

Billericay Action Group

Basildon Council Local Plan 2016

Billericay Roads

An analysis of the main proposals affecting Billericay with respect to roads.

Relevant Documents: Local Plan 2016; Highways Topic Paper, December 2015; Technical Note on 2031 Mitigation Modelling.

Background

Basildon Council proposes to allow building of upward of 1800 new houses around Billericay, almost all on Green Belt. These new houses would be built on 9 sites, known as H19 to H27, as detailed below. (The difference in number between those listed below and the 1800 covers houses already approved/built within the plan period.)

Site Ref	Location	Number
H19	North of Potash Road	150
H20	East of Tye Common Road	160
H21	South of London Road	180
H22	East of Mountnessing Road	280
H23	East of Frithwood Lane	330
H24	South of Windmill Heights	70
H25	East of Kennel Lane	70
H26	East of Greens Farm Lane	280
H27	East of Southend Road	220

The Issue

In the 2011 document produced for Basildon Council, Basildon Borough Local Plan Highway Assessment, the following chart shows that many of the key junctions in the Billericay road network will be at or exceeding capacity under expected natural growth conditions by the end of the then Local Plan period, 2031. The chart shows the baseline 2011 position in column 1 and the results of a number of scheme proposals in the following columns. The full detail of the analysis is not considered in this paper, but the degree of red, indicating exceeding capacity, is clear, both under current conditions and even after the then considered mitigation modelling.

Billericay										
28	B1007 Stock Road / Queens Park Avenue / Potash Road		Roundabout							
29	B1007 Stock Road / Radford Way		Mini-Roundabout							
30	Mountnessing Road / Parry Street / Radford Way		Roundabout							
31	A129 London Road / High Street / Sun Street		Roundabout							
32	A129 Sun Street / Chapel Street		Roundabout							
33	A129 Southend Road / A176		Roundabout							
34	A176 / Kennel Lane / Laindon Road		Roundabout							
35	A129 London Road / Mountnessing Road		Priority							
36	B1007 Stock Road / Noresey Road / High Street / Western Road		Signals							
37	A129 London Road / Tye Common Road / Western Road		Signals							

The 2016 Plan

In the 2016 Local Plan, which would introduce over 1800 new homes, and approximately 3600 new cars, a number of possible enhancements to Billericay's roads are considered. Despite the conclusions reached in the 2011 analysis in the new Local Plan, para 9.17, it is claimed that 'The results of the Highway Mitigation Modelling for Billericay shows that the majority of the major junctions in this settlement could be improved to accommodate the levels of growth proposed.' Highways Topic Paper, Appendix C, suggests that all but one junction is now considered to be acceptable after mitigation. (The still compromised junction is that at London Road/Tye Common Road.) How is this considerable improvement to be obtained ?;

In the Local Plan, Policy TS2(k), two proposed enhancements to Billericay's roads are referenced, a roundabout at the Mountnessing Road/London Road junction and improvements at Sun Corner. In addition in TS.2 (h) the provision of a south/south-west relief route alongside new housing development is mentioned.

The proposals in the current plan therefore amount to the following;

Existing Roads and Junctions

- 1 A new roundabout at the junction of Mountnessing Road and London Road.

This would make access from Mountnessing Road into London Road easier and does not appear to have too many issues, except that by improving the Mountnessing Road/London Road throughput this could encourage more traffic onto Mountnessing Road and may also increase traffic on the Gooseberry Green Roundabout, neither of which are considered in the available documentation.

- 2 Removal of the one way restriction at the south of Landon Road and encouragement of all traffic heading north at the A176/Laindon Road junction onto Laindon Road. With this modification it is considered that the Sun Corner roundabout could remain, and this would alleviate the issues at the Chapel Street/Sun Street roundabout. However, to fully realise the benefits at Sun Corner a new slip road would need to be provided across the QEII Field, linking Laindon Road to London Road.

However, the studies note that the slip road would present a major challenge as the status of the QEII Field may preclude its being used for this purpose and even if it were to be constructed there would then be an issue with the viability of the pedestrian crossing on London Road due to sighting issues. So the official analysis itself appears to rule out the only mitigation proposal offered. See Fig.2.

Not considered in the analysis, however, is the fact that Laindon Road already has its own traffic arising from two schools, two churches, a fire station, a doctor's surgery, a night-time entertainment venue and existing local housing. One might question whether forcing all northbound traffic onto this road would be in the best interests of the existing users and local inhabitants of the road.

A suggestion that replacing the Sun Corner Roundabout with traffic signals is mentioned but does not seem to have particular merit.

3 Although not quantified the Local Plan does reference two other opportunities for improving traffic around Billericay, greater use of cycles and sustainable travel, but offers no further insight into what these would actually mean or how they might help. Taking into account the very limited new job creation proposed for Billericay the vast majority of new residents will need to commute, and given Billericay's spatial relationship with the potential sources of employment it is difficult to conclude that many will avail themselves of this suggestion.

It is to be noted that in two traffic surveys conducted by Billericay Action Group at Sun Corner on 25 November 2015 and at the Southend Road/Outwood Common Road junction on 15 December 2015 only a handful of pedal cycles and motorbikes were seen compared to around 6000 cars. The hilly nature of Billericay to the east and the practicalities of using a cycle when visiting a supermarket would also appear to question the long-term benefits of these schemes, even if some detail were provided.

No proposals are offered for any junction north of the town, and it is claimed that either land would be readily available for mitigation schemes, even these are not detailed or, in the planners words "it is considered that vigorous application of sustainable transport policies could also serve to alleviate some of the capacity issues". One wonders what this may practically mean. It is to be noted that whatever mitigation may take place in the Billericay environs traffic heading towards or from Chelmsford will still be subject to the bottleneck at Stock.

New Roads and Junctions

Many of the issues affecting Billericay's transport system are declared to be due to traffic travelling from the west to south of the town, and this will only be exacerbated by the proposed new build of 670 new houses in the areas.

A new bypass road from London Road to Laindon Road is not considered financially acceptable, a cost of £65 Million being identified.

Policy TS2 (h) proposes instead a south/south west relief route. This would comprise roads constructed as part of the housing developments and elements of the existing infrastructure. A new junction on London Road to the west of Mountnessing Road would lead into H21, pass through this site and H20 to emerge on Tye Common Road. A new road constructed as part of the H23 development would join this site to Laindon Road. These two routes would then use part of the existing Frithwood Lane and Tye Common Road to complete the link.

This would potentially relieve the problem at the London Road/Tye Common Road junction, which has no other mitigation in the proposals, and could help with the Sun Corner loadings.

However, this is very much a collection of stretches of road rather than a cohesive route. Some of the existing elements are already built up on both sides, others are currently little more than lanes. See Fig.3 and 4. In addition, this proposal is very much dependent upon

funding, primarily from developers, and the Frithwood Lane development, H23, is not scheduled for delivery until at least 2025, meaning that the remainder of the new works on London Road and Tye Common Road would rely on existing infrastructure during construction and once initially inhabited, and the overall benefits, if any, would not be realised until well after this date.

If this route was constructed, however, it is difficult not to see it subsequently becoming another rat run through residential areas, thus negating a major element of the rationale for its construction. Traffic using this link would also affect the analysis of the Laindon Road/A 176 roundabout.

Other Issues

Four other issues are not addressed in the Local Plan.

- Site H22, west of Mountnessing Road, will have only one road access, onto London Road at the new junction mentioned above leading into H21. It is not identified what form this junction will take but with its construction we will then have 3 major junctions on London Road in the space of around 600 yards, this junction, the new Mountnessing Road roundabout and the Tye Common Road traffic signals. No analysis is provided of the impact of this arrangement.
- A recent traffic survey conducted by Billericay Action Group at the Southend Road/Outwood Common Road junction identified that more vehicles use this area than Sun Corner in the same time period, 3254 vs 2130 in the same 90 minute period from 7.30 to 9.00 am. Residents of the Southend Road area have regularly brought attention to existing traffic problems in the locality. Proposed new builds on Southend Road (H27) and Greens Farm Lane (H26) will only exacerbate problems, and the BAG traffic survey identified that traffic on Grange Road essentially makes this a staggered crossroads. Essex County Council have clearly ignored all this evidence and there are NO proposals in the Local Plan for any improvements to this area, which can only lead to an even worse situation for local residents. See Fig.5.
- Currently Essex Highways is working with residents of Green Farm Lane to reduce the excessive speeds of motorists using GFL as a rat run, but have yet to suggest any solution. However, the same Essex Highways has seen no reason to comment on the impact of an additional 280 houses, and potentially over 500 new cars, on the same road.
- The contributions from Essex Highways only consider the impact of new traffic generated as a result of our Local Plan. But all other councils in our area and beyond are currently subject to the same drive for more house building and hence more traffic. In addition it has recently been claimed that Basildon is now seen as a jobs growth area and this must also increase traffic. Billericay sits on the main Basildon to Chelmsford through route but no analysis of the impact of extra traffic on this route is contained in these proposals.

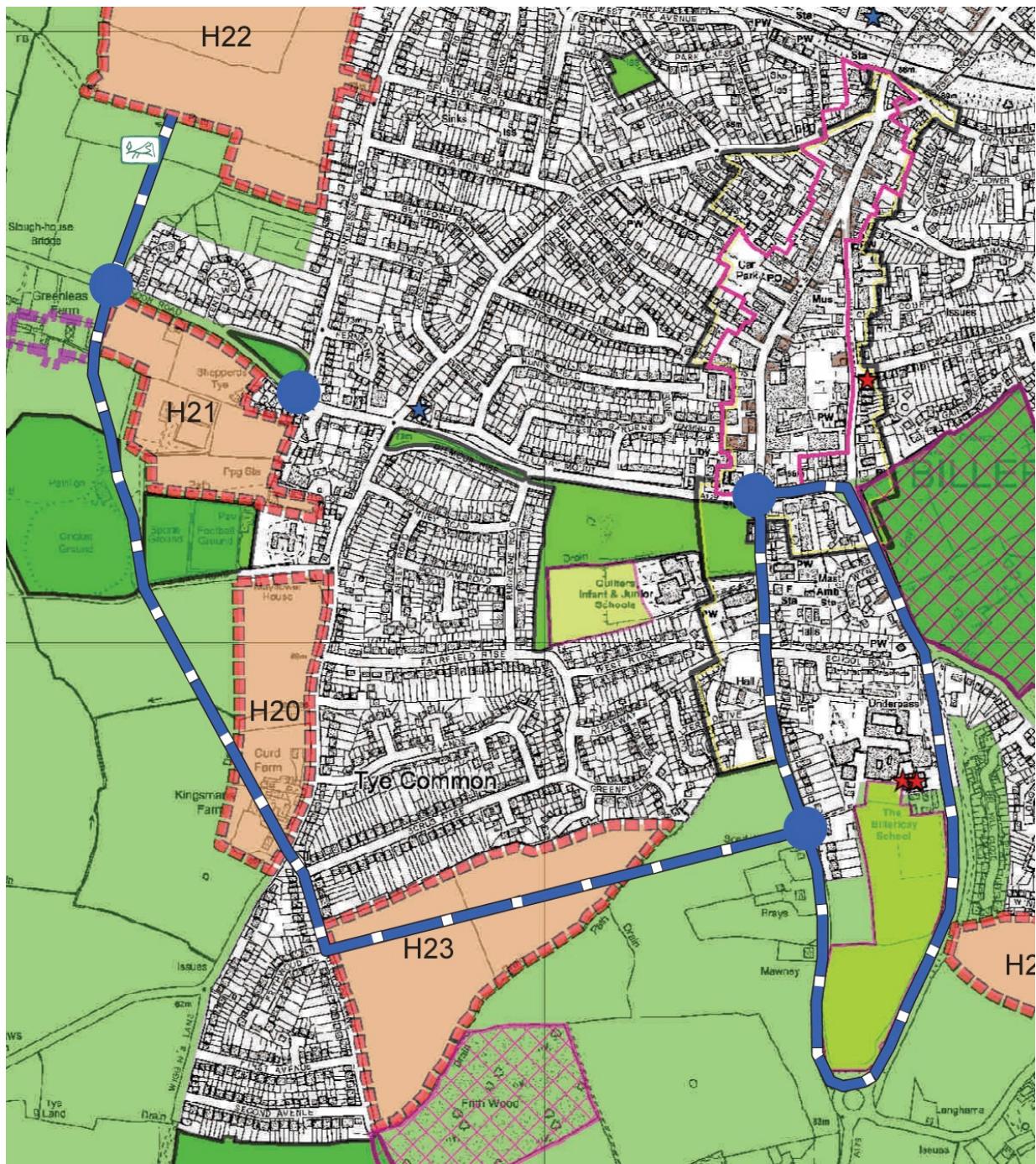


Fig.1 The Main Locations mentioned in this paper



Fig.2. Site of the proposed Laindon Road slip road.



Fig.3 Frithwood Lane, looking towards Scrub Rise



Fig.4 Tye Common Road/Scrub Lane junction, Frithwood Lane heading off centre right.

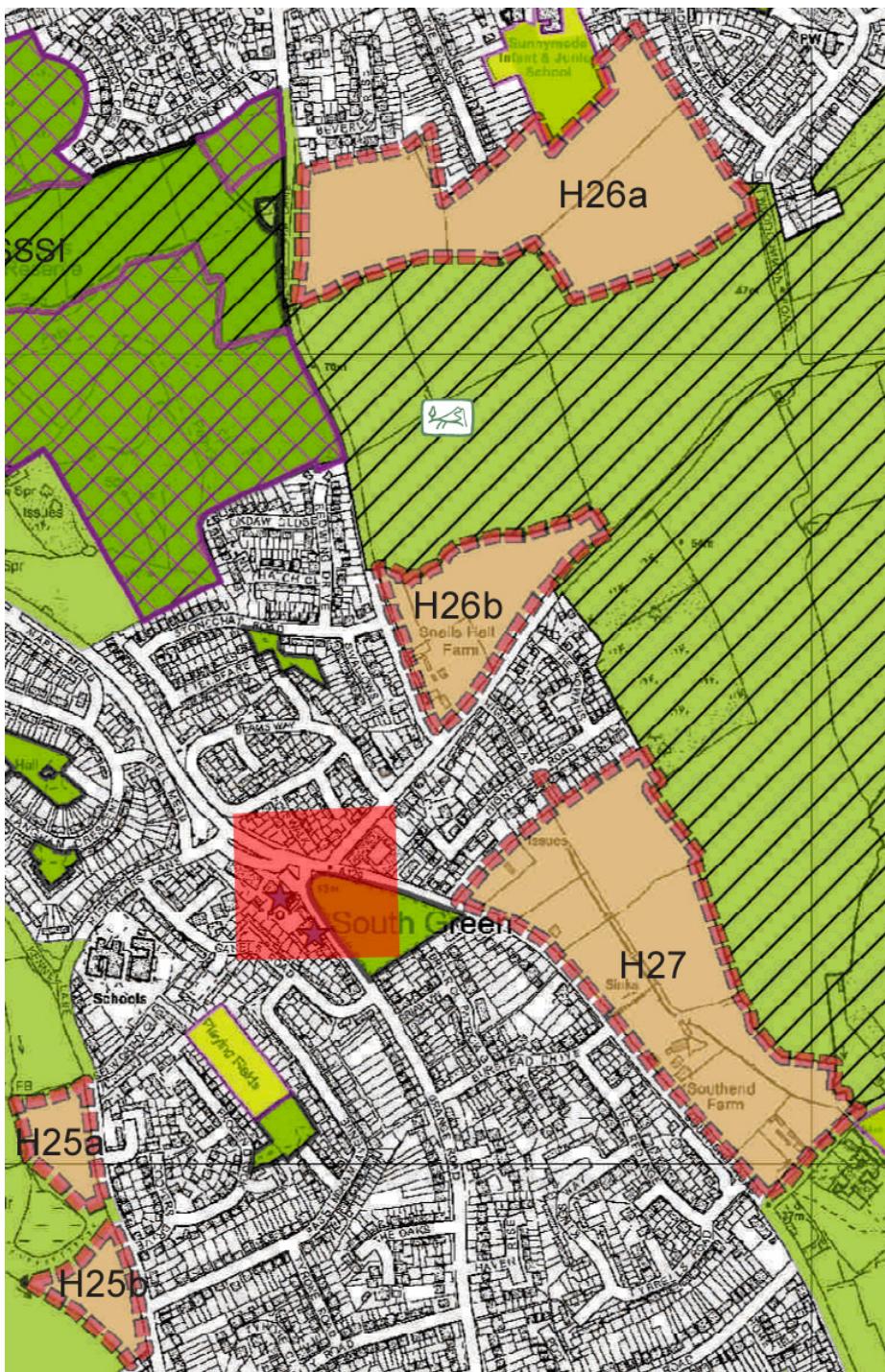


Fig.5 Southend Road/Outwood Common Road Area