

Essex County Council Active Travel Fund Consultation Plan December 2020

Introduction

In November 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that they will be awarding Essex County Council (ECC) £7.3M to improve walking and cycling in Basildon (Wickford), Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Colchester. These are bold and ambitious schemes which will make a real difference to sustainable transport in Essex. A key part of ensuring success is that ECC consult with the community and make sure these schemes meet local needs.

This document details our proposed engagement activity including

- The principles guiding the consultation process
- Who we plan to engage with, the proposed approach and timescales
- How the schemes will be monitored

We will be consulting on the high level detail of the five schemes.

Engagement principles

We will ensure that the consultation is:

Inclusive

The consultation process will be open to all residents living within the immediate vicinity of each scheme as well as local community groups and third parties related either by geography or interest.

Accessible and convenient

As we will be unable to hold any in person consultation events due to Covid-19 restrictions, we will be conducting online surveys and will ensure that they are widely publicised.

Genuine and meaningful

Interested parties will be engaged at an early stage (avoiding the Christmas holiday period) so that feedback can be gathered and comments can be considered before any work commences.

Accountable

A full record of all feedback will be maintained. We will report back on the feedback received, key themes and how comments have helped to further evolve plans.

Our engagement plan

ECC will consult with interested parties in best way we can taking advantage of technology, existing groups and individual needs. Full details are in the table below but in summary, we will consult with:

- **Residents** – consulted via online survey on the aspirations of our proposals.
- **Important third parties** (business, disability groups, cycling groups, passenger transport, schools) – already actively engaged via five steering groups we have set up, one in each location. These meet frequently to shape our proposals to ensure the needs of the local community are met.
- **Politicians** – local MPs, and district and county councillors, via briefings or virtual meetings.
- **Other legal consultees** as part of the Traffic Regulation Order process.

Who	How we will engage	When
County Councillors	Briefings via ECC cabinet meetings	Regular briefings January 2021 – March 2021
Businesses	Consultation via existing steering group	Regular engagement through Steering Groups and as part of ATF Consultation May – June 2021
Disability and sight loss groups	Consultation via existing steering group	Regular engagement through Steering Groups and as part of ATF Consultation May – June 2021
District councillors	Consultation via existing steering group	May – June 2021
Bus operators	Consultation via existing steering group	Engagement through Steering Groups and May – June 2021
Other consultees not covered elsewhere		May – June 2021
Local MPs	Virtual discussions with ECC members	May – June 2021
Residents	Online public opinion survey based on DfT best practice template, shared press releases, posters and social media. We will also make use of ‘virtual town halls’ to provide visual representations of our schemes	May – June 2021
Emergency Services	Statutory consultee via TRO process	May – June 2021
Royal Mail	Statutory consultee via TRO process	May – June 2021

We will focus our consultation on those directly impacted by our proposals, and we will also ensure that immediate neighbours are able to engage in the process. Time-permitting, we will also hope to consult Essex-wide.

Once the above appropriate local consultation has concluded, ECC will confirm, in a letter signed by the responsible senior officer, the following to the DfT:

- That an appropriate local consultation has taken place
- That there is sufficient support for proposals to begin delivery, highlighting any proposed changes taking account of local feedback
- That a clear communications plan has been implemented to deal with any backlash which draws on the results of local feedback;
- Provides a summary of MPs’ responses
- Confirmation that appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the schemes as recommended by the DfT will be introduced