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SENT BY EMAIL

Dear Andrea,

Southend New Local Plan “Refining the Options” consultation

Capacity of South Essex authorities to accommodate Development Needs

As you are aware Southend Borough Council is currently consulting on “Refining the Options”, the second consultation on the Southend new Local Plan closing 26th October 2021. The consultation focusses on four different strategy options and potential development sites that could contribute to meeting development needs in the Borough.

I write to you concerning the significant challenge Southend faces in meeting all its housing needs. Southend is one of the most densely populated urban areas outside of London. It is constrained by the Thames estuary, environmental and other designations. Land that is unbuilt on is nearly all either designated as protected greenspace or as Green Belt.

The Government Standard Methodology requirement for Southend is 1,181 dwelling pa, which equates to 23,620 across a 20-year period. Less than a third of this rate has been achieved between 2001-2020 despite a continued supply of urban regeneration schemes.

Our research for the Local Plan “Refining the Options” consultation indicates that we will be unable to meet the standard method housing need figure within Southend, even if Green Belt sites were to be developed. 8,850 new homes could be delivered if all potential urban sites were to be considered sustainable. This includes the Better Queensway regeneration scheme. This could rise to 12,850 new homes if past windfall rates can also be maintained. This figure would in itself be nearly double the amount of homes that has been delivered in the Borough between 2001-2020.

It has yet to be determined if all these sites would constitute sustainable development as some are contrary to existing policy, and others may not be deliverable during the plan period given their complex nature and varying land values experienced across Southend.

A strategic development opportunity is also being promoted on the edge of Southend, comprising land within Southend Borough and Rochford District that in total could deliver between 10,000 and 12,000 new homes. However, if a new neighbourhood were to be delivered within Southend’s administrative area only, this would deliver around 7,200 new homes, the vast majority upon the Borough’s remaining Green Belt land. This, together

with sites in Southend not within the Green Belt and if windfall rates can be maintained (12,850), could result in a maximum supply of around 20,000 new homes within Southend by 2040, a shortfall of 3,000 – 4,000 homes.

If a larger neighbourhood were to be brought forward, which included some of the Rochford District land, that shortfall could potentially be met, depending upon deliverability constraints. The table below explains further.

Strategy Options	Potential new Homes (rounded)
A. Increasing Urban Capacity	10,600 (of which windfall 4,000)
B. Facilitating Urban Change	2,250
<i>Within existing urban area of Southend</i>	<i>12,850</i>
C. New Neighbourhood within Southend (largely Green Belt)	7,200
<i>Within Southend</i>	<i>20,050</i>
D. Development outside the Borough (expanded/ series of neighbourhoods on edge of Southend to be determined by Rochford District Council)	4,900

A new neighbourhood would also be dependent on access routes outside the Borough boundary and together with the phasing of development not all of these homes may be delivered during the plan period.

The Council has not concluded whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify Green Belt release. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist, local planning authorities must, inter alia, explore whether other neighbouring authorities can accommodate some identified needs. The 'Refining the Options' consultation document sets out that Southend is unable to meet all identified housing needs even if its remaining Green Belt was developed.

I would be grateful therefore if you could advise me of whether any of Southend's identified development needs could be accommodated in your authority area in the period up to 2040. This will help inform the continued preparation of the new Southend Local Plan towards preferred approach and an assessment of whether such exceptional circumstances exist.

Southend recognises the importance of working together with other neighbouring Councils as part of the South Essex Association of Local Authorities (ASELA). This includes preparation of a non-statutory Joint Strategic Framework and supporting evidence base documentation. It is within this context and knowing the challenges of delivering the Basildon Local Plan through EiP, that I would like to understand whether you have any capacity to meet any of Southend's housing need.

I look forward to meeting via Teams on **Friday 17th September at 10:00** to discuss housing supply and a range of other cross-border issues including transport.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sheppard
Team Leader, Strategic Planning