



The Castle Point Plan

Issues & Options Consultation

Summary Document

Your Community. Your Views

Introduction

A priority for the Council is creating a bright and prosperous future for Castle Point. Key to this is planning how our borough will develop in the coming decades. We must ensure we have the right housing, infrastructure, green spaces, and services to meet your needs as we change and grow. To this end, we are developing the Castle Point Plan.

What is the Castle Point Plan?

A local plan is a long-term plan which sets out a positive vision for the area and identifies where and how development should take place in the future.

This local plan - **The Castle Point Plan** - will set out all the planning policies and proposals for Castle Point. When complete, it will act as a framework to inform planning decisions and guide development in the borough up to 2043.

It will include what kind of development can go where to ensure the right number and types of homes, space for businesses and the infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities, are delivered to support our growing population. It will also contain policies that safeguard the environment, enable climate change mitigation, and secure high quality design.

The Castle Point Plan is proposed to cover the period 2023-2043.

Why is the Council Consulting?

There are some difficult decisions to be made when it comes to balancing the need for economic growth and increased demand for housing with other important issues, such as protecting the environment and improving essential infrastructure.

Understanding the views of local residents and other organisations is key to establishing a positive approach to making these decisions.



Keep up to date

To find out more, scan the QR Code or visit:
www.castlepoint.gov.uk/castle-point-plan
or call **01268 82200**.

If you would like to receive regular email updates as the Castle Point Plan develops please email: CPPlan@castlepoint.gov.uk

Initial Engagement

During 2023’s Initial Engagement on the issues to be addressed in the Castle Point Plan you told us:

- The protection of the borough’s green spaces is a key priority for local residents.
- There is a preference for new development to be on existing brownfield sites.
- There is concern over the impact of new development on the already congested roads.
- The provision of social housing and housing that buyers can afford to buy or rent, is important for local residents.
- New infrastructure was needed before new development is commenced.
- Parks and open spaces should be well maintained.
- Local town centres are in need of improvement.
- Water infrastructure and wastewater management are specific issues requiring attention due to increased flooding.
- Leisure and entertainment activities are required to support the health and well-being of the growing population and prevent/reduce anti-social behaviour.

What stage are we at?

Building upon the outcomes from the initial engagement, this consultation introduces the Issues and potential Options to address those issues in the Castle Point Plan. It is important to note that this consultation is not on a draft Plan, it simply introduces the content that the Plan will cover.



Canvey Island

Canvey is the largest town, with the largest town centre in the Borough. There are significant opportunities to improve Canvey Town Centre, to generate increased investment, with more new homes and jobs, shops and services. This opportunity extends eastwards along the High Street and westwards along Long Road.

To the south of the town centre is Canvey Seafront, where there is scope to regenerate existing facilities and grow the leisure sector to harness the potential of tourism.

To the west of Canvey is Charfleets Industrial Estate, the biggest employment area in the Borough. It is well occupied but would benefit from enhancements to

public spaces and improvements to infrastructure including digital infrastructure and parking.

Adjacent to this is out of centre retailing and employment growth locations, which make west Canvey a significant area for employment activity and economic growth. The ports sit to the south east of this, and are nationally significant.

West Canvey is also home to extensive areas of nature conservation for both invertebrates and birds. This provides opportunities for both nature and recreation, tying into the wider network of green infrastructure across South Essex.

Have your say—Questions 2-13

Benfleet

Benfleet is located to the west of the Borough and has the only rail station, closely located next to the South Benfleet Conservation Area. Both of these assets need to be enhanced and complemented by the policies in the new Plan.

Located along Benfleet High Rd, Benfleet Town Centre has a good range of local services, but there is need for improvement. There are a number of underutilised land parcels within and around the centre that offer the opportunity to increase the local population and provide updated premises for businesses to operate in.

The old centre of South Benfleet comprises several listed pubs, retail units and restaurants close to the railway station. Businesses in the area have successfully created a vibrant leisure quarter, and this needs to be protected and enhanced.

South Benfleet playing fields has a key dual role in providing open space and playing fields for local residents, and protecting South Benfleet from flooding due to its sloping topography.

Further north, South Benfleet and Tarpots town centres have potential for regeneration to provide more homes to support an improved retail and leisure offer, alongside new business and infrastructure space.

Congestion on the A13 is an issue, and opportunities to improve connectivity east west, as well as north south will be important.

Manor Trading Estate is a key employment location in the north of Benfleet, but needs to be modernised in order to obtain greater investment, and produce more jobs in the future.

Have your say—Questions 14-24

Thundersley

Thundersley’s historic village centre is located on Hart Rd in the north of Thundersley. This is currently the main civic and service centre within Thundersley, but the area has grown significantly over the 20th Century and the village centre is now not of a scale that meets local needs.

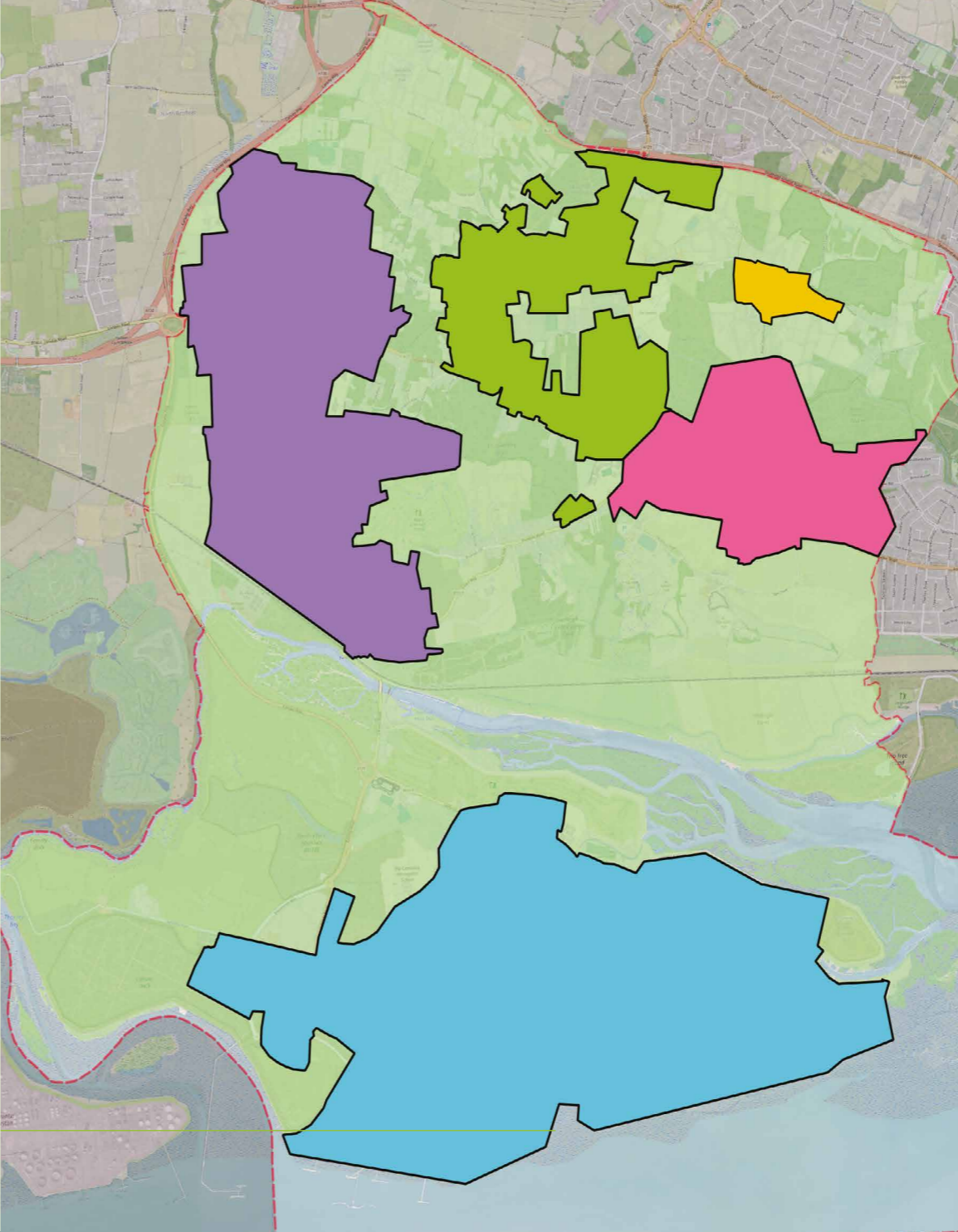
There is a large area of publicly owned land around the Council offices on Kiln Rd, which offers a unique opportunity for growth to optimise civic and education facilities locally, as well as spur economic growth and meet housing needs. There are key bus routes in the Borough that run through Thundersley connecting Rayleigh and Hadleigh.

There is a small shopping parade at the junction of Rayleigh Rd and Hart Rd, with capacity on a neighbouring site to enhance overall service provision here.

Rayleigh Weir is both an important shopping and employment location. It is also an opportunity to make more intensive use of brownfield land.

Thundersley is surrounded by green areas which offer significant value to local residents. Due to the extensive green infrastructure network, there may be additional off-road opportunities to improve footpaths and byways for active leisure travel in the Thundersley area.

Have your say—Questions 36-40



Hadleigh

Hadleigh has the Borough’s second largest town centre, comprising of a mixture of retailers, cafés, restaurants, and a growing cultural offer.

The Town Centre environment could be improved to reinforce Hadleigh’s importance as a place to visit rather than to pass through. Traffic flow on the A13, and the dominance of the road within the centre could be reduced to help achieve this. The Hadleigh “island” area represents a significant opportunity to regenerate the centre of Hadleigh. The former Crown Public House site has remained vacant for a significant period.

Benfleet and Southend Marshes hold a significant landscape value, both in terms of views from and in to it, and as a living landscape. Significant areas of the marshland and creek are designated due to their nature conservation value.

Hadleigh Castle Country Park and the Salvation Army Farm offer a range of tourism and leisure activities. These include the rare breeds centre and Olympic mountain biking trails. There is scope to improve this offer and improve linkages between the Park and the town centre.

Have your say—Questions 25-33

Daws Heath

The Green Belt is tightly defined around Daws Heath and there are very few opportunities for development and change within the village.

The quality of the Green Belt in this location is high, comprising meadows, woodlands and some ancient woodland. Some elements of this landscape are managed for wildlife purposes and there is a good level of public access in parts. There is potential to extend opportunities for wildlife habitat and recreational access around Daws Heath to improve connectivity between West Wood, the Haven Complex to the north, and Great Wood, Dodds Grove, and Belfairs Wood.

Have your say—Questions 34-35

How many homes do we need?

The Government has a Standard Methodology which acts as the starting point for setting a housing requirement for local areas. This incorporates local population growth rates, house prices, and income levels to produce a local housing need figure. Using the Standard Methodology, and without having specific regard to local circumstances, Castle Point’s housing requirement would be 355 dwellings per annum between 2023-2043 (7,100 total). This figure represents a significant uplift on the number of homes that have been built locally in recent years.

When added together, the Government’s aim is that the combined local targets will deliver in the order of 300k new houses per year to address the nation’s housing shortage. When considering the housing requirement to be included within the Castle Point Plan, it is important to recognise that the plan is required to contribute to this national objective. It will do this by listening to local residents, having regard to local housing needs, land availability, and the character of the local area. The Castle Point Plan is seeking to maximise the local benefits and minimise the local impacts of new development.

The Council commissioned a Local Housing Needs Assessment to better understand local housing need, and what type of new homes need to be built. The Local Housing Needs Assessment shows that there are exceptional circumstances which justify moving away from the Standard Methodology housing requirement. Specifically, the assessment identifies that there has been a significant over estimation within the Standard Methodology regarding migration into the borough which has artificially inflated the overall housing requirement.

Having comprehensively updated the data informing the Standard Methodology, including revising the migration figure, the recommendation from the Local Housing Needs Assessment is that there is a need for 255 new homes p.a. between 2023-2043 (5,100 total).

The Council is pursuing a brownfield-first approach to development in the borough. This means a primary focus on meeting development needs within existing urban areas where possible. The Council has so far undertaken a Call

for Sites, to understand what land is available for development, and a draft Urban Capacity Study, to proactively seek urban capacity in the Borough.

This process has identified that there is a capacity of 2,204 units on sites within the urban area. This is a modelled figure to reflect that some of the identified sites may not come forward for development.

When combined with sites that already have planning permission, completions since 2023, and windfall development, there is an estimated total urban capacity of 3,727 new homes 2023-2043.

Option 1a - Limit new development to brownfield sites within the Urban Area

In this option, development will be limited to sites within the existing urban area. This will mean the redevelopment of a significant number of existing brownfield sites for new, more intense development. This would generally provide replacement town centre, employment or service floorspace at ground floor level, with flats above. This option would only deliver 3,727 homes against a need of 5,100 (73%).

Option 1b – Regenerate Employment Areas

This option is the same as option 1a with the additional redevelopment of a portion of the Borough’s three Designated Employment Areas to deliver the balance of new homes (1,373) to meet local housing needs.

Option 1c – Increase density in the urban area

This option has the same sites as option 1a. The difference is that in this option, higher densities would be sought, thereby meeting local development needs on the same amount of land. This would mean new development being above recent development densities, and an evolution of local character in some areas.

Summary – Option 1

It is evident that meeting local housing need in full, within the urban area is very challenging. There is considerable risk in preparing a plan that does

not meet local housing needs, as it may not be found sound at Examination. Equally, there are considerable impacts to “cramming” development into the urban area at the expense of local character or long-term economic potential, if provided at the expense of employment land.

The impacts of Options 1a, 1b and 1c suggest that it is appropriate to consider further options for how to meet housing needs. This means considering Options that include Green Belt land.

Option 2a – Release a limited amount of Green Belt to meet local housing need

This option includes the urban sites identified in Option 1a, but would also include Green Belt sites to deliver the local development needs in the borough. The amount of Green Belt land required to meet local housing needs is estimated at 50Ha, in order to develop 1,373 additional new homes.

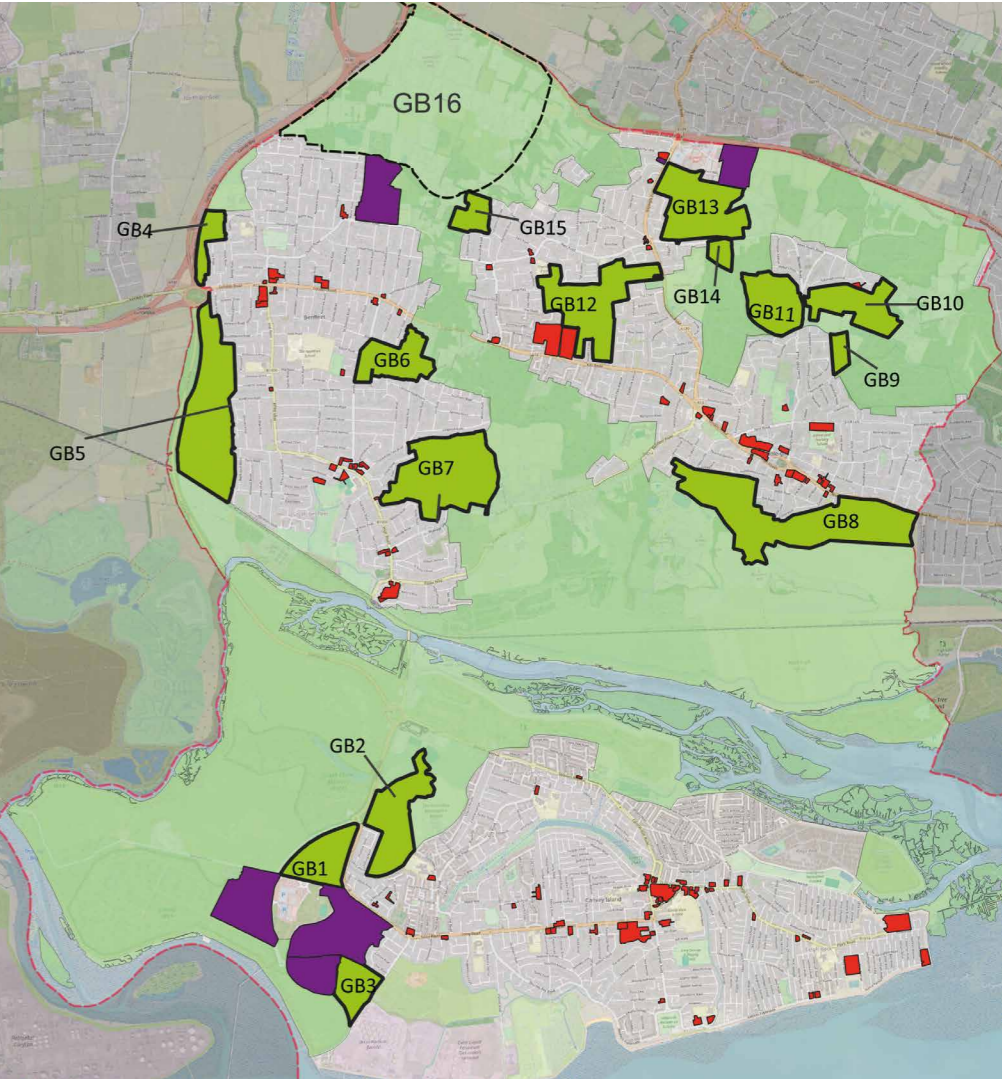
Land would only be identified following a Green Belt Review, which would test the relative contribution that all parts of the Green Belt make to the purposes of the Green Belt. Any substantial Green Belt sites would include proportionate infrastructure and services to balance the increase in new homes.

Option 2b – Create a substantial new development area in NW of Thundersley

In this option, in addition to the sites identified in Option 1a, a comprehensive regeneration of the “plotlands” area in the north of the Borough would help meet local housing need. As in Option 2a, approximately 50 Hectares of Green Belt land would be required in order to meet local housing needs.

A significant amount of land was submitted in this area through the Call for Sites exercise. At present there are not suitable accesses into these sites to consider them developable in planning terms, in addition to their Green Belt designation. The Council considers that a comprehensive approach would be required in order to enable all land parcels to contribute to a master plan which sets out the business case for new access from the A127/A130.

Given the above, it is anticipated that should this area be allocated, that the area remains in the Green Belt until a master plan has been prepared and the area allocated in a review of this Plan.



Map Key: - - - - - North West Thundersley Option

Designated Employment Sites	Green Belt Site Options	Urban Sites	Green Belt
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Option 3 – Release significant Green Belt land to meet standard methodology housing need.

The Council could aim to achieve the amount of housing set out in the Government’s standard methodology (7,100 new homes 2023-2043). Of this 3,737 would be in the urban area as per Option 1, leaving 3,373 that would have to be met in the Green Belt.

This is 2,000 more in total than in Option 2a, and would require approximately 70 additional hectares of land (120 hectares in total) in order to be delivered.

Land would be identified following a Green Belt Review, and any substantial Green Belt sites would include proportionate employment, infrastructure, and services to balance the increase in new homes. This would be in addition to the sites identified in Option 1a.

By meeting the Government’s standard methodology housing target, this option would provide significant opportunity for choice in the housing market. The release of Green Belt sites is however considered to have significant environmental impacts.

Have your say—Questions 41-46



The Castle Point Plan’s Draft Vision

It is our ambition to make Castle Point a place where:

- All residents have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and live happy, healthy, productive lives.
- Everyone will have a warm, safe home they can afford to live in, on a street that is safe to walk down, and has access to local services and amenities.
- Green spaces in local areas will be pleasant places to rest and play and will be connected into the wider network of green infrastructure, providing opportunities to connect with nature.
- These green spaces alongside community buildings and other community spaces will be busy with communities, community groups and organisations engaged in social, physical and cultural activities, delivering health and wellbeing outcomes and creating a vibrant buzz about the place.
- Our high streets, seafront, shopping parades and business areas will provide good quality spaces, the right environment and the infrastructure needed by businesses to attract customers and investment. There will be strong links between local businesses and local education providers to enable local people to work locally in good quality jobs.
- To support the economy and ensure good access to training, jobs, services and amenities for local people, the transport network will be enhanced so that residents have more choice as to how and where they travel.
- The impacts of climate change are managed and mitigated to reduce potential disruption to day to day life by introducing green infrastructure and other natural processes. Other infrastructure will be adapted and enhanced to accommodate a changing climate, and homes, businesses and other buildings will be built or adapted to reduce their impact on the climate and to be resilient to extreme weather.

Have your say—Question 1

Thematic Policies

As well as setting out where development should and should not go in the Borough, the Castle Point Plan will also include policies on a range of other matters. These policies will ensure new development is designed well, has access to jobs and services and minimises its impact on the environment. They will also ensure that there is the right infrastructure provided alongside development to meet the needs of a growing population.

Deciding the Council’s priorities for developer contributions

It is an accepted practice that as new development produces an uplift in population, it also creates an uplift in value, and that some of this value should be captured to provide improvements to local services such as roads, schools and healthcare facilities.

However, other policy requirements such as affordable housing, enhancements to biodiversity, and carbon reduction compete for this uplift in value. There are therefore choices about what this value should be spent on, as well as ways to increase the value of development, such as the amount of homes being delivered on a site.

Have your say—Questions 47-50

Providing the right types of new homes

The total number of new homes needed is discussed earlier, but what form should these new homes take? There is a considerable need for affordable housing, amounting to around 30% of the total homes to be provided. Meanwhile the need for family housing is about 75% of the potential new homes. It is also estimated that the amount of people aged 75 and over will increase by 3,500 people by 2043 in the Borough. So there is a specific need for housing to support an ageing population.

Have your say—Questions 51-58



Developing Castle Point’s Economy

With South Essex being on the doorstep of London Castle Point sits within a region of significant economic opportunity. However investment, and employment options are relatively limited in the local area.

There are opportunities to grow the stock of employment land in the Borough, which alongside programmes to provide additional local skills could create opportunities for residents to find improved opportunities, and businesses to start, grow, and thrive.

Have your say—Questions 59–66

Ensuring the vibrancy of the Borough’s town centres

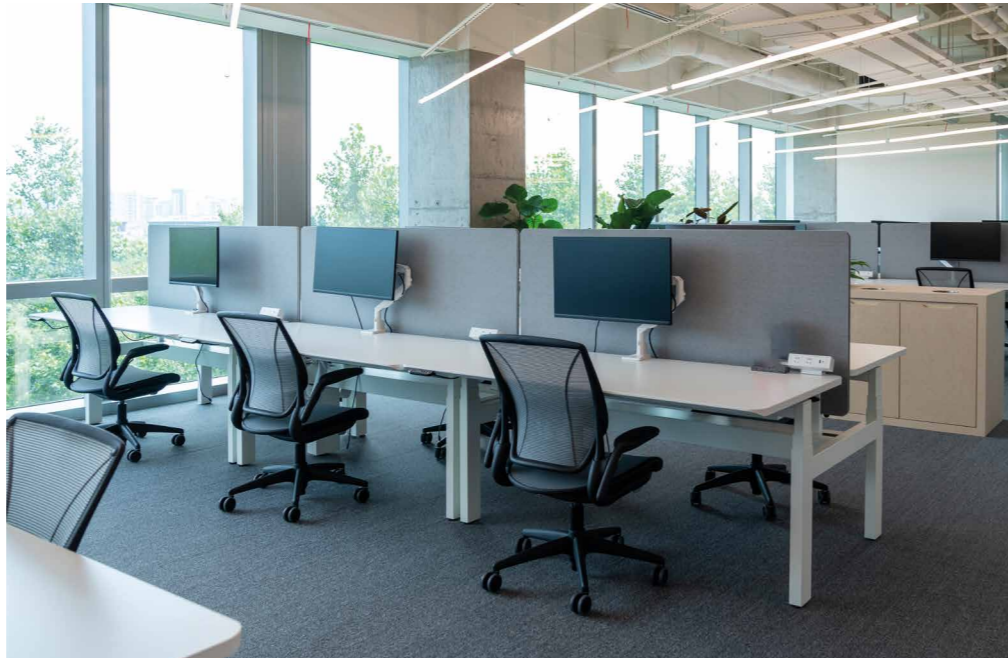
Town centres are the focal point of our communities, and need strong policies to support them to thrive. What is the role of our local town centres in providing jobs, business space, retail and leisure facilities and community and cultural venues?

Have your say—Questions 67–74

Creating well designed development and protecting the Borough’s character

New development needs to be designed and built to a high quality, and it needs to complement its setting. Local heritage assets need to be protected due to the contribution they make to the Boroughs character and appearance.

Have your say—Questions 75–81



Creating environmentally sustainable new developments

Climate change is everybody’s problem, and new development needs to be at the forefront of delivering opportunities for residents to live climate change neutral lifestyles.

Climate change affects the lives of many people in Castle Point through increased risk of flooding and the potential impacts of extreme temperatures on health. Flood risk management and urban greening are therefore essential to creating places that we can comfortably and safely live in for the future.

Have your say—Questions 82–88

Protecting and enhancing green & blue infrastructure

Castle Point has an abundance of local green spaces and river landscapes. These need protecting so that they can be enjoyed by all in the future, as well as providing valuable habitats for a range of species.

Have your say—Questions 89–99

Providing the services local residents and businesses need

An increasing population needs improved local services such as roads, schools, and health facilities. Businesses need utilities including digital infrastructure in order to invest locally.

Have your say—Questions 100–109

Improving access for all in Castle Point

Alongside mitigating the impact of additional homes and jobs within the Borough, there are opportunities to improve existing transport facilities, to provide residents with a choice of modes for getting about the local area and to opportunities elsewhere in South Essex faster and easier.

Have your say—Questions 110–119



Photography: Tessa Hallmann, for *This is Us*.

How to have your say

This document summarises the key issues that will be covered in the new Castle Point Plan and invites your views on how these issues should be addressed by asking a series of questions. You are welcome to comment on every issue, or you can focus on the ones that specifically interest you.

You are encouraged to answer the questions within the Issues and Options document directly on-line via the Council’s consultation portal, which can be accessed via <https://consultation.castlepoint.gov.uk/cplan/>

You can also submit representations by email to:
CPPlan@castlepoint.gov.uk.

or by post to: CP Plan, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Benfleet, SS7 1TF

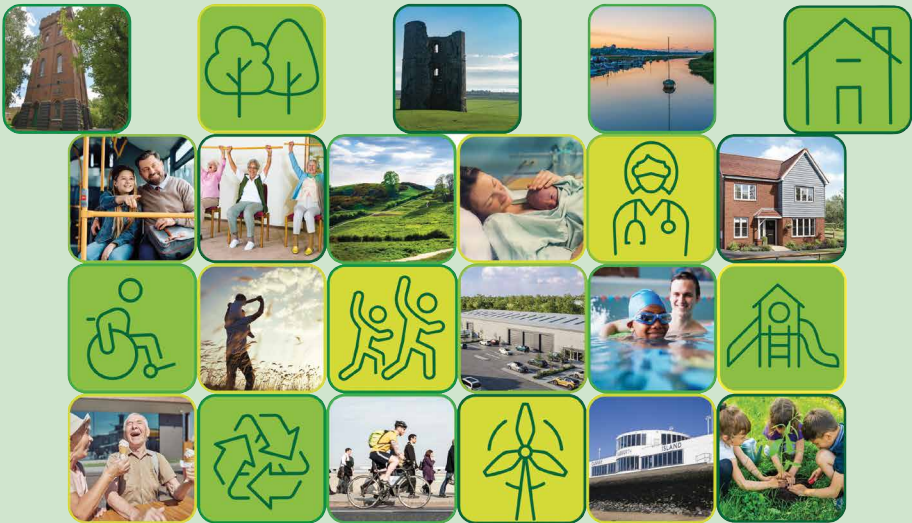
If emailing or sending postal responses, please remember to indicate which questions you are answering.

What Happens Next?

Stage	Estimated date
Issues & Options Consultation (Regulation 18)	Jul-Sept 2024
Publication of the Castle Point Plan (Regulation 19)	Jan-Mar 2025
Submission of the Castle Point Plan	April 2025
Examination in Public of the Castle Point Plan	Jun-Dec 2025
Adoption of the Castle Point Plan	March 2026

Other Documents the Council is consulting on

- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
- Equalities Impact Assessment Scoping Report
- Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report
- South Benfleet Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan and Design Code



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