

**NEW LOCAL
PLAN**



castlepoint

benfleet | canvey | hadleigh | thundersley



New Local Plan Issues Discussion Paper

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1 Introduction

Castle Point Borough Council is commencing work on a *New Local Plan*. This local plan will set out the overall strategy for future development in Castle Point including any site allocations and designations, as well as policies that the Council will apply when deciding planning applications.

This discussion paper does not set out a *New Local Plan*. It is a paper that is intended to stimulate discussion amongst residents, businesses and all other stakeholders about the issues affecting Castle Point and its towns.

Anybody with an interest in Castle Point is welcomed to read all or part of this paper and provide their views on what they think the issues are affecting the borough or the towns within it.

The Council would like to provide all interested parties with the opportunity to take part in this discussion; however it also needs to make progress with preparing the *New Local Plan* so that it can provide the best possible protection to those areas of high environmental quality. Therefore, all comments on this discussion paper need to be received by the Council by the 28 March 2012.

This discussion paper is not a final piece of work, but the start of a journey. The comments that you make now will be used to develop objectives for the *New Local Plan*, and to inform options for the policies contained within it. Once policy options have been developed there will be further opportunities for residents, businesses and all other stakeholders to have their say on what should be included within the *New Local Plan*.

If you are reading this document after the 28 March 2012, and would like to be involved in future consultation events on the *New Local Plan* please send your contact details to planningpolicy@castlepoint.gov.uk

Remember, it's your Future and your Local Plan, so take the opportunity to tell us your views.

2 The Castle Point Context

Castle Point is unique compared to elsewhere in England. It has things that make it a great place to live and work, and other things which affect the quality of life experienced by residents, and impact on the ability of businesses to be successful in the borough. A simple SWOT Analysis approach has been taken in this section to identify:

Strengths: Those things that are good about Castle Point which we may wish to protect, enhance or promote;

Weaknesses: those things in Castle Point that cause us problems and need improving;

Opportunities: Those things that put us in a good position to deal with the issues we face in Castle Point;

Threats: Those things that may prevent us dealing with our issues, or may make circumstances worse.

2.1 Strengths

It is considered that Castle Point's strengths are as follows:

- Castle Point has a **unique natural environment** comprising a European Special Protection Area, a recommended Marine Conservation Zone, six Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and over 30 Local Wildlife Sites. There are several areas of marshland and also several areas of ancient woodland that are included within this array of designations highlighting the diversity of habitats in Castle Point.
- There are **significant landscape features** in Castle Point. The escarpment at Hadleigh provides panoramic vistas across the Thames Estuary highlighting the contrasting landscapes and land uses that exist in the area.
- The **coastline** in Castle Point provides opportunities in terms of the economy and recreation. The coastal path through Hadleigh Marshes is a popular local walking route, whilst the coastline around Canvey is used for walking, cycling and recreational boating, as well as some commercial operations.
- The Borough is well provided for in terms of the quantity and range of public open space available. 4,508ha, or 18.6% of the total area of the borough is accessible **public open space**.
- The **RSPB** is a significant landowner on Canvey, and also works with other organisations to manage their land. **Essex Wildlife Trust and various local wildlife groups** are active on the mainland, managing areas of woodland and meadows.
- Just over 60% of the borough's land area is designated as **Green Belt**. This has proved successful in preventing urban sprawl in the borough, and in preventing the individual towns in Castle Point from merging with one another, or with towns outside Castle Point.
- Castle Point has an interesting history which is reflected in a number of **historic assets** located around the borough including two conservation areas, 40 listed buildings and 7 scheduled ancient monuments. Archaeological investigations have shown activity in the area going to back to the Stone Age.

- The **railway** has been a significant driver in the growth and development of the towns in Castle Point over the previous Century. The railway now provides journeys into **London in just 35 minutes**, whilst also connecting residents with job opportunities in **Basildon and Southend**.
- Siting between Basildon and Southend, towns in Castle Point are well connected to the **local bus network**. The location of a bus depot in Hadleigh means that Hadleigh is particularly well connected.
- The residential stock in Castle Point is dominated by the provision of **family housing**. There are good opportunities for families to settle in Castle Point.
- There are **local shopping parades** serving each of the towns in Castle Point. This means that local residents have good access to convenience goods in particular. In some parades there remains the presence of **independent traditional retailers** such as butchers and bakers.
- There are **good schools** in Castle Point, with attainment levels above average. There has been significant investment in secondary schools on Canvey Island to improve attainment levels in this area.
- **SEEVIC** has been offering sixth form provision in Castle Point for many years and is now one of the most successful colleges in south Essex, attracting students not only from Castle Point but also from Basildon, Rochford and Southend boroughs also.
- The Council has retained a leisure service, and as such there is **affordable leisure provision** in Castle Point at Runnymede Pool and Waterside Sports Centre, and also at Runnymede Hall and the Paddocks Community Centre.

Question IDP 1

Do you agree with the strengths identified for Castle Point? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 2

Are there any other strengths of Castle Point that are not identified? If yes, please explain.

2.2 Weaknesses

Unfortunately, it is thought that Castle Point has the following weaknesses that need addressing:

- There are **significant inequalities** in Castle Point between Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley and Canvey Island. The average income in Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley is around £22,630, whilst the average income on Canvey is just £17,604. As a result, the Indices of Multiple **Deprivation** shows that some parts of Canvey are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in the country, whilst parts of Benfleet are amongst the 20% least deprived areas in the country.

- Throughout the borough there are poor levels of educational attainment amongst adults. This has a particular effect on deprivation levels on Canvey Island, where all areas are within the 50% most deprived areas against the education and skills index. There are 3 areas within the 10% most deprived for this index on Canvey.
- There is a **limited land supply** to accommodate new development in Castle Point. The existing urban area has mainly developed over the last 50 years, and as a result there is very little vacant or derelict previously developed land available for redevelopment. The urban area is tightly bound by the Green Belt preventing expansion of the urban area.
- Within Castle Point there is an issue with **housing affordability**. In Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley, house prices are considerably higher than local wages resulting in a house price to income ratio of 10.64:1. On Canvey, whilst house prices are lower so are wages. The house price to income ratio on Canvey is 10.75:1. An affordable house price to income ratio is up to 4:1.
- There has been **limited investment in the public realm** as Castle Point has developed. As a result, the public realm, including some public open spaces, is of a poor quality, particularly in town centres and around employment areas.
- There has been **inconsistent treatment of the private realm** as Castle Point has developed resulting in poor quality shopping parade facades and grim employment areas. The poor quality and lack of upkeep of residential frontages in some locations detracts from the quality of the streetscene.
- There is a **small, low quality stock of employment floorspace** in Castle Point, which is a deterrent to inward investment into the borough.
- The poor quality employment floorspace has acted to create a **low value economy** in Castle Point, providing **poorly paying, low skilled jobs**. Local wages are significant lower than the wages earned by residents working elsewhere.
- As a result of the better wages offered elsewhere there is a **high level of out-commuting for work**. This results in significant **peak time congestion** on the local highway network and on strategic highway routes in and around Castle Point.
- Whilst the borough is reasonably well served by public transport provision during the day, **evening bus services are limited**. This has implications for those accessing jobs and services elsewhere, pushing up car ownership and congestion.
- Whilst there are sufficient GP surgeries to serve Castle Point, there are a number of **GP surgeries that need upgrading** to offer 21st Century provision. There are disability access issues with some of the existing surgeries.
- Whilst there is affordable leisure provision in Castle Point, the **facilities at Waterside Farm need upgrading** to offer 21st Century provision. The current facilities are dated and are a deterrent to users. This has implications for their viability and the ability of the Council to offer affordable leisure provision.
- There is **inconsistent provision of youth services and facilities** across the borough. This has implications for anti-social behaviour and the ability of young people to contribute positively to the community.

Question IDP 3

Do you agree with the weaknesses identified for Castle Point? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 4

Are there any other weaknesses of Castle Point that are not identified? If yes, please explain.

2.3 Opportunities

It is thought that the following opportunities will enable Castle Point to become a better place to live, work and run a business:

- There is a **strong sub-regional partnership** in the Thames Gateway South Essex for the delivery of green infrastructure projects. The Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy and Parklands Plan provide a base for this working and have already resulted in the delivery of Green Infrastructure projects in Castle Point.
- The **Castle Point Regeneration Partnership** has already secured investment for the preparation of Masterplans for the regeneration of Canvey and Hadleigh Town Centres, and for public realm works at the seafront and in Charfleets and Manor Trading Estates. This provides a firm bases for future public and private sector investment.
- Castle Point, despite having a low value economy has a great number of self employed individuals. This suggests that there is **entrepreneurial spirit** to be captured within the local population. This is reflected in the number of independent traders present in local town centres and employment areas.
- There is **vacant land allocated for employment purposes** at West Canvey. The extension of Roscommon Way to Haven Road has provided access to this land. This provides the opportunity to provide better quality employment floorspace to encourage inward investment and also to facilitate more enterprise.
- The alignment for the next stage of **Roscommon Way** will see the road extended from Haven Road to Western Esplanade. This provides the opportunity to ease east-west flows on Canvey Island to the benefit of traffic flows across the Island.
- The growth of **Southend Airport** for both logistics and passenger travel creates opportunities for growth in the logistic and business sectors in Castle Point, particularly at the Rayleigh Weir.
- **Job opportunities created by major schemes elsewhere in the sub-region** will benefit residents of Castle Point. Regeneration proposals for Southend and Basildon Town Centres will create new jobs in the business and retail sectors. The Dubai Ports scheme at Shellhaven will meanwhile create jobs in logistics and a whole range of related sectors.

- Hadleigh is the location for the **London 2012 Olympic Mountain Biking event**. This provides a key opportunity to secure **regeneration** in Hadleigh Town Centre, and also to **promote cycling** throughout Castle Point. Canvey Island is flat, and is therefore a good location to promote more cycling for commuting and recreational purposes.
- The old Fire Station in Hadleigh has been reused as a community arts venue, with a number of resident artists. The **ageing population** presents the opportunity to **promote more art and craft activities** in Castle Point, as there will be more people with more recreational time in the borough.
- There is a **strong voluntary sector** in Castle Point already delivering a range of services and activities. There is the opportunity to promote and enhance the activities of this sector by working closely with them to identify and address their needs for facilities and funding.
- Traditionally, Castle Point has not been active in taking up funding from recognised funding sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England etc. There is therefore the opportunity to **enhance funding streams** by tapping into these funding sources more effectively.
- **The LIFT Project**, which delivered the Paddocks Healthcare Centre, is still active. If sites were to be made available in Castle Point, it may therefore be possible to secure new GP facilities despite the austerity measures in place.
- Essex County Council is still investing in the **provision of new education facilities** in Castle Point. There is an agreement in place to fund a Vocational Centre on Canvey Island. They are also supporting the renewal and co-location of the Deanes School and the Glenwood Special Needs School.

Question IDP 5

Do you agree with the opportunities identified for Castle Point? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 6

Are there any other opportunities for Castle Point that are not identified? If yes, please explain.

2.4 Threats

It is thought that the following threats could affect how we plan for the future and how successful our plans are:

- 40% of the borough's land area is **within flood risk zone 3**. This land is substantially protected from flooding by the presence of flood defences. However, as a result of climate change increasing sea levels, there is the risk that these defences will not be sufficient to defend against the worst Spring tides by 2100. There is also a very small risk (known

as residual risk) that the defences may be breached in some way, which would result in sudden and unexpected inundation.

- **Climate change** is also a threat in itself. Climate change has the potential to affect natural habitats, altering the unique natural environment of Castle Point. It also poses a risk to the resident population by virtue of changes to rainfall patterns, increasing the risk of surface water flooding and drought. Extreme temperatures (hot and cold) meanwhile can affect health, particularly of more vulnerable people such as the elderly and the young. Sudden rainfall, heavy snow and high temperatures can also affect the effectiveness of the transport network, resulting in congestion and accidents.
- There are two COMAH registered **Hazardous Installations at South Canvey**. The presence of these installations restricts the ability of other land in this location to be developed. The presence of these installations is also a threat to the existing population, in particular those residents who are located closest to the installations within the area in which development should not have occurred.
- **The population in Castle Point is ageing**. This has implications for both the economy and service provision. As a result of the ageing population, there will be lower levels of economic activity in Castle Point affecting the ability of local businesses to attract the employees they need to grow. Services meanwhile will need to become increasingly focused on the older population to the detriment of young people and families. There are examples of towns elsewhere, where the town centre and leisure services are focused on meeting older people's needs.
- There is a significant threat to the regeneration of our town centres, and indeed the ongoing success of the centres generally from **retail provision elsewhere**. Lakeside and Bluewater are a significant draw for local residents. The opening of the new Westfields at Stratford may increase this draw. Many people also travel to Basildon and Southend for shopping purposes. Additionally, Pitsea and Wickford are both the subject of regeneration also, and Rayleigh is a successful town centre just outside Castle Point. All of these centres are competition for town centres in Castle Point.
- The public sector in the UK is operating within a period of austerity where **infrastructure funding is severely restricted**. This is further exacerbated in Castle Point by the lack of a land supply which means that there are very few significant developments coming forward that will enable the Council to seek developer funding for infrastructure. This will affect the ability of the Council to deliver the infrastructure required to deal with those weaknesses set out above.

Question IDP 7

Do you agree with the threats identified for Castle Point? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 8

Are there any other threats to Castle Point that are not identified? If yes, please explain.

3 Town Specific Issues

Picture 3.1



There are four towns that make up Castle Point. The population of Castle Point is currently distributed as follows between its constituent towns:

Canvey Island – 43%

Benfleet – 22%

Hadleigh – 14%

Thundersley – 21%

The following section sets out profiles for each town to stimulate discussion. Comments are welcomed on these profiles.

3.1 Benfleet

Benfleet is located to the north of Benfleet Creek and to the south of the A13. The A130 provides the western boundary to the town whilst to the east is Thundersley. Three wards make up Benfleet –

Appleton, Boyce and St. Marys.

South Benfleet Town Centre is a successful district centre, occupied by independent retailers offering a range of goods and services. Some improvements to the public realm would be beneficial, but there is not a significant need for regeneration in this centre. South Benfleet Conservation Area is to the south east of Benfleet and is occupied by a mix of development including housing, some retail, restaurants and pubs. It is adjacent to the railway station, which has helped to drive development and improvements in the built environment in this location over the past 10 years.

The town centre and conservation area are the main employment areas in Benfleet (around 3,300 jobs). However, most people commute out of Benfleet for work. Good access to the railway station has resulted in high levels of out commuting to London (25%), Basildon (15%) and Southend (12%) from Benfleet. As a result, unemployment in Benfleet is low. Jobs in these commuter locations command higher wages than those earned locally, and as such there are relatively low levels of income deprivation in Benfleet with two areas in the top 10% least deprived areas in the Country.

Benfleet is a secondary sub-market of the Southend Housing Market. The Southend Housing Market provides a comprehensive housing offer, with those areas in Castle Point and Rochford providing family and high-end housing to complement smaller home provision in Southend. This role within the housing market is reflected in the housing supply of Benfleet that comprises

around 7,700 homes. Of these homes 89% are detached or semi-detached family homes. Only 10% are terraced or flats. Most homes in Benfleet are owner occupied. Only 3.5% are rented from the Council or a Housing Association, whilst 4% are privately rented.

The mix of homes and the limited availability of rented accommodation in Benfleet has implications for affordability with the average house price at £247,624 and the average lower quartile house price at £185,000 in September 2011. 52% of local first time buyers and 42% of existing households cannot afford to buy a flat in Benfleet. This increases to 68% and 60% respectively for terraced properties with semi-detached properties being even more difficult to access.

Benfleet is well served in terms of community infrastructure with good access to schools, GP surgeries, churches and their halls, and youth provision at Richmond Hall Park. The Council Offices, sixth form provision and leisure services are available in Thundersley adjacent to Benfleet's northern boundary. However, it is recognised that with the exception of Villa Park, open space is limited to the periphery of Benfleet's urban area. It is also recognised that the A13 becomes congested at peak times and there this has implications for the local road network in Benfleet. Benfleet is well served in terms of access to railway provision; however as with all areas in Castle Point bus service provision is poor in the evenings. Due to the lack of proximity of the south western corner of Benfleet to services, this area scores higher on the Barriers to Housing and Services Deprivation Index than all other areas in Benfleet.

There are a number of constraints to future growth in Benfleet, that will limit when and where new development can be located. These are as follows:

- Benfleet is developed up to its northern boundary;
- To the south of Benfleet the railway and marshlands constrain development. Benfleet playing fields, also to the South of Benfleet, are identified as public open space. This open space is multifunctional, acting as a flood plain and also forming part of a network of routes leading commuters to and from the railway station;
- To the west of Benfleet is a strip of Green Belt between the A130 and the urban area. This Green Belt is part of a larger swathe of Green Belt separating Benfleet from the town of Pitsea in Basildon Borough. Access to this area is limited to residential streets with little capacity to accommodate growth.
- To the east of Benfleet is a strip of Green Belt separating Benfleet from Thundersley and Hadleigh. This Green Belt is narrow in parts, and is therefore sensitive to development.

Question IDP 9

Do you agree with the profile for Benfleet? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 10

Do you think anything should be added to the profile for Benfleet? If yes, please explain

3.2 Canvey Island

Canvey Island is located to the north of the Thames Estuary. It is separated from Benfleet and Hadleigh by Benfleet Creek. East Haven Creek separates Canvey from Basildon Borough to the west, and Holehaven Creek from Thurrock Borough to the south west. Canvey Island is accessed from two routes – the A130 Canvey Way from the Sadlers Farm Junction, and Ferry Road from the railway station in Benfleet. Both routes converge on the Waterside Farm Junction to the north west of Canvey Island.

At the centre of Canvey Island is Canvey Town Centre. Canvey Town Centre is located around Furtherwick Road and the High Street with the retail circuit incorporating the Knightswick Shopping Centre, which is an imposing intro-centric 1970's development in the middle of the town centre. Sainsbury's is present in the town, and although its store is small it acts as a main anchor in the town centre. The retail offer has suffered during the recession and a number of shops have closed. Further to this, the town centre has a poor public realm that needs to be upgraded and maintained into the future. As a result, the Retail Needs Assessment identified the need for regeneration of Canvey Town Centre. The Regeneration Partnership has prepared a Masterplan to deliver this regeneration. This is supported by a Public Realm Strategy.

Shopping facilities are also available at West Canvey, to the south of Northwick Road. A large Morrisons Supermarket operates successfully in this location, and there is also outstanding planning consent for a development of retail warehouses in this location. These provide opportunities for jobs in retail additional to those in the town centre.

To the east of the Morrisons Supermarket is a large employment area called Charfleets Industrial Estate. The estate is well occupied by a large range of businesses, although more recently some units have become vacant. The estate is of a poor environmental quality and as such employment in this location is low economy and low paid. A new access to the south of the estate has recently been constructed to improve traffic movements to and within the estate. This also provides access to land allocated for long-term employment to the south of Charfleets.

To the west of the Morrisons Supermarket is a greenfield site allocated for employment in the Local Plan. Work is underway on proposals to provide an enterprise centre on this site in order to improve the value of the local economy.

Canvey Seafront also has the potential to generate employment opportunities related to leisure and tourism. At present the seafront area is rundown, with vacant land, poor quality buildings and a poor public realm. The Regeneration Partnership has recently invested in some improvements to the public realm and as a result a trend towards redevelopment and café provision has emerged, however there is still some way to go in the regeneration of this location.

Due to the low value of the local economy, only 35% of people who live on Canvey work on Canvey. Many people chose to commute off the Island for work in particular to London (19%), Basildon (15%) and Southend (10%). As a result of these commuting patterns, key routes

and junctions can become congested during peak hours. However, residential areas located towards the north west of the Island benefit from good access to Benfleet Railway Station.

Whilst there is good access to employment on Canvey Island (around 6,100 jobs) and to employment opportunities elsewhere, unemployment on Canvey Island is relatively high compared to elsewhere in Castle Point. In addition to this, there are five areas on Canvey Island where deprivation levels are amongst the 30% highest in the country. As a result there is a need to improve access to better quality employment opportunities for residents of Canvey Island. This is particularly important as there are a relatively high number of economically inactive people who have the potential to participate in employment in the future i.e. those involved in childcare and some of those who are currently sick and/or disabled (30%).

Canvey is a secondary sub-market of the Basildon Housing Market. The Basildon Housing Market provides a narrow housing offer, with a limited number of high-end homes. This is reflected in the housing supply of Canvey which comprises of around 15,000 homes. Of these homes, 79% are detached or semi-detached family homes. Compared to Benfleet and Thundersley, there is a higher proportion of terraced homes and flats (18%). Most homes on Canvey Island are owner-occupied (around 85%); 8% of homes are rented from the Council or a housing association; and 6% of homes are privately rented.

Additionally, and unlike other areas of Castle Point caravans/mobile homes make up 2% of homes on Canvey Island. Whilst the occupation of caravans represents a lifestyle choice for some (Kings Park is an over 50's site where most occupiers own their home outright), there is an increasing trend of people occupying caravans due to difficulties with income (Thorney Bay rent at a weekly rate, which is attractive to low income households). There are social issues associated with a concentrated population of caravan dwellers on low incomes affecting the provision of healthcare, education, social services and policing.

Homes on Canvey traditionally cost less than homes elsewhere in Castle Point; however, the mix of homes and the limited availability of traditional rented accommodation on Canvey Island have implications for affordability when considering the relative levels of income compared to elsewhere in the borough. On Canvey, the average house price was around £187,382 at September 2011. The lower quartile house price meanwhile was around £145,000. At these prices 49% of first time buyers and 37% of existing households are unable to afford to buy a flat on Canvey Island, and 67% of first time buyers and 59% of existing households are unable to afford a terraced or semi-detached house.

Rents on Canvey are very similar to the cost of paying a mortgage. On average the cost of a mortgage on Canvey is £166 per week. At £173 per week for a two bedroom flat, rental prices are slightly higher and do not therefore improve accessibility to housing on Canvey Island. Agents have indicated that there is a strong demand for three bedroom rental properties on Canvey Island, with these costing in the order of £900 to £925 per month. This is typically higher than the rent sought for similar sized properties in Benfleet. There is therefore a need for a better mix of homes for first time buyers and for families, including a greater provision of rental properties in order to make the private rental market more affordable.

Canvey is well served in terms of community infrastructure with good access to schools, GP services, leisure services, churches and their halls, and youth provision at Waterside Farm and in the town centre. However, it is recognised that many of these facilities are ageing and in need of renewal. There is also a need for extended youth services to tackle issues with anti-social behaviour.

There is however a lack of further or higher education provision on Canvey Island, with the closest provision in Thundersley. This lack of provision is highlighted by high levels of education deprivation on Canvey, with all areas amongst the 50% most deprived in the country, and 3 areas within the 10% most deprived. A vocational centre is currently being provided to help address this issue.

There are 49 open spaces including 6 children's playgrounds throughout Canvey, and on the periphery of the residential areas. These have recently been supplemented with the creation of a large nature reserve at West Canvey Marshes. Canvey also benefits from a coastline that has a good degree of accessibility for residents and visitors. The coastline and associated footpaths would however benefit from public realm improvements. Despite the amount of open space, some of the residential areas can feel quite intensely developed due to the nature of the streetscene, and as a result lack a sense of openness.

As previously mentioned, Canvey suffers with peak time congestion, particularly at Waterside Farm and on key east-west routes. This has implications for journey times, also affecting the efficient operation of bus services on Canvey. Canvey is well served by buses, although evening services are poor and bus waiting facilities need upgrading. There are good links between the bus services on Canvey Island and railway services operating from Benfleet railway station.

There are a number of constraints to future growth on Canvey Island, that will limit when and where new development can be located. These are as follows:

- Canvey is located in flood risk zone 3a. However, it is substantially protected from flooding at present by sea defences commonly acknowledged as being some of the best in the country. As a result of climate change, it will be necessary to improve the defences on Canvey in the longer term to ensure ongoing protection for the community on Canvey Island. The Environment Agency's Thames Estuary 2100 Plan identifies Canvey as a place where defences will be maintained and improved up to 2100 and beyond.
- To the south of Canvey are two COMAH registered hazardous installations. There is a third hazardous installation on the border with Canvey in Thurrock Borough. The Health and Safety Executive have identified consultation zones around these installations within which the level of development is controlled using the PADHI Methodology. Additionally, the site in Thurrock has an additional buffer zone marked by an 'x-x' line within which development should be limited.
- Canvey is developed to its eastern extent, with the limited exception of some public open space provision. There are no plans to redevelop public open space in Castle Point.
- There is a large swathe of public open space to Canvey's northern extent in the form of rugby pitches and a public golf course. The Playing Pitch Assessment does not advocate

the redevelopment of such pitches and therefore there are no plans to redevelop these pitches, or the golf course.

- To the west of Canvey is a large swathe of Green Belt that has acted to prevent urban sprawl and protect the countryside from encroachment. A significant proportion of this Green Belt land is publicly accessible and therefore also provides positive benefits to the local community.

Question IDP 11

Do you agree with the profile for Canvey Island? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 12

Do you think anything should be added to the profile for Canvey Island? If yes, please provide details.

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3.3 Hadleigh

Hadleigh is to the east of Benfleet and Thundersley. Its southern boundary is Benfleet Creek, whilst its northern boundary is the A127. Leigh-on-Sea in Southend Borough is to the east. Within the area defined as Hadleigh is the larger town of Hadleigh itself and the smaller settlement of Daws Heath within sits to the north. Two wards make up Hadleigh – St. James and Victoria.

At the heart of Hadleigh is Hadleigh Town Centre. Hadleigh Town Centre sits on the A13 and was dominated by car sales showrooms until fairly recently. The decline in the second hand car trade, along with the trend for new car sales showrooms to occupy out of town locations has resulted in a number of larger sites becoming available in Hadleigh for redevelopment. Vacant sites, combined with the dominance of the A13 and poor public realm have affected the vitality of the town centre, and as such it is now the focus of regeneration activities by the Regeneration Partnership.

Along with the town centre, shopping facilities and the employment area at Rayleigh Weir provide employment opportunities in Hadleigh (around 5,200 jobs). However, a significant number of people continue to commute out of Hadleigh for work. Hadleigh does not however have its own railway station and therefore commuting by car is more common. As a result, a far higher proportion of Hadleigh's population work in Southend compared to other parts of Castle Point (22%). Fewer people commute to London (17%) and Basildon (6%).

Unemployment in Hadleigh is low, and due to the levels of out-commuting income deprivation is also generally low. There are however two areas on Hadleigh's western boundary where income deprivation is higher than elsewhere in Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley. The creation of additional employment opportunities in or around Hadleigh may therefore be beneficial.

As with Benfleet, Hadleigh is a secondary sub-market of the Southend Housing Market, which provides a comprehensive housing offer with those areas in Castle Point and Rochford providing family and high-end housing to complement smaller housing provision in Southend. This role is reflected in the housing supply of Hadleigh which comprises of around 5,200 homes. Of these homes, 82% are detached or semi-detached family homes. A comparatively higher proportion of homes in Hadleigh are terraced or flats (17%) compared to Benfleet. This reflects the more urban nature of central Hadleigh. Most homes in Hadleigh are owner occupied; only 7% are rented from the Council or a Housing Association, whilst 6% are privately rented.

The mix of homes and the availability of rented accommodation in Hadleigh have implications for affordability with the average house price at £247,624 and the average lower quartile house price at £185,000 in September 2011. As a result, 52% of local first time buyers and 42% of existing households cannot afford to buy a flat in Hadleigh. This increases to 68% and 60% respectively for terraced properties with semi-detached properties being even more difficult to access.

The cost of rented accommodation is also high at £173 per week for a small flat. This has implications for local young people who not only are unable to buy, but would also have to pay high rents if they wished to live locally. Rented family housing is less expensive in Hadleigh than elsewhere in Castle Point with costs for a three bedroom home in the region of £800 to £900 per month.

Hadleigh is well served in terms of community infrastructure with good access to schools, GP surgeries, churches and their halls. There is also good provision of open space in and around Hadleigh; most notably Hadleigh Castle Country Park occupies a significant area to the south of Hadleigh's urban area. The Council Offices, sixth form provision and leisure services are available in Thundersley close to Hadleigh's western boundary. However, there is a significant lack of services for young people in Hadleigh.

In terms of transport infrastructure, the A13 becomes congested at peak times through Hadleigh Town Centre and associated local routes. The A127 also becomes congested at peak times and this has implications for the A129 Rayleigh Road and junctions along its route. Hadleigh is not well served in terms of railway provision, although Benfleet, Leigh and Rayleigh station are not so far removed that railway travel is impossible. Hadleigh is however better served by buses than other parts of Castle Point as it is the termination point in many bus routes by virtue of a bus depot being located close to the town centre. Due to the lack of proximity of Daws Heath to services, this area scores higher on the Barrier to Housing and Services Deprivation Index than all other areas in Hadleigh.

There are a number of constraints to future growth in Hadleigh, that will limit when and where new development can be located. These are as follows:

- The urban area of Hadleigh Town is constrained to the west and east by development in Thundersley and Leigh-on-Sea respectively;
- To the south of Hadleigh Town is a significant swathe of Green Belt. The Green Belt in this location has protected the countryside from encroachment, protecting an area of notable landscape value. There are historic and natural features within this Green Belt area subject to national, European and international protection. There is no realistic capacity to accommodate growth in this location;
- To the north of Hadleigh Town is a swathe of Green Belt that separates Hadleigh from Daws Heath, and also separates the towns in Castle Point from Rayleigh to the north and Eastwood to the east. There are historic, natural and landscape features within this area that are subject to national protection, or are otherwise intrinsically worthy of protection e.g. ancient woodland. This area is highly sensitive to development.

Question IDP 13

Do you agree with the profile for Hadleigh? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 14

Do you think anything should be added to the profile of Hadleigh? If yes, please provide details.

3.4 Thundersley

Thundersley is bound to the south by the A13, to the west by the A130 and to the north by the A127. Hadleigh forms the eastern boundary. Thundersley comprises of two areas, New Thundersley to the west and Thundersley to the east. A strip of woodland separates these two areas. Three wards make up Thundersley – Cedar Hall, St. Georges and St. Peters.

Tarpots Town Centre is on the southern boundary of New Thundersley with Benfleet. This is occupied with a mix of national and independent retailers providing convenience and essential services. This centre is dominated by traffic and would benefit from public realm improvements. There are also some sites in this centre that would benefit from redevelopment, although wholesale regeneration is not appropriate due to road layout in this location. Thundersley Village is located in Thundersley. A small parade of shops is reasonable well occupied by local retailers meeting local retail and service needs.

A limited amount of employment provision occurs at Tarpots Town Centre and in Thundersley Village. However, the biggest employment provision in Thundersley is at Manor Trading Estate. Manor Trading Estate is occupied by a range of local businesses, but suffers in terms of environmental quality and the quality of the building stock, and would benefit from regeneration and public realm improvements.

Unemployment in Thundersley is low due to local employment provision (around 3,900 jobs) and also due to significant levels of out-commuting from Thundersley, however as with Hadleigh it is removed from the railway station and therefore there is a notable level of out-commuting by car. As a result relatively fewer people commute to London from Thundersley (17%). Basildon (16%) and Southend (14%) are popular commuter destinations.

As with Benfleet, Thundersley is a secondary sub-market of the Southend Housing Market, and therefore contributes towards the provision of family and high-end housing within the overall housing supply for the Southend area. This role is reflected in the housing supply mix of Thundersley which comprises around 7,200 homes. Of these homes 86% are detached or semi-detached family homes. Only 12% of homes in Thundersley are terraced homes or flats. Most homes in Thundersley are owner occupied; only 2% of homes are rented from the Council or a Housing Association, whilst only 4% are privately rented.

The mix of homes and the limited availability of rented accommodation in Thundersley have implications for affordability with the average house price at £247,624 and the average lower quartile house price at £185,000 in September 2011. As a result, 52% of local first time buyers and 42% of existing households cannot afford to buy a flat in Benfleet. This increases to 68% and 60% respectively for terraced properties with semi-detached properties being even more difficult to access.

Rental properties are also expensive in Thundersley, with the average cost of renting a two bed flat being around £173 per week. Young people are effectively priced out of the market in Thundersley. Rented family housing is less expensive in Thundersley than other parts of Castle Point however at between £800 and £900 per month for a three bedroom property.

Thundersley is well served in terms of community infrastructure with good access to schools, GP surgeries, churches and their halls. There is reasonable provision of open space on the periphery of Thundersley however there is limited provision within the urban area itself. The Council Offices, sixth form provision and leisure services are located in Thundersley also.

There are however limited services and facilities for young people in Thundersley. Transport infrastructure is also an issue as the A13 and the A129 become congested at peak times, resulting in traffic delays throughout Thundersley most days, particularly on Rushbottom Lane, Church Road and Hart Road which act as local distributor routes. Thundersley is not well served in terms of railway provision, although Benfleet and Rayleigh stations are not so remote as to make railway travel impossible. Bus services in Thundersley are regular throughout the day but are poor during the evenings.

There are a number of constraints to future growth in Thundersley, that will limit when and where new development can be located. These are as follows:

- The urban area of New Thundersley and Thundersley is constrained to the south by Benfleet.
- To the west of New Thundersley is a strip of Green belt between the A130 and the urban area. This Green Belt is part of a larger designation separating New Thundersley from Pitsea in Basildon Borough. Access to this area is limited to residential streets with little capacity to accommodate growth.

- To the east of New Thundersley is a strip of Green Belt separating New Thundersley from Thundersley. This Green Belt is narrow in parts and heavily wooded. It is therefore very sensitive to development.
- The eastern boundary of Thundersley comprises of developed areas and some thin ribbons of Green Belt providing local function in terms of separating areas of development. There are wildlife conservation interests in this area making it sensitive to development.
- To the north of New Thundersley and Thundersley is a swathe of Green Belt extending to the A127 and beyond, which acts to prevent urban sprawl and at a sub-regional level separates Thundersley from Rayleigh and Wickford to the north. There are some small areas of nature conservation interest in this area.

Question IDP 15

Do you agree with the profile for Thundersley? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 16

Do you think anything should be added to the profile of Thundersley? If yes, please provide details.

4 Policy Context

Whilst consultation is a fundamental element of informing what is included within the *New Local Plan*, it is also necessary for the Council to have regard to other policy documents that may also have an influence. The following policy documents are considered to be of particular relevance to the preparation of the *New Local Plan*:

National Planning Policy Framework – the draft of this document was published in 2011. It is expected that the final version will be published in April 2012. Whilst this document is expected to undergo considerable changes before it is finalised, the draft provided some direction over plan making that is unlikely to change significantly. In order for a Local Plan to be found sound they should be:

- **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is practical to do so consistently with the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

In order to achieve the final element of this list, it will be necessary to ensure any policies in the Local Plan are consistent with the final National Planning Policy Statement.

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England – this document was published in November 2011 and identifies ways in which Local Plans should contribute towards securing a supply and better quality in new housing.

Essex Integrated County Strategy – this document has been prepared to direct regeneration, economic development and investment at a County wide scale.

Essex Local Transport Plan – this document was published in 2011, and identifies the County Council's approach to the delivery of transport infrastructure in Essex during the period to 2026.

Thames Estuary 2100 Plan – the draft of this document was published in 2010. It is expected that DEFRA will publish a final version in 2012. This document sets out how flood risk will be managed in the Thames Estuary in the period to 2100.

Thames Gateway Green Grid Strategy (and South Essex Parklands) – this document was published in 2008 and sets out how partners will work together to deliver a comprehensive network of connected green open spaces throughout south Essex. The Parklands Project is delivering this strategy.

Castle Point Regeneration Framework – this document was published in 2008 and sets out how partners will work together to deliver regeneration ambitions in Castle Point in the period to 2021.

Castle Point Housing Strategy – this document is currently being prepared, and will identify how the Council will go about meeting its duties related to housing as a consequence of changes to the national housing strategy.

Question IDP 17

Do you agree with the list of documents proposed to be included within the policy context for the *New Local Plan*? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 18

Do you think any other policy documents should be included within the policy context for the *New Local Plan*? If yes, please provide details.

5 Evidence Base

In order for the *New Local Plan* to be justified, it needs to be based on evidence. Whilst consultation responses are part of that evidence base, empirical studies are also needed to ensure that everyone's needs are fully identified, and elements of the environment are fully understood.

Documents that currently form part of the evidence base include:

- TGSE Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 and Update 2010
- Castle Point Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2011
- Castle Point Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2010
- Castle Point Watercycle Study 2011
- Open Space Appraisal 2006
- Playing Pitch Assessment 2011
- East of England Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study 2011
- Castle Point Green Belt Functions Assessment 2010
- Castle Point Green Belt Character Assessment 2010
- Essex Thames Gateway Historic Characterisation Assessment 2007
- Castle Point Affordable Housing Development Viability Assessment 2009
- Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2009
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation Data 2007 and 2010
- Natural England SSSI Condition Statements 2010
- Castle Point Local Wildlife Site Review 2002 and 2007
- Castle Point Retail Needs Assessment 2007
- NOMIS Annual Business Inquiry Data 2010

Documents that are underway and would form part of the evidence base include:

- Essex Population and Household Projections
- South Essex Surface Water Management Plan
- Castle Point Urban Characterisation Assessment
- Open Space Appraisal Update
- Environmental Baseline

Documents that we are proposing to prepare for the evidence base include:

- Integrated Development Needs Assessment comprising:
 - Retail Needs Assessment Review
 - Employment Land Review
 - Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment
 - Local Housing Needs Assessment
- Development Viability Assessment and Toolkit
- Local Wildlife Site Review

Census 2011 data will also be used if and when it becomes available.

Question IDP 19

Do you agree with the list of documents proposed to form part of the evidence base for the *New Local Plan*? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 20

Do you think there is any additional evidence that will be required to ensure that the *New Local Plan* can be justified by evidence? If yes, please provide details.

6 Potential Policy Headings

The following list is of potential policy headings for the *New Local Plan*:

Introduction

Policy Context

Local Context

Vision

Ambitions

Spatial Strategy

- Principles of Sustainable Development
- Protecting the Metropolitan Green Belt
- Coastal Change Management Area
- Sustainable Development and Growth

Economy

- Creating Employment Opportunities
- Managing Employment areas/uses
- Improving the Vitality of Town Centres
- Managing Retail Uses
- Seafront
- Homeworking

Housing

- Meeting Housing Needs
- Delivering Affordable Housing
- The right mix of housing types
- Residential Densities
- High Quality Homes
- Care Homes and Nursing Homes
- Other Residential Institutions
- Residential Caravan Parks
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

Physical Infrastructure

- Community Infrastructure
- Transport Infrastructure
- Water Supply
- Waste Water Infrastructure

- Telecommunications inc. broadband
- Renewable Energy Generation

Green Infrastructure and the Coast

- South Essex Green Grid Strategy
- Green Connections
- Existing Open Spaces
- Providing New Open Spaces
- Playing Pitch Provision
- Protecting Local Green Spaces
- Nature Conservation
- Areas of Landscape Value
- Other Users of Green Infrastructure

Historic Environment

- Designated Historic Assets
- Archaeology
- Local Historic Assets

Green Belt

- New Development in the Green Belt
- Extensions to Buildings in the Green Belt
- Replacement Buildings in the Green Belt
- Change of Use in the Green Belt

Managing Risk

- Tidal Flood Risk
- Fluvial Flood Risk
- Surface Water Management
- Hazardous Uses
- Development near Hazardous Uses
- Pollution
- Contaminated Land

Sustainability

- Energy Efficiency new build
- Water Efficiency new build
- On-site Renewable Energy Generation
- Efficiency Improvements to existing buildings
- Space for segregated waste storage
- Managing construction waste

Design

- Design and Setting
- Parking and Access
- Optimising Land Use
- Control of Advertisement
- Design allocations

Monitoring and Implementation

- Developer Contributions/CIL
- Monitoring
- Review

Question IDP 21

Do you agree with the list of potential policy headings? If no, please explain.

Question IDP 22

Do you think any other potential policy headings should be included within the *New Local Plan*? If yes, please provide details.

7 Infrastructure

The Council will be preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy alongside the *New Local Plan*. A Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge levied against specified types of new development in order to fund the provision of infrastructure in the local area.

The Community Infrastructure Levy will comprise of two schedules - a Charging Schedule, setting out the charge per square metre for different types of development where viable; and a Infrastructure Schedule, setting out what any levy collected will be spent on.

Until the *New Local* is more developed, it will not be possible to determine the charges. This is because policy decisions such as the level of affordable housing provision and the level of Code for Sustainable Homes sought will affect development viability and the amount of levy that can be charged.

However, it is possible to consider infrastructure priorities at this time to start informing the Infrastructure Schedule.

The Community Infrastructure Levy can be spent on a range of different types of infrastructure such as:

- Highways and transport
- Open spaces and playgrounds
- Leisure facilities
- Community halls
- Healthcare
- Education and childcare
- Youth facilities and services
- Adult social care
- Flood risk management
- Drainage
- Public realm improvements

Question IDP 23

Do you think that certain types of infrastructure provision in Castle Point should be prioritised? If yes, please provide details.

Question IDP 24

Are there any infrastructure projects, that you are aware of, that should be included within the infrastructure schedule for Castle Point? If yes, please provide details.

8 Consultation

The Council will also be revising the Statement of Community Involvement alongside the New Local Plan.

The Statement of Community Involvement was originally adopted in 2006. However, since this time a lot of work has been carried out on planning policy consultations. The Council has therefore learnt what does, and does not work when it comes to consulting on planning matters. Revisions therefore need to be made to accommodate these lessons.

There has also been considerable change at a legislative level. The requirements for consultation in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations were amended in 2008. The Localism Act 2011 has made further changes to the way in which Council's should engage with local people and stakeholders on planning matters.

In order that we can engage with you better in the future, please consider the following two questions:

Question IDP 25

Were you satisfactorily advised of this consultation event? Please comment on how we should advise you of consultation events in the future.

Question IDP 26

Have you been satisfied with the mechanisms available to respond to this consultation event? Please comment on how you would prefer to comment on consultations in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to read the *New Local Plan Issues Discussion Paper*.

Hopefully, you have found it thought provoking, and have been able to add your own ideas and concerns through the consultation questions.

If you are still thinking about how you would like to respond, remember that you have until the 28 March 2012 to let us know your views.

The easiest way to comment is online at: <http://castlepoint.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/nlp>

If you would prefer to make your comments in writing please use the question numbers provided throughout the *Issues Discussions Paper*.

Email: planningpolicy@castlepoint.gov.uk

Write to: Planning Policy, Castle Point Borough Council, Kiln Road, Benfleet, SS7 1TF