

A black and white photograph of a harbor scene. In the foreground, several small wooden boats are moored in a concrete-lined basin. Behind them, larger boats are docked, including one with the name 'HOOGE SPRINGER' visible on its side. In the background, there are industrial buildings, a crane, and various maritime equipment. The sky is overcast.

**SPATIAL PLAN**

# **OLD LEIGH PORT & TWO TREE ISLAND**

**FINAL REPORT  
JUNE 2019**





Cockle Wharf



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# INTRODUCTION

1



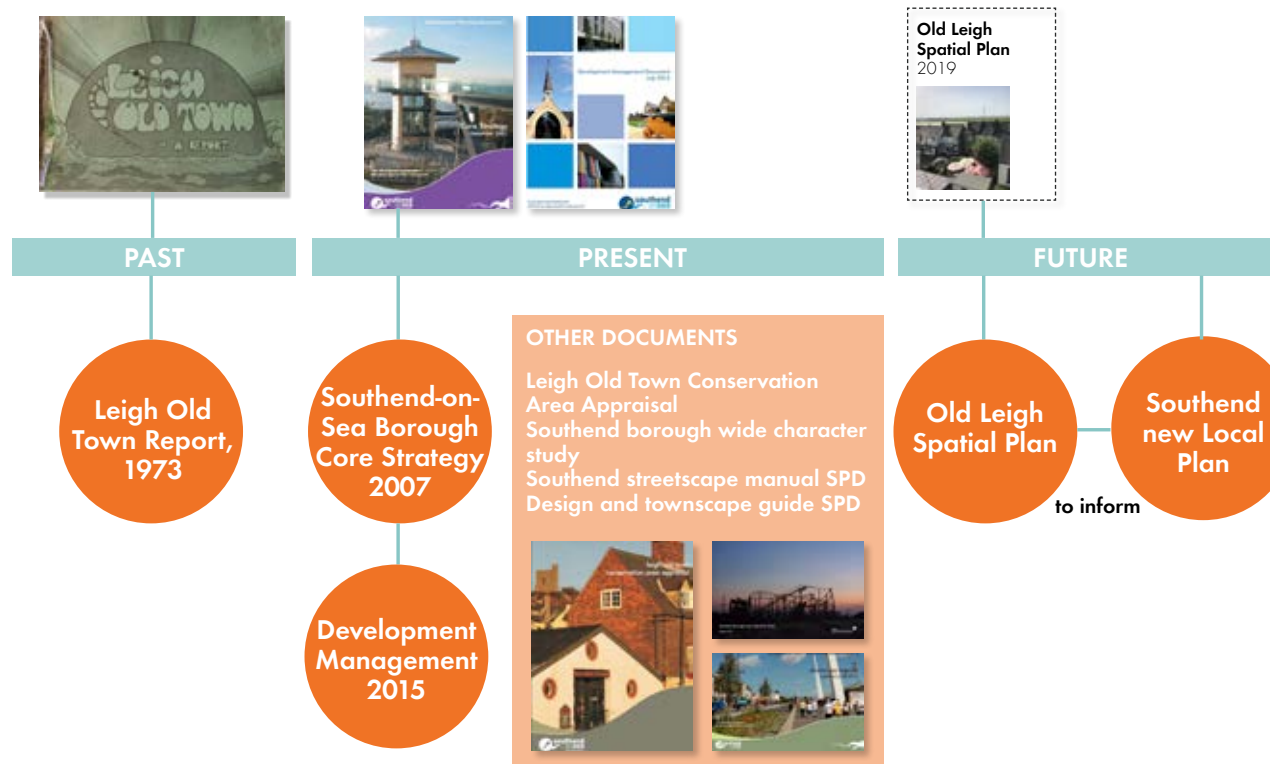
## Overview

The Spatial Plan for Old Leigh has been prepared by Allies and Morrison for Leigh-on-Sea Town Council. The project is funded by Leigh-on-Sea Town Council and the EU's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) locally through the North Thames Fisheries Local Action Group (NTFLAG).

Old Leigh has a long-standing tradition of cockling, fishing, boat building and other maritime activities. The Plan sets out a clear strategy for the Port by providing strategic priorities and establishing the context for a spectrum of local projects and initiatives.

The purpose of the Spatial Plan is to provide Leigh Town Council with a coherent evidence base to inform project development with their partners, and to influence the preparation of the Borough Council's new Local Plan. It will also help to set a framework for funding bids and investment in the future.

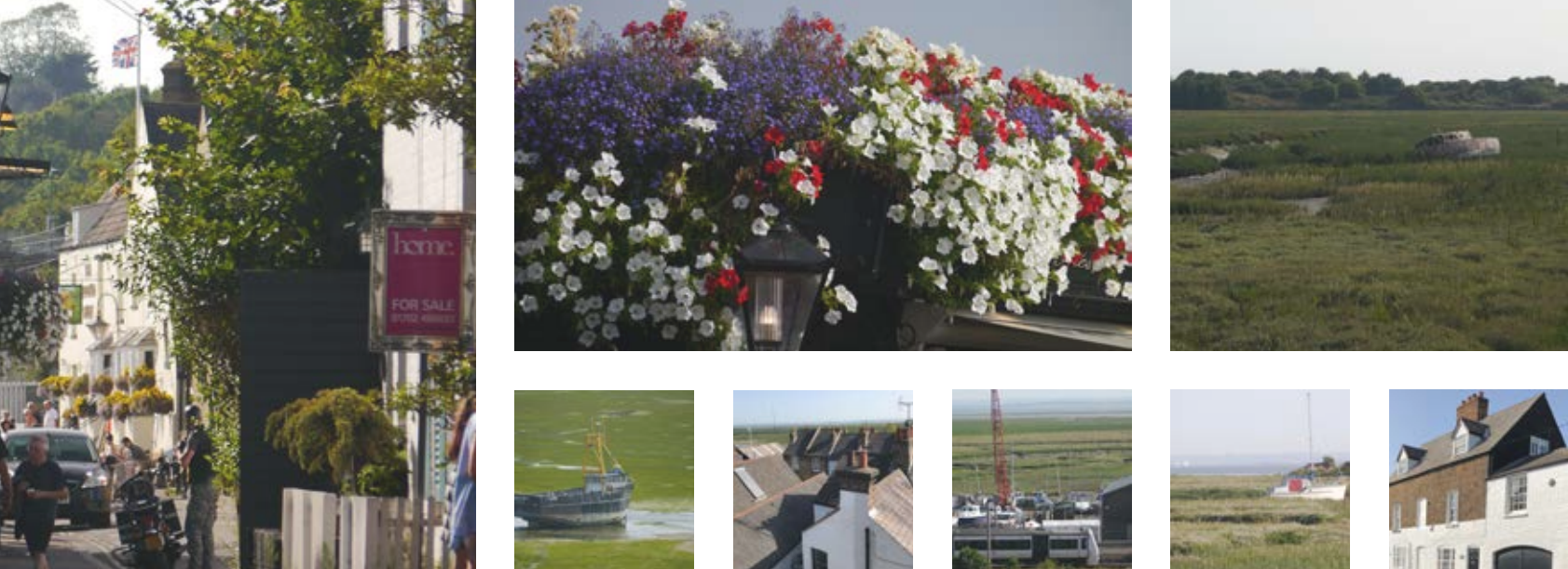
The Spatial Plan should be read in conjunction with other evidence base documents including Leigh Port Feasibility Study and other reports / assessments relating to electrical power supplies and sea defences.



Summary of how the Spatial Plan sits with past, present and future planning documents

Photos of Old Leigh





## Structure

The structure of the Spatial Plan is as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the vision and objectives for Old Leigh and the Port. It summarises the key proposals and recommendations that are explained more fully in Chapter 5;
- **Chapter 3** sets the context for change in the town. This includes background information with regards to its heritage, character, environmental changes, landscape assets and movement and car parking;
- **Chapter 4** analyses the overlap of competing and complementary activities in the town;
- **Chapter 5** sets out the recommended proposals for Old Leigh; and
- **Chapter 6** explores the tools needed to successfully deliver the proposals.

## Purpose of the Spatial Plan

The Spatial Plan has the following aims:



The Spatial Plan contributes to the evidence base that will help to inform the emerging Southend new Local Plan for Southend Borough Council.

The Plan acknowledges the long-standing and current discussions between residents, business owners, community groups and cocklemen, who care about the very special character of Old Leigh and desire to see it continue to thrive. We have worked with local stakeholders to prepare the plan and we are grateful for their insights.

A summary of community involvement is set out in the Appendix.





## Introduction





## The study area

The focus of the study is on Old Leigh and its Port. The area includes the High Street, Leigh Port and Leigh-on-Sea Station to the west. The study area also takes in Two Tree Island and Leigh Marsh. There is no fixed red line boundary - most maps in the Spatial Plan are centred on Leigh Port and the High Street but there are some which show the wider context and are used to show issues relating to landscape, movement and Two Tree Island.

## Partners

The Spatial Plan has been developed as part of a range of studies and initiatives funded by the EMFF and delivered locally through the NTFLAG. It also seeks to complement the Leigh-on-Sea Coastal Community Team (CCT) Economic Plan. The CCT and Leigh Port Partnership will play a key role in supporting Leigh Town Council, Southend Borough Council and other local partners in progressing the principles and emerging projects in the Spatial Plan.

## Planning context

Reference is given to Old Leigh and the Port in existing planning policy. **The Southend-on-Sea Borough Development Management Document (2015)** references the **Southend Borough Wide Character Study (2011)** that recognises the historic estuary town at Leigh-on-Sea as playing a major role in defining the character of Southend.

The Development Management Document recognises the range of leisure and tourism activities that take place along the Seafront in Southend, and the need for an appropriate balance between often competing priorities (p. 34).

Leigh Port and Old Town is listed as a Seafront Character Zone. Development principles for Leigh Port and Old Town are set out in Policy Table 1 (p. 39):

- To maintain a thriving fisheries and working port by resisting the loss of loss of existing marine industrial activities.
- To enhance the leisure and tourism offer, but in a manner that does not compromise the marine industrial activities and character of Leigh Old Town.
- To preserve and enhance the special character of Leigh Old Town Conservation Area.
- Measures that maintain an appropriate balance between the working port and leisure activities, when considered in conjunction with the three bullet points above.

The Development Management Document (2015) recognises the foreshore in Southend as “its most valuable amenity, biodiversity and natural resource and is recognised as such by international, national and local designations” (p. 33), “the mudflats at Leigh contribute to the estuarine character of the place.” It notes the importance of Two Tree Island and Leigh Marshes as important visitor attractions which “could be further enhanced to provide an eco-tourism offer” p. 34. Two Tree Island, Leigh Marshes and Belton Hills form their own character zone, under which are the following principles (p.39):

- To maintain and improve recreational facilities within the character area and provide appropriate additional recreational facilities that support the needs of residents and enhances the attractiveness of the offer for visitors.
- To protect the special character of the nature reserve.
- The priority is to maintain the openness and function of the Green Belt in this area.
- To retain character and building height and type along Marine Parade.

Leigh Old Town was designated as a conservation area in 1977. Its special interest is summarised below:

- Unique character as a working marine village;
- Close urban texture with buildings on the edge of the narrow High Street and narrow gaps providing glimpses of the Creek;
- Attractive and lively townscape; and
- Position overlooking Leigh Creek and the marshes to the south and backed by Leigh Hill to the north enables extensive views into and out of the area.

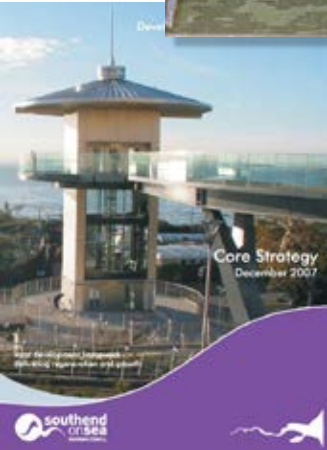
Policy C5 in the existing **Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan** specifically relates to the conservation area of Leigh Old Town:

*“Within the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area, in addition to Policy C4 the Council will require the retention of commercial, leisure and residential uses appropriate to its character as a working marine village and will seek to reduce vehicular access for non-essential traffic. Permission will normally be refused for the loss of marine industrial uses and associated facilities. Development of existing cockle sheds to provide improved processing facilities will be encouraged subject to the design guidelines set out in Appendix 2 being met. The use of existing cockle sheds will be restricted to the processing, storage and sale of fish, shellfish and other marine products traditionally associated with Leigh Old Town. Additional parking facilities will be sought outside the Conservation Area. Policy Cross References: C4 Conservation Areas and Appendix 2 Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas.”*

The planning context for Old Leigh reiterates the importance of the Port as integral to its character and attraction. It is recommended that the Port should be protected and enhanced to ensure the future sustainability and success of the town. The Spatial Plan offers a strategy to achieve this.



The Leigh Old Town report published in 1973 mentions several of the same issues that Old Leigh still faces.



Southend-on-Sea Core Strategy (2007)



Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2009)



Southend-on-Sea Borough Development Management Document (2015)



Southend Borough-wide Character Study (2011)



# VISION AND OBJECTIVES

## 2

### A VISION FOR OLD LEIGH



**Old Leigh is a working port town, not a museum. Establishing a sustainable future for commercial activities, alongside cultural, community and residential uses, is vital to the long term character of the place.**



**Old Leigh will be accessible to all, made possible with high quality pedestrian and cycle routes to and from the station, Leigh town and nearby car parks.**



**Old Leigh will maintain its seaside charm and working port character, whilst ensuring it is a functional and safe place to live, work and visit.**



**The town's activities will contribute to the protection and enhancement of its stunning natural environment.**



### Objectives

The following objectives set a high bar of ambition for Old Leigh:

To **raise the profile of the 'working port'** character of Old Leigh and to ensure the continuation of maritime activities in the Old Town;

To **create a well-functioning and high quality High Street** by limiting visiting cars and reducing their negative impact on character, safety and the environment;

To **reduce the impact of cars** by providing attractive and legible cycling and pedestrian routes to the High Street from the station, car parks, Leigh town and along the cinder path;

To **improve the way existing public spaces are used** and to create new ones by converting under-used spaces for flexible / temporary uses and activities;

To **promote the wider cultural and community offer** in Old Leigh;

To **protect and enhance the conservation area**, including views into the town and out from Old Leigh to the sea;

To **reduce conflict between unloading catch and recreational activities at Bell Wharf** through the implementation of an effective management strategy to ensure safety for all; and

To **sensitively repair gaps in the historic fabric** by exploring opportunities for minor infill development.



## Summary of the proposals

A series of proposals and projects have been developed to achieve the vision and objectives. The proposals are structured within three themes and are summarised below. They are explained more fully in Chapter 5.

### MOVEMENT

1

Remove visiting cars from the High Street, especially at peak-times



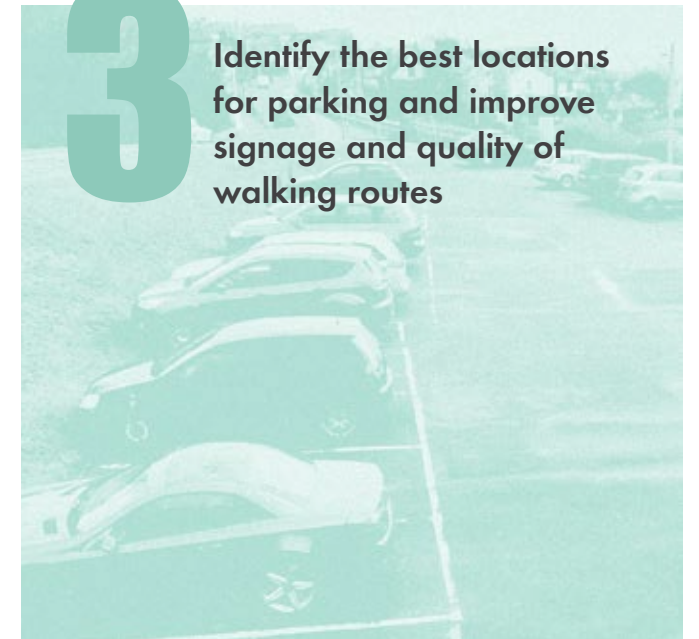
2

Introduce time-limited deliveries to reduce congestion



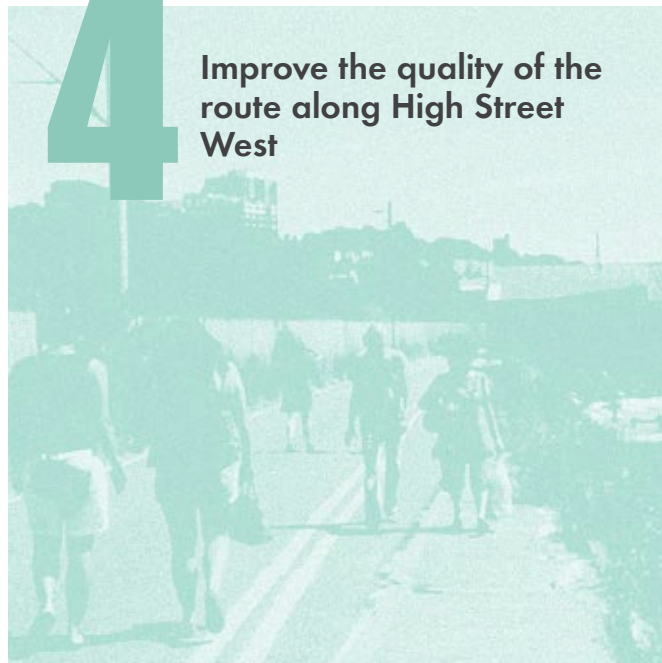
3

Identify the best locations for parking and improve signage and quality of walking routes



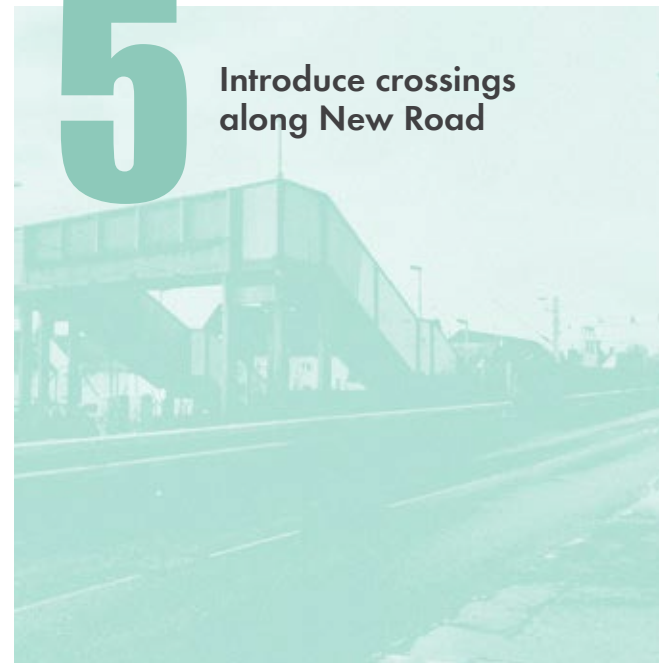
4

Improve the quality of the route along High Street West



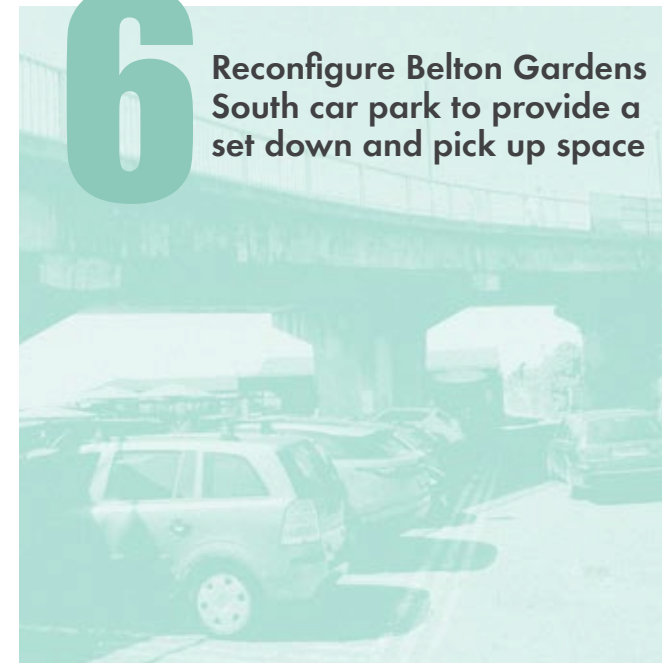
5

Introduce crossings along New Road



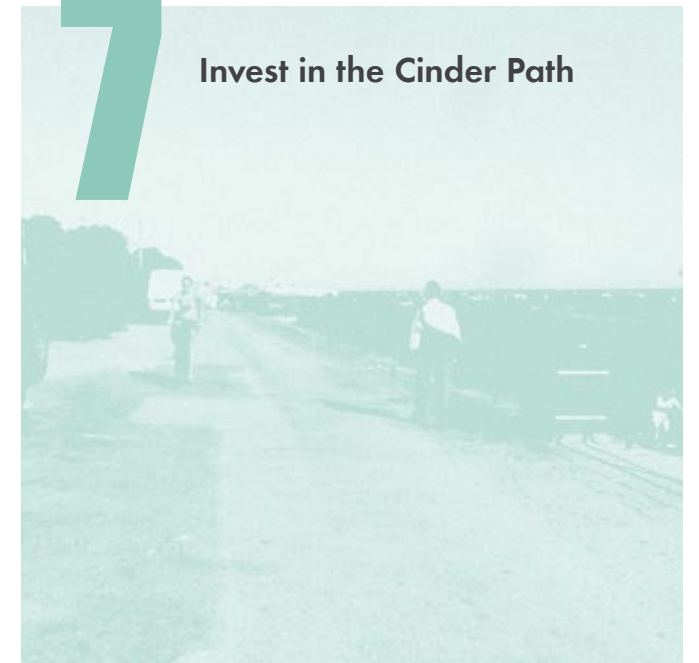
6

Reconfigure Belton Gardens South car park to provide a set down and pick up space



7

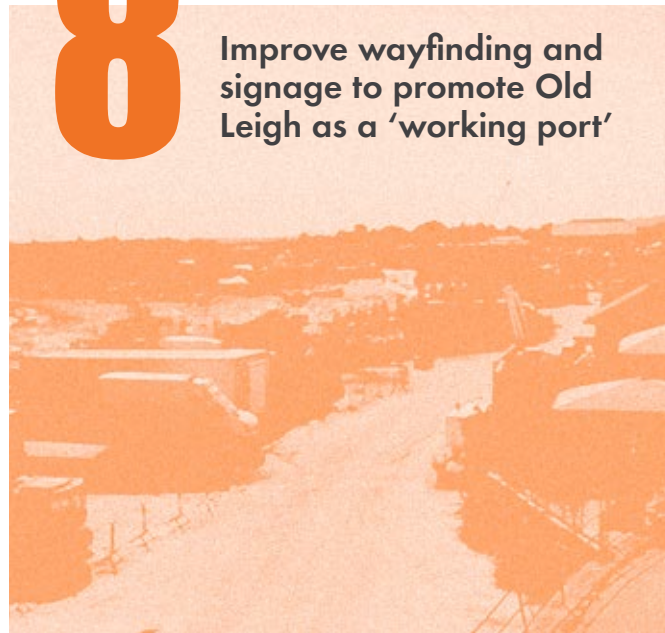
Invest in the Cinder Path



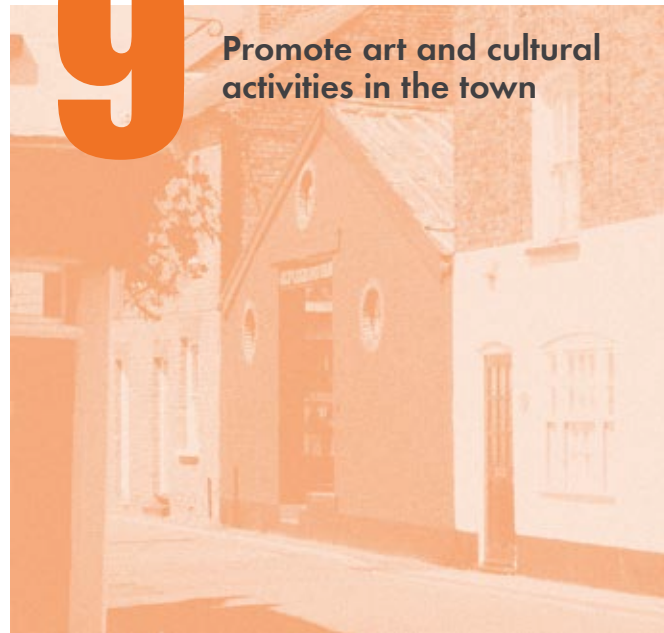


PUBLIC REALM AND  
TOWNSCAPE

**8** Improve wayfinding and signage to promote Old Leigh as a 'working port'



**9** Promote art and cultural activities in the town

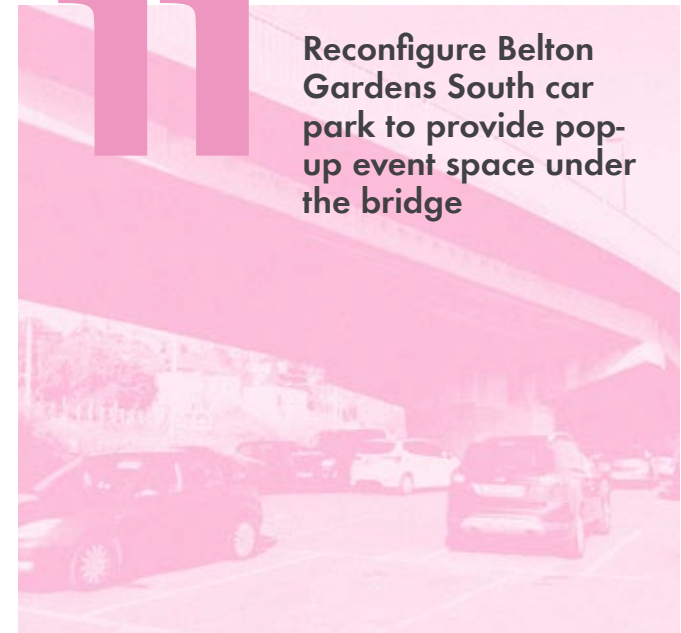


**10** Explore the potential for a new building next to Old Custom House

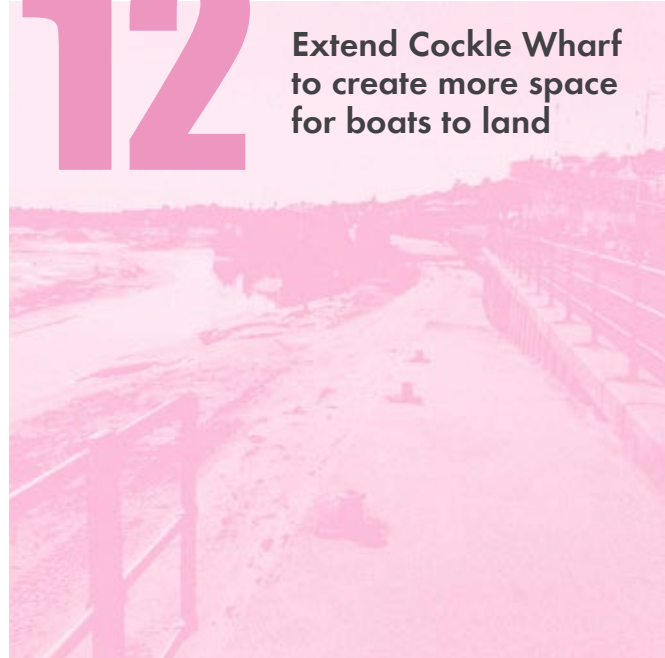


ACTIVITIES AND USES

**11** Reconfigure Belton Gardens South car park to provide pop-up event space under the bridge



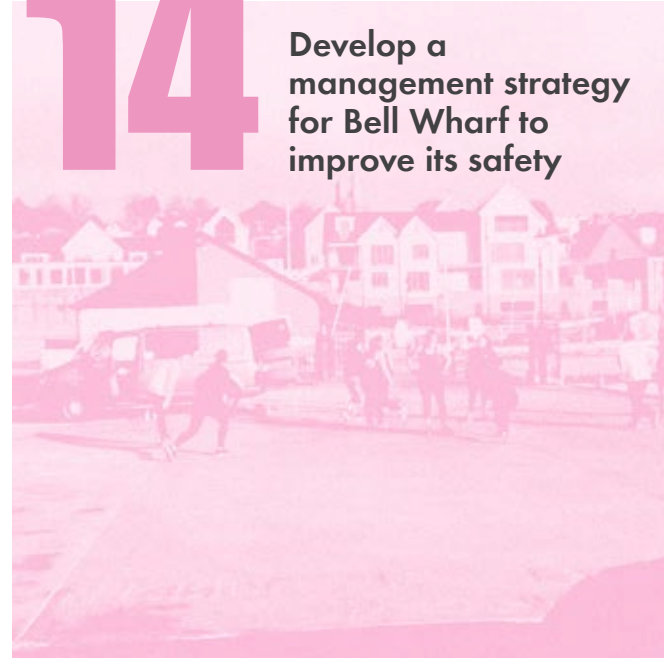
**12** Extend Cockle Wharf to create more space for boats to land



**13** Remove restrictions at Strand Wharf



**14** Develop a management strategy for Bell Wharf to improve its safety



**15** Reduce car parking at peak times to free up space for alternative activities





Plan of the proposals

The plan below shows the location of each of the proposals. These are intended as a collation of potential ideas. In most cases, it is anticipated that the Town Council (or their partners) would undertake further detailed design work / feasibility studies to progress the concepts.





# SETTING THE SCENE

3





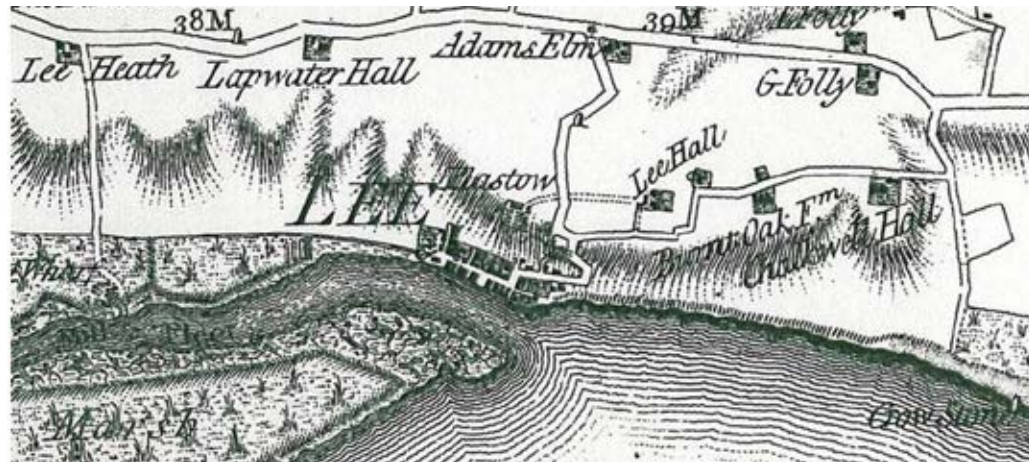




**“a proper fine little towne and verie full of stout and adventurous sailors”**

*William Camden, historian, 1551-1623*

# A BRIEF HISTORY



1777 map showing Leigh (Chapman and Andre map of Essex)



Bell Wharf © The Lynn Tait Gallery



High Street looking east © The Lynn Tait Gallery

1086

## FIRST RECORD OF LEIGH

*Manor and small port*

Leigh is recorded in the Domesday book, entered as a manor with the name Legra. A small port had already developed but there was no mention of a fishery. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was a prosperous port on the primary shipping route to London. However, by 1740, Leigh's deep water access had become silted up and the village was in decline as an anchorage and port of call.

1777

## SMALL COASTAL SETTLEMENT

*Centred around the High Street*

The fishing industry reached its peak in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Chapman and Andre map of Essex shows the High Street lined by a single row of buildings either side and a couple of short streets and one dock. There is an estimated 100 families living in the town.

**Population: 570 in 1801**

1855

## GROWING NORTHWARDS

*Developing towards the church*

The railway station opened in Leigh Old Town in 1855 which led to a rapid increase of speculative development to the north and east. Much of the Old Town was demolished to accommodate the line, but the line meant fishermen were able to transport shellfish to London more quickly and reliably. The station relocated westwards in 1934. The number of wharves increased to three. The oyster pits were located within the creek and foreshore area and were the foundation of much of Leigh's early prosperity.



Map of Old Leigh before the railway ©Leigh Heritage Centre

1875

## FISHING AND TRADING CENTRE

*Establishing the character seen today*

Leigh Old Town begins to resemble its modern appearance, although residents of the town lived in often poor and unsanitary conditions. The 1897 Ordnance Survey shows disused fish ponds, which had previously been used in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to store fish on the foreshore to keep them fresh until they were needed to be sent to market.

**Population: 1400 in 1861**

1899

## LEIGH'S FISHING FLEET

*Of 100 vessels*

Leigh fishing fleet consisted of approximately 100 vessels. Fishing remained a primary industry until it began to decline after WWII. A fire at the Peterboat in 1892 uncovered a large underground room which contained evidence of smuggling. Smuggling flourished in Leigh for at least 500 years.

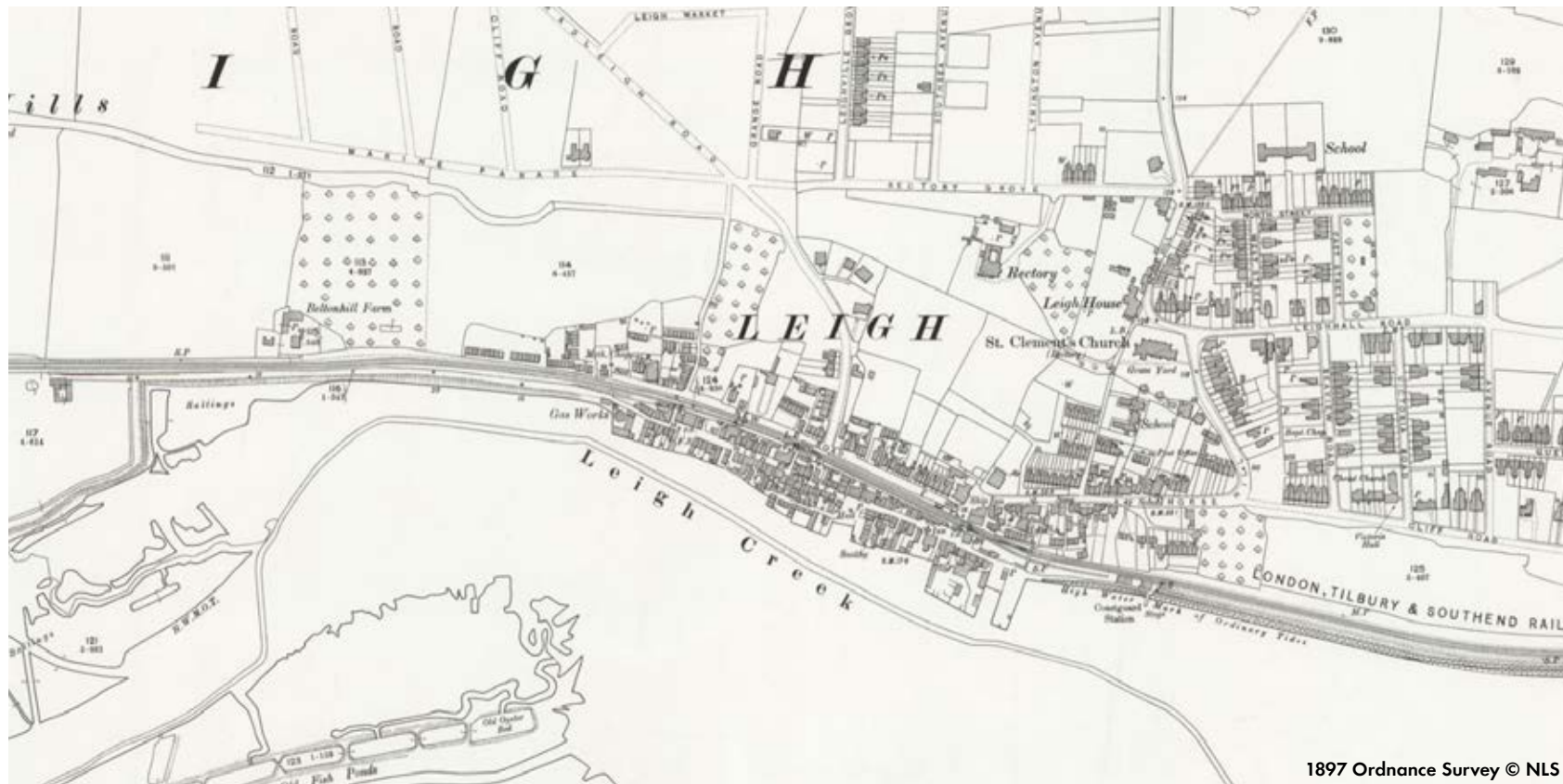


Osborne Bros © The Lynn Tait Gallery

**“the 16<sup>th</sup> C seems to have been the hey-day for shipbuilding in Leigh”**

*Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal*





1897 Ordnance Survey © NLS



R Harvey & sons  
© The Lynn Tait  
Gallery



Cockle sheds © The  
Lynn Tait Gallery

## Early 20<sup>th</sup> C



### COCKLING TAKES OVER

*Emergence of cockle sheds and boats*

Leigh had gone through eras of increased and diminished maritime trade. Cockling took over in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and cockle sheds are shown on the 1922 Ordnance Survey. By this time, Leigh-on-Sea was the westernmost suburb of the borough of Southend-on-Sea.

Cockle boats used to be constructed in Leigh. The Endeavour is the last remaining Leigh-built fishing boat, built in 1926. It was the first to be fitted with an engine and sails and marks the transition to the style of fishing seen today.



The Endeavour

## 1940s



### WORLD WAR TWO

*Old Leigh contributes to the war effort*

Six Leigh craft were used to rescue British and French soldiers from the beach at Dunkirk.



Aerial image of Old Leigh in 1952, before the construction of Belton Bridge ©Historic England

## 1950s



### CHANGES TO TRANSPORT

*Construction of Belton Bridge*

In 1955/6, the Town Development Plan proposed the construction of a new road to cut right through the Old Town. The project was never completed except for the flyover, Belton Bridge. The large expanse beneath it would benefit from enhancement.



Belton Bridge

## 1967



### EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY

*A switch to suction dredgers*

The 1960s saw a shift from cockle harvesting by hand rake to using suction dredgers. This improved the efficiency of harvesting, an increase in the size of vessels to allow for the dredging equipment, and an increase in hold capacity.



Changes to vessels as a result of using suction dredgers has had an impact on cockle harvesting operations

## 2019



### OLD LEIGH TODAY

*For rest, work and play*

The town continues to be a popular place to live, work and visit, with several pubs, cafés and restaurants, and a few shops. It continues to thrive as an active fishing port and centre for maritime industries. Its identity is deeply rooted in its port and maritime history, yet Old Leigh faces environmental, social and economic pressures which threaten its future success.





## Setting the scene

### Old Leigh in 1931

This aerial image shows the middle section of the High Street. To the far right of the photograph is Plumb Cottage and Strand Wharf. There is a building next to Old Custom House which is now the Leigh Foundry car park.

©Historic England



## Old Leigh in 1952

This aerial image looks west along the High Street. Belton Bridge and Belton Gardens are not yet constructed. The beginnings of Cockle Wharf can be seen to the top left of the image.

©Historic England





# HERITAGE

*With a longstanding history of trade, ship building and fishing, Old Leigh has built a reputation as a successful working port.*

## Old Leigh's heritage

Old Leigh has an exciting past - as a small coastal settlement located on an important shipping route to London, the village grew to be an established base for ship-building, fishing and later, the cockling industry. Its maritime activities have underpinned its economic success, and together with its charming historic buildings, seaside setting and proximity to London, Old Leigh has become a well-loved and popular place for residents, workers and visitors.

Old Leigh sits within its own conservation area which recognises the town as a place with historic and architectural interest. Leigh Old Town is special for:

- Its unique character as a working marine village;
- Its close urban texture with buildings on the edge of the narrow High Street and small gaps between buildings providing glimpses of the Creek;
- Its attractive and lively townscape; and
- Its extensive views into and out of the area towards Leigh Creek and marshes to the south.

There are three Grade II Listed buildings - The Crooked Billet and a pair of 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed cottages. Buildings of local architectural or historic interest are The Old Custom House, built in 1815; 2 & 3 Plumb's Yard, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and recently restored; and 39 High Street. Other cherished buildings, like the The Old Station (now used by Leigh Sailing Club), and The Smithy (now the Heritage Centre) also tell of Leigh's rich past.

The plan opposite shows the area's heritage assets - its conservation areas, listed buildings and locally listed buildings.



**A** The Crooked Billet



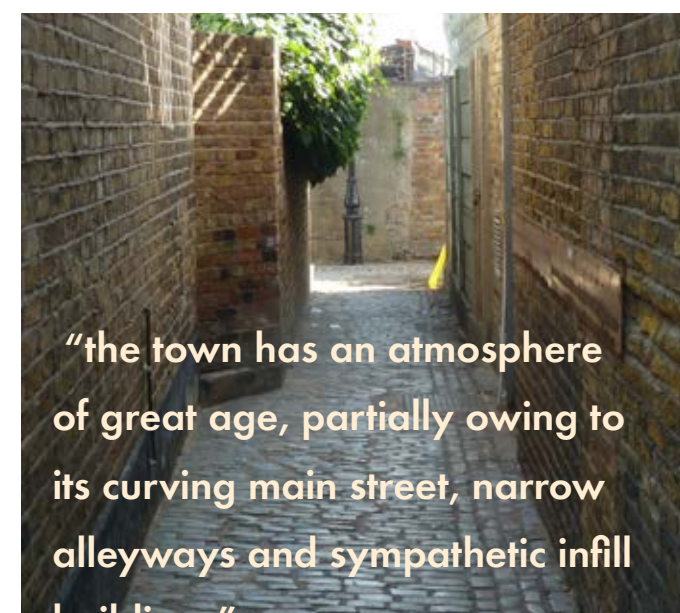
**B** Pair of 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed cottages



**C** The Old Custom House



**D** 2 & 3 Plumb's Yard



*"the town has an atmosphere of great age, partially owing to its curving main street, narrow alleyways and sympathetic infill buildings"*

*Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal*



**E** 39 High Street

*"the whole Conservation Area has a feeling of animation and industry about it"*

*Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal*







LEIGH OLD TOWN  
CONSERVATION AREA

LEIGH CONSERVATION AREA

St. Clement's  
Church Leigh

A  
E  
HIGH STREET  
B

C  
D  
NEW ROAD

LEIGH HILL



TWO TREE ISLAND

wider study area

- Conservation area
- Listed buildings
  - II\*
  - II
- Locally listed buildings in Old Leigh



# CHARACTER AND VIEWS

*The unique layering of Old Leigh's natural landscape, topography, built heritage and well-established marine activities gives the town its special character.*

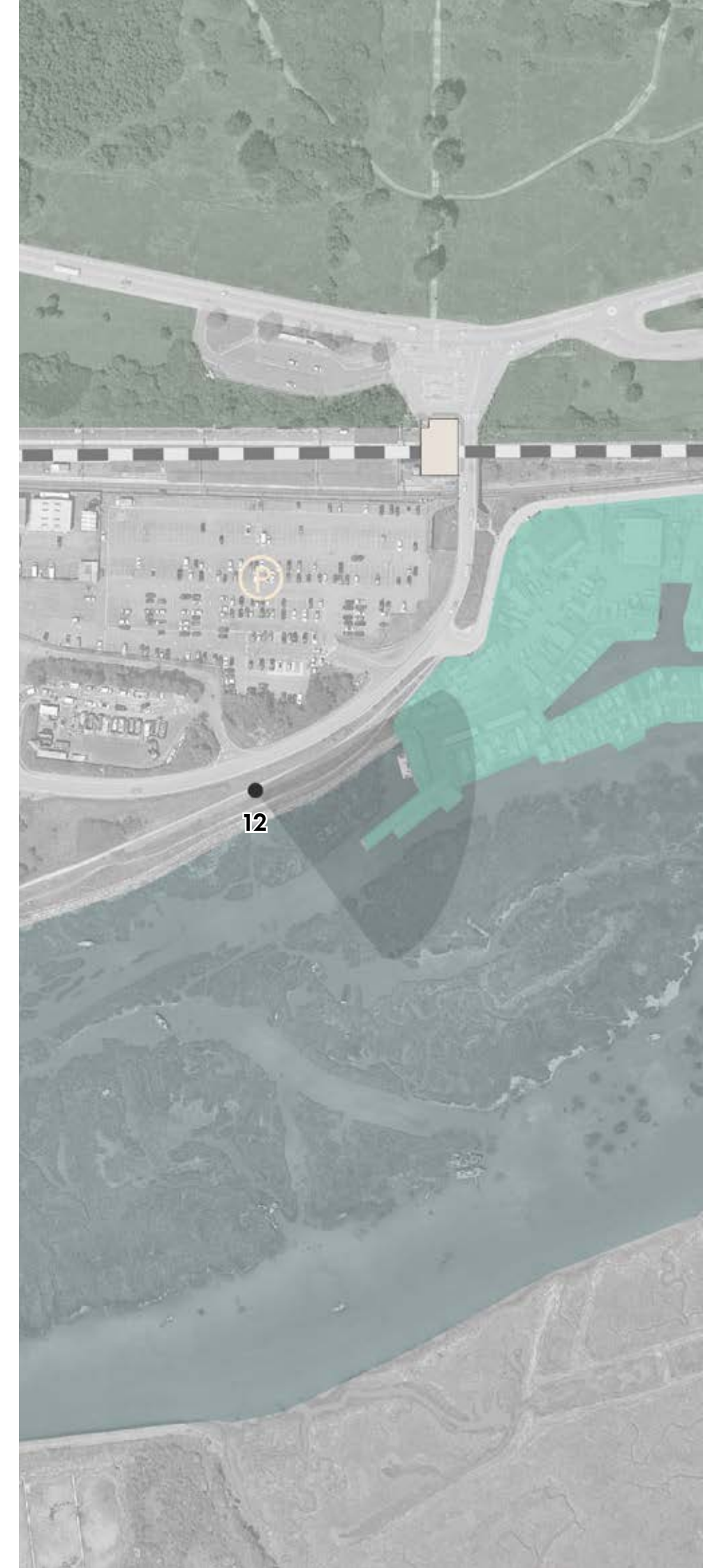
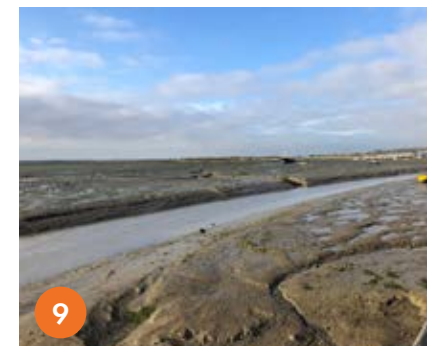
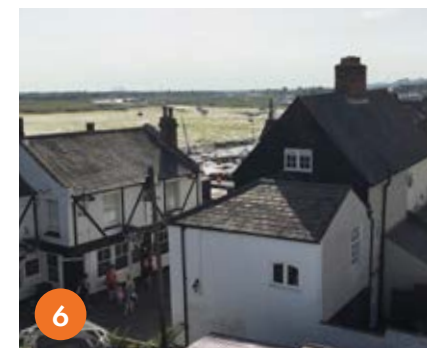
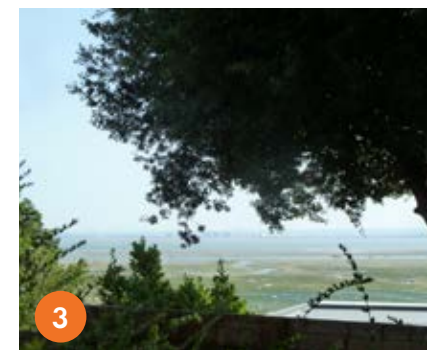
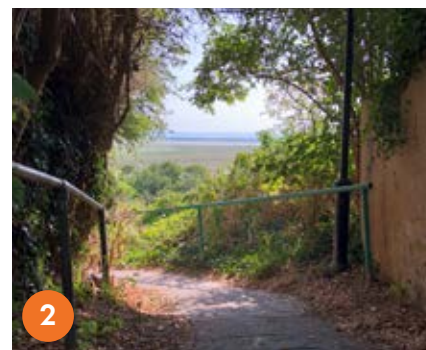
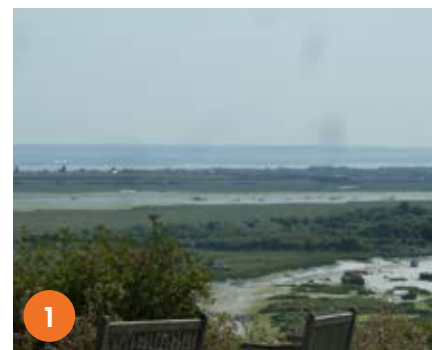
## Capturing its essence

From higher ground, there are panoramic views towards the old town and Leigh Creek from Belton Way East, the historic Billet Lane, and from the Grade II Listed Leigh Library. To the east, glimpsed views towards the town and sea can be viewed from points along Church Hill. To the southwest of Old Leigh, the open space at Leigh Marsh offers impressive panoramas back towards the town looking northeast.

In Old Leigh, the character of the town is experienced by long and enclosed views along the High Street in both directions - the kink in the street at Sara's Tea Garden gives a glimpse eastwards of the Victorian terrace directly fronting the narrow street beyond. At points along the High Street, the gaps between buildings offer views out to Leigh Creek, contributing to a strong sense of place. The pedestrian bridges that cross the railway line give impressive views of the town's diverse townscape, characterised by the development of tightly packed small buildings in an informal layout. The townscape is enlivened by the assortment of its historic features and details - the cobbled streets, painted brick façades, Victorian lampposts and cast iron pub signs. The limited views out of the area give a sense of remoteness.

Old Leigh's identity as a working marine village is experienced all along its length and adds visual interest - the boats, cockle sheds, processing equipment, nautical paraphernalia and the variety of marine activities, together with pubs and houses, are essential to its character. The essence of Leigh is captured in other ways - the smell of the sea air and fresh fish; the sound of seagulls and moving boats; the taste of seafood, chips and ice cream; the sea breeze and feeling of sand between your toes. Ensuring this essence continues into the future is a priority for the Spatial Plan.

The plan opposite summarises the key contributions to Old Leigh's character.







## KEY

-  Panoramic views
-  Enclosed views / long views
-  Listed buildings
-  Locally listed buildings
-  Cobbles
-  Lampposts
-  Outside seating
-  Working port character

Plan showing the key elements that contribute to the character of Old Leigh. This is interpreted from the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area appraisal.

## PANORAMIC VIEWS

1. From benches at Belton Way East towards Old Leigh
2. From Billet Lane south towards Old Leigh
3. From Library gardens south towards Old Leigh
4. From Church Hill south towards Old Leigh
5. From Cliff Parade looking southwest towards Old Leigh and Leigh Creek
6. Looking from pedestrian bridge by Sara's Tea Garden over railway line
7. Looking west from pedestrian bridges over railway line
8. Looking out to sea from Bell Wharf
9. South from Strand Wharf looking out to sea
10. South east towards Old Leigh and sea from buoy
11. View south east on approach to Old Leigh from Belton Bridge
12. View northeast towards Old Leigh from Leigh Marshes



Glimpsed or enclosed views from within the old town





Boat detailing



Stone carvings



Cast iron pub signs



Street names



"much of the signage is modest, hand painted, and full of character which makes a significant positive contribution to the conservation area"

*Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal*



## signs





Brickwork



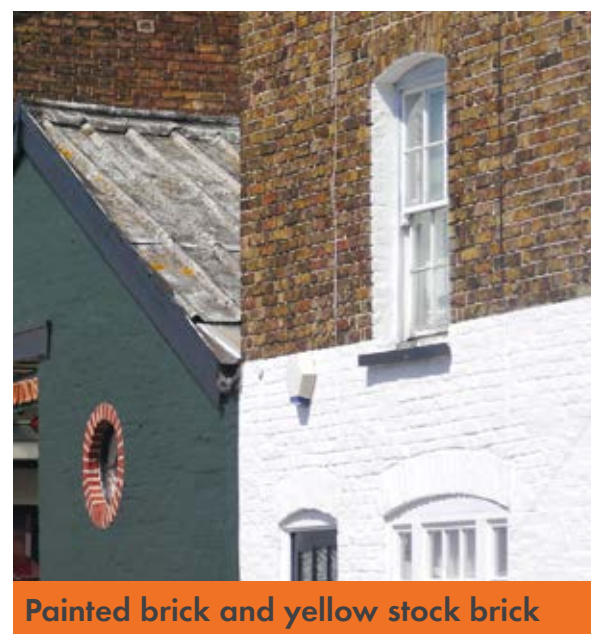
Cobbled streets



Timber sliding sash windows



Weatherboarding



Painted brick and yellow stock brick



intimate

enclosed

industrial

hard-working

glimpsed views

informal

modest

well preserved

charming

narrow &  
winding

WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE  
OLD LEIGH IN THE LEIGH  
OLD TOWN CAA

materials and features



# LANDSCAPE ASSETS

*Old Leigh's surrounding landscape is protected by several national and international designations which recognise the importance of the area for supporting a large variety of fauna and flora.*

## A unique coastal landscape

Old Leigh is set within a diverse and unique coastal landscape, nestled at the base of steep cliffs which naturally separate the old town from the rest of Leigh. This is reinforced by the railway line which runs along the northern side of the present day High Street. The southern edge of Old Leigh follows the shape of the coastline. The vastness of the Thames Estuary to the south contrasts with the intimate and enclosed feel of the old town.

The estuary is protected by its Ramsar and Special Protection Area (SPA) designations and is recognised for its extensive saltmarshes, mudflats and grasslands. These support internationally important populations of regularly occurring migratory species, waterfowl and nationally rare or scarce plant species and invertebrates.

The land that is now Two Tree Island was reclaimed from the sea in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and later used as a landfill site until the 1970s. The eastern section forms part of the Leigh National Nature Reserve run by Essex Wildlife Trust, and is recognised for its best surviving saltmarsh plant species and a great variety of winter wildfowl and waders.

To the west of Old Leigh are extensive green spaces - Belton Hills and Leigh Marsh. These are designated as Local Wildlife Sites, some of which have European importance as habitats for birdlife.



West towards Cockle Wharf at low tide



Boats to the west of Cockle Wharf



Boats to the west of Cockle Wharf



Northeast towards Old Leigh from Leigh Marsh



South across Leigh Marsh



Looking towards Leigh Creek from the top of Belton Way East



Towards Two Tree Island



South across Leigh Marsh



Looking towards Old Leigh and the estuary from Belton Way East



The creek from Bell Wharf



Looking towards Old Leigh and the estuary from Belton Way East



The view towards the estuary unfolds when walking down Billet Lane



20,000

The number of waterfowl in winter recorded within the Benfleet and Southend Marshes Ramsar



1.2-2.3m

is the average accretion of saltmarsh throughout a period of 84-85 years



30



RDB species are recorded within the Benfleet and Southend Marshes SPA and Ramsar - the area is of outstanding importance for scarce invertebrates

35,000

birds supported during winters within the designated Benfleet and Southend Marshes SPA and Ramsar





# ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

*In recent years the area has seen major environmental changes which are endangering wildlife and threatening the ability of cocklemen to unload their catch at Leigh Port.*

## Growth of saltmarsh

A major environmental change has been the growth of saltmarsh eastwards around the North and South Leigh Creek channels. The aerial images opposite show the extent of saltmarsh around Leigh Port and Lower Thames Marina in 1999 and 2018. The growth of saltmarsh is a result of several factors, including coastal flood-defence works, rising sea-levels, variations in sediment deposition and land claim for development.

The increased siltation has resulted in Leigh Creek becoming shallower which has had a direct impact on the ability of cocklemen to unload their catch at Cockle Wharf. A shorter tidal window has resulted in a higher frequency of missed windows, affecting the economic viability of the industry and forcing cocklemen to unload at Bell Wharf instead of at Cockle Wharf.

A feasibility study was commissioned in 2018 to explore options for dredging along the Lower Leigh Creek to improve access to Cockle Wharf and to develop a sustainable long-term solution in light of these issues. The study considers past and predicted environmental changes to inform the proposed dredging options.

The Spatial Plan recognises that the preferred dredging approach will directly impact the level of importance assigned to each of the proposals and the order in which they are implemented. The proposals are set out in Chapter 5.

## Flood risk

Sea level rise will increase the risk of flooding at Leigh over time. Climate change has resulted in long-term changes in mean sea level which is expected to be approximately 0.75m by 2116 (UKCP09). This rise may also have implications for the anticipated seawall defence works and the height of quay and berthing structures along Leigh Port.



South across the estuary



Lower Leigh Creek



Entrance to Cockle Wharf



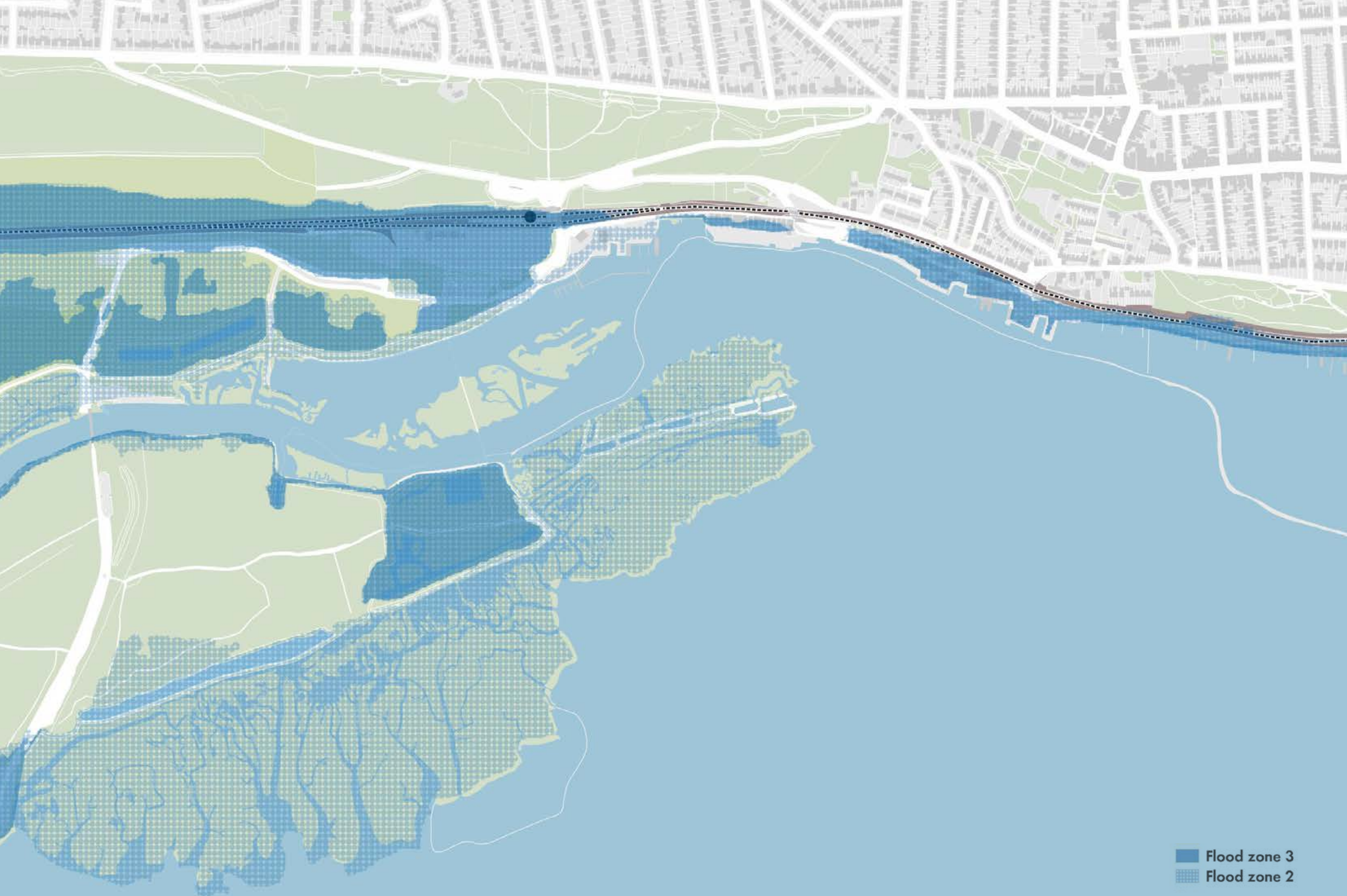
1999



2018

Comparison of aerial images in 1999 and 2018 showing the growth in saltmarsh





Flood zone 3  
Flood zone 2

Plan showing flood risk



# MOVEMENT AND PARKING

*Conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is a key issue in Old Leigh.*

HOW DO PEOPLE MOVE AROUND?

## A congested High Street

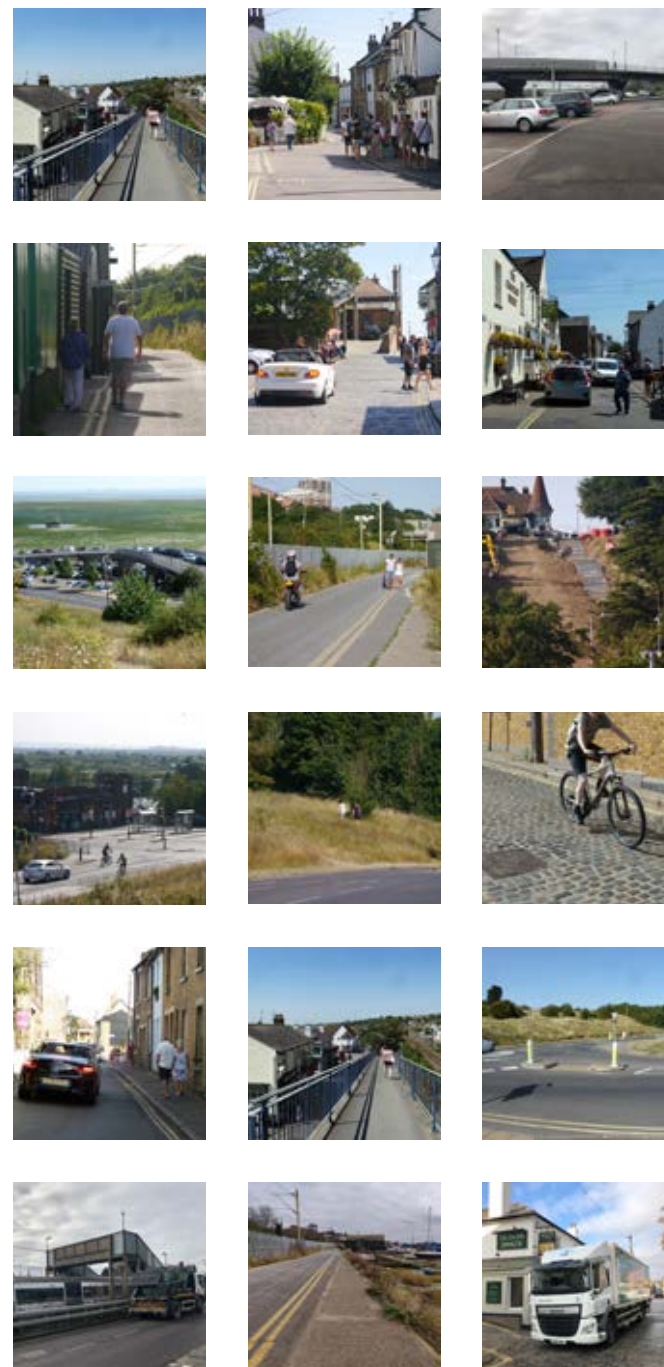
Old Leigh consists of one no-through local road, the High Street, which suffers from high levels of vehicular traffic. Much of the congestion is caused by visiting cars that are looking to park at Victoria Wharf or Leigh Foundry, often to no avail. The conflict between pedestrians and vehicles is exacerbated by the narrow width of the road and pavements which result in people walking on the road, particularly in the high season.

Traffic conflict has a harmful impact on the safety, functionality and character of Old Leigh. Movement was identified as a key issue at both the drop-in sessions with local stakeholders and the community workshop. The Spatial Plan aims to redress the balance between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians to ensure a safer and better functioning environment.

Car parking spaces are located at the western end of the High Street, underneath Belton Bridge, and at Belton Gardens North. Parking bays along the bridge are also a popular option. Less popular is the station car park which has 537 spaces and is operated by NCP. To the south is Leigh Marshes car park which is free after 10am on weekdays. Encouraging visitors to park away from the High Street by improving walking routes and wayfinding to Old Leigh is an integral part of the strategy.

## Proximity to the station

Leigh is the closest coastal town to London making it popular with day-trippers and commuters. The station is on the c2c service from Fenchurch Street to Southend Central and benefits from regular trains every 6-10 minutes. The High Street is a short walk from Leigh-on-Sea train station yet is perceived as being further than it is. Improving the route from the station to the old town is explored as part of the Spatial Plan.



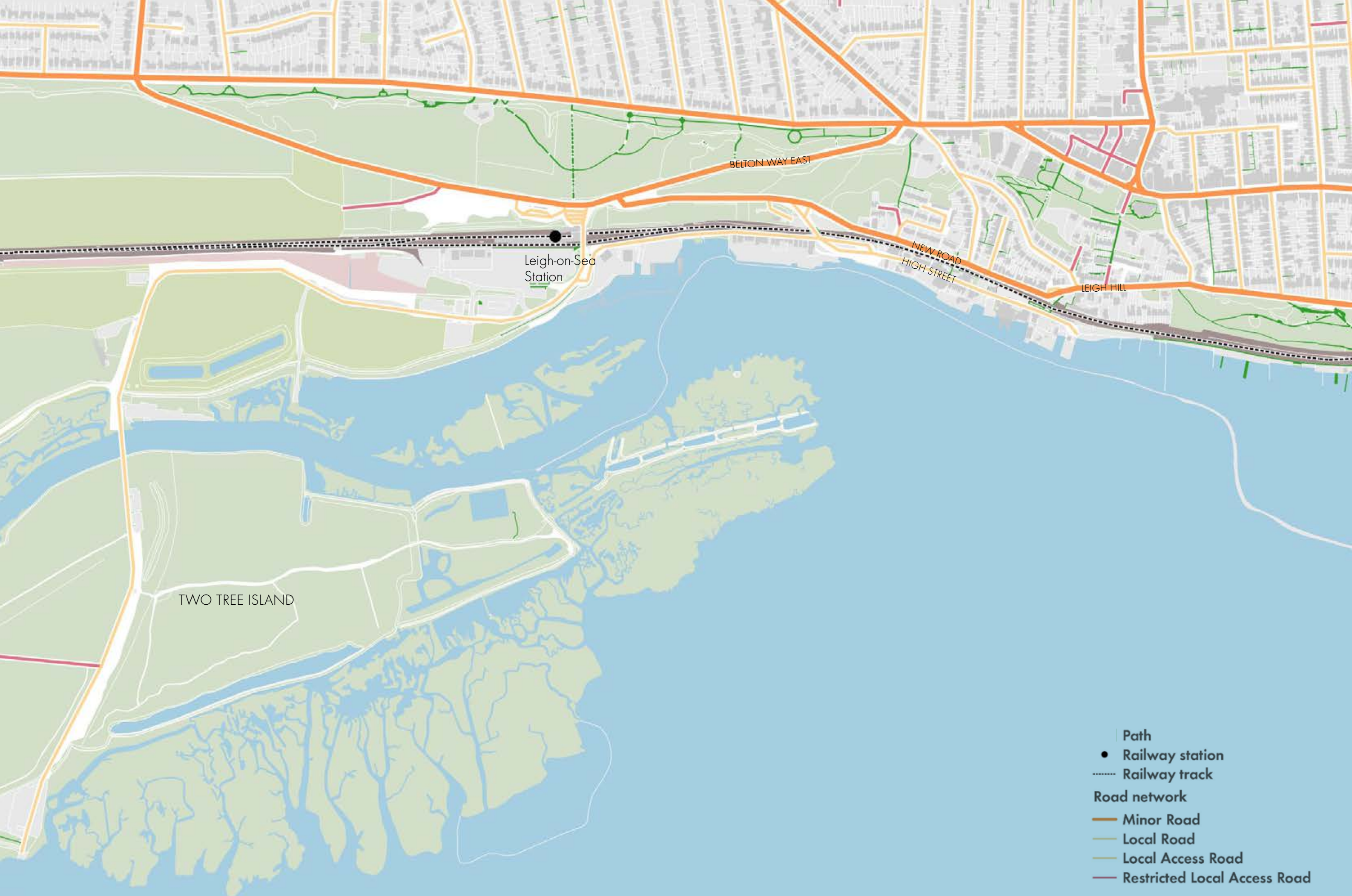
Modes of travel around Old Leigh



### Car parks in Old Leigh

- Belton Gardens North - 61 spaces
- Belton Gardens South - 44 spaces
- Parking bays on the bridge - 22 spaces
- Leigh Foundry - 11 spaces
- Victoria Wharf - 14 spaces







# CONFLICTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

4







RISQUE LADY

CALLUNA

LEIGH-ON-SEA



# OVERVIEW

*There is a lot going on in a small space in Old Leigh. Although this overlap is part of the area's charm, the competing demands for space could threaten the essence and future prosperity of Old Leigh.*

## Competing demands...

In order to distil the spatial issues and conflicts, we have identified a framework for categorising and understanding the way in which spaces are currently used and contested in Old Leigh.

There are various overlapping uses and activities taking place in the old town. The user groups have been categorised into three broad strands:

- **Residents and communities** - those who live in Leigh, and community and cultural organisations like Leigh Sailing Club and Old Leigh Studios;
- **Visitor economy** - pubs, restaurants and visitor accommodation; and
- **Working port** - Mikes Boatyard, Leigh Marina and Leigh Port.

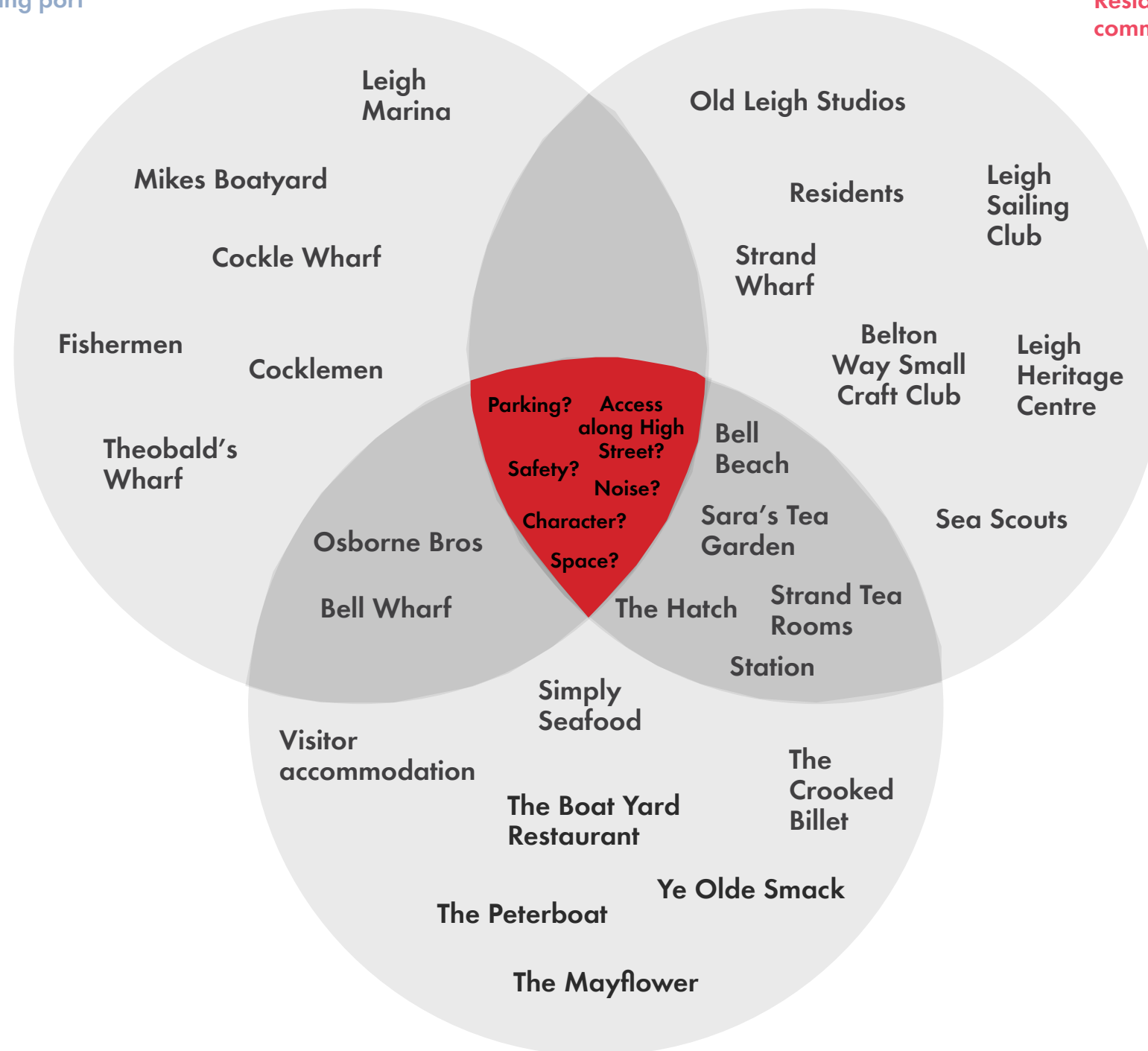
For each strand, we have mapped the main uses and activities, travel routes and key issues that were identified by stakeholders during the drop-in sessions and community workshop. By layering these strands, we have been able to identify the main conflicts and opportunities which are set out on page 40.





Working port

Residents and communities



Visitor economy

### ...contested spaces

The overlapping nature of uses and activities in a small and finite space produces inevitable conflicts. These relate to parking, access along the High Street, noise, antisocial behaviour, impact on character and safety issues. The purpose of the Spatial Plan is to look at how different activities can work better together, both now and in the future. As noted in the vision statement, the higgledy-piggledy nature of working port uses cheek by jowl with more conventional high street activities is part of Old Leigh's innate charm.



Cars parked on Cockle Wharf



Large artic lorry on the narrow High Street



Bins overspilling onto public footpaths



Boot camp on Bell Wharf



# RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

*Old Leigh is home to a small number of residents as well as a variety of organisations that offer activities for the wider Leigh community.*

## Living in the old town

There are a small number of homes in Old Leigh that front the High Street. Residents have parking permits which allow them access to the car parks in the old town, although finding a space can be a struggle due to business owners parking their vehicles in the car parks for long periods of time. The two pedestrian bridges over the railway line provide a critical connection to Leigh for residents who travel into the main town regularly for work or school. The cinder path provides a safer and more attractive pedestrian link along the coast towards Southend.

## Community uses

Community organisations use Old Leigh as their base for a variety of art, cultural and coastal activities. The Heritage Centre and Museum occupies the former Smithy building on the High Street. It has recently restored Plumb Cottage on the Strand, open to visitors as a replica of a traditional Leigh cottage in the Victorian era. Old Leigh Studios is used as a gallery and workshop and is home to a small number of artists and potters who showcase their ceramics and pottery to the public.

The Scouts occupy two buildings - The Den at Victoria Wharf and The Coal Hole at the western end of the High Street. Leigh Sailing Club is located at the eastern end of the High Street in the former railway station. The facilities are well used throughout the year. The High Street can become busy at drop-off and pick-up times, an issue that was highlighted at the stakeholder drop-ins. The Sailing Club has its own small private car park.

## Public spaces

Bell Beach is a popular spot for residents to rest and play. Strand Wharf was recently refurbished as a public space for events and activities. The space is well loved by the community but the restrictions on the number and type of activities allowed is limiting its potential as a really successful community resource.



Terrace fronting the High Street



Leigh-on-Sea Sailing Club



The Coal Hole (left) and housing



Walks along the seafront



Strand Wharf



Swimming in the Creek



Housing and Old Leigh Studios



Leigh Heritage Centre



The Old Custom House



# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE HERE?

## Stakeholder feedback

- 1 Strand Wharf - well used by the community. Could you move boot camp here? The Boat Yard gets cars parked on Strand.
- 2 Pubs / drinking - events need to be promoted more - Old Leigh is more than just drinking; concern over people drinking on the sea wall
- 3 Parking - could Leigh Foundry car park be residents only? Residents get two resident permits but often have nowhere to park. Business owners using up parking spaces for days at a time.
- 4 High Street - restrict traffic along High Street, need to keep out cars looking for parking
- 5 Victoria Wharf - hidden and out of sight so lends itself to antisocial behaviour
- 6 Cubs & scouts - can get congested at drop off times





# VISITOR ECONOMY

*As the closest coastal town to London and with plenty of charm, Old Leigh is very popular with visitors who enjoy its pubs, restaurants and local beach.*

## Pubs and restaurants

There are numerous pubs and restaurants in Old Leigh - many with outdoor seating areas which fill up quickly in the summer months. They are popular and successful and an important part of the local visitor economy. Whilst a mix of activities and uses is desirable in the old town, residents are concerned that there is too much emphasis on drinking and, leads to issues with regards to noise levels, antisocial behaviour and safety. Promoting other activities is a key opportunity that came out of the consultation.

## Bell Wharf

Bell Beach and Bell Wharf is a popular destination for visitors. The stakeholder consultation highlighted the conflicts at Bell Wharf between young people jumping off into the creek when cocklers and fishermen need to unload their catch. This is a particular problem in the summer months and only at certain times of day.

## Festivals and events

Several hugely successful events are held annually in the old town which attract large numbers of visitors. The Leigh Folk Festival in the summer is the UK's largest folk festival. The festival sees Old Leigh's buildings and spaces transformed into live music venues, including a pop-up dance venue, busker's square and stages at Strand Wharf and Bell Wharf. Similarly, the Old Leigh Regatta is an annual community and charity event based in the Old Town which sees the closure of the High Street for entertainment, competitions, shows and craft stalls.

## Visiting Old Leigh

Most visitors to the old town travel by car and drive to the end of the High Street looking for a parking space without success. This presents a major problem and was raised as an issue across all stakeholder groups. Despite efforts to encourage car parking around Belton Bridge and the station, cars are often parked outside the designated car parks,

along Alley Dock, on the Strand or other wharf areas, and on Cockle Wharf, which impacts on the safety and functionality of the High Street and detracts considerably from the appearance of these spaces.

The stakeholder engagement process revealed alternative options for parking, particularly north of Belton Bridge along the road and north of Belton Gardens. It was felt the Leigh Marshes car park to the west could be better promoted and incentivised to encourage people to park there and walk in.

Old Leigh is close to the station, yet the quality of the route along Cockle Row is poor for pedestrians, with no pavements, signage or lighting.

In the summer months, conflicts can arise between the large numbers of walking tourists and trucks trying to unload deliveries to the pubs. Particular points of vehicular and pedestrian conflict are at the Crooked Billet, outside the Peterboat where vans unload, and outside the Mayflower where people queue for chips and disrupt traffic. Taxi drop-offs along the High Street can also lead to traffic conflicts.



Plan showing The Leigh Folk Festival 2019 venues  
©Leigh Folk Festival Association



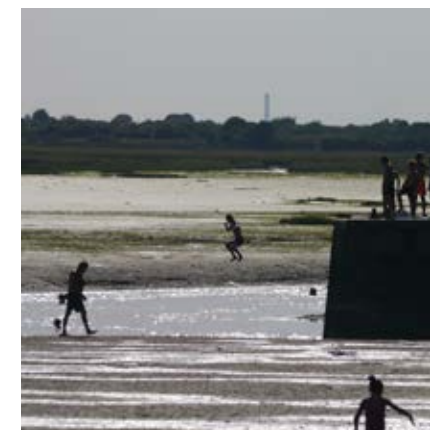
Outdoor seating at the Peterboat



Congestion outside the Crooked Billet



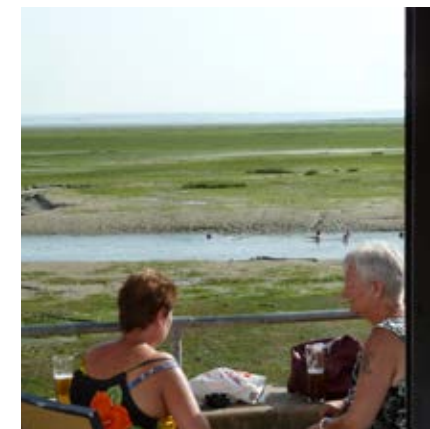
Seating opposite the Mayflower



Jumping off Bell Wharf



Takeaway service at the Mayflower



Looking out to the creek from Ye Olde Smack



Outdoor seating by Osborne Bros



Sara's Tea Garden



Cockles by Osborne Bros



# HOW DO VISITORS SPEND TIME IN OLD LEIGH?

## Stakeholder feedback

- 1 Crooked Billet - conflict between drinkers crossing road and cars.
- 2 High Street - Inappropriate sized vehicles come down the narrow High Street - conflict between trucks and people
- 3 Taxis - cut taxis from the High Street as drop-off causes problems. Taxi pick up from the buoy.
- 4 Restricted access - support for access for residents, industry and businesses only
- 5 Peterboat - most likely to get stuck outside here with vans unloading
- 6 North of Belton Bridge - need to get more use out of this car park
- 7 Belton Gardens - parking is free here and is popular for walking back into Leigh
- 8 Leigh Marshes car park - could it be extended and walk route improved?
- 9 Route to/from station - poor for pedestrians, no pavements or lighting





# WORKING PORT

*A key objective of the Spatial Plan is to raise the profile of the working port, an essential part of the old town but which often goes unnoticed.*

## Cockle Wharf

Cockle Wharf is located where Upper and Lower Leigh Creek meet. The Lower Leigh Creek is the main access to the wharf from the Thames Estuary. The wharf consists of a berthing area comprised of sheet piles containing a small reclaimed area. This area gives boat access and is the site of the cockling sheds which are largely used for storage, but in some cases are where cockles are cooked, processed, and sold.

## Theobald's Wharf

Theobald's Wharf is located further east and is used by the fishing fleet. Vessels at Leigh used for general fishing are less restricted and more flexible in their operations than the cockling vessels.

## Bell Wharf

Bell Wharf is the eastern most wharf in Old Leigh. Cockles are unloaded at Bell Wharf and often transported by road out of Leigh to processing plants further away. Occasionally they are transported to Cockle Wharf. As mentioned previously, there are safety issues regarding the conflicting uses at Bell Wharf, as well as traffic conflicts between pedestrians and the artic lorries who turn around by Leigh Sailing Club and have to navigate past queues

of people outside the Mayflower. This is especially an issue in the summer months.

## Unloading catch

The change in methodology from hand raking to dredging, and the location of the main cockling areas, has put greater time pressure on cocklers departing and arriving back to Cockle Wharf within the tidal window, and so cockle vessels are more often unloading at Bell Wharf. This alternative can increase time and add costs to the cockle harvest.

If Lower Leigh Creek becomes shallower due to siltation, the tidal window will decrease further and result in a higher incidence of missed windows. This could have a considerable impact on the economic viability of the cockling industry at Leigh. A feasibility study was commissioned in 2018 to develop a sustainable solution for the Port which could include dredging along the Creek and the extension of the Port eastwards.



Cockle Wharf



Mikes Boatyard



Equipment and storage



Leigh Marina



View from Cockle Row through the sheds



Looking east towards Cockle Wharf





# HOW DO THE BOAT YARDS AND WHARVES AT LEIGH PORT OPERATE?

## Stakeholder feedback

- 1 Bell Wharf - safety issues with young people swimming whilst boats trying to unload. Queuing to unload. Young people also throw bags into the sea.
- 2 Unloading at Cockle Wharf - Short tidal window and lack of articulated lorries access at the Port means cocklemen unload at Bell Wharf
- 3 Extension of Leigh Port - keen to see Cockle Wharf extended to the east to improve unloading options.
- 4 Mayflower - conflict between lorries and kids getting their chips from the Mayflower.
- 5 High Street - lorries parked in the road is a problem (especially outside the Peterboat)





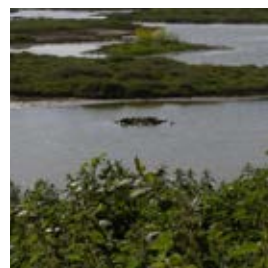
# TWO TREE ISLAND

*This section gives a summary of the main conflicts and opportunities for Two Tree Island.*

## Issues

Some of the issues identified for Two Tree Island are outside the scope of the Spatial Plan, but it is useful to identify them here for completeness. If not addressed, these issues could have a significant impact on the existing economy in Old Leigh, felt most strongly by the fishing and processing industry. The issues identified are:

- Inadequate electricity infrastructure with very little capacity and therefore resilience (work is being undertaken to commission an appraisal of current infrastructure challenges);
- Improvements required to the bridge that connects Two Tree Island with the mainland;
- Current lack of storage and poor access to the island make it difficult to unload catch there;
- Concern from stakeholders that the old landfill site is not properly capped;
- Issues with rough sleepers and people loitering;
- Issues with dog walkers leaving dog mess; and
- Poor car park surfacing.

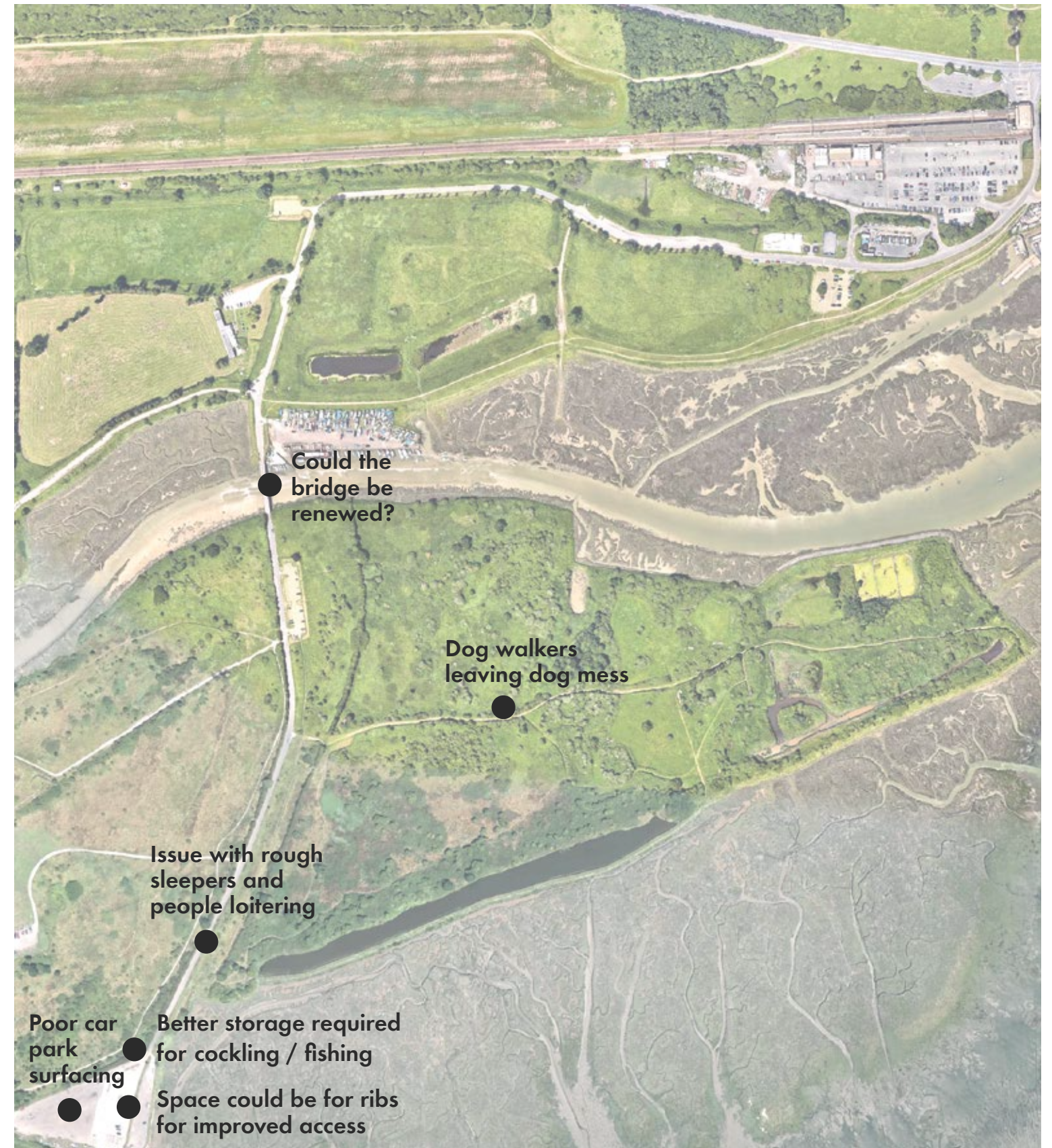


Images of Two Tree Island  
(Source: wikimedia commons)

## Opportunities

During the consultation it was noted that planning permission had been granted in 2000 for a two-storey building with storage at ground floor and a cafe at the upper floor. There is potential for a building on Two Tree Island that includes dry and secure storage space, and offers a cafe and place for people to learn more about the variety of wildlife and habitats on the island.

There is also an opportunity to explore how Two Tree Island could provide better unloading options for cocklers. By making this a more desirable option, there could be a smaller number of articulated lorries using the High Street and less conflict at Bell Wharf between boats unloading and young people jumping off.





Aerial view south of the eastern half  
of Two Tree Island in 1987 (Source:  
Edward Clark, wikimedia commons)





# THE PROPOSALS EXPLAINED

5









# INTRODUCTION

*This section gives sets out the proposals under the following themes - movement, public realm and townscape, and activities and uses. The proposals have been developed by reflecting on the key conflicts and opportunities which are summarised below.*



## Conflicts

1. Outside Crooked Billet / Osborne Bros
2. Outside The Peterboat
3. Outside the Mayflower
4. Eastern end of High Street
5. Bell Wharf

## Opportunities

- A. Improving route to / from station
- B. Leigh Port extensions
- C. Space under Belton Bridge
- D. Crossings along New Road
- E. Restricted vehicle access along High Street
- F. Strand Wharf
- G. New building with workshop / studio space
- H. Reducing car parking could lead to more attractive activities
- I. Improving the cinder path link







# MOVEMENT



## Introduction to movement

The proposals for movement achieve the following objectives set out in Chapter 2 of the Spatial Plan:

- To **create a well-functioning and high quality High Street** by limiting visiting cars and reducing their negative impact on character, safety and the environment;
- To **reduce the impact of cars** by providing attractive and legible cycling and pedestrian routes to the High Street from the station, car parks, Leigh town and along the cinder path;
- To **protect and enhance the conservation area**, including views into the town and out from Old Leigh to the sea;

### 1 Remove visiting cars from the High Street, especially at peak times.

Old Leigh is frequently congested with large numbers of visitors looking for places to park, especially in the summer months. This has a negative impact on character, accessibility and safety of the High Street, and worsens noise and pollution levels.

By excluding visiting cars at peak times from the High Street, the High Street can be a higher quality urban environment - a more attractive, better functioning and accessible place for all. It could also provide a strong stimulus for economic growth through increased footfall.

Access to the High Street would remain for residents, business owners and disabled parking.



Congestion outside the Crooked Billet

### 2 Introduce time-limited deliveries to reduce congestion.

Our analysis has identified numerous pinch points along the High Street where lorries, vans and cars often get stuck, either along narrow stretches of the road or outside pubs and restaurants when vans stop to unload deliveries.

By introducing time-limited deliveries, these pressure points could be relieved, resulting in greater efficiency and a less congested High Street.

Use also needs to be made of the space that businesses already own off street e.g. the Peterboat seating area.



Lorry by Ye Olde Smack

### 3 Identify the best locations for parking and improve signage and quality of walking routes

Encouraging people to park away from the High Street is a key part of the strategy. This is only achieved if affordable and attractive alternative options are offered. People should be encouraged to park at:

- Leigh Marshes car park
- Leigh-on-Sea station car park
- Belton Way East
- Belton Gardens north

At each of these locations, the High Street should be well-signposted and the route attractive and clearly defined, so people are more likely to travel the distance on foot.

The possibility of a shuttle bus from the station to the High Street during peak season should be explored.



The orange shows suitable parking spots if visiting the Old Town



#### 4 Improving the quality of the route along High Street West

Despite an only eight-minute walk from the station to the Old Town, the route is currently unpopular because of awkward crossings, poor lighting and lack of proper paving.

To promote more sustainable modes of travel to the Old Town, the route should be an attractive and accessible option. This could be achieved by:

- By establishing a safe pavement on the north side of the road and a new boardwalk on the south side of the road;
- Relocating the clubhouse westwards to improve access; and
- Limiting through-traffic and creating a quality shared space.



Suggested improvements along High Street West

#### 5 Introduce crossings along New Road

There is currently no safe crossing point along the stretch of New Road from Chapel Hill in the east to the railway station to the west. A pedestrian crossing midway by the pedestrian bridge would greatly improve safe access to the Old Town.

Local residents are also supportive of a pedestrian crossing across New Road to / from Fishermen's Chapel on the northside. The chapel is well used by the local community, particularly those who are older and less mobile and who therefore require a safe place to cross.



Option for a crossing on New Road by the pedestrian bridge

#### 6 Reconfiguring Belton Gardens South car park to provide a set down and pick up space

Taxi drop-offs along the High Street were raised as an issue during the consultation.

Reconfiguring the Belton Gardens South car park to offer a set down and pick up space for taxis and other vehicles will lessen disruption caused by taxis along the High Street.



Location of set down and pick up space

#### 7 Investing in the Cinder Path

By investing in the Cinder Path link, the overall connection between Shoeburyness and Hadleigh Country Park will be strengthened.

Promoting the entire seafront route for cycling and walking and improving surfacing will encourage more sustainable forms of travel into and through Leigh. This is also likely to have a positive impact on the rest of the High Street (i.e. lower numbers of vehicles, greater footfall).

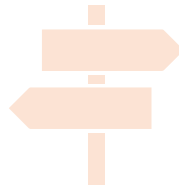
Improvements to the Cinder Path should be accompanied by the provision of safe and secure cycle parking at locations along the High Street and at the station.



The Cinder Path at Bell Beach



# PUBLIC REALM AND TOWNSCAPE



## Introduction to public realm and townscape

The proposals for movement achieve the following objectives set out in Chapter 2 of the Spatial Plan:

- To **raise the profile of the 'working port'** character of Old Leigh and to ensure the continuation of maritime activities in the Old Town;
- To **improve the way existing public spaces are used** and to create new ones by converting under-used spaces for flexible / temporary uses and activities;
- To **protect and enhance the conservation area**, including views into the town and out from Old Leigh to the sea; and
- To **sensitively repair gaps in the historic fabric** by exploring opportunities for minor infill development.

### 8 Improve wayfinding and signage to promote Old Leigh as a 'working port'

Old Leigh's working port character could be promoted more through a signage and wayfinding strategy that raises awareness of Old Leigh's marine and industrial activities and helps to improve connections between the station and Old Town.

This will ensure a more pleasant and safer experience for all.

Locations for signage to be considered are:

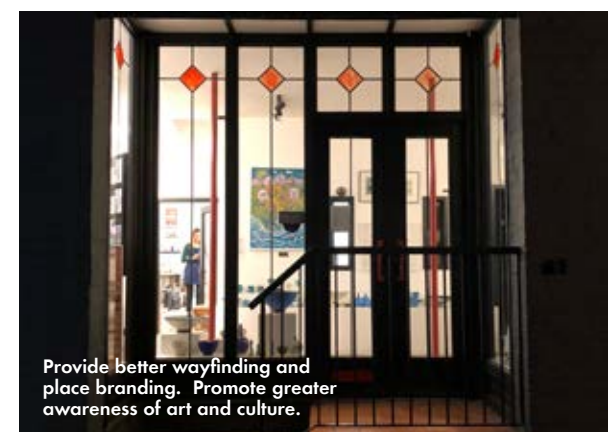
- Leigh-on-Sea station
- Steps down to Cockle Row
- Buoy at the western end of the High Street
- Bell Beach / Bell Wharf

The strategy could take cues from the character zones identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal for the Old Town (p. 29).

### 9 Promote art and cultural activities in the town

Whilst the pubs and restaurants are an important contributor to the local economy, Old Leigh offers much more. The Spatial Plan recognises and celebrates all the art and cultural activities in the town - Old Leigh Studios, the Heritage Centre and the numerous events and festivals that take place annually.

A wayfinding and/or public realm strategy that works collaboratively with local artists and historians would be a positive step to promote art and cultural activities in the Old Town. This should be accompanied by promotion of arts / culture on social media and via other channels.



Provide better wayfinding and place branding. Promote greater awareness of art and culture.

Old Leigh Studios

### 10 Explore the potential for a new building next to Old Custom House

There are very few opportunities in Old Leigh for development. A site that has potential for a building is adjacent to Old Custom House. A building once occupied the site but has since been demolished, and now it is used as a storage area for Mike's Boatyard.

A building sensitively integrated into its context would repair the historic fabric by giving a new front to the street that respects the rhythm and scale of its neighbours. It would also restore a sense of intimacy and enclosure which is an integral part of the Old Town's character.

The building would retain workshop / storage space at ground floor, and could provide community, education, studio or office space above.



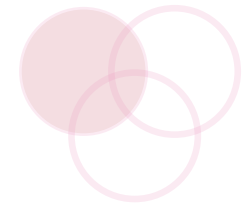
Could a building help repair the historic fabric of the High Street?







# ACTIVITIES AND USES



## Introduction to public realm and townscape

The proposals for movement achieve the following objectives set out in Chapter 2 of the Spatial Plan:

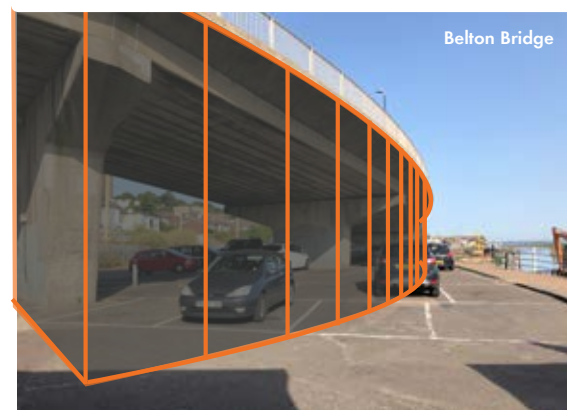
- To **raise the profile of the 'working port'** character of Old Leigh and to ensure the continuation of maritime activities in the Old Town;
- To **improve the way existing public spaces are used** and to create new ones by converting under-used spaces for flexible / temporary uses and activities;
- To **promote the wider cultural and community offer** in Old Leigh; and
- To **reduce conflict between unloading catch and recreational activities at Bell Wharf** through the implementation of an effective management strategy to ensure safety for all.

### 11 Reconfigure Belton Gardens South car park to provide pop-up event space under the bridge

The good views out to the estuary are undermined by the space under Belton Bridge which is unattractive and uninviting and offers a poor sense of arrival to the Old Town from the station.

By encouraging cars to park elsewhere, the space could be freed to provide flexible, temporary pop-up event space, giving the local community and visitors a new offer in this part of the Old Town. The space could have alternative uses that change frequently e.g. a pop-up cinema, art exhibition or food market during the summer.

Activating the space will strengthen the connection between the station and High Street, add variety and interest, and encourage people to stop, linger and enjoy the good views out towards Leigh Creek.



The structure could be enclosed to create a new events space

### 12 Extend Cockle Wharf to create more space for boats to land

There is currently poor access to Leigh Port for cocklers and fishermen. By extending the beach at Cockle Wharf eastwards to Theobald's Wharf, the option to unload at the Port would be improved (together with widening the access from Cockle Row).

The change in level between the Port and promenade creates a convenient buffer between the working port activities and the residents / visitors passing by. By extending the Port eastwards, visitors and locals can safely watch and enjoy the activities happening down below.

The feasibility of this proposal is closely linked to the dredging options as set out in the Leigh Port Feasibility Study (2018).



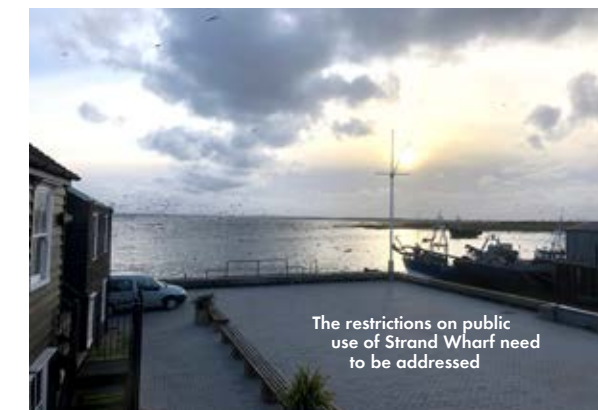
Separating working space and the promenade

### 13 Remove restrictions at Strand Wharf

The use of Strand Wharf is currently restricted to 15 events a year. Placing restrictions on the Wharf undermines the objectives of the Spatial Plan to improve the way existing public spaces are used and to promote the wider community offer in Old Leigh.

Removing these restrictions and allowing community groups to use the wharf more frequently for classes and events is a positive step.

Any changes to usage must consider the impact this would have on residents living close-by and therefore consultation is essential.



Promoting activity on Strand Wharf



## 14 Develop a management strategy for Bell Wharf to improve its safety

A clear management strategy and active lifeguard service is needed to improve safety for all.

By improving access to Leigh Port we can give boats a better alternative for landing and therefore reduce conflicts and improve public safety at Bell Wharf.

It is recommended that options to manage the space and access are explored by the Town Council and relevant representatives of the Council / local businesses.

A clear management strategy and active lifeguard service is needed to ensure safety for all



A management strategy is needed at Bell Wharf

If we can give the boats an alternative place to land catch then we can reduce conflicts and improve public safety at Bell Wharf

## 15 Reduce car parking at peak times to free up space for alternative activities

Victoria Wharf car park currently occupies a prime site between the Mayflower, Bell Beach and the pedestrian bridge over the railway line.

If alternative car-parking locations away from the High Street are promoted, spaces like Victoria Wharf could be released for more attractive and playful activities that promote interaction and spontaneity.

Examples of uses include outdoor markets, outdoor play spaces and cycle parking.

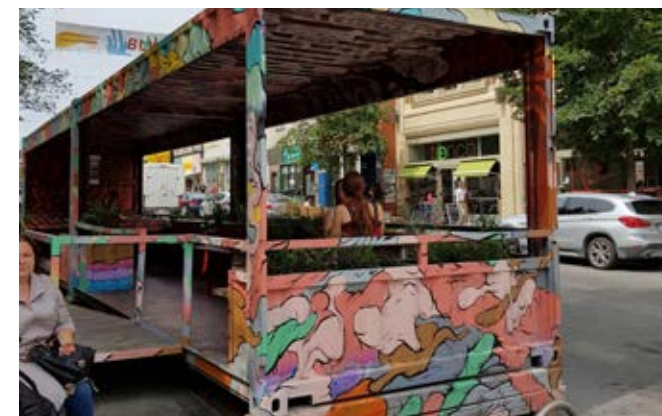
Reducing public car parking at peak times will release space for more attractive activities



Victoria Wharf car park gives an opportunity for new activities



Undercroft in Thamesmead activated for community and cultural uses  
(Source: Peabody)



Street intervention in Montreal



Opportunity to convert some car parking spaces to cycle parking (as in Amsterdam)



Hackney Downs Studios - temporary seating and food stalls



Undercroft in Hackney Wick converted into a temporary cinema  
(Source: Morely Von Sternberg)



Temporary community activities under a bridge in Thamesmead  
(Source: Peabody)



# DELIVERING THE SPATIAL PLAN

6









# DELIVERY

## Planning

The Spatial Plan establishes an emerging set of principles and accompanying projects which are recommended for further development and exploration by the Town Council and their partners. Further feasibility work and engagement will be required to gain consensus for these concepts, and to embed them as recognised priorities.

A key opportunity in this regard would be the incorporation of key principles and projects in local planning guidance and documents where appropriate. Potential routes are outlined as follows:

### 1. Specific Old Leigh policy in the Local Plan

Southend Borough Council is currently reviewing the Local Plan. At time of writing, the New Local Plan is at a relatively early stage, with Issues and Options stage closing in April 2019, and preferred approach targeted for Winter 2019/20.

Depending on the approach to thematic and place-based policies and guidance in the Local Plan, it might be appropriate to include specific Old Leigh policy statement. This could be in the form of a policy statement or supporting guidance in response to a general policy. Key elements could include the following:

- Definition of the main planning, design and heritage principles of relevance to Old Leigh.
- Establishing a context for implementation projects which might ultimately be incorporated within future iterations of the Local Transport Plan.
- Cross-referencing other guidance documents as set out below.

It is recommended that the Spatial Plan is issued to Southend Borough Council as a direction of travel / statement of intent well in-advance of the preferred options stage. It could form the basis of further discussions with the planning policy team and has potential to be referenced by the Council as part of the evidence base.

If the parts of the Spatial Plan can be incorporated in this way, there would be opportunities for additional engagement through the formal stages of the plan-making process.

### 2. Update of Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

It is understood that Southend Borough Council is embarking on a focussed review of its Conservation Areas. The Spatial Plan provides a helpful repository of information, and it might provide a useful reference for the Council in preparing the Management Plan. In particular, the Spatial Plan identifies several practical interventions which could enhance the setting of the Conservation Area.

### 3. Old Leigh Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Spatial Plan focuses largely on opportunities to enhance the area in relation to public realm, movement and activities. This scope of proposals would be appropriate for re-casting as supplementary guidance. Further focused consultation on draft proposals and a formal draft would be necessary.

## Governance

It is vital that a clear governance strategy is developed in support of the continued progression of the ideas in the Spatial Plan.

Leigh Town Council should continue to take a lead role in progressing initiatives with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, influencing positive change in Old Leigh.

Strong and effective partnership working will be needed following the end of the North Thames FLAG in 2020. Leigh Town Council will continue to work with Leigh Port Partnership and the Leigh-on-Sea CCT to fulfil the aims and objectives identified in the Spatial Plan. Close working with other key partners such as Network Rail, local businesses and residents will also be encouraged. As noted above, it is recommended that existing issues which have potential health and safety risks are carefully assessed with inputs from the appropriate local groups and authorities as soon as possible through separate workstreams.

## Projects

As noted above, the Spatial Plan places an emphasis the identification and future implementation of projects. The following table attempts to draw the various recommendations from chapter 5 into a delivery table. The projects are grouped according to the three themes (Movement, Public Realm and Townscape and Activities and Uses). The table contains the following information:

- **Project name and overview:** précis of the project concept and concept.
- **Priority:** summary of whether the project is a short (1-2 years), medium (2-5 years) or long-term opportunity (5 years plus). Although some interventions might take place in the longer-term, there might be a need for a more immediate activity to move the concept forward or establish a brief.
- **Next steps:** indication of the immediate actions required to progress the project. This could relate to partnership working to create a more developed feasibility or concept,
- **Partners:** initial estimate of potential partners who would work together to take the projects forward.



	NAME / DESCRIPTION	NEXT STEPS	TIMESCALE / PRIORITY			PARTNERS
			Short	Medium	Long	
MOVEMENT						
1	Remove visiting cars from the High Street, especially at peak times	Review with Southend Borough Council (SBC) officers and Leigh Town Council. Potential to consult further with residents and businesses.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, local businesses / residents, Leigh-on-Sea Coastal Community Team (CCT)
2	Introduce time-limited deliveries to reduce congestion					Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, local businesses, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
3	Identify the best locations for parking and improve signage and quality of walking routes					Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
4	Improving the quality of the route along High Street West	Review with Southend Borough Council (SBC) officers and Leigh Town Council. Potential relocation of boat hut requires consultation with Belton Way Small Craft Club, environmental bodies and cockling industry.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Port of London Authority, NTFLAG, Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Leigh Marina, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
5	Improved crossings along New Road	Review with Southend Borough Council (SBC) officers and Leigh Town Council. Potential to consult further with residents and businesses.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
6	Reconfiguring Belton Gardens South car park to provide a set down and pick up space					Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
7	Investing in the Cinder Path	Feed into discussions led by SBC in relation to promotion of Cinder Path as a strategic connection through planning policy and investment opportunities.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Network Rail, Natural England, yacht clubs, Environment Agency, Rights of Way groups, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
PUBLIC REALM AND TOWNSCAPE						
8	Improve wayfinding and signage to promote Old Leigh as a ‘working port’	Production of a wayfinding or public realm strategy for Old Leigh led by Leigh-on-Sea Town Council in consultation with SBC and local groups and businesses.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, local cocklers / fishermen, NTFLAG, The Leigh Society, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
9	Promote art and cultural activities in the town	Assess potential of establishing a steering group of arts and cultural organisations in the Old Town to promote art, culture and heritage through events / wayfinding / art installations.  Production of a wayfinding or public realm strategy for Old Leigh led by Leigh-on-Sea Town Council in consultation with SBC and steering group, including Old Leigh Studios and The Leigh Society.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, Old Leigh Studios, The Leigh Society, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
10	Explore the potential for a new building next to Old Custom House	Review with the landowner and undertake further feasibility.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council
ACTIVITIES AND USES						
11	Reconfigure Belton Gardens South car park to provide pop-up event space under the bridge	Review with Southend Borough Council (SBC) officers and Leigh Town Council. Potential to consult further with residents and businesses.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
12	Extend Cockle Wharf to create more space for boats to land	To be reviewed in context of Leigh Port Infrastructure and options Appraisal Study and in consultation with SBC, Port of London Authority, environmental bodies and local businesses.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Port of London Authority, NTFLAG, Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, local businesses, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
13	Remove restrictions at Strand Wharf	Leigh-on-Sea Town Council to renegotiate current restrictions at Strand Wharf.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea CCT
14	Develop a management strategy for Bell Wharf to improve its safety	Develop in partnership with Southend Borough Council (SBC) foreshore officers, Leigh Town Council and Port of London Authority. Consultation required with local groups.				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Port of London Authority, NTFLAG, Leigh-on-Sea CCT , local groups
15	Reduce car parking at peak times to free up space for alternative activities	Review with Southend Borough Council (SBC) officers and Leigh Town Council. Consult further with local groups, including Leigh-on-Sea Independent Traders Association (LOSITA).				Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, SBC, Leigh-on-Sea Independent Traders Association (LOSITA), Leigh-on-Sea CCT



# APPENDIX

## Community consultation









# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

## Drop-in sessions

We held two rounds of consultation to ensure that the preparation of the Spatial Plan for Old Leigh was well informed by those who live and work there.

The first round was held in November 2018 and comprised two drop-in sessions:

- Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November, 11am to 5pm at the Heritage Centre, Old Leigh
- Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November, 12pm to 6pm at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road

The purpose of the drop-in sessions was to present our initial research and understanding of Old Leigh and to listen to people's thoughts and ideas about the key issues relating to the working port and boatyards, built heritage, food and drink, servicing and parking.

We prepared an ideas book which we tabled at the drop-ins to generate discussion, and brought large scale maps of Old Leigh and post-it notes to capture feedback.

We spoke to a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, representatives of the cockling and fishing industry in Old Leigh, business owners, community groups and visitors to the town.

All comments made at the drop-ins were transcribed and summarised on a series of plans, shown earlier in the report, that layer the different activities and uses in Old Leigh for residents and communities, the working port, and the visitor economy. The key feedback points are included on the opposite spread.



A flyer was hand delivered to businesses, residents and community groups in Old Leigh, inviting them to attend. An email was also sent round to contacts to make them aware of the consultation.



Photos from the drop-in at the Heritage Centre



### A spread from the scrapbook



#### Residents and communities

- Strand Wharf is a well used community space however cars parked on the Strand causes issues.
- Events need to be promoted more in Old Leigh - it is more than just a place for drinking.
- Could Leigh Foundry car park be for residents only? Residents get two resident permits but often struggle to find space to park because of visitors and business owners using up parking spaces for days at a time.
- Support for restricting traffic along the High Street, especially visiting cars looking for parking.
- Victoria Wharf is hidden and out of sight so lends itself to antisocial behaviour.
- The cubs and scouts drop-offs can cause congestion.

#### Visitor economy

- There is often conflict outside the Crooked Billet between drinkers crossing the road and cars.
- Concern that inappropriate sized vehicles come down the narrow High Street which can make it unsafe for pedestrians.
- Support for deterring taxis from the High Street as drop-offs cause problems. Taxi pick up should be from buoy.
- Support for restricted access - access should be for residents, industry and businesses only.
- Vans unloading outside the Peterboat can cause congestion.
- The car park north of Belton Bridge could benefit from greater use.
- Parking at Belton Gardens is free and is a popular route for walking back into Leigh.
- Could Leigh Marshes car park be extended and the walking route to it be improved?

- The route to and from the station is poor for pedestrians - there are no pavements or lighting.

#### Working port

- The working port character of Leigh is important - we need to preserve its heritage and the fishing industry for the future.
- There are safety issues at Bell Wharf with kids swimming / jumping off whilst boats are trying to unload. Kids also chuck off fishing / cockling equipment into the sea.
- The short tidal window and lack of artic access at Cockle Wharf makes it difficult to unload there, so cocklemen often unload at Bell Wharf.
- There is support for extending Leigh Port to improve unloading options.
- There is often conflict between lorries and kids getting their chips from the Mayflower.
- Lorries parked along the High Street is a problem, especially outside the Peterboat.

#### Other feedback

- Should there be public toilets near the skatepark?
- The offshore area is a sensitive and protected area - ensure the eel grass is left unaffected to protect the birds.
- The creek and views are the most important factor contributing to character.

Most likely to get trucks stuck at the Peterboat - vans outside on the pavement

We are landing at Bell Wharf due to lack of artic lorry access at the port

The creeks and views are the most important factor

Public events need to be promoted more so that it is more than just drinking

"Signage to be clear about the working port"

"Not any foreshore management"

"Boats end up queuing at Bell Wharf"

"Promote workshops"

"It's a cultural desert - signage to direct people to art and activities"

Big safety issues around the clash between boats and tourists

The working character - messy is good. Don't smarten it too much.

"The road is too narrow for so much traffic"

"Improve the footpath between Leigh Station and the cockle sheds"

Quotes from the drop-ins

Tourism and leisure are increasing - its inappropriate to have large vehicles

Conflict between lorries and kids getting their chips at the Mayflower



## Community workshop

We used the feedback received at the drop-in sessions to develop a strategy for the future of Old Leigh. We held a community workshop to present our emerging proposals and to gather input that would feed into the final report.

The workshop was held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 from 5pm-7pm at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road. The programme for the workshop was as follows:

- Presentation by the consultant team of Old Leigh context;
- Workshop 1 - a review of key issues in small groups;
- Presentation of emerging themes and proposals;
- Workshop 2 - a roundtable discussion about the proposals and projects; and
- Feedback by table representatives to the rest of the group.

The event was advertised on the Town Council's social media channels and by email to key stakeholders. A team of volunteers also flyered and spoke to local businesses in Old Leigh inviting them to attend.

15 people attended the workshop representing a variety of stakeholder groups, including local residents, cocklers, business owners and community groups in Old Leigh.

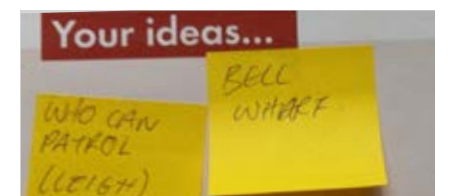
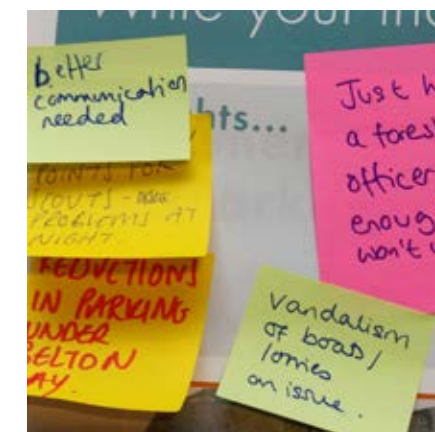
Feedback from the community workshop is summarised on the following spread.



A flyer was hand delivered to businesses, residents and community groups in Old Leigh, inviting them to attend. An email was also sent round to contacts to make them aware of the workshop.



Worksheets used to capture feedback



Photos from the community workshop



## Workshop 1 feedback

### Parking

- There are a number of visitors looking for parking in the wrong places;
- Disabled parking and access is a priority;
- There is a lack of information about parking spaces - better signage showing the number of car parking spaces left could prevent cars travelling down the High Street;
- The station car park is too far away but more could be made of it;
- Cars park behind the cockle sheds; and
- There are conflicts between visiting cars and access to the working port.

### Cycling and walking

- Promote walking routes into Old Leigh – not only along Cockle Row but on the other side of the railway line which gives good views to the sea and is perhaps more accessible;
- Improved cycle parking at the station and formal provision of cycle parking along the High Street is needed; and
- Cycling along the cinder path is officially not allowed but currently there is no enforcement.

### Working port

- Signage needs to be clearer that Leigh is a working port. It was suggested that a simple map could help inform people;
- Bell Wharf is a place of interest and fascination but it can also be dangerous - there is a need to educate and inform; and
- Vandalism of boats and lorries is an issue.

### Activities and events

- A tourism strategy is needed;
- Promote events more effectively; and
- There is concern over the water quality at Bell Beach.

## Workshop 2 feedback

### Movement

- There is support for better access around the station including ramps to get down to Cockle Row, improved steps, signage and a pedestrian crossing;
- It was suggested by both groups for shared use / shared surfacing along Cockle Row and the High Street;
- It was suggested that Cockle Row could be one-way or access only for lorries using Cockle Wharf;
- There is support for a new crossing by the Methodist Church as it is often a popular place to cross. The crossing by the pedestrian bridge (D) should move further east subject to safety;
- Maintain access to Sea Scouts;
- There is support for turning Victoria Wharf into a new use which offers seating, cycle parking and disabled parking;
- There is support for improvements to the cinder path for cycling including improved lighting – could the cinder path be segregated for cyclists and pedestrians?
- There was some concern over reducing car parking under Belton bridge;
- One respondent was concerned about dropping off children at the end of the High Street and walking past pubs late at night;
- There is support for cycle parking at the station and along the High Street (eg outside pubs);
- There is support for the proposal to restrict access along High Street to disabled / resident / industry only;
- The Sailing Club would still like access along the High Street;
- Consider proposals for access via the water – paddle boards and other boats;

- It was suggested that parking north of Belton Bridge could be reconfigured to provide more car parking; and
- Consider introducing vertical bays off Belton Way to create more parking spaces.

### Public realm and townscape

- Review existing signage at the station and parking signs.

### Activities and uses

- People would like to see a way that the cockle and fishing industries can still use Bell Wharf;
- Changing the restriction of use on Strand Wharf (can only be used 15 times a year) will be difficult but in theory is supported;
- Just having a foreshore officer is not enough to ensure safety at Bell Wharf (although this is desired);
- There is support for greater education around the danger of Bell Wharf and better signage. It was also noted that it is only an issue at certain tides (eg evening landings between 5 and 6pm in the summer) so this should be considered when finding a solution;
- Suggestion for the creation of a pier as an alternative location for unloading catch;
- Can we make man-made wharfs / places to jump?
- Support for pop up and temporary uses under the bridge;
- More activities for children and non-drinkers is supported; and
- Concern that the pubs and restaurants may not be happy if parking is reduced.

### Other

- Better communication is needed about the Spatial Plan.

## Concluding remarks

We would like to thank all those who participated in the drop-in sessions and community workshop. The input from local people throughout the preparation of the Spatial Plan has added great insight and value to the process.

Local people have an immense knowledge of the way Old Leigh is, both in terms of what makes the place really special and an understanding of the key priorities for change. The Spatial Plan has been deeply informed by the local knowledge captured from the discussions.

Furthermore, the consultation process has been a beneficial way through which to, not only communicate future change, but to instil a greater sense of pride in Old Leigh and its special working port character. Encouraging residents, local businesses and community groups to work together to ensure this character is preserved for the future is a key aim of the Spatial Plan.

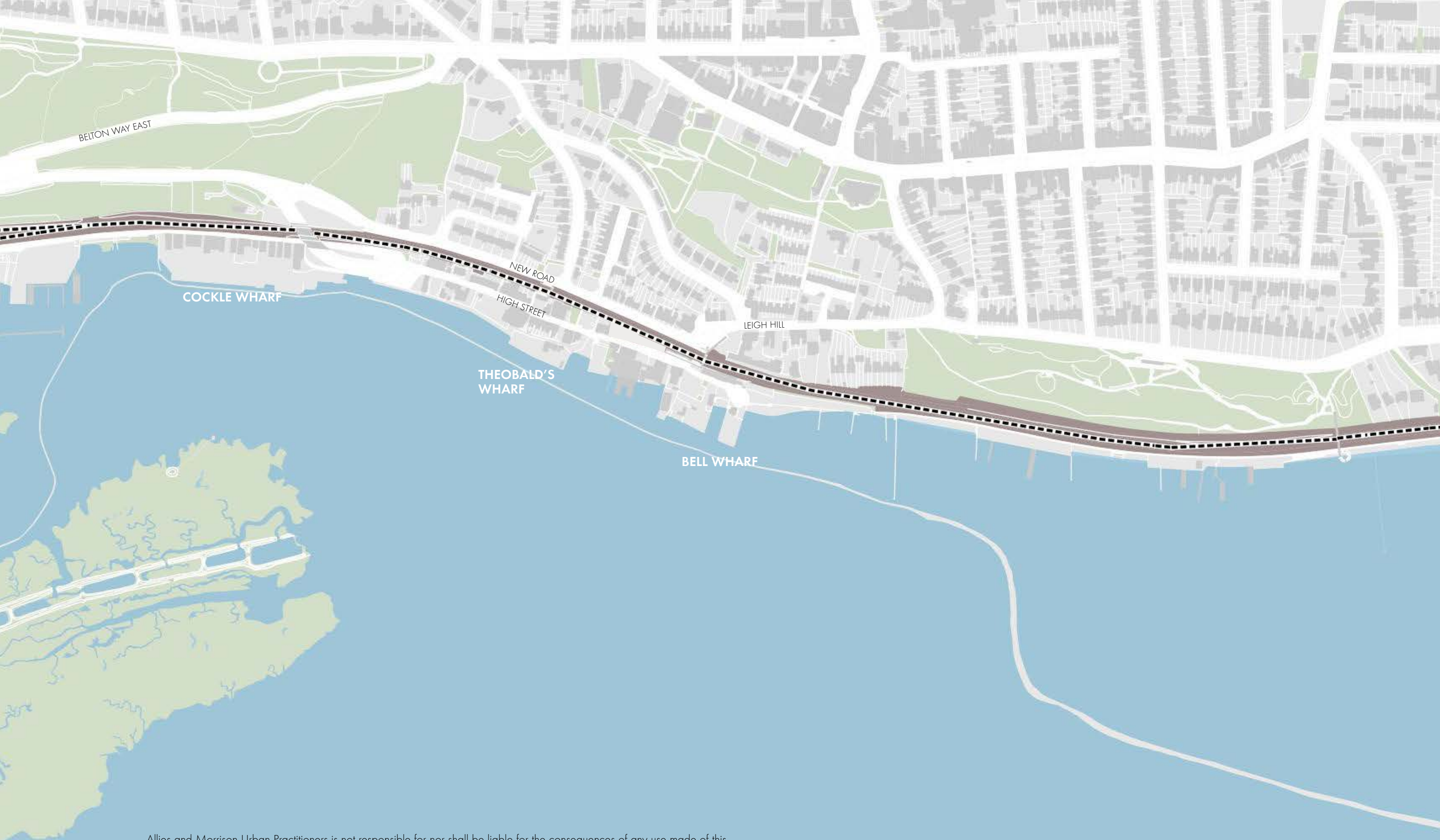




Leigh-on-Sea  
Station

TWO TREE ISLAND





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