

# **Rochford Futures**

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**A report for the Rochford Partnership**

October 2007

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in September 2007 commissioned the Local Futures Group to undertake a programme of research to help refresh and refine its Sustainable Community Strategy.

The existing Community Strategy (2004) expresses the long-term vision for the area, with goals covering the next 20 years structured around six “key themes”:

- Feeling safe;
- Looking after the environment;
- A good education, good skills and good jobs;
- Healthy living;
- Getting around; and
- An inclusive community.

The LSP wished to build on this foundation by creating an updated Strategy, focusing on more specific objectives to create the visions outlined in the original document. Thus, they approached the Local Futures Group to produce a series of research documents that would inform this process, as well as wider policy development regarding the Local Area Agreement and broader regional strategic plans.

During Stage One of the research we prepared a Local Futures Audit of the state of the district. The Audit benchmarked the district’s performance on a range of economic, social and environmental indicators, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and policy challenges. This was supported by a Data Annex, a separate report providing a wider and more detailed set of statistics to be used by LSP partners at their own discretion.

During Stage Two we drilled down to analyse aspects of Rochford at a ward and neighbourhood level. One of the key aspects of Rochford life is the economic relationship with surrounding areas; the Local Futures Group undertook an analysis of commuting dynamics within and around Rochford. A ward-level analysis of Rochford also formed part of this neighbourhood study, providing a local snapshot of economic, social and environmental conditions.

In Stage Three of the programme we prepared a report on ‘future drivers of change’. We identified 11 broad ‘drivers of change’ that are likely to be instrumental in shaping the

environment within which the District Council and its partners will operate over the next decade and onwards.

The final stage of research was a workshop involving various members of the Rochford LSP, representing a cross-section of representatives from statutory agencies, public services and the business and voluntary sectors. We presented the findings of our research and, with their involvement, identified some of the key issues and challenges to be addressed in the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

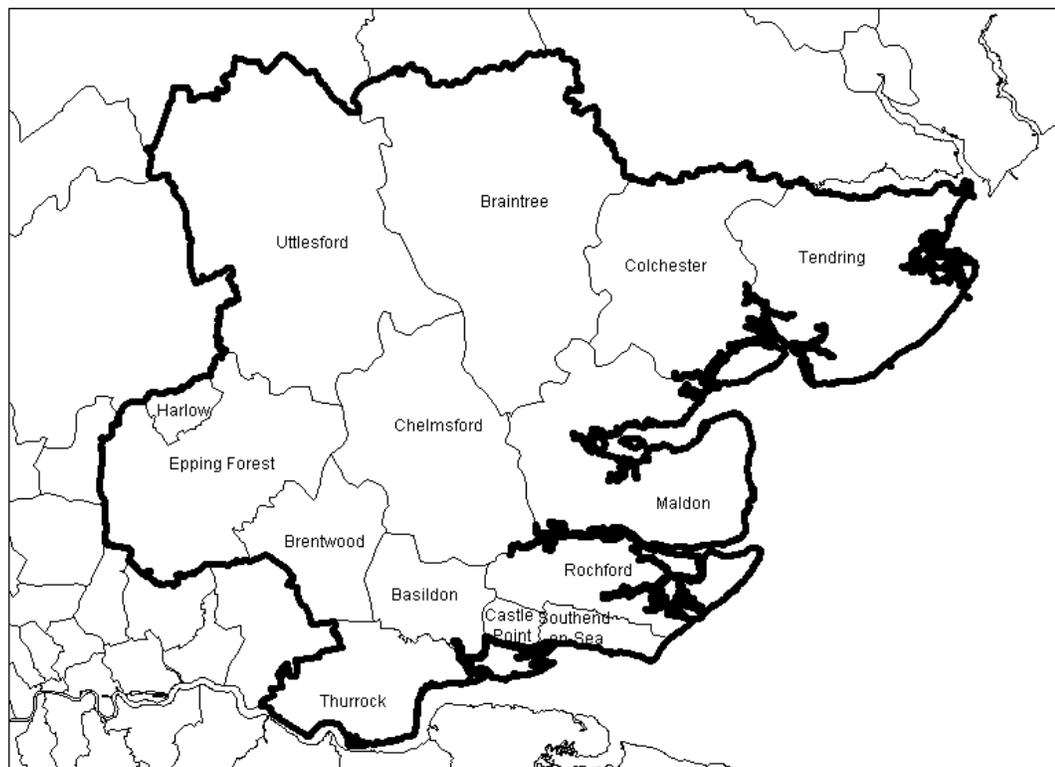
## 1.2 This report

A summary of the findings of our research and the workshop are presented in the following chapters. In **Chapter 2**, we summarise our baseline analysis of Rochford, highlighting current strengths and weaknesses. In **Chapter 3**, we consider some of the main drivers of change that are likely to be influential in shaping Rochford's future, highlighting opportunities and threats. In **Chapter 4**, we highlight the key challenges highlighted by partners in delivering their vision for the future of Rochford.

## 1.3 Location Map

The following map shows the location of areas used in this report for comparator purposes.

**Map 1: Rochford and its comparator areas**



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

## 2 The State of Rochford

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the context by providing an overarching analysis of Rochford according to a range of key economic, social and environmental indicators. It provides a baseline analysis that informed a workshop discussion of current strengths and weaknesses.

### 2.2 State of the District

In the Audit report (October 2007), we assessed the state of Rochford from three perspectives – economic, social, and environmental. A summary of the findings is presented in the report card shown below, where ‘A’ places the district in the top 20 per cent of local authority districts nationally and ‘E’ in the bottom 20 per cent. We benchmark the performance of Rochford at three spatial levels; Essex County grades are presented in the first column, East of England grades in the second and national grades in the third.

#### Report Card – Rochford

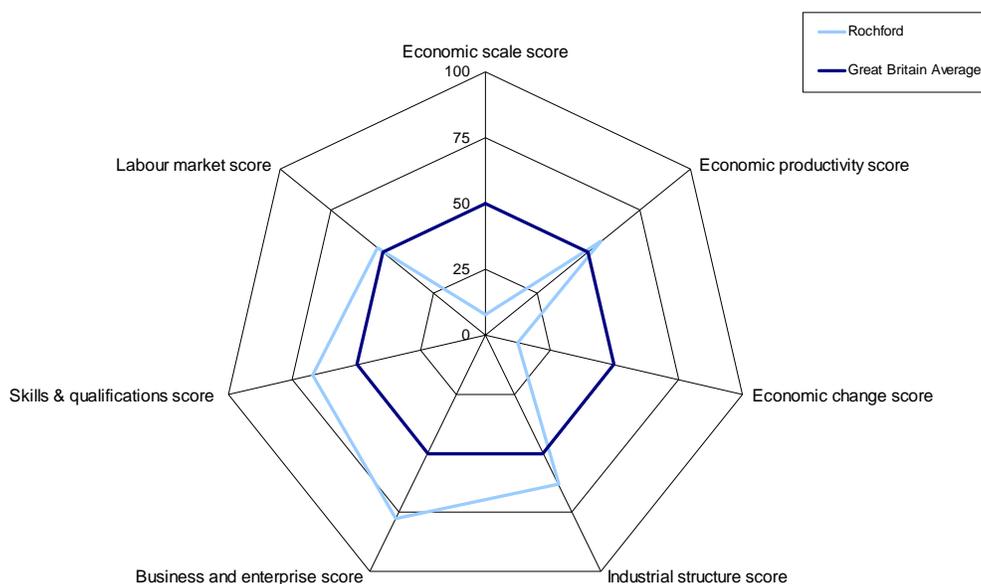
	Sub-Region Essex	Region East of England	Nation Great Britain
<b>Economy</b>			
Economic scale	E	E	E
Productivity	C	C	C
Economic change	E	E	E
Industrial structure	C	C	B
Business and enterprise	C	B	B
Skills and qualifications	A	B	B
Labour market	C	D	C
<b>Society</b>			
Knowledge workers	C	C	C
Prosperity	B	B	B
Deprivation	A	A	A
Inequality	C	C	B
Health	A	A	A
Crime	A	A	A
<b>Environment</b>			
Affordability	C	C	C
Floorspace change	E	E	E
Connectivity	C	B	B
Local services	E	E	E
Local amenities	E	D	D
National environment	C	C	C

- Economic Development** – Rochford’s economic performance is mixed. By national standards, its productivity and business enterprise stand out as relative strengths. The district faces strong local competition in Essex, ranking average at best by sub-regional standards. Rochford’s small economic scale is indicated by the district’s ‘E’ grade across the benchmarks; the small size of the economy is reinforced by the low growth experienced over the past few years, again relative to all three benchmarks.
- Social Profile** – Social conditions in the district are very good, with high levels of prosperity despite not having particularly large shares of resident knowledge workers (typically the higher earning workforce). Prosperity is coupled with low levels of deprivation and average levels of inequality. These conditions are reflected in a relatively healthy resident population, experiencing low levels of crime by all three benchmarks.
- Environment** – The environment within Rochford is mixed. The strongest environmental asset in the district is its connectivity, rated good by regional and national standards, although the findings also point to a relatively attractive natural environment. Housing affordability is average by all three benchmarks, reflecting the relatively high incomes of residents. However, there is an evident weakness in the quality of local services and amenities, although this in part reflects the rural nature of large parts of the district.

## 2.3 Economy

A summary of Rochford’s economic profile is presented below, in the form of a spider chart. Every British districts data is converted into a percentile, with the top-ranked area scoring 100 and the bottom zero. These can then be plotted on the chart to give a profile for each area. In general, the bigger the web, the better the area is performing on each set of indicators. In this chart, the darker line shows the British median score.

### Economy: Composite Indicators



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

Rochford has a small, but reasonably productive, and enterprising economy. Although the district does not record significant levels of 'high skills', a solid foundation of basic and intermediate skills underpins the local economy, and supports a healthy share of knowledge-driven jobs. This is backed up by small-area data, which shows that very few of the knowledge workers in Rochford commute into the area. There are however, relatively high shares out-commuting to parts of Basildon and Chelmsford, as well as central London.

However, the small economic scale, modest levels of high skills and local competition may be undermining the sustainability of the Rochford economy; the direction of travel for the local economy is not as positive as many other local authorities in the UK, resulting in Rochford ranked within the lowest quartile of local districts by its economic change score.

Furthermore, data at the ward level shows some evidence of an economic divide between urban and rural areas; this is particularly noticeable in levels of skills, where wards close to the coast have significantly lower levels of skills than wards close to the town centre.

In light of our analysis, the following economic strengths and weaknesses were highlighted by partners at the *Rochford Futures* workshop. These views are generally listed in order of consensus (i.e. more comments were raised on those listed first):

**Economy: Strengths and Weaknesses**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Skills and qualifications	Static economy
Entrepreneurial spirit	Low knowledge economy base
Small business growth	Lack of high value employment
Access to jobs and earnings	Lack of skills for knowledge economy
High employment, good productivity	Rural and urban tension (e.g. skills, employment)
Potential airport development	Dependence on out-commuting
	Ageing population, shrinking labour force
	Restrictive planning policy
	Low business prosperity
	Cuts in public sector funding and employment
	Under-developed tourism offer

## 2.4 Society

Rochford is a generally prosperous part of the country, despite only a modest share of resident ‘knowledge workers’, the typically higher paid employees. This is reflected in reasonably low deprivation, excellent health conditions among the district’s population (although some pockets of poorer health in the more urban areas are evident), and one of the lowest crime rates in the country.

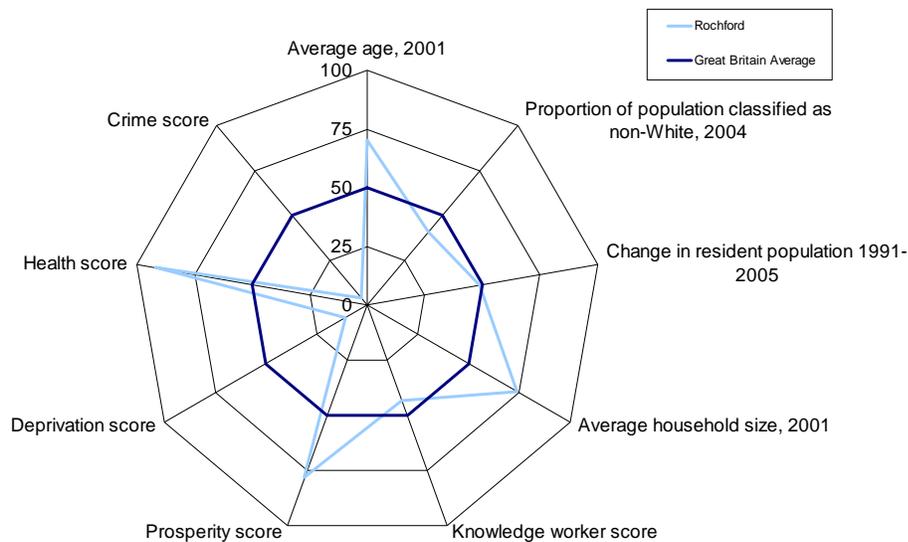
The Rochford population is among the older local populations in Britain, perhaps ageing due to average population growth. There are some local variations in this pattern, with wards around Rochford town centre and to the north of the district recording older average ages than the coastline wards and those along the west border.

Ward dynamics of the modest population growth reveal higher rates of migration into the Foulness and Greater Wakering area, as well as areas along the border with Basildon. This could be due to a number of factors, such as employment, house prices and quality of life.

Rochford is home to a relatively large number of families, raising the average household size. This is particularly the case in the western part of the district, perhaps indicating that the higher levels of in-migration in these parts are due to parents seeking the quality of life and prosperity needed to support families.

The more highly paid knowledge workers (with higher weekly incomes) are found mainly along the borders of Basildon and around Rochford town centre – giving rise to another rural-urban divide in the district. Conversely, higher levels of deprivation are found in the more rural parts of Rochford.

### Society: Composite Indicators



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

In light of our analysis, the following society strengths and weaknesses were highlighted.

**Society: Strengths and Weaknesses**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Low crime rates	Lack of cohesion
Access to good education	Fear of crime
Healthy population	Social isolation
Wealth/low deprivation and low inequality	Local low skill and low value jobs
Static communities	Ageing population
Ageing population	Commuting and work/life balance
Positive partnership working	Average ethnic mix
Average ethnic mix	

## 2.5 Environment

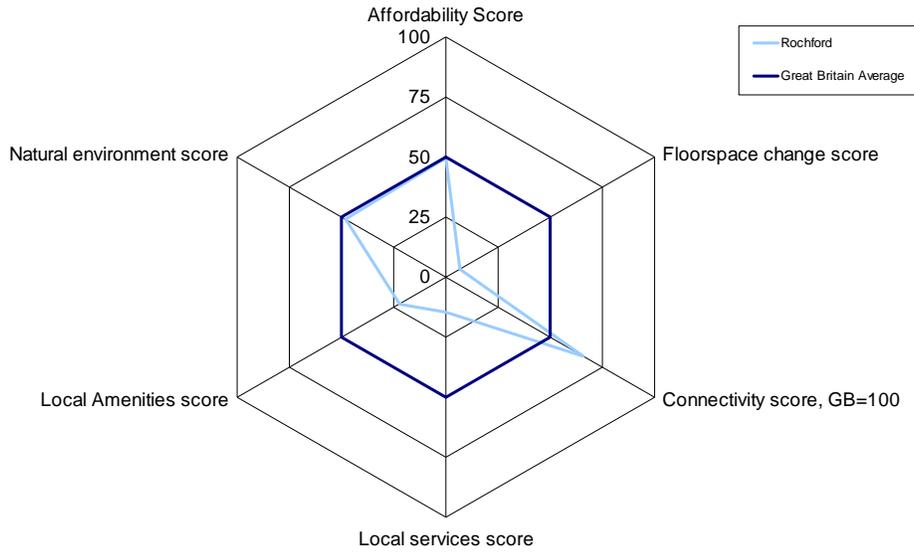
Our assessment of Rochford's environment produces mixed results. This is due in part to the conflict between environmental measures, with good transport connectivity (and the high levels of journeys made) often resulting in high levels of congestion (and poor air quality).

The district is well connected overall, largely due to its rail links and proximity to Southend airport. However, drilling down to lower spatial levels reveals a stark divide between the urban and rural use of public transport, perhaps reflecting unequal transport provision across Rochford. This divide is emphasised by data on access to services, which again results in a clear east-west, urban-rural divide.

Average housing affordability (by national standards) is another asset, although house ownership is concentrated around the urban/eastern parts of Rochford. This most likely indicates differences in incomes and affordability.

Overall, the combination of a reasonably attractive natural environment, access to some good transport links and affordable living indicates a good quality of life for local residents, although this is tempered by relatively poor access and provision of local services and amenities. Furthermore, the local environment may not be as attractive to businesses, given the very low floorspace change score by national standards.

**Environment: Composite Indicators**



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

The following table summarises the district’s environmental strengths and weaknesses:

**Environment: Strengths and Weaknesses**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Natural environment, green space Rural areas Sites of Special Scientific Interest Coastline and rivers Good services: e.g. council, health Good standard of local services Transport: rail links; bus links to Southend; E-W links Recreation activities: golf, fishing, sports Housebuilding	Limited and overloaded infrastructure: public transport; motorways in South East Essex; N-S connectivity Access to amenities and services: rural access; over-play of existing areas (e.g. Windmill, Jubilee Park); public access to coast Availability of services: sporting facilities; youth services; cultural facilities Housing: lack of social housing and affordable housing; high density housing Floorspace decline: industrial and retail Over-protection of green belt Inadequate support for environmentally friendly behaviour: cycle tracks, recycling, etc Natural assets not marketed widely

## 3 Future drivers of change

### 3.1 Introduction

Successful visions and strategies are those that anticipate the future. For this reason we undertook a short programme of research on the future drivers of change that will have the greatest implications for regions and localities. The key trends, summarised below, were presented at the workshop and generated a discussion of the most important drivers for Rochford.

Drivers of change	Underlying trends
<b>Globalisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world economy is globalising</li> <li>• Europe is a major source of inward investment</li> <li>• Rapid growth in world air freight</li> <li>• Production costs cheaper in developing/emerging economies</li> <li>• Rapid growth of China and India: re-emerging economies</li> </ul>
<b>Industrial Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decline of manufacturing</li> <li>• The growing dominance of and trade in services</li> <li>• The use of technology key to higher productivity</li> <li>• London dominates Britain's knowledge economy</li> <li>• The growing healthcare economy</li> <li>• Tourism on the rise</li> </ul>
<b>Science &amp; Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications cost declining</li> <li>• Processing power gets more powerful</li> <li>• Consumer use of the internet maturing</li> <li>• Increase in online shopping and other e-services</li> <li>• Broadband critical engine of growth</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign direct investment grows</li> <li>• Mergers and acquisitions recovering</li> <li>• Transnational corporations are growing</li> <li>• The rise of employment in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)</li> <li>• Rise in foreign ownership of UK companies</li> </ul>
<b>Labour Market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size of the labour market set to decline</li> <li>• An ageing workforce</li> <li>• Increasing importance of foreign workers</li> <li>• Growth in 'knowledge workers'</li> <li>• Flexible working increasingly common</li> <li>• UK struggling to compete on skills</li> </ul>

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Demographics and households</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World population growth</li> <li>• A middle ageing population</li> <li>• Changing life patterns</li> <li>• Changing family structures</li> <li>• Household structures changing</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Inequality and social cohesion</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households in relative poverty declining</li> <li>• Inequality still high</li> <li>• Growing wage inequality</li> <li>• Housing increasingly unaffordable</li> <li>• Unequal distribution of wealth</li> <li>• Rich getting richer, poor getting left behind</li> </ul> |
| <b>Values and attitudes</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging values of individualism and self fulfilment</li> <li>• Levels of trust declining</li> <li>• The personalisation of authority</li> <li>• Growing importance of cultural and intellectual capital</li> <li>• The search for quality of life</li> </ul>           |
| <b>Environment</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for water expected to surge</li> <li>• Water scarcity worsening</li> <li>• World temperature rising</li> <li>• Traffic volumes expected to increase</li> <li>• CO<sub>2</sub> in atmosphere expected to increase</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Leisure and tourism</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rise of the experience economy</li> <li>• Time spent 'out and about' rising</li> <li>• Tourist expenditure abroad outstrips foreign tourist expenditure in UK</li> <li>• Local leisure culture and long term success linked</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>Government and politics</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rise of global institutions</li> <li>• European Union – widening and deepening</li> <li>• The Euro and UK membership</li> <li>• Winners and losers in a Europe of regions</li> <li>• The new 'localism'</li> </ul>  |

### 3.2 Key future drivers of change for Rochford

Following a presentation and discussion of the future drivers of change, participants were asked to highlight the trends and forecasts that were likely to have most impact on Rochford's own future, over the period to 2030. The feedback is summarised below highlighting some of the key trends for which the district may need to prepare. Again, we have reported comments in the approximate the order of importance, as indicated by the frequency the topic was raised in discussion:

#### Industrial structure

Local economic sustainability was a key issue raised by partners. In particular, the economic structure within Rochford was considered a critical driver for the area's future prospects. The

Partnership members recognised that there has been a decline in traditional jobs at a national and local level, and Rochford still needs to adjust to the post-industrial economy. Most partners felt that engagement with the knowledge economy is needed to prompt this adjustment, particularly in view of the district's proximity to London's strong knowledge economy base and the aim to minimise other areas' economic dominance over Rochford.

### **Globalisation**

The potentially conflicting dynamics of localisation and globalisation were raised as another key driver for Rochford. The rise of overseas manufacturing will inevitably have an impact on the local manufacturing industry and its accompanying jobs. Further, resident workers may find that the labour market is less secure in the future, given the rise in foreign ownership of UK businesses. This may particularly affect those who commute out to access employment and earnings in the larger, multinational companies in other parts of Essex and in London.

Another aspect of this driver raised was the potential increase in global transport. In particular, the growth in world air freight could have implications for the local airport, together with the surrounding economy and environment.

### **Business and enterprise**

The business and enterprise environment within Rochford is considered to be one of the district's economic strengths, and fostering this environment will be critical to shaping the local economy in a sustainable manner. Stimulating this entrepreneurial culture will depend upon the future investment in small and medium enterprise (SME) and supply chain growth and management.

### **Migration**

Social cohesion was another recurring factor shaping Rochford's future. There were many facets to this driver, one of which was how future migration flows will be dealt with in Rochford. Attracting and valuing inward migrants to become part of the workforce will be an important part in fostering sustainable communities in the district, particularly given the increasing spread of immigration beyond the urban areas of the UK.

### **Housing and transport**

Housing and transport infrastructure was another contentious point raised; housing costs could create a generation divide in Rochford, with young people increasingly unable to afford local housing. However, development will be needed to sustain economic growth. In addition, access to services and employment are compromised by a static transport system; e-service delivery through increased broadband access could be important in shaping this issue in the future.

### **Values and attitudes**

A changing sense of community was an important aspect of this driver, with the rise in potential conflict between the importance of personal happiness and that of shared social values. The strength of family ties and the evolving family 'unit' is a part of the changing

nature of society and communities; the increase in the importance of technology within social interaction another aspect of these changes. How Rochford reacts to these trends will shape local community cohesion, as well as wider social (and economic) ties, particularly with the rest of Essex and London.

Overall, the understanding of public expectations for the quality of life sought was considered critical to advancing cohesion. This involves responding to the demand for, and extending, “feel good factors” such as leisure facilities and other parts of the quality of life ‘offer’.

### **Demographics**

A key element of the stakeholders' concern for the future social cohesion within Rochford was, as alluded to above, the changing demographic and household structures. Rochford already has an older than average population (relative to the UK as a whole), and is likely to age further given current trends.

The resulting workforce balance will shape the local skill set and thus shape the future employment and economic prospects of the area. The pressure on local services will also change, potentially with increased demand for health and social care services rather than youth services. Socially, the changing demographic balance may result in the isolation of the existing pockets of young people in the area - this can have an effect on the social and economic futures of local youth.

### **Environment**

Rochford's coastal geography, together with the River Roach running through the district, presents significant risks associated with the effects of global warming. In particular, the balance between flood risk management and local and regional housing development policy may have an impact on the sustainability of the area. Greater environmental awareness was raised as important, moving sustainability and climate change issues up the policy agenda.

### **Governance**

Some participants felt that future national and local government would play an important part in Rochford's future. Party politics would obviously affect the direction of local policy. The adoption of new legislation and performance measures will also shape the way in which policy develops over the short to medium term. A final point was raised regarding how local government engaged with ‘policy of change’ – there was a call to alter attitudes (e.g. regarding planning policies) to encourage innovation and adaptation to changing times.

### 3.3 Opportunities and threats

In discussion with participants, the following opportunities and threats were identified after reflection on the key drivers of change expected to affect Rochford in the coming years:

#### Economy: Opportunities and Threats

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<p><u>Enterprise culture</u>: Growth in SMEs can drive further growth in Rochford</p> <p><u>Proximity to engines of growth</u>: London, SE knowledge economy, Stansted, M11, Olympics; balanced by rural quality of life</p> <p><u>Knowledge-based services</u>: Attract inward investment – location provides pathway to growth in services, particularly through ‘virtual’ working</p> <p><u>Skills development</u>: Local businesses can offer training to retain skills; develop current base of medium-high skilled human capital; utilise skills of the ageing and migrant workforces</p> <p><u>Leisure facilities</u>: Develop recreational offer with green space; climate change could offer greater tourism potential</p> <p><u>Sustainable culture</u>: ‘Eco-development’, with improved rail services to decrease car use; internet and wi-fi technology to enable virtual working</p>	<p><u>Climate change</u>: Potential economic sanctions due to increased flood risk; size of the carbon footprint; global warming</p> <p><u>Ageing population</u>: Shrinking workforce; drain on public finance through increased demand for health and social care</p> <p><u>Competition</u>: Increased global competition, particularly from emerging economies such as China and India; high concentration of economic growth in ‘Middle England’</p> <p><u>Employment</u>: Further decline of manufacturing industries; out-sourcing of labour and migrant workers could undermine local employment; more jobs outside Rochford will increase the population without boosting the local labour market</p> <p><u>Transport</u>: Lack of public transport results in gridlock, pollution and poor connectivity</p> <p><u>Housing</u>: Lack of affordable housing could detract young graduates needed to sustain the local workforce; current emphasis on housing growth conflicts with floorspace growth</p>

#### Society: Opportunities and Threats

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<p><u>Social inclusion focus</u>: Support single parents; lower rate of teenage parents; support more youth clubs; increase outreach services; build community schools</p> <p><u>Fluid communities</u>: Attract ‘DINKYs’; more diverse communities through migration; community and voluntary sector development as a result; promote cultural opportunities through diversity</p>	<p><u>Social isolation</u>: The ‘Facebook’ society – increasing individualism and web-based interaction could harm social skills and cohesion; digital divide may restrict access to jobs, services and amenities</p> <p><u>Ageing population</u>: Higher dependency ratio may drain health resources; widening gap between the older generation and youth could create tensions</p>

<p><u>Skills</u>: Education and 'upskilling' opportunities; new technology gives rise to new IT skills, and greater dispersal of employment and access to services</p> <p><u>Changing households</u>: Changing household structures; ageing population; maintaining 'virtual' families through web-based networking</p> <p><u>Quality of life</u>: A changing work-life balance could increase the importance of leisure time; the inherent wealth in the area could play a part in fostering an experience/consumer economy; prosperity and low crime attract residents/business</p>	<p><u>Infrastructure</u>: Risk of overdevelopment with increased house-building; risk of underdevelopment of the local transport infrastructure, and social/economic isolation</p> <p><u>Quality of life</u>: Fear of crime high despite low crime rates; long working hours conflicts with work-life balance; sedentary lifestyles and alcohol consumption may infringe upon quality of life</p> <p><u>Service provision</u>: Decline in public services; lack of pension provision; diverse communities take up resources; child poverty rates not dealt with</p>
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**Environment: Opportunities and Threats**

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<p><u>Public transport</u>: Increase and improve access to public transport, particularly in rural areas; enforce existing laws and road tolls concerning traffic</p> <p><u>Corporate response to climate change</u>: reward businesses for energy saving; low fuel consumption; promote industrial carbon footprint</p> <p><u>Reduce local carbon footprint</u>: Reduce traffic; utilise new technology to develop environmentally-friendly solutions; wi-fi and internet for virtual working enables lower requirement of industrial/occupational land; restrict new housing</p> <p><u>Lifestyle culture</u>: Develop leisure services by capitalising on natural assets (e.g. green space, and coastline); reduce travel outside the district</p>	<p><u>Global warming</u>: Flood risk; water scarcity leads to rising water costs; rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels, particularly with increased congestion; unadjusted household waste; impact of airport</p> <p><u>Transport</u>: Over-reliance on cars; need better alternatives; planning restrictions prevent innovative solutions</p> <p><u>Housing</u> – Lack of affordable housing, therefore young people are leaving ('brain drain')</p> <p><u>Growth</u> – Concentration of economic growth in the South East and increased need for development will lead to environmental degradation</p> <p><u>Amenities</u>: Current underdeveloped leisure provision, particularly for young people; may decline with increase in web-based interaction</p>

## 4 Challenges for the future

### 4.1 Challenges for the future

#### **Economic growth**

The growth of the local economy was considered to be one of the key challenges for the future of Rochford. The small district economy is currently vulnerable to any future economic downturn, and must engage with other growth areas. Harnessing key local drivers will be an important part of the response to this challenge. Linking the local growth areas may also need improved engagement with the private sector, to work in partnership for further economic growth. This is particularly the case in the likely climate of reduced public funding, and a greater emphasis on local leadership of sub-national economic regeneration and development.

Further to this, although many of Rochford's residents commute out of the area to well paid jobs in the Thames Gateway and London, it will be important that the spending power of the district's residents does not also leave the area. There is an opportunity to retain locally-generated prosperity by encouraging local spending and a retail/consumer economy.

Crucially, Rochford faces the dilemma of balancing the need to attract inward investment – for example by increasing the supply of industrial and business floorspace – and the need to maintain the environment which attracts and retains local residents.

#### **Social cohesion**

Future social cohesion will be another important challenge for the district, with different aspects of social life increasing the chances of social isolation. The growth in IT dependency could widen the digital divide, particularly between generations. The concept of the 'virtual community' within the realm of public services and the local social and economic environment is still relatively unknown.

The effects of an ageing population and generation gap will need to be addressed; indirectly, fear of crime and youth services are also likely to be affected. Furthermore, the concept of 'family' may begin to change as residents become older and young people are increasingly unable to purchase their first homes. Utilising the ageing population as an economic and community resource will be critical to positively managing these changes.

Final the balance between development for wealth creation and the local quality of life may also shape how Rochford's pockets of deprivation – as well as the wider population – progress in the future.

### **Services and amenities**

Improvements to the local services and facilities are another critical aspect of building a cohesive and prosperous future for Rochford. There are numerous local attractions that may yet be exploited through improved access and better networking (e.g. the Greengrid project).

Investment in a community-wide service infrastructure was also raised, particularly to influence social inclusion. Facilities to address problems involving underachieving young people, mental health, lone parents and the fear of crime were among those identified for improvement.

### **Natural environment**

As mentioned earlier, there is a tension between delivering economic development in Rochford and preserving the environmental quality of life of the area. Devising and promoting eco-friendly initiatives, backed by long-term and sustained environment policies, will be important to dealing with the issue of environmental sustainability.

Rising sea levels and an increased risk of flooding in the area is another threat to the area; this will need a commitment from the council to “think non-political” in order to put plans in place for an admittedly uncertain future.

On the positive side, changes to the environment were raised as an opportunity for the local economy. For instance, there are opportunities for leading the way in technological advances for dealing with the effects of climate change.

### **Housing and population trends**

There are significant local tensions over housing development and the associated population trends. On the one hand, some participants advocated controlling population increases by slowing house-building rates. On the other, there were some who felt that it was critical to house the workers needed to grow the local economy to prevent the district becoming a ‘dormitory’ for other areas.

A range of suggestions for future housing were proposed; notably, many commented on the need for a greater variety of accommodation to meet increased demand as well as the different age, lifestyle and affordability profiles of residents.

### **Skills**

There has been a national focus on the skills agenda, at both ends of the spectrum: improving the rates of workers with the higher ‘knowledge-based’ skills, and those with basic skills. The analysis demonstrates that Rochford also needs to maintain this

dual focus. Higher end skills are needed to prevent economic decline by engaging with the knowledge economy. 'Knowledge pathways' for resident workers would also help to counteract the 'brain drain' and reduce out-commuting, making the local economy more self-reliant.

Further to this, a broader and longer-term view of local skills is needed. Suggestions of life skills and training in non-academic subjects highlighted the demand for a wider educational experience. Improving basic skills through school outreach programmes, vocational education and business support for pathways to work, alongside lifelong learning programmes, will also help to ensure local education is inclusive to all skill types and ages, thus creating a more sustainable society and economy in Rochford.

### **Connectivity**

Rochford is relatively well connected, primarily due to good rail links into London and being located near Southend airport. However, on the ground, these benefits are outweighed by significant pitfalls in the local transport infrastructure.

The area is largely car-dependent, and has problems with connectivity and access to services, particularly in rural areas. A congested road network and weak public transport system exacerbate these conditions, and threatens social inclusion and economic prosperity.

### **Migration**

Migration is another potential challenge to the area – from within and outside the UK. With changes in EU legislation, and the expansion of the London economy, migration has flowed outside of the core urban areas. Rural localities are increasingly destinations of choice, whether for young professionals seeking a better quality of life, new arrivals seeking employment, or second home owners. Whether migrants choose Rochford or areas near Rochford as their home/place of work, there will be again consequences for services, employment and social cohesion.

### **Overall image**

Overall, participants felt that a unifying sense of place was needed in order to begin to deal with the challenges Rochford faces. A 'unique selling point' and image of the district should be identified in order to raise the profile of the area and provide a foundation from which stakeholders could work to release Rochford's full potential.

## **4.2 Next steps**

This report provides a synthesis of the various phases of research undertaken for Rochford District Council, as part of the Rochford Futures project. While it is designed specifically to inform the review/refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy, it also provides an evidence base to inform a range of other policy and research activities. This includes the Local Development Framework/Core Strategy, which itself

should reflect Partnership's wider vision. Not least it provides a context within which the Council, with its partners, can respond to government's emerging Place Shaping agenda.

# Glossary

<i>Amenities</i>	The provision of amenities such as cinemas, theatres, libraries, heritage sites, hotels and restaurants.
<i>Business and enterprise</i>	Our overall business and enterprise score takes into consideration an areas business formation rate, the change of in VAT registered business stock, and new business survival rates.
<i>Economic Scale</i>	The scale of a local economy based on an areas share of national GVA and employment.
<i>Connectivity</i>	The connectivity of an area, relative to the GB average based on an access to airports, motorways, inter city rail connections and distance to London.
<i>Crime</i>	An overall measure based on the total number of offences per 1,000 resident population.
<i>Deprivation</i>	The Index of Multiple Deprivation, average SOA score provides a weighted average figure for the levels of deprivation in a given area.
<i>Economic Change</i>	The percentage change in the total number of employees (by workplace) from 1998 to 2002.
<i>Floorspace change</i>	Percentage change between 2000 and 2003, in an area's total industrial, office and retail floorspace.
<i>GVA per head</i>	A measure of the level of value added at each stage of the production process
<i>Health</i>	An overall measure based on average life expectancy at birth, of all residents.
<i>Housing affordability</i>	This index of housing affordability is based on local earnings v local house prices, benchmarked nationally.
<i>Industrial Structure</i>	An overall measure based on the proportion of all employed persons working in sectors of the economy defined as "Knowledge-intensive".
<i>Knowledge workers</i>	The proportion of the working age population employed in managerial and senior official, professional or associate professional & technical occupations.
<i>Labour market</i>	The overall measure is based on the proportion of people aged 16-59/64 (men/women) in employment.
<i>Natural environment</i>	The overall measure reflects the quality of an areas natural environment based on its Natural Beauty (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks, Community Forest etc), Tranquility, and Average weather.
<i>Participation rates</i>	The proportion of people aged 16-59/64 (men/women) in employment.
<i>Prosperity</i>	The overall measure is based on average total incomes.
<i>Productivity</i>	The overall measure reflects the productive capacity of an area and is based on

average gross weekly earnings and GVA (Gross Value Added) per head.

*Services*

This composite measure provides an indication of the quality of local public services based on GCSE performance, proportion of household waste recycled, and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) score of each area.

*Skills and qualifications*

Our composite measure assesses the overall level of qualifications of an areas workforce (based on NVQs), relative to the GB value.