

Colchester City Council
Colchester
CO1 1PJ

26 January 2026

Dear Colchester Local Plan Review Team,

RESPONSE TO PREFERRED OPTIONS LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) would like to submit a response to the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation in regards to National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 51 which connects Colchester and Wivenhoe.

The National Cycle Network is a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and exploring outdoors. We work with partners and professionals across the UK, helping them to make walking, wheeling and cycling an easy and safe option for more communities up and down the country. Together, we're moving towards our vision of a traffic-free, more consistent and accessible Network for everyone.

NCN 51 - also known as the Wivenhoe Trail - is a well-used walking, wheeling and cycling route which runs between Colchester and Wivenhoe on a traffic free greenway between the River Colne and the railway.

The majority of this path is formed of two public footpaths - Footpath 130 Colchester and Footpath 8 Wivenhoe. A small section (approx. 180 metres) of the NCN is off the footpath alignment, as shown on the images below*, as the original footpath alignment has been lost to erosion following a breach of the sea wall. Public access to this section, as well as consent for cycling along the length of the Trail, is subject to landowner permission for which considerable premiums have been paid.

Securing long term rights for walking and cycling**Registered Office:** Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol BS1 5DD.**Bristol:** 0117 926 8893. **Belfast:** 028 9043 4569. **Cardiff:** 029 2065 0602.**Edinburgh:** 0131 346 1384. **London:** 0207 017 2350

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is a registered charity no. 326550 (England and Cymru), SC039263 (Scotland) and 20206824 (Republic of Ireland)

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Walk Wheel Cycle Trust have ambitions for **long term rights for cycling (as well as walking) to be secured along the Wivenhoe Trail, in line with our aspirations to secure legal rights for the public to walk, wheel and cycle on more of the NCN**. The mechanism we believe this can be achieved is through:

- Creation/upgrade of the route to a bridleway or cycle track; or
- Transfer of the land to Local Authority ownership

Securing public access rights in this way improves the funding prospects of future path upgrades by offering security on the investment of public funds.

Policy PP24: Land Northwest of the Fire Station, Wivenhoe

Some of the Wivenhoe Trail is under the same ownership as site allocation **Land Northwest of the Fire Station**, Wivenhoe, which is included in the draft Local Plan as **Policy PP24**. Policy PP24 states that for residential development to be supported on the site (amongst other things) it must:

“c. Provide a safe pedestrian access to ensure connectivity within and throughout the site to existing footways and any Public Rights of Way. Ensure provision of green infrastructure connections and recreational access to the countryside, also securing active travel links and connections to the settlement”

NCN 51 will be an important asset to residents as it is an obvious and enjoyable active travel link from the site into Colchester, and provides recreational access to high quality green and blue infrastructure. The NCN can be accessed from Land North of Fire Station via residential streets and Footpath 7 Wivenhoe. PP24 should specifically refer to the Wivenhoe Trail/NCN 51 and seek to improve the route and connecting PROW. The map below* shows the Trail in relation to the site allocation.

The same principles would apply to other current or future site allocations in the vicinity.

Should this policy be adopted with a reference to the Wivenhoe Trail as suggested, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust would support this site allocation, given its benefits to the NCN.

Other aspirations for NCN 51 and connections

As well as securing the land for public and active travel access, the Wivenhoe Trail/NCN 51 and connecting paths would benefit from maintenance and improvements to the path surface and drainage, to support the year-round usage by a wide variety of users.

Improvements to the surface and maintenance of Footpath 7 Wivenhoe and Footpath 236 Colchester would further uplift active travel in the area. Footpath 7 provides access between the site and the Trail via Lower Lodge Farm/Colne Local Nature Reserve. Footpath 236 Colchester connects the Trail to the University of Essex campus, and also forms part of the same land parcel and ownership.

Maintenance and surface improvements to these paths would ‘ensure provision of green infrastructure connections and recreational access to the countryside’ in line with Policy PP24.

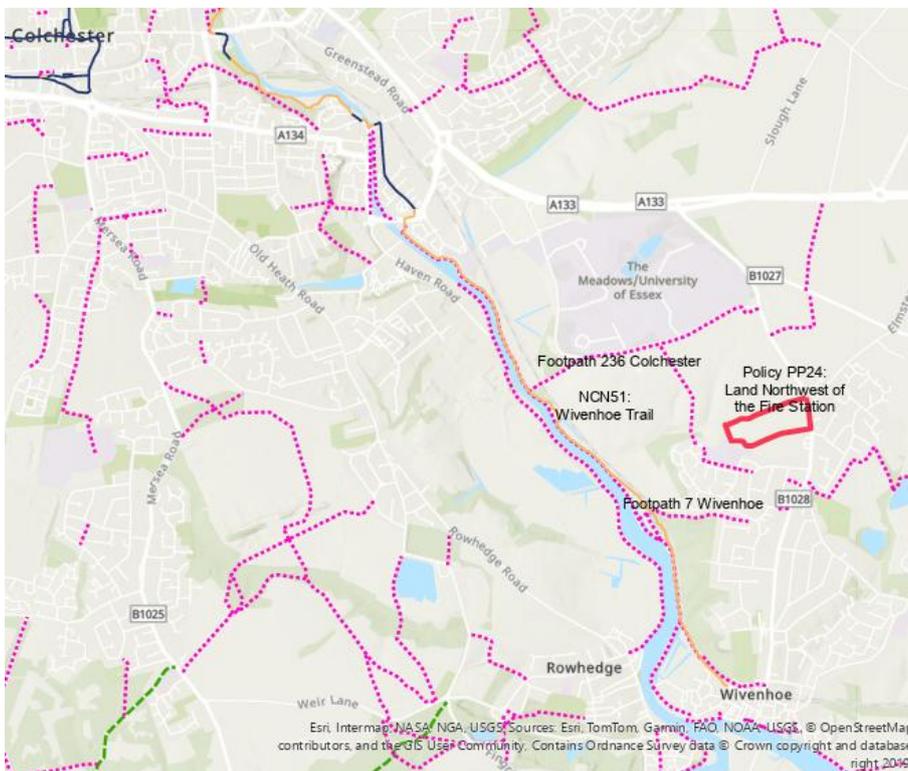
Our asks for the new Local Plan

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust request that the Local Plan seeks to identify any opportunity to

- a) Secure long term rights for both cycling and walking along the Wivenhoe Trail**
- b) Help facilitate investment in maintenance and improvements of the Trail and connecting PROW to ensure a high-quality, inclusive and accessible active travel route**
- c) Include a requirement for development proposals to invest in maintenance and improvement of walking and cycling networks, including the NCN and specifically referring to well-used routes such as Wivenhoe Trail**

For example, PP24 could be more specific in its requirements for active travel links by referring specifically to the Wivenhoe Trail and requiring the creation of a bridleway or the transfer of land ownership.

Policy PC2: Active and Sustainable Travel could specifically refer to the NCN and well-used routes such as Wivenhoe Trail and require new developments to contribute to their maintenance and improvement. Otherwise, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust support the inclusion of Policy PC2 and the reference to LTN 1/20 standards.



NCN 51 from Wivenhoe to Colchester, in context of Land North of Fire Station and local public rights of way

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Lidington

Senior Network Development Manager | East of England | Walk Wheel Cycle Trust