

# THE CASTLE POINT PLAN



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## Settlement Hierarchy

July 2025



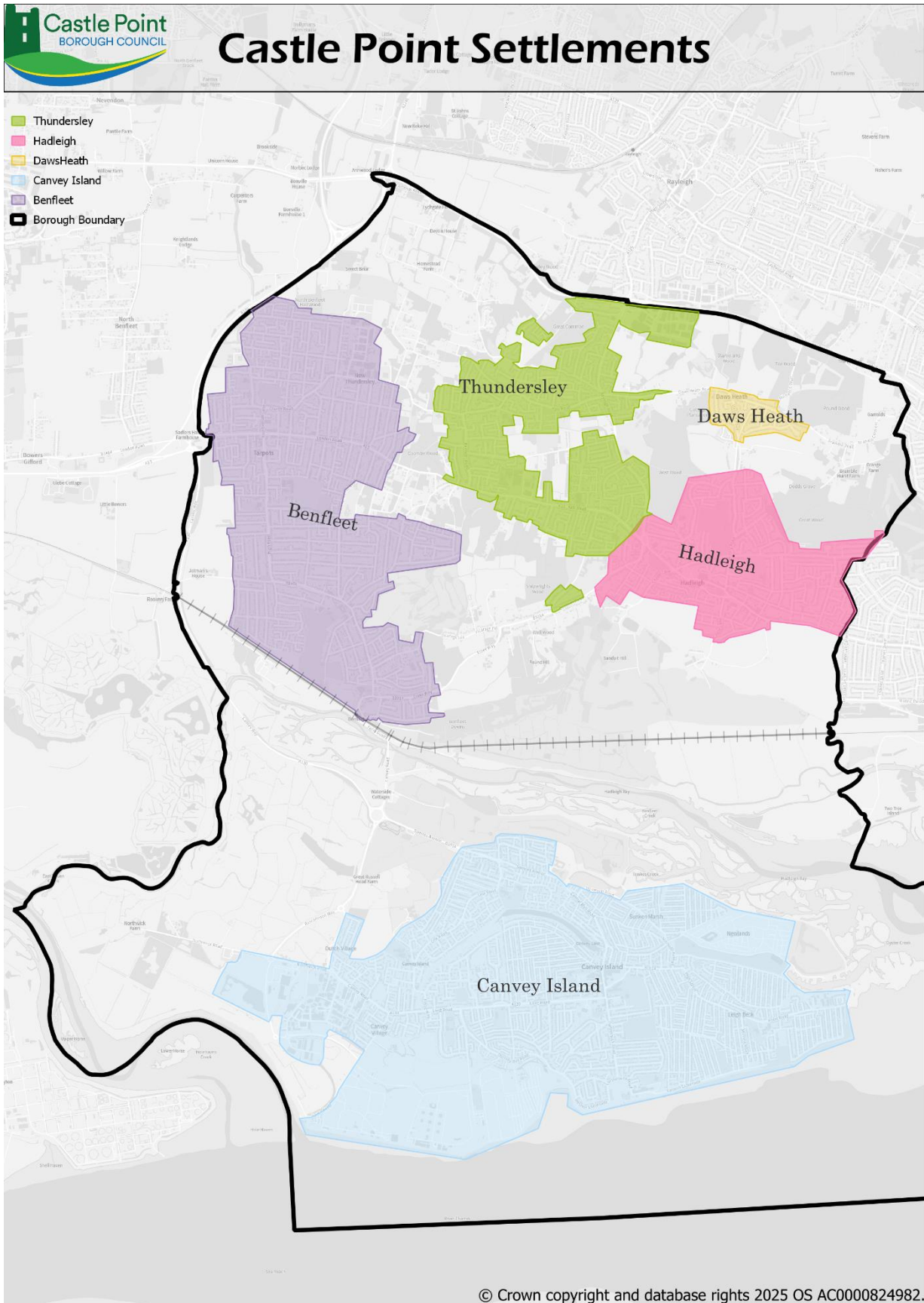
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared to establish a settlement hierarchy in Castle Point. The currently adopted Castle Point Local Plan 1998, does not include a settlement hierarchy. However, it is now considered necessary to review this position in order to assess the suitability for development at each settlement, having regard to the overall sustainability of each settlement.
- 1.2. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not provide specific advice for the production of settlement hierarchies. However, as a broad matter of principle, it notes that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, taking local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area (paragraph 9).
- 1.3. A settlement hierarchy ranks settlements according to their size, function, the range of services and facilities they provide and their accessibility. The process of establishing a settlement hierarchy helps to inform understanding of the existing capacity of each of the settlements located within the borough, their potential for growth, and the inter-relationship between them.
- 1.4. In Castle Point, there are five main settlements, these are: Benfleet, Canvey Island, Daws Heath, Hadleigh and Thundersley, see Map 1 below. While population figures are considered at a borough-wide scale, this hierarchy focuses on the relative role and function of settlements.
- 1.5. An assessment for each settlement has been undertaken. Once established, the settlement hierarchy will be used to inform the overall spatial strategy for the Castle Point Plan.

## Map 1: Castle Point Settlements



## 2. Historical Context

- 2.1. The development of settlements across Castle Point has been shaped by a combination of geographical, historical, and economic influences. The borough's name reflects its two historic townships—Hadleigh (with its Norman castle remains) and Canvey Island (with its Dutch-engineered sea defences). Understanding the evolution of these settlements is essential in framing a hierarchy that supports sustainable development.

### *Early Origins and Rural Character*

- 2.2. Historically, Castle Point was an area of agricultural land, marshes, and small rural communities. Hadleigh and Thundersley date back to medieval times, with parish churches and scattered dwellings forming the early village cores. Canvey Island remained largely uninhabited and prone to flooding until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Dutch engineers constructed sea walls and drainage systems, enabling settlement and grazing.
- 2.3. Until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, much of the borough retained its rural identity. Daws Heath and Thundersley were particularly woodland-rich areas, forming part of the ancient Hadleigh Forest.

### *Post-War Expansion and Urbanisation*

- 2.4. Following World War II, Castle Point experienced rapid suburbanisation, reflecting wider national trends. The borough's proximity to London made it a popular location for post-war housing development.
- 2.5. The opening of the Benfleet railway station in 1855 (on the London Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness line) catalysed residential expansion in South Benfleet. Canvey Island also grew dramatically in population during the 1950s–70s, transitioning from a holiday resort of chalets and bungalows into a densely developed residential area. However, this growth raised concerns over flood risk, which culminated in the 1953 North Sea flood disaster. Subsequent flood defence improvements allowed development to continue, albeit under tighter planning controls.
- 2.6. The 1970s and 1980s saw the consolidation of suburban housing estates in Thundersley, Hadleigh, and North Benfleet. These areas matured into commuter settlements with limited local employment, reinforcing car dependency and pressure on local infrastructure.

### *The Castle Point Local Plan 1998*

- 2.7. The Castle Point Local Plan (1998) remains the currently adopted Local Plan. While it identified residential areas and designated Green Belt, it did not formally define a settlement hierarchy. Instead, development management operated on the basis of designated land uses, settlement envelopes, and infrastructure constraints.
- 2.8. Key features of the 1998 Local Plan include:

- Protection of Green Belt and environmentally sensitive areas (notably in Daws Heath and Thundersley)
- Designation of Canvey Island as a regeneration priority due to deprivation and flood risk
- Emphasis on maintaining the character of established residential neighbourhoods

### *Recent Influences and National Policy*

- 2.9. Recent decades have brought new challenges and policy changes. The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 emphasised sustainable development, housing delivery, and the importance of infrastructure-led planning. Councils are now expected to have a five-year housing land supply and to align plans with settlement sustainability.
- 2.10. Castle Point has and continues to face increasing pressure to deliver housing while maintaining flood safety, protecting green spaces, and respecting settlement character.
- 2.11. In this context, the establishment of a formal settlement hierarchy is an essential step. It allows the borough to:
  - Justify spatial distribution of housing growth
  - Prioritise infrastructure investment
  - Guide town centre renewal and service delivery
  - Protect less sustainable or environmentally sensitive areas from inappropriate development
- 2.12. The hierarchy proposed in this paper will reflect the borough's evolution and settlement identity while planning requirements and addressing housing supply.



### 3. Methodology

- 3.1. To ensure the settlement hierarchy is based on robust evidence, each settlement has been assessed following the methodology set out below:

#### Stage 1 – Settlement Profile

- 3.2. Identify Size and Function of the settlement

- Using Census 2021 data, identify the population, number of households and age profile
- Identify which wards are within each settlement
- Using the South Essex Retail Study 2017 and Town Centre, Primary Shopping Areas and Local Shopping Parades Health Checks July 2025, identify if there are town centres, employment areas and/or primary shopping areas at the settlement level
- Identify key features within the urban structure of each settlement

#### Stage 2 – Services and Facilities

- 3.3. Identifying services and facilities provision of the settlement

- Using the Open Spaces Assessment 2023 and Green and Blue Infrastructure Study update 2025 to identify the provision and accessibility to open spaces at the settlement level.
- Information on the provision of local services and facilities has been collated from a number of emerging studies to support the Castle Point Plan such as: the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) 2025; Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, 2023; Built Indoor Facilities Strategy 2023; Sustainability Appraisal 2025; and Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) 2025. Within each settlement, identify the following services and facilities.

| Community             | Transport     | Retail, Sports and Leisure    | Health       | Education                 |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Community Halls       | Train Station | Supermarkets                  | GP Surgeries | Early Years               |
| Places of Worship     | Bus Routes    | Shops                         | Dentists     | Primary School            |
| Libraries             |               | Pubs, Restaurants, Cafes      | Pharmacies   | Secondary School          |
| Youth or Social Clubs |               | Post Office/Convenience Store |              | College/Further Education |

| Community                     | Transport | Retail, Sports and Leisure                                    | Health | Education |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---|--------|-----------|
| Recreation Ground, Play Areas |           | Indoor Sports Facilities e.g. swimming pools, leisure centres |        |           |
|                               |           | Outdoor Sports Facilities e.g. playing pitches                |        |           |

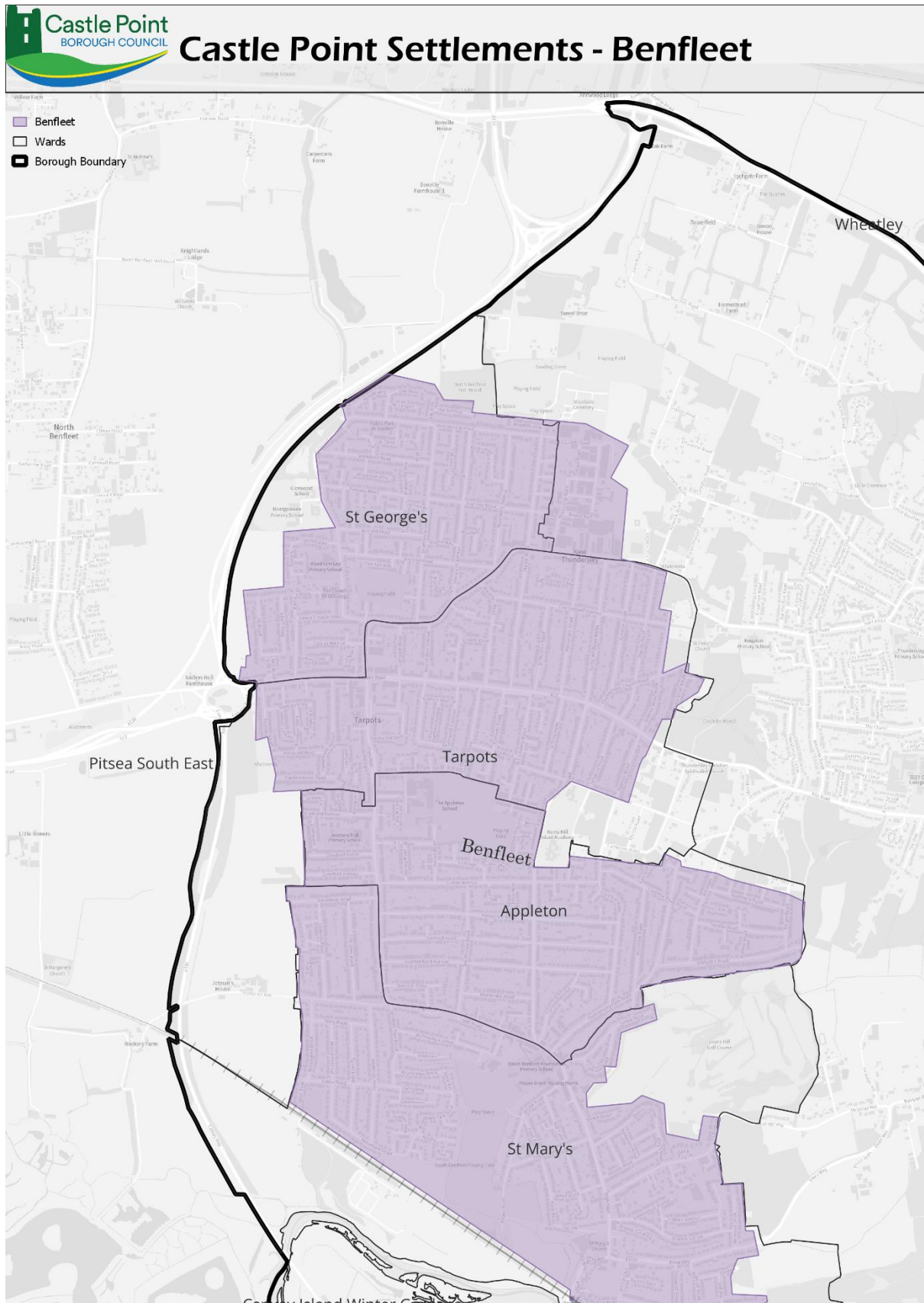
### Stage 3 - Accessibility

#### 3.4 Considering accessibility to services and facilities and other settlement areas

- An indicative level of sustainability for each settlement is identified using the Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Access mapping (Appendix A). The Connectivity/Accessibility mapping is a data-driven way to show how easily people can reach services, jobs and travel options in each part of Castle Point. The connectivity maps score every 100 m grid cell on public-transport options, proximity to key services and jobs reachable within 30 minutes, then average these into five bands from “Very Low” to “Very High”. Using these bands in Stage 3 gives each settlement an objective, comparative accessibility rating.
- Summary of the existing sustainable travel options within the settlement including details of routes identified through The Castle Point Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Transport Assessment July 2025.



## 4. Benfleet



### Stage 1 - Settlement Profile

- 4.1. Benfleet is a key settlement in the borough of Castle Point and is one of its most important areas in terms of population, accessibility, and infrastructure. Located in the north-west of the borough, Benfleet forms part of a largely built up area with pockets of open land that links into Basildon and beyond, making it highly integrated into the wider South Essex sub-region.
- 4.2. Benfleet's four component wards (St Mary's, Tarpots, most of Boyce and Appleton) contained 26,340 usual residents in roughly 10,940 households at the 2021 Census. Children and young people (0-17) make up 22% of the population, adults of working age (18-64) 57 % and older people (65+) 21 %. This gives Benfleet a median age of around 45 years, six years above the England figure. Its location along the commuter belt has contributed to steady population growth and high housing demand.
- 4.3. Benfleet functions as the tier-one service centre in the borough. It is defined in the South Essex Retail Study (2017) as a local town centre, supported by a primary shopping area around the High Road and Tarpots, and benefits from proximity to employment zones to the north, including the nearby Burnt Mills Industrial Estate in Basildon, and the Manor Trading Estate within South Benfleet.
- 4.4. The Town Centre, Primary Shopping Areas and Local Shopping Parades Health Check (2025) has identified two town centres in the settlement – South Benfleet and Tarpots. Within each town centre is a primary shopping area. There are a total of 6 local shopping parades in Benfleet.
- 4.5. Key features of Benfleet's urban structure include:
  - A linear town centre core running along High Road (A13)
  - A strong east–west orientation of development
  - Defined neighbourhood areas including Tarpots, South Benfleet, and Hope's Green
  - A major rail station and adjacent park-and-ride site
  - South Benfleet Conservation Area centred on St Mary's Church and the historic High Street

### Stage 2 - Services and Facilities

- 4.6. A comprehensive summary of local services and facilities for each settlement is provided in table in Appendix B.
- 4.7. Benfleet provides one of the most comprehensive range of local services in Castle Point, fulfilling key roles in community provision, healthcare, education, retail, and transport.

#### 4.8. Community and Social Infrastructure includes:

- Benfleet Library – a key community hub offering access to digital services and events
- Great Tarpots Library – a community branch library serving the Tarpots neighbourhood
- Places of Worship – including St. Mary’s Church (a Grade I-listed building), South Benfleet Methodist Church, and several community churches
- Community Halls – available for hire at Tarpots Hall and St. George’s Church Hall
- Youth Facilities – local scout groups, youth centre near High Road
- Various high street bank branches, lawyers and financial institutions.

#### 4.9. Transport Infrastructure includes:

- Benfleet Railway Station – operated by c2c, providing direct services to London Fenchurch Street (approx. 40 minutes) and Southend; the station includes car parking and cycle storage
- Bus Services – operated by First Essex and NIBS, including links to Basildon, Southend, Hadleigh, and Canvey Island (routes 21, 22, 27, 28)
- Proximity to Strategic Routes – A13 and A130 link Benfleet to the M25 and the A127 corridor
- Walking and Cycling Infrastructure – Benfleet benefits from dedicated cycle routes along London Road and High Road, identified in the Castle Point Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Planned improvements include new and upgraded segregated cycle lanes along the A13 and B1006 corridors, enhanced connections to Benfleet station, and improved pedestrian crossings—particularly at Tarpots and the A13/Essex Way junctions (Castle Point Transport Assessment 2025). The Transport Assessment also highlights future schemes such as a protected cycle link towards Hadleigh, improved cycle facilities at Benfleet station, and Cycle routing proposed along Kents Hill Road to North Benfleet.

#### 4.10. Retail, Leisure and Sport provision:

- Tarpots Shopping Area – a secondary retail node with Tesco Express, Iceland, and various independent retailers
- High Road Retail Core – including national chains (Boots, Co-op), convenience stores, cafes, and takeaways
- Dining and Hospitality – notable venues include The Hoy and Helmet, and The Tarpots pub
- Sports and Recreation – Benfleet Cricket Club, Benfleet Football Club, Benfleet Running Club, Benfleet Bowls Club, King George V Playing Field, and several gyms (e.g., Ripped Gym Benfleet)
- Open Spaces – Open space provision includes South Benfleet Playing Fields, Boyce Hill Golf Club and Woodside Park, with strong green corridors linking to Hadleigh Castle Country Park

#### 4.11. Health and Social Care provision:

- Primary Care – Benfleet Primary Care Centre (offering GP, nursing, and minor treatment services), several other practices including Applewood Surgery and Rushbottom Lane Surgery
- Dental Services – Multiple NHS and private dental clinics
- Pharmacies – Boots, Superdrug, Lloyds and independent outlets

#### 4.12. Education provision:

- Primary Schools: South Benfleet Primary School, Jotmans Hall Primary School, Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Montgomerie Primary School, The Robert Drake Primary School, Woodham Ley Primary School, Kents Hill Infant Academy, Kents Hill Junior School,
- Secondary Education: The Appleton School (high-performing 11–18 academy), Glenwood School
- Early Years: Numerous private nurseries and preschools
- Further Education Access: Proximity to SEEVIC College in Thundersley and South Essex College campuses

#### Stage 3 - Accessibility

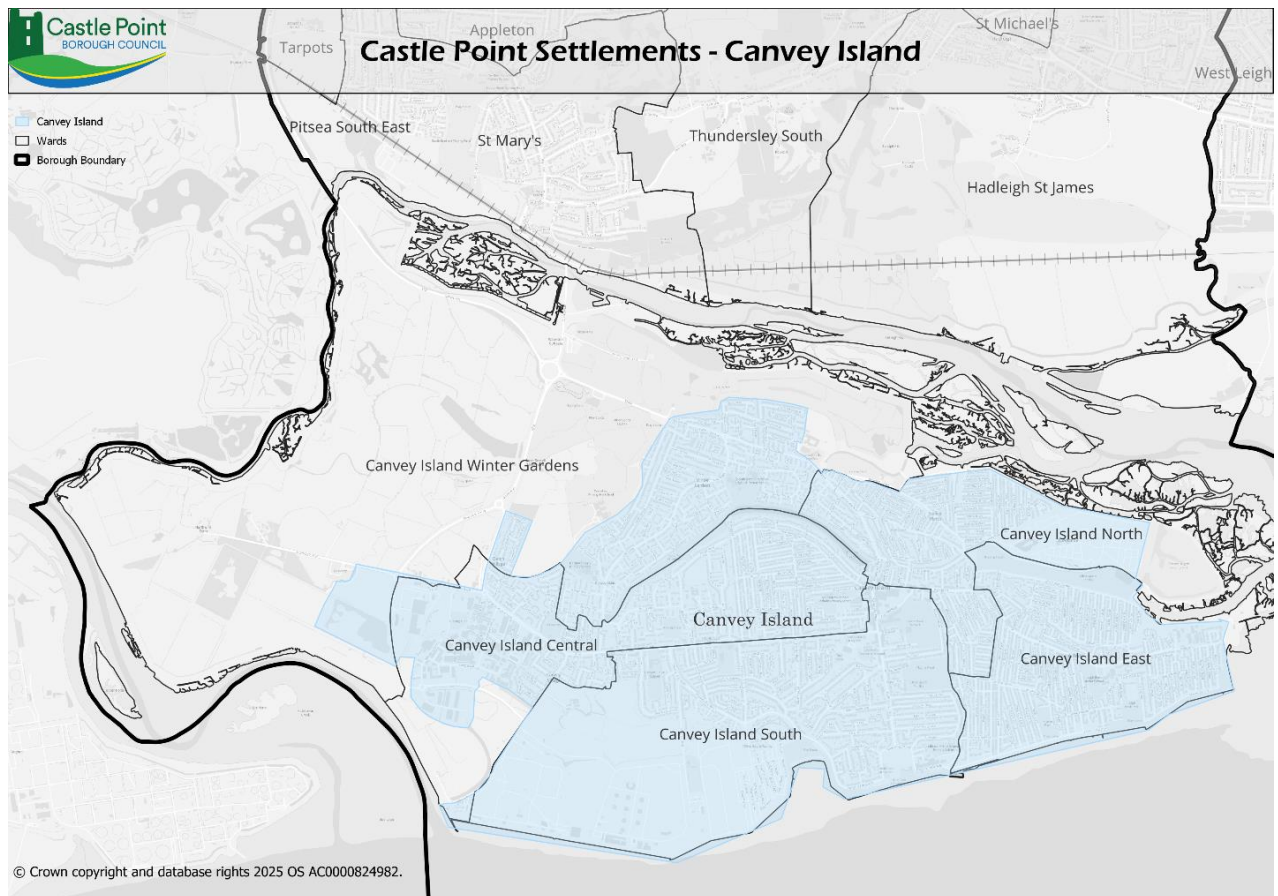
#### 4.13. Benfleet is one of the most accessible and sustainable settlements in Castle Point due to its multimodal transport links, walkable centre, and range of local services.

- Rail: Fast and reliable rail links place Benfleet within the London commuter zone
- Bus Network: High-frequency services facilitate inter-settlement movement
- Active Travel: The Castle Point LCWIP highlights Benfleet as a key active travel corridor, with infrastructure focused along High Road and London Road, linking to Hadleigh and Thundersley
- Road Access: Benfleet is well connected by road but experiences peak-hour congestion around Tarpots and the A13 interchange

#### 4.14. The Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Access mapping (Appendix A) scores Benfleet highly across indicators including transport choice, proximity to services, and employment access. Its catchment area extends beyond the borough boundary, reinforcing its sub-regional importance.



## 5. Canvey Island



### Stage 1 - Settlement Profile

- 5.1. Canvey Island is the most populous area in the borough, with approximately 39,000 residents and over 16,000 households (Census 2021). The settlement encompasses the wards of Canvey Island Central, East, North, South, and Winter Gardens. Around 16 % of its population is aged 0–17, with 59 % aged 18–64, and 25 % aged 65 and over. Nationally, on average 19% of the population are aged 65 and over, this confirms there is an older age population profile living on Canvey.
- 5.2. Historically a seaside resort, Canvey has transitioned into a densely populated residential settlement with a mix of urban and suburban characteristics. It is separated from the mainland by a network of creeks and connected via the A130 and A13 by two bridges (Canvey Way and Northwick Road), which also impact its transport resilience.
- 5.3. Canvey Island also plays an important strategic and industrial role, with a small but active port area on its southern shoreline. The Oikos terminal is a nationally significant energy infrastructure site, handling fuel imports, storage, and distribution for the wider South East. The presence of Oikos and associated port activities

supports local employment and positions Canvey as a key node in the region's energy and logistics network.

- 5.4. Canvey Wick is a 93-hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest located in the southwest of the island, renowned for its rich biodiversity—including rare insects like the shrill carder bee—and managed in partnership with the RSPB. To the north, West Canvey Marsh encompasses extensive grazing marshes owned by the RSPB and provides vital habitat for wetland birds and aquatic species.
- 5.5. A striking feature of Canvey Island is its 15-mile concrete sea wall—built and upgraded post-1953 flood and completed in its current form in the early 1980s—that encircles the island along the coastline and is also a designed public amenity space.
- 5.6. The South Essex Retail Study (2017) recognises Canvey Town Centre as a primary shopping area, with ancillary retail hubs at Furtherwick Road and Northwick Road. The town also includes several employment zones, notably Charfleets Industrial Estate, a major economic driver for the borough.
- 5.7. The Town Centre, Primary Shopping Area and Local Shopping Parades Health Check (2025) identifies a strong town centre on Canvey including a primary shopping area and 9 shopping parades. There is also an out of centre retail park to west.

## Stage 2 - Services and Facilities

- 5.8 A comprehensive summary of local services and facilities for each settlement is provided in table in Appendix B.
- 5.9 Canvey Island provides a comprehensive range of services across all sectors. Despite its geographical separation from the mainland, it is largely self-sufficient and supports multiple neighbourhoods with a spread of facilities. However, access limitations and flood risk management place pressure on infrastructure and service planning.
- 5.10 Community and Civic Infrastructure includes:
  - Library and Cultural Facilities: Canvey Library (High Street) is a key hub offering books, computer access, study spaces, and community events.
  - Community Centres: The Paddocks Community Centre (Long Road), Canvey Youth Project, and Winter Gardens Community Centre offer a mix of youth services, social clubs, and hire spaces.
  - Places of Worship: Numerous including St Nicholas Church (Anglican), Our Lady and the English Martyrs (Catholic), Canvey Island Methodist Church, and independent evangelical congregations.

- **Community Identity:** The island has a strong sense of identity, with local publications, heritage walks, and civic pride events centred on Canvey's maritime history.

#### 5.11 Transport Infrastructure includes:

- **Bridges:** The island is connected to the mainland by the A130 Canvey Way (dual carriageway) and Northwick Road (B1014). These are the only vehicular access points, presenting a critical movement challenge.
- **Public Transport:** Served by Arriva and NIBS bus routes linking to Benfleet, Southend, and Basildon (e.g. routes 21, 22, 27). Buses are frequent during peak times.
- **No Rail Access:** The absence of a railway station significantly affects wider connectivity and reinforces car dependency culture.
- **Cycling and Walking:** The Castle Point LCWIP identifies several cycle routes, particularly along Long Road, Somnes Avenue, and the seawall. The island's flat terrain is well-suited to cycling, though infrastructure varies in quality.

#### 5.12 Retail, Leisure and Sports Provision:

- **Town Centre:** Located along Furtherwick Road, offering a range of national retailers (e.g., Boots, Iceland), independent shops, and cafes. A market is held weekly.
- **Canvey Island Retail Park** located on Northwick Road/Roscommon Way adjacent to Morrisons, includes major retailers such as B&M, Sports Direct, the Food Warehouse, M&S Foodhall, and Costa Coffee. Together with Lidl next door, forms the primary grocery and convenience retail hub for the island with plenty of free parking and high footfall.
- **Supermarkets:** Tesco (Northwick Road), Morrisons (North Canvey), and smaller convenience stores spread across the island.
- **Pubs, Cafes, and Restaurants:** Numerous hospitality venues, particularly along the seafront and High Street, including historic pubs like The King Canute and new independents at Smallgains Corner.
- **Waterside Farm Leisure Centre:** Largest indoor leisure facility in the borough, with swimming pool, gym, sports hall, and fitness classes.
- **Movie Starr Cinema:** Independent cinema in central Canvey
- **Seafront Promenade and Beaches:** Offering family-friendly recreation, seasonal amusements, and walking routes

#### 5.13 Green and Open Spaces provision:

- **Canvey Heights Country Park:** Elevated park offering panoramic estuary views
- **Labworth Park and Thorney Bay:** Seafront open spaces with playgrounds, cafes, and access to tidal flats



- West Canvey Marshes and RSPB Sites: Major biodiversity and birdwatching areas
- Canvey Lake is a linear freshwater lake and local nature reserve situated near the western edge of Canvey Island, within easy reach of residential areas. It offers accessible walking paths serving as a valued recreational and environmental asset for the local community.

#### 5.12. Health and Social Care provision:

- GP Surgeries: Canvey Island Primary Care Centre (Long Road) is a health hub, supported by other surgeries such as Oakleigh and Grafton. Services include minor injuries, community nursing, and mental health care.
- Dentists: Multiple NHS and private practices throughout the island
- Pharmacies: Located in town centre, supermarkets, and neighbourhood shopping parades

#### 5.13 Education provision:

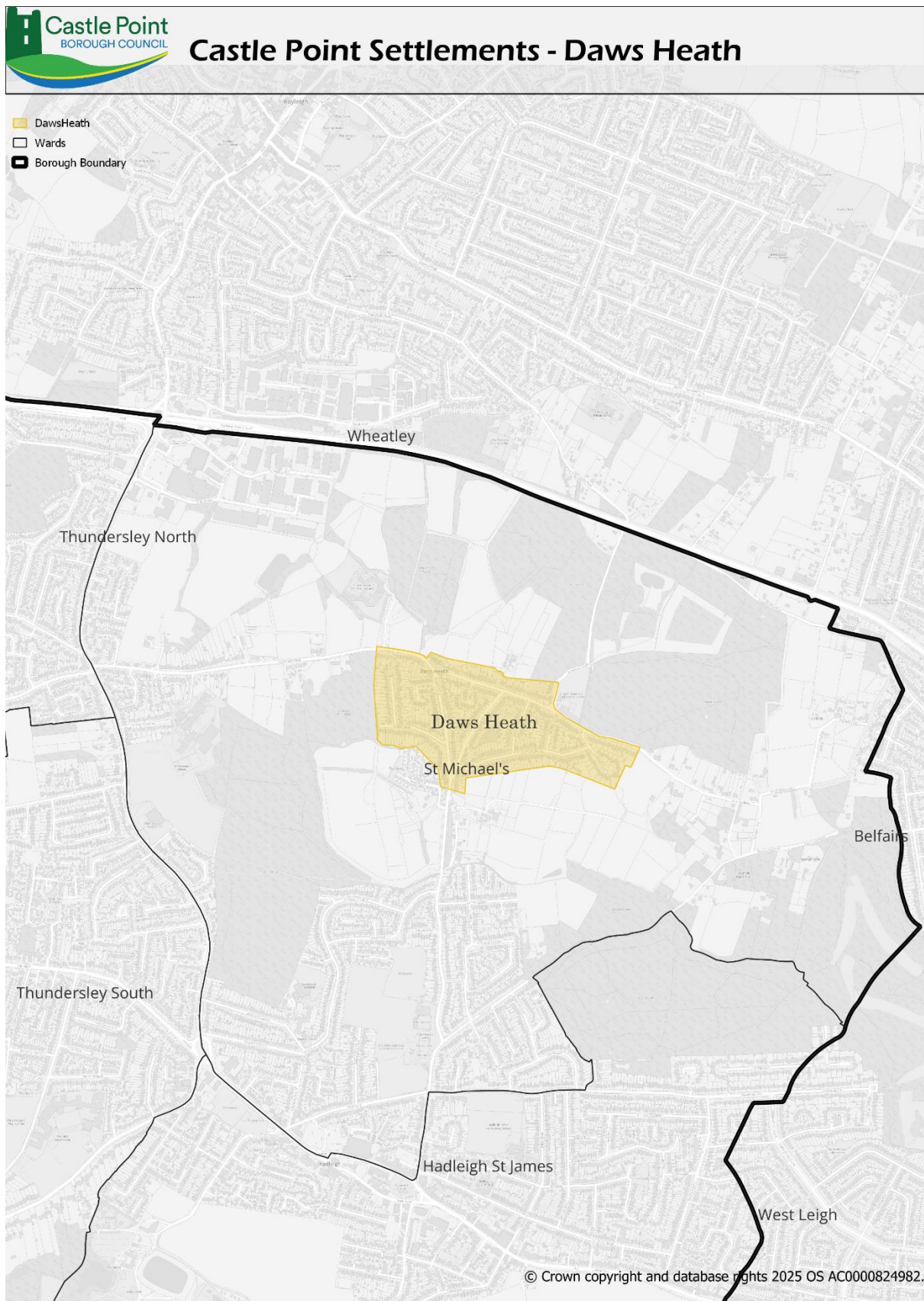
- Primary Schools:
  - Lubbins Park Primary
  - William Read Primary
  - Leigh Beck Infant and Junior Schools
  - Northwick Park Primary
  - St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
  - St Katherine's Church of England Primary School
  - Winter Gardens Academy
  - Athena School (independent special school)
  - Canvey Junior school
  - Canvey Island Infant School and Nursery
- Secondary Schools:
  - Castle View School
  - Cornelius Vermuyden School (both mixed 11–16 academies)
- Further Education:
  - No post-16 provider on the island itself
  - Most students access SEEVIC College in Thundersley or South Essex College (Southend)

5.14 The island supports several active scout and guide groups (including 1st Canvey Island Scouts and Canvey Island Girlguiding) as well as Army and Sea Cadet units, providing young people with opportunities for outdoor adventure, skills development, There is the Canvey Island Youth FC and Castle Point Youth FC—catering to a range of age groups and abilities. Local churches - including St Nicholas Church, Canvey Island Methodist Church, and independent evangelical congregations—run youth clubs.

### Stage 3 - Accessibility

- 5.15 Based on Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Access mapping, Canvey ranks moderately due to the breadth of internal services but low strategic connectivity. Its car dependency and vulnerability to climate change impacts are balanced by its service density and population catchment.
- 5.16 Canvey offers almost all daily needs reducing reliance on the mainland for shopping, schooling, or healthcare. Its flat geography and defined road structure support active travel, although upgrades to cycleways are needed. Frequent bus services provide internal connectivity and links to Benfleet, although dependability can be limited by traffic or bridge incidents.

## 6. Daws Heath



## Stage 1 - Settlement Profile

- 6.1. Daws Heath is a small, predominantly residential settlement in the north-eastern part of Castle Point, within the St Michael's ward. It is characterised by its semi-rural, low-density layout and proximity to ancient woodland and Green Belt land. With a population of around 1,660 residents in 730 households (Census 2021 estimates). While ward-level age brackets aren't readily available, the area reflects Castle Point's overall demographic trends - namely an ageing population with a median age of around 46 and a sizeable 65+ cohort. Daws Heath functions as a quiet residential area rather than a service hub.
- 6.2. There are no defined town centres or employment zones in Daws Heath, and most residents commute to nearby Hadleigh, Benfleet, or Southend for services and work. Key features of Daws Heath include its extensive ancient woodlands - such as West Wood and Little Haven Nature Reserve—a well-used village hall, and the Conservation Area which preserves its rural landscape and scattered historic cottages. The area is also known for its tranquil lanes, mature trees, and access to local bridleways and equestrian facilities.

## Stage 2 - Services and Facilities

- 6.3. A comprehensive summary of local services and facilities for each settlement is provided in table in Appendix B.
- Community: Limited; St Michael's Church and hall, Daws Heath Evangelical Church and a village hall located on Daws Heath Road.
  - Transport: No train station; limited bus routes connect to Hadleigh and Rayleigh
  - Retail, Sports, Leisure: Very limited; Anns Mini Market is only shop within settlement, nearest supermarkets and leisure facilities are in Hadleigh or Thundersley
  - Health: No GP practices within the settlement; nearest facilities are in Hadleigh or Benfleet
  - Education: Daws Heath itself does not contain a primary school. The nearest provision is Thundersley Primary School, with most students travelling to secondary schools in Hadleigh or Thundersley.
  - Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure - Daws Heath is exceptionally well-served by accessible green infrastructure, with several ancient woodlands on its doorstep, including West Wood, Tile Wood, Starvelarks Wood, and Little Haven Nature Reserve. These spaces offer high-quality opportunities for walking, informal play, wildlife watching, and outdoor recreation. The woods are criss-crossed by a network of public footpaths and bridleways, making them popular with walkers, dog owners, and horse-riders.
  - Opportunities for Walking and Cycling - The rural character of Daws Heath means that many local lanes and public rights of way are attractive for walking and cycling and link the settlement to Hadleigh, Thundersley, and the wider

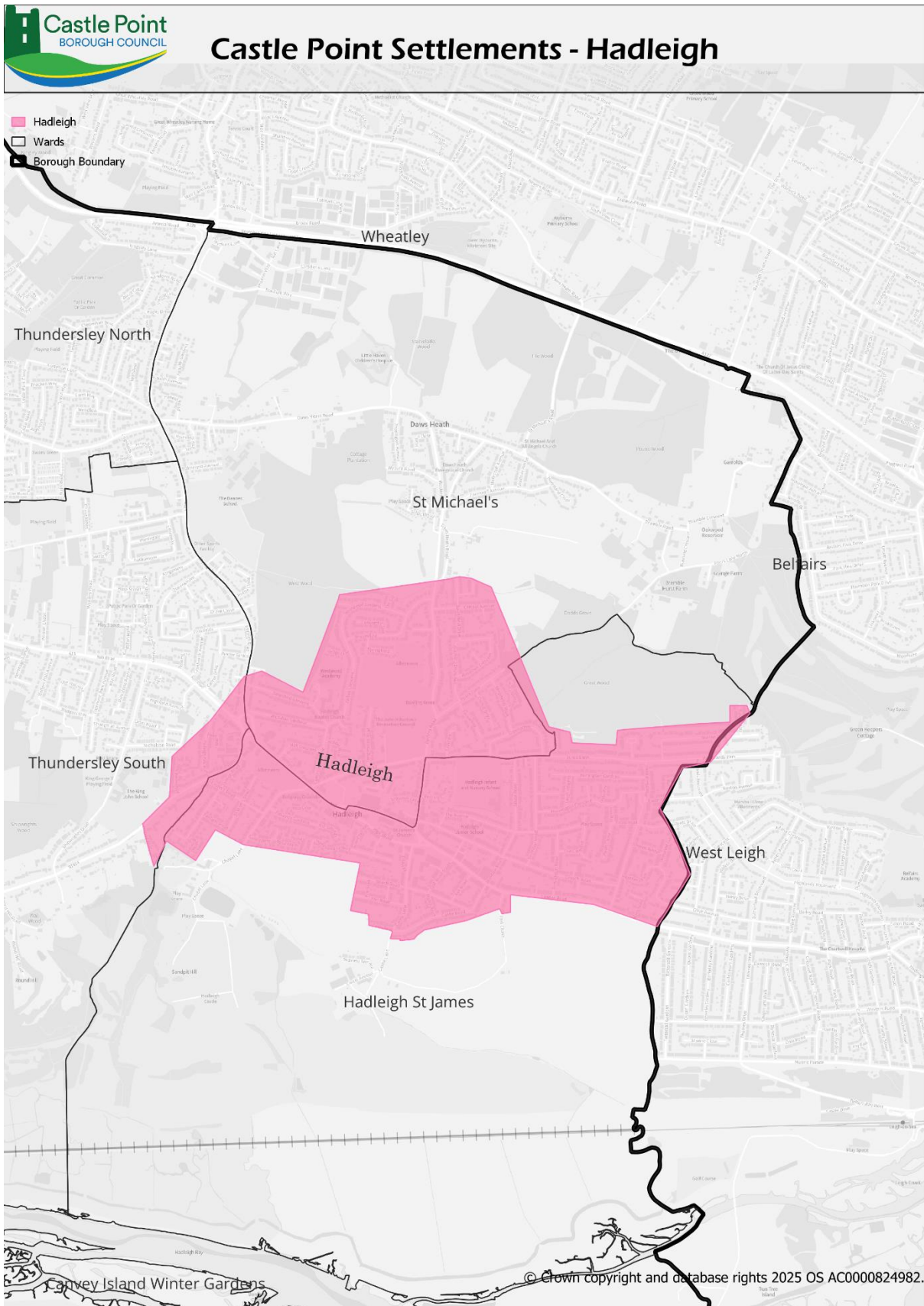
countryside. While there is no dedicated cycling infrastructure, the network of bridleways and green lanes provides scenic routes for recreational cycling, horse riding, and walking.

### Stage 3 - Accessibility

- 6.4. Daws Heath scores low in accessibility due to the lack of services and public transport options. It is car-dependent and ranks low on the Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Access map. However, its green infrastructure is a strength in terms of ecological sustainability and biodiversity.



7. Hadleigh



## Stage 1 - Settlement Profile

- 7.1. Hadleigh is a historic settlement in the western part of the borough, known for Hadleigh Castle and the adjacent country park. The area combines historical character with modern residential development. Hadleigh covers two wards—St James and Victoria—with a combined population of approximately 18,300 residents living in about 7,550 households. Its age structure shows around 19 % aged 0–17, 59 % aged 18–64, and 22 % aged 65+.
- 7.2. The Hadleigh Castle Country Park—a 77 ha historic and recreational asset overlooking the Thames Estuary—the main London Road high street retail spine, and the A127 Southend Arterial Road which bypasses the town to the north. Together these elements shape Hadleigh's role as a well-connected historic town with both local and visitor appeal.
- 7.3. The South Essex Retail Study (2017) recognises Hadleigh Town Centre as a designated retail and service hub, with a notable shopping strip along London Road. Hadleigh also includes a share of the borough's employment land in and around the retail core.
- 7.4. Although Hadleigh is classed as a medium-tier settlement, it merges with Thundersley's. Together two settlements form a single, larger contiguous built-up area that functions much like a higher-order town.
- 7.5. The Town Centres, Primary Shopping Areas and Local Shopping Parades Health Check (2025) identifies Hadleigh town centre and primary shopping area and 1 local shopping parade.

## Stage 2 - Services and Facilities

- 7.6. A comprehensive summary of local services and facilities for each settlement is provided in table in Appendix B.
  - Community: Hadleigh Methodist Church, Salvation, Hadleigh Old Fire Station (HOFS). The Salvation Army's Hadleigh Corps church and community centre on London Road serves as a vital hub for social support in Hadleigh. In addition to weekly worship services, the centre runs a food bank, debt advice sessions, community lunches, and youth clubs, helping to address local need and foster social cohesion. Its meeting rooms are also used by numerous support group.
  - Transport: Served by high-frequency bus routes along London Road; the First Essex bus depot on London Road provides operational support for services across the borough. The A13 cuts through Hadleigh, with a gyratory system within the Town Centre.
  - Retail, Sports, Leisure: Tesco Extra and various local shops; Hadleigh Park (Olympic mountain biking venue); gyms and play areas



- Health: At least two GP practices, several dental practices and pharmacies

#### 7.6 Education provision:

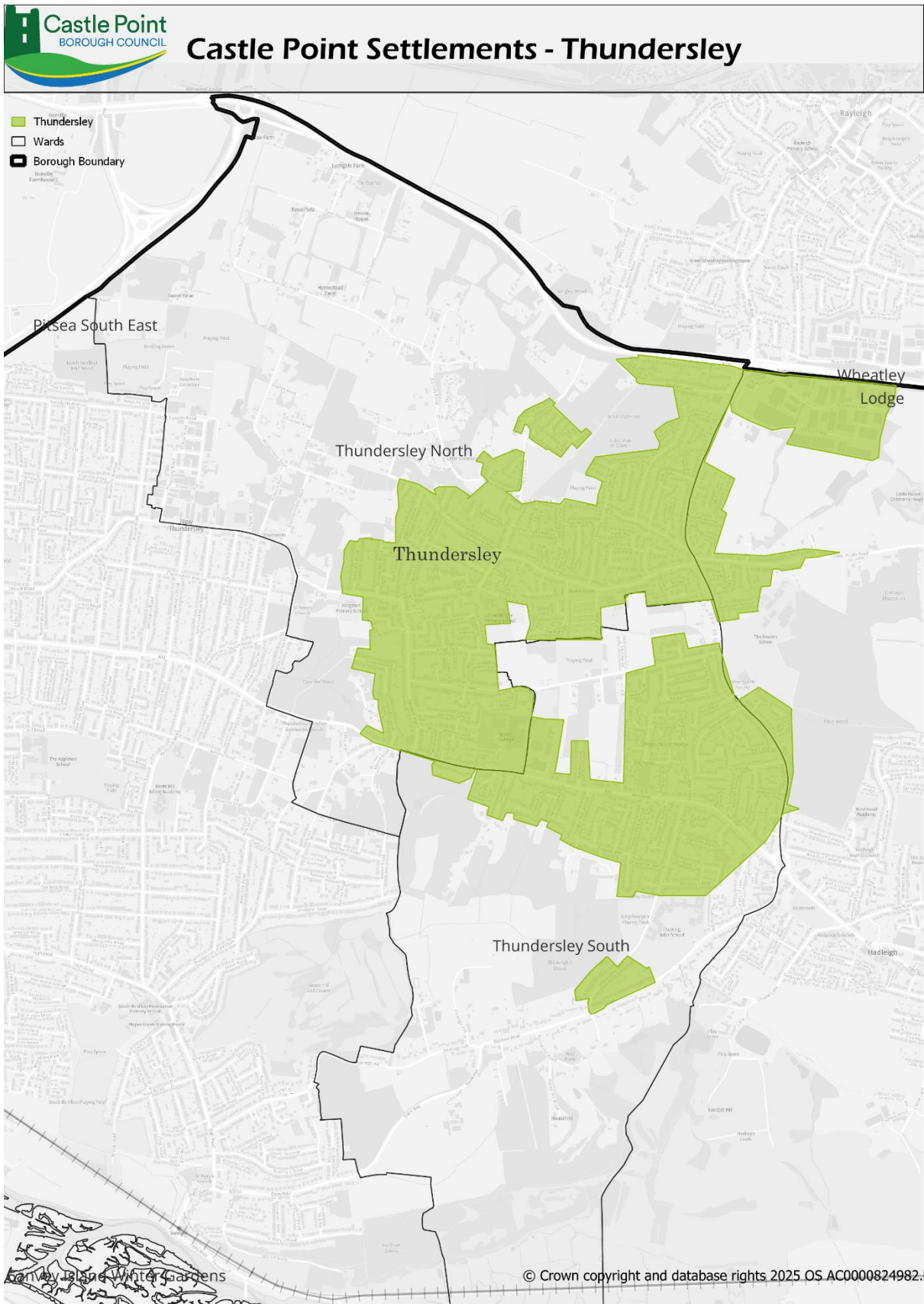
- Primary:
  - Hadleigh Infant and Nursery School (including early-years provision),
  - Westwood Academy,
- Secondary:
  - The Deanes School
  - King John School
- post-16 learners typically attend SEEVIC College (Thundersley) or South Essex College (Southend)

A key feature of Hadleigh is the legacy mountain-bike trail—constructed for the London 2012 Olympics remains one of the region’s premier off-road cycling facilities, drawing riders as a destination for outdoor sport and recreation.

#### Stage 3 - Accessibility

- 7.5. Hadleigh is moderately accessible in accordance with the Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Access mapping. The high street is walkable, with good pedestrian facilities and a strong east–west bus corridor. Cycling connectivity via LCWIP has been enhanced with links to Hadleigh Park.

8. Thundersley



### Stage 1 - Settlement Profile

- 8.1. Thundersley is a largely suburban area encompassing a mix of post-war and modern housing. It includes the Thundersley North and South wards with an estimated population of about 14,400 in around 5,000 households. The settlement benefits from its proximity to the A127 and A130, making it an attractive commuter location. Thundersley has an ageing demographic, with 20 % of residents aged under 18 and 22 % aged 65 + (Census 2021).
- 8.2. The historic Village Square around St Peter's Church, the open plotland areas to the north (a legacy of inter-war self-build plots), and the wooded slopes of Thundersley Glen give the settlement a distinctive semi-rural character within the urban fringe.
- 8.2. While it lacks a formal town centre, Thundersley Centre acts as a local node of activity with a mix of small retailers and community spaces. Hart Road Village Core: A small parade of local shops, cafés and community facilities forms the traditional village hub. In addition to Thundersley Centre, there are 3 other local shopping parades in Thundersley. Also Thundersley merges and combines with Hadleigh to create a substantial continuous built up urban area, reinforcing its overall role as a higher order settlement

### Stage 2 - Services and Facilities

- 8.3. A comprehensive summary of local services and facilities for each settlement is provided in table in Appendix B.
- 8.4 Community & Civic facilities include:
- Council Offices, Thundersley Village Hall on Hart Road hosts fitness classes, WI meetings, children's groups and local functions.
  - Religious venues include Thundersley Christian Spiritualist Church, Salvation Army Hall, and St. Peter's Church, which also run youth groups.
- 8.5 Transport provision:
- bus links to Southend, Rayleigh, and Benfleet
  - Rail access: The nearest stations are at Benfleet (2 miles) and Hadleigh (3 miles), both accessible via frequent buses.
  - Road links: A127 and A130 provide access to Basildon, Chelmsford and the M25.
- 8.6 Retail & Convenience provision:
- Hart Road parade: Co-op convenience store, pharmacy, petrol forecourt, newsagent, hairdressers, vets and café.
  - London Road strip: Sainsbury's Local, Costa Coffee, a post office, and a small cluster of independents (butcher, fish & chip shop, takeaways).

- Pubs & Dining: The Swan Inn (Hart Road) and The Old Plough (London Road) provide local food and drink venues.
- Sports & Leisure provision:
  - Recreation Ground: Football pitches, children's play area and multi-use games area on Westwood Avenue.
  - Thundersley Glen & Shipwrights Wood: Informal trails for walking, running and mountain biking among ancient woodland.
  - Tennis & Outdoor Fitness: Four public courts at Hadleigh Park (adjacent) and outdoor gym equipment at the recreation ground.
  - Private clubs: Castle Point Bowls Club and Thundersley Tennis Club offer membership facilities.

#### 8.7 Health & Wellbeing provision:

- GP Practices: Thundersley Medical Centre (Hart Road) and Pinewood Surgery (London Road) offer primary care and nurse clinics.
- Pharmacy: Well Pharmacy (Hart Road) and Boots Pharmacy (Hadleigh Park).

#### 8.8 Education provision:

- Primary:
  - Thundersley Primary School
  - Kingston Primary School
- Secondary:
  - King John School and The Deanes School are 2–3 miles away in Hadleigh
- Further education: USP College – Seevic Campus in Thundersley serves post-16 learners.

#### 8.7 Green and Open Spaces include:

- The northern plotlands belt and adjacent commons provide open-air recreation and horse-riding.
- Cycle & Footpaths: A network of public rights-of-way and quiet lanes link to Benfleet station and Hadleigh Castle Country Park—suitable for leisure cycling and walking.
- Local parks: Runnymede Park offers picnic lawns and community events space, complementing the more formal recreational offer at Hadleigh Park next door.

### Stage 3 - Accessibility

- 8.4. Accessibility is moderate to good due to bus connectivity and the road network. Although not rail-served, it is within cycling distance to Benfleet Station. The Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity mapping places Thundersley in the mid-tier due to its blend of access to local services and green space, albeit with some car dependency.

## 9. Overall Findings and Results

- 9.1. The study analysis carried out results in the following proposed hierarchy of settlements for Castle Point as set out in the table below. The hierarchy has been developed using a functional tiering approach, reflecting the size, role, and accessibility of each area. It shows a clear distinction between the borough's larger, more self-contained settlements and smaller residential communities. It categorises the boroughs settlements according to their different roles. At the top of the hierarchy are the large towns which are functionally the most sustainable.
- 9.2. While population estimates are considered at a borough-wide scale, this settlement hierarchy adopts a functional and qualitative approach. The north-western part of the borough — comprising Benfleet, Thundersley, and Hadleigh — is treated as a single contiguous urban area with shared infrastructure and services, housing approximately 48,000 people (2021 Census). This approach reflects the real-world interdependence of these areas and allows spatial strategy to respond more effectively to actual patterns of living, movement, and service use.

Tiering Classification Table

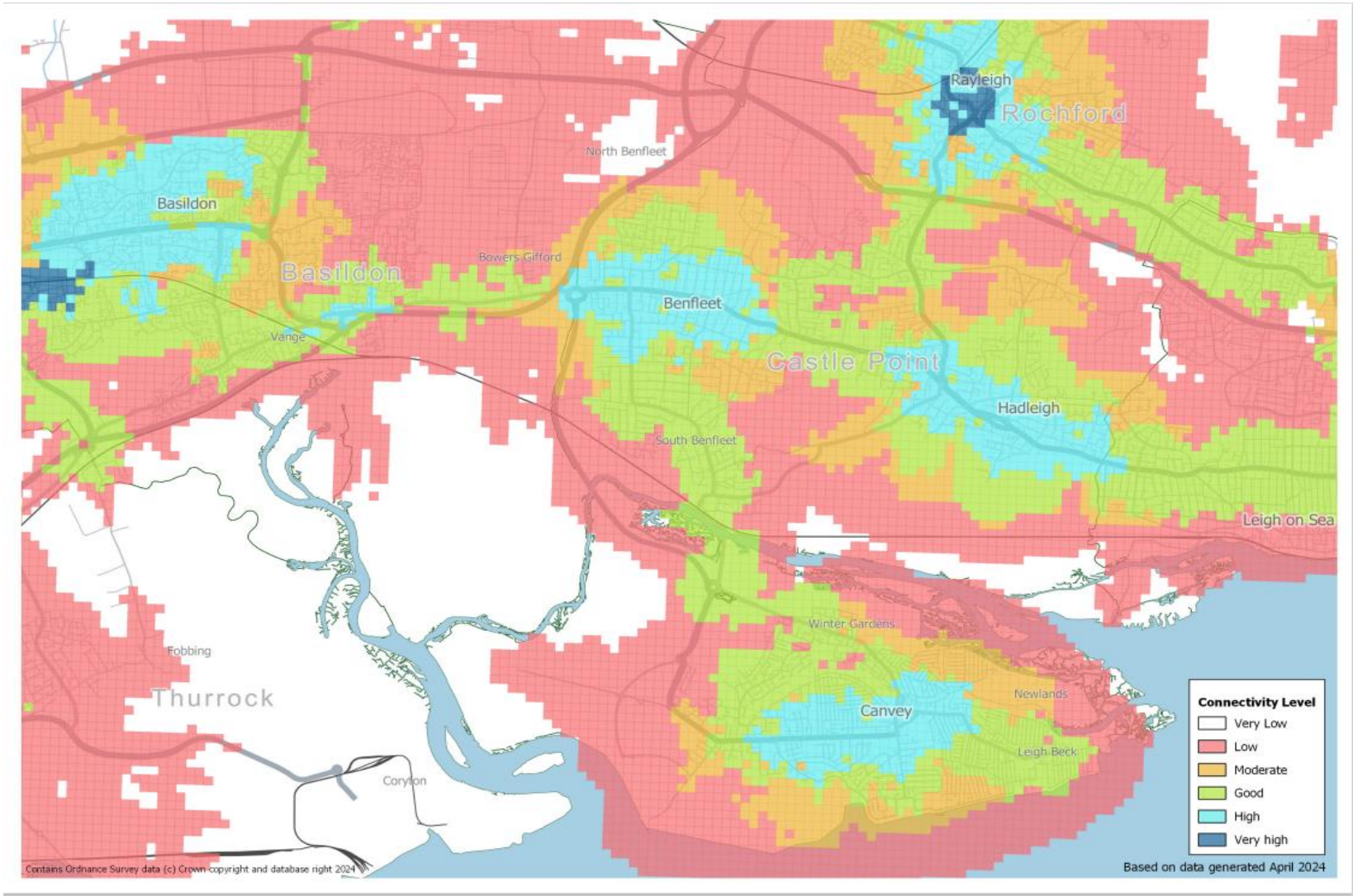
| Tier                          | Settlement           | Accessibility | Facilities | Description/Role and Function  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------|--|
| <b>1 – Large Settlements</b>  | <b>Canvey Island</b> | Moderate      | High       | Main self-contained settlement, full range of services, education, healthcare, leisure, town centre, and employment (e.g. Charfleets.  |
|                               | <b>Benfleet</b>      | High          | High       | Main settlement with full range of services, employment, and transport nodes. Strong transport access.   |
| <b>2 – Medium Settlements</b> | <b>Hadleigh,</b>     | Moderate      | Moderate   | Secondary settlements with moderate range of services and facilities. However the two settlements merge into each other and when combined they effectively operate as a higher-order urban centre. |
|                               | <b>Thundersley</b>   | Moderate      | Moderate   |  |

| Tier                         | Settlement        | Accessibility | Facilities | Description/Role and Function   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|---|
| <b>3 – Small Settlements</b> | <b>Daws Heath</b> | Low           | Low        | Small semi-rural enclave with limited services and infrastructure, no town centre, and high rural constraints |

- 9.3. Castle Point consists of five main settlements, with no significant rural villages or hamlets. Benfleet and Canvey Island function as the borough's primary service centres. Hadleigh and Thundersley support a secondary tier of services and have moderate development capacity. Daws Heath should be protected from large scale development due to its limited services, facilities and infrastructure and high environmental value.
- 9.4. This settlement hierarchy provides an evidence-based framework to support spatial planning in the Castle Point Plan, helping direct sustainable growth to locations that can best support it.
- 9.5. Infrastructure, services, and population are heavily concentrated in Benfleet and Canvey, with Thundersley and Hadleigh supporting secondary functions.
- 9.6. Daws Heath is the only settlement with a notably semi-rural character.
- 9.7. The functional tiering system is both proportionate and robust for a borough like Castle Point. It reflects real-world settlement behaviour, aligns with national guidance, and respects the geographical, infrastructural, and environmental realities of the borough.
- 9.8. Together with other evidence based documents this study will inform the development of the spatial strategy for the Castle Point Plan. The settlements with the greatest range of facilities tier 1 (large settlements) are best placed to accommodate further growth based on the existing level of service provision and employment opportunities. It is recognised that improvements to existing services and facilities may also be necessary to enable and support future growth. Sustainable development should be located close to services and facilities with good public transport provision.



Appendix A – Essex Parking Guidance Connectivity Mapping



## Appendix B – Services and Facilities (Summary Table)

| Settlement      | Community & Civic  | Transport  | Retail & Leisure  | Health & Social Care  | Education   | Open Space & Active Travel   |
|-----------------|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Benfleet</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Benfleet Library &amp; Great Tarpots branch</li> <li>– St Mary's Church, Methodist &amp; community churches</li> <li>– Tarpots Hall, St George's Church Hall</li> <li>– Scout groups &amp; youth centre</li> <li>- High street banks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Benfleet rail station (40 min to London)</li> <li>– Bus routes 21, 22, 27, 28</li> <li>– A13/A130 links to M25/A127</li> <li>– LCWIP cycle routes with future segregated lanes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– High Road core (Boots, Co-op, cafes)</li> <li>– Tarpots (Tesco Express, independents)</li> <li>– Pubs: The Hoy, Tarpots pub</li> <li>– Clubs: Cricket, FC, Running, Bowls</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Benfleet Primary Care Centre &amp; satellite practices</li> <li>– Multiple dental clinics</li> <li>– Boots, Superdrug, Lloyds, independents</li> </ul> | <p><u>Primary Schools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kents Hill, South Benfleet Primary, Montgomerie, Westwood Academy, Robert Drake, Woodham Ley Primary School, The Deanes, Thundersley Primary, Holy Family Catholic.</li> </ul> <p><u>Secondary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Appleton School (11–18),</li> <li>- Glenwood School</li> <li>– Nurseries &amp; SEEVIC/South Essex College nearby</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– South Benfleet Playing Fields, Boyce Hill GC, Woodside Park</li> <li>– Green corridors to Hadleigh Castle CP</li> <li>– Ongoing LCWIP crossings &amp; cycle hubs</li> </ul> |
| <b>Canvey</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Canvey Library; Paddocks, Winter Gardens &amp; Youth Project centres</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A130 Canvey Way &amp; Northwick Rd bridges</li> <li>– Arriva/NIBS buses to Benfleet, Southend, Basildon</li> <li>– LCWIP: seawall, Long Rd, Somnes Ave cycle routes</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Canvey Town Centre (Boots, Iceland, weekly market)</li> <li>– Retail Park (B&amp;M, Sports Direct, M&amp;S Foodhall, Costa)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Canvey Island Primary Care Centre + Oakleigh, Grafton surgeries</li> <li>– Pharmacies across island</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Canvey Junior school</li> <li>- Canvey Island Infant School and Nursery</li> <li>- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Canvey Heights CP, Labworth Park, Thorney Bay</li> <li>– Canvey Wick SSSI &amp; West Marsh RSPB sites</li> </ul>  |

| Settlement        | Community & Civic  | Transport  | Retail & Leisure  | Health & Social Care  | Education  | Open Space & Active Travel   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|
|                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– St Nicholas, Our Lady &amp; Methodist Churches</li> <li>– Scouts, Guides &amp; Cadets</li> </ul>            |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lidl, Tesco, Morrisons</li> <li>– Seafront cafés &amp; pubs</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– NHS/private dentists</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- St Katherine's Church of England Primary School</li> <li>- Winter Gardens Academy</li> <li>- Athena School</li> <li>– Lubbins Park, William Read, Leigh Beck, Northwick Park Primaries</li> <li>– Castle View &amp; Cornelius Vermuyden (11–16)</li> <li>– FE via SEEVIC/South Essex</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 15 mi sea wall path &amp; cycle route</li> <li>– Canvey Lake reserve</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Daws Heath</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Daws Heath Village Hall</li> <li>– Evangelical Church activities;</li> <li>-St Michael's Church.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No station; buses to Hadleigh &amp; Rayleigh (limited)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No shops or leisure— residents use Hadleigh/Benfleet</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No surgeries— nearest in Hadleigh/Benfleet</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Thundersley Primary only; sec schools in Hadleigh/Thundersley</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– West Wood, Tile Wood, Starvelarks Wood, Little Haven NR</li> <li>– Public footpaths &amp; bridleways for walking, riding &amp; cycling</li> </ul> |
| <b>Hadleigh</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hadleigh Methodist, Salvation Army HQ, Old Fire Station arts</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– High-frequency buses on London Rd</li> <li>– First Essex depot on London Rd</li> <li>– A127 bypass</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– London Rd strip (Tesco Extra, independents)</li> <li>– High St cafés &amp; pubs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Two GP practices</li> <li>– Dental clinics &amp; pharmacies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hadleigh Infant &amp; Nursery, Westwood Academy</li> <li>– Deanes &amp; King John (nearby sec)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hadleigh Castle CP (77 ha)</li> <li>– Olympic BMX/mountain-bike trail</li> </ul>  |

| Settlement         | Community & Civic   | Transport  | Retail & Leisure   | Health & Social Care  | Education  | Open Space & Active Travel   |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|--|--|
|                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Scout groups &amp; community clubs</li> </ul>  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hadleigh Park mountain-bike trail (2012 legacy).</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– SEEVIC/South Essex FE</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Thames Estuary Path walking links</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Thundersley</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Council Offices</li> <li>– Village Hall on Hart Rd</li> <li>– Christian Spiritualist Church, Salvation Army, St Peter's</li> <li>– Scouts, Guides, Sea Cadets, Youth Club</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bus routes 21, 27, 28 to Benfleet/Southend/Rayleigh</li> <li>– Nearest stations Benfleet (2 mi), Hadleigh (3 mi)</li> <li>– A127/A130 road links</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hart Rd parade (Co-op, pharmacy, vets, café)</li> <li>– London Rd shops (Sainsbury's Local, post office)</li> <li>– Pubs: Swan Inn, Old Plough</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Thundersley Med Centre &amp; Pinewood Surgery</li> <li>– Thundersley Dental Practice</li> <li>– Well &amp; Boots pharmacies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Thundersley &amp; Kingston Primaries</li> <li>– King John &amp; Deanes (2–3 mi); Cedar Hall School</li> <li>– SEEVIC FE campus</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Northern plotlands belt (Green Belt) &amp; commons</li> <li>– Runnymede Park &amp; Recreation Ground</li> <li>– Bridleways &amp; quiet lanes for cycling &amp; walking</li> </ul> |