

Essex County Council
Highway Asset Management Policy 2020-21



Foreword - Our New Vision and Aims for Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel

The highways infrastructure is one of the highest value assets that Essex County Council owns, with current estimates valuing it at £10 billion (excluding land value). This represents a significant maintenance commitment for the County and requires us to take a robust approach to the management of this asset.

Our ambition is to maintain a highway network that supports economic growth, keeps users safe and continues to achieve our statutory responsibilities, all within our new vision for Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel for current and future users of the transport network in Essex. Like all Councils, however, Essex County Council is not alone in facing significant budgetary challenges. The cost of maintaining our highway network at a level that supports our ambition, whilst meeting public expectation, is becoming unsustainable.

In order to deliver a sustainable, well-managed highway network we must build on our recent work to implement a more strategic, long-term approach that continues to provide value for money whilst ensuring everything we do supports the drive towards a Greener Essex. Whilst investment into the highway asset are no longer at historic, high levels, the scale and need of the highway asset dictates that investment levels must continue to be significant.

The highways service is delivered through a long-term collaborative partnership contract between Essex County Council and its strategic partner, Ringway Jacobs; a partnership that currently stands as one of the largest highway services partnerships in the UK. To help us to deliver our ambition, we must maximise the commercial and strategic opportunities that are available to us through this partnership.

This strong focus on asset management within the partnership will continue to support the Council's Strategic Priorities. It will also be key to ensuring everything we do promotes options that have a positive impact on everyone's health by continuing to place people at the heart of what we do. This approach not only makes us adaptive to change but positions us well to foster the benefits of change, such as the potential benefits promised by the plans of central government for devolution. In this regard, asset management will unify the aims of all customers by delivering the best possible service and value for residents, businesses and the travelling public in Essex.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Bentley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Embedding this Policy

Essex County Council recognises the vital role that its highway network plays in the lives of residents, as well as the travelling public and local businesses. Effective asset management of the highway network, including its infrastructure, is fundamental in supporting the Council's Strategic Priorities which include the new vision and aims for Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel. In so doing it contributes to the Local Transport Plan and the Council's Vision of attracting sustainable economic growth that helps deliver the best quality of life for the residents of Essex.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Cook'.

Andrew Cook
Director for
Highways & Transportation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Butt'.

Simon Butt
Operations Director

Highways and Transportation Asset Management Policy

Essex County Council has developed a number of Strategic Priorities to take into account stakeholder expectations. These are supported by the Essex County Council Organisation Strategy 2017-21 and the Local Transport Plan.

- Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills
- Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries
- Target economic development to areas of opportunity
- Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential
- Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care
- Improve the health of people in Essex
- Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities
- Help secure sustainable development and protect the environment
- Facilitate growing communities and new homes
- Limit cost and drive growth in revenue
- Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people
- Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a digital world

Effective asset management leads to a safe, accessible, serviceable and sustainable highway network which is vital for providing access to key services such as employment, healthcare, education, social services, sports and leisure facilities. It is also vital for providing access across the County for the police, ambulance, fire and other emergency response services.

The County's priority route network provides the main arteries for the flow of commerce, goods and people, and therefore carries high volumes of traffic through and around the County. Sustaining this network in appropriate condition promotes reliable access and journey times, thereby encouraging desired economic growth in the County by making Essex an attractive investment for employers.

A balanced approach to asset investment promotes choice as to where people wish to travel, as well as how people wish to travel: either by walking, cycling, driving or by public transport. The highway network, including public rights of way, also affords opportunities for exercise and wellbeing through walking, jogging, cycling and horse riding, as well as access to the countryside and other open spaces. Choice of travel as well as opportunities for exercise and wellbeing are of particular importance currently as the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

To support these priorities the Council has developed a Highways and Transportation Asset Management Strategy which sets out how the highway infrastructure is managed and maintained effectively in Essex. Central to this strategy is flexibility, so that competing and changing demands for investment across all asset groups can continue to be balanced. It achieves this by prioritising investment needs on sound data and evidence. It also places people at the heart of what we do by taking into account the safety, needs, views and expectations of the travelling public and residents of Essex.

The Asset Management Strategy explains how available funds and resources are utilised to maximise the benefits of the investment in the highway network for all users of Essex highways. The key Outcome Objectives of the Essex County Council Asset Management Strategy are:

Enable Inclusive Economic Growth

The County Council supports the commercial needs and economic growth desired in the County through ensuring its Highways assets are safe, accessible, serviceable and sustainable. This provides access to key national and international destinations, supported by reliable journey times, thereby creating the right environment to attract employers to the area.

Help People Get the Best Start and Age Well

An accessible, serviceable and sustainable highway network supports quality of life expectations through ensuring all users have access to key services such as social services, healthcare, education and employment. It also enables opportunities for cycling, jogging, walking and horse riding, as well as providing access to sports, leisure and entertainment facilities.

Help Create Great Places to Grow Up, Live and Work

An accessible, serviceable and sustainable highway network promotes a safer environment through access to emergency services such as the fire, police and ambulance services. It also enables people choice in mode of travel, providing opportunities for reducing carbon footprint. It encourages economic growth, which provides opportunities for work, training and development. It also supports a safer environment by providing access to waste collection services and recycling centres.

Transform the Council to Achieve More With Less

The County Council strives for continual improvement and innovation in the use of technologies, processes and materials in the maintenance of its Highway assets. This is aimed at reducing costs and environmental impact as well as enabling adaption to climate change. This is delivered through evidence based, robust asset management planning across all Highway asset groups. This facilitates the best strategic, value for money solutions within the overall funding available.

The County Council implements methods to monitor, evaluate and review the performance of its Highway assets, to ensure the effectiveness of strategies are sustained and aligned to Council's Strategic Priorities.

Next review date January 2022