



**Statement of Common Ground**

**Castle Point Plan 2026 to 2043**

**Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft**

**Between**

**Castle Point Borough Council**

**and**

**Thurrock Council**

**Castle Point Local Plan 2026 to 2043**

**Date: 9 January 2026**

## **1. Introduction**

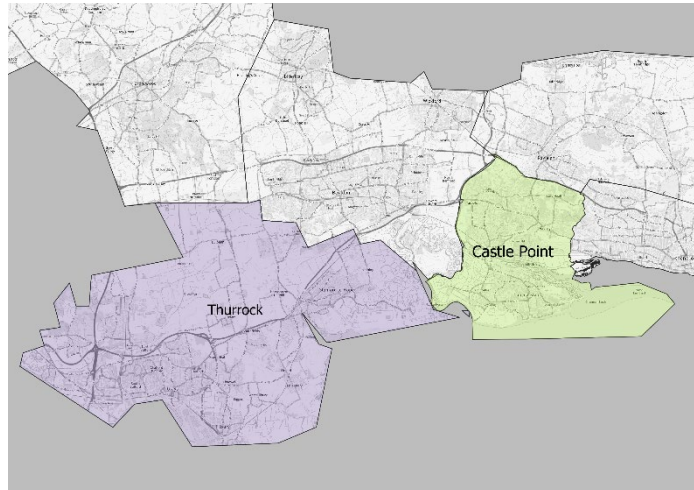
1.1. This Statement of Common Ground identifies areas of agreement between Castle Point Borough Council (CPBC) and Thurrock Council (TC) in relation to Castle Point Plan 2026-2043 and supporting evidence base. There are no outstanding areas of disagreement.

1.2. This statement has been prepared to assist the examination of the Castle Point Plan. Thurrock Council made representations to Regulation 18 Consultation in issues and options and Regulation 19 Publication of the Plan drafts published for consultation on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 to 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025 consecutively. TC confirmed their response to the Regulation 19 Draft during the further consultation 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025. TC representations cover strategic cross boundary issues relating to:

- Meeting Housing Need and Policy SP3
- Policy C5 Access to Canvey Island
- Sustainable Development SP4 and SP5
- Local Wildlife and Geological Sites ENV4

The map below shows the locations and administrative areas covered by this statement. Castle Point and Thurrock are neighbouring coastal areas in South Essex situated on the north bank of the Thames Estuary, they share an administrative boundary along Holehaven Creek to the west of Castle Point. Thurrock is only 18 miles from London, it includes the northern end of the Dartford Crossing and is an area of regeneration within the Thames Gateway redevelopment Zone. The borough comprises of the settlements of Grays, Chadwell St Mary, Chafford Hundred, Purfleet-on-Thames, South Ockendon, Stanford-le-Hope, Tilbury and a number of smaller villages. Castle Point Borough Council governs the settlements of Canvey Island, Benfleet, Daws Heath, Hadleigh and Thundersley.

## Map of Authority Areas



1.3. The Castle Point 1998 Adopted Local Plan forms the development plan for the Borough. The Castle Point Plan will cover the period of 2026 to 2043 and aims to grow with a focus on regeneration, brownfield redevelopment and increased density in urban areas whilst protecting its green belt and ensuring that growth is climate resilient and supported by essential infrastructure.

## 2. Duty to Cooperate

2.1. The councils of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend on Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council formed a strategic partnership in 2017 to develop a long-term growth ambition which would underpin strategic spatial, infrastructure and economic priorities in South Essex. The collaboration was underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in January 2018<sup>1</sup> creating the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA). In 2023 the leaders and Chief Executives agreed to refresh the identity for the partnership which is now known as South Essex Councils (SEC). The SEC's core purpose is to provide leadership for South Essex and to deliver a vision for the region up to 2050<sup>2</sup> in order to promote healthy growth for South Essex Communities. This is achieved through collaboration, by sharing resources, joint evidence and by lobbying government.

2.2. The SEC is supported by the South Essex Joint Officers Group which both CPBC and TC officers attend, and the group meets monthly. Through joint working shared evidence is prepared and strategic issues along with local plan preparations are discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> [South-Essex-Joint-Strategic-Plan-Statement-of-Common-Ground-June-2018](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.southessex.org.uk/opportunity-south-essex>

- 2.3. At a regional level the Essex Planning Officers Association represents officers from all 14 local authorities in Essex including CPBC and TC. Planning heads from each local authority meet several times a year to provide leadership and discuss strategic matters across all of Essex. Terms of reference including governance for this decision-making body was agreed in December 2020<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.4. CPBC also has one to one quarterly meetings with TC to consider any specific cross border strategic matters, shared evidence and to appraise each other on their local plan preparation and any potential impacts.
- 2.5. CPBC has also collaborated with TC on various environmental strategy documents, and these include the EPOA Planning Policy Statement- Operation Energy and Carbon (Net Zero) October 2025, and the Work of the Essex Climate Action Commission, the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, The Riverside Strategy for implementation of the Thames Estuary 2100 plan and the Essex Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. All of which have been implemented across both authorities.
- 2.6. CBPC has fully engaged with TC on the development of its local plan from the outset. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) regulations, TC has been formally consulted at each stage of consultation on the Castle Point Plan. The Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement outlines in detail the engagement activities and outcomes together with the joint evidence base studies undertaken during the Plan's preparation and any protocols agreed which benefit strategic and cross boundary plan making.

### **3. Strategic Matters**

- 3.1. South Essex's proximity to London and its position on the Thames Estuary have been the major factors behind the historical growth of South Essex and these will continue to be major influences on its future growth and wider relationship with the rest of Essex. Southend Airport, the Port of Tilbury and DP World London Gateway in Thurrock and the forthcoming Lower Thames Crossing which will link Essex via Thurrock to Kent will also provide economic opportunities for the area.
- 3.2. As neighbouring authorities CPBC and TC are inter- connected in terms of transport connections, economic and employment ties, education and skills,

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<sup>3</sup> [Chief Officers' Group and EPOA Partnership - Terms of Reference](#)

housing market overlaps and shared environmental interests including shared areas of the Thames estuary.

- 3.3. South Essex 2050 Ambition was initiated by the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) in 2018 and furthered by South Essex Councils (SEC) and aims to build on South Essex's economic opportunities. Its objectives are to prioritise growth that provides good digital infrastructure, improved transport connectivity, enhanced green and blue infrastructure opportunities, greater commercial development and employment skills and good quality housing in the right places.
- 3.4. The Castle Point Plan's vision and objectives are in accord with the South Essex 2050 Ambition and envisages a borough where residents have good quality and affordable homes in thriving communities with access to green spaces, economic opportunities, and amenities enabling them to fulfil their potential and live happy, healthy lives.
- 3.5. Both CPBC and TC support the vision of South Essex as described in the South Essex 2050 ambition.

#### **4. Housing Need**

- 4.1. In December 2024, the government introduced changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) along with changes to the standard methodology for calculating housing need, from this the government set annual housing delivery targets which will require local authorities to plan for significantly more housing within the South Essex area.
- 4.2. The Standard Method Housing Need for CPBC over the planned period of 2026-2043 is 11,662, which equates to an average of 686 dwellings per annum. The annual housing delivery for Castle Point averages at 100 dwellings per annum. Castle Point is 17.4 square miles in size with a population density of 4,976 per square mile. Over half of the borough is designated Green Belt and much of the borough is low lying land below sea level resulting in 45% of it in flood zone 3.
- 4.3. CPBC has considered through its evidence what housing delivery can be realistically achieved within its boundaries taking into account its significant environmental and infrastructure restraints as well as its market capacity. The evidence identified that CPBC is able to deliver 6,196 homes through the planned period. A master planning approach will be taken to delivering these homes, which will be delivered by intensification of urban density, regeneration and reuse of brownfield sites.

- 4.4. TC agrees that Castle Point faces notable physical and environment constraints to growth and TC has no objections to CPBC's approach to addressing housing need.

## **5. Meeting Unmet Housing Need**

- 5.1. Following the revised NPPF 2024 and the introduction of the new standard methodology for calculating housing need, CPBC contacted its neighbouring authorities including TC in January and February 2025 to assist with meeting the newly calculated housing need. This was in accordance with the Essex Planning Officer's Association (EPOA) Unmet Housing Need Protocol 2017. As yet no authority is able to assist CPBC.
- 5.2. TC is currently working on its new Thurrock Local Plan 2024 – 2044 and is reviewing its Green Belt and Grey Belt areas as well as assessing sites to ascertain whether it can meet its own housing needs. Consequently, at this moment TC is unable to confirm whether it can assist CPBC in meeting its unmet housing need.
- 5.3. TC agrees that CPBC has followed the EPOA Unmet Housing Need protocol 2017 to address its unmet housing need.
- 5.4. CPBC is working through the South Essex Joint Officers Group to try to address their unmet housing need. Part of this work includes reviewing the EPOA mechanism for considering unmet housing need established in 2017 and providing a shared joint position statement on the housing need within South Essex.
- 5.5. Both CPBC and TC agree to continue to work collaboratively through SEC to address CPBC and other authority areas' unmet housing need within South Essex, while recognising the significant constraints that each of these authority areas face in meeting that need.

## **6. Policy C5- Improved Access to and around Canvey Island**

- 6.1. Since 1974 the population on Canvey Island has grown by 150% but there still remains just two routes on and off Canvey Island, both become extremely congested during peak times. One route is via the A130 Canvey Way and the other is via B1012 from South Benfleet and both routes converge at a pinch point at Waterside Farm Roundabout. The A130 route has further congestion issues at Sadlers Farm Junction off the island as does the B1014 through Benfleet. There are aspirations for a third route off the island and CPBC is

committed to working with key stakeholders to prepare a feasibility study to identify options for improving access on and off the island.

6.2. In the Regulation 18 consultation to the Castle Point Plan, TC objected to a proposal for a link road from Canvey Island (Northwick Road) to Thurrock (Manorway), due to the impact on the landscape, designated sites and highways particularly at the Junction of Manorway and A13, and the impact for those communities along Manorway. The Regulation 18 consultation sought views on how access to and through Canvey could be improved. It remains a local aspiration to deliver a third road to Canvey Island, although currently there is no deliverable scheme that can be identified. TC notes that CPBC intends to prepare a feasibility study (Policy C5) to explore options and welcomes further discussion to provide for better access to and from Canvey Island

6.3. CPBC and TC agree to collaborate on the feasibility work to explore the options for better access to and from Canvey Island.

## **7. Sustainable Development Net Zero Carbon Development SD4 & SD5**

7.1. Supporting the environment to combat the effects of climate change and protecting and enhancing the area's green spaces is at the heart of the Castle Point Plan. Both CPBC and TC are committed to reducing greenhouse emissions to carbon net zero by 2050 through their local plans.

7.2. TC supports the Net Zero Carbon Development policies SD4 In operation and SD5 Embodied Carbon as policies that represent a substantial step in addressing climate change across South Essex and providing certainty and clarity to developers. Following feedback from Essex County Council Climate Commission during the Regulation 19 consultation, these policies have been updated to the latest model draft based on the Net Zero Carbon Viability and Tool Kit Study and to align with the latest EPOA Planning Policy Statement Operational Energy and Carbon (Net Zero) October 2025

7.3. CPBC and TC agree that it is appropriate to pursue a Climate Responsive Design approach in their respective local plans, while acknowledging that detailed policy in the Thurrock Local Plan will be subject to confirmation of evidence and testing.

## **8. Sustainable Development Local Wildlife and Geological Sites ENV4**

8.1. The Castle Point Plan is committed to improving biodiversity within its borough and in developing its housing strategy has had regard for the Essex Local Nature

Recovery Strategy<sup>4</sup>. Both CP and TC have endorsed the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a strategy for nature recovery in Essex.

8.2. TC supports Policy ENV4 and the direct reference to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy requiring development proposals to have regard for and protect strategically important areas of biodiversity.

8.3. CPBC and TC agree to enable and support biodiversity opportunities through their local plans.

## **9. Modifications to Castle Point Plan Regulation 19 Draft**

9.1. TC through their representation to the Castle Point Plan Regulation 19 Draft, have identified no modifications to the Plan.

## **10. Areas of Agreement**

10.1 CPBC has worked collaboratively with TC to ensure that all cross boundary strategic issues have been properly considered and where appropriate reflected in the Castle Point Plan 2026 to 2043 and effective and ongoing joint working has and will continue to be undertaken.

10.2 It is agreed that the Castle Point Plan 2026-2043 does not allocate sufficient sites to meet the Standard Methodology Housing Need for housing at this time. It is agreed that evidence has been provided of environmental, physical and infrastructure constraints which prevent this.

10.3 It is agreed both CPBC and TC will support environmental strategies to conserve and enhance local wildlife sites and geological sites through their local plan making.

10.4 It is agreed that both CPBC and TC will support policies to ensure that all buildings are designed and built to be Net Zero Carbon in operation and in embodied carbon in line with the EPOA Planning Policy Statement- Operation Energy and Carbon (Net Zero) October 2025, and the Work of the Essex Climate Action Commission, subject to confirmation of evidence and testing of the Thurrock Local Plan and its formal approval for submission for Examination.

10.5 It is agreed that both CPBC and TC will support habitat priority measures identified within the Strategic Opportunities set out in the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

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<sup>4</sup> [Local Nature Recovery Strategy | Essex County Council](#)



## **11 Areas of Uncommon Ground**

11.1 Through the Duty to Cooperate, CPBC and TC have jointly considered issues relating to housing, gypsy and traveller needs, jobs and employment, retail and tourism, natural environment, strategic site allocations and the sustainability appraisal. There are currently no areas of uncommon ground in relation to these topics.

## **12 Additional Strategic Matters**

12.1 There are no additional strategic matters which CPBC and TC are aware of which has not already been addressed by this Statement of Common Ground.

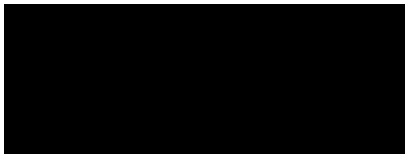
## **13 Monitoring**

13.1 This statement will be maintained by CPBC and updated as necessary.

## **13. Signatories**

13.2 The signatories agree that the Castle Point Plan has been prepared in accordance with the “Duty to Cooperate” imposed by Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in that the Council has cooperated with TC as a neighbouring authority, through constructive and ongoing engagement on the impacts of sustainable development set out in the Duty Cooperate State of Compliance and that there are no outstanding strategic planning issues to be addressed.

Name: Amanda Parrott

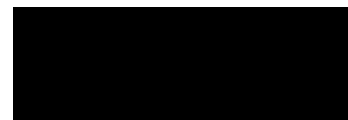


Position: Assistant Director, Climate and Growth

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Castle Point Borough Council

Name: Ashley Baldwin



Position: Chief Planning Officer

Date: 09.01.2026

Thurrock Council