



Economic Development  
Strategy & Action Plan

2025-2028

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## 1. Strategy at a Glance

1.1 This Strategy sets out a baseline and a series of deliverable actions to grow Castle Point’s economy. The Action Plan focuses on four core themes, with a set of evidence, and measurable actions behind each of them. They are:

- Supporting our businesses;
- Raising skills levels and aspirations;
- Increasing economic participation across all ages; and
- Developing our town centres.

### Corporate Plan 2025-28

Council ambition	Linked?
<p><b>Working for a prosperous future</b></p> <p><i>We want to ensure the best possible local economy, with opportunities for our residents to succeed and achieve</i></p>	Yes
<p><b>Healthier, safer communities</b> <i>Residents should feel safe in our Borough and supported to be more active in order to improve their health and wellbeing</i></p>	Yes
<p><b>A greener and cleaner environment</b></p> <p><i>It’s important to everyone that we look after our environment</i></p>	Yes
<p><b>Restoring the Council to good health</b></p> <p><i>We will place our Council on a sound financial footing and ensure resilience – delivering the service our residents deserve and expect</i></p>	Yes
<p><b>We ♥ Castle Point</b></p> <p><i>We will help create and maintain the best possible place to live in, work in and visit</i></p>	Yes

## 2. Foreword

- 2.1 We are pleased to introduce the Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan for Castle Point. When we came into administration in 2022, we committed to improving how we built trust with and supported our local businesses and grow the economy putting community at its heart.
- 2.2 Since then, much has been achieved. This includes bringing in a dedicated ‘outward facing’ Economic Development & Regeneration team and the delivery of over £1million of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding. This has enabled us to introduce the first dedicated business support programme for Castle Point, award grants to businesses and community organisations, and provide training for young people to gain qualifications. At the same time the Borough has benefitted from £8m of investment into South Essex to improve digital connectivity. In this time, we have become much more proactive in engaging with our local business community. We have introduced a programme of business visits and events, and we have celebrated business success through the expanded Mayor’s Business Awards.
- 2.3 This Strategy is an important step in setting the direction and ensuring we can continue and expand on this good work, by setting out a series of deliverable and measurable actions to help the Borough’s economy grow and give our residents the opportunity to access local job opportunities and reach their potential. To deliver this strategy, we will need to work with our partners and, where necessary, make the case for further investment in the Borough’s economic development resources and infrastructure.
- 2.4 This Strategy contributes directly towards the Corporate Plan priorities of “working for a prosperous future”, and “we ♥ Castle Point”. We are putting the needs of local businesses and local people at the forefront of our work to ensure that they thrive and are proud to live and/or do business in Castle Point.

### 3. The Castle Point Economy, Issues and Opportunities

- 3.1 Castle Point lies within South Essex, an area of significant economic opportunity with the towns of Southend to the east and Basildon to the west. The ports in Thurrock sit to the south-west. The Basildon Enterprise Corridor, the largest employment centre east of London, and the Thames Freeport, anticipated to generate over £4.5bn in new public and private investment, are major growth areas for the South Essex economy.
- 3.2 London is located around 30 miles to the west of Castle Point and is a major draw on the local labour force, attracting around 6.2% of the local working age population to jobs in and around the city.
- 3.3 There are around 26,000 jobs in Castle Point, although there are 46,800 Borough residents in work. This highlights that nearly 20,000 residents commute outside of the Borough for work. As well as commuting to London around 8.4% commute to Basildon, 7.5% commute to Southend and 3.5% commute to Thurrock. Castle Point is an essential component of the South Essex labour supply.
- 3.4 Despite this competition for labour supply, and despite challenges in the national economy, the Borough has seen job growth in recent years increasing by 6.1% (1,286 jobs) between 2018 and 2023. The Borough has also seen a boost in investment, with the delivery of new commercial and employment floorspace at West Canvey, and with the Government allocating £20m to Regenerate Canvey Island over the next 10 years through the Plan for Neighbourhoods. We have also utilised UKSPF funding to make improvements to Hadleigh Town Centre. Regeneration funding is being used to leverage other investment, through Sport England and the Creative sector. We will continue to seek investment into the Borough.
- 3.5 The GVA (Gross Value Added) of the Borough is about £1.1bn per year, which equates to £20,500 per working age person. However, this is low compared with Essex and East of England - approximately £48.8bn/£44,800 (Essex), £30,950 (East of England). The value of GVA varies widely across the Greater Essex Region, reflecting the wide variation between urban, rural, and coastal places in Greater Essex. Basildon (£6.3 billion) and Chelmsford (£5.6 billion) continue to generate the largest economic outputs, whereas Castle Point's GVA is the smallest in the county; the reasons for this will be outlined later in the Strategy. Ignoring this is not an option.
- 3.6 Jobs are primarily located in the major employment sites of Manor Trading Estate in Thundersley, at Stadium Way adjoining the A127, and at the Charfleets Estate to the west of Canvey Island. Businesses and jobs are also located in our

key town centres of Hadleigh and Canvey, and at West Canvey Retail Park. The other major sector is the public sector through the Council, Education, including the USP SEEVIC campus in Thundersley and the Xtend campus on Canvey Island, and the NHS. The voluntary sector is also a major contributor of jobs in the Borough.

- 3.7 Job density is among the lowest in Essex (as demonstrated below) especially on Canvey Island, where job density is at 0.5. This means that there is half a job for every working aged person in Castle Point. The emerging Castle Point Plan seeks to address this through mixed use development, regeneration of Charfleets Industrial Estate and town centres, and expansion of sites like West Canvey. However, it is likely that larger economies elsewhere in South Essex and London will continue to draw workers from Castle Point.

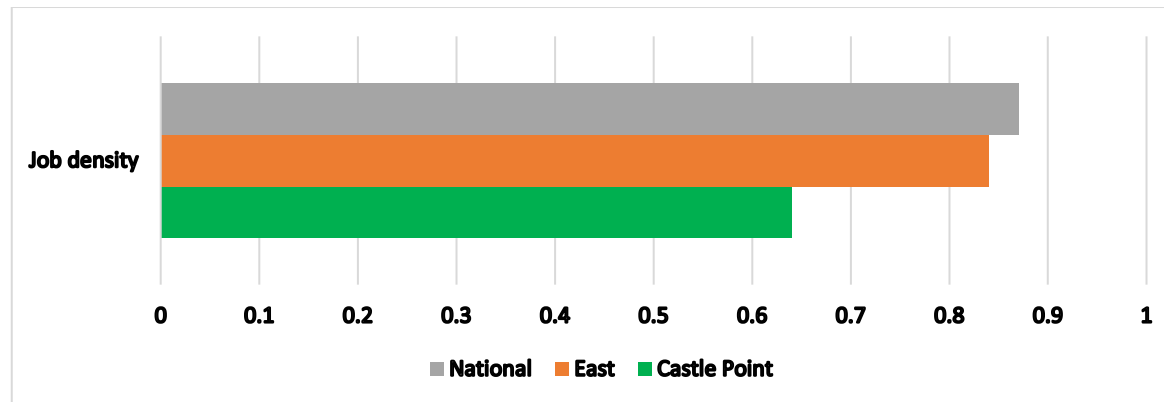


Table 1: Job density in Castle Point compared to the National and East of England. Job Density is the number of jobs in relation to the population

- 3.8 The Borough lacks an abundance of traditional ‘anchor’ employers<sup>1</sup> in the private sector. Within Castle Point, the larger employers are found in the education, health and social care, and retail sectors. However, there are many small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with specialisms in a variety of sectors including engineering, boatbuilding and construction.

<sup>1</sup> Anchor institutions refer to large, typically non-profit organisations like hospitals, local councils, and universities whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve.

Many of these businesses operate ‘under the radar’. Despite the fact that we have only a small number of food establishments there is also a lot of small-scale food production. This Strategy recognises the need to work with small business owners to grow the economy, and to protect independent retailers in our town centres and shopping parades, which are regularly met with challenges like business rate increases and parking restrictions.

- 3.9 Canvey Island also has specific businesses with strengths in green energy and performing arts; two areas where training opportunities should be developed.

#### Where are most of the jobs now?

Sector	Total number of jobs	Percentage of total employment
Wholesale and retail trade	6,122	14.9%
Construction	5,927	14.5%
Human health and social work activities	4,793	11.7%
Education	3,470	8.5%
Financial and insurance activities	3,269	8.0%
Transport and storage	2,525	6.2%
Manufacturing	2,479	6.0%

*Table 2: Proportion of business sizes in Castle Point. 91.9% are Micro, with 6.8% being small*

- 3.10 There are pockets of deprivation within the Borough, which has a pronounced impact on aspiration levels and unemployment. For example, Canvey Island South is among the 10% most deprived in the country, according to the latest Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) report. Employment and economic wellbeing are a wider determinant of health. There is a strong correlation between the deprivation in Canvey Island South and health outcomes. Specifically, there is a six-year difference in healthy life expectancy between the most and least affluent areas of the Borough<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Essex Indices of Multiple Deprivation Report, 2019 (page 39): <https://docs.planning.org.uk/20220909/170/RGN8BQCQ00A00/rjney90vvcmobbla.pdf>

- 3.11 Due to the local industrial make-up, there is a large proportion of people in self-employment, or employed in low pay or 'poor' employment (underemployment). This is due to a prevalence of lower paying retail and administrative jobs, making the local GVA among the lowest in the East of England. Due to the low levels of GVA, **improving productivity is a key action for this Strategy.**
- 3.12 Encouragingly, 84% of the working age (16-64) population are in employment. This is higher than both the national (76.5%) and East of England (81%) average. Out of work claimant benefits below the national and regional averages suggests a willingness to work and low state dependency.

## 4. National and Regional context

4.1 In June 2025, the UK Government released its Industrial Strategy, which sets out a ten year plan to transform business investment, innovation and productivity across the UK, by investing £20.4bn in 'frontier sectors' that bring places together. Local authorities in England have a key role to play in supporting their areas' strengths in the Industrial Strategy's eight Key Growth Sectors.

4.2 The Strategy makes a case for Investment in eight high growth sectors:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Clean Energy
- Creative Industries
- Defence
- Digital and Technologies
- Financial Services
- Life Sciences
- Professional and Business Services

4.3 Despite being a small borough, Castle Point can demonstrate strengths in several of these sectors, with the potential to drive higher levels of economic growth. This Strategy will provide a particular focus on these sectors, especially in relation to skills and training, driving innovation and creating jobs. The sectors where we can focus efforts in Castle Point are as follows:

### **Advanced Manufacturing**

- There are 65 companies registered in the Borough employing an estimated 141 people contributing £67,477 estimated GVA to the economy per employee.
- This includes the following businesses: steelwork fabrication, boat building, designing and repairing aircraft parts.

## **Creative Industries**

- Turnover in the creative industries is estimated to be £5.3m in Castle Point, with an estimated growth rate of +11.5% per year, and a growing network of freelancers.
- We have seen growth in the artist community in Hadleigh focused around Hadleigh Old Fire Station (HOFS).
- Estuary Festival CIC, based in the Borough, attracted Arts Council funding to deliver the Estuary Festival series of community events in Castle Point, celebrating arts and culture. In June 2025 the Festival delivered 92 events and 27 projects across the Thames Estuary (many of which took place in Castle Point), with 589 creatives included. Castle Point remains a priority place for Arts Council investment moving forward.

## **Digital & technologies**

- Xtend College on Canvey Island offers a clear pathway into high-end careers, offering courses and skills training for careers in the exciting, emerging field of immersive technology, using industry-leading extended reality (XR) equipment. USP College in Benfleet also hosts a cutting-edge med-tech facility.
- The Borough hosts international fin-tech businesses and small and medium businesses with cyber security, and network specialisms.
- It is estimated that these industries will grow 6.5% per year in Castle Point.

4.4 The Borough also has strengths which align with Essex's Sector Development Strategy. The Essex Sector Development Strategy pre-dates the Government's Industrial Strategy and identifies the five key growth sectors across Essex. These are: construction; clean energy; advanced manufacturing and engineering; digi-tech; and life sciences. Therefore, alongside the sectors detailed above, it is also important to highlight the construction sector which has a significant presence in Castle Point, providing a higher than average number of local jobs and the potential to grow by 38% by 2040. In recent years UK Shared Prosperity Funding has been used to invest in training for a range of 'green skills' and retrofit training, as well as entry level training in construction and building site safety. There is further scope to invest in skills development in this sector to ensure the competitiveness of our construction sector into the future.

- 4.5 Around us, the South Essex economy is also growing. It is home to nearly one million people and nearly 33,000 enterprises including leading international brands such as Ford, Amazon, National Westminster Bank and Olympus. Castle Point is well located, just over 10 miles from major investments at Thames Freeport in Thurrock, which is anticipated to see over 12,000 new jobs created, new jobs in areas such as digital skills, logistics, and sustainable industries, alongside large manufacturing employment spaces in Basildon and Southend. We also need to ensure our residents are skilled to take up these opportunities.
- 4.6 Across Essex, there are some similar challenges when compared to the Castle Point economy. For example, neighbouring Rochford has a similar demographic and small business make up, and boroughs like Tendring and Maldon share aspects of Castle Point's rural and semi-rural profile, with challenges in aspirations and retaining young talent. This Strategy sets out a series of actions for how we will tackle these challenges in Castle Point, but leans into work such as Essex's Sector Development Strategy, which provides an approach and tools for supporting key growth sectors with the greatest potential for sustainable job growth in Essex, including construction and retrofit.
- 4.7 The Essex Sector Development Strategy was informed by consultation with a wide range of businesses (over 600) and seeks to address barriers to business including: 'workforce and adult skills', 'access to market and sales' and 'the finances of businesses'. Essex County Council has commissioned support around the key sectors to provide support to address these barriers, and it is therefore critical to work with them to ensure businesses and residents in Castle Point benefit fully from the offer available.
- 4.8 Separately, South Essex Councils (SEC) has come together to deliver growth and prosperity in the South Essex region. An example of this work included the establishment of South Essex Advanced Technical Skills (SEATS), a collaboration between SEC, the education sector and major businesses in the region (including Ford UK, London Southend Airport, Leonardo, DP World and Tevva Motors), to address the technical skills shortages identified by employers. Working with SEATS there is a key opportunity to better align the needs of businesses with the skills offer in the locality.

## 5. How We Made This Strategy

- 5.1 Castle Point is unique, with its own distinctive personality and issues, therefore simply adopting an Essex-wide strategy would not be the right approach for the Borough. Residents and businesses are proud of where they call home and there is a strong sentiment to buy and do business locally. This is reflected by the high proportion of small and independent retailers in the Borough.
- 5.2 The following actions and priority themes have been developed following extensive data gathering, and work with the following groups and consultees:
- A cross-party group of Castle Point Councillors via a Task and Finish Group looking at developing a set of priorities for the Economy. This work included input from experts on skills and business support matters.
  - Survey data (December 2023) and meeting with local businesses.
  - Work with 'Place Partnership' Board.
  - Using existing data and documents at regional and local level, referenced throughout this Strategy, and within the Appendices. Data sources are listed in the 'Sources' section from page 16.
- 5.3 This Strategy does not propose that we attempt to create a long set of actions or seek to address them all on our own. Instead, it recommends a partnership approach.
- 5.4 The following section sets out the challenges and how we seek to address them. The themes in the next section are not listed in priority order, and actions will run concurrently.

## 6. Action Plan: Supporting our businesses

### *Ensuring that Castle Point remains a great place to start and grow a business*

- 6.1 Nationally, small businesses are the heart of the UK economy. 99% of businesses in the country are small or medium, contributing approximately 25% of the UK's GDP.
- 6.2 Castle Point is a hub of entrepreneurship, with 7,400 self-employed workers in 2024, accounting for 15% of the employment base (6% higher than the national and regional averages).
- 6.3 The Borough also has the joint highest percentage of small and micro businesses in Essex - projected to grow to 4,700 by 2044, reflecting the continuing trend towards entrepreneurship, freelancing, and the gig economy roles. We want to ensure that Castle Point remains a great place to start and grow a business. These small businesses often operate in sectors and industries that are vulnerable to economic challenges, are heavy regulation or are at risk of automation. For example, the Borough was one of the worst hit in the county (in terms of GVA loss) by the COVID 19 pandemic. Small business confidence has been declining nationally. The Federation of Small Businesses Q4 Small Business Confidence Report showed a sharp fall in confidence, down to -10.8 points (from +5.5 points). Two in five small firms saw revenues fall over Q3, while only one in three saw an increase. This Strategy puts supporting small businesses at its heart.
- 6.4 Notwithstanding the challenges, business retention rates are stable in the Borough, and business rated revenues have seen an increase, demonstrating business resilience and ability to adapt to challenges. We want to ensure that growing businesses in Castle Point have the capability to access funding, to develop products and innovate, upskill and retain employees, and know where to go for support.

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When? <sup>3</sup>	Resource requirements
<b>1.1 Commit to organising a programme of business support events and training, tailored to the needs of Castle Point businesses</b>	<p>Working with partners such as Essex County Council, Department for Business and Trade, Innovate UK, Federation of Small Businesses and others on key topics such as AI and innovation, and Net Zero transition.</p> <p>Stemming from this work, we will also reestablish a business forum representing the voice of small businesses, which includes key occupiers and landowners. This will cover issues and topics of relevance to our small businesses.</p>	Short term	No additional resource required – existing officer time
<b>1.2 Retail reliefs – promotion and lobbying</b>	Actively promote incentives such as Small Business Rate Relief, as well as reliefs for specific sectors. Investigate and lobby for additional incentives.	Short term	No additional resource required
<b>1.3 Maintain a local business support navigation offering for Castle Point businesses</b>	Businesses have frequently told us they like to have a trusted, central point of contact at their local authority as a ‘go to’. This will require additional resourcing, especially after March 2026, when the Business Accelerator programme, funded from UKSPF currently, comes to an end.	Mid term	Additional Resource - New Economic Development Officer Post at £56,000 per annum x 2 years

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When? <sup>3</sup>	Resource requirements
<b>1.4 Ensure our businesses are able to access procurement opportunities</b>	Businesses often tell us they are unsure where and how to access contracts. Through communications and events, training and transparency of public procurement processes we will improve access.	Short term	No additional resource required
<b>1.5 Invest in tourism to increase the visitor economy in Castle Point</b>	Includes a package of training and networking for tourism businesses, as set out in the Visitor Economy Action Plan 2025-28.	Mid term	Some additional resource - Set out in the Visitor Economy Action Plan
<b>1.6 Support the development of green skills and advice to support all businesses in the transition to Carbon Net Zero, especially those in the high intensity sectors</b>	Castle Point has a high proportion of businesses operating in sectors that are likely to be impacted by Net Zero regulations, unless they adapt. These include the automotive sector (Car garages and repair), scrap metal yards, waste paper, recycling. This Action Plan complements the Borough's Climate Action Plan 2025.	Short term	Additional Resource - Small budget for events and engagement, set out in the Climate Action Plan

<sup>3</sup> Short term = 1 year, Mid term = 2-3 years

## 7. Action Plan: Building a skilled workforce

### *Our residents can access the opportunities around them*

- 7.1 Qualification levels are generally lower in the Borough than nationally, particularly in Higher Education, which is significantly below the national average – 15.6% of residents have a degree or higher, compared to the national average of 33.9%. The number of people aged between 16 to 64 with a Level 3 qualification (equivalent to A levels) is also below the national average.
- 7.2 There are currently no Higher Education institutions in the Borough, and there is no Adult Education provision. Across Benfleet and Thundersley there are two sixth forms within secondary schools and a Further Education college. However, there is limited Further Education provision on Canvey Island. This contributes to a “knowledge drain”, with young people often leaving the Borough for Higher Education in major university towns and cities such as London, Manchester and Birmingham. It is often the case that once young people leave an area, they do not return, particularly if the local economy is not strong in terms of professional and technical jobs.
- 7.3 Amongst people who remain in the Borough, a high percentage of residents (54%) leave the Borough for employment, travelling to areas such as Basildon, Thurrock and London where there are more higher paying and professional and technical jobs across a range of industrial sectors. Benfleet Station (the only train station in the Borough) is reported as being one of the busiest in Essex in terms of daily usage and provides direct access into London’s financial district and has good access to Canary Wharf. This out-commuting for work further adds to the Borough’s ‘knowledge drain’.
- 7.4 Whilst there are employment opportunities in other nearby areas, this access is not universal, especially for those who do not have a car. There is a need for improved access to support residents, especially young people, get to employment and training opportunities, both inside and outside the Borough. For example, there are no direct public transport links to technical colleges like Prospects College in Basildon, or Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford and at Writtle. Despite its proximity, public transport access to jobs in the Basildon Enterprise Corridor and logistics jobs at the Thames Freeport in Thurrock is challenging.
- 7.5 Within the Borough there is also a need for people to get around for employment. Roles such as domiciliary care shift work and retail require workers who are often heavily reliant on driving to be able to get around the Borough.

### *Raise aspiration levels of our residents*

- 7.6 Parts of the Borough also suffer from low levels of aspiration at a young age, often because young people and parents don't have the knowledge of what jobs, training and opportunities are available locally. In some cases there are a lack of 'visible' role models, especially where parents are not in work. This perpetuates worklessness and under-employment.
- 7.7 Recent national research showed that in-school visits only accounted for 1% of how children knew about a job, while comparatively, 81% based their career aspirations on people they knew in their families, or what they have seen on TV, film or radio<sup>4</sup>. Research from the Careers and Enterprise Company<sup>5</sup>, suggests that bringing employers into schools from primary age, and teachers showing how the curriculum links to the world of work can broaden horizons. There is a clear opportunity at a young age to broaden knowledge of potential career options.
- 7.8 The start in life that a young person receives has a profound impact on whether or not that individual goes on to become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Data gathered by the Local Government Association shows that on average each economically inactive young person who stays inactive for life costs £340k in direct welfare payments. When these welfare payments are combined with lost tax revenue, the cost of someone remaining economically inactive for life is over £1m in direct costs and direct loss of tax revenue<sup>6</sup>.
- 7.9 Among the NEET figures for the borough, there are 557 people who are among the most vulnerable groups, classified as 'not known' (shown in appendix). Working with community organisations and support agencies, as well as ensuring there are opportunities for individuals with disabilities and additional needs, will be crucial in identifying these individuals, who fall outside DWP provision. Individuals within this group are not claiming benefits and sadly often fall 'through the cracks'.

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<sup>4</sup> Education and Employers 'Drawing the Future' report, January 2018 [DrawingTheFuture.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Insight briefing 2: The promise of primary | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

<sup>6</sup> Understanding the Economic Cost of Economic Inactivity on Young people, 2021 <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/understanding-cost-economic-inactivity-young-people>

## Our residents can access the opportunities around them

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource requirements
<p><b>2.1 Ensure greater social value comes to Castle Point</b></p>	<p>Work with developers and employers, both within Castle Point and surrounding boroughs, to leverage social value opportunities. We will develop a standard approach around apprenticeships, career talks, school engagement, etc.</p> <p>A Skills and Apprenticeship monthly working group is established, which could be the vehicle for this. A Task and Finish approach may be undertaken, working with members of this group during the lifetime of a particular build or project.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>No additional resource required – existing officer time</p>
<p><b>2.2 Investigate the feasibility of the provision of a vocational skills centre for Castle Point</b></p>	<p>The intention is that this is aimed at residents aged 14-19 not wishing to proceed with an academic education and will provide access to skills training and apprenticeships which are needed to improve the economic productivity and prosperity of the Borough and its residents. It is envisaged that the feasibility work will explore the potential to work with local, regional, and national partners and organisations to find the best type of provision for Castle Point. One of the areas to be explored through this work is the potential for a university technical college to be provided locally. The outcomes of the feasibility work will be used as an advocacy tool to engage with the future Essex Mayor and with those preparing the Local Skills Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>Mid – long term</p>	<p>£20,000 for feasibility study commission</p>

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource requirements
<b>2.3 Promote inclusive employment opportunities and initiatives to local residents and employers</b>	<p>There are opportunities to better promote initiatives such as Supported Internships and work experience to employers. We will work alongside the DWP, to ensure more local businesses are aware of, and can sign up to schemes such as Disability Confident.</p> <p>This will also involve working more closely with agencies delivering support to residents with additional needs and disabilities. This includes organisations such as Essex Cares Ltd (ECL), Hamelin Trust, Trustlinks and others.</p>	Short term	No additional resource required. Will involve effective partnership working

### *Raise aspiration levels of our residents*

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource
<b>2.4 Encourage greater uptake of the Apprenticeship Levy among our small businesses</b>	Continue to promote the Apprenticeship Levy to small businesses, and engage with organisations like South Essex Advanced Technical Skills (SEATS) to support with this.	Short term	No additional resource required – existing officer time
<b>2.5 Review public transport routes around the Borough to help people access jobs</b>	Key to this will be partnership working with Essex County Council and private bus operators and leveraging opportunities through the Local Transport Plan for Essex to review transport routes to key employment and training sites.	Mid term	No additional resource required. Will involve effective partnership working and leverage.

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource
<b>2.6 Engage Castle Point Primary schools in the My Future programme</b>	This is an established programme that provides Primary School Children with a meaningful encounter with a businessperson. Since starting in Southend in 2021, it has reached nearly 23,000 children in Southend, Basildon and Tendring alone, with 79 employees/businesses.	Short term	No additional resource required – Covered by Essex County Council
<b>2.7 Make closer links with our secondary schools and careers leads, to coordinate careers programmes, including work experience</b>	Maximising links with agencies such as the Greater Essex Careers Hub and giving our headteachers and careers leads in our schools a point of contact at the Council to coordinate messaging.	Short term	No additional resource required - Small amount of additional staff time to be covered within existing team arrangements
<b>2.8 Work with the above to facilitate events that raise aspirations in the Borough for students in Year 10 and above</b>	Explore opportunities, working with Essex County Council and wider partners, to bring aspirations events to Castle Point. The purpose of these events will be to raise awareness of Higher Apprenticeships within Local Employers.	Mid term	£2,000 Additional Resource - Potential for Match Funding requirement

## 8. Action Plan: Grow productivity and economic participation across all ages

*Everyone in the Borough should have the opportunity to be economically active and mobile*

- 8.1 With a population of 89,712, Castle Point is one of the smallest boroughs in Essex. The Borough has an ageing population. As of the 2021 census, over 25% of the population were aged 65 and over, a higher percentage than both Essex and England (by almost 7%). Projections show that the Borough's population is projected to grow by 4,700 by 2044. Despite this, the working age population (16-64) is only expected to grow slightly, from 51,700 to 52,900 while the 65+ group is expected to grow considerably, from 23,900 to 27,200. This in turn affects the pace of growth, placing increased demand on the care sector, and slowing growth in other sectors through a reduction in experience in the work force.
- 8.2 The collective spending power older people have is commonly referred to as the 'silver pound' and this Strategy takes into account the increasing importance of the silver pound to the local economy. It is important to distinguish that someone in their 60s will have different spending habits and priorities to someone in their 80s or 90s. The following actions seek to capture the economic benefits an older population can bring, encouraging civic participation and volunteering, in turn, drawing residents into our town centres, spending money on local amenities and businesses.
- 8.3 There is a need for a multi-agency approach across local authority, health, and community and voluntary sectors to support residents across these groups, especially in relation to skills uplift, and the exchange of knowledge. Volunteering has numerous economic benefits to the older population, as well as being a means to keep physically and mentally healthy; it provides a sense of giving back to the local community (which runs strong in Castle Point). Volunteering groups also have the potential to save the public sector money, for example, clean-up and maintenance.

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource requirement
<b>3.1 Provide opportunities for our older residents to remain healthy and active</b>	<p>Work with CAVS, Active Essex, the NHS and other partners to promote, enable and encourage the participation of older people in health and wellbeing activities and initiatives.</p> <p>Where possible, support the development of new initiatives in this area, especially where they will attract inward investment and funding.</p>	Short term	No additional resource - covered by existing officer time, internal expertise, and Sport England Place Partnership expansion
<b>3.2 Build links with leaders in the Community, Volunteering and Third sectors to encourage volunteering opportunities</b>	<p>Work with CAVS and other partners to promote, enable and encourage the participation of older people in volunteering.</p>	Mid term	No additional resource
<b>3.3 Develop multi-generational knowledge exchange programmes and investigate spaces in the Borough for these to take place</b>	<p>Investigate space for these activities to take place in the Borough and engage and encourage groups offering this to come into the Borough. Some good existing initiatives in the Borough like Thundersley Men's Shed's reuse, recycle and repair already exist.</p>	Mid term	£2,000 Small additional resource to cover venue hire and project delivery on the mainland. Canvey delivery is largely covered by the Active Essex Partnership.
<b>3.4 Ensure no resident is digitally excluded</b>	<p>Utilise the South Essex Full Fibre network to ensure residents have basic access to the internet. Working with agencies like ACL (Adult Community Learning) Essex, CAVS, Canvey Island Town Council and local banks to deliver digital upskilling training to residents in the Borough.</p>	Mid term	No additional resource required. Fibre network is being delivered by external partners, and partnership work is ongoing around the delivery of courses and training.

## 9. Action Plan: Developing our town centres

*Our town centres will be vibrant, full of life and areas of cultural activity, where our residents enjoy spending time, and which visitors want to come to*

- 9.1 Castle Point's four main town centres/villages each have their own characteristics, history, and community culture. Encouragingly, commercial vacancies within our towns have remained low. However, due to the high level of out-commuting from Castle Point, the local town centres lose a substantial proportion of the residential spend to other centres such as Basildon, Southend and Lakeside in Thurrock. The most recent South Essex Retail Needs Assessment identifies significant spend leakage from Castle Point into neighbouring areas. Since the publication of that report, several large retailers and supermarkets have come to the Borough, particularly on Canvey Island, improving the split of convenience spending. Conversely, a resident survey looking at improvements to Canvey Market and town centre in 2024 found that only a third of residents who responded regularly use the town centre for their daily and weekly needs, with more using the out-of-town Roscommon Way retail park.
- 9.2 The nature of the types of businesses operating in our town centres also means they are impacted by factors (which the Council has varying control over) such as parking charges, business rates and private rents, overheads and staffing costs. More broadly, the competition from online shopping and changing consumer trends continues to be a challenge. As a result, our town centres and businesses and traders within them in Castle Point need revitalising in order to make them more attractive destinations for existing residents and for visitors, and places to be invested in for business growth and housing.

What will we do?	How will we do it?	When?	Resource
<b>4.1 Canvey Island</b>	Support the development of Canvey Market and improvements to the Knightswick Shopping Centre to encourage a more diverse offering and greater footfall to the town centre. Deliver further town centre improvements emerging from the Plan for Neighbourhoods Board.	Mid Term	No additional resource – Wider Town Centre improvements to be delivered by existing officers
<b>4.2 Deliver the Vision for Hadleigh Town Centre</b>	Deliver the recommendations of the Vision for Hadleigh Town Centre, including the improvement to shopfronts and public realm, art trails and events linking the creative sector based at HOFs to the town and events.	Mid term	No additional resource – To be delivered by existing officers. Report to follow separately on the capital and revenue resources required for specific actions, etc.
<b>4.3 Provide targeted support to South Benfleet, Tarpots, Thundersley</b>	This will be done through events (seasonal window display competitions, trails, etc.), and initiatives (such as celebrating high streets) – identifying opportunities to offer incentives to businesses and shoppers.	Short term	Additional resource - £3,500 for delivery of retail business support and business group development
<b>4.4 Improved wayfinding and signage linking to the visitor experience</b>	For example, at our public car parks and arrival points into the Borough, pointing out tourism attractions and places of interest.	Short term	Through the Parking Strategy
<b>4.5 Provide additional promotional support to the retail sector</b>	Additional investment in the Choose Local website and brand, which will promote businesses all across the Borough.	Short term	Additional resource - £15,000 Dedicated Marketing Officer (estimated at £30,000 per annum) for 5 days per month dedicated, plus website development costs

## 10. Measures of Success

Theme	Indicator	Baseline	Target	How we will measure
Supporting our businesses	Number of businesses in operation in the Borough	3,315		ONS register
	Percentage of businesses retained after one year of trading	92.5%		ONS register
	Number of new businesses starting in the Borough (on year)	380		ONS register, Companies House data and HMRC
	Number of businesses accessing business support programmes	60		Council's records and reporting from business support providers
	Number of business events delivered through the Council and with partners	8	10	Internally
Building a Skilled Workforce	Number of residents in employment	45,700		Nomis, DWP
	Number of new Apprenticeship starts in Castle Point	560		National Apprenticeship Service (Department for Education)
	Percentage of the working age population (16-64) with a Regulated Qualifications Framework 4 qualification and above in Castle Point	17.6%		National Apprenticeship Service (Department for Education)
Grow Productivity, Participation and Aspirations	Number and Percentage of NEETs and Not Known in Castle Point	2,133 (1,576 NEET 557 Not Known)		Essex County Council data Option to split by ward

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>How we will measure</b>
	Resident earnings per week (including gender breakdown)	£696		
Develop our Town Centres	Number of vacant premises			Business rates register and manual count
	Percentage of residents satisfied with their town centre			Resident survey

## 11. Supporting data

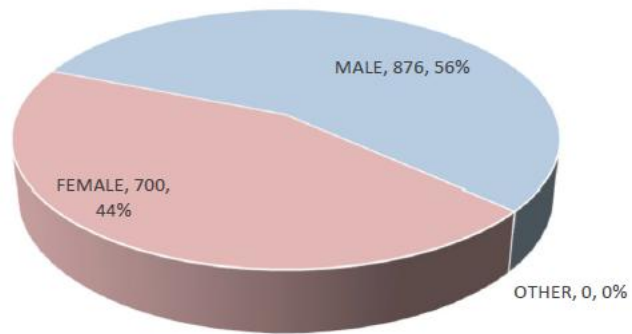
### Apprenticeships

As of the last full academic year 2023/24, Apprenticeship completions were higher than the East of England average at 607 (per 100,000 population) against 460 regionally.

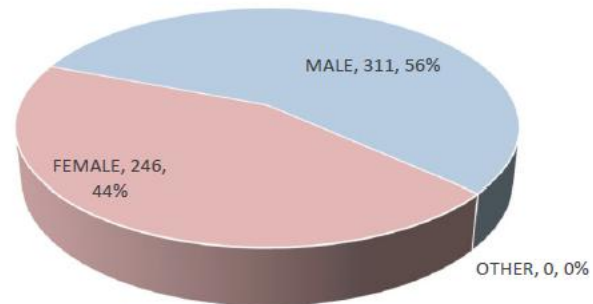
[Local indicators for Castle Point \(E07000069\) - ONS](#)

### NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Figures

NEET BROKEN DOWN BY GENDER FOR CASTLE POINT - JUN 25



UNKNOWN BROKEN DOWN BY GENDER FOR CASTLE POINT - JUN 25

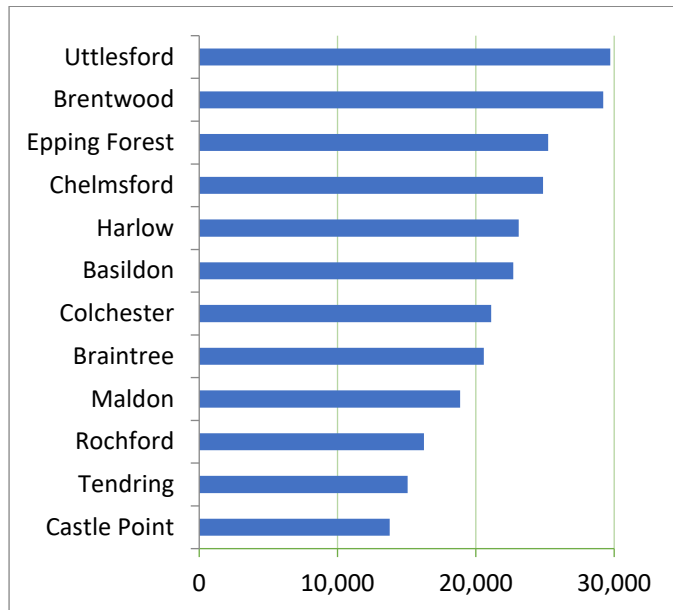


NEET includes residents aged 16-24.

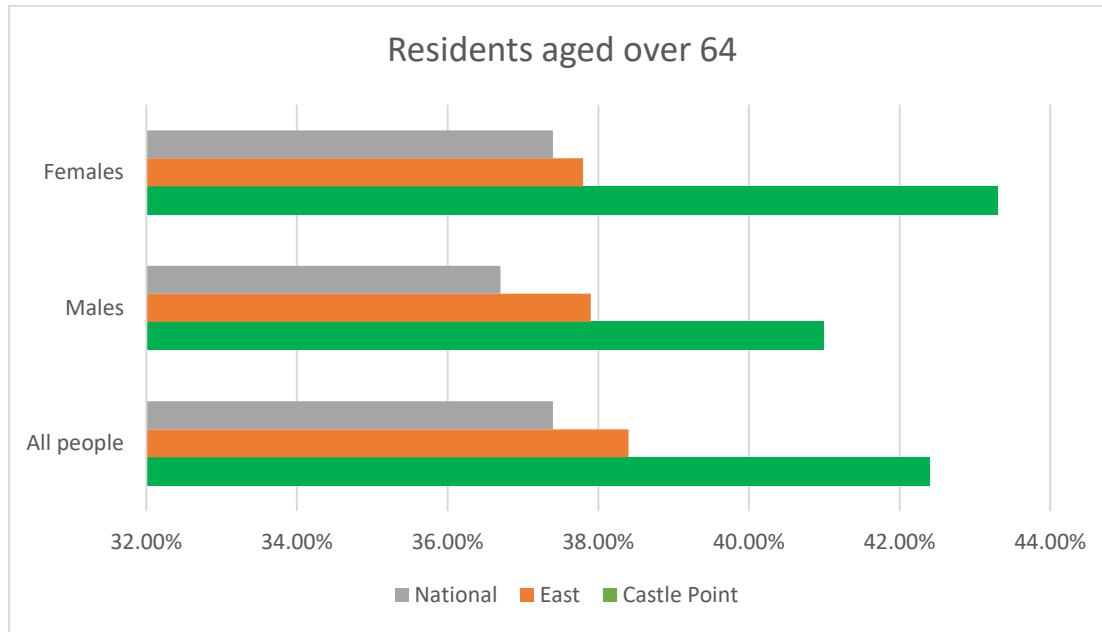
## Low Economic Output and Productivity ↓

According to the most recent figures, compiled in 2018, Castle Point has the highest employment rate in Essex, but the lowest GVA per head in 2018. Employment has subsequently remained high.

Essex has notably had low productivity for some time. Castle Point has only £13,769 which is almost as little as half of national GVA per head, whereas Brentwood and Uttlesford are both higher than the national average.



## Ageing population



## Our Employers

Castle Point is home to over 3,000 businesses. This list gives a picture of the types of larger employers in the Borough, demonstrating the prevalence of retail and education as our largest employers in the Borough.

There is the potential to grow the capacity and skills of our (higher end of) small and medium sized businesses and invest in recruitment and skills development in these firms.

A 1-1, mentoring and advice approach is often needed for micro businesses, who are often time-pressed, and will seek out a specific piece of information.

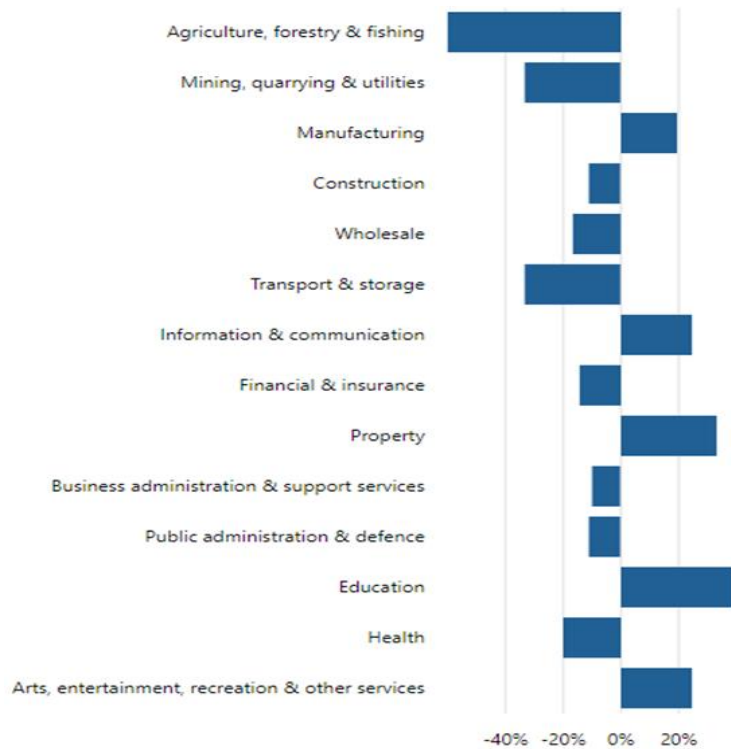
Large	Number of employees
McDonalds	822
Sainsbury's	600
Zenith Multi Academy Trust	457
Castle Point Council	350

Small	
Oikos	47
Blyth Catamarans	2
Charfleet Book Bindery	23
DSP Rail & Civils	41
First Class Linen Service	12

Medium	
USP College	250+ (approx.)
F Brazil	129
Saunders Senior Living	218
Thames Card Technologies	177
Laurelle London	51
Micro	
Entertainers	0
International House	3
Octopus Networks	4
First Flooring	5

It should be noted that the Entertainers, while a well-established business in the Borough, utilises freelancers and contractors, a practice commonplace in the creative/entertainment industry.

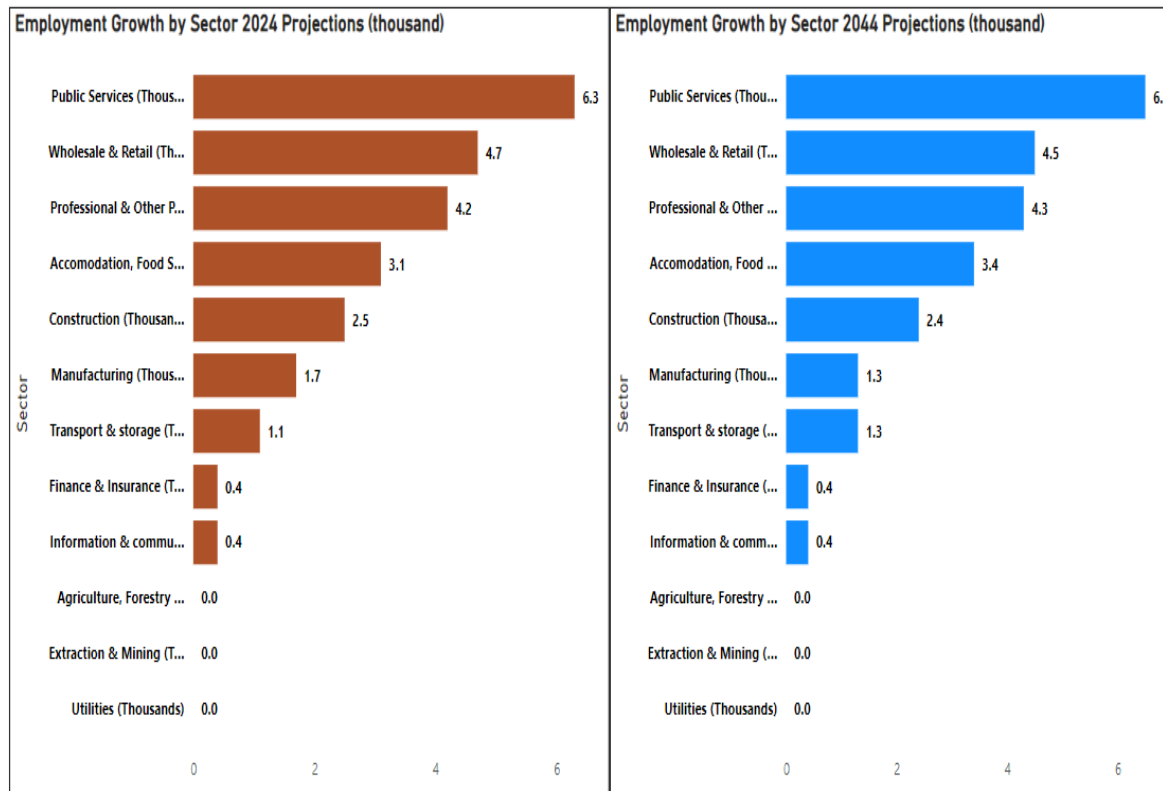
### Sector Growth and anticipated changes



The above graph shows the growing and declining sectors over the past 10 years in Castle Point. Health and Construction are anticipated to return to growth, based on forecasting data, shown below.

Sectors set to grow include: Education, Construction, Administrative & Support Services, Accommodation & Food Services. To underscore this, to meet the Government’s target to build 1.5m homes in the next five years, the CITB reports there will be a need for over 250,000 extra construction workers nationally by 2028<sup>7</sup>. Local industry experts suggest the need for 15,000 additional bricklayers across Essex.

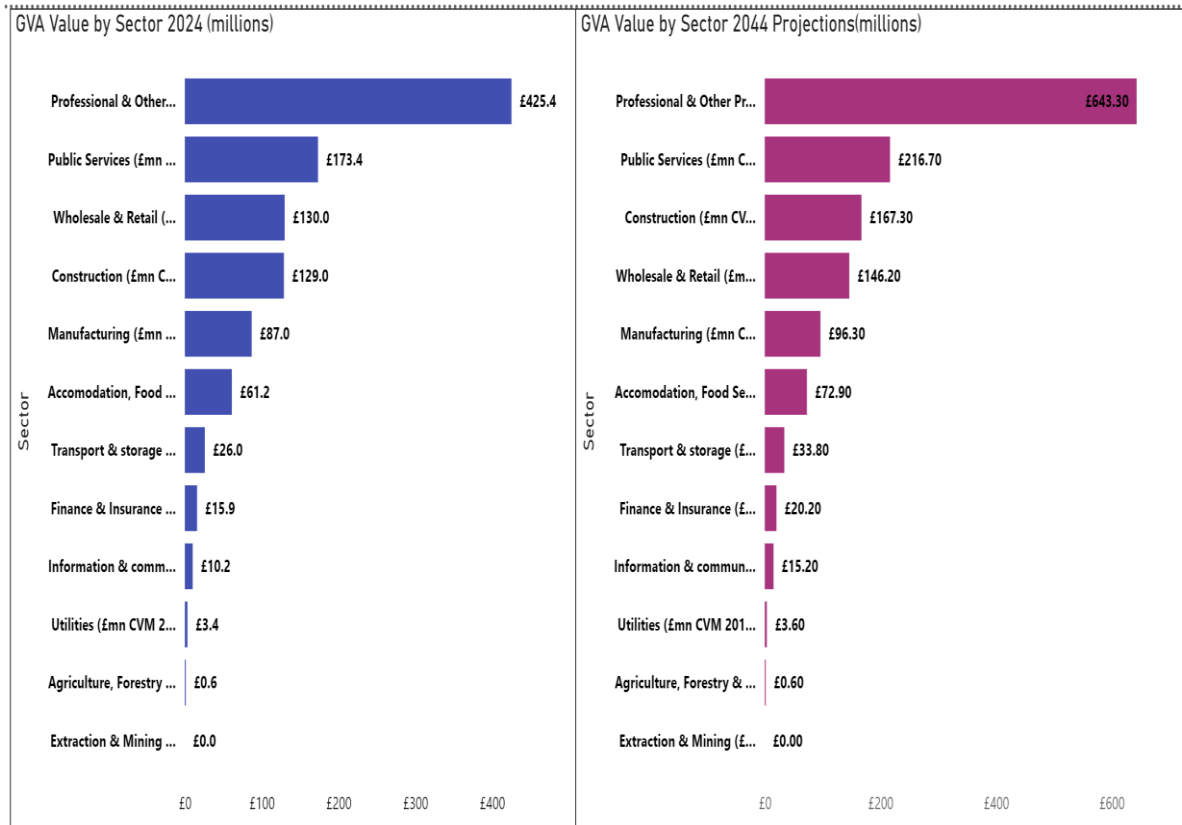
The charts show sectors anticipating the highest growth, in terms of increase in GVA, between 2024 and 2044



<sup>7</sup> [Over 250,000 extra construction workers required by 2028 to meet demand - CITB](#)

## Challenging Sectors

The Manufacturing sector, while identified in South Essex as a priority sector, is expected to show limited growth, with only a 11% increase in GVA between 2024 to 2044<sup>8</sup>, and a decline in employment of 400 jobs (to 1,300 employees).



The charts show sectors anticipating the highest growth, in terms of increase in GVA, between 2024 and 2044

<sup>8</sup> GVA of Manufacturing in 2024 was £87bn, anticipated to rise to £96.3b in 2044.

## Data Sources

Data City Explorer

NOMIS/ONS

Experian Forecasting data

Retail study

Castle Point Business Survey, December 2023 – telemarketing survey conducted by Team Telemarketing on behalf of Castle Point Borough Council, Summary Report: [Business Survey Report.pptx](#)

## References

[Castle Point Corporate Plan 2025-2028Active Essex Insight Pack](#)

[Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan - Annex A](#)

[Essex Sector Development Strategy](#)

[ONS Census 2021 Data - People, Population and Community - Education and Childcare \(Aspirations and life chances\)](#)

[South Essex Retail Needs Assessment 2017](#)

[Hadleigh Town Centre Future Vision and Strategy](#)

[Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan - Annex C](#)

[Greater Essex Trends Report 2024](#)

Essex Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Report :

<https://docs.planning.org.uk/20220909/170/RGN8BQCQ00A00/rjney90vvcmobbla.pdf>