



Colchester Cycling Campaign's response to the masterplan consultation

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Colchester Cycling Campaign is in **broad agreement** with the thrust of the masterplan, especially in relation to improving the infrastructure for active travel.

We fully support the aim (page 6) that "as many people as possible should walk, cycle or use public transport to travel into the city centre".

We also agree with the success criteria.

However given the huge amount of taxpayers' money likely to be spent, this **must not be a half-hearted exercise**. Walking and cycling must be made as attractive as possible and be **given clear advantages** over private motor transport.

All schemes must have a **high score** using the LTN 1/20 level of service tool.

The engineers devising each scheme should bear in mind:

- **Decarbonising transport:** Grant Shapps' statements in the [De-Carbonising Transport declaration](#) of 2021 in which he said: "Public

transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network."

- **The Vienna Declaration** (the UK is a signatory to this [UN initiative](#)), and
- **Compliance with LTN 1/20** (all schemes funded by Whitehall must comply with policy on cycling infrastructure)

TRANSPORT IN GENERAL

We agree with the baseline appraisal for transport on page 19.

Mention should be made that air pollution is not only above the UK legal limit but well above the UN limit. Consideration should be given not only to particulate pollution from transport but those from other sources too.

We support aims five and six on page 34 which call for a car-light city centre, zero emissions zone and key north-south and east-west city centre corridors. Zonal traffic circulation **should be a short term goal (not long term)** and a date set or it will never be achieved. Climate change is a factor here.

The masterplan should also provide data on how congestion in the greater city is a drag on the economy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The section on climate change **lacks a sense of urgency**. The issue has been in the public arena since 1989 (Margaret Thatcher's speech to the UN) and this year we are beginning to see its terrible effects (including the Canadian wildfires and the southeast Asian and Mediterranean heatwaves). Speak to any FTSE 100 sustainability officer and they will stress the need for faster action and the importance of **building resilience** into all new and existing thinking. More emphasis on climate change is needed in the masterplan to support the intended changes. Resilience also needs to be considered.

CYCLING AND WALKING

Given the importance of cycling and walking, **each should have a separate layer in the plan** to pull together all the issues that are currently spread through the document. These should also highlight the problems such as breaks in cycling and walking routes.

Our two main points are:

- The need for **contraflow cycling in High Street**, and
- The need for **contraflow cycling in Queen Street/St Botolph's Street** (detail on both below)

If these cannot be progressed immediately, the masterplan **must not rule them out.**

We support new pedestrian/cycle links across Southway but would prioritise Headgate/Butt Road and St Botolph's (including Stanwell Street) over the other proposed crossings.

We support improved pedestrian links across Balcerne Hill south (Crouch Street). See below for Balcerne Hill North.

We dispute that the level of cycling infrastructure is "reasonable" (page 19). The alternative phraseology would be "that the **level of cycling infrastructure has potential**". The plan already notes that the quality of the infrastructure is largely poor and/or fragmented and is in need of huge improvement.

We support improvements to cycle access to the city centre via North Hill, Crouch Street, Sheepen Road, Butt Road, Stanwell Street, St Botolph's, East Hill and King's Meadow/Dutch Quarter.

We note that **Military Road** is earmarked as a potential route and agree that it would be a valuable part of the cycle network but wonder how this can be achieved.

WHY CONTRAFLOWS ARE NEEDED

The Roman city centre grid is largely still in place and provides the basis for the **most efficient and easily achievable** cycling network.

The one-way system instituted 60 years ago to control motor vehicles **destroyed city centre permeability** for cyclists. Access is needed not simply into the centre but across the centre, as shown by the high number of cyclists who ride on the footway or carriageway northwards on St Botolph's/Queen Street and westwards on High Street.

At present people from much of New Town, Mersea Road, Shrub End and the new garrison estate have to make considerable diversions to cycle to High Street, North Hill and East Hill. **The current proposals do not address these issues**. See the importance of having direct routes in [Gear Change](#) and [Local Transport Note 1/20](#).

Thought needs to be given to greater use of cargo bikes or provision of this kind of delivery system:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRqKOztzLDs>

HIGH STREET CONTRAFLOW DETAILS

Currently there are only two cycle routes east to west for the entire distance between Southway and Cowdray Avenue. These are St John's Street and the Riverside Walk via Lower Castle Park which takes you from the bottom of East Hill to the bottom of North Hill, missing the city centre entirely. St John's Street is a useful route when travelling from East Hill to Crouch Street but it is not as useful for East Hill to the Sixth Form College – you have to take three sides of a rectangle with two hills.

It is imperative that another east-west route is added. The proposal to use Culver Street seems unworkable except in the extreme long term. Not only does it rely on a building demolition but that route includes market stalls and other obstacles that will cause conflict for cyclists.

This leaves High Street. Two-way cycling could be achieved either

by a cycle contraflow, for example on the north side, or by making the High Street two way for both buses and cycles (and no other traffic), which could improve the bus network too.

ST BOTOLPH'S STREET/QUEEN STREET CONTRAFLOW DETAILS



Stand at St Botolph's and consider cycling direct to the castle. None of the proposed routes addresses such a commonsense scenario. A contraflow would give a direct connection to the north and east for people in western New Town, Mersea Road and the new garrison estate.

The road is wide enough. The current layout makes the street appear narrower than it is but the 1930s picture below (looking towards the site of today's St Botolph's roundabout when the road was two-way for all vehicles) shows the width available.

Issues with loading access could be mitigated by adding dedicated free loading spaces in Priory Street car park and/or repurposing spaces in the private car park between The Gym Group and Sharp Cut and/or part of the site of the former bus garage. The possibility of unloading via the new Vineyard Street development should also be considered.



While a cycle route from Priory Street to Britannia Yard via St Julian's Grove (page 36) is a possibility it would be of limited use. It should not distract from the need for improvements to St Botolph's Street and Queen Street.

A better option might be a route from Rosebery Road and Nicholson's Grove to Britannia Yard. This would offer a relatively flat route between St Botolph's and the bottom of East Hill if the difference in levels can be solved and a right of way achieved at the western end of Nicholson's Grove. Put bluntly, though, this idea presents problems of its own. Such difficulties make it even more important that St Botolph's Street and Queen Street are given contraflow cycle lanes.

The same applies to a possible cycle route from St Botolph's to Vineyard Street passing to the west of St Botolph's Street: it would be of limited use.

ST BOTOLPH'S

Please consider CCC's response to the July 2023 St Botolph's consultation as part of this response. One of the points made in our feedback to St Botolph's is the need for wider routes to be considered in detail in all plans that focus on a particular area. The **current St Botolph's plan fails to do this** and the lesson should be learnt for all future schemes.

CHAPEL STREET CROSSING OF SOUTHWAY

In terms of improvements for cyclists, two-way cycle working in Butt Road/ Headgate is a better option and this proposal should be secondary to that.

A crossing of Southway at Chapel Street will be of little use to all except residents in the immediate roads unless access can be secured from South Street to Butt Road (via Wellington House car park) and the new Abro development (**plan currently with the city council**) (please alert planning team as soon as possible) south of the Artillery Barracks folley. The steep gradient in Chapel Street between Wellington Street and South Street is a disincentive for active travel.

Residents would be better served by improved pedestrian/cycle crossings at Abbeygate, Stanwell Street and Butt Road. More emphasis could be placed on improving east-west pedestrian/cycle connectivity between Cedars Road and St John's Green. This could be achieved via urban realm improvements on or parallel to Southway.

CYCLE PARKING

Little if any mention is made of the need for **more secure cycle parking**, which is essential if the level of cycling is to increase. All planning approvals in the city centre should include key-fob accessible secure cycle parking covered by live CCTV (this would particularly help shop and cultural sector employees and night-time workers). This is especially important given the advent of expensive ebikes. **Greater police support is needed**. Note that LTN 1/20 deals with cycle parking in a thorough way; it should replace the guidance given in the outdated Essex County Council Parking Guide.

SHEEPEN ROAD

The masterplan area should include the roundabout at the northern end (bottom) of Balkerne Hill and the length of Sheepen Road. It should include medium-term improvements to or replacement of the subway beneath Southway. **Thousands of students and workers inhabit the Sheepen Road area each day** but the current emphasis is car-reliant, to wit Sheepen Retail Park, Colchester Institute and various offices.

ODDS AND ENDS

The map on page 34 needs to show East Hill as a cycle route (going ahead as part of LCWIP 4). We cannot see the need for cyclists to be included on a better link between . Priory Walk and Firstsite (Point 2 page 72).