

Southend Manifesto

Our vision for Southend is of a more equal, compassionate town that protects the vulnerable, provides decent homes, education and health service for all; and recognises the right of future generations to be protected from the ravages of climate change and environmental degradation.

This **Southend Manifesto** does not repeat the national manifesto, nor the policies available on the Party's website; instead it complements that material, setting out how we will deliver Green Party policy in this town.

1. Tackle homelessness

Southend has performed poorly in the provision of affordable housing and the social to rent sector. This has forced up the cost of rent, prevented many young adults from gaining a place of their own and contributed to the homelessness crisis.

We will lead a dynamic change of council effort, away from the provision of luxury homes and apartments to the provision of affordable homes and new social to rent homes. We will:

- Support the renovation and/or construction of new high quality, well insulated, spacious flats in central Southend close to public transport hubs or along public transport corridors;
- Introduce a speedy and effective strategy to bring back into use empty private sector homes;
- Adopt a “permission to occupy” policy to permit homeless people to occupy derelict buildings until they can be renovated/replaced;
- Support the development of housing co-ops and co-housing projects;
- Give social housing tenants greater control over the management of their homes and neighbourhoods;
- Improve the quality of housing stock to help reduce household bills with energy efficiency and water saving upgrades;
- Aggressively pursue slum landlords, using the full force of council powers;
- Oppose multi-occupancy, sub-dividing houses into flats; except where an unusually large property is to be subdivided and where the flats will make comfortable dwellings;
- Oppose “right to buy” legislation being extended to housing associations;
- Develop an immigration policy to welcome, settle and integrate refugees;
- Protect green belt and green spaces from development (e.g. Fossetts Farm proposals), focussing development on brownfield sites; and
- Stop the overdevelopment of the Cliffs.

2. Move to localised energy system

We support the ‘Southend Energy Company’ and will promote renewable technologies as part of that scheme. We will seek the construction of a new wind farm to the north of the town and in other parts of

Essex. The proposed Two Tree Island turbine is not feasible (likely opposition from RSPB/Essex Wildlife Trust and Southend Airport) and we will oppose the construction of wind farms where they pose an unacceptable risk to wildlife. We will:

- Vigorously promote solar PV technologies, using council roofs and school building roofs;
- Encourage business and private residents to install solar PV, solar thermal panels, ground and air source heat pumps, biomass boilers and other renewable technologies that will ensure all new estates are carbon neutral;
- Deliver higher energy conservation standards in new and existing buildings - domestic, commercial and industrial;
- Vigorously promote energy efficiency in both private and public premises including the roll out of LED technology for street lights;
- Seek the creation of a Green New Deal scheme to make homes more energy efficient coupled with a thermal and noise insulation programme for those living on the Southend Airport flight path; and
- Oppose the Bradwell nuclear power plant and any proposal for a nuclear waste dump in Essex.

3. Sustainable transport

Council policy has historically encouraged the use of the private motor car, wasting £millions of public money on road widening/construction schemes that can never tackle congestion. No large town in the world has ever solved its congestion problems by building new roads. The scale of council failure has resulted in residents being regularly exposed to dangerous levels of toxic pollutants. We will deliver a radically different, environmentally sound transport policy designed to reduce car use. We will:

- Develop an integrated transport plan, increasing the provision, reliability and affordability of rail and buses;
- Initiate a range of measures to improve the Abellio Greater Anglia railway line (national policy is to eventually renationalise);
- Explore the potential for a Park and Ride facility;
- Oppose expansion of the A127 to 3 lanes and oppose any form of “Rochford Outer By-pass” scheme;
- Offer free electric vehicle charging points in all car parks and encourage the move from diesel/petrol to battery electric vehicles;
- Reduce car parking provision at rail stations, promoting the alternatives to car travel;
- Undertake a public education programme to promote the benefits of physically active travel;
- Expand the network of safe cycle lanes; including new routes to Castle Point, Rayleigh and Rochford;
- Improve road junctions and cycle routes to ensure greater safety for cyclists and pedestrians and maintain existing cycle routes to a high standard;
- Oppose expansion of out of town shops and other leisure facilities, promoting efficient land use policies that reduce dependence upon the private car (e.g. Roots Hall ground to be radically renovated rather than moved out of town to Fossetts Farm);
- Ensure 20 mph zones become the norm in all residential areas; and

- Oppose any further expansion of Southend Airport, pursuing all options to ban night flights, ban weekend flights before 10am and seek an airport contribution to acoustic insulation grants for residents adversely impacted by noise.

4. Food and wildlife

We will take every appropriate opportunity to promote the ethical treatment of animals, reduce meat consumption and protect wildlife. We will:

- Protect and enhance our internationally important natural areas, preserve biodiversity and natural ecosystems;
- Develop a local food production plan;
- Ban council use of weed killing chemicals, seeking agreement for a Borough wide ban;
- Develop a high standard bee strategy to protect pollinators;
- Reduce cutting of wildflowers and meadows to protect wildlife;
- Address the threats to the Thames fishing industry; and
- Oppose expansion of Sea Life Centre and reduce the number of animals kept in captivity.

5. Quality education

The town has historically suffered a failing education system. The grammar schools are part of the reason for that failure and so we oppose selective education. We will:

- Support moves towards less reliance on fixed curriculum teaching and testing - allow Headteachers more flexibility;
- Speed improvements to school buildings to higher standards of comfort, space and energy conservation;
- Speed up phase-out of all remaining demountable classrooms;
- Introduce 20 mph zones and Safer Journeys schemes for all schools;
- Develop an integrated and fair school transport system to reduce the "school run" and give parents and pupils information to encourage sustainable travel to school;
- Improve school dinners with more organic food and fresh fruit & veg; and
- Promote the Sure Start programme.

6. Economy

Southend Council has an exceptionally poor record of promoting economic and employment growth by environmentally destructive practices. We will deliver a more successful town by reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. We will:

- Promote the eco-tourism opportunities long neglected by council and business;
- Support independent traders, seeking ways to reduce the business rates burden upon small traders; and
- Develop a local circular economy, encouraging residents to purchase from local traders.

7. Leisure/health

We recognise the role physical active travel has in improving wellbeing and reducing ill-health and sickness. We will:

- Encourage healthy lifestyles with improved green spaces, sport and leisure amenities;
- Ensure play facilities in public parks are free;
- Develop safe play strategies for children, with safer roads and parks; and
- Ensure footpaths and public rights of way are properly maintained.

8. Waste strategy

Southend should be a model for a different way of working in which the maximum possible quantity of redundant materials are re-used or recycled. We will:

- Promote grey water recycling, sustainable drainage and a full range of recycling storage facilities;
- Aggressively pursue, detect and prosecute fly-tipping;
- Lead initiatives to tackle dog-fouling; including a publicity campaign to educate dog owners on the damaging environmental effects of plastic bags in landfill, etc. Encourage shops to only stock biodegradable bags. Install dog waste compost bins in parks and encourage the use of poop-a-scoopers;
- Initiate a new natural nappies programme;
- Explore the options for a publicity campaign to encourage the use of natural sanitary products and provide sanitary products free-of-charge to the homeless;
- Encourage greater uptake of food waste recycling scheme; and
- Move to a separated waste strategy to improve value of recyclables and oppose incineration of waste.

9. Political vision

Councillors will be open and progressive, financially responsible and answerable to local residents. Genuine consultation will always take place before decision making, with an end to the secrecy that has dogged the council for decades.

Elected councillors will work to secure a taxation regime that provides sufficient funding to maintain essential public services, including social care for the elderly, the disabled and an excellent education system.

Green Party Policies

Visit <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/> for details of Green Party national policy.