

Rochford and Southend Joint Part 1 Local Plan

Statement of Common Ground

November 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 places a Duty to Co-operate on local planning authorities and county councils¹ (amongst other public sector organisations), requiring them to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis in the preparation of plans where this involves strategic matters. Local planning authorities are required by law² to prepare one or more Statements of Common Ground (SOCG) to help manage strategic planning matters across local authority areas and strengthen the Duty to Cooperate. Details of this requirement are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)³ and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)⁴.
- 1.2 Rochford District Council (RDC) and Southend Borough Council (SBC), together with Essex County Council (ECC)⁵, have agreed to prepare two distinct local plans with a new identical Joint Part 1 section for the combined local authority areas of Rochford and Southend. This SOCG sets out the reasons for the three authorities to work together, the scope of joint work and the project management and governance arrangements for the preparation of the plan.
- 1.3 The primary purposes of this SOCG are to:
- co-operate and seek agreement on strategic cross-boundary issues, including planning for the wider area's housing, economic, infrastructure and environmental needs;
 - increase certainty and transparency in plan making, including on where effective co-operation is and is not happening, and specifically identifying any issues where agreement cannot be reached; and
 - provide clear evidence of the co-operation on plan-making to date in the process of preparing the Joint Part 1 Plan
- 1.4 The three authorities are also partners in the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) together with Brentwood Borough Council, Basildon District

¹ Section 110

² Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

⁵ Essex County Council is the strategic upper tier local authority for Rochford District Council with responsibility for highways, education including early years and childcare, minerals and waste, lead local flood authority, lead advisor on public health and delivery of social care services for adults and children.

Council, Castle Point Borough Council and Thurrock Borough Council. ASELA is currently engaged in preparing a number of strategic documents to guide and promote growth in south Essex including the preparation of a South Essex Plan (SEP). The SEP will provide the overarching strategic framework to guide the preparation of the six Local Plans in South Essex. A separate SOCG has been prepared for ASELA⁶.

- 1.5 The potential of South Essex to achieve substantial growth and prosperity has recently been recognised by the Thames Estuary Growth Commission and in the Government's response to their report⁷.

2. Parties to the Statement of Common Ground

- 2.1 The parties to the SOCG are:

- ❖ Rochford District Council;
- ❖ Southend Borough Council;
- ❖ Essex County Council.

- 2.2 In preparing RDC and SBC new respective local plans, containing a common Part 1, both authorities will consult in accordance with the RDC and SBC respective adopted Statements of Community Involvement (SCI), including, but not limited to, the following key stakeholders:

- Local Communities – residents, workers, visitors
- Landowners and developers
- Castle Point Borough Council (as part of SHMA and neighbouring local authority)
- Other South Essex authorities (as part of ASELA)
- Any other neighbouring local authorities
- Essex County Council
- London Southend Airport – airport development and surface access
- Network Rail
- Highways England
- Office of Rail and Road (independent regulator of Network Rail and Highways England)
- Greater Anglia –(operator of rail passenger services until October 2025)
- Trenitalia C2C Ltd –(operator of rail passenger services until November 2029)
- Arriva and First Bus – bus service operators
- Anglian Water – waste water
- Essex and Suffolk Water – water supply
- Environment Agency – flood risk management
- Natural England – natural environment

⁶ [Statement of Common Ground for ASELA \(June 2018\)](#)

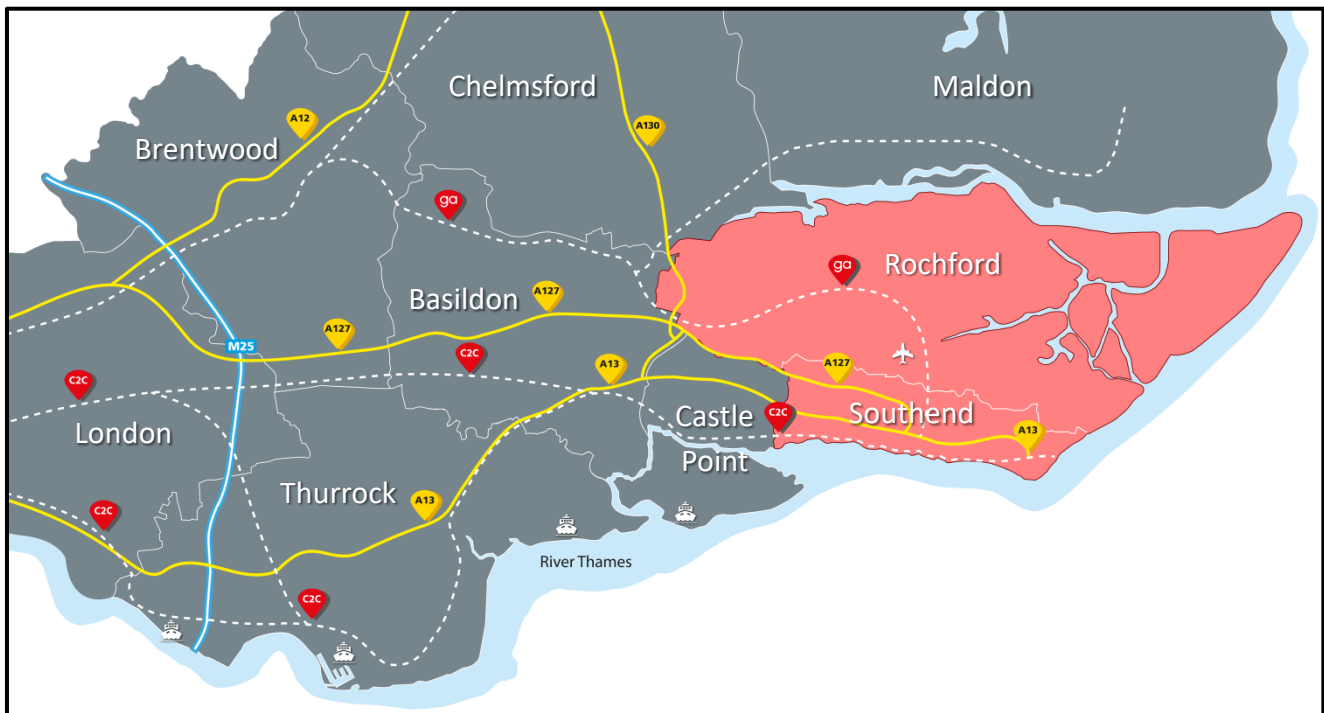
⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thames-estuary-2050-growth-commission-report>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thames-estuary-2050-growth-government-response-to-commission>

- Marine Management Organisation – marine matters
- Local Nature Partnership – biodiversity
- Historic England - heritage matters
- Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS – health infrastructure matters
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership, Southend Business Partnership, Business Improvement District/Chamber of Commerce, BEST Growth Hub and Invest Essex – employment and skills

3. Strategic Geography

- 3.1 For the purposes of this SOCG the geographic area applies to the administrative areas of RDC and SBC. SBC is a unitary authority, whilst RDC is a two-tiered authority with ECC. Rochford district and Southend borough are located within the South East Essex peninsula, bounded to the north by the River Crouch, the North Sea to the east and Thames Estuary to the south. The two authorities share an extensive administrative boundary running east-west.
- 3.2 Due to the geography of the area, it is dependent on an east-west transport corridor served by the strategic highway routes of the A127 and A13 linking to the M25 and London and two rail routes from Southend to London Liverpool Street and London Fenchurch Street respectively. Challenges remain in terms of road and rail capacity providing adequate connectivity both east to west and north to south. The regenerated London Southend Airport straddles the administrative boundaries of Rochford and Southend and has ambitions to grow its passenger numbers significantly over the next 20 years.
- 3.3 The Borough of Southend is urban in character with the existing built up area closely abutting the administrative boundary. In contrast, Rochford district to the north is predominantly rural in character with extensive areas of high-grade agricultural land. Much of the undeveloped land in the Rochford district and Southend borough forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) extending across South Essex to London.

Map 1: Strategic Geography – Rochford and Southend Joint Part 1 Local Plan Area



Rochford district

- 3.4 Rochford is a district rich in heritage and natural beauty, covering 16,800 hectares. The majority of the district's 87,000 residents are located to the west within the towns of Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford. Smaller villages and hamlets are dispersed across the eastern parts of the district. Development opportunities within the existing urban areas to provide local jobs and homes are limited by a lack of suitable brownfield sites. Outside the urban areas, over 12,400 hectares is designated as MGB. Considerable parts of the district are also subject to other environmental constraints, including estuarine habitats sites and areas at risk of flooding, indicative of its coastal nature.
- 3.5 Rochford's economic strengths lie primarily in its entrepreneurial character, with an abundance of successful small and medium sized businesses, coupled with the presence of London Southend Airport, a regionally important asset, which has led to the development of a new high-quality business park in the district.

Essex County Council

- 3.6 ECC is the strategic upper tier authority covering RDC within the county of Essex, a neighbouring authority to SBC and partner within ASELA. ECC's statutory functions and responsibilities apply to Rochford (but not Southend), and include as a highway authority (and the delivery of the Essex Local Transport Plan); local education

authority; Minerals and Waste Planning Authority; Lead Local Flood Authority; Public Health advisor; as well as the ECC role as a major provider and commissioner of a wide range of local government services throughout the county of Essex, many of which are accessed by those adjoining Essex. Any planned growth is likely to have either an indirect or direct impact on the provision and delivery of ECC infrastructure and services and therefore SBC and RDC wish to work with ECC to explore ways to plan for growth to create new sustainable communities supported by the right infrastructure at the right scale in the right location.

Southend borough

- 3.7 Southend-on-Sea is a Unitary Authority responsible for planning (including minerals and waste), highways, social care and educational matters. With a population of 182,500 in an area of approximately 4,100 hectares, Southend has one of the highest urban densities in England, outside London.
- 3.8 It is a sub-regional centre for employment and retail provision in South Essex as well as a major tourist resort and leisure destination centred on its seven miles of foreshore fronting the Thames Estuary. Over seven million-day visitors a year come to Southend along with a quarter of a million staying guests.
- 3.9 The predominant land use in Southend is residential interspersed with mature parks and gardens. The area has a number of key business parks, such as at Progress Road as well as district commercial centres at Leigh and Westcliff supplemented by a number of local centres.
- 3.10 With limited land resources, Southend faces significant challenges in seeking to meet development needs and to maximise its potential for economic and tourism growth in a sustainable manner.

Reasons for Joint Plan Making

- 3.11 The current strategic planning policy framework for the Rochford district and Southend borough is set out in:
- the Rochford District Core Strategy adopted in 2011 covering the period to 2025;
 - the Southend Core Strategy adopted 2007 covering the period to 2021;
 - London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan adopted in 2014 covering the period to 2031;
 - Essex and Southend on Sea Waste Local Plan adopted in 2017 covering the period to 2032; and
 - Essex Minerals Local Plan adopted in 2014 covering the period to 2029.

It is recognised that Minerals and waste planning is a strategic cross boundary matter which falls to ECC and SBC. A separate Statement of Common Ground will be prepared to manage these planning matters.

Both Councils (RDC and SBC) have been successful in delivering policy provisions for employment and housing delivery.

- 3.12 However, the Government's recently introduced standard methodology for calculating housing need (Objectively Assessed Needs – OAN) presents a significant challenge to both Councils on the number of houses that need to be built over the next 20 years. This growth and the need for complimentary employment and infrastructure provision presents the Councils with difficult decisions in formulating their new local plans.
- 3.13 The Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need⁸ shows there is a need to provide around 1,600 homes per annum and approximately 650 new jobs per annum across both Council areas over the plan period. Of these needs, a significant majority (1,200 homes and 550 jobs pa) result from Southend Borough's identified needs. The Councils' respective evidence bases show that there is limited land available within existing urban areas to accommodate these needs⁹, and the Councils are therefore having to look critically at the capacity of land outside their urban areas, including within the Metropolitan Green Belt, to meet their growth needs.
- 3.14 Both Councils have commenced work on preparing new Local Plans to guide development decisions in the area over the next twenty years. Both have consulted on respective Regulation 18 'Issues and Options' Documents. In light of the duty to co-operate and the strong relationship between the two authority areas, and being at similar stages in the plan preparation process, the Councils have agreed to prepare a Joint Part 1 for their respective Local Plans covering their entire local authority areas. This would allow the authorities to more effectively address more localised strategic issues and growth pressures and respond positively to cross-boundary opportunities and challenges, including around London Southend Airport.
- 3.15 The joint planning arrangement between the Councils will sit within a broader planning and investment framework being prepared across South Essex through ASELA and the preparation of the SEP.
- 3.16 The SEP is expected to sit alongside each authorities' respective Local Plans, providing an overarching framework for South Essex and considering strategic issues such as the broad spatial distribution of new growth across the sub-region. The

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

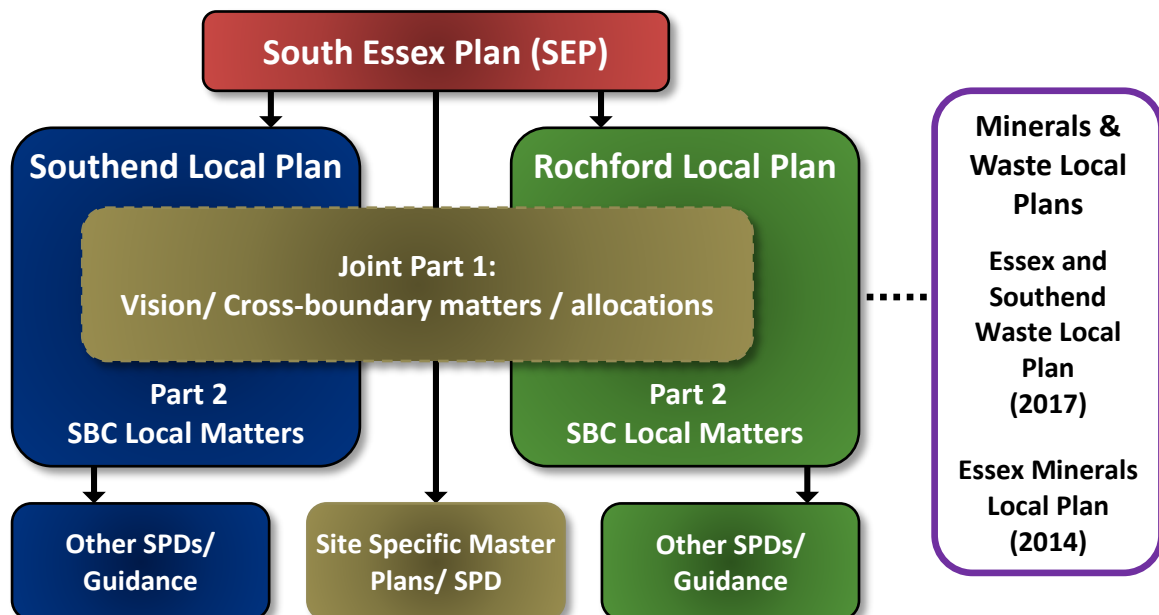
⁹ Southend Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2018 and Rochford Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2017

common Joint Part 1 for the respective local plans will provide more detailed analysis and evidence needed to support the delivery of the SEP and address more technical matters such as the allocation of land, infrastructure, delivery and the MGB.

- 3.17 The commitment from RDC, SBC and ECC to work together to prepare common Joint Part 1 for respective local plans is set out in the Co-ordinated Plan Making MOU (Annex 1).

Planning Policy Hierarchy in South East Essex

Figure 1 - Planning Policy Hierarchy and relationship with SEP and other local planning documents



4. Strategic Matters

- 4.1 There are number of key cross-boundary matters between RDC and SBC that require a consistent localised response that need to be developed with ECC.
- 4.2 **Ensuring High Quality Outcomes** – strategic collaboration provides the opportunity for greater ambition in planning and delivering high quality sustainable development; particularly, for example, through garden community principles¹⁰. More generally, new development must be sustainable, functional and viable, but also reflect high standards of design. Major new developments will be planned carefully with the use of masterplans and design codes where appropriate;

¹⁰ www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles

- 4.3 **Providing Sufficient Homes** – housing need is high across the area and a large amount of land is being promoted for development either side of the Rochford/Southend administrative boundary. There is a need to ensure that preparation of a spatial strategy, site assessment and selection is consistent across both authority areas;
- 4.4 **Providing for Employment** – to strengthen local economies to provide more employable and skilled workers; more employment opportunities for residents, and higher productivity firms; to achieve a better balance between the location of jobs and housing, which will reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable growth;
- 4.5 **Transport Infrastructure and connectivity** - Developing appropriate integrated and sustainable transport networks to support the efficient movement of people and goods, including strategic transport corridors (including A127, A13 and A130) recognising the requirements of both Essex and Southend local transport plans, including modal shift, sustainable travel, new technology, rail franchisee investment plans, footpath and cycle networks, and any access mitigation to enable strategic scale development across administrative boundaries, and future proofed internet access to all new development;
- 4.6 **London Southend Airport** – the existing planning framework for London Southend Airport will need to be reviewed and rolled forward having regard to national policy, the economic potential of the area and environmental constraints;
- 4.7 **Collaboration to accelerate delivery and Infrastructure Planning** - including for example education, health, flood and water management and how provision will be funded/ delivered and governance structures to maximise developer contributions including alignment of infrastructure requirements and provision between ECC and SBC and other providers;
- 4.8 **Environment and Climate change** – reducing greenhouse emissions, minimising vulnerability and improving resilience, encouraging reuse of existing resources and supporting renewable and low carbon energy. Protection of designated sites for wildlife, biodiversity net gain, blue and green infrastructure and built heritage;
- 4.9 **Approach to Minerals and Waste** – ensuring SBC and ECC planning response to minerals and waste is appropriately addressed; and
- 4.10 **Resource efficiency** - the ability to more effectively align resources and reducing duplication of work to support the timely preparation of Local Plans.

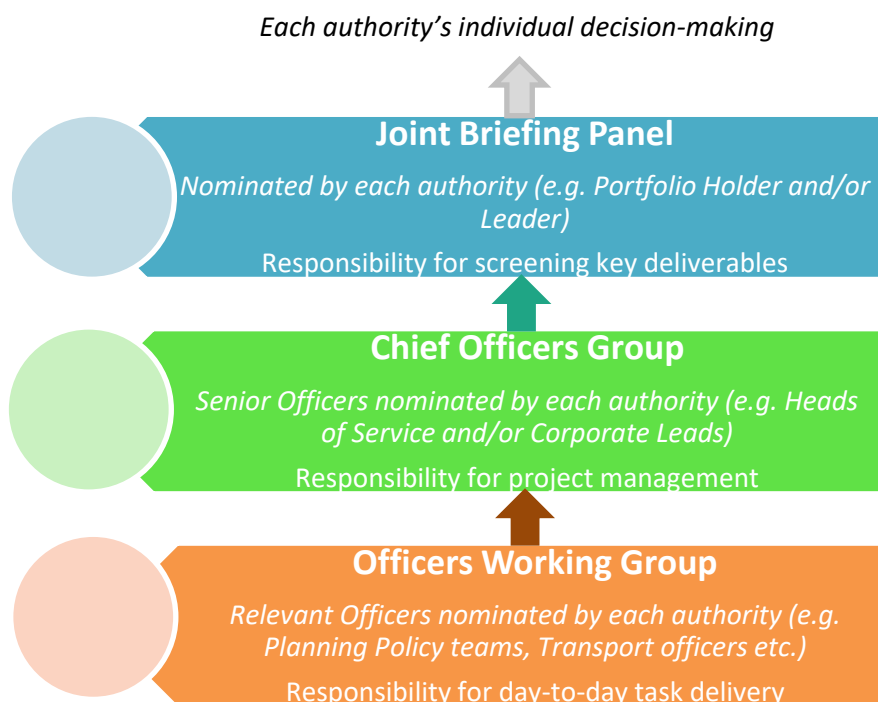
5. Governance Arrangements

- 5.1 RDC, SBC and ECC have a strong and proven history of collaborative working, including in the preparation of the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) and the Essex and Southend Waste Plan.
- 5.2 The development of these previous plans was underpinned by effective cross-authority governance arrangements which allowed for different interests to be represented and synthesised, and which ensured that outputs could be delivered in a timely and organised manner. We also work jointly as part of ASELA.
- 5.3 The establishment of similar formalised governance arrangements is important in ensuring the timely and organised delivery of the new joint planning arrangements. A three-tiered governance structure has been established, comprising the following levels and as shown in Figure 1 below:
- **A Joint Briefing Panel**, comprising relevant Members from each Authority, e.g. Portfolio Holders and Leaders, supported by relevant Senior Officers
 - **A Chief Officer Group**, comprising relevant Senior Officers from each Authority, e.g. Heads of Service and/or Corporate Leads
 - **An Officer Working Group**, comprising officers from relevant teams within each Authority
- 5.4 The **Officer Working Group** is responsible for fulfilling the day-to-day tasks necessary for the delivery of the project outputs, including the preparation and commissioning of technical evidence, the preparation and consultation on draft Plan documents and engagement responsibilities with prescribed bodies under the Duty to Co-operate.
- 5.5 The **Chief Officer Group** holds responsibility for overseeing the key deliverables of the project. This includes providing the corporate lead for the project, resourcing, providing initial screening to the content of technical evidence and draft Plan documents and dealing with any issues impacting on progress. The Chief Officer Group will meet as and when required and comprise Senior Officers appointed by each authority. Other individuals may be invited to attend the Chief Officers Group.
- 5.6 The **Joint Briefing Panel (JBP)** will comprise:
- Elected relevant members from each Authority (e.g. Portfolio Holder, Leader)
 - Supported by representatives from the Chief Officer Group from each authority
 - Supported by representatives from the Joint Officer Group as required
- 5.7 The JBP will review all documents produced by the Joint Officer Group before they are submitted for formal approval or published to ensure there is joint agreement. In

the event that the JBP cannot agree on a joint way forward the Portfolio Holders will determine a resolution.

- 5.8 The JBP forms an advisory role and will not have decision making or approval powers; existing approval and decision making mechanisms in each Authority will be used and the Portfolio Holders will be responsible for gaining the necessary approvals within their Authority. The aim will be to get concurrent agreement at both Councils (Rochford and Southend) within the constraints of the various meeting schedules. In the event that one or other Authority rejects a document, it will be returned to the JBP for reconsideration accompanied by written commentary on the relevant issues to be resolved.
- 5.9 The JBP is also expected to provide an opportunity for the Chief Officers Group to inform Members of progress on the project's key deliverables and other key decisions and to invite Member input into those decisions. The Joint Briefing Panel will meet as and when required by the Chief Officers Group. It will comprise elected Members appointed by each authority. Other individuals may be invited to attend the Joint Briefing Panel.
- 5.10 Cross party oversight of the project will be administered through the SBC Environment and Planning Working Party, RDC Planning Policy Sub-Committee, and ECC Cabinet Member for Economic Development. The need for joint meetings between the groups will be kept under review and be at the discretion of the JBP.

Figure 1: Diagram of Proposed Governance Structure



6. Timetable for review and ongoing cooperation

- 6.1 The Rochford and Southend Local Development Framework and timetable for review is set out in **Figure 2**. The timetable for preparing the Joint Part 1 of the new local plans in accordance with this framework for Rochford and Southend is detailed in **Figure 3**.
- 6.2 The development of cross-boundary strategic issues is an iterative process and depends on a wide range of factors and bodies, not just the local authorities. The risks associated with this will be managed and monitored through the governance process as detailed in section 5 above.
- 6.3 There are a number of risks specifically linked to preparing the Joint Part 1 of the respective local plans, some of which are political risks, others are technical risks. A high-level risk assessment and project plan will therefore be prepared alongside the Joint Part 1. This will be monitored by the Joint Briefing Panel, and the need to review the timetable for preparing the joint plan will be kept under review.
- 6.4 Preparation of the SOCG itself is also an iterative process and it will be reviewed prior to the key stages of plan preparation set out in Figure 4.

Figure 2: Rochford and Southend’s Local Planning Framework (currently under review)

(Q refers to the quarter of that calendar year)

| LPA | Present Plan Adoption | Proposed Plan Review Date | Reg 18 date | Target Reg 19 Date | Target Submission Date |
|----------|---|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Rochford | Core Strategy Allocations Plan DM Plan Hockley AAP Rayleigh AAP Rochford AAP Airport JAAP | Jan 2018 | Jan 2018 | 2022 Q2 | 2022 Q4 |
| Southend | Core Strategy 2007 DM DPD 2015 JAAP for London Southend Airport 2014 Essex and Southend Waste Plan 2017 SCAAP 2018 | Feb 2019 | Feb – April 2019 | 2022 Q2 | 2022 Q4 |
| Essex | Essex Minerals Local Plan Review | Nov 2018 | 2020 Q2 | 2020 Q4 | 2021 Q1 |

Figure 3: Timetable for preparing common Joint Part 1 for Rochford and Southend Local Plans

| JOINT PART 1 PLAN STAGE | TARGET DATE FOR COMMENCEMENT |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Evidence base preparation | On-going |
| Issues and Options | 2020 Q3 |
| Preferred Approach Document public consultation | 2021 Q3 |
| Publication of Proposed Submission Document public consultation | 2022 Q2 |
| Submission to Secretary of State for independent examination followed by subsequent Examination and Adoption* | 2022 Q4 |

* As an approximation, the period from submission to adoption may range from 9 to 12 months dependent on the content and scope of the plan, issues arising during examination and scheduling of meetings.

7. Signatories to the Statement of Common Ground

| SIGNATURE | ROLE | AUTHORITY |
|------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | | Rochford District Council |
| | | |
| | | Southend Borough Council |
| | | |
| | | Essex County Council |
| | | |

ANNEX 1

Please see Appendix 1 of the Southend-on-Sea Cabinet Report Southend New Local Plan Update (16/01/2020)