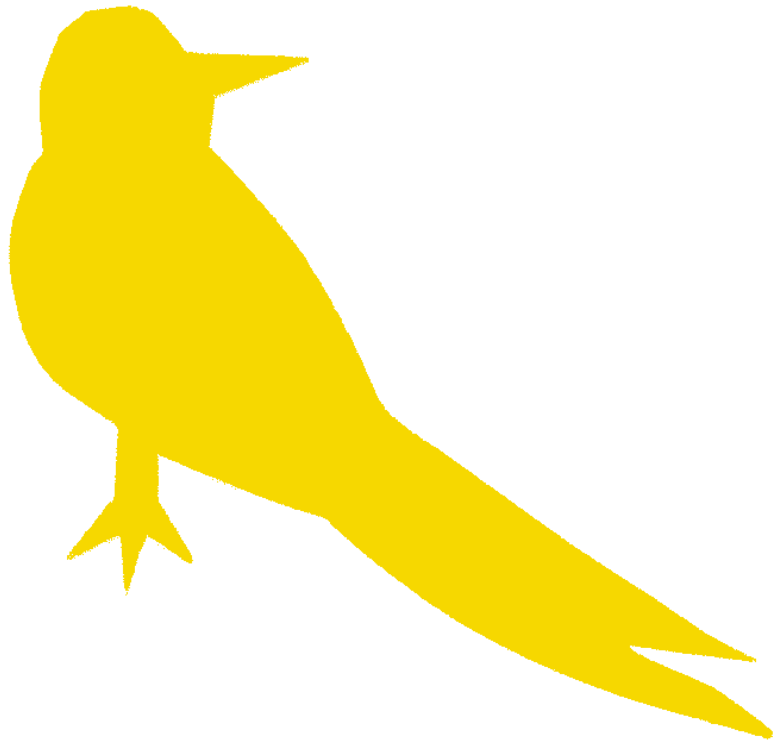


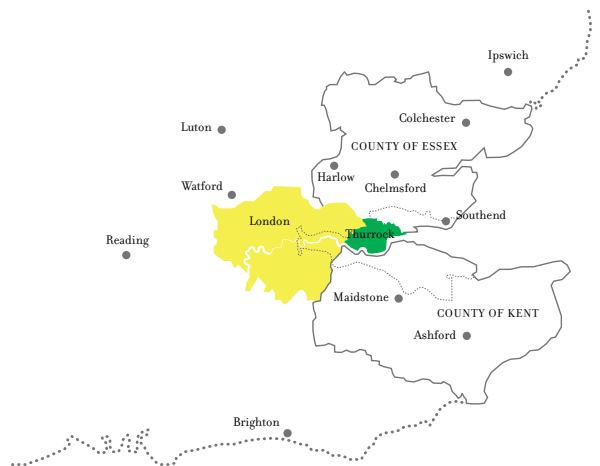
Thurrock: A Visionary Brief in the Thames Gateway



'Development & growth in Thurrock in this century must set a goal of equity, access and a commitment to doing no harm.' Tim Collins, Studio for Creative Inquiry, USA

Thurrock: A Visionary Brief in the Thames Gateway is the first step towards an imaginative and exciting future for the area. Future development of this ambitious programme will place Thurrock at the forefront of international best practice and innovation.

www.visionarythurrock.org.uk



The Thames Gateway is:

- The largest regeneration project in Europe, covering 80,000 hectares.
- The largest priority area for regeneration and housing for the South East: due to its proximity to London, good links to Europe and large areas of brownfield land.
- Targeted for 120,000-200,000 new homes and 120,000-180,000 new jobs by 2016.

The Thames Gateway comprises East London, North Kent and South Essex. Thurrock is the south-western borough of Essex bordering London, with 18 miles of Thames frontage.

Thurrock is the first area of the Thames Gateway to have an Urban Development Corporation to lead its regeneration. The approach taken in Thurrock will be widely observed and this programme has been developed as a significant resource for all bodies operating in the Thames Gateway to learn and benefit from detailed research and international best practice.

This programme was commissioned by Thurrock Council and a unique partnership of agencies including Arts Council England East, East of England Development Agency, Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England East, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Countryside Agency, Essex County Council, Government Office for the East of England, Living East and Price Waterhouse Coopers.

THURROCK: A VISIONARY BRIEF IN THE THAMES GATEWAY has redefined what is meant by 'culturally-led regeneration'. It is a major programme of research and creativity, applying high-profile international thinking to Thurrock for the first time.

The programme has set out an innovative process for planning and development in the Thames Gateway. It has demonstrated that *if* culture is interpreted widely, *if* regeneration is addressed holistically and *if* a creative process is embedded in planning and decision-making, then it is possible to create truly sustainable communities.

Underpinning the programme is a celebration of the strong local character and values of the area, as well as an emphasis on the importance of quality and innovation, local participation, strong leadership and cross-sector working.

The process has gathered extraordinary support and enthusiasm along the way, not only from the sponsoring thirteen agencies but also from central government, the private sector and an extensive network of international practitioners. The challenge now is to take it forward in partnership with other local and national stakeholders and to put Thurrock in a position to develop best practice and delivery.



*The river Thames from Grays' Foreshore.
Jason Orton 2004.*



PROGRAMME. This programme proposes a **new approach to the future development of Thurrock**, informed by an intensive process of research and an application of creative thinking. This has created the first ever compilation of in-depth information and knowledge about the area as a publicly accessible and ongoing tool.

Research & mapping:

- Detailed research and mapping of Thurrock including its existing activities, landscapes, communities and history.
- Compilation of international case studies.
- Creative mapping commissions from leading artists.
- Essays by environmentalist Chris Baines and writer Ken Worpole.

All research is available online at www.visionarythurrock.org.uk



Charrettes. Three intensive multi-disciplinary workshops (charrettes) focused on **creative responses to the regeneration challenges in Thurrock**. These involved leading international architects, artists, environmentalists, writers and experts in community engagement. These resulted in principles for development in three areas of particular importance to Thurrock:

1. The Thames at Purfleet
2. The Greenbelt
3. Culture & creativity

The participants were advised by stakeholders and residents who provided an insight into local perceptions and values.

Presentation: Tilbury Cruise Terminal, 30th June 2004. Presentation to government ministers, local and national agencies, local decision makers, stakeholders, private sector representatives and local and national media.

Future challenges. The programme proposes frameworks to inform the forthcoming regeneration of Thurrock. Change on this scale involves many agencies and must also work with existing initiatives. We hope that these suggested principles and methods of delivery will be recognised and carried forward by all involved.

The programme is a growing body of work that will be showcased as it develops. Future presentations will include the Sustainable Communities Summit in February 2005. Please see the website for more details www.visionarythurrock.org.uk

OUTCOMES. The charrettes focused on raising aspirations for Thurrock's future and proposed visionary and ambitious strategies for sustainable change and methods for delivery. All are founded on a recognition of Thurrock's unique and vital character and culture.

Four key principles emerged as common in all three charrettes in addition to specific strategies for each theme.

COMMON PRINCIPLES:

- 1. Do no harm.** Thurrock is a place where damage has been done to the natural and social environment. All future development should be restorative and respectful of the local culture and ecology.
- 2. Community engagement.** Participation of local people must be actively and creatively integrated into all stages of the regeneration process.
- 3. Innovation & creativity.** As the first area of the Thames Gateway to see co-ordinated development under a UDC, Thurrock should lead the way with innovative approaches and quality as a priority in all areas of future development.
- 4. Long-term thinking.** All programmes should be planned over a period of not less than ten years, to ensure a truly sustainable process.

1. THE THAMES AT PURFLEET. Purfleet, a village on the boundary with London, is set to triple in size under plans for new development. The Thames is currently virtually inaccessible to the existing fragmented communities and new development threatens to further exclude these communities from using the riverfront.

Purfleet links the internationally important ecologies of the Thames, the new London Riverside Conservation Park (Rainham Marshes) and Thames Chase Forest. This creates a unique opportunity that must be harnessed. In addition the railway line runs near the riverfront, providing the possibility of public transport access to the river.

The river and its floodplain should be viewed as the major public realm in Purfleet—dedicated to public access, and temporary and permanent uses relating to the river.

A world-class marine reserve could be designated in and around the river to highlight the importance of the Thames environment. An associated centre for marine studies could train local people as the new 'park keepers' and act as a new economic generator for the area.

Principles

- No houses to be allowed in the floodplain unless sustainably designed for flood conditions, for which prototypes could be developed.
- Encourage river transport for people and goods connecting to a new train station near the river.
- Redefine the local transport provision to provide appropriate permeable slow routes.
- New housing outside the floodplain to meet new minimum space standards and densities.
- Reinstate a new public slipway to the Thames.
- Encourage a community bridge building culture; designing bridges as a way to mend both physical and social divides in the area.

This is an innovative designation of the tidal Thames where flooding becomes an opportunity for social and ecological gain, and creates a major public realm in Thurrock.

2. THE GREENBELT. Thurrock is 60% greenbelt but these areas are poorly used, despite the opportunities they offer for recreation and amenity. An inability to relate to the countryside inhibits its use by many of Thurrock's inhabitants, and no planning framework exists for introducing new activities and access points to these areas.

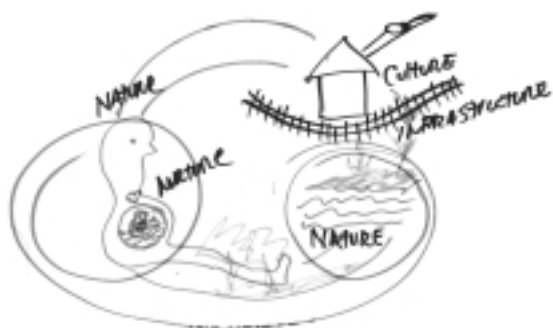
Current planning policy views the areas defined as greenbelt as identical in quality despite their variations in ecology, usage and character. This binary definition of greenbelt/urban no longer describes the current pattern of land use found on the ground, which is made up of a fine grain of ecological links and patterns of use. This is particularly evident in the urban fringe areas where the urban-rural classification breaks down.

Thurrock should develop a **new participatory mapping method**, informed by local knowledge, spatial characteristics, ecologies and time-specific patterns of use, appropriate for the 21st century. This would be the starting point for a new evaluation of land use, and could identify opportunities for new uses and change in both built-up and rural areas.

Principles

- Develop this mapping method for land use characteristics, testing methodologies in sample areas.
- Gather and use collective knowledge and experience to inform the planning process.
- Celebrate both ordinary and extraordinary areas, and the ecological and social value of brownfield, 'derelict' land.
- Consider both the macro and micro scales of ecological exchange, positioning Thurrock internationally.
- Establish a mobile unit for community engagement, creating a forum for debate.
- Encourage debate, discourse and exchange through a twinning programme between schools in rural and urban areas.
- Commission an artist to work with the local community to develop signage and an interactive website to encourage greater accessibility to the countryside.
- Encourage citizens to explore the green areas of the borough through a programme of creative activities.

This would be a pioneering programme in which Thurrock can show its commitment to innovation and participation by citizens in planning processes.



3. CULTURE & CREATIVITY. Thurrock is currently under-celebrated, despite its rich heritage and contemporary culture. Thurrock is a gateway to other places and the future, and as such should pioneer the most forward-thinking programme of cultural activity.

Culture & creativity should be embedded in all regenerative projects to encourage participation with environmental, spatial, social and planning proposals. Temporary events and programmes are an important part of this process but should also operate under a long-term strategy.

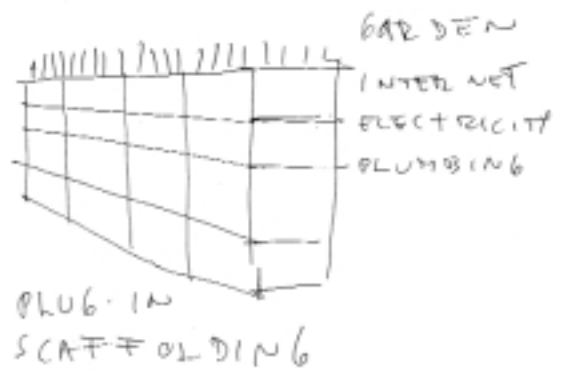
Principles

- Cultural programmes in the borough to be sustainable and long-term, encouraging cross-sector working between ecology, heritage, education, the arts and architecture.
- Learn from international best practice.
- Promote a culture of curiosity about one's surroundings.
- Planning permission to be given only to projects that reach an aspirational quality of design and sustainability.
- Celebrate local history and values.
- Encourage temporary structures and events.
- Connect projects to national and international narratives but ensure local community interaction.
- A proportion of any Section 106 or 'Percent for Art' monies to be ring-fenced as a central fund to ensure integrated creative involvement with all future development.

In the short term housing design will have the greatest impact on Thurrock's future and this is the area where this new embedded, participatory concept of creativity can be demonstrated now. The charrette recommends a **commissioned programme to raise the design quality of volume housing** in Thurrock.

Ten sites owned by Thurrock Council to be made available for ten teams comprising an architect, artist, ecologist, house builder and the family or individual to be housed. The dwellings would be built and become the benchmark for design quality and sustainability for Thurrock.

This ground-breaking approach to housing design would launch a long term, international programme of high-quality cultural activity, embedded in development on the ground.

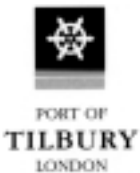


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Programme devised & produced by General Public Agency
www.generalpublicagency.com

Artist & writer commissions

Chris Baines (essay, Thurrock 20/20)
Helena Ben-Zenou (creative mapping, Tilbury)
Nils Norman (creative mapping, the Greenbelt)
Jason Orton (Thurrock: a photographic portrait)
Public Works (creative mapping, Purfleet)
Ken Worpole (essay, Landscape and Memory)

Charrette participants & facilitators

Peter Beard (landscape architect, Landroom, UK)
Susan Benn (Performing Arts Labs, UK)
Kerstin Bergandal (artist, Denmark)
Tim Collins (artist and academic, Studio for Creative Inquiry, USA)
Marco Casagrande (architect, C-lab, Finland)
Jeremy Deller (artist, UK)
Paul Grover (architect, UK)
Harry Gugger (architect, Herzog and de Meuron, Switzerland)
Jeanne van Heeswijk (artist, the Netherlands)
Nerys Jones (National Urban Forestry Unit, UK)
Keith Khan (spectacularist, motiroti, UK)
Chris Moller (urban designer/architect, s333, the Netherlands)
Nils Norman (artist, UK)
Mike Phillips (writer, UK)
Martina Reuter (artist, Wochenklausur, Austria)
Ralph Rugoff (curator, cca Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, USA)
Nathalie de Vries (architect, mvrDV, the Netherlands)
Chris Vorhees (artist, Simparch, USA)

Charrette local & technical advisors

Nicky Adamson (Thurrock arts|generate)
Catherine Bailey (Green Spaces Strategy Officer, South Essex)
Liz Beadle (Thurrock Regeneration)
Jonathan Catton (Thurrock Museum)
Alan Gosling (Purfleet Heritage Centre)
John Meehan (Thames Chase Community Forest)
Sarah Tanburn (regeneration consultant, Thurrock Council)

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