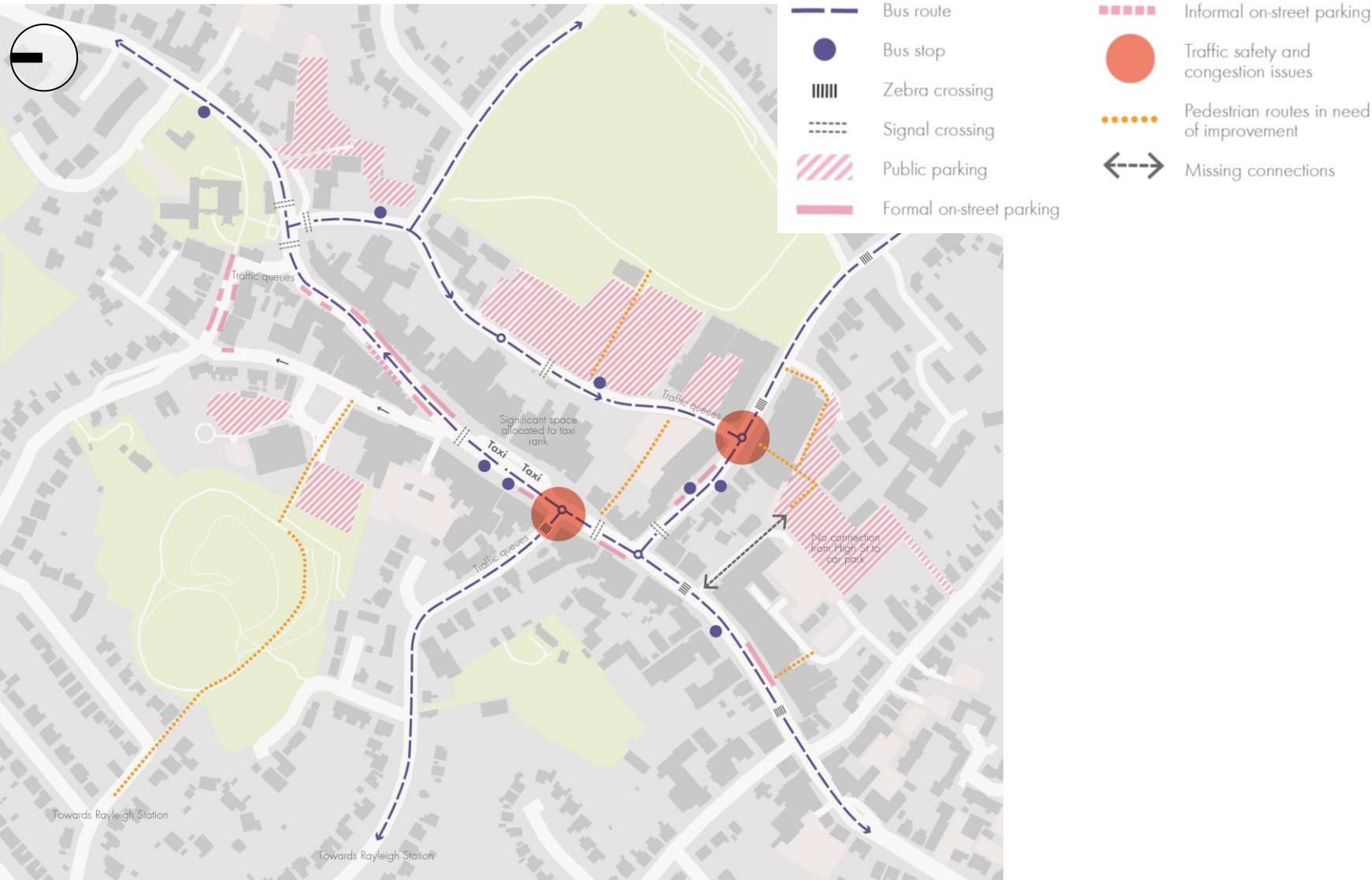
There are no allocated employment sites within the AAP area. However, the study considers the existing employment uses within the town centre and recommends that office uses should be encouraged given its strategic location.

2.6 Land ownership context

Freehold land ownership within the AAP area is highly fragmented. However, it is noted that the Council has control over Websters Way car park, which is a significant site on the edge of the town centre.

2.7 Property market overview

Despite general market uncertainty since the 2007 "credit crunch", there are certainly signs of increased activity – especially in London and the south-east, where developers and investors are beginning to re-enter the market place. A number of retailers have roll-out targets which they have been unable to meet due to the lack of development activity since 2007.



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Figure 4 – Movement issues in Rayleigh

However, such requirements are focussed on a select number of towns and both size and demographic profile of catchment populations are of paramount importance.

Rayleigh town centre is the largest shopping destination in Rochford District and qualitatively has a distinctive local identity and individuality with a good range of smaller independent and specialist retailers and national multiple retailers.

The headline findings from a comprehensive review of Rayleigh's property market were that:

- Rayleigh is successful as a town centre and appears to have withstood the recession relatively well.
- Improvements to the public realm would assist in attracting new investment and stimulating occupier demand.
- A number of the larger sites that were previously considered as development opportunities are either no longer available for development or would be prohibitively expensive to deliver in the current economic climate.
- There may be an opportunity for further infill development as buildings and properties come to the end of their economic life and such opportunities should be taken to reinforce the character of the town and add to the varied mix.

- There is a limited town centre office market, typified by low rental values and, as such, new office development is unlikely to come forward in the short term without cross subsidy from high value uses or public sector funding support.

2.8 Movement issues

Rayleigh town centre is located at the intersection of four main vehicle routes: the A129 London Road/Crown Hill in the west, the B1013 Hockley Road in the north, the A1015 Eastwood Road in the east, and the A129 High Street towards Hadleigh and A127 dual-carriageway in the south.

The town itself developed along the High Street, where most of its retail frontage is currently concentrated. Websters Way was originally constructed as part of a one-way gyratory system around the town centre, but has since reverted back to two-way working. The High Street remains one-way northbound, and much of the traffic uses Websters Way to access the main town centre car park and retail servicing areas. As a result, Websters Way and the junctions at either end are often congested and the conditions are decidedly poor, with the backs of retail premises forming the western edge of the street and surface parking forming a large portion of the eastern street edge.

There is also evidence of queuing into the Websters Way car park and at the junctions of the High Street with Eastwood Road and with Crown Hill. The latter being on the main route towards the station and heavily trafficked.

A range of short and long term parking is provided in and near to the town centre. The railway station has approximately 610 long-stay parking spaces spread over two connected car parking areas, and a 38 space short-stay car park adjacent to the station building. There are a number of short (less than four hours) and mixed-stay car parks spread around the town core, of which the most substantial and anecdotally well used is the Websters Way car park with 347 spaces. Castle Road Car Park (behind the food store) has 148 mixed-stay spaces. At the Windmill and The Mill Arts and Events Centre there is a 53 space short-stay car park and another 68 space mixed-stay car park. To the north east of the town adjacent to the Council Civic Suite is a 65 space mixed-stay car park.

An extensive bus network operates in Rayleigh with the wider sub-regional service structure gravitating to Southend-on-Sea. Many bus routes start and end at Rayleigh rail station, making this an important interchange point for the town, with rail services terminating at London Liverpool Street (42 minutes) and Southend Victoria (18 minutes). In addition, there are four key stops in the town core that provide access to all bus services passing through Rayleigh.



Movement in Rayleigh

1. Rayleigh train station, with its bus interchange, is a 5-10 minute walk from the town centre
2. The town centre is well served by taxis
3. Pedestrian crossing facilities and associated environmental improvements have been improved in recent years
4. The Websters Way car park is the largest in the town
5. Traffic congestion can occur, particularly at key junctions
6. Websters Way acts as the town's by-pass

Walking is provided for through the publicly accessible street network. At many of the junctions in the town centre and along High Street, guardrails and bollards create barriers to movement on foot and divert pedestrians away from direct crossings and desire lines, such as at the junction of the High Street and Crown Hill. In particular, the High Street's bus stop and taxi rank dominate and require pedestrians to modify their routes accordingly.

The development of the AAP offers an excellent opportunity to enhance the accessibility of the town centre for the elderly and those with disabilities. Such improvements can be achieved by the removal of street clutter along main routes of pedestrian movement, the inclusion of appropriately designed crossing facilities and there is also potential to provide additional disabled only spaces. Dropped curbs can be designed sympathetically so as not to impede people with vision or mobility issues. Design and access statements provided as part of planning applications will be required to demonstrate appropriate consideration for the movement issues affecting the elderly and those with disabilities.

Minor walking improvements could be delivered in the form of a redesigned taxi rank, the removal of pedestrian guard railings and general decluttering. The main walking route

from the station to the town core is via Crown Hill, although this is steep with narrow footways in places and accommodates high volumes of traffic, and should therefore be a focus for improvement. Websters Way also has a significant section without a footway that needs to be resolved.

There is no information on current signed or advisory cycle routes in the town and no national cycle routes pass through Rayleigh. There are also no notable on-road facilities. However, some cycle stands are provided on the High Street. The best approach to improve cycling in the town would be to manage traffic speeds and focus on the provision of appropriately located cycle racks at the station and the High Street.

2.9 The Sustainability Appraisal

The Rayleigh Centre AAP has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required by the European SEA Directive, UK planning legislation and the NPPF. SA seeks to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in the preparation of planning documents.

A Scoping Report was prepared and published in September 2012 to help ensure that the SA

covered key sustainability issues relevant to Rayleigh town centre. This information was sent to statutory consultees for comment. Options proposed in the Rayleigh AAP Issues and Options report, which included alternatives for a number of issues and different sites, were then subject to SA in February 2013. This was sent to statutory consultees and wider stakeholders for consultation from 27 February to 10 April 2013. The findings of the SA have been balanced against consultation feedback and helped to inform the policy options selected in this version of the AAP.

Generally the SA found that the higher the level of intervention proposed, the more positive the effects are likely to be against SA objectives relating to communities, housing, the economy and townscape. However, the redevelopment of unsympathetic buildings, particularly in large blocks, also adds an element of uncertainty. Although higher level intervention has the potential for negative effects on a number of SA objectives in the short-term during construction, it is considered that suitable mitigation measures are available at the project level to address adverse effects.

The movement of traffic through the town centre is a key sustainability issue. The SA found that options which sought the full or partial pedestrianisation of the High Street would only shift current transport issues

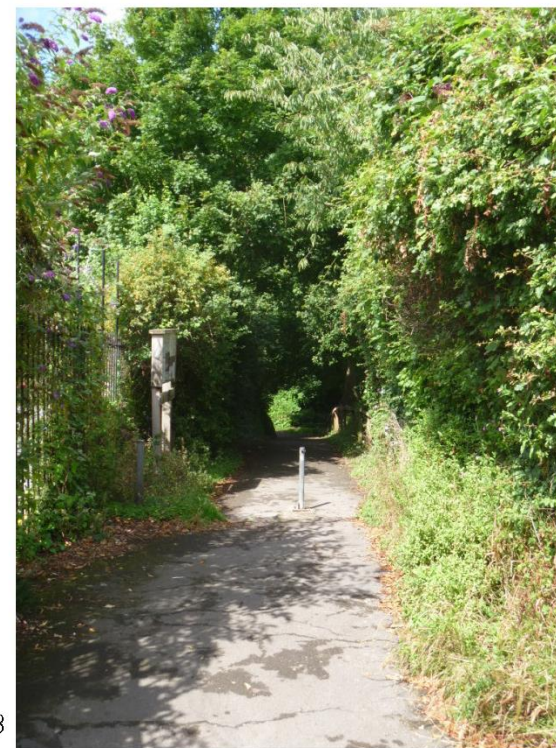
elsewhere within the AAP area. The option that sought to work within the existing network and provide improvements to pedestrian crossings at roundabouts and improved capacity at junctions was considered to have the potential for the greatest benefits compared to the others, as it will not shift transport issues elsewhere in the area and will not increase the levels of traffic along the High Street.



1



2



3

Pedestrian paths in Rayleigh

1. Ernie Lane
2. The path alongside the Spread Eagle Pub
3. Footpaths around the Mount

3. A framework for a better Rayleigh

3.1 What makes for a sustainable Rayleigh?

Rayleigh is an established town and a sustainable location for homes, shops, jobs, leisure and other services and facilities. The AAP seeks to ensure that a positive planning policy framework that protects this function is put in place. It recognises that sustainable development must be delivered in a joined-up fashion, with economic, social and environmental benefits being sought concurrently. In this context, the following factors are considered important:

Provision to meet shopping needs locally and within the District – Rayleigh is Rochford District's main town centre and has a successful mix of shops. Demand for additional retail floorspace and supporting leisure facilities, to help meet shopping needs locally and across the wider-District, should be addressed. Other supporting uses should also be encouraged to help increase the attractiveness of the town centre's offer and improve vitality.

Excellent public realm – There are a number of attractive places, spaces and buildings within Rayleigh's town centre. These should be further enhanced, with a particular focus on the main part of the High Street, as well as weaker areas on Bellingham Lane and Websters Way.

Conservation of historic assets and local character – Rayleigh has a number of important heritage assets, including Rayleigh Mount, Holy Trinity Church, Rayleigh Windmill and the Dutch Cottage. All new development should respect and enhance these assets and their settings, as well as the positive aspects of the town's local character.

A high quality natural environment – Rayleigh benefits from being surrounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt, which prevents urban sprawl, but also allows local people access to significant areas of high quality, open space. This open space should be safeguarded through the efficient use of previously developed sites within the town's existing boundaries.

Good accessibility – Rayleigh is well connected to other centres within the District, south-east Essex and the wider-region through road, rail and bus links. Improvements should be made to local walking routes, bus stops and the road network to help increase the level of accessibility to, through and within the town centre.

The AAP is a planning policy document that, primarily, seeks to assist in the management of changes and developments in Rayleigh town centre. Therefore, whilst its remit is limited, its reach is wide. Alongside the Core Strategy and other key policy documents, the AAP will help to attract and encourage new investment and co-ordinate change.

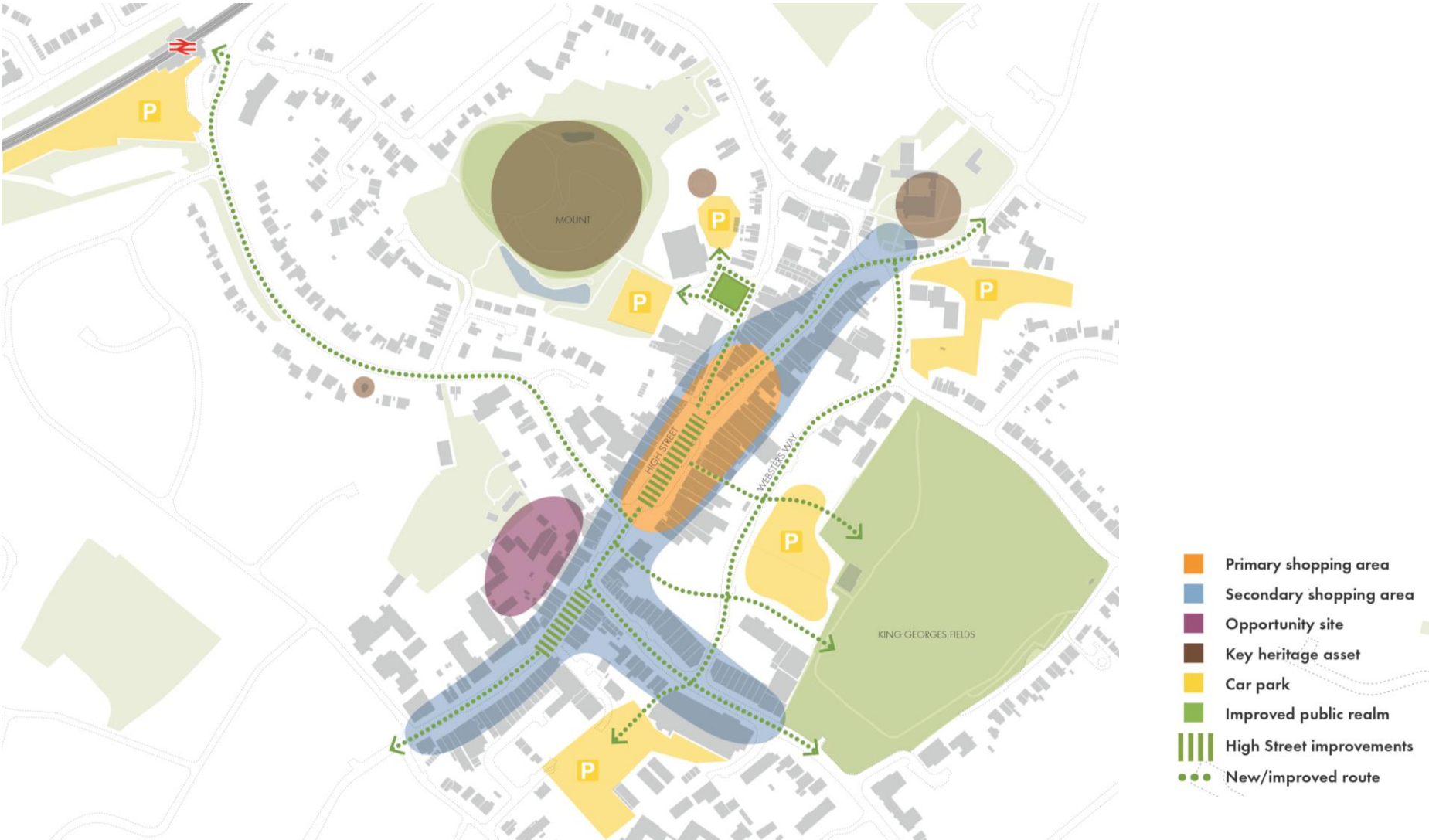
3.2 Vision and objectives

The future development of Rayleigh should strengthen the town's position as Rochford District's main centre, improve the environment and accessibility, and have a positive impact on the town's heritage assets.

The AAP sets a vision for the town's future based on an understanding of the unique context that drives change and development in Rayleigh. It translates this vision into implementation objectives, policies and guidance that will act as a robust framework for delivery.

The vision for Rayleigh is:

Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as the District's main centre. By 2025, 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 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 its existing character, including that of nearby suburban, low-density neighbourhoods.



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Figure 5 – Rayleigh AAP framework plan

The four key objectives that support this vision and are vital in its delivery are:

1) Strengthening Rayleigh's role as Rochford District's principal town centre.

Rayleigh is the most important town centre in Rochford District for shopping. It is clear that this current position could be strengthened by the provision of new accommodation, which should be suitable for both large national retailers and small independent shops. A greater range of leisure facilities and other complementary uses, including dwellings and offices, on more peripheral sites would also increase Rayleigh's vitality.

2) Improving accessibility for all

The rail station is some distance from the High Street, and walking routes from the main car parks to the High Street and the main section of the shopping frontage could be improved. There are opportunities to strengthen the linkages between these areas, improve the arrival experience for visitors to the town and make some positive changes to the road network.

3) Making the most of historic assets

Rayleigh has a number of significant historic assets that are on the edge of or adjacent to the existing town centre. Principal among these is Rayleigh Mount, the site of a motte and bailey castle; Holy Trinity Church, Rayleigh Windmill and the Dutch Cottage are also important. Opportunities exist to create better connections between these assets and the town centre.

4) Delivering public realm improvements

The quality of the public realm within Rayleigh town centre is generally good. However, there are a number of opportunities to make small-scale improvements.

3.3 Arriving at a framework

Rayleigh's existing condition was analysed through the 2009 Issues and Options report, which was prepared to inform the AAP. Some contextual changes took place between 2009 and the January 2013 consultation on the Council's emerging preferred development framework. The most important changes were:

- A tougher economic climate – the current economic climate is significantly more challenging than it was at the beginning of the AAP process.
- The emergence of new priorities – a number of organisations, including Essex Police, have reviewed their property portfolios and informed the Council that land previously believed to be available for redevelopment is now included in their future plans.
- Healthcare reform – the government has changed the way in which the NHS's budget is managed and it is no longer clear that there is potential for a new healthcare centre in Rayleigh.

Following the January 2013 consultation the Council considered all of the feedback that was received to help refine the preferred development framework further. The AAP sets out a framework that responds to the contextual changes and previous stages of analysis and consultation.



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Figure 6 – Rayleigh AAP movement framework

POLICY 1 – RAYLEIGH AREA ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

New opportunities for retail development or other town centre uses together, supported by or contributing to appropriate town centre environmental improvements, will help to strengthen the town's role as Rochford District's principal town centre.

Development within the Rayleigh AAP area should contribute towards the delivery of the spatial framework as shown in Figure 5. Key elements of this framework are:

- 1. A consolidated and strengthened primary retail core along High Street;**
- 2. Opportunities for new and intensified retail and other mixed-use development as sites become available;**
- 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;**
- 4. New and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the AAP area and linking the centre with the railway station and the surrounding area; and**

- 5. New and improved public realm and environmental improvements throughout the centre as identified on the spatial framework. It is expected that significant retail development within Rayleigh centre will contribute financially to these schemes.**

The spatial framework for Rayleigh is summarised in Figure 5 which provides a broad indication of where development and change could take place.

The Council's primary objective for Rayleigh is to protect and enhance its role as Rochford District's principal town centre. This will be dependent on the emergence of high quality proposals for new retail, leisure, cultural, community and mixed-use development, enhanced connections with nearby and adjoining areas, and an improved public realm.

The AAP sets out further policies that are intended to guide high quality development that is in accordance with its vision, objectives and framework. These policies are based around an understanding of the centre's character areas and seek to build on Rayleigh's existing local character.

3.4 The movement framework

The movement framework outlined in Figure 6 identifies a series of key junctions throughout Rayleigh which would benefit from investment and improvement. The Council will continue to work with Essex County Council to agree the priorities for these improvements and more

fully assess the issues they present and opportunities available to address them.

Table 1 below provides an overview of these improvements and a headline estimate of the resources this might require.

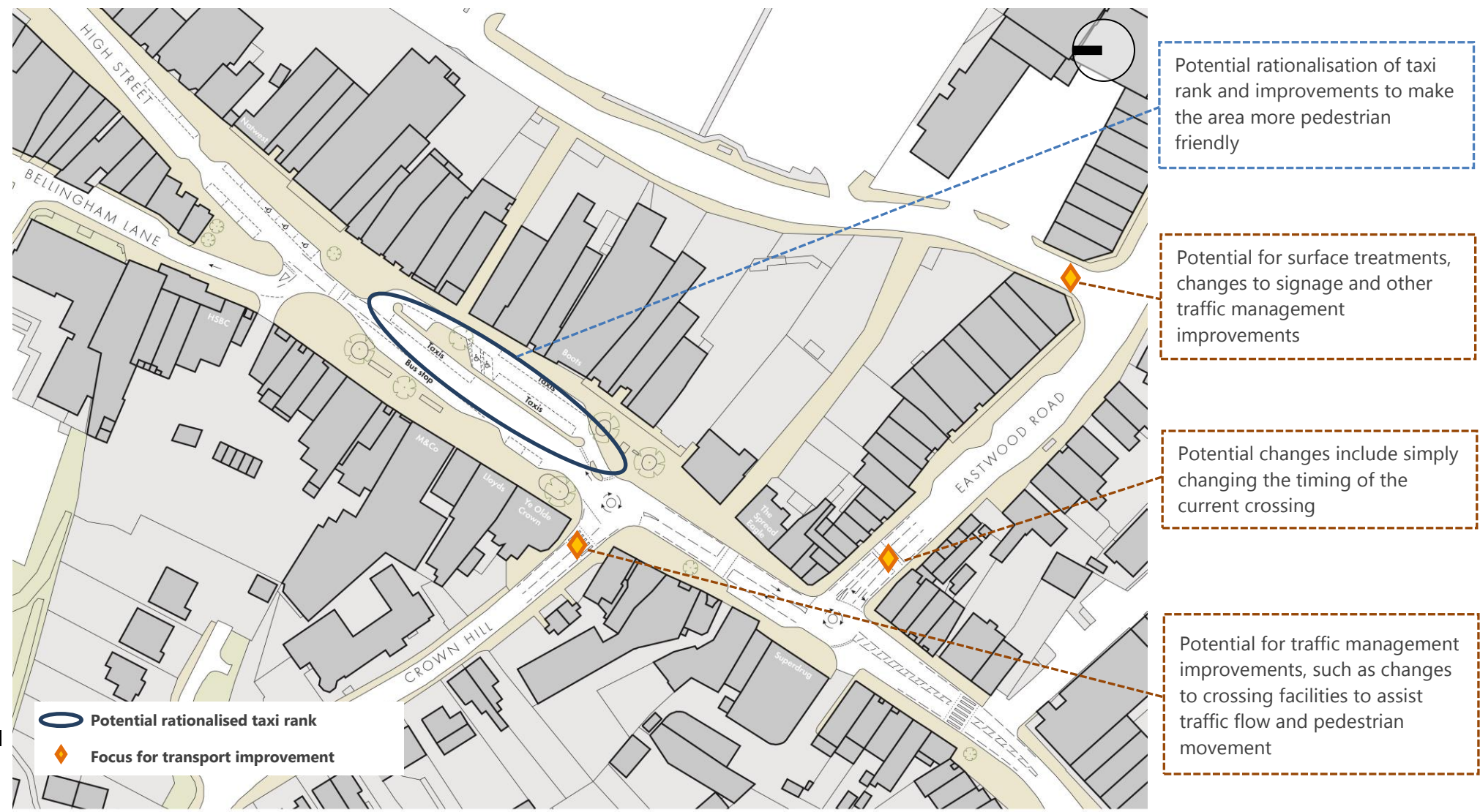
In terms of delivering public realm improvements to the town centre, the Rayleigh Framework identifies the opportunity for improvements to the central section of High Street, which is currently dominated by the taxi rank. The Council recognises that the taxi services provide shoppers with a local service, but there is an opportunity to deliver greater pedestrian priority and flexibility for the local market in this central and high profile location as well as recognising the role of the taxi rank. Figure 7 provides an overview of the existing conditions in this central area and Figure 8 identifies sites that would benefit from potential rationalisation. The ideas put forward would, subject to funding being identified, need to be developed and refined with the Highway Authority, local traders and other stakeholders. However, they provide a framework for a major initial phase of environmental improvements – with the potential to continue further improvements of this type within adjacent areas.

In the same spirit, Figure 9 provides an artist's impression of the potential for environmental improvements to the High Street area outside the Library.



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Figure 7 – Central High Street – existing condition



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Figure 8 – Central High Street – potential improvement framework



Figure 9 –High Street south looking north from outside the Library – artist's impression illustrating the potential benefits of pavement widening, new street trees and shop front improvements

Environmental improvement / highways scheme	Lead partner	Other partners	Estimated cost	Potential funding stream(s)	Comments	Justification
High Street Taxi Rank & Market Area	ECC	Rochford District Council / developers	£300,000 - £1,250,000	Pooled financial contributions / ECC budget	<p>Potential rationalisation of taxi stand to allow improved pedestrian environment and to achieve a more versatile use of the taxi rank and market area.</p> <p>Landscaping and lighting enhancement. Traffic management improvements at key junctions and crossing points aimed at improving existing functionality (including low impact surface treatments and signage improvements).</p> <p>Following identification of a range of options and their costs for Rayleigh centre through earlier iterations of the Plan, the Local Highways Panel has agreed to fund transport modelling work. This will identify precise measures from the framework for improvements this Plan provides, along with the specific costs of such improvements from the range of costs identified here based on a scalable package of measures.</p>	<p>A significant proportion of public space in the core of town centre is allocated as carriageway for a taxi standing area. Space is required for occasional market use. There is a need to review and seek to improve taxi parking and circulation within this area to meet the needs of the local market and improvements to pedestrian movement. While acknowledging the role played by the taxi services in the town centre there is the potential to rationalise the taxi parking with the market.</p> <p>The town centre functions as a major traffic thoroughfare in the District. There is an opportunity for enhanced pedestrian safety improvements and better traffic flow around the town centre through making existing junctions perform at a more optimal level. Traffic management improvements can ensure that pedestrians are still able to use these crossings safely while also ensuring that traffic flow is not adversely affected.</p>
1. Zebra Crossing	ECC	Rochford District	£500,000 –	Pooled financial	There is potential for the	The town centre functions as a

Environmental improvement / highways scheme	Lead partner	Other partners	Estimated cost	Potential funding stream(s)	Comments	Justification
<p>at the top of Crown Hill</p> <p>2. Pelican Crossing before the junction of Bellingham Lane and the High Street</p> <p>3. Pelican Crossing of, Eastwood Road, before the High Road and Eastwood Road roundabout; and Pelican Crossing of High Road to the north east of the High Road and Eastwood Road roundabout.</p> <p>4. Zebra Crossing, High Street to the North of the Police Station.</p>		Council / developers	£3,000,000	contributions / ECC budget	<p>inclusion of traffic management measures to improve the effectiveness of key crossing points, subject to further investigation of traffic and pedestrian movements. Rochford District Council will work in conjunction with Essex County Council to assess appropriate measures to be taken.</p> <p>Following identification of a range of options and their costs for Rayleigh centre through earlier iterations of the Plan, the Local Highways Panel has agreed to fund transport modelling work. This will identify precise measures from the framework for improvements this Plan provides, along with the specific costs of such improvements. Whilst the potential costs of these range of improvements have the potential to total up to £3,000,000, it could be that the most effective measures will</p>	<p>major traffic thoroughfare in the District. There is the opportunity for greater pedestrian safety improvements and better traffic flow around the town centre through making existing junctions perform at the most optimal level. Traffic management improvements can ensure that pedestrians are still able to use these crossings safely while also ensuring that traffic flow is not adversely affected.</p> <p>Traffic management improvements can involve significantly less material disruption to the structure of existing roads. The extent of the improvements to be applied to the area will be determined in relation to further investigation of pedestrian and motorist behaviours and with the assistance of Essex County Council as Highways Authority.</p>

Environmental improvement / highways scheme	Lead partner	Other partners	Estimated cost	Potential funding stream(s)	Comments	Justification
5. Zebra Crossing of Websters Way at Eastwood Road junction.					cost considerably less. The extension of the High Street improvement scheme along Eastwood Road, including the junction with Websters Way.	
New and enhanced pedestrian / cycle links	ECC	Rochford District Council / developers	£150,000 - £200,000	Pooled financial contributions / ECC budget	The enhancement of pedestrian and cycle links across the town centre, for example improved mid-block links between High Street and Websters Way, between Eastwood Road and Castle Road car park, and to the station via Crown Hill and Rayleigh Mount.	To improve environmental quality and safety, and encourage walking and cycling for local journeys around the town.

Note: The broad budget estimates given are based on general experience of similar scheme costs rather than any professional cost advice related to specific proposals. For public realm improvement schemes a general rate of £300/m² has been applied to the scheme area, which would allow for resurfacing with high quality materials. These figures are indicative only

Table 1 – Major environmental improvements and highways schemes



Rayleigh Mount – owned by the National Trust and managed by the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Management Committee. The network of footpaths across the Mount are well used and the site has considerable amenity value, both for recreation and education. It is the only freely accessible motte and bailey castle in Essex.



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Figure 10 – Rayleigh AAP Proposals Map

4. Proposals plan, shopping frontages and sites

4.1 Rayleigh town centre boundary

Rayleigh town centre is centred on the High Street. To the north, the centre extends up to the top end of London Hill. To the south, the centre extends to the Rayleigh Baptist Church site on High Street, south of Castle Road. Generally, to the west, the boundary is drawn at the rear of the commercial premises which address High Street – the centre also includes the Mill Arts and Events Centre on Bellingham Lane. On the eastern side, the centre includes both the Castle Road and Websters Way car parks. The centre extends along Eastwood Road beyond King George's Park although does not encompass the park itself. The town centre boundary is considered appropriate and has not been altered during the preparation of this AAP. The District-wide Retail and Leisure Study makes no recommendation to review the boundary.

POLICY 2 – RETAIL DEVELOPMENT IN RAYLEIGH

Rayleigh town centre is Rochford District's principal shopping centre. The Council will support development proposals that retain or strengthen Rayleigh's position in the local retail hierarchy.

New retail-led development within Rayleigh town centre will be permitted where it would:

- 1. Maintain the predominance of retail uses in the centre, at concentrations and proportions appropriate to the relevant designated shopping area defined under Policy 3;**
- 2. Contribute positively to the local retail character of the relevant area of the town centre, as identified under Policies 4-8; and**
- 3. Where possible, deliver improved physical linkages along key public routes and between the core High Street and the town's principal car parks.**

POLICY 3 – RAYLEIGH'S SHOPPING FRONTAGES

Within the town centre's primary and secondary shopping frontages, as defined on the Rayleigh AAP Proposals Map (Figure 10), proposals for A1 retail uses will be acceptable. A proposed change of use for non-retail (non-A1) purposes will be permitted where it would:

- 1. Not have a detrimental impact on, or undermine, the predominance of A1 uses within the centre, both within the centre as a whole and within the primary shopping frontage;**
- 2. Not create a cluster of non-A1 uses within the same use class in a locality that undermines the retail character of the centre;**
- 3. Entail the provision of a non-A1 use which is considered to positively contribute to the overall offer and encourage people into the centre. These may take the form of those non-A1 uses set out in criterion 3 of Policy 1, including A2-5, leisure, cultural and community uses. The Council will encourage such uses outside of the primary shopping frontage in particular; and**

4. **Not have a negative effect on the amenity and character of Rayleigh or have adverse consequences for Rayleigh centre.**



High Street looking north towards the Primary Shopping Area – this secondary area plays an important role in supporting the core town centre

4.2 Retail development

Rayleigh town centre is the town's principal shopping centre. Under Policy 2 and in line with Core Strategy Policy RTC 4 a positive stance on new retail development within the defined shopping frontages will be taken.

The proposals plan (Figure 10) defines the primary and secondary shopping frontages within Rayleigh town centre. An appropriate balance of uses is necessary to support the economic health of Rayleigh town centre, and it is essential that retail uses are supported by non-retail uses such as cafés, pubs, offices and banks.

The district-wide Retail and Leisure Study 2008 concluded that the planning strategy in place at that time in terms of the extent of primary and secondary frontages and the concentrations of A1 uses and non-A1 uses within them was appropriate and no changes were recommended. Since then, land use monitoring of the defined shopping frontages has been undertaken. This monitoring reveals that for the target proportions of A1 uses in the primary shopping frontage to be achieved, the extent of the primary frontage will need to be reviewed.

The primary shopping frontage is now consolidated around the central section of High Street between Crown Hill and Bellingham Lane. This more concentrated primary shopping area presents concentrations

of A1 retail uses at the proportion sought under the policy. This review helps to strengthen the primary shopping frontage policy and in doing so helps to protect the vitality and viability of the town centre economy. The secondary shopping frontage has been extended to incorporate those areas previously identified as part of the primary shopping frontage.

The Council recognises the dynamic nature of centres and the need for flexibility. Nevertheless, it wishes to ensure that the majority of uses both within the centres as a whole and within the primary shopping frontage are in A1 use. As at March 2015, within the revised primary and secondary shopping frontages, 66% of the primary frontage and 62% of the secondary frontage fall within A1 use. The Council will seek to achieve a target of 75% A1 uses in the primary frontage and 50% A1 uses in the secondary frontage.

Notwithstanding the need to protect A1 uses in the identified shopping frontages, an appropriate balance of uses is necessary to support the health of Rayleigh town centre, and it is essential that retail uses are supported by non-retail uses such as cafés, pubs and banks. Leisure, cultural and community uses will also be accepted in the secondary frontages provided that they meet the criteria set out in Policy 1.

With this goal in mind the Council has set several criteria to encourage the appropriate mix of uses within Rayleigh Centre. Under

policy 1, criterion 3, the Council states that it will promote appropriate proportions of non-A1 development, particularly outside of the retail core (within the secondary shopping frontage); such development within the retail core is not precluded provided it conforms to the provisions in Policy 1 and Policy 3.

Policy 3, criterion 3 requires non-A1 developments proposed for Rayleigh Centre to positively contribute to the overall offer and encourage people into the centre. In addition to community uses, leisure and cultural uses will be supported in the secondary shopping frontages where they comply with the criteria in Policy 3.

The Council recognises the dynamic nature of centres and the need for flexibility. The target proportions of A1 retail uses will be used as a guide and will be kept under review through town centre monitoring.

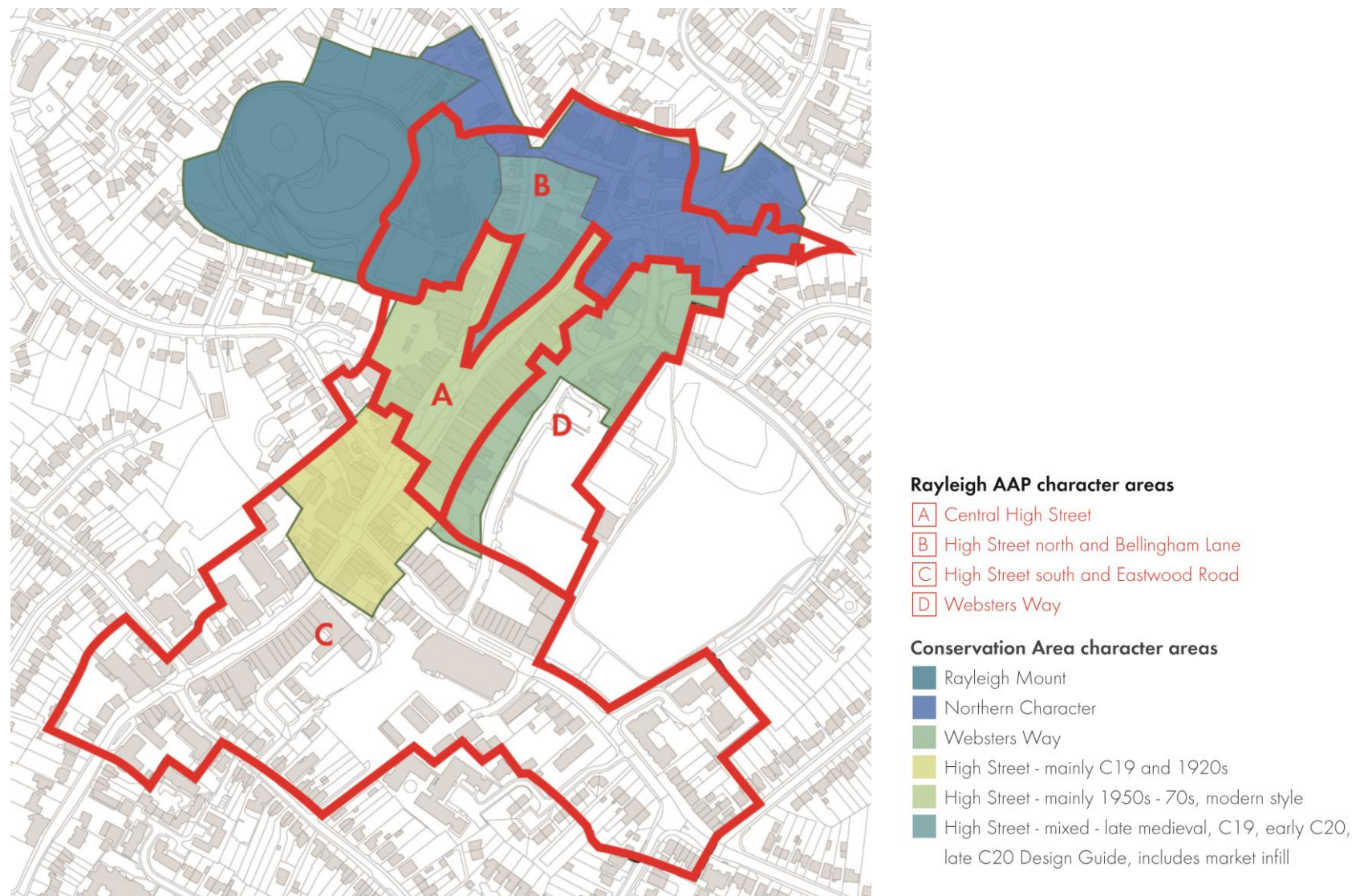
As was the case in the previous Local Plan, clusters of non A1 uses are considered to be more than two immediately adjacent non-A1 uses of the same use class. That said, a view will be taken on a case-by-case basis. The overriding objective will be to ensure the vitality and viability of the town centre is protected.

To ensure this balance the Council will not permit a cluster of any more than two immediately adjacent non-retail uses of the same use-class. More than two Sui Generis uses adjacent to one another may not

necessarily be considered a cluster, provided they are distinct and different uses.

However there are uses of which the provision of additional units in Rayleigh centre would not be considered to positively contribute to the overall offer of the centre. Developments which would have a negative effect on the amenity and character of Rayleigh or which would have adverse consequences for Rayleigh centre would not generally be supported.

Some land uses associated with town centre locations have the potential to raise amenity issues for nearby residents. Such uses might include, but are not necessarily limited to, those falling in Use Classes A3, A4 and A5 or other, Sui Generis uses such as night clubs. The impact of such non-retail uses on the amenity of those living within or nearby the centre will be an important consideration in determining relevant planning applications, and applicants will be expected to demonstrate how negative impacts arising from such proposals will be mitigated, if applications are to be permitted.



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Figure 11 – Character areas for Rayleigh AAP, based on those identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal (May 2007)*

*On 6th July 2009, Rochford District Council adopted the recommendation in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans and amended the boundaries of five existing Conservation Areas: Rayleigh, Rochford, Canewdon High Street, Canewdon Church and Great Wakering.

5. Rayleigh's character areas

The central thrust of the AAP is to ensure that the historic character of the centre is protected and, where possible, enhanced. To help achieve this, and in support of the existing controls and guidance provided through the designation of the Rayleigh Conservation Area together with its associated appraisal and management plan, a character area approach has been developed.

For the purposes of this AAP, four character areas have been identified. These have been carefully drawn to take full account of the character areas identified in the conservation area appraisal and have been drawn to ensure comprehensive coverage of the AAP area. These do not replace the character areas set out in the conservation area character appraisal, where more detail can be found.

Policy 4 defines the four AAP character areas and provides overarching and town-wide policy guidance which will be relevant to all applications for development across the town. This is followed by a planning policy for each individual identified area.

POLICY 4 – RAYLEIGH'S CHARACTER AREAS

Development will have regard to Rayleigh town centre's identified character areas as defined in Figure 11 and the important role that each of these play in helping to make Rayleigh a successful place. Guiding principles for these areas are outlined under Policies 5, 6, 7 and 8. Where these policies contain principles that specify environmental enhancements, development should either incorporate or contribute towards these improvements.

There are principles that are important in respect of development in all four of the character areas; development should either incorporate or contribute towards the specified schemes. The principles are:

- 1. Public realm interventions should include the replacement of poor quality paving, the removal of street clutter, the improvement of the lighting for pedestrian routes, and the planting of native street trees;**
- 2. Enhanced cycle parking facilities should be provided at suitable locations throughout the centre;**
- 3. Bus facilities should be upgraded, with improvements including better shelters and increased seating provision; and**

- 4. New and improved pedestrian signage should be introduced for key destinations and attractions, including the rail station, the town centre, the Mount, the Windmill, Holy Trinity Church and the Dutch Cottage.**

The character areas identified in this AAP are informed directly by those defined in the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. However, taken together, the AAP character areas cover the entire AAP area, including the area to the south of the town centre not covered by the Conservation Area.

The appraisal and management plan provides detailed analysis of the town's heritage assets and an account of the evolution of the town and the major events in its development. Rayleigh's built character is one of its key assets and proposals for new development must ensure that the setting of heritage assets and, more generally, the character of the Conservation Area as a whole is conserved or enhanced.

Public realm, route and junction improvements as identified in Rayleigh's Strategic and Movement Frameworks (Figures 5 and 6 respectively) are a priority and the Council will seek to secure contributions to these improvements as relevant development proposals come forward.



Character area A – Central High Street

1. High Street plays host to buildings of contrasting styles
2. High Street east side, looking north – part of the primary shopping frontage
3. High Street west side, looking south – also part of the primary shopping frontage
4. High Street east side looking north – the access to the taxi rank is a prominent feature
5. The High Street memorial was built in 1908 and commemorates four local Protestant martyrs, who died in 1555 during Queen Mary's reign

The local bus network is a town-wide resource which plays an important role in ensuring local people have access to sustainable, accessible modes of public transport. The Council will continue to work with partners at Essex County Council and the bus operators to keep the bus network– its routes, timetables and supporting infrastructure – under review.

Town centre signage plays a key role in helping visitors with way-finding. This in turn helps to support local businesses. Fingerposts contribute to the quality of the arrival experience and new street furniture should respond positively to the historic townscape character.

POLICY 5 – CHARACTER AREA A: CENTRAL HIGH STREET

Development in the Central High Street area will help to protect and improve Rayleigh’s position as the District’s principal retail centre. Retail (A1) uses will be supported by a high quality public realm and excellent links to the rest of the town centre and the wider surrounding area.

The following principles are important:

- 1. Development will respond positively to local townscape character, key elements of which include:**
 - a. A strong building line at the back edge of pavement;**
 - b. Town centre, predominantly A1 retail, uses at ground floor level;**
 - c. Prevailing building heights of 3 storeys; and**
 - d. Principal points of access to ground and upper floors positioned to address the High Street directly.**
- 2. In accordance with Policy 3, shopping frontages should be predominately A1 in use;**
- 3. Development will be acceptable where it would lead to the creation of additional A1 use floorspace which would strengthen the retail function and character of the town centre;**

- 4. Public realm enhancements should be focused on the creation of a new public space at the centre of the High Street and include the potential rationalisation of the existing taxi rank; and**
- 5. Pedestrian links within the AAP area, including those between the central High Street area and the Websters Way car park, and across Rayleigh, including to the rail station, should be strengthened.**

The central High Street area is the core of the town centre and a location that has undergone significant redevelopment since the 1950s. Despite this period of growth and investment, the structure of the town – with the very wide High Street acting as an informal market square – has remained intact. Redevelopment has, however, underpinned the town’s retail growth with new developments catering more efficiently with modern day retail requirements. The Retail and Leisure Study identified demand for more comparison retail floorspace in the town centre. Improving the efficiency of floorspace and floorplates in this central, primary area is likely to play a significant role in meeting any such demand.



Character area B – High Street north and Bellingham Lane

1. The public space at Bellingham Lane, which acts as the gateway to the Rayleigh Windmill and the Mill Centre
2. Independent traders in the upper end of High Street
3. The upper end of High Street has considerable townscape merit
4. Holy Trinity Church is a prominent landmark on the town
5. View towards Rayleigh Windmill, looking west, from the top of London Hill
6. Rayleigh Windmill, grade II-listed from the early 19th century. The building was restored in 2005 with the aid of a Thames Gateway grant

Whilst the individual buildings are generally not in themselves special, the central High Street area benefits from a good quality townscape, with buildings generally respecting the prevailing 3 storey scale.

The taxi rank arrangement dominates the southern side of the street and, whilst shoppers benefit from the convenience this provides – as is the case with the bus stops opposite – there is scope for rationalisation of this current arrangement to give greater priority and more space to pedestrians.

Pedestrian connections to the town's principal public car park are important. Access is currently provided by two pedestrian lanes between the High Street and Websters Way – one adjacent to the Spread Eagle Pub, and Ernie Lane which is adjacent to Barclays Bank. Improving these connections is a priority for the town. In particular, there is scope to improve the lane adjacent to the Spread Eagle pub which would benefit from resurfacing and new lighting. This space has the potential to host temporary pop-up shops/market stalls.

The street's mature trees, mostly plane, contribute significantly to local townscape character.

POLICY 6 – CHARACTER AREA B: HIGH STREET NORTH AND BELLINGHAM LANE

Development in the High Street North and Bellingham Lane area will support the retail function of the central High Street area, primarily through the provision of complementary uses, including leisure, cultural and community facilities – many of which contribute positively to the evening and night time economy. The character of this area is underpinned by a number of important heritage and leisure/cultural assets and civic uses.

The Council will support development in the High Street North and Bellingham Lane area that would protect and enhance its existing character, with a particular emphasis on its role supporting the central High Street area and the need to respect the setting of its key heritage assets. The following principles are important:

- 1. Development will respond positively to local townscape character, key elements of which include:**
 - a. High quality historic townscape;**
 - b. Town centre uses at ground floor level;**
 - c. Prevailing building heights of 2 and 3 storeys – with taller prominent landmark buildings; and**
- d. An urban morphology characterised by fine grain development benefitting from rich and varied traditional building detailing and materials.**
- 2. In accordance with Policy 3, shopping frontages should be in a mix of retail (A1) and other appropriate town centre uses, including leisure, cultural, community facilities and uses that contribute to the evening and night time economy;**
- 3. Development will be acceptable where it would lead to the creation of additional floorspace for appropriate town centre uses that support the main retail function of the central High Street area;**
- 4. Development at the rear of existing properties will be acceptable where this would not have an undue negative impact on the operation of units fronting the High Street;**
- 5. Development in the area should, where possible, seek to deliver improvements in the townscape and environmental quality of the Bellingham Lane area – including the opportunities to improve the public space in front of The Mill Arts and Events Centre; and**
- 6. Pedestrian links across Rayleigh, including to the Mount, should be strengthened.**



Character area C – High Street south and Eastwood Road

1. The junction between High Street and Crown Hill – guardrail is a prominent feature
2. View south east along Eastwood Road
3. The lower end of High Street – where the urban grain is generally more coarse – again, guardrail is a prominent feature
4. Mixed use property along Eastwood Road
5. King George V Playing Fields, which lie outside the town centre boundary, is the town's key open space and an important amenity
6. The Co-op is the largest food store in the town on Eastwood Road – with pedestrian access to Castle Street car park

Views north along the High Street are terminated by the prominent Holy Trinity Church, part of which are thought to date from the 12th century although most of the fabric is 15th century. The Church and its grounds together with the northern part of the High Street is the most historic part of the centre and benefits from a finer urban grain.

Complementing the setting of the church, the area is characterised by its civic and cultural uses: the Council offices, the Windmill and its sensory gardens, the Mill Arts and Events Centre and the National Trust's Rayleigh Mount. This cluster of town assets – both heritage and cultural – could anchor improvements in the provision of new leisure-based uses in the town centre, the need and opportunity for which was identified in the Retail and Leisure Study.

The northern part of the High Street has developed a supporting role to the adjacent primary shopping frontage, with higher proportions of cafes and restaurants. This has informed the review of the shopping frontages during the preparation of this AAP.

Bellingham Lane is more varied in character and would benefit from sensitive redevelopment as sites become available.

There is a particular opportunity to improve the open space which acts as the entrance to The Mill. Whilst performing an important car parking function, the space and circulation around it is car dominated and would benefit from environmental improvements. The Conservation Area Appraisal noted that "The area around Mill Hall is poorly defined with an inadequate sense of enclosure".

POLICY 7 – CHARACTER AREA C: HIGH STREET SOUTH AND EASTWOOD ROAD

Development in the High Street south and Eastwood Road area will support the retail function of the central High Street area, with an emphasis on the provision of secondary retailing and complementary uses, including service and office uses and community facilities. The area is well served by public parking which supports nearby convenience retailing.

The Council will support development in the High Street south and Eastwood Road area that would protect and enhance its existing character, with an emphasis on its role supporting the central High Street area. The following principles are important:

- 1. Development will respond positively to local townscape character, key elements of which include:**
 - a. A more coarse grain of development – more suited to accommodating larger floor-plates;**
 - b. Town centre uses at ground floor level; and**
 - c. Prevailing building heights of 3 storeys.**
- 2. In accordance with Policy 3, shopping frontages should be in a mix of retail (A1) and other appropriate town centre uses, including leisure and community facilities;**
- 3. Development will be acceptable where it would lead to the creation of additional floorspace for appropriate town centre uses that support the main retail function of the central High Street area. The area is considered the most appropriate location for additional convenience retail floorspace;**
- 4. Pedestrian links within the AAP area, including those between the High Street south and Eastwood Road area and the Castle Road car park, should be strengthened; and**
- 5. Development should not result in an overall loss of public parking in this area which plays a critical role in supporting the vitality and viability of the businesses in the town centre.**



Character area D – Websters Way

1. The pedestrian route between Websters Way and High Street adjacent to the Spread Eagle pub presents opportunities for improvement
2. The Rayleigh Lanes shopping centre presents an active frontage to Websters Way
3. Ernie Lane is the key pedestrian connection to High Street from the Websters Way car park
4. The Websters Way car park is very well used
5. Websters Way, looking north east
6. Websters Way, looking south from the junction with Hockley Road and High Street

This lower part of the High Street and Eastwood Road play a secondary and supporting role to the core town centre. Shopping frontages have been reviewed and, generally, the areas previously identified as primary shopping frontage along High Street and along the northern end of Eastwood Road are now identified as secondary shopping frontage. This change has a number of benefits. Firstly, it will help make the town more resilient to the weak prevailing economic conditions by providing a more clearly defined and defensible primary shopping frontage. Secondly, the change should help to minimise the potential number of vacancies in this, more vulnerable, part of the town centre. Thirdly, the change helps respond to the Retail and Leisure Study's call for "a greater range of leisure service uses" by providing a more flexible planning framework for these key streets.

The Library provides a key community facility and will play an important role in generating footfall for this secondary location. There may be potential to deliver environmental improvements in this part of High Street which would improve the setting of the retail and other uses and would help to encourage more people to use the area. Figure 9 provides an artist's impression of improvements that could be delivered.

The area is particularly well served by public car parks. Castle Road car park serves the area directly and the Websters Way car park is only a short walk away. Improving the quality of the pedestrian links between these car parks and the surrounding shopping streets is a priority.

The town's largest food store is located along Eastwood Road, served by a limited dedicated car park but also benefitting from direct pedestrian access to Castle Road car park. Much of this wider area has been redeveloped for larger, more modern retail requirements. When compared with the central area and the upper High Street area, the quality of the townscape is not as high and the grain of development is less fine. For these reasons, the area is considered potentially appropriate for new larger format – including convenience – retail floorspace.

The Dairy Crest site on the corner of High Street and Crown Hill is a busy depot site and a going concern. The current occupiers have confirmed that they have no plans to relocate in the short to medium term. However, the current use is one not normally found in town centres and it is considered that in the longer term – potentially beyond this plan period – the site may have the potential for mixed use redevelopment.

POLICY 8 – CHARACTER AREA D: WEBSTERS WAY

Development in the Websters Way area will support the retail function of the central High Street area, foremost through the provision of car parking and servicing areas. The role of Websters Way itself, which takes service and through traffic away from High Street, will also be protected.

The Council will support improvements to Websters Way through development which introduces buildings which directly address this key route whilst not undermining the role that it plays in providing car parking and servicing for the central High Street area. The following principles are important:

- 1. Development will be acceptable where it would lead to the creation of additional floorspace for appropriate town centre uses that support the main retail function of the central High Street area;**
- 2. Development at the rear of existing properties will be acceptable where this would not have an undue negative impact on the operation of units fronting the High Street, the safety and operation of Websters Way or the levels of town centre car parking;**

- 3. Opportunities to make better use of and deliver environmental improvements to the lanes between Websters Way and High Street will be supported. In particular, the lane alongside The Spread Eagle Pub has the potential to provide flexible space for temporary and pop-up retail stalls and events;**
- 4. Pedestrian links within the AAP area, including those between the central High Street area and the Websters Way car park, and across Rayleigh, including to King George V Playing Fields, should be strengthened; and**
- 5. Development should not result in an overall loss of public parking in this area which plays a critical role in supporting the vitality and viability of the businesses in the town centre.**

Websters Way performs a critical role for the town centre. It successfully takes through traffic out of the primary shopping area and diverts it around the town. This inevitably leads to Websters Way being a busy road.

Access and egress to and from the town's largest and most central public car park is also taken directly from Websters Way. The road therefore plays a critical role in supporting the economy of the town.

The north side of Websters Way presents a disjointed frontage and is primarily used as the service access to commercial High Street premises. Some units however, such as the Rayleigh Lanes shopping centre, successfully manage to present an active address to both the High Street and Websters Way. Development seeking to take advantage of creating active frontage on to Websters Way will be supported and encouraged by the Council so long as the principal parking and servicing functions of Websters Way are not undermined.

Pedestrian connections between the car park and High Street are critically important for the local economy. Ernie Lane and the route adjacent to the Spread Eagle Pub are very important in this regard and opportunities to improve their environmental condition – through better lighting, associated crossing points, and surface treatment – will continue to be considered in ongoing dialogue with relevant partners and stakeholders. The route alongside the Spread Eagle Pub is seen as a particular opportunity for improvement as set out in the AAP's movement framework above. The pedestrian links across the car park towards the King George's Park and the Town Council facilities is also an important consideration if changes were to come forward which directly affected the car park.

6. Delivering a better Rayleigh

6.1 Working in partnership

The Council will continue to work closely with partners, landowners and other stakeholders to realise the successful implementation of the policies in the AAP.

The Council will also continue to engage with the community. Although future planning applications and the development management process will determine the details of any individual development schemes that come forward, the community will be given the opportunity to have further input into the design of developments.

6.2 Working with Essex County Council

A further key partner is ECC, the Highways Authority. In its role as highway network manager, ECC will consider the movement framework identified in this AAP and will take this forward as part of its strategic planning process. In doing so, they will take into consideration the AAP policies.

ECC will also be responsible for reviewing and approving Transport Assessments and Travel Plans submitted as part of any future planning

applications for significant development in the AAP area. They will need to be satisfied that any transport impacts identified have been appropriately mitigated and that the movement-related elements of any scheme are in accordance with the AAP policies.

The Council will continue to be proactive in its engagement with ECC through the Local Highways Panel, which is made up of members and officers from both authorities and decides on which highway and public realm improvements monies will be spent.

6.3 Financial viability

The Council has taken into account information regarding national and local trends in the property market, as well as high-level viability advice. This is to ensure that the guidance set out within this AAP is robust and based on commercial realism.

6.4 Community infrastructure

The Council, in line with Core Strategy Policy CLT1, requires that developers provide on-site infrastructure to mitigate specific issues relating to their development scheme. Developers will also be required to contribute towards off-site, strategic infrastructure, which would help to mitigate the cumulative impact of new development.

The Core Strategy sets out the types of strategic infrastructure that should be funded

by contributions arising from new development. These include highway and public transport improvements, alongside a number of other important types of infrastructure.

The AAP sets out priorities for delivering environmental improvements and highways schemes. The Council will expect that new developments within, and affecting, the AAP area contribute towards these identified priorities, in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Table 1 gives further detail in relation to major improvements and schemes. It should be noted that this is not exhaustive and development may be required to contribute towards other enhancements as identified in the AAP or through the development management process.

6.5 Monitoring change

The importance of monitoring is recognised in both legislation and local policy. The Localism Act 2011 requires that the Council produces regular monitoring reports to assess the delivery of its planning documents and implementation of its policies. The Core Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to the production of monitoring reports and explains how each of its policies will be monitored.

Whilst the AAP's progress can be tracked to some extent against the Core Strategy's monitoring framework, there are several instances where a monitoring framework specific to the Rayleigh AAP is required. Table 2 sets out how the AAP will be monitored.

The Council's monitoring report will document whether or not the AAP's objectives are being met and will set out the necessary actions to aid the delivery of the AAP.

Table 2 – Implementation, delivery and monitoring

Policy	Implementation and delivery	Potential risk	Risk mitigation	Monitoring
Policy 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan framework	Development within the Rayleigh AAP area will be guided by the framework.	The development set out within the Rayleigh AAP framework is not delivered or does not meet the needs of Rayleigh and its residents.	The Council has engaged with relevant stakeholders during the evolution of the AAP. The AAP has benefitted from a number of informal stages of consultation and an iterative process of sustainability appraisal. Amendments in the policies and proposals have been made in view of the informal responses and feedback received during the production process.	The Council will record development through monitoring reports, keeping track of commitments and completions.
Policy 2 – Retail development in Rayleigh, and; Policy 3 – Rayleigh's shopping frontages	The town centre boundary and primary and secondary retail frontage and A1 retail proportions/concentrations were endorsed by the Retail and Leisure Study of 2008. However, the more recent town centre land use monitoring undertaken by the Council revealed that the A1 retail proportions being targeted were unsustainable and unrealistic. A range of options for redrawn primary and secondary frontages were considered and a preferred option taken forward to strengthen the primary shopping frontage.	<p>The policy plays an important role in protecting the retail vitality and viability of the centre. By making the changes proposed and taking a more flexible stance on changes of uses in the centre there is a risk that the retail character of the centre will be harmed.</p> <p>The temporary changes to the permitted development rights for town centre uses are also a factor which may impact on the success of these policies – although it should be noted that the plan period for this AAP is longer than that associated with the temporary changes.</p>	<p>The extent of the primary shopping area and the policy approach taken within it have been carefully assessed to ensure the approach taken supports the objectives set out under Core Strategy Policy RTC 4. By concentrating the primary shopping area around a much tighter core the policy position for the primary shopping area has been strengthened significantly.</p> <p>The number of retail units in A1 uses within the primary area is currently below the target level of the policy. The policy was therefore considered in need of review.</p>	The Council's economic development team monitor retail uses across the identified shopping frontages on a regular basis.

Policy	Implementation and delivery	Potential risk	Risk mitigation	Monitoring
Policy 4 – Rayleigh’s character areas	With no major site allocations being made in the AAP, the central thrust of the Plan is the protection of the area’s character whilst recognising the important role played by the town as the District’s principal town centre.	New development being proposed and investment in the public realm coming forward that does not respond as positively to the town’s character and context as it might have done.	Four character areas have been identified which coordinate well with those identified in the conservation area appraisal. In taking a character area-based approach, the Plan strengthens the role played by the guidance contained in the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.	The quality of new development will be monitored as planning decisions are made.
Policies 5, 6, 7 and 8 – Rayleigh’s character areas A, B, C, D	More specific proposals and priorities are identified in the individual character areas.	The town’s varied characteristics are not seen as the basis for new development and investment in the town.	Area specific policies help to identify local priorities and opportunities which will help to protect and enhance the qualities of these identified areas and the town as a whole.	The quality of new development will be monitored as planning decisions are made.



Rochford District Council Local Development Plan

Rayleigh Area Action Plan

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/ STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PRE- SUBMISSION AAP

December 2013



Rochford District Council Local Development Framework

Rayleigh Area Action Plan

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/ STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PRE-SUBMISSION AAP

for and on behalf of Enfusion Ltd:

<i>date:</i>	December 2013	
<i>prepared for:</i>	Rochford District Council	
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Rochford District Council Local Development Framework Rayleigh Area Action Plan

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRE-SUBMISSION REPORT

CONTENTS

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	I
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of The SA and the SA Report	1
Area Action Plan: DPD Contents and Objectives	1
Summary Of Compliance with the SEA Directive/Regulations	3
2.0 APPRAISAL METHODS	4
Scoping the Key Sustainability Issues	4
Appraising the AAP Options	4
Summary of SA Method	4
Uncertainties and Data Gaps	4
Consultation on the SA	5
3.0 SUSTAINABILITY CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES	6
Review of Relevant Plans and Programmes	6
Description of the Baseline Conditions	6
Key Sustainability Issues, Problems and Opportunities	9
The SA Framework	10
4.0 SA OF AAP OPTIONS (ALTERNATIVES)	14
SA of AAP Options	14
Reasons for progressing/rejecting options	20
5.0 SA OF AREA ACTION PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION POLICIES	26
SA of AAP Vision and Objectives	26
Summary of SA of Pre-Submission Policies	26
6.0 SUMMARY AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ANALYSIS	31
Cumulative Effect of Plan Policies (Intra-plan Effects)	31
Significant Positive Cumulative Effects of Plan Policies	33
Significant Negative or Uncertain Cumulative Effects of Plan Policies	34
Interactions with Other Relevant Plans & Projects (Inter-plan Effects)	34
7.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING	36
Introduction	36
SA Monitoring Proposals for the AAP	36
8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	40

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Economic Baseline information	7
Table 3.2: Environmental Baseline information	8
Table 3.3: Social Baseline information	8
Table 3.4: Key Sustainability Issues for Rayleigh AAP	9
Table 3.5: SA Framework	10
Table 4.1: Summary of Approach to Alternatives Assessment and Selection	21
Table 6.1: Intra-plan effects: Cumulative summary of Pre-Submission Policies	32
Table 6.2: Significant positive effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	33
Table 6.3: Potentially significant negative effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	34
Table 6.4: Inter-Plan Cumulative Effects	35
Table 7.1: Potential Indicators	36

APPENDICES**(Available separately)**

I	Statement on Compliance with the SEA Directive and Regulations
II	Summary of Responses to Consultation
III	New/ Updated Plans and Programmes
IV	SA of Rayleigh AAP Options
V	SA of Rayleigh AAP Vision and Objectives
VI	SA of Rayleigh AAP Pre-Submission Policies

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- 0.1 This is the summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for Rochford District Council's Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) Development Planning Document (DPD): Pre-Submission Document. It describes how the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process was used to assist in the preparation of the Area Action Plan, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL & STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- 0.2 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs). This requirement is set out in Section 39 (2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Sustainability Appraisal incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment¹² (SEA), a requirement of European and UK Legislation. Government guidance advises a number of stages of SA work that need to be carried out as a Local Development Document is being prepared:

Stage A: Setting Context & Scope
Stage B: Developing Options & Assessing Effects
Stage C: Preparing the SA Report
Stage D: Consulting on the Plan & the SA
Stage E: Monitoring Implementation of the Plan

- 0.3 The SA/SEA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has been prepared in accordance with these requirements for SA/SEA.

THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND RAYLEIGH AAP

- 0.4 The Council is in the process of preparing its Local Development Plan (LDP) (previously known as the Local Development Framework), which will set out how the District will develop in the future. The LDP will gradually replace the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan which was adopted in 2006. The Rochford Local Development Plan comprises the following Local Development Documents:

- Core Strategy DPD (also known as the Local Plan)
- Development Management DPD
- Site Allocations DPD
- Area Action Plans (DPDs) for Rochford Town Centre, Hockley Town Centre, Rayleigh Town Centre and London Southend Airport (with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council).

¹ EU Directive 2001/42/EC

² Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

- 0.5 The Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) creates a policy framework for development of Rayleigh from which applications for planning permission will be determined against. The AAP sets out a vision for the future which declares that Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as Rochford District's main centre and that new development will help to enhance the centre's historic setting.
- 0.6 The AAP sets a vision for the settlement's future based on an understanding of the unique context that drives change and development in Rayleigh. It translates this vision into implementation objectives, policies and guidance that will act as a robust framework for delivery.

THE CHARACTER OF RAYLEIGH

- 0.7 Rayleigh town centre is situated in the south west of the District, approximately 32 miles from London and 4.9 miles from Southend-on-Sea. It is the largest retail centre in the District with a strong comparison and convenience offer, low vacancy rates and a range of unit sizes.
- 0.8 A large portion of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area and includes a number of listed buildings as well as the Rayleigh Mount, which is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

SA SCOPING & ISSUES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- 0.9 A SA scoping process was undertaken to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Rayleigh. This included the development of an SA Framework of objectives to comprise the basis for appraisal. An SA Scoping Report was prepared to summarise the findings of the scoping process and was sent to statutory consultees for consultation in September 2012. As part of the scoping process plans and programmes were reviewed and information was collated relating to the current and predicted social, environmental and economic characteristics of Rayleigh.
- 0.10 From these studies, the key sustainability issues and opportunities for the AAP and the SA were identified, as follows:

Key Sustainability Issues for Rayleigh AAP	
■	The provision of quality and affordable housing to meet housing needs in Rayleigh.
■	Improve the connectivity between the High Street, Rayleigh Mount, the Windmill and Mill Arts and Leisure Centre.
■	Improve the connectivity between the High Street and the main town centre parking facility on Websters Way.
■	Reduce traffic along Websters Way and improve pedestrian movement.
■	Taking account of environmental and physical constraints when accommodating new development.
■	Opportunity to improve the public realm and pedestrian movement.
■	The protection of the Rayleigh Conservation Area and listed

buildings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of car ownership and travelling to work using a private vehicle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air quality concerns in Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road (an AQMA is being designated) which may restrict new traffic-generating development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to improve retail and provide a greater range of leisure service providers, comparison goods and mixed-use schemes incorporating floorspace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change is a significant issue facing all communities and the AAP will need to consider issues around energy efficiency, renewables and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

SA FRAMEWORK

- 0.11 An SA Framework was compiled and included SA Objectives that aim to resolve the issues and problems identified; these are used to test the draft plan as it is being prepared. The SA Framework for Rayleigh AAP is based on that developed for the Rochford Core Strategy. A list of the SA objective headings follows:

SA Objective headings	
1. Balanced Communities	8. Landscape & Townscape
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	9. Climate Change & Energy
3. Housing	10. Water
4. Economy & Employment	11. Land & Soil
5. Accessibility	12. Air Quality
6. Biodiversity	13. Sustainable Design & Construction
7. Cultural Heritage	

SA OF THE RAYLEIGH AAP

- 0.12 Each stage of the preparation of the AAP was appraised using the SA Objectives. Where significant negative effects, including environmental effects, were predicted, the SA sought where possible to identify means of offsetting these effects. Where it was considered that there were opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the proposals, recommendations were made. The appraisal recognised 6 categories of predicted effects, as illustrated in the following key.

Categories of sustainability effects	
Colour	Impact
++	Major Positive
+	Positive
0	No Impact
?	Uncertain
-	Negative
--	Major Negative

CONSIDERATION AND APPRAISAL OF ALTERNATIVES

- 0.13 The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in November 2012. The purpose and key objectives of the AAP have been set at a higher level; therefore it was considered that the alternatives available to the plan-maker in preparing the AAP were limited to the level and type of intervention/development that should be accommodated in the Town Centre.
- 0.14 The Issues and Options Document (2009) identified a number of areas within the town centre where opportunities may exist for redevelopment, as well as a range of opportunities related to transport and circulation and the public realm. A range of options were proposed in relation to each area and some involved a number of key aspects which included the redevelopment of existing buildings or vacant for mixed-uses, or the redevelopment of existing businesses to enlarge existing car parking facilities. Some options were devised using a number of interventions which would result in differing levels of change i.e. low, medium, high and/or higher.
- 0.15 The options which proposed interventions which sought to improve the quality and attractiveness of particular areas, supported mixed-use development and/ or improve pedestrian links were found to progress many of the SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility, the economy, heritage, townscape and sustainable design. The significance of effects was found to increase along with the level of intervention. However, with a higher level of intervention there is also some uncertainty and this was because the proposed development could have the potential for negative effects in the short-term on SA objectives through increased noise and congestion. The SA also found that options which recommended full pedestrianisation may have negative effects on communities and health as they could potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement.
- 0.16 Furthermore, with reference to the spatial options, it was considered that composite option that sought the higher level of intervention proposed in option 4 with the shared space treatments proposed in option 3 (rather than the pedestrianisation of the High Street), would not require the diversion of traffic and would provide greater benefits to a wider area.
- 0.17 Alongside consultation responses, the Council considered the SA findings in its decision making. The reasons for the selection or rejection of options in plan-making are set out in Section 4 of the SA Report.

APPRAISAL OF THE AAP VISION AND POLICIES

- 0.18 A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in December 2013. Overall the vision and objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA objectives.
- 0.19 The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in December 2013. On the whole, the findings of the SA suggest that the emerging AAP policies

will make significant contributions to the progression of SA objectives. Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered and these have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS IDENTIFIED

- 0.20 The majority of policies were found to have significant positive sustainability benefits. The following table summarises the key positive effects identified:

Significant positive effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	
Key relevant SA Objective:	Positive effects identified:
1.Balanced communities & 2.Healthy and Safe Communities	The AAP will have positive effects on communities through providing a mix of uses in the town centre, including retail, cultural, leisure facilities and new public spaces. New, improved and enhanced pedestrian links should encourage more people to get out and about and improve their fitness. Improving the quality of the area could help reduce the incidence of crime and the potential for new employment opportunities will have positive indirect effects on the health of the community. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
4.Economy and Employment	A significant positive effect on the local economy is likely through enhanced opportunities for retail, leisure and offices. It seeks to enhance consumer choice through encouraging opportunities for development in addition to the main focus on retail which should provide more employment opportunities (skilled and unskilled) for local residents. It also seeks to strengthen pedestrian links across Rayleigh which is likely to provide better access for consumers and workers to the centre of Rayleigh thereby boosting the local economy. Improvements to the public realm will also make the town centre a more attractive and enjoyable place for people to shop, visit and live. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
5. Accessibility	Significant positive cumulative effects for accessibility are likely through a range of improvements to the public realm, upgrades to bus facilities, access to the train station and increased accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.
6.Landscape and Townscape	The setting of key principles for development to contribute positively to the local townscape and character, focusing on the individual parts of the AAP area, is likely to lead to positive cumulative

	effects. In addition, the combined requirements for enhancing the public realm and the likely redevelopment of derelict, degraded or underused land will also contribute to an overall significant positive cumulative effect.
7. Cultural Heritage	The main thrust of the AAP is to ensure that the historic character of the centre is protected and where possible enhanced. It advocates new and improved pedestrian signage to key cultural heritage assets such as the Mount and the Windmill which will hopefully improve access to heritage. Furthermore, public realm interventions and regeneration are likely to help improve the aesthetic value of the AAP area which is likely to benefit the conservation area and the settings of the listed buildings. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.

- 0.21 Alongside the many positive effects of the plan, potential negative sustainability effects were also identified, although the effect is uncertain at this stage of the assessment and it is considered likely that these effects can be mitigated at a more detailed planning stage. These are summarised below:

Potentially significant negative effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	
Key relevant SA Objective:	Negative Effects identified:
7. Cultural Heritage	Some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as noise and vibration will be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level. Any other effects were considered to be mitigated by policies contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs.
2. Healthy and Safe Communities and 12. Air quality	There have been exceedences of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide at Eastwood Road/Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road. Any new development has the potential to increase nitrogen dioxide levels in the both the short-term and the long-term. Mitigation already in place through Core Strategy Policies. There may be some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as waste, noise and dust nuisances may be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level.

MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MONITORING

- 0.22 An important role of the SA process is to provide recommendations for the mitigation of negative effects and enhancement of the positive effects identified in the appraisal process. In preparing the AAP, Rochford District Council has already sought to address many of the sustainability problems in Rayleigh, and consequently the majority of the SA findings were positive. A small number of recommendations have been made and these will be considered by the Council in finalising the plan.
- 0.23 Local planning authorities are required to produce Annual Monitoring Reports to monitor the progress of the Local Development Plan. There is also a requirement to monitor the predictions made in the SA. Rochford District Council prepares an Annual Monitoring report each year, and in preparing the report, considers any recommendations made through the SA process. The indicators and targets suggested for the SA monitoring of the Core Strategy are considered appropriate for the monitoring of the Rayleigh AAP, with additional specific suggestions made during the preparation of the Rayleigh AAP. This SA has also made further suggestions, which are detailed in the main SA report.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 0.24 The SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has appraised the effects of individual policies, as well as the overall effect of the plan, including cumulative and incremental effects. It has also considered and appraised reasonable alternatives to the plan itself; and this information has been made available to the Council to help in the selection of the preferred plan. Overall the SA has found that the AAP will help to resolve a number of key sustainability issues in Rayleigh Town Centre and will also play a role in improving sustainability in the wider Rochford District. Significant positive effects were identified for communities, economy and employment, accessibility, landscape and townscape and cultural heritage.
- 0.25 The sustainability appraisal did not identify any significant likely negative effects from the plan alone. However, possible significant cumulative negative effects were identified for cultural heritage, healthy and safe communities and air quality. It is expected that these can be mitigated and managed through further detailed planning, monitoring as well as by policies already in place which are contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs. To reduce short-term negative effects on cultural heritage and on health, it was also recommended that either a construction management plan could be developed or phasing could be introduced at the project level.
- 0.26 The Council has considered the recommendations made throughout the Sustainability Appraisal process, and amended the plan where appropriate. This has contributed to further enhancing the positive sustainability effects of the AAP.
- 0.27 This SA Report will accompany the AAP on Pre-Submission consultation for 6 weeks, during which time interested parties are invited to make

representations on the AAP or the SA. The SA will form part of the evidence base during the Examination of the AAP and if any further significant changes are made to the plan the SA Report will be updated accordingly. A finalised report will accompany the adopted DPD when it is published.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE SA AND THE SA REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs). This requirement is set out in Section 39 (2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Local Development Documents must also be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment³⁴ (SEA) and Government advises⁵ that an integrated approach is adopted so that the SA process incorporates the SEA requirements.
- 1.2 This SA Report documents the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment processes for Rochford District Council's Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) Development Planning Document (DPD): Pre-Submission Document. The Sustainability Appraisal Framework discussed in Section 3 of this SA Report indicates the relationship between the SA and the SEA; compliance with the SEA Regulations is signposted below in this section and detailed in Appendix I. This SA Report is being published for consultation with the Rayleigh AAP Pre-Submission Document in accordance with SEA Regulations and SA Guidance.

AREA ACTION PLAN: DPD CONTENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Local Development Plan

- 1.3 The Council is in the process of preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP) (previously known as the Local Development Framework), which will set out how the District will develop in the future. The LDP will gradually replace the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan which was adopted in 2006. The Rochford LDP comprises the following Local Development Documents:
- Core Strategy DPD (also known as the Local Plan)
 - Development Management DPD
 - Site Allocations DPD
 - Area Action Plans (DPDs) for Rochford Town Centre, Hockley Town Centre, Rayleigh Town Centre and London Southend Airport (with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council).

Core Strategy

- 1.4 The Core Strategy is the overarching strategic document of the Rochford District Council Local Development Plan, and sets out the key elements of the planning framework for the District; it is the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Core Strategy was adopted in

³ EU Directive 2001/42/EC

⁴ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

⁵ DCLG (August 2013) National Planning Practice Guidance: Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal.

December 2011 and contains a policy relating to the development of Rayleigh Town Centre, which is reproduced below:

Policy RTC4 - Rayleigh Town Centre

The Council will ensure that Rayleigh town centre's role as the District's principal town centre is retained through the production and implementation of an Area Action Plan which delivers the following:

- Improved accessibility to and within the town centre
- A safe and high quality environment for residents and visitors
- A predominance of retail uses, including intensification of existing retail uses, which cater for a variety of needs
- A range of evening leisure uses
- Promotes provision of community facilities, including exploration of potential locations for a healthcare centre and, if appropriate delivery of such facility

The Council will work with landowners and its partners to deliver the Area Action Plan.

Rayleigh Area Action Plan

- 1.5 The Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) creates a policy framework for development of Rayleigh from which applications for planning permission will be determined against. The AAP sets out a vision for the future which declares that Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as Rochford District's main centre and that new development will help to enhance the centre's historic setting.
- 1.6 The AAP sets a vision for the settlement's future, based on an understanding of the unique context that drives change and development in Rayleigh. It translates this vision into implementation objectives, policies and guidance that will act as a robust framework for delivery.

Vision

'Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as the District's main centre. By 2025, 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 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 its existing character, including that of nearby suburban, low-density neighbourhoods.'

- 1.7 The four key objectives that support this vision are set out below:
- 1) Strengthening Rayleigh's role as Rochford District's principal town centre.
 - 2) Improving accessibility for all
 - 3) Making the most of historic assets

4) Delivering public realm improvements

SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE SEA DIRECTIVE & REGULATIONS

- 1.8 The SEA Regulations set out certain requirements for reporting the SEA process, and specify that if an integrated appraisal is undertaken (i.e. SEA is subsumed within the SA process, as for the SA of the Rayleigh AAP), then the sections of the SA Report that meet the requirements set out for reporting the SEA process must be clearly signposted. The requirements for reporting the SEA process are set out in Appendix I.

2.0 APPRAISAL METHODS

SCOPING THE KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

- 2.1 Enfusion Ltd was commissioned in July 2012 by Rochford District Council to progress the SA work. A SA scoping process was undertaken in September 2012 to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Rayleigh. This included the development of an SA Framework of objectives (presented at the end of Section 3 of this SA Report) to comprise the basis for appraisal. An SA Scoping Report was prepared to summarise the findings of the Scoping process. This was sent to statutory consultees for consultation in September 2012. Responses to this scoping consultation, and how they were taken into account, are reported in this SA Report.

APPRAISING THE AREA ACTION PLAN OPTIONS

- 2.2 A number of options for future change in Rayleigh were initially identified through an Issues and Options Document published for consultation in September 2009. The options identified in this Report (Rayleigh Town Centre Issues and Options Report: A discussion and consultation report Sept 2009) were assessed against the full SA Framework of objectives with regard to the short, medium and long term effects of the options on the SA objectives. The findings helped to inform the development of the Pre-Submission AAP. The detailed SA of options is provided at Appendix IV with a summary of findings provided in Section 4.

SUMMARY OF SA METHOD

- 2.3 The method used for this Sustainability Appraisal of the Rayleigh AAP Pre-Submission DPD comprises the following elements:
- Identifying relevant baseline information and other plans or programmes that influence the AAP policies.
 - Using the Sustainability Appraisal Framework with professional expertise and drawing upon selected information in the Review of Plans and Programmes, and the Baseline Information.
 - Commenting on the areas where each element or policy of the AAP has specific potential impacts - highlighting where possible, positive/negative effects, short/long term effects, indirect/direct effects, cumulative effects, and the reversibility, scale and likelihood of effects with recommendations for proposed mitigation or enhancement where identified.

UNCERTAINTIES AND DATA GAPS

- 2.4 Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered. It is not always possible to accurately predict sustainability effects when considering plans at this scale. Impacts on cultural heritage, for example, will depend on more detailed information and studies at a site-level. It is also difficult to predict air quality effects and future traffic levels based on interventions. These

uncertainties have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

CONSULTATION ON THE SA

- 2.5 The key sustainability issues were identified through the SA scoping process and described in the SA Scoping Report that was placed on consultation with statutory consultees in September 2012. The responses were used to inform the development of the SA Framework.
- 2.6 This SA Report is being published alongside the Rayleigh AAP Pre-Submission DPD. It will be published on the Council's website <http://www.rochford.gov.uk/> and sent to statutory consultees and other relevant stakeholders for consideration and comment.

3.0 SUSTAINABILITY CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

- 3.1 In order to establish a clear scope for the SA of the AAP it is necessary (and a requirement of SEA) to review and develop an understanding of the relationship of the plan with other plans or programmes and how their environmental objectives have been taken into account during its preparation⁶. This includes International, European, National, Regional and local level policies, plans and strategies. Summarising the aspirations of other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives (hereafter referred to as 'relevant plans') promotes systematic identification of the ways in which the Plan could help fulfill them.
- 3.2 A detailed plans and programmes review was undertaken for the SA Report (September 2009) of the Rochford District Core Strategy Submission Document. The full information is available to view on the Council's website⁷. To account for changes since the SA Report in September 2009, a list of new or updated key plans and programmes was provided in Appendix 1 of the SA Scoping Report (September 2012). This list of new or updated key plans and programmes is available in Appendix III to this Report.
- 3.3 Of most relevance is the adopted Rochford District Core Strategy DPD, which sets out the vision, new development and infrastructure requirements for Rayleigh. It includes Policy RTC 4 (Rayleigh Town Centre) which sets out the requirement for an Area Action Plan for Rayleigh.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 3.4 The SEA Directive requires the collation of baseline information to provide an evidence base for environmental problems, the prediction of effects, and monitoring; to help in the development of SEA objectives. This task was undertaken for the original LDF Core Strategy Draft SA Scoping report (2005), and is updated on an annual basis for RDC by Essex County Council. The latest version of the baseline (2010) will be available on the Council website in due course. The information in the baseline encompasses the environmental and socio-economic characteristics of Rochford District, providing a general context for the SA of the AAPs.
- 3.5 The characteristics and key baseline information for Rayleigh were set out in the SA Scoping Report published in September 2012. Further studies relating to the AAP area may be undertaken to support the plan-making processes. If further studies become available, they will be used to inform the SA.
- 3.6 The key relevant features of the AAP area have been summarised below:

⁶ DCLG (August 2013) National Planning Practice Guidance: Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal.

⁷ http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/policy/local_development_framework/core_strategy_submitted

- Rayleigh town centre is situated in the south west of the District, approximately 32 miles from London and 4.9 miles from Southend-on-Sea. It is the largest retail centre in the District with a strong comparison and convenience offer, low vacancy rates and a range of unit sizes.
- A large portion of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area and includes a number of listed buildings as well as the Rayleigh Mount, which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Table 3.1: Economic Baseline information (SEA Topics Material Assets, Population and Human Health)

- 74% of people in the Wheatley Ward⁸ are classed as being in employment with 2.9% unemployed.
- The percentage of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in the Wheatley Ward is 2.5% (July 2012).
- Employment by occupation in the ward is as follows: manager & senior officials 19.6%; professional 10.4%; associate professional & technical 16.3%; administrative & secretarial 16.9%; skilled trades 10.8%; personal services 5.8%; sales & customer services 7.8%; process plant & machine operatives 4.5% and elementary occupations 7.7%.
- There are 14 convenience good units in Rayleigh, which equates to 7.0% of the total number of units in Rayleigh - slightly below the national average of 8.42%. In terms of floorspace however Rayleigh is just above the national average with 15.0% of total floorspace compared to the national average of 13.71%.
- There are 75 comparison units within Rayleigh Town Centre with a range of national multiples present including Boots, Dorothy Perkins and Woolworths, equating to 37.5% of the total number of units in Rayleigh. This compares to a national average of 35.71%. The retail offer is therefore slightly above the national average.
- The retail service sector and financial and business service sectors are well represented in Rayleigh, coming in above the national averages for unit numbers and proportion of floorspace, while the leisure service sector is below the national average in both cases.

⁸ The Wheatley Ward includes the majority of the AAP area.

Table 3.2: Environmental Baseline information (SEA topics:

Biodiversity, Soil, Water, Air, Climatic Factors, Cultural Heritage, Landscape)

- Available information indicates that there are air quality concerns relating to the exceedance of annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions in Rayleigh.⁹ A review¹⁰ undertaken in 2011 concluded that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) will be required for the annual mean objective around the junction of Eastwood Road and the High Street.
- There is an existing Air Quality Management Area at Rawreth Industrial Estate, Rayleigh however this is outside of the AAP area and is caused by fine dust emissions from industry, therefore is unlikely to be influenced by the plan.
- There are no international, national or locally designated sites for biodiversity or geodiversity within or adjacent to the town centre.
- The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identified that the Area Action Plan for Rayleigh is located within Flood Zone 1, associated with low probability of flooding from fluvial and tidal sources.
- A large portion of the AAP area is part of the Rayleigh Conservation Area, which includes 24 listed buildings.
- Included within the Conservation Area and adjacent to the AAP area is the Rayleigh Mount, which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Table 3.3: Social Baseline information (SEA topics: Population & Human Health).

- The population in the Rochford 008¹¹ Middle Layer Super Output Area¹²
- The health of people in Rochford District is generally better than the England average. Deprivation is lower than average, however 1,795 children live in poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.
- Since 2003 the level of crime in the District has reduced significantly; however, the number of drug related offences has

⁹ AMEC (2012) Air Quality Updating and Screening Assessment for Rochford District Council. Rochford District Council. Online at <http://www.essexair.org.uk> [accessed November 2013]

¹⁰ Air Quality Consultants (2011) Detailed Assessment of Air Quality in Rayleigh. Online at <http://www.essexair.org.uk> [accessed November 2013]

¹¹ This Super Output Area includes the area covered by the AAP.

¹² Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a geography designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. They are used by the Office for National Statistics.

increased.

- Rayleigh's railway station is located five to ten minutes walking distance from the High Street. A mainline service operated by Anglia National Express runs between Southend-on-Sea and London Liverpool Street.
- The town has frequent bus services to and from neighbouring towns in the district.
- Traffic is limited to one lane along Websters Way, which coupled with the presence of the main town centre car park and retail servicing arrangements is causing congestion.
- As with other centres in Rochford District, there does not appear to be any specific provision for cyclists or people with disabilities other than limited cycle parking at the Railway Station.

KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.7 It is important to distil the key sustainability issues, problems and objectives relevant to the District from the collated information and consideration of the particular character of the area. These issues are considered to be priorities for consideration through the Sustainability Appraisal, and the SA Framework of sustainability objectives (detailed later in this Section) seeks to attend to them.
- 3.8 The following key sustainability issues are considered to be priorities for sustainability, arising from the particular characteristics, pressures and opportunities currently affecting Rayleigh.

Table 3.4: Key Sustainability Issues for Rayleigh AAP

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The provision of quality and affordable housing to meet housing needs in Rayleigh.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the connectivity between the High Street, Rayleigh Mount, the Windmill and Mill Arts and Leisure Centre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the connectivity between the High Street and the main town centre parking facility on Websters Way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduce traffic along Websters Way and improve pedestrian movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taking account of environmental and physical constraints when accommodating new development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Opportunity to improve the public realm and pedestrian movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The protection of the Rayleigh Conservation Area and listed buildings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High levels of car ownership and travelling to work using a private vehicle.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Air quality concerns in Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road which may restrict new traffic-generating development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Opportunity to improve retail and provide a greater range of leisure service providers, comparison goods and mixed-use schemes incorporating floorspace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Climate change is a significant issue facing all communities and the AAP will need to consider issues around energy efficiency, renewables and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

THE SA FRAMEWORK

- 3.9 The proposed SA Framework provides the basis by which the sustainability effects of emerging AAP will be described, analysed and compared. It includes a number of sustainability objectives, elaborated by 'decision-aiding questions'. The SA Framework developed for the Rochford Core Strategy is considered to be suitable for the appraisal of the Rayleigh AAP, however a number of amendments have been made to ensure the 'decision-aiding questions' address the specific concerns facing Rayleigh. The final SA Framework is provided in Table 3.5 below and has been informed by statutory consultee responses to the SA Scoping Report.

Table 3.5: SA Framework	
SA Objective	Decision-Aiding Question Will it (the Policy)...?
Balanced Communities	
1. To ensure the delivery of high quality sustainable communities where people want to live and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Will it ensure the phasing of infrastructure, including community facilities to meet ongoing and future needs? ■ Will it ensure the regeneration and enhancement of existing rural and urban communities? ■ Will it ensure equal opportunities and that all sections of the community are catered for? ■ Will it meet the needs of an ageing population in Rayleigh? ■ Will the policies and options proposed seek to enhance the qualifications and skills of the local community? ■ Will income and quality-of-life disparities be reduced?
Healthy & Safe Communities	
2. Create healthy and safe environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Will it ensure the delivery of high quality, safe and inclusive design? ■ Will it improve health and reduce health inequalities in Rayleigh? ■ Will it promote informal recreation and encourage healthy, active lifestyles? ■ Will green infrastructure (non-vehicular infrastructure routes and links) and networks be promoted and/or enhanced?

Table 3.5: SA Framework	
SA Objective	Decision-Aiding Question Will it (the Policy)...?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it minimise noise pollution? Will it minimise light pollution?
Housing	
3. To provide everybody with the opportunity to live in a decent home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it increase the range and affordability of housing for all social groups in Rayleigh? Will a mix of housing types and tenures be promoted? Will it reduce the number of unfit homes? Does it promote high quality design? Is there sustainable access to key services in Rayleigh? Does it meet the resident's needs in terms of sheltered and lifetime homes or those that can be easily adapted so?
Economy & Employment	
4. To achieve sustainable levels of economic growth/prosperity and promote town centre vitality/viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it promote and enhance existing centres by focusing development in such centres? Will it improve business development in Rayleigh? Does it enhance consumer choice through the provision of a range of shopping, leisure, and local services to meet the needs of the entire community? Does it promote mixed use and high density development in urban centres? Does it promote a wide variety of jobs across all sectors? Does it secure more opportunities for residents to work in the District? Will it aid the realisation of London Southend Airport's economic potential?
Accessibility	
5. To promote more sustainable transport choices both for people and moving freight ensuring access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it increase the availability of sustainable transport modes in Rayleigh? Will it seek to encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation other than the private car, including walking and cycling? Will it contribute positively to reducing social exclusion by ensuring access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services? Will it reduce the need to travel? Does it seek to encourage development where large volumes of people and/or transport movements are located in sustainable accessible locations? Does it enable access for all sections of the community, including the young, the socially deprived, those with disabilities and the elderly? Does it secure more opportunities for residents to work in the District, and for out-commuting to be reduced? Does it enable access to green infrastructure and the wider natural environment to all sections of the community?

Table 3.5: SA Framework	
SA Objective	Decision-Aiding Question Will it (the Policy)...?
Biodiversity	
6. To conserve and enhance the biological and geological diversity of the environment as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it conserve and enhance natural/semi natural habitats, including the District's distinctive estuaries and salt marshes? Will it conserve and enhance species diversity, and in particular avoid harm to protected species and priority species? Will it maintain and enhance sites designated for their nature conservation interest? Will it conserve and enhance sites of geological significance? Does land use allocation reflect the scope of using brownfield land for significant wildlife interest where viable and realistic? Does new development integrate within it opportunities for new habitat creation, particularly where they could facilitate species movement and colonisation in relation to climate change pressures on biodiversity and its distribution?
Cultural Heritage	
7. To maintain and enhance the cultural heritage and assets of the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it protect and enhance sites, features and areas of historical, archaeological and cultural value in both urban and rural areas? Will it support locally-based cultural resources and activities?
Landscape & Townscape	
8. To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes and townscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it seek to enhance the range and quality of the public realm and open spaces? Will it contribute to the delivery of the enhancement, effective management and appropriate use of land in the urban fringe? Will it reduce the amount of derelict, degraded and underused land? Will it conserve (as preservation is neither realistic or desirable) the landscape character areas of the plan area? Will it preserve and/or enhance townscape character and value?
Climate Change & Energy	
9. To reduce contributions to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by reducing energy consumption? Will it lead to an increased proportion of energy needs being met from renewable sources in Rayleigh? Does it adapt to and provide for the consequences of climate change in a largely low-lying area?
Water	
10. To improve water quality and reduce the risk of flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the quality of inland water? Will it improve the quality of coastal waters? Will it provide for an efficient water conservation and supply regime in Rayleigh? Will it provide for effective wastewater treatment?

Table 3.5: SA Framework	
SA Objective	Decision-Aiding Question Will it (the Policy)...?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it require the provision of sustainable drainage systems in new development? Will it reduce the risk of flooding? Will it integrate sustainable flood management which works with natural processes, presents habitat enhancement opportunities and is landscape character sensitive?
Land & Soil	
11. To maintain and improve the quality of the District's land and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it ensure the re-use of previously-developed land and urban areas in preference to Greenfield sites, as far as is practicable given the characteristics of the District? Will higher-density development be promoted where appropriate? Will soil quality be preserved? Will it promote the remediation of contaminated land in Rayleigh? Will the best and most versatile agricultural land be protected?
Air Quality	
12. To improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will air quality be improved through reduced emissions (e.g. through reducing car travel)? Will it direct transport movements away from AQMAs and/or potentially significant junctions?
Sustainable Design & Construction	
13. To promote sustainable design and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it ensure the use of sustainable design principles, e.g. encouraging a mix of uses? Will climate proofing design measures be incorporated? Will the local character/vernacular be preserved and enhanced through development? Will it require the re-use and recycling of construction materials? Will it encourage locally-sourced materials? Will it require best-practice sustainable construction methods, for example in energy and water efficiency?

4.0 SA OF AREA ACTION PLAN OPTIONS (ALTERNATIVES)

SA OF AREA ACTION PLAN OPTIONS

- 4.1 The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in November 2012 using the SA Framework, with the predicted effects recorded in a matrix (Appendix IV) and detailed commentary and justification provided where necessary. The purpose and key objectives of the AAP have been set at a higher level; therefore it is considered that the alternatives available to the plan-maker in preparing the AAP were limited to the level and type of intervention/development that should be accommodated in the Town Centre. A do-nothing approach is not considered appropriate in this instance as it would not be in accordance with Policy RTC4 - Rayleigh Town Centre from the Adopted Core Strategy, which requires a certain level of intervention in Rayleigh to achieve regeneration objectives.
- 4.2 The options considered for the AAP fell under a number of different categories including: Issues; Components, Circulation and Spatial. The following provides a summary of the appraisal findings for the different options. The detailed appraisal of options is provided in Appendix IV. Full descriptions and details of each individual option are provided in Rochford District Council's 'Rayleigh Town Centre Issues and Options - A discussion and consultation report' (Urban Initiatives, 2009) which is available online at http://fs-drupal-rochford.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/raap_issues_options.pdf

ISSUES

Issue 1. Quality and setting of conservation area/ listed buildings undermined by unsympathetic development and 'street clutter'.

- 4.3 For this issue, four options were considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; High; and Higher.
- 4.4 The options propose varying levels of intervention to enhance the quality and setting of the conservation area. All of the options have the potential for positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health, the economy, heritage, townscape and sustainable design. The higher the level of intervention the more positive the effect is likely to be; however, the redevelopment of unsympathetic buildings, particularly in large blocks, also adds an element of uncertainty. The high and higher options have the potential for negative effects on a number of SA objectives in the short-term during construction; however, it is considered that suitable mitigation measures are available at the project level to address potential negative effects. The high option was assessed as having an uncertain effect on accessibility and health as a shared space scheme could make it difficult for blind members of the community to move through the town centre.
- 4.5 The higher option also has the potential for negative effects on communities and health as a result of the pedestrianisation of the High Street. This would result in the diversion of traffic along surrounding routes (Bellingham Lane,

Church Street, London Hill & Websters Way), which would require significant infrastructure improvements for these routes to be able to accommodate the additional traffic. It would potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement. It could lead to the diversion of buses (depending on full or partial pedestrianisation) away from the High Street along alternative routes which could result in delays to journeys and little opportunity to provide priority measures.

Issue 2. Need to introduce a greater range of leisure service providers, further comparison goods floorspace and office space.

- 4.6 For this issue, four options were also considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; High; and Higher.
- 4.7 All of the options have the potential for a positive effect on social and economic SA objectives as they seek to improve access to a greater mix of uses. The higher option has the potential for the greater positive effect as it proposes the development of a major mixed-use redevelopment at the southern end of the High Street and could potentially result in new residential development within the town centre. This would help to regenerate the existing community and improve access to employment, housing and retail with indirect positive effect on transport by reducing the need for people to travel. The assessment identified some uncertainty in relation to the medium, high and higher options given the development they propose and potential impacts on communities, townscape and transport during construction. However, it is considered that suitable mitigation measures are available at the project level to minimise potential impacts. There are a number of potential negative effects that could arise as a result of the pedestrianisation of the High Street, which are set out in the summary appraisal of the Issue1 options.

Issue 3. Cluster of leisure and cultural uses around Rayleigh Mount are poorly integrated with the town centre core.

- 4.8 For this issue, three options were considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; and High.
- 4.9 The options propose improvements to the pedestrian environment around Rayleigh Mount and improved access to the town centre core. This has the potential for a positive effect on SA objectives relating to the economy and communities. The low option will not have the same benefits as the other options in terms of accessibility as no new access routes are proposed. The medium and high option are likely to have similar effects; however, the assessment did identify uncertainty in relation to the shared space treatments proposed in the high option, which can have implications for blind members of the community.

Issue 4. Traffic dominated, service access nature of Websters Way represents a poor quality environment and arrival to the town centre.

- 4.10 For this issue, four options were considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; High; and Higher.
- 4.11 The options were assessed as having the potential for a positive effect on communities, health and the economy through measures intended to improve the environment of Websters Way. Compared to the other options, the higher option was assessed as having the potential for greater a positive effect for communities and the economy through the creation of a multi-storey car park and the redevelopment of the block fronting Eastwood Road for mixed-uses. However, it was also assessed that the creation of a multi-storey car park on Websters Way could have a negative effect on townscape as well as the Rayleigh Conservation Area. Development would need to be carefully planned and designed.

Issue 5. Pedestrian movement hindered or uncatered for in some locations through a combination of vehicle dominated junction forms, street clutter and guardrailing, narrow or missing pavements, or poorly defined routes.

- 4.12 For this issue, four options were also considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; High; and Higher.
- 4.13 The options seek to improve pedestrian movement in the AAP area through a variety of different interventions, including improved or new pedestrian routes and junctions, which have the potential for long-term positive effects on communities, health, the economy and accessibility. The low and medium options propose improving existing routes with the medium option having the added benefit of providing walking improvements at junctions which is an identified issue within the AAP area. The high option is likely to have the greatest positive effect on SA objectives as it proposes redevelopment at strategic locations to create new, direct walking routes as well as reconfiguring the taxi rank and bus stop on the High Street to provide high quality walking routes. The higher option is unlikely to have the same benefits as it will only result in improved pedestrian movement along the High Street, whereas the high option will improve connectivity throughout the AAP area. There are a number of potential negative effects that could arise as a result of the pedestrianisation of the High Street, which are set out in the summary appraisal of the Issue1 options.

Issue 6. Congestion along Websters Way and approaches into the town centre.

- 4.14 For this issue, four options were considered which relate to differing levels of intervention or change: Low; Medium; High; and Higher.
- 4.15 The low option was assessed as having the potential for a positive effect on communities, health and accessibility as it seeks to improve conditions for walking and cycling within the town centre. It was also assessed as having a positive effect on climate change and air quality as it will help to encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation other than the private car, therefore reducing emissions from vehicles. The medium, high and higher options all propose measures to try and reduce the level of traffic within the

town centre, which will have a positive effect on SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility, townscape, climate change and air quality. A composite option that sought to not only reduce traffic in the town centre but also improve walking and cycling conditions would have a greater positive effect against SA objectives than any of the proposed options.

COMPONENTS

Area around the Police Station and Somerfield Store

- 4.16 For this component, three options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; Option 2; and Option 3.
- 4.17 All of the options were assessed as having a positive effect on SA objectives relating to communities, health, heritage and townscape as they seek to improve the south of the High Street, which is a gateway to the town centre. Option 3 has the potential to provide the greatest benefits, particularly for the economy, as it proposes the highest level of intervention, which includes a new town centre food store and mixed-use developments. With a higher level of intervention comes a degree of uncertainty as development has the potential for negative effects in the short-term during construction (noise & traffic); however, it is considered that suitable mitigation measures are available at the project level to minimise impacts and address any significant effects.

The High Street taxi rank ('Boots Lagoon')

- 4.18 For this component, two options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; and Option 2.
- 4.19 Option 2 was assessed as having the greatest positive effect on SA objectives relating to communities, health and the economy through public realm improvements and the creation of a new public space in the town centre.

Opportunities between the High Street and Mount

- 4.20 For this component, three options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; Option 2; and Option 3.
- 4.21 Option 3 was assessed as having the greatest potential for sustainability benefits through the provision of a large mixed-use development, the creation of large central public space and wider public realm improvements along the High Street and Bellingham Lane. It has the potential for long-term positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health, housing, the economy and accessibility. The other options also have the potential for positive effects on SA objectives although not the same level of significance as option 3. However, given the higher level of intervention, option 3 has the potential for negative effects on heritage and townscape unless development is carefully planned and designed. There is also the potential for negative effects on communities and the economy in the short-term during construction.

Development opportunities along Websters Way

- 4.22 For this component, three options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; Option 2; and Option 3.
- 4.23 All of the options will help to progress sustainability objectives relating to communities, health, the economy and accessibility as they seek to improve the quality and attractiveness of Websters Way as well as the pedestrian routes along it and connecting to the High Street. Option 3 was assessed as having the greatest potential for positive effects as it proposes the redevelopment of the former Tesco store for mixed-uses and the strengthening of pedestrian links between Websters Way and the High Street by formalising routes between the two. Option 3 was also identified as having the potential for a positive effect on housing as there is the potential for providing housing as part of the mixed-use development. The assessment considered that option 3 also has the potential for a long-term positive effect on the quality and setting of the Conservation Area as it proposes the redevelopment of the former Tesco store, which is rated by the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)¹³ as having a very negative impact. As noted in the option, any redevelopment of the former Tesco store would need to be sensitively designed to respond to the Conservation Area.

Development opportunities at Rayleigh Lanes

- 4.24 For this component, two options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; and Option 2.
- 4.25 The options consider development opportunities at Rayleigh Lanes and for potential to improve the quality and attractiveness of the area as well as pedestrian links. Both options have the potential for positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health, the economy and accessibility. Option 3 was assessed as have the potential for the greatest sustainability benefits as it proposes the redevelopment of an infill site for a mix of uses including retail, commercial and residential.

Car parking provision on Websters Way

- 4.26 For this component, two options were considered which focus on key aspects for bringing about change: Option 1; and Option 2.
- 4.27 The options seek to address the loss of car parking on Websters Way potentially lost as a result of changes proposed in other options. Both options have the potential for a positive effect against SA objectives relating to communities, health, sustainable design and the economy through improvements to the pedestrian crossing conditions at the junction of Eastwood Road and Websters Way. Option 2 is likely to have further enhanced benefits through signal controlled junction improvements and the provision of new links to and development addressing King Georges Fields. The positive effect on the local economy is likely to be greater for Option 2 through the provision of a multi-storey car park wrapped with commercial

¹³ Rochford Council (2007) Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

activities to create an active street front. The assessment also identified the potential for uncertainty as proposed development has the potential negative effects in the short-term for communities, health and the economy; however, it is considered that suitable mitigation is available at the project level to minimise any negative effects.

CIRCULATION

- 4.28 The town centre circulation and public realm options included the following:
1. Working with the existing network
 2. Partial pedestrianisation
 3. Partial or full pedestrianisation
 4. Two way working on the High Street
- 4.29 Option 1 seeks to work within the existing network and provide improvements to pedestrian crossings at roundabouts, a shared space along the High Street and capacity improvements to the junctions at either end of Websters Way. This has the potential for long-term positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health and safety, accessibility and the economy. This option has the potential for the greatest benefits compared to the others as it will not shift transport issues elsewhere in the area and will not increase the levels of traffic along the High Street.
- 4.30 The partial or full pedestrianisation of the High Street, or sections of the High Street, proposed in Options 2 and 3 would mean the diversion of traffic along surrounding routes (Bellingham Lane, Church Street, London Hill & Websters Way). This would require significant infrastructure improvements for these routes to be able to accommodate the additional traffic. It would potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement. Options 2 could also lead to the diversion of buses (depending on full or partial pedestrianisation) away from the High Street along Websters Way which could result in delays to journeys and little opportunity to provide priority measures. While Options 2 and 3 have the potential for positive effects through improvements to the public realm the diversion of traffic has the potential to have negative effects in other areas that have not been pedestrianised.
- 4.31 Option 4 will not result in the public realm improvements as proposed in the other options as it proposes two-way traffic on the High Street. This has the potential to double the amount of traffic using the High Street. Crossing would be regulated at controlled crossing points to allow the movement of pedestrians. The option would remove the need to divert traffic along Websters Way and help to relieve congestion through the town centre by adding a second lane for eastbound traffic. This has the potential for a positive effect, particularly through the provision of two-way buses, which would improve on the efficiency of the bus network. This option would not help to encourage walking within the town centre and has the potential for negative effects on climate change and air quality.

SPATIAL

- 4.32 A total of four spatial options were considered:
- Option Level 1: Low
 - Option Level 2: Medium
 - Option Level 3: High
 - Option Level 4: Higher
- 4.33 All of the options have the potential for long-term positive effects on communities, health and safety, accessibility, the economy and heritage through improvements to the public realm and amenity of the plan area as well as enhanced movement for pedestrians. The significance of this effect increases along with the level of intervention. The higher levels of intervention proposed in options 3 & 4 will have a greater positive effect on communities and the economy through the provision of mixed-use developments and more dramatic changes to pedestrian movement along the High Street. However, with a higher level of intervention there is also some uncertainty as proposed development has the potential for negative effects in the short-term on SA objectives through increased noise and congestion.
- 4.34 Option 4 has the potential for negative effects on a number of SA objectives as a result of the pedestrianisation of the High Street. This would result in the diversion of traffic along surrounding routes (Bellingham Lane, Church Street, London Hill & Websters Way), which would require significant infrastructure improvements for these routes to be able to accommodate the additional traffic. It would potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement. It could lead to the diversion of buses (depending on full or partial pedestrianisation) away from the High Street along alternative routes which could result in delays to journeys and little opportunity to provide priority measures.
- 4.35 A composite option that sought the higher level of intervention proposed in option 4 with the shared space treatments proposed in option 3 (rather than the pedestrianisation of the High Street) would not require the diversion of traffic and would provide greater benefits to a wider area.

REASONS FOR PROGRESSING/ REJECTING OPTIONS

- 4.36 Table 4.1 below summarises the options/alternatives considered for the AAP, with an outline of the reasons for rejection where relevant. It should be noted that whilst the SA findings are considered by the Council in its selection of options and form part of the evidence supporting the Rayleigh AAP, the SA findings are not the sole basis for a decision; planning and feasibility factors play a key role in the decision-making process.

Table 4.1 Summary of Approach to Alternatives Assessment and Selection

Options Considered and Appraised	Reasons for Progressing or Rejecting the Option in Plan Making
Issues	
Issue 1. Quality and setting of conservation area/ listed buildings undermined by unsympathetic development and 'street clutter'.	
Low Medium High Higher	The high and higher level of intervention options were assessed as generally having the most positive effects. However, there were a number of negative effects identified in respect of full pedestrianisation of Rayleigh High Street, including in respect of accessibility and potential for traffic issues to occur elsewhere within the AAP area. Consequently, this option was not progressed.
Issue 2. Need to introduce a greater range of leisure service providers, further comparison goods floorspace and office space.	
Low Medium High Higher	Higher level intervention options were assessed as generally having the most positive effects. However, some of the aspects of the highest level intervention options were not progressed to the next iteration of the Plan due to viability and deliverability issues. For example, since the Issues and Options report was published the economic climate has changed; and, in addition, a number of organisations, including Essex Police, have reviewed their property portfolios and informed the Council that land previously believed to be available for redevelopment is now included in their future plans.
Issue 3. Cluster of leisure and cultural uses around Rayleigh Mount are poorly integrated with the town centre core.	
Low Medium High	The options propose improvements to the pedestrian environment around Rayleigh Mount and improved access to the town centre core. This has the potential for a positive effect on SA objectives relating to the economy and communities. The low option would not have the same benefits as the other options in terms of accessibility as no new access routes are proposed. In progressing options, the Council has also been mindful of consultation responses regarding the feasibility of additional pedestrian routes on Rayleigh Mount, including concerns expressed by Rayleigh National Trust Local Committee.
Issue 4. Traffic dominated, service access nature of Websters Way represents a poor quality environment and arrival to the town centre.	
Low Medium High Higher	Compared to the other options, the higher option was assessed as having the potential for greater a positive effects for communities and the economy through the creation of a multi-storey car park and the redevelopment of the block fronting Eastwood Road for mixed-uses. However, it was also assessed that the creation of a multi-storey car park on Websters Way could have a negative effect on townscape as well as the Rayleigh Conservation Area. In progressing options, the Council was mindful of the results of community involvement, which indicated opposition to a retail-led development of Websters Way car park: retail-led redevelopment of Websters Way car park and the construction of a multi-storey car park was

	considered likely to cause visual harm, have a negative impact on openness and cause security problems. There were also concerns that such a development would have a detrimental impact on the town centre's vitality. Consequently, this option was not progressed.
Issue 5. Pedestrian movement hindered or uncatered for in some locations through a combination of vehicle dominated junction forms, street clutter and guardrailings, narrow or missing pavements, or poorly defined routes.	
Low Medium High Higher	The option of full pedestrianisation of the High Street, whilst assessed as having a number of positive effects, gave rise to a number of concerns including in respect of accessibility and potential for traffic issues to occur elsewhere within the AAP area. Consequently, this option was not progressed. Other options for improved pedestrian movement have been progressed and included in the Submission Document, but the Council's approach has had to have regard to viability and deliverability – as such, some of the higher level intervention options that entailed significant redevelopment have not been progressed. Options to improve the layout of the High Street, including alterations to the layout of the taxi rank and improved pedestrian crossings, have however been progressed to the Submission Document.
Issue 6. Congestion along Websters Way and approaches into the town centre.	
Low Medium High Higher	Improvements to Websters Way were assessed as having a number of positive effects and have been progressed to the Submission Document.
The Component Options	
Area around the Police Station and Somerfield Store	
Option 1 Option 2 Option 3	All of the options were assessed as having a positive effect on SA objectives relating to communities, health, heritage and townscape as they seek to improve the south of the High Street, which is a gateway to the town centre. Option 3 was assessed as having the potential to provide the greatest benefits, particularly for the economy, as it proposes the highest level of intervention, which includes a new town centre food store and mixed-use developments. In determining how to progress options, the Council were mindful of viability issues in respect of any major redevelopment; and concerns expressed through community involvement in respect of a new food store
The High Street taxi rank ('Boots Lagoon')	
Option 1 Option 2	Alterations to the pedestrian environment and taxi rank were assessed as having positive effects and progressed to the Submission Document.
Opportunities between the High Street and Mount	
Option 1 Option 2 Option 3	Option 3 was assessed as having the greatest potential for sustainability benefits through the provision of a large mixed-use development, the creation of large central public space and wider public realm improvements along the High Street and Bellingham Lane. It has the potential for long-term positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health, housing, the economy and accessibility. The other options also have the potential for positive effects on SA objectives although not the same level of significance as option 3. However, given the higher level of intervention, option 3 has the potential for negative effects on heritage and townscape unless development is

	carefully planned and designed. Given the above issues in addition to those in respect of deliverability, a less interventionist approach is proposed in the Submission Document which sets out a criteria based policy which seeks to enhance the character of the area and the town centre's retail offer.
Development opportunities along Websters Way	
Option 1 Option 2 Option 3	All of the options assessed were considered to progress sustainability objectives relating to communities, health, the economy and accessibility as they sought to improve the quality and attractiveness of Websters Way as well as the pedestrian routes along it and connecting to the High Street. The Submission Document proposes a criteria based policy which seeks to increase provision of uses appropriate for the town centre, deliver environmental improvements, improve pedestrian links, and ensure that car parking provision is retained.
Development opportunities at Rayleigh Lanes	
Option 1 Option 2	Both options considered at Issues and Options were found to have the potential for positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health, the economy and accessibility. The Submission Document proposes a criteria based policy which seeks to enhance the retail provision within the town centre. The Submission Document acknowledges that Rayleigh Lanes manages to present an active address to both the High Street and Websters Way
Car parking provision on Websters Way	
Option 1 Option 2	Both options were assessed as having the potential for a positive effect against SA objectives relating to communities, health, sustainable design and the economy through improvements to the pedestrian crossing conditions at the junction of Eastwood Road and Websters Way. Option 2 is likely to have further enhanced benefits through signal controlled junction improvements and the provision of new links to and development addressing King Georges Fields. The positive effect on the local economy is likely to be greater for Option 2 through the provision of a multi-storey car park wrapped with commercial activities to create an active street front. The assessment also identified the potential for uncertainty as proposed development has the potential negative effects in the short-term for communities, health and the economy. In progressing the options to the Submission Document the Council were mindful of concerns expressed through community involvement that a multi-storey car park would cause visual harm, have a negative impact on openness and cause security problems. Consequently, a multi-storey car park is not proposed in the Submission Document.
Circulation Options	
Town centre circulation and public realm options	
1. Working with the existing network 2. Partial pedestrianisation 3. Partial or full pedestrianisation 4. Two way	Option1 sought to work within the existing network and provide improvements to pedestrian crossings at roundabouts, a shared space along the High Street and capacity improvements to the junctions at either end of Websters Way. This was assessed as having the potential for long-term positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health and safety, accessibility and the economy. This option was found to have the potential for the greatest benefits compared to the others as it would not shift transport issues elsewhere in the area and will not increase the levels of traffic along the High Street.

working on the High Street	<p>The partial or full pedestrianisation of the High Street, or sections of the High Street, proposed in Options 2 and 3 would mean the diversion of traffic along surrounding routes (Bellingham Lane, Church Street, London Hill & Websters Way). This would require significant infrastructure improvements for these routes to be able to accommodate the additional traffic. It would potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement. Options 2 could also lead to the diversion of buses (depending on full or partial pedestrianisation) away from the High Street along Websters Way which could result in delays to journeys and little opportunity to provide priority measures. While Options 2 and 3 have the potential for positive effects through improvements to the public realm the diversion of traffic has the potential to have negative effects in other areas that have not been pedestrianised.</p> <p>Having regard to all of the above, and especially concerns with altering the existing highway network, the Submission Document includes a movement framework that does not alter the existing traffic regime, but does seek to give pedestrians greater priority.</p>
Spatial Options	
<p>Option Level 1: Low</p> <p>Option Level 2: Medium</p> <p>Option Level 3: High</p> <p>Option Level 4: Higher</p>	<p>All of the options were assessed as having the potential for long-term positive effects on communities, health and safety, accessibility, the economy and heritage through improvements to the public realm and amenity of the plan area as well as enhanced movement for pedestrians. The significance of this effect was found to increase along with the level of intervention. The higher levels of intervention proposed in options 3 and 4 would have a greater positive effect on communities and the economy through the provision of mixed-use developments and more dramatic changes to pedestrian movement along the High Street. However, with a higher level of intervention there would also be some uncertainty as proposed development has the potential for negative effects in the short-term on SA objectives through increased noise and congestion.</p> <p>Option 4 has was found to have the potential for negative effects on a number of SA objectives as a result of the pedestrianisation of the High Street. This would result in the diversion of traffic along surrounding routes (Bellingham Lane, Church Street, London Hill & Websters Way), which would require significant infrastructure improvements for these routes to be able to accommodate the additional traffic. It would potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement. It could lead to the diversion of buses (depending on full or partial pedestrianisation) away from the High Street along alternative routes which could result in delays to journeys and little opportunity to provide priority measures.</p> <p>In progressing the options to the Submission Document, the Council was mindful of changes in circumstances since the Issues and Options document was published. In particular, the current economic climate is significantly more challenging than it was at the beginning of the AAP process. In addition, a</p>

	<p>number of organisations, including Essex Police, have reviewed their property portfolios and informed the Council that land previously believed to be available for redevelopment is now included in their future plans. As such, deliverability and viability – particular for major redevelopment projects – is more difficult. Furthermore, community involvement has not indicated there is a desire to see a significant degree of change in the town centre. Consequently, the more dramatic and higher level intervention suggestions in the Issues and Options document have generally not been progressed.</p>
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5.0 SA OF AREA ACTION PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION POLICIES

SA OF AREA ACTION PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in December 2013.
- 5.2 The Vision was found to be very compatible with a number of SA Objectives including the ones relating to Balanced Communities; Healthy and Safe Communities; Economy and Employment; Accessibility; Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage. The vision is also considered to be compatible with SA Objectives 2, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11 as it seeks to provide new homes which if of good quality can have indirect positive effects on health and also enhance and respect the town center's character which will have positive effects on the quality of its townscape. In addition, environmental enhancements could lead to positive effects on biological diversity, land, water and soil quality and health. The uncertainties identified within the compatibility analysis relate to the overarching nature of the vision, which cannot be expected to cover all aspects of sustainability in detail. The certainty of compatibility with SA Objectives 9 and 12 could be improved if greater emphasis was placed on improving access in the AAP area by more sustainable modes of transport, by foot and public transport, rather than by private motor vehicles.
- 5.3 The AAP Objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA Objectives. The uncertainty that has been identified can largely be mitigated with higher level policies in the Rochford District Council Core Strategy, for example, Policy ENV10 –BRAM and Policy ENV9 – Code for Sustainable Homes would support the AAP Objectives to ensure the certainty of compatibility with SA Objective 13. However, it would be recommend that reference is made to 'environmental enhancements' within the Objectives to ensure they fully support the Vision and to further reduce uncertainty identified for SA Objectives 6 and 9 to 13.

SUMMARY OF SA OF PRE-SUBMISSION POLICIES

- 5.4 The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in December 2013. A summary of the results of this appraisal is provided below, with the detailed working matrices provided in Appendix VI. On the whole, the findings of the SA suggest that the emerging AAP policies will make significant contributions to the progression of SA objectives.
- 5.5 There are a number of negative effects which were found to be common to all the AAP policies which supported new development. Firstly, it was considered that there could be potential negative effects on health and air quality, as new development has the potential to increase NO₂ levels in the short-term during construction through an increase in heavy goods vehicles and in the long-term through increases in light good vehicles and cars. Secondly, negative effects were also identified in the short-term with reference to health/ safety and sensitive heritage assets as a result of waste, noise, vibration and noise nuisances being created during demolition/ construction. It was considered that in most cases suitable mitigation is

available either in the policy wording itself or in Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs to reduce these identified negative effects. To reduce short-term negative effects on cultural heritage and on health it was recommended that either a construction management plan could be developed or phasing could be introduced at the project level.

- 5.6 In addition, it was considered that for all policies, greater positive effects on sustainable design and construction and also biodiversity could be achieved if the design of any development was required to maximise opportunities for biodiversity by taking account of 'Biodiversity by Design' (Town and Country Planning Association, 2004).

POLICY 1 – RAYLEIGH AREA ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

- 5.7 This policy requires development to be in accordance with the spatial development framework, which aims to create new opportunities for development, in particular, retail and to require new development to contribute to appropriate town centre environmental improvements. All of these aims are consistent with the SA objectives developed for the Rayleigh AAP, and the predicted effect is one that is positive for sustainability in the long-term. The policy has the potential for major positive long-term effects on communities, health, the economy and accessibility. It was considered that in most cases suitable mitigation is available either in the policy wording itself or in Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs to reduce the negative effects. To reduce short-term negative effects on cultural heritage and on health it was recommended that either a construction management plan could be developed or phasing could be introduced at the project level.
- 5.8 It was considered that this policy could be strengthened with regard to biodiversity, if more detail was inserted with regard to biodiversity improvements including other forms of green infrastructure e.g. creation of greenway linkages. It was also recommended that account should be taken of the written guidance/ reports provided by Natural England with reference to green infrastructure.

POLICY 2 – RETAIL DEVELOPMENT IN RAYLEIGH

- 5.9 This policy was designed to encourage new retail-led development within the town centre in order to strengthen Rayleigh's position in the local retail hierarchy. The policy has the potential for major positive long-term effects on communities and the economy and minor positive effects for health/safety, accessibility, land and soil, landscape/townscape, cultural heritage and sustainable design/construction.
- 5.10 It was considered that this policy could be strengthened with regard to accessibility if the emphasis of improving key public routes was placed on the promotion of walking and cycling over the use of cars.

POLICY 3 – RAYLEIGH'S SHOPPING FRONTAGES

- 5.11 This policy aims to protect existing retail uses but also where appropriate and subject to a number of conditions, it will support non-retail uses. It is concerned with change of use rather than development of new buildings. The policy has the potential for major positive long-term effects on communities and the economy and minor positive effects for housing, landscape/townscape, land/soil, cultural heritage and sustainable design/construction. Potential for negative effects were only identified against SA objectives relating to health/safety and air quality through permitting A3 and A4 uses which may have an impact on odour and smoke on adjoining uses. It was considered that the nature of effects will depend on the type of use adjacent, for example, residential establishments will be more sensitive than office uses. Also, it was found that mitigation is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (paragraph 109) and also by Policy ENV 5 –Air Quality and therefore the potential residual effects are not considered to be significant.

POLICY 4 – RAYLEIGH'S CHARACTER AREAS

- 5.12 This policy identifies a number of important principles for any development proposed in the four character areas. Specifically it supports public realm interventions to be incorporated where possible for new development, enhanced cycling facilities, improved bus facilities and new and improved pedestrian signage. All of these principles are consistent with the SA objectives developed for the Rochford AAP, and the predicted overall result is one that is positive for sustainability. It also emphasises the importance of the historic character of the centre and requires that it is protected and where possible, enhanced. The policy has the potential for major long-term positive effects on SA objectives relating to communities, health/safety, accessibility and cultural heritage and minor positive effects for a number of other objectives, including, the economy, landscape/ townscape, climate change/energy, sustainable design/construction and biodiversity.

POLICY 5 – CHARACTER AREA A: CENTRAL HIGH STREET

- 5.13 This policy identifies a number of important principles for any development proposed in the Central High Street character area, which includes the requirement for development to respond positively to the local townscape character. Specific proposals within the policy include the potential public realm improvements focusing on the creation of new public space. The regeneration of the Central High Street Area, will help to strengthen the retail function and create a stronger sense of place as well as improve accessibility, which has the potential for long-term positive effects against a number of SA objectives, including accessibility, health, landscape/townscape, land and soil and biodiversity, and in particular communities and the economy.
- 5.14 It was considered that the certainty of positive effects resulting from the implementation of this policy on biodiversity could be increased if a requirement was introduced to create a potential greenway, focused on pedestrians, which would link the centre and the Mount (an important

cultural heritage asset). It was considered that this could also lead to additional positive effects for many other SA Objectives, in particular, for cultural heritage and health. It was also recommended that account should be taken of the written guidance provided by Natural England.

POLICY 6 – CHARACTER AREA B: HIGH STREET NORTH AND BELLINGHAM LANE

- 5.15 This policy identifies a number of important principles for any development proposed in the High Street (north) and Bellingham Lane Character Area B. This includes the requirement for development to respond positively to the local townscape character with regard to several key elements one of which refers to the high quality of the historic townscape. The regeneration of Area B will help support the main retail function of the central high street covered by the previous policy primarily through the provision of complementary uses. All of the principles are consistent with the SA objectives developed for the Rayleigh AAP, and the predicted effect is one that is positive for sustainability in the long-term. The policy was considered likely to lead to major positive effects on the SA objectives of communities and the economy.
- 5.16 Uncertain effects were identified for biodiversity and it was considered that the certainty of positive effects on biodiversity could be enhanced if there was a requirement to protect and retain existing trees and shrubbery. It was also suggested that wording could be inserted into the supporting text which specified that the public space outside of the Mill Arts and Events Centre and the Mill itself could be turned into a communal greenspace to incorporate fine grain habitats to boost biodiversity and aesthetic value. In addition, it was suggested that creating a potential greenway focused on pedestrians linking Area B, with the Mount, the Mill and the main centre could also provide additional positive effects for biodiversity as well as many other SA Objectives, in particular for cultural heritage. It was also recommended that account should be taken of the written guidance/ reports provided by Natural England with reference to green infrastructure.

POLICY 7 – CHARACTER AREA C: HIGH STREET SOUTH AND EASTWOOD ROAD

- 5.17 This policy identifies a number of important principles for any development proposed in the High Street (south) and Eastwood Road Character Area C. This includes the requirement for development to respond positively to the local townscape character with regard to several key elements which mainly concern design aspects (development grain and building heights). The regeneration of Area C will help support the main retail function of the central high street covered by policy 5, primarily through the provision of secondary retailing and complementary uses as well as maintaining existing car parking. Major positive effects were identified for SA objectives relating to communities and the economy, with minor positive effects identified for health, housing, landscape/townscape, land and soil, accessibility and sustainable design and construction.
- 5.18 Uncertain effects were identified for biodiversity and it was considered that the certainty of positive effects on biodiversity could be increased if there was a requirement to protect and retain existing trees and shrubbery. It was also

suggested that new development could be encouraged to contribute to creating a potential continuous street tree canopy which would link High street and Eastwood Road to King George's Park. This could also provide additional positive effects for many other SA Objectives, in particular for landscape and townscape. It was also recommended that account should be taken of the written guidance/ reports provided by Natural England with reference to green infrastructure.

POLICY 8 – CHARACTER AREA D: WEBSTERS WAY

- 5.19 This policy identifies a number of important principles for any development proposed in Websters Way Character Area D. The policy seeks to protect the area's role as providing the main car parking and servicing areas for the main high street. All of the principles are consistent with the SA Framework objectives developed for the Rayleigh AAP, and the predicted effect is one that is positive for sustainability in the long-term. The policy was considered likely to lead to major positive effects on the SA objectives of communities and the economy. One of the policy's successes in terms of realising positive effects regards cultural heritage, as it advocates development which will improve the area with a degree of flexibility to allow for creative ideas and as a result it was considered that this should help address the issues identified by the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal (Rochford District Council, 2007) for this area.
- 5.20 As for a number of the other policies, uncertain effects were identified for biodiversity and it was considered that the certainty of positive effects on biodiversity could be increased if there was a requirement to protect and retain existing trees and shrubbery. It was also suggested that in the supporting text a way to improve the environment could be inserted such as encouraging new development to contribute to creating a potential continuous street tree canopy which would link High street, Eastwood Road, Bull Lane and Webster's Way to King George's Park. This could also provide additional positive effects for many other SA Objectives, in particular for landscape and townscape. It was also recommended that account should be taken of the written guidance/ reports provided by Natural England with reference to green infrastructure.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ANALYSIS

- 6.1 In addition to the appraisal of individual policies undertaken in SA/SEA, the SEA Directive requires consideration of the overall effects of the plan, including the secondary, synergistic and cumulative effects of plan policies. This may include incremental effects that can have a small effect individually, but can accrue to have significant environmental effects.
- 6.2 In good practice SA/SEA, the analysis of cumulative effects should also consider the significant effects of the plan in combination with the effects of other plans, policies and proposals.
- 6.3 This section summarises the key effects, including the cumulative effects of the plan policies (known as the intra-plan effects) and the combined effects with other relevant plans and projects (known as the inter-plan effects).

CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF PLAN POLICIES (INTRA-PLAN EFFECTS)

- 6.4 To assist in considering the overall effects of policies within the plan when assessed against the SA Framework, a summary has been prepared, illustrating how each policy has performed against each SA Objective. This is provided in the following table:

Table 6.1: Intra-plan effects: Cumulative summary of Pre-Submission Policies

Appraisal key - Categories of sustainability effects	
Colour	Impact
++	Major Positive
+	Positive
0	No Impact
?	Uncertain
-	Negative
--	Major Negative

Policy	SA Objectives														
	1	2		3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework	++	+	?	+	++	++	+	+	?	+	+	0	+	?	+
Policy 2 – Retail Development In Rayleigh	++	+	?	0	++	+	0	+	?	+	0	0	+	?	+
Policy 3 – Rayleigh’s Shopping Frontages	++	?		+	++	0	0	+	?	+	0	0	+	?	+
Policy 4 – Rayleigh’s Character Areas	++	+	?	0	+	++	+	+	?	+	+	0	0	?	+
Policy 5 – Character Area A: Central High Street	++	+	?	0	++	+	+	+	?	+	+	0	+	?	+
Policy 6 – Character Area B: High Street North And Bellingham Lane	++	+	?	+	++	+	?	+	?	+	0	0	+	?	+
Policy 7 – Character Area C: High Street South And Eastwood Road	++	+	?	+	++	+	?	+	?	+	0	0	+	?	+
Policy 8 – Character Area D: Websters Way	++	+	?	+	++	+	?	+	?	+	0	0	+	?	+

SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF PLAN POLICIES (INTRA-PLAN EFFECTS)

- 6.5 The SA found that the majority of policies could have significant positive sustainability benefits for Rayleigh Town Centre and the wider area. The following table summarises the significant positive effects identified.

Table 6.2: Significant positive effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP

Significant positive effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	
Key relevant SA Objective:	Positive effects identified:
1.Balanced communities & 2.Healthy and Safe Communities	The combined individual requirements of the AAP will lead to: a mix of uses in the town centre, including retail, cultural, leisure facilities and new public spaces; more people to get out and about and improve their fitness; reduce the incidence of crime; and the potential for new employment opportunities. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
4.Economy and Employment	Potential for positive effects on the local economy identified for individual policies result from enhanced opportunities for retail, leisure and offices and improvements to the public realm. The combining of the resulting benefits of greater consumer choice, potential provision of employment opportunities (skilled and unskilled), greater access to the centre, a high quality public space, is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
5. Accessibility	Significant positive cumulative effects for accessibility are likely through a range of improvements to the public realm, upgrades to bus facilities, access to the train station and increased accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.
6.Landscape and Townscape	The setting of key principles for development will contribute positively to the local townscape and character, focusing on the individual parts of the AAP area, is likely to lead to positive cumulative effects. In addition, the combined requirements for enhancing the public realm and the likely redevelopment of derelict, degraded or underused land will also contribute to an overall significant positive cumulative effect.
7. Cultural Heritage	The main thrust of the AAP is to ensure that the historic character of the centre is protected and where possible enhanced. It advocates new and improved pedestrian signage to key cultural heritage assets such as the Mount and the Windmill which will hopefully improve access to heritage.

	Furthermore, public realm interventions and regeneration are likely to help improve the aesthetic value of the AAP area which is likely to benefit the conservation area and the settings of the listed buildings. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
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SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE OR UNCERTAIN CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF PLAN POLICIES (INTRA-PLAN EFFECTS)

- 6.6 Alongside the many positive effects of the plan, potential negative sustainability effects were also identified, although their effect is uncertain at this stage of the assessment and it is considered likely that these effects can be mitigated at a more detailed planning stage. These are summarised in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Potentially significant negative effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP

Potentially significant negative effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP	
Key relevant SA Objective:	Negative Effects identified:
7. Cultural Heritage	Some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as noise and vibration will be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level. Any other effects were considered to be mitigated by policies contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs.
2. Healthy and Safe Communities and 12. Air quality	<p>There have been exceedences of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide at Eastwood Road/Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road. Any new development has the potential to increase nitrogen dioxide levels in the both the short-term and the long-term. Mitigation already in place through Core Strategy Policies.</p> <p>There may be some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as waste, noise and dust nuisances may be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level.</p>

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND PROJECTS (INTER-PLAN EFFECTS)

- 6.7 In considering the effects of AAP with other plans and projects, priority has been given to key documents that affect planning and development in

Rochford District, in particular the Rochford Core Strategy and the Area Action Plans for Hockley and Rochford (also in preparation). The aim of the analysis of inter-plan effects was to identify how other plans and key projects may affect the sustainability of Rayleigh.

Table 6.4: Inter-Plan Cumulative Effects

SA Objective	Significant combined effects of Rayleigh AAP with other plans, projects or policies
1. Balanced communities & 2. Healthy & Safe Communities	Increased access to employment, leisure and community facilities and services as well as improved connections will combine with effects from the Core Strategy overall and other AAPs, to create a better and healthier environment for local residents across the District.
4. Economy & Employment	An increase in mixed-use development and new shops, services and a higher quality environment will, when combined with the development outlined in the Rochford Core Strategy and AAPs, contribute to an improved local economy and increased employment opportunities.
5. Accessibility	Enhancements to accessibility proposed in the AAP will add to similar improvements in the other 2 AAPs for Rochford and Hockley as well as the Core Strategy and help to improve overall use of public transport, encourage cycling and walking in the District. This should help the District to achieve a higher level of containment, reducing out-commuting to other areas and hopefully reduce traffic congestion.
7. Cultural heritage & 8. Landscape and Townscape	Firm proposals and measures have been put in place to ensure that the local townscape, the historic environment and the character of the AAP area. Overall, the regeneration of the town centre has the potential for positive effects on heritage although given the sensitivity of the historic environment of the area and the wider District, new development will need to be carefully considered and designed and planned sensitively.
10. Water	Alone the AAP is unlikely to have significant impacts on the water environment; however, it could add to the pressures on water resources and water quality identified in the Rochford Core Strategy.
12. Air Quality	Alone the AAP is unlikely to have significant impacts on air quality although an element of uncertainty remains as the High Street/ Eastwood Road given the exceedances in NO ₂ levels. However, it is likely still to contribute to increased atmospheric pollution as a result of development proposed across the District through the Core Strategy and other AAPs.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 This section discusses indicators and targets to help monitor the sustainability effects of the AAP. Monitoring arrangements should be designed to:
- highlight significant effects;
 - highlight effects which differ from those that were predicted; and
 - provide a useful source of baseline information for the future.
- 7.2 Local planning authorities are required to produce Annual Monitoring Reports including indicators and targets against which the progress of the Local Development Plan can be measured. There is also a requirement to monitor the predictions made in the SA and Government advises Councils to prepare a Monitoring Strategy that incorporates the needs of the Local Development Plan and the SA. Rochford District Council prepares an Annual Monitoring report each year, and in preparing the report, considers any recommendations made through the SA process, which have also been subject to consultation. The indicators and targets suggested for the SA monitoring of the Core Strategy in Table 7.1 are considered appropriate for the monitoring of the Rayleigh AAP, with additional specific suggestions underlined and in red text.

SA MONITORING PROPOSALS FOR THE RAYLEIGH AAP

Table 7.1: Potential Indicators

Potential Indicators
1. Balanced Communities To ensure the delivery of high quality sustainable communities where people want to live and work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changing educational attainment at GCSE Level ■ Proportion of persons in the local population with a degree level qualification. ■ Parishes with a GP, post office, play area, pub, village hall ■ Percentage of completed retail, office and leisure development in town centre ■ Mix of housing tenure within settlements ■ Provision of new community facilities secured through new developments, <u>including a break-down by settlement</u>
2. Healthy & Safe Communities Create healthy and safe environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor the number of domestic burglaries, violent offences, vehicle crimes, vandalism and all crime per 1,000 population. ■ Percentage of residents surveyed who feel 'fairly safe' or 'very safe' during the day whilst outside in their Local Authority, <u>including in key settlements</u> ■ Indexes of Multiple Deprivation throughout the District.

Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the type and number of applications permitted in the greenbelt. Life expectancy Hectares of new greenspace created, including location of greenspace Percentage of eligible open spaces managed to green flag award standard Death rates from circulatory disease, cancer, accidents and suicide Residents description of Health Obesity levels
3. Housing To provide everybody with the opportunity to live in a decent home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of unfit homes per 1,000 dwellings. Indices of Multiple Deprivation – Housing and Services Domain Percentage of households rented from the Council or in Housing Association/Registered Social Landlords properties Percentage of new housing which is affordable, including in key settlements Average house price compared with average earnings Number of housing Completions
4. Economy & Employment To achieve sustainable levels of economic growth/prosperity and promote town centre vitality/viability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing diversity of main town centre uses (by number, type and amount of floorspace), including a breakdown for the 3 town centres. The changing density of development Percentage change in the total number of VAT registered businesses in the area Percentage of employees commuting out of the District to work Amount of land developed for employment (by type) Retail health checks/economic prosperity of smaller towns and villages and key settlements
5. Accessibility To promote more sustainable transport choices both for people and moving freight ensuring access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the travel to work mode of transport Indices of Multiple Deprivation most notably the Housing and Services Domain Car ownership Percentage of new residential development within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major health centre Kilometres of cycle routes and facilities for cyclists Kilometres of new walking routes provided Number of houses within a specified radius of services/facilities Pedestrian and cycle counts in the 3 town centres of Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh
6. Biodiversity To conserve and enhance the biological and geological diversity of the

Potential Indicators
environment as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net change in natural/ semi natural habitats Change in areas and populations of biodiversity importance Condition of designated sites Change in area of woodland Proportion of new developments delivering habitat creation or restoration
7. Cultural Heritage
To maintain and enhance the cultural heritage and assets of the District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings of Grade I and II at risk of decay Condition of Conservation Areas Number of historic parks and gardens
8. Landscape & Townscape
To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes and townscapes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To monitor the number of parks awarded Green Flag Status To monitor the number of landscape or built environment designations Hectares of new development outside settlement boundaries Hedgerow and/or veteran tree loss Area of /change in landscape designations % of development on previously developed land
9. Climate Change & Energy
To reduce contributions to climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the travel to work mode of transport Greenhouse gas emissions Renewable energy capacity installed by type Percentage of new development including renewable energy generation Energy consumption
10. Water
To improve water quality and reduce the risk of flooding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing water quality Groundwater levels Percentage of new development incorporating water efficiency measures Water consumption per household Number of homes built against Environment Agency advice on flooding
11. Land & Soil
To maintain and improve the quality of the District's land and soil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of previously developed land Density of new residential development Number of sites/hectares decontaminated as a result of new development
12. Air Quality
To improve air quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AQMA designations or threshold designations Growth in cars per household Growth in car trip generation Type of travel mode to work % change in public transport patronage

Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of days in the year when air quality is recorded as moderate or high for NO₂, SO₂, PM₁₀, CO and Ozone on average per site. ■ <u>Monitoring of air quality in Rayleigh Town Centre, particularly on Eastwood Road and High Street.</u>
13. Sustainable Design & Construction To promote sustainable design and construction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Percentage of new development incorporating energy and water efficiency measures, and sustainable drainage systems ■ Percentage of new development meeting BREEAM very good/excellent standards ■ Percentage use of aggregates from secondary and recycled sources

8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has appraised the effects of individual policies, as well as the overall effect of the plan, including cumulative and incremental effects. It has also considered and appraised reasonable alternatives to the plan itself; information which has been made available to the Council to help in the selection of the preferred plan. Overall the SA has found that the AAP will help to resolve a number of key sustainability issues in Rayleigh Town Centre and will also play a role in improving sustainability in the wider Rochford District.
- 8.2 Significant positive effects were identified for communities, economy and employment, accessibility, landscape and townscape and cultural heritage. These effects mainly resulted from: enhanced opportunities for retail, leisure and other mixed used development; public realm enhancements; greater pedestrianisation; the improvement of more pedestrian and cycle links; upgraded bus facilities; design-led principles for the individual character areas; and specified protection/ enhancement suggestions for historic assets and character. The AAP seeks to enhance consumer choice and should provide more employment opportunities (skilled and unskilled) for local residents. It also seeks to strengthen pedestrian links across Rayleigh which is likely to provide better and safer access for all the community. The AAP overall is likely to create a more attractive and enjoyable place with a strong local character and a firm sense of place for people to shop, visit and live.
- 8.3 The SA did not identify any significant likely negative effects from the plan alone. However, possible significant cumulative negative effects were identified for cultural heritage, healthy and safe communities and air quality. It is expected that these can be mitigated and managed through further detailed planning, monitoring as well as by policies already in place which are contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs. To reduce short-term negative effects on cultural heritage and on health, it was also recommended that either a construction management plan could be developed or phasing could be introduced at the project level.
- 8.4 In preparing the AAP and deciding on its preferred option for Rayleigh Town Centre the Council has considered the recommendations made throughout the Sustainability Appraisal process, and amended the plan accordingly. This has contributed to further enhancing the positive sustainability effects of the plan.
- 8.5 This SA Report will accompany the AAP on Pre-Submission consultation for 6 weeks, during which time interested parties are invited to make representations on the AAP or the SA. The SA will form part of the evidence base during the Examination of the AAP and if any further significant changes are made to the plan the SA Report will be updated accordingly. A finalised report will accompany the adopted DPD when it is published.

**Sustainability Appraisal of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan
Pre-Submission Document (November 2013) – Schedule of
Modifications
March 2015**

Sustainability Appraisal of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan: Schedule of Modifications

This report forms an addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) technical report that accompanied the Rayleigh Area Action Plan on submission in December 2014. This report seeks to undertake an SA of Rochford District Council's Rayleigh Area Action Plan: Schedule of Modifications. The Schedule of Modifications sets out proposed modifications to the Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2013) that is the subject of the examination, in light of the hearing session that has taken place, further discussions with Essex County Council and the Inspector's recommendations. The SA of the proposed modifications does not seek to repeat the assessment carried out for the SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Pre-Submission Document (November 2013), but rather seeks to assess the modifications made to the policies themselves. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the SA technical report (December 2013) that accompanied the Rayleigh Area Action Plan on submission.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process

Throughout the development of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan the SA process has been used to assist in planning for the development and the use of land, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance, within the centre of Rayleigh. SA assists sustainable development through an ongoing dialogue and assessment during the preparation of Development Planning Documents (DPDs), and considers the implications of social, economic and environmental demands on land use planning.

An SA scoping process was undertaken to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Rayleigh. This included the development of an SA Framework of objectives to comprise the basis for appraisal. An SA Scoping Report was prepared to summarise the findings of the scoping process and was sent to statutory consultees for consultation in September 2012. As part of the scoping process plans and programmes were reviewed and information was collated relating to the current and predicted social, environmental and economic characteristics of Rochford. The SA Framework for the Rayleigh Area Action Plan is based on that developed for the Rochford Core Strategy.

Consideration and Appraisal of Alternatives – Issues and Options Document 2009

The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in November 2012. The purpose and key objectives of the AAP have been set at a higher level; therefore it was considered that the alternatives available to the plan-maker in preparing the AAP were limited to the level and type of intervention/ development that should be accommodated in the Town Centre.

The Issues and Options Document (2009) identified a number of areas within the town centre where opportunities may exist for redevelopment, as well as a range of opportunities related to transport and circulation and the public realm. A range of options were

proposed in relation to each area and some involved a number of key aspects which included the redevelopment of existing buildings or vacant for mixed-uses, or the redevelopment of existing businesses to enlarge existing car parking facilities. Some options were devised using a number of interventions which would result in differing levels of change i.e. low, medium, high and/or higher.

The options which proposed interventions which sought to improve the quality and attractiveness of particular areas, supported mixed-use development and/ or improve pedestrian links were found to progress many of the SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility, the economy, heritage, townscape and sustainable design. The significance of effects was found to increase along with the level of intervention. However, with a higher level of intervention there is also some uncertainty and this was because the proposed development could have the potential for negative effects in the short-term on SA objectives through increased noise and congestion. The SA also found that options which recommended full pedestrianisation may have negative effects on communities and health as they could potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement.

Furthermore, with reference to the spatial options, it was considered that the composite option that sought the higher level of intervention proposed in option 4 with the shared space treatments proposed in option 3 (rather than the pedestrianisation of the High Street), would not require the diversion of traffic and would provide greater benefits to a wider area.

Alongside consultation responses, the Council considered the SA findings in its decision making. The reasons for the selection or rejection of options in plan-making are set out in Section 4 of the SA Report.

Appraisal of the AAP Vision and Policies – Pre-Submission Document 2013

A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in December 2013. Overall the vision and objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA objectives.

The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in December 2013. On the whole, the findings of the SA suggest that the emerging AAP policies will make significant contributions to the progression of SA objectives. Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered and these have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

The SA of the Pre-Submission policies found that the majority of policies would have significant positive sustainability benefits. The AAP has the potential for significant long term positive effects to ensure balanced and healthy communities by providing a mix of uses in the town centre and improved and enhanced pedestrian links into the centre. It was found that the AAP would have a significant positive effect on the local economy, primarily through enhanced opportunities for retail, leisure and offices. It was found that the economy would benefit from strengthened pedestrian links which would be likely to encourage consumers and workers to the centre. Cumulative improvements to the

public realm, bus facilities, the train station, and better pedestrian and cycle facilities were found to have a significant positive effect on accessibility. The setting of key principals for development to contribute positively to the local townscape and character, focusing on the individual parts of the AAP area, was found to have potential positive cumulative effects, when combined with requirements to enhance the public realm and the likely redevelopment of derelict, degraded or underused land. The SA found that the AAP's goal of protecting and enhancing the historic character of the centre was likely to have significant positive cumulative effects. These were found to come from new and improved pedestrian signage to key heritage assets in concert with public realm interventions and regeneration of the aesthetic value of the AAP area.

Some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as noise and vibration were identified as being likely to occur but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level. Any other effects were considered to be mitigated by policies contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs.

There have been exceedences of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide at Eastwood Road/Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road. Any new development has the potential to increase nitrogen dioxide levels in the both the short-term and the long-term. Mitigation measures are already in place through Core Strategy Policies.

There may be some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as waste, noise and dust nuisances may be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level.

There is the potential for negative effects on health, heritage and air quality in the short term during the construction of new development or redevelopment of existing buildings. However, it considered that suitable mitigation is available at the project level to address any adverse effects and suitable protection is provided through Core Strategy and Development Management policies. New development and the redevelopment of existing buildings will need to be carefully and sympathetically designed to ensure that there are no long term negative effects on heritage, particularly on the Rayleigh Conservation Area.

Uncertainties and Data Gaps

Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered. It is not always possible to accurately predict sustainability effects when considering plans at this scale. Impacts on cultural heritage, for example, will depend on more detailed information and studies at a site-level. It is also difficult to predict air quality effects and future traffic levels based on interventions. These uncertainties have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The assessment found that none of the policies in the Rayleigh Area Action Plan are likely to have significant impacts, either alone or in combination, on European Sites.

Sustainability Appraisal Update

The Rayleigh Area Action Plan Submission Document (December 2014) was submitted to the Secretary of State on 5 December 2014, although at the request of the Inspector the Pre-Submission Document (November 2013) is the subject of the examination. A hearing session was held on 4 March 2015 at which the various aspects of the plan were discussed. Following this hearing session, the Planning Inspector wrote to Rochford District Council on 6 March 2015 providing a Post Hearing Note.

In his Post Hearing Note the Inspector set out several suggested changes to the Pre-Submission Document (November 2013), relating to the soundness of the plan. Based on these suggested changes the Council produced a revised Schedule of Modifications, which will be the subject of this Sustainability Appraisal Update.

As per the SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document, the appraisal recognised six categories of predicted effects, as illustrated in the key below. For further information on the method used for the SA, please refer to the SA technical report for the Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document.

Categories of sustainability effects	
Colour	Impact
++	Major Positive
+	Positive
0	No Impact
?	Uncertain
-	Negative
--	Major Negative

Section 1.1, Paragraph 1 (MM1)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM2)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	The proposed modification to clarify that the Council is referring to new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the AAP area is likely to have a positive impact on the health and safety of the local community as it will serve to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport, and walking and cycling in particular. Better signage and improved routes will also help to improve safety.	+
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy &	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
Employment		
5. Accessibility	Clarifying that Policy 1 refers to new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the AAP area will encourage alternative modes of travel in the form of walking and cycling and is likely to have a positive effect on accessibility.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	Clarifying that Policy 1 refers to new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the AAP area will encourage alternative modes of travel in the form of walking and cycling and is likely to have a positive effect in terms of combatting climate change. By encouraging alternate modes of travel various emissions from motor vehicles could be reduced.	+
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	Clarifying that the Policy 1 refers to new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the AAP area will encourage alternative modes of travel in the form of walking and cycling and is likely to have a positive effect on air quality. By encouraging alternative modes of travel the policy has the potential to reduce the number of motor vehicles within the AAP area, this could also reduce emissions.	+

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM3)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification clarifying that the Council expects that significant retail development within Rayleigh centre will contribute financially to the schemes proposed in the plan will help to ensure that the relevant financial contributions to projects within the AAP area are provided. This will help to ensure that potential schemes arising from the RAAP in the centre can be funded and are more likely to be viable.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	The proposed modification clarifying that the Council expects that significant retail development within Rayleigh centre will contribute financially to the schemes proposed in the plan will help to ensure that the relevant financial contributions to projects within the AAP area are provided. This will help to ensure that funding will be available for improving and enhancing cultural heritage assets.	+
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Section 3.4, Paragraph 3 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM4)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification to clarify that the Council recognises the potential to deliver greater priority and flexibility for the local market while still recognising the role played by the local taxi rank will have a positive effect in terms of balanced communities by ensuring that the market can continue to prosper while still acknowledging the local taxi rank and the service it provides.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	
4. Economy & Employment	The proposed modification could have benefits for the local market and wider High Street area through potentially providing greater flexibility for the market.	+
5. Accessibility	The proposed modification ensures that taxis will continue to form a part of the transport mix in Rayleigh and can provide an alternative mode of transport to the private car.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
& Energy		
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Figure 8 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM5)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
4. Economy & Employment	The amended Figure 8 identifies locations for potential improvements, in particular improvements to the functioning of key crossing points. These improvements have the potential to improve accessibility to the AAP area which is in turn likely to increase the number of visitors coming into the centre for retail and other purposes. It also has the potential to improve the attractiveness of the area for employment.	+
5. Accessibility	The proposed Figure 8 identifies several key sites for potential improvement, including improvements to key pedestrian crossing points. These improvements could have a positive impact on accessibility. Potential rationalisation of the taxi rank and a greater pedestrian focus, could also improve accessibility within the AAP area.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	Potential improvements to key crossing points and rationalisation of the taxi rank would have a positive effect on landscape and townscape.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	Potential improvements to key crossing points could have the effect of improving traffic flow within the AAP area.	+

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Table 1 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM6)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The amendment to Table 1 identifies potential improvements, in particular improvements to the functioning of key crossing points. These improvements have the potential to improve accessibility to the AAP centre, which is in turn likely to increase the number of visitors coming into the centre for retail and other purposes. It also has the potential to improve the attractiveness of the area for employment.	+

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
5. Accessibility	The proposed modification to Table 1 reflects what is shown in Figure 8, as amended in MM4, it identifies several key areas of potential improvement, including improvements to key pedestrian crossing points, which could have a positive impact on accessibility. Potential rationalisation of the taxi rank and a greater pedestrian focus, could also improve accessibility within the AAP area.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	Potential improvements to key crossing points and rationalisation of the taxi rank would have a positive effect on landscape and townscape.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	Potential improvements to key crossing points could have the effect of improving traffic flow within the AAP area. This may have a small positive effect in terms of air quality.	+
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 3 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM7)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification seeks to clarify that the non-A1 uses set out in Criterion 3 of Policy 1, which include leisure, cultural and community uses will also be acceptable under Criterion 3 of Policy 3. By clarifying in Policy 3 where such non-A1 uses will be acceptable, the modification will ensure that non-A1 uses of the type described will be supported in the secondary shopping frontage area to support the retail core (primary shopping frontage area). This will ensure that a complimentary mix of uses are available for the community, to contribute to a vibrant and viable town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	<p>The proposed modification seeks to clarify that the non-A1 uses set out in Criterion 3 of Policy 1, which include leisure, cultural and community uses will also be acceptable under Criterion 3 of Policy 3. By clarifying in Policy 3 where such non-A1 uses will be acceptable the modification will ensure that there is an appropriate mix of non-A1 uses in the town centre. This will potentially have a dual effect, encouraging more visitors to the town centre and ensuring a greater variety of employment opportunities.</p> <p>The proposal to remove the target of ensuring that 75% of Rayleigh's primary shopping frontage and 50% of its secondary shopping frontage is in retail (A1) use, will still have a positive impact in terms of economy and employment. Although the percentage targets are proposed to be removed from the policy, it is proposed below in MM7 that they be included elsewhere within the main text of the RAAP. Therefore they still have a positive role to play in the plan, as they set a target that the Council will seek to reach.</p>	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	The proposed modification to ensure that any development would not have a negative impact on the amenity and character of the town centre, which would have a positive effect on this SA objective.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Section 4.2 – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Framework (MM8)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The proposal to clarify the target of ensuring that 75% of Rayleigh's new primary shopping frontage and 50% of its new secondary shopping frontage is in retail (A1) use, will have an impact in terms of economy and employment. Although the percentage targets have been removed from the policy, it is proposed that they be included elsewhere within the main text of the RAAP. Therefore they still have a positive role to play in the plan, as they set a target that the Council will seek to reach.	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
& Energy		
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Section 4.2, Paragraph 6 (MM9)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification seeks to clarify that leisure, cultural and community uses are important to the vitality of the town, and would be supported in the secondary shopping frontage under Policy 3. This will ensure that a complimentary mix of uses are available for the community, to contribute to a vibrant and viable town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The proposed modification seeks to clarify that leisure, cultural and community uses are important to the vitality of the town, and would be supported in the secondary shopping frontage under Policy 3. This will ensure that a complimentary mix of uses are available for the community, to contribute to a vibrant and viable town centre. This will potentially have a dual effect, encouraging more visitors to the town centre and ensuring a greater variety of employment opportunities.	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Section 4.2, Paragraph 6 (MM10)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification seeks to clarify that leisure, cultural and community uses are important to the vitality of the town, and would be supported in the secondary shopping frontage under Policy 3 provided it meets the criteria. This will ensure that a complimentary mix of uses are available for the community, to contribute to a vibrant and viable town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The proposed modification seeks to clarify that leisure, cultural and community uses are important to the vitality of the town, and would be supported in the secondary shopping frontage under Policy 3 provided it meets the criteria. This will ensure that a complimentary mix of uses are available for the community, to contribute to a vibrant and viable town centre. This will potentially have a dual effect, encouraging more visitors to the town centre and ensuring a greater variety of employment opportunities.	+

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Section 4.2, Paragraph 10 (MM11)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	The proposed modification to ensure that any development would not have a negative impact on the amenity and character of the town centre, which would have a positive effect on this SA objective.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 5 – Character Area A: Central High Street, Criterion 4 (MM12)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
5. Accessibility	Potential rationalisation of the taxi rank and a greater pedestrian focus, could also improve accessibility within the AAP area.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	Potential rationalisation of the taxi rank would have a positive effect on landscape and townscape.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 6 – Character Area B: High Street North and Bellingham Lane (MM13)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	The proposed modification clarifies that the criteria refers to the rear of existing buildings along to High Street, and affords an opportunity to utilise potentially underused land within the centre which would have a positive impact on the local townscape and character.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 8 – Character Area D: Websters Way (MM14)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0

Rochford District Council – Rayleigh Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document (November 2014): Schedule of Modifications

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	The proposed modification clarifies that the criteria refers to the rear of existing buildings along to High Street, and affords an opportunity to utilise potentially underused land within the centre which would have a positive impact on the local townscape and character.	+
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Summary:

The SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has appraised the effects of the proposed Schedule of Modifications on individual policies, as well as the overall effect of the plan. The findings of the SA Addendum indicate that the proposed modifications to the RAAP will have a positive effect on the key sustainability criteria, as well as the overall effect of the plan, including cumulative and incremental effects.

Report to Rochford District Council

by David Smith BA (Hons) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Date 6th August 2015

PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (AS AMENDED)
SECTION 20

REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION OF THE RAYLEIGH AREA ACTION PLAN

Document submitted for examination on 5 December 2014

Examination hearing held on 4 March 2015

File Ref: PINS/B1550/429/7

Abbreviations Used in this Report

CS	Core Strategy
LDS	Local Development Scheme
MM	Main Modification
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
RAAP	Rayleigh Action Area Plan
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy

Non-Technical Summary

This report concludes that the Rayleigh Area Action Plan provides an appropriate basis for the planning of this part of the District providing a number of modifications are made to the plan. Rochford District Council has requested me to recommend any modifications necessary to enable the plan to be adopted. All of the modifications were proposed by the Council. I have recommended their inclusion after considering the representations from other parties.

The Main Modifications can be summarised as necessary changes to the policies in the interests of effectiveness and to ensure consistency with national policy.

Introduction

1. This report contains my assessment of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan (RAAP) in terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It considers first whether the Plan's preparation has complied with the duty to co-operate. It then considers whether the Plan is sound and whether it is compliant with the legal requirements. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 182) makes clear that to be sound, a Local Plan should be positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy.
2. The starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The Submission Document of November 2013 was published for consultation in January 2014. Subsequently the Council produced a post pre-submission consultation document entitled Rayleigh Centre Area Action Plan (December 2014). However, that version of the Plan contains changes that materially affect the policies and has not been the subject of consultation. Therefore, having regard to *Examining Local Plans: Procedural Practice* (December 2013) the examination should properly be based on the November 2013 Plan as I made clear prior to and at the hearing.
3. In accordance with section 20(7C) of the 2004 Act the Council has requested that I recommend any modifications required to rectify matters that make the Plan unsound and thus incapable of being adopted. The report deals primarily with the main modifications that are needed to make the Plan sound and legally compliant and they are identified in bold (**MM**). The Appendix contains the Main Modifications in full and all relate to matters that were discussed at the examination hearing.
4. Following this, the Council prepared a schedule of proposed main modifications and an addendum to its sustainability appraisal. The proposed modifications were the subject of public consultation between 27 April and 22 June 2015. I have taken account of the responses received in coming to my conclusions in this report.

Duty to Co-operate

5. The key strategic matters relating to sustainable development in the District were settled in the Core Strategy (CS) adopted in December 2011 and no neighbouring authorities have advised of any cross-boundary issues. Indeed, because of its location and the content of the RAAP, the sustainable development or use of land in Rayleigh would not have a significant impact on any other local planning authority area. As a result the duty to co-operate imposed by section 33A of the 2004 Act in relation to the Plan's preparation is not engaged. The Council has nevertheless continued to liaise constructively with Essex County Council as Highway Authority.

Assessment of Soundness

6. Taking account of all the representations, written evidence and the discussions that took place at the examination hearing I have identified four main issues upon which the soundness of the Plan depends.

Issue 1

Is the overall framework for development within the RAAP area sound having regard to its needs and demands; the relationship with other plans and national policy and the evidence base and preparatory processes?

7. Rayleigh is the principal centre in Rochford District. It is a market town that provides a reasonable range of shops and facilities that serve the settlement and nearby villages¹. The RAAP area coincides with the town centre boundary. A portion of this is designated as a Conservation Area with attractive heritage assets within it. There are few vacant commercial units. Whilst issues of traffic congestion and pedestrian movement exist there is no dissent from the Council's view that the centre is "successful" and the RAAP aims to build on its existing strengths.
8. Policy RTC4 of the CS seeks to ensure that Rayleigh's role is retained through the production of an Area Action Plan which delivers improved accessibility; a safe and high quality environment; a predominance of retail uses; a range of evening leisure uses and promotes community facilities. These criteria have all been positively addressed by the RAAP and are reflected in Policy 1 which sets out the overall framework and refers to new opportunities for retail development and environmental improvements.
9. National policy indicates that policies should be positive and promote competitive town centre environments and support their vitality and viability. Compared to previous options considered the RAAP has been "reined back" and is not particularly ambitious. This is partly due to the absence of suitable sites and the constraints imposed by the historic environment, street layout and neighbouring residential areas. However, the underlying aim of the RAAP is to improve what is already there and there is no evidence to indicate that more dramatic growth is required in order to sustain the centre's fortunes.
10. Therefore the RAAP is justified as the most appropriate strategy and consistent with the CS and national policy. However, the plan period should be clearly stated and linked to that of the CS in the interests of effectiveness (**MM1**).

Issue 2

Are the policies and proposals for movement justified and deliverable? Would they achieve the aims in the RAAP framework?

11. Rayleigh town centre is located at the intersection of 4 main vehicle routes. Websters Way to the rear of the High Street is often congested at either end and there is evidence of queuing into the car park and at the junctions of High Street with Eastwood Road and Crown Hill. Furthermore, pedestrian routes are affected by guardrails and other barriers and the central taxi rank is quite a dominant feature.
12. To address these issues the RAAP proposes a more pedestrian friendly treatment of the central High Street with wider pavements, a rationalised taxi rank and greater pedestrian emphasis with improved crossings. In principle this is consistent with the NPPF which seeks to give priority to pedestrian

¹ Retail and Leisure Study Update 2014 (SUBDOC17)

movements. The intention of making the wide High Street more multi-functional and vibrant is laudable but the detail is not sound.

13. This is because the High Street (A129) carries substantial traffic flows. According to the NPPF layouts should also be safe and secure and seek to minimise conflicts between traffic and pedestrians. In particular, the addition of 'informal' pedestrian crossings would not work well in this context. Furthermore, Figure 8 indicates that 2-way flows would be re-introduced. However, no detailed modelling of the implications of this for the wider network has been undertaken. It is likely that the proposed changes could have unfortunate 'knock-on' effects elsewhere and there is insufficient evidence to justify the potential improvement framework.
14. The Council's proposed modifications address these matters by clarifying that circulation changes are not proposed and by identifying only the taxi rank and existing crossing points as areas of change. Although these amendments provide little detail they nevertheless highlight the key elements of any future scheme. The revisions also offer sufficient flexibility to incorporate the eventual findings of the modelling work that has commenced with funding from the Local Highway Panel. As such, I recommend them as Main Modifications (**MM4, MM5, MM6 & MM12**).
15. There are existing pedestrian links between the main car park in Websters Way and the High Street and the station can be reached along Crown Hill. The policies of the RAAP allow for "cosmetic" improvements to be undertaken. This is consistent with national policy and sound although for clarity criterion 4 of Policy 1 should refer to pedestrian and cycle routes (**MM2**).
16. The schemes identified would be funded publicly or by developer contributions. Consultation has yet to take place on the draft charging schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy. Policy CLT1 of the CS sets out the Council's general approach to infrastructure provision. However, in the interests of effectiveness, a clause should be added to criterion 5 of Policy 1 to indicate that any significant retail developments within the RAAP area would be expected to contribute to these environmental and public realm works (**MM3**).
17. Therefore, subject to the matters referred to above, the policies and proposals for movement are justified and deliverable. They would also form a basis to achieve the aims contained in the RAAP framework.

Issue 3

Are the policies for retail development clear, justified and consistent with national policy? Would they achieve the aims in the RAAP area framework?

18. The NPPF indicates that a range of suitable sites should be allocated to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure and other development needed in town centres. The Retail and Leisure Study Update of 2014² contains projections which suggest that there is scope for a total of 6,800 sq m of additional floorspace by 2034 although dependent on Rayleigh maintaining its current market share. However, development options are limited in the short term.

² SUBDOC17

19. The Dairy Crest site is shown as an opportunity site as it could be redeveloped in the long-term subject to the relocation of the existing occupiers. In theory, development of Websters Way car park could occur if replacement parking were provided in a multi-storey building alongside new uses. The Council does not wish to pursue this option for the present. However, the retail policies do allow scope for new development to be supported if either of these sites or any other land were to come forward unexpectedly. In addition, the assessment in the Update extends beyond the plan period and there is no evidence to suggest that a significant expansion of Rayleigh is required at this time. Consequently the RAAP is justified in taking this approach.
20. Local plans should identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the use of buildings if such restrictions are supported by a clear explanation. Moreover, paragraph 23 of the NPPF refers to the setting of policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in primary and secondary frontages. The Retail Update supports the continuation of these designations.
21. The RAAP has, however, reviewed the extent of the frontages in Rayleigh. As a result, the primary frontage has been reduced to a more tightly drawn 'core' with a good proportion of Class A1 uses (66%). This is justified on the basis of the evidence and in broad terms would allow for non-retail uses to be more strictly controlled in the geographical centre and for greater flexibility on the periphery in the interests of vitality and viability.
22. The target in Policy 3 of 75% of retail use in the primary shopping frontage is higher than the existing figure. There is no mechanism in place to secure an increase in retail premises and so it should be removed from the policy and placed in the supporting text (**MM7 & MM8**). As a result the policy expectation is that there should be a predominance of Class A1 uses within the centre as a whole and within the primary shopping frontage. This would support one of the key elements of the town centre whilst allowing scope for future change.
23. Policy 1 refers to the promotion of community uses in locations outside the primary frontage. For effectiveness the Council should clarify that uses of this kind will be acceptable under the provisions of criterion 3 in Policy 3. Similarly the justification for Policy 3 should also be expanded to make plain that leisure and cultural uses as well as community uses will be acceptable in secondary frontages, subject to criteria 1 and 2 (**MM7, MM9 & MM10**).
24. Whilst I acknowledge public views, the statement that hot food takeaways will not be supported is not backed up by any evidence regarding their impact on the town centre. Such a 'blanket' prohibition is not consistent with national policy and should be removed. In order to deal with concerns about their possible impact the Council proposed modifications to avoid negative effects on the amenity and character of Rayleigh or any other adverse consequences. I recommend these changes in the interests of soundness (**MM7 & MM11**).
25. Provided that the RAAP is modified as recommended the approach adopted would be consistent with the expectations and definitions within the NPPF. It should ensure the future vitality of the main centre with greater prospects for new uses in the secondary frontages.

Issue 4

Are the policies relating to the character of Rayleigh clear, justified and consistent with national policy? Would they achieve the aims in the RAAP area framework?

26. The RAAP identifies four separate character areas to provide comprehensive coverage. They provide overarching guidance to protect the historic character of the town where necessary but also to allow for public realm interventions and new development in line with Policy 1. For clarity the references in Policies 6 and 8 to "building backs" should be adjusted to "development at the rear of existing properties" (**MM13** & **MM14**).

Assessment of Legal Compliance

27. My examination of the compliance of the Plan with the legal requirements is summarised in the table below. I conclude that the Plan meets them all.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS	
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	The RAAP is identified in the December 2014 ³ Update and its content and timing are compliant with the LDS.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and relevant regulations	The SCI was adopted in 2007 ⁴ and consultation has been compliant with its requirements, including that on the proposed main modifications.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	SA ⁵ has been carried out, including an SA of the proposed main modifications and is adequate.
Habitats Regulations Assessment	The Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report of December 2013 ⁶ and Update of March 2015 ⁷ found that none of the policies are likely to have significant impacts on European sites. Natural England agrees with their findings.
National Policy	The RAAP complies with national policy except where indicated and modifications are recommended.
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)	Satisfactory regard has been paid to the SCS.
2004 Act (as amended) and 2012 Regulations.	The RAAP complies with the Act and the Regulations.

Overall Conclusion and Recommendation

28. The Plan has a number of deficiencies in relation to soundness for the reasons set out above which mean that I recommend non-adoption of it as submitted, in accordance with Section 20(7A) of the 2004 Act. These deficiencies have been explored in the main issues set out above.

³ SUBDOC11

⁴ SUBDOC12

⁵ SUBDOC3

⁶ SUBDOC4

⁷ RCAAP013

29. The Council has requested that I recommend main modifications to make the Plan sound and capable of adoption. I conclude that with the recommended Main Modifications set out in the Appendix the Rayleigh Area Action Plan satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.

David Smith

INSPECTOR

This report is accompanied by the Appendix containing the Main Modifications

Main Modifications

The changes below are expressed either in the conventional form of strikethrough for deletions and underlining for additions of text, or by specifying the change in words in *italics*.

The page numbers and paragraph numbering below refer to the Rayleigh Area Action Plan Submission Document (November 2013), and do not take account of the deletion or addition of text.

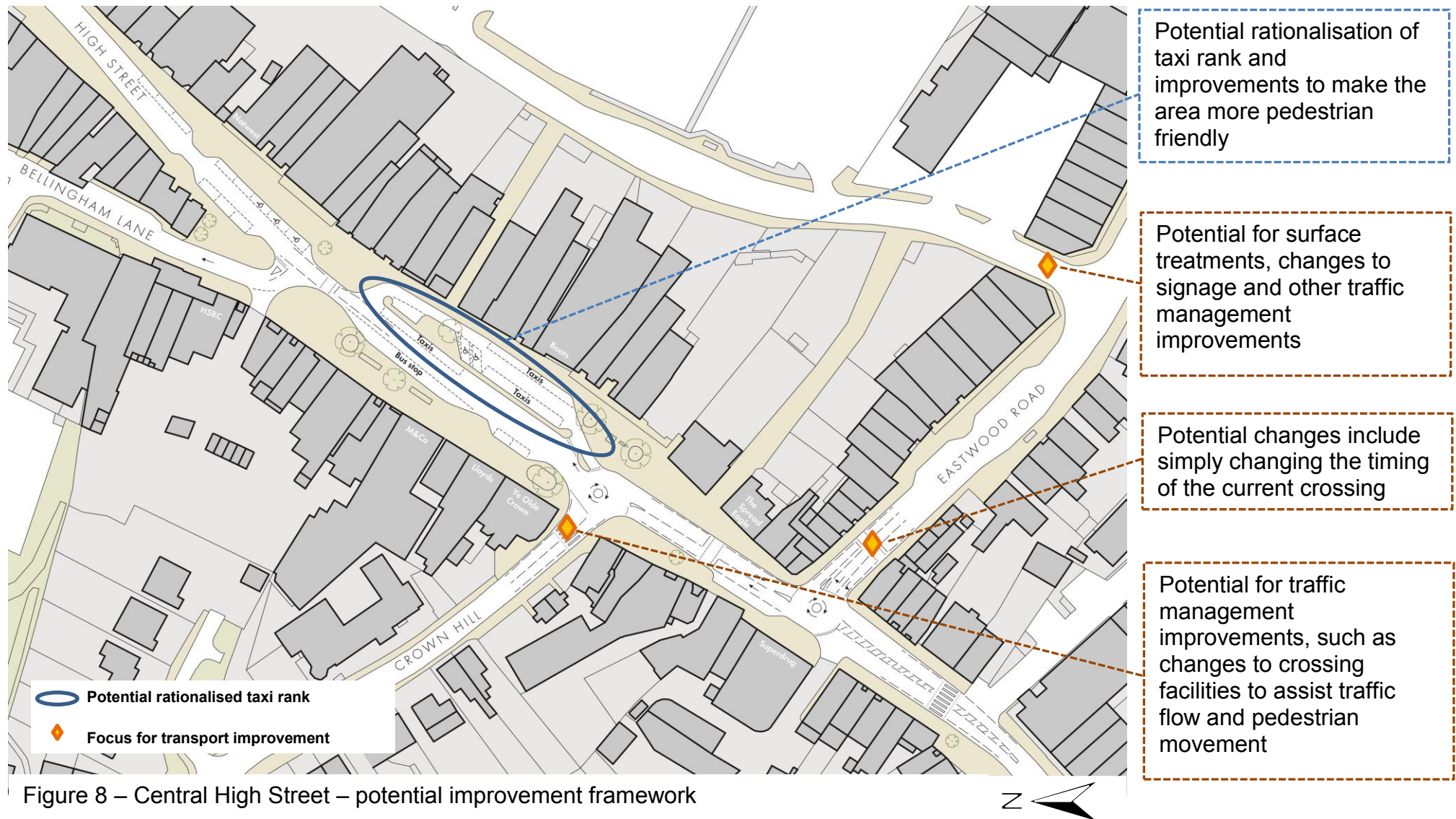
Ref	Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modifications
MM1	6	Section 1.1 Paragraph 1	Amend paragraph as follows; Rochford District Council is committed to preparing Area Action Plans (AAP) for its three main centres of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. The AAPs will form part of the statutory development plan for Rochford District. This document focuses on guiding the development of Rayleigh town centre, and also considers its immediate surrounds . <u>surroundings, during the current plan period to 2025.</u>
MM2	24	Policy 1	Amend Policy as follows; 4. New and improved <u>pedestrian and cycle</u> routes within the AAP area and linking the centre with the railway station and the surrounding area; and
MM3	24	Policy 1	Amend Policy as follows; 5. New and improved public realm and environmental improvements throughout the centre as identified on the spatial framework. <u>It is expected that significant retail development within Rayleigh centre will contribute financially to these schemes.</u>
MM4	24	Section 3.4 Paragraph 3	Amend text as follows; In terms of delivering public realm improvements to the town centre, the Rayleigh Framework identifies the opportunity for improvements to the central section of High Street, which is currently dominated by the taxi rank. The <u>Council recognises that the local</u> taxi services provide shoppers with <u>an important a</u>

Ref	Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modifications
			local service, but there is an opportunity to deliver greater pedestrian priority <u>and flexibility for the local market</u> in this central and high profile location <u>as well as recognising the role of the taxi rank</u> . Figure 7 provides an overview of the existing conditions in this central area and Figure 8 puts forward a potential framework for improvements <u>identifies sites that would benefit from potential rationalisation</u> . The ideas put forward would, subject to funding being identified, need to be developed and refined with the Highway Authority, local traders and other stakeholders. However, they provide a framework for a major initial phase of environmental improvements – with the potential to continue further improvements of this type within adjacent areas.
MM5	26	Figure 8	Replace Figure 8 with modified version of Figure 7 (see Appendix 1)
MM6	28-29	Table 1	Replace Table 1 as shown in Appendix 2
MM7	32	Policy 3	<p>Amend policy as follows;</p> <p>Within the town centre's primary and secondary shopping frontages, as defined on the Rayleigh AAP Proposals Map (Figure 10), proposals for A1 retail uses will be acceptable. A proposed change of use for non-retail (non-A1) purposes will be permitted where it would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not have a detrimental impact on, or undermine, the predominance of A1 uses within the centre, both within the centre as a whole and within the primary shopping frontage; 2. Not create a cluster of non-A1 uses within the same use class in a locality that undermines the retail character of the centre; and 3. Entail the provision of a non-A1 use which is considered to positively contribute to the overall offer and encourage people into the centre. <u>These may take the form of those non-A1 uses set out in criterion 3 of Policy 1, including A2-5, leisure, cultural and community uses. The Council will encourage such uses outside of the primary shopping frontage in particular; and</u> 4. Not have a negative effect on the amenity and character of Rayleigh or have adverse consequences

Ref	Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modifications
			<p><u>for Rayleigh centre.</u></p> <p>The Council will generally seek to ensure 75% of Rayleigh's primary shopping frontage and 50% of its secondary shopping frontage is in retail (A1) use.</p>
MM8	34	Section 4.2	<p>Replace paragraph 5 with the following;</p> <p>The target proportions of 75% and 50% of the primary and secondary frontages in A1 retail use respectively are considered appropriate for this principal town centre. These proportions have been carried forward from the Local Plan.</p> <p><u>The Council recognises the dynamic nature of centres and the need for flexibility. Nevertheless, it wishes to ensure that the majority of uses both within the centres as a whole and within the primary shopping frontage are in A1 use. As at March 2015, within the revised primary and secondary shopping frontages, 66% of the primary frontage and 62% of the secondary frontage fall within A1 use. The Council will seek to achieve a target of 75% A1 uses in the primary frontage and 50% A1 uses in the secondary frontage.</u></p>
MM9	34	Section 4.2 Paragraph 6	<p>Amend paragraph as follows;</p> <p>Notwithstanding the need to protect A1 uses in the identified shopping frontages, an appropriate balance of uses is necessary to support the health of Rayleigh town centre, and it is essential that retail uses are supported by non-retail uses such as cafés, pubs and banks. <u>Leisure, cultural and community uses will also be accepted in the secondary frontages provided that they meet the criteria set out in Policy 1.</u></p>
MM10	34	Section 4.2 paragraph 6	<p>Insert additional paragraph after paragraph 6 as follows;</p> <p><u>With this goal in mind the Council has set several criteria to encourage the appropriate mix of uses within Rayleigh Centre. Under policy 1, criterion 3, the Council states that it will promote appropriate proportions of non-A1 development, particularly outside of the retail core (within the secondary shopping frontage); such development within the retail core is not precluded provided it conforms to the provisions in Policy 1 and Policy 3.</u></p>

Ref	Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modifications
			<u>Policy 3, criterion 3 requires non-A1 developments proposed for Rayleigh Centre to positively contribute to the overall offer and encourage people into the centre. In addition to community uses, leisure and cultural uses will be supported in the secondary shopping frontages where they comply with the criteria in policy 3.</u>
MM11	34	Section 4.2 paragraph 10	Amend Paragraph as follows; However there are uses of which the provision of additional units in Hockley <u>Rayleigh</u> centre would not be considered to positively contribute to the overall offer of the centre. <u>Developments which would have a negative effect on the amenity and character of Rayleigh or which would have adverse consequences for Rayleigh centre would not generally be supported.</u> Such uses include hot food takeaways (A5-uses), planning applications for which will not generally be supported.
MM12	38	Policy 5	Amend Policy as follows; 4. Public realm enhancements should be focused on the creation of a new public space at the centre of the High Street and include the <u>potential</u> rationalisation and reduction in size of the existing taxi rank; and
MM13	40	Policy 6	Amend Policy as follows; 4. The development of building backs <u>Development at the rear of existing properties</u> will be acceptable where this would not have an undue negative impact on the operation of units fronting the High Street;
MM14	44	Policy 8	Amend Policy as follows; 2. The development of building backs <u>Development at the rear of existing properties</u> will be acceptable where this would not have an undue negative impact on the operation of units fronting the High Street, the safety and operation of Websters Way or the levels of town centre car parking;

RayAAP: Schedule of Modifications Appendix 1



RayAAP: Schedule of Modifications Appendix 2

Environmental improvement / highways scheme	Lead partner	Other partners	Estimated cost	Potential funding stream(s)	Comments	Justification
High Street Taxi Rank & Market Area	ECC	Rochford District Council / developers	£300,000 - £1,250,000	Pooled financial contributions / ECC budget	<p>Potential rationalisation of taxi stand to allow improved pedestrian environment and to achieve a more versatile use of the taxi rank and market area.</p> <p>Landscaping and lighting enhancement. Traffic management improvements at key junctions and crossing points aimed at improving existing functionality (including low impact surface treatments and signage improvements).</p> <p>Following identification of a range of options and their costs for Rayleigh centre through earlier iterations of the Plan, the Local Highways Panel has agreed to fund transport modelling work. This will identify precise measures from the framework for improvements this Plan provides, along with the specific costs of such improvements from the range of costs identified here based on a scalable package of measures.</p>	<p>A significant proportion of public space in the core of town centre is allocated as carriageway for a taxi standing area. Space is required for occasional market use. There is a need to review and seek to improve taxi parking and circulation within this area to meet the needs of the local market and improvements to pedestrian movement. While acknowledging the role played by the taxi services in the town centre there is the potential to rationalise the taxi parking with the market.</p> <p>The town centre functions as a major traffic thoroughfare in the District. There is an opportunity for enhanced pedestrian safety improvements and better traffic flow around the town centre through making existing junctions perform at a more optimal level. Traffic management improvements can ensure that pedestrians are still able to use these crossings safely while also ensuring that traffic flow is not adversely affected.</p>
1. Zebra Crossing at the top of Crown Hill	ECC	Rochford District Council /	£500,000 – £3,000,000	Pooled financial contributions / ECC budget	There is potential for the inclusion of traffic management measures to improve the effectiveness of key	The town centre functions as a major traffic thoroughfare in the District. There is the opportunity for greater pedestrian safety

<p>2. Pelican Crossing before the junction of Bellingham Lane and the High Street</p> <p>3. Pelican Crossing of, Eastwood Road, before the High Road and Eastwood Road roundabout; and Pelican Crossing of High Road to the north east of the High Road and Eastwood Road roundabout.</p> <p>4. Zebra Crossing, High Street to the North of the Police Station.</p> <p>5. Zebra Crossing of Websters Way at Eastwood Road junction.</p>		developers			<p>crossing points, subject to further investigation of traffic and pedestrian movements. Rochford District Council will work in conjunction with Essex County Council to assess appropriate measures to be taken.</p> <p>Following identification of a range of options and their costs for Rayleigh centre through earlier iterations of the Plan, the Local Highways Panel has agreed to fund transport modelling work. This will identify precise measures from the framework for improvements this Plan provides, along with the specific costs of such improvements. Whilst the potential costs of these range of improvements have the potential to total up to £3,000,000, it could be that the most effective measures will cost considerably less.</p> <p>The extension of the High Street improvement scheme along Eastwood Road, including the junction with Websters Way.</p>	<p>improvements and better traffic flow around the town centre through making existing junctions perform at the most optimal level. Traffic management improvements can ensure that pedestrians are still able to use these crossings safely while also ensuring that traffic flow is not adversely affected.</p> <p>Traffic management improvements can involve significantly less material disruption to the structure of existing roads. The extent of the improvements to be applied to the area will be determined in relation to further investigation of pedestrian and motorist behaviours and with the assistance of Essex County Council as Highways Authority.</p>
New and enhanced pedestrian / cycle links	ECC	Rochford District Council /	£150,000 - £200,000	Pooled financial contributions / ECC budget	The enhancement of pedestrian and cycle links across the town centre, for example improved mid-block	To improve environmental quality and safety, and encourage walking and cycling for local journeys around the town.

		developers			links between High Street and Websters Way, between Eastwood Road and Castle Road car park, and to the station via Crown Hill and Rayleigh Mount.	
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