

CHAPTER 6

Leisure and Tourism

Introduction	99
Objectives	99
Development Potential	99
Central Seafront Area	101
The Pier	102
Seafront Leisure	103
Entertainment and the Arts	105
Visitor Accommodation	105
Self-Catering Accommodation	108
Caravan and Camping Accommodation	109
Seafront Visitor Parking	110
Proposals	110

CHAPTER 6

Leisure and Tourism

Introduction

- 6.1 Traditionally, one of Southend's main roles has been that of a seaside tourist resort for staying and day visitors. At one time it was said to be the second largest resort in the country. Tourism gave the town much of its impetus for growth during the late 19th Century and the first half of this century. It stimulated investment, employment and development, especially along the seafront; it gave Southend considerable status nationally; and it encouraged migration into the town and the consequent expansion of housing, retailing and other facilities.
- 6.2 Along with many other seaside resorts, Southend experienced a marked decline in visitors during the 1950s and 1960s due to changing leisure patterns, a lack of investment in new facilities, and a widely held view that tourism was unnecessary for the town's future. Facilities and parts of the seafront environment also deteriorated steadily, further reducing the resort's attractiveness for visitors. During the 1970s the decline levelled out but left a legacy of environmental problems, especially in the Marine Parade area. At the same time, there was renewed awareness of the advantages of a thriving tourist trade and the likely costs to the town of stagnation or further decline.
- 6.3 In 1985 the Council re-affirmed its commitment to the encouragement of tourism and in 1989 published a corporate tourism and resort strategy. This acknowledges both the potential benefits of leisure development - increased facilities, jobs and income for local residents and businesses - and the need for the Council to become actively involved in promoting the resort potential of the town. Chapter 4 of this Plan has already referred to the need to expand the local employment base and the opportunities provided by new visitor facilities. Tourism and leisure is an expanding sector of the national economy which can also benefit local retail and other business activity.

Objectives

(see Introduction, Aim 3)

- 6.4
1. To promote the resort potential of the town by identifying development opportunities and encouraging the provision of new tourist facilities and visitor attractions.
 2. To seek to achieve improvements to the environment of the main tourism area along and adjoining the seafront.
 3. To retain an adequate stock of serviced accommodation and to promote the provision of new facilities.
 4. To encourage the provision of improved facilities for water recreation.
 5. To encourage the retention and development of entertainment, cultural and arts facilities.

Development Potential

- 6.5 Existing tourist facilities are concentrated along the seafront. With a shoreline of more than eight miles, most of which has unrestricted public access, the seafront also serves as an

important recreational and leisure resource for the Borough's residents. Its environmental quality is, however, varied, and some parts of it need upgrading. The Marine Parade area especially suffers from poor quality beaches, promenade and building frontages. Residential areas adjoin much of the seafront and during the summer season experience some conflict with its activities. Many of the resort's facilities have been slow to adapt to meet new leisure markets and to provide all-weather attractions, and as a result have been unable to develop the right image for attracting new visitors.

- 6.6 Existing tourism in Southend is concentrated on day visits, with over two million during the season (April-September). The town is extremely well situated to attract large numbers of day visitors, and the Council believes there is potential to develop and promote this aspect of tourism in the future. It is currently the fourth most popular seaside destination for day visitors behind Blackpool, Southport and Brighton. It is, however, highly dependent on repeat visits, and whilst these remain relatively steady, the town is vulnerable to competing destinations with more attractive facilities.
- 6.7 The trade from staying holiday visitors is low and in decline. Staying business visitors provide the majority of hotel/guest house trade and result from Southend's function as a sub-regional shopping and business centre. The exhibition and conference trade is small, due partly to inadequate accommodation and leisure facilities. Whilst more than 15 million people live within a two hour journey of Southend, and it is easily accessible from London and the continent, there is little hope of fulfilling its potential as a seaside resort and expanding tourism without substantial improvement to its facilities, in particular the provision of modern year-round attractions. The Borough Council therefore recognises the importance of promoting and encouraging new visitor attractions and for improving existing tourist facilities, particularly where they enhance the resort's ability to attract and cater for visitors and increase local employment opportunities.
- 6.8 In furtherance of these objectives, the Borough Council has undertaken substantial improvements to the facilities provided by the Cliffs Pavilion, making it one of the finest entertainment venues in the country and providing much needed improved conference facilities. Considerable investments have also been made to Southend's most famous leisure facility, the Pier, initiatives which have brought new life back to the Pier. A number of new visitor attractions have also been provided or are being pursued, in particular the Sealife Centre on Eastern Esplanade and ambitious plans for a major new sports and leisure facility (see Chapter 7). Opportunities to provide further new leisure and tourist facilities are identified at the end of this Chapter.
- 6.9 The Borough Council is committed to promoting the resort potential of Southend, to improving the quality of leisure and tourist facilities by means of regeneration and renewal, and providing for an improved seafront environment in accordance with the provisions of Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 (PPG21 - Tourism, November 1992). The following policy will, therefore, apply:

POLICY L1 - FACILITIES FOR TOURISM

Proposals to provide new visitor attractions or improve existing tourist facilities will be encouraged where they enhance the resort's ability to attract and cater for visitors, increase local employment opportunities and provide for environmental improvements.

Central Seafront Area

- 6.10 The majority of the visitor attractions in Southend are concentrated in the Central Seafront Area, which extends between Marine Gardens West (Western Esplanade) and the Corporation Loading Jetty and includes Pier Hill and Marine Parade. This area contains amusement arcades, pubs, clubs/discos, restaurants, amusement parks, the Pier, car parks and a number of other leisure uses. Its location at the southern end of the High Street, adjoining the retail centre, provides potential spin-off for both leisure and commercial facilities. Together, they can give the town centre a unique attraction for shoppers and other visitors and can be used to strengthen mutual trade and competitiveness. Approximately 40% of seafront visitors also spend money on shopping.
- 6.11 The Central Seafront Area therefore offers the potential to achieve a thriving tourist and leisure attraction. However, the area comprises an environment of varied quality. Part of the area has Conservation Area status and whilst some buildings and tourist facilities have been improved to a high standard, many present an appearance of decay or poor design. It is essential that existing leisure facilities are encouraged to stay and modernise, and the Borough Council will support development proposals which would achieve both an improved environment and improved tourist facilities through the selective demolition and redevelopment of certain properties and the renovation or modernisation of others. It will also seek the provision of well designed new leisure facilities, as has recently been achieved south of the seafront road with the development of the Sealife Centre. There is an opportunity to create a more dramatic skyline on redevelopment, by encouraging taller buildings in Marine Parade as a focus for new leisure activity.
- 6.12 The area also experiences environmental conflict between its predominant leisure use for large numbers of pedestrians and its use as a through route for seafront traffic, notably in the Marine Parade area. The route separates the beach and promenade from the main area of amusements, cafes and other facilities. It restricts the area available for pedestrians and inhibits the potential for landscaping. Substantial environmental improvement would result from extending pedestrian areas and providing improved servicing to the rear of properties on the north side of the seafront road. Redevelopment proposals in the area could also provide the opportunity for a more direct pedestrian link between Seaway Car Park and Marine Parade.
- 6.13 In order to promote the above initiatives as the catalyst for the refurbishment and improvement of the 'Golden Mile', whilst safeguarding the recreation and nature conservation value of the foreshore, the following policy will be applied:

POLICY L2 - CENTRAL SEAFRONT AREA

Within the Central Seafront Area, a defined on the Proposals Map, the Borough Council will promote new leisure facilities and seek to introduce the following measures to improve its environment for visitors:

- (i) the creation of a wide landscaped pedestrian concourse from the High Street to the loading jetty to include segregated facilities for cyclists;**
- (ii) the provision of a more direct pedestrian route from Seaway Car Park to the promenades;**
- (iii) improved rear servicing facilities for Marine Parade properties;**

- (iv) **protection and enhancement of the character of historic buildings in the area, including those within the Kursaal Conservation Area; and**
- (v) **promotion of the redevelopment or refurbishment of other buildings, where appropriate.**

Development proposals south of the seafront road will be considered where they are predominantly visitor orientated and contribute to the leisure and tourism facilities of the town, having regard in particular to their impact, if any, on the following:

- (i) **the tidal regime of the Thames Estuary;**
- (ii) **sites of value to Nature Conservation (see also Proposal P1a);**
- (iii) **the availability of visitor parking facilities, public beaches and moorings;**
- (iv) **the long-term future of the Pier (see also Policy L3);**
- (v) **wider foreshore views;**
- (vi) **the environment of the Central Seafront Area itself; and**
- (vii) **the highway network.**

A detailed environmental impact assessment will be required for any proposals likely to have significant environmental effects on the seafront or foreshore.

In addition planning permission will not normally be granted for proposals involving the reduction or loss of leisure facilities or associated car parking, unless the proposal increases the resort's ability to attract and cater for visitors, and results in environmental improvement.

Policy Cross References : L3 Southend Pier (see below) and Proposal P1a (Southend Foreshore Local Nature Reserve), page 20.

The Pier

- 6.14 Within the Central Seafront Area, the Pier is the resort's best known feature. It is also a Grade II listed building. Despite structural and other problems which have diminished its leisure use and threatened its continued existence, the Council intends that it should be retained and restored as an important tourist facility for the resort. Substantial investment has been made in recent years to upgrade it and its railway system, to increase its attractiveness for visitors, and to expand its leisure use. It is also a popular base for anglers. Frequent special events are held during the summer season which focus on the Pier. The Council wishes to promote the development of new facilities at the Pier Head, either in conjunction with development at its landward end (Marine Gardens East - see Proposal P6d, page 111) or independently. Development could include additional deep-water berthing facilities for overseas yachtsmen and visiting passenger vessels. The following policy will apply:

POLICY L3 - SOUTHEND PIER

Southend Pier will be retained over water as a traditional pleasure pier. In order to safeguard its future as a unique leisure facility for visitors to the town, development will be promoted at the pierhead, subject to the design of any building or structure being sympathetic with its designation as a Grade II Listed Building and subject to the need to retain access for sea anglers.

Seafront Leisure

- 6.15 The seafront provides the Borough with its most extensive recreational asset, with about 7 miles of public beach and promenade, much of which is backed by public gardens and open space. Only the sections of coastline within the Leigh National Nature Reserve and the Shoebury Old and New Ranges of the Ministry of Defence are not freely accessible. Traditional beach uses are of an informal nature requiring few facilities other than the beach itself and the sea. Having regard to available resources, the Council will maintain existing children's paddling pools on the foreshore and improve the quality and cleanliness of the beaches from time to time with the deposit of additional sand.
- 6.16 In addition to its traditional recreational use for relaxing, walking, swimming and picnicking, the seafront supports a wide range of marine activities on the tidal foreshore. Southend's marine setting and its water recreation facilities are an important attraction for visitors. Policy L9 of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration acknowledges the value of water recreation provision in resort towns in the County:
- "The development or expansion of major water recreation facilities will not be permitted on the rural coastline but will be encouraged in those coastal towns where there would be no detriment to townscape and nature conservation and where traffic generated by the development could be satisfactorily handled. New marinas should be considered at Harwich and Southend."
- 6.17 Most forms of boating are represented in the Borough and some are experiencing popularity and pressure for growth. Facilities are provided and operated mainly through local clubs. Nine clubs are distributed along the seafront and the majority provide club premises, boat racks or parks, moorings and slipways for members. Facilities are also provided by the Council for non-club members, notably moorings and some slipways. Sailing, especially cruiser sailing, is continuing to expand. Over 2,700 moorings are provided on the foreshore for all types of boats and there is adequate scope for their expansion to meet foreseeable future requirements. However, there are few deep water moorings available because of the shallow foreshore.
- 6.18 Dinghy sailing is not expanding locally, due partly to difficult access to certain slipways, and partly to policies restricting development south of the seafront road. Nevertheless, existing dinghy parks and racks can accommodate approximately 500 boats, which meets existing demand. Wind-surfing is increasingly competing for popularity with dinghy sailing. A voluntary code of practice with designated sailboarding zones has been established to reduce conflict with other beach users. Some facilities are provided by sailing clubs. Public facilities for non-club members, especially car parking close to designated sailboard zones and space for rigging boards are, however, limited.

A tranquil scene on Southend's Foreshore, reflecting the importance of the area for water recreation and the need to retain estuary views (see pages 31 and 34).

- 6.19 Waterskiing, speed boats and water scooters are also popular but are restricted in terms of speed within an extensive area offshore. Because of conflict with other water users, bye-laws are enforced to control the increasing use of jet-skis, and to restrict the water areas available to them. The Council will continue to press the Ministry of Defence to permit the public use of water areas adjoining the private foreshore between West Beach and East Beach, Shoeburyness, which could include use by water skiers and jet skiers.
- 6.20 There are currently eight public launching facilities available at Camper Road, East Beach, Two Tree Island, Bell Wharf at Old Leigh, Lifstan Way, Thorpe Hall Avenue, Thorpe Bay Yacht Club and Ness Road. In addition the Essex County Council operates at Thorpe Bay the Southend Marine Activities Centre, which offers tuition and access to the water for canoeing, sailing and windsurfing. With the continued popularity of water recreation, it is important that new and improved facilities, including slipways, are provided in appropriate locations where they do not conflict with other beach activities, public accessibility and general enjoyment of the foreshore. Despite the restricted space of most beaches for non-boat users, it would appear possible to extend boat racks and private slipways in some locations without reducing significantly the beach area or conflicting with environmental policies for the seafront. The following policy will apply:

POLICY L4 - WATER RECREATION

The provision of new and improved facilities for water recreation, including slipways, will be encouraged in appropriate locations where they do not reduce significantly the amount of beach available for public use or public accessibility to the foreshore, where adequate means of access can be provided and, outside the Central Seafront Area, where they do not restrict views of the foreshore from the promenade, beach or residential properties (see also Policy C16).

Policy Cross Reference : C16 Foreshore Views, page 34.

Entertainment and the Arts

- 6.21 In addition to the facilities offered in the Central Seafront Area, Southend is generally well supplied with a range of entertainment and cultural facilities of all kinds, both public and private, reflecting the town's long-standing resort function. Nevertheless, in the interests of providing as varied and attractive an environment as possible for both residents and visitors, the Borough Council will encourage the retention and development of existing facilities and the provision of additional ones in accordance with policies contained elsewhere in this plan.
- 6.22 The Borough Council also operates a comprehensive museums and art gallery service. The Central, Priory, Southchurch Hall and Pier Museums provide valuable resources of both cultural and educational importance, whilst the Beecroft Art Gallery is an established centre for the visual arts. At a time when the value of museums and galleries to both tourism and the national curriculum is being emphasised, it is clearly important that these resources are safeguarded and enhanced. Development of the Central Museum, Beecroft Art Gallery and Southchurch Hall Museum and Garden facilities is either programmed or under investigation. In addition, the Council will wish to extend the facilities available in support of local arts organisations. This could be achieved by the provision of a Central Arts Centre. In addition the Council will pursue a policy of extending arts activities around the Borough, in our historic buildings and in Community Centres and Churches.

POLICY L5 - ENTERTAINMENT AND THE ARTS

The Borough Council will encourage the retention and development of existing entertainment, cultural and arts facilities and the provision of new ones in support of local arts organisations - in particular by the establishment of a central community arts centre. Permission will not normally be given for proposals involving the loss of such facilities unless it can clearly be shown that these can no longer be justified or that improved alternative provision is available.

Visitor Accommodation

- 6.23 Southend's hotel and guest houses serving the tourism industry provide for 983 bedspaces in a total of 36 establishments. Having regard to comparable resorts around the country, this provision is very poor, indicating a major shortfall in visitor accommodation necessary for a vital tourist economy, and the industry's predominant day resort function. The holiday market

is relatively insignificant, due partly to poor tourist attractions. The business market is the strongest element but is not fully exploited due to a shortage of good quality accommodation. The conference market is also difficult to exploit due to an inadequate quantity and quality of accommodation and relatively poor leisure attractions. As a result of these factors, the hotel/guest house trade is structurally weak, and there is continuing pressure to convert to other more economic uses. Since the early 1980's, this pressure has resulted in a 32% reduction in bedspace provision in the town. This has been mainly due to the conversion of smaller hotels to residential care and other residential uses, although the last two years have witnessed the loss of 100 bedspaces in three large hotels located outside the Visitor Accommodation Areas. Since 1987, there has been a threefold increase in the number of conversions to hostels and houses in multiple occupation as a result of the continuing decline in the availability of rented housing in the town and the increasing demand for single person accommodation. Changes to planning legislation which permit changes from hotel to hostel use without the need for planning permission have contributed towards this trend. This has recently been exacerbated by the decline in the number of leisure trips caused by current economic conditions.

- 6.24 Improvement in the quality, range and quantity of hotel/guest house accommodation is necessary if Southend's role as a tourist resort is to be regenerated, and business development promoted. In particular there is a need for larger hotels, in addition to the smaller budget accommodation currently provided, to cater for the potential conference and 'mini break' market. However, this will only happen if the resort's tourist attractions are greatly improved. The recent improvements to the Cliffs Pavilion, with facilities for 1,600 conference delegates, and the provision of new tourist attractions such as the Sealife Centre on Eastern Esplanade, are the first steps towards achieving these improvements. Hotel developers believe there is an adequate weekday business market in Southend to warrant new good quality accommodation, subject to the resort being able to attract staying leisure visitors at the weekends. There is also potential for small exhibitions, for short and specialist holidays, and for developing the town as a base for visitors - especially overseas visitors - to London.
- 6.25 Policies L12A and L12B of the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration state:
- "The development of new hotels and motels will be encouraged within towns and coastal resorts, and, in appropriate circumstances, adjoining them so long as they are well related to the primary road network and do not conflict with other planning policies."
- "Proposals which up-grade standards and improve the facilities of existing serviced and self-catering accommodation, or for the conversion and extension of existing buildings for bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation, will normally be encouraged in appropriate circumstances."
- 6.26 In general, the Borough Council supports these policies and considers it to be essential that the range and quality of visitor accommodation in Southend is improved. Clearly, with the already low level of provision of visitor accommodation and the increasing importance of leisure and tourism to the town's economic development and employment base, it will be vital to ensure that the existing larger hotels and those located in the tourism areas are retained in accordance with the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 (PPG21 - Tourism, November 1992), and that the provision of new facilities is promoted to ensure a range of accommodation types necessary to help Southend become viable as a resort for staying visitors. Four areas close to the seafront have been designated as Visitor Accommodation Areas within which proposals for hotels and guest houses will normally be encouraged. Land to the north of Prince Avenue adjacent to the proposed A127/B1013 interchange (Proposal P6e, page 111), at the southern end of Hamlet Court Road (Proposal P4b, page 77) and at Warrior Square/Whitegate Road in the town centre (Proposal P5b, page 96), are also identified as suitable sites for new hotels.

- 6.27 In promoting new hotel development it is necessary, however, to draw a clear distinction between bona-fide hotels and guest houses and those bed and breakfast establishments actually providing low-cost housing. This is because the continuing decline in the availability of rented housing in the town and the increasing demand for single person accommodation, has led to a growth in the number of unauthorised bed and breakfast establishments. This in turn has led to concern about the standard of provision at some premises and their effect on both adjoining residents and the tourism image of the town. Therefore, all proposals for serviced accommodation will be assessed in terms of the guidelines set out in Appendix 5 (page 207) and the proposed legal arrangements under which guests would occupy the property. In addition, research has shown that, in order to ensure that adequate facilities and management accommodation are provided, a minimum floor area of 160m² is required. In residential areas proposals will also be assessed in terms of their potential impact on the amenities of adjoining premises, and the cumulative impact of all non-residential uses on the character of the street (see also Policy E5, page 74). Having regard to all of these factors, the following policies will apply:

POLICY L6 - HOTELS AND GUEST HOUSES

Within the Central Seafront Area and those areas defined as Visitor Accommodation Areas on the Proposals Map, proposals for the establishment, extension or improvement of hotel and guest house accommodation will be encouraged subject to the requirements of Policy H5 and, within Conservation Areas, Policy C4.

Elsewhere permission may be granted where the following criteria can be met:

- (i) the proposal is well related to the primary road network or the seafront promenades;**
- (ii) the character and amenities of residential streets are unlikely to be adversely affected, having regard to the size of the proposal and the level of activity generated;**
- (iii) conversion proposals involve properties which have a gross floor area of 160 square metres or more, in order to retain an adequate stock of single family dwelling houses, and to ensure the premises are suitable for the use;**
- (iv) the requirements of Policies H3, H5 and E5 are complied with. In addition, where the proposal affects a property or site within a Conservation Area, the requirements of Policy C4 can be met.**

In order to safeguard the stock of serviced accommodation in Southend and to ensure that the town remains attractive to visitors, the Borough Council will consider the need to prohibit future changes to a particular use or uses which would otherwise be permitted by virtue of the Use Classes Order. Where a proposal is considered to be for long-term residential accommodation, having regard to the guidelines in Appendix 5, it will be assessed in accordance with Policy H9.

Policy Cross References : C4 Conservation Areas, page 24; H3 Retention of Small Family Houses, page 48; H5 Residential Design and Layout Considerations, page 51; H9 Non Self-Contained Residential Accommodation, page 57; E5 Non-Residential Uses Located Close to Housing, page 74; and Appendix 5 Non-Residential Policy Guidance, page 207.

POLICY L7 - RETENTION OF HOTEL AND GUEST HOUSE USES

Development which would involve the loss of any form of hotel/guest house accommodation in the Central Seafront Area and in Visitor Accommodation Areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, and elsewhere in establishments of 20 or more bedspaces*, will not normally be permitted unless:

- (i) there is an overriding need for the development which cannot be met elsewhere;**
- (ii) the development will enhance the quality and viability of the hotel/guest house;**
- (iii) there are overriding environmental reasons for the development.**

Self-Catering Accommodation

6.28 Southend contains only a small amount of self catering tourist accommodation, with six registered premises offering about 62 bedspaces. There are no purpose-built self catering or time share complexes and most of the accommodation has resulted from the conversion of residential property in residential areas. Nationally, self-catering is an increasingly popular form of tourist accommodation. With improvements to leisure facilities there could be increased demands for its provision in the resort. Conversion of existing housing to self-catering units could, however, conflict with policies for the retention of residential units. Although direct employment is low in comparison with hotels, their provision will help broaden the resort's appeal, help retain day visitors as staying visitors to exploit an expanding tourist market, and indirectly help support the trade and employment of other facilities. Self catering units will, therefore, be encouraged in purpose-built schemes which could contain communal leisure facilities. Their provision through the conversion of residential property will be restricted to Visitor Accommodation Areas and may be subject to legal agreements with the Council to ensure their use for tourists and the provision of self-contained accommodation to an appropriate standard. The following policy will apply:

POLICY L8 - SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION

The provisions of self-catering accommodation in purpose-built developments which may include ancillary communal leisure facilities will be encouraged within the Central Seafront Area. Elsewhere such proposals will be considered on their merits. The conversion of residential property to self-catering accommodation will not normally be permitted unless it is located within a Visitor Accommodation Area and it provides self-contained accommodation to an appropriate standard for use by visitors. The Council may also require an applicant to enter into a legal agreement to restrict the use.

Caravan and Camping Accommodation

- 6.29 Caravanning and camping facilities are also limited, with approximately 160 spaces for static and touring caravans and tents at Shoebury East Beach. The site is frequently full at peak periods, and it would be desirable to expand the number of non-residential spaces available for touring caravans and tents. However, there is a restrictive covenant attached to the adjoining land limiting its use to public open space and car parking, which would need to be varied to enable an extension to be considered. At present, no other sites in the Borough can provide additional facilities due to policy constraints. The existing site is in a suitable location for caravanning and camping visitors, being close to a large area of beach and open space. It adjoins a 2,000 space public car park serving East Beach, and an extension of the site would only be possible by reducing the area of open space or car parking. The existing site backs onto residential properties and any extension must be subject to strict environmental and management controls. The following policy will apply:

POLICY L9 - CARAVAN AND CAMPING ACCOMMODATION

No additional permanent camping or caravan sites will be permitted within the Borough. In addition, the extension of the existing site at Shoebury East Beach may only be permitted if:

- (i) the extended site is screened by substantial landscaping from any nearby residential property and public areas;**
- (ii) the landscaping of the internal layout of the site provides a good standard of amenity for visitors;**
- (iii) there is control of noise from the site;**
- (iv) adequate parking space is maintained; and**
- (v) it is used only for non-residential caravans, and provision is made for touring caravans.**

Seafront Visitor Parking

- 6.30 Traffic and parking considerations are generally discussed in Chapter 9. However, with renewed expansion of tourism, increasing pressure will be placed on parking facilities along the seafront, and specific problems and proposals need to be considered here. Whilst Southend's rail links with London should be exploited to increase visitors, cars and coaches will continue to be the main means of transport to the resort. Seaway car park which is located close to the town centre is the largest public car park available for visitors to the commercial part of the seafront - providing over 600 spaces - but is also used as a town centre and lorry park. In addition, just over 200 parking spaces are provided at the Jolly Spot and Fairheads Green car parks, use is made of temporary parking areas when available during the summer season, and on-street parking facilities are provided at various places along the Esplanade. These spaces are often inadequate to cope with demand during peak periods.
- 6.31 It is necessary to ensure, therefore, that the present level of parking provision is not reduced and that additional parking facilities, commensurate with the growth of the resort, are provided. In relation to individual sites and premises, however, flexibility will be needed. Many hotels and guest houses as well as leisure uses are unable to provide adequate on-site parking, and in many cases unless the Council's adopted car parking standards are relaxed, new proposals are unlikely to be successful. Similarly, some leisure sites and premises will require the loss of associated parking spaces to enable their improvement or expansion. In order to promote the modernisation of leisure facilities in the Central Seafront Area and the conversion of premises to hotels in Visitor Accommodation Areas, the following policy will be applied:

POLICY L10 - SEAFRONT VISITOR PARKING

The Council's adopted standards for car parking will normally apply to proposals for hotels, guest houses and seafront leisure development, in accordance with Policy T11. Within the Central Seafront Area and the Visitor Accommodation Areas, a relaxation of these standards will, however, be considered where proposals involve the conversion of existing premises and where they result in a desirable improvement of the resort's facilities for visitors, and, when leisure developments are involved, adequate alternative public parking is available close to the site.

Policy Cross Reference : T11 Parking Standards, page 155

Proposals

- 6.32 In view of the above paragraphs, the following proposals are made:-

PROPOSAL P6a - CORPORATION LOADING JETTY, EASTERN ESPLANADE

The jetty is at the eastern end of the Central Seafront Area, extending 170 metres over the foreshore. In the past it was a loading jetty for small coastal shipping but it has suffered severe structural decay and is now unused. Its semi-derelict condition is environmentally damaging. It does, however, provide a vehicular access through the sea wall which could be exploited for boating activities. As substantial investment would be required to bring it back into safe use, it is proposed to demolish the majority of the jetty and form a new slipway accessible to trailed boats and jet-skis with associated parking facilities on the remaining part of the stem.

PROPOSAL P6b - KURSAAL, SOUTHCHURCH AVENUE/EASTERN ESPLANADE

Planning permission has been granted for renovation of the Kursaal building for an indoor leisure pool complex. An alternative leisure use of the site would be considered provided that the existing dome, the frontage to Southchurch Avenue and other attractive features of the building are retained in any development. The site (0.9 hectares) is within the Kursaal Conservation Area and is, therefore, also subject to policies contained in Chapter 2.

PROPOSAL P6c - SOUTHCHURCH AVENUE/MARINE PARADE

This is potentially a prime leisure site for the resort. It contains a number of different uses and ownerships at present. If redeveloped comprehensively, it would involve properties in Southchurch Avenue and two public houses in Marine Parade (0.9 hectares). It is an important corner site with a frontage to the sea and access from the main traffic route to the seafront. It may be affected by the need to improve the alignment of Southchurch Avenue at its junction with Marine Parade as a result of developments on the foreshore (Proposal T7 - Seafront Access, Chapter 9, page 147).

PROPOSAL P6d - MARINE GARDENS EAST

This 1.6 hectare site owned by the Council is located at an important focal point within the Central Seafront Area close to the Pier. It contains a boating lake and promenade but is seriously underused and contributes little to the resort's facilities. A more prestigious leisure use, preferably providing an all-year attraction, is being sought. In furtherance of these objectives planning permission was granted in July 1992 for the development of an amusement park with associated facilities.

PROPOSAL P6e - LAND NORTH OF PRINCE AVENUE

An area of approximately one hectare of agricultural land to the north of Prince Avenue, as defined more precisely on the Proposals Map, is proposed for the development of an hotel. This proposal will form part of a wider integrated development on land declared surplus to requirements by the owner, for which a detailed planning brief will be prepared in accordance with Policy C20 (page 37). Development will be dependent upon the implementation of appropriate improvements to the highway network. The extensive use of planting on the boundaries of the site and within car parking areas will be required to ensure its satisfactory integration into the townscape. The site is also close to the Public Safety Zone for runway 06 at Southend Airport, which will restrict the height of buildings in this location and the type of planting considered appropriate.

PROPOSAL P6f - LAND AT LONDON ROAD AND TO THE REAR OF IMPERIAL AVENUE

This site comprises the now vacant Cannon Cinema and adjoining showroom, builders and wood yards fronting London Road (A13) and derelict open backland formerly occupied by a private tennis club. The site area is approximately 1.2 hectares. The Borough Council would prefer to see the site continue to be utilised predominantly for recreation and leisure purposes, in accordance with Policies C15, L5 and R1 of the Plan. However, having regard to the fact that the majority of the site has been vacant for a number of years and makes no contribution to the local environment or economy, its development, re-development or change of use for housing and/or commercial purposes in a comprehensive scheme would also be considered appropriate, provided that certain environmental safeguards are met. In particular, any development or change of use of the backland part of the site should be of a nature and layout which respects the scale, height, amenities and outlook of adjoining residential properties. The London Road frontage is appropriate for a higher density of residential or commercial use (other than Classes B2 - B7) of up to 4/5 storeys in height, subject to a satisfactory relationship being maintained with adjoining land uses and the local highway. Extensive landscaping will be required as an integral part of any layout on the southern, western and eastern boundaries and within the site itself, in particular within any hardsurfaced areas for car parking. Vehicular access to all development on the site should*

be from London Road. All development proposals for the site should have regard to Policies C11, H2, H5, H10, E5 and T11 as appropriate.

Policy Cross References : C11 New Buildings, Extensions and Alterations, page 30; C15 Retention of Open Spaces, page 33; H2 Future Housing Needs, page 47; H5 Residential Design and Layout Considerations, page 51; H10 Backland Development, page 59; E5 Non-Residential Uses Located Close to Housing, page 74; L5 Entertainment and the Arts, page 105; R1 Outdoor Sports Facilities, page 114; and T11 Parking Standards, page 155.