

CHELMSFORD TOMORROW

Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan

Topic Paper 4 Retail Strategy

March 2008

Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan Examination Hearings 22.04.08 to 01.05.08

Topic Paper 4 – Retail strategy

I Purpose and Scope of the Topic Paper

- 1.1 This Topic Paper is one of six produced by Chelmsford Borough Council to provide context and baseline information to assist the Council's evidence into the Independent Examination of the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD (CTCAAP), which will commence on 22 April 2008.
- 1.2 This Topic Paper anticipates the main issues that the Inspector is likely to examine and addresses the representations that have been received at the submission stage. Evidence-related papers the Council will provide for the Examination include:-
- The Council's *Self Assessment of Soundness* [CD/CFD/035] which sets out the reasons why it is the Borough Council's belief that the submitted Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD is 'sound' in relation to each of the nine tests of soundness set out at Paragraph 4.24 of PPS12 [BD/NAT017].
 - Six interrelated Topic Papers; *Topic Paper 1: The Strategy for Chelmsford Town Centre*, *Topic Paper 2: Delivering Infrastructure*, *Topic Paper 3 Transportation Strategy*, *Topic Paper 4 Retail Strategy*, *Topic Paper 5 Managing Flood Risk* and *Topic Paper 6 Other Matters*.
 - Written Statement of Evidence related to the matters and issues identified by the Inspector for debate at the Examination.
- 1.3 Each of the Topic Papers provides the context and broad basis for the Council's evidence in relation to the topics identified. They should be treated as an inter-related suite of papers, which should be read together to give a strategic overview. Throughout the Topic Papers, references are made in square brackets [XXXXXX] to documents referenced in the Related Documents List and held in the Independent Examination Public Library.
- 1.4 In essence, the Topic Papers identify the relevant evidence base work, which has supported the evolution of the policy or issues, assess the main issues that arose from consultation responses and examine the information and guidance provided by the Strategic Environmental and Sustainability Assessments (SEA/SA). The Topic Papers, where appropriate, include succinct responses to the issues raised within representations made at the Submission stage. They also address the main issues that have been raised in the Inspector's Matters and Issues for Examination and provide the Council's initial and general responses to those matters.
- 1.5 This Topic Paper on retail strategy covers the following aspects of the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD:
- The policy context
 - Existing shopping provision
 - The quantum of retail growth
 - Development opportunities within the existing Primary Shopping Area (PSA)
 - Opportunities for extending the PSA
 - Phasing and prioritising development
 - Infrastructure relating to retail growth

2 Policy Context

The Regional Spatial Strategy context

- 2.1 The East of England Plan (RSS14) [CD/REG/01] says that Chelmsford has substantial potential as an important economic development and growth focus for central Essex, reflecting its roles as a county and university town, its strategic location on the A12 and Great Eastern railway line and its economic strengths in retailing, administration, manufacturing, and finance.

Policy SS3 identifies Chelmsford as a Key Centre for Development and Change where there is likely to be need for significant continued growth after 2021.

Policy SS6 recognises that thriving, vibrant and attractive town centres are fundamental to achieving sustainable development and should continue to be the focus for investment.

Policy E5 relates to the regional structure of town centres, within which Chelmsford has strategic importance for retail and other town centre purposes. Major new retail development and complementary town centre uses should primarily be located in such centres and be consistent in scale with the size and character of the centre and its role in the regional structure.

- 2.2 Local development documents should only propose higher order provision where need is clearly established and the development would result in a more sustainable pattern of development and movement, including a reduction in the need to travel; and have no significant harmful impact on other centres or the transport network.
- 2.3 Significant growth in retail will be needed in response to growth in population and expenditure per capita. Changes in the pattern of retailing such as the growth in 'e-tailing' creates uncertainties about how much additional floorspace, and of what types, will be needed. The scale of additional provision may need to be significant where major regeneration or housing growth are planned.

CBC Policy Context

- 2.4 The adopted *Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document* [CD/CFD/004] endorses the regional strategy for growth in Chelmsford and sets the policy for reinforcement of its retail function. This is reflected in the Borough Council's strategic objectives to:
- Maintain economic competitiveness in a region of growth (ECPI)
 - Reinforce Chelmsford's sub-regional role (ECP2)
 - Enhance Chelmsford's role as regional transport node (ECP3).
- 2.5 Policy CP23 promotes the continued strengthening of Chelmsford's regional role for shopping, major employment, civic and administrative functions, arts, culture and leisure facilities; refers to development opportunities in Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan and promotion of development within the primary shopping area and an extension of the primary shopping area.

3 Shopping in Chelmsford Town Centre and its Regional Context

Shopping in Chelmsford town centre

- 3.1 Chelmsford has been a market town since 1199. Since the 1960s retail has grown significantly, reflected in the opening of the High Chelmer Shopping Centre in the 1970s and the Meadows shopping Centre in 1992. The attractiveness of the town as shopping destination was enhanced by the pedestrianisation of the High Street in 1991.

Chelmsford within the Regional Context of Shopping Centres

- 3.2 Chelmsford is identified in the East of England Plan as a town of strategic importance for retail and other town centre purposes. The nearest towns of similar status are Basildon, Colchester, Harlow, Southend on Sea, Ipswich and Cambridge. Stratford City is under construction and will provide a major shopping centre opening in 2011.
- 3.3 Out-of-town shopping centres within the region are Lakeside shopping centre in Thurrock and Bluewater shopping centre in north Kent.
- 3.4 Chelmsford Town Centre's catchment area includes the Maldon district, from west of Chelmsford towards the M11, Basildon (including South Woodham Ferrers, the borough's second town), Braintree district, and Uttlesford district.
- 3.5 From Chelmsford's whole catchment area, there is a leakage of spending to other towns, mainly Basildon, Braintree (Freeport), Colchester and Lakeside. 2002 figures show Lakeside the most popular regional destination, followed by Cambridge.
- 3.6 In the absence of any significant new retail development or changes in its retail composition, Chelmsford has declined in relative terms since 2002 in regional rankings, according to the Retail Study.

Existing Town Centre Primary and Secondary Shopping

- 3.7 To help identify places mentioned in the text, Diagram 1 shows Town Centre shopping locations and the PPS6 Primary Shopping Area.
- 3.8 The Town Centre contains approximately 100,500 sq m of ground floor space for retail trade and services, comprising some 479 units (Experian Goad Town Centre report 2004. This does not provide a definitive figure for net or gross floorspace).
- 3.9 In PPS6 terminology, the primary shopping area (PSA) of Chelmsford is focused on the High Street, southern end of Springfield Road, Moulsham Street (north of Parkway), High Chelmer and Meadows Shopping Centres and contains the major multiple retailers.
- 3.10 Secondary shopping frontages extend from the High Street along Baddow Road, Duke Street and Moulsham Street and contain a range of independent retail outlets that support the primary shopping areas. Riverside Retail Park on Victoria Road is within the town centre but outside of the PSA.
- 3.11 Foodstore provision within the primary shopping area comprises Tesco and Iceland on Springfield Road, and a food hall in Marks & Spencer. Elsewhere in the Town Centre there are various smaller convenience supermarkets in the West End, Moulsham.
- 3.12 A household survey (referred to in the Chelmsford shopping study) and analysis of retailer requirements shows the following are all perceived to be under-represented in Chelmsford Town Centre: department store/s, furniture, household accessories, foodstore, discount retailers, independent/specialist retailers, and cafes and restaurants

- 3.13 There is a significant level of retailer interest for locating in Chelmsford such as: department stores including John Lewis, House of Fraser; multiple retailers including Zara and TJ Hughes; clothes shops including Republic, Jaeger, Edinburgh Woollen Mill; household goods including Lakeland, and Pier; furniture outlets including Sofa Workshop, and Cotswold Company; and other well-known retailers and restaurants.

Neighbourhood Centres and Retail Parks outside the PSA

- 3.14 Diagram 2 shows shopping areas outside the town centre in the three main neighbourhood centres at Chelmer Village, Great Baddow (The Vineyards) and North Melbourne. These all contain a major convenience retail outlet that serves as an anchor store supported by a range of smaller shops and services. There are out-of-town superstores at Princes Road (Tesco) and White Hart Lane (Sainsburys) as well as smaller stores on Springfield Road (Aldi) and Princes Road (Lidl / Farmfoods).
- 3.15 Chelmer Village and Homelands Retail Parks offer a range of out-of-centre comparison shopping opportunities.

4 Quantum of Retail Growth

Policy and proposals

- 4.1 The spatial strategy of the Core Strategy (paras 2.48 and 2.49) indicates that growth in retail floorspace of up to 100,000 sq m in the period up to 2021 can be sustained in the town centre. This figure represents net Class A1 sales floorspace. This figure excludes complementary service uses such as banks/building societies and restaurants/public houses which are likely to be provided as part of any large scale town centre retail development.
- 4.2 This is conveyed in Policy CP23 which provides for meeting 'the identified need for retail growth of up to 100,000 sq m.'
- 4.3 The Core Policy is carried through to the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD where the projected growth is expressed as a range. Section 6, para 6.4 states '... comparison retail growth of about 86,000 sq m net sales area by 2016, possibly rising to 100,000 sq m net sales area in the long term.'
- 4.4 The identified capacity for convenience shopping indicates scope for an additional 4,300 sq m net sales convenience floorspace by 2011, rising to 5,700 sq m net by 2016 and 7,700 sq m net by 2021. This represents the provision of at least one major new food superstore over the plan period.
- 4.5 This proposed increase in floorspace is based on the retail function and physical configuration of the town centre and on an understanding of the opportunities for major development within the town centre.

Retail Analysis

- 4.6 Evidence underlying the Council's proposals is provided by two studies:

Chelmsford Retail Study by GVA Grimley [BD/CFD/037].

The Grimley study analyses the capacity for additional retail floorspace.

Market Review and Impact Assessment by CACI Property Consulting [BD/CFD/055 + 056].

Two CACI studies analyse the potential market attraction for Chelmsford based on a substantial increase in comparison shopping floorspace. These two studies have been the subject of independent

assessments by ColliersCRE on behalf of the Council and Turley Associates on behalf of Standard Life Investments.

- 4.7 The GVA Grimley study was commissioned to provide the evidence base for the Town Centre strategy. The CACI report was commissioned to complement the Grimley study and its terms of reference were to look at the implications of a level of growth. The 'further studies' referred to in paragraph 6.4 of the AAP is the retail analysis provided by CACI.
- 4.8 In the light of representations questioning the soundness of this evidence, the Council commissioned Colliers CRE to undertake an independent critique of both quantitative need assessments. Their report explains and comments on the methods and findings of the above studies and confirms that the Council's evidence is robust. [BD/CFD/140]
- 4.9 A separate retail assessment was produced by Turley Associates for a Core Strategy Hearing Statement on behalf of Standard Life Investments and the Chelmsford Meadows Ltd Partnership - owners of land at Chelmer Waterside. The Turley work tested key assumptions and compared them with their own research into future capacity. The study concluded there will be adequate capacity to support development over the period to 2021, and that current patterns of shopping whereby people living in the Chelmsford catchment area have to travel to centres such as Lakeside and Cambridge are not sustainable. [BD/CFD/TC/041]

GVA Grimley Findings

- 4.10 In the light of economic trends described in the study, Chelmsford's size and success to date indicate it is well placed to benefit from forecast spending growth and a growing, more affluent catchment. However, the centre needs to expand and adapt if it is to capitalise on these opportunities, and maintain and enhance its position within the wider region.
- 4.11 GVA Grimley concluded that 'we consider there is a clear quantitative need to increase the amount of retail floorspace in Chelmsford Town Centre, to relieve the current pent up capacity for significant expansion, reflected in the low vacancy rate and constrained accommodation of key retailers to meet forecast growth.' (para. 7.39).
- 4.12 They projected that the increases in retail expenditure on comparison goods generates capacity for 18,046 sq m net floorspace by 2011, 37,623 sq m net in 2016, rising to 69,629 sq.m net additional floorspace in Chelmsford by 2021.
- 4.13 The Grimley study says that Chelmsford has a below average provision of convenience goods retailers. The increase in convenience goods spending generates capacity for 4,325 sq m net floorspace by 2011, rising to 5,679 sq m net by 2016 and 7,683 sq m by 2021. The study said there are opportunities to qualitatively improve convenience goods provision to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.

CACI Findings

- 4.14 CACI consider the capacity assessments projected for Chelmsford up to 2015 to be commercially viable based upon achieving a greater market penetration across a wider catchment area. If Chelmsford provides an upmarket and attractive retail offer in a conducive environment it has the capacity to substantially extend its catchment and compete more effectively for the affluent customers in its outer catchment area.
- 4.15 CACI predicts that Chelmsford could sustain a development of 100,000 sq m based on current population levels.
- 4.16 Chelmsford faces competition from Lakeside, Bluewater, Cambridge, and central London, which are amongst the strongest shopping destinations in the UK. Collectively, the level of investment planned in the competing sub-regional centres will strengthen their role in the retail hierarchy, and increase their

market share from the Chelmsford catchment area. In these circumstances, it is critical for Chelmsford to improve its retail offer even in order to maintain its market share and establish its position as a 'regional' centre as envisaged by RSS14. Without investment in the town centre and improvements to its retail offer, Chelmsford will decline.

- 4.17 The Borough Council is also mindful of developments elsewhere likely to contribute to continuing decline, such as those at Stratford and Colchester.

5 Development Opportunities Within the Existing PSA

Scale of Comparison Shopping Floorspace Needed

- 5.1 PPS6 directs retail development to suitable sites within the existing Primary Retail Area. It asks local planning authorities to ensure that the number and size of sites identified for development are sufficient to meet the scale and type of growth identified, where necessary, by planning an extension of primary shopping areas through the application of the sequential approach.
- 5.2 Existing development opportunities within the primary shopping area are insufficient to meet the required growth. The GVA Grimley retail study states that in order to accommodate the scale of additional comparison shopping floorspace required, the retail core area in Chelmsford needs to be significantly expanded. The study identifies four areas as having the potential to accommodate expansion and collectively define an extended area:
- Redevelopment/extension of the High Chelmer shopping centre
 - Land to the east of High Street
 - Chelmer Waterside
 - Riverside frontages within the Town Centre
- 5.4 The study states that in policy terms, redevelopment/expansion of the High Chelmer Centre and land to the east of High Street would be regarded as 'sequentially preferable' to the Waterside area. However, High Chelmer and east of High Street would not by themselves deliver the scale of expansion needed.
- 5.5 The scale of additional retail floorspace needed by 2016 and beyond to 2021, suggests a large development opportunity should be identified now. Chelmer Waterside is potentially well suited to provide a sufficient scale of development to be a genuine expansion of the Town Centre and act as the catalyst to reinforce the potential of the rest of the centre.
- 5.6 The CACI study recognises the great potential for Chelmer Waterside, but says it needs to be unified with Chelmsford's current retail core to present a seamless retail offer.

Scope and Capacity for Retail Development within the Existing Primary Shopping Area

- 5.7 In selecting sites for extension of the Primary Shopping Area (PSA), PPS6 says that plans should identify the appropriate scale of development and first identify locations in the existing centre, second edge-of-centre sites, thirdly, out-of-centre, giving weight to locations that best serve the needs of deprived areas. Flexibility and realism is required in identifying sites for allocation. Plans should identify sites that are, or are likely to become available for development.
- 5.7 The Borough Council's assessment of the potential for sites within the existing PSA to accommodate comparison retail development is set out in a 2005 committee report on preparation of the CTCAAP [BD/CFD/TC/004] and the preferred options draft CTCAAP [CD/CFD/020].

- 5.8 The Borough Council considers it essential that new development locations strengthen the whole Town Centre and do not jeopardise the vitality of existing shopping areas.
- 5.9 High Chelmer, Barrack Square and riverside land east of the High Street are within the existing primary shopping area and are proposed site allocations in the CTCAAP. The Council has been proactive in stimulating development and improvement in these areas over several years as summarised below and in Section 7 on phasing:

High Chelmer – AAP site no. 1

- 5.10 High Chelmer shopping centre constitutes a highly valuable part of the existing shopping provision, comprising approximately 29,000sq m retail floorspace, covering a large site area fronting directly onto the High Street. A 1970s, single level, managed shopping centre, generally acknowledged to be outdated, wasteful of space and a major eyesore.
- 5.11 The CTCAAP allocates High Chelmer as Opportunity Site no 1 and proposes development in recognition of its potential and its key location within the PSA.
- 5.12 Minor or major development would lead to increased floorspace and an improved environment. There is scope for increasing floorspace on an upper level, within screened service areas, or in redeveloped sections of the existing centre. The maximum potential development would entail redevelopment of the car park and creation of an additional level of shopping floorspace. Allowing for new servicing and car park access space needs, the Borough Council estimates that floorspace could be approximately doubled, with a net increase of approximately 18,600 sq m. This would only fulfil a minority part of the overall growth requirement.
- 5.13 The shopping centre owners have held discussions with the local planning authority on three occasions since 2000. In each discussion possible ways of upgrading and extending the shopping centre have been explored, including relocation of parking, location of new floorspace and inclusion of restaurant and residential uses. To date developers working with the shopping centre owners have not yet been able to progress a significant scheme at High Chelmer, largely due to asset management implications
- 5.14 Planning permission was granted in early 2008 for a new High Street entrance.

The River Can north and south frontage – AAP site no. 2

- 5.15 This area includes the Marks and Spencer service yard, the Co-op Quadrant department store, the former Alders and adjoining land where development would lead to increased floorspace and a better integrated part of the shopping centre. The north and south frontages to the River Can are central sites on an under-exploited riverside, with direct access from Parkway. The buildings and servicing arrangements are inefficient and the streets and service yards unsightly.
- 5.16 An Urban Design Framework document was produced by the Borough Council in 1999. Its aim was to introduce new shop units, improve the quality of built frontages, rationalise service access and enhance the Moulsham Street area. [BD/CFD/TC/020]
- 5.17 The 2005 feasibility study for Chelmer Waterside considered the potential for this area and showed how it could form a strengthened retail circuit. [BD/CFD/060] There is clear scope for redevelopment of existing retail property and service areas but this would also only fulfil a minority part of the overall growth requirement.

The land East of High Street – AAP site no. 3

- 5.18 This area is directly to the rear of High Street shops and has access from Springfield Road with a river frontage is available for development. It is underused and derelict land containing surface car parking in need of regeneration. There is scope for considerable new development.

- 5.19 A Development Framework was adopted as supplementary guidance in 2002. Its planning objectives were to bring forward land for development, optimise use of land within the Town Centre, set a structure for future development. It led to land assembly and comprehensive development proposals. The first phase scheme for 72 apartments and 935 sq m retail and restaurant floorspace was granted permission in 2005 and completed in 2007. (CBC planning permission 04/00703/FUL). A planning application for the second phase was submitted in February 2008, comprising 192 dwellings, 16,731 sq m retail, A2 and A3 floorspace, in accordance with the development framework.

These development schemes will contribute a minority part of the overall growth requirement.

Tesco – AAP site no 4

- 5.19 The Tesco foodstore on Springfield Road comprises 3,000 sq m net floorspace and 556 parking spaces. It lies within the existing PSA. It is directly connected to Springfield Road and High Street.
- 5.20 While redevelopment of this site for comparison shopping was a considered option, the Borough Council considers that Tesco on Springfield Road is an appropriate use within the existing Primary Shopping Area, making full and effective use of the site – the building has rooftop parking and is sited onto the street frontage with an entrance well-related to Springfield Road and the rest of the PSA, acting as an anchor.
- 5.21 The feasibility study into Chelmer Waterside tested an option with a department store anchor on the Tesco site. It found that there is insufficient space for a department store and that a replacement foodstore in a retail park on Chelmer Waterside would separate the proposed residential area in site no 24 from the shopping centre.
- 5.22 Redevelopment of the site for comparison shopping would entail displacing the existing Debenhams to achieve a retail circuit with new shop units leading to the new anchor. Therefore development of the Tesco site would largely replace existing floorspace and not contribute the required additional floorspace.
- 5.23 There is no desire to relocate the existing Tesco store to a freestanding retail park-type building which would disrupt the form and character of the town centre.

6 Opportunities for Extending the PSA

Suitability of Chelmer Waterside for Extension of the Shopping Area

- 6.1 The current retail core extends roughly north-south along the High Street to Moulsham Street, and west-east from Chelmsford Market to the Meadows retail park. The Borough Council's spatial rationale is to maintain the balance of the centre by extending the PSA to the east with a broadly equivalent walking distance from the High Street east and west.
- 6.2 During the preparation of the CTCAAP alternative locations for accommodating significant retail growth outside of the existing PSA were assessed. An extension to the existing Meadows shopping centre taking development into land at Chelmer Waterside was the preferred option conveyed into the submission CTCAAP.
- 6.3 Opportunity Site 5 in the CTCAAP comprises the former gas works north-west of the Essex Records Office and the surface car park on the peninsula at the river convergence. This is mainly derelict former gas works land in need of regeneration.
- 6.4 The Borough Council considers selection of this area is well founded for the following reasons:

- It fulfils the requirements of the sequential approach, after allowing for increased floorspace within the existing PSA;
- The availability of the land needing regeneration;
- Ability to connect logically with the existing centre in a continuous pedestrian circuit;
- The ability to accommodate genuine additional floorspace;
- Use of existing car parks;
- Ability to design a development layout taking account of the site constraints.

6.5 The planning context for regeneration of the whole Chelmer Waterside area is the Chelmer Waterside Strategy adopted by the Council as SPG in 2002 [BD/CFD/TC/027] and a concept statement for areas 1 and 9 (the same as AAP site no 5) was adopted in 2004. [BD/CFD/TC/026]

Other Proposed Locations for Extending the PSA

6.6 The CTCAAP also proposes extensions to the PSA as follows:

6.7 *Springfield Road, east of Tesco.* The proposed PSA extension allows the Tesco store to expand.

6.8 *Eastwards along Baddow Road towards Moulsham Mill.* This would enable extension of the Secondary Frontage of the shopping area.

6.9 *East of High Street to the river side.* The proposed extension to the PSA was drawn to include land behind existing High Street retail properties, but excludes land behind offices and a hotel. The completed first phase development includes a street-side block containing ground floor commercial floorspace, which lies within the extended PSA as proposed. The defined extension to the PSA allows for a similar building block to continue southwards in a subsequent development phase, with retail floorspace. The way the extended PSA is drawn allows development to be integrated and does not restrict development.

6.10 *West of Chelmsford market and High Chelmer car park.* The CTCAAP proposal to extend the Primary Shopping Area to Victoria Road South will assist with the improvement of High Chelmer shopping centre. It means that the whole site of the car park can be planned for retail led development. The very extensive existing High Chelmer shopping centre holds potential for more efficient and effective use of well-located land within the existing PSA.

6.11 The High Chelmer Partnership prepared plans in 2006-7 proposing a 55,000 sq m extension of the PSA west of High Chelmer shopping centre, including redevelopment of the multi-storey car park. This approach is the subject of their representations on the submission CTCAAP. The proposal relies on land detached from the existing PSA. An extension of the PSA west of the High Chelmer shopping centre would divert the pedestrian circuit of the shopping centre as a whole. Part of the area is a well-located, modern office building; part is land in Site no. 20 with planning permission for residential-led mixed uses and relocated public open space. The Borough Council does not consider arguments that the extended High Chelmer as shown in the representation is the most sustainable nor sequentially preferable as it also relies on land outside the existing PSA. It does not consider an extension westwards to accommodate a new department store necessary for the improvement of the existing High Chelmer shopping centre - Site no 1.

6.12 The overall benefit to the town would not be greater than an eastward extension of the PSA – Chelmer Waterside would provide a critical link to a new residential quarter further east, it enables regeneration of brownfield land, and creation of an attractive environment around the river frontages,

Practicability of integrating Chelmer Waterside into the PSA

6.12 In 2005, the owners of this area, Standard Life, Lend Lease and CBC formed a partnership to explore development opportunities. Chapman Taylor were commissioned in 2005 to undertake a feasibility

study of sites 1 and 9 of the Chelmer Waterside Strategy to examine the capacity of this site to take a connected, commercially acceptable layout and the prospects for viability [BD/CFD/060].

- 6.13 The study considered the constraints presented by High Bridge Road, land contamination, utilities infrastructure, flood risk and the opportunities offered by its location and its water frontages. The study recommended a workable layout in an illustrative masterplan which entails the removal of High Bridge Road, creation of a new access road and creation of a new bus access link.
- 6.14 The study considered different layout options, one of which retained High Bridge Road, another investigated the placing of an anchor store on the Tesco site with a retail park-style development in the gas works area. The analysis of advantages and disadvantages showed that the preferred approach is well-founded.
- 6.15 High Bridge Road acts as a visual and physical barrier and the need for maintenance access would segregate the road from development with a detrimental effect on the retail environment. The study examined a solution to divert the road along Wharf Road, creating a main distributor for wider new development, while maintaining a section of High Bridge Road for service access. Removal of High Bridge Road thereby becomes an opportunity for generating best use of the site. The creation of a new access road meets wider town centre objectives relating to regeneration of the whole of Chelmer Waterside.
- 6.16 Ground contamination results from a long history of gas making. While Transco have done some decontamination, the ground surface will have to be treated.
- 6.17 The land is largely within Flood Zone 3 and would require compensation flood storage. The components of the proposed Flood Alleviation Scheme – an upstream flood storage area and on-site defences would jointly provide a standard of protection of 1:100 years plus climate change [Topic Paper 5 - Managing Flood Risk]
- 6.18 The illustrated masterplan layout demonstrates how a development can generate pedestrian permeability throughout the area across the river Chelmer and Navigation and along the waterfronts.
- 6.19 The design strategy is based on direct linkage between the existing shopping area and a new anchor store location, and creation of a shopping circuit focussed on public spaces. It considers alternative options for basement or roof-top shopper parking and inclusion of residential accommodation and associated car parking.
- 6.20 The study positively confirmed that the proposed development site
 - has the capacity to meet a significant part of the town centre's need for new retail floorspace
 - has the physical characteristics to realise a commercially acceptable layout
 - can be well integrated with the retail core
 - has prospects of financial viability.
- 6.21 The study provides evidence justifying selection of this site in the CTCAAP.
- 6.22 The study enabled development assumptions to be agreed with the County Highway Authority and built into the traffic model used to assess the options for a new access road to accompany removal of High Bridge Road.

Further Work Progressing the Chelmer Waterside Site

- 6.23 A property owning consortium comprising Standard Life, Lend Lease and the Borough Council is actively working on scheme options. The consortium's planning team is in regular dialogue with the local planning authority.

- 6.24 The Local Planning Authority has seen scheme options in preparation and under appraisal which carry forward the work in the feasibility study. The Borough Council has wanted to be assured that the ongoing work confirms the AAP proposals and demonstrates that a commercially attractive, viable extension to the shopping centre is practicable on Site no. 5.
- 6.25 A report setting out progress with masterplanning was submitted by Standard Life Investments Ltd and the Chelmsford Meadows Ltd Partnership to the Core Strategy examination in September 2007. [BD/CFD/TC/041] The masterplan concept comprises a net addition of 61,250 sq m gross (approx 50,000 sq m net sales) floorspace. The Borough Council is satisfied that the quantum of development indicated by emerging concept studies is consistent with traffic modelling assumptions used to test the preferred option [BD/CFD/059].
- 6.26 The Borough Council has seen how the masterplan concept has developed and is satisfied that the emerging urban design provides strong pedestrian linkages with the existing PSA and demonstrates that it is possible to develop the area as an integral part of the whole shopping area.
- 6.27 The Borough Council is satisfied that progress has been made with acquisition of former gas works land. Planning permission has been granted and arrangements are advanced for relocation of necessary gas pressure reduction plant.
- 6.28 The Borough Council has commissioned further studies to demonstrate the workability of the changes to the road network associated with removal of High Bridge Road.

Types of Anchor Store

- 6.29 The Borough Council has clearly stated its aspiration for a new department store as part of the Chelmsford Tomorrow vision.
- 6.30 The location of new shopping must work in relation to the primary shopping area as a whole. This means a legible walking route between retail anchors attracting people through shopping streets. New anchors generating retail activity may be a new department store, a relocated department store (Debenhams for example), a large variety store, a large fashion store such as Top Shop, a leisure store such as Borders, or a quality food store. These would work with existing anchors, including department stores, major variety stores and Chelmsford market.
- 6.31 The CTCAAP identifies locations for new anchor stores including the existing High Chelmer shopping centre. The case for a department store on other land west of Victoria Road South, linked to High Chelmer is not supported by the Borough Council. Nor is there a case to make land west of the existing High Chelmer a priority location to accommodate a new department store, over and above the other locations considered.

Location of Convenience Shopping

- 6.32 To fulfil the requirements for food shopping, sites within or at the edge of the PSA are required. There are very few available sites suitable for convenience shopping. Therefore the CTCAAP prioritises development on two sites: extending the existing Tesco on Springfield Road – Site no. 4, and land at Moulsham Mill – Site no. 25. The Borough Council is mindful of the environmental sensitivity of the Moulsham Mill site and the need to relate to the setting of natural landscape and listed buildings. This does not make the site unsuitable but generates stringent site allocation requirements.

7 Phasing And Prioritising Development

- 7.1 The Grimley study says there is no need to impose any formal phasing on the options identified, provided the development framework provides clear guidance on the scale and form of uses and the

degree of integration to ensure that the potential for each opportunity area, including river frontages, to contribute to the success of the centre is not prejudiced.

- 7.2 Paragraph 6.8 of the CTCAAP states the Borough Council's phasing strategy. The CTCAAP programme in Section 23 gives each development proposal a priority:
- Priority 1 matters are for implementation in the period to 2011
 - Priority 2 matters are for implementation during the period to 2016.
- 7.3 Chelmer Waterside is the proposed location for shopping development as set out above. As well as leading the regeneration of derelict land, this area can accommodate substantial additional floorspace, meeting the identified need and making the step-up needed to fulfil Chelmsford's regional role. The Borough Council's planning priority is to promote and enable the substantive growth of additional shopping to meet regional and borough planning objectives. The Borough Council is aware of the financial appraisals and commercial risks associated with major investments, and wishes to enable the initiation of the major growth project without delay to ensure the success of the strategy. Achievement of this long term objective would be jeopardised by being held back to await smaller developments to come forward. Therefore the CTCAAP prioritises development of Chelmer Waterside to secure progress with the substantive development delivering a change in role of the centre.
- 7.4 It is not the only location however, other locations within throughout the Primary Shopping Area are integral to the shopping strategy and need to contribute to the overall quantum of floorspace and maintain the balance and vitality of the centre as a whole. Progress with development east of High Street is also a priority.
- 7.5 However, there is no current prospect of major development at High Chelmer or Barrack Square and it would damage the town centre's prospects to wait for schemes to emerge. It would run entirely against the strategic objectives to wait for these sites to develop in advance of the only location that can provide substantial additional floorspace.
- 7.6 The CTCAAP proposes development at High Chelmer as Priority 2, which seeks implementation during the period to 2016. During 2006 discussions took place with the High Chelmer Partnership, comprising Capital Shopping Centres and the head lessee Coal Pensions Properties. The partnership submitted representations on the submission CTCAAP.
- 7.7 Since 2007 discussions have been held with Centros Miller, new partners of Coal Pension Properties, about options for modifying and reorganising the existing centre and introducing strong retail anchors. To promote alternative ways of expanding and enhancing the centre, the Borough Council produced a draft planning brief in November 2007 and has given this to Centros Miller prior to wider consultation.
- 7.8 The Local Planning Authority has encouraged different scales of development and improvement over several years but to date developers working with the shopping centre owners have not yet been able to progress a significant scheme at High Chelmer, largely due to asset management implications - the threat of disrupting existing thriving tenancies.
- 7.9 Similarly, since the inception of the CTCAAP process, discussions have been held with key landowners and businesses including Marks and Spencer, Co-op Quadrant and the former Alders site concerning retail-led redevelopment opportunities for this section of the Town Centre. Quadrant has invested in a major upgrade of its store and planning permission granted for sub-division of Alders but significant development proposals have not yet emerged.
- 7.10 While it is within the existing PSA, the Borough Council does not support development of the Tesco site (opportunity site no.4) to accommodate the needs for comparison shopping and therefore it is a Priority 1 site for expansion of food shopping, not comparison shopping,

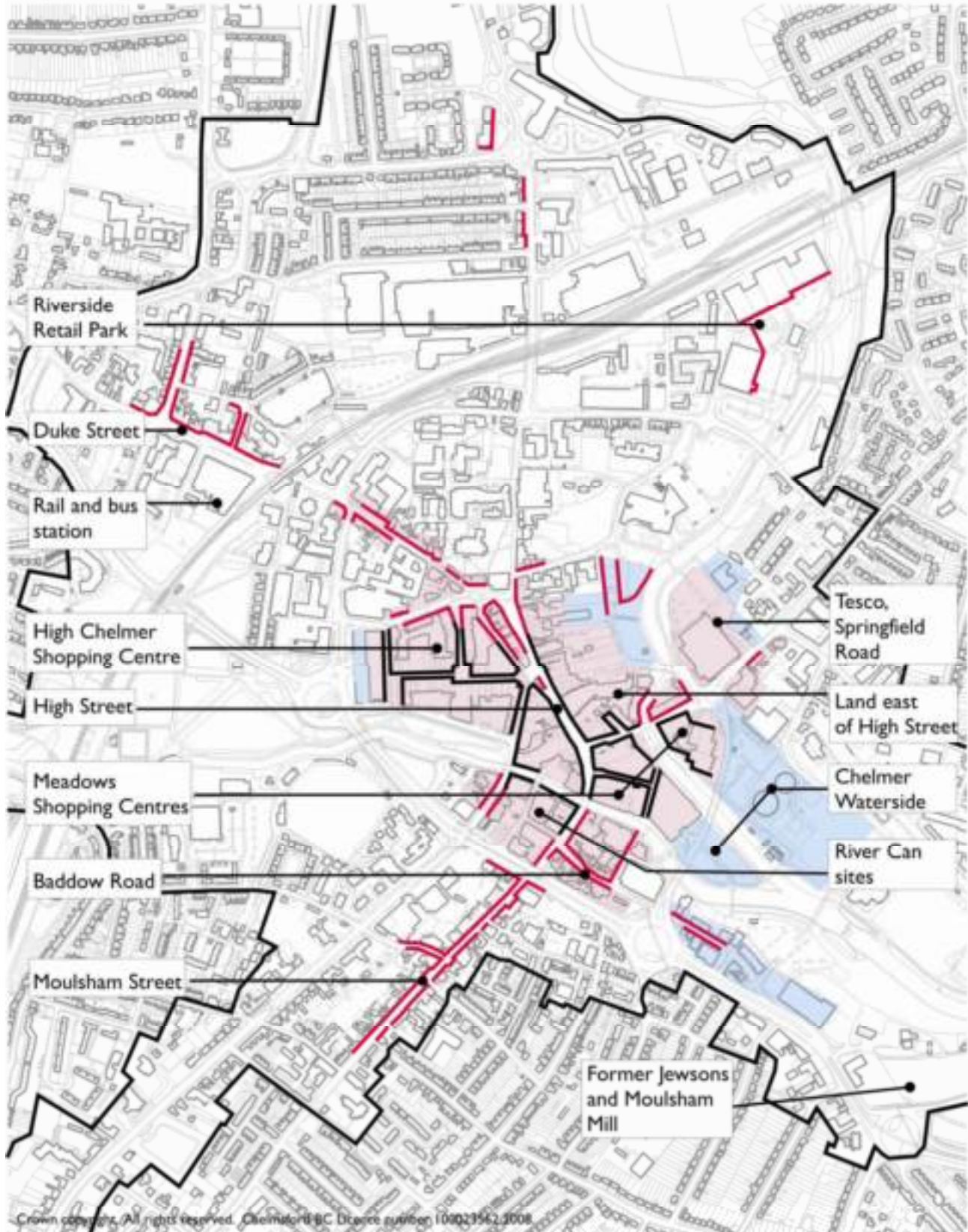
8 Infrastructure Relating to Retail Growth

Road Access and Transport Accessibility

- 8.1 Delivering the optimal development of Chelmer Waterside requires the removal of High Bridge Road and construction of a new access road from the east. This was assessed in the Chapman Taylor feasibility study and in traffic modelling and found to be practicable and viable.
- 8.2 The Area Action Plan contains proposals for enhanced bus access to serve the extended primary shopping area (see transportation topic paper).
- 8.3 Car parking – the existing PSA and new shopping development throughout the centre will be supported by existing multi-storey car parks and new car parks at Baddow Road and within Chelmer Waterside (see transportation topic paper). These car parks will be for short term shopper parking and not for long term commuter parking.

Topic paper number 4: Retail Strategy

Diagram 1 _ shopping in chelmsford town centre

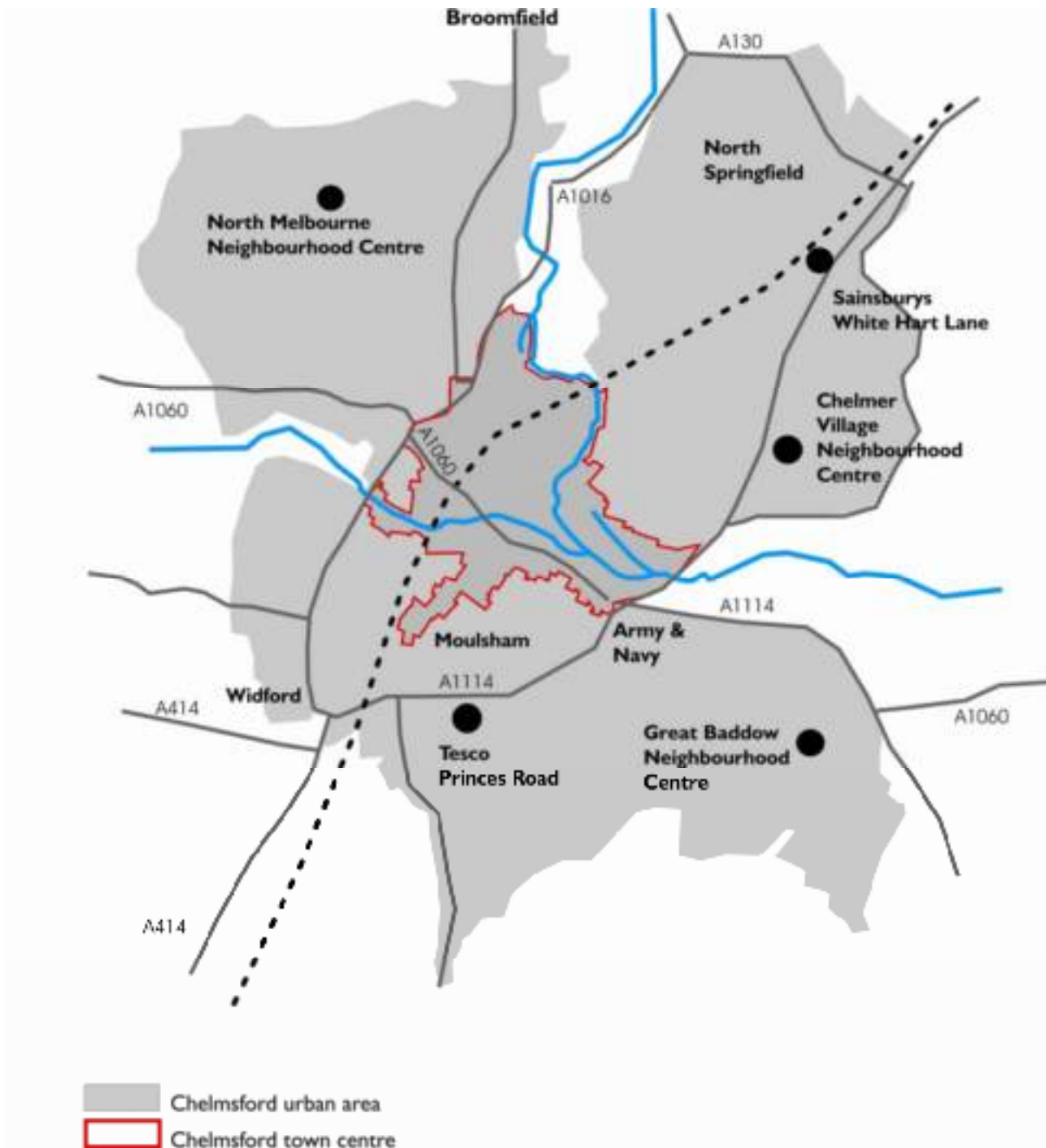


Notation

- Primary shopping area
- Proposed extension to primary shopping area
- Primary frontage
- Secondary frontage

Topic paper number 4: Retail Strategy

Diagram 2 – shopping areas outside the town centre



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