

Traffic

Even before building of any housing estates in the New Town, there was congestion on the A127 and the A13 at weekends. Traffic police were often in attendance at the Fortune of War roundabout, the Cricketers crossroads in Nevendon and Rectory Road, Pitsea, at the junction with the A13. Therefore, there were already signs of traffic problems for the planners to factor in.

It's worth bearing in mind that, in 1950, there were only around two million cars on the road in the UK, but less than fifteen years later, there were almost ten million. Such an increase was not envisaged, and consequently, at the start of the New Town's construction in the early 1950s, only one garage space was allocated for every six homes. That was in line with the government approved ratio of 14%, which all new towns had to adhere to.

Predictably, as the number of cars on the streets increased, parking became a real thorn in the side of the Corporation, as many of the town's roads

simply hadn't been designed to accommodate parked cars.



Pictured left; estate roads quickly become clogged up which, in turn, caused issues for larger vehicles, and also for road safety.

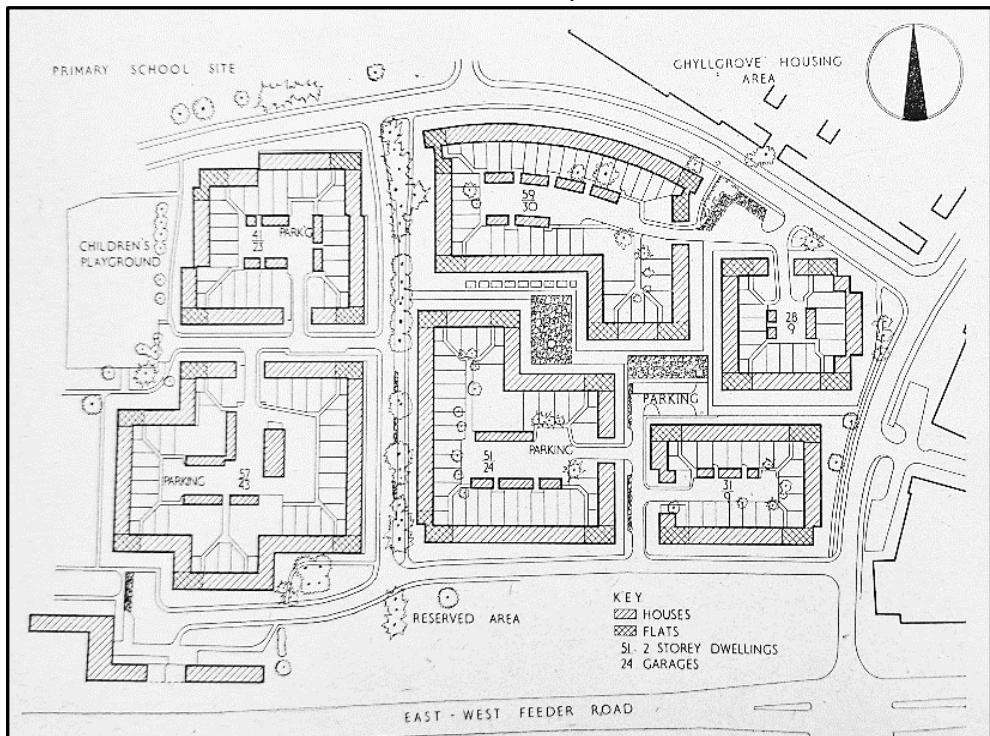
Alarm bells started ringing as early as 1953, when the Corporation recognised that: 'the provision of garages was quite insufficient'. This became abundantly clear due to the increasing number of residents applying for garages, and by the number of parked cars on the roads or, in many cases, lay-bys and even bus stops. The police and other emergency services lobbied the Corporation on the matter, and it was agreed that future estates in Basildon should be built on a ratio of one garage for every two houses (ie a 50% ratio) from 1954 onwards.

However, due to outdated governmental regulations, the Corporation was still only allowed to build housing estates using the old ratio of 14% for the

next two to three years, which was well below the number it knew was needed to overcome the problems it was facing.

It was only in late 1957 that the government relented and allowed the ratio to increase to 25% for new housing in Britain but, whilst it was an improvement, it was still nowhere near enough. Just three years later, in 1960, the ratio had to be increased again, this time to allow one garage for every new home. In later years even this proved to be inadequate, as many households started to own more than one vehicle.

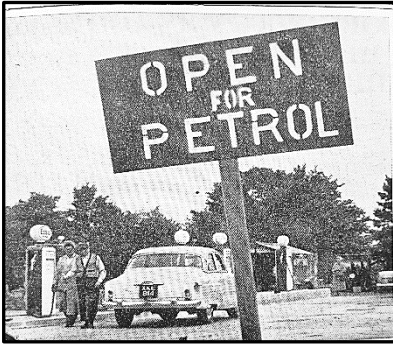
Recognising the increased need for garage spaces in the late 1950s, the design and layout of new housing estates was changed radically to accommodate this increase in car ownership.



Pictured above; Ghyllgrove had a much larger provision for car parking spaces than earlier estates in Fryerns and Vange. This was achieved by introducing the concept of 'service areas' which allowed goods, such as coal, to be delivered via a shared back yard, which also doubled as a general parking area and had additional garage spaces.

This new layout made a lot of sense and had other benefits too. House frontages now opened onto pedestrianised areas which were prohibited to

all cars. It reduced traffic noise, was far safer and, as a by-product, created a greater sense of community for those who lived in the same street. The same design principles were adopted for Lee Chapel North.



Pictured left; on the subject of traffic, the 'Open for Petrol' sign announced that the first New Town petrol station was open for business in September 1958.

The first petrol station was based in Long Riding but, at that point, none of the petrol station buildings had been completed, just the pumps and a shed for the staff. This was several years after the first tenants began moving into Basildon, and, prior to this, motorists would have filled up along the A127 or in Pitsea or Laindon.

The A13

The A13 was one of two roads which linked the east and west of the designated area, the other being the A127 to the north. The planning of the Vange and Pitsea neighbourhoods would have been severely impacted by any decision taken on the alignment of A13 and, in 1953, a decision was taken by the Highways Authority to simply widen the existing road there. However, the Corporation felt that this would encourage more, and faster, through traffic, making it dangerous and noisy for local residents.

In its opinion, the road was inadequate to take any additional traffic and it fought for these proposals to be overturned. The decision sat with the government for several months, which meant that detailed planning for parts of Vange and Pitsea had to be delayed. It took until 1954 for agreement to be reached for a diversion to the south of Vange and Pitsea – where it runs today.