

SERVICES SPECIFICATION FOR

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan

(Procurement by Electronic Tender)

SECTION B



[Southend Council](#) (the Council) wishes to appoint consultants to develop

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

Town Centre Strategy & investment plan

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council's ambitions for the future are explained in [Southend 2050](#).

[Southend 2050](#) states that in the future we will be able to say,

‘We have a vibrant, thriving town centre, with an inviting mix of retail, homes, arts, culture(i) and leisure(ii) opportunities.’

The town centre will evolve and flex in response to economic, social, and environmental issues. Our central questions are –

How do we create the vibrant and thriving mix? What does that look like?

The Council together with key stakeholders, partners, and residents, is committed to a proactive approach to regeneration of the Town Centre.

We want to commission a **Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan** which will deliver a step change in economic vitality, open-up new thinking, provide informed critical challenge, encourage a creative approach, and shape a practical plan to attract new investment and partnerships.

Footnote: (i) Arts and Culture = all Creative & Cultural industries. (ii) Leisure = all Leisure and Sports.

[Southend 2050](#) is the borough's ambition for the future. The ambition is grounded in the values of Southenders. It was developed following extensive conversations with those that live, work, visit, do business and study in Southend-on-Sea. These conversations asked people what they thought Southend-on-Sea should be like in 2050 and what steps are needed now, and in the coming years, to help achieve this. The vision is bold and challenging and will need all elements of our community to work together to ensure we continue to make progress.

Here in [Southend 2050](#) you will find the 5-year Roadmap, Shared ambition document, and the Annual report 2020/21. The success of Southend Town Centre is an important goal which runs across the Southend 2050 strategic outcomes, and therefore shows the high priority placed on it by the Council, and by key stakeholders. The 2050 strategy and outcomes are embedded in the Council's work through associated action plans including targets and success measures.

The successful consultants must use the Southend 2050 engagement findings and the 2050 strategy as starting points for the work on the Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan.

The Southend Central Area Action Plan ([SCAAP](#) and [Policies Map](#)) was adopted in 2018 and contains the statutory policy framework, vision, objectives, interventions, site allocations and proposals aimed at strengthening the role of Southend Town Centre and Central Seafront area as a successful place to live, work and visit. It also sets out the policy framework and proposals for adjacent residential areas. It is accompanied by an up-to-date Policies Map. [SCAAP consultation feedback](#) received during the preparation of the SCAAP is available.

The SCAAP is to be reviewed by the emerging new Local Plan providing suite of policies, objectives and allocations for the Central Area and Town Centre. The Issues and Option version of the Local Plan was consulted on in 2019, which contained a chapter on the [Town Centre](#). Relevant [supporting evidence](#) and [feedback](#), including on a Town Centre specific workshop, is available on the website. The next version of the Local Plan '[Refining the Plan Options](#)' is to be consulted upon commencing 31 August 2021 and sets out a number of possible zones and site allocations to guide development.

The Town Centre Strategy and Investment Plan will inform later iterations of the Local Plan and provide valuable evidence to assist the implementation of future proposals.

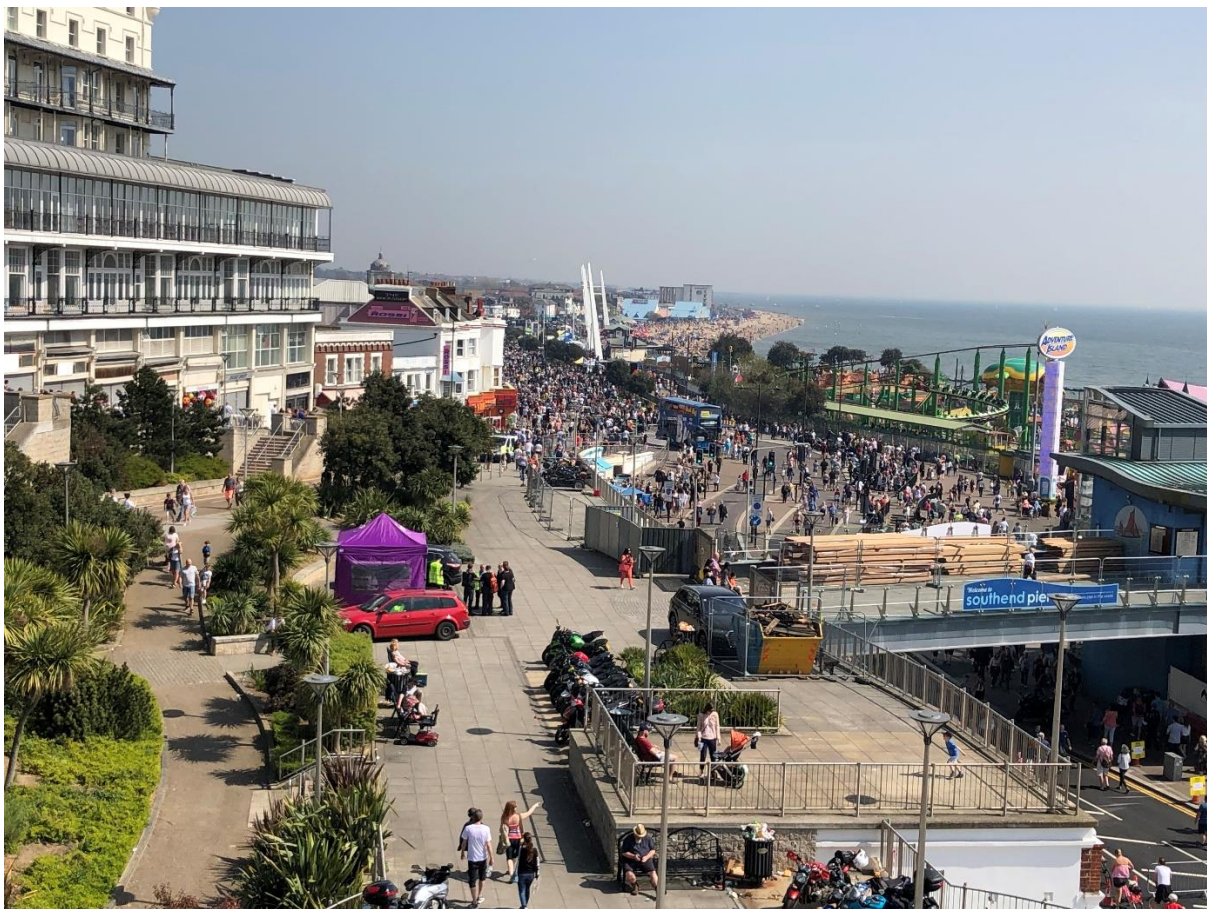
The borough of [Southend-on-Sea](#) is found at the mouth of the Thames Estuary around 35 miles east of London and with over seven miles of river/sea frontage. It has an expanding population of over 180,000 who live in a densely populated and urban area. Southend is a popular destination for visitors and has a wide range of Leisure, Culture, Parks, and seaside attractions for all ages and backgrounds. The main transport links are East-West (A127/A13 and the C2C/Greater Anglia rail lines). The North-South link is constrained with the A130 (on the western edge of the area) forming the main link. [London Southend Airport](#) which straddles the Rochford/Southend border has expanded into a major Regional Airport with around 2 million passengers in 2019 and aspirations to expand.

The Government's Standard Housing Methodology indicates that Southend will need to provide up to 24,000 new homes by 2040. About half of these additional homes will come forward from schemes already in the pipeline, such as [Better Queensway](#) and

at [Fossetts Farm development](#). The remainder of the target for new homes will be identified through the current review of the [Southend Local Plan](#), including an exploration of the potential for additional residential development in and around the Town Centre. The Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan will provide new thinking to contribute to the identification of opportunities for housing development in the Town Centre.

Around 13,000 new jobs will also need to be provided by 2040, and the Town Centre has an important role to play in the delivery of jobs growth. London Southend Airport has indicated aspirations to grow to 5 million passengers p.a. in the short/medium term which will likely deliver more jobs, and to grow up to 10 million passengers in the longer term, subject to planning.

Southend Town Centre is host to a wide range of attractions and facilities in education, leisure, culture, heritage, sport, and retail. This is explained in the [Southend Tourism Strategy called Destination Southend](#), details of these leisure and retail assets can be found in the section 'Destination development'. [Visit Southend](#)



The Council has responded to the declaration of a climate change emergency with ambitious plans through its [Green city action plan](#) recognising the need for a green sustainability approach to developing the town centre environment and the provision of public space.

[Factor of Deprivation in Southend comparison 2015-19](#) Several wards around the town centre are amongst the most deprived in the borough and incidence of child poverty, poor quality housing and unemployment being particularly high. Traditionally many jobs in Southend have been poorly paid with poor terms and conditions. People

living and working in Southend tend to earn less than those working outside of the borough.

Southend has a diverse economy, key employment sectors include tourism and leisure, business administration, health and care, and the public sector. Emerging and growth sectors include advanced manufacturing, creative & cultural industries and digital. 99% of all businesses in Southend are micro-businesses, those with fewer than 10 employees; the borough has an entrepreneurial spirit and business start-up numbers are strong. There is a strong programme of support for businesses including through the [BEST Growth Hub](#) and significant financial support available to businesses through initiatives such as [South Essex Business Boost Grants](#). There is also significant support for residents towards work including upskilling, retraining and employment support delivered by the Council and other partners.

There is national and regional government data that shows a strong indication that COVID-19 has changed the way people work. The Southend Economic Development team believe there could be opportunities for Southend to benefit from changing working patterns. There is potential to create remote working hubs for employees of large companies who may continue to work remotely or on a blended working week. This new working pattern could benefit Southend high street in terms of better use of empty units and to potentially increase spend and dwell time in the Town Centre. There are several flexible workspace locations in and around central Southend / Southend Town Centre and a new innovation centre – the [Launchpad](#) -will open at the Airport Business park in June 2022.

2. AMBITION

Southend Town Centre Strategy (STCS) & Investment plan

The Council wishes to take a short sharp strategic view of Southend town centre in terms of its economic potential, underpinned by a robust evidence base, and born out of meaningful engagement with stakeholders and residents. This strategy will guide the future physical, economic, cultural and social development of Southend Town Centre over the next 5-10 years.

The primary aim of this work is to produce a shared vision for the Town Centre, where all stakeholders, partners and residents can identify their role in delivery. This work will ensure that local growth is the goal; built into our thinking and that of our partners, key stakeholders and residents.

We recognise the challenges resulting from the national reduction in the retail economy which has resulted in pressure on our high streets. The **Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan** must bring forward new thinking about the best ways to reinforce and anchor the existing retail base. The strategy must also capitalise on our assets, both built assets and people – ‘Southenders’. The strategy must identify opportunities to provide a diverse mix of services, commercial, residential, arts, culture, heritage, and leisure.

What is the USP of the Town Centre? What are the USPs of the Town Centre?

Southend also has a long and vibrant history in the arts, culture, and heritage. This work will position the Creative & Cultural industries as a positive catalyst to drive

innovation and regeneration in the town centre. As a priority, the successful consultants will look at new ways to work with the Creative and Cultural industries in the town, to ensure their creativity and entrepreneurship is woven into our future plans to bring additional economic and social value.

The Council and partners will use this work to ensure the town centre moves into the best position to take advantage of forthcoming government investment, whilst encouraging private sector and partnership investment, and community partnership opportunities.

This work will provide the framework for, set the context for, future public sector investment bids including [Levelling Up Fund](#) (LUF) round 2. The work will also feed into the ongoing preparation and refresh of other key Council strategies and plans, such as the new [Southend Local Plan](#).

3. Summary – Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan

This strategy and plan will provide:

- i) Background, context, and evidence of need for suggested interventions; including a SWOT and or similar analysis tools;
- ii) Engagement with key stakeholders, partners and residents to ensure this work builds on the Southend 2050 engagement work;
- iii) Analysis of the current function and geography of the Town Centre, and illustration of the spatial design and modelling of the Town Centre to support the future interventions;
- iv) Vision for the Town Centre, complementing agreed or emerging local economic strategies; and including a check and challenge approach to engagement with Members, Senior Officers, and key stakeholders;
- v) High-level description of priority areas for the short, medium, and long term, including:
 - a. Activity that can be locally funded;
 - b. Projects that could be supported by public investment, with high level cost estimates;
 - c. Ambitions for private sector and joint investment partnership projects;

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (SBC) are looking to appoint consultants to prepare a **Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment plan**, which will develop in two stages:

Stage 1 – Analysis & engagement.

Provide a robust analysis of the physical, economic, cultural, social economic, social, environmental, and governance data on the current condition of the Town Centre. This work will include targeted engagement with young people and other key stakeholders. The work will include SWOT and or similar analysis tools.

Stage 2 – Vision & investment proposition.

Provide a new strong vision for the Town Centre and visualisation of the economic potential through narrative, modelling, spatial design, and illustration; identify sites and areas to form projects and opportunities for investment; articulate the investment proposition for public, private, and third sector investors and provide the data, content,

and framework for public and private investment; and, provide a programme of work for delivery of the strategy in partnership with stakeholders, at site, project, and programme level; and including engagement with stakeholders.

Deadline for the substantive completion of the work, draft Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan report, will be **Friday 18th March 2022**, and the full completion and contract end date will be **Friday 27th May 2022** allowing for full completion of the work, final consultation and revisions of the Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan, specified in this document.

The Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment plan, once completed, will be launched by the Council, and partners, to maintain momentum and focus on the town centre.

Outcomes:

All stakeholders are on the same page – the vision and ambition for the town centre is distinctively Southend and has been developed through stakeholder and resident engagement; the vision is illustrated to help all stakeholders to visualise the ambition and identify their role in it.

The way ahead for the Town Centre is underpinned by robust evidence and analysis.

The way ahead is underpinned by focused engagement with stakeholders including residents.

There is a clear, well-informed, and confident prospectus and pitch to developers and investors to work with the Council, and partners, on the regeneration of the Town Centre.

The way ahead has been mapped out in a delivery programme which gives us the pipeline of projects, and again stakeholders can see their role.

The Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan has opened-up new ideas and new possibilities for sites, projects, partnerships, and investment.

The Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan will capitalise on existing investments in the town centre eg. Seaways, Better Queensway, £20m on the Pier, Public Realm improvements, purchase of the Victoria Centre.

The Strategy & Plan will capitalise on the quality and variety of the ‘self-starter’ businesses in the town, eg the Creative & Cultural industries sector, in terms of a pipeline of investable projects and propositions for regeneration of the town.

The Strategy & Plan will capitalise on the heritage and pride of Southend as a great place to live, work, study, and do business in terms of investable projects and propositions.

The Strategy & Plan provide the guide to future growth and investment decision making by identifying the development potential, associated leverage, and investment opportunities in the town centre at a site, project, and programme level; ensure that these priorities form a coherent strategic approach to the regeneration and growth of the town centre and in the context of the review of the Local Plan.

Outputs:

The Strategy & Investment Plan will include:

Analysis of the current economic, social, environmental, and Culture, position of the Town Centre; the problems and constraints.

Analysis of the barriers to growth and investment; the problems and constraints; and recommendations of which constraints must be accepted, and which should be tackled and overcome.

Analysis of the opportunities for growth, regeneration, and renewal of the Town Centre; and recommendations for delivery.

Key challenges are: What are the new ideas? Where are the new possibilities? How can Southend capitalise on its distinctiveness, its geographic position, and economic potential?

This will include a high-level review of the accessibility of the town centre; the number and distribution of car parking spaces available in the town centre, including disabled spaces.

Narrative and visualisation (2D and or 3D) of the vision and ambition for the town centre, and articulation of key messages for developers and investors.

Articulate the opportunities and challenges in terms of the unique qualities and investable potential of the town centre, setting an outline of the potential for key sites/areas identified through both narrative and 2D or preferably 3D illustrative form.

The Investment Plan will be an illustrative prospectus including a clear and concise investment pitch. This will explain the principles for public and private investment in the town to encourage confidence and build investable partnerships. Prior to publication, the final draft of the Investment Plan will be soft market tested on a range of likely investors; to be agreed with the Client.

Delivery programme plan – this will be a high-level document setting out the timeframe for projects. These projects will be categorised: quick wins/18mths, 3yrs, 5yrs; the steps needed to deliver; project budget estimates; investment sources and likely partners; plus, interdependencies; the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. A small number of success measures will be recommended as part of the delivery programme plan. This plan sets out a clear pathway and timeline for delivery of the Southend Town Centre Strategy.

4. Engagement Context

Engagement, consultation, co-design and co-production are key to success in Southend. Significant levels of engagement work have been undertaken by the Council which must be taken into account alongside continuation of the conversation with key stakeholders, partners, and residents.

Key stakeholders and partners include but are not limited to: Southend Business Partnership, the BID, Southend Tourism Partnership, Southend Education Partnership, the Engine Room, Southend Cultural Network, Concrete Culture network.

The successful consultants will develop their work based on stakeholder engagement, on the ground research, and the background information and reports listed in this specification.

The consultants will undertake a targeted engagement with young people to gain their perspective and aspirations for the town centre. The Council and key partner organisations can support in setting up this engagement.

Prior to the Covid19 pandemic the Council undertook a number of workshops with key stakeholders and, this resulted in the establishment of a working group called the Engine Room which included local business and community leaders. The successful consultants must plan to communicate with and engage with this group effectively and on an ongoing basis throughout the project.

The Local Plan first phase consultation feedback and the consultation being undertaken this summer should also be used to inform the work being undertaken.

The Local Plan review process includes a second phase consultation which will start at the end of August and will run for 8 weeks until the end of October.

The definition of the Town Centre area, 'the red line', will be taken from the Local Plan as a starting point for the successful consultants (please refer to *Appendix A*). The Town Centre means different things to different people. The successful consultants should test the area definition with key stakeholders through engagement workshops.

5. DELIVERABLES

This brief/specification has explained the context and reasoning behind the work and, laid out the work required in detail.

As a further aid to bidders, here is a list of potential tasks set out in two stages. The bidders must satisfy themselves that all of the tasks listed will fulfil the work required in this specification.

The work will progress in two stages.

Stage 1 – Analysis & Engagement

- Task 1.1 – Desktop review of key documents, evidence and data on the town centre current position and policy background (supplied by Client) and consultant led research; and site visits to the town centre.
- Task 1.2 - Analysis of the Town Centre – the operation of the town centre today, its challenges and strengths in terms of social, economic, and environmental.
- Task 1.3 - Engagement with key Council Members and staff.
- Task 1.4 - Engagement with the CCI sector in the borough; network meetings take place and the Client will provide the introductions.
- Task 1.5 – Engagement with key stakeholders including the Engine Room group.
- Task 1.6 - Testing findings and understanding - reporting back to Client.

- Task 1.7 - Report of evidence base and recommendations.

Gateway Review by Client

Following completion of outputs received in Stage 1, there will be a gateway review by the Client, which will include a review of the quality and timing of work required for LUF round 2 submission and Stage 2.

The LUF timeframe is not known at the time of writing, therefore the successful consultants will be expected to review the timeframe for the work in Stage 1 to assist the Client in meeting the evidence needs for the LUF bid in Round 2. The Client's intention is to apply to Round 2 for a Town Centre Culture led regeneration bid package.

Stage 2 – Vision & investment proposition.

- Task 2.1 – Develop the shared vision with corresponding principles and priorities for the town centre.
- Task 2.2 - Undertake modelling and spatial design for sites and projects in the town centre.
- Task 2.3 - Testing of the modelling and design with key stakeholders.
- Task 2.4 - Finalise the modelling and design work.
- Task 2.5 - Reporting back to Client – include presentations to Members and officers, and key stakeholders; and test the evolving ideas with key investors (to be agreed with the Client; with a preference for talking to a sample group including investors already working in the town and those who are not working in the town, yet).
- Task 2.6 – Provide the Investment Plan for the town centre.
- Task 2.7 - Provide the Delivery Programme plan in outline linked to the Investment Plan.
- Task 2.8 - Provide final documents and visuals, the Southend Town Centre Strategy and Investment Plan.

Selection process

The Council requires the appointment of a multi-disciplinary team to provide new thinking in the context of place-making and to attract new investment.

The chosen consultant will need to demonstrate, in liaison with the client team, the following skills and knowledge:

- Professional skills in master planning.
- Urban Design skills.
- Knowledge and expertise in town centre regeneration and renewal projects, and wider place-making;
- Knowledge of development viability, funding and investment decision-making in town centre projects.
- Understanding of the broader principles of economic development, social value, environmental issues, community opportunity and health and wellbeing considerations in regeneration and place-making projects.

- Knowledge and understanding of the role of the creative and cultural industries sector in regeneration projects.
- Research and data analysis skills.
- Report writing for inclusion in bid writing for public investment.
- Experience and knowledge of best practice in public consultations and engagement with key stakeholders.

The procurement selection process:

1. Submissions will be assessed.
2. Clarification questions may be submitted to the bids.
3. Clarification interviews with a Client panel may be held, if the Client requires.
4. The successful bidder will be appointed by the Client.

8. CONTRACT PERIOD

Deadline for the substantive completion of the work, draft Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan report, will be the **Friday 18th March 2022**, and the full completion and contract end date will be **Friday 27th May 2022** allowing for full completion of the work, final consultation and revisions of the Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment Plan, specified in this document.

The Southend Town Centre Strategy & Investment plan, once completed, will be launched by the Council, and partners, to maintain momentum and focus on the town centre.

9. BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

It is important to the Council that momentum is maintained in this work and this must be linked as much to good communication as to the implementation of the work contained in this brief/spec.

Therefore, the successful consultants will plan to present and discuss progress in private session with the Cabinet on two occasions during the contract. These sessions may be introduced by Senior Client Officers who will be reporting back on other ongoing Town Centre delivery projects. The purpose of the sessions will be to maintain the momentum of the work with Members, to allow them to keep up to date on the progress of thinking, to ask questions and to feed in their thoughts and concerns.

We will require consultants to provide a schedule for the work to include these sessions with Cabinet. These sessions will require preparation time, time to sign-off by Senior Client representatives (to be confirmed), time to present to Members, and time to debrief with Officers. The time with Senior Officers will be factored into the contract monitoring meetings described here.

Good communication between the Contactor and the Councils officers will be expected throughout the life of the Contract. This should include, but is not limited to, an inception meeting to discuss and agree any issues prior to the commencement of the contractor. There will be weekly check-in calls with the contract manager or support manager. There will be fortnightly email updates on progress from the consultant team and conference calls and face to face meetings at key stages with the project steering group. A timetable will be set up and agreed by both parties at the

inception meeting. The steering group will consist of key officers from across the Council including Regeneration, Property, Culture, and Planning. The Council and the Contractor will be responsible for responding to emails and/or phone calls in a timely manner to avoid any undue delays to the delivery of the Contract.

10. INVOICING

Southend Borough Councils terms of payment are 30 days from date of invoice.

The invoices should legibly state the following as a minimum: -

- The Council's Purchase order number
- The full invoice addresses

A full and proper description and breakdown of the services provided including: -

- Description of service
- Unit and Total Costs
- Date
- VAT Breakdown

11. BASIS OF PRICES

The prices quoted in the commercial document shall be fixed for the duration of the contract.

The stage payments will be agreed with the successful consultancy team prior to contract. Payments will be set against the deliverables.

NB. The consultants should include in their submission, a benchmark financial figure and rate card for any additional and related work which the Client may require. The prices quoted in the commercial document shall be fixed for the duration of the contract.

12. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Monitoring of the service level throughout the contract is required by using key performance indicators (KPI) which will be discussed and mutually agreed at the inception meeting.

13. CONTRACT REVIEW MEETING

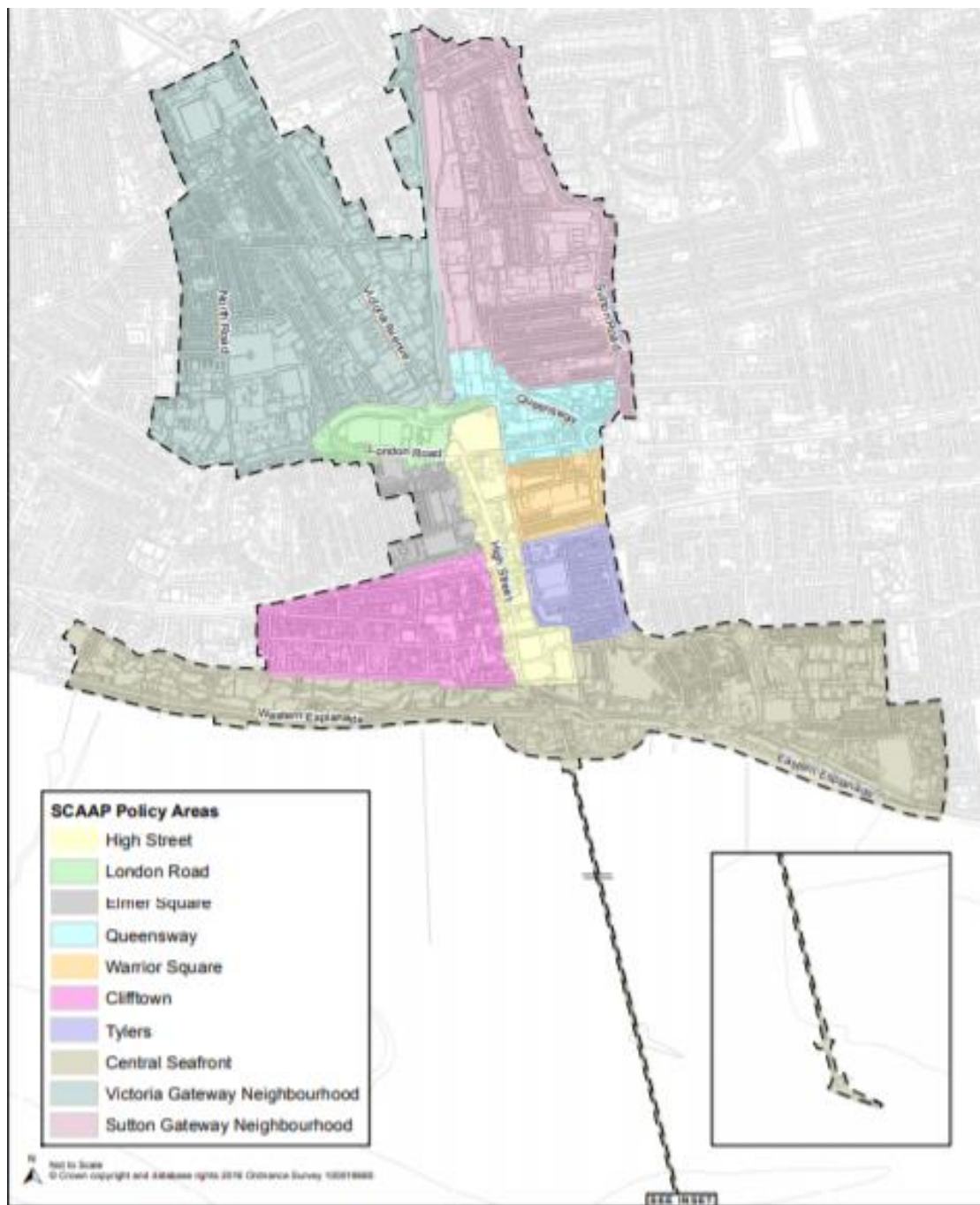
The Supplier will be required to meet with the council and/or provide reports as agreed. Such meetings will discuss the progression of work at each phase. Review meetings to be either face to face or by conference call and will be set up at the inception meeting.

Appendix A – 'Red line' to show the central area of Southend, as starting point for this work.

Appendix B – Background briefing and links to further information which forms part of this specification.

Appendix A

'Red line' map of Southend Town Centre, taken from the [Southend Central Area Action Plan \(SCAAP\)](#) – starting point for the definition of the Town Centre.



Background briefing

Southend Town Centre – current thinking

Central Southend like most seaside towns has two high streets, the main street and the seafront. Hamlet Court Road, Shoeburyness, and Leigh also offer local high streets.

The Council has undertaken considerable public consultation. Some projects have been completed as a direct result of public consultation. The SUNRISE pilot European achieved co-creation project work and improved accessibility on the High Street. Feedback from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders informed the design and delivery of the SUNRISE project: -

- Pedestrianisation of London Road
- provide more green space
- give us somewhere to sit and relax
- give us somewhere to hold events
- improve the lighting to make us feel safe
- give us a reason to come to the High Street.

Southend central high street is considered long and sits on a cliff higher than the seafront. The linkages and sight lines between the high street and the seafront are therefore not ideal in encouraging linked activity, footfall, or spend, between the two areas.

The long high street has few visual or spatial breaks which results in limited dwell time as visitors walk the length. In the context of recent nationwide pressures on retail activity in town centres, Southend is also experiencing heightened economic pressure on retailers, landowners, and leaseholders.

The successful consultants should consider the high street length as an opportunity to 'curate' the space and to find different ways to work with owners and traders to increase economic viability and dwell time. The Council has begun to think about the high street in three sections - the Northern area including the Victoria Shopping Centre (owned by the Council); the central area where the high street leads to Southend Central station; and the Southern area where linkage to the seafront is key and could be strengthened. The side streets also provide opportunities to help us tell the Southend story and to help connect the central area to the seafront.

On the map in Appendix A, the 'red line' includes Better Queensway and the relationship between that planned development and the town centre is important for economic growth and in terms of services for local people. Just beyond the red line is Hamlet Court Road to the West, which is a good example of a mix of eclectic independent and creative business. This mix may provide some inspiration for economic growth as well as new thinking about the self-starter economy prevalent in Southend alongside the tradition of counter-culture and innovation in the arts and culture, and business enterprise.

Here are some of the key assets and plans (and there may be others) to be considered in a curated approach to Culture-led regeneration of the town centre: the links between

Better Queensway, Beecroft Gallery and Southend Museum, the Victoria Shopping Centre, the high street, the Southend Central Station, the Forum and Focal Point Gallery, the seafront and the Pier, Hamlet Court Road to the West and Kursaal Palace to the East.

Summary - Town Centre key connections and accessibility issues:

- Connection between high street and seafront.
- Connection between Southend Central Station, high street, and Southend Victoria Station.
- Length and curation of the high street – areas: North, central, and South; and surrounding smaller streets.
- Victoria Shopping Centre and the link to Better Queensway development plans and Southend Victoria Station.
- Connections between the Kursaal, the seafront, and link to Better Queensway.
- Connection between the Beecroft Gallery and Southend Museum to the town and the seafront.
- Visibility of the Creative & Cultural industries offer at the two main railway stations – Central and Victoria.
- Convenience of car parking to access shops and attractions (including provision of those with access requirements).

Future of Southend High Street

There are many projects and schemes taking place to improve Southend High Street and encourage shoppers to return. Here you can find out more about those projects and schemes, how other schemes nearby will have a positive impact on the High Street and what our ambitions are for the [Future-of-southend-high-street](#)

The Forum – a successful partnership between the Council, South Essex College and the University of Essex, this library and gallery complex is at the heart of the town and is adjacent to the Central station. The key partner is the Council's own gallery – Focal Point Gallery who receive national investment from the Arts Council England, and there are ongoing positive discussions with the FE sector. The Council aspires to extend the Forum facilities into new spaces within the town, including a new learning space, café, production/workshop spaces, and community facilities. An options appraisal and community consultation has taken place, and this work will be shared with the successful consultants.

The Beecroft Gallery and the Southend Museum – these high-quality institutions have plans to build their audiences and programmes in the town. There are also plans being developed to provide fit for purpose of the National Collections it is responsible for and consideration of ways to better store and provide public access to these collections. With numerous residential developments taking place nearby on Victoria Avenue, these venues occupy an increasingly strategic position.

The Kursaal Palace – this 19thC Grade II Listed iconic seaside heritage building faces City Beach. It was built for cultural production and presentation and is owned by the Council. The Kursaal is the subject of a local resident-led campaign, called [Concrete Culture](#), to bring it back into public use. This initiative aims to develop a cultural centre on the seafront where local people can access training and work in the creative and cultural industries. The project has secured partners in Early Years provision and

social housing; and has gathered considerable public support through residents' surveys. This example of resident-led regeneration has cross-party support from Members, and from senior Officers. The Council and [Concrete Culture](#) are meeting regularly in a collaborative partnership, looking at options and opportunities to redevelop the Kursaal.

Strategic and Policy Context

Southend Town Centre is a unique place with a strong identity based on the seaside heritage and modern-day leisure; Thames Estuary heritage; transportation and air travel; and the historic and contemporary achievements of homegrown Creative & Cultural industries.

The Town Centre is also home to University of Essex and South Essex College. Here is the [University Strategy 2019-2025 for University of Essex](#). And, [University of Essex Economic Impact Report 2018-19](#). Here is the [South Essex College Strategic Plan & Values](#).

The future of the Town Centre is also impacted by these key strategies which were written pre-pandemic:

[Southend Economic Growth Strategy 2017-22](#)

[Ambition Southend - A skills and labour market strategy 2018-23](#)

University of Essex and South Essex College are also key sub-regional partners and fully engaged in the Thames Estuary strategic partnerships.

The spotlight of policy and investment opportunities are arguably at a height in the Thames Estuary at present with the work of the South East LEP ([SELEP](#)), [Thames Estuary Growth Board](#), and [Thames Estuary Production Corridor partnership](#).

The Thames Estuary is the subject of considerable regeneration, placemaking and delivery activity and this document provides the framework [Thames Estuary Growth Board Blue & Green Strategy](#)

The [Thames Estuary Production Corridor](#) (TEPC) is a Government-backed [vision](#), which aims to use the Creative & Cultural industries as the catalyst for growth. The Thames Estuary will provide much-needed space for expanding creative businesses, and provide the scale of services, skills and infrastructure sought by both London organisations and international creative producers.

In early 2019 the University of Kent was awarded £4.3m from the [Dept Digital, Culture, Media, & Sport](#) (DCMS) [Cultural Development Fund](#) on behalf of the TEPC partners in the Estuary (excluding ineligible London partners) for their first delivery programme, called [Creative Estuary](#). The ambition is simple: to transform 60 miles of the Thames Estuary across Essex and Kent into one of the most exciting cultural hubs in the world. Southend Council is a partner in TEPC and for the Creative Estuary programme. Southend is also host to the asset development workstream for the programme.

The [Creative Estuary](#) programme will contribute to wider programmes to generate investment, jobs and opportunities for the whole Thames Estuary, making it one of the most attractive places to live and work in the UK. This work will drive forward the creative and economic evolution of this unique region, unlocking its potential both as an international production hub and a collaborative, inspirational working space for a new generation of creative talent.

The quality and variety of Southend's creative and cultural sector provides a real opportunity to lead on Culture-led regeneration in the context of the regeneration of the Thames Estuary sub-region.

The [Association of South Essex Local Authorities](#) (ASELA) is a partnership between Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford Southend and Thurrock. The ASELA partners are alert to the need for regeneration and investment to ensure residents have improved opportunities to thrive and access to the benefits of shared prosperity policies. Southend has a key role in place making and regeneration in the context of managing the effects of the pandemic and driving economic recovery.

[ASELA](#) have agreed a clear ambition for growth of South Essex and are developing a prospectus. There is an agreed set of strategic priorities and workstreams for delivery: new [South Essex Estuary Park](#) (SEEPark) an extraordinary parkland of 23,000ha covering a third of South Essex; Accelerating Housing Delivery – an ambitious programme to deliver new homes at pace across South Essex; Digital Infrastructure – enabling economic growth by delivering improvements in digital infrastructure; South Essex Technical University – creating a high quality HE offer linked to key employers across south Essex; Thames Freeport – maximising opportunities from the Freeport.

In Thurrock the new [Thames Enterprise Park](#) is a part of the Thames Freeport alongside London Gateway, Port of Tilbury and Ford's Dagenham engine plant. The Freeport as a whole could create more than 25,000+ new jobs.

Southend is part of the [South East Local Economic Partnership](#) (SELEP). SELEP takes a strategic lead across Essex, Thurrock and Southend, Kent and Medway, and East Sussex enabling regeneration, growth and economic inclusion. The business led board has made significant investment in Southend in recent years.

The [BEST Growth Hub](#) is the centre point for Essex business support and is fully funded by SELEP. Whatever the business size, stage, or industry the BEST Growth Hub can provide access to specialist and relevant business support free of charge. [BEST Prospectus](#)

SELEP has published 'Towards a National Prospectus for the Creative Economy in the South East' [South East Creative Economy Network - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership \(southeastlep.com\)](#). The prospectus focusses attention on four workstreams: Workspace; Business support and development; Skills – Talent Accelerator; Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

To deliver on the four workstreams the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN) was created comprising creative and cultural industries professionals and organisations alongside local authority economic development and policy from across the region. Significant progress has been made against all four workstreams and the Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) is now a Government-backed [vision](#), which aims to use the Creative & Cultural industries, specifically production, as a catalyst for growth. The Thames Estuary will provide much-needed space for expanding creative businesses, and provide the scale of services, skills and infrastructure sought by both London organisations and international creative producers.

SECEN is currently funded to deliver research into the development of a new model called Creative Opportunity Zones (COZ) which will aim to help create the conditions for the clustering and growth of the Creative and Cultural Industries. This work will learn from and build on the success and challenges faced by the Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) already established in the London region and tailored to the needs of the SELEP area. The new COZ model has the potential to support and help drive Southend's ambitions for Culture-led regeneration across the borough and in the town centre. Strong signs of clustering in Southend borough are: [The Forum](#) and [Focal Point Gallery](#) near to Southend Central; Chalkwell and [Metal](#); Hamlet Court Road where independent and creative businesses have created a unique mix of retail and cultural activity; and Culture-led regeneration in resident's ambitious plans for the [Kursaal Palace](#) alongside [City beach Southend](#).

Review of the [Southend Local Plan](#) is well underway. The Southend Town Centre Strategy (STCS) will sit underneath the Local Plan. The Local Plan will include a chapter on Southend town centre and for each neighbourhood across the borough. The work resulting from this specification will inform the Local Plan approach to the town centre and vice versa. Southend is also feeding into the Joint Strategic Planning Framework being developed across South Essex with Essex County Council. Planning teams from across ASELA are also working together to ensure the compatibility of local plans.

The next round of consultation for the [Local Plan](#) is planned for summer 2021. Feedback from the first round of consultation suggests a vision for the town centre should focus on being vibrant, safe, hospitable, rich in heritage, commerce, learning and Culture. Feedback also tells us that residents want the town to be more attractive, welcoming, prosperous and thriving where there is diversity and a diverse offer; where people want to live, work and visit for both day trips, overnight and longer stays.

The work contained in this specification will be developed alongside the Local Plan ensuring read across and making best use of resident and stakeholder input, to inform all areas of the work. Engagement with stakeholders and residents, and feedback from local surveys and data, are an essential part of the evidence base for this work.

The Council recently purchased the Victoria Shopping Centre at the Northern end of the high street. This strategic purchase has given the Council a stake in the town centre as a significant landowner. The purchase is also adjacent to the [Better Queensway, Southend](#) planned development of 1,760 homes, 10,000 sqm of commercial space, and provision of community facilities. The Council has gathered a team of expert professional advisors to commence the development of a strategy which will regenerate the shopping centre and provide complementary facilities in the town and in relation to Better Queensway.

The consultants will undertake high level review of the access to the town and accessibility of the town and take a view on that alongside ambitions. The successful consultants will also undertake a high-level review of the number and distribution of car parking spaces available in the town and take a view on that provision in-light of the ambition for the town centre. NB. This is not an in-depth car parking review.

Consideration should be given to the importance of the central area of the high street and the connections between the high street and the seafront in terms of ease of access for visitors and residents alike. The successful consultants should put forward ideas which will help improve functional and visual links between the high street and

the seafront to generate additional visitor interest and activity between these two areas.

Using funding from the Local Growth Fund the Council has produced, with stakeholders, a vision for the Forum/Elmer Square. This vision aims to enhance the square and increase its use as venue for a range of activities. The vision includes additional wayfinding and improvements to the arrival on one side of Southend Central Station. Phase 1 of the works will be underway shortly and the vision document will be shared with the successful bidder.

The work in this specification will also take account of the '20-minute walkable neighbourhoods' policy. [TCPA Guide-the-20-minute-neighbourhood](#)

Definition: '20-minute neighbourhoods' are places that are designed so residents can meet their day-to-day needs within a 20 minute walk of their home; through access to safe walking and cycling routes, or by public transport. Many places around the world have made commitments or drawn up plans to support the realisation of the concept.

Arts Council England have recently commissioned research in the region to look at the needs of and contribution of the creative and cultural industries through a piece of work called – [Creative High Streets research](#). This research will inform the consultants work to utilise the Creative & Cultural industries to drive regeneration.

The development of the Southend Town Centre Strategy(STCS) & Investment Plan will be undertaken in tandem with the development of the [Levelling Up Fund prospectus](#) round 2 which will focus on Culture-led regeneration of the town centre. This work will inform the framework for the bid and other bids in the future.

Further reading:

A series of reports and other sources of background information are listed here to provide a starting point for the successful consultants; and further information will be provided by the Client to successful consultants:

Verbal update on town centre partnerships.

2019 **Town Centre reimaged** Cabinet report

2021 **Town Centre Culture-led regen** Cabinet report

Southend Culture Vision – approved by Cabinet Nov 2021 – to be supplied.

Kursaal Palace – 'the Deck', vision by Concrete Culture; and two reports from resident surveys.

Focal Point Gallery - Forum 2 Options Appraisal and related consultation results.

Metal/ASELA - CCI sector mapping and report study into the needs of the sector.

Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) Encyclopaedia of Evidence.

[Local Plan – consultation issues and options.](#)

Feedback summary:

<https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/sites/localplan.southend/files/2019-11/Southend%20New%20Local%20Plan%20consultation%20report%20-%20summary.pdf>

Feedback full report:

<https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/sites/localplan.southend/files/2019-11/Southend%20Issues%20and%20Options%20Consultation%20Report.pdf>

[Southend Central Action Plan 2018 \(SCAAP\)](#)

[Southend Tourism Strategy](#)

SELEP – [Creative Open workspace masterplan and prospectus](#)

SECEN – [Towards a National Prospectus for the Creative Economy in the South East.](#)

Southend by night.

