

A120 -A133 Link Road

Frequently asked questions

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Link Road FAQ

1.1 How has the Link Road come about?

Within their emerging Local Plan, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council, with the support of Essex County Council, have developed plans for a new Garden Community development to the east of Colchester. The Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community will see 7,500 – 9,000 homes built over the coming decades, along with business, school, health, leisure, and cultural spaces to support the development and ensure it thrives.

The ethos of a ‘Garden Community’ is to create a place in which people can live, work and spend time.

Recognising the need for new infrastructure to both support the new community and help manage existing traffic in the area, Essex County Council successfully bid to the government’s ‘Housing Infrastructure Fund’, a fund set up by Government to forward-fund large-scale infrastructure improvements needed to support growth.

Alongside the Link Road, the £99.9million received from Government will also enable the first stages of a new Rapid Transit System (RTS) to be developed. These two pieces of infrastructure will work in conjunction, with the Link Road creating a new link between the A133 and A120 taking traffic away from local roads, and the RTS linking key destinations across the town through the creation of a transit corridor.

The RTS will offer quick and regular services from the Park and Ride on the A12, through the town to the new Garden Community and ultimately a transport hub located as part of the Garden Community.

1.2 What are the benefits of the Link Road?

The Link Road along with the Rapid Transit System will, working in conjunction, have a transformational impact on Colchester’s transport network.

In terms of the new Garden Community, the Link Road will provide accesses into and away from it, meaning those needing to travel by car can quickly and easily access the A120 and A12, roads which are designed for heavier traffic.

The Link Road design approach includes provision for walking and cycling, with routes created that can form part of a new joined-up network for the Garden Community and beyond.

The Link Road will also make it easier for those travelling from Tendring to access the A120 and A12. About half of journeys leaving Tendring currently travel into Colchester, some commuting and some travelling into the town to then access the A120 and A12. This means that the A133 often suffers congestion at peak times.

Reducing the need to travel on more local roads, while also connecting those travelling into the town with RTS connections, will, **ultimately, make it quicker and easier to not drive into the town**, helping ease congestion and improving air quality.

1.3 What is going to be built?

The 2.4km Link Road is proposed to be a 50mph two-lane dual carriageway. The height of the road will vary north to south, and will be as low as it can be, to blend with existing landscape, connecting at the level of the current road via a roundabout on the A133 (to the east of the University of Essex).

The A120 junction will be raised over the A120 carriageway with slip roads to join the A120 via a separated dumbbell junction (close to Strawberry Grove and the Ardleigh Services).

A dumbbell junction has two roundabouts linked by a single bridge (to resemble a weightlifter's dumbbell).

A dumbbell arrangement can provide high capacity with minimal impact on the carriageway below and has a smaller footprint than alternatives. A local example of a dumbbell junction is at Junction 28 on the A12 near Colchester Stadium.

1.4 Has a route been selected?

Yes. A 'route options' consultation was held in November 2019. The consultation set out four possible routes and set out the pros and cons for each. Following the consultation, 'Option 1C Variant' was selected as the preferred route. This saw a slight variance to the 1C route to reduce the impact on Turnip Lodge Lane (as a protected lane) and Strawberry Grove. **The planned route will leave the A133 via a roundabout east of the University of Essex, joining the A120 via a junction east of Strawberry Grove.**

The route was formally approved by Essex County's Cabinet in May 2020.

1.5 How much will it cost and is the scheme funded?

The cost of the road is circa **£70 million**. Recognising the importance of the scheme to bring the Garden Community to fruition and ensuring that an infrastructure-led approach was taken, **Essex County Council successfully bid to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund last year.**

The fund was set up by the Government in recognition that one of the barriers to creating new housing is the upfront cost of the infrastructure required to make the development viable.

The A120-A133 Link Road was one of several successful Essex bids and received £99.9 million to help deliver the Link Road and the first stages of a Rapid Transit System.

1.6 When is work likely to start?

The Housing Infrastructure Funding stipulates that the Link Road is to be completed by 2024 to support the first homes within the Garden Community. **Construction of the Link Road is due to begin in early 2022.**

1.7 How does the Link Road connect to the Garden Community?

While the Link Road design is being undertaken through Essex County Council as the highway authority, we are working closely with Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council.

One of the rationales for selecting the chosen route is that it will fall on the eastern side of the Garden Community, so minimising the impact on the residential area. Primary points of connection from the Link Road to the Garden Community will be through a series of roundabouts.

As such landscaping, visual and noise screening, walking and cycling routes, accesses into the new community and how utility provision is maximised are all being considered through the Link Road design and the master planning process.

1.8 How does the Rapid Transit System (RTS) connect to the Link Road?

The successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid also saw funding provided for the first stage of a new Rapid Transit System for Colchester.

This will see a route running from the existing Park and Ride on the A12, through the town centre, heading east through the new Garden Community reaching a proposed new ‘Park and Choose’ site. A Park and Choose is a transport hub which offers choices beyond a traditional Park and Ride. For example, it could offer cycle storage and lockers, electric bikes, car parking and connections to the wider bus network as well as the RTS.

What makes the RTS unlike other public transport is that it will see high frequency (every ten minutes or less) services on segregated or priority corridors, so meaning it will take priority over other traffic.

For the purpose of designing the RTS, the proposals have been split into four sections, with two of the sections taken through consultation.

Section A uses an already approved route between the Park and Ride site on the A12 and the Albert Roundabout. Section D, meanwhile, covers the section within the Garden Community itself and is being considered as part of the design process.

The consultation held in November 2019, therefore, looked at Section B from the Albert Roundabout to the Greenstead Roundabout and Section C from the Greenstead Roundabout to the Garden Community. Within the consultation, several route options were set out. The comments and views given were assessed alongside the engineering feasibility and the ability to meet the overall objectives. It has been agreed that two options for section B and two options for section C will be further developed ahead of a final route selection.

Ultimately, the RTS will play a key role in intercepting and reducing traffic which would otherwise travel into the town. Commuters travelling from Tendring will be able to access the RTS services from the new Link Road/A133 corridor, while residents of the Garden Community, as well as other nearby areas, will be able to easily access the services without using a car.

1.9 Will there be walking, cycling and horse-riding provision?

Through the design process, the team is looking at how the new infrastructure will connect existing local roads, public rights of way, bridleways and existing cycle networks and private accesses. As part of this process there will be east-west connections across the Link Road and alongside, which will be developed as part of the Garden Community master plan.

Cycling and walking opportunities are fundamental to the sustainable transport approach being advocated in the area and for the Garden Community.

Within the shared section of their Local Plans, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council have policies for additional transport priorities, including the provision of a network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways to enhance connectivity within the new development and to access adjoining areas. Through the preparation of a Development Plan Document, these would be developed in more detail alongside the detailed design of the RTS and Park and Choose site.

1.10 Are you considering the impact on the environment?

Yes, the **environmental considerations are a key part of the design process**. Any new infrastructure project has an impact on the local and wider environment, and it is important to properly assess and mitigate the impact where possible.

To support this, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to assess the impact of the road and the associated works. To inform the EIA, a scoping report has been submitted for planning consideration. The scoping report contains an overview of the proposed scheme and its potential impacts on the baseline environment, identifying the likely significant effects that will need to be considered as part of the EIA. The report also addresses the methods that will be used and how the EIA will then feed into the planning application through the creation of an Environmental Statement.

Within the scope it is proposed to assess the impact on the following – air quality, cultural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and visual effects, geology and soils, material assets and waste, noise and vibration, road drainage and water environment, population and human health, climate and cumulative effects.

Once the impact of these topics has been assessed, appropriate mitigations will be considered.

1.11 When will the Link Road go to planning?

The planning application for the Link Road is due to be submitted in **early 2021**. At this point the council will have 16 weeks to determine the application. During that time there is a period of 21 days in which members of the public can provide comments.

1.12 How can I contact you to ask a question about the scheme?

Please email linkroadandrapidtransit@essexhighways.org and we would be happy to answer any questions on the Link Road or RTS schemes.