THURROCK
BIG SKIES
BIG THINKING

Key Components

A.



B.



C.



D.



D1.



E.



F.



G.



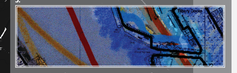
H.



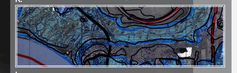
I.



J.

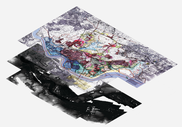


K.



L.





1M LiDAR

Value

High : 214.61

Low : -81.5425

1:25,000

0 1 2 4 6 8 Kilometers

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Produced by Professor Moore & Dr Cureton, 2015

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

BIG SKIES BIG THINKING: A new water, land, development and transport strategy for Thurrock 2015-2040

A. - Proposing a new kind of urban living, Big Skies Big Thinking is prompting debate about what the borough should look like in future, based on a holistic, integrated approach, connecting housing, transport, planning and landscape. It is firmly believed that the transformational agenda proposed will improve the quality of life, level of skills and economic prospects throughout the borough. It underpins a potential Thurrock Garden City proposal. It contains a number of important principles outlined below:

B. - A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT DEVELOPMENT
Working with the landscape as the context within which development takes place is an effective way to increase environmental quality. Conserving and highlighting the richness of Thurrock's landscape, improving degraded and derelict land and avoiding suburban spread, it will provide a mix of affordable social housing, accommodation for large families and professionals, a graduated range of densities and visual, physical connections with the water to re-establish a symbiotic relationship between local communities, the river and the landscape.

C. - DESIGN EXCELLENCE
Design excellence is a prerequisite. A public realm strategy encourages people to walk more, cycle more and spend more time in the local environment. Cycle routes are constructed alongside (and separate from wherever possible) major roads. Pedestrians and cyclists are given priority over cars in the urban centres. The transition between inside a building and the outside is seen as a vital part of the public realm, and all built form is above national standards in terms of energy rating, space standards and quality of design. Priority is given to system built housing, produced locally (if possible) and erected by local people trained (if necessary), at the new College

D. - VALUING THE LAND, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL
Tipping and the careless use or exploitation of land river and air is prohibited and environmental pollution (diesel and noise) dramatically reduced. Carbon capture is improved by planting a Forest of Thurrock and a sustainable return to the land is driven by new market gardening, allotments and intensive horticultural production of organic food in association with local gardening societies, local college and schools.

D1. - Grays nighttime economy is supported, participation in arts festivals, public events with the RNO and other regional, national and European organisations are more widely encouraged and publicized, and initiatives to improve public health and well-being include catalyst projects such as encouraging the private sector to invest in a 50m swimming pool and heated lido, more numerous gardening competitions, the promotion and facilitation of cycling and walking, sailing and fishing on the river.

Replacement street lighting is responsive to context. To ensure that the skies remain dark in the centre of Thurrock, roads and paths are to be lit by glow in the dark lines. Elsewhere, smart lighting responsive to movement and demand is used to reduce lighting costs and maintain public safety.

E. - ON THE WATER
At carefully selected locations, high-density flats and duplexes are built on the water in proximity to water taxi stops/railway stations. Each block has a distinct character and form (industrial, riverine, fluvial, rural). Note: Silodam in Amsterdam, is 10x 20m x 10 stories. This provides a mix of 157 flats, the equivalent of 657 houses per hectare.

F. - THE RIVER
It is vital to increase safe access to the Thames for local communities. River based tours, water taxi's linked to the railway stations and leisure boats, sailing back and forth from London, to and from Kent and Medway, establish the river as a connecting rather than dividing element, as does a frequent ferry from Gravesend to Grays and in the longer term, to Swanscombe and Paramount Park.

G. - THE QUIET HEART/DARK SKY OF THURROCK
The Fenlands, de-polderd for productive water catchment, storage and purification have the traditional rectilinear field patterns, streams and ditches restored providing the capacity for periodic flooding and water harvesting. Used more intensively for recreation, fish farming, increased bio diversity and wildlife sanctuaries, it is serviced by a network of foot and cycle paths. As the land rises, agriculture, ecological and horticultural production, forestry, and nature reserves are created, form part of a high quality, resilient green belt.

H. - THE FENLAND SHOULDERS
In conjunction with the Fenlands (above) local accessibility is improved for recreation, cycling and walking. Careful design and management enhances the quality of the green belt. It is preferred that the lower Thames Crossing does not come through the borough. However, if is decided that that third crossing runs through the Fenlands of Thurrock the road needs to be realigned to the higher ground to the East. Pylons are removed, gas pipes and other utilities, including a high-speed digital infrastructure are placed underground as part of the road construction.

I. - THE INHABITED FLOOD PLAIN
Riverside housing, institutional and commercial development, designed with local and long distance views of the river and local surroundings, defines an iconic sequence of connected parks (some of which could be floodable), with piers, terraces, viewing platforms, squares and promenades. Generous, substantive footpaths and cycleways help re-establish a productive relationship between local communities and the river, accommodating events such as the Marshland Half Marathon, an extended Shoreline Arts Exhibition, offering numerous venues from which to enjoy a renewed programme of recreational and cultural activities on the river in Thurrock.

A collision of urban, marshland and industrial characteristics, this strategic spatial structure embraces people and industry, recreation and work, integrates river and rail other forms of public transport. Renewed flood defences, moved inland wherever possible incorporate the development, and the robust public realm re-establishes a long lost connection with the river. The developments are brightly lit to mark the river's edge and more muted away from the edge with smart lighting

Terracing and manipulating the massing of the built form ensures that all development, including housing, incubators and digital and creative start up facilities industries, have views of the river, across the river as well and to adjacent areas to create a greater sense of location and identity. This might include areas of high density living accommodation at about 30-80 houses/flats per hectare.

J. - THE PORTS
Ensuring the ports are leading the way in terms of sustainable development, it is suggested that as in Europe, they are used as engines of growth for the whole borough and its wider constituency, for example by working collaboratively to seek access to funding through the ELL utilizing the facilities to establish Thurrock as the entrance to the North Sea and contributing to a flourishing North Sea dialogue with surrounding seaward facing communities including Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Scotland.

As a priority, the ports will aim to reduce night lighting of roads and facilities within the ports and introduce energy efficient mobility strategies for employees and goods, and a series of community engagement projects, including helping to address the lorry-parking problems. We will investigate whether the ports would contribute to the provision of residential accommodation and facilities to become a major tourist attraction (for example, as in Cape Town) in addition to creating a striking showcase for the arts, music and media when viewed from the river.

Tilbury Port capitalizes on the huge number of passengers embarking and disembarking on the cruise liners by the provision of hotels, restaurants and other entertainment facilities (through a joint HLF bid?).

K. - WATER MANAGEMENT
The EU funded project "Making room for the River and the expert seminar with Dirk Sjimons, raises a number of issues relating to water management within the borough and highlights the vital responsibility and opportunity Thurrock has to play to alleviate flooding within the context of the Thames Gateway and London. With the support of the Environmental Agency, it is proposed that Thurrock increases the capacity of the river, without compromising safety, by realigning the floodwalls, changing the profiles of the flood defences and river edge to create new floodable areas.

Relocating the floodwalls releases room for the river, allows periodic flooding in existing low-lying areas, marshland restoration and, improves water catchment and storage. New dikes defining the urban areas and accommodate a longitudinal cycle and footpath connecting the communities. Development on top of the floodwalls provides local facilities and houses facing the river. Habitat creation will increase biodiversity.

Built further inland, the flood defences utilise the natural topography, embankments and ancient dykes. On the river's side, excavating pools, lakes and green river flood by-passes allows for the greater collection and retention of flood water. The reinstatement of small streams, the ancient grain of field patterns and footpaths creates a patchwork of salt marshes, water meadows, semi natural grassland, rough damp meadows, small scale pastures, an expanded floodplain and far more extensive river and ground water flood catchment areas.

Improved river flood defences protect existing housing, but in some locations it may be necessary to replace the poorest quality housing situated on the floodplain with new housing on higher ground.

L. - ENERGY
Thurrock could be one of the first boroughs to move away from new energy production towards energy conservation, micro storage and recycling. Companies will be encouraged to establish research labs on existing or proposed powerplant sites in association with a new faculty/university and incoming research facilities.