

Rochford Town Centre Area Action Plan: Issues and Options

A discussion and consultation document



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Produced with the assistance of Urban Initiatives
Urban Initiatives, 1 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 5HE
T +44 (0)20 7380 4545
F +44 (0)20 7380 4546
www.urbaninitiatives.co.uk

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1 Introduction

What is an Area Action Plan, and what is an Issues and Options Report?

- 1.1 An Area Action Plan (AAP) creates the framework for development sites and planning policies in a specific area. It acts as the focal point for the coordination of other public policies and programmes and guides public and private investment in the area.
- 1.2 This document is an Issues and Options report and represents a very early stage in the production of the Area Action Plan. No decisions have been made, but the document sets out some of the thoughts and ideas about matters that have been identified. You may have many other ideas or proposals that would enhance the town centre and we welcome suggestions – this document is a consultation document designed to generate discussion and interest in the issues.
- 1.3 Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) is government guidance which explains what local spatial planning is and how it benefits communities. It also sets out what the key ingredients of local spatial plans are and the key government policies on how they should be prepared. It should be taken into account by local planning authorities in preparing development plan documents and other local development documents. As set out in PPS12 (published June 2008), AAPs should be used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. PPS12 states that AAPs should:
 - Deliver planned growth areas;
 - Stimulate Regeneration;
 - Protect areas particularly sensitive to change;
 - Resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures; or
 - Focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives

What does this Area Action Plan cover?

- 1.4 This AAP covers the area that is defined as Rochford Town Centre through the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan Proposals Map (adopted June 2006) and beyond where appropriate. Town centres play a key role in providing for local people's everyday needs in terms of shopping, healthcare and leisure. An AAP can provide a framework to ensure that these needs are met. In addition, having regard to the objectives of an AAP as set out in PPS12, there are a number of reasons that an AAP is appropriate for Rochford Town Centre.
- 1.5 In general terms National Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) stresses the importance of town centres in terms of promoting sustainable development and seeks to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by planning for growth in existing town centres. Therefore town centres are often areas in which significant change is planned.
- 1.6 Secondly, in terms of Rochford specifically there is pressure on land because of the need to provide additional housing in the area. By March 2021 the district is required (by the East of England Plan) to accommodate 4,600 new homes.

- 1.7 Thirdly, Rochford Town Centre is a designated Conservation Area (Policy BC1 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan) and has a strong character and a number of listed buildings that are important to preserve. Thus any development that takes place will need to be extremely carefully managed.
- 1.8 This AAP will set out a vision for how the need for growth and change can be managed within a Conservation Area. It will help to identify how much potential exists within Rochford Town Centre and what level of new development is appropriate in these locations. It is hoped that through the evolution and delivery of this AAP a contribution can be made towards the Council's vision: 'To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here'

Overview of the area and Planning Policy Context

- 1.9 The focus for the AAP is the defined town centre boundary as illustrated on the current Local Plan Proposals Map. The heart of Rochford Town Centre is the Market Square. It is here, and along the streets leading to this, where the majority of town centre uses are located. The town follows a traditional cruciform street pattern, providing links to the railway station to the west and to residential areas elsewhere. Immediately bounding the town centre to the north is the Rochford Primary School and Rochford Hospital. Recent development has seen the expansion of the retail area to the north of the Market Square which includes a new Somerfield food store as part of a residential-led mixed-use development of town houses and flats. The town centre also includes a number of civic buildings and uses, which are mainly located along South Street.
- 1.10 To the south and west, Bradley Way acts as a 'by-pass', providing links to Hockley (to the north west) and Southend (to the south). The town centre includes a high number of historic buildings and it has a high intrinsic value. This is reinforced by local topography, which affords interesting views of the roofscape and of local landmarks.
- 1.11 The opportunities presented in this report sit within the framework of regional and local policy documentation which guides future change and development in the area. A detailed policy context section can be found in Appendix A, however the key points are outlined below.
- 1.12 At a regional level the East of England Plan (RSS14) highlights the potential of town centres in helping to achieve the development objective of making more use of previously developed land. In addition, the Plan aims to foster mixed use economies throughout the region, with town centre development playing a key role in improving economic opportunities and quality of life for local people.
- 1.13 The Rochford District Replacement Local Plan (adopted 2006) seeks to promote sustainable development patterns that minimise land take and reduce the need to travel. The Plan also designates Rochford Town Centre as a primary retail area in the district. The Council is in the process of producing its Core Strategy, which will eventually replace the Local Plan. The Core Strategy is currently at the pre-submission consultation stage. The draft Submission Document sets out the Council's aims for Rochford Town Centre (Policy RTC5) as delivering:
- A safe and high quality environment for residents
 - A market square that encourage visitors

- Enhanced retail offer for Rochford
- A range of evening leisure activities
- Improved accessibility to and within the town centre

Other emerging policies in the Core Strategy of particular relevance to the Rochford Area Action Plan include those in relation to public open space (Policy CLT5), community facilities (Policy CLT6) and youth facilities (Policy CLT8).

- 1.14 Alongside the regional and local planning policy documents, there are a number of other documents (Rochford Futures Study; Annual Monitoring Report; Urban Capacity Study; Employment Land Study; Conservation Area Appraisal; Retail and Leisure Study) that explore the issues that Rochford is facing. These documents have fed into this Area Action Plan and are also summarised in Appendix A.

Getting your Views

- 1.15 Your views are needed to help us to assess whether we have fully considered all the issues and opportunities facing the study area and have adequately assessed the potential future options for development of the area.
- 1.16 In order to encourage discussion and consideration of the matters in this report we have presented questions throughout the document. These questions are meant to be thought provoking and there is no need to answer all the questions. Your responses to these questions and any other submissions will be taken forward to the preparation of the document.



Feedback session as part of Placecheck

2 The Issues

Introduction

2.1 In preparing this consultation document, we gathered information and initial ideas from the public via the Council's website and through a Placecheck Initiative where members of the Citizens Panel were invited to participate in a workshop event to explore issues and opportunities for the town centre. The feedback from these exercises has helped to provide ideas set out in this document, and inform the suggested vision and strategy for Rochford Town Centre. The main points raised are presented in the sections below.

What you Told Us

Interactive Web-based Consultation

2.2 The web based consultation highlighted a number of key points which are summarised below:

- There were varying views on whether or not the Market Square should be pedestrianised. Those against felt it would negatively affect retail and encourage anti social behaviour and those in favour felt that it would create a better atmosphere and safer environment.
- There was a suggestion for a war memorial/other kind of memorial in the Market Square.
- There were suggestions for a café/bar in the Market Square.
- It was stated that there should be crossings near to Market Square to make pedestrian movement easier.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that the town centre is still used for shopping (even if Tesco and Sainsbury were to move into the area) and to promote local business. One suggestion was to stop charging for car parking in order to encourage people to continue to park in the town centre (rather than use the inevitable free parking at the supermarkets).
- There were suggestions for a landmark development over the Spar store at the eastern end of the Square.
- It was stated that more entertainment and leisure facilities are needed (particularly for under 18s).
- It was stated that more affordable housing is needed.
- It was stated that the Green Belt should be protected.

- It was stated that there should be shelter at bus stops and the position of the bus stops should be better thought through.
- There were concerns over speeding in all four streets of the town centre and the dominance of vehicles (and suggestions for better signage).
- Better signage was suggested for around the one way system to make the town centre more legible.
- There were many remarks about keeping the historic character of Rochford intact.

Placecheck Initiative

2.3 The Placecheck event was held to help inform ideas and options for future change and improvement in the town centre of Rochford, ensuring that the views and opinions of local residents help generate these options. Placecheck is a method of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focussing people on working together to achieve them. Placecheck asks questions about the processes of change and the potential for improving the area physically (more details of the Placecheck process can be found in Appendix B). The findings are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 – Summary of Placecheck Consultation Responses

Questions	Comments
<p>What do you like about Rochford?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Buildings • Local Character • The Market • Variety of local shops • Reservoir and Green Space • New development when viewed from station exit
<p>What do you dislike about Rochford?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many retirement homes – unsold: is there a need for so many? • Unattractive arrival experience into the town (but see comment above) • High-speed of traffic on all town centre streets, but mainly on North Street • Buses on West Street cause traffic delays • Somerfield development has generated HGV movement in town centre • Change has been incremental and un-coordinated rather than planned • Lack of community facilities (and anti-social behaviour of youths due to lack of facilities) • Unsafe at night • Difficult to cross road outside Council Offices • Narrow pavements on West Street • Spar building very unattractive • Public lavatories feel unsafe • Virgin Active facility expensive to hire • Concern that local shops will close due to competition from new larger food stores

Questions	Comments
<p>What can be changed/improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New buildings should be in-keeping with the character of the town • More youth and other community facilities are needed • Need better signage/local information, especially for car parking • Historic walks could be introduced to make Rochford a destination for people • Need affordable housing, particularly for young • Introduction of an evening economy, including a new restaurant in the Market Square • Extend offer in Market, with stalls on different days (Farmers Market/French Market) • Market Square could potentially be pedestrianised • Short-stay parking could be moved to Back Lane car park, with dedicated spaces closest to the Square and long-stay parking closest to station • More legible and direct link from the station into the town centre • Needs an overall plan for future change • Improve access to green spaces: improve links across Bradley Way • Improve lighting and safety of car parks • Events are needed to instill and promote civic pride – better street cleaning and recycling facilities needed • Earlier buses to serve the station • Better interchange with the station needed

Urban Design Analysis

2.4 To properly understand how the town centre works we have undertaken a survey and analysis in terms of physical development, scale, character, legibility and permeability. This has been based upon the seven objectives of urban design as established through the government guidance document: 'By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice'. The seven objectives of urban design area:

- **Character: A place with its own identity**
 - 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**
 - 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 spaces**
 - 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 is easy to get to and move through**
 - To promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.
- **Legibility: A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand**
 - 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**
 - To promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.
- **Diversity: A place with variety and choice**
 - 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.

- 2.5 In addition to national guidance we have also taken into account the advice in the Essex Design Guide. Originally published in the early 1970s, the Guide was updated in 1997 and again in 2005. It provides guidance for designing within the context of market towns and for lower density schemes. The latest version also provides links to the new Urban Place Supplement (UPS).
- 2.6 The UPS provides a design framework for the delivery of compact, mixed-use sustainable urban development. The guidance emphasises design quality while ensuring the improvement of infrastructure and the sustainability of existing urban places. The UPS is being adopted as a supplementary planning document by most district and borough Councils in Essex. The urban design analysis undertaken as part of this baseline report is thus mindful of the advice contained within both the Essex Design Guide and UPS.
- 2.7 This analysis is summarised in the table below, with more detail provided in subsequent text and diagrams.



Rochford Market Square

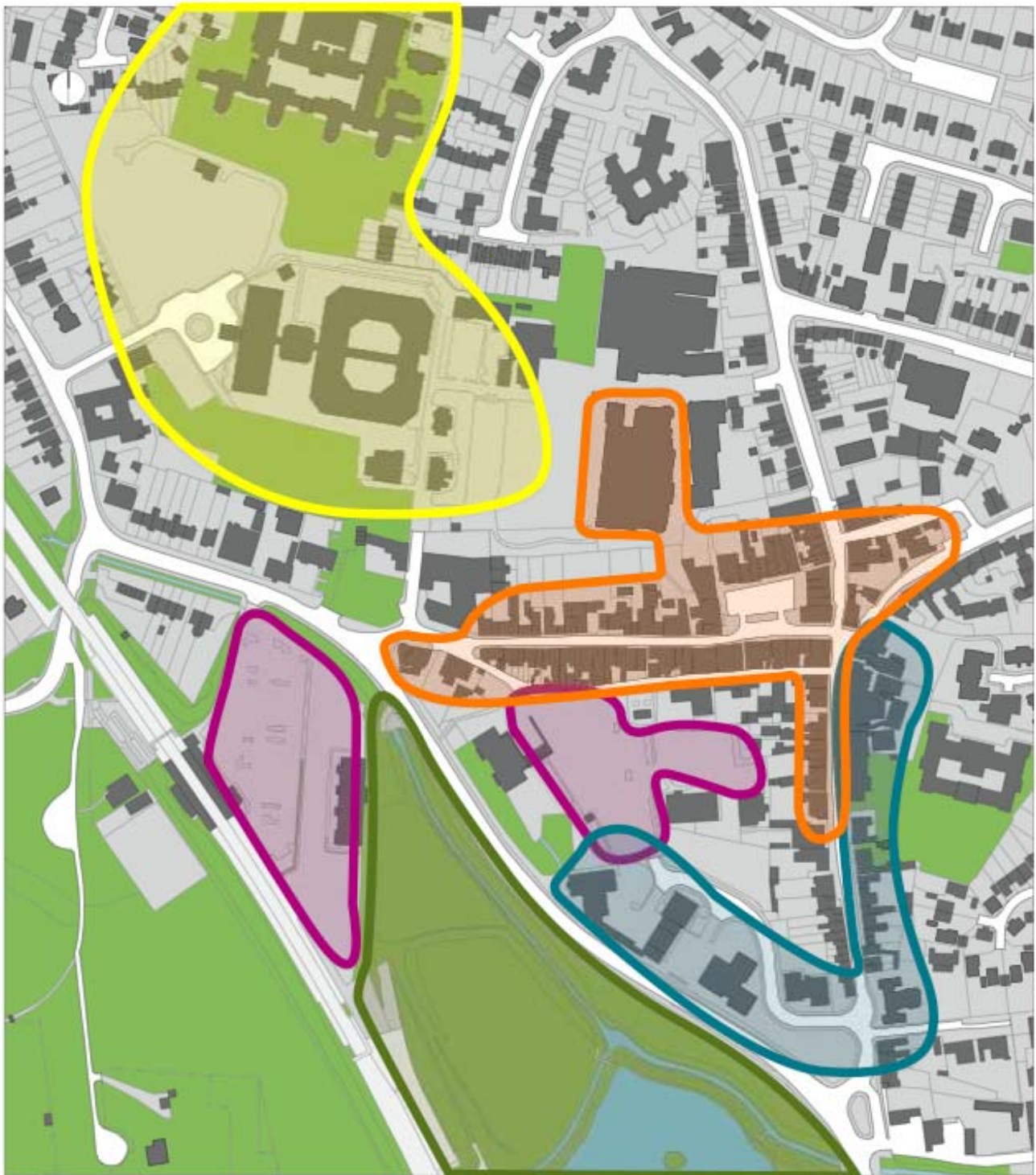
Table 2: Summary Urban Design Assessment of Rochford Town Centre


Urban Design Objective	Analysis
Character	Rochford’s Town Centre is defined by its historic character. The built form is of a fine grain and relatively small, intimate and human scale. It has a very high intrinsic quality. The Market Square is at the heart of the town and surrounded, in the main, by attractive buildings looking onto it. The town has evolved on the traditional cruciform pattern of streets, which come together at Horners Corner to the east of the Market Square
Continuity and Enclosure	Most streets and spaces are fronted and overlooked with development. However, there are a number of ‘exposed’ backs. This mainly affects the properties along Back Lane and South Street, where the urban fabric is broken down by the existence of the large surface car park.
Quality of the Public Realm	The Market Square is the focal point of the town centre and primary public space. This is however enclosed to the east by an unsympathetic retail unit that presents a visual barrier and unattractive blank facade to North Street. The surrounding countryside encroaches into the town, although Bradley Way forms a barrier between this and town centre activities.
Ease of Movement	Rochford is a small and compact centre that is easy to navigate by foot. However, given its historic nature, many streets and pavements are narrow. The one-way system also makes for some difficult crossing points, particularly at the junction of North, South, East and West Streets. To the north of the town centre there are few connecting routes.
Legibility	The historic structure and topography of Rochford enliven the experience of the town centre. Local views, landmarks and buildings enable the area and its constituent parts to be easily understood.
Adaptability	In general, the built form has stood the test of time, with uses locating within the historic fabric. The reuse of the Freight House and the former Boiler House demonstrate this adaptability. However, newer developments may now be needed to accommodate modern business requirements.
Diversity	The town centre comprises a good mix of uses, including retail, residential, civic and community uses within a relatively small catchment area. The new superstore has strengthened the convenience retail offer, although this could be better integrated with the town centre.

Land Uses

- 2.8 The primary town centre uses and activities in Rochford are located along West Street, connecting the station with the Market Square. A smaller number of units turn the corner into both South and North Streets. This main area of activity has recently been expanded by the development of the new Somerfield store to the north of the centre. This is however, a little disconnected from the Market Square which is at the heart of the town.
- 2.9 Light industrial uses are focused around Union Lane off West Street. Of particular prominence is a garage on the corner of Union Lane and West Street, which sits between the traditional core retail along West Street and the former garage site opposite the station. Business and other commercial units, including the Council Offices, are located along South Street and Locks Hill, adjacent to Bradley Way. Those along South Street have made use of the historic building stock, whereas those adjacent to Bradley Way occupy more recent purpose-built development. This may limit the potential for adaptability and change in the long-term.
- 2.10 Sandwiched between the main retail core and the commercial uses is the Back Lane car park. In the context of Rochford Town Centre, this is a relatively land hungry resource. Public car parking is also located nearby at the railway station and there is also a large car park available for users of the Freight House. Opportunities may exist to explore how these facilities can be rationalised in order to make more efficient use of the land.
- 2.11 Other important uses include health and community activities to the north west of the town centre. Direct, safe and convenient links between these and other uses are essential to the pattern of movement in the town centre. Elsewhere, residential uses are dominant. The residential stock comprises a mixture of period housing and modern apartments. The most significant residential development within Rochford is Roche Close, by Barratt Homes. Roche Close is situated immediately to the west of North Street and is accessible from the Market Square and North Street. The scheme comprises over 100 new apartments, a supermarket with underground car parking, retail accommodation, and a library.

Figure 1 – Broad Land Use Plan



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Retail, banks, catering |  Business |
|  Car parking |  Health care |
| |  Public open space |

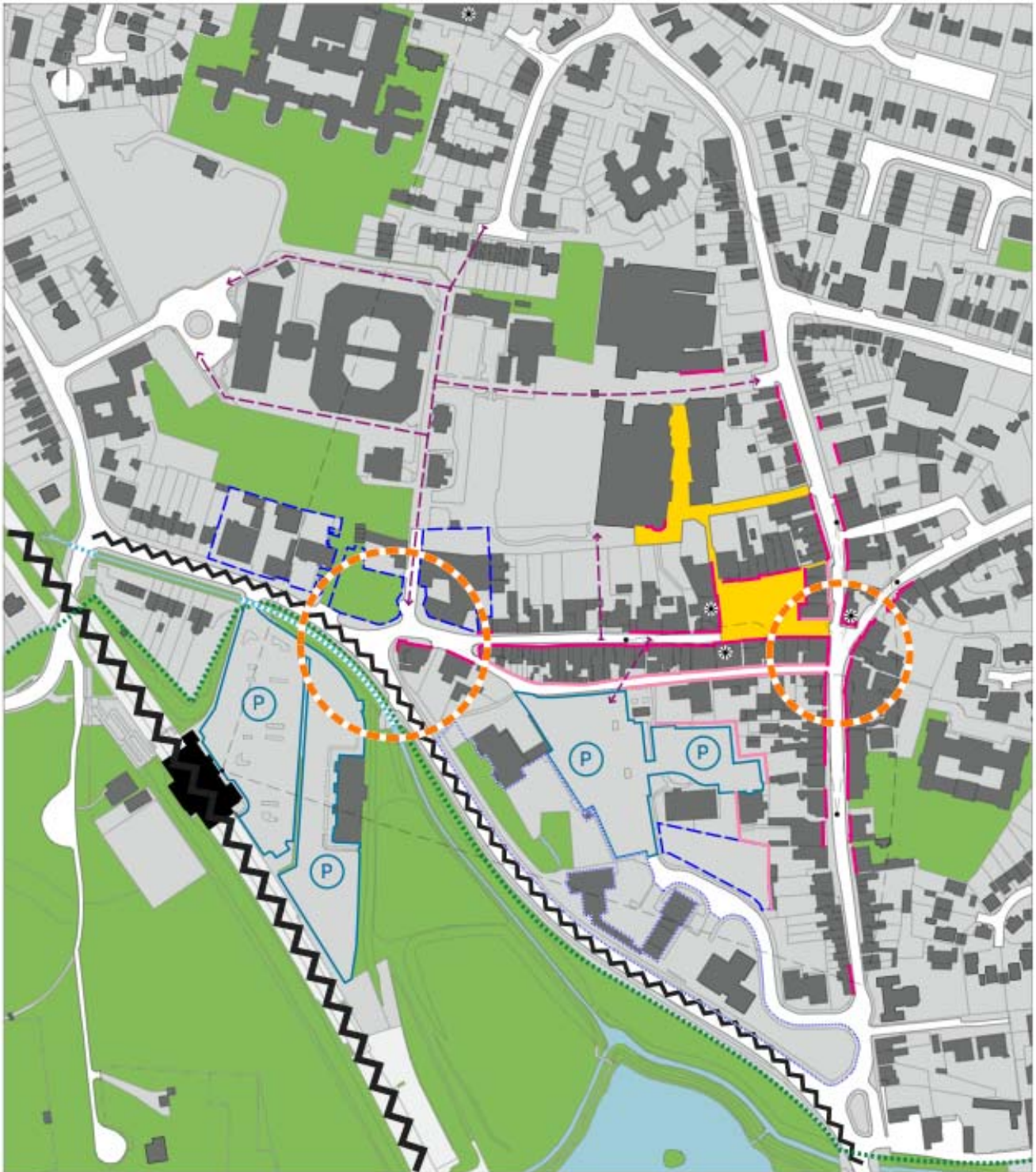
Form and Structure

- 2.12 The historic development of Rochford has resulted in a fine grain of development, with intimate spaces of a good human scale enclosed, in the main, by active building frontages. However, this grain breaks down in a number of places. Notably, the Back Lane car park exposes a large number of backs to properties on Back Lane and South Street. In general, this whole area is poorly defined, with little relationship or coherence between the main town centre core, the car park and commercial uses along Bradley Way. The uses along Bradley Way present an unassuming ‘front door’ to the town and give little clue as to the quality of the town centre. This might be addressed through redevelopment and landscaping, including the possible reopening of the culvert stream running along the front of the railway station car park.
- 2.13 The other main area that suffers from poor quality frontage is to the east of the Market Square, where the retail unit occupied by Spar presents an unsympathetic response to West and North Streets. This contrasts with the high intrinsic quality of buildings and spaces at this important node point at the heart of the town.
- 2.14 The junction of Bradley Way and West Street also acts as an important node, linking the town centre with the railway station. West Street, which runs between these two nodal points, is thus central to the overall structure and success of the town. Reinforcing the quality of this route will help enhance and strengthen the town centre. Despite the town’s fine grain, there are a number of missing links, associated primarily with the land take of the town’s hospital and related health facilities. Opportunities may exist to stitch the different elements of the town together.



View along Bradley Way

Figure 2 – Form and Structure



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Station | Important view | Public realm |
| Key node | Severance | Missing links |
| Landmark/important building | Culverted stream | Site under development |
| Parking | Active commercial frontage | Undefined area |
| | Poor/inactive frontage | Green belt |

Conservation and Heritage

- 2.15 For the purposes of this study a thorough understanding of the historic context is essential to understand the area's special qualities and the reasons why it has been designated as a Conservation Area. A full understanding will ensure that any solution is derived from these special qualities thereby enhancing its local distinctiveness. All of Rochford Town Centre is a Conservation Area, designated in 1969 and later extended. In 2007 Rochford District Council produced a Conservation Area Appraisal, which sets out and explains the special characteristics of the area. It is accompanied by a Management Plan that sets out measures to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. The key elements of these documents will need to be reflected in any solutions brought forward.
- 2.16 Generally the special character of Rochford Town Centre is comprised of the inter-relationship of the following elements:
- A well preserved market town centred on a cross roads
 - A collection of historic buildings of high architectural quality many of which are listed
 - A characteristic street plan comprising axial roads, infilled market, Back Lane and irregular frontages all of which derive from its medieval origins
 - Narrow streets with slight curvature forming discrete units. Buildings at the back edge of pavements e.g. North and West Street
 - Picturesque historic core of mostly 18th and 19th century rows of low level cottages of brick and weatherboarding, one and a half imposing brick town houses notably evident on South Street and each end of West Street
 - Twentieth century suburban development on the outer edges of mixed character
 - Infilled market place on triangle of land with buildings grouped together on small plots
 - Twentieth century institutional buildings such as the hospital to the north west
 - Just outside the study area are large areas of open space, St Andrews Church (Grade II*) and the old manorial centre of Rochford Hall, a 16th century Tudor mansion house and Scheduled Ancient Monument
 - Limited public open space in the town centre
 - Mix of uses notably, residential (North Street, West Street, South Street and East street), Retail (West Street, part of North Street and Market Square), Offices (South Street, Market Square and West Street), public buildings including a primary school and places of worship
 - Landmark buildings notably the old Rochford Hospital boiler house

- Characteristic landscape setting on the rising ground above the River Roach with South Street climbing the gently rising side of the river valley levelling out at the cross roads and the main streets
- Characteristic views up South Street towards the main road junctions adjacent to the town centre
- Selective specimen trees



Rochford Reservoir

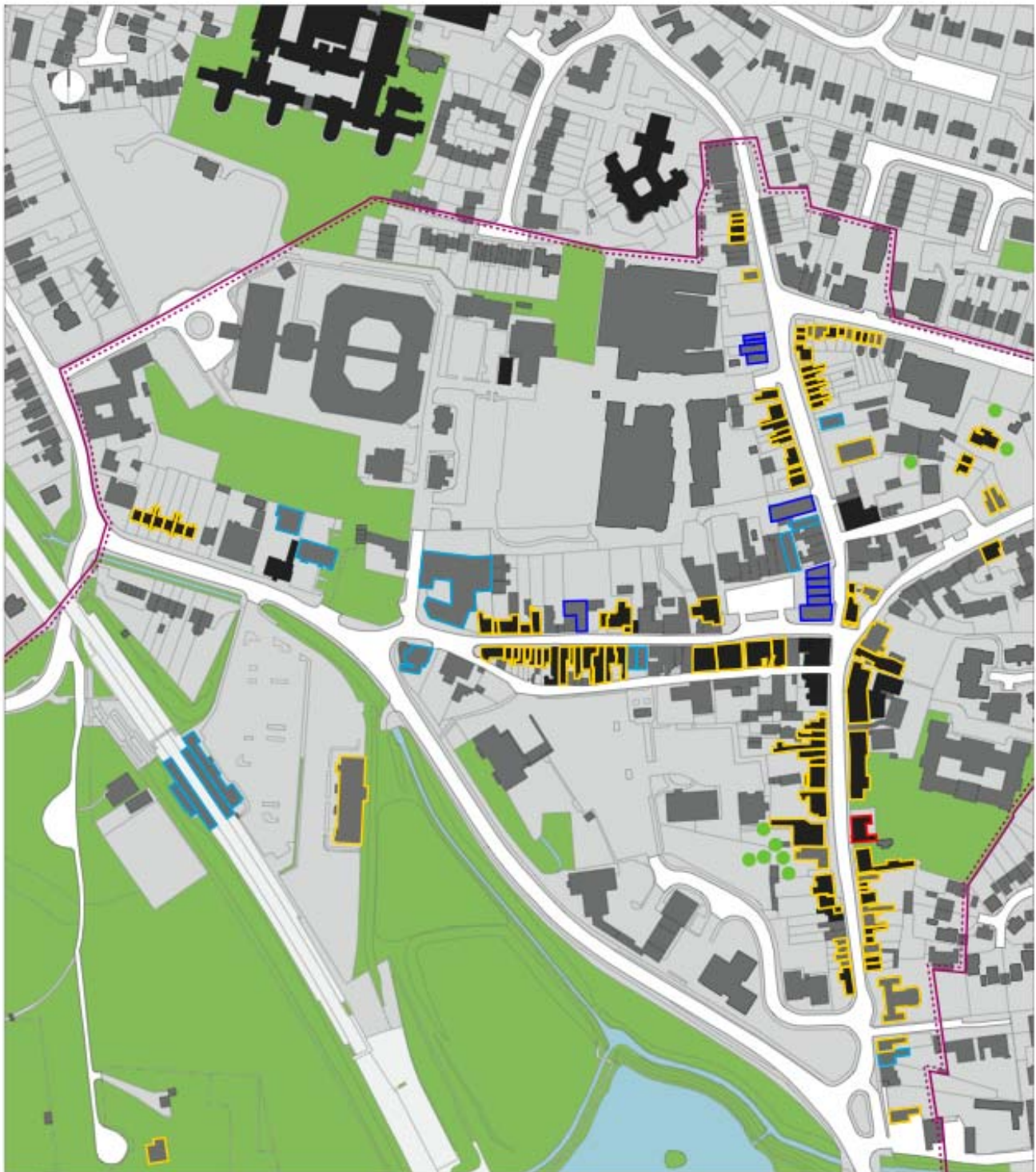
2.17 The appraisal document also provides information on the types of materials and colours that should be used and it identifies, through a Management Plan, a number of measures to enhance the special characteristics of the town centre. These will feed through into proposals that are developed for the area. We do not repeat all the measures here, but flag up those of importance for this study which include:

- Improving the relationship of the church with the town centre
- Station car park improvements including refurbishment of buildings and west access
- Improve the pedestrian environment at busy junctions
- Reduce street clutter generally and rationalisation of street furniture
- Provide pedestrian access to open space near Bradley Way
- Improve the pedestrian environment at Back Lane and Old Ship Lane

- Alleviate the problem of queuing cars at the Market Square i.e. restrict car access
- Improvements to the Market Square
- Preserve historic spaces and pedestrian links where they survive
- Tree planting in car parks
- On street car park restrictions e.g. Weir Pond Road and East Street
- Landscape improvements to Old Ship car park

2.18 The need to ensure that any proposals derive from and respond to the context is well established. An analysis of the Conservation Area clearly flags up issues that are consistent with and build on those concluded from other parts of the study. The special qualities that are identified will need to be reflected in the solutions put forward.

Table 3 – Heritage and Conservation



Contribution to character inside the conservation area's boundary (all others neutral)

- Very positive
- Positive

- Negative
- Very negative

- Listed buildings
- Conservation area boundary
- Tree preservation order

Topography

- 2.19 The local topography of Rochford makes a strong contribution to the character and identity of the town. The Market Square and junction of North, South, East and West Streets are the town's natural high points. Local views exist along these streets, the eye being led up and around streets and spaces, terminating on buildings and local features. The attractiveness of these views is enhanced by the intrinsic quality of the built form.
- 2.20 The railway station is also on a high point, with the station car park sloping up to the railway line. This means that the visitor is afforded interesting long distance views of the town and its roofscape upon arrival at the station.



Rochford Station Car Park

- 2.21 The topography here also presents an opportunity for the town centre. On the one hand, views can be maximised to enhance the quality of the town. On the other hand, it might be possible to explore how new buildings can be structured to make better use of the topography. The railway station car park is a prime opportunity. Here, the topography could potentially be used to create a structured car park, incorporating an enhanced arrival space outside the station and improved frontage along West Street and Bradley Way.

Street Network/Management

Existing Network of Streets

- 2.22 Southend Road and Bradley Way/West Street form the main highway route running along the western border of the town centre. Strategically, this route connects with Southend-on-Sea in the south and Hockley to the north. Ashingdon Road links through to the north of Hockley. South Street, East Street and Dalys Road serve an important local collector function running along the eastern and northern boundaries of the town centre.
- 2.23 For the town centre itself, its evolution from a village to a town pre-dated the advent of the motorcar. As a result the width of the streets are scaled to the pedestrian. The widths, generally 4-5m wide, are insufficient to cater for two-way vehicular flow. However, Rochford's position with the wider region and location on an important highway, has necessitated a measure of vehicular access through it. As a result, a circuitous one-way network exists through the centre. West Street is the narrowest, and is only able to cater for one lane of traffic. South Street has two way flow, however North Street is one way (due to its narrowness at Horners Corner), thus vehicles moving from north to south are required to divert around Weir Pond Road, and East Street to access South Street.
- 2.24 Traffic flows collected for Dalys Road (March 2006) show that it carries approximately 5,000 – 6,000 vehicles per day. While no other data exists for Rochford, it is expected that volumes along Bradley Way are significantly higher with a greater proportion of Heavy Goods Vehicles. Observations have also concluded that vehicles generally speed through the centre along East and North Streets given the scale of the street.
- 2.25 In terms of traffic junctions, roundabouts manage vehicular access through and into Rochford along Bradley Way and along Dalys Road, most of which are small mountable versions, with numerous observed incidences of vehicles driving straight over the islands. The use of roundabouts is in response to Rochford's relatively suburban/rural setting, which has not necessitated the use of signalised traffic control systems.
- 2.26 Rochford's street pattern does not lend itself to permeable movement. As is evidenced by Rochford's focus of retail and small business activity on West Street and North Street, the provision of missing or improved links in the middle of the town centre has the potential to open up redevelopment opportunities and relieve pressure on the one-way system. These movement desire lines are shown in the analysis diagram Figure 4 – Street network plan, though it should be noted they are only indicative.

Parking

- 2.27 There are two main public off-street car parking locations in the town centre that occupy a large amount of land. The railway station car park contains 202 spaces and the Back Lane car park with 171 spaces. The station car park operates as a park and ride facility, whereas the Back Lane car park services journeys to Rochford itself. Very limited information is available on actual parking utilisation of these car parks as they are both pay and display parking facilities. A smaller pay and display car park on Old Ship Lane, between East Street and North Street, provides additional parking within the town centre.














Back Lane Car Park

- 2.28 Areas of private off street parking exist throughout Rochford, most notably, the parking adjacent to the railway station car park. This is a free parking area that is used by Rochford District Council staff and by staff and visitors to the Freight House.
- 2.29 The Market Square provides retail premises with eighteen parking spaces with a 30 minute time restriction. While no formal count was undertaken, this parking area was observed to have queues on average of three to five cars waiting on West Street to get a parking space, with an approximate wait time of between two – five minutes. A taxi rank with six spaces is also provided. In close proximity to the Market Square, North Street contains approximately fifteen on-street parking spaces, three disabled and two loading spaces. Loading time restrictions are also in force from 10.30 am to 4.30pm, to ensure that parking spaces are used by retail patrons, and to ensure that loading activity does not block moving traffic lanes during peak times.

Table 4 – Street Network Plan



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  Distributor roads |  One way street direction of flow |  Public 'pay and display' off street parking |
|  Collector roads |  Roadabouts |  Private off street parking |
|  Local roads |  Important priority controlled junctions |  Important public on street parking |
|  Shared surface street | |  Desire line |

Pedestrian and Cycle Network

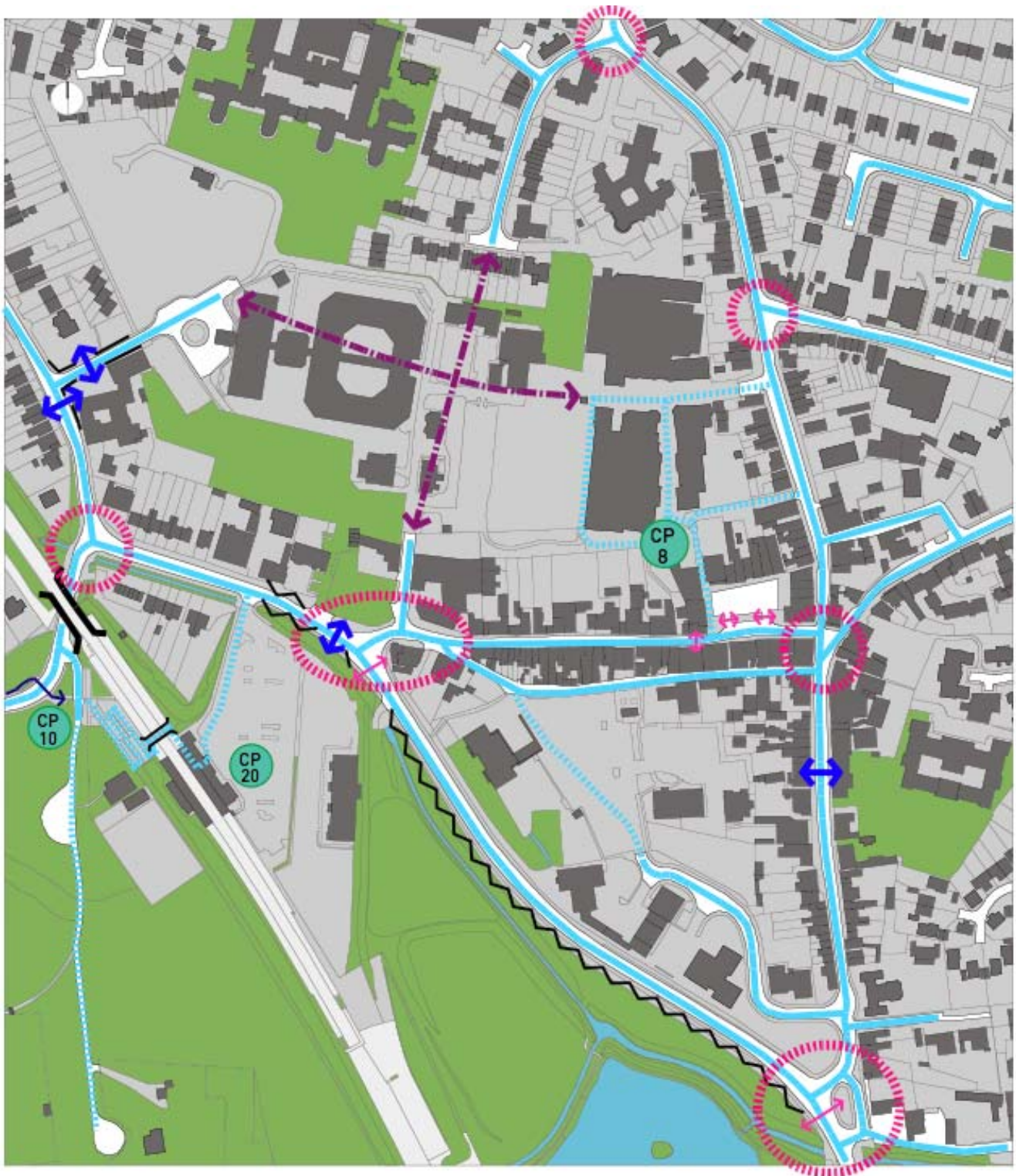
Pedestrian Movement

- 2.30 There is a definite concentration of pedestrian movement on South, North and West Streets associated with retail and small scale business uses. While the pedestrian experience on these streets is generally acceptable, the environment could be improved by slowing or removing traffic from these areas
- 2.31 Off-street pedestrian connections have been provided to the north of West Street in association with new development. Despite this, pedestrian permeability to the west is considered poor with limited connections to the station. The existing bulk and location of the Hospital is the main cause of this condition.
- 2.32 There are a number of junctions in the centre that act as barriers to pedestrian movement, resulting from traffic management solutions that have prioritised vehicle capacity and speeds. The roundabouts on Bradley Way are particularly problematic for pedestrians and hamper movement to the station. Of greatest concern are the junctions at either end of West Street given its importance as an access to the station and Market Square. This is a critical issue in making pedestrian journeys to the station more viable and attractive. Another opportunity exists in strengthening connections to the park to the south of Bradley Way.

Cycling Movement

- 2.33 Cycling through Rochford is of a generally acceptable standard, with the exception of the lack of provision of facilities at junctions and a tendency of traffic to speed through them by virtue of the method of traffic control. Resolving speed issues through the town centres narrow streets and slowing vehicles through improved junction treatments would have a marked impact on the cycling experience.
- 2.34 There is a cycle path running east along Hall Road that links up with the station. A reasonable spread and quantum of cycle parking exists in Rochford as illustrated in the figure on the facing page. At the station and to the rear of the Market Square by the Somerfield store the cycle parking is all sheltered. To the west of the station and on the Market Square itself, the cycle racks are for persons using the retail facilities and station and are therefore not covered.

Figure 5 – Pedestrian and Cycle Network



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Pedestrian street network | Bridge | Barriers to pedestrian movement |
| Pedestrian off street network | Formal pedestrian crossing facilities | Intersections with poor pedestrian crossing |
| Cycle facility | Formal pedestrian crossing facilities | Cycle parking location and numbers |
| | Desire lines for pedestrians | |

Public Transport

The Rail Network

- 2.35 Rochford is served by a train line, running from London Liverpool Street Station through to Southend Victoria in Essex and is located between Hockley and Prittlewell Stations. Trains run on a twenty minute headway in peak periods and a 30 minute headway in off-peak periods on Monday to Saturday. A 30 minute service operates on Sundays. Rochford is approximately 48 minutes travel time from London Liverpool Street station.
- 2.36 The Rochford rail station is a relatively well maintained station facility that is manned during the day. The platforms are both sheltered. A pedestrian overbridge provides access between platforms.

The Bus Network

- 2.37 There is a well established network of bus routes servicing Rochford. Some routes passing through Rochford serve Hockley, although the majority only go as far as Ashingdon. The two main routes are the 7 and the 8 services connecting Shoeburyness and Southend to Hockley and Rayleigh. Other routes through Rochford include the 20 express (no information is available at present for this route), and the 60 and 515. The 60 connects Southend to Canewdon.
- 2.38 Internally the 7 and 8 services run through Rochford from Southend to Ashingdon Road. Given the one way network in the town centre itself, northbound services use South Street and West Street. Southbound services use Dalys Road, Weir Pond Road, East Street and South Street onto Southend Road. The 60 service runs via South Street, North Street and Weir Pond Road, and the 515 service begins and ends its journey just to the south of Rochford Town Centre on Southend Road before heading east to Canewdon then Rayleigh.
- 2.39 Bus stops are scarce through the town centre and consist of signs only. No shelter is provided, due to the narrowness of the existing pavement layout, nor is there any service information available to users, with the exception of the southbound bus stop on East Street. Additionally, the one way network doesn't allow for the placement of stops as functioning pairs, nor gives the user a sense as to what direction the bus is going to head in. Given this, there is very little legibility of the bus network and stop locations. The stop locations themselves are also concentrated around the junction of West and North Street, with a notable gap in stops the further outside of the centre you go. Given the demographic of the area and the need for the bus system to be accessible to the elderly and mobility impaired, there is a definite need to explore the provision of basic shelters and information at key locations, and a more even distribution of stops at approximately 300m intervals. Careful bus stop placement can also be used as a mechanism for 'drawing' pedestrians past areas of interest or retail uses.



View along West Street

- 2.40 A particular issue in this regard exists with the level of interchangeability of bus services with the rail station. At present, given circulation issues, buses only pass by the train station in a northbound direction. The nearest southbound bus stop is located on East Street to the east of the study area: a significant walk. This means that people from Canewdon area are not able to catch a bus to Rochford for the purpose of interchanging with the rail station, without a significant walk

Taxis

- 2.41 Taxis serve as an important mode of public transport for Rochford. A taxi rank containing capacity for six spaces is located on West Street where it meets the Market Square. It was observed that this area was heavily used during the day. A taxi rank is also located adjacent at the railway station entrance.

Figure 6 – Public Transport Provision in Rochford



- Bus route 7: Shoeburyness – Southend – Rochford – Hockley – Rayleigh (Approximate frequency 15 mins)
- Bus route 7: Shoeburyness – Southend – Rochford – Hockley – Rayleigh (Approximate frequency 30 mins)
- - - Bus route 20x: Rochford to Rayleigh (Express service – no more information found as yet)
- Bus route 60: Southend – Rochford – Great Stambridge – Canewdon
(Approximate frequency 90 mins – Rochford from 8.25 am to 6.04 pm)
- Bus route 515: Great Stambridge (Rochford) – Canewdon – Lower Hockley – Hullbridge – Rayleigh
(Weekday school service only – 7.45 am to Rayleigh, 3.15 pm to Rochford)
- Railway line (Approximate frequency 20 mins)
- Rail or bus direction and approximate frequency per hour
- Bus terminus point (starting and ending from the north – 20 x and 515, from the south – 61, X1, X10)
- Bus Stops

Summary of Issues

2.42 The key issues that face Rochford are summarised in the table below:

Table3 – Summary of Issues for Consideration in Rochford Town Centre

Theme	Summary of the main issues
<p>Land Uses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of uses can be found (retail, commercial, and community) located mainly along West Street, however new development to the north (Somerfield and Roche Close) is disconnected from the centre: it is accessible only by North Street or via a pedestrian only route from the Market Square which runs past service areas and parking associated with properties in the Market Square. • Car parks occupy a large amount of space in the town centre • Buildings along Bradley Way are often purpose built making them inflexible in terms of changing their use • It is important to link the community activities to the north and west of the centre to the other uses in the town
<p>Form and Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a large number of active frontages, however Back Lane is mainly lined by the backs of properties. • The Spar building to the east of the Market Square is not in keeping with the high quality of the rest of the Square and undermines the quality and character of the town centre • Uses along Bradley Way give little clue to the quality of the town centre • The quality of the link between the town centre and railway station could be improved
<p>Conservation and Heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rochford Town Centre is a Conservation Area with a picturesque historic core and a collection of buildings of high architectural quality, some are listed • Rochford has a fine grain of development with intimate spaces of human scale, good enclosure which should be respected in any new development • Any developments in the town centre will need to respond to this context having regard to the detailed analysis carried out in the Conservation Area Appraisal

Theme	Summary of the main issues
Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topography contributes to the character of the town and offers the possibility of an enhanced entrance to the town, making use of the views afforded from the railway station
Street Network/Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The street widths are scaled to the pedestrian and are insufficient to cater for a two-way flow, which has resulted in a one-way network around the town centre • Roundabouts manage vehicle access through and into Rochford. Most of these are mountable roundabouts and there are many incidences of vehicles driving straight over them • There are two main car parks: at Back Lane and at the station both of which appear (without having undertaken a study) to have spare capacity. These are surface car parks and occupy a large amount of land in the town centre. • The parking area in the Market Square is pressurised with cars queuing for one of eighteen spaces (despite a time restriction of 30 minutes) • The problem of access to the Market Square and West Street due to queuing cars waiting for a parking space in Market Square.
Pedestrian and cycle network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian movement is centred around the Market Square and its retail uses. • There are some problematic junctions for pedestrians at either end of West Street, as well as at the roundabouts on Bradley Way • Traffic moves quickly through the town centre, making some crossings difficult for pedestrians and cyclists
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rochford town centre is served by trains, buses and taxis • The bus service in particular has a number of problems having signs instead of stops with no shelter or information for users • There is not a good interchange between the bus service and the rail station.

Question: Do you agree that these are the main issues facing Rochford Town Centre?
Are there any other issues that you think should be considered?

3 The Opportunities

Vision

3.1 Our vision for Rochford is best encapsulated in the following statement:

“An attractive town centre that is proud of its heritage and which builds sensitively upon its special character. New development will be integrated with the historic urban fabric, creating a vibrant and successful town centre that offers high quality, modern community facilities, a shopping environment that caters for the needs of all in society and maximises its potential as a centre for all, including arts and crafts”.

Objectives

3.2 The vision will be delivered through a set of strategic objectives, which are:

- To ensure that future development complements and integrates with the unique character of the town;
- To enhance the quality of the public realm and create a safe, attractive and welcoming environment;
- To rationalise parking provision in the town so that it supports its retail and visitor function but does not undermine the quality of the shopping experience, or the historic form and character of the town;
- To improve accessibility within the town and encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport;
- To reinvigorate the Market Square and strengthen its position at the heart of the town and focus of civic life; and
- To provide a mix of uses and facilities which support the local community.

3.3 In taking forward opportunities for change and development in the town centre it will be necessary to ensure that the town centre accommodates a mix of viable town centre uses and that the Market Square is the focal point for activity within the town centre. The historic market town character is the defining feature of Rochford and this should be retained and enhanced even further. As part of this, small and local businesses along West Street and North Street must be supported to draw local customers into the area.

3.4 It is also important that accessibility in the town centre is improved, particularly through the promotion of different modes of transport. Pedestrian and cyclist movement should be encouraged given the size of Rochford and the distances within the town centre.

3.5 Rochford railway station is one of the main arrival points for visitors not travelling by car or bus and so the pedestrian links between the station and town centre must be improved.

<p>Do you agree with the vision and objectives for Rochford Town Centre? What would you suggest?</p>
--

Potential Opportunity Sites and Development Options

3.6 The analysis has identified a range of opportunities related to transport and movement and the public realm. We have also identified a number of sites where opportunities may exist for redevelopment. The potential opportunity sites identified, and options for them are outlined below.

Site A – Eastern Side of the Market Square

3.7 This site is currently occupied by the Spar building and a variety of other retail units which create a poor frontage both onto West and North Streets undermining the character and quality of the town centre (as set out in the Issues section). There is therefore potential for redevelopment or renovation along the eastern side of the Square, where an improved building or open space could be provided that would complement and enhance the space, also bringing better connectivity between North street and the Market Square.

Site A Options

Option	Issues
<p>Redevelopment of Site A for two-storey retail building designed as a modern interpretation of the once existing Market Hall.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain existing use, whilst enhancing character of Square. • Improvement to appearance of Conservation Area. • Disruption to existing businesses. • North Street remains separated from the Market Square.
<p>Redevelopment of Site A comprising a landmark building on corner of North Street/West Street. Three-storeys, ground floor retail with residential above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance appearance of the Conservation Area at prominent corner location. • Possible issues with regards to scale and bulk, depending on detailed design. • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere.
<p>Removal of building currently occupied by Spar without replacement building. Improved streetscaping linking North Street with town square.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening up Mbetween the Square and businesses in North Street. • Opportunity to enhance streetscape. • Net loss of retail space in town centre. • Easing of Pedestrian crossing movements due to visibility of pearket Square and creating better links destrians in this area.
<p>No redevelopment of Site A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No short-term disruption to businesses. • Missed opportunity to enhance appearance of Market Square and character of Conservation Area. • Poorly designed building remains in prominent part of Conservation Area. • North Street remains separated from the market square. • Clash of junctions between four main access/distributor roads

Which of the options, or combination of options, for Site A do you prefer?
Are there any other options for Site A?



Aerial view of Site A – Eastern Side of the Market Square



Site A – Eastern Side of the Market Square

Site B – The Market Square and West Street

- 3.8 The Market Square is currently being used as a car park servicing adjacent retail premises. Consultation has identified that this car park is also used by people who are using convenience retail on the way to and from work or school, particularly as it is free. This, it may be argued, represents a misuse of what should be taking place in Rochford's town square and that parking would be better placed elsewhere in the town centre, such as by providing equivalent parking at Old Ship Lane car park. The space in the Market Square could be a place of recreation and of civic focus, as well as servicing retail uses. Additional cycle racks could also be incorporated into the Square. The removal of parking could occur in conjunction with a re-provision or even increase of short-term parking spaces in the Back Lane car park.
- 3.9 Suggestions from early community involvement concluded that Rochford Town Centre would benefit from the introduction of an evening economy and a new restaurant in the Square. Current planning policy, as set out in the Replacement Local Plan (2006), seeks to ensure that retail uses dominate primary shopping frontage areas (of which Rochford Market Square is part) and thus restricts the proportion of non-retail uses, such as restaurants, within the town centre. If additional restaurants, or indeed other uses which may benefit the evening economy, are to be encouraged this policy needs to be re-visited.



Aerial View of Site B –Market Square



Site B – Market Square

Site B – Options

Option	Issues
<p>Full pedestrianisation of Market Square with re-provision/increase of short-term parking spaces in Back Lane car park. Free parking provided at Old Ship Lane car park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public realm and a more pedestrian friendly environment created in heart of town • Attractive public area created that will encourage additional visitors and footfall • Appearance and character of Conservation Area enhanced • Loss of free car parking. This may discourage some potential shoppers or visitors.
<p>Part pedestrianisation of Market Square by restricting parking on the Square to the part alongside West Street, thereby creating a larger pedestrian area. Free parking provided at Old Ship Lane car park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to strike a balance between improving character and appearance of Conservation Area, creating a pedestrian friendly environment, and maintaining free car parking in centre of town.
<p>Part pedestrianisation of Market Square, with parking rationalised to those core spaces needed only to provide for loading and servicing, for taxi and bus access, as well as a limited number of disabled parking bays. Free parking provided at Old Ship Lane car park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to strike a balance between improving character and appearance of Conservation Area, creating a pedestrian friendly environment, and allowing some vehicular access into Square.
<p>Additional restaurant uses within Market Square through relaxation of policy requiring 75% of the primary shopping frontage for the Market Square to comprise retail uses. (NB this option could be implemented in conjunction with pedestrianisation/part pedestrianisation options).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase night time economy, introducing additional uses in town centre, and contributing towards vibrancy of town centre. • If too much retail were to be lost within the town centre, this would discourage shoppers, decrease footfall and be of harm to vitality of town centre.

Option	Issues
Removal of bus route through West Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stops at both ends of West Street allows for better access to station and other routes to district e.g. Stambridge etc. • Buses diverted away from historic town centre, preventing any potential impact on historic buildings
Removal of taxi rank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible re-location of rank by train station including possible usage of the Station House for headquarters, and the creation of a safe waiting area for night time passengers.
Full pedestrianisation of Market Square on market days only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public realm and a more pedestrian friendly environment created in heart of town, allowing historic market to flow further down West Street and rejuvenate the town centre
Removal and relocation of Pump and Trough to a more suitable location, and incorporating the Martyrs plaque, forming a heritage centre for the Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation of these features provides an opportunity to provide a new focus to the Market Square around heritage, and also enables the reconfiguration of the Square to assist in the reduction of traffic congestion.

Which of the options, or combination of options, for Site B do you prefer?
Are there any other options for Site B?

Site C

- 3.10 Site C, at the western end of West Street, comprises an existing commercial garage with an MOT and sales area on the northern site of West Street. On the southern side of the street on another prominent corner location there is a florist, and adjacent to this florist is an Indian restaurant.
- 3.11 Redevelopment would provide an opportunity to enhance the townscape in a prominent location, and to create a gateway into the town centre, particularly for those arriving by train.
- 3.12 Redevelopment would also provide an opportunity to explore junction improvements between West Street and Bradley Way.



Aerial view of Site C

Site C Options

Option	Issues
<p>Redevelopment at corner of West Street and Bradley Way, involving possible relocation/removal of florist and Indian restaurant at western end of West Street. Potential alteration to layout of highway at junction of Bradley Way and West Street.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable junction improvements at western end of West Street. • Easier access to the station. • Opportunity to enhance character of town in prominent location, particularly when viewed from the train station. • Disruption to existing businesses.
<p>Create heritage entrances and improved signage on the main routes into the town centre.</p>	<p>Improved public safety and defining routes through traffic areas.</p>

Which of the options for Site C do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site C?



Site C

Site D

3.13 Located at the junction of North Street and Weir Pond Road, Site D comprises, from north to south, the following: a car park for the nearby pub; a clear but unused site; and a row of shops and restaurant. The site currently makes a poor contribution to the character of the town. Opportunities may exist for development here, which would most likely take the form of residential uses. This would help frame the junction and repair the built fabric at this point by continuing the existing building line across the site.



Aerial view of Site D

Site D Options

Option	Issues
Redevelopment of shops/restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to enhance appearance of the town, removing poor quality development. • Disruption to businesses. • Potential to provide residential units which would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere.
Development of vacant part of site and car park for residential use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere. • Loss of car parking.
Development of vacant part of site for residential use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere. • Potential for fewer residential units than if car park was also redeveloped.
Leave unused land vacant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap in street scene remains. • Inefficient use of land in town centre location.

Which of the options for Site D do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site D?



Site D – Car Park



Site D – Shops and Restaurants

Site E

3.14 This site represents an opportunity to reshape the gateway into the town centre. The current development of the site between Site C and E which will comprise commercial with the possibility of some retail may help provide a catalyst for change.



Aerial view of Site E

Site E Options

Option	Issues
Redevelopment of sites for residential use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of existing business which contributes towards mix of uses within town and provides employment.• Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere.

Option	Issues
No redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for business to remain• Missed opportunity to improve character and appearance of town centre and provide residential uses within a sustainable location.

Which of the options for Site E do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site E?



Site E

Site F

3.15 Site F comprises green space utilised by Maison Renouf Hotel and is situated between the hotel and office buildings that front Bradley Way. The frontage with Bradley Way is currently very weak and, along with Bradley Way itself, acts as a barrier between the town centre and the Access through the town centre to the west. At Site F, there is an opportunity to provide for potential commercial/retail/residential infill development. This would strengthen the street frontage and help provide a link with the countryside beyond.



Aerial view of Site F



View of Site F from Bradley Way

Site F Options

Option	Issues
<p>Redevelopment of site for retail/residential use, comprising a row of units fronting onto Bradley Way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere. • Retail units would be out of main Square, but could incorporate Arts and Crafts, which could enhance the vista of Rochford drawing people into the town centre. • Opportunity to strengthen frontage with Bradley Way and provide better links between town centre and transport links to the west.
<p>Redevelopment of site for office use, fronting Bradley Way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased employment opportunities in town centre locations, in close proximity to main transport nodes. • Opportunity to strengthen frontage with Bradley Way and provide better links between town centre and green space to the west.
<p>No development at Site F.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space retained for use by hotel. • Missed opportunity to add employment or residential uses within a town centre location. • Missed opportunity to improve links between town centre and green space to west. • Weak frontage on Bradley Way remains.

Which of the options for Site F do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site F?

Sites G and H

- 3.16 The potential for these sites is linked to the future of car parking provision in the town. Parking provision is required in the town: the questions to address are where is the most appropriate location for this and what are the wider benefits for the town that might be derived from restructuring and redevelopment.
- 3.17 At the Back Lane car park site, opportunities to rationalise the parking area would enable development to be promoted which would address perceived ‘front-to-back’ problems currently experienced by properties along Back Lane and South Street. This could also help give greater structure to this area, which currently adds little to the quality or character of the town centre, but shows its historic usage. However, if the Market Square were to be pedestrianised or part pedestrianised, Back Lane car park would play an important role in ensuring that there was still car parking in the vicinity of the town centre and could also include short-stay spaces.
- 3.18 Site H currently comprises a doctor’s surgery and car park that exposes the backs of the buildings to the rear of South Street. One opportunity for this site would be to strengthen the existing health provision by forming a Primary Health Centre, a development that could help to frame the rear of South Street and surrounding properties. Another option would be to move the existing doctor’s surgery to Site C (where a garage currently stands) in order to relate it better to the hospital. This option would free up Site H for alternative uses.



Aerial view of Sites G and H

Site G Options

Option	Issues
<p>Back Lane car parking retained, with provision of short-stay spaces. Possible streetscene improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues to provide car parking in close proximity to the town centre. • Mitigate against the loss of parking if the Market Square were to be pedestrianised/part pedestrianised. • Missed opportunity to improve the character of the area.
<p>Partial redevelopment of Back Lane car park to provide residential development in the form of apartments and houses. Designed to be in keeping with Rochford Conservation Area. Possible Health Centre. Provision of car parking at alternative location (see options for Site J).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere. • Loss of public car parking spaces within town centre location. • Increase of usage and access to Health Care providers and a healthier population not having to travel for additional health care provision. • Viability and deliverability of additional car parking at Site J currently unclear.

Which of the options for Site G do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site G?



Site G – Back Lane Car Park

Site H Options

Option	Issues
Retain current doctor’s surgery and car park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disruption to services. • Missed opportunity to redevelop site to include improvements to character of area.
Extend provision of healthcare facilities on this site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of additional healthcare facilities in an accessible town centre location. • Loss of car parking.
Redevelopment of site for residential with healthcare facilities re-accommodated on Site C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential units would increase vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and help reduce demand for greenfield release for housing elsewhere. • Viability and deliverability of redeveloping Site C to accommodate healthcare currently unclear. • Loss of car parking.

Which of the options for Site H do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site H?



Site H - doctor’s surgery and car park

Site J

3.19 Site J is currently used as parking for the hospital. It may be possible to restructure the car parking at this site along the lines of a multi-storey car park that could be used both by the hospital and the wider public. This would free up some of the space currently occupied as surface parking in Rochford Town Centre for development. However, it should be noted that the safe, secure and successful operation of Rochford Hospital is of paramount importance. The development of a multi-storey car park would only proceed if it could be demonstrated that it will not affect the operational needs of the hospital and its patients.



Aerial view of Site J

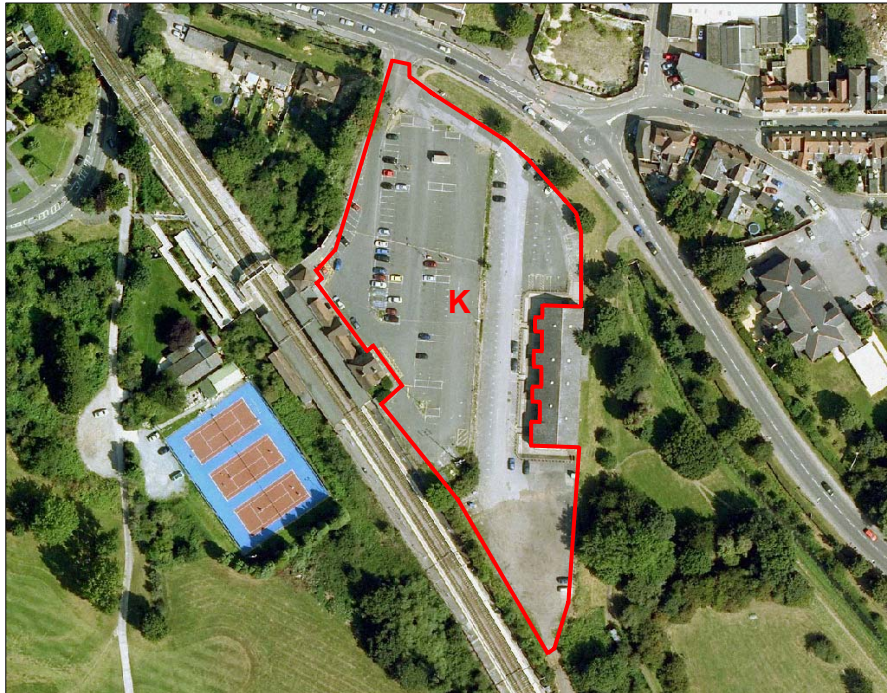
Site J Options

Option	Issues
<p>Redevelop car park as multi-storey car park for both hospital and public use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional car parking provided in town centre. • Additional car parking at this location enables the potential redevelopment of other locations currently used for car parking, making a significant contribution to the regeneration of Rochford Town Centre, providing economic and social benefits and opportunities to improve the townscape and character of the Conservation Area. • Economic viability of providing a multi-storey car park in Rochford currently unclear. • The safe, secure and successful operation of Rochford Hospital is of paramount importance. The development of a multi-storey car park could only proceed if it could be implemented in a manner that does not adversely affect the operational needs of the hospital or its patients.
<p>Retain surface car park as existing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disruption to operation of hospital. • Limits opportunity to redevelop other car parks in town centre for uses which would benefit Rochford.

Which of the options for Site J do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site J?

Site K

3.20 The railway station car park and building itself, together with the Freight House car park, present a number of possible options for redevelopment, restructuring and reuse. Firstly it might be possible to reconfigure the layout of the car park to create better pedestrian connections from the station to the town centre and Freight House. Secondly there is potential to resurface parts of the car park to create further car parking spaces and free up space in the town centre. Thirdly improvements to the environment could be achieved by opening up the culvert stream, although this would require significant redevelopment of the car park site.



Aerial view of Site K



Part of Site K

Site K Options

Option	Issues
<p>Refurbishment of train station including provision of a café, public toilets, newsagent and real time travel information. Improve bus-rail interchange.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to train station, encouraging people to utilise rail transport to and from Rochford. • Better links between bus service and rail service, enhancing public transport. • There would be a cost to the station operator and improvements would require their support.
<p>Ramp/steps facility up embankment linking the proposed West Street signalised junction (see Transport Options) to the car park. Re-design car park to provide a direct pedestrian linkage from this ramp through to the station. This link would be paved and be lined with trees to increase its prominence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will improve links between town centre and train station and create a better relationship between the two. • Will create a more pedestrian friendly environment. • There would be a cost to the station operator and improvements would require their support.
<p>Create pedestrian links between train station and public open space and reservoir to south-east of Freight House, including improvements to fencing at reservoir.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will improve access to a valuable amenity area. • Would require support of station operator and a link through Freight House car park.

Which of the options for Site K do you prefer? Are there any other options for Site K?

Other sites

3.21 This report identifies a number of potential sites where there is an opportunity for redevelopment which would enhance the town centre. Additional sites may be identified as the Area Action Plan develops through its various consultation stages.

Are there other sites with potential for redevelopment which would enhance the town centre in Rochford?

Phasing

- 3.22 Most of the sites can be redeveloped independently from each other. Some sites, depending on which options are taken forward, will have to be phased to ensure there is not a deficit of parking around the town centre.

Materials

- 3.23 All of the identified sites are situated within Rochford's Conservation Area. To retain the character of Rochford, the materials used for any forthcoming development on these sites and any additional developments proposed through the transport options below should be guided by the Conservation Area Appraisal, consultations with the Essex County Council's conservation officers and English Heritage.

Improving the pedestrian and vehicular movement

- 3.24 It is proposed to create landscaped links from the green space area over Bradley Way into the town (for example between the reservoir and Back Lane). Further improvements to vehicular movement through the town centre are also proposed and explored in greater detail in the Transport Options section of this Area Action Plan.

Transport Options

- 3.25 This transport and movement section focuses on the key projects that will assist in the delivery of the wider regeneration options suggested in this report. A variety of options are proposed below which can be taken forward individually or together.

Parking and travel demand management

- 3.26 When looking at the existing built form of Rochford, it is discernable that a large amount of land in the town centre is taken up by surface parking, and as discussed throughout the AAP, a number of these sites have been identified as having the potential for redevelopment. As a consequence it is necessary to establish the principles by which this parking is provided for in the town centre.

Option: Manage parking more strictly in Rochford by prioritising parking in the town centre in the following hierarchy: for elderly and disabled, for loading and servicing, taxi access, and for short term parking needs associated with retail premises. On street commuter parking would be actively discouraged in the town centre and soft measures such as providing information on other travel options and through education campaigns/travel plans, can also support hard measures in changing peoples travel behaviour.

Option: Given the importance of encouraging commuter trips to be taken by rail, it is further proposed that the park and ride facility at the train station be increased in size to allow for additional parking spaces in the future.

Question: Which options do you agree/disagree with? Are there any other options regarding parking that you would like to be considered?

Market Square

3.27 Options for parking in the Market Square are discussed as part of options for Site B.

North and South Streets

3.28 The existing pattern of one way traffic flow in Rochford has led to problems with legibility and coherency of the movement network. It has also created an environment that has encouraged vehicles to exceed desirable speeds along its narrow streets. Of particular concern is the confluence of one way routes at the junction of North, East, South and West Streets.

Option:	In the short-term potential exists for small scale improvements to be progressed, aimed at slowing vehicle speeds and improving pedestrian crossings. This would include changing the layout of kerbs and public realm materials to this effect. This could also include an additional pedestrian crossing on North Street.
Option:	In the longer term potential exists for South and North Street to form a continuous two-way link through the town connecting into Bradley Way which would slow vehicle speeds, improve the legibility of the town centre and create a more accessible town centre making distances between destinations shorter. The increased storefront exposure afforded by two-way directional flow would also make retail and commercial activities more viable at the street level.
Option:	In the long-term, and in conjunction with redevelopment of Site A if such an option were to be pursued, the existing one-way section of North Street could be made two-way and kerb extensions could take place at East Street junction and the Weir Pond Road and North Street junction in order to improve pedestrian movement in these areas. Also the junction could be controlled by lights or other means to make it safe for vehicles accessing the town from the east. In addition parking could be removed from the eastern side of North Street from Old Ship Lane to Weir Pond Road in favour of parking on the western side.
Option	Adoption of Roche Close off North Street, allowing parking restrictions to be implemented and resolving issues with parking on-street interfering with flow of vehicular movements.

Question: Which options do you agree/disagree with? Are there any other options that you would like to be considered?
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3.29 It is recognised that the long-term proposals for two-way North Street are costly and will need to be delivered as part of redevelopment proposals adjacent to the Market Square in order to gain sufficient physical widths for this to occur. Further work is required to assess the costs associated with this proposal and the relevant delivery mechanisms.

Weir Pond Road

- Option:** Enhancements to footpaths and additional pedestrian crossings, creating better links to town centre.
- Option:** On-street parking restrictions to allow for better traffic flow through one way system.
- Option:** Removal of traffic island at the junction of Weir Pond Road and East Street, allowing buses better access through town centre. Potential to incorporate street scene improvements, enhancing appearance of town in prominent location.

Question: Which options do you agree/disagree with? Are there any other options that you would like to be considered?

Bradley Way

- 3.30 Bradley Way is the primary vehicular route passing through Rochford and caters for significant volumes of traffic and Heavy Goods Vehicles. There is also an important local pedestrian route from West Street to the railway station and an important open space located adjacent to it.
- 3.31 Other improvements along Bradley Way, in terms of pedestrian access to green space and the reservoir, are discussed within options for Site K.

- Option:** The street could be redesigned so as to balance movement with various place functions. On-street parking bays should be provided on both sides of the street in a manner that ensures that traffic still moves efficiently. These spaces would allow for people to stop off at the park to take rest and respite as part of journeys through Rochford. This would greatly improve opportunities for people to use the park rather than drive by it, and improve levels of passive surveillance. This option would also allow for possible retail usage along Bradley way.
- Option:** The junction with West Street could be signalised. Whilst this may have implications on vehicular journey times through this route, it is deemed to be the most effective manner by which pedestrian movements can be safely provided for from the Market Square through to the rail station – a critical route required to support the successful regeneration of the town centre.

Question: Which options do you agree/disagree with? Are there any other options that you would like to be considered?

West Street

- 3.32 At present vehicles and buses have sufficient carriageway width to travel at speeds that are incongruous with the scale of West Street, dominating the footways. This impacts upon the safety and amenity of what could be a landmark historic street connecting the railway station to the Market Square.
- 3.33 Other options to enhance pedestrian links along West Street are discussed within Options for Site A, B and K.

Option: Footways could be widened on both sides, narrowing the carriageway but retaining bus and traffic movements. The carriageways could be paved in materials that are similar although differentiated from footways. Carriageways and footways would be differentiated via a nominal kerb to assist the visually impaired, and also deflecting vehicles from footways. In combination these measures would ensure that any vehicle using West Street does so in a manner that respects the needs of pedestrians, including the elderly and disabled, and protects the historic buildings along it.

Option: Signalised junction with Hall Road, replacing current roundabout. This option would have to be carefully examined by Essex County Council Highways Department to determine the impacts on traffic flow at this important junction between West Street, Hall Road and Ashingdon Road.

Question: Which options do you agree/disagree with? Are there any other options that you would like to be considered? Are junction improvements required?

The railway station

- 3.34 The rail station is the most important access point for the town, including commuter trips to London's varied employment and entertainment destinations. Improvements to the layout and access to the station car park are discussed as within option for Site K.

Bus routing and facilities

- 3.35 The existing bus network is circuitous and to a degree illegible due to the one-way network and a lack of appropriate way-finding mapping/signage to indicate where bus stops are and what routes stop where. There is also a level of disintegration between bus routes and destinations such as the railway station and the Market Square.
- 3.36 That being said, the existing one-way network makes it difficult to resolve these issues. The demand responsive nature of servicing in outlying towns like Rochford, also require that the bus network is flexible enough to accommodate buses where the passengers are. For this reason the retention of the existing bus routing network through Rochford is preferable. However, one potential option would be to redirect routing so that buses did not travel through the Market Square. Whilst this may improve the character of the Market Square, there are concerns as to what impact this would have on its accessibility.

Option: Stop facilities should be improved to include a map of Rochford with stops and services noted on it, to provide users with information required to plan their journeys. In addition real time bus information should also be provided at the Rochford train station to facilitate improved interchange between these modes.

Option: Reroute bus service to avoid Market Square.

Question: Do you agree with this approach? What do you think about the current routing of buses? Are there any other options that should be explored?

Development Issues

- 3.37 For any proposed development it is important to consider the question of delivery and whether or not the scale of change proposed can be delivered by the market or whether other interventions will be required.
- 3.38 The proposed uses for potential development sites suggested above are, in our opinion, commercially sound, however financial viability and delivery would depend upon many issues including the ability to obtain the sites and the cost of obtaining vacant possession.
- 3.39 Furthermore, some of the more strategic development opportunities (e.g. Back Lane car park) are unlikely to happen in the short to medium term (and possibly the long term) without more direct public sector support and involvement. The Council could seek to work with stakeholders and for example engage with Rochford Hospital (the South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation) to try to bring forward development on the hospital car park. Partnership arrangements with other public sector bodies such as EEDA (East of England Development Agency) and the Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) may also help to bring forward change in the town centre. Further discussion will be required with Network Rail and the South East Essex Primary Care Trust to realise development opportunities in the town.

4 The Area Action Plan Process

The Steps

- 4.1 As a statutory Development Plan Document, the AAP is being prepared in accordance with regulations set by Central Government. The process and the proposed time scale are set out below:
- Issues and options consultation: September – October 2009
 - Further consultation on options: August – November 2010
 - Pre-submission consultation: May – June 2011
 - Submission to the Secretary of State: July 2011
 - Examination in Public and adoption: November 2011
 - Adoption: May 2012
- 4.2 The first stage in the process above is the culmination of a period of research and analysis that has involved evidence gathering and working with key stakeholders within the AAP area.
- 4.3 We are at the stage of seeking your views on the Issues and Options report to feed into future work. There will be further community involvement at later stages as outlined above.

Sending in your Views

- 4.4 The feedback received from this Issues and Options draft will play an important role in the development of the Rochford Area Action Plan.
- 4.5 An online facility has been created that enables comments to be submitted quickly and easily, as well as providing the respondent with instant confirmation of receipt. The facility can be found at the web address below:

<http://rochford.jdi-consult.net/ldf/>

Views may be submitted by **5pm on 30th November 2009**.

We recognise that not everyone has access to the Internet and that it is important that no one is excluded from participating. If you wish to submit your views but are unable to do so online, please Planning Policy on 01702 318191.

The consultation period at this stage will last until 5pm on 30th November 2009. Please ensure that any comments that you have on the document are received before this time.

Appendix A – Planning Policy Context

East of England Plan

The East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14) provides a spatial development framework for the East of England. The strategy aims to deliver a more integrated pattern of land use, movement and activities that achieves a balanced mix of housing and employment. New development should sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres throughout the region, being places with high levels of service provision. Development plans within the region will make more use of previously developed land and buildings to protect Green Belt land, though in some districts a reassessment of such designation is needed.

Town centres, such as Rochford and Hockley, play a vital role in attracting investment and enhancing the environment through regeneration. The Plan aims to foster mixed-use economies throughout the region, with town centre development playing a key role in achieving brownfield development objectives and improving economic opportunities and quality of life for local people.

The region will see an overall growth in households largely through indigenous growth. Of the region's housing target of 421,500, the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region has been allocated 55,000 dwellings from 2001-2021, with 4,600 allocated to Rochford District Council. New housing should be high quality and high density (where appropriate) to make most efficient use of land.

Rochford Futures Study 2007

This document conducts a baseline analysis of Rochford District's economic, social and environmental performance, identifies future drivers of change and challenges for the future.

The report notes that Rochford's economic performance is mixed, being a very small local economy with very limited growth. The district is 'well-off' socially, with relatively low social isolation and inequality. However, it has poor local services and amenities. Rochford's economy is relatively static and will need to grapple with globalisation and deindustrialisation more effectively in the future. The population is aging, with a large expansion of the elderly population expected. House prices are high and development restraints are equally high. There has been a decrease in employment workspace and the local infrastructure is overloaded.

Key agents of change in the future will be deindustrialisation, globalisation, stimulating enterprise growth and new migration and social cohesion. The study notes that the local authority will need to engage more effectively with the private sector to deliver economic growth in the face of public sector funding cutbacks. The aging population should be used as an asset rather than a burden, and there needs to be additional community facilities.

In terms of housing growth, there needs to be greater variety of housing types and more housing generally. Car dependence is problematic and is causing problems throughout the region.

Rochford District Replacement Local Plan

The Rochford District Replacement Local Plan was adopted in 2006. Some policies within the Plan expired on June 15th 2009, but the majority have been saved until superseded by policies within the emerging Local Development Framework. Through the Plan, the Council seeks to promote sustainable development patterns that minimise land take and reduce the need to travel, especially locally. The Plan supports town centres and industrial estate enhancement throughout the District. Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley are the three designated town centres that are the primary retail areas of the District. Retail development outside these centres is not favoured.

Particular attention is given to the area's character and ensuring that new development respects the heritage and character of place throughout the District. The density of new developments will range between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, with higher levels permitted in town centres or places with good service provision. In developments of 25 units or more than one hectare in size, 15 percent of units must be affordable housing.

Rochford Core Strategy

Under the new Local Development Framework procedures, the Council is progressing its Core Strategy and has recently finalised the submission version for pre-submission public consultation. The emerging Core Strategy sees a vital role for its town centres in accommodating new growth. The retail strategy outlined in the draft submission document seeks to strengthen the role of the District's town centres. A sequential approach to the development of new retail provision is promoted as a means of ensuring the vitality and vibrancy of town centres.

The emerging Core Strategy seeks to improve the quality of the built environment as a result of growth. New development is expected to make a positive contribution to local character and all major applications will require a design brief. The emerging Core Strategy sets out a number of planning objectives against various themes. The key planning objectives in relation to retail and town centres set out in the Core Strategy are:

- To direct retail development to the District's town centres of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley.
- To enhance the centres of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley ensuring they are vital and vibrant places containing a range of uses and activities for all.
- To reduce the leakage of retail expenditure out of the District.
- To ensure that village and neighbourhood shops provide a service for local communities, particularly for those with limited access to transport.

Urban Capacity Study (2000 and 2007)

Two Urban Capacity Studies have been conducted for Rochford District Council. The 2000 study found that intensification was unlikely to yield many housing units, that employment sites were generally too far removed from town centres to be suitable for housing, that car parks are of mixed quality and potential for housing because of the economics of structured parking and that living above the shop offered most promise in Rochford town centre.

The updated 2007 study generally found less scope for housing capacity than the 2000 study. The earlier projections for housing through intensification, subdivision and above shops did not materialise as expected. The 2007 study similarly reduced expectations for development within town centres by excluding car parks in Rochford town centre, citing high usage.

Employment Land Study (2008)

In parallel to this Area Action Plan the Council has also commissioned an Employment Land Study. This was published in September 2008, addressing current supply and quality, future need and demand. The Employment Land Study forms a technical background report to the Council's emerging Local Development Framework. It will be used to help understand what and how much employment land is required in the District and whether there is any potential to release existing land supplies.

Given the need for additional employment land in the District the Employment Land Study recommends that the Council adopts strong policies to protect existing employment land. On a strategic level it is recommended that land to the west of the District is considered as viable to be developed as employment land. It is strategically best placed to house such uses due to its relatively good connectivity to Southend and London.

The eastern parts of the District, on the other hand, are not strategically good locations for employment land. The Employment Land study recommends that Rochford District Council consider the east as a more appropriate location for housing and other uses when planning for future land use requirements.

Retail and Leisure Study (2008)

The Retail and Leisure Study undertaken for the District states that Rochford is performing poorly in terms of expenditure retention. It notes that it is the second largest town centre within the District, has strong comparison and service sectors and benefits from a unique layout and shopping environment. It is also easily accessible by a range of transport modes.

The study does though identify a number of weaknesses. Comparison goods floor space is lacking and there is a high proportion of small units which restricts potential occupiers. There is also a lack of retailers at the higher end of the market.

The state of Rochford's environment is generally very good although there are opportunities for improvement. For example the Market Square, which has the potential to act as a strong focal point, suffers from low amenity and is dominated by vehicle parking. The study comments extensively on opportunities to pedestrianise the Market Square to provide a pleasant, accessible hub and focal point for the town centre and dovetailing with opportunities to develop a 'café culture' within the town centre.

Appendix B – Placecheck Initiative

Purpose of the Placecheck

The options presented in this report were informed by consultation with local representatives. On Saturday 23 February 2008 two Placecheck events were held in the District: one in Rochford town centre and one in Hockley town centre.

Placecheck is a method of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focussing people on working together to achieve them. Placecheck asks questions about the processes of change and the potential for improving the area physically.

Placecheck involves a series of questions, starting from the basic about what people like or dislike about the place and what needs to be improved, to over a hundred more specific questions. Not all of these questions need to be asked; a series of questions and prompts can be used that are more specific to the place. For the purpose of the Rochford and Hockley Placechecks we used the basic questions for the purpose of generating wider discussion.

The Placecheck events were held to help inform ideas and options for future change and improvement in the town centres of Rochford and Hockley, ensuring that the views and opinions of local residents help generate these options. The Rochford Placecheck took place in the morning and Hockley in the afternoon. Invitations to participate in the process were sent to all residents on the Council's Citizens Panel who had expressed an interest in planning for the town centres.

Each event convened with an introduction to Placecheck. Participants were then split into two groups for the purposes of a walking tour around the town centres. During this tour questions were asked about issues and opportunities, likes and dislikes. Following the walking tour a group feedback session was convened, during which participants were asked to report back on their thoughts.

Appendix C – Glossary

Note: This glossary of terms used in planning is intended to provide a simple guide. It is not a statement of the law nor does it claim to be an authoritative interpretation of the law.

Adoption	The final confirmation of a plan as a statutory document by the local planning authority.
Affordable Housing	Low cost housing for sale or rent, often from a housing association, to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation through the open or low cost market, or subsidised housing
Amenity	The pleasant or normally satisfactory aspects of a location which contribute to its overall character and the enjoyment of residents or visitors.
Backland	Land which is behind existing development with no, or very limited, road frontage. Usually applied to describe land previously or currently in use as rear gardens to existing residential properties.
Brownfield Site	Land which has been previously developed, excluding mineral workings or other temporary uses.
Change of Use	More correctly referred to as a 'material change of use'. A change in the use of land or buildings that is of significance for planning purposes, often requiring planning permission.
Comparison Goods	'Non perishable' goods for retail sale which are often stocked in a wide range of sizes, styles, colours and qualities, including furniture, carpets, televisions etc.
Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)	Notice issued by the government or a local authority to acquire land or buildings for public interest purposes.
Conditions	Stipulations attached to a planning permission to limit or direct the manner in which a development is carried out.
Conservation Area	An area designated under Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, by the local planning authority, as an area where it is desirable to preserve or enhance the character of its special architectural or historic interest.
Conservation Area Consent	Consent required from the local planning authority before demolishing an unlisted building in a conservation area.

Consultation	Procedures for assessing public opinion about a plan or major development proposal, or in the case of a planning application, the means of obtaining the views of affected neighbours or others with an interest in the proposal.
Density	In the case of residential development, a measurement of either the number of habitable rooms per hectare or the number of dwellings per hectare.
Design Brief	A statement prepared by the Local Planning Authority indicating the preferred way in which the Authority envisages the development may be accommodated.
Design Statement	A document provided by applicants to demonstrate how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals.
Development	The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land.
Development Brief	Document providing detailed information to guide developers on the type of development, design and layout constraints and other requirements for a particular, usually substantial, site.
Development Plan	The Local and Structure Plans are both development plans. The development plan for the District is comprised of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (adopted April 2001) and the Rochford District Local Plan First Review (adopted April 1995) [or the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan, when adopted].
English Heritage (Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England)	A national body funded by the government to promote and give advice on building conservation matters.
English Nature	A national body funded by the government to promote and give advice on the conservation of England's wildlife and natural features.
Essex Design Guide	Prepared by Essex Country Council, the Design Guide forms the basis for the design of housing development in the District.

Green Belt	Specially designated area of countryside protected from most forms of development in order to stop urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements, preserve the character of existing settlements and encourage development to locate within existing built-up areas.
Greenfield Site	An area not previously used for built development.
Infrastructure	Permanent resources serving society's needs, including roads, sewers, schools, hospitals, railways, communication networks etc.
Intensification	Increasing densities within existing residential areas through the bringing forward for development of unidentified
Listed Building	Building or other structure of special architectural or historic interest included on a statutory list and assigned a grade (I, II* or II).
Local Plan	Statutory development plan prepared by a local planning authority setting out detailed policies for environmental protection and development.
Local Planning Authority	The local authority or Council that is empowered by law to exercise planning functions. This is normally the local borough or District Council, but in National Parks and some other areas there is a different arrangement.
Planning Control	The process whereby a local planning authority decides whether a planning application meets the requirements of planning policy, particularly as set out in development plans.
Proposals Map	An obligatory component of a local plan showing the location of proposals in the plan on an Ordnance Survey base map.
Public Open Space (POS)	Land provided in urban or rural areas for public recreation, though not necessarily publicly owned.
Residential Land Availability	The annual statement indicating all sites available for housing and their development status for the next 5 years, in order to ensure that an adequate housing land will be made available.

Structure Plan	A plan produced jointly by Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, mainly comprising a written statement setting out the strategic policies and framework for development throughout the County. The Plan is approved by the Secretary of State following an Examination in Public, and District Councils then put the flesh on the framework with their Local Plans.
Sustainable Development	Environmentally responsible development, commonly defined as "development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
Town Centre	Describes city, town and traditional suburban centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus for a community and for public transport.
Town Centre Management	Partnership of local organisations, businesses and individuals to promote the common good of a town by developing, managing, promoting and improving facilities, the useful resources, the economy and the environment of a town centre.
Townscape	The appearance and character of buildings and all other features of an urban area taken together as a whole.
Urban Regeneration	The reuse or redevelopment of decaying or run-down parts of older urban areas to bring them new life and economic vitality.



Rochford District Council

Council Offices South Street
Rochford Essex SS4 1BW

Telephone: 01702 546366

Facsimile: 01702 545737

Website: <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>