

GB8 Hadleigh Farm Green Belt Castle Point Borough Council's (CPBC) Submission

Site GB8 sweeps in a crescent around the south of Hadleigh and across the open farmland between Hadleigh and Leigh-on-Sea. This is all much loved highly performing Green Belt and satisfies criteria for existence as Green Belt.

This submission supports CPBC assessment of the Core purposes of Green Belt

- **Checking Sprawl: Preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.**

In Southend a large conurbation already exists. Building on Hadleigh Farm (GB8) will result in ribbon development along the north bank of the Thames for over 10 miles.

Building on Hadleigh Farm create a substantially built-up location causing the merging of Castle Point and Southend.

- **Preventing Merging**

The north side of the London Road is already heavily built-up between Southend and Hadleigh. This means that building on the south side of the road on GB8 will result in both communities completely merging and is therefore even more important to preserve this much loved open space.

CPBC own Green Belt Assessment 2025 states development here would cause loss of visual separation leading directly to urban coalescence. This is a public view which would be almost obliterated. Regardless of the Promoter's (Salvation Army) inclusion of so-called viewing corridors in their section 19 submission. Any worthwhile view across the Thames Valley would be predominantly available from the houses built on the southern edge of the Promoters currently proposed plan. This open space is important for the local community and visitors allowing them to distinguish where they are in an already built-up area. This is a public view and a publicly visible gap that is highly valued in understanding the local area.

- **Protecting the Countryside**

GB8 is one of the few areas of countryside to the west of Southend. It borders Two Tree Island and Hadleigh Country Park – important nature reserves. The upper fields are active habitat for legally protected declining species, a flyway for many migratory birds and act like a buffer to the internationally protected Thames Estuary.

GB8 has been under constant cultivation for many decades and has provided substantial crop yield over this period. Building on this land will cause the loss of this cultivated land.

The views from this land are breathtaking and should be preserved as part of the countryside which provides much needed open space locally having positive effects on residents and visitors mental health and wellbeing.

Hadleigh Park is home to the 2012 Olympic Mountain Bike Course a legacy from the Olympic Games. It has many opportunities not just for cycling but other recreational

pursuits in a beautiful and iconic location, filled with wildlife with magnificent views over the estuary to Kent. Building houses next to this area would destroy such a wonderful setting

The landscape sensitivity assessment identified GB8 as a high value landscape with high sensitivity.



View of Hadleigh Castle across Hadleigh Farm field

- **Preserving Historic Setting of Hadleigh and Leigh-on-Sea**

GB8 is adjacent to a number of historic sites, the spectacular 13th-century Hadleigh Castle a Grade 1 listed historic monument, a Roman fort (archaeological surveys have recovered Roman and pre-Roman artefacts particularly in the fields near the castle), as well as historically important large gun emplacements and the birthplace of the Salvation Army Hadleigh Farm Community. Burying them in a large housing estate would destroy the settings for these sites. This loss to current and future generations would be catastrophic.

The part of Southend that is closest to GB8 is a historic fishing port and can trace its history back to before Roman times. Hadleigh is also an ancient farming settlement and can likewise trace its history back to the same period. Both towns have very separate and distinctive characters that should be preserved. Building on GB8 will destroy the distinctiveness of both distinctive and important historic communities that have existed separately for over two millennia.

The promoter's own Heritage Appraisal admits the large development will urbanise the setting of this and other historic assets-a direct failure to preserve it.



Aerial View over the Thames Valley



Hadleigh Castle and Surrounding Hadleigh Farm Fields

- **Encouraging Regeneration**

Not allowing building on GB8 will not only preserve this magnificent, historic and bucolic site for further generations but will encourage other less important sites that are Brown Belt to be regenerated for much needed housing.

Castle Point by not approving the building on the Hadleigh Farm site will result in densification of housing elsewhere within the CPBC Local Plan which is preferable over suburban expansion.

Refusal of planning permission will encourage developers to look for more suitable sites in CPBC to build houses that would not have the same catastrophic impact.

In conclusion this is an outstanding piece of land. It performs strongly as Green Belt meeting all five core purposes-checking urban sprawl, preventing merging, protecting the countryside, preserve setting and encouraging regeneration; there is very strong evidence to support all of these purposes. This exceptional site can not be classified as Grey Belt, should not be built on now or in the future because of its strength as Green Belt. It must be the very last place for any construction in Castle Point Borough.

Promoter's Grey Belt Claim

The Promoter's (Salvation Army) spatial strategy rests on attempting to reclassify high-performing Green Belt as "Grey Belt" to lower the threshold for release and maximise profit when selling the land. Land is expressly excluded from Grey Belt classification if it strongly contributes to any core Green Belt purpose. Site GB8 contributes strongly for both Purpose (b) and Purpose (d), rendering any reclassification invalid. For all the reasons set out above and as is evident from the CPBC Green Belt Assessment 2025 this is clearly not the case.