

10 Building a strong, competitive economy

Strategic Policy EC 1: Economic Strategy

Policy Context

10.1 The *NPPF* sets out the Government's policies in relation to planning for a strong and competitive economy. It makes clear that local planning policies should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local needs and wider opportunities for development.

10.2 The *NPPF* sets out that local planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable growth. They should also set criteria for local and inward investment to match the strategy, address potential barriers to investment be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the Plan, allow for new flexible working practices, and enable a rapid response to changing economic circumstances.

Evidence Base

10.3 Evidence in relation to the economy, employment and economic growth in Castle Point is set out in the 2017 *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment*. This report identifies the key strengths and weaknesses in the economy within Castle Point.

10.4 The key strengths were identified as being: low unemployment; reasonable transport links; above average business formation rates and high levels of self-employment indicating entrepreneurial activity; low cost base (premise and wages); and resilient manufacturing base less affected by global pressures.

10.5 The key weaknesses were identified as being: lack of modern employment premises; out commuting for work; below average skills and workplace wages; low representation in growth and knowledge based sectors; cutbacks in public sector employment; no strong sectors with growth potential businesses; limited attraction to inward investment; and competition from larger centres nearby.

10.6 The consequence of these weaknesses is a low level of business output. As a key measure of productivity gross value added (GVA) per head in Castle Point is low, with the area ranking in the bottom 40% of districts nationally. In 2014 GVA per head in Castle Point was £12,996.70, this is almost half of the GVA experienced in the neighbouring authority of Basildon. Due to low local wages, many of Castle Point's residents commute out of the borough for work. 19% commute to London, whilst 12.7% and 14.7% commute to the local centres of Basildon and Southend-on-Sea respectively.

10.7 Modelling was undertaken in the *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* to determine the future demand for employment. The study concluded that an additional need of 1 hectare of employment land is necessary to support Castle Point up until

2036. Re-location of industrial needs from London to outer areas is a catalyst for this additional growth. The majority of this need is for B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage or distribution) class employment.

10.8 There are six active and three potential employment sites included within the assessment of Castle Point's employment land supply, totalling 103ha.

10.9 In order to make Castle Point a more attractive location for businesses and a local workforce, there is a need to improve the quality of employment areas and provide a greater flexibility in the supply of premises in order to attract investment and encourage indigenous companies to stay in the borough as they grow. To address the current issues with the skill level of the local labour force, training provision should be aligned with the needs of local businesses. The office market in Castle Point is under-developed and is unlikely to feature as a destination for non-indigenous businesses. There is a need to develop this market overtime to provide the necessary range of accommodation to support a diverse local economy.

10.10 The Castle Point Regeneration Partnership is well placed to address some of the issues mentioned above. Around the environmental quality of the estates, new gateways and signage has already been delivered at Charfleets Industrial Estate and Manor Trading Estate. However, there remains an issue with the quality of the private realm in these areas. With regard to training meanwhile, two new secondary schools and a Skills Campus to deliver further education courses have been delivered on Canvey Island. The ambitions of partners in the South Essex sub region, from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to the Castle Point Regeneration Partnership, is to develop a series of measures related to education and skills provision that will ensure that there is greater alignment between the needs of local businesses and the training on offer. In particular, there will be new investment in training for advanced engineering, logistics and digital media within the sub-region with specialist advanced engineering opportunities at USP (SEEVIC) college in Thundersley.

Policy 1

Economic Strategy

1. In order to support the wider economy in South Essex, during the period 2018 to 2033, the economy of Castle Point will be enhanced through:
 - a. The provision of at least an additional 23 hectares of land for employment development falling within B Use Classes of the Use Classes Order;
 - b. Improved local wages, in line with wages elsewhere in South Essex; and
 - c. Increased levels of productivity in Castle Point, by increasing GVA to the Essex average.
2. This will be achieved by:
 - a. Working with partners to deliver improvements to the quality of public space within employment areas in Castle Point, including the quality of open spaces, landscaping, roads, drains and communication infrastructure;
 - b. Encouraging the improvement and redevelopment of private land within existing employment areas in order to enable business growth and improve the attractiveness of these areas;
 - c. Maintaining a flexible employment land supply within established and proposed employment sites identified on the Policies Map, which has the potential to deliver at least 6,600m² of additional employment floorspace for employment development falling within Use Classes B1a, B1c and B2 of the Use Classes Order;
 - d. Seeking the provision of suitable, flexible floorspace that can be used by office or knowledge based businesses;
 - e. Seeking the provision of small business units and specific start-up facilities to support indigenous business growth; and
 - f. Establishing and maintaining relationships between local businesses and local training and education providers to improve local skills levels.

Strategic Policy SP EC 2 : Protecting Existing Employment Land

Policy Context

10.11 The *NPPF* expects that policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

10.12 It also states that planning policies should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment uses where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

Evidence Base

10.13 The *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* indicates that the existing employment estates identified in policy SP EC 3 are well occupied and should be protected and maintained. Therefore, the ongoing protection of these areas for employment purposes is appropriate.

10.14 However, the majority of employment floorspace in Castle Point is currently used for industrial purposes. Several of the scenarios considered in the *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* indicated that there may be a decrease in demand for industrial floorspace as a consequence of a potential decline in manufacturing, however new demand is likely to arise from the London Industrial Land Re-location Scenario. A flexible approach to the re-use of sites within employment areas is needed in order to support the changing demands of the local economy.

10.15 It should however be recognised that permitting some uses in employment areas, such as shops (especially supermarkets) is likely to detract from the vitality and viability of local shopping parades and town centres and should be avoided by applying the sequential approach set out in the *NPPF*.

10.16 It should also be recognised that some uses may not be compatible with one another. For example, an employment area that comprises many industrial units would not be a suitable location for a children's nursery, despite the jobs or residential uses a nursery may provide.

Policy 2

Protecting Employment Land

Applications for uses falling outside Use Classes B of the Use Classes Order will be permitted within those employment areas identified in policies SP EC 3 and LP EC 5 to 8 of this plan where they accord with the following criteria:

- a. It can be demonstrated that the use will provide an equivalent number of jobs compared to a employment development falling within Use Classes B of the Use Classes Order use of the site, meeting the requirements of policy LP EC 11 in terms of skills;
- b. It can be demonstrated that the location of the use within an employment area will not undermine the vitality or viability of local town centres or local shopping parades;
- c. The proposed use is compatible with other existing uses within the employment area, having regard to any potential harm to productivity levels, or to the health and well-being of employees or potential users; and
- d. All other relevant policies within this plan are also complied with.

Strategic Policy SP EC 3: Identified Land for Employment

Policy Context

10.17 The *NPPF* requires local planning policies to set criteria, or identify strategic sites for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. Additionally, local planning policies are expected to seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment.

Evidence Base

10.18 The *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* indicates that six existing employment sites in Castle Point are well occupied with very low levels of vacancy. They are all assessed as being good or average quality employment sites within the borough.

10.19 Four of the six sites identified make an important contribution to the stock of available employment land in the borough, and should therefore be protected for this purpose. Land by the River Thames a South Canvey is used for port-related hazardous installations, and policies for this area found in other Chapters. Land at and surrounding Lychgate Farm is identified as Green Belt, but also as a safeguarded area for potential strategic development and therefore subject to a different policy approach.

Policy 3

Identified Land for Employment

1. The existing employment locations, listed below, will be retained for employment development falling within Use Classes B1a, B1c, B2 and B8 of the Use Classes Order:

- a. Charfleets Industrial Estate, Canvey Island
 - b. Manor Trading Estate, Thundersley
 - c. Stadium Way Estate, Rayleigh
 - d. Land at Council Offices and UPS, Thundersley
2. The extent of these allocations are shown on the Policies Map.

Local Policy LP EC 4: Unidentified Locations for Employment

Policy Context

10.20 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to set criteria, or identify strategic sites for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the Plan period.

Evidence Base

10.21 The South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment indicates that the locations allocated for employment development (B Class Uses) in policy SP EC 3 and LP EC 5 to 8 provide sufficient space to accommodate the predicted economic growth needs of the borough, as well as needs arising from any loss of smaller employment sites within residential areas for residential purposes. There is therefore no known requirement for permitting economic development outside allocated employment locations identified. However, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF, criteria identifying where such development may be deemed suitable have been developed in the event such applications are made.

10.22 Policy SP EC 4 should be read alongside all other relevant policies within this plan. This includes, but is not limited to, policy LP EC 11 regarding higher skilled jobs, policies related to transport within chapter 13, policy LP DS 5 regarding the design of business premises, policies related to climate change in chapter 18, in particular policy LP CC 6 regarding the Surface Water Management, and policies in the chapter 19 regarding the natural environment in particular policies LP NE 8, LP NE 10 and LP NE 11 regarding nature conservation, pollution control, and contaminated land respectively.

Policy 4

Unidentified Locations for Employment

Applications for employment development falling within Use Classes B of the Use Classes Order will be given favourable consideration in those locations allocated for employment purposes on the Policies Map. Uses falling within Use Class B1a of the Use

Classes Order will also be given favourable consideration above shops within town centres. Uses falling within Use Classes B of the Use Classes Order will only be permitted elsewhere when the following criteria can be met:

- a. The proposed development is for a building or land already used for employment purposes, or it is proposed that the existing use of the building or land is retained alongside the employment use;
- b. The proposed development will not have an impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties greater than the existing or most recent use of the building or land; and
- c. Other relevant policies within this plan are also complied with.

Local Policy LP EC 5: Extension to Manor Trading Estate

Evidence Base

10.23 The *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* identified a need for additional employment land to be made available throughout the borough.

10.24 Land to the east of Manor Trading Estate has been promoted to the Council for employment purposes, and appears to be deliverable. It is expected that access to the site will be achieved through the existing estate, or through the redevelopment of some land within the existing estate.

10.25 The land was designated as Green Belt in the *1998 Adopted Local Plan*. The *Green Belt Review 2018* indicated that this site could be removed from the Green Belt without undermining the purpose of the Green Belt in this location.

10.26 The site was identified as a Local Wildlife Site in the *Local Wildlife Site Review 2012*. The loss of biodiversity from a *Local Wildlife Site* must be compensated for as the *NPPF* expects a net gain in biodiversity.

10.27 Land in this area falls within a Critical Drainage Area for a Potential Surface Water Flooding Hot Spot, as identified in the *South Essex Surface Water Management Plan 2012*. Ongoing surface water flooding issues are known on Manor Trading Estate and adjacent residential areas. Numerous cases of internal property flooding have been recorded by the Lead Local Flood Authority. It is therefore necessary that any development within this area includes appropriate drainage arrangements that do not increase the risk and ideally reduce the risk of flooding to other properties in the area, consistent with criteria set out in the *NPPF*.

Policy 5

Extension to Manor Trading Estate

The 1.58ha site identified on the Policies Map as an extension to the east of Manor Trading Estate will be made available for employment development falling within Use Classes B1b, B1c and B2 of the Use Classes Order where it can be demonstrated that:

- a. Access suitable for commercial vehicles has been secured for the site via the adjacent industrial estate;
- b. Sufficient and suitable compensatory provision has been made for the loss of wildlife in order to result in a net gain in biodiversity;
- c. Appropriate drainage infrastructure improvements can be delivered on the Trading Estate that result in a reduction in surface water flooding risk to properties within the vicinity of the site; and
- d. The proposal meets all other requirements of this plan.

Local Policy LP EC 6: Extension to Charfleets Industrial Estate

Evidence Base

10.28 This site was allocated for employment purposes in the *1998 Adopted Local Plan*. The extension to Roscommon Way, which provides access for the site has also recently been completed. Due to the new access provision, this site is now reasonably available for employment development, and is considered to be deliverable.

10.29 The *South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment* recognises this site as suitable for meeting Castle Point's employment needs; the site has received planning permissions and construction work has begun.

10.30 Whilst the site was identified for employment purposes in the *1998 Adopted Local Plan*, a Local Wildlife Site designation affects the site. The loss of biodiversity from a Local Wildlife Site must be compensated for as the *NPPF* expects a net gain in biodiversity.

10.31 This site is on Canvey Island and is therefore located within flood risk zone 3. Additionally, due to its low lying nature, land on Canvey is subject to surface water flooding with the entire Island identified as a Critical Drainage Area in the *South Essex Surface Water Management Plan 2012*. Development proposals at this site need to be designed to achieve resilience and resistance to flood risk. They also need to be designed to manage surface water drainage issues on site and prevent an increased risk of flooding by surface water to other land and properties nearby. Surface water arising from development should be managed

sustainably, and should not require connection to the piped drainage network. The piped drainage network should be upgraded as appropriate to accommodate additional foul water flows.

Policy 6

Extension to Charfleets Industrial Estate

The 10.5ha site identified on the Policies Map as an extension to the south of Charfleets Industrial Estate will be made available for employment development falling within Use Classes B1b, B1c and B2 of the Use Classes Order, where it can be demonstrated that:

- a. Access suitable for commercial vehicles has been secured for the site via Roscommon Way;
- b. Sufficient and suitable compensatory provision has been made for the loss of wildlife in order to result in a net gain in biodiversity;
- c. Development proposals are resilient and resistant to flooding from tidal and surface water sources, and provide safe, on-site refuge facilities in the event that a flood does occur;
- d. Surface water is fully managed on-site, and on adjacent land within the same ownership, with no increase in the risk of surface water flooding to other land and property nearby;
- e. Drainage capacity will be improved as necessary to accommodate additional foul water flows; and
- f. The proposal meets all other requirements of this plan.

Local Policy LP EC 7: Land for Employment South of Northwick Road

Evidence Base

10.32 This site was allocated in the *1998 Adopted Local Plan*. However, it has not been developed to date. Applications and approvals support employment provision on this site, including the potential provision of an enterprise centre to support indigenous business growth.

10.33 The allocation in the *1998 Adopted Local Plan* covered 18ha of land. However, the designation of the Canvey Wick SSSI in 2005 covered approximately half the site and 9.7ha. are now available for development purposes. Development proposals must not have an adverse impact on the SSSI and must provide mitigation and compensation for any biodiversity impacts on site. Due to the proximity of this site to a SSSI, development proposals will require a screening opinion from the Council with regard to the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment, and where requested produce such an assessment to accompany any planning application they submit.

10.34 The site is at a prominent location at the junction of Roscommon Way with Northwick Road. It is therefore important that the design of this development reflects this location, and that any buildings located to the north-east of the site are of sufficiently high quality to act as a landmark for Canvey.

10.35 As this site is on Canvey Island, it is located within flood risk zone 3. Additionally, due to its low lying nature, land on Canvey is subject to surface water flooding with the entire Island identified as a Critical Drainage Area in the *South Essex Surface Water Management Plan*. Development proposals at this site need to be designed to achieve resilience and resistance to flood risk. They also need to be designed to manage surface water drainage issues on or adjacent to the site and prevent an increased risk of flooding by surface water to other properties nearby. Ideally, surface water will be managed sustainably and will not require connection to the piped drainage network. The piped drainage network should be upgraded as appropriate to accommodate additional foul water flows.

Policy 7

Land for Employment South of Northwick Road

The 9.7ha site identified on the Policies Map as land for employment South of Northwick Road will be made available for development for employment development falling within Use Classes B1b, B1c and B2 of the Use Classes Order where it can be demonstrated that:

- a. An enterprise centre or similar facility will be delivered on the site, providing accommodation for start-up businesses;
- b. Development proposals will ensure that there is no adverse harm to the Canvey Wick SSSI, and that any biodiversity loss on site is fully mitigated or compensated for, with the result of a net gain in biodiversity;
- c. Development proposals are resilient and resistant to flooding from tidal and surface water sources, and provide safe, on-site refuge facilities in the event that a flood does occur;
- d. Surface water is fully managed on or adjacent to the site, with no increase in the risk of surface water flooding to nearby properties;
- e. Drainage capacity will be improved as necessary to accommodate additional foul water flows;
- f. Development proposals are designed to reflect the prominent location of the site as the gateway to West Canvey; and
- g. The proposal meets all other requirements of this plan.