



## **Southend Business Partnership**

Response to the Thames Estuary Growth  
Commission 2050 - Call for Ideas

September 2016

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## Response to the Thames Estuary Growth Commission Call for Ideas

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The Southend Business Partnership is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the work being undertaken by the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, via the July 2016 call for ideas.

The Partnership firmly believes that the Thames Estuary area has the potential to become the critical engine for growth within the UK economy and welcomes all efforts to achieve sustainable growth that seek to maximise the benefits realised by local businesses and residents.

Southend is an area that has delivered a huge amount of growth and contributed significantly to the Thames Estuary area during the last 15 years. In many instances this growth has been initiated and driven by Southend businesses, but it also extends to all of the component parts that comprise the Thames Estuary as 'a place', including: housing, transport, population, health, green spaces and the wider built environment.

Examples of SBP member investment in the area include:

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|---|------------------------------------|
| ■ £200million Southend Airport Business Park (projected)            | ■ £27million The Forum             |
| ■ £150million London Southend Airport                               | ■ £26million Park Inn Palace Hotel |
| ■ £100million Marine Plaza (projected)                              | ■ £7.6million City Beach           |
| ■ £30million Adventure Island, Sands Restaurant, Sea Life Adventure | ■ £6million Roslin Hotel           |
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Within the Thames Estuary area, Southend businesses stand willing and able to play their part in forging a new place that can be universally recognised as an example of excellence in growth as well as a fantastic place to live, work and visit.

On reflection of the work to be undertaken by the Thames Estuary Commission, the Southend Business Partnership wishes the commission every success with their task and urges commissioners to:

- be bold, ambitious and innovative with plans for the region;
  - consider, first and foremost, the lives and livelihoods of residents and businesses in the area;
  - seek to incorporate the views and ambitions of those businesses and residents that know the area best;
  - cut through the red-tape and bureaucratic barriers that have previously restrained growth in the area.
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## The Southend Business Partnership

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The Southend Business Partnership is the principal organisation representing businesses located in Southend. The Partnership is currently chaired by Mr Murray Foster and has approximately 1700 active members. The partnership holds quarterly briefing sessions, regularly attended by 120+ members. The partnership also operates an executive committee, made up of representative members from the following sectors/areas:

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|------------------------------------|--|
| ■ Medical Technologies             | ■ Finance & Customer Services                |
| ■ Retail                           | ■ Property                                   |
| ■ Tourism                          | ■ Transport                                  |
| ■ Cultural and Creative Industries | ■ Education (Higher & Further)               |
| ■ Engineering & Aviation           | ■ Local Authority (Southend Borough Council) |
| ■ Community & 3rd Sector           |  |
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The Southend Business Partnership is represented on the South Essex Growth Partnership and is subsequently represented on the South East Local Enterprise Partnership strategic board.

The following response incorporates views taken from the whole of the Southend Business Partnership membership base with specific contributions made by the Southend Business Partnership Executive Committee.

## Our Vision for Southend 2050

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In 2050, the City of Southend is a bright, prosperous and bustling metropolitan area; a 'City-by-the-sea' and a jewel within the crown of the Thames Estuary.

Encompassing the previous Borough of Southend-on-Sea, as well as the neighbouring local authority areas of Castle Point and Rochford, The City of Southend is centred on a bright and characterful core, comprising several distinct 'hub' areas linked by clean and uncongested routes for pedestrians and public transport. The modern, mixed-use city-centre together with its 'destination' night time economy and thirteen miles of prime European shore-line form the beating heart of the city.

Throughout the city, high quality residential property is seamlessly blended with commercial, civic and leisure building uses. A light-railway moves residents, workers and visitors effortlessly around the city and shoreline, enabling every area to maximise its potential as a destination.

As an urban centre, a large range of housing exists within the city and its suburbs, providing adequate accommodation for all. Rich with period properties dating back to the nineteenth century, housing in the

west of the city is tastefully blended with more modern developments, such as the Queensway area in the north; offering a mixture of high-end, private and rented properties alongside more affordable accommodation.

Bolstered by a network of well-maintained green spaces, corridors and parkland; health, leisure and sporting activities are central to the lifestyles of the majority of the city's residents. An expanded Southend University Hospital and a strong and integrated 3rd sector mean that residents and visitors from the surrounding areas have ready access to the best healthcare and community services in Europe.

The six key transport arteries into the city (A13, A127, London Fenchurch Street Line, London Liverpool Street Line, London Southend Airport and a new arterial thoroughfare) ensure that people and goods can move freely in, out and around the city unhindered. Thirty-five minute journey times to Central London and the city's 'gigabit network' status mean that commercial and community links with the capital are blooming; bringing together the very best elements of both cities.

Southend schools and colleges, graded as amongst the best in Europe, are nationally recognised as the crucible of the best UK talent. The Southend education quarter, a physical manifestation of the city's high attainment, is located at the heart of the city-centre, ensuring that local and international students are an integrated component of the city's cultural and creative offers, as well as providing a crucial dynamic and skilled workforce to growing local industries.

To the north of the city, London Southend Airport, acts as gateway for visitors;

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transporting millions of passengers from every continent, to the city and beyond. The surrounding Southend Airport Business Park supports a world-leading cluster of engineering and aviation businesses by providing high-end office and commercial premises with a bustling medical technologies centre radiating innovation from its core.

In the west of the city, a world-renowned conference centre, internationally-recognised theatres and the new 'Museum of the Thames Estuary' ensure that business visitors and cultural tourists alike are welcomed and catered for. Thriving galleries, bars, restaurants and shops, as well as a unique shellfish fishing industry continue to ensure that Leigh-on-Sea is a popular place to live, work and visit.

In the east of the city, a newly constructed marina provides new high-end residential and commercial property, as well as a landing place for watercraft of all shapes and sizes. Further east, Shoeburyness and Foulness Island offer an attractive mixture of residential property, sublime green spaces, a dark-sky nature reserve and un-crowded beaches that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

To the south of the city, a range of internationally renowned hotels and hostelries meet the needs of over 6 million overnight visitors annually. In the middle of the shoreline, transporting visitors into the centre of the estuary itself, a renewed and revitalised Southend pier provides new commercial and leisure attractions for visitors and acts as a globally-recognised icon for the city.

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## Our Ideas for Southend and the Thames Estuary

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### Creating high productivity clusters

**Southend as a hub for digital 'health' and 'media' businesses.** Southend's imminent installation of a 'dark fibre' broadband network and confirmation as a 'gigabit-city' will confirm it as a premier location for investment in digitally-based businesses. Developing the skills provision to support entrance into health and media businesses for the local workforce will further enhance the productivity of the area. Similarly, property prices encouraging digital business to relocate from East London will increase the areas appeal as a focus for investment. Local infrastructure to support skills and innovation space will catalyse the creation of this hub and maximise the number of local jobs created by this industry.

**Southend as a hub for medical technologies, health, well-being and mental-health innovation.** Southend is already home to a growing cluster of health and medical businesses, including: Olympus Keymed, Surgical Holdings and a number of SMEs that have grown around Southend University Hospital. The development of a new Medical Technologies Innovation Centre within the Southend Airport Business Park site and expansion of the local hospital will facilitate further growth within this industry. With a growing burden placed on public services by the needs of mental health and ageing patients, Southend is a prime site to develop this cluster further. Improved connectivity with London and integration with existing specialist establishments (University College London, St Mary's, etc) will further support development of this cluster.

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### Increasing connectivity

**Creation of a single, comprehensive public transport system covering the whole of the Thames Estuary area.** Frequently, privately operated public transport services do not cover significant employment sites effectively (Thames Industrial Park and Temple Farm Industrial Estate being notable examples). This inability to get skilled staff (in particular young people without access to a private vehicle) to a workplace represents a significant barrier to growth for many businesses in the region. Collectively procuring a comprehensive transport system for the whole area will unlock latent economic growth and realise previously unexploited economies of scale.

**Expanded train operating hours.** Currently major train services operating in South

Essex do not operate before 06:30am or after 11:00pm, this results in a serious impediment to growth for London Southend Airport; the only airport with the capacity to add significant numbers of new travellers in the South East. Further, this creates an inconvenience for local shift workers in the area and restrains the growth of the night-time economy. Collective bargaining with the train operators, led centrally, should seek to rectify this problem as soon as possible.

**Using the river for public and commercial transport.** For millennia, the river Thames has been utilised for transporting goods and people efficiently and effectively. New infrastructure and investment could make this form of transport an even quicker and more cost-effective option for modern

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travellers and businesses alike. Similarly, further utilising the river for the transport of mass goods will reduce congestion levels on our over-burdened road network.

**A new link road into Southend.** Southend is a burgeoning city hub with huge potential for economic growth. At present the road arteries into the town represent a significant barrier to business growth and increase business costs across the board. A third link road or arterial thoroughfare (in addition to the a127/a13) would reduce travel times, congestion and business costs. Similarly, a 'park and ride' facility, in partnership with the rail service providers, will enable the area to further unlock its growth potential.

**Expand Southend Airport.** Over the last five years, London Southend Airport has proven itself to be a key engine for growth in the local economy. Whilst excellent progress has been made, additional runway space and

an expanded building footprint will enable the airport to embark on new routes and unlock further private sector investment. The potential gains for the local and regional economy from this development make a compelling business case.

**New underground parking provision within the town centre.** Southend's tourism offer is strong and has shown persistent growth during the last 5 years. However, on busy days, the number of people that can access the seafront and town centre is restrained by the number of car-parking spaces available. New, subterranean parking provision will reduce the congestion created by motorists trawling for parking spaces; enable the tourism industry to further expand whilst preserving the utility of the surface land for development.

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## Creating new homes and communities

**New Marina Development on Southend Seafront.** A new marina in Southend has the potential to compete with prime docking sites for watercraft such as St Katherine's Dock, Wapping and South Dock Marina, Rotherhithe. Further, a new marina providing commercial and residential property, linked to a revitalised Southend Pier, would attract strong interest from international developers whilst creating new homes to contribute to the achievement of local housing targets.

**Secure Ministry of Defence Land for Housing sites.** A large amount of land exists to the east of Southend that is grossly under-utilised by the ministry of defence. This land could provide key sites for new housing as well as generating a significant income for the MOD/Central Government. The Commission should commence negotiations with the relevant government offices immediately to put the land to productive use as soon as possible.

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## Securing investment

**A new landmark tower marking the entrance to the Thames Gateway.** Southend is unique in being able to offer a 270° view of the Thames Estuary with views stretching as far as Canary Wharf in the West and Kentish Flats wind farm to the East. A new tower with viewing platform will enable the public to get the best from these views as well as providing an iconic landmark, synonymous with the Thames Estuary that will attract international investment to the area.

**Southend pier as a site for new commercial property.** Southend's iconic pier currently represents a significant burden on the public purse. Developing the pier as a site for commercial property, whilst maintaining its core structure, will alleviate the burden on the taxpayer and bring forward an enhanced visitor offer that will retain and enhance this globally important structure, in-perpetuity.

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## Harnessing innovation in the built environment

**A new tidal lagoon, generating power for the region.** The tidal range at Southend (5-7metres) means that it is a prime site for the implementation of the latest technology in tidal power generation. A new tidal lagoon will realise this potential, creating a new

landmark within the estuary, securing a sustainable source of power for the regions homes and businesses and creating a new visitor experience to rival other sites within the UK and beyond.

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## Putting it together: centres of excellence

**Southend as a 'Digital Construction Centre of Excellence'.** With many billion pounds worth of regeneration projects planned within the Thames Estuary area during the next 10 years, Southend is in a unique position to act as a central hub for education, skills and training to support future investment. The education quarter within the town is appropriately positioned

to expand provision from both the University of Essex and South Essex College to meet this imminent demand for skills. This action will ensure that local people are able to benefit from the jobs and wealth creation associated with the planned development, leave a lasting legacy for Southend and act as a key selling point for investment in the area.

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## Conclusion

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The Southend Business Partnership feels that the above represent a strong, positive and inclusive vision for the future for Southend and the Thames Estuary area. We are ready to play our part in making this vision a reality and we welcome any support that the Thames Estuary Commission can offer to aid our progress.

Should the commissioners wish to discuss any of the enclosed information, or indeed any issues associated with Southend businesses and the Thames Estuary area, The Southend Business Partnership would be pleased to participate in discussions and to support the commission's progress.

Yours Sincerely



**Murray S Foster**

Chairman - The Southend Business Partnership

6th September, 2016

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**southend·on·sea**  
business partnership

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