


# East Hill cycling and walking improvement
# Contractor newsletter #1
# November 2026

Welcome to our first newsletter, detailing progress and achievements to date on the East Hill cycling and walking improvement scheme. Our team arrived on site in July and took occupancy of project offices at The Digital Forum, Queen Street, placing us at the heart of Colchester City Centre and adjacent to the works site. Our location provides the project with a public interface, allowing us to liaise with stakeholders, residents and businesses in a proactive, responsive and pragmatic way.



L-R Andrew, Andy, James, Mo and Elliott

Our tenancy at the Digital Forum also allows us to remove the environmental impact of a generator-powered temporary office, maximising space for materials storage in our compound and enhancing supply chain efficiences, whilst also developing meaningful partnerships with key Colchester businesses and organisations.

# Project Progress

In July we held a 'Meet the Contractors' event at the Minories in collaboration with Essex County Council (ECC) and Colchester City Council (CCC). Here we welcomed a range of queries, questions, feedback and insight from over 120 local stakeholders, providing an opportunity to keep residents, businesses, cyclists, bus users and council members informed about project design, programming and logistics.

We began the first phase of works excavating east of Lewis Gardens and east of Priory Street. This allowed us to relocate all bus and coach services at the top of East Hill to a singular stop by the Minories until the newly constructed bus area by St James the Great Church completed. Sawcutting, kerb installation, cycle path tarmac installation and heritage paving has completed in planned phases from Lewis Gardens to Priory Street and from Priory Street to The Outhouse. With Heritage Week taking place in September, paving the access route into St James the Great Church was re-programmed and prioritised to support large numbers of visitors navigating the church and other venues of cultural and historical significance throughout that week and beyond.



Paving at St James the Great Church



Paving east of Lewis Gardens

***"Please pass on my congratulations to all your engineers for the professionalism and manner in which they conduct and complete their work every day. They are polite to the public [and] work very hard to limit pinch points for pedestrians and local traffic, and access to property."***

***East Hill Stakeholder***



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# Progress cont.

Through co-ordination with ECC and CCC, we have managed and adjusted our works around a busy programme of events during the summer to autumn period including Colchester Castle's Summer Series, Invasion Colchester, Remembrance Day and back-to-school week for St Thomas More's and St James the Great primary schools. As we head into November and December, we continue to work in close collaboration with partners to ensure mitigated disruption in the lead up to the festive period.

In November we completed work on the newly constructed bus area by St James the Great Church, delivering a successful migration of bus and coach services from the Minories. Temporary shelters are in place while awaiting the delivery of permanent fixtures. We have temporarily relocated the Surgery (opp) bus stop at the bottom of the hill to the area outside the former Old Auction Room at 12-14 East Hill. While construction and paving continue at the permanent bus stop location, it is expected that the temporary stop will be in effect until approximately week commencing 7th December.



New bus and coach stop at St James the Great Church

***"Thank you very much for coming to my house and explaining carefully to me what is going to be happening regarding the works. It really has allayed some of my worries."***
***East Hill Resident***



Temporary bus stop at Old Auction Room

# Wider benefits of the scheme

As well as delivering planned improvements, the scheme has given us the opportunity to identify and address a number of hidden issues beneath the local road network that might otherwise have become much bigger problems in the future. This includes repair of a drainage problem near Priory Street, where a void had formed beneath the surface. Our teams excavated the area, repaired and reconnected the damaged drainage system, and reinstated the ground, helping to prevent future problems and reducing the risk of damp affecting nearby properties.

We have also repaired and upgraded a number of drainage and sewer connections across the site. These improvements will help water drain more effectively, reducing the likelihood of flooding and standing water during periods of heavy rainfall. We are also very pleased to have been able to support St James the Great Church by lifting the levels to improve accessibility into the church.

By addressing these issues now, we have been able to complete these repairs in the most cost-effective manner, and we leave the network in a much stronger and more resilient condition for years to come.  Most importantly, resolving these problems today benefits residents, businesses and road users by removing the significant inconvenience of more disruptive roadworks in the future.



Priory Street underground void



Priory Street void repair

# Community Engagement

We have continued our relationship with Colchester Institute, supporting a wide range of learners with employability and skills support. In August we bid farewell to Andrew, our T-Level placement studying Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction. Andrew joined us earlier in the year during our delivery of Phase 1 of the A1331 Link Road and moved over to East Hill to complete his placement hours. During his time with us he gained practical, on-the-job learning across all areas of engineering, quality, quantity surveying, project management and stakeholder engagement. He has recently applied for a degree apprenticeship with Octavius when he completes his studies next summer. In the coming weeks, we welcome our next T-Level placement, Matt.

We have delivered a number of soft skills employability sessions including professional communication, interview preparation and mock interviews. In partnership with Colchester Institute and Job Centre Plus Colchester, we will deliver a series of mock interviews for learners completing construction skills short courses and obtaining CSCS qualifications. If you are a school or college looking for construction industry insight or soft skills employability support, please contact the project team.



T-Level placement Andrew with Stakeholder Manager, Maxine




Colchester Institute interview preparation

***"We're incredibly grateful to employers like Octavius who invest their time, expertise and enthusiasm in supporting the next generation of talent."***

***Nicky Brown***
***Employment and Student Engagement Manager***
***Colchester Institute***



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## Look Ahead

With our programme remaining on schedule, we plan to complete all works along the south side of East Hill in time for the festive break. This includes ongoing construction of the cycle lane and footpath paving from The Outhouse to the Guildford Road junction. Once construction completes we plan to bring the Surgery (opp) bus stop back into operation from approximately week commencing 7th December. We also continue works to construct the cycle lane and footpath paving from Lewis Gardens to Queen Street, liaising with the Minories team to minimise disruption to their flagship exhibition Out of Line: Banksy and the Art of Dissent.

We plan to bring areas of the south side back into public use as they complete, before switching to the north side of East Hill in the new year. Following a similar model of phased delivery, excavation and construction is driven by the logistics required for a smooth transition of bus services to temporary stop locations. We plan to undertake night works at the Guildford Road junction for 2-3 weeks during the Easter holidays to complete deep drainage repair works and relocate the manhole cover. These works will be conducted under temporary multi-way lights. Final surfacing works for the scheme will be delivered during night works in early summer.

## Find Out More

You can find out more and track progress by visiting:
essexhighways.org/east-hill

If you wish to receive regular updates directly to your inbox please email:
colchestercitycentre@essexhighways.org

If you have any queries relating to the overall project please email:
easthill@essexhighways.org

If you have any queries relating to the delivery of the works, property access or project programming please email:
easthill.project@octavius.co.uk