

BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

**URBAN CHARACTERISATION AND
DESIGN REVIEW**

DECEMBER 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Basildon Council is committed to high quality development that seeks positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life. To inform the Council's planning policies for preserving and enhancing the quality of Basildon's built environment and the distinctive urban character of the Borough, a local evidence base is required in terms of understanding the quality and character of the urban townscape.
- 1.2 The Urban Design Review has been carried out by Basildon Borough Council to distinguish the characters of existing urban areas, in order to identify the context for future design and to identify those features of the existing urban environment that contribute to or detract from the quality of the urban areas. This should enable allocation criteria and design policies to respond effectively to the local context by guiding responsive development that reinforces local character.
- 1.3 The distinct character areas provide the spatial framework for reviewing recent developments and appraising the effectiveness of existing policies against such developments. This is done by identifying those areas of policy that have been successful, and those areas that need to be strengthened in order to deliver high quality urban design. It will also form the basis to providing recommendations on the types of criteria to be included in future policies in order to achieve high quality urban design.

Understanding Urban Design in the Context of Planning

- 1.4 Urban design is simply the art of creating places where people want to live, work and visit. It involves the process of shaping the physical setting for life in cities, towns and villages through the arrangement and design of buildings, public spaces, landscapes, transport systems, services, and amenities. Urban design addresses the character and quality of the built environment in relation to the human scale. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns and cities.
- 1.5 Good design can help create lively places with distinctive character; streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale; and places that inspire. According to the Urban Task Force, "the best way to promote successful and sustainable regeneration, conservation and place-making is to think about urban design from the start of the planning and development process. Leaving urban design until the end can make the planning process slow, frustrating and a source of wasteful conflict, and is unlikely to lead to the best outcome in terms of quality". Good design is central to good planning, and local authorities have several tools available within

the planning system to help deliver better design. One important tool is the local authority's development plan which should set out the design policies against which development proposals will be assessed. This report sets to provide an evidence base necessary to inform the preparation of design policies in Basildon Borough Council.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

- 1.6 The purpose of this study is to provide an evidence base to inform the overarching design policies to be included in the New Local Plan. This study has been undertaken to identify and highlight local character and local distinctiveness within the Borough. The character areas are considered to have shared and locally distinctive features that are credible of recognition in the planning process. The characterisation study will help to instil good placemaking throughout the Borough by identifying what makes good neighbourhoods and allowing these principles to be applied to the planning, design and management of the Borough in the long term.
- 1.7 This study does not advise against development and change within these areas but rather draws attention to features and elements which best define the sense of place in a specific area, and which should be reflected when forming policies that will guide the design of development proposals. The report seeks to reveal the diversity and value of the urban environment within the area and should facilitate the development of positive approaches to the integration of urban design objectives into spatial planning for the Council.
- 1.8 The study evaluates and builds upon existing evidence base including conservation area appraisals, the *Typical Urban Areas* characterisation that was prepared for the Urban Capacity Study in 2004, the Basildon Historic Environment Characterisation Report, the Thames Gateway Historic Landscape Characterisation, the Essex Design Guide and associated Urban Place Supplement, and other relevant documents.
- 1.9 The study recommends a set of principles which would help form an urban design framework for Basildon. It is not however intended to provide the evidence necessary to inform a review of the Basildon District Development Control Guidelines. Work at a later date will be required to review the Development Control Guidelines. Furthermore, there are limits to the level of detail that can be presented in this study. The study operates at a macro scale and does not analyse every street, building or space, but does extract particular examples that help demonstrate or describe a certain characteristic.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

- 1.10 The overarching aim of this study is to provide the evidence necessary to inform the preparation of design policies and designations to be included in the New Local Plan

in order to ensure that future development is designed to a high standard, and achieves urban design objectives. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Outline the factors that have contributed to the formation of the towns within Basildon Borough, and identify the unique character areas within them.
2. Appraise the effectiveness of existing guidance and policy in achieving good design in the different character areas;
3. Appraise the effectiveness of policies BE13, BE14, and BE15 in achieving specific design objectives in the areas of Special Development Control;
4. Provide recommendations on the types of criteria that should be included in future policies related to the design of buildings;
5. Provide recommendations on the on-going retention and, where appropriate policy criteria, for the existing areas of Special Development Control;
6. Identify any additional areas (excluding the plotlands which are subject to a separate study) where Special Development Control policies may be required to achieve specific design objectives, and identify the policy criteria that would be required in those areas.

Planning Policy Background

National Policy Context

- 1.11 Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is entitled '*Requiring Good Design*'. It states that the Government attached great importance to the design of the built environment and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development indivisible from good planning. It should contribute positively to making places better for people.
- 1.12 It is expected that local plans should include robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development expected in an area, based on an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.
- 1.13 Such policies should ensure that developments:
 - Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short terms but over the lifetime of the development;
 - Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
 - Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other

public spaces as part of the development) and support local facilities and transport networks;

- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

1.14 Design policies should however avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development. In particular, policies should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes, although they may seek to reinforce local distinctiveness.

1.15 The context in which a development site is located is also considered to be important. Planning policies should address the connections between people and places, and ensure that new development integrates well into the natural, built and historic environment.

1.16 The approach to design set out in the NPPF is heavily informed by long established guidance on design set out in the Urban Design Compendium. The Urban Design Compendium, now published by the Homes and Communities Agency, was first published in 2000. At that time it was noted that quality of design was becoming one of the most important criteria in determining whether a project should be eligible for public funding. Since that time understanding of the importance of design quality in creating places people want to live and work in has grown.

1.17 The purpose of the Urban Design Compendium is to help equip all those involved in the delivery of places with guidance on achieving and assessing the quality of urban design in developing and restoring urban areas.

1.18 The Urban Design Compendium identifies seven key aspects of urban design which provide the basis for considering a site, its context and its potential for development. These seven key aspects are:

- **Places for People** - For places to be well-used and well-loved, they must be safe, comfortable, varied and attractive. They also need to be distinctive, and offer variety, choice and fun. Vibrant places offer opportunities for meeting people; playing in the street; and watching the world go by.
- **Enrich the Existing** - New development should enrich the qualities of existing urban places. This means encouraging a distinctive response that

arises from and complements its setting. This applies at every scale - the region, the city, the town, the neighbourhood, and the street.

- **Make Connections** - Places need to be easy to get to and be integrated physically and visually with their surroundings. This requires attention to how to get around by foot, bicycle, public transport and the car - and in that order.
- **Work with the Landscape** - Places that strike a balance between the natural and man-made environment and utilise each site's intrinsic resources - the climate, landform, landscape and ecology - to maximise energy conservation and amenity.
- **Mix Uses and Forms** - Stimulating, enjoyable and convenient places meet a variety of demands from the widest possible range of users, amenities and social groups. They also weave together different building forms, uses, tenures and densities.
- **Manage the Investment** - For projects to be developable and well cared for they must be economically viable, well managed and maintained. This means understanding the market considerations of developers, ensuring long term commitment from the community and the local authority, defining appropriate delivery mechanisms and seeing this as part of the design process.
- **Design for Change** - New development needs to be flexible enough to respond to future changes in use, lifestyle and demography. This means designing for energy and resource efficiency; creating flexibility in the use of property, public spaces and the service infrastructure and introducing new approaches to transportation, traffic management and parking.

1.19 In relation to policy preparation, the Compendium states that planning, urban design and sustainable development are responses to the same challenge – how to make successful places in a responsible way, making the most of what the market can deliver. In order to achieve this, planning policies should incorporate design principles at every scale. At a local level urban design policies should be based on a clear analysis of the environmental, social and economic context, and a local view of what qualities development should achieve. Such policies should be clear, specific, measurable/testable, and technically feasible.

1.20 By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – towards better practice (here on in known as By Design) was also published in 2000, and is cross referenced in the Urban Design Compendium as a source of design objectives/principles. By Design sets out 7 objectives of urban design which are still relevant and widely applied today. These objectives are Character, Continuity and Enclosure, Quality of the Public Realm, Ease of Movement, Legibility, Adaptability, and Diversity.

1.21 By Design recognises that these urban design objectives, when considered in isolation, are abstract. They have an impact on people's lives only when translated into development. It is the form of buildings, structures and spaces which give physical expression to urban design. By Design therefore identifies the eight most important characteristics of the physical form of development. Together, these aspects define the overall layout of a place; its scale, its appearance and its landscape. The eight aspects (characteristics) of development form are as follows:

- **Layout: Urban Structure** – The framework of routes and spaces that connect locally and more widely, and the way developments, routes and open spaces relate to one another.
- **Layout: Urban Grain** – The pattern of the arrangement of street blocks, plots and their buildings in a settlement.
- **Landscape** – The character and appearance of land, including its shape, form, ecology, natural features, colours and elements, and the way these components combine.
- **Density and Mix** – The amount of development on a given piece of land and the range of uses. Density influences the intensity of development, and in combination with the mix of uses can affect a place's vitality and viability.
- **Scale: Height** – Scale is the size of a building in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly in relation to the size of a person. Height determines the impact of development on views, vistas and skylines.
- **Scale: Massing** – The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings in relation to other buildings and spaces.
- **Appearance: Details** – The craftsmanship, building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting of a building or structure.
- **Appearance: Materials** – The texture, colour, pattern and durability of materials, and how they are used.

1.22 Section 3 of By Design sets out how the urban design objectives can be used to carry out an appraisal of a development or urban areas, providing a framework and suggesting questions that can be posed to assess the achievement of each objective.

1.23 It also sets out an approach to using the urban design context to construct policies for inclusion within Local Development Plans. It states that a plan's design policies should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. It is however noted that it is common for plans to capture all of

these matters in a single policy which requires development to be acceptable or appropriate. It expresses a concern that too often these policies are focused on promoting or protecting an area's character, neglecting other design objectives. There is therefore a need for policies to be more ambitious in terms of addressing design objectives.

Current Local Policy Context

- 1.24 The current development plan for Basildon Borough is the Basildon District Local Plan adopted in 1998. Policies relating to design are set out in the Built Environment Chapter. Policy **BAS BE12** is the key policy against which decisions on design are made in relation to residential developments, and as suggested above focuses on promoting and protecting the character of the local area, and on residential amenity, rather than the wider range of design objectives.
- 1.25 In addition to policy **BAS BE12**, there are three areas of Special Development Control where particular emphasis on protecting the character of the surrounding area is expected (**BAS BE13, BAS BE14 AND BAS BE15**). There are also specific policies on shop front design (**BAS BE17**) and advertisements (**BAS BE18 and BAS BE19**), although again the emphasis of these policies is also on the protection of character.
- 1.26 The requirements in relation to the design of commercial buildings are largely captured within policies **BAS E10** and **BAS SH1**. Again, the emphasis of these policies is on the protection of character and on residential amenity. Limited focus is given to other design objectives, potentially resulting in opportunities to better integrate homes and jobs provision being missed.
- 1.27 Development Control Guidelines 1997 provide supplementary guidance on design, and are used to direct development. These guidelines are however focused on the protection of existing character and set out prescriptive measures and thresholds to achieve this. Such measures and thresholds can result in contrived schemes which do not necessarily respond well to the design context, and therefore need updating. Within Billericay, the Town Council have worked with the Borough Council to put in place Shop Front Design Guidance which better responds to the local context.
- 1.28 Guidance is also available on the application of urban design principles in an Essex context. The Essex Design Guide and associated Urban Place Supplement are widely recognised as examples of good practice in promoting better design. Whilst Basildon Borough Council has not adopted either of these documents as supplementary planning guidance, there is evidence, primarily in northern parts of the borough, of the Essex Design Guide having influenced new development.

New Local Plan Requirement

- 1.29 At its meeting in December 2014, the Council's Cabinet approved a Local Development Scheme which sets out the programme for preparing a new Local Plan. The Local Plan will set out the overall strategy for development and growth within Basildon Borough as well as allocation and development management policies.
- 1.30 It is expected that the policies within the Local Plan will promote high quality design, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF. It is expected that allocations for new development will advocate high quality design, and that there will be some specific designations within the existing built environment where specific design criteria will apply (i.e. similar to the existing areas of Special Development Control). It is also expected that there will be development management policies that will address the requirement for good design, which will be applicable to not just new build developments, but also smaller scale proposals such as residential extensions.
- 1.31 The Local Plan will not however include detailed design guidance such as that currently set out in the Basildon District Development Control Guidelines 1997. Any new design guidance will be set out in a supplementary planning document to be prepared at a later date.

Structure of the Study

- 1.32 This study includes both a characterisation and an urban design review of the borough. It is rooted in an appreciation and understanding of how urban design can assist in the creation locally distinct places. It is therefore not extensive in its scope, but selective in its review, appropriate to the needs of supporting the creation of a new Local Plan.
- 1.33 The first part of this study sets out background research into urban design in the Borough through a series of desk-top analysis including analysis of existing literature, socio-economic data, and planning policy. This is structured to give an initial context into urban design from a series of perspectives, and its role in plan-making in Basildon.
- 1.34 Following this, a borough-wide analysis then provides an emerging picture of how nature and human activity have shaped each neighbourhood within the city by setting out the historical and built processes that have come to form the townscape and identity of the town. Building upon the 2004 Urban Capacity study, the Basildon Historic Environment Characterisation Report, alongside other digital mapping, historic mapping and site visits and photographic analysis of the borough, distinct character areas were identified within the borough. Maps, figures and text show the outcomes of the urban characterisation.

- 1.35 The study then presents an analysis of each urban character area against the design objectives by identifying, analysing and describing in a systematic and objective way, those elements or combination of elements that help to form the character of a place.
- 1.36 Arising from the character analysis, a number of recommendations, opportunities and implications were identified as to how the urban character of each area could be improved through the application of design policies. The aim is to stimulate, inform and guide the location, form and type of future planning and regeneration development projects.
- 1.37 The study also attempts to identify additional areas (excluding the plotlands) where Special Development Control policies may be required to achieve specific design objectives as well as policy criteria that would be required in those areas.
- 1.38 A review of selected recent developments was also undertaken in order to determine how these developments have responded to the local context. This helps to identify those areas of policy that have been successful, and those areas that need to be strengthened in order to deliver high quality urban design.
- 1.39 As a follow-up to the character assessments and design review outcomes, the study draws together all the previous analysis to present a series of recommendations for spatial planning in Basildon.

Methodology

- 1.40 This section sets out the approach and methodology employed in understanding and analysing the borough's urban character, in order to undertake a design review for Basildon Borough.
- 1.41 The study uses a mixture of primary and secondary data sources in order to build a comprehensive representation of urban character. Primary data collection was undertaken through extensive character surveys of each place. Secondary data sources include historical records and maps, GIS mapping, aerial photography, statistical data, socio-economic data and planning policy and other existing design evidence base.
- 1.42 The criteria chosen have been adapted from best practice and established urban characterisation provided by a number of key urban design publications including but not limited to:
- Countryside Agency - Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (2002).
 - By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001).

- Urban Design Compendium: Volume 1, English Partnerships & the Housing Corporation (2000).
- Urban Design Compendium: Volume 2, English Partnerships & the Housing Corporation (2007).

Urban Characterisation

- 1.43 This study identifies, analyses and describes in a systematic and objective way those elements, or combination of elements, that help to form the character of a place. By understanding the characteristics that give a particular area its own unique sense of place, the characterisation exercise acts as a framework to guide future development. The distinct character area boundaries do not necessarily correspond to administrative or political boundaries (although some traditional boundaries have been included). Rather, the extent of the areas has been established through a process of desk and field research, with the areas being grouped and mapped based on shared characteristics. To obtain an understanding of relationships between topography, settlement patterns and developments in human activity the study examines the borough, using best practice developed by the Countryside Agency for Landscape Character Assessment. The Borough is broken down into distinct character types against the following criteria adapted from best practice:

Historic Influences

- 1.44 The historic thread of our environment is fundamental to understanding how society and landscape have developed over time. Aspects of the historic environment can contribute towards people's sense of place. This is because people cherish places, and the historic environment provides roots and forges connections between people and the places where they live and visit. The historic environment is more than bricks and mortar, but a combination of physical things (tangible) and those aspects we cannot see – stories, traditions and concepts (intangible). This environment is fragile and may be susceptible to high levels of change if appropriate policies are not developed to protect it. With sensitivity and imagination however, it can be a stimulus to creating new architecture and design, a force for regeneration and a powerful contributor to people's quality of life.

Settlement Typology

- 1.45 Settlements are not uniform and a variety of settlement types are often prevalent within geographical areas. The study and interpretation of different settlement types will therefore facilitate in distinguishing between urban character areas. Identifying and distinguishing different settlement types is often a complex task because of a multitude of factors that play a role in differentiating one settlement from another, such as size, composition, location, arrangement and pattern, organization, service, function, proximity and management structures. For the purpose of this study

however, settlements will be distinguished on the basis of size, pattern, location as well as function in order to enable the characterisation process to capture the uniqueness of each character area. Since the study has a design focus, it includes the towns, villages, and urban open spaces (excluding the plotlands which are subject to a separate study) within the Borough.

Topography and Microclimate

- 1.46 Patterns of human settlements are often influenced by the site of the settlement, the surrounding topography, terrain and climate. Topography has a significant effect on microclimates. While on a larger scale weather systems are relatively predictable, these patterns can get disrupted at the local level by topographical features such as aspect and slope. A microclimate is the distinctive climate of a small-scale area. The weather variables in a microclimate, such as temperature, rainfall, wind or humidity, may be subtly different to the conditions prevailing over the area as a whole. In fact, it is the mixture of many, slightly different microclimates that actually makes up the climate for a whole town.

Land Use

- 1.47 Land use simply refers to the function of land within geographically defined areas. It involves the management and modification of the natural environment into built environment such as settlements and semi-natural habitats such as farmlands. Typical categories for land use include residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, recreational, and agricultural uses.

Scale and density

- 1.48 Scale is the self-referential ratio of one distance to another distance, or one size to another size. Urban elements are often in some scale ratio to the individual human being or to some activity of the individual human being (e.g. walking distance to a bus stop). Whereas, density refers to the number of units of people, dwellings in a given land area. Density influences the intensity of development, and in combination with the mix of uses, can affect a place's viability and character. Scale and density are important factors in understanding how cities function with some indications to aspects of sustainability. They are primary to how people perceive an area and must therefore be primary in how a city or parts of the city are designed.

Architecture

- 1.49 In general terms, architecture refers to the style of design and method of construction of buildings and other physical structures. It is both the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing. Architecture continues to have strong influences in defining the character and identity of an area. In many neighbourhoods, identity is based on a particular architectural style or mix of architectural styles.

Socio-economic Characteristics

- 1.50 This is a combination of economic and sociological factors such as income, education, occupation that define an individual's or group's economic and social position in relation to others. Studies suggest that the socioeconomic mix of communities is very significant for social outcomes, and likely to account for area variation in the urban form.

Movement

- 1.51 The structural aspects of movement focuses on the street and footpath networks i.e. roads, streets, railways, e.tc. Every area is different, and the types of networks available in a large suburban area will be quite different from a pocket site in the inner city.

Open Space

- 1.52 Open spaces are a vital part of urban landscape with its own specific set of functions that adds to the character of places. Urban areas have buildings and roads, but the spaces in between are what hold them together as a place - the open spaces, streets, parks, squares, green spaces and the network of pavements and pedestrian thoroughfares that knit them together. The pedestrian spatial experience within an urban area plays an important role in establishing distinctive, social communities. Such landscapes can range from playing fields to highly maintained environments to relatively natural landscapes.

Urban Design Review

- 1.53 Once all of the character areas had been identified, they were assessed based on the seven urban design qualities set out in *By Design* as discussed below. The character areas were assessed in order to provide baseline evidence to further the understanding of the local distinctiveness of each area, and to identify the key elements that contribute positively and/or negatively to the overall character of the various urban settlements within the borough. By assessing each place in the same manner, it is possible to draw out and link the spatial form of a place and its inherent qualities.

Character - A place with its own identity

- 1.54 To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.

Continuity and Enclosure - A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished

- 1.55 To promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines private and public areas.

Quality of the Public Realm - A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas

- 1.56 To promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.

Ease of Movement – A place that has a clear image of buildings, places and spaces and is convenient and safe for people to pass through.

- 1.57 To promote accessibility and circulation through development that provides well-designed streets to help people find their way around.

Legibility – A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

- 1.58 To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.

Adaptability – A place that can change easily

- 1.59 To promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Diversity – A place with variety and choice

- 1.60 To promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.
- 1.61 Part 3 of *By Design* also sets out a series of questions that could be asked to consider how well an area contributes to each of these objectives. Questions for each of the design objectives were selected based on the ability to obtain sufficient data from secondary sources and/or through a visit to the area (*See Appendix 1*).
- 1.62 Site visits were undertaken to each character area to visually assess the relative merits of the different urban environments within the borough. Relevant notes and photographs were taken to evidence the logic of any classification or findings.
- 1.63 In addition to visiting the character areas, site visits were also undertaken to selected recent developments. The purpose of the visits was to determine the success of the urban environment in each character area.
- 1.64 As with the reviews elsewhere, consideration was given to the seven urban design objectives in order to determine how well new development in these locations are

responding to wider design objectives. Additionally, for these developments, consideration was also given specifically to the design objectives identified in the Basildon Borough Local Plan in order to determine whether the development control policies have been effective in achieving their original objectives.

2 BOROUGH WIDE CONTEXT

Borough Overview

- 2.1 Basildon Borough is located in South Essex and lies at the heart of the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE), 48 kilometres (30 miles) east of the City of London. It covers an area of approximately 110 square kilometres (42 square miles), and has a population of 174,497. The Borough is highly diverse in its social and economic make-up, landscape, ecology and built environment. Such diversity is reflected in the three urban settlements in terms of a range of defining characteristics such as housing tenure, educational attainment, travel to work modes, life expectancy, and crime. The main settlement is Basildon, a Mark 1 New Town designated in 1948 and built in a number of phases over 50 years. The New Town area, to the south of the Borough includes the neighbourhoods of Basildon, Laindon, Vange, Pitsea, Steeple View and Noak Bridge. Basildon has the largest population in the Borough with approximately 107,000. Two smaller independent towns are situated to the north of the Borough, Billericay and Wickford. Billericay (including Little Burstead and Great Burstead) has a population of around 34,000 and Wickford (including Crays Hill and Ramsden Bellhouse) approximately 33,000. The urban areas are enveloped by rural countryside containing six villages and thirteen smaller plotland settlements set within the Green Belt.
- 2.2 The local natural environment is rich in nationally and locally important habitats with six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) ranging from Ancient Woodland and rich grasslands in Billericay to coastal marsh in Vange, Fobbing and Pitsea. There are over 50 Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Country Parks with over 150km of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that provide a means of accessing the open countryside. There are no internationally or European protected habitats in the Borough. The Borough's main watercourse has its source in Little Burstead.
- 2.3 Basildon is one of Essex's Regional Town Centres, alongside Chelmsford, Southend and Colchester. There are four other town centres in the Borough; Pitsea, Laindon, Billericay and Wickford. The Borough has four out-of-town retail parks that all have at least one large supermarket providing convenience goods. There are also 62 local centres or sub centres that support the Borough's residential and business neighbourhoods with basic shopping and service needs. The Borough offers a range of leisure and recreational opportunities including the Basildon Sporting Village, which includes Essex's only 50m swimming pool and South Essex Gymnastic Centre. The swimming pool in Wickford Town Centre has been recently renovated to provide new and expanded facilities in the heart of the town. The Borough is also home to several health clubs, four golf courses, four country parks, and over 1300Ha of open space. Basildon Festival Leisure Park is the Borough's principal commercial leisure complex

which contains a multiplex cinema, bowling alley, wake boarding centre, nightclubs, restaurants and hotels.

Historical Influences

- 2.4 The Basildon Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Study Report 2011 identifies that there has been evidence of human occupation in Basildon Borough since the late *Palaeolithic period (500,000-10,000 BC)* as evidenced by chance discoveries of flint tools, particularly flint hand-axes. The current evidence would suggest that they favoured the north of the Borough, particularly the valley of the River Crouch.
- 2.5 A few scatter of find-spots from the *Mesolithic period (10,000 to 4,000BC)* in recent years have led to the conclusion that there were possible Mesolithic settlements in the Borough in areas such as Nevendon. There are also a significant number of finds from Langdon Hills Park, enough to suggest another settlement site. The Norsey Wood area also seems to have been another focus for Mesolithic activity.
- 2.6 There is only slight evidence for *Neolithic (4,000 – 2,200 BC)* activity in the Borough which is a reflection of the general lack of archaeological fieldwork in the area and poor cropmark formation on the London Clay soils rather than necessarily a genuine absence. A possible settlement site represented by flint flakes and burnt flint was revealed in the upcast from a badger's set on the Mill Meadows Nature Reserve.
- 2.7 *Bronze Age (2,200 – 700 BC)* activity in the Borough is clustered in three distinct groups, in the northern part of the Borough centred on Billericay and Norsey Wood, in the west of the Borough, around Wickford and North Benfleet and in the south at Vange. There is considerable evidence for the Iron Age period (700 BC – 43 AD) in Basildon Borough, in the vicinity of Norsey Wood and south Billericay with a possible settlement at Little Burstead and an extensive settlement at Beauchamps Farm in Wickford.
- 2.8 The principal settlement during the *Roman period (43-410 AD)* appears to have been at Billericay, centred at the site of the present Billericay School and its playing-fields. The excavation area suggests that the settlement comprised a series of timber-framed buildings set in individual building-plots demarcated by boundary ditches, with accompanying paddocks and small fields. Overall the impression is that Billericay comprised a rather sprawling, loosely-knit village site. There is also settlement evidence from Beauchamps Farm and Barn Hall in Wickford, the top of Langdon Hills and from the Lee Chapel Reservoir site.
- 2.9 When the official Roman administration of Britain collapsed, Britain had already been under attack from across the North Sea, with raids and then settlement by the Saxons, Angles, Friesian and Jutish peoples. It was the Saxons who eventually gave Essex its name, the land of the East Saxons. There is widespread evidence of early settlement

from the *Saxon period (410-1066 AD)* across most of south Essex, reflecting its proximity to the Thames estuary and the old trading/raiding routes to northern Europe. In Basildon Borough however the evidence is rather sparser. However there is evidence of a number of early fifth century buildings of post, turf and rubble construction on the Beauchamps Farm site in Wickford suggesting that occupation of the site in that period was extensive. The early Saxon settlers were pagans but converted to Christianity in the 7th century. The large number of medieval churches in Basildon are thought to have come out of the organisation of the Saxon church in this period.

- 2.10 It is the *Medieval period (1066-1537)* that laid the foundations for the modern development of the Borough, through the establishment of local manors, Parish Churches and Parish boundaries. The settlements were both sparse and widely spaced, with the only settlement of any size being the medieval town of Billericay. The remainder comprised of churches, manorial sites, moated sites, farms and cottages. There are numerous medieval sites and find-spots within Basildon Borough including 42 Listed Buildings that are medieval in origin, with the oldest structures being invariably the parish churches. The historic parishes are: Mountnessing; Billericay; Great Burstead; Little Burstead; Ramsden Crays; Ramsden Bellhouse; Downham; Wickford; Nevendon; North Benfleet; Pitsea; Vange; Basildon; Lee Chapel; Laindon; Langdon Hills; and Dunton.
- 2.11 The landscape of the Borough at the end of the medieval period was crossed by numerous small roads, running either north-south or east-west, forming a rough grid pattern. This grid-pattern is continued on into the field patterns we see today, elements of which may well have been many centuries old.
- 2.12 The beginning of the *Post-medieval period (1538-1900)* is marked by the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The rise of non-conformism in the 17th -19th centuries is demonstrated by the appearance of non-conformist chapels in the landscape. In the 15th and 16th centuries brick also became a fashionable building material. It was widely used in Essex, which lacked suitable building stone but had plentiful supplies of clay for brick production. There were a number of brick kilns and clay pits within the Basildon area. The two prosperous periods of Billericay's past, the Tudor and Georgian periods, are well represented in the surviving buildings. Those dating to before the 18th century are all timber-framed, some with later brick facades. The 18th and 19th century buildings are largely of brick construction. There was little overall change to rural Basildon during the post-medieval period. It was still a landscape of rectilinear fields set within a grid-system of roads, with relatively sparse settlement. The woodland was still concentrated around Norsey Wood and Langdon Hills.
- 2.13 The change that had the greatest impact on the subsequent history of the Borough was the coming of the railway, with the opening of the first part of the London-Southend line in 1854 and the construction of a second London to Southend line in

1889 passing through Billericay. It was however during the *Modern period (1900 to the present day)* where the most profound development occurred.

- 2.14 At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th-century, agricultural depression meant that many Essex farms were semi-derelict or derelict and abandoned, particularly on the heavy clay lands of south Essex which are harder to work. Entrepreneurs bought up these farms at a low price and split them into individual plots or 'Plotlands'. They were advertised as an opportunity to live in an Arcadian paradise with good transport links to London, and were often promoted with the offer of cheap rail excursions to view the site and free food and drink.



Figure 1: The Haven, Dunton (Once a Plotlands Home, now a Museum)

- 2.15 The plotlands were to prove very attractive to people living in the cramped slum conditions of London's East End and to soldiers returning from the First World War with gratuities to spend on housing within commuting distance of London. As a consequence of the unregulated nature of the developments there was little in the way of services, with the unmade roads degenerating into quagmires in the winter, and many of the houses built on them were little more than shacks, with limited access to sanitation, water or lighting. The high-point of plotland development came between the First and Second World Wars, with a major concentration in the Basildon area. A surviving plotland bungalow, The Haven at Dunton, forms the basis of the Plotland Museum.

- 2.16 Basildon was the largest of the Mark 1 New Towns created in the post-War period to absorb the expanding population of London. In 1949 the designated area covered 7,818 acres (3164 Hectares) and incorporated some 8,700 dwellings, of which 5,500 were considered to be substandard accommodation. The New Town was to incorporate the existing settlements of Laindon, Langdon Hills, Pitsea and Vange. Basildon's layout adheres closely to the ideals and principles of New Town planning. Industry is concentrated on the northern side of the town close to the A127 and the town centre is surrounded by self-contained residential neighbourhoods, most with their own shopping centre, church, primary school and playing-fields, linked by footpaths and cycle ways to the town centre. The towns of Wickford and Billericay expanded significantly in the post war period as stand-alone settlements and residential development took place in Ramsden Bellhouse, Crays Hill, Noak Hill Road and Bowers Gifford.
- 2.17 Modern Basildon Borough is now largely urban in character, being dominated by Basildon New Town, and the towns of Billericay and Wickford. However there are still extensive areas of open landscape. The northern part of the Borough is more rural, and here the ancient rectilinear field pattern can still be discerned, albeit with superimposed areas of former plotlands and post-1950s field boundary loss. To the south of Basildon New Town are the Langdon Hills, still well wooded with a mix of ancient woodland and secondary woodland on abandoned plotlands. The south-east corner of the Borough is still characterised by grazing marsh and former grazing marsh on the Thames flood-plain, much of which is now being taken into conservation ownership as part of the Thames Gateway Parklands initiative which will help conserve the historic and natural environment and provide a large area of publicly accessible green space.
- 2.18 The Historic Environment Characterisation Study identifies thirteen (13) Historic Environment Character Areas based on the historic landscape character, archaeological character and historic urban character of the Borough. The Historic Environment Character Areas are listed below (*See also Figure 2*).
1. Little Burstead and The Land To The West Of Billericay
 2. Modern Billericay
 3. Historic Billericay
 4. Rural Landscape to the East of Billericay
 5. The Ramsdens
 6. Wickford
 7. Shotgate
 8. Langdon Hills and West of Laindon

9. Basildon New Town
10. North Benfleet and Bowers Gifford
11. Westley Heights To Vange Area
12. The Marshes
13. Wat Tyler Country Park And Pitsea Landfill

2.19 The Report further assessed the Historic Environment in more detail, dividing the Historic Environment Character Areas into smaller Historic Environment Character Zones. These smaller Character Zones are described to be more suitable for strategic planning within Basildon. The full report is available in the Basildon Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2010 - 2011.

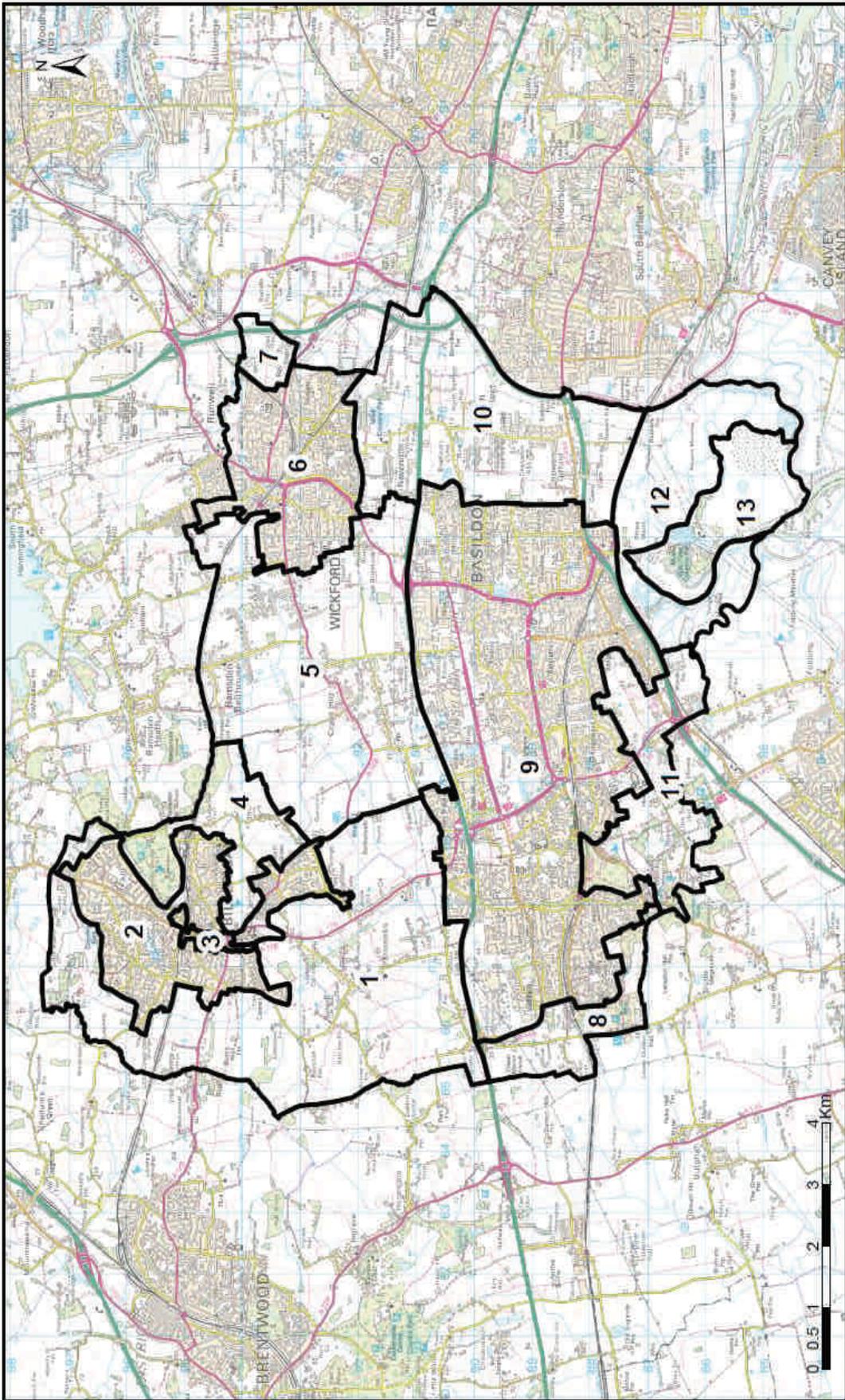


Figure 2: Basildon Borough Historic Environment Character Areas

Settlement Typologies

- 2.20 The differing types and sizes of settlements relate strongly to specific uses and to specific periods and types of development. The 2004 Urban Capacity Study defines the district's main urban areas as Basildon, Billericay, and Wickford. The Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies 2007, which remains applicable in the Borough also refers to Basildon, Billericay and Wickford as towns and the main locations of services. Bowers Gifford, Ramsden Bellhouse, and Noak Hill Road are mentioned in the Local Plan, although no particular settlement classification is given to these areas. Whilst the Local Plan makes reference to the aforementioned areas, it also recognises that there are numerous small settlements and Plotland areas dispersed throughout the Green Belt. However, these settlements have not been formally defined through local planning policies.
- 2.21 The Basildon Borough Settlement Hierarchy (2012) was carried out to reflect the different characteristics of the area, and involved the classification of settlement types according to factors such as population, level of facilities and accessibility to services. Using this information, along with the policy context, similar characteristics in settlements were identified and then used to categorise the settlements to form an initial Settlement Hierarchy.
- 2.22 The study clarifies Basildon's status as a more, *Major Urban Area* (when incorporating Laindon and Pitsea) given its higher population and the presence of facilities. This places Basildon at the apex of the settlement hierarchy. Wickford and Billericay's status with a comparable population between them and the availability of services and facilities placed them next in this hierarchy as *Towns*. Ramsden Bellhouse, Crays Hill and Bowers Gifford were distinguished from other smaller settlements in the Borough as *Serviced Villages* because they have at least some facilities or services present. All other remaining settlements are grouped together as *Unserviced Settlements* as identified in the Policy Context, as they are all limited in accessibility to services, each having a slightly different historic background. The Basildon Borough Settlement Hierarchy derived from the Settlement Topic Paper is represented in *Figure 3* below.

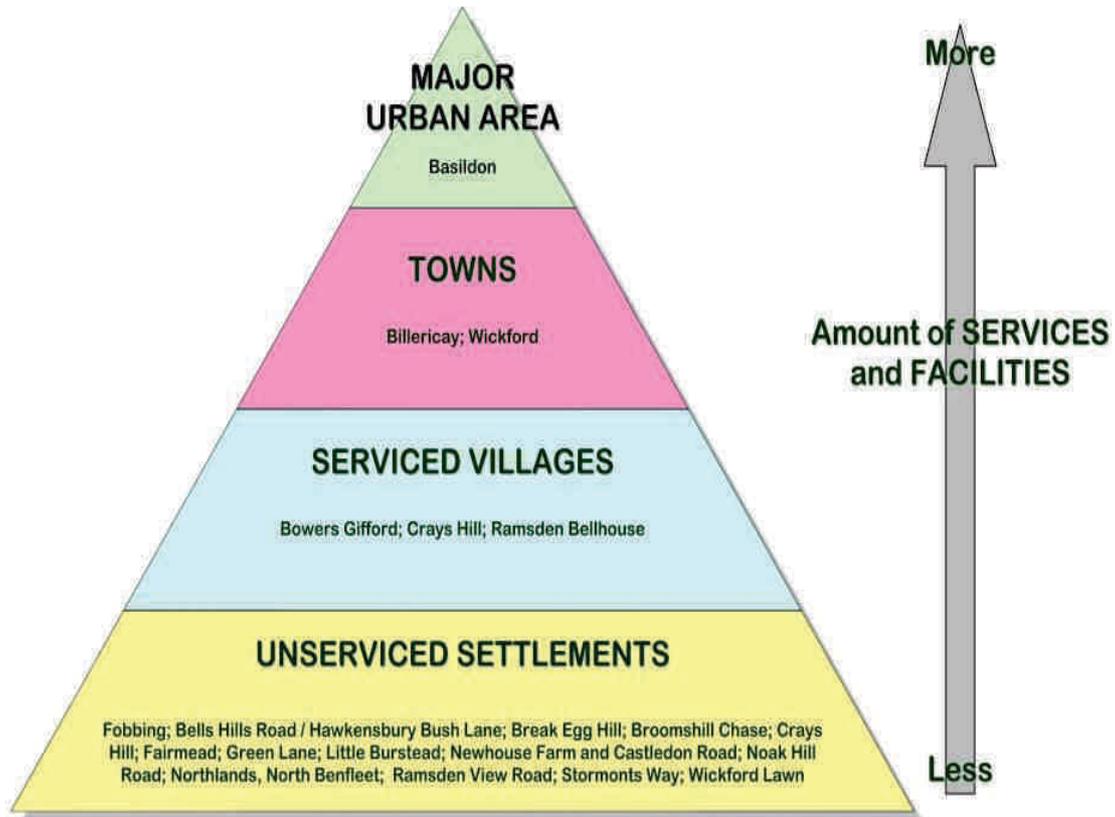


Figure 3: The Initial Settlement Hierarchy

Topography and Climate

- 2.23 According to the UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP), Basildon Borough's climate change sub-region falls under the Thames Gateway and Fringes which is highly influenced by coastal processes and home to important wetland habitats, with a rich archaeological record. Both urban and rural parts of the Borough will become more vulnerable to fluvial and coastal flooding, water supply deficiencies, subsidence and sea level rises, as the local climate continues to change with significant implications for regeneration, property infrastructure, habitats and archaeology. The Rivers Crouch and Wid, together with their tributaries are the main sources of fluvial flooding. The River Thames poses a tidal flooding risk in the south of the Borough, although this area is predominantly uninhabited marshland. Meteorology or weather patterns could vary marginally across the District, just as they do across the region and country.
- 2.24 The basic structure of any landscape is formed by its underlying geology. Basildon Borough is located in the south of Essex, the southern part of the Borough overlooking the Thames Estuary. The geology of Basildon largely comprises London Clay with patches of Claygate clays and Bagshot Formation sands and gravels forming the

higher points within the Borough. The valley-floor of the Crouch and its tributaries is alluvial in nature and the marshes are made up of tidal flat deposits.

- 2.25 The Borough's landscape is varied, comprising three main urban development areas and three serviced settlements, set within arable farmland, permanent grazing with hedgerows, woodland and a large area of the Thames Estuary's coastal grazing marshland. It also contains significant areas of plotland landscape, characterised by a mosaic of scrub, grassland and relict woodland habitats with small-scale communities of a rural nature.
- 2.26 The landscape character in the Borough can be characterized in terms of both character types and character areas. Character Types are generic in their attributes and can appear in more than one location. Eight Landscape Character types have been identified within Basildon which are Estuary Marshlands, Lowland Farmlands, Lowland Settled Claylands, Restored Landforms, Sloping Farmland, Urban Fringelands, Wooded Farmlands, Wooded Hills and Ridges. In contrast, character areas are a specific local expression of a Character Type occurring only in one unique location. Fourteen Landscape Character Areas have been identified in the 2013 Landscape Character Assessment of Basildon Borough as shown in *Figure 4* below.

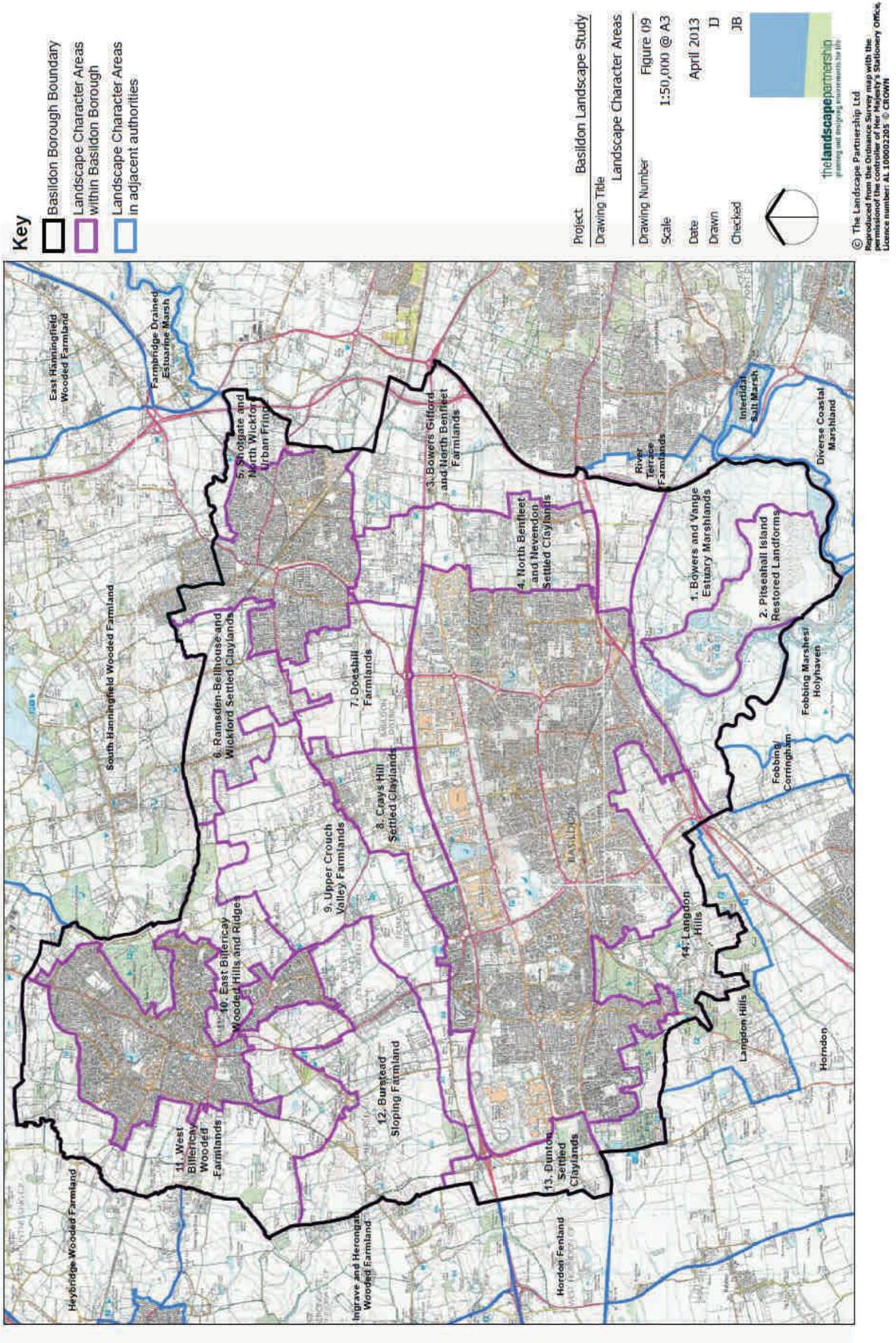


Figure 4: Basildon Borough Landscape Character Areas

Land Use

- 2.27 Basildon Borough is made up of 63% Green Belt and 37% urban area. The fundamental aim of Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and preventing the coalescence of the urban areas. This policy designation has acted to affect the way in which land within Basildon Borough is used. The urban areas - Basildon (including Laindon and Pitsea), Billericay and Wickford - are surrounded by countryside within the Green Belt. A number of small villages and settlements lie outside these main urban areas, within the Green Belt, and have been included as part of this study (excluding plotland settlements) because of their relatively developed character. Tight boundaries have however been drawn around these to limit their growth. Together, these represent the major locations for residential uses within the Borough.
- 2.28 As a former new town, Basildon was planned around a strong segregation between land uses. As a consequence, the main employment area takes the form of a belt along a linear corridor that is bounded to the north by the A127 and to the south by Cranes Farm Road (B148/A1235). The major employment sites include Burnt Mills, Cranes Industrial Estate, Case New Holland Tractor Park, Festival Business Park, Pipp's Hill, Laindon North, and Ford Technical Centre. The Ford Dunton Technical Centre has secured Basildon Borough's reputation as a centre for automotive research and development. The concentration of industrial activities within well-managed industrial estates along the strategic road corridor of the A127 has improved Basildon Borough's competitive edge as a location for industrial, manufacturing and warehouse related B-class employment activities. There are also residential uses along this corridor, but the segregation between residential and employment is such that there are minimal opportunities to introduce housing into the employment areas. Significant business operations are also found in other employment areas throughout the borough such as Hurricane Way, Wickford and Radford Way, Billericay. On the whole, the major clusters of B-class employment uses are located in the 24 employment sites (including the three major town centres of Basildon, Billericay and Wickford). Basildon Borough's employment floorspace is predominantly general/light industry, supplemented by other office, warehousing, research & development, and wholesale and retail trade.
- 2.29 Other important land use types within the Borough are: Recreation including indoor and outdoor recreation, and allotments; Transport; and Community and Institutional uses. The District benefits from woodlands in both urban and rural locations. Ancient Woodlands account for cumulatively 122.4Ha of the Borough's land cover, including Norsey Wood in Billericay and Nevendon Bushes in Pitsea. There are also 6 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the District including Norsey Wood, Mill Meadows, Basildon Meadows, Pitsea Marsh, Vange and Fobbing Marshes, and Holehaven Creek. In addition, there are other Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and Priority Habitats in Basildon District.

2.30 The generalised land use database as derived from the Department for Communities and Local Government Land Use Statistics is presented in *Figure 5* below.

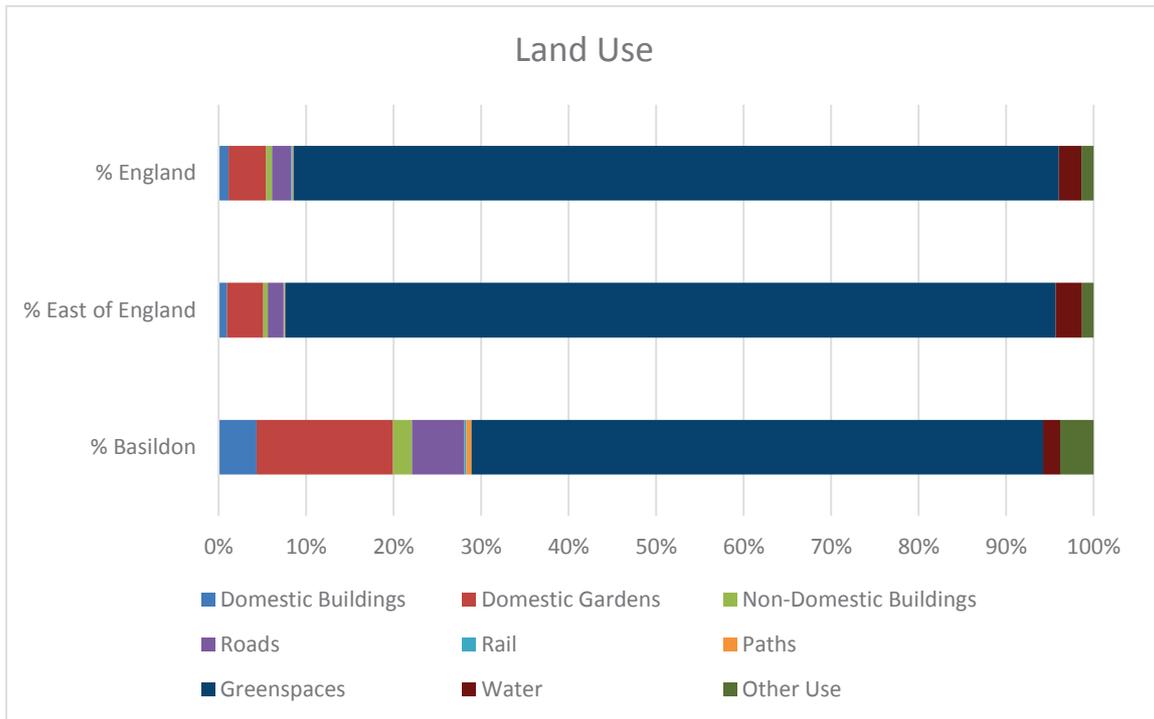


Figure 5: DCLG Land Use Datasets for Basildon

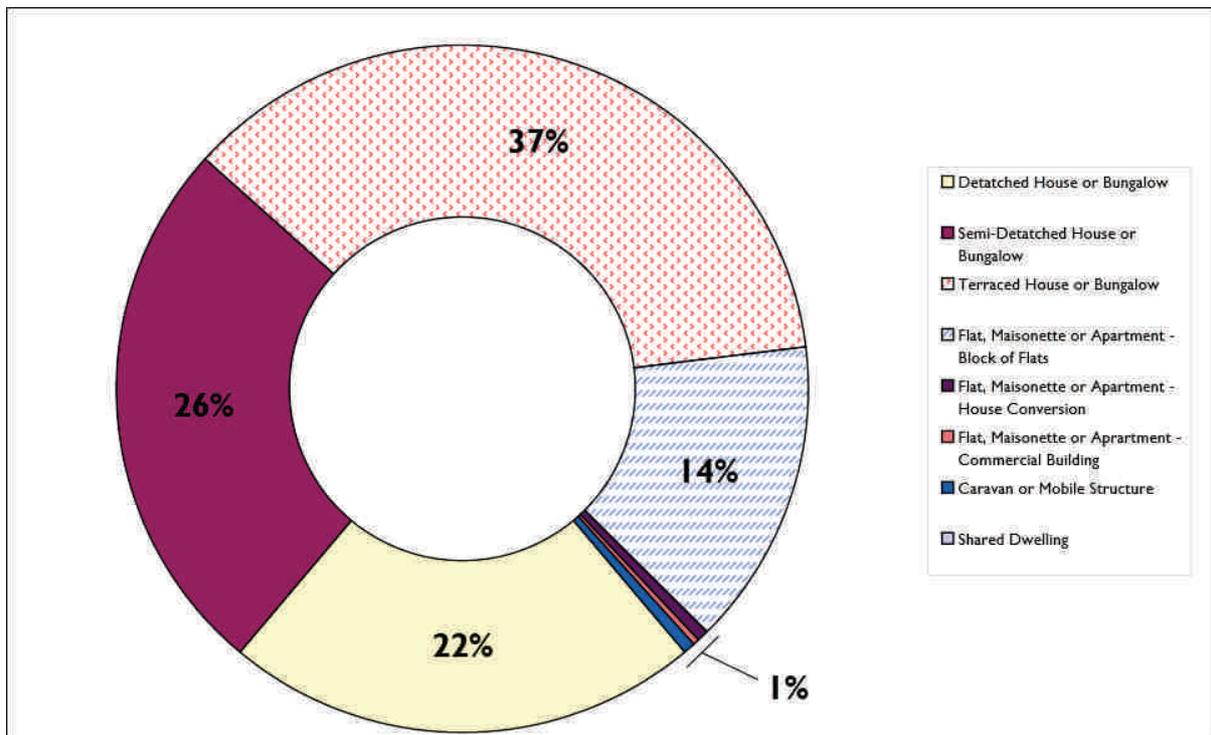
Scale and Density

2.31 The 2011 Census revealed that there were over 72,700 households in the Borough, 50,537 of which contain families. The New Town's legacy of family orientated neighbourhoods means that residents in the Borough are more likely to live in a house or bungalow. 35.3% of the housing stock is terraced, 25.8% semi-detached and 21.8% detached. Only 16.7% of the Borough's housing stock is in the form of flats, most of which are purpose built blocks, rather than converted buildings. The average household size is 2.37 persons.

2.32 The borough is predominantly low rise, characterised by one to three storey buildings, sometimes with attics or basements. The majority of medium to high rise buildings can be found in and around Basildon town centre, and in business parks.

2.33 The density of buildings varies across the borough. In the main urban areas and extensive residential areas, the building stock is built to a medium to high density, revealing a tight urban form. Housing largely comprises suburban two-three storey detached or semi-detached houses, interspersed with bungalows, short terraces and apartment blocks. This kind of concentration supports the location of services and facilities. Outside the main urban areas, the dispersed nature of housing results in medium to low density development patterns which may not be sufficient to support

local shops and services. There is a dynamic cluster of industries in designated industrial parks with medium to large footprint industrial buildings.



Source: Basildon District Core Strategy Issues Paper 2007

Figure 6: Basildon Borough, Proportions of Housing Types

Architecture

2.34 The appearance of buildings and the differing architectural treatments found within the Borough relate strongly to specific periods of development and reflect spatial variations. In the beginning of the 20th century, many weekend residences began to spring up in Basildon as the railway opened up the area for Londoners. This gave rise to the erection of buildings by plot owners ranging from shacks and shelters created from recycled materials to brick-built homes which were served by unmade roads and lacking services such as water, gas, electricity. Land was cheap and so this type of development grew out of all proportion. Basildon grew into a collection of small, rural communities and in 1949, the Basildon Development Corporation was appointed to co-ordinate the development of the New Town.

2.35 The work of the Basildon Development Corporation started in 1951 with the first new homes being built in Vange and Fryerns. This period of development was characterised by wide scale demolition of old homes which were replaced, in many cases, by large scale housing estates and tall multi-story blocks of flats. The Development Corporation had a policy to build a wide range of homes for all sectors of the community including those on higher incomes and the elderly. The early estates were very open with a high standard of landscaping. Garages were as rare as cars in those early days. It was also the Council's responsibility to work with the Basildon

Development Corporation to help build the community spirit of the New Town. Hence in the early years, the development of houses, shops, factories, community and recreation facilities, and schools went at a pace. In 1963 there was a shift from the traditional form of house building to system build, to enable more housing to be provided for less money. Many of the estates built during that time won awards but have not stood the test of time.



Figure 7: Fryerns - A Typical Early Housing Development

- 2.36 The Council took over most of the housing stock in 1994 as there was a real need for regeneration of estates by that time and new ways had to be found of achieving this. Partnership working with Housing Associations on various projects has brought great benefits to tenants in recent years in raising housing standards and the environment of estates. The physical standard of dwellings is showing signs of improvement throughout the Borough with the number of dwellings determined to be unfit falling year on year since 2004.
- 2.37 Elsewhere in the Borough, Billericay is an ancient town. Its position between Tilbury and Chelmsford made it an ideal staging post for travellers in the 1500s. The Georgian period saw the construction of several fine houses in Billericay, built by prosperous wool farmers. A fine example of Georgian architecture can be seen in Burghstead Lodge. The arrival of the railway in 1889 attracted city workers to take advantage of cheaper land prices in a cleaner rural environment and many landowners were keen to sell plots, for weekend or more continuous use. Little development actually took place until the interwar period, but the future shape of Billericay had been defined. During the period 1960-1980 a number of large housing developments were built on the outskirts of the town, including Great Burstead and South Green, whilst in the High

Street, modern commercial expansion led to the need for the establishment of the Conservation Area to protect the historic core.



Figure 8: Burghstead Lodge in Billericay- A large Georgian House in a Classical 18th Century Style

- 2.38 The movement of people out of London at the end of World War II had a large effect on Wickford, which is conveniently situated in the commuter belt. Prior to the 20th Century, Wickford was just a typical Essex agricultural village with the land providing a living for many people who lived there.
- 2.39 Whilst some historic buildings within the Borough survive to date, the 20th century onwards is characterised by a fragmentation of built form much of which has largely failed to relate to the townscape of previous centuries. The history of building construction is intimately related to the availability of suitable building materials. Until the 19th century, the vast majority of buildings and structures were constructed from locally produced materials, mainly timber, plaster, and tiles. The post-war houses are in a variety of styles using different bricks, and some with weather-boarding, render and pebble dash.
- 2.40 Industrialisation made it possible to produce building materials on a large scale, and convey them over greater distances with the availability of new means of transport such as the railways. Thus, not only were traditional materials such as bricks

manufactured in huge quantities but also new, industrial materials such as cast and wrought iron, and steel. Concrete also began to play an increasingly important role in construction. Up to the present, architects, engineers and designers continue to use a wide variety of materials, at times in eccentric and innovative ways.

Socio-economic Characteristics

- 2.41 The Borough's population has increased dramatically over the last 60 years, following the phased construction of Basildon New Town and the expansion of the older settlements of Billericay and Wickford over a similar timeframe. Subnational population projections, suggest that the Borough's population will continue to grow with 188,000 people projected to live in the Borough by 2021. In 2011, 66% of homes were owner occupied, 22% socially rented and 10% privately rented.
- 2.42 The Borough's population is much less ethnically diverse, than the East of England region or country, with notably smaller proportions of people from Asian, Black or Chinese ethnic groups. Age structure has been changing in line with national trends, with a decreasing proportion of young people and an increasingly ageing population. In the future, this change will see different demands placed upon support and care services (e.g. schools, health, social care, e.tc.) and may lead to changes in future housing and service provision needs.
- 2.43 Basildon town is the largest employment centre in Thames Gateway South Essex (part of the wider Thames Gateway, a Government priority area for regeneration) and is home to the A127 Enterprise Corridor, the largest concentration of employment in Essex. In total there are over 6,500 VAT registered business enterprises trading in the Borough.
- 2.44 There are significantly lower rates of infant deaths, people feeling "in poor health" and poor mental health than the national averages. However, the numbers of people with diabetes, teenage pregnancy, those who eat healthy, adults who are physically active, early deaths through cancer and hip fractures in the elderly are worse than regional and national levels. There are also clear links between deprivation and poor health.
- 2.45 Over half the wards in the Borough are considered deprived in respect of education, skills and training in England. Basildon Borough has a higher level of benefit claimants of working age (18.5%), than the national (17.8%) and regional (14.3%) averages. There is significant spatial variation in deprivation levels across the Borough with higher levels of deprivation in central and southern parts of the Borough. Educational achievement also varies considerably depending on school location in the Borough. The schools in Billericay and Wickford out-perform the schools in Basildon and are above the county and national averages for GCSE results. Significant variation in earnings across the Borough reflect the fact that there are affluent areas within the Borough.

Movement

- 2.46 Throughout the Borough, Basildon maintains comparatively good connections with national and regional strategic road network. The A13, A130 and A127 connect the Borough with London and its immediate neighbours, as well as to the routes of the A12 and A120 providing access to Stansted Airport and the international ports of Felixstowe and Harwich. Roads accommodate the greatest proportion of all travel in the Borough, whether for commuting, leisure, business or freight. Access to the strategic highway network has attracted businesses to the A127 corridor and the Borough in general. Proximity to London, the M25 and M11 are all advantages for industries in terms of reaching a large number of customers through import, export and general distribution.
- 2.47 In Basildon, car ownership is lower than the Essex average (76.8% compared to 80.7%). High levels of rail commuting and good public transport will be a factor, although the pattern of car ownership identifies lower levels in the New Town area compared to Billericay, Wickford and (specifically) Langdon Hills. Each of these areas also have a greater proportion of households with two or more cars, indicating that ownership (and car use) is linked to affluence as much as need, following national trends.
- 2.48 Railways are an important mode of transport in the Borough, connecting people to employment and leisure destinations, particularly Southend and London. The Borough is also served by two railway lines to the north and south, enabling relatively high levels of rail commuting. Access to these is via five railway stations: Basildon, Laindon, Pitsea, Billericay and Wickford. Rail services from Billericay and Wickford connect to Stratford City enabling transfer to Eurostar Services at Stratford International and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and terminate at London Liverpool Street. From 2018, Crossrail services will be operational from Shenfield, one stop east of Billericay, linking with Maidenhead and Heathrow Airport, via Central London. In the south of the Borough, rail services run between London Fenchurch Street and Shoeburyness with services to Lakeside Shopping Centre, via a junction at Pitsea.
- 2.49 An extensive bus network also connects people with a range of local destinations. The Borough's urban areas are generally very accessible by public transport, with bus frequencies of between 10 and 30 minutes during week days. Public transport connectivity is more variable and less frequent in the outlying settlements. In terms of access to other key services, the majority of Basildon Borough is within 30 minutes of a hospital and within 20 minutes of a college or sixth form.
- 2.50 Basildon has a good pedestrian network however, walking and cycling are less likely to be chosen as a method of travel than in similar sized towns across Essex.
- 2.51 While the general picture for accessibility is good, there are current and emerging deficiencies within the transport network including congestion at peak hours, concerns

over parking capacity, low levels of take up of active travel, amongst others. Road safety also remains a significant local issue and needs to improve.

2.52 *Figure 9 below 'Strategic Transport Network Surrounding Basildon Borough' illustrates the connections the Borough has with national and regional strategic road networks.*

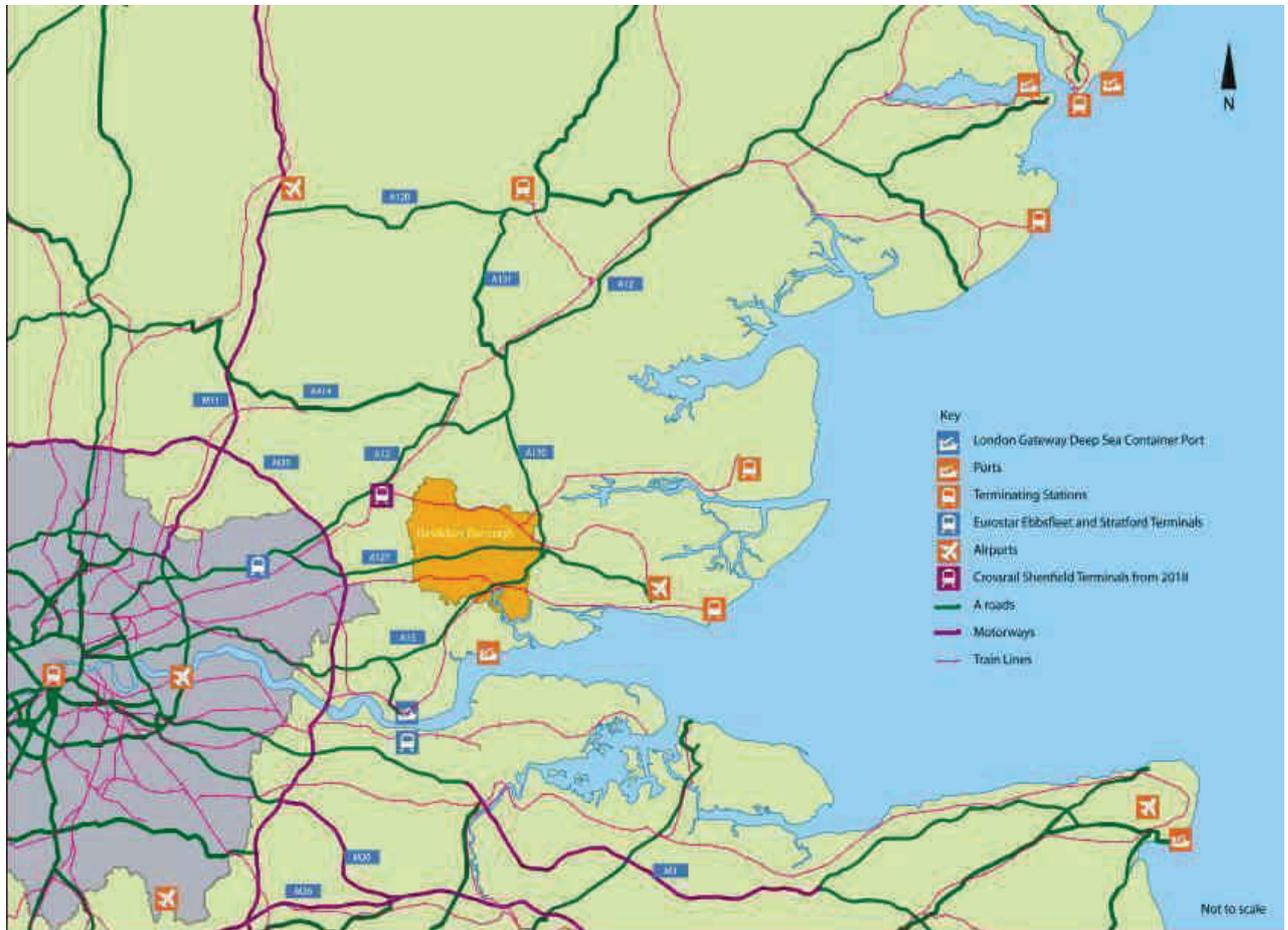


Figure 9: Strategic Transport Network surrounding Basildon Borough

Open space

2.53 Approximately 63% of the Borough is made up of Green Belt land including a series of diverse habitats, including woodland and the Thameside grazing marsh, which is unique in Europe and of international importance. The Borough is also home to several health clubs, four golf courses, four country parks, and an extensive Green Infrastructure network that covers over 1,300ha. Green Infrastructure (GI) is the term used to describe a strategic network of high quality green spaces and other landscape or environmental feature. Basildon's GI network comprises of a series of multi-functional spaces of different size and purpose, linked by green corridors and/ or public rights of way, in the urban areas, urban fringe, villages, plotland settlements and countryside. Its key elements are the strategic green corridors that follow natural assets such as the River Crouch Valley, the South Essex Marshes and the Langdon

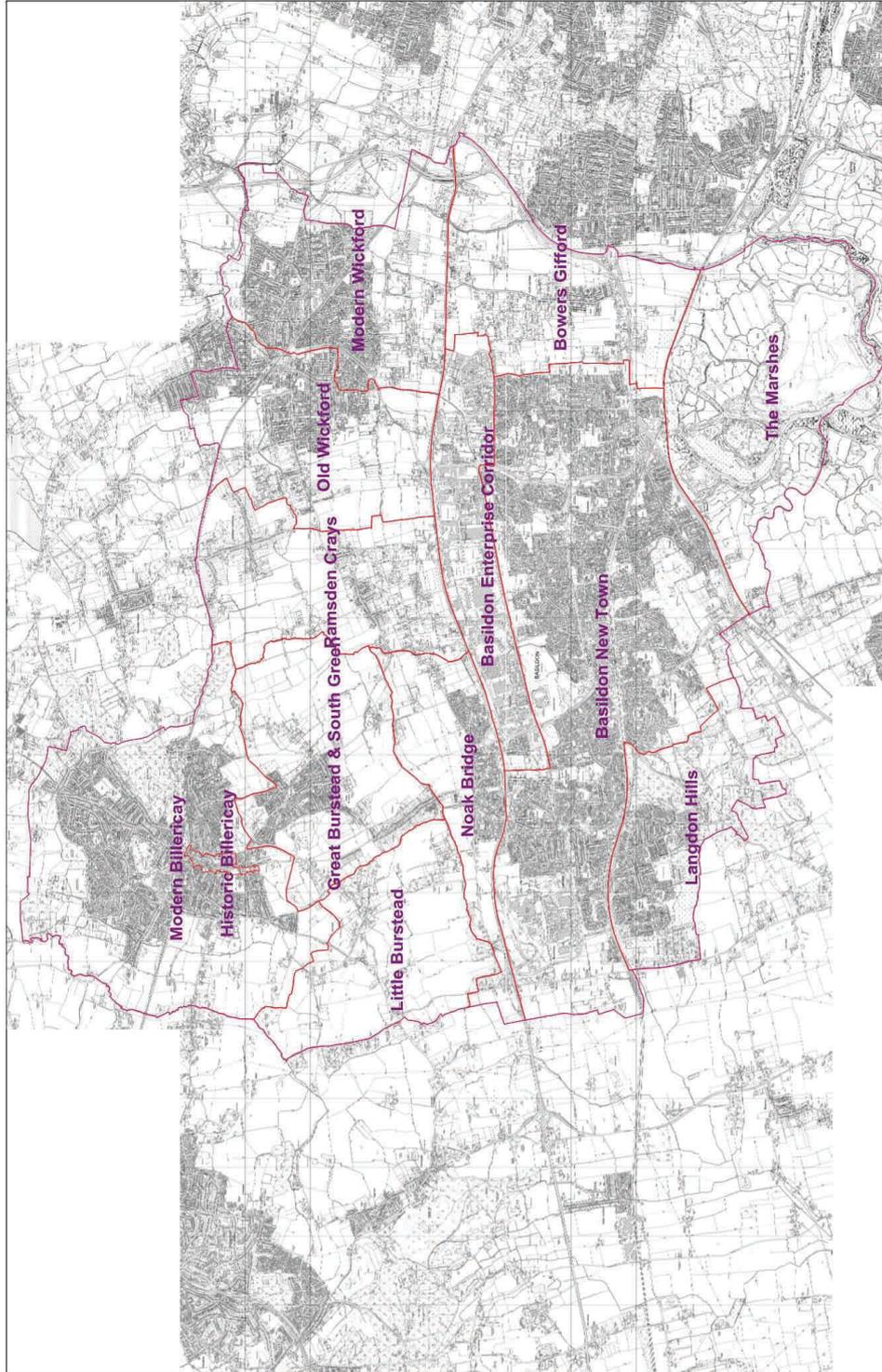
Hills/ Kingston Ridge, which stitches the Borough's landscape into that of its neighbours.

- 2.54 This network provides opportunities for exercise, sport and active recreation, whilst the relative tranquillity and low levels of noise, air and light pollution aids people's wellbeing and supports biodiversity. The network is in part, a legacy of the Borough's New Town history, natural environmental assets, and large late 20th Century parkland acquisitions. The network is an integral part of the high quality environment that has over the years, helped attract people and investment to the Borough, whilst providing essential and integrated space for flood storage, drainage and urban cooling, which makes the Borough's urban landscape distinctively green. It has also had a pivotal role in connecting local people with the Borough's historic past in providing the setting for local churches, the remains of moated farms, manors and Victorian industries, many of which also benefit from complimentary conservation designations.
- 2.55 The Borough benefits from a range of outdoor recreational facilities which provide locations for activities such as team sports, walking, cycling, nature conservation, horse-riding, fishing and golf. With a view to improve upon this existing provision, which provides a regional, as well as a local function, £11.5m was invested by the Government in 2008 into the Thames Gateway Parklands in South Essex.
- 2.56 There are however parts of the Borough where improvements to open space provision need to be explored even further. In Billericay, whilst it is rich in natural and semi-natural open spaces, such as Norsey Wood and Mill Meadows, there are open spaces which fall below desirable quality standards. It also lacks any allotment provision, despite there being indicators of need. Likewise, Wickford has the lowest supply of accessible open space per head of population in the Borough, and the presence of man-made barriers (e.g. the two railway embankments and Golden Jubilee Way dual-carriageways) inhibit physical access to what is otherwise good quality open space. In Basildon, Laindon and Pitsea, whilst there are pockets of the towns which have less accessible or poorer quality open spaces, the New Town's layout and estate design has meant that overall, its residents enjoy the best access to open space in the Borough.

Urban Structure

- 2.57 This section serves as the baseline evidence for analysing the place qualities which have shaped the settlements within Basildon. By way of an introduction to *Section 3: Character Areas*, the diagram below (*Figure 10*) provides a simple, at-a-glance summary of the basic structure of the Borough's character areas. The character areas have been broadly drawn, dividing the borough into twelve (12) distinct areas by using a set of guiding criteria that examines the relationships between topography, settlement patterns and developments in human activity as outlined in the methodology section. The intention is to divide the borough into neighbourhoods that are distinct, and that reflect social and functional geographies as opposed to

administrative boundaries such as wards. Therefore, the boundaries of each neighbourhood hold no administrative or political significance. Following on the above, an urban design assessment has been carried out to assess the performance of each area against the seven urban design qualities presented in the resulting illustrated character assessments.



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Scale:	1:62000

Figure 10: Basildon Borough Urban Character Areas

3 CHARACTER AREAS

Character Area 1: Little Burstead

Character

- 3.1 Little Burstead is a small village with agricultural origins, set in gently rolling countryside. It is predominantly rural in character and retains many of its historical landscape features relating to the rural environment especially the historic settlement pattern and field system with ancient woodland sites. The area's rural feel and identity is further enhanced by its many trees. The area has numerous mature hedges and trees which provide a foil to the houses and provide an attractive setting. Trees are very significant in Little Burstead and are very much part of the landscape.



Source: www.flickrriver.com, September 2015

Figure 11: Aerial View of Little Burstead along Laindon Common Road

- 3.2 There is quite a broad range of building styles within the area, although all are generally unified by the use of local materials and their residential nature. Timber and brick account for most of the buildings in this area. Their frequent use throughout the village provides unity across the different styles of building. They also provide pleasing colour contrasts within the village, with weatherboarding and render usually painted black or white. There are also some brick cottages and typical Victorian suburban villas. Larger houses displaying greater architectural detailing are found in the western green area as a result of its openness and flatness, which contrasts the smaller properties along Laindon Common Road where the topography undulates slightly.

The embellished elevations and position of the larger houses around the main public space means that they have an important visual role in the village.

- 3.3 Little Burstead is an area of special architectural and historic interest and has 11 Listed Buildings including the Church of St Mary the Virgin built in late Norman times, and others of particular historic and architectural merit. Some mid twentieth century development has however diluted its character. In the 20th century, linear roadside development and plotland development have occurred in the area, particularly in the south and east. Despite some 20th century boundary loss, the historic field system and dispersed settlement pattern is well preserved. Today, the village functions largely as a dormitory settlement with most residents commuting to nearby towns or London. As a result of the village's well established character and appearance, Little Burstead Conservation Area was first designated in July 1983, encompassing much of the present day village, but excludes the 20th century development along Broomhill Chase.



Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 12: The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Little Burstead

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.4 There are a large number of trees in the village and though there is open country around, in many places this is screened by trees. These trees help to create a feeling of enclosure and add height to the landscape. Boundaries are also important to the character of Little Burstead, in particular the hedges. There are good stretches of

highly cultivated hedge of varying heights which are used to screen a number of houses from the road, and provide a street edge. There is also some use of timber fences and gates. Around the Green, boundary walls are more dominant, reflecting what is traditionally the grander part of the village. The continuity of building frontage is however minimised due to the variety of housing types that are sparsely located. Gaps often dominate between houses and the space visually leaks away.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.5 The only true area of public open space within the neighbourhood is the expanse of grass ('the Green') at the junction of the main routes through Little Burstead. Generally development is located either on one side of a street or the other, allowing for open views and a rural setting. Road surfaces are tarmaced and driveways to houses are shingled, tarmaced or have modern block paving, maintaining the overall visual cohesiveness of the area. Speed bumps serve as traffic calming measures along Clock House Road and on Laindon Common Road. Street lighting is provided by modern lampposts and timber cable posts. Little Burstead War Memorial is an important piece of public art, acting as a historical touchstone that links the past to the present. Timber benches in activity areas, 'the Green' and the war memorial triangle, provide amenity and comfort. There is a modern bus stop and road signs in this area, with a traditional full height fingerpost on the Green. All these contribute to providing a safe, attractive, and convenient pedestrian environment.



Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 13: The Green, Little Burstead

Ease of movement

- 3.6 The village's two main roads, Laindon Common Road and Clock House/Rectory Road converge at the former village green. The Clock House Road route contains the higher status development clustered around the junction with Laindon Common Road. Laindon Common Road leads eastwards to Laindon Common which has shaped the development of the village. Despite some through traffic on Laindon Common Road, the route still retains a country lane character largely due to the lack of buildings along its southeast side and the setback building line of the properties along it.
- 3.7 Country lanes are an integral part of our rural environment and are traditionally designed to encourage local journeys to be made on foot or bicycle, and for recreation. Although, cars are not banned and use of these roads is shared. The volume and speed of car traffic in Little Burstead is however making these routes uninviting and intimidating for pedestrians. Traffic is quite a serious issue both in amount and speed, evidenced by an abundance of cars and fast moving traffic. The residents of Little Burstead need cars to access services and jobs as there are no services in the village, and many commute for work, so traffic is relatively heavy for a village. Despite the traffic calming measures in place, the 30 mph limit is frequently ignored. This is particularly harmful, as it creates conflict between the needs of pedestrians and car users. Reducing the intimidating effects of car traffic can help protect the character and tranquillity of this countryside. This can be achieved by reducing reliance on the car with improvements in public transport and other modes of travel, and reducing the desirability of country lanes as an alternative to the strategic road network through enhancements to strategic routes.

Legibility

- 3.8 The attractive expanse of the Green forms the focal area of the village, with residential densities higher in the vicinity. It is also located at the junction of the main routes through Little Burstead, and is well defined by trees. The church and hall complex located to the south of the present village, at the Church of St. Mary, forms another focal point. The Church of St Mary the Virgin, built in late Norman times is set in a picturesque but isolated rural situation on high ground overlooking the Thames valley. The design of the street system articulates the structure of the area. However, pedestrian and cycle movement may be discouraged as there is no clear distinction between spaces for different users, and the car often dominates.

Adaptability

- 3.9 Timber framed and weather-boarded cottages are the common building styles within the Conservation Area. These range in date from the 18th century to the present day. This style is largely timeless and does not alter significantly over the centuries. Brick cottages and villas are also typical, and other grand houses of the village are individual

in style. The building materials within the village are predominantly ones that would have been locally available. Timber was readily available in this rural area and brick making was a local industry. Painted render is also seen both on brick and timber framed buildings to good effect.

Diversity

- 3.10 The majority of buildings in Little Burstead are dwelling houses with modern garages and outbuildings, and a number of farm buildings, barns and stables some of which are still in use. Other non-residential facilities include the church, school building, public house and the village hall. The dispersed nature of housing results in a low gross density which may not be sufficient to support local shops and services. Opportunity to extend local community choice and opportunity in relation to jobs, commercial facilities and services is therefore limited by the scale and dispersed nature of the village. The gentrification of the area stems from the decline of agriculture in the post war era and inevitably the desire for modern facilities and larger houses has affected the character of the area. This has increased property values and displaced low-income families, affecting spatial relations between various social groups which can inhibit neighbourhood-level diversity.

Character Area 2: Modern Billericay

Character

- 3.11 The area includes the site of the Late Iron Age Roman settlement located in and around Billericay School, and the modern housing estates to the eastern and western side of Billericay including the row of 20th century housing on western edge of Norsey Wood. The area remained rural until the 20th century when it became fully built-up. A large part of the zone was developed for residential and educational use in the early 1970s. Most of the historic settlement and street pattern in the area have been obliterated since the commencement of the late 20th century due to housing development. There are however a number of Listed Buildings surviving within the urban area.
- 3.12 Modern Billericay is a 20th century residential suburb that evolved through piecemeal development, rather than being deliberately planned as evidenced by the fragmentation of the built environment. The majority of properties were built as a series of small estates on farmland which had been sold off in separate plots. As such, several phases of housing estate are present within this zone, reflecting differences in architectural styles and materials, typical of their period of construction.
- 3.13 Houses are however unified in type as they tend to be detached or semi-detached, sitting on individual plots. The large setback of properties from the road create a more spacious layout which provides an adequate landscape setting for front gardens and driveways. Front gardens are generally well kept with manicured hedges and landscape, which enhances the character of the area and reflects the higher status of the resident population. Generally, residents pay a premium to live in this area.
- 3.14 Also within this zone is Billericay Industrial Estate which was purpose built in the early 1960s, and occupies a central position within the town, close to the railway station. The recent office and business developments in the Estate have been well-designed and landscaped. Some older industrial units have also been refurbished in recent years and now provide modern and appealing accommodation. However, some units retain a functional industrial façade which could be made more attractive with additional landscaping and tree planting.



Figure 14: Architecture reflecting the Eclectic Styles found around Billericay

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.15 The urban form is characterised by large plots that are fairly individual, with contiguous setback of properties that reinforces a continuous building frontage. Hedges, landscape and other boundary treatments also serve to ensure a common building line of the streets, while also enclosing blocks and spaces. Building heights vary from 2 to 3 storeys across the zone, respecting the surrounding built form and creating a strong sense of place and enclosure to the streets and open spaces. The modern detached houses outside the urban expansion are often larger, with deep setbacks and generous rear gardens.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.16 Streets, paths and spaces provide an attractive, safe and comfortable pedestrian environment. Streets are directly overlooked to provide natural surveillance. Functional street furniture is sited throughout the town including street lights, signs, traffic signals, bus stops, bollards, phone and postal boxes. There are also many trees, including veteran trees located across private gardens, parks, greenspaces and hedgerows. Unfortunately, most of the area is served by overhead power and telephone lines which are often unsightly along the landscaped roads and can cause inconvenience if damaged in bad weather.
- 3.17 Although dwellings are by no means cramped, there are few open spaces inside the built envelope. Rather, wedges of greenspace and open land within the built envelope provide access to the open countryside for the urban populations as well as opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation near urban areas. This gives the town a smaller feel than is actually the case and helps make it a pleasant place to live.
- 3.18 Open space largely comprises natural and semi-natural greenspace, school playing-fields and recreation grounds. Places of interest within the area include Norsey Wood, Mill Meadows, Lake Meadows, Hannakins Farm and Queens Park Country Park forming important open areas within this otherwise densely settled landscape.

Ease of movement

- 3.19 Modern Billericay is accessible via main roads, residential streets, and footpaths. The settlement lies along the B1007, which is called Stock Road for most of its length in the town. The main through routes of the area are Radford Way, Rosebay Avenue, Perry Street, Queens Park Avenue and Mountnessing Road. The A129 forms the east-west route from Wickford to Brentwood. The town is also served by a rail network and local bus routes. For residents, the main transport interchange is Billericay railway station where train, bus and taxi services can be accessed.
- 3.20 With the development of the town, traffic volumes have increased significantly. Roads are generally subject to speed limits, with compliance reinforced by traffic signals and

speed signs to improve safety and traffic flow. There is a network of safe and traffic free footpaths but the town is not well provided with dedicated cycle paths or bridleways. Cyclists have to compete with motor traffic or share footpaths with pedestrians. There is no bus station but there are several bus routes with bus stops that enable residents to reach local towns, shopping centres, and other amenities. The growth and accommodation of the private motor car heavily influenced the layout and design of houses within modern Billericay. Extensive driveways and garages provide off-street parking in residential areas. On some minor roads however, especially those roads within walking distance of the station, on-street parking has increased to the point of nuisance. This has led to the introduction of parking restrictions such as double yellow lines, in these areas. Further development, major or minor, will affect traffic flows and volumes around the town and will need to be carefully considered when planning is undertaken.

Legibility

- 3.21 The street layout is fairly permeable to pedestrians but caters principally for the car. It is well connected and offers commuters a choice of direct routes to local destinations and to the wider urban area. The network of streets allows for easy navigation and provides a pattern that creates increased connectivity, which encourages both transit and pedestrian oriented movements. There are however few landmarks or vistas within the network that could aid orientation.

Adaptability

- 3.22 Although there are only a few older buildings that have been intentionally designed for adaptability, most are capable of responding to changing circumstances depending upon the additional investment required to achieve adaptable designs and materials. This is evidenced by a vast number of planning applications received for residential improvements in the district, which include extensions, new windows and energy efficiency retrofits. The building stock is characterised by a generosity of space, large back gardens, deep front gardens, space for cars and invariably, space to extend houses. This means it is possible for occupants to use the building more effectively as their needs change, or as their business (or family) expands. In some instances, convertibility may allow basements, attics, hallways, storage areas, roofs and entrances to be used for other purposes, as new needs arise.

Diversity

- 3.23 Twentieth century modern residential development and housing estates is the dominant characteristic for this area. This area does not however have a mix of compatible housing and building types to provide for diversity and choice. Studies show that the area has the highest house prices in the borough, with a number of

million pound plus properties. According to the 2011 census data, over 80% of homes are privately owned with less than 10% being social rented housing.

- 3.24 There are also high levels of higher qualifications in this area and low levels of those without qualifications. This results in high levels of managers and senior officials and low levels of those working in the elementary occupations in the resident population when compared to the rest of the borough.
- 3.25 Though mainly residential, the industrial area offers a variety in the land use pattern to support commercial, retail, and employment functions.

Character Area 3: Great Burstead and South Green

Character

- 3.26 This area is contiguous with the town of Billericay. However, it comprises some fairly distinct areas. These include the ribbon development along Noak Hill, the small historic settlement and conservation area of Great Burstead, and the modern settlement of South Green. The historic settlement is centred on the Grade I listed Church of St. Mary Magdalene of Norman origin, the vicarage, Well Farm, and a small cluster of weather-boarded buildings and cottages which formed a small nucleated settlement, in an otherwise dispersed settlement pattern. After the railway arrived in Billericay in 1889 and the increase in population of that town, Great Burstead also began to grow. Post-War development continued apace, expanding the village and creating the South Green area. The area became attractive to commuters and those moving out of London, although the area around the Church remained largely the same. South Green is a largely modern development to the north and east of the historic core. Inter-war plotland developments along Noak Hill Road and Rectory Road form the basis of the modern settlement of Noak Hill.
- 3.27 Although small, the Conservation Area has features of a typical Essex village albeit surrounded by modern suburbia. The area is now mixed; the older houses around the Church providing a link with the village's history which has been eroded to some extent by infill and rebuilding in 'modern' styles without reference to local traditions. The area is nonetheless visually appealing with good historic character.
- 3.28 Trees and open spaces are an important part of the character of the area, with the churchyard and the greensward forming a significant part of the area. Barleylands Farm Park and Craft Village is also located within this zone. Barleylands is a unique farm based attraction in the countryside, and is home to the Craft Village, Miniature Steam Railway, Farm Centre, and a bimonthly Farmers Market. Barleylands is also the venue for the Essex Steam and Country Show along with other activities and interests throughout the year. The land holds a significant amount of the Borough's playing pitches.



Source: www.tripadvisor.co.uk, September 2015

Figure 15: Barleylands Farm Park and Craft Village

- 3.29 The density of buildings is generally low, with those within the Conservation Area lower than in the modern part of the village to the east and west. The houses fall into two main groups; the 18th century or earlier timber framed and listed group around the church, and the post-War buildings. The listed houses use traditional, readily available local materials – timber and plaster, and tiles for the roofs that may have been originally thatched. The post-War houses are in a variety of styles using different bricks, and some with weather-boarding or pebble dash, but they are all of a similar size and mass. The modern houses are often simple in style and detail, usually detached or semi-detached, and sometimes with traditional ‘country style’ influences such as mock beams, sash windows, weather boarding, pebble dash.
- 3.30 The character and appearance of the area is held together by the traditional buildings which represent the surviving elements of the village’s historic core. Its position on edge of the settlement however threatens its continuity to function as the heart of the village. Further extensions need to be carefully monitored to ensure that they do not dilute the character of the original property, particularly in the case of the listed buildings.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.31 There are a number of trees across Great Burstead which add greenery, but do not provide a sense of enclosure as they are well set back from the pavement edge. Low brick walls, tall hedges, and mesh and metal post fencing give little definition to street line in some instances. There are a few good examples including the white picket fence in front of Bottle Cottage; timber fencing around the vicarage, village hall

churchyard, and cemetery; and hedges along some properties which lend some colour and definition to the pavement edge. Property boundaries are generally not of great visual importance in Great Burstead. Across the area however, there is evidence of an attempt to bring greenery and a touch of the countryside evidenced by the presence of street trees, grass verges, deep front gardens and green spaces which serve to distinguish public space from private space. Within its compact urban core, residential blocks are arranged along a loose and regular urban grid and active street.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.32 Most public surfaces are tarmaced. Parking is often on property frontages but the upsurge of on-street parking in some parts detracts from the street scene. Street furniture are modern except for a few traditional elements within the Conservation Area. Although of timber, and not generally very prominent, there is a proliferation of telegraph poles and overhead cables which together with the modern street lighting, do not enhance the character of the area. Any opportunity to reduce their visual presence should be encouraged. There are many trees in the churchyard and cemetery which add greatly to its character; simple timber bench and green litter bins are also well suited to the environment of this public space. The Christopher Martin Memorial Plaque, Village Pump, King George V letter box, and the 'King' and 'Queen' corbel features at the church's north entrance are some notable public art and features. Considerations should be given to better use of the village green space in order to improve the vitality. From the churchyard there is an extensive view over the valleys of the Crouch and the Thames and over the town of Basildon.
- 3.33 The Churchyard, with the cemetery is a distinct 'place' providing an extensive open space to the south and east of the church. This is an attractive and shady green area with lots of character provided by the many trees, views of the church, old graves and the slope to the south. There are also pedestrian access points from South Green onto Mills Meadows which is a local nature reserve containing one of the finest ancient meadow systems in Essex. A number of play areas also form part of the network of open spaces in the area.

Ease of movement

- 3.34 The A176 and A129 are the main routes through this area, marking its western and eastern boundaries respectively. Church Street, Mill Road, Kennel Lane and Southend Road are important routes, forming a triangle around the area within which development is concentrated. The Conservation Area is situated to either side of Church Street with St. Mary Magdalene Church approximately at the centre. A network of historic paths and lanes characteristic of the village life in Great Burstead still forms part of the layout and street pattern to date. The nearest railway is in Billericay which has frequent trains to London.

3.35 Streets tend to be of medium width, with dedicated pedestrian lanes. There are no dedicated cycle paths, and cyclists often have to share the same space with other road users. The area is accessible by public transportation and served by local bus services. Car traffic is high in both volume and speed, particularly for those travelling through Great Burstead. The prominence of the highway at the eastern greensward lends a more suburban character to this otherwise rural community. Traffic calming measures and highway regulations should be introduced, although any such measures should be carefully considered and designed to ensure they do not harm the character and appearance of the area.

Legibility

3.36 The size of St. Mary Magdalene Church, the height of its tower and its position at the high point of the village ensure that it is a focal point both within the Conservation Area and for the rest of the village as one approaches it along Church Street. Good views of it can be had from all directions, particularly the long view through the churchyard framed by trees. Streets form a network that is generally permeable to pedestrians, as well as catering for the car.



Source: www.ipernity.com, September 2015

Figure 16: The Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Great Burstead

Adaptability

- 3.37 Given the current trend towards mixed building uses and higher densities in urban planning, it is likely that the convertibility and scalability of individual buildings will help the area adjust to new urban growth patterns. This may contribute to relieving housing shortages at lower cost, more rapidly, and with less damage to the community character and urban fabric. Within the Conservation Area, behind Gobions is a collection of derelict farm buildings which have a negative impact. If carefully restored and an appropriate use were found, these could be an asset to the area.

Diversity

- 3.38 The area is predominantly residential, and contains a small parade of retail units and other community services centred on South Green. Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are houses and have always been so. The Church, cemetery and village hall denote the public centre of the village for use by all residents. A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Even so, the area benefits from its close proximity to the rest of modern Billericay.
- 3.39 In general, there is need for a greater social mix of in terms of income, housing tenure, and demography. A variety of commercial and community uses and activity can be introduced to give a cross-section of people – families and single people of different ages – the chance to live there if they choose to. Great Burstead shares similar socio-economic characteristics with Billericay in terms of a sizeable proportion of high income earners in the resident population. There is however a prospect to provide more opportunities for a more diverse community, and range of land uses.

Character Area 4: Historic Billericay

Character

- 3.40 This area comprises the medieval and post-medieval historic core of Billericay, developing along the present High Street. High Street was (and still is) on one of the routes to the Thames crossing. Pilgrims would spend the night before the last leg of the journey to the ferry which would take them to Kent, and Billericay benefitted from the trade; an activity which seems to have continued through the centuries. Billericay is a town of historical importance, comprising several civic style buildings that have survived to date, reflecting the growth and prosperity of the town.
- 3.41 Historic Billericay is a commercial core, with buildings occupied mostly as shops and offices especially along the High Street, with some private dwellings. Individual shop units seen here are smaller than those found in modern High Streets elsewhere. Although very much the town centre, this market town provides marked contrasts between one street and another. Traditional buildings are small and low, contrasting sharply with the tall and bulky steel framed buildings of the twentieth century, different in style, but more importantly different in scale and bulk.
- 3.42 During the late 19th century and 20th century urban expansion occurred with the initial development of the former Billericay Union Workhouse. Billericay Union Workhouse was built in 1840 to house the destitute of the area in exchange for work. Parts of this building were later incorporated into St. Andrews Hospital. And although the hospital has now been demolished to make way for housing, some of the oldest buildings have been retained. The coming of the railway in 1889 placing Billericay on the line between London and Southend-on-Sea increased the town's importance.
- 3.43 Town centre redevelopment in Billericay also gave rise to new shops and offices built in the town centre. These new buildings were modern in design, of over-sized dominant structures with few architectural details, plain in form and alien in character both in the use of modern materials, their excessive depth, bulk and large areas of flat roofs. Certainly of their time, they replaced buildings of local style, form and massing, diluting the historic pattern of the place and are visually uncomfortable.
- 3.44 Although modern development has taken place, the area has retained its historic street pattern and much of its fabric with the triangular area between the High Street and Chapel Street defining the original marketplace. Within this area are a number of Listed Buildings reflecting the towns Tudor and Georgian heydays, with this historic core now designated a Conservation Area.
- 3.45 The townscape of the High Street now appears fragile and incremental changes often of a minor nature can adversely affect the quality. Several of these buildings would offer opportunities for redevelopment in a more sympathetic manner to the character

of the area. Nonetheless, the High Street still retains enough of its historic buildings to preserve the appearance of a small market town of late medieval origin.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.46 The High Street is lined with shops and commercial premises close together without significant gaps, providing a continuous linear town centre. Chapel Street is less densely built up, but the presence of a car park and rear servicing is eroding its character. Sun Street is a busy through route with imposing early nineteenth century terraces clad in pebbledash or cockle shell harling with slate roofs.



Figure 17: Continuous Linear Form on Billericay High Street

- 3.47 Property boundaries do not form visually important features in the historic core of Billericay; there are no high walls and few fine railings. Generally properties are situated on the road or pavement edge without enclosure. The separation of private land from public highway in the High Street is delineated by changes in the brick weave paving, creating visually a wider pavement. Elsewhere in the area, properties are set back from the road behind low walls in varying states of preservation.
- 3.48 The loss of walls and hedging has detracted from the street scene, particularly the lack of greenery to soften car parking and the lack of enclosure of the garage site. There are some good quality shopfronts that make a positive contribution to the street scene providing active frontages, but there are also many which detract.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.49 Generally, the public realm is pleasant with coordinated street furniture and adequate paving. The High Street has brick paving with bollards and barriers. Some roads and courts leading off the High Street have not been paved while some are in poor conditions. Outside the High Street, other roads are all tarmac of varying quality. Short stay on-street parking is permitted in High Street and there are accesses to two car parks, but parking capacity is still insufficient. Car parking, though much needed, has exacerbated the visual decline of the middle section of Chapel Street, now reduced to a service and access road.
- 3.50 There is an increasing number of temporary banner signs and 'A' boards which detract and contribute to clutter. The proliferation of street signs and highway furniture on the High Street has resulted in more highway clutter. While some items of street furniture have become redundant, the pair of kiosks and the double pillar box outside the old post office are attractive pieces of street furniture. The whole area here could be redesigned to create a more pleasing environment, reducing highway clutter and introducing more soft landscaping.
- 3.51 Away from the High Street, trees soften the built area and there are fine views out of the town from open spaces at the Festival Gardens, Mill Meadows and Sun Corner. Parks and woodland enhance the setting of the town, which retains a strong sense of place, particularly in its centre, which forms the core of the Conservation Area.

Ease of movement

- 3.52 Billericay is located on an historic route between Basildon and Chelmsford, and has easy access with good road and rail links. The two principal streets, High Street and Chapel Street, run almost parallel north-south and converge at their northern ends to meet a crossroads and at their southern end are linked by Sun Street. The railway from London Liverpool Street to Southend has a station in a cutting at the northern end of the town centre, with frequent trains to the capital.
- 3.53 The High Street is busy, characterised by local and through traffic with on-street parking. It has always been the main artery of the place. At the bottom of the hill, lies Sun Street, also a busy thoroughfare. Just a short distance from the High Street, there are quieter lanes and residential streets that lead off the High Street often to small courtyards. The surviving street layout originates from the development of the town in the medieval period.
- 3.54 The traffic along the High Street is particularly harmful, as the conflict between the needs of pedestrians and car users is most apparent here. Whilst the volume of traffic reduces pedestrian enjoyment, to some extent it contributes to a liveliness and bustle.

Legibility

- 3.55 This historic area has few focal points; it possesses no market place or square and has few landmark buildings which can be viewed from a distance. The church of St. Mary Magdalene is the predominant landmark with its brick tower and projecting clock. The former Town Hall (No.94 High St) is a large building, creating a focal point in the middle of the High Street.



Source: sylviakent.blogspot.co.uk, September 2015

Figure 18: The Church of St. Mary Magdalene, High Street, Billericay

Adaptability

- 3.56 The area is characterised by a collection of buildings dating from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, modest in scale and rarely above two storeys in height, many of which have been used as High Street shops. Typically, buildings are two storeys, sometimes with attics, with only the grandest buildings reserved for a 3 storey scale.
- 3.57 Buildings are generally well maintained and only few vacant properties exist. There are no derelict buildings, though a few require improvement, maintenance or repair, and there are areas of improvement opportunity for enhancement proposals.

Diversity

- 3.58 Historic Billericay is a bustling, lively and prosperous market town, with the long High Street being its commercial core and lined mostly with shops and commercial premises. The High Street is lively and busy, having a good mix of shops from national retailers to local specialist stores with some banks and offices.
- 3.59 The development of large housing estates on its periphery and a demand for light industrial premises adds to this mix. There are a few detached and semi-detached residences mixed in especially at the southern end of Chapel Street. Sun Street, Norsey Road, Western Road also have terraces of houses. The Hospital has been replaced with modern residential accommodation, with the buildings being converted into flats and apartments.
- 3.60 The presence of public houses and restaurants/bars also offers a popular evening/night time economy. Further opportunities to diversify the night time economy could be explored, although the scale of the town is such that large venues could not easily be accommodated within the centre. Elsewhere chapels and meeting halls occur, but it is the shops which dominate.

Character Area 5: Ramsden Bellhouse and Crays Hill

Character

- 3.61 This area comprises the small, distinct, settlements of Ramsden Bellhouse and Crays Hill. Crays Hill may be medieval in origin with the presence of a moated enclosure. A surviving church and hall complex of medieval or possibly even late Saxon origin in Ramsden Bellhouse formed a focal point in a rural landscape of enclosed fields. The preceding dispersed settlement pattern in the area demonstrates a long history of occupation. Although suffering some boundary loss from plotland divisions, the basic structure of the field system has survived. The plotland development which took place in the years between 1920 and the Second World War now form the basis of the present day settlements. Typically, properties are zoned parcel by parcel based on what would have been the requirements of individual property owners. Many dwellings have since been modified and extended, or replaced by larger properties.
- 3.62 The area is characterised by low density residential development set in large, spacious plots. The overall scale and density is low rise and low density, however it does vary across the neighbourhood from single storey bungalows to larger two storey buildings. Properties are detached or semi-detached, some gated, with good size front gardens. It includes a collection of buildings of different ages, sizes and design, built to different standards dependent on the affluence and taste of occupiers. Certain streets within Ramsden Bellhouse are presently protected by Special Development Control Policies to preserve their unique character. There are a number of Grade II listed properties of note including Ramsden Bellhouse Hall, Church of St Mary, Woolshots' Farmhouse and Great Wasketh Farmhouse.
- 3.63 The urban edge influences the character of the area. The area's semi-rural character provides a variety of visual interest that physically integrates with the surrounding area, and forms a focus for it. Access to the countryside and green amenity space features strongly in this neighbourhood. With the improvement of road surface and growth of motor traffic, building activities have now expanded in a natural way along the side of the major roads giving rise to a form of ribbon development.



Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 19: Street View of Church Road, Ramsden Bellhouse



Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 20: Street View of A129, Crays Hill

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.64 Properties are set back from the road with deep frontages, and a good sense of enclosure. Active frontages with windows and main entrances line the street facades, giving streets 'natural surveillance' and overlooking. In areas where boundary treatments are used, these are low enough to create overlooking onto public space. There is a consistent building line, with development only taking place along existing built up frontages.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.65 There is no designated public open space within the neighbourhood, but the location provides easy access to a range of open space including walks over the surrounding countryside. Crays Hill Recreation Ground also offers outdoor play areas with football goal posts and other civic outdoor amenities.
- 3.66 Streets and spaces are free of clutter that could make access for the pedestrian difficult. Car parking has been sensitively integrated into the development to minimise on-street parking. Tree planting creates seasonal interest and help define boundaries to spaces and streets. While there is no designated public open space, property boundaries and front gardens generally appear well maintained which contribute to the enjoyment of public areas. The public realm is however not complemented by nodes of activity or art to give activity and interest to passing pedestrians.

Ease of movement

- 3.67 The main routes through the villages have remained the same over time. Ramsden Bellhouse has developed along the existing road layout in a very regular linear pattern, gradually extending up to the railway line, which forms the northern boundary of this area. The main movement corridor through the neighbourhood winds through Church Road and Crays Hill, with a few side turns.
- 3.68 In some instances, there is no separate footway from streets resulting in shared surface streets. On the main roads however, there are delineated pedestrian margins. Service provision for public transport is limited both in frequency and destinations covered, without adequate penetration through the area. As expected, car ownership levels are high as residents often depend on cars for commuting outside the area to access jobs and services. For the most part however, the area in itself is suitably walkable. Movement is facilitated by well-connected streets and spaces which allows people have a choice of convenient routes and direct connections to get to their destination.

Legibility

- 3.69 The appearance of the street gives a clear indication of the hierarchy of different routes - from wide arterial roads, to small residential streets - which enables people to orientate themselves. There are opportunities to incorporate landmarks and views, to punctuate the streets by a series of events e.g. opening up space to form a small square. These could potentially improve the quality of streets and spaces being easily understood by residents and visitors when moving through.

Adaptability

- 3.70 Housing is dominated by a stock type, bungalows and chalets which are often adaptable and economic in design. During the 20th century these areas expanded with the building of mostly single storey detached bungalows of different architectural styles dating from the 1930s to the present. Structural changes and extensions have been made to many of the original buildings with the purpose of adding value and improving residential properties.
- 3.71 Bungalows are designed to blend into the environment in which they're built and are largely about ease between indoor and outdoor spaces. They are an enduringly popular design that remains successful and sustainable across the country. Buildings are generally well maintained and there are no derelict buildings. However, the convertibility and scalability of individual buildings may be limited as an extension of inappropriate scale can detract from the character of the area.

Diversity

- 3.72 The predominant land use is housing. Ramsden Crays is a commuter town, with majority of its residents having to travel for work and services. This suggests that there is little commercial or industrial activity beyond a small amount of retail and civic uses, oriented toward serving the residents. The size of the local population is also fairly low, unable to support a broader range of local services.
- 3.73 There is also minimal variety in terms of housing typology, ownership and tenure. Away from the shops and services of the city centre, the Ramsdens attracts a more mature population able to afford larger properties. Home ownership is high with very little rented property available.
- 3.74 A range of different uses along the street and surrounding space will give the area more liveliness and vitality. Variety within the street scene gives visual interest, but needs to be carefully balanced with creating a coherent character.

Character Area 6: Old Wickford

Character

- 3.75 This area encompasses the historic core of the town of Wickford and the surrounding early to mid-20th century residential developments. The historic core was always very small and little now survives. Expansion of the settlement occurred relatively slowly after the arrival of the railway in the late 19th century with the town assuming its present character only after World War II. Since then, there has been significant infill of previously undeveloped land with housing and commercial properties. There are no significant concentrations of listed buildings or Conservation areas, reflecting the lack of a strong historic character. Nevertheless the historic road layout has been largely preserved, although the modern road network has altered the arrangement in places.
- 3.76 Overall, the area has considerable character with the urban form exhibiting marked differences usually due to being developed at different periods. The town centre's physical characteristics are dominated by the linear High Street. Away from the High Street, the pattern of small plots results in a varied townscape. There is no consistent architectural approach, with many plots having been developed at different times including Victorian brick terraces, some 1920's-30's art deco style units and the flat roofed 'box' developments of the 1960's/70's. In this respect, the streets and buildings tell a story of how the neighbourhood developed over time. Protected by Special Development Control policy, Sugden Avenue for instance has a unique appeal that retains the open character of surrounding Green Belt.
- 3.77 Across the Old Wickford, the residential areas are characterised by plots and dwellings that have generally become larger. Properties are sometimes built in long pairs with subtle variations in size, style and detailing. The town centre is of low visual and physical quality. Infill areas on its High Street are usually of weaker character than the historic core. Wickford town centre is not a niche market town and is currently unable to promote a distinctive or quality offer. Nonetheless, this area within Wickford does have a sense of place and history that is somewhat lacking in other parts of the town.



Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 21: Sugden Avenue, Wickford

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.78 The present townscape reveals a tight urban form with some sense of enclosure and intimate scale of 2-3 storeys and bungalows. The more modern properties encompass a more spacious layout than older properties. Often, low brick walls and setbacks with front gardens give a consistent building line and sense of enclosure between street and building. Buildings clearly define the street without overshadowing or dominating the space, giving a domestic and human scale to the street. In some areas, the building line is broken due to large setbacks and gaps in the built form, which is particularly apparent along London Road. Interrupted building lines, dead frontages and poor quality entrances sometimes minimise the degree to which the public space is overlooked in the area.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.79 The quality of the streetscape is often poor with poor quality materials and broken/damaged paving. Street trees and grass verges feature in some streets aligned to party walls, but are not always consistent. Roads and footways are also relatively narrow. The pattern of development further neglects potential assets such as the River Crouch. Incorporating well-designed public spaces and greenery that allow for different uses will give the place a more positive appearance. There are no distinct areas of open space apart from a few outdoor play areas catering for children and teens.

Ease of movement

- 3.80 The town benefits from strong rail links and good public transport accessibility. Key access points include the train station as well as the A132 and A129 main roads which cross from north to south and east to west respectively, intersecting in the centre. As such, the area is well connected to the wider strategic transport network. These routes provide access to the surrounding towns, as well as a number of communities in the immediate catchment area.
- 3.81 Close to public transport partly because of when they were built, this area is within commutable distance to the train station. Although well connected to the wider strategic transport network, it is dominated by vehicles and is poorly linked for pedestrian/cyclists. In the town centre, there seems to be a lack of clear boundaries between vehicles and pedestrians. The A132 and A129 also act as major barriers to pedestrian movement and cyclists from surrounding residential areas. Pedestrian links within the area could be improved to focus on the Town Centre, as this is the core area of greatest pedestrian concentration.

Legibility

- 3.82 There are no significant landmark buildings, statement architecture, or works of art providing focal points in the area. There are also a number of poor gateways with indirect, unpleasant routes and neglected places and spaces particularly in the Town Centre. The main gateways of the town are junctions dominated by traffic control infrastructure aimed primarily at moving vehicles into and out of the High Street, presenting a poor sense of arrival to vehicles and pedestrians. In spite of these, the layout is compact and relatively walkable, with very few dead-end streets.





Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 22: Traffic Control Infrastructure on High Street, Wickford

Adaptability

- 3.83 This area continues to offer a popular, affordable place to live since its development. The layout and arrangement of houses allows for constant and gradual internal adaption and extensions. This could enable responses to changing social, technological and economic conditions in the future.

Diversity

- 3.84 Alongside its primary housing role, the area presents a mix of civic and commercial uses. These amenities are complemented by schools, pubs, places of worship and corner shops located through the neighbourhood. Shops and services are focused on the High Street and the immediate surroundings dedicated largely to car parking. Outside the core area of the High Street, traditional retail uses give way to a range of supporting activities including bars and restaurants, professional services, offices, and public facilities.
- 3.85 This character area shows itself to have a fairly strong concentration of professional and skilled workers, and under-represented in the lower classifications of semi-skilled and those on state benefits. These indicate that the town performs reasonably well in respect of socio-economic characteristics. The proportion of social housing is however significantly lower in this area.

Character Area 7: Modern Wickford

Character

- 3.86 Now surrounding the historic core are large expanses of modern and post-World War II (WWII) housing development, which is still to be completed. This area broadly encompasses the modern wider area of urban expansion. The historic settlement pattern comprised dispersed settlement with farms and a church and hall complex. The church (St. Catherine's) and hall complex and the historically associated farm at Wickford Hall are of medieval, or possibly late Saxon origin, although only the church survives today. The urban landscape originated in plotland development which began between the two World Wars. Expansion of the town since World War II has effectively linked the previously existing settlement elements. Parts of the plotland road pattern still survive to the west of Shotgate, and to the south of Cranfield Park Road. The main period of development in this zone stretches from the 1980s and 90s to present and as a result, the dominant characteristics of this zone are continuing to form.
- 3.87 The zone is dominated by the late 20th century private housing estates, built largely by private house builders and developers. This zone is adjacent to the prior early to mid-20th century suburbanisation of Wickford, reflecting a continuing 20th century trend towards the expansion of the suburban landscape. This suburban expansion was not only driven by the continued population growth, but also by a general increase in prosperity. This resulted in a rise of property ownership and the consequent movement of people from urban centres to lower density urban fringe locations.
- 3.88 The present character features low rise buildings arranged in groups around a semi-enclosed court or cul-de-sac, often inward facing with an emphasis on privacy. This form of development gives a sense of quiet residential ambience. Houses are designed in a contemporary late-20th century style, owing nothing to historical precedent. Standard house types are sparsely detailed, with a traditional look of pitched roofs, porches and brickwork forming a pattern book applied across the estates. The use of brick, render and timber cladding varies across the zone to create a balance between variety and uniformity. The roofing materials provide a unifying element, often of tile. Light orange brick walls also feature regularly in the facade of buildings, making an important contribution to the local character of buildings.
- 3.89 In the industrial area, buildings have even less detailing with a mix of materials such as brick, metal sheets, glass and prefabricated panels which give functional and commercial aesthetic to this group of buildings. The buildings of simple rectangular form, and is oddly located in between the housing development without adequate buffer to distinguish the residential area from industrial land uses.
- 3.90 High quality open space has not been integrated into the heart of this development, but rather forms a collection of left over spaces on the edge of the development.

However, courtyards often feature as shared landscaped areas within the development. The character and quality of the area is a mixture of poor and good conditions, lacking consistency in quality and coherency in identity.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.91 Housing density across the zone tends to be medium to low and the layout highly urban, with minimal private garden or public green space provision within the neighbourhood. Although buildings are set back from the street, they have shallow frontages. The fronts of houses are directly adjacent public space, with limited edge treatment. Boundary lines often delineated by a change in material or other subtle way. In some instances, buildings are arranged in a group or in a more ad-hoc way, enclosing courtyards and open space rather than the road, and interrupting the common building line of the street. For the most part, public spaces are enclosed by dead frontages and are poorly overlooked. Within the employment zone, buildings do not generally front onto the street, often set back behind a pool of car parking or boundary lines demarcated by steel palisade fencing.



Figure 23: Ad-Hoc Street Arrangement disrupting Continuity and Enclosure in Wickford

Quality of the public realm

- 3.92 Only few properties have private green space on their frontage and there are few street trees to soften the urban form. Where there are trees, the effect is very attractive but most streets are bare of planting. Front gardens are too shallow to accommodate car parking, with narrow pavement widths thus car parking is almost exclusively on-street. Cars have easily dominated and overtaken the streetscape making the public space appear cluttered and unappealing.



Figure 24: An Example of Frontage Treatment found in Modern Wickford

3.93 Key routes have been ignored as a space as properties back onto them with long blank facades and poor levels of natural surveillance making these spaces feel unattractive and unsafe especially at night. The segregation of pedestrians, cars and cyclists can also lead to dead and inactive routes which can exacerbate property related crime. Street furniture only exists in the most basic form, and does little to make the street feel like a communal space.



Source: Google Maps Street View, September 2015

Figure 25: An example of a Key Route (Radwinter Avenue) ignored as a Space, with some Dead Frontages

3.94 There is an area of open space to the north-east of the area comprising the Memorial Park. Wickford Memorial Park covers 80 acres of Parkland, and facilities include cricket pitch, football pitch, tennis court, basketball court, novelty golf, children's playground, sports pavilion, riverside walk, rose gardens & some woodland. The Wick

Country Park located to the south, also offers over 2Km of easy access trails around the site. Several play areas are found around the neighbourhood.

Ease of movement

- 3.95 As with the rest of Wickford, the train station is a key access point, with the A132 and A129 also serving as the main vehicular access roads into and out of the area. Residential streets are characterised by an insular, self-contained feel, resulting from its lack of through-movement and wider connectivity.
- 3.96 Through movement is discouraged and designed out, functioning mostly as a place to drive into and out of. This modern development is characterised by a main distributor road with a series of access roads forming cul-de-sacs. These access roads form dead-ends, thereby forcing pedestrians to walk on the main road. The layout ensures vehicles and pedestrians are segregated, with roads for cars and footpaths for pedestrians. The disadvantage of this layout is that routes for pedestrians are indirect and boring, discouraging pedestrian movement and impeding social interactions.
- 3.97 Public transport accessibility is also limited within the area, restricted only to main roads. Consequently, car use and ownership levels are high and cul-de-sac layouts further increase traffic loads on feeder roads, with a consequent loss of amenity to residents of those roads. Streets are wider in the industrial estate, with turning circles/junctions to cater for heavy good vehicles.

Legibility

- 3.98 Road patterns were designed to minimise through traffic past the front of the houses, whilst ensuring that each property has some form of vehicular access. As a result, properties do not generally front on to main roads, but are instead clustered around short branching cul-de-sacs, increasing the privacy of each dwelling. This one way in and one way out traffic system creates dead ends for all forms of traffic, and moving around is quite confusing unless one knows the area well. Unnecessary detours particularly generates lower levels of pedestrian activity and cycling as it discourages their movements. In addition, roads appear rambling and often look similar without significant landmarks to aid orientation.
- 3.99 The River Crouch, which meanders through the centre from south-west to north-east, is another important feature, although because it is in a culverted channel, lacks visual prominence.

Adaptability

- 3.100 An advantage of the cul-de-sac plan was its adaptability to irregularly shaped plots of land, making it especially suitable for infilling between earlier developments. Individual houses are however not easily adaptable to changes in future conditions, with very

few examples of side or rear extensions to dwellings. While industrial units tend to emphasize more on durability, there are elements of flexibility and future adaptability of the workspace in their design.

Diversity

- 3.101 Wickford has expanded rapidly in recent years with several new industrial estates being created and thousands of new homes built in the Wick and Shotgate, accounting for a third of homes in the town. Wickford is a thriving suburb with generally low levels of income deprivation compared to the national average. There are however below average scores against education and barriers to housing in some areas.
- 3.102 Large expanses of modern and post-World War II housing development is the dominant land use. This development also blends a combination of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial uses. There is modern industrial development alongside the railway providing employment areas. In addition, there is a local shopping parade with a community centre (the Wick Community Centre) and convenience shops, as well as other community facilities and services interspersed around the neighbourhood. These uses however need to be physically and functionally integrated to provide better networks and pedestrian connections.
- 3.103 Building types in this character area offer a more mixed variety and provide a diversity of households occupying residential apartment blocks/flats, short terraces and semi-detached dwellings.

Character Area 8: Basildon Enterprise Corridor

Character

- 3.104 This is the commercial/employment area of the town comprising the A127 Basildon Enterprise Corridor. The majority of buildings in the area were constructed during the second half of the 20th century with the redevelopment of the zone for commercial use as part of the development of the New Town, little now survives of the historic character. The landscape has retained some of its historic field system of rectilinear enclosures and former plotland lanes although much is now secondary woodland maintained as open space. Historically, the zone contains the church and hall complex of Nevendon Hall and St. Peters Church. Small areas of residential development have now been established around Nevendon Church. This is an example of irregular expansion on the edge of an existing historic core.
- 3.105 Land use is primarily defined by series of large scale industrial buildings which have a uniform bland character, typically of a block standardised shape with generally muted colours and a lack of architectural detail. Mostly constructed from brick, metal sheets, glass, and prefabricated panels with flat roofs, these buildings are designed to conform to functional and commercial aesthetic. They vary from rectangular, freestanding commercial/industrial buildings with medium-large footprint, to big box-style stores typical in retail parks. These features give a distinct experience of the bulk and mass of development.
- 3.106 Within this broad overriding large scale industrial built form, is a pocket of housing. The area around Nevendon provides a small isolated historic core with some pre-industrial feature buildings. Modern houses are constructed in a range of different coloured bricks, with painted render, and tile and slate roofs. The small scale and dense built form of the residential townscape provide a pronounced contrast in scale where it abuts the wider industrial landscape.
- 3.107 This inner urban industrial area also incorporates the Festival Leisure Park. Basildon Festival Leisure Park is the Borough's principal commercial leisure complex which contains a multiplex cinema, bowling alley, wake boarding centre, nightclubs, restaurants and hotels. Whilst this leisure park has a different form of architecture to the industrial landscape, it has a similar scale of building form and adjacent open space. There are also a number of outdoor sports pitches/facilities providing a range of leisure and recreational opportunities. In general, this area has a large scale industrial character but lacks cohesiveness in that the landscape is fragmented and complex with a number of distinct pockets which can present a neglected character.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 3.108 The low density of buildings, large areas of open space and wide roads, result in a low sense of enclosure with strong horizontal emphasis. The boundary to the area is defined by the corridor of the A127 dual carriage way, which strongly contains the industrial landscape. Individual buildings within the industrial/business parks are set back from road behind car parking, sometimes with soft landscaping. Building heights typically vary from double-height single storey or two storey buildings to three storeys, with medium to large footprint. Buildings usually have blank edges with the exception of entrance and exits. Boundary lines when used, are often varied, demarcated by low to high security fencing, brick walls, mature trees and planting.
- 3.109 Residential streets are well enclosed, with the houses set within small plots and along narrow width roads. Streets are densely lined with buildings, resulting in a continuous building line.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.110 Industrial roads are tarmaced, with mixed quality materials on pavements. Pavements are often available on the main access roads but less so on plot access roads. The car-based layout has limited provision for pedestrian/cyclists, intensified by the scattered arrangement of street furniture - low bollards, street lights e.tc. Street clutter is further pronounced in rear service entrances and yards where outside space is been used for waste and temporary storage, and parking has become insufficient. Signs/brands feature heavily on building facade advertising the name and operations of businesses, some more appealing than others.
- 3.111 Open space surrounding buildings is primarily given over to extensive hard landscaping for infrastructure and servicing of the buildings and associated car parking. The area also accommodates heavy plant traffic, transport yards and outdoor storage which lack strong structure and detracts from the street scene. Soft landscaping is usually low maintenance shrubbery with the occasional trees and grass verges. These attributes lead to a feeling of incoherence in the public realm that does not encourage pedestrian activity. A mixture of boundary styles (including a proliferation of metal palisade fencing) combined with the variety of road and footpath surfaces which are in a poor condition in some places, adds to a lack of coherence in the public realm. The integration of front gardens, soft landscaping and street trees within the residential zone however makes a positive contribution to public spaces in those areas.



Figure 26: Standardised Block Types with Extensive Hard Landscaping in Yardley Business Park, Basildon

3.112 The neighbourhood offers some outdoor sports facilities. There is currently a cluster of low quality, yet high intrinsic benefit open spaces in the vicinity. The business parks will benefit from new areas of open space, including footways and other areas of hard and soft landscaping between the buildings. This will provide a pedestrian focused environment conducive to a range of sociable and informal recreational activities.

Ease of movement

3.113 The location is strategically positioned in terms of its access and proximity to major transport infrastructure, including the A127 which is the major distributor road as well as other principal routes, sea ports and international airports. However, people without cars may find it difficult to access the area due to poor public transport links

and pedestrian and cycling linkages. The A1235 forms part of the southern boundary of this zone.

- 3.114 Situated along one of the main arterial roads into and out of the town, the area offers easy access for vehicles, with limited crossing points for pedestrians. The detached urban structure offers limited through movement and connections which marks this area out from its immediate surroundings. This car-based model relies on and encourages the use of the private motor vehicle, with little incentive for walking or cycling.
- 3.115 Poor public transport accessibility to the Basildon Enterprise Corridor furthers high levels of commuting by car, with traffic implications that lead to peak hour congestion. Within the industrial estates, streets are wide with large turning circles/junctions to cater for heavy good vehicles.

Legibility

- 3.116 The area is relatively impermeable, usually only functioning as a place to drive into and out of. Permeability throughout the area is limited by the high volume of traffic, the large junctions, individual plot boundaries, extensive areas of vehicle parking and different pedestrian control infrastructure. The scale of development and the irregular arrangement of buildings also gives the appearance of an incremental development which lacks a strong landscape framework resulting in a cluttered and complex built form which is difficult to orientate around. One significant feature of this area is the onion shaped Water Tower at the tractor plant which creates a unique urban skyline and has become an important landmark in the area which can aid in orientation. Another landmark feature is the Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility which is a modern sustainable waste treatment facility.

Adaptability

- 3.117 Properties in retail, light industrial and commercial use are in a good condition due to their recent construction and renovation, reflecting greater level of care. Several of the larger, heavy and often older industrial units are tired looking, derelict or in a relatively poor condition. Buildings are functional, fit for the purpose for which they are designed. Further enhancements can serve to improve the character and quality of the built environment in relation to the human scale, specifically in terms of massing, bulk, and articulation. There are a number of vacant office units as well as open spaces awaiting redevelopment and these can generally be adapted to offer some form and structure that will enhance the existing character of the area. There are however limits to the scope for development due to intact nature of the industrial area.

Diversity

- 3.118 The Basildon Enterprise Corridor along the A127 is the largest employment area in Basildon, and the Thames Gateway sub region outside London. This employment hub is a key driver of the sub-regional economy and as such, the economic vitality of this industrial zone is crucial to the prosperity of Basildon and the larger sub region.
- 3.119 This edge of centre development offers mixed-use retail, commercial, industrial and leisure uses, and to a lesser extent residential. There is a dynamic cluster of industries in automotive, aerospace, defence, research and development, distribution and financial sectors among others. As a result, vitality within the area is not confined to business hours but extends to give a varied evening/night time economy. To enable easy access to, and use of these areas, the network of roads, paths and transport services should provide convenient access to these services.

Character Area 9: Basildon New Town

Character

- 3.120 This zone represents suburban expansion in the post-war period, through government-facilitated building programmes, as a replacement of earlier housing that was deemed unfit for habitation. It started as a collection of small, rural communities most notably Basildon, Laindon, Vange and Pitsea. In 1949, these settlements were incorporated and Basildon was officially designated as a New Town to transform the designated area into a modern new town. As a result of this comprehensive redevelopment, the prevalent urban layers that impact a feeling of place only span a period of about 50 years which is unusual in much of England.
- 3.121 Much of the modern housing that now exists was built over pre-existing inter-war plotland development, retaining only little of its original plotland layout in some parts. Historically, a medieval church and moated site at Botelers likely to be of 14th century or earlier date formed a church and hall complex within the New Town. The surviving moated site is designated as a scheduled monument. Another moated site (circuit and platform) around Basildon Hall is also designated a scheduled monument. The 16th century Church of St. Michaels occupies an elevated location overlooking Pitsea Hall Fleet, Vange creek and the south Essex marshes and Thames estuary to the south. Part of the church only now survives as foundations, and the tower restored in 1871. Great Chalvedon Hall is a Grade II listed 16th century timber framed hall, now operating as a pub.
- 3.122 This is the largest settlement area in the assessment, containing more than half the population of the borough and representing an elongated urban area extending from Laindon to Pitsea which reflects the interconnectivity of the existing urban environment. Given its higher population, the presence of facilities and its modern town centre, Basildon New Town is recognised as the main town and regional hub in the Borough.
- 3.123 This suburb provided a location for rehousing inhabitants of inner city areas in London, and contributed to solving the problem of overcrowding and poor quality slum housing in London. While this fulfilled the expansion and demand for housing in the post-war period, the situation today is a highly populated town which lacks a sense of neighbourhood in some areas. It comprises a combination of high-rise tower blocks, terraced properties, and detached/semi-detached houses. Building at such high densities maximises land use but brings with it, larger questions about design and live-ability. Growth in the population has also been good for supporting the sustainability and vitality of the area, but is now leading to pressures on housing, services and amenities. The outcome today is that of a deteriorating environment suffering from the same problems as the inner city areas which it sought to alleviate.

- 3.124 These areas tend to consist of estates of detached and semi-detached housing with some large and distinctive schemes of two-three storey terraces, maisonettes, and houses set around linked courtyards with some cul-de-sac arrangements. Small estates often consist of just one housing type, although larger estates sometimes contain a mix of bungalows, detached and semi-detached houses and low rise flats. Low rise flats are generally a feature of the council estates. Although broadly characterised by mixed building styles, there are unifying features within smaller areas. Houses are chiefly constructed with brick and often rendered in smooth plaster or pebbledash. White and black painted weatherboarding is sometimes found on the façade of houses.
- 3.125 Within Basildon, it is possible to identify individual character areas that together make up neighbourhoods. Due to the mix of uses, the refinement of architectural detailing and the changes in urban form and condition, there is a rich variety within the area. The consistent style and layout repeated in an area gives it a particular character and sense of place. While the sense and feel of each place can be tangibly different from one street to the next, it is sufficient in this assessment to distinguish between larger sub-areas that operate differently enough to warrant their own understanding and treatment. The boundaries of these should not be interpreted too rigidly, but rather to aid the consideration of sets of issues. Collectively, their group value lie in their association with the development of the New Town.

Laindon

- 3.126 Separated to a certain degree by greenery, Laindon is a densely populated residential area with some edge of town commercial/industrial estates which gives the area a more varied character in terms of use. The industrial estates contain a mixture of modern light industrial development including Ford's Dunton Technical Centre, making the area an important contributor to industry and employment in the Borough. Laindon also has a local shopping centre which currently lacks the vibrancy it once enjoyed, with shops looking very tired and dilapidated. The lack of action and deterioration of the centre has led to reduced trade. Although containing some good and relatively modern architecture, the overall visual condition of housing tends to be at best fair and generally poor. There is a random mix of some high rise flats and housing estates that reflect a variety of unsightly architectural treatments. Examples are typically massive, unsympathetic in character, and grouped together into a unified whole.
- 3.127 This type of architecture was made popular in the late twentieth century, as communities sought inexpensive construction and design methods for low-cost housing. Some of these estates are now being redeveloped to improve housing quality as well as the quality of life for residents. There are some elements of thought to sustainable building construction found in this zone. For instance in certain areas where the site is steeply sloped, the topography of the area has been utilised in the building form to minimise the need for excavation or infill, adding great interest to the site and building. Fragments of older developments that existed before the New Town have been preserved in some areas, but these are very limited in extent. Laindon West exhibits a slight difference in character, where several houses are arranged within a plotland layout in certain parts. Here, detached properties are set back behind front gardens and hedgerows, defining the building line and creating a sense of enclosure. Laindon is served adequately by the existing railway station.

Lee Chapel

- 3.128 This small area contains the historic Church of St. Nicholas which forms a focal point within a sparsely populated landscape. Development density here is much lower than in other zones within the character area. Some plotland development within the zone was regularised as part of the new town, retaining some of its historic former plot-land lanes. The zone contains extensive modern housing developments dating to the 1950s and 60s. Soft-landscaping, street trees and greenery lend to the better quality of this residential environment, with views into the country park. Properties here attract higher values in comparison to the rest of Basildon New Town.

Fryerns Residential Areas

- 3.129 The zone contains extensive housing estates, maisonettes, and open areas of playing fields dating to the initial development of Basildon new town in the 1950s and '60s.

The historic fieldscape which in turn influenced the layout of the plotlands was obliterated by this new town development. Two moated sites survive in the area - at Botelers and Basildon Hall – and are designated scheduled monuments. Modern housing is laid out in the conventional open ‘new town’ style, often unsightly or unsympathetic in character. Housing estates were built on Radburn principles of design that segregated vehicular and pedestrian routes. Some key problems of the existing estates are the lack of overlooking of parking areas, the lack of privacy and security for homes where both sides of the plot are open to public access, and the poor definition between public and private spaces. Not unlike the rest of the New Town, housing estates are being redeveloped to improve housing quality as well as the quality of life for residents.

Basildon Town Centre

3.130 This zone comprises extensive modern development including the modern town centre/shopping core of Basildon as well as recreational opportunities at the Basildon Sporting Village. Although some remodelling has taken place since its completion, the town centre has retained its original design concept of a traffic-free pedestrian shopping area lying within an inner ring road. Pedestrian connections from surrounding neighbourhoods is however severed by the high speed dual carriageway which isolates the Centre. The shopping area is busy and characterful, and is highly provided for in terms of A1 retail. But it has a tired air, with significant problems in the quality of its retail offer particularly relating to evening and leisure uses since the opening of Festival Leisure Park. The office market has also been very limited, established by a falling demand and lack of investment.

3.131 The physical fabric of the town is also fading. It is however the civic status of this zone that defines its distinctive character. Tall buildings are set adjacent to low to medium rise buildings, a tradition established early on in the development. Many of the buildings have become iconic to Basildon and recognised for their architectural and historic interest. It also benefits from a number of existing pieces of public art and important public spaces. The Basildon Market adds to the interest and vitality of this town centre. The quality and range of current housing stock reflects a lack of town centre housing/communities, with higher proportions of compact terraced housing and a higher level of social rented accommodation. Several high quality new build and conversion schemes, including the development at Gloucester Gate, are now contributing to improving the accommodation and environment of the centre. Planned town centre regeneration is expected to guide future development, and ensure the viability of the town centre as a vibrant and popular to visit and live.

Pitsea

3.132 Pitsea contains extensive modern housing estates constructed early in the New Town’s development. These early neighbourhoods had conventional open ‘new town’ layout with considerable open space. The built structure is generally the same, but

these have been varied to give some distinction between blocks as reflected in the diverse mix of architectural styles. Some of these designs were simply functional, others were experimental. There is evidence of sustainable building design in parts of Pitsea wherein the site of the building has influenced its orientation in terms of desired exposure to natural daylight and wind.

3.133 Topography has also influenced building form in other parts. House types range from single storey bungalows to two-three storey properties in a range of detached/semi-detached and terraces, catering for whole communities. The area around Northlands is relatively pleasant, with some fairly recent detached properties towards its northern edge. There are some examples of poor architectural styles, for instance, in parts of Felmore where the back of buildings conflict with the front of others, exposing rear car parking to public view and open areas. High rise flats and housing estates also feature within the zone, and are typically massive with poor architectural treatments. In general, Pitsea has a strong sense of community with a number of dedicated community centres. The High Road/Town Centre is a vital local shopping centre, where commercial and residential uses are often stacked above ground floor retail. Its historic market has been historically renowned throughout Essex.

Vange

3.134 Generally, houses are less spacious and are often unsympathetic in character. There are some properties in very poor condition, and indeed entire streets in disrepair. Those properties looking in good repair are in a minority. There is a high concentration of social/affordable housing in this zone, typically large housing estates and big blocks of flats. Higher densities are observable here, with occupancy levels generally higher in social housing. There is also a severe lack of greenery in parts of Vange. Property frontages and private amenity space look neglected and poorly cared for. Another apparent flaw in the design of streets and amenity space is the inadequate provision for car parking, increasing the demand for on-street parking spaces. Vange however has a strong sense of community, with good access to local services. There is a concentration of community facilities ranging from basic health and social services to shops, education, recreational and religious facilities. The area is well served by buses, and often within walking distance of bus stops.

Kingswood

3.135 This small area has a scale and use of materials that give a traditional, suburban character different from its immediate surroundings. Houses are generally detached, semi-detached or terraced. The area achieves good densities within a more spacious layout, with more private gardens and public green space provision within the neighbourhood. Properties and amenity spaces also look well cared for. The visual appearance of housing condition reflects the capacity and/or willingness of owners to maintain their property.



Figure 28: Typical Examples of Blocks of Flats found within Basildon New Town



Figure 29: Some Architectural Styles and Treatments associated with the New Town Development

Continuity and Enclosure

3.136 The scale and density of development varies greatly across the neighbourhood from two storey detached and semi-detached homes, to low and high rise terraces, laid out in distinctive urban street patterns. Cul-de-sacs are sparse, with most roads forming circuits. Houses are generally aligned in a repetitive pattern, with buildings forming a continuous, enclosing street wall. Houses tend to have small front and larger rear gardens. Small front gardens or terraces directly address the pavement, forming a strong building line. The exceptions are linked courtyards that enclose forecourts and open space rather than the road. Buildings generally front onto the street, creating active frontages with windows and main entrances. Boundary treatments such as gates, fences and boundary walls are not a common feature of these neighbourhoods, with boundaries often delineated by a change in level, material or other subtle way. Public green spaces are generally simple areas of grass and there are few street trees included in the layout of residential streets.

Quality of the public realm

3.137 Generally, paving and signage are of standard statutory quality materials, with narrow street widths. The main roads are well lit with street lighting. Streets are not cluttered with transmit poles and overhead cables, as these were buried during the development of the New Town. The concentration of development, the existence of a wide range of uses and the high level of overlooking generate a good intensity of street activity and community interaction. Further provision of street furniture and regular resting places, benches, e.tc may serve to encourage walkers, particularly the elderly, disabled and those with prams/pushchairs and shopping.

3.138 Unfortunately, characterised by a lack of garages, parking limitations and on-street parking detracts from a high quality public realm. There are few street trees within the built envelope but rather, wedges of greenspace and mature trees feature between developments to soften the urban form. The poor condition of private gardens or the lack thereof and degradation in the pedestrian environment also impact badly on the active enjoyment of public areas. Nonetheless, Basildon town benefits from many parks, local play areas, sports grounds, allotments and civic squares. During the 1950's as development of the new town got under way, many hundreds of acres were set aside to create parks and recreation grounds. Basildon's main park, Gloucester Park was officially opened in 1957 and since then many others have followed including Northlands Park, Mopsies Park, and Vange Hill Open Space. Nevendon Bushes is one of the last remaining fragments of old woodland within the urban area of Basildon.

3.139 Play and recreation facilities are located within easy distances, however these are not secured and are often problematic especially at night. Narrow dark corridors and pedestrian underpasses also exacerbate crime and vandalism. The environmental quality of the public realm is a severe issue across the neighbourhood, and at present relegates much of the strength of character the neighbourhoods possess. The area is a hot spot for crime and anti-social behaviour.



Figure 30: Public Realm, Basildon Town Centre

Ease of movement

3.140 The modernisation of Basildon consisted the development of road systems and other transport links, preparing the town for the car in a period where its growing importance in urban life was becoming clear. Roads accommodate the greatest proportion of all travel, whether for commuting, leisure, or business, with good access to the strategic highway network. The A13 and A127 are important commuter trunk roads, and allow easy access to the rest of the motorway network. Locally, the A13 gives access to Pitsea and Vange, and the A127 gives access to the town centre and Laindon. Major and minor roads run within the town, linking areas to local services and the wider urban area. The town benefits from good access by car and as common with most

urban areas, the road network suffers from some traffic congestion during peak periods.

- 3.141 Laindon, Basildon and Pitsea stations also enable relatively high levels of rail commuting. A viable, extensive bus network connects people to a range of local destinations but car traffic continues to account for the majority of road traffic. Basildon town is widely accessible by public transport, connecting the town to Billericay, Wickford, and other nearby towns outside the borough. The town centre is the central transport hub for the area with connections to the wider town radiating from this point. Both the bus and rail stations are well located to the town centre core.
- 3.142 Crossing provision on the whole is good with pedestrian crossings, subways, overpasses and footbridges allowing pedestrians cross safely without slowing down the traffic. There is a good pedestrian and cycle network, although the choice to walk or cycle is strongly effected by how convenient and safe it is.

Legibility

- 3.143 Movement is facilitated by a permeable pattern, which allows a range of route choices and direct connections. For most parts, streets are navigable and legible with a logical street pattern. The continuous built form of street frontages allow users to easily understand where they are. Although the curvilinear nature of some streets and the confusing numbering of street addresses reduces overall convenience and frustrates ease of movement for pedestrians.
- 3.144 Basildon has several tall structures and buildings in comparison to other New Towns. The town centre is marked by Brooke House, a fourteen storey residential tower block, visible over much of the town and surrounding countryside. It was intentionally constructed to be a new physical landmark to define Basildon's urban status, an expression of its scale and importance, and to act as the visual focus to identify the town centre's location within a largely low-rise settlement set in a flat landscape.

Adaptability

- 3.145 The 20th century saw large numbers of homes built across the town, expanding existing settlements and replacing earlier low quality housing. Over the years, through unforeseeable changes in the economy, society and environment, the area has become infamous for offering a popular, affordable place to live. Properties have become mired in a low value. Some areas like Vange have become stigmatised, and others nearby have suffered blight.
- 3.146 Furthermore, post-war housing was relatively cheap and quick to build resulting in some poor quality buildings. Homes in some neighbourhoods are not in good visual condition and many houses are now suffering from age decay and associated problems. Despite the robust physical structure, the general environmental quality in

some parts of the area is currently poor. The intensity of use in these areas is not matched by the same high levels of maintenance. Property boundaries and front gardens are generally in bad repair and appear unmaintained. There has been very little investment in design and environmental improvements due to the number of residents on low incomes. The overall situation will require major upgrades in visual condition across large swathes of the housing stock and public realm.



Figure 31: Deteriorating Aesthetic Appeal and Functional Value of Physical Structure in Basildon

Diversity

- 3.147 Basildon New Town is predominantly a residential district. This large zone mainly comprises an extensive series of planned post-WWII modern housing developments built during the 1950s and 60s, including some industrial land uses and the Town Centre of Basildon. The provision of a mix of housing types including flats, maisonettes, townhouses, mews and terraces reflects the diversity of housing need at the time and allows for a healthy and sustainable mix of uses.
- 3.148 Alongside its primary housing role, the area contains a significant number of civic and commercial uses, with a core of important public, cultural and retail facilities around the town centre. The town centre occupies a 65 acre site designed by the Development Corporation. This area is a focal point for retailing and commercial activities with a wide range of leisure and community facilities, schools, hospital and health facilities, and other employment uses.
- 3.149 The area continues to provide a meaningful range of amenities and services that is valued by residents. The major services are shopping parades, but there is a distinct lack of entertainment facilities such as cinemas or other night time economy. The business environment has also struggled in the face of competition from commercial opportunity sites and retail centres in out-of-town parks and nearby towns. There are empty units which presents a risk to investment, services and employment.
- 3.150 Some neighbourhoods within this area suffer from significant deprivation and are within the most deprived in the country for income, education and employment. They are also within the worst nationally for health and crime. The majority of the resident population fall under the category of those working in the elementary and semi-skilled occupations, having little or no qualification. A significant number of children in the town also live in poverty and a good number of its residents still receive benefit. The housing stock is dominated by council/social housing as evident in their quality and design which often gives away the economic circumstances of residents. As such, the area has been stigmatised by an institutional character that creates easily identifiable social housing. This ingrained prejudice against social housing may threaten the success of neighbourhood level diversity.

Character Area 10: Langdon Hills

Character

- 3.151 The modern settlement of Langdon Hills is contiguous with the Basildon urban area. Separated from the rest of the New Town by its location south of the B1036, this edge of town residential neighbourhood offers an entirely different urban environment to the rest of the Basildon area. The development is characteristic of towns that have continued to grow outwards into the countryside - a movement which was accelerated with the popularity of private transport. Houses have been built within a pre-existing plotland townscape first established during the interwar period, resulting in many of the earlier plotland boundaries surviving as streets or boundaries within the modern developments. A number of Listed Buildings survive in the zone including the Grade II Listed Church of St Mary.
- 3.152 Extensive housing development started from the late 20th century onwards, and as such, most houses are modern in design as well as in the amenities they provide. Langdon Hills has a very mixed residential characteristic due to the infilling nature, as housing gradually filled the plots, thus displaying less uniformity but adding some visual interest. A variety of styles, designs, materials and sizes exists within the area which are generally of a high quality reflecting higher incomes. The houses are made typically of mortared brick and tiled cladding, have good exterior finishes with architectural detailing, with large gardens and garages. Buildings have largely kept to a spacious design of detached and semi-detached houses of one-two storeys, keeping building densities generally low. Most of the dwellings are single-family homes, owned by their residents.
- 3.153 This zone is home to Langdon Marks Hill Nature Reserve and Westley Heights, Langdon Hills Country Park. Langdon Hills is well wooded, with both ancient woodland and secondary wood developed on abandoned plotland. Discrete areas of both regular and irregular fields of historic origins survive between the settlement and woodland. The area has a varied and complex character and morphology, reflecting human interaction with a topography that differs significantly to that of the surrounding lowlands, of the area, with its distinctive hilltop location. Though fairly modern in principle, Langdon Hills has a distinct rural ambience and aesthetic appeal accentuated by the generosity of greenery which softens the landscape.



Source: Google Maps Street View, October 2015

Figure 32: Strong Feature of Street Trees and Hedge Treatments within the Built Form, Langdon Hills

Continuity and Enclosure

3.154 The regular layout of housing plots built on the pre-existing plotland arrangement creates a strong building line. Boundary treatments are usually clear and intact, delineated by low boundary wall, hedges, or other fencing to provide a clearer definition and enclosure of public-private space. Building heights are modest and generally define the spaces they enclose. Doors and entrances often front directly onto the street to create activity, although there are a few instances of blank facades and poor corner treatments.

Quality of the public realm

3.155 Roads and footpaths are tarmaced, and street furniture limited to street name signs and lamp posts. Most properties afford some level of garden both to the front and rear of the property, front gardens well-tended and generally aspiring to some degree of landscaping. There are significant numbers of mature trees (both in streets and private gardens) and green shrubbery that contribute to a high quality streetscape, clearly differentiating this area from the terraced housing areas and older middle class suburbs surrounding it. Although hard landscaping tend to be more dominant within newer developments.

3.156 Parking is sometimes provided on-street, but usually provided within individual plots in front garages and driveways to reduce pressure on on-street parking. This zone has large areas of open space with easy access to parks, golf clubs, and out-of-town spaces, offering a much higher quality living environment. Great Berry Open Space and Langdon Hills Recreation Ground constitute important play areas in the zone.



Source: www.panoramio.com

Figure 33: View from Langdon Hills Recreation Ground

Ease of movement

- 3.157 As characteristic of many suburban areas, Langdon Hills is home to commuters who need access to central cities or other business districts. Langdon Hills is located south of Laindon railway station, with regular trains eastbound to the Essex coast and west bound to London. Mandeville Way (B1036) is the main through route, with the railway line to the left and housing to the right.
- 3.158 This is a car-friendly development, with a good network of roads providing access to local destinations and the wider urban area. Side roads are quiet and narrow, with no

heavy traffic. There are internal pedestrian prioritised streets where vehicular access has been restricted to encourage pedestrian movements.

- 3.159 Permeability for public transport services is constrained by design, and bus routes are largely limited to the peripheries. Development density is much lower than some other character areas, making parking and movement easier. There is however a high dependence on car to commute to out-of-town shopping centres and business parks for work.

Legibility

- 3.160 Characterised by long, winding streets that climb up hills, these raise issues of legibility for the pedestrian and driver alike. Visitors to this area are likely to encounter slight difficulties in finding directions with an apprehension of being lost. There are also a few dead end roads that lack permeability and linkages. Sometimes a network of footpaths are evident which interweave through the middle and side of blocks, but these are not always consistent.

Adaptability

- 3.161 Langdon Hills continues to attract high values and offers a popular, endearing place to live. The fine grain plot structure of houses allows for constant and gradual internal adaption and extensions. This could enable responses to changing social, technological and economic conditions in the future.

Diversity

- 3.162 Housing predominates, with some retail/shopping uses and community facilities such as schools, medical centres, places of worship to support the local residents. A golf course forms a large component of the modern landscape of the zone, and there are a number of areas of secondary woodland on former plotlands. There is a strong leisure use with the Langdon Hills Marks Hill Nature Reserve and Westley Heights, Langdon Hills Country Park.
- 3.163 Mainly residential, its location within commuting distance of the city affords its residents access to major services. Although served by a local parade of shops including the newly opened shopping centre at 'the Triangle', opportunity to extend local community choice is limited by scale, and the proximity of the neighbourhood to the main town centre.
- 3.164 This area does not have a diversified mix of compatible housing and building types to provide for varied demographic groups. Langdon Hills has some of the wealthiest areas in the borough, characterised by residential estates for high income groups escaping the noise, congestion and traffic problems of the older sections of the town.

The desirability of housing has made the area expensive. Increased property values displaces low-income families, with minimal provision for affordable housing.

Character Area 11: Noak Bridge

Character

- 3.165 This zone comprises Noak Bridge and a small area of housing in Steeple View. It contains the most modern collection of buildings to be designated Conservation Area status in the Borough, and represents one of the final phases of Basildon New Town. It was built outside the main urban area to the north of the A127 in the late 1970s and early 80s. Some older 1920s buildings are found in parts of this zone on plots that would originally have been farmers' fields. A couple of surviving buildings on Wash Road mark the location of a former farmstead that occupied a landscape of enclosed fields, while a single road which still follows its original alignment remains within the development. However, late 20th century development on the edge of the new town has virtually eradicated the earlier historic landscape.
- 3.166 Noak Bridge has been partially designated as a Conservation area despite its recent age, due to its particular character. The housing within this zone is noticeably different from the rest of Basildon especially within the Conservation Area, with the intention being to reproduce a traditional English village in accordance with the principles set out in the Essex Design Guide. The area features a variety of housing styles and vernacular architectural features within an irregular street plan with many trees and hedges. Standardised house types are skilfully varied through careful architectural detailing and selection from a limited palette of locally sourced materials. These have created a balance between unity and variety that is at once immediately attractive and suggestive of a traditional English village.
- 3.167 The street scene is enlivened by landmark buildings, and distinctive features such as Dutch gables, barge boards, decorative brickwork, sun dials, and finger post signs. The style of the housing combines unity of scale and materials – bricks, render, and cladding - with a variety of architectural detailing and composition, creating sustained visual interest. The more recent housing developments outside the Conservation Area have also been carried out to a high standard, emulating the 'Spirit of Noak Bridge', even if they are subtly and perceptibly different to the original parts of the village. In Steeple View, there are other more modern, developer-led housing schemes that adhere less strictly to the Essex Design Guide.
- 3.168 Trees, hedges and green space are an essential feature of Noak Bridge. Careful consideration has been put into the landscaping with the planting of species that are native to the region. Streets, public open spaces, and front gardens form part of this network of greenery. The extent of front gardens however varies across the zone, with the older parts of Noak Bridge having deeper frontages than is found within the Conservation Area. Greenery has a strong bearing on the character of this area, giving it a rural feel. Noak Bridge has a unique countryside appeal that distinguishes it from the rest of its surrounding settlements. In seeking to preserve the special identity of

the village, it is important that the abrupt division between town and country is not blurred by creeping development.



Figure 34: Street Scene, Noak Bridge Conservation Area

Continuity and Enclosure

3.169 Houses are generally arranged in two to three storeys of detached/semi-detached and terraces. There is a strong sense of enclosure provided by mature hedges, trees and wooded bund, like a medieval planned walled town. Houses are built tight up to street frontages making for a good sense of enclosure. Fragments of old hedgerows have been preserved where possible at road edges, and house plots designed so that they have greenery in front of them, and not just confined to the rear gardens. Taller buildings have also been cleverly located in positions where they respond to long

views. Appropriate materials used to emphasise local design give visual continuity and context to this character area.

Quality of the public realm

- 3.170 Highways materials and street furniture are generally consistent with its modest village character. Roads and footpaths are of tarmac, with concrete kerbs. The surface finish most consistent with the informal village character of Noak Bridge is gravel. Block paving and tarmac have also been used in some driveways and parking courts. Trees, hedges and green space are an essential feature of Noak Bridge. However, in some parts where the trees have grown up spontaneously or to maturity, there has been a failure to manage them. Typical boundary treatments are made from natural elements, often low hedge treatments, hurdle and picket fences, estate railings, and field gates.
- 3.171 Another essential feature of the village plan is the parking courts and courtyard developments. Small courts form in effect and fold in the line of the buildings along the streets or at the rear, screening small car parking areas. The intention is to help keep parked cars off the roads. This is no longer successful in many parts of the village as with increased car ownership, parked cars are now obtrusive and becoming prominent in the street scene.
- 3.172 The east and west sides of the village are surrounded by woodland and hedges, including the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve. Public open space is gathered together to form the village green, Noak Bridge Central Green, where some of the best trees are concentrated. It is large enough to be used for cricket and other games, fetes and village sports. There are also a number of play areas outside the village centre for recreation and sport.



Figure 35: Typical Boundary Treatments, Noak Bridge

Ease of movement

- 3.173 Noak Bridge is enclosed by Wash Road to the north, and the A127 to the south. These effectively form ring roads round the Noak Bridge village with the result that within it, there is virtually no through traffic. Bridge Street is the principal road that crosses through the village, from which side roads with footpaths serve the houses and other buildings. The subways beneath Wash Road and Bridge Street also serve to provide the village with a network of footpaths. Outside the Conservation Area, Noak Hill Road and High Road North form the major through routes.
- 3.174 The layout of the area is based on a road system arranged so that pedestrian and vehicular movement will be convenient, safe, and pleasant. For instance, it is possible to walk throughout the village without crossing any roads. In some parts of the area, internal access routes and home zones have been implemented to restrict the dominance of cars. Some of these routes provide access into the countryside. Bridge Street is the main access road leading to most of the roads serving the houses and other buildings. It joins together the various parts of the Conservation Area in the simple and straightforward manner of the village tradition.
- 3.175 The car is the most popular mode of transport to access services, the nearest town being Basildon which is about 2 miles away. Bus services cut across the main streets but do not permeate through the residential areas. The nearest rail links are available from Basildon train station. Dedicated footpaths and cycle ways make pedestrian movements easier.

Legibility

- 3.176 The irregular street plan could be regarded as tortuous, making it difficult to navigate around. Contrary to the original vision, the village lacks a well-defined centre. The village green may be a central feature and a pleasant space, but it is hardly a focal point partly because very few houses actually face on to it, and because it is now largely wooded. Its wooded character restricts the sense of permeability in the centre of the village. Instead of linking the various parts of the village together, the green now forms a physical and visual barrier. The main arterial road, Bridge Street, by-passes the village green with the school and shops, and has no focus to them.
- 3.177 Nonetheless, the use of different grade roads across the area creates legible streets with a clear hierarchy of different routes and how they function from principal roads, to small residential streets and private roads leading to houses.

Adaptability

- 3.178 Noak Bridge was built to the Essex Design Guide principles. It is a highly successful exercise in place-making, very popular with residents. Poor maintenance and neglect of both housing and the public realm is however becoming conspicuous, especially

within the Conservation Area, and cumulatively these have an erosive effect on the appearance and character of the area.



Figure 36: An Example of Eroding Aesthetic Appeal of a Property in Noak Bridge, due to Lack of Maintenance

Diversity

3.179 Despite aspirations at the planning stage for a degree of mixed use, Noak Bridge is almost entirely residential. The housing stock however caters for a more diverse market, comprising flats and sheltered housing, as well as individual dwellings for different income groups. Noak Bridge has its own identity and attracts a more diverse population with house prices moderately higher than those in nearby Basildon. Local services comprise of shops including the small supermarket and pharmacy, a post office, the village hall, school, a medical centre, library, and a pub.

Character Area 12: Bowers Gifford

Character

- 3.180 This small zone comprises the historic settlement of Bowers Gifford and the ridge of agricultural land sloping down to the Bowers and Pitsea marshes. Historically the zone was sparse and highly dispersed, set within a rectilinear field system of ancient origin, comprising the former Rectory, Bowers Hall and the Church of St. Margaret (the Rectory and Bowers Hall were moated). The exception to these was a small area of roadside settlement at Bowers Gifford, which is depicted on the 1777 Chapman and André map. Earlier plotland developments within the historic settlement were significantly infilled during the second half of the 20th century, and the area now lacks the characteristic gaps between the individual buildings. The World War II General Headquarters defence line also runs through this zone, surviving elements including the filled-in anti-tank ditch and a number of pill-boxes.
- 3.181 Bowers Gifford is an infill area set in the green belt and decidedly semi-rural, characterised by its linear roadside settlement pattern enveloping earlier villages and farmsteads. This linear development form has been broken up by a small number of cul-de-sacs, though these do not impact on the overall character. The linear nature means there is no distinctive core area. Although the historic focus of the village was centred on the Church, Bowers Gifford has always been quite spread out, with a significant number of dwellings along the access routes to the local farmsteads which originally would have been workers' cottages for the farms.
- 3.182 The settlement consists almost entirely of privately owned houses, the great majority of which have been built in the last century. There is considerable variety of both design and materials in this zone owing to the infill nature of the development, however they are similar in size and massing. Generally one or two storey, almost all of them are detached, on individual plots with relatively generous front and rear gardens. The housing types are predominantly bungalow style developments interspersed with a number of chalets and very few two storey dwellings.
- 3.183 Over the years, small to medium scale buildings have become larger in response to growing household needs. While the settlement has changed considerably over time, it is important that the existing character be preserved from future inappropriate developments that could detract from the character of the area. A Special Development Control Policy is currently in place to preserve the existing character of the area, which is mainly bungalow and chalet development. Overall the area has a distinct and fairly consistent character.



Figure 37: Examples of Detached Properties found in Bowers Gifford

Continuity and Enclosure

3.184 Low rise, low density houses are arranged over a tight development pattern. Properties are often set back from the street along fairly consistent building lines, and behind well vegetated front gardens or driveways. Boundary treatment is consistent with hedges and low brick walls, although the quality and consistency of these vary. Building heights are modest and generally define and enclose streets without overshadowing or dominating it. The small, compact scale of the area establishes a close and clear relationship between street and building.



Figure 38: Continuous Built Form Establishing a Clear Distinction between Public and Private Space, Bowers Gifford

Quality of the public realm

- 3.185 Hedgerows and tree planting along the roadsides soften the streetscape. There are a few open frontages which undermine the local landscape pattern. These may be due to the loss of front garden boundaries to allow for parking. Car parking is almost exclusively off-street as front gardens are deep enough to accommodate car parking. Front doors and windows front onto and overlook the street to provide constant activity and natural surveillance on the street. Strong visual and physical links with the surrounding countryside extend into the heart of this community.
- 3.186 The Basildon Crematorium and Cemetery is set close to the historic village of Bowers Gifford, overlooking the Thames estuary and with views across to the Kent Hills. Surrounded by trees, lawns and with an ornamental pond at the centre of its gardens, the crematorium has a special, distinctive feel. In addition to this, there is an outdoor play area as well as an outdoor gym in this zone.

Ease of movement

- 3.187 The settlement of Bowers Gifford lies to the south of the A127, north of the A13 and west of the A130, and around two miles to the east of Basildon. Vehicular movement through the neighbourhood is facilitated via the main route of Pound Lane. The area is fairly accessible by public transportation. There are bus services running through the community, as well as rail stations at nearby Pitsea, and Wickford.
- 3.188 Pedestrian movement is facilitated by footways, although these do not provide strong links to the historic core as major roads form significant barriers to pedestrian and

cycle movements. Away from the busy highways, there is a quiet network of streets and roads which are adequate for light use by motor traffic and are often enjoyed by walkers and cyclists. The car is the most popular mode of transport to access work and services as bus transport is limited and the train station is some three miles away warranting the need to use the car. Increased car ownership and development of major movement corridors have contributed to Bowers Gifford's growing popularity as a rural settlement.

Legibility

- 3.189 The street-based grid layout creates a network of routes that is fairly permeable to pedestrians and vehicles, making navigation easy. Local landmarks include the former Rectory, Bowers Hall and the Church of St. Margaret, although these do not form a focal point for the settlement.

Adaptability

- 3.190 The convertibility and scalability of individual buildings may be limited in responding to new growth patterns. This is because inappropriate extensions can detract from the character of the area, and can have a detrimental effect upon the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers. Apart from these limitations in scale, bungalows are an enduringly popular design that remains successful and sustainable across the country.

Diversity

- 3.191 The predominant land use is housing, and house prices in Bowers Gifford are generally higher than those in Basildon town. Existing data reveals that income and employment levels of residents are higher than the national average. Majority of the houses are owned with a few rented privately.
- 3.192 Some agricultural uses also lie within the southern part of the zone and the former Rectory and grounds is now a cemetery. There is also a primary school, church, and a few local employment opportunities. There isn't a wide variety of social activities or local employment opportunities on offer in the zone now due to the proximity of the area to the main town. Particularly as car ownership is on a rising trend, the requirements of most residents can be readily met by other shopping centres.

4 DESIGN OUTCOMES REVIEW

Introduction

4.1 This section focuses on a number of new build residential developments which have been selected in order to review and determine how they have responded to their local context. While it is noted that one cannot generalize from a limited selection of developments, the study approach focuses on depth, rather than breadth. As such, this assessment is descriptive in approach with an in-depth investigation of selected cases. The study attempts to identify the factors that are important in the history and development of each case. The intention is to provide a baseline in identifying those areas of policy that have been successful, and those areas that need to be strengthened in order to deliver high quality urban design. The following have been selected for assessment:

- Morello Quarter, Basildon
- Gloucester Gate, Basildon
- Craylands Regeneration Project, Basildon
- Dunton Fields, Laindon
- Riverside Place, Wickford

Morello Quarter

4.2 Morello Quarter is a comprehensive redevelopment scheme of the entire southern side of Cherrydown East, in the heart of Basildon. The proposal was for a residential development of three blocks of flats containing 425 apartments with 446 parking spaces. As of March 2015, 331 flats had been completed with an outstanding 94 flats. Prior to this redevelopment, the site was in use for commercial car-related purposes, with a multi-storey car parking.

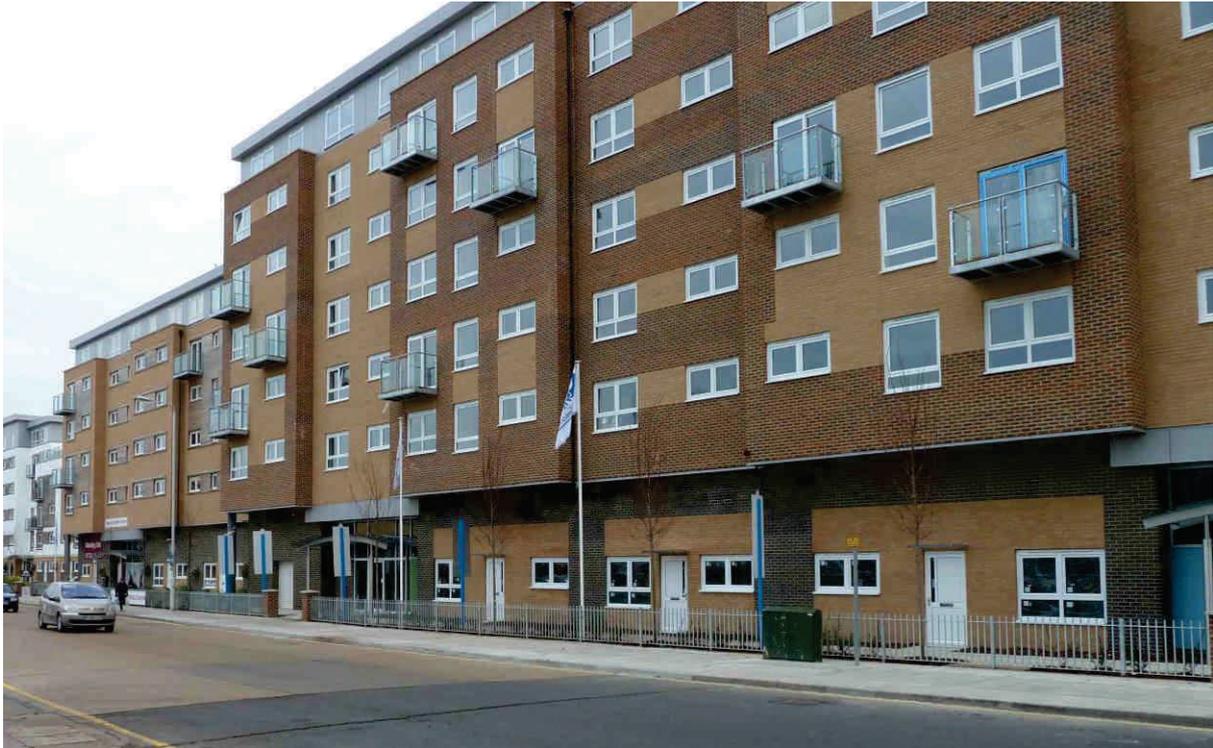


Figure 39: Morello Quarter, Basildon

Character

- 4.3 Chiefly of brick construction with some cladding as prevalent across much of Essex, the buildings are well articulated with windows, balconies, and variances in façade colour and material changes. The contrast in building heights of these mid-rise apartment blocks is another noticeable feature. The scale of this new development compliments the surrounding neighbourhood without seeming bland or oppressive.
- 4.4 The present character does not relate to the previous townscape as the proposal involved the demolition of all previous buildings. Its present character however establishes an appropriate character for the much needed town centre housing communities and contributes to the quality and range of housing stock in the area. Morello Quarter does not meet a varied set of housing needs, but what it does offer is a good quality apartment living environment. Despite aspirations at planning stage for the development to interact strongly with the adjacent town centre, connections are still severed by the railway and a dual carriageway.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 4.5 Buildings sit within a street pattern, and are set back behind low boundary walls and green edges, which clearly provide a distinction between public and private space. The scale of the development sits in the context of the physical environment (buildings, parking lots and streets), without dominating the space within.

Quality of the public realm

- 4.6 The development incorporates block paved surfaces, low hedging and planting treatments that ensure good quality public realm. Car parking is enclosed in underground parking to reduce the impact of on-street car parking on residential amenity. Tree planting, communal courtyards and other green spaces lend to the domestic character of the development. Although, the use of low iron palisade fencing detracts from the street scene. Roof terraces are also provided for communal seating and use. These are hard surface spaces with some planting of low shrub and groundcover species that aid in ecological biodiversity. In general public open space is minimal, landscape is mostly private, only for use by residents as amenity space. Soft landscaping also does not benefit from mature trees and shrubs. Maintaining the privacy and residential amenity of dwellings features strongly in its design.

Ease of movement

- 4.7 Located on the local highway network for access to and from the Town Centre, Cherrydown East forms part of Basildon Town Centre's one way road system. Cars flow round from Southernhay or Clay Hill Road through Cherrydown East. This one way system, along with proximity to the bus and train stations provides the development with high accessibility by primary modes of transport. This location is easily accessible by both private and public transport, and benefits from the Town Centre's network of pedestrian routes. The convenient access to services and facilities would encourage residents to reduce car usage and use more sustainable means of transportation.

Legibility

- 4.8 Internal access routes align with the surrounding street network, without posing barriers to movement. Parking is not located within the building setback, facilitating pedestrians' access into the building directly from public sidewalks. The open layout and traditional street system makes it easy to navigate. However, entrances and doorways are few, serving many dwellings which may often be difficult to identify for those who do not live there.

Adaptability

- 4.9 Given its fairly recent nature, modern building materials and finishes have been used in construction. More so, flats create flexibility in their use and can be altered to suit future redevelopment.

Diversity

- 4.10 This is a residential scheme with a limited mix of dwelling types and sizes, offering only 1 and 2 bedroom apartments. It does not incorporate a mix of uses, but rather builds on its location for ease of access to the Town Centre's work, leisure, and shopping areas, as well as surrounding parks and sports facilities. In the context of its location and setting, it makes a positive contribution to sustaining a mixed-use environment.

Gloucester Gate

- 4.11 In 2011, planning application was granted for the erection of 144 residential dwellings, access, car parking and landscaping on brownfield site dominated by surface car parking at Phase 1A Westside North, Broadmayne, Basildon. Located to the north-west of Basildon town centre, the development is bounded by (and encompasses a small extent of) Gloucester Park to the north with its fishing lake and sports facilities; existing residential dwellings to the east (within the Ghyllgrove area and Basildon Crown Court); the A176 Roundacre and the A1321 Broadmayne to the south; and the A176 Uppermayne to the west, with the residential area of Lee Chapel North beyond. As of 2014, a total of 132 units had been completed.



Figure 40: Housing Development at Gloucester Gate, Basildon

Character

- 4.12 Predominantly town houses and apartments, with some formal and informal landscape treatments for public and private open space and access routes, this development makes a positive attempt to creating a compact, walkable, neighbourhood typical of urban villages. The houses are 2-3 storeys in height, with the residential apartment blocks ranging from between 4 storeys, and the blocks at the southern entrance rising to 6 storeys to create a focal gateway feature. House types are skilfully varied through careful architectural detailing and selection from a palette of regional materials including slate appearance roofing, weather boarding, smooth render and clay brick. The contrasts and variations in building heights, volume, and materials enhances visual interest and contributes to the unique character of the area, although there are some examples of bland architecture, particularly the apartment flats.

- 4.13 The development establishes a positive urban relationship between the Town Centre and Gloucester Park promoting a greater mix of uses and re-characterising the hitherto town field area of Gloucester Park. Although there is a visual separation between this development and the existing residential dwellings within the Ghyllgrove area which instantly gives it a distinct sense of place. Overall, Gloucester Gate is a significant movement towards creating a sustainable town centre community as part of Basildon's wider urban movement and vision for its town centre regeneration. It builds upon its surrounding context, with an opportunity to strengthen existing attributes.
- 4.14 While the current character is yet to make significant contributions to the attraction of the centre being the earlier phase of the proposed development, it is envisaged that future planned developments will continue to ensure a considered relationship with existing land uses with a view to bringing Gloucester Park into the heart of the town centre.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 4.15 The distribution of building mass and scale has been done contextually with reference to the surrounding neighbourhood and landscape to manage the perception of scale across the area. The core area is predominantly detached and semi-detached 2-3 storey houses with 4 storey buildings at street corners. The primary urban park frontage of the East Crescent is generally maintained at three storeys to provide a clearly defined edge structure where the development abuts the park. In contrast, the core area of the village is characterised by irregular street patterns and meandering roads. Buildings are set back at various distances, and edge treatments enclosing public spaces are inherently informal to avoid concealment. The sense of enclosure varies across the village, although individual buildings are well laid out and sited to be overlooked to some degree by neighbouring buildings.

Quality of the public realm

- 4.16 Roads are tarmaced, with pedestrianised zones often indicated by a change in material to pavement. Streets are generally free of clutter, making it easy to move around. Car parking bays and cycle storage are provided for all dwellings either close to the dwelling or on the plot. These are retained in communal parking courts or integral garages with only few on-street parking in sight. Natural surveillance of public spaces is provided by adjoining active frontages. Semi-private space, car courts and minor access roads have also been designed to open onto spaces that are overlooked by adjoining buildings. While this design focuses on reducing crime, in some instances, it exposes rear car parks and the back of buildings to public view and access, as well as creating a situation where the front and back of buildings conflict.

- 4.17 There are a number of formal and informal soft landscaped amenity areas within this development. Each house has a garden and the apartment blocks have access to communal landscaped amenity areas. The dwellings are also located in close proximity to a shared landscape amenity space, including play areas available for public use at Gloucester Park. Street trees are also not a common feature of this development given that it has been recently developed on brownfield site, and hard landscaping tend to dominate in places. Greenery can help shape the streetscape further, reinforce the character of the village, and improve the pedestrian spatial experience.

Ease of movement

- 4.18 There is one point of vehicle access to the development via The Gore. This links onto the A1321 Broadmayne which is a strategic route that forms part of the County road network. Internal roads have been designed with an emphasis on reducing car dominance and keeping traffic speeds low. Footways and shared surfaces are provided along all vehicle routes throughout the estate. There are also natural walkways within the housing with pedestrian links to principal routes, as well as a principal cycle route along its boundary. The development is well located within walking distances to Basildon railway station, which provides regular services towards central London and Southend, and the bus station is located adjacent to the railway station. This location is also within close proximity to local bus stops, as well as shops and services in the town centre.

Legibility

- 4.19 The layout has been designed to facilitate pedestrian movement, with pedestrianized zones and internal access routes where cul-de-sacs link up. The palette of materials used also influences the townscape legibility. The irregular street pattern could sometimes give an illusion of being lost to visitors especially, making it difficult to navigate around.

Adaptability

- 4.20 The environmental impact of the development was considered in terms of the design, layout, as well as in the construction of the buildings. A significant amount of the materials used are either renewable or recyclable. Buildings also comply with the standards set by the new Building Regulations. The irregular urban pattern however limits flexibility to accommodate further developments of various scales.

Diversity

- 4.21 A mixture of houses and flats are provided ranging from 4 and 3 bed houses, to 2 and 1 bed flats, including affordable housing. This is strictly a residential estate, however, surrounding the site is a mixture of residential, recreational, commercial and industrial land uses. Inclusive design principles have also been adopted in relation to transport links, access requirements, and affordable housing.

Craylands and Fryerns Regeneration Project

- 4.22 The Craylands estate was developed in the late 1960s as a medium density estate in four-storey maisonette and terraced blocks. The estate had a reputation for isolation, poor quality housing and a lack of social amenities and had been found to be insufficient in standard. Adjacent to the Craylands estate is the former Fryerns School site. The Fryerns School closed over a decade ago, and had been declared redundant and surplus to requirements by the County Council. The situation therefore presented a potential to link the development opportunities on the former school site with the regeneration of the Craylands Estate.



Figure 41: 1960s' Maisonette at Craylands

- 4.23 It was proposed that the redevelopment programme will take place in several phases. This first phase which has been further divided into sub phases includes the majority of the former Fryerns School playing fields and the central section of the Craylands

Estate. Named Beechwood Village, the units west of the existing Craylands Estate (Phases 1A and 1B) have now been completed. The current phase now involves the selective removal and replacement of units on the existing estate while integrating some retained units, and connecting these to the completed housing and infrastructure on the west. It also reflects lessons learned from Phase 1A and 1B.



Figure 42: New Housing at Craylands

Character

- 4.24 The Craylands regeneration project is an on-going scheme that involves the re-branding of Craylands estate and redeveloping the former Fryerns school playing field to provide quantitative and qualitative improvements to the existing housing stock and create a new neighbourhood that meets the aspirations of a sustainable community.
- 4.25 Houses range from two-storeys to four-storeys in height. This variation of scale across the development is to accommodate existing conditions in keeping with the context of its surroundings. Houses are in a variety of building types with some traditional styles with pitched roofs to give a residential village feel. The architecture draws on regional precedents, mainly of brick, with elements of timber and render, bay windows and front porches to provide added interest. The houses generally have the same range of materials, but the combination of materials and architectural detailing differs across the estate, reinforcing the distinction between zones, each with a unique but compatible character. This makes the experience of moving through the estate, a more memorable experience by helping to define the area and creating a strong sense of place.
- 4.26 Beechwood Village contains the larger scale buildings with a mix of architectural features such as reconstituted stone, brick and render, softened with porches and Juliet balconies. Blocks of flats are broken into distinct architectural elements using

variations in height and changes in material to reduce the apparent mass of the buildings and to give individual blocks a distinct identity and vertical emphasis. The later phases of development have a more intimate character, with smaller scaled two storey homes set around pedestrian friendly, traffic calmed streets.

- 4.27 The redevelopment of Craylands thus far has provided a more pleasant and attractive living environment for both existing and new residents, establishing a new face for what is to come.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 4.28 Houses are built on a residential street pattern, with dwellings facing onto streets with front gardens and footpaths. Small front gardens provide opportunities for entrance plantings and proper frontage on streets. The setback of buildings and consequent front garden sizes vary across the estate with an occasional use of stone terrace walls, fences, and hedge rows lining public walkways. Taller buildings are used to define important routes and spaces and provide added emphasis at street corners and other important points within the development. While non-continuous streets and ambiguous spaces characterised the early phases of the development, this was modified in the more recent phases to create a compact street and block pattern.

Quality of the public realm

- 4.29 A significant amount of existing landscaping was retained within the development. The public realm benefits from generous amounts of open spaces with natural green verges, front gardens, tree-lined main streets, and landscaped pavements. The local square provides an attractive amenity space with natural surveillance from surrounding buildings. Parking provision is either on-plot, on-street or within parking courts which are overlooked and close to the dwellings they serve. On-plot allocated parking for units are provided in the rear of blocks, on curtilage accessible by rear lanes. The absence of private drives in front gardens improves the quality of the street for pedestrians, and frees up on-street parking for visitors.

Ease of movement

- 4.30 The Craylands site is located between the four primary roads which are the A13 Vange Bypass and the A127 Southend Arterial Road to the north and south of the site respectively; and the A132 East Mayne and A176 Upper Mayne to the east and west of the site. Closer to the site, the A1235 Cranes Farm Road and the A1321 Broadmayne form east-west connections with the primary road network. There are two access points to the Craylands Estate from the adjacent highway network. One is on Whitmore Way which is northern boundary of the site, and the other on the A1321 Broadmayne to the south of the site.

- 4.31 Access to the housing areas within the new development is via a main street which runs through the development, along the northwest boundary of the estate, passing through the local centre and connecting to Whitmore Way. It integrates the separate parts of the development together, and provides access to the internal road network which gives vehicular access to the residential areas. The main street has been designed to enable the passage of both private and public transport. Bus services will pass through the main street in the long term to further support the retail provision and connect Craylands to the rest of Basildon. The layout encourages greater cycling and walking within the development through the use of shared surfaces, lower traffic speeds and dedicated cycle/pedestrian routes. Taken together with the public transport accessibility, these are intended to reduce the need to travel by car.
- 4.32 Within the earlier phases of the development, internal roads had no clear distinction between streets and pavements, with limited use of kerbs. The principle behind this design is to encourage traffic to pass through slowly giving priority to pedestrians. The creation of streets and blocks was however essential to the design of later phases, with pavements along all streets, encouraging residents to walk or cycle for short trips.

Legibility

- 4.33 The creation of the different character zones creates more legible areas where people can move around more easily and it is not difficult for visitors to orientate themselves. The local centre is at a central location, and serves as the shared focus of both the new development and the regenerated Craylands Estate. Internal access roads run through the development to provide access across it, thereby increasing the permeability of the site. Lanes and courts help to provide a clearly defined environment, where public, semi-private, and private spaces are understood. In general, the development is organized around a logical and interconnected network of street, lanes, and courts that allow for clear navigation around the neighbourhood.

Adaptability

- 4.34 At the core of the Craylands redevelopment project is the need to create a sustainable, thriving and vibrant community where people want to live and become actively involved in the management of their neighbourhood, now and in the future. The project has a number of sustainable features including solar panels, photovoltaics, and meets the Code for Sustainable Homes 'Level 3'. Craylands integrates passive stormwater management measures (SUDS) into the landscape design from the onset. Landscape areas within the public realm use native plantings not only to enhance the character of the site but also to establish a sustainable, drought resistant, diverse, and easily maintained landscape. The re-use of previously developed land in urban locations in order to reduce the need for Greenfield release also contributes towards sustainable development.

Diversity

- 4.35 The development is a mix of private and social housing consisting of flats and houses. The houses and flats are mixed tenure consisting of private sale, shared ownership and affordable rent. There are a mix of one and two bedroom apartments, as well as two to four bedroom houses. To a large extent, architectural improvements have been made to improve and integrate the residential character of affordable housing such that tenure types are indistinguishable by building type. Craylands also has a local centre comprising which accommodates a mix of uses including retail units and community uses to create a balanced community.

Dunton Fields

- 4.36 Dunton Fields is a previous Greenfield site bordered by existing industrial units to the east, and residential units to its south with Archer Fields to the south east. An area of open space is retained to its west, and the area to the north of the site beyond the A127 is predominantly rural in nature and allocated as Green Belt. It is a phased residential development of up to 450 homes on the edge of the existing Laindon settlement area. The first phase of the proposal for 179 residential units together with key infrastructure, including outline application for later units was approved in 2013.



Figure 43: New Housing Development at Dunton Fields, Laindon

Character

- 4.37 The general layout of the first phase of this development is focused around a main street (spine) road that runs through the site. Along the first section of the main street from south east, the Circus acts as a nodal point within the scheme. This space provides a transition between the avenue character of the primary street and the more intimate character of the linkages into residential areas to the south and north. The units that lead up to this area are set back from the road providing a boulevard feel to the development. Two gateway units are set forward from this building line and provide a feature entrance to the Circus. The units in the north and eastern side of the Circus are in a crescent form and at 3 storey heights, signifying important landmarks and prominent features at this point of transition. High quality landscaping complements the buildings. The spine road continues west from the Circus with large detached and semi-detached units leading into a large formal square which provides a sense of space within the development. The units facing onto the square are larger in scale, to emphasise the hierarchy of spaces within the scheme by providing a mass and scale adjacent to the open feature which complements the significance of the space. Another smaller area of public open space acts as a pivot point as the formal square links up to the link road that turns north.
- 4.38 The use of high quality traditional materials, selective colours and architectural detailing on the elevations gives a community theme to the overall design, with a strong sense of place. The palette of materials used include red and yellow stock brickwork, red/terracotta plain tiles/pantiles, grey tiles and reproduction slate. The use of stone detailing (cills, heads, string courses and copings) on some more prominent buildings boosts the level of detailing. Similarly the use of boarding to gables on some of the smaller units (notably the splayed corner houses) creates added interest to the street scene. The style and scale of the housing complements that of existing properties adjacent to the site without detracting from the general appearance of the development. The development at Dunton Fields represents a popular development of contemporary homes which contributes to the much needed regeneration of Laindon, and the general Basildon area.

Continuity and Enclosure

- 4.39 The vast majority of the residential units on the site are 2 storeys in height but generally vary from 1 to a maximum of 3 storeys in height. These often form a continuous street frontage. Buildings define and enclose the street scene with feature units being located at strategic points to act as gateway units or focal points. The scale and proportion of building blocks create a sense of hierarchy within the development. Dual aspect units are used on street corners to provide continuous active street frontages. The northern boundary has a fairly continuous building line that separates the main development from the A127, with fencing acting as an acoustic and visual buffer for the site. Properties benefit from private open space in the form of small front

gardens, and larger rear gardens. Boundary treatments feature within the more intimate areas of the development and include railings, picket fences and low hedges. Tree planting also frames views, and lends an avenue character of the primary street.

Quality of the public realm

- 4.40 Surface materials used for hard landscaping of the roads, shared surfaces and pathways differ so that users are able to easily distinguish between them. The changes in surface also denote a hierarchy of route ways to manage vehicle speed and movement. Car park areas are formed using tarmac. Timber bollards are also used to prevent roadside parking in public spaces. Car parking is retained in parking courts or integral garages with only few on-street parking in sight. There are several rear parking courts within the development all of which are overlooked by adjacent units. Flat-over-Garage units provide access to parking courts to ensure that the buildings dominate the street scene. A key element in design is the inclusion and retention of high quality open space and trees throughout the development. The Central Square is the key area of the formal public realm within the development, providing a meeting and activity space, and a sense of arrival within a contained space at the centre. The Eastern Circus is an informal open space incorporating various soft landscaping measures to provide amenity to residents. A significant amount of open space was also retained to allow future improvements to Victoria Park.

Ease of movement

- 4.41 Dunton Fields is well-located close to the A13 and the A127, giving access to areas of the capital which is advantageous for commuters. Laindon Station which is nearest to the development provides rail links to Shoeburyness in the east and London Fenchurch Street to the west. Access to bus services is limited at present, with only one bus service stop outside the entrance to Phase 1 of the development on High Road, which runs towards Brentwood in the north and Basildon Town Centre in the west. The development could benefit from further provision of new bus services. There is a hierarchy of roads within the site, with secondary roads, tertiary roads, cycle routes and footpaths leading off from the main link road. The Western Link Road represents a significant piece of infrastructure associated with this development. A principal vehicular access which continues from the new development south east at Archer Fields leads north-west into the site, forming the main link road. This spine road runs through the site, connecting the different parts of the development to the existing Ford Dunton roundabout. Secondary roads lead away from the spine road and access the other areas within the development. The secondary roads incorporate shared surfaces to encourage lower vehicular speeds, and concurrent use by vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. A footpath/cycleway has been provided along the length of the link road to facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport and to improve accessibility. However the choice to walk or cycle may be inhibited by the

sheer length of the road without buildings or activity to provide active street frontages that could be beneficial both visually and in terms of security through increased overlooking.

Legibility

- 4.42 There is a clear delineation between the roads and cycleways/footpaths to ensure a high level of pedestrian safety. A legible movement pattern through the development is facilitated through linked pedestrian/cycleway corridors which increase connectivity between the site and surrounding urban areas. Legible views are reinforced through the positioning of gateway units and focal points at the strategic locations.

Adaptability

- 4.43 Dwellings have been constructed to meet Building Regulations Part L (2010) requirements for sustainable and low energy dwellings as a minimum standard. A large area of public open space has been retained as an open area to attenuate surface water across the site. This is an integral part of the drainage strategy for the site as well as being visually appealing to the area and providing amenity to local residents.

Diversity

- 4.44 The residential dwellings comprise of a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses, as well as 1 and 2 bedroom flats, providing both private and affordable accommodation. Consideration has been given to ensure that the flats integrate with the rest of the development in terms of design. The scheme proposals also include land reserved for a health centre and an early years' centre which could potentially provide for community facilities within this area. There are no retail provisions within this development. However, it is located in close proximity to Laindon town centre which has a number of local services, but itself has been subject to redevelopment proposals. Basildon Town Centre is located approximately 3 miles away from Dunton Fields. With limited public transport accessibility, residents are likely to depend on car travel to access services, jobs, and facilities.

Riverside Place

- 4.45 Riverside Place is a comprehensive redevelopment of previously developed, under-utilised land on an area north of Lower Southend Road, on the north-eastern side of Wickford Town Centre. It is bounded by the A132 Golden Jubilee Way to the east, and the River Crouch to the north and west. The scheme comprises an on-going phased development of about 173 one and two bedroom apartments, with some offices, retail units and restaurants and basement car parking. The first phase of the

redevelopment is now complete which currently consists over 50 apartments, forming part of the new Riverside Place development.



Figure 44: Riverside Place, Wickford

Character

4.46 The design of the buildings is based on modern, yet classical design features and proportions. The facades are broken up proportionally to replicate human proportions to produce a streetscape that sits comfortably in its urban environment. The range of materials used have a modern reflection of the existing and traditional building fabric of the local area and include brickwork, rendered panels, timber cladding, darkened window frames and different coloured glazing. The built form provides visual and acoustic screening to the area and creates a distinctive and interesting appearance on the street scene. The Wickford Master Plan identified the site as part of a Riverside Living zone where high quality residential development adjacent to the River Crouch will be promoted together with revitalisation of the river. In light of this, this quality residential scheme adjacent to the River Crouch creates a new focal point that would maximise the riverside as an asset.

Continuity and Enclosure

4.47 The blocks of apartments are arranged around landscaped courtyards to create an enclosed area, which also presents a strong building frontage along Lower Southend Road to create a high quality streetscape. Public and private areas are well defined

with overlooking views. Furthermore, the space retained for restaurant use will provide an active building frontage at the entrance to the development.

Quality of the public realm

- 4.48 The use of different surface materials defines movement within the area. Private parking courts serve the apartment units to keep car parking off street. Additional spaces cater for cycle storage with some provision for casual on street parking spaces for use by the general public. The scheme has been designed to enable the maximum number of dwellings to benefit from views across the town and over the River Crouch. A new pedestrian-friendly, civic space with easy access to River Crouch is also proposed as part of the development.

Ease of movement

- 4.49 The site is a short distance from Wickford's High Street and the railway station, with frequent bus and rail services connecting to the wider urban area. The Town Centre is well connected to the wider strategic transport network, although it is presently not sufficiently linked for pedestrians/cyclists. Nonetheless, the close proximity to local services and facilities will reduce the need to travel by car.

Legibility

This planned redevelopment represents a new focal point that would maximise pedestrian movement between locations by creating a more active street frontage and a walkable and user friendly public realm.

Adaptability

- 4.50 The scheme was designed to achieve 'built-in' sustainability in terms of the choice of materials and construction methods and achieves the Eco Homes 'Very Good' rating as a minimum standard. It is a modern interpretation of the traditional Essex vernacular, using materials identified in the Essex Design Guide.

Diversity

- 4.51 The provision of housing and promotion of new eating and drinking opportunities in this town centre location could create a demand for the planned improvements and regeneration of the Wickford centre. Its close proximity to the town centre and local amenities together with access to public transport services, would contribute to the creation of a more vibrant town.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

- 5.1 Based on the detailed review carried out in the study, this section reviews the main findings and results by drawing a set of conclusions. A broad SWOT analysis has also been carried out to consider some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from an urban design perspective. The section then provides some guiding principles and recommendations as to how design policies could influence better design outcomes within the Borough. It reinforces the detailed urban design analyses of the previous sections, using the outcome to establish a set of guidance parameters that would inform all stakeholders for future developments.

Table 1: Urban Design Review SWOT Analysis

	STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
CHARACTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A modern town, with strong focus on community. ▪ The structure of the town, based around different town and local centres and smaller settlements, leads naturally to a strong sense of local identity. ▪ Some buildings of historic merit contribute to the special interest in some areas. ▪ Vibrant industrial heritage as an economic driver for the local area and wider sub-region. ▪ Range of residential types meets a diverse set of housing needs. ▪ The consistent style and layout repeated in some areas (e.g. the New Town, areas of Special Development Control) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of awareness and appreciation of the full diversity and complexity of spatial qualities, historic fabric, and streetscape by the public and potential investors. ▪ Poor alterations, unsympathetic conversion of historic buildings, leading to the erosion of local identities. ▪ Obliteration of the integrity of the historic plots within suburban residential areas. ▪ Poor quality buildings falling into disrepair and underuse. ▪ Stark building facades especially in the industrial areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned urban and town centre regeneration has the potential to bring great improvements to the quality of the urban environment. ▪ Exploring sympathetic conversion and reuse of robust buildings. Appropriate redevelopment schemes could have major beneficial impact. ▪ Shop fronts present a particular opportunity for character enhancement. ▪ The opportunity to acknowledge and enhance the quality of surviving historic fabric by setting up initiatives to make best use of those special features of the town that still exist to reinforce the sense of place and local distinctiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The continuation of degradation process of buildings could reduce investment confidence for repair. ▪ Inability to secure financial resources for major infrastructure projects. ▪ Economic downturns and external factors beyond local control. ▪ Planning reforms and relaxed planning protection leading to unsympathetic and poor quality developments and conversions. ▪ Political interests that are inconsistent with design objectives.

	<p>gives uniformity and a sense of place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buildings generally respond to the underlying landscape and topography. ▪ Period features and high quality craftsmanship in external detailing is evident in new residential schemes which gives a visual richness and personality to the facades. ▪ Green corridors that penetrate and interlock with the urban form. 			
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A predominance of continuous built frontages through much of the town. ▪ The public realm is often well enclosed by buildings. ▪ Buildings generally define the street without overshadowing or dominating it, giving a domestic and human scale to the streets. ▪ Entrances, windows, and shopfronts generally provide active frontages onto the street and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poorly defined public and private space in some areas. ▪ Loss of boundary walls to make way for car parking leading to a loss of definition and enclosure. ▪ There are examples of developments where rear elevations and service areas are adjacent to road frontages. Such development ignores the public realm, and makes no positive contribution the street-scene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enclosing streets and other spaces by buildings and trees of a scale that feels comfortable and appropriate to the character of the space. ▪ Enhancing street and space frontages with outward facing development to reinforce street layout and consolidate the built form. ▪ Reinforcing the siting of dual aspect buildings at street corners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unsympathetic infill that fails to adhere to urban structure and built form of the town. ▪ Lack of investment secured for new development. ▪ New development creating inactive frontages or abnormal setbacks due to operational requirement.

	boundary walls are generally low, creating a good sense of enclosure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some poor treatment of street corners. ▪ Long blank facades in industrial parks and along some key routes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create higher level of active frontages and natural surveillance and enhancing inactive edges to encourage social interactions and pedestrian flows. 	
QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large areas of open spaces in most urban areas, though their strength depends on quality. ▪ The town benefits from dedicated community spaces, play areas, and other areas of high landscape value providing a valuable amenity for the local population. ▪ Paved surfaces, street furniture, and low hedging and planting treatments ensure good quality public realm. ▪ Some good examples of featured public art. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The loss of and general poor maintenance of the public realm has led to a degeneration in the quality of public space. ▪ Hard streetscape, lack of green areas or 'breathing spaces' in certain areas. ▪ Poor connection and integration of some key natural features e.g. River Crouch. ▪ Traffic intrusion and poor infrastructure are inhospitable to pedestrians and do not invite people to linger and interact. ▪ The quality of spaces in and around development is limited by car parking. On-street parking easily dominates and overtakes the streetscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is much scope for public realm improvement in terms of quality by investing in sensitive front space planting, street planting, and improved landscaping through appropriate developer contributions. ▪ Major developments could incorporate public art within public spaces and along public routes. ▪ Introduction of innovative frontage treatments such as artwork or local historic information on blank facades. ▪ Reconnection to the natural landscape by creating better visual and physical linkages. ▪ Introducing sensitive physical and visual links to all green spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inability to secure financial resources for major infrastructure projects. ▪ Further loss of front gardens and boundary walls to hard standing.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Segregation of pedestrians, cars and cyclists can lead to dead and inactive routes. ▪ Lack of active uses along pedestrian routes and poor levels of natural surveillance of some public space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce existing extensive hard landscape given to car parks and giving such land for redevelopment to revitalise these areas. 	
EASE OF MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good connection to the wider strategic transport network. ▪ Access to nearby employment areas, services, and facilities. ▪ Good public transport links, service and interchange location at the heart of the town. ▪ Narrow streets help to control vehicle speeds and are of human scale thereby conducive to cycling and pedestrian movement. ▪ Creation of pedestrianized zones and internal access routes to facilitate pedestrian movement within areas. ▪ New developments are giving greater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design for, and dependence on the private motor vehicle. ▪ Busy transport routes act as barriers to pedestrian movement. ▪ Lack of adequate pedestrian route ways, few crossing points for pedestrians and little provision for cyclists in some areas. ▪ Pedestrian routes like subways and underpasses can feel potentially unsafe. ▪ Some developments are poorly located with regard to services and public transport accessibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New investments in highway construction. ▪ Rebalance streets to comfortably accommodate all modes of movement through design. ▪ Improvements to local public transport accessibility. ▪ Creation of home zones along quieter streets can help to find a better balance between cars and pedestrians and social activity. ▪ Fostering pedestrian permeability by improving and linking up footpaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of funding and economic downturn, affecting major infrastructure projects. ▪ Road improvements unprogressed to areas outside the main settlement areas. ▪ Development opportunity sites may not materialise to create a new network of streets. ▪ Public transport connections not expanded towards some areas. ▪ Unchanged, tired public realm that affects people's perceptions and

	consideration and priority to pedestrian movement.			confidence thus discouraging walking and cycling.
LEGIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most areas are often permeable and navigable with a range of route choices and direct connections for all road users. ▪ Signage, information and interpretation at street level aids navigation. ▪ Good landscape features, prominent buildings, vistas, and views that act as landmark features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of significant landmark buildings, statement architecture, or works of art especially at key gateways providing focal points in an area. ▪ Uniformity in some estates can seem quite monotonous and can make way-finding difficult. ▪ The open layout and removal of the traditional street system in some parts makes it difficult to navigate. ▪ Hierarchical road layouts and commercial designs have characterised some recent housing development, resulting in poor permeability and legibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant restructuring of street layouts to improve the quality of legibility and permeability, for instance, by connecting cul-de-sacs together to form streets. ▪ Layout can also be improved when building new homes by framing key movement routes to improve legibility. ▪ Creating and enhancing positive and memorable landmark features and gateways that aid linkages between places. ▪ Comprehensive sign posting scheme, attractions and points of interest to aid legibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inappropriate and out-of-scale built form that impacts on views, skyline and roofscape. ▪ Poor design solutions that erode the streetscape of both new and historic streets. ▪ Weak built forms that do not address the street i.e. presence of dead frontages.
ADAPTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability of buildings to be personalised and adapted/improved over time with extensions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The urban fabric of the town has started to show signs of strain due to land use intensity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redevelopment of unused and redundant areas. ▪ New and refurbished buildings could be designed to be energy efficient and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further decline of building maintenance could discourage investments to improvement.

	<p>alterations and improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some streets build on topography and micro-climate to maximise the effects of wind, sun and shade. ▪ New developments are responding well to contemporary issues on sustainability and achieving 'built-in' sustainability as an integral part of the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-term deprivation has left a legacy of under-investment and lack of repair and restoration in many properties. ▪ Empty buildings and sites. 	<p>reduce harmful impacts, inspired and following the principles of a sustainable environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage new innovative designs that harness natural resources; for example green roofs, solar and wind power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Viability pressure to create returns on investment, impacting on the quality of buildings. ▪ Poor built form in terms of the inappropriate positioning, orientation and scale would exacerbate poor climate comfort conditions.
DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The diversity of uses ensures that all facilities are within a compact and accessible area which ultimately supports the success and vitality of the Borough. ▪ Provision of mixed tenure housing is becoming more popular within new residential schemes consisting of private sale, shared ownership and affordable rent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restrictive zoning and the spatial segregation of uses hampers the growth of mixed-use urban neighbourhoods. ▪ Lack of diversity of offer and limited night-time economy. ▪ Out-of-town retail draws potential trade and business away from established centres which benefit from public transport access. ▪ Vacant retail space and office buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing new areas and sites to both strengthen and diversify existing character areas where appropriate. ▪ Identification of Opportunity Sites offer potential for regeneration. ▪ Promoting linkages and connections between edge of town developments and the core. ▪ Reappraisal of the role of town centres in the 21st century will offer greater opportunities for leisure, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A variety of other visitor attractions and accommodation within close proximity to the town. ▪ Lack of willing investors. ▪ Competition from neighbouring towns. ▪ Incompatibility between private and public sector activities.

		▪ Some developments do not fully integrate tenures.	civic and non-shopping activities.	
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Policy Review Outcomes

- 5.2 It is evident that Basildon Borough is an agglomeration of distinct character areas which have built up over time to create the vibrant, attractive town that it is to date. This is reflected in its landscape, history and buildings, emphasizing how human relationship across space and time has influenced its built form. Thus, it is difficult to establish a single cultural identity for the whole Basildon Borough as it is an area of contrasts with historic town centres, New Town development, areas of open countryside, small villages and Plotland settlements, as well as a unique and biodiversity rich wildlife habitat in the form of the Thames Estuary marshes. However, it is important to value and celebrate the differences between the communities, while also recognising their inherent interdependence.
- 5.3 One of the Borough's more unique character traits is reflected in the south of the Borough dominated by the development of a Mark I New Town, masterplanned in phases from 1951. The New Town brought a comprehensive transformation to the area, with significant changes to its landscape and original village and Plotland communities, although pockets of its more historic origins remain in a physical sense, the 20th century onwards is characterised by a fragmentation of built form much of which has largely failed to relate well to the townscape of previous centuries. Therefore, the prevalent urban layers that form the south of the Borough's 'sense of place' are almost exclusively post 1950's in date; although distinct design variations exist in the neighbourhoods.
- 5.4 Elsewhere in the Borough, Billericay is a more historic town, its position between the Thames and Chelmsford making it an ideal staging post for travellers from the 1500s. The arrival of the railway in 1889 caused the town to expand, although this was not significant until the inter-war period and after when more large scale development occurred. It therefore retains a historic core, with more eclectic styles radiating outwards.
- 5.5 Similarly, prior to the 20th Century, Wickford was a small village, clustered around the cross roads of the High Street and London Road. The arrival of the railway however meant it found itself situated in London's commuter belt and experienced significant expansion from the 1950's onwards, the largest area of which, The Wick started in the 1970s and is still to be completed.
- 5.6 Several areas of urban expansion and regeneration now define the modern Basildon. Efforts to develop the Borough as a truly modern town has brought a comprehensive transformation to the area, with significant changes to its landscape, leaving little of its past remaining. Belonging to the group of towns built in England in the 1950's, it drew upon the perceived best town planning principles of the time, and prided itself on creating valiant, new places that were visionary and that would overcome the inequalities that had arisen in the historic cities. This visionary heritage and optimism is still palpable over much of the town, and has much to pride itself upon. But as

hindsight has shown over the years, it is not without its own problems and is considered to lack some balance in its understanding of the inter-relationship between people and places.

- 5.7 Current policies relating to design focuses on promoting and protecting the character of the local area, and on residential amenity. Limited focus is given to wider design objectives, potentially resulting in opportunities to better integrate the built environment being missed. The Borough's urban areas is envisaged to see significant growth in coming years, and will therefore need to adapt and respond to these pressures both within their existing boundaries and beyond, while retaining their unique character and heritage. Where settlements that fall within Green Belt need to accommodate new development to deliver housing needs, this will need to embrace locally distinctive character. Securing new development that can positively contribute to the character of its local environment is therefore of key importance, and are as relevant in urban areas, as in more rural locations. A balance will need to be struck between making best use of land, respecting established urban character, and creating new and vibrant sustainable neighbourhoods.

Areas of Special Development Control

- 5.8 There are three Areas of Special Development Control (SDC) where particular emphasis on protecting the character of the surrounding area is expected. Areas of Special Development Control are identified specifically with an emphasis on the protection of localised character, by setting out a series of measures which are designed to ensure that new dwellings do not dominate the street scene, are not out of character, and do not cause excessive overlooking or overshadowing of existing properties.
- 5.9 Ramsden Bellhouse is characterised by low density residential development set in large plots. In order to retain its semi-rural, spacious character, a practice of requiring minimum plot widths was formalised in 1986, and applies to all new dwellings. The plot width is measured at the front building line of the proposed dwelling, or at the point where the plot borders onto the highway. In order to minimise the impact of new development in Ramsden Bellhouse on the relatively open surrounding countryside, only chalets and bungalows are normally permitted.
- 5.10 The Council accepted in 1980 that two areas of Bowers Gifford, either side of Pound Lane, to the east of Pitsea were sufficiently built-up to be accorded the status of 'infill areas'. The largest of these areas, at the southern end of Pound Lane, consisted of predominantly bungalow style developments interspersed with a number of chalets. However, after its designation as an infill area, a large number of bungalows have been converted into, or replaced by large chalets. These large chalets, often developed on moderate plots, can be inappropriate in scale, detract from the character of the area, and can have a detrimental effect upon the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers. The use of maximum ridge heights, and the retention of a 1 metre gap

between flank walls of new chalets and site boundaries aims to minimise the impact of any new chalets on the adjoining properties, and to preserve the character of the area.

- 5.11 In 1986, the Council accepted that, notwithstanding the designation as Green Belt, Sugden Avenue, parts of London Road and Woolshots Road, Wickford were built-up to such an extent that no useful purpose was served by applying Green Belt policies to these areas. Accordingly, development control practice was amended to allow residential development, with special development control standards applicable in Sugden Avenue. These standards limit the floor space, plot widths and types of new dwellings. These criteria are designed to retain, as far as reasonably possible, the open character of the area and minimise the impact of development on the adjacent Green Belt.
- 5.12 As part of this design review, the effectiveness of policies BE13, BE14, and BE15 in achieving specific design objectives in the areas of Special Development Control has also been assessed. It is evident that SDC policies have influenced the character of these areas, marked by low density residential development set in large, spacious plots. The semi-rural character provides a variety of visual interest that physically integrates with the surrounding area, with access to the countryside and green amenity space featuring strongly in these neighbourhoods. However, it is important to consider whether SDC policies will continue to be required given that these areas are now built up, with proposed allocations for the Borough's strategic sites adjacent to some of these sites.
- 5.13 In addition to the site visits, planning applications that went to appeal in the last 5 years in the three Areas of Special Development Control Policy in the Borough were reviewed. Of the 13 applications reviewed, SDC policies were only effective in influencing the Inspector's decision to dismiss an appeal on two occasions. Having regard also to the SDC policies, proposals for extensions and alterations were also not considered to be contrary to the SDC policies as SDC policies are considered to relate to new dwellings rather than extensions and alterations. From this review, it can be deduced that saved Policies BAS BE13, BAS BE 14 and BAS BE15 were often not given significant weight when making appeal decisions, with considerations given instead to the overall design objectives. The result of this analysis is presented in *Appendix 2*.
- 5.14 Given the relatively built up nature of the Areas of Special Development Control, the trends presented by past appeal decisions, and future indications of strategic housing allocations on surrounding countryside, the effectiveness of SDC policies needs further consideration.
- 5.15 The aim of requiring different design standards in these SDC areas is to protect the open character of the area and minimise the impact of development on the adjacent Green Belt. While SDC policies may cease to be effective in preserving the character

of the surrounding countryside and the adjacent Green Belt, it is worth noting that the principles of such policies should be retained as far as reasonably possible, to maintain the open character of the area and minimise the impact of new development on adjoining properties. This is to ensure that only development of a satisfactory design and layout takes place, which would shape the potential for area specific characteristics to be effectively considered.

- 5.16 Future policy criteria should therefore consider the appropriateness of design principles arising from the general design policies in preserving area specific characteristics in these areas, or whether SDC policies will continue to be required to protect residential amenity from harm. In any case, innovative contemporary design should be encouraged, and regard should be had to characteristic features of the local area and the adoption of successful urban forms.

Recommendations

- 5.17 The quality achieved in the design and layout of the built environment is one of the long term legacies development gives to an area. The appearance of new development and its relationship with its surrounding built and natural environment has a significant effect on the character and appearance of an area. Therefore, new development should be sensitive in terms of location, scale, materials and design, reflecting the traditional pattern of development within the settlement. The following recommendations should be considered when determining the types of criteria to be included in future policies related to the design of buildings and places.

Character

- New development should be of the highest architectural standard, and respond to local context and character including the local materials and styles, natural features, and historic quality of the area that contributes to its special interest.
- Future development and regeneration should respond to the different urban design character areas such that design principles enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of the Borough's built environment through high quality and inclusive design that makes places better for people.
- An effective response to local character and distinctiveness will draw on the positive characteristics of the area. Where existing development relates poorly to the surrounding development or lacks a coherent and integrated built form, new development should take reasonable opportunities to improve the area's character, enclosure, permeability, public realm and appearance, and better integrate the area with its surroundings.

Continuity and Enclosure

- Consistency in the building lines along each street should be emphasised, with setbacks appropriate to the character of the area.
- Buildings should typically face the street, both to create an increased sense of security and added vitality to the public realm. Street design which establishes narrow blocks and allows fronts onto access roads, and force backs of houses onto primary or distributor roads should be avoided.
- Houses should have rear gardens that back onto other rear gardens as a means of maximising wildlife habitat, privacy and sunlight.
- Buildings should be designed to respond appropriately to their importance, and reflecting their function and role in relation to the public realm, with clear and delineated boundaries and responsibility for external spaces provided.

Quality of the public realm

- Appropriate materials of high quality, environmental performance and durability should be used for roads and other street furniture, with adequate provision for the enhancement and maintenance of the public realm. Good quality landscaping, including hard and soft landscaping should be encouraged, and opportunities to incorporate public art promoted.
- The emphasis for green infrastructure should be on quality rather than quantity of green space within the Borough boundary. A strategic approach is required to create a linked network of green routes and spaces.
- New developments should consider the context when determining if front gardens are individual or communal (as individual front gardens are often critical to the character of an area).
- New development needs to be designed with safety in mind, both within the site and in the adjoining public realm.
- Emphasis is needed on removing vehicular infrastructure from the public realm. On-street parking should typically be avoided on primary routes. However, on-street parking may be encouraged on residential access roads or other tertiary routes when street widths permit it, and where it does not impinge on character. Newer developments may also consider communal on-site parking.

Ease of movement

- Urban design in new development needs to facilitate choice in means of transportation for users and occupiers in order to reduce dependence on car. Walking should be prioritized as the preferred mode of travel.
- The town morphology should emphasise vehicular and pedestrian permeability within a clear street hierarchy, with regard to circulation, demand and linkages. The street hierarchy should accentuate the primacy of the primary roads and the distributor routes that extend off from them.
- Crosswalks are recommended at all intersections to improve pedestrian access and safety.
- New development should establish a grid of streets to improve access for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Cul-de-sacs and dead-end roads should be avoided.
- Footpaths represent important circulation paths, and new development needs to link into and reinforce the existing path network. Cycling routes should also be encouraged.

Legibility

- Residential footprints should not be too massive, and should facilitate permeability and future flexibility. Walkable, short blocks should be created to expand pedestrian access, maximize building frontage, and increase sidewalk activity.
- Existing landmarks, vistas and views along corridors and orientation points should be recognised and protected. Opportunities should also be maximised to create new landmarks buildings, memorable and distinctive images, and strategic breaks in frontages.
- Key nodes and clear gateways into distinct areas should be established and marked by such features as gateway signage, key buildings, and changes in streetscape treatment that express the function of buildings and places through the design, detailing and quality of materials.
- Way finding signage should be applied consistently throughout the Borough as a way of indicating places of interest, connections to open land and the presence of a clear street hierarchy.

Adaptability

- Existing building stock should be protected and enhanced in terms of their physical upkeep, and the treatment of sites in their immediate vicinity. Urban areas should strive for a consistency of character which extends to streetscape elements and furniture.
- Existing buildings can also be adapted to introduce new uses and provide modern accommodation standards.
- New development should respond intelligently to lifestyle needs that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic, and environmental conditions.
- New homes should be designed in accordance with Building Regulations and up-to-date national standards for construction including and 'Building for Life 12' standards, to optimize energy performance and resource conservation and facilitate future adaptation to residents' needs.

Diversity

- Neighbourhoods should be resilient by embracing density, diversity and mix of uses, users, building types, and public spaces.
- Mixed use neighbourhoods should be socially and economically diverse - mixed in income, mixed in use, and actively supportive of places where people of different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, occupations, and households can live and visit.
- New development should promote a mix of residential tenure and introduce new commercial and community uses that will support diversity and choice as well as respond to local needs.
- Urban areas should foster inclusive and accessible environment that functions safely for all.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: URBAN DESIGN REVIEW - ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Character

1. What are the important characteristics of the area (e.g. architecture, historic quality)?
2. What features enhance, intrude on or detract from the character of the area?

Continuity and Enclosure

3. Is there a clear distinction between public and private spaces, and is it clear how each function?
4. Do built features, and features in the street scene reinforce or impair streets, spaces and continuous building frontage (e.g. active/dead frontages, gap sites, boundary treatments)?

Quality of the public realm

5. Are the public spaces attractive, safe, accessible and well connected?
6. Does the public realm make a positive contribution to the life of the area? Does it enhance amenity & enjoyment?

Ease of movement

7. Does the network of roads, paths and transport services provide convenient access to local services, and to the wider urban area?
8. Are there clear distinctions between spaces for different road users to avoid confusion?

Legibility

9. Are streets well planned and convenient to use for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and other users without the need for detours?
10. Could a stranger or visitor find their way around the area? Consider the availability of landmarks, vistas and signage.

Adaptability

11. Is there evidence of sustainable building construction and/or adaptations and enhancements which have improved the sustainability of existing buildings?
12. Does the design of development within the area allow for redevelopment in the future if requirements change?

Diversity

13. Is there a mix of land uses to enable residents to have access to jobs, services and facilities?
14. Is there a mix of different house types, enabling different households to live in the community together?
15. Is the housing provision tenure blind, or is it possible to distinguish through the design, quality and upkeep of homes the likely economic circumstances of residents?

APPENDIX 2: APPEAL DECISIONS RELATING TO AREAS OF SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Date of Decision	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Appeal Decision	Reason for Appeal and Inspector's Conclusions	Effectiveness of Special Development Control Policy	Notes
06-Nov-12	10/00654/FULL	Land adj. to Thark, Sugden Avenue	Proposed construction of a detached dwelling and garage	Dismissed	The proposal was found to accord with accord with saved Policies BAS BE12 and BAS BE14 of the Basildon District Local Plan (2007) and was considered to be acceptable in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the area. Rather, it was dismissed based on the level of harm in respect of its effect on flood risk.	Not relevant.	
30-Dec-10	10/00617/FULL	Ampney, Sugden Avenue	First floor side extension	Allowed	Given that the proposal would extend an existing house rather than construct a new dwelling on a new plot, the restriction posed by Policy BAS BE14 does not apply.	Not relevant.	

15-Jun-15	14/01202/FULL	The Grange, Church Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Erection of free standing private recreation/store building	Dismissed	Having balanced the various matters, other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the GB by reason of inappropriateness, the additional harm to its openness, and the conflict with national planning policy.	Not relevant.	The local plan in force is the Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies 2007, but the Council has not identified any local policy of relevance in that document, relying instead on the Framework in its interpretation of Green Belt Policy.
20-Oct-11	11/00441/FULL	"Naomi", Church Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Proposed detached garage/cart store to the front of the property	Allowed	The Inspector found that the building would not be imposing or harmful in the street-scene, and that these individual and local circumstances are considerations which outweigh the relevant factors of the development plan and that the aims of the policies to retain a spacious character of development are still met. He also noted other examples of recent development along Church Road where there is a lesser distance of built development from the road itself.	Not relevant.	

08-Jun-11	10/00921/FULL	Hemmings Store, Glebe Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Construction of a detached 3 bedroom bungalow and garage to the rear of existing building	Dismissed	The proposal would result in a cramped development, which would be out of keeping with, and significantly harmful to, the prevailing character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with LP policy BAS BE 13	Relevant	
15-Jun-15	14/01186/FULL	Brooklyn, Glebe Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of a new dwelling (Revised)	Dismissed	It was concluded that that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene in conflict with the aims of LP Policy BAS BE13, and LP Policy BAS BE12. The proposal also conflicts with the overarching design objectives set out in the NPPF	Relevant	
06-Dec-13	13/00424/FULL	Woodlands, Glebe Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Demolition of existing chalet and garage and erection of new dwelling and detached garage/workshop	Allowed	The scheme was considered to be in line with the objectives of saved Policies BAS BE12 and BAS BE13 of the Basildon District Local Plan and amongst other matters seeks to achieve the NPPF's call for sustainable development with good design quality	Not Relevant	Conditions were imposed by the Inspector relating to certain matters that were raised by the Council in the interests of amenity and convenience.

19-Nov-10	10/00333/FULL	Mayfield, Glebe Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Demolition of the existing dwelling and 2 outbuildings and the erection of a new 4 bedroom detached replacement dwelling	Dismissed	The proposed 4 bedroom detached replacement dwelling was considered inappropriate in the Green Belt for the purposes of PPG2 and contrary to Policy BAS GB3. Additional harm would be caused by the loss of openness to the Green Belt and to the purposes of including land in Green Belts	Not Relevant	
29-Apr-10	10/00305/FULL	Khairuzan, Glebe Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	New roof to dwelling to provide enlarged first floor accommodation with front dormers, a front gable projection, rear gable projections with balcony and a single storey side extension	Dismissed	The proposal would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of L'Ancrese and would fall foul of Local Plan Policy BAS BE12 because of its over-dominance.	Not Relevant	The appeal was dismissed on the grounds of the Council's Design policy. However having regard also to the SDC policy, the proposal was not considered to be contrary to this as it relates to new dwellings rather than extensions and alterations.
11-Jun-13	13/00017/FULL	Casetta, Orchard Avenue, Ramsden Bellhouse	Single storey rear extension to form "orangery"	Dismissed	It was concluded that the development would not preserve the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt, and would conflict with Saved Local Plan Policy GB4	Not Relevant	

03-Nov-11	10/00977/FULL (Appeal A)	Tennisdene, Ramsden Park Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Construct a replacement dwelling and detached double garage	Dismissed	Although the proposal was not found to harm the character and appearance of the Ramsden Bellhouse Special Protection Area, the harm to the living conditions of the adjoining occupants was a compelling and overriding objection to the proposal.	Not Relevant	
03-Nov-11	11/00344/FULL (Appeal B)	Tennisdene, Ramsden Park Road, Ramsden Bellhouse	Construct a replacement dwelling and detached double garage (re-submission of 10/00977/FULL)	Allowed	The Inspector acknowledged that whilst neither proposal would comply with criterion (ii) of policy BAS BE13, they would not harm the character or appearance of the Ramsden Bellhouse. In this respect they would comply with policy BAS BE12 of the Local Plan and the aims of policy BAS BE13.	Not Relevant	This proposal differs from appeal A in that there is a greater degree of separation from the boundary with the neighbouring dwellings and it is lower in height. In addition, the footprint is much shallower by comparison with Appeal A. For these reasons, it was considered that it would maintain the spacious character of the area.

21-Aug-15	14/01298/FULL	17 Westlake Avenue, Bowers Gifford	Replace existing dwelling with a two storey chalet style property	Allowed	The proposal was considered to comply with the aims and objectives of saved Policies BAS BE15 and BAS BE12 of the Local Plan, which seek development of high quality that respects its setting.	Not Relevant	
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