



# SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: Submission version

2020 - 2036

June 2020



SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS  
TOWN COUNCIL

South Woodham Ferrers

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: Submission version**

2020 -2036



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**Notes**

- (1) This document is set up in A3 for double-sided printing.
- (2) The typeface and colour palette used in this Neighbourhood Plan reflects the original masterplan documents for South Woodham Ferrers.







# Foreword

## ***Dear Residents,***

This Plan has been produced by the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Committee on behalf of South Woodham Ferrers Town Council. The Plan has been created after several years of study, research and consultation with the local community across South Woodham Ferrers parish and with guidance from Chelmsford City Council.

It is important that I, on behalf of the Town Council, thank every previous and current member of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee for their hard work, care and attention to Parish and Community best value. All members past and present deserve our most sincere thanks for contributing their time to the creation of OUR Neighbourhood Plan.

Support from you, our Town Community, has also been superb. Thank you for your responses to surveys, attendance at meetings and overall interest in the future wellbeing of South Woodham Ferrers. Your input made through open days, interest group meetings and surveys confirms that this Plan reflects the views of you all – our community.

A strong message emerging from the consultation process was that the local people are proud of the character reflected across the town of South Woodham Ferrers and have a very strong desire to retain this character, avoiding excessive over development.

This was key to developing the Plan's vision. The aims and views of the community have been used to create this vision and are detailed in this Plan. I strongly believe that this Plan is robust and when formally adopted will provide the necessary guidance for South Woodham Ferrers until 2036.

A full copy of the Plan and other supporting documents are on the South Woodham Ferrers Town Council website.

This Plan is fully compliant with national standards and:

- has appropriate regard to national planning policy;
- contributes to sustainable development;
- confirms with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; and
- is compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

In addition to its value as a statutory document used in planning-decision making, the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan will also help the Town Council decide priorities for the parish and give guidance when making decisions on behalf of the parish.

**Murrough O'Brien**

Chair of the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Committee







# 1. Introduction

## A new plan for South Woodham Ferrers

- 1.1 This is the submission version Neighbourhood Plan for South Woodham Ferrers. It covers the entire Town Council area, as illustrated in Figure 1. It sets out the local community's aspirations for South Woodham Ferrers over the period to 2036<sup>1</sup> and establishes policies in relation to land use and development. As and when the Neighbourhood Plan is formally 'made' it will sit alongside the Chelmsford Local Plan and the policies in it will be used to influence future planning applications and decisions in the area. But the Neighbourhood Plan is much more than this. It represents the community's manifesto for South Woodham Ferrers, bringing together more than just traditional planning matters.
- 1.2 The purpose of neighbourhood planning is to give local people and businesses a much greater say in how the places they live and work in should change and develop over time. South Woodham Ferrers is about to enter a period of growth and development. The new Chelmsford Local Plan allocates land to the north of the town for development of around 1,000 new homes (Strategic Growth Site 10). Through the Neighbourhood Plan, policies and projects can be identified that influence the form and shape of this new development, how it relates to the existing town, and the nature of any facilities and infrastructure that should be provided.
- 1.3 Applicants for growth and development in South Woodham Ferrers are required to fund new infrastructure through payment of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). As and when the Neighbourhood Plan is formally 'made' as a planning policy document, 25% of all monies payable under CIL will be passed to the Town Council to spend on locally identified projects. The Neighbourhood Plan is thus a very powerful document for identifying those projects that can help deliver positive change and improvement at the local level.
- 1.4 South Woodham Ferrers was formally designated as an area for neighbourhood planning purposes in October 2015<sup>2</sup>. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has surveyed, spoken to and listened to members of the community, and has used the issues, and opportunities, raised during that process to help inform production of the policies and projects now presented in this draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.5 There are a number of stages involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. This is the submission version of the Plan. It will be subject to formal consultation prior to independent examination. Following this, a referendum will be held, where all people of voting age residing in South Woodham Ferrers will be able to cast a vote on whether they think the Neighbourhood Plan should be brought into force ('made'). If more than 50% of those people who turn out vote 'yes', the Neighbourhood Plan will be used to help shape planning decisions and applications in South Woodham Ferrers.
- 1.6 The Neighbourhood Plan is an exciting opportunity for the community to come together and influence future change in South Woodham Ferrers. More information on the Plan and the process to date can be found via the Town Council website:  
[https://www.southwoodhamferrers.gov.uk/Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_26846.aspx](https://www.southwoodhamferrers.gov.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_26846.aspx)

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<sup>1</sup> This aligns with the period covered by the Chelmsford City Local Plan, adopted in May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> The Localism Act 2011 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>) gave communities the power to develop neighbourhood plans, to be progressed by Town and Parish councils, or neighbourhood forums, as opposed to the local authority.



## Structure of the plan

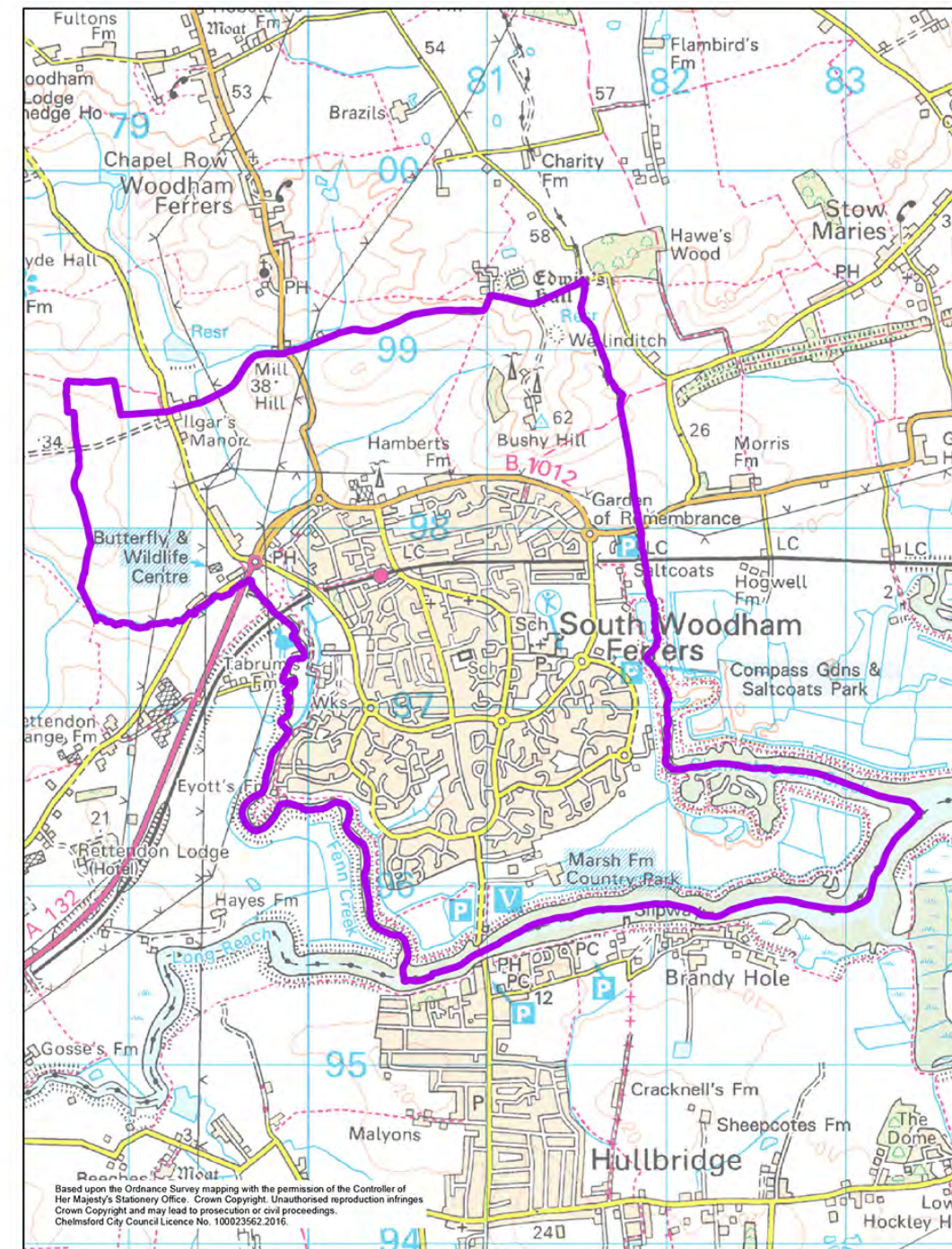
- 1.7 Following this introduction the Neighbourhood Plan comprises nine further sections. These are:
- Section 2: 'South Woodham Ferrers today', presents an overview of the area covered by the draft Neighbourhood Plan, what existing planning policy says for the area, key issues and comments raised during consultation.
  - Section 3: 'South Woodham Ferrers tomorrow', presents the vision and objectives for the Plan area.
  - Sections 4 – 9: These sections present the policies and associated projects for South Woodham Ferrers. These are grouped based upon the objectives outlined in Section 3.
  - Section 10: 'Next steps' outlines the current stage in the plan making process and what the future steps in the process are.
- 1.8 For the avoidance of doubt, within sections 4 – 9, each topic area includes some introductory and explanatory text, followed by one or both of the following:

### Policy Box

The Neighbourhood Plan establishes land use and development management policies for South Woodham Ferrers. These are contained in blue shaded policy boxes, like this one. These will be used to help determine planning applications.

### Project Box

The Neighbourhood Plan covers more than just traditional planning matters as it presents the community's vision for the area. Items that the community are seeking, but that cannot be delivered through planning policy, are identified and contained in green shaded project boxes, like this one. These are included within the body of the report, rather than being presented in a separate chapter or appendix, because they relate to the objectives and form a clear and important part of the story.



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Figure 1: The designated Neighbourhood Plan area for South Woodham Ferrers





image source © Google Earth



China Kitchen 01245 320473

BOO



## 2. South Woodham Ferrers ‘today’

### Overview of the neighbourhood plan area

- 2.1 South Woodham Ferrers is perhaps best known as the original Essex Design Guide Town and the growth and development which took place from the 1970's onwards. Development in the town though dates back to 1899 and the coming of the railway, with housing, in the form of plotlands, initially taking place around the station. The first period of major growth after that then took place in the 1960's and early 1970's, focused along the north-south spine of Hullbridge Road. The population of South Woodham Ferrers at this point was approximately 4,500 people.
- 2.2 Major expansion of South Woodham Ferrers into the town we know today resulted from the New Town movement, with Essex County Council leading the large scale, comprehensive expansion of the town, with the vision of it being a 'new country town on the River Crouch'.
- 2.3 The first major stage of development resulting from the new town programme took place to the north of the town, with later development from the mid-1980's taking place to the south of the railway line. The pace of development has been more limited since the turn of the century.
- 2.4 The development of South Woodham Ferrers has many lessons for the wave of new towns and garden communities currently being proposed across the country, not least those across mid and north Essex. Indeed, it appears as a case study of new developments in a 'best-practice' report prepared by the Town and Country Planning Association for the Government in 2007<sup>3</sup>. The report recognises the legacy and influence of South Woodham Ferrers within the ground-breaking Essex Design Guide, the strong lead taken by the County Council in developing the town and ongoing maintenance of it. The report notes that it is *"undoubtedly... a strong community with key elements required for everyday living"*. However, it also notes that *"the fabric of the town centre is now ripe for refurbishment"* and that, *"while being walking and cycle friendly, is still road dominated"*. Ten-years on from that report these comments remain valid and, indeed, are reflected in the priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.5 Although the town initially grew as a response to growth pressures in the 1970's and 80's, it now faces renewed pressure for growth and expansion, with land to the north of the town allocated for new homes and infrastructure in the Chelmsford City Local Plan. This presents an exciting new chapter in the growth of South Woodham Ferrers, with the Neighbourhood Plan establishing policies that help shape the future development of this area, such that it integrates with the existing community, reflects the character and qualities of the town and the local landscape, and brings benefits back to the town for all, through improved connections to green space, housing choice and strengthening the role and function of the town centre.

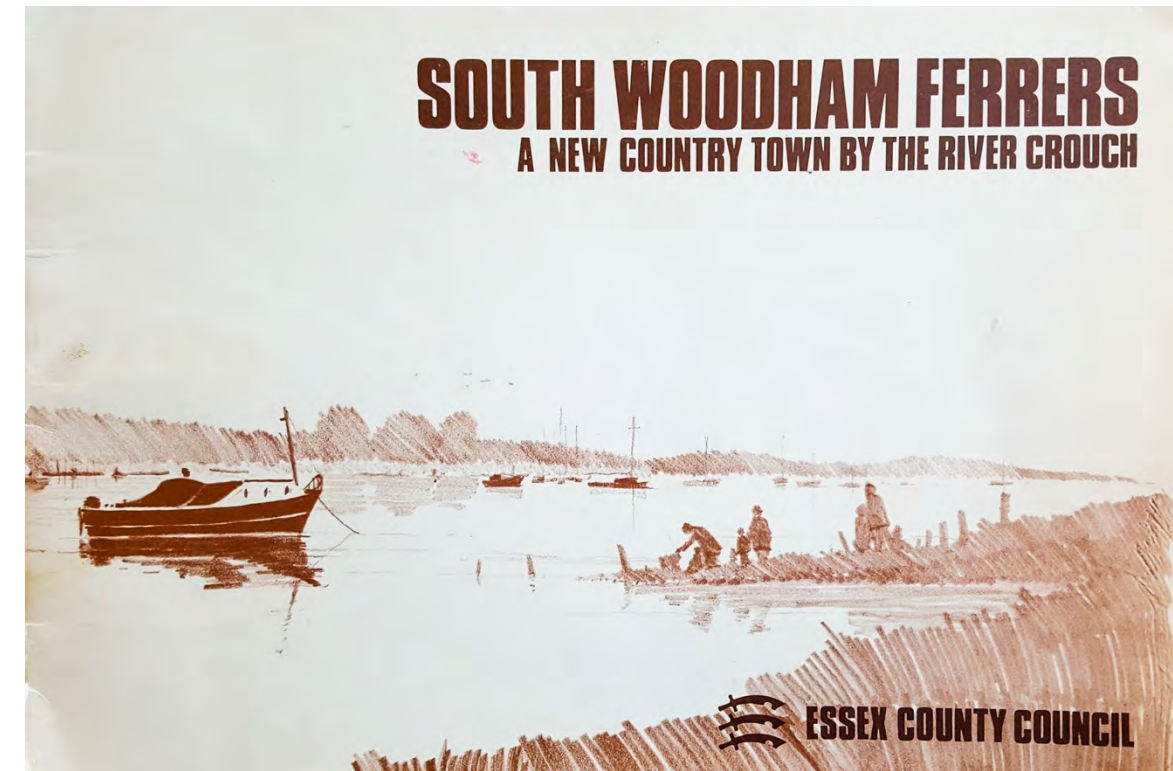


Figure 2: The cover from the original masterplan document for South Woodham Ferrers

<sup>3</sup> TCPA and DCLG, Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements: A report on emerging good practice, March 2007



# Demographic profile

- 2.6 The original masterplan for South Woodham Ferrers envisaged a population of approximately 18,000 people. Today the town has a population of 16,300 people, although this has fallen slightly since the 2011 census. The population is also ageing: the predominant age band has moved from 30–44 years old in 2001 to 45-59 years old in 2011. Population predictions now indicate a growth in the 60-74 year age group.
- 2.7 This population shift is evident in analysis of household size: much of the housing stock in South Woodham Ferrers was designed for families, with the average size house having three bedrooms. However, the average household size is now 2.46 persons per household. This indicates that there are a large proportion of married or co-habiting couples without dependent children in the home. Altogether there are 6,600 households in South Woodham Ferrers: the majority of which (81%) live in homes either owned outright or with a mortgage.

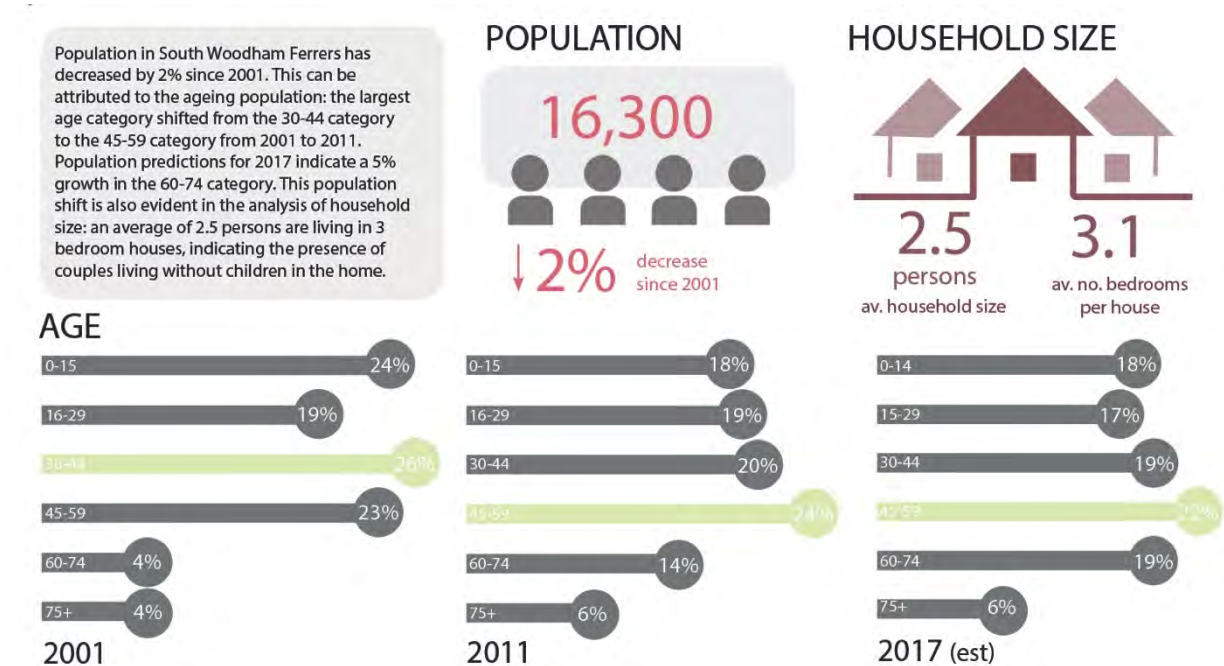


Figure 3: Population data for South Woodham Ferrers. Sources: Parallel, ONS Population Estimates Mid 2016 / Nomis, South Woodham Ferrers Parish: Local Area Report

- 2.8 A high proportion of residents (87.5%) are reported as being in good or very good health. However, and in comparison with the immediate area<sup>4</sup>, there is a relatively high prevalence of obesity and high blood pressure. Both of these can be reduced by regular exercise, with land use policies encouraging walking and cycling, through provision of safe and attractive routes, as well as incorporating accessible sports, play and leisure facilities.

## HEALTH

Disease prevalence in South Woodham Ferrers in comparison to the UK and to the rest of the Maldon parliamentary constituency:

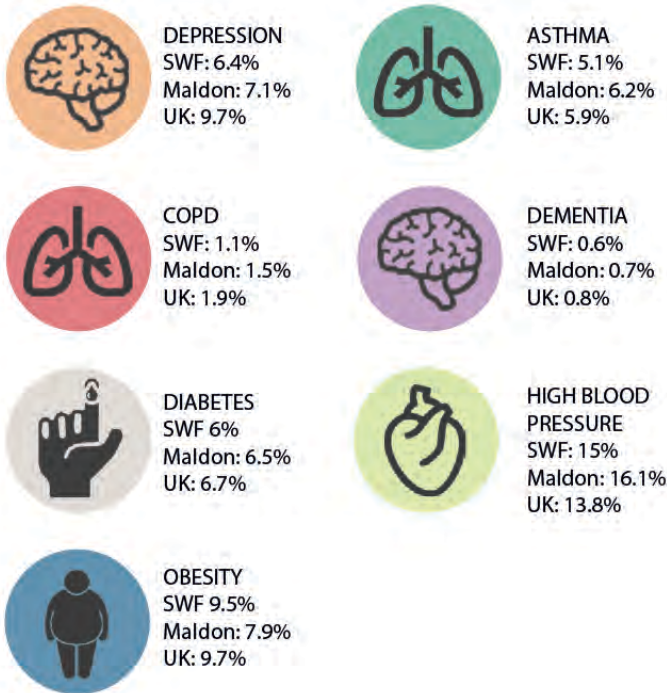


Figure 4: Health data for South Woodham Ferrers. Sources: House of Commons Library (January 2019), Constituency Data: How healthy is your area / Local Government Association, Natural Neighbourhoods, Basic facts about South Woodham Ferrers

<sup>4</sup> Constituency level data for Maldon forming part of the House of Commons Library, based on NHS digital data: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/social-policy/health/diseases/constituency-data-how-healthy-is-your-area/>



- 2.9 The town centre, which was designed and built in partnership between Essex County Council and Asda, has a relatively low vacancy rate (8%, compared to a UK average of 12.5%), but there are few comparison goods retailers<sup>5</sup>, with many travelling to Chelmsford for this offer.
- 2.10 Chelmsford is also the main place of work for the economically active population of South Woodham Ferrers, with 42% of all commuters travelling to Chelmsford, most by car. This is more than double the proportion of people who commute to London (17%). Just under 10% of the economically active population live and work in South Woodham Ferrers, with others commuting to nearby towns, including Basildon. Maldon, Brentwood, Rochford and Southend.
- 2.11 The relationship with Chelmsford is two-way, with almost 60% of all commuters into South Woodham Ferrers originating from Chelmsford, with 24% coming from Maldon. Although the train service led to the growth of the town in the first place, and remains important, the majority of journeys are by car and take place in both directions between South Woodham Ferrers and Chelmsford. The employment base is mixed, with the population employed across a diverse range of activities.

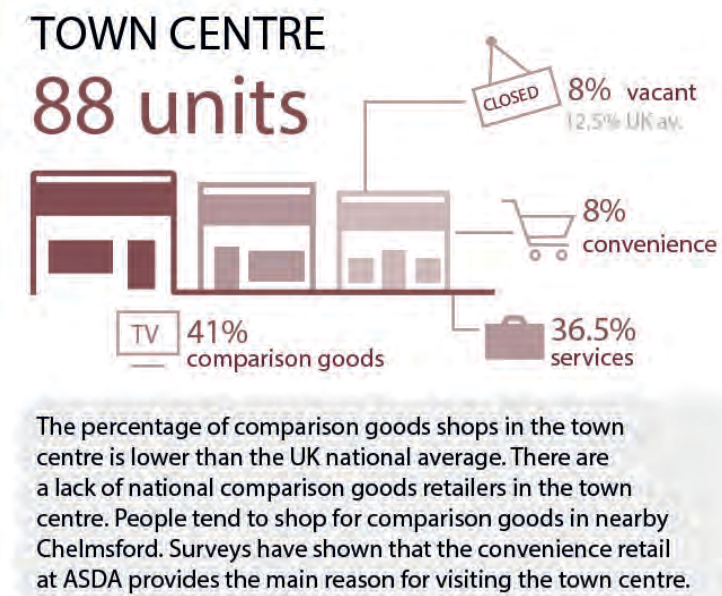
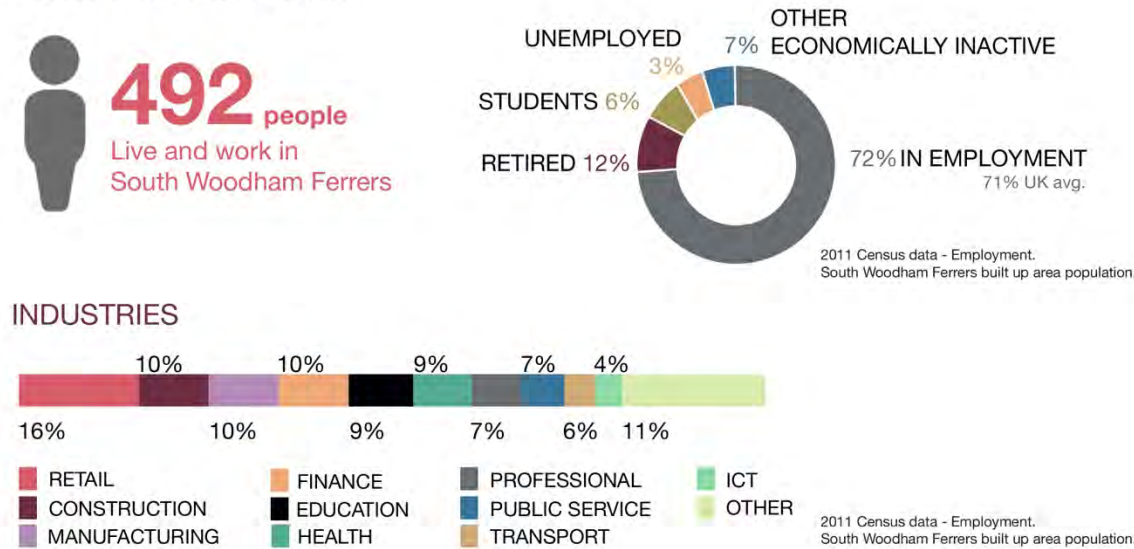


Figure 5: Breakdown of use types in South Woodham Ferrers town centre. Source: Chelmsford Retail Capacity Study, January 2015

## EMPLOYMENT



## OUT- COMMUTING

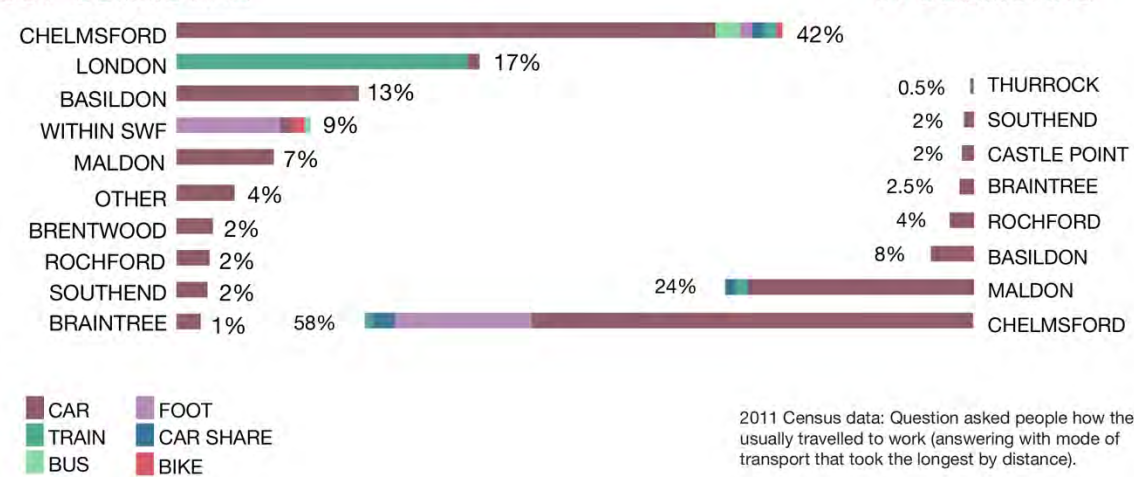


Figure 6: Employment data for South Woodham Ferrers. Sources: Nomis / 2011 Census

<sup>5</sup> Comparison goods shopping is that normally undertaken for non-food items such as clothing, footwear, electrical and household goods. This type of shopping is undertaken less frequently than convenience (food) shopping.



## What you told us

- 2.12 A series of consultation events and activities have been undertaken to inform this Neighbourhood Plan. They include:
- Visioning events in Summer 2017, encompassing exhibitions, displays and poster competitions with local school children.
  - A series of events in March 2019 revisiting the findings of the earlier visioning exercise, seeking to ratify the focus of the Plan. This included the display of material on the Bandstand, at the Annual Town Meeting and the Mayor's Charity Event.
  - A workshop with town centre landowners in June 2019 held at the Town Council offices, exploring the potential opportunities and scale of intervention that might be possible in the town centre from both a land-use and non land-use perspective.
  - Display of material through July and August 2019 to present emerging ideas for the Plan, including attendance at an open event at the Town Council office in July as well as attendance at the 'Summer Fun' event for parents and children held at the Town Council in the August school holiday period.
  - Six-week 'Regulation 14' consultation period in February and March 2020, including display of material, surveys and presentation at the Annual Town Meeting.
- 2.13 Alongside the above feedback was sought through surveys (both online and in paper form) and updates provided via the Town Council website and Facebook page. Regular meetings with the Steering Group have also been held, as well as meetings and workshops with the developer team for the Northern Growth Area. Meetings have also taken place with Chelmsford City Council in relation to progress and relationship with the Local Plan.
- 2.14 The consultation exercises undertaken identified a range of issues of importance for addressing in the Neighbourhood Plan. Four key themes were identified, relating to:
- The town centre.
  - Access and movement.
  - Greenery.
  - Future growth to the north of the town.
- 2.15 These are expanded upon overleaf. Although not all of these are 'land-use planning policy' matters, they do reflect the community's concerns and hopes for the area, and are thus embedded in this Neighbourhood Plan through a combination of the vision, objectives and supporting projects.



Figure 7: Entry to poster competition, Summer 2017 (Top), and July 2019 consultation event at the Town Council offices (Bottom)



## i. The town centre:



Figure 8: View of the central bandstand square

- The town centre should provide a wider range of shops, restaurants, civic and community facilities.
- Potential should be explored for new employment opportunities and space for start-up businesses in the town centre.
- The quality of the public realm and connections with the town as a whole should be improved.
- The centre should be an attractive and welcoming place for people to spend time in.
- Activities that bring the town together, such as local festivals and cultural events, and which instill pride in the town, should be actively encouraged and could take place in the town centre.

## ii. Access and movement:



Figure 9: View of an existing pedestrian route across Ferrers Road into the town centre

- The Plan should look to provide better walking, cycling and public transport facilities, both within the town but also to Wickford and Chelmsford, for work, leisure and education.
- The speed of traffic on main roads should be reduced so that these become safer places for all users.
- The right amount of parking provision should be provided, in the right places, in new and existing development.
- There should be better maintenance of public spaces across the town.



### iii. Greenery:



Figure 10: Image of existing housing fronting onto green space surrounding the town

- New street-tree planting and green routes in the built-up area should be provided that link to the surrounding green spaces.
- Access across Ferrers Road to Saltcoats Park and Compass Gardens should be improved, making this safer for people to access by foot and by bike.
- A range of sports and leisure facilities should be provided for all ages.
- Existing flood defences should be improved and new flood mitigation measures provided.

### iv. Future growth to the north of the town:



Figure 11: View of the site of the Northern Growth Area

- Any future growth to the north of the town should be well-linked to the existing built-up area, improving connections across Burnham Road.
- Consideration needs to be given to the role and function of Burnham Road, and how growth will be balanced with traffic movements.
- A range of housing types should be provided, including those for young families, as well as opportunities for self-build homes.
- Provision of new and improved social and community infrastructure, including space for leisure and recreation, schools and early years facilities, new walking and cycling links.
- New growth and development should be designed and located so that it responds to views, the local landscape, and provides access to green space.
- New development and housing should be well designed, reflecting local character.



## The development plan

- 2.16 Neighbourhood Plans must be prepared in line with national guidance and legislation including the Localism Act (2011), the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012)<sup>6</sup>, the Neighbourhood Planning Act, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 2.17 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan<sup>7</sup>. The development plan for South Woodham Ferrers is the Chelmsford Local Plan, adopted in May 2020. This presents the planning strategy for the City Council administrative area for the years up to 2036 and is the framework within which the Neighbourhood Plan needs to function.
- 2.18 Of particular relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the following policies in the Local Plan:
- The spatial strategy outlined in Strategic Policy S7 for the Chelmsford administrative area as a whole, and which makes provision for a sustainable urban extension to the north of South Woodham Ferrers. This is further elaborated upon in Strategic Growth Site Policy 10, establishing the mix and quantum of development to be provided. The Local Plan notes within the supporting text to this Policy that the draft Neighbourhood Plan can help shape the allocation and that, when made, the Town Council will receive 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy payable as a result of development.
  - The role and function of South Woodham Ferrers Town Centre, as set out in Strategic Policy S12, and which is further elaborated upon in Policy DM5 in respect of primary and secondary retail frontages in the Town Centre.
  - The requirement for new development to help make high quality new places, through good design and sustainable principles, as set out, for example, in Policies DM23 (High Quality and Inclusive Design), and DM24 (Design and Place Shaping Principles in Major Developments).
- 2.19 This Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by the Chelmsford City Council Local Plan documents and the suite of supporting material providing evidence to this, all of which can be accessed via the Chelmsford City Council website<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.20 Other relevant policy documents at City Council level include the Essex Minerals Local Plan (2014) and the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (2017)<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, South Woodham Ferrers is close to important European habitat sites – the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Crouch and Roach Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA). These sites are sensitive to increased visitor pressure from any new housing development, particularly from disturbance to birds and their habitats. An Essex-wide strategy (called the Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy, or RAMS) has been prepared, identifying the potential for disturbance and the types of mitigation that might be needed. Requirements are set out in Strategic Policy S4 of the Chelmsford Local Plan.

- 2.21 All new housing development in South Woodham Ferrers, however small, will need to provide financial contributions towards the mitigation measures. Developers can also agree bespoke mitigation measures with Chelmsford City Council and Natural England. A South East Inshore Marine Plan is also currently being prepared by Defra and the Marine Management Organisation which, once adopted, will be relevant for the coastal area at South Woodham Ferrers.

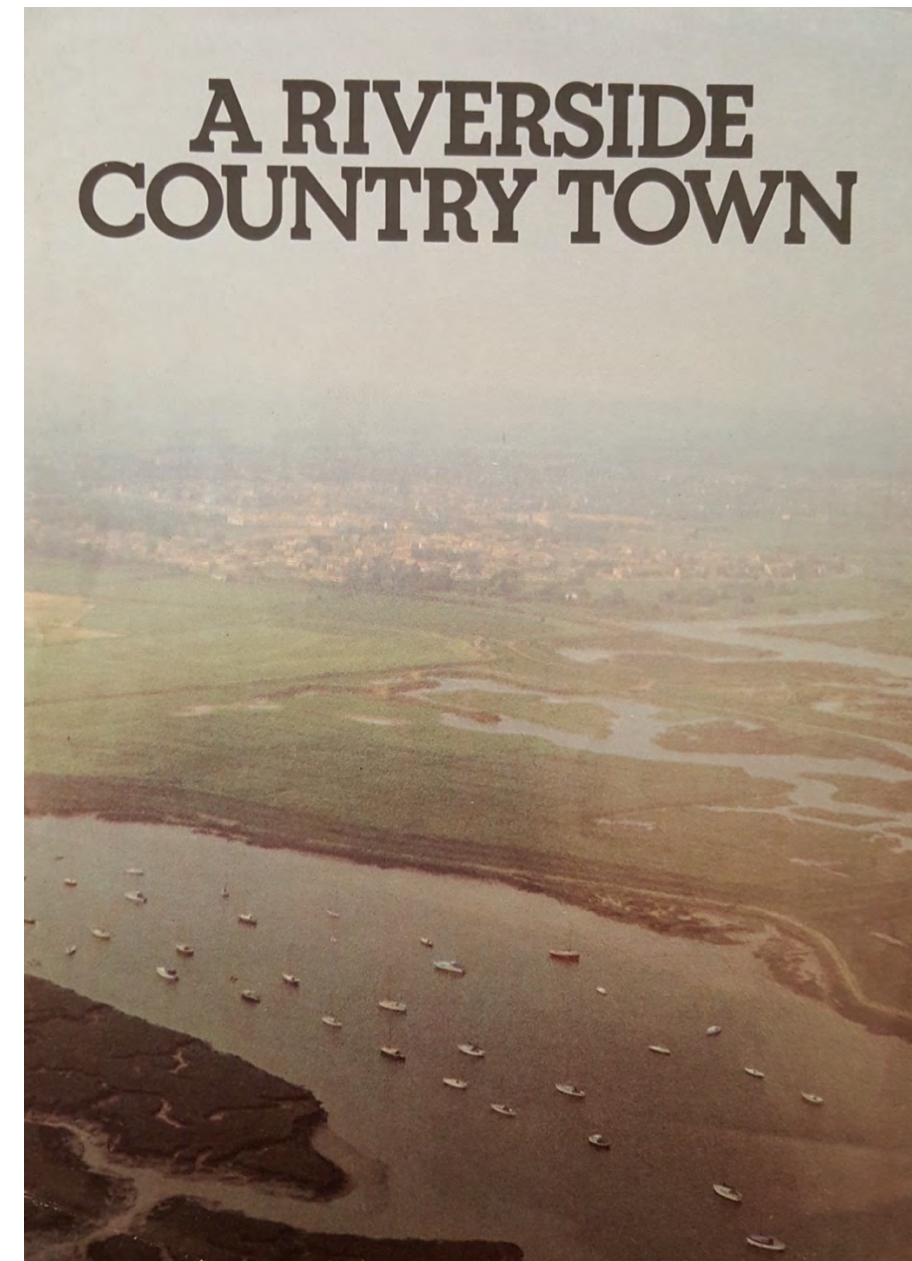


Figure 12: Marketing material prepared for South Woodham Ferrers, Essex County Council, 1982

<sup>6</sup> Updated in 2015 and 2016

<sup>7</sup> See Para 29 / Footnote 16, MHCLG, February 2019, NPPF

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-new-local-plan/new-local-plan/> (accessed May 2019)

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix C of the Neighbourhood Plan for more information







# 3. South Woodham Ferrers ‘tomorrow’

3.1 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision and objectives for South Woodham Ferrers. It has been informed through consultation and establishes the community's aspirations for the future of the area.

## Vision 2036

3.2 The vision for South Woodham Ferrers is presented below:

***Our vision for South Woodham Ferrers is that, by 2036, it will have become a ‘Complete Community’.***

***The strong sense of community and identity that the town experiences will have been strengthened. South Woodham Ferrers will be a safe, friendly, green, accessible and welcoming place for all, with a range of housing choices, leisure and employment opportunities, all in easy walk and cycle of the home, and with a strong and vibrant centre at the heart of the town.***

***Through future growth and change, South Woodham Ferrers will become the ‘riverside country town’, with greenery integrated into the heart of the town.***

***New development will reflect the best of the local ‘Essex vernacular’ and be an exemplar for new design and place making.***

**We see South Woodham Ferrers becoming the ‘Complete Community’.**

You previously told us that there is a strong sense of community in South Woodham Ferrers and that the town has a strong identity. Our vision seeks to maintain and strengthen this, providing a safe, friendly, green, accessible and welcoming place for all, with a range of housing choices, leisure and employment opportunities, all in easy walk and cycle of the home, and with a strong and vibrant town centre at the heart of the town.



Figure 13: Vision diagram



# Objectives

3.3 The objectives below provide a framework for the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

## Objective 01:

*To revitalise the town centre such that it becomes the hub of civic life and activity, providing a wide range of uses and facilities that cater for day-to-day needs, entertainment and leisure for all ages.*

## Objective 02:

*To make it safer and easy for all people of all ages to move around South Woodham Ferrers, promoting active and sustainable travel measures.*

## Objective 03:

*To integrate surrounding green space into the town and create new green space for the use and enjoyment of all, whilst also delivering environmental, health and well-being benefits.*

## Objective 04:

*To reflect the legacy of the Essex Design Guide in any new development, delivering high quality design in the built form and surrounding landscape. Development should be in keeping with the Essex vernacular and respect existing building heights.*

## Objective 05:

*To successfully integrate new growth and expansion with the existing built form and communities, providing housing choice and opportunities, as well as new community infrastructure, for the benefit of all.*

3.4 The policies, and projects, within this Neighbourhood Plan intend to deliver on these objectives. The following sections of the Neighbourhood Plan present these, ordered in response to the objectives.

3.5 **It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan is read as a whole. All policies should be viewed together in the preparation and consideration of planning applications.**

# Spatial interpretation of the vision and objectives

3.6 The original masterplan for the growth of South Woodham Ferrers envisaged it as a 'riverside country town'. An 'abstract town plan' was prepared and included in that document (Figure 14). It notes that South Woodham Ferrers should have its own identity, 'avoiding the rigid parceling of land into areas for specific land uses... the general aim will be to foster a more cohesive approach to the creation of urban form and the sense of place'.

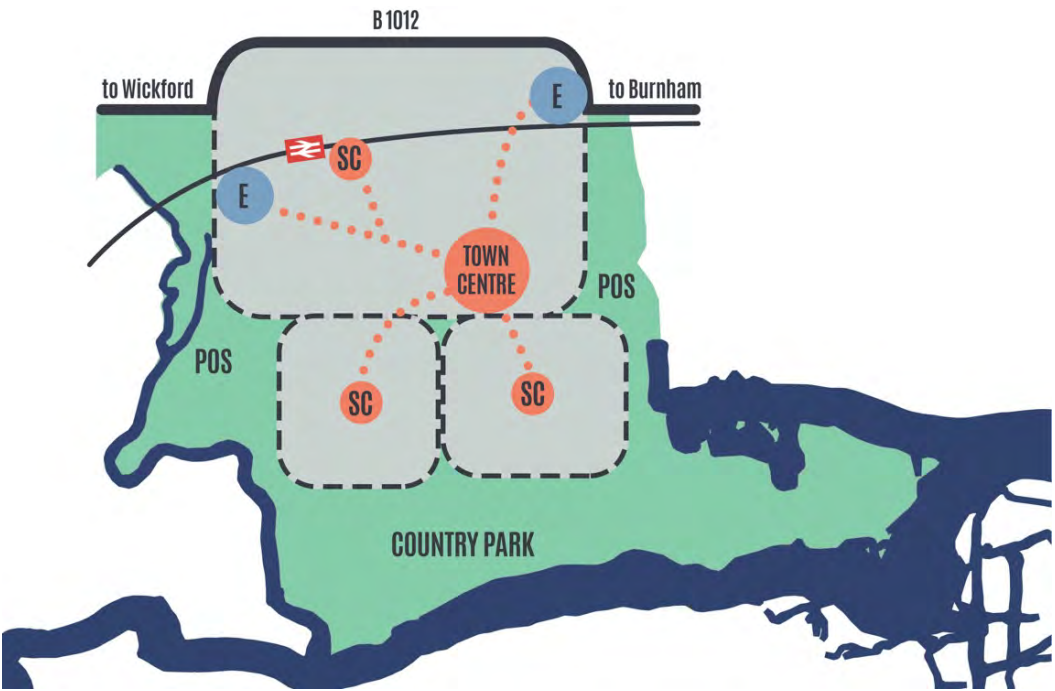


Figure 14: Original abstract plan from the masterplan for South Woodham Ferrers (Note: 'E' stands for employment, 'SC' for sub-centre, and 'POS' for public open space)

3.7 These aims hold true today. The legacy of the masterplan and associated Essex Design Guide is a town with a unique identity and its own character. Yet some of the original ambitions, for example the concept of the riverside country town, have not been fulfilled: despite being surrounded by green space, the relationship between the town and surrounding space is limited. Furthermore, the structure of the town, which is typified by a series of estate periphery roads and network of cul-de-sac development within these has created a series of disconnected areas of development and barriers to movement between these. Future change and growth in South Woodham Ferrers provides the opportunity to realise the original ambitions for the town, developing a 'complete community' that provides for the needs of all and builds upon the locally distinctive character.

3.8 The sequence below (Figure 15 - Figure 18) illustrates how South Woodham Ferrers might change over time whilst staying true to the original masterplan concept. This change is reflected in the series of policies and projects contained within the Neighbourhood Plan.



## Growing the town:



Figure 15: Updating the original abstract plan (a)

- New growth to the north of South Woodham Ferrers will be well connected to the existing built form, particularly by foot and by bicycle.
- New growth to the north also provides the opportunity to provide new accessible green space for the enjoyment of all, wrapping the town with a network of connected open space.
- Roads in and around the town are redesigned as streets, creating safer places for all.

## Greening the town:



Figure 16: Updating the original abstract plan (b)

- Green fingers and spaces reconnect the town with the surrounding landscape.
- Opportunities for new trees and rain gardens within the public realm, integrating water with the urban environment, minimising surface water flood risk and reinterpreting the riverside setting: South Woodham Ferrers becomes the 'riverside country town'.
- The City Council has pledged to plant one tree for each of its residents<sup>10</sup>. For South Woodham Ferrers this means around 18,500 new trees, accounting for the existing population and the likely population generated from the new growth area. These trees should be planted across the urban area and in the network of green spaces forming the setting of the town.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/news/help-plant-thousands-of-trees-in-chelmsford/> accessed May 2020



### Strengthening the town centre:



Figure 17: Updating the original abstract plan (c)

- The town centre is reinvigorated as the hub of social life and activity in South Woodham Ferrers.
- A wider range of uses and activities are found in the town centre, set around welcoming and attractive spaces.
- Regular events take place in the town centre as part of a 'Place-branding' initiative that promotes the distinct and unique local character of the town and its setting, with local businesses and land owners actively engaged in delivering local level change.

### Improving access and movement:



Figure 18: Updating the original abstract plan (d)

- A lattice of well-connected walking and cycling routes provide excellent connections across town for all people of all ages.
- Everyone is within a ten-minute walk or cycle of day-to-day services and facilities, including schools, healthcare, shops, employment and leisure opportunities.
- Transport connections to nearby towns, particularly by bus and train, are improved.



## Climate change and planning for a post-pandemic world

- 3.9 During the course of writing this Neighbourhood Plan two global events took place which have begun to impact on the way we live and plan for our towns and cities. First, the ever increasing momentum behind the climate change agenda has seen many authorities, including Chelmsford City Council, declare a climate emergency. Second, the rapid spread of COVID-19 at the start of 2020 and the social distancing measures put in place as a result of that, including the need for homeworking and home schooling, had a profound effect on day-to-day life. The implications of these for development planning will likely be far reaching.

### Climate change

- 3.10 This Neighbourhood Plan is set in the context of the 'Climate and Ecology Emergency' declared by Chelmsford City Council in July 2019. The Town Council has also declared a Climate Emergency.
- 3.11 The City Council has pledged to reduce its own carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and to encourage others to do the same. A raft of actions have been proposed by the City Council to support this, including the promotion of sustainable forms of development, promoting active travel, protecting and planting new woodland, and reviewing planning policies that encourage developers to build to zero-carbon standards.
- 3.12 This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote high quality, eco-friendly design that respects the environmental qualities and landscape setting of South Woodham Ferrers. It promotes walking, cycling and better public transport facilities. It seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure, as well supporting the full range of facilities that make South Woodham Ferrers a vibrant and attractive place, reducing the need to travel, maximising social cohesion, health and wellbeing.
- 3.13 As the City Council reviews and updates policies in response to the Climate and Ecology Emergency, so this Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed.

### COVID-19

- 3.14 The COVID-19 pandemic that spread across the world at the start of 2020 will have far reaching consequences for plan-makers, service and infrastructure providers, with questions asked as to whether lifestyles and the working environment should change.
- 3.15 With social isolation and homeworking measures put in place the need to travel quite so extensively on a daily basis for many people reduced. This resulted in improvements to air quality as well as quieter and safer streets for walking and cycling. At the same time, it increased awareness of the importance of local shops and essential services, and the ability of people to be able to access those, with matters such as resilience in regard to food supplies, for example, recognised. The measures also highlighted the importance of good quality broadband provision, the need for parks and spaces for people to exercise in, and the importance of well-designed homes and living spaces. Moreover, the importance of good social networks and community cohesion was highlighted, providing support to neighbours and those in need.
- 3.16 As a response to COVID-19 the Government published an update to the Traffic Management Act 2004<sup>11</sup>. This specifically requires local authorities to make significant changes to road layouts to give more space to pedestrians and cyclists. The Government expects measures to be implemented quickly, with any temporary measures being installed with a view to making them permanent in the long term. The reallocation of road space is expected to help support behavioural change, facilitate active travel and realise the benefits this brings in terms of health and wellbeing, air quality and congestion.
- 3.17 As part of this Neighbourhood Plan we have sought to future proof growth and development, with the suite of policies and projects set out in the Plan responding to these challenges, with key messages illustrated in Figure 19.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>, accessed May 2020





Figure 19: Key messages for plan-making, responding to climate change and the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic



Illustration of the vision for the town centre within the original masterplan for South Woodham Ferrers. Image source: Essex County Council









# 4. The Town Centre

## Objective 01:

*To revitalise the town centre such that it becomes the hub of civic life and activity, providing a wide range of uses and facilities that cater for day-to-day needs, entertainment and leisure for all ages.*

## Town centre challenges and opportunities

- 4.1 South Woodham Ferrers town centre (as defined in the Local Plan, Policies Map 6) was planned and developed in the late 1970's as a partnership between Essex County Council and Asda, who remain the primary landowner. The design of the town centre adapted the principles embodied in the 1973 Essex Design Guide for residential areas. Although it includes many distinctive elements which create local identity, such as the Bandstand and Clock Tower, the form of the town centre, activities within it and way it is used, need revisiting.
- 4.2 In 2008 the City Council, in partnership with South Woodham Ferrers Town Council, prepared a 'Plan for South Woodham Ferrers'<sup>12</sup>. Consultation informing the 2008 Plan indicated strong support for revitalising the town centre. It summarises 'key likes' as *"the town being small and friendly, its location and access, and safety"*. Key 'dislikes' included *"litter, vandalism and graffiti, the perceived dominance of ASDA, and a lack of number and variety of shops"*. With specific reference to Asda it also states that *"there is a perception that a greater sensitivity to neighbour businesses and active partnership within the town centre economy by Asda would strengthen the confidence and diversity of business in the community"*.
- 4.3 The findings of the 2008 Plan for South Woodham Ferrers remain relevant today. The Chelmsford Local Plan states that the town centre would benefit from enhancements and investment to meet the requirements of customers, businesses and visitors.
- 4.4 Drawing upon evidence prepared in support of the Chelmsford Local Plan, as well as that produced for this Neighbourhood Plan, including a Character Area study, identified issues include:
- The dominance of the retail offer by Asda.
  - The car dominated experience of arrival to the centre.
  - The layout of the centre, which is very inward looking, and does not let the visitor know that there is a wider town centre offer beyond the Asda store.
  - A tired and poorly maintained public realm, with convoluted routes to and through the centre.

## A Vision for the town centre

- 4.5 At the heart of every successful town is a strong and vibrant centre. The NPPF encourages the use of planning to support 'strong, vibrant and healthy communities' and to improve the vitality and competitiveness of town centres. We believe that South Woodham Ferrers town centre should be more than just a retail centre. It should be the 'centre of everything'. It should have a main square that is the town's 'living room'. It should be a place for social interaction, the civic hub and heartbeat of the town.

*Retail + civic and community + employment + entertainment and activities + housing + green space + places to play + places to learn + a cultural centre + a market place + a meeting place + great streets and spaces.*

- 4.6 With new growth and development, including 1,000 new homes to be delivered on land in the Northern Growth Area, comes the opportunity to identify and invest in a range of projects and initiatives to help improve the quality and function of the town centre. The new growth area will generate a population of approximately 2,500 people. A strong centre will be needed to meet the needs of the existing and new community, providing for day-to-day needs, retaining expenditure in the town and strengthening community cohesion. A series of land-use and non-land use policies and projects are included in this section of the Neighbourhood Plan, which, if pursued together, can help deliver change.



Figure 20: The vision is that the town centre should be lively and welcoming to all, with a wide range and mix of activities and uses set around an improved public realm, that becomes a place for social cohesion and interaction.

<sup>12</sup> Chelmsford Borough Council, A Plan for South Woodham Ferrers: Supplementary Planning Document, June 2008



# Initiatives

4.7 Change in the town centre can be delivered through land use and development, but also through interventions and initiatives explored in partnership with landowners and businesses that help promote the range and mix of uses in the centre, which bring people into the centre and maintain retail spend in South Woodham Ferrers. Ideas such as place branding, establishment of a business forum and public realm interventions were discussed at a town centre landowners meeting, with support expressed for investigating new ideas and approaches that help support the centre. Such initiatives could be explored and established relatively quickly, and ahead of any wider land use and development proposals that might come forward.

## Case study: a Business Improvement District

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), are business-led organisations, funded by a levy on eligible businesses in a defined area subject to a ballot of businesses signaling their approval for establishment.

A BID can provide additional and or improved services in the defined area, which have been identified as important by local businesses. This could include promotional, cleaning and environmental measures.

Money raised through the levy is ring-fenced for spending in the defined area, and spent on projects identified and agreed on by the businesses. Benefits include place promotion, increased footfall and staff retention.

There are now more than 270 BIDs in the UK. As an alternative, informal business forums might be established to identify opportunities that can be worked on together, though which might need delivering through alternative funding streams.

## Project / Aspiration SWF TCa: Town centre initiatives

### (a) Town Centre Forum

The Town Council is keen to work with local businesses and landowners to establish a business forum or similar for the town centre. The purpose of this would be to help co-ordinate and lead on activities and initiatives that help it compete with other centres. This might include the establishment and running of regular events and efforts to attract inward investment to the town centre.

This could take the form of a Business Improvement District. A not-for-profit organisation, this would help create a strong partnership between local businesses, the Town and City Councils, providing a basis to work together to deliver improvements to the town centre trading environment.

### (b) Place Branding

The Town Council is keen to prepare a 'place branding' strategy for the town, through which a year-round programme of events are curated, linked back to the unique identity of the town, including its design legacy, relationship with water and potential for local food and drink production raising the profile of the town centre and attracting visitors to spend time, and money, in the centre. This might include a design centre for visitors, showcasing the growth of the town as a centre of design excellence and providing an opportunity for the community to be involved in discussing future growth and development proposals.

Wider initiatives might also be explored, including potential introduction of a town-wide 'app', providing a social media platform to share local news, events and promotions.

### (c) Public Realm Pilot Projects

The Town Council is keen to explore potential public realm trial projects in association with partners, including landowners, the City and County Council. These would test opportunities for intervention prior to major works taking place, exploring how people use and interact with the space. Potential pilot projects are outlined below, for which relevant approvals may be required. Longer-term projects are set out in Project SWF TCb.

- a. A series of 'pop-up' parks within the main squares in the centre, providing planting, places to sit and opportunities for outdoor events and activities.
- b. Introduction of planting and greenery through placement of planters within the public realm.
- c. Promotion of outdoor events, including exhibitions, screenings and other cultural events, particularly those which maximise use of the Bandstand square.
- d. Installation of parklets, which can be moved around, testing the most suitable location of areas of seating.
- e. Decoration of blank walls, through use of public art, murals and greening, enlivening the space and experience of these.

The provision of well-designed water bottle refill points in public spaces is also encouraged, subject to them not becoming an obstruction within the public realm.



## Planning and development strategy

- 4.8 Where future development is proposed in the town centre (as defined in the Chelmsford Local Plan, Policies Map, Plan 6) it should, wherever possible, help contribute to the vitality of the centre, encompassing the mix of uses and activities as well as the way in which it is structured and functions as a place. This includes the quality and experience of the urban realm (which is the space between buildings) and relates directly to the way in which the town centre is laid out, including the movement network, activities in spaces and links to and from those spaces, development frontages and the way in which the public, semi-public and private realms are defined.
- 4.9 There are many positive features in the town centre, including for example the pedestrian nature of streets and human scale architecture. There are also references in the built form to traditional town and village centres: the Barclays Bank building for example is evocative of a Guildhall or Corn Exchange. Analysis of the urban morphology has though drawn out a series of issues which development projects should help address. These include:
- Although Asda is an important anchor, footfall declines rapidly beyond this.
  - There is no real sense of arrival to the town centre, with routes leading to and through car parks.
  - Main routes through the town 'by-pass' the centre, with limited connectivity with the wider catchment of the town.
  - The hierarchy of streets and spaces, their role and function is unclear.
  - Building lines deflect and terminate views. Combined with a mix of building fronts and backs, including exposed service yards and blank walls, it is unclear what represents public, semi-public or private space, and whether you are welcome in that space.
- 4.10 Further analysis of the character of the town centre is presented in the Character Study accompanying this Neighbourhood Plan and summarised in section 8 of this Plan (Design and Character).
- 4.11 Development proposals and uses should help strengthen and recognise the central spine of the town centre, which is that from the Bandstand through to Trinity Square, as the 'High Street'. But activity and footfall currently falls away very quickly from the Asda store. Greater efforts need to be made to encourage people to move across the town centre. This relates in part to the experience and understanding of the centre. The Bandstand and routes leading from this are home to a wide range of retailers and businesses, but many are 'hidden from view'. It is not clear for example, when arriving in the main town centre car park, that there is a retail offer beyond the main Asda store. Indirect routes and structures, such as the archway from the car park through to the Bandstand, obstruct views and thus discourage movement. Efforts should be made to open these up and encourage footfall from the main arrival points and across the town (Figure 21). Projects and interventions that proposals for development should respond to are illustrated in Figure 22. All proposals should respond to good design principles and which reflect the unique character and identity of the town centre.



Figure 21: Views to the central Bandstand Square should be opened up, providing a clear visual link to the central spine from the main car park and arrival point into the town. Coupled with public realm improvements and activities in the square, this could increase footfall into the centre.



### Policy SWF TC1: The central spine

Where development is proposed within the town centre it should, wherever possible, help deliver a well-defined central spine between the Bandstand Square and Trinity Square that acts as the 'High Street' for South Woodham Ferrers. Principles indicated on Figure 22 that should be considered include:

#### Entrances

All development should front onto this central spine, with main doors and entrances opening onto this. Where the opportunity arises, existing retail and business units should be reconfigured to provide new windows, doors and entrances opening onto the central spine.

#### Views and connections

Where the opportunity arises, views to and connections between town centre arrival points and the central spine should be opened up, made clear and direct, including:

- a. reconfiguration of the arched entranceway into the Bandstand Square from the main Asda car park.
- b. reconfiguration of the former NatWest bank building, providing a clear link with Barons car park, but also opening views along the central spine from the squares at each end that currently terminate on this vacant building. As a short term measure, potential for 'pop-up' uses and activities of the former NatWest bank will be encouraged.

Proposals for new development in the town centre should allow retention of views to the Clock Tower.

#### Development opportunities

Opportunities should be explored that help define the public, semi-public and private realm, including provision of new development and associated frontages that enclose rear service areas. Where this opportunity arises, development should align with existing building frontages and respond to the scale and massing of adjacent buildings.

Where the opportunity arises through the size of the site, the provision of clear and direct routes through the site should be explored that strengthen links into the central spine from surrounding streets. Opportunities potentially include:

- a. The area at Knight Street currently used for parking<sup>13</sup>, providing a new frontage along Inchbonnie Road and possible new links from this through to the central spine.
- b. Reuse and or redevelopment of the former health centre and emergency services site, providing new connections across Ferrers Road.

### Policy SWF TC2: Town centre design principles

Proposals for new development in South Woodham Ferrers Town Centre should complement the special character of the centre, reflected in the height and massing of buildings, as well as the materials used and interpretation of the Essex Design Guide for application in central areas, expressed through the building styles and roof heights.

Where development is proposed in the town centre it should, wherever possible:

- a. Create clear and consistent building lines with active frontages at ground floor level, following established building lines where they exist.
- b. Provide the principal points of access to buildings on the main street or public space onto which it fronts.
- c. Provide for clear, direct and well-overlooked pedestrian routes through or around the development site, connecting with the existing route network.
- d. Clearly define areas of public and private realm through well-defined building lines and enclosure of private space. Blank walls and exposed back land areas, including car parking and servicing areas, should be screened from view, preferably through the wrapping of these with active development edges, or with other solutions such as provision of green walls that improve the quality of the townscape.
- e. Avoid creation of blank gable ends.
- f. Respect the prevailing building height. Where building heights vary this change should be subtle and step up or down by no more than half to one storey between buildings.
- g. Incorporate generous floor to ceiling heights, particularly at ground floor level, to allow for flexibility and change of use over time.
- h. Support improvements to the quality of the public realm in the town centre.
- i. Protect or enhance views of the Clock Tower from key vantage points in the centre and on approach to the centre.
- j. Align with SuDS drainage principles and explore options that reduce surface water runoff volumes and pollution.

<sup>13</sup> This has previously been identified as a development opportunity area. See: Chelmsford Borough Council, June 2008, A Plan for South Woodham Ferrers, Supplementary Planning Document and, prior to this, The Knight Street Planning Brief, published by Chelmsford Borough Council in May 2005.



- ① ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE CLEAR AND DIRECT VISUAL LINKS BETWEEN CAR PARKS AND CENTRAL AREA
  - ② ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT TO ENCLOSE AND CLEARLY DEFINE THE PUBLIC REALM AND SCREEN SERVICE AREAS
  - ③ ENCOURAGE INFILL DEVELOPMENT THAT CREATES ACTIVE NEW STREET FRONTS ALIGNED WITH BUILDING LINE ON INCHBONNIE ROAD
  - ④ WHERE DEVELOPMENT ALLOWS, ENCOURAGE PROVISION OF NEW, DIRECT ROUTES INTO CENTRAL AREA. THESE SHOULD BE FRONTED WITH ACTIVE DEVELOPMENT EDGES
  - ⑤ ENCOURAGE REUSE AND REDEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH CENTRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES SITE TO INCLUDE ACTIVE FRONTAGES AND EDGES, WITH DIRECT ROUTES TO SURROUNDING AREA
  - ⑥ ENCOURAGE NEW RETAIL USES, ACTIVITIES AND OTHER SERVICES TO FOCUS ALONG CENTRAL SPINE, WITH KEY ROUTES AND FRONTAGE ALIGNED TO LEAD TO THIS. MAIN ENTRANCES SHOULD BE CONFIGURED TO OPEN ONTO CENTRAL SPINE
  - ⑦ MAINTAIN VIEWS OF CLOCK TOWER WITHIN THE CENTRE AND FROM KEY VANTAGE POINTS LOOKING TOWARDS THE CENTRE
- CENTRAL SPINE
  - ACTIVE FRONTAGES ONTO CENTRAL SPINE
  - KEY LINKS
  - CLOCK TOWER
  - VIEWS OF CLOCK TOWER
  - PRIMARY RETAIL FRONTAGE
  - SECONDARY RETAIL FRONTAGE

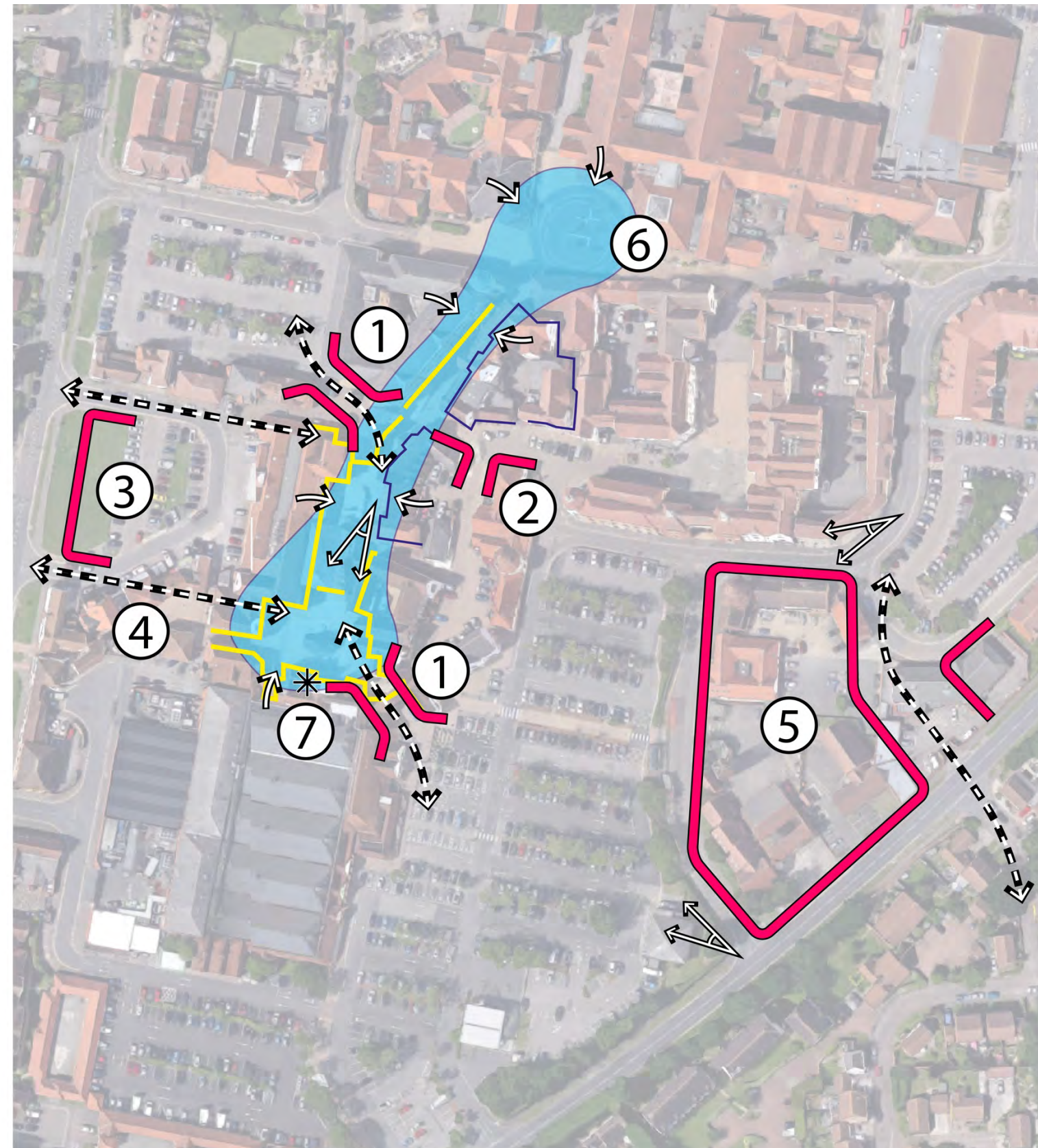


Figure 22: Potential town centre development interventions



# Town centre uses

- 4.12 A mix of uses should be provided in the town centre that encourage activity. With the changing nature of the High Street, competition from other centres and from internet-based shopping, uses that provide for a mix of activities, including services, are encouraged. Use of such services will help support retail activities, by bringing customers into the centre, including local and independent retailers.
- 4.13 The central spine (Figure 22) is the core area of the town centre. New retail uses are encouraged to locate within this area, particularly within the defined primary retail frontages. Outside of the central spine but within the wider town centre area (as defined in the Chelmsford Local Plan, Policies Map, Plan 6) other uses are also considered appropriate, including leisure and entertainment, office floorspace, cultural activities, community uses and residential development.

## Policy SWF TC3: Town centre uses and activities

Proposals for major development in the town centre (as defined in the Chelmsford Local Plan, Policies Map, Plan 6) should incorporate a mix of uses consistent with the role, function and character of the town centre. Suitable uses in the town centre include:

- a. Retail development (A1 and A2 uses)
- b. Leisure and entertainment (A3, A4 and D2 uses)
- c. Office development, including affordable and flexible office space for start-up and incubator businesses (B1a uses)
- d. Arts, culture and tourism (D1 uses)
- e. Social and community uses (D1 uses)
- f. Residential (C3 uses)

Where residential uses are proposed in the areas of primary or secondary retail frontage within the central spine (as indicated on Figure 22) these should be on the upper floors of a mixed-use scheme, with ground floors comprising retail or other complementary uses. Outside of this and other areas of primary retail frontage (as indicated on the Chelmsford Local Plan Policies Map, Plan 6) residential uses may be appropriate at ground floor level.

Meanwhile uses, including 'pop-ups', that allow for the temporary use of vacant buildings in the town centre are encouraged. Proposals for such uses will need to comply with the use classes outlined above.

The main focus of the town centre uses and activities should be along the central spine (the primary retail frontage defined in the Chelmsford Local Plan).

- 4.14 A key challenge for the town centre is the decision to relocate health facilities to a new medical centre within the growth area. Activities such as these are important to the footfall of the town. Wherever possible, and subject to viability, these buildings should be repurposed with other social and community uses, and or leisure, entertainment, arts and cultural uses.
- 4.15 There are several vacant retail units within the town centre. Temporary re-use of these, through 'pop-up' and 'meanwhile uses'<sup>14</sup> is encouraged, providing life and activity in the short-term whilst opportunities for longer-term re-use and marketing of the units is undertaken. Pop-up units could cover a range of activities compatible with the function of the town centre, including retail and places to eat.
- 4.16 Proposals for mixed use development including residential are encouraged, as this will increase the resident catchment of the centre and provide movement and activity throughout the day, helping to sustain and support town centre businesses.

## Policy SWF TC4: Town centre community facilities

Applications for development that provide new community facilities or which improve existing facilities in the town centre will be encouraged. Any proposals for such uses should meet the following:

- a. Ensure that good access to and between facilities would be provided to everyone commensurate to the scale of development.
- b. Provide access to high quality walking, cycling and public transport links and infrastructure.
- c. Be designed to allow for internal spaces to be adapted over time, providing flexibility of use and potential co-location with other complementary community uses and functions.
- d. There would be no unacceptable impact on the character, appearance or local environment.

The loss of any space used for community purposes will only be supported where an equivalent replacement of alternative provision is made for that use or met by an existing facility within the town centre. Where an existing community facility is to be vacated the applicant should provide a strategy that indicates what the future use of that building / site might be, including, wherever practicable, reuse for alternative community facilities. The loss of community facilities from the town centre will need evidence to be submitted to demonstrate that the use is not economically viable and that it is no longer required to meet the needs of the community.

Where currently vacant social and community buildings, including former health centre buildings, are to be reused or redeveloped, applicants should, in the first instance, explore reuse for other similar uses. Proposals for community uses integrated with other complementary town centre uses are also encouraged.

<sup>14</sup> A 'pop-up' shop or other similar activity is one that opens for a short period of time on a temporary basis, taking advantage of an empty retail space. Equally, a 'meanwhile use' refers to the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings, such as retail units, until they can be brought back into commercial use. Both provide an opportunity to maintain the vibrancy of an area.



## Public realm

- 4.17 The public realm is defined as all the spaces between buildings to which the public has access. The importance and value of good quality public realm is well recognised<sup>15</sup>. A series of public realm projects have been identified which the Town Council encourages applicants for development to respond to. Not all of these are directly related to individual development schemes and instead represent projects that the Town Council will look to take forward in discussion with the City Council and other partners, including the Highways Authority and land owners. These are illustrated on Figure 24 and form the basis of projects towards which CIL receipts might be directed towards.

### Policy SWF TC5: Town centre streets and spaces

All proposals for development should include proposals that enhance the attractiveness of the public realm, or make financial contributions to the delivery of public realm improvements.

Proposals for development in the central spine (the area of primary retail frontage as defined in the Local Plan) should include use of new materials that define the central spine as distinct from the surrounding network of pedestrian streets and which involve removal of unnecessary barriers and street furniture. Squares along this should be reimagined as multi-functional spaces, allowing for a range of outdoor activities and events at different times of the year, including markets, screenings and displays. Such proposals will be subject to the necessary approvals and licenses.

Provision of outdoor tables and seating, associated with cafes and restaurants is encouraged, where it does not hinder pedestrian movement. New seating should also be installed that provides opportunities for people to sit and relax. Where tables and seating are provided these should not be fixed in place.

Wider public realm opportunities for the town centre are outlined in Project SWF TCb



Figure 23: The main town centre square, looking towards the Bandstand and Clocktower

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Cobe, The Value of Public Space, 2004, and, The Heart Foundation, Good for Business: The benefits of making streets more walking and cycle friendly, 2011



## Project SWF TCb: Improving the public realm around the town centre for all users

Linked to Policy SWF TC5, the Town Council is keen to explore opportunities that improve the quality of the public realm and highway network in the town centre, and to work with partner organisations to test and deliver the projects outlined below and as indicated on Figure 24:

### Greening

Opportunities should be taken that contribute to the greening of the urban environment. Subject to agreement of appropriate management and maintenance regimes, this includes but is not limited to:

- New tree planting as well as planting of wildflowers, including that on underused land alongside public highways.
- Planting of green walls.
- Introduction of urban rills and other water features, forming part of a network of sustainable urban drainage systems, which also help create functional and attractive places..
- Creation of temporary 'pop-up' parks.
- Creation of a formal landscaped square at Trinity Square, comprising part of a green landscaped street that transforms the northern edge of the centre formed by William De Ferrers school, and including planters, green walls and places to sit. This will provide a green link between Inchbonnie Road and Compass Gardens.
- Reconfigure Oaklands Square along the lines of a traditional 'London Square', with tree planting and places to sit.

### Streets and spaces

Opportunities to improve crossing points along Inchbonnie Road and Ferrers Road should be facilitated, connecting surrounding residential areas, parks and gardens with the central area. This may involve remodeling existing roundabouts (including Brickfields Roundabout) to provide safe and direct crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists, including measures that slow traffic along Ferrers Road and allow safer crossings to Saltcoats Park and Compass Gardens by foot and by bicycle. Subject to feasibility, potential transformation of Inchbonnie Road may include:

- Introduction of rain gardens, wildflowers and trees along the currently under-utilised mown verge.
- Segregated cycle lanes.
- Visual clues, such as the narrowing of the road space and use of different materials, to define this as an entry point to the town centre.
- Integration of additional crossing points for pedestrians that connect with existing routes.

On-street parking provision should be removed where possible, allowing re-use of that space for walking, cycling and landscape improvements.

## Project SWF TCb continued

### The main car park

Opportunities to reconfigure the layout of the main car park should be explored, including:

- In any redevelopment of Asda or the main car park, the layout should be reconfigured to create an enlarged arrival space at the main entrance to Asda and aligned to provide clear routes and views through to the central spine, with materials and landscaping matching that within the central spine.
- Provision of routes through the car park that follow pedestrian desire lines and include direct connections with crossing points on Ferrers Road to surrounding residential areas.

## Case study: creating an 'urban forest'

Aarhus, in Denmark, is rated as 'Europe's second best place' to visit and in 2017 was the European Capital of Culture.

Over the last decade a city centre greening programme has transformed the quality and experience of public spaces in Aarhus. An Urban Forest programme was launched that initially changed the central square into a green meadow, with trees and water features bringing the country into town.

Exposure to nature has nurtured social trust, reduced stress, improved long-term mental health and increased educational attainment. Initially a temporary project as part of a cultural festival, it has now led to the transformation of other public squares in Aarhus, and its success was recognised as a category winner at the 2011 Landscape Awards.

The commitment by Chelmsford City Council to plant one new tree for each of its residents can take inspiration from the 'urban forest' programme in Aarhus.



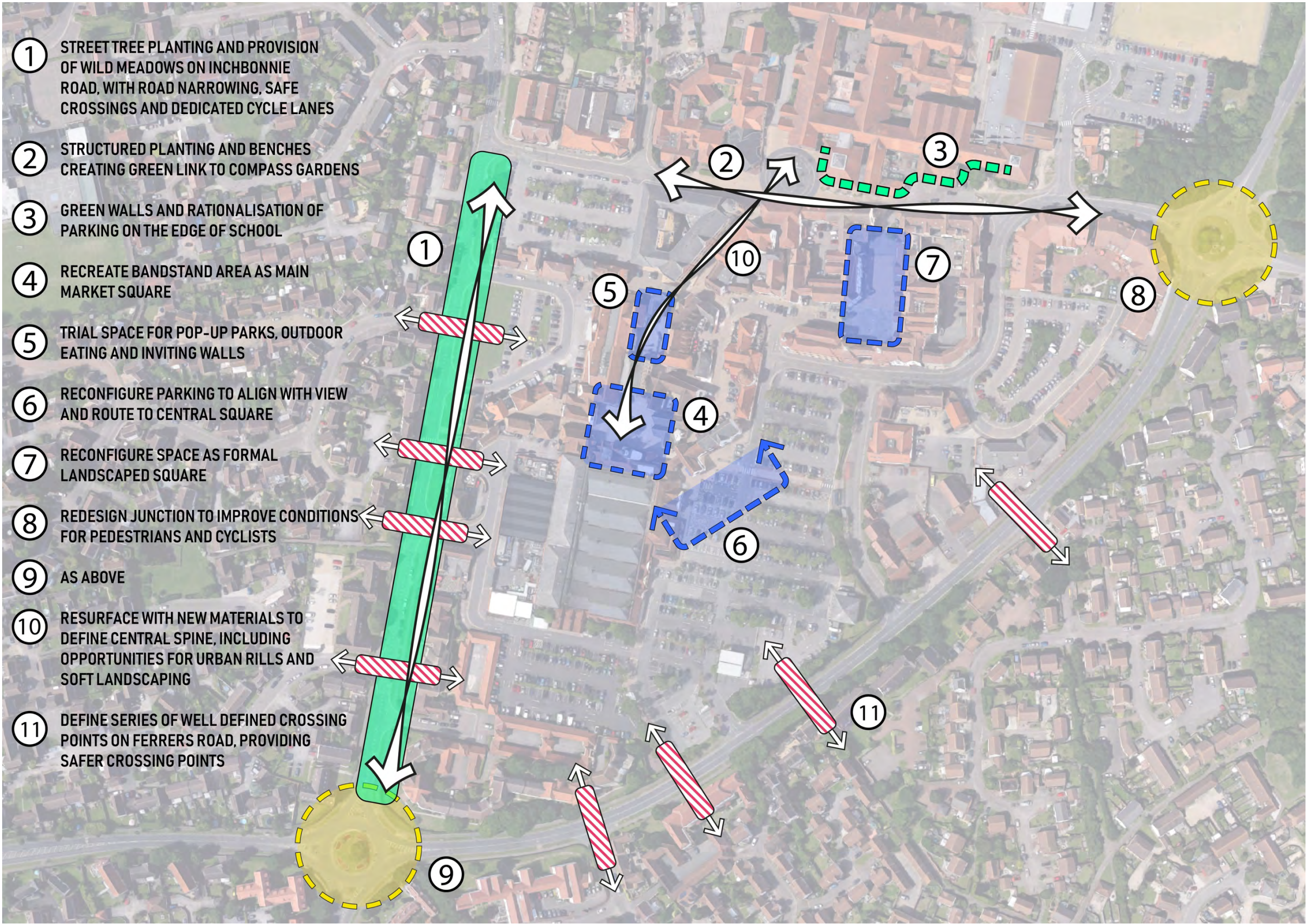


Figure 24: Public realm strategy for the town centre



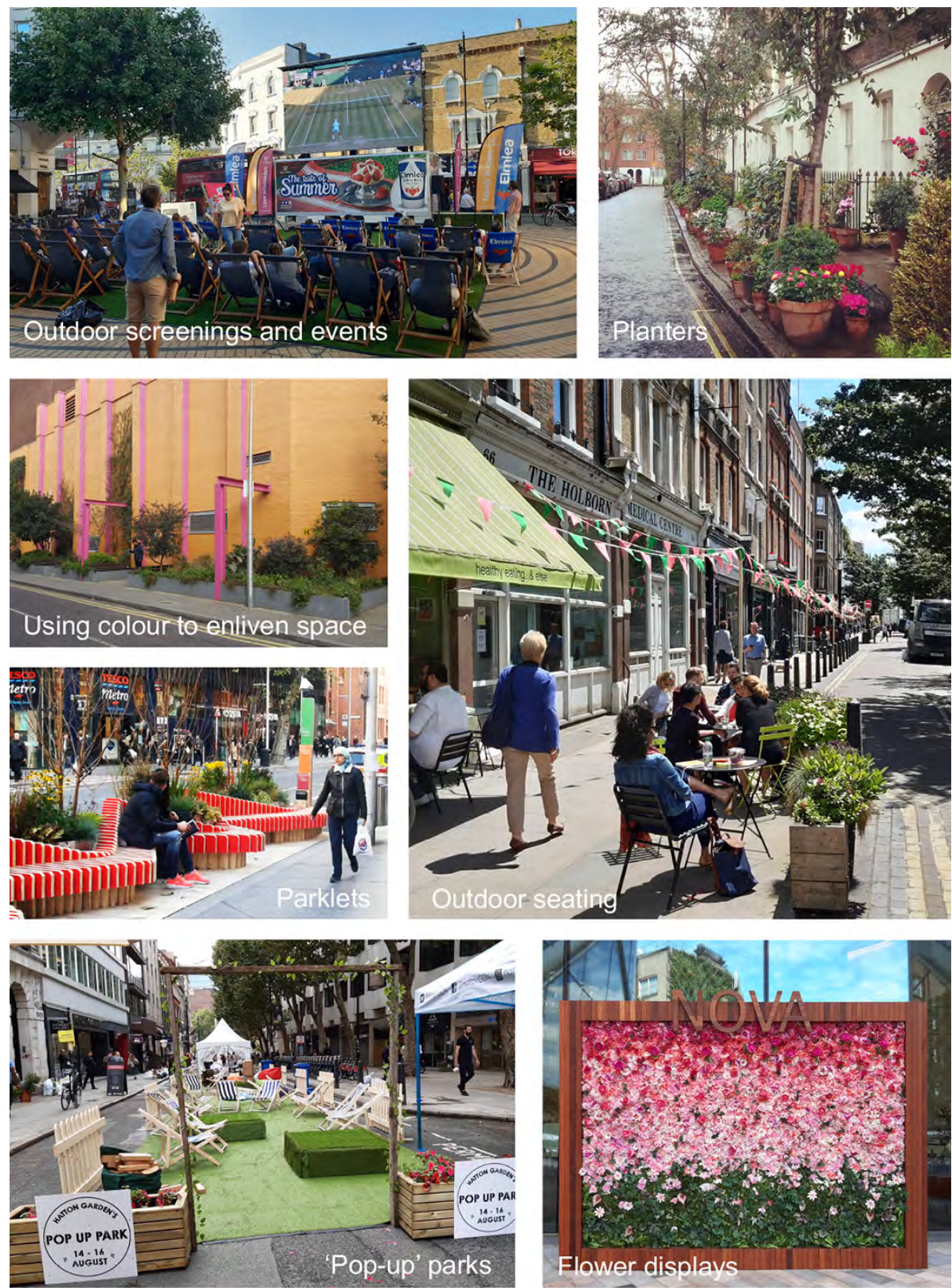


Figure 25: Example public realm images and precedents for exploring and testing ideas on an initial temporary basis in the town centre

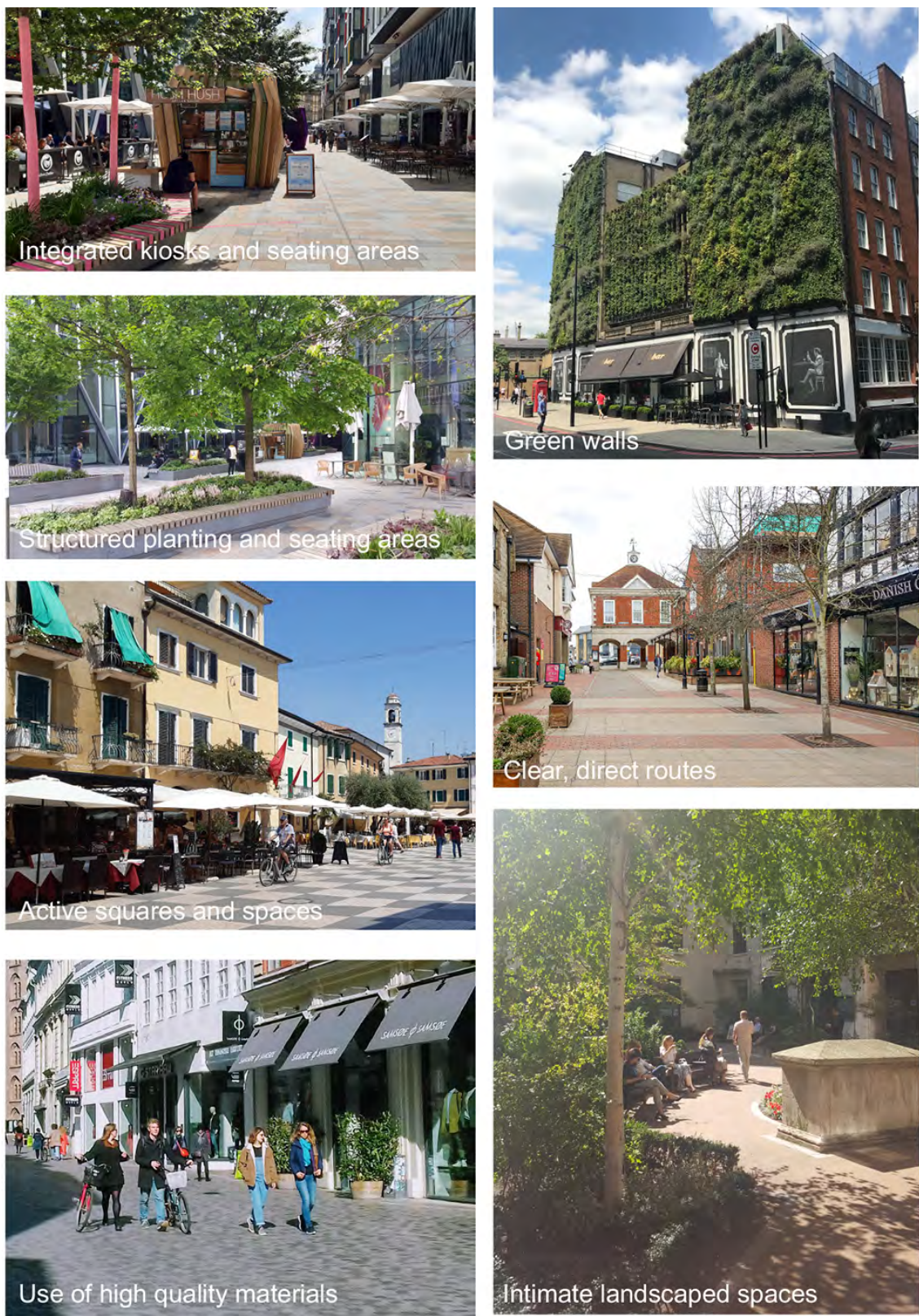


Figure 26: Example public realm images and precedents for longer term structural change and public realm intervention in the town centre



## Car parking

- 4.18 Car parking represents the dominant use of land within the town centre. Areas of parking are well-used throughout the year. The retail study undertaken by Chelmsford City Council as part of the Local Plan suggests that 70% of all visitors arrive by car, despite only 9% of visitors to the centre being from outside South Woodham Ferrers. This would suggest there is a high propensity amongst local residents to drive.
- 4.19 As part of this Neighbourhood Plan a car park and visitor survey was undertaken<sup>16</sup>. This was carried out at different times of the week, during and outside of school holiday periods. It reiterates findings from the retail study noted above and also suggests:
- Space capacity exists with the car parks.
  - The majority of the users of the car parks are visiting for purposes of shopping, food and drink.
  - The length of stay of the majority of car park users is less than two hours.
  - Most users of the car parks only use these once or twice a week.
- 4.20 This suggests scope exists to reconsider the amount of parking provision within the town centre. The areas of car parking form the setting of the town centre and comprise the main points of arrival, with the centre itself and main retail offer located behind these and looking inwards. The layout and orientation of uses suggests that the Asda store is 'the town centre'. Rationalisation of car parking space, including reconfiguring this and introducing landscaping, might improve the sense of arrival and connection with the wider retail offer, as well as making this a more attractive place to spend time in.
- 4.21 However, any parking interventions need to go hand in hand with town wide strategies that support active and sustainable travel measures, such that these become easy and attractive to use. This means more direct walking and cycling routes to the centre, and reconfiguration of the alleyway network around the town. At present, many respondents to consultation exercises said they do not make regular use of these, because they are indirect and because of a perception of danger. Combined with the typical street layout in South Woodham Ferrers, which includes a network of residential culs-de-sac, walking and cycling routes are indirect, and the associated walking and cycling catchment of the centre is diminished: in short, the layout makes it easier and more convenient for people to drive than to walk or cycle. Indeed, the updates to the Traffic Management Act 2004 (published in May 2020) require changes to be made in towns and cities that provide more space for and make it safer and easier for people to walk and cycle, particularly for short journeys, which includes those to the town centre.

### Policy SWF TC6: Town centre car parking

Development proposals that reconfigure parking provision and the layout of spaces will be supported, subject to evidence of use, which complement initiatives to improve the arrival experience into the town centre and include for improved walking and cycling connections into the central spine from the car park and adjacent areas.

Where multi-storey or decked parking provision is proposed this should be wrapped with active development frontages and be informed by the scale of adjacent buildings.

Proposals for the rationalisation or reconfiguration of car parking should be associated with proposals that support active travel measures (non-car modes of travel) across the town.

Proposals that involve the loss of on-street parking within the town centre will be supported where adequate alternative provision is shown to be available within the existing car parks, and where the space lost is replaced with public realm improvements, including landscaping, walking and cycling provision.

<sup>16</sup> Alpha Parking for South Woodham Ferrers Town Council, October 2019, Parking Occupancy & Car Park User Questionnaire Report





321 330

Bus & Taxi  
Way out  
Car park  
Cycle rack

Calin  
Co



# 5. Movement and access

## Objective 02:

*To make it safer and easy for all people of all ages to move around South Woodham Ferrers, promoting active and sustainable travel measures.*

## Active and healthy travel

- 5.1 The Chelmsford Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of movement (see Local Plan Policy S1 and supporting text), which states that in new development, priority should first be given to attractive walking and cycling routes, and or improvements to the environment along existing routes, followed by public transport. This is reflected in national guidance, with the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment strategy<sup>17</sup>, for example, pointing to the importance of and need for new infrastructure investment to support active travel.
- 5.2 South Woodham Ferrers is a relatively small and compact town, with everyday uses located within a five to ten-minute walk, cycle, or bus journey of the home. But current infrastructure provision does not support travel by these modes. The design of roads and streets is unbalanced and weighed heavily in favour of travel by car. This is exacerbated by the layout of development: the cul-de-sac layout often means that routes between places are convoluted and not conducive to walking or cycling.
- 5.3 The quality of streets and spaces in the town need rethinking, such that it is safe, easy and convenient for all members of society to move freely around the town. New routes and connections are needed, that provide for direct links between the places people want to travel to and which, more importantly, are safe. Space for cycling should be made available on the main routes in and around the town, and safe crossings provided at junctions to avoid conflicts between vehicles and cyclists.
- 5.4 Walking and cycling can and should be the default choice for moving around in South Woodham Ferrers. It is an aspiration that short trips, by foot and by bike, will become more common. This is good for the environment, for health and social well-being<sup>18</sup>, and for the economy<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, this is now required by the updated Traffic Management Act 2004 (published May 2020).

- 5.5 This needs to go hand-in-hand with changes to the way we currently use the car. Providing more road space and plentiful car parking simply encourages demand, creating additional traffic and supporting the growth of lower density development that is dependent on car movement. Whilst it is accepted that people will continue to travel by car, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to create the conditions that encourage safe, attractive and efficient travel by alternative modes, and which provide people with the choice and opportunity to travel by foot, bike or public transport: a choice that doesn't fully exist at the moment. Indeed, providing for good walking and cycling conditions, and improved public transport services, has been shown to help reduce congestion<sup>20</sup> and carbon emissions from vehicles, bringing environmental benefits. This includes giving support to measures that reduce traffic speeds in South Woodham Ferrers, particularly around schools, making these safer places for all. Encouragement is given to introduction of the 'Sustainable Travel Recognition and Accreditation for Schools (STARS)' scheme<sup>21</sup>, which seeks to change the way that children travel to school, promoting a shift towards walking and cycling.
- 5.6 Within South Woodham Ferrers, streets should be redesigned to recognise that they are places too, that they comprise the majority of public space in the town and should therefore be safe and attractive for all people of all ages and abilities to use, and should provide opportunities for people to meet, sit and enjoy being in. New or improved walking and cycling infrastructure should reflect best practice principles, drawing on examples from The Netherlands and Denmark<sup>22</sup>, thus becoming an attractive proposition for all to use.
- 5.7 Alongside provision of safe street conditions and junctions for walking and cycling is a need to increase the provision of cycle parking, particularly within the town centre. Safe and secure parking facilities should be accommodated within the public realm, though designed such that provision responds positively to the character and quality of the built environment. Covered cycle parking is also encouraged, particularly within new commercial development, which should also provide shower and locker facilities for cyclists.
- 5.8 High quality walking and cycling routes should be integrated within new developments. But the quality and attractiveness of the network is only as good as the missing links or gaps in the routes. The Town Council thus proposes that CIL payments received from development are directed to an improved town wide walking and cycle network for the benefit of existing and new residents. Key routes for improvement are those that make short, everyday journeys easy and enjoyable. This includes improving links to parks, the town centre, schools, healthcare and other community facilities.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Transport, Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, April 2017

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the Healthy Streets Initiative developed by Living Streets with Transport for London.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the Health Economic Assessment Toolkit developed by the World Health Organisation

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, <https://civitas.eu/news/civitas-flow-quick-facts-show-how-walking-and-cycling-help-reduce-traffic-congestion>

<sup>21</sup> For more information, see <https://www.modeshift.org.uk/stars> and <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/en/projects/stars>

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, The London Cycling Design Standards, Transport for London, 2014, updated 2016





Figure 27: New segregated cycle lanes should be provided across South Woodham Ferrers, providing safe and attractive traffic free routes for all to use

### Policy SWF MA1: Active travel

Development proposals should enable active travel (non-car modes of travel) through delivery of new walking and cycle routes, and or improvements to existing routes.

Where new walking and cycling routes are provided, they must be direct, safe and convenient to use. The layout of proposed development should allow for the natural surveillance of routes through overlooking with active development frontages. Proposals should not result in the loss of existing walking or cycling routes, nor reduce the capacity or safety of that infrastructure.

Where new cycle routes are provided, they should reflect best practice principles, including those contained in the London Cycling Design Standards.

Where existing walking and cycling routes are provided within or adjacent to a site development proposals should link into these networks.

Proposals for commercial, leisure and community uses should support and enable active travel through inclusion of safe, secure and convenient cycle parking and changing facilities where appropriate. Proposals for secure and covered cycle parking areas in the public realm are welcome, subject to compliance wider design policies.

### Project SWF MAa: Safer streets and town wide cycle grid

The Town Council is keen to improve the town-wide cycle network (see Figure 28), providing scope for short, everyday activities and trips to be made by bicycle. Opportunities to provide safe cycle routes on or alongside the main road network will be explored and should be supplemented by a network of safe streets and routes in residential areas, with junctions and crossings redesigned along Dutch-principles to make cycling as safe and attractive as possible for all members of society.

Where possible, the Town Council is keen to see other measures introduced that make the use of streets and spaces safer for all, including a town-wide reduction of speed limits on all roads to 20mph, particularly those around existing and proposed new schools. The Town Council will seek to work with partners to explore the feasibility of such ideas.

### Case study: a small cycling city

Goes, in Zeeland, The Netherlands, has a population of 27,000 people. Recently, major investment in cycling infrastructure has helped seen the mode share for journeys made by bike for short journeys (those defined as being up to 7.5km) increase to 50%.

The town includes a network of primary and secondary cycle routes, as well as coastal paths. Major junction redesign, including those near a local school, have helped improve safety and relieve congestion on the ring road.

The town was shortlisted as Dutch 'Cycling City' in both 2008 and 2016.



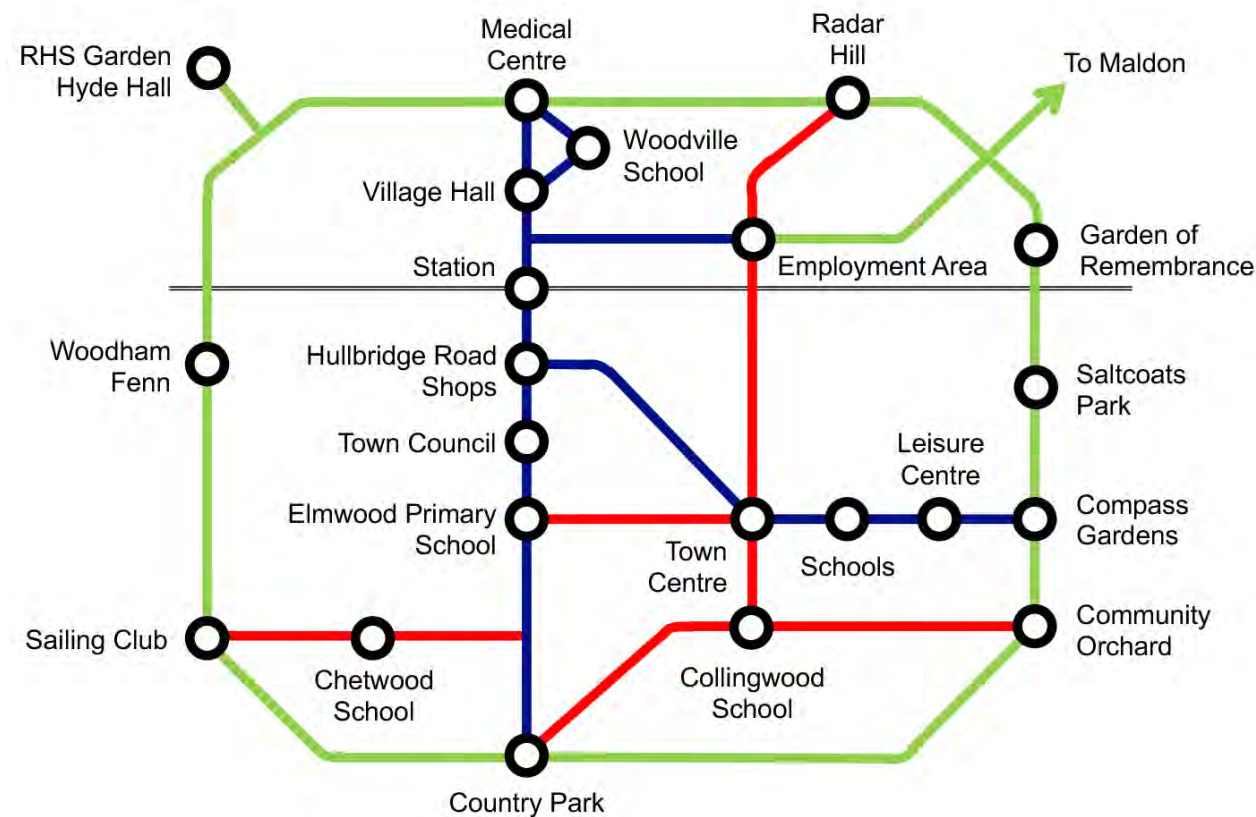


Figure 28: Concept for a connected town-wide grid of cycle routes across South Woodham Ferrers, enabling everyday journeys to be made between the home, leisure, employment and other activities. Green comprises leisure routes around the town as part of the 'Green Necklace'. Red comprises opportunities to improve links through the existing network of off-road routes. Blue comprise opportunities for new cycle infrastructure in the highway.

### Case study: applying 'Dutch' cycle principles

Canmore, in Alberta, Canada, is a town of 14,000 people. Located in the Rockies, streets and spaces are being redesigned along 'Dutch principles' to increase the proportion of all journeys made by foot and by bicycle to 30%.

Segregated cycle lanes have been installed, with Dutch-style red paving used to make these highly visual. Other design tools have also been employed, including street tree planting and a reduction in overall road widths. These changes signal to motorists that they are a 'guest in the street'. As a result, driver behaviour is changing, slowing traffic and making streets and spaces safer for all. This, coupled with introduction of greenery, also makes walking and cycling a more attractive proposition, reducing the volume of local journeys made by car.

## Alleyways

- 5.9 The original design of South Woodham Ferrers included a network of footpaths and alleyways, connecting residential streets with schools and the town centre. Although these allow for relatively quick journeys by foot across town there are a series of issues related to them. These include:
- Concerns about personal safety, perceived or otherwise, particularly because in many places they are indirect and do not benefit from entrances or windows overlooking them. They are, in many cases, a route 'around the back' of residential properties.
  - A lack of lighting, particularly after sunset, which compromises their use.
  - Poor maintenance, including overgrown vegetation, presence of litter and graffiti, reducing the attractiveness of these as routes people will use on a regular basis.
- 5.10 These factors, accompanied by the indirect road network, can make use of the car a more attractive proposition than walking and cycling. Through consultation, strong support was given to improving the quality of the alleyway network.



Figure 29: Example of an existing alleyway in South Woodham Ferrers. Could the space be opened up and made more attractive to users, including new development frontages and accessible community gardens?





Figure 30: This new development in Cambridge<sup>23</sup> shows how alleyways can be successfully incorporated within new development, making these safe and attractive for all to use at all times of the day, encouraging people to walk and promoting active and healthy lifestyles. Opportunities to retrofit existing alleyways along these lines should be explored.

5.11 The Town Council is keen to encourage active travel and recognises the benefits of a well-connected network of walking routes. However, interventions are required to make the existing routes more conducive to use. These might include:

- Opening up routes wherever possible, removing unnecessary walls and fencing between public spaces, creating a sense of space.
- Encouraging the provision of new frontages onto the routes, either through new development or adaptation and extension of existing development over time.
- Identifying potential for provision of more direct routes.
- Re-using redundant or under-utilised space within and along routes for other uses, such as installation of community gardens, increasing community ownership and maintenance of space, whilst also contributing to the greening of the town.
- Installation of lighting to increase the perception of safety and the use of routes.

5.12 Where areas of new development are proposed and these are to integrate pedestrian routes, these should, as outlined above, be direct, well overlooked, landscaped and lit. Wherever there are stretches of footpaths without a direct frontage onto them, these stretches should be short.

### Policy SWF MA2: Alleyways

Where new development is proposed adjacent to an existing alleyway applicants should provide new entrances and windows that face onto the footpath. Proposals for development should consider how any route might be made more direct, with a clear visual link from each end of the footpath established.

Where new footpaths are proposed within a development proposal these should be short, direct and overlooked with doors and windows opening onto the route.

Where appropriate, low level lighting should be provided and designed to respect the amenity of any neighbouring residential properties.

### Project SWF MAb: Alleyway transformation projects

The Town Council is keen to work with partners to deliver transformational projects that improve the quality and attractiveness of the alleyway network such that they become a more attractive proposition for people to use on a regular basis. Projects include:

- Opening up enclosed spaces wherever possible through removal of walls and fences between public and semi-public spaces.
- Encouraging community use and ownership of the alleyways and spaces through a programme of community gardening initiatives.
- Establishing a regular programme of maintenance.

### Case study: creating a community garden

Lamlash Street, SE11, London, is a reclaimed road in a residential area that has been transformed from an unloved fly-tipping hotspot into a thriving community garden.

It has become a new social space in the heart of the neighbourhood, mixing places to sit and relax with opportunities for local food production, including seasonal fruit and vegetables, and an 'urban mini-orchard' of plum, apple, pear, cobnut and fig trees.

It has become an active and well-used pedestrian route and, in 2016, was awarded 'Cleaner Greener Safer Funding' by Southwark Council to expand the project.

<sup>23</sup> Image source © 2019 Google (Image capture: July 2015)





Figure 31: Lamlash Street in London has been reimagined as a traffic free community garden. It provides a direct link between adjacent streets and opportunities for local food production.



Figure 32: This 'mini front garden' project in Southfields, south west London, is a neighbourhood initiative that seeks to foster community ownership and civic pride through conversion of 'grey' areas into space for biodiversity and local food production, reusing under-utilised spaces in the public realm.

## Public transport

- 5.13 Provision of good public transport services are essential to creation of a socially inclusive community, providing opportunities for all to access services and employment opportunities. Within South Woodham Ferrers, bus links between the residential areas, the railway station, town centre and new medical centre within the growth area are important. Bus and rail links to destinations outside of South Woodham Ferrers are also important: rail for those commuting to London, and bus for those commuting for work elsewhere, in Chelmsford for example.
- 5.14 The quality and frequency of services at present is limited, with many of those who can, travelling by car instead. Anecdotally, many respondents through the consultation process said that they drive to Wickford in order to travel by train to London as the service there is more frequent. However, and at the same time, many respondents raised concern about traffic congestion and the impact of this on journey times. Travelling by car contributes to congestion. Promoting an improved public transport service, with regular and direct links to key destinations, would help influence a mode shift away from the car to public transport services and, at the same time, relieve congestion and free-up space for those who need to travel by car.

### Policy SWF MA3: Public transport

Proposals for development should respond to the need to reduce the generation of road traffic and help reduce air and noise pollution. Development should, where appropriate to the scale of proposals, incorporate sustainable transport measures, including new and enhanced bus services, new and improved public transport infrastructure, including real time information, waiting facilities, and or accessibility to services.

Proposals that support provision of improved bus services to Chelmsford and Wickford (including Wickford station), as well as between the Northern Growth Area, railway station and town centre will be encouraged.

### Project SWF MAC: Public transport services

The Town Council is keen to explore opportunities to work with partners, including Essex County Council, the Train Operating Company and the developers of the Northern Growth Area, which, subject to feasibility work, would deliver improvements to public transport services between South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford and Wickford station. The Town Council would like to see the quality of bus waiting facilities improved, integrating technology into these, providing real time journey information.



## New technology

- 5.15 The way in which people move, own and access means of transport is evolving, with new concepts, such as 'mobility as service'<sup>24</sup> and the e-vehicle revolution, providing new choice and opportunity. With technology rapidly advancing, and the climate change agenda given ever more emphasis, the role and future of traditional modes of transport, based around private car use and ownership, will need to be questioned.
- 5.16 The House of Commons cross-party Science and Technology Select Committee has recently reported<sup>25</sup> that, if the UK is to meet climate change targets, then transport solutions are required. It reports that 'in the long-term, widespread personal vehicle ownership does not appear to be compatible with significant decarbonisation'. Improvements in public transport, walking and cycling are supported.
- 5.17 The Government is committed, through the 'Road to Zero' Strategy<sup>26</sup>, to half of all new car sales being ultra-low emission vehicles by 2030 (with the sale of all petrol and diesel vehicles phased out by 2040), whilst also rolling-out the necessary infrastructure to support provision of electric vehicles. The National Infrastructure Audit<sup>27</sup> goes further than this and includes recommendations that are based on preparing for the sale of all new cars by 2030 to be electric. More recently, the Government has launched a consultation<sup>28</sup> on proposals to make it mandatory for all new homes to be fitted with an electric car charging point.
- 5.18 Support will be given to projects and proposals that embed new technologies, providing a wider range of choice and opportunity for all. Such technology should be designed such that it does not cause obstruction within the public realm (e.g.: e-vehicle charging points and cables placed on the footway which impede pedestrian movement).
- 5.19 Where mobility is provided as service, through car sharing and docking points for bikes for example, these should be located within a convenient walk of the home and main destination (such as the town centre, railway station and places of work), encouraging their use. Where provided in the public realm, these should replace existing car parking provision, encouraging a modal shift away from use of the private car.
- 5.20 Research undertaken by Transport Systems Catapult<sup>29</sup> provides an overview of Mobility as a Service, how it works, and examples of how it might be used on a day-to-day basis. It notes that transport services need to better suit customers' circumstances and provide options that align with their lifestyles. Traditional 'one size fits all' approaches are no longer an option.



Figure 33: Example of an e-vehicle charging point at Asda Car Park in South Woodham Ferrers

<sup>24</sup> See, for more information: <https://maas-alliance.eu/homepage/what-is-maas/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news-parliament-2017/clean-growth-report-published-17-19/>

<sup>26</sup> Department for Transport, July 2018, The Road to Zero: Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy

<sup>27</sup> National Infrastructure Commission, National Infrastructure Audit, July 2018

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/electric-car-charging-points-to-be-installed-in-all-future-homes-in-world-first>

<sup>29</sup> Transport Systems Catapult, Mobility as a Service: Exploring the opportunity for mobility as a service in the UK, July 2016



5.21 Mobility as a Service, in its current form, works through an app that enables customers to access a journey planner to show which route and combination of modes are available, including public transport, docked hire vehicles or on-demand services. Research undertaken on behalf of the Government<sup>30</sup> acknowledges that Mobility as a Service will transform the way in which we travel, and that this needs reflecting in policy decisions. The research states:

*“MaaS potentially offers a paradigm shift from transport being fundamentally provider-led (i.e.: where fixed capacity is provided to serve a predictable demand), to being a fully user-led system whereby the level and type of transport supply continually adjust in response to the specific desires of individual travelers.”*

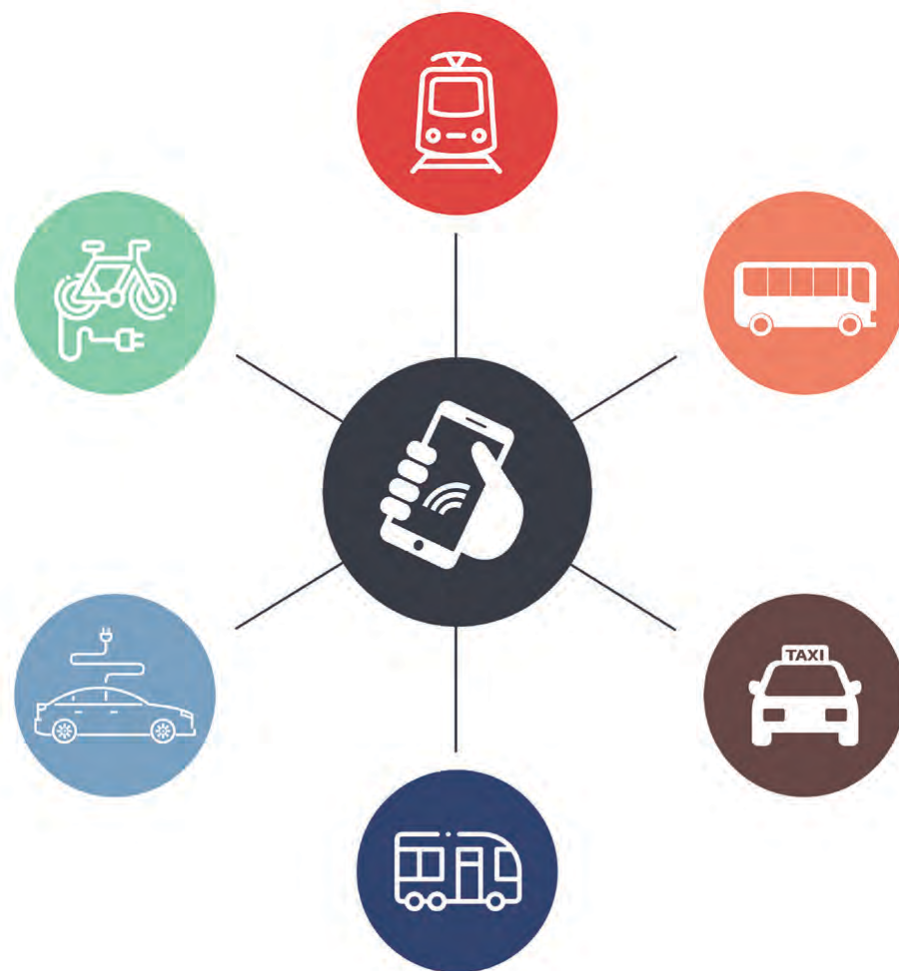


Figure 34: Provision of mobility as service alongside an improved public transport, walking and cycling network, can combine to make these attractive alternatives to private car use and ownership

- 5.22 It is recognised that people in South Woodham Ferrers will continue to own cars, and that they will continue to be used for some journeys. The provision of new technology and mobility solutions is though intended to provide wider choice and opportunity for all, reducing reliance on private car ownership and use, contributing to an improved environment.
- 5.23 The Chelmsford Local Plan, at Policy DM25, requires all new dwellings and non-residential buildings to provide convenient access to Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. The policy for Strategic Growth Site 10 (land north of South Woodham Ferrers) also requires provision of and financial contributions towards car club facilities. The concept of Mobility as a Service is however far more extensive than car clubs or electric charging points: it is about providing for a whole range of integrated transport solutions that are accessible to all, including those unable to drive.

#### Policy SWF MA4: E-vehicles and Mobility as Service

Proposals for major development should explore how new mobility solutions, including Mobility as a Service, can be incorporated within the scheme. Such provision should, where practicable, include e-vehicle charging and docking points for multiple transport choices, including cycles and scooters.

Proposals for e-vehicle charging points and shared mobility infrastructure (mobility hubs) within the public realm are welcome. Where proposed, they should be located sensitively to ensure that there are no harmful impacts upon pedestrian circulation or the immediate appearance of the street scene and wider townscape. Wherever possible, public EV charging infrastructure, such as cabling, should be provided in such a way that it can be expanded in the future to provide additional charging points.

Appropriate locations for new mobility hubs include the town centre and railway station car parks.

<sup>30</sup> Foresight, Government Office for Science, December 2018, Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in the UK: change and its implications







# 6. Green space & natural environment

## Objective 03:

*To integrate surrounding green space into the town and create new green space for the use and enjoyment of all, whilst also delivering environmental, health and well-being benefits.*

## The ‘green necklace’

- 6.1 The natural setting of the town is a major asset. In particular, the presence of the Marsh Farm Country Park, the riparian environment of the River Crouch, network of creeks and views across these give the town character. But these assets are on the edge of the town. Despite the original masterplan for South Woodham Ferrers envisaging it as the riverside country town, there is little connection with the surrounding assets, or indeed, sense of these within the town. Better connections with and integration of the natural environment within the built form should be considered in future change. Indeed, ‘greening’ the existing built-up area will also help address matters such as flood risk.
- 6.2 Opportunities should be taken that allow for enjoyment of the green and blue space by all, connecting these with the existing built form and integrating new green space within the new Northern Growth Area. This should be done in such a way that provides space for enjoyment but without placing additional visitor and recreational pressures on the River Crouch environment.
- 6.3 Associated with this is the nature of the street environment. Estate periphery roads around South Woodham Ferrers are just that, and restrict movement: Saltcoats Park for example is ‘cut off’ from the neighbouring residential area, despite presence of sport and play facilities. Improved crossing points to enable all people to cross and access the Park, and all green spaces, are required.

## Policy SWF GS1: Completing the Green Necklace

Development in the Northern Growth Area shall include accessible green space that complements and completes the network of green infrastructure around the town, allowing for a continuous network of walking routes that are accessible to all. The type and mix of green space provided should be in line with standards established by Chelmsford City Council and the Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist.

Proposals for new development should consider the potential for incorporating greenery with the street network, through provision of street tree planting, green spaces and sustainable urban drainage systems wherever possible.

Wherever possible, connections and crossing points should be provided along Ferrers and Burnham Road that are safe for pedestrians and cyclists, which connect with existing rights of way and other established routes.

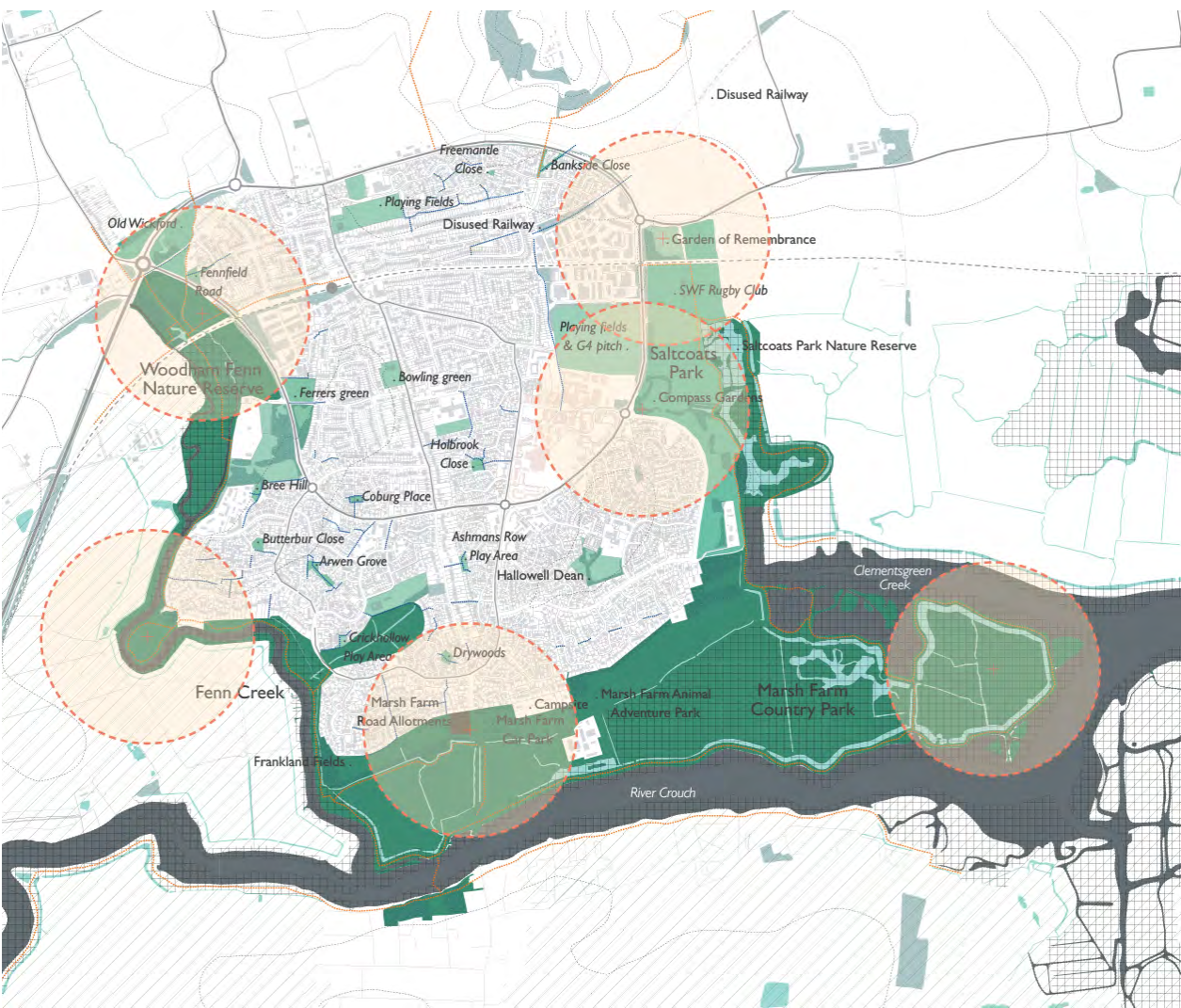


Figure 35: The above plan shows the location of green space provision within and around the town, and, by way of the circles, five minute walking distances from these spaces. The plan shows that although the town is surrounded by green space much of this is outside of a reasonable walking distance of many residents. Equally, there is limited provision of green space within the town. Opportunities that provide new green space and improved access to this are encouraged, including new green space provision within the Northern Growth Area, the greening of existing streets, through landscaping, and safer routes for all between the home and green space network. Provision of a green corridor within the Northern Growth Area, combined with accessible routes, would complete the network of green space around the town, strengthening the unique setting of the town and providing a leisure and recreational resource for all to enjoy.



# Avenues and Connections

- 6.4 As noted above, although the town is surrounded by high quality natural and amenity space, access to these is limited, as is green space provision in the built-up area. Access to and extensions of the green infrastructure network is required, including the potential retrofitting of existing streets and spaces.
- 6.5 The existing network of streets within South Woodham Ferrers include, in places, mown grass verges. These provide scope to integrate street tree planting and other landscaping, including raingardens and planting of wildflowers. This would transform the nature of the urban environment, providing a link between the built area and surrounding green space, whilst also enhancing biodiversity and flood management. Replanting mown verges with wildflowers would also bring cost benefits, reducing the need for regular maintenance. The City Council has pledged to plant a tree for all its residents. These spaces are ideal locations for such an initiative.

## Project SWF GSa: Street greening

The Town Council is keen to promote delivery of greener streets throughout South Woodham Ferrers.

The Town Council is keen to work with partners, including the City and County Council, to explore how underused green spaces and roadside verges might be better used to increase biodiversity value, provide new wildlife habitats and space for local food production. Reuse of such space for raingardens and wildflower meadows is encouraged, and which would also help manage surface water run-off. These may act as a network of 'B-Lines' allowing bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators to extend their range.

The associated management and maintenance regimes would be agreed with the relevant authorities.

## Case study: from grey to green

The city of Sheffield is surrounded by spectacular countryside, parks and gardens. The Grey to Green project has brought this colour into the city centre, transforming streets into vibrant, green and attractive public spaces.

Phase I is now complete. A large area of wild flowers, trees and shrubs have replaced redundant carriageway. Public art and provision of benches provide an opportunity for people to linger in these spaces, enjoying the sights and scents of the plant life and associated wildlife it attracts.

The scheme also acts as a new rain garden, helping to manage flood risk and surface water run-off. This is an award winning scheme delivered in partnership by Sheffield City Council and Sheffield City Region.



Figure 36: There is plenty of scope within existing streets in South Woodham Ferrers to introduce new landscaping



Figure 37: Example in Kent of trees and wild flowers alongside the street, bringing biodiversity and environmental benefits



## Creating ‘Play Streets’ and ‘Homezones’

- 6.6 Many of the residential streets in South Woodham Ferrers take the form of a cul-de-sac and are dominated by the street environment and parking of cars, with housing built close to the pavement edge. As a result there is a lack of greenery within many of these streets. At the same time, and because of the cul-de-sac and main road network, access to green space for play and recreation is limited. This is recognised in the Chelmsford Open Space study<sup>31</sup>, which notes that although there is good provision of natural green space surrounding the town, the walking catchment of these is limited, and that there is a shortfall of allotments, amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds, children's play space and youth play space in the town.
- 6.7 Opportunities for improving access to and provision of green space in the existing built environment is actively encouraged and can bring numerous benefits, helping facilitate healthy and active lifestyles, strengthening community cohesion, and delivering environmental benefits through a net increase in biodiversity and local management of surface water flooding.
- 6.8 Transforming existing residential streets into Play Streets or Homezones is one strategy to help create greener, safer streets for residents while also creating connections with the surrounding natural environment. The concept derives from The Netherlands, where such streets are known as ‘Woonerfs’. These streets typically include shared spaces, greening, traffic calming and low speed limits. A central goal of the concept is to remove the traditional segregation of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians in public spaces and encourage natural human interaction.

### Case study: a UK pilot Homezone scheme

The Methleys neighbourhood in Leeds was one of the first to pilot the Homezone approach in the UK. The area contains 300 properties and is home to around 700 people.

A ‘turf the street’ project was initially tested prior to transformation as a Homezone. The scheme has involved the narrowing of the road, and corresponding expansion of pavement areas, traffic calming, speed restrictions and new shared road surfaces, with coloured block paving and extensive planting.

Residents have reported reduced traffic and parking problems, lower speeds and improved air quality. The scheme has also improved the appearance of the area, increased street based activity and opportunities for children's play.

The scheme was funded by a pilot project set up by the Department for Transport. A detailed case study of the pilot project is available via: <https://trl.co.uk/sites/default/files/TRL586.pdf>

### Project SWF GSb: Play Streets and Homezones

The Town Council is keen to explore opportunities for transforming existing culs-de-sac into Play Streets and Homezones. This would need to involve the cooperation of homeowners and close partnership with the relevant authorities, including the local highways authority, to identify a pilot project to trail this concept, ahead of any longer term roll-out of such a project.

Identification of a pilot project would enable funding streams to be identified to help facilitate such transformation, with management and maintenance regimes and responsibilities established as a result of the trail.

Ahead of this, temporary applications for street closures as part of annual car free days and other similar events are encouraged and can be used to monitor the community benefits.

The Neighbourhood Plan encourages the Northern Growth Area to plan for and accommodate play streets and homezones within the new development area. The lessons of these schemes will be used to inform design solutions for the retrofitting of existing residential streets.



Figure 38: Concept illustration of Play Street / Homezone concept applied to a typical residential street in South Woodham Ferrers

<sup>31</sup> Chelmsford City Council, Chelmsford Open Space Study: Green space area profiles, 2016-2036



# The Riverside

- 6.9 As noted elsewhere in this Neighbourhood Plan, South Woodham Ferrers was originally envisaged as the ‘riverside country town’. The relationship with the River Crouch is important to the history and setting of the town. The 2008 Plan for South Woodham Ferrers explains that *‘the town’s river frontage and the two creeks are the farthest inland stretches of tidal water in Essex (with the exception of Battlesbridge)’*<sup>32</sup>. The river is important for recreation and for biodiversity. The Country Park, which extends to some 260 hectares, is both a nature reserve and place for walking and cycling. A car park and sailing club are located adjacent to the old ford across the river to Hullbridge.
- 6.10 However, the riverside is somewhat disconnected from the town. Routes to the riverside, other than by car, are limited. Although footpaths do exist they are not continuous, are hidden from view and use is susceptible to weather conditions. And although the walks and views of the riverside bring pleasure, facilities are lacking. Access to nature is important for a healthy society. The Country Park and riverside are important though over looked assets for the town.
- 6.11 Through the Coastal Communities Fund Essex County Council is investigating how the role and setting of the riverside and its relationship with the town might be improved for the benefit of all.

## Project SWF GSc: The Riverside

The Town Council is keen to improve access to and enjoyment of the Riverside and will explore opportunities to work with partner organisations that provide:

- a. New and better signage from the town to the riverside, including signs and information points at the railway station and in the town centre.
- b. Improved and continuous all weather walking routes along Marsh Farm Road to the riverside.
- c. New power and water connections for casual traders.
- d. Improved toilet facilities.
- e. Car park improvements for multi-user access.



Figure 39: Looking out across the River Crouch from the riverside, South Woodham Ferrers

# Management of open space

- 6.12 The quality and provision of green space around and within South Woodham Ferrers is a defining feature and characteristic of the town. Through this Neighbourhood Plan, the aspiration is to improve access to green space, integrate it within the urban area, and improve the quality of the space. Good quality open space is important for quality of life and environment and should be managed for the public good. The Town Council supports the establishment of a Community Land Trust to manage and maintain the quality of open space for the benefit of all, particularly that outside the built-up area.

## Project / Aspiration SWF GSd: Community Land Trust


Open space outside of the built-up area and Northern Growth Area allocation should be retained and protected as the setting of the town. Support is given to the establishment of a Community Land Trust to manage and maintain that land, in partnership with other organisations, on behalf of the town and its residents.

<sup>32</sup> Chelmsford Borough Council, June 2008, A Plan for South Woodham Ferrers, Supplementary Planning Document







A photograph of a residential street. In the foreground, there is a grassy area with some tall, dry grass and a large, leafy tree. A road with a white line runs across the middle ground. In the background, there is a large, two-story red brick house with a dark roof and several windows. A blue car is parked on the street in front of the house. The sky is overcast.

*“This ambitious County Council project has become renowned nationally, and indeed internationally, for the innovative way it has developed... The results really speak for themselves, and the local Essex style is much evident... I agree wholeheartedly with the slogan that this is a little piece of Essex created with a lot of imagination”*

Ron Williams, Former Chair, Essex County Council

Source: Essex County Council, 1984, A Guide to South Woodham Ferrers



## 7. Design and character

### Objective 04:

*To reflect the legacy of the Essex Design Guide in any new development, delivering high quality design in the built form and surrounding landscape. Development should be in keeping with the Essex vernacular and respect existing building heights.*

### A legacy of design quality

- 7.1 Good design has a major role in contributing to quality of life and creating attractive, livable places. Good design goes beyond the look of buildings and considers: the mix of uses and activities that help create lively and interesting places; the local character and distinctiveness of a place, reflected through its landscape and building materials for example, contributing to healthy lifestyles by making it easy for people to move by foot and by bike; fostering a sense of community through well designed, functional and attractive public spaces; and enhancing the quality of environment.
- 7.2 The achievement of high quality design is a core principle of the NPPF. It states, at paragraph 124, that *'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps makes development acceptable to communities'*. The importance of the design of the built environment and its contribution to making better places for people is emphasised. It goes on to note that *'Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development'* (paragraph 125).
- 7.3 In short, good design will help create high quality, safe and successful places where people enjoy living, working and visiting. Successful places are those which reflect the following ten characteristics:<sup>33</sup>
- Enhance the surroundings.
  - Are attractive and distinctive.
  - The built form presents a coherent pattern of development.
  - Are accessible and easy to move around.
  - Enhance and optimise nature.
  - Have safe, social and inclusive public spaces.
  - Mixed and integrated uses.
  - Functional, healthy and carbon neutral; homes and buildings.
  - Are efficient and resilient.
  - Are made to last.



Figure 40: Image from original masterplan document for South Woodham Ferrers, showing a model of one of the proposed housing areas

- 7.4 South Woodham Ferrers is the original Essex Design Guide town. First published in 1973, this forward thinking and ground-breaking document established guidance to shape new development. South Woodham Ferrers stands apart from many other towns of the same growth period, including those in Essex, at Basildon and Harlow, for example, and has a unique character.
- 7.5 Now more than forty years later the Essex Design Guide is in its fourth iteration, having been updated in 2018<sup>34</sup>. This presents new guidance and good practice case studies that should be drawn upon to inform new development, whilst reflecting the 'Essex vernacular'. Equally, new development in South Woodham Ferrers, particularly that to the north, represent a new chapter in the growth and evolution of the town. As with the original planning and development of South Woodham Ferrers, so new growth and development should be of the highest quality, embedding best practice in design.

<sup>33</sup> MHCLG, October 2019, National Design Guide. Also see, for further information, the Design Companion for Planning and Placemaking, Transport for London (Urban Design London), 2017. This document supports and extends national Planning Practice Guidance and is intended for use by all those involved in the planning and placemaking process to help secure higher standards of urban design and the delivery of better practice.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/>



Character and identity

- 7.6 New growth and development in South Woodham Ferrers, whether that is in the northern growth area or elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be expected to reflect upon the legacy of the Essex Design Guide and respond to the positive features and qualities of the town.
- 7.7 Alongside this Neighbourhood Plan a Character Area study has been produced<sup>35</sup>. This identifies a series of character areas across the town (illustrated in Figure 41), positive character features, risks to character, and opportunities. It also considers the street hierarchy and typology of streets, which are central to character and affect the way in which people move around and use the town. Landscape Analysis of South Woodham Ferrers has also been undertaken<sup>36</sup>, identifying the typology of open spaces in and around the town, the potential to integrate with and extend the network of green infrastructure. Key findings from assessment of local character, which applicants for new development should respond to, are summarised below, with more information within the Character Area study:

Table 1: Positive character features and opportunities in the original village area (1960's – 1970's):

Positive character features	<p>The interconnected streets make this area more pedestrian and cycling friendly than other parts of the town.</p> <p>The presence of a number of older properties, such as The Railway Pub dating from 1889, gives a sense of the historic development of this area.</p> <p>There are a small number of original plotlands development still evident in the area, which further contextualises this original village area.</p> <p>Unifying character features of the built form include the colour palate, building materials and gabled roofs. The area is generally well maintained.</p>
Opportunities	<p>The reintroduction of permeable surfaces into the area would help to maintain a verdant, suburban character.</p> <p>The safety of the alleyway connections could be improved with better lighting and reconfiguring housing to face or overlook the passageways.</p> <p>Connecting the interspersed cycle paths would help to improve their utility.</p>

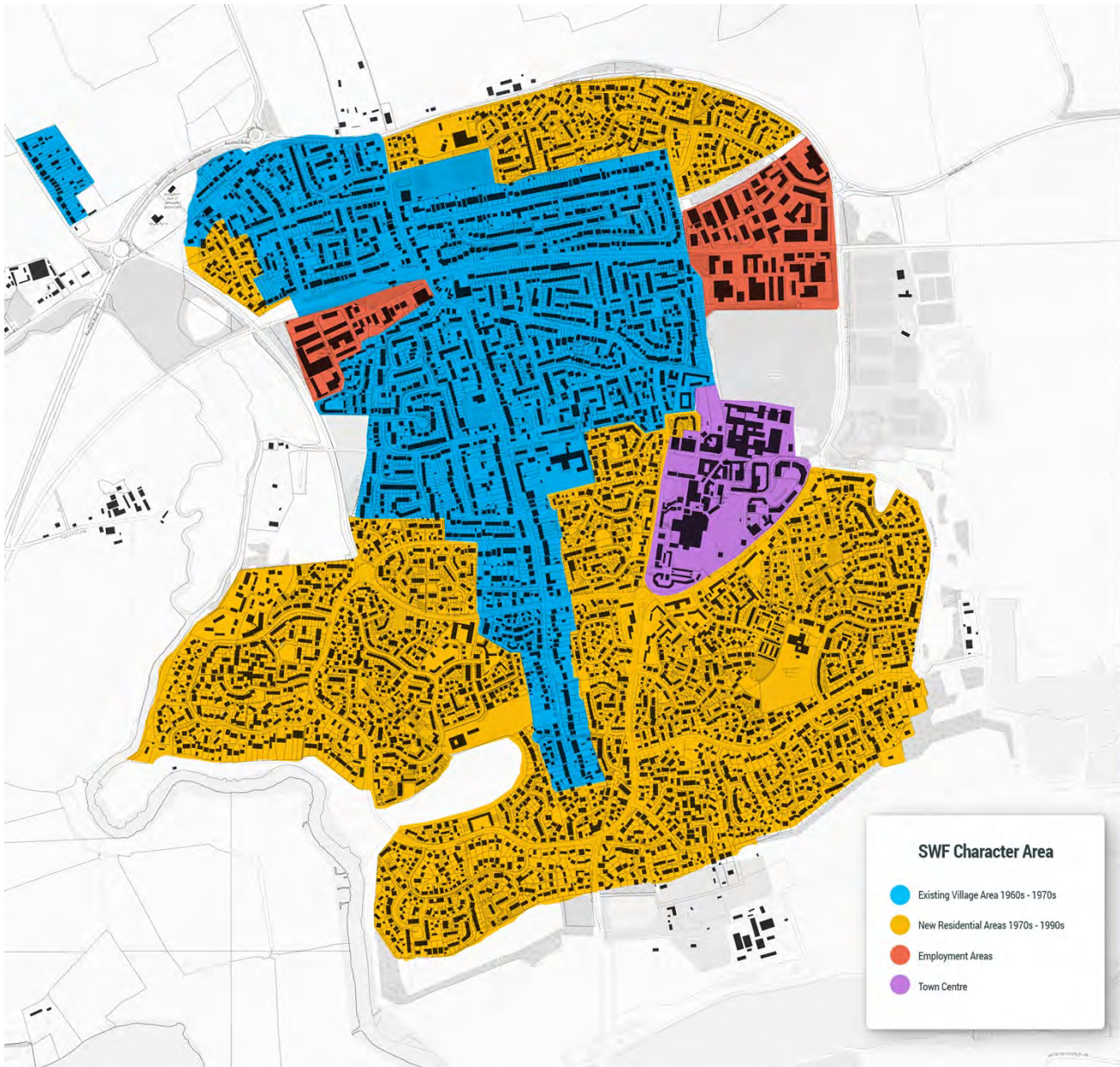


Figure 41: Broad character areas within South Woodham Ferrers. See the Character Area Study for further information

<sup>35</sup> Troy Planning + Design for South Woodham Ferrers Town Council, South Woodham Ferrers Character Area Study, March 2019

<sup>36</sup> Troy Planning + Design for South Woodham Ferrers Town Council, South Woodham Ferrers Landscape Analysis, April 2019



Table 2: Positive character features and opportunities in the 'new town' residential areas (1970's – 2010's):

Positive character features	<p>Views towards the countryside, the River Crouch and Fenn Creek beyond the area frame the suburban context.</p> <p>Residential areas are adjacent to high quality open spaces.</p> <p>Unifying characteristics of the built form include orange, red and brindle brick, white render and different shades of weather boarding.</p> <p>Houses tend to be set in smaller plots and have short or no setbacks from the road, particularly within culs-de-sac; this distinguishes the area from the older, existing village area.</p> <p>The area is generally well maintained.</p>
Opportunities	<p>The area is surrounded by high-quality open space, however the pedestrian and cycle connections to these areas could be improved.</p> <p>Improvement of the disjointed cycle routes could strengthen connections to the town centre and open spaces.</p> <p>Measures to slow down road speeds would improve residential character and improve pedestrian and cycling opportunities.</p> <p>Increasing the greenery of some of the areas, through "de-paving" and tree planting along roads, would strengthen the suburban character of the area.</p>

Table 3: Positive character features and opportunities in the Town Centre:

Positive character features	<p>The Town Centre has a distinctive built form that clearly distinguishes it from residential areas.</p> <p>The Town Centre is very different to other town centres planned at a similar time in terms of its built form. The Bandstand and Clock Tower are distinctive features and lend a local identity to the Town Centre. There are a number of versatile 'market square' areas.</p> <p>Inchbonnie Road is lined with grass. This improves the pedestrian walking environment.</p>
Opportunities	<p>Pedestrian and cycle connections through residential development should be improved to reduce the car-centric character of the Town Centre.</p> <p>The sense of arrival at the Town Centre could be improved by reducing the dominance of car parking.</p> <p>Long views into the Town Centre would help to signal the importance of the area.</p> <p>Connections to the market squares within the Town Centre could be improved; this would help to define the role and function of the squares. This could be achieved by 'signalling' main routes within the area, such as with tree planting and more explicit signage.</p> <p>Introducing residential and other uses in the town centre may increase vibrancy.</p> <p>Increasing the offer within the town centre for all age groups may help to increase vitality.</p> <p>The utility of the grassy open space to the west of the Town Centre along Inchbonnie Road could be improved.</p>



Table 4: Positive character features and opportunities in the employment areas:

Positive character features	<p>The built form and materials cohere with adjacent residential areas.</p> <p>The industries located in the employment areas have a minimal impact on residential amenity. This is partly as a result of the road network, which directly connects with main routes, reducing through traffic through residential streets.</p> <p>The Tap Room bar attached to the brewery creates a connection with the adjacent residential areas.</p>
Opportunities	<p>Some active frontages, similar to the Tap Room, along the edges of the employment areas could help introduce connections between residential and commercial areas.</p> <p>Greenery could be introduced along roads to improve the walking environment for pedestrians.</p> <p>Walking and cycling connections to the other parts of the town may help to reduce the dominance of vehicles in this area.</p> <p>Installing windows that overlook streets may help to improve the street environment, especially in regards to walking.</p>

- 7.8 Proposals for development should respond to the findings and recommendations of the Character Study, taking a design-led approach to development. Given the legacy of the Essex Design Guide in South Woodham Ferrers, innovative design that promotes and reinforces local distinctiveness is welcome.
- 7.9 The Essex Design Guide was first published in 1973 by Essex County Council. It is used as a reference guide to help create high quality places with an identity specific to its Essex context. It was updated in 2018 (<https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/>). The City Council is also in the process of preparing a new Making Places SPD, establishing design principles. Applicants should refer to and be guided by the most recent version of these documents. Contemporary design approaches may be considered acceptable where they respond positively to context. To help deliver design quality, encouragement is given to the use of independent review through the use of design panels.

### Policy SWF DC1: Design

New development in South Woodham Ferrers should contribute to the creation of high quality places through a design-led approach underpinned by good practice principles and reflecting a thorough site-appraisal. All buildings, spaces and the public realm should be well-designed and display a high level of architectural quality which responds positively to local context.

Development should respond to guidance and best practice principles established in the Essex Design Guide, the Chelmsford Local Plan and the positive design features identified within the South Woodham Ferrers Character Area Study and presented in this Neighbourhood Plan in Tables 1-4. Schemes, should, wherever possible, support the opportunities for improving character and local conditions identified in the South Woodham Ferrers Character Study and outlined in Tables 1-4.

Proposed building heights should reflect the prevailing character of the area: within the town centre, as defined on the Chelmsford Local Plan policies map (Map 6), buildings up to four storeys in height may be considered appropriate, subject to production of supporting site appraisals. Elsewhere in the built-up area, building heights of two and three storeys are appropriate.

Major developments are encouraged to demonstrate how they respond to best practice through submission of a Building for Life 12 assessment (or later equivalent). Innovative schemes that respond to and reinterpret local design cues, and which demonstrate an imaginative sense of place whilst respecting the surrounding context, are welcome.

The layout of proposed new development should contribute to the provision of well-designed energy efficient buildings and places. Innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon development, and which demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Construction to Passivhaus standards and the Home Quality Mark is encouraged. Buildings should, where possible, viable and in line with good design principles, be orientated to optimise passive solar gain, and be designed such that they can accommodate photovoltaic panels or materials on roofs, either at the point of construction or at a future date. Alterations to existing buildings should also be designed with energy reduction in mind.





Figure 42: Exemplar housing schemes, such as the one above, in Saffron Walden, demonstrate the benefits of a design-led approach, successfully integrating development around a central green spine, and carefully using a limited palette of materials to create unity and interest, whilst successfully managing the impact of the private car on the quality of the street scene and enjoyment of the public realm.

## The built-up area

- 7.10 The character of South Woodham Ferrers also derives from its scale and relationship with surrounding countryside, green and open spaces. The Neighbourhood Plan Area (Figure 1) is relatively small and, in the main, occupied by the existing built up area as defined in the original masterplan for the town, as well as open spaces including the Country Park, Compass Gardens, Saltcoats Park and Woodham Fen. The 2008 Plan for South Woodham Ferrers explains that *'the need to maximise the actual area of building for land for private houses had a strong influence on the town's layout and composition. On three sides of the town, housing allocation was taken to the physical limits of developable land, taking into account drainage and flooding issues'*<sup>37</sup>. The fourth side is defined by Burnham Road.
- 7.11 The allocation of the Northern Growth Area will see the built-up area extend across Burnham Road, representing the first major expansion of the town since the original masterplan was prepared. Land to the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area is though important to the setting of the town; with high points framing the built-up area and offering a connection with the surrounding countryside. Furthermore, and as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, accessible green space in close proximity to the home is important for health and well-being. Equally, and reflecting the City Council's commitment to plant a tree for all of its residents, land to the north of the Northern Growth Area is an ideal location for enhanced biodiversity and access to nature. Proposals for future development should respect the extent of the built-up area and relationship with the countryside, maintaining this as an asset for the residents of the town to enjoy.

### Policy SWF DC2: Built-up area

The Neighbourhood Plan defines the built-up area of South Woodham Ferrers as that drawn on the Chelmsford Local Plan policies map, (Map 5), which includes land within the extent of the Northern Growth Area allocated for development. Proposals for development outside of the built-up area will only be considered where they are of a scale and form consistent with the landscape character and rural uses. The green necklace wrapping around South Woodham Ferrers, including land to the north of the Northern Growth Area, shall be preserved and protected from future development.

<sup>37</sup> Chelmsford Borough Council, June 2008, A Plan for South Woodham Ferrers, Supplementary Planning Document



## Parking in residential areas

- 7.12 The quality and provision of car parking can be a major determinant on the quality of place, particularly in residential areas. If it is not provided in the right place, it is unlikely to be used properly. The location and provision of parking should respond to good urban design and placemaking principles<sup>38</sup>, with on-plot and on-street parking provided in close proximity to the home. Rear courtyards should be avoided where possible. Equally, alternatives to garages should be explored, as these are not often used for parking and occupy valuable space that might be used more effectively for other uses, including living space.
- 7.13 Where parking is provided on-street, consideration should be given to using different materials to define the use of different areas. Where possible, unallocated on-street parking provision, particularly for visitors, and which is more land-efficient than parking courts, should be provided. Applications for proposals in areas of new growth are encouraged to present a street hierarchy and cross sections as part of the pack of submission material, demonstrating how parking will be provided on street. Robust street widths that allow for on-street parking but which also incorporate street trees and landscaping, and are designed to reduce speed in residential areas, will be viewed favourably. Design principles<sup>39</sup> and parking standards published by Essex County Council should also be referred to<sup>40</sup>. Provision of private and visitor parking will also need considering in light of technological changes (e.g.: MaaS<sup>41</sup>) and the impact of this on planning for parking.

### Policy SWF DC3: Parking

Parking within proposed new development, including the northern growth area, shall be designed such that it is used in the way it is intended, avoiding informal parking that undermines the quality of the street environment. Parking should be unobtrusive and in locations that are overlooked. Proposals for rear or separate parking courts are not encouraged and should only be proposed unless alternative provision is impracticable. Key principles for integrating parking include:

- Formal parking spaces, including unallocated visitor parking, can be planned into the street, where forming a comprehensive public realm strategy, including tree planting and use of materials to define parking spaces and soften the visual impact of parked cars.
- On-plot parking should be set back from the main building line in accordance with ECC parking standards. Parking bays set back from the building line should be of a sufficient size to accommodate a parked car.
- Garage and parking courts should only be provided where they are well overlooked, are directly accessed from the front of properties, and are designed as attractive, functional spaces, incorporating tree planting. Narrow vehicular accessways should be avoided.
- Undercroft and decked parking may be appropriate, but should in all instances be wrapped with active development frontages, particularly at ground floor level.

All new development will have regard to the vehicle parking standards set out in the Essex Parking Standards, or as subsequently amended, when determining planning applications.

## Chetwood School

- 7.14 Although the Chelmsford City Council Local Plan envisages provision of a new two form-entry primary school in the Northern Growth Area (see Northern Growth Area section of this Neighbourhood Plan and associated Local Plan policy for 'Strategic Growth Site 10'), there are parts of South Woodham Ferrers where school provision is limited. In the south west of the town the Chetwood Primary school was recently closed due to falling pupil numbers. The school has since been repurposed as a 'Family Hub Delivery Site' offering 'stay and play', child clinic services and advice. It remains in the ownership of Essex County Council. Those residents of primary school age living in the Chetwood area currently need to travel across the town for education in one of the other schools.
- 7.15 As the population cycle of the town changes so local needs and requirements may change. Future residents of family housing in the Chetwood area may include school age children. This Neighbourhood Plan 'future-proofs' the area such that the Chetwood school could potentially be brought back into use at a later date for primary school age education. This would also provide for a school close to home and help minimise the impacts of the school run. Demographics and household structure will be monitored and the impact on school place planning reviewed with the local education authority.

### Policy SWF DC4: Chetwood School

The site of the Chetwood School shall be safeguarded for future educational or community use. Until such time as the school is reused for educational purposes, other civic and community uses will be considered appropriate, subject to impact on residential amenity.

<sup>38</sup> URBED, University of Edinburgh and Design for Homes, 2013, Space to Park, and online resource: <http://www.spacetopark.org>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/parking-design/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media/1960/essex-parking-standards.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Mobility as a Service. See Section 5 for more information



# Design review

- 7.16 The NPPF states (at paragraph 129) that Local Planning Authorities should have access to and make use of tools and processes to assess and improve the design quality of development, including making use of design review arrangements. Design review is a way of assessing the design quality of new developments by an independent panel of experts to help support high standards of design. Guidance on the Design Review process can be found via the Design Council Cabi and Essex County Council websites<sup>42</sup>.
- 7.17 In South Woodham Ferrers it is envisaged that major applications for development, as well as smaller schemes in sensitive or important locations, should be subject to design review. This might include residential, commercial and mixed-use development proposals, infrastructure, community facilities, public realm and open space proposals. Design review should take place at the pre-application stage to inform the design process and again following submission of the application, to help inform officer recommendations. The final proposals submitted should show how comments made during the design review have influenced the proposed development.

## Project / Aspiration SWF DCa: Design Review

Emerging schemes for major development<sup>43</sup> should be assessed through design review. Design review of smaller schemes is also encouraged, including those in sensitive or important locations, such as the town centre.

It is envisaged that schemes will be referred to the Quality Review Panel operated by Essex County Council (until such a time that Chelmsford City Council runs and operates a Design Review Panel) to ensure the delivery and promotion of high-quality new development through the creation of good design, sustainability and improved quality, creating better places and environments. It is encouraged that design review takes place early in the process to allow scope for input into the emerging design. The final schemes submitted to the Council should include a report on the design review process and how the scheme has responded to this. Design Review of live applications is also encouraged.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/built-environment/design-review>, and <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/qualitypanel/about/>

<sup>43</sup> Major development is that as defined in the NPPF. For residential development it is that where ten or more homes will be provided, or where the site is greater than 0.5 hectares. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000 square metres or more, or a site of one hectare or more.







# 8. Northern growth area

## Objective 05:

*To successfully integrate new growth and expansion with the existing built form and communities, providing housing choice and opportunities, as well as new community infrastructure, for the benefit of all.*

- 8.1 The northern growth area is a major area of opportunity for new growth and development in South Woodham Ferrers. Allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan for around 1,000 new homes and other supporting uses, it is anticipated that development will commence in 2024/25.
- 8.2 The Local Plan establishes the parameters for new development and the principles that need to be considered. It is expected that a masterplan will be prepared for approval by the City Council and that development proposals should accord with this. Material submitted by the City Council for the examination of the Local Plan establish the masterplan protocols. It is noted that the masterplan should be prepared by the applicant for development in agreement with the City Council and that, once approved, it will sit alongside the Local Plan.
- 8.3 However, the Local Plan clearly states that *“although the development quantum and extent of the allocation is set out in the Local Plan, the emerging Neighbourhood Plan being prepared in South Woodham Ferrers is envisaged to help shape this allocation”*.
- 8.4 This reflects guidance in the NPPF which emphasis the role that communities have in shaping future development through Neighbourhood Plans. This was given added weight following the 2020 Budget announcements and the subsequent Government publication, ‘Planning for the Future’<sup>44</sup>. This includes a commitment to local communities being able to produce their own design guides and codes that will help shape the places they want to see delivered. It states:
- “We will ask local places to produce their own design guides and codes, informed by listening to local people and considering local context. This will embed standards in planning policy and give local communities the confidence to demand that they are met”*.
- 8.5 Through work on the Neighbourhood Plan, which has included discussion with the City Council and the developers of the northern growth area, as well as community consultation events, a concept masterplan (Figure 44) has been prepared that should be used to help guide development. This reflects good-practice guidance in the forthcoming Making Places SPD to be published by the City Council and to which applicants should refer.

## Integrating with the existing built-form

- 8.6 The original masterplan for South Woodham Ferrers saw Burnham Road as the northern limit of the town. With the requirement to accommodate future growth and development, and the allocation of the Northern Growth Area in the Local Plan to help achieve this, new development will now take place to the north of Burnham Road.
- 8.7 Burnham Road is the main east-west route for vehicular movements in the area, connecting the Dengie Peninsula with Basildon. Junctions on the Burnham Road also comprise the main points of vehicular access into (and out of) South Woodham Ferrers.
- 8.8 Burnham Road is a barrier to movement, carrying fast moving traffic, and is difficult to cross. Indeed, review of traffic accident data since 2010<sup>45</sup> shows a high occurrence of accidents on Burnham Road between the junctions with Ferrers Road and Hullbridge Road.
- 8.9 Questions have arisen through the work on the Neighbourhood Plan (and, before that, on the Chelmsford Local Plan), as to how the wider movement function of Burnham Road might be retained whilst making conditions safer for all and enabling growth to be integrated with the existing built-form. A range of options and the implications of these have been looked at, including:
- Creation of a new northern by-pass, redirecting east west traffic. Such an approach would be very expensive and, given the topography and wider landscape constraints, would result in a significant diversion and added cost implications. Although this remains the Town Council's preferred option, it was ruled out through the Local Plan.
  - Creation of segregated crossings (e.g.: pedestrian bridges) along Burnham Road. Similar to above, provision of bridges would be costly and complex, potentially requiring land acquisition on the southern side of Burnham Road to enable routes up to bridge level to be provided, as well as impacting upon residential amenity. Given the sensitive nature of the Radar Hill environment, such crossings would likely have visual and aesthetic consequences. Underpasses do not represent a solution given flood risk and security concerns. Furthermore, the solution retains the status quo: that prominence is given to vehicular movements and that the road would remain a physical barrier to movement. The Town Council does not consider grade separated crossings to represent a reasonable solution. Any proposals for such a crossing must be demonstrated as being feasible, deliverable, and well-designed, responding to the sensitive landscape setting and amenity of neighbouring residential properties.
  - Downgrading Burnham Road to provide seamless crossings and connections between the growth area and existing built-up area. This would see Burnham Road transformed into a street, changing the nature of driver behaviour. It was thought by some respondents to

<sup>44</sup> MHCLG, March 2020, Policy paper: Planning for the Future

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.crashmap.co.uk>



previous consultation events that, with vehicle movements associated with the growth area accessing Burnham Road, plus potential growth from development further to the east in the Dengie Peninsula, this might lead to congestion and conflicts between users.

8.10 Through work on the Neighbourhood Plan a concept masterplan has been prepared (Figure 43). A fourth, preferred option, for resolving the integration issue is shown on this. This suggests that:

- The carriageway width of Burnham Road should preferably be reduced to allow for one lane of traffic in each direction (as is currently the case), but that less space is available for motor vehicles, and thus traffic will be slowed as a result, making this safer for all to cross. Other design solutions that help slow traffic, including landscaping and public realm treatments, should also be explored.
- New and improved pedestrian and cycle crossings are provided along Burnham Road, located such that they connect with the existing network of routes and links in the built-up area, as well as to the Town Centre and railway station. These are needed in any event and irrespective of future housing growth to enable the community to access the new superstore and health centre, as well as integrating with public rights of way that provide access to the countryside. Where crossings are provided, cycle provision should be integrated, and reflect best practice design solutions, including those typically found in The Netherlands.
- Multiple points of vehicular access into the development area are provided, from Burnham Road and from the B1418 towards Bicknacre,. This will help disburse vehicular movements.
- A central street is provided through the growth area, connecting Burnham Road and the B1418. This provides a secondary route which will provide choice and disburse vehicular traffic. It will also help build resilience into the network.
- The central street should be designed such that it can accommodate bus provision, with all homes being in walking distance of bus stops.
- Within the development area, housing and other uses should be aligned to front Burnham Road and other routes, creating active frontages and which change the nature of the street from one designed primarily for vehicles to one that balances the need for vehicular movement with the wider placemaking agenda, resulting in streets and spaces that are safe and attractive places for all. Where development does front Burnham Road, these should not be directly accessible by vehicles from Burnham Road. Existing vegetation should also be retained wherever possible.

8.11 As per the Chelmsford validation requirements, the planning application for the Northern Growth Area will need to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment. The Highways Authority will need to be satisfied with the Assessment and package of transport solutions, and mitigations, put in place, including how development will resolve issues in respect of traffic generation from the development and the cumulative impacts of movements associated with development in the wider area, including that across the Dengie Peninsula and the forthcoming Development Consent Order for the Bradwell B Power Station.

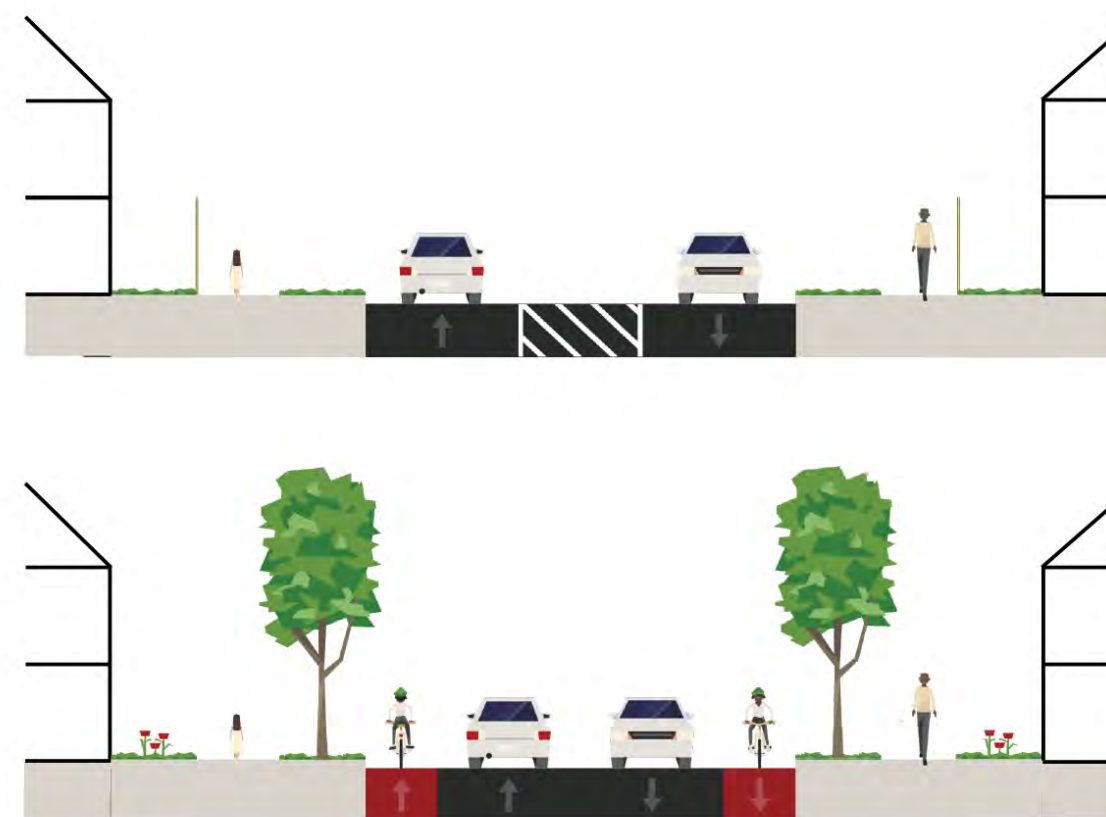


Figure 43: (Top) – cross section illustrating the typical main road alignment in South Woodham Ferrers, with houses and private gardens backing onto a generous road width. (Bottom) – cross section illustrating the structure of a potential central street through the new Northern Growth Area, providing space for different modes of transport and creating a more attractive landscaped route for pedestrians, with housing fronting onto this.

### Case study: a central ‘main street’

The Sherford urban extension, in Plymouth, is a growth area accommodating 5,500 new homes. The scheme, which is under construction, is structured around the concept of a new main street. This forms the central spine of the development.

Although the central streets is classified as an arterial route (a high capacity road), it is designed to balance this function with its place-making role: local centres, squares, schools and homes are directly accessed from and front on to the main street, and pedestrian crossing points are provided along its length.



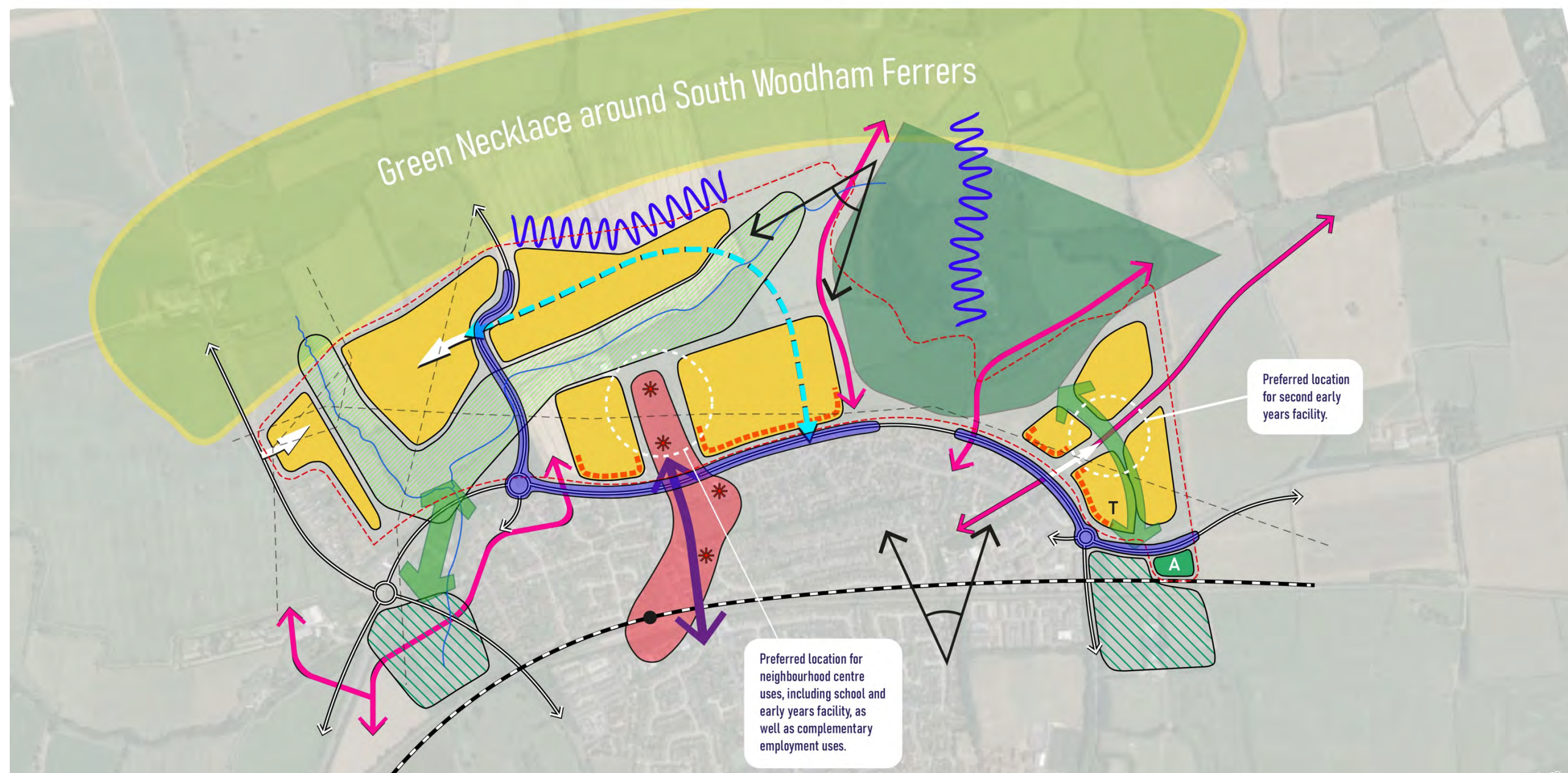
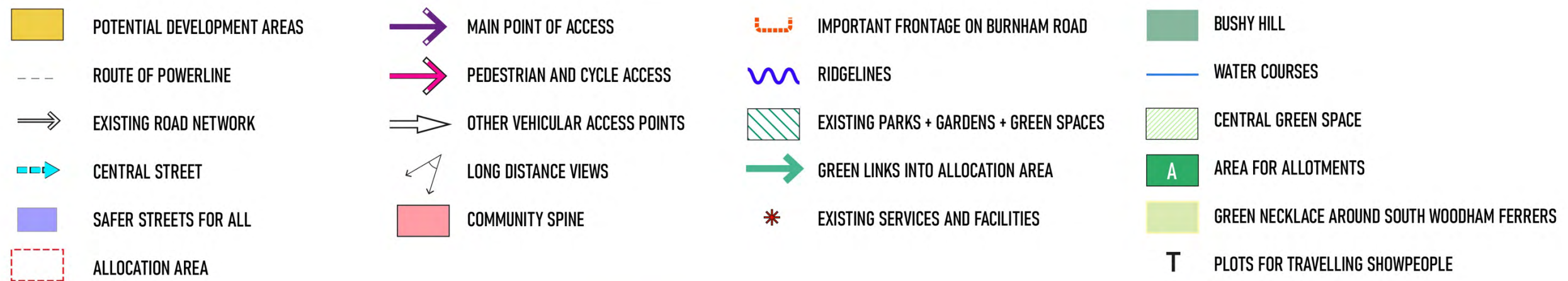


Figure 44: Concept masterplan of Northern Growth Area



## Growth area layout, mix and disposition of uses

8.12 The Chelmsford Local Plan establishes the overall policy framework for the Northern Growth Area, including principles for development and the mix of uses to be provided. Based on consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and studies in support of this a set of more locally specific principles are presented in the policy below and illustrated on the concept masterplan (Figure 44). These are intended to influence creation of a well-designed, accessible and permeable new neighbourhood that is connected with and feels part of the existing town. These reflect:

- The landscape character of the site, topography and important role that Bushy Hill plays in the setting of the town, as well as the ridgeline along the north of the site.
- The importance of green space provision and potential to integrate green infrastructure within the site such that it is accessible and useable for all, forming a linked network of green spaces around the town.
- Local flood risk and patterns, particularly along Burnham Road where existing drainage ditches meet, and thus the need to successfully design and integrate sustainable urban drainage systems into the development.
- The sensitive nature of the Garden of Remembrance and locating appropriate uses (allotment gardens) next to this. There is a waiting list for allotments in South Woodham Ferrers.
- Equally, there is a need for new burial space in South Woodham Ferrers, though land within the town is limited for this. The Town Council is keen to work with Chelmsford City Council to identify the most appropriate and effective strategy for providing additional capacity in the future. Land within the Northern Growth Area, but on higher ground away from areas of floodrisk, are favoured by the Town Council, and opportunities for provision will continue to be explored by the Council and partner organisations.
- Structuring the development such that new facilities are accessible to all and well-integrated with the existing community, connecting across Burnham Road to Hullbridge Road.
- The need to integrate safe and attractive routes for all, including for people walking and cycling.
- Providing plots for Travelling Showpeople where the road infrastructure can accommodate provision, and where the amenity and setting of adjacent uses is respected. The possible location for these plots is to the east of the allocation area, north of Woodham Road and adjacent to the Hamberts Road employment area. Existing roadside vegetation and landscaping should be retained.
- A holistic approach to development which recognises that the growth area comprises three landownerships and that these should be coordinated to create a cohesive place.

### Case study: a new, walkable, urban extension

Nansledan is an urban extension of Newquay, in Cornwall. Newquay has a current population of approximately 20,000 people. Development of the first phase of development of 800 homes is now underway at Nansledan. Later phases will increase this to 4,000 homes.

The urban extension is built to a design code reflecting the local vernacular and use of a 'local pattern book'. It is based on a legible street-network, with all routes and spaces overlooked by buildings. Efficient use of land means all homes are within walking distance of services and facilities.

A Community Orchard has been provided as part of the urban extension. This provides a link between the new and existing community. It has created social cohesion and strengthened local identity, being a place for community activity and social interaction. Food grown at the orchard is sold in local market and used in local restaurants.



Figure 45: Bushy (Radar) Hill forms an important backdrop to South Woodham Ferrers, the setting of which should be protected.



### Policy SWF NGA1: Placemaking principles

Proposals for development of the Northern Growth Area will be informed by a comprehensive masterplan to be prepared by the applicant to be approved by Chelmsford City Council and which should incorporate the following principles illustrated on Figure 44:

- a. Provide for an accessible, central green space that helps create and complete the green necklace of connected routes around the town.
- b. Focus development on the flatter parts of the site, such that it does not encroach on Bushy Hill, nor the ridgeline to the north of the site, preserving long distance views to these.
- c. Incorporate existing streams and water features within the site into green spaces and streets and, where possible, SuDS should be multi-functional to deliver benefits for the built, natural and historic environment..
- d. Retain existing rights of way across the site and establish new, attractive walking and cycling routes that connect with these, and the wider network.
- e. Incorporate potential for the reopening of the route of the former South Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway as a green walking and cycling corridor, either as part of the development or at a later date.
- f. Provide safe crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists at key points along Burnham Road, Woodham Road and the B1418, allowing safe use of the rights of way and other places of entry into the site. Cycle infrastructure should be provided at crossing points and junctions.
- g. Create new development frontages along the northern side of Burnham Road, helping to change the nature of the street and driver behavior, but that, beyond the main points of access identified on the concept masterplan, these should not be accessed directly by vehicles from Burnham Road.
- h. Incorporate a new central street through the site, which allows access into the site for buses, as well as multiple points of vehicle access. Wherever possible, bus stops should be located so that all residents are within walking distance of a bus stop.
- i. Provide for a network of permeable and well overlooked walking routes through the site.
- j. Provision of a mix of housing types set around pedestrian and cycle friendly streets and spaces, including mews type streets, play streets and homezones.
- k. Focus provision of any onsite community uses close to the new medical centre and Superstore, such that they create a cluster of uses and activities along a central spine connecting with Hullbridge Road, the existing Village Hall, Station and Neighbourhood Centre, linking the new community with the existing, and with access provided to green space along the watercourses within the Growth Area, making an attractive setting for the central area. Potential school provision, including an early years facility, shall be located close to the centre.

### (Policy SWF NGA1 continued)

- l. Respect the sensitive setting of the Garden of Remembrance. Land to the east of the Garden and within the Growth Area should form part of the 'green necklace' around the town, including provision of new allotments for the town.
- m. Provide new employment floorspace preferably in close proximity to the new Medical Centre and superstore, creating a local centre, subject to proposed uses being complementary, or, alternatively, close to existing employment uses on Hamberts Road. Flexible premises for small and medium enterprises, including those looking for 'grow-on' space, are encouraged.
- n. Provision of plots for Travelling Showpeople where the road infrastructure can accommodate it whilst protecting the setting of the landscape and living environment of existing and future residents.. Locations for preferred sites shall be tested through the masterplan and consider proximity to water courses. Preferred locations include the east of the allocation area, north of Woodham Road and adjacent to the Hamberts Road employment area. Existing roadside vegetation and landscaping should be retained.
- o. The layout of development should not preclude the longer-term opportunity to bury or divert the overhead power cables.

Developers will be expected to mitigate the transport impact of their proposed development in liaison with relevant partners, including the Highways Authority, to ensure the network performs satisfactorily for all post-development.

- 8.13 The capacity of remaining burial space in South Woodham Ferrers is limited. The Town Council has indicated its preference for future burial space to be provided within the northern growth area, and will work with partners to identify appropriate locations for this. Should this not be possible, the Town Council intends to work closely with Chelmsford City Council to identify the most appropriate and effective strategy for providing additional capacity in the future. This will need to consider the necessary size and most suitable location for additional capacity, the needs for different types of burial and cremation, car parking and accessibility, and proximity to existing burial provision.

### Project / Aspiration SWF NGAa: Burial Space

The Town Council will commence a review of the options to provide additional burial space in South Woodham Ferrers and work with partner authorities to deliver this in the most effective way.



# Housing

- 8.14 As noted in Section 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan there is a predominance of family-sized housing in South Woodham Ferrers. However, as the town has matured, so has the age structure. This is reflected in average household size, there being a large proportion of married or co-habiting couples without dependent children in the home. It is important that the Northern Growth Area provides for a mix of housing types, including those for new families as well as those looking to move into their first home, or those who wish to downsize. This will help provide a balanced mix. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) prepared by the City Council indicates the broad mix of housing sizes to be provided within new development which the application for the Northern Growth Area will be expected to comply with.
- 8.15 The provision of specific housing types in response to the SHMA represents a need at a specific point in time. As demographic patterns change so need may change. Opportunities that allow people to remodel their home to allow for changing circumstances are encouraged. Subject to compliance with Building Regulations, flexible, loose-fit housing models that allow the owner to remodel the internal space to suit their needs over time, but at minimal cost, should be explored. This might be provided through market housing and or through self and custom build housing opportunities.
- 8.16 The Chelmsford Local Plan (at Policy DM1) requires provision of plots for self and or custom build housing on major development sites. The masterplan for the Northern Growth Area will be expected to identify a suitable location and plots for provision of this housing type. It is anticipated that the overall developer of the Northern Growth Area will provide the supporting infrastructure and services for each plot before these are sold.
- 8.17 Plot passports should be provided that establish the parameters within which these new homes can be designed and built, allowing for individual interpretation but within a framework that establishes the grain, scale and rhythm of new development.
- 8.18 Plot passports are in effect a summary of the design parameters for any given plot, helping private homebuilders understand what they are allowed to build on the plot. They capture key information from the planning permission for the site, design constraints and procedural requirements. The passports clearly show permissible building lines within which the new dwelling can be built as well as height restrictions and other details such as parking requirements. Aspects such as materials, roof styles and fenestration are usually left for the plot owner to decide. Further information is set out in the forthcoming Making Places SPD to be published by the City Council to which applicants should refer.
- 8.19 A range of housing and delivery models might come forward on the self and custom build plots, including shared delivery through collaboration. To allow this, any area of self or custom build should be no smaller than ten plots in size.

## Policy SWF NGA2: Housing

The Northern Growth Area will provide for a range of housing types and sizes in line with the most up-to-date available information of housing needs.

Subject to compliance with Building Regulations, the applicant is encouraged to explore provision of flexible, loose-fit housing types. This includes multi-generational homes that enable part of the unit to be subdivided as a separate stand-alone unit with its own entrance, allowing older children and elderly family members to live independently. The concept of Lifetime Homes, live/work accommodation and provision of flexible internal layouts responding to life cycle changes are encouraged.

Development in the Northern Growth Area will make provision for self and custom build housing. The location of these will be determined through the overall masterplan for the Growth Area. Areas for self and custom build housing should be no smaller than ten plots. This will allow opportunities for co-housing schemes and other collaborative delivery models to come forward.

For the area of self and custom build housing the applicant shall prepare a set of individual plot passports. These will regulate the form of development, establishing building parameters, such as height, footprint, set-backs and parking requirements. Individual plots will be provided with the necessary services by the developer to allow for connection to utilities.

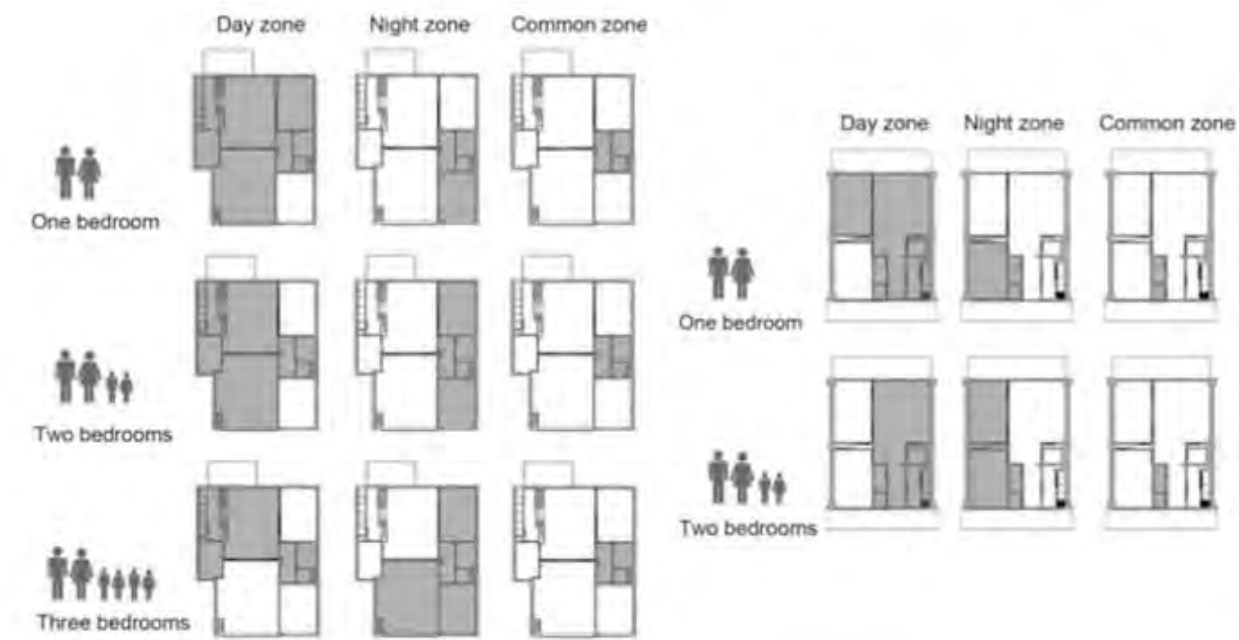


Figure 46: Illustration of a flexible, loose fit dwelling, showing how the house might be adapted to suit different demographic circumstances (image source: planningtank.com)



# Social and community facilities

- 8.20 The Chelmsford Local Plan requires that the Northern Growth Area safeguard land for provision of a new primary school, to be co-located with an early years and childcare nursery. A further early years and childcare facility is also required.
- 8.21 Provision of the primary school is triggered by, amongst other factors, the child yield ratio deriving from the quantum of homes to be provided on the site. This would result in the provision of a new primary school in close proximity to the existing Woodville Primary school located in the north of South Woodham Ferrers.
- 8.22 The new school should preferably be located within the centre of the Northern Growth Area, closely linked to the new foodstore and Medical Centre, creating a local centre, and which is easily accessible to all by foot and by bicycle, and where good connections with Hullbridge Road enable safe and direct access for existing residents. Measures that reduce the use of the car as part of the school run should be incorporated into the design of the development and provision of new school places. Recommendations and case studies as to how this can be achieved have been prepared by Living Streets<sup>46</sup> and should be referenced as part of the design strategy. Further information on school place planning is provided in the Essex guide to infrastructure contributions<sup>47</sup>.

**Policy SWF NGA3: School provision**

The Northern Growth Area will deliver a new primary school, which will either be in the form of (a) land reserved for a new school on the site co-located with early years and childcare facilities, or (b) expansion of existing school facilities. A second early years facility shall also be delivered.

The most appropriate form of provision will be agreed through the masterplan process with the appropriate partners and funding agreed in line with guidance established by the City Council and County Council.

The preference is for the primary school provision (and co-located early years facility) to be accommodated on site. In this instance, the school should be located within the centre of the site, close to the new foodstore and Medical Centre, creating a new local centre, as indicated on Figure 44.

In the event that school places are provided off-site, then two free-standing early years and childcare facilities shall be provided on the site of the Northern Growth Area. One of these shall be centrally located. The location of the second shall be in the proposed residential area to the east of the site, as indicated on Figure 44, such that all homes are in walking distance of at least one of the early years facilities.

Routes to all facilities will be pedestrian and cycle friendly, allowing safe movement for all. Routes shall be designed that minimise the impact of the vehicular based 'school-run', with limited drop off and waiting facilities provided for vehicles.

Where the proposed development of the Northern Growth Area triggers a need for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) these needs should ideally be provided on-site through appropriate co-located facilities. Where needs cannot be met onsite financial contributions will be sought to enable the expansion of appropriate schools, as required, to meet SEND demand generated from the development.

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3618/livingstreets\\_school\\_run\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3618/livingstreets_school_run_report_web.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> <https://assets.ctfassets.net/5aKhke88EY5zkdMvSQj44w/33ef01a332384c239a43ecd7b356ed51/developers-guide-to-infrastructure-contributions.pdf>







# 9. Community Infrastructure Levy

- 9.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on development which is payable to the local authority and is intended to be spent on infrastructure projects across the Chelmsford City Council administrative area that help address the demands placed on it resulting from growth. This might include, for example, spending on new transport infrastructure, health and educational facilities, open spaces and sports facilities.
- 9.2 A portion of CIL is payable to the Town Council for spending on local projects in the Neighbourhood Plan area. When the Neighbourhood Plan is made the Town Council will receive 25% of all CIL monies paid to Chelmsford City Council in respect of qualifying development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. In regard to what this money can be spent on, advice suggests<sup>48</sup>:
- "The neighbourhood portion of CIL can be used for a wider range of planning issues than infrastructure as long as they are concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area."*
- 9.3 The Chelmsford City Council CIL Charging Schedule was approved in February 2014 and took effect on 1 June 2014<sup>49</sup>. All applications for development that are above the necessary thresholds will be subject to this charging schedule, or any subsequent updates to it. Payment is linked to an instalments policy, related to the scale and commencement of development. From December 2020, CIL Charging Authorities have to publish Annual Infrastructure Funding Statements which will set out the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which the Council intends to wholly or partly fund by CIL..
- 9.4 Through consultation and work on the Neighbourhood Plan a series of projects have been identified which the Town Council intends to direct the neighbourhood portion of CIL towards. These are referred to through the Neighbourhood Plan, in the green 'projects' boxes and referenced within the CIL policy below. These projects will be kept under review by the Town Council.
- 9.5 Alongside CIL, the City Council will continue to negotiate Section 106 agreements with applicants which can provide funds or works to make development more acceptable in planning terms. The Town Council will liaise with the City Council as to the most appropriate form of Section 106 agreement relating to applications within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The ECC Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions details the scope and range of infrastructure towards which ECC may seek from developers and landowners in order to make development acceptable in planning terms. Contributions will also be secured towards mitigation measures in accordance with the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS).

## Policy SWF NCIL 01: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Where development projects trigger the requirement for CIL payments these will be made in accordance with Chelmsford City Council's CIL Charging Schedule.

Monies payable to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council will be used to help support delivery of the projects outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan, including those in the green project boxes, and which may include but are not limited to:

- Town centre public realm improvement projects, including trialing pilot projects to test the feasibility of schemes.
- Support for establishment of a Town Centre business forum or similar and associated initiatives to promote the town.
- Provision of a town-wide cycle network, working in partnership with ECC, to include safe crossings and junctions along Ferrers Road to be delivered in line with best practice Dutch-style principles.
- Transformation of the network of alleyways, including opportunities for community gardening projects, lighting and a programme of regular maintenance.
- Street greening initiatives, including tree planting, wildflowers and provision of rain gardens.
- Identify and test a pilot Play Street / Homezone project within an existing residential cul-de-sac.
- Improved town-wide public transport provision and infrastructure, including improved waiting facilities and travel information.

Possible projects and the spending of any CIL monies received by the Town Council as a result of new development will be kept under review and regularly updated.

<sup>48</sup> My Community / Locality, 2017, Community Infrastructure Levy; Neighbourhood Planning toolkit

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/community-infrastructure-levy/>







# 10. What Happens Next?

## Process through to referendum

- 10.1 This is the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan for South Woodham Ferrers. It will be subject to formal consultation by Chelmsford City Council prior to independent examination.
- 10.2 The Examiner will review the Plan and any comments made in response to it. Following this, they will issue a report to the City Council advising whether:
  - The Plan should proceed to referendum.
  - The Plan should proceed to referendum subject to modification.
  - The Plan should not proceed to referendum.
- 10.3 For the Examiner to advise that the Plan proceed to referendum it will need to be demonstrated that the Plan meets what are called the 'Basic Conditions'. These include showing that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the Local Development Plan (i.e.: the Chelmsford Local Plan).
- 10.4 Chelmsford City Council will organise the referendum. All people of voting age in South Woodham Ferrers are eligible to vote on whether the Plan should be brought into force ('made') or not. If more than 50% of all people who turnout vote in favour of making the Plan, then it will become part of the suite of planning policies used by Chelmsford City Council to help shape and determine planning applications in South Woodham Ferrers.

## Reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan

- 10.5 Notwithstanding the defined period of the Neighbourhood Plan to 2036, it is recognised that, with further changes to planning policy at the national level, and consequently, to the Local Plan (the Local Plan was adopted in May 2020 and a review is likely to commence within two years from this date), the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed periodically. This will enable the Neighbourhood Plan to remain 'current' and in conformity with the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework.







# Appendix A: Projects

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a set of suggested projects and initiatives to be progressed.

Implementation of these will require working with partner organisations, as outlined below.

They will be regularly monitored and may be updated over time.

Project Reference	Project Name / Title	Potential partner organisations	Notes
SWF TCa	Town Centre Initiatives: (a) Town Centre Forum	Town centre businesses and landowners	Scope exists for the businesses to establish a Forum or propose a Business Improvement District (BID).
SWF TCa	Town Centre Initiatives: (b) Place branding	Town centre businesses and landowners	Scope exists for the businesses to prepare a place branding exercise as an action through the establishment of a Forum or BID.
SWF TCa	Town Centre Initiatives: (c) Public realm pilot projects	Essex County Council and Asda as primary landowners	Potential for Neighbourhood portion of CIL funding to be directed towards public realm improvements, supported by landowners and other funding streams available to public sector organisations, including, for example, use of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) .
SWF TCb	Improving the highway network around the town centre for all users	Essex County Council, Town Centre business and landowners	As above
SWF MAa	Safer streets and town-wide cycle grid	Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council as well as other potential organisations including Sustrans	The Chelmsford Cycling Action Plan (ECC / Essex Highways) identifies possible funding streams. The draft Essex Walking Strategy also highlights opportunities for intervention. LCWIPs provide scope to develop local solutions. Guidance on these is provided by the Department for Transport. Essex County Council is a partner authority in the programme to accelerate production of LCWIPs.
SWF MAb	Alleyway transformation projects	Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council	As above.
SWF MAC	Public transport services	Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council, Northern Growth Area Project team and Public Transport Operators	Sustainable transport packages and s106 funding agreed through application for Northern Growth Area may help facilitate public transport improvements.
SWF GSa	Street greening	Essex County Council as well as other potential organisations including Essex Wildlife Trust	Essex County Council is responsible for the maintenance of roadside verges. In partnership with Place Services and the Essex Wildlife Trust more than 60km of road verges across Essex have



			been designated as 'Special Roadside Verges', providing habitats for wildflowers and other native species.
SWF GSb	Play streets and homezones	Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and local residents, as well as other potential organisations including Living Streets and Playing Out	The Department for Transport has issued updated guidance (as of August 2019) to make it easier to close streets for community events, helping trial and inform the creation of play streets.
SWF GSc	The Riverside	Essex County Council	Coastal Communities Funding has been secured by Essex County Council and provides scope to identify and implement projects.
SWF GSD	Community Land Trust	Northern Growth Area Team	Potential to acquire public open space and manage land to the north of the development area for the benefit and enjoyment of the community, and to involve the community in this.
SWF DCa	Design Review	Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council	Essex County Council has recently established a Quality Review Panel. Until such time that Chelmsford City Council establishes a Design Review Panel, proposals for major development should be referred to Essex County Council for input. It is expected that applications for the Northern Growth Area will be subject to review by the Quality Review Panel.
SWF NGAa	Burial Space	Chelmsford City Council and the Northern Growth Area Team	The Town Council will work with partner organisations to explore potential land for provision of new burial space. The preference is for provision within the North Growth Area. Burial Space to be managed by the Town Council or City Council as appropriate .



## Appendix B: Supporting Material

The Neighbourhood Plan draws on the following material, all of which can be found on the South Woodham Ferrers Town Council website:

[http://www.southwoodhamferrers.gov.uk/Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_26846.aspx](http://www.southwoodhamferrers.gov.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_26846.aspx)

The documents include:

- Character Area Study, March 2019
- Comparator Towns Study, April 2019
- Landscape Analysis, April 2019
- Parking Occupancy & Car Park User Questionnaire Report, October 2019
- Town Centre Analysis, February 2019
- Town Centre Ideas, April 2019
- Town-wide Analysis, February 2019
- Town-wide Ideas: Access and Movement, April 2019
- Town-wide Ideas: Green Infrastructure, April 2019
- Town-wide Ideas: Northern Growth Area, April 2019

The Neighbourhood Plan also draws upon the Chelmsford Local Plan and the suite of technical evidence documents prepared in support of the Local Plan. The evidence documents are available via the Chelmsford City Council website:

<https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-new-local-plan/new-local-plan/evidence-base/>

The Neighbourhood Plan refers to the latest iteration of the Essex Design Guide. This is available online via the Essex County Council website:

<https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/>

The City Council is in the process of preparing a new design SPD entitled Making Places. The Consultation draft is available at the following link:

[https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/\\_resources/assets/inline/full/0/4261515.pdf](https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/_resources/assets/inline/full/0/4261515.pdf)

A design code template for self and custom build housing is also being prepared by the City Council alongside the Making Places SPD. The Consultation draft is available at the following link:

[https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/\\_resources/assets/inline/full/0/4261517.pdf](https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/_resources/assets/inline/full/0/4261517.pdf)

South Woodham Ferrers specific documents referred to in preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Chelmsford Borough Council, 2008, A Plan for South Woodham Ferrers: Supplementary Planning Document
- Essex County Council, 1973, A Design Guide for Residential Areas
- Essex County Council, 1973, South Woodham Ferrers, A new country town by the River Crouch
- Essex County Council, 1977, South Woodham Ferrers publicity sheet, A New Riverside Country Town: a place to live in and enjoy
- Essex County Council, 1977, South Woodham Ferrers newssheet 5, Alternatives to Anywhere
- Essex County Council, 1977, South Woodham Ferrers newssheet 7, Traditional Essex Style for Town Centre
- Essex County Council, 1979, South Woodham Ferrers newssheet 5, Three Ways to New Lifestyle
- Essex County Council, 1980, South Woodham Ferrers newssheet 6, The centre for Leisure
- Essex County Council and Essex Chronicle Newspaper, 1980, Guide to a new country town by the River Crouch
- Essex County Council, 1982, South Woodham Ferrers publicity sheet, A Riverside Country Town
- Essex County Council, 1984, A Guide to South Woodham Ferrers; 'A little piece of Essex created with a lot of imagination'
- Essex County Council, undated, South Woodham Ferrers: Restrictive Covenants
- Frankland, J., 1992, South Woodham Ferrers: A Pictorial History
- Pevsner, N. and Bettley, J., 2007, The Buildings of England; Essex
- Waterworth, F., 1978, A Short History of South Woodham Ferrers

Other documents referred to within the Neighbourhood Plan are sourced via the series of footnotes.



## Appendix C: Essex Waste and Minerals Local Plans

Essex County Council is the Waste Planning Authority (WPA) for the Plan area and is responsible for preparing planning policies and assessing applications for waste management development. The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (WLP) was adopted in July 2017 forming part of the statutory Development Plan and should be read alongside the Chelmsford Local Plan. The WLP covers the period from 2017 to 2032. It sets out where and how waste management developments can occur and contains the policies against which waste management planning applications are assessed.

Essex County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority (MPA) for the Plan area and is responsible for preparing planning policies and assessing applications for mineral development. The Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014 (MLP) forms part of the statutory Development Plan and should be read alongside the Chelmsford Local Plan. Active and unworked sand and gravel deposits are subject to a Minerals Safeguarding policy (Policy S8), which seeks to prevent deposits being sterilised. Part of the Neighbourhood Plan area is covered by sand and gravel deposits, and hence subject to Policy S8. Mineral Consultation Areas seek ECC to be consulted on all non-mineral related development within a distance of 250m around active quarries, mineral infrastructure and mineral deposits permitted for extraction.

Figure 47 identifies that the only area within the Neighbourhood Plan area that is covered by a Mineral Safeguarding Area has already been sterilised by the previous development of South Woodham Ferrers. Any other known deposits are beyond the Plan boundary. In addition, there is currently no mineral or waste related infrastructure in the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Area.

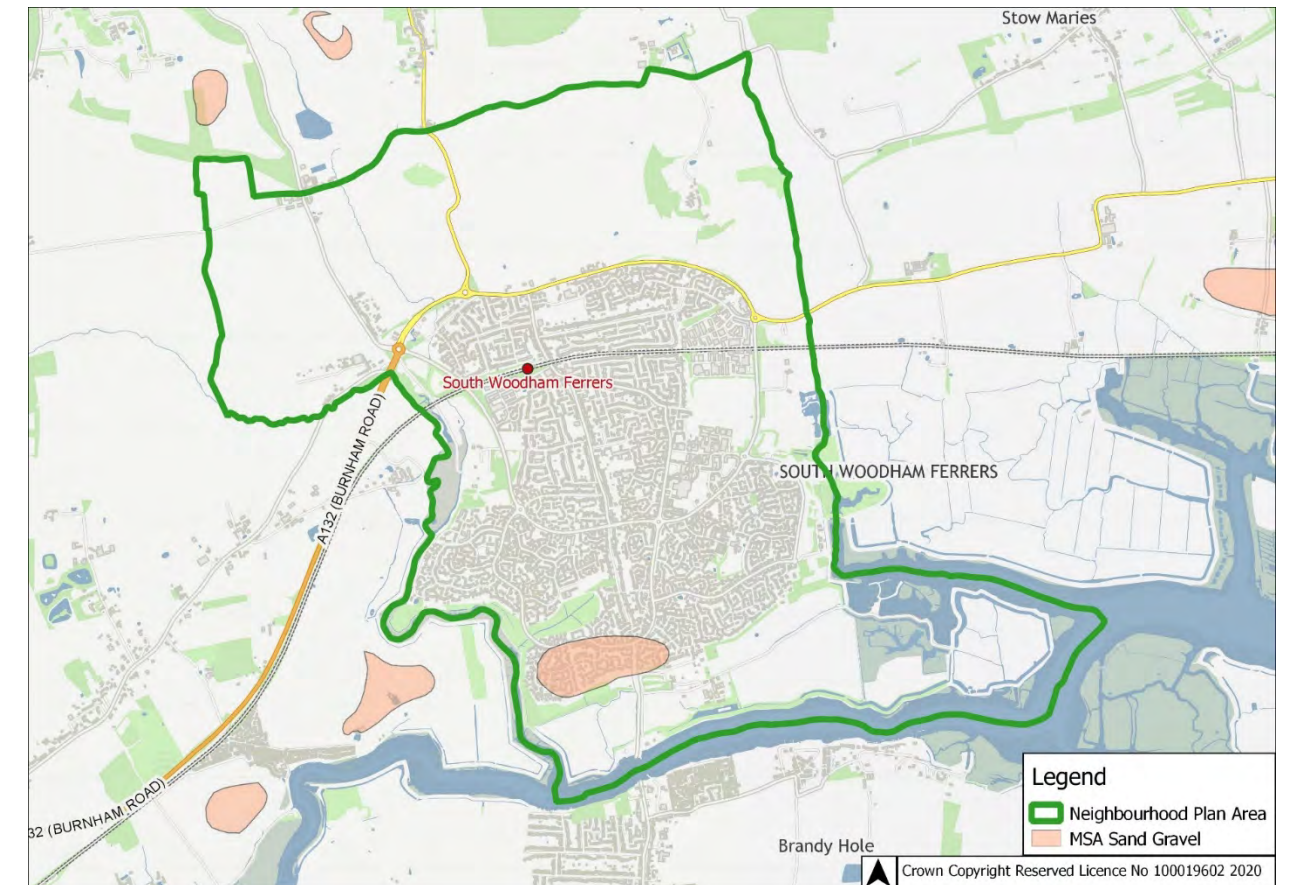


Figure 47: Mineral safeguarding areas in relation to the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan area. Source: Essex County Council



## Appendix D: Glossary

**Adoption** – The final confirmation of a Development Plan by a local planning authority.

**Affordable housing** - Includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. A full definition is available in the NPPF (see below).

**Brownfield site** – See Previously Developed Land.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** – A levy that allows Local Authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their areas. Money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure such as transport schemes, schools, health centres, leisure centres and parks.

**Development Plan** – A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the authority's area. For South Woodham Ferrers, this includes the Chelmsford Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans, once made, form part of the Development Plan.

**Evidence base** - The background information and data that any Development Plan Document is based on and is made up of studies on specific issues, including physical, economic, and social characteristics of an area.

**Greenfield site** – Land, or a defined site, where there has been no previous development, often in agricultural use.

**Green-space** - Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments and the like. Also often referred to as 'Green Infrastructure'.

**Green wall** – External walls purposely covered by vegetation. Vegetation grows from a structure attached to the wall as opposed to the use of climbing plants that grow in the soil alongside the building and grow up the wall. Green walls can support a wide variety of plant species and can support improved air quality, increased biodiversity and building insulation. Also known as 'living walls'.

**Heritage Asset** – A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated assets (e.g.: listed buildings) and assets identified by the local planning authority, which may include a local list of assets.

**Housing Associations** – Not-for-profit organisations that work with councils to offer affordable flats and houses to local people.

**Independent Examination** - An assessment of a proposed Development Plan carried out by an independent person to consider whether a Development Plan conforms with the relevant legal requirements.

**Infill Development** – Small scale development filling a gap within an otherwise built up frontage.

**Infrastructure** – Basic services necessary for development to take place, for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

**Listed Building** – A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II or II\*, with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the exterior as well as the interior of the building.

**Local Plan** – The Plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority. This forms part of the Development Plan.

**Local Planning Authority** - Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development in a particular area, e.g.: a district council, metropolitan council, county council, a unitary authority or national park authority. For South Woodham Ferrers this is Chelmsford City Council.

**Made** – Terminology used in Neighbourhood Planning to indicate whether a Plan has been adopted.

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** - Government department with responsibility for planning, housing, urban regeneration and local government (MHCLG). Previously known as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** - sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The current version of the NPPF was published in February 2019.

**Neighbourhood Plan** – A plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council, or a Forum, for a particular Neighbourhood Area, which includes land use topics. Once made this forms part of the Development Plan.

**Outline Application** – A general application for planning permission to establish that a development is acceptable in principle, subject to subsequent approval of detailed matters. Does not apply to changes of use.

**Passivhaus** – Passivhaus is the world's leading fabric first approach to low energy buildings. The core focus of the Passivhaus standard is to dramatically reduce the requirements for space heating and cooling, whilst also creating excellent indoor air quality and comfort levels. See <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk> for more information.

**Permitted Development** – Comprises certain categories of minor development as specified in the General Permitted Development Order, which can be carried out without having first to obtain specific planning permission.

**Planning Permission** - Formal approval granted by a local planning authority (e.g. Chelmsford City Council) in allowing a proposed development to proceed. Permission may be sought in principle through outline planning applications, or be sought in detail through full planning applications.

**Pop-up Park** – Use of planters and benches to create a temporary and small park-like structure within an otherwise urban area.

**Previously Developed Land** - Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land



that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

**Public Open Space** - Open space to which the public has free access and which fulfils, or can fulfil, a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural uses).

**Public Realm** – Those parts of a city, town or village, whether publicly or privately owned, which are available for everyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks.

**Public Right of Way** – Paths on which the public has a legally protected right to pass and re-pass.

**Raingarden** – An area designed to receive surface water run-off from roofs and other hard surfaces, and thus manage the risk of surface water flooding. Species of plants used in the raingarden will typically be able to stand waterlogging for up to 48 hours at a time.

**Registered Social Landlords (RSL)** – See Housing Associations

**Section 106 Agreement** – A legal agreement under Section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. These are agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to development are undertaken.

**Settlement Development Limits Boundary** – Settlement or development boundaries (including 'village envelopes') seek to set clear limits to towns and villages. They are designed to define the extent of the existing settlement area and to identify areas of land where development may be acceptable in principle, subject to other policies and material planning considerations.

**Soundness** – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified (founded on robust and credible evidence and be the most appropriate strategy), whether the plan is effective (deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored), and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy.

**Stakeholder** – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and national organisations and government departments

**Sustainability Appraisal** – An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a Plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

**Sustainable Communities** – Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

**Sustainable Development** – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Urban Design** – The art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development.

**Use Classes Order** – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is the statutory instrument that defines the categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. Planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another class.

**Urban rill** – A shallow channel cut into the surface of the street or urban space for running water. Can be used alongside raingardens and other drainage systems to help manage and mitigate surface water run-off.



## Appendix E: Acknowledgements

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council would like to thank everyone who participated in consultation and engagement events to help shape and inform the Neighbourhood Plan.

We are also grateful to members of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group, who have committed their time, energy and passion to preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and helping to shape a better future for South Woodham Ferrers.

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South Woodham Ferrers  
**Neighbourhood Plan, 2020-2036**

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