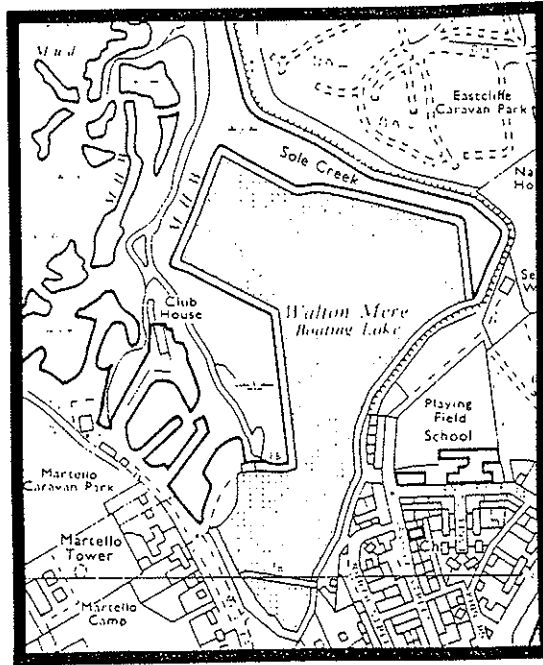


# DESIGN BRIEF



# WALTON MERE

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

(iii) WALTON MERE

Site Location

The site is located in the town of Walton-on-the-Naze which lies adjacent to the Walton backwaters and Frinton-on-Sea 9 miles from Clacton-on-Sea and 19 miles from Colchester. The town has a resident population of 5,600 but during the busiest summer weekends it regularly accommodates 8,000 holidaymakers, mainly in the caravan parks, together with 4,500 daytrippers.

Walton originally developed as a Victorian Seaside resort and in recent years it has also become an important retirement and sailing centre. In the summer months leisure activities are concentrated at the Naze and between Bath House Meadow, the beach and the pier.

Site Description

The site is located between the Backwaters and a large caravan park to the north, the main summer car park and the beach to the east, the town centre to the south and the Yacht Club, a boatyard and a 50 berth mooring basin to the west.

The Backwaters extend over 2,200 hectares of intertidal saltings and waterways and the area is a recognised site of national conservation status on account of its natural habitat for plant life and birds. The main summer car park at Bath House Meadow is an informal grassed area controlled by the Council which is used for picnics and other leisure activities as well as for parking up to 1,000 cars. The beach is just across the Esplanade from this car park. The Town Centre is part of the Conservation Area and consists of attractive buildings in narrow streets which create an informal holiday atmosphere. The High Street which forms the main approach into the town is the main focus of shopping and other activities.

The site area comprises a former private boating lake covering 24 acres which has become disused since 1976. When it was popular for small sailing and rowing boats the water was only 2' deep, controlled by a sluice.

The boating lake is partly contained by a sea defence wall protecting adjoining built up areas but to the west and north it is only separated from Walton Channel and Sole Creek respectively by earth embankments which are now in need of restoration. These form the high water mark for medium tides.

Surface water drainage systems flow into the southern end of the boating lake and as the sluice is now left permanently open it is tidal.

Vehicular access to the site can be obtained via Mill Lane and a boatyard to the west the route of the proposed town centre relief road between Walton Road and Standley Road or from Bath House Meadows.

Residential properties face the Mere in Mill Lane and back on to it in North Street and Saville Street.

### Policy Background

In the Approved County Structure Plan the site is affected by the following policy areas as defined in the Countryside Conservation Plan: Supplementary Planning Guidance and the draft Essex Coast Protection Subject Plan:-

- a) The Hamford Water Special Landscape Area
- b) The Coastal Protection Belt
- c) The Coast Nature Conservancy Zone.

### Planning History

In 1980 planning permission was sought for a major recreation development of the site as follows:-

- a) to the north a 400 - 500 craft marina
- b) to the south a lake for pleasure craft hire, sailing instruction and a vintage craft exhibition

The major engineering works involved included the dredging of the Mere, the provision of two locks and a weir and the construction of a peripheral service road, car parks and new buildings. The main vehicular access to the site was to be via the first stage of the relief road to be constructed by the developer on Council owned land.

The proposals were supported by the district planning authority but opposed by the County Council, the Ministry of Agriculture, Conservation interest groups and various private interests.

Following a public local inquiry the Secretary of State refused to grant permission for these proposals, because in his view the movements of additional boats could cause congestion in Walton Channel and put at risk the sensitive ecology of the Backwaters due to pollution and disturbance. It was accepted however that the economic benefits of the proposals to the local economy could be considerable and there were no valid amenity objections to the restoration of the boating lake in the intensive manner proposed.

### Future Proposals

In the light of the conclusions of the Secretary of State it is not proposed to allow private pleasure craft to regularly gain access to and from the site via the Backwaters.

The Council as district planning authority considers the following examples of leisure proposals offer an exciting opportunity to restore the site to active use in ways which would be viable commercially and in keeping with the character of the town.

- 1 a nautical heritage and exhibition centre
- 2 a training complex for sailing, canoeing, wind surfing and water ski-ing
- 3 Public boat hire facilities
- 4 Different sorts of holiday accommodation grouped around the southern edges of the lake with related facilities built over the water
- 5 An outdoor activities centre with floating accommodation providing a base for local sailing, bird watching, natural history studies etc
- 6 An imaginative water leisure water park incorporating moving or floodlit displays on the water, fountains, water slides and other activities.

These activities could be combined in various novel forms or phased over several years to create a major tourist attraction open to the public, not only during the main holiday season but earlier and later in the year and also not totally dependant on good weather. New types of flexible roofing materials may be used to enclose various activities in an imaginative manner.

This site has outstanding potential due to its easy accessibility and good parking facilities coupled with its location adjacent to the beach, and town centre. It provides a stimulating opportunity to combine some of the most successful leisure concepts in new and creative ways.

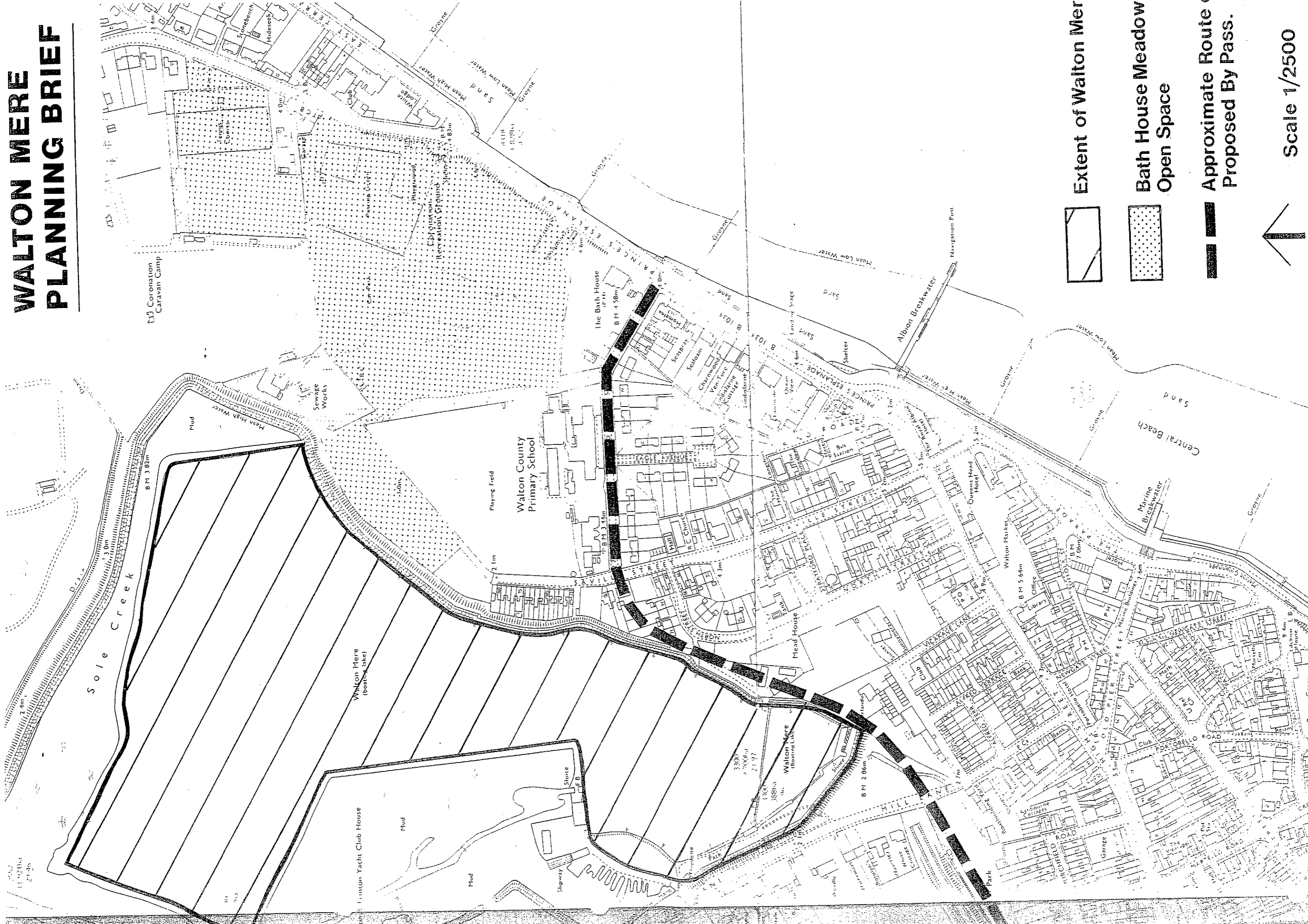
#### Initial Development Costs

The following figures indicate broadly the likely initial reclamation costs for the site excluding acquisition:-

- |   |  |                  |
|---|--|------------------|
| 1 | To restore the banks of the lake by dredging and filling so that it can retain water at all tidal states | <u>£ 120,000</u> |
| 2 | Repairs and alterations to sluice gates and weir   | <u>£ 50,000</u>  |

If the lake is to be used for watersports a further £125,000 could be required for additional protection to its surrounds against potential wave erosion. Any substantial dredging of the lake would incur a further cost to be set against the likely return from the facilities provided.

# WALTON MERE PLANNING BRIEF



Extent of Walton Mere



Bath House Meadow  
Open Space



Approximate Route  
Proposed By Pass.



Scale 1/2500