

Release issued in partnership by Essex County Council and Braintree District Council

Braintree town centre to have social distancing advisory signs to help people stay safe while High St and nearby improvements carried out

Essex County Council and Braintree District Council have worked together to plan the installation of several social distancing signs while High St and nearby improvement works are carried out by Braintree Council. Barriers such as have been used in other town centres in Essex are not appropriate in Braintree due to the continuing pedestrianisation improvement works. The measures are paid for by Government as part of national work to re-open town centres safely.

Called 'Safer, Greener, Healthier', these schemes aim to provide bigger, safer spaces for city centre shoppers, residents, workers and visitors to maintain social distance. Measures will be installed in Braintree from Wednesday 24th June and will be constantly reviewed and altered if required.

The measures in Braintree, like others planned across Essex, are driven by immediate public health requirements such as social distancing, and in encouraging walking and cycling will enable healthier and greener ways of getting around. Data on streets in UK and elsewhere where the pedestrian experience has been improved shows footfall increasing 20-35 per cent, with sales increases following.

Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Public Health, Essex County Council explains:

"Providing space for the public to practice safe social distancing remains a core part of the measures we need to limit the spread of coronavirus. Helping people to social distance in traditionally busy urban areas will help immediate public safety; it will also make it easier as businesses re-open.

"Walking and cycling are healthy activities in their own right, they can help to lessen traffic congestion and consequently improve air quality, so these new measures are very supportive of societal demand."

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader of Essex County Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, said: "Safety is the reason why we are introducing a 20pmh speed restriction in the centre of Braintree. We want to keep people safe from COVID-19 infection while they visit the shops and businesses in Braintree and this is how we are going to do it.

"While I recognise many people will still need to use their cars, this is a chance for all to think hard about driving for short journeys. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to greatly improve our air quality and our health as well as the life opportunities for the next generation.

"Braintree is among the first towns in Essex to get such a scheme, we're using this money to help people confidently return to shop and work, as lockdown measures continue to be carefully eased."

Councillor Tom Cunningham, Deputy Leader of Braintree Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "Supporting our town centres to re-open safely for both shoppers and businesses is a key focus for us right now. I would like to thank Essex County Council and its Highways department for putting up the new signage which will support our social distancing measures already in place in Braintree town centre.

"We're keen for people to return to the town centre to visit and shop, and we remain committed to complete the pedestrianisation improvement works already underway, but it's still so important to shop safely and responsibly – to keep following social distancing guidelines and respecting measures local businesses have put in place to protect the safety of their staff and shoppers."

The total money that could be made available to Essex by the Government if further plans are approved is up to £9.6m.

Why not log your cycle ride on some of the enhanced routes for National Bike Month and let others in Essex know what you're doing too at www.lovetoride.net/essex

People can share comments on the measures with Essex and Braintree councils at SGH.Routes@essex.gov.uk

Please see the full map and scheme details on our website at: www.essex.gov.uk/safer-greener-healthier

For Essex County Council media enquiries:

Press Office at press.desk@essex.gov.uk

Out of Hours: 07717 867525

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