

Growth and Recovery Prospectus

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH ESSEX LOCAL AUTHORITIES

JULY 2020



Introduction

THE OPPORTUNITIES

South Essex is a powerful region with a proactive attitude to delivering growth. The South Essex authorities and local businesses have formed an association which, for the past two years, has developed joined up proposals and prioritised projects, driving change collectively for its people and businesses.

It is also an active member of the Thames Estuary Board and responded positively to the Thames Estuary Commission's recommendations to Government when it published its vision and priorities for the Thames Estuary. South Essex has used this platform to achieve early successes. It is actively working with Homes England to accelerate housing delivery, it is developing a Joint Strategic Plan with support from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, secure investment from the Future High Street Fund and the Towns Fund, and is rolling out a local full fibre network with support from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

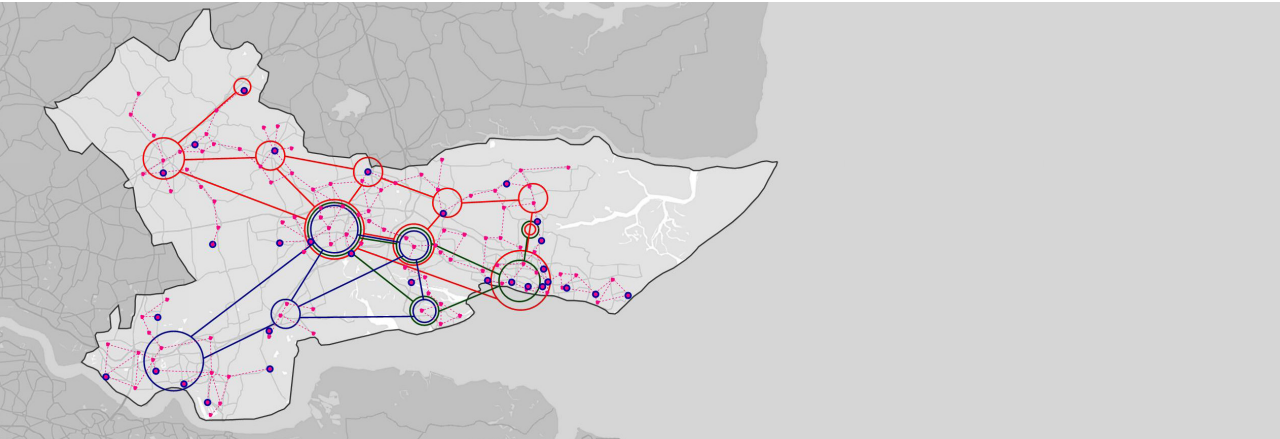
The region is now working hard to build its way forward as it moves its way out of the pandemic, with a vision to deliver for People productive jobs, blue and green infrastructure, physical and digital connectivity, new homes people need and can afford.

The South Essex economy is more vulnerable than most to the negative impacts of the coronavirus. Factors such as a higher prevalence of small businesses and self-employment, and an occupational mix less suited to working from home, are among those that underpin this assessment. Oxford Economics forecast estimates are that the

South Essex economy will contract by 8.5% in 2020, even after allowing for some rebound later in the year. Up to 25% of the regional workforce was furloughed, and it is predicted that 12,000 jobs will be permanently lost as a result of the pandemic. The South Essex authorities want to work quickly and proactively to build back better and make sure that its residents and businesses are guided through the recovery with new opportunities.

The region can also drive the levelling up agenda, over time, seeing more investment delivered here from both the public and private sector. More investment is needed in South Essex if it is to deliver its latent potential, with its proximity to London, the river and the coast, to bring new investment and jobs to the region. The region has seen underinvestment over the past few decades and wants to position itself for a fair share. The region wants to leverage private sector investment through strong partnerships and delivering new homes and infrastructure, including transport and digital.

Its work on connectivity is about ensuring an active travel network can be delivered, which will support local connectivity and a transformative change in movement for businesses and communities, so that the region is not a car dominated place. There are ambitions for better regional connectivity allowing South Essex to better connect to the other parts of the South East, East Anglia and the rest of the country. The area will build on its existing assets and sectors driving more productive jobs and regeneration, making sure its communities have access to the best amenities, green space and homes.

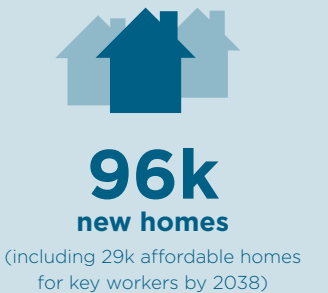
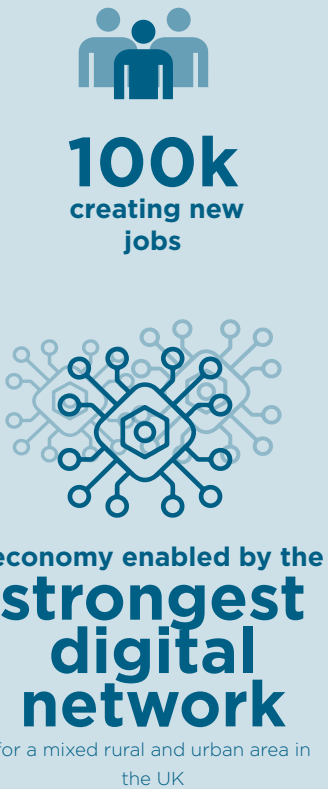
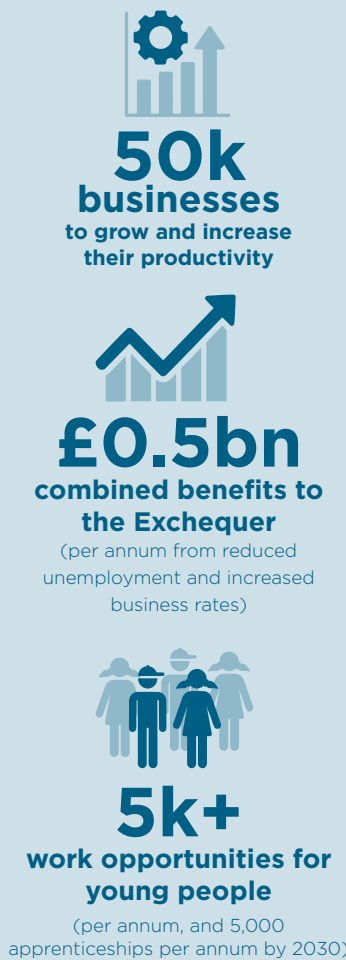


South Essex has a key role in the local economy and is of great importance to UK PLC:

- It is home to nearly 1 million people and generated £17.9bn of economic value in 2019.
- There is a rich culture of entrepreneurialism and is home to leading brands including Ford, Amazon, National Westminster Bank and Olympus among others.
- Industry sectors and clusters are firmly established around Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics, Creative industries and Health.

- It has some key infrastructure crucial to the UK, including:
 - four major ports that are recognised as the UK's fastest growing terminals and vital to the UK fuel and energy economy;
 - an international airport;
 - a Crossrail terminus; and
 - the proposed the Lower Thames Crossing.

There are significant opportunities to create greater prosperity and quality of life in South Essex and by 2050 it plans to grow its contribution to the UK economy by £15bn, through:



Jobs and Opportunity

SKILLS AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

The South Essex economy is important. With a business base of over 32,000 enterprises providing more than 354,000 jobs and a population of around 800,000, South Essex is a major economy, comparable in scale to the combined authority areas of Sheffield City Region, West of England or Tees Valley. Its relationship with London should not be underplayed, with around 80,000 people commuting to the capital for work. Although the area has, at times, lacked a sense of identity as a major employer, often seen as a dormitory to London.

The area wants to enhance its employment activity. Productivity in South Essex is significantly less than the national and regional average and at £20,143 per capita, is nearly 40% below that of nearby Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LEP. South Essex has a very high proportion of micro businesses and self-employed traders compared to regional and national average, which historically has had an impact on the scope for growth. There are major gaps in adult skills, with overall one in four adults (24.3%) with level 1 or no qualifications, rising to nearly one in three adults in parts of South Essex.

In summary, there has been a lack of investment in major employment areas in South Essex. The review of the green book and approach Government has taken to devolving funding and priority areas is welcomed here and it would like to see further investment in its priority projects.

This has been acknowledged in both the Thames Estuary Commission's report and other policy documents which have set out South Essex's latent potential and wanting to cement South Essex's USP in employment activity including:

- The manufacturing sector in South Essex consists of around 1,700 businesses providing over 19,000 jobs. The sector includes several specialisms that could be developed to increase business productivity and build a thriving green technology sector.
- A number of specialist areas including engineering, machinery and automotive manufacturing that create a solid foundation for high value growth and exploitation of green technology.
- Creative industries that are prevalent in the Thames Estuary Production corridor.
- Niche medical and dental manufacturers, linked to an emerging health sector in Southend. Allied to manufacturing is a notable concentration of engineering and industrial design jobs (over 6,500) located primarily in Basildon.
- High value manufacturing output, product and process design offer a key opportunity to build innovation networks maximising potential applications in software and control systems, sensor technology, quality control and energy and materials efficiency essential for the green economy. Co-ordinated through a centre for green technology and a network of maker centres, South Essex this provides the basis for significant high value growth.

Skills

Skills in the area need to improve and there is significant vulnerability with coastal communities and pockets of long-term unemployment. South Essex has a significant core of low skilled residents and a long-standing pattern where those with higher skills commute into London to work. While mobility is generally a positive characteristic, the labour market in South Essex has become polarised, creating a major barrier to change. A dual strategy will be implemented to improve skills levels, for young people and adults, while also connecting individuals to employment. Aligning skills supply and demand will not only address unemployment and create pathways into work but can be an important incentive to attract business investment. Reducing commuting levels will only happen when there are sufficient well-paid jobs in South Essex. There is also the threat of automation in the region which could impact significant sectors in the area including manufacturing, transport and logistics. Between 2009 – 2018 manufacturing employment in South Essex fell by about one quarter. The South Essex authorities want a joined-up approach to skills that seeks to support those currently in work but also work with employers and future investors to ensure that local people, and new residents, are equipped with the skills they need for productive employment.

Future employment

The South Essex authorities will support the transition of advanced green manufacturing businesses to be more productive and expand high skilled employment. Through improved business networking and strengthening local supply chains, targeted business support to assist firm to access higher value national and international markets and investment in workforce and entrant training.

Knowledge intensive services play an important part in the South Essex economy and offer significant potential to create high

skilled employment. Some 45.2% of jobs in South Essex are in knowledge intensive sectors, compared to a national (England and Wales) average of 48.5%. Across South Essex, the rates are significantly higher in Southend and Brentwood (55.3% and 51.1%), where knowledge intensive jobs form a majority of employment. South Essex has local concentrations of creative, engineering design, scientific testing, computing and education activities that provide a foundation for knowledge intensive growth.

Capturing the opportunity will be driven by extending production facilities present in Basildon, Southend and Thurrock to build the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, along the South Essex coast.

The logistics sector is at the forefront of automation, with employer demand and skills requirement evolving to a more efficient use of space and an occupational shift away from elementary roles to skilled process and technical jobs managing intelligent transport and warehouse management systems. The requirement for digital skills, quality control, performance analytics and communication skills will become increasingly important and it will be vital to ensure that employers have access to qualified local labour to fill vacancies and meet replacement demand.

The opportunity for South Essex is to capture increased value and productivity in the sector to boost the share of higher skilled jobs and value chain activity. With existing and historical locational and infrastructure advantages, South Essex can become a centre for innovation in logistics by growing capacity in digital, AI, data management and control systems technologies. Building on the international recognition the South Essex major ports and access to London, significant benefits can be gained by realising the potential of the sector to generate higher paid jobs, support digital enterprises and offer degree level vocational training through apprenticeship frameworks.


Connectivity


PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

South Essex plans to transform digital and transport and connectivity in the region, providing contemporary digital infrastructure that will see the entire region super-connected to attract a new business base. This is alongside a viable, deliverable and resilient transport system.

In South Essex the transport network, especially highways, operate over capacity. This has significant impact on productivity and movement. The authorities want to rebalance modal priorities in favour of active and sustainable modes and deliver a decarbonised, integrated public transport system. Walking, cycling and greener public transport will become the most appealing and practical choice. These will be supported by quality placemaking initiatives improving public realm, regeneration and community led initiatives.


There are a number of guiding principles underpinning South Essex’s approach:

- 


Become the **leading place in the UK for urban and rural digital connectivity**.
- 


Enhancing and connecting local places to reflect the distinctiveness of communities.
- 

Supporting healthier lifestyles by connecting places at a human scale.
- 

Reducing the need for travel by the private car, providing attractive and safer routes for active travel while aggressively reducing emissions with the aim for South Essex to become Carbon Neutral ahead of national targets.
- 

Laying foundations for future working practices by **improving connections between existing and future residential and employment areas**, supporting logistics and advanced manufacturing sector by creating new opportunities to integrate these land uses and reducing the need to travel.

- 

Trialling future technologies to overcome existing challenges and provide flexibility and resilience to respond to the changing needs of employers.
- 

Supporting access to local services, particularly health and education, by active modes and public transport.

*Underpinning all this is **South Essex’s aim to be carbon zero by 2040**, with significant progress by 2030. How successful the region is in this aim will highly depend on reducing emissions from transport.*

There are a number of key programmes developed to deliver the transformative change:

- Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN) ‘5G Network’**

It will be delivered across the sub region, providing an ecosystem for businesses, public sector organisations, educational organisations and the public.
- South Essex Active Travel Network**

A regional wide active travel programme to provide attractive connections between places which will enable a significant shift to movements by active modes.
- Green Blue Integrated Public Transport**

A rapid transport network that provides high quality, high frequency direct links to public transport hubs (or living stations).



Visualisation of School Street in Southend-on-Sea

- Living Stations**

Establishing key public transport hubs (Living Stations) that will be a focus for public transport interchange and opportunities for the delivery of high quality and distinctive public realm, creative employment and retail spaces and education, health and leisure services located at Brentwood, Basildon, Grays, Southend and Southend Airport.
- New strategic Interchange Hubs on the River Thames**

Located between Tilbury and Southend to support new passenger river services.
- Green and Blue Infrastructure through South Essex Estuary Park**

Where there is a long term vision to create a single park system that encompasses all of South Essex, framed by five large-scale landscapes and an improved network of blue and green connectors.

- Local Connections to Health, Education & Natural Assets**

A programme including establishing active routes to schools. These routes will link schools to local communities with enhanced landscaping providing opportunities for play and interaction with green spaces.
- Forward Funding of a new EV Infrastructure Network**

At scale, providing EV charging points across homes, businesses and existing infrastructure to drive the transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles and securing a step change in decarbonised transport use.

Homes and Place

INFRASTRUCTURE LED GROWTH

South Essex support the idea that investment in infrastructure can support large scale and accelerated housing delivery. Historic delivery rates have been poor in South Essex, with underinvestment in both infrastructure and employment. South Essex want to support the delivery of new homes, with a strong sense of place and community, through growing existing urban settlements or delivering new ones, including Garden Towns.

Across South Essex, a number of new, mixed use, communities will be required to meet long term needs. South Essex intends to build on its heritage to pioneer the next generation of settlements and create a new concept to sustainable living for South Essex. All proposals for housing, including new settlements will be subject to existing planning controls and local decision making. Where a plan for a new settlement is brought forward, it is envisaged that they would be designed around garden village principles offering high quality and inclusive places with a mix of homes, jobs in all sectors, open spaces, community infrastructure, digital connectivity, retail and leisure space that meet need and build cohesive communities.

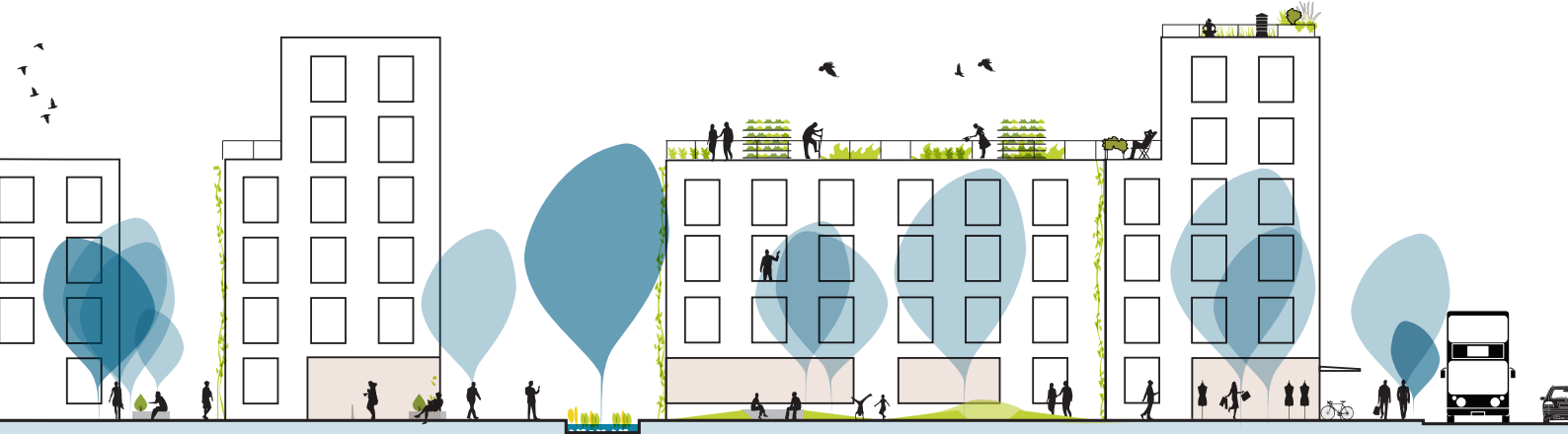
To enable this, the ambition in South Essex is to:

- Put in place a complete suite of up to date local plans, supported by the South Essex Plan, a strategic plan that establishes the strategic planning ambition, and policies to address sub-regional cumulative impacts that local plans cannot fully address.
- Completely transform housing delivery in the region – there is a recognised need

for, and commitment to, a programme of strategic and tactical interventions that would significantly increase delivery rates;

- Co-ordinate strategic land-use with strategic transport planning and provide an ambitious framework to achieve net zero and tackle the climate emergency with urgency and strong leadership
- Be a pathfinder for the Thames Estuary and set about rapid implementation of the Governments objectives for this area;
- Work collaboratively with Homes England, Housing Providers, Developers and Builders (large and small), to deliver a joint plan; and
- Establish a new delivery team – utilising expertise from the public and private sectors.

Over the past six months, South Essex have been working with Homes England on a joint delivery plan. Together they have identified the requirement for 96,000 homes in just under twenty years which equates to 4,500 homes per annum. The area is not delivering this volume of housing and is only achieving around half the requirement. To accelerate housing delivery to the level required will need substantial additional management, and technical capability, to help delivery transport and infrastructure, unlock stalled sites, remediation issues and other factors that prohibit faster delivery.



Visualisation of active travel network

The vision for South Essex is to:

- Unlock up to 43,000 of the 96,000 homes included in the strategic assessment of housing needs.
- Unlock up to 39,000 more construction jobs.
- Generate additional income for the Council of up to £450m one-off payments and £31m gross recurring annual income through Council Tax, Business Rate, Community Infrastructure Levy & New Homes Bonus.
- Increase wider economic benefits for the community by up to £2.2bn

South Essex wants to ensure its housing delivery is a result of strong economic development, new jobs and inclusive growth across the region. This means that the area will invest in its town centres, high streets and new settlements. The ambition is to embed outstanding place making principles in every project so local communities can thrive and see a step change in employment and skills, life chances and health and wellbeing.

Regeneration plans are already underway across the area, for example at Basildon, Brentwood, Grays and Southend, to develop a design blueprint that can be tailored and applied at a local level in towns across South

Essex. The programme will determine the locations where delivery can be accelerated and develop up-date strategies and action plans, this will include facilitating economic recovery and resilience responding to the impact of COVID-19.

To support new modes of living and quality of life, South Essex also wants to invest in its green and blue infrastructure and not see them as a 'nice to have' but rather core to all project work moving forwards. The emerging green blue infrastructure (GBI) framework, along with the mapping and design guidance being developed by Defra and Natural England, will help South Essex and the Thames Estuary to become an exemplar of good green infrastructure delivery, benefitting the economy, people and the environment of the region, and helping to deliver biodiversity net gain and net zero carbon.

The long-term vision is the creation of one single park system that encompasses all of South Essex. A South Essex Estuary Park will be framed by five large-scale landscapes and an improved network of blue and green connectors. These five sites include flood zones, habitats, existing parkland, riverfront, former industrial sites, agriculture land, and special historical features and landmarks:

- Island Wetlands
- Central Thames Marshlands
- Central Woodland Arc
- Mardyke Valley
- Brentwood Parklands

The Proposition

A TRANSFORMED VISION FOR SOUTH ESSEX

The South Essex Authorities have a strong 'can do' attitude and want to see lifelong improvements for its communities and businesses.

The area knows it can do better and is working hard to achieve a step change in productivity, skills, employment and place making.

It can only do this with both support and long term investment, not just from the public sector but by leveraging its assets and opportunity to drive private investment too.

South Essex is placing strong emphasis on joined up leadership and governance, knowing it can achieve greater than the sum of its parts by working proactively together. South Essex authorities recognise that delivery of these proposals will require appropriate governance arrangements to be in place and has already undertaken a preliminary review of governance in the area to assess future options. If the area is going to build back better then it needs a long term strategy with some short term interventions to recover quickly from Covid-19 and create economically and socially resilient communities. At the heart of the work being undertaken by the South Essex Authorities is an ambition to deliver a series of priorities which the leadership know will deliver long lasting and wider benefits for both people and place.

These priorities need support both locally and centrally and includes:

- Providing excellent and contemporary **digital infrastructure** including 5G and connectivity that will see businesses want to invest in the area and start successful and productive enterprises.
- Delivering significant improvements in **connectivity and public transport**, underpinned by investment in active travel projects which benefit people's health and wellbeing and could see major environmental benefits.

- Unlocking **housing** sites to deliver accelerated development seeing new **quality homes**, neighbourhoods and communities brought to South Essex, and enhancing amenity and place for existing local residents.
- Investment in **green and blue infrastructure** to enable new parks and river walks, supporting active use of environmental assets, adding to biodiversity, health and wellbeing outcomes, whilst supporting active and thriving communities.

- Improving **skills** across the region from school aged children through to adult training and education, ensuring that the current and future workforce can access productive and highly skilled jobs.
- A strategy to secure more **commercial development** from employers who can provide productive and well-paid employment, locally.
- Supporting **young people** to achieve their best and build their futures in South Essex.



Visualisation of future Basildon Living Station

