

## COLCHESTER TRANSPORT SYMPOSIUM

### Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Chris Stevenson, Head of Commissioning, Connected Essex, Integrated Transport, Essex County Council (ECC) and chairman for the day welcomed everybody to Wivenhoe House for the first Colchester Transport Symposium.

Chris went on to give a brief list of facts relating to Colchester:

- Colchester Station has 4.4 million rail passengers every year and the countries longest railway platform at 620 metres.
- 1 million people a year cross Colchester High Street.
- A very brief history of Colchester transport including trams, roads etc.
- Colchester was best Cycling Town 2009.

Chris advised that this meeting has been convened to look at various topics and social problems relating to Colchester in light of the town getting bigger with a lot of planning and growth underway. Everyone wants the town to function as well as it can and people here today can provide input regarding the way forward in achieving this.

Chris introduced the first speaker.

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#### **Councillor Kevin Bentley**

*Deputy Leader, ECC and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure, Waste and Recycling.*

Councillor Bentley welcomed everybody to today's symposium and raised the following points:

- How important today is in relation to how we are going to put in the infrastructure for Colchester to enable the required level of economic growth.
- Councillor Bentley advised that he is working hard with colleagues to ensure there are jobs for people but this is no good if they cannot move their goods and people around.
- At the top of employers list of requirements are skills and connectivity.

- The success in Colchester of getting broadband rolled out is having a positive effect on the area.
- If the town is going to attract people to work or start-up businesses they need to be able to get around for business and leisure.
- There is a big debate going on about the “Big Plan Consultation”, it is important that people can give their views.
- Today is about people being able to give their views: about learning, listening and giving your thoughts.
- At a local level it is important that we listen to the views of the people of Colchester.
- Decisions that are being made today will affect people who have yet to be born.
- There are skills that have not yet been thought about today but which children tomorrow will be learning.
- Attendees here today will be discussing shaping things across all sectors: education and manufacturing.
- This meeting will be discussing cycle ways around Colchester.
- Politically, everybody is jockeying for position ahead of the general election, where it is crucial to service everyone’s needs, but it is also important to maintain Colchester’s current high standards

This meeting today will be the start of the conversation: it will not be finalised today but will be the start of plans for those who live in Colchester today and those not yet born.

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## **Paul Wilkinson**

*Transportation Policy Manager, Colchester Borough Council (CBC)*

## **Colchester Growth and Strategic Transport Context**

Paul advised that he wished to talk today about the *Local Plan* for Colchester Borough covering the years from 2017 to 2032.

The Strategic Plan covers 7 themes:

1. Housing
2. Centres and Employment
3. Rural Colchester
4. Promoting Healthy Communities
5. Sustainable Transport and Accessibility
6. Heritage and Townscape: i.e. Heritage, listed buildings
7. Natural Environment

**Growth options:**

The key underlining factor is calculating housing needs which is driven by population growth - if you look at the numbers by statistics Colchester is going to continue to grow.

The objective to provide housing for this population growth is about 1,000 dwellings per annum. The current rate is around about 830 new dwellings per annum.

Calculating the need for housing is driven by the population growth statistics provided by the Office of National Statistics and Department of Communities and Local Government.

CBC are undertaking a joint housing study with Braintree District Council (BDC) and Tendring District Council (TDC). Data does seem to vary but hovers in the Colchester area of around 1,000 houses needed per annum.

An employment study has been undertaken looking at what industries are going to be needed in the future, manufacturing has declined, and there is a growth in service sector industries.

Looking at a 15 year time horizon there is overlap with the current Local Plan: 2017 to 2023. 5,000 dwellings are already allocated in the current plan namely the northern growth area and Stanway but there is a need to find land for about 10,000 more dwellings up to 2032

The availability of significant brownfield land is limited in Colchester and CBC is beginning to look at where it can develop sustainable Green field options.

CBC are keen to adopt Garden City principles so development funds infrastructure and strong local job opportunities so people can work and live locally.

Walkable neighbourhoods empower people to walk and avoid the car.

Strong public transport networks are needed.

CBC is working closely with Braintree District Council and Tendring District Council to the East and West.

CBC are talking to other providers: health, utilities, bus companies etc.

There may be some urban development but it is limited and there are constraints around Colchester. The only growth options are to look outside the main urban area.

There are 3 basic options, - separate sustainable settlements with some urban development, and proportional expansion of rural district centres. The sub option allows for the proportional element of growth in the rural areas.

**Growth: OPTION 1**

A separate sustainable settlement to the west of Colchester in the Marks Tey area – approximately 15,000 dwellings split between Colchester and Braintree.

A separate sustainable settlement to the east of Colchester in the area to the north of Wivenhoe – approximately 6,000 dwellings between Colchester and Tendring.

**Growth: OPTION 2**

A separate sustainable settlement to the west of Colchester in the Marks Tey area – approximately 15,000 dwellings split between Colchester and Braintree

**Growth OPTION 3**

A separate sustainable settlement to the east of Colchester in the area to the north of Wivenhoe – approximately 6,000 dwellings between Colchester and Tendring

A significant urban extension to the north of Colchester crossing the A12.

Another option is to allow some of the existing villages to grow; some villages acknowledge they need growth to accommodate people in their own areas.

There has been Local Plan workshops held around the Borough. Future ones include Wivenhoe, Hythe and Marks Tey. There is also a questionnaire on the Colchester Borough Council website.

The closing date for responses to be processed for consideration to the Local Planning Committee is 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

**Programme:**

- January to February 2015 – Issues and Options Consultation (current stage)
- January/February 2016 – Draft Local Plan Consultation (Preferred Option)
- August to September 2016 – Publication of the Submission Local Plan
- November 2016 - Submission to the Secretary of State
- February 2017 – Examination in Public

CBC is currently at Issues and Options Consultation stage. Further work is needed to be undertaken with partners to develop the evidence base.

The plan is being developed under the current National Planning Policy Framework, this may change after the Election in May.

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**Alan Lindsay**, *Transport Strategy and Engagement Manager*  
*Economic Growth and Development, Essex County Council*

Alan advised that Colchester is the oldest town in Britain and has been the fastest growing Borough in the country.

**Key facts**

- Key routes into / out of / through the town are congested at peak periods
- There is congestion in North where options are limited because of the railway.
- There is a mixture of European, National, Regional and Sub Regional traffic using the network.
- There are a high number of people and goods getting to the ports.
- Congestion is a factor at peak times; how do we move on from that?
- Local traffic comes onto the main arterial roads for just 2 or 3 junctions.
- Freight impacts on passenger trains
- Commuter services to London are full.

A Key pinch point for congestion is Colchester station environs

- Colchester station bridge is very confined and cannot be improved without a huge building operation.
- 5 million people per annum use Colchester Station.
- The average driving speed around the station area morning and evening is 5 miles an hour.
- There is access to a major retail park adjacent to the station.
- Colchester General Hospital shares the area and generates 5 to 6,000 people per day
- There are 70 bus movements per hour through the bridge at Colchester Station.
- There are 3 further key junctions within 500 metres.

Alan stated that he is not underestimating the problems today: previous plans and policies have reflected these pressures.

### **New Plan**

- Additional highway was considered but the scale of the work could not match the increase in traffic.
- We cannot simply address the demand for transport by providing for extra traffic.
- Colchester Borough Council is working with us to provide strong base for the plan.
- It is important to link the transport plan into delivery on the ground
- Route Based Strategies are being prepared by the Highways Agency and should be completed the end of March 2015.
- Rail - asking for increased service and reliability and passenger enhancements be rolled out as a package with cycling walking, rail and bus networks.

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### **Councillor Rodney Bass**

*Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, Essex County Council*

### **Major Infrastructure to Support Growth**

Councillor Bass stated that there is one theme that is uppermost, and that is that infrastructure must support economic growth and economic growth must support infrastructure: it is axiomatic.

### **Key Points**

- Essential Partnership working
- A120 Enterprise Corridor
- Essex Area Transport Boards
- It is vital to seek Stakeholder views
- Improved funding for pipeline schemes
- £5 million up from £3 million for advanced scheme design
- Another £1 million for feasibility studies

### **What is happening now:**

- Northern Approach Road phase 3 (NAR3)
- Colchester Park and Ride
- A120/A12 Route Based Strategies

- Essex County Council is continuing to involve and work in parallel with District and Borough Councils.
- The influence of a Local Plan and its impact on the infrastructure and road plans
- Scheme design is essential so when money comes available it can be rolled out.
- Essex County Council is putting £5 million into the A120 itself for the corridor from Colchester to Braintree.
- Essex County Council is investing £250,000 at Horsley Cross to promote a safety scheme where it goes into single track.
- These things are important and though do not deliver instant infrastructure they are planning for the future. With budgetary restraints these things can get axed; ECC are demonstrating that they are investing for the future.

#### **Key facts:**

- The stretch of road between Marks Tey and Braintree, where the A120 runs as a single carriageway road is carrying tens of thousands of vehicles a day - greater than along the M11, and the lorries component is one of the highest.
- On the new A12 there are 200,000 vehicles a day across Colchester and if you build 10,000 houses you could generate another 40,000 movements a day, that is the size of the problem being tackled.

There is evidence of serious potential traffic congestion.

#### **Northern Approach Road 3 (NAR3)**

- The road will be named Via Urbis Romanae.
- This is a key project: the road will join Junction 28 of the A12 with the existing Northern Approach Road and will provide bus lanes for the Park and Ride. It is expected to change the pattern of traffic dramatically in Colchester.
- There have been frustrating difficulties and delays and the road should have been open; there have been difficulties due to electrical infrastructure problems but work is being done as quickly as possible and apologies are given for the delays and resulting traffic difficulties in the northern part of Colchester.
- Without Essex County Council forward-funding this project it would not be happening. It is hoped that ECC will recoup their money eventually.
- The road will be a key corridor between the A12 Trunk Road, the Park and Ride facility, Colchester station and the town centre.

#### **Colchester Park and Ride**

- The Park and Ride will open on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the Monday after Easter week.
- There will be 1,000 car park spaces and parking will be free.
- The buses will operate every 10 minutes during peak times.
- The cost will be £3.00 per person paid either on the bus or prior to boarding.
- Concessionary fare holders will travel free after 9am.
- Bus priority measures are being implemented
- There will be stops at Station Way (for the station), High Street, Queen Street and Head Street.
- There will be 5 buses and they will each have a name: Saint Helena; Queen Boadicea; Emperor Claudius, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle.

- There will be a 5 year contract, with a possible 2 year extension with TGM Group Ltd.

The Park and Ride buses will not be using Southway. They will use bus lanes on North Hill; turn left into High Street where there will be a dedicated stop, right into Queen Street, right into Osborne Street and right again into Head Street. They will then return to Colchester Station via North Hill and back to the Park and Ride.

In terms of town centre traffic management it is no longer considered appropriate to ban traffic from the High Street but consideration is being given to reversing the flow of traffic along Priory Street to discourage people from doing u-turns on East Hill.

The crossing at the end of Cymbeline Way and Colne Bank Avenue will be moved 200 yards towards Stanway and in the longer term, Colne Bank roundabout will be improved.

The roundabout needs enlarging as it is at capacity. A temporary traffic signal controlled pedestrian crossing will give an alternative to the existing route for pedestrians, which is along North Station Road; the walking times involved will not change significantly.

### **A12/A120 Corridors**

These are a vital part of the economic growth agenda.

ECC have had some success in persuading the Department for Transport to get the A12 back on the agenda.

There is a £5m initiative by ECC on how the corridor between Colchester and Braintree can be enhanced but will require very careful planning.

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## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Questions:**

#### ***Question 1: Councillor Julie Young***

East to West movements has been an ongoing problem for years and years; in 1998 there was a big study on the East, West corridor and talk about junctions at Greenstead being a pinch point. What plans are in place to ease traffic coming from Tendring into Colchester?

#### ***Question 2: Councillor Tim Young***

The Park and Ride is not reflecting public opinion. Are you ruling out a stop at Colchester Hospital or will it be possible if there is a demand?

### **Answers:**

#### ***Answer Question 1: Alan Lindsay, Essex County Council:***

As we well know, East to West there are a number of key pinch points in that corridor and junctions are at capacity. The council is looking at an A133 package and what improvements can be made. A piece of work is underway; at the moment we are

looking at a package to address the pinch points, using individual pockets of Section 106 money along there.

*Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation:*

A route to link the A120 and A133 will be on the agenda as it would release some of the pressure and is of shared interest to both Tendring and Colchester.

**Answer Question 2:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

In relation to the hospital; the Council is not in the business of providing car parking for the hospital but has to work on the basis of passing straight through into the town centre.

Councillor Anne Brown has asked that I meet with hospital staff and I will. If the hospital wants to talk to the Council after the Park and Ride is open, about an additional stop that would work in off peak periods, and would be prepared to make a financial contribution it could be considered.

ECC is paying the running costs of £600,000 a year although it will get some of that back in fares. I would not rule it out but it would require some intensive discussion regarding the financial implications.

The Sandon Park and Ride, Chelmsford has now reached the stage where it breaks even financially.

*Paul Bird, Director for Commissioning: Transport and Infrastructure Essex County Council:*

If we do not give priority to the town centre we will fail. Hospitals have to deal with both staff and visitors all trying to get there by car; we have to look at how people can get to the hospital without using their cars.

### **Questions:**

**Question 3:** *Councillor Dave Harris*

You talk about employment and the roads being snarled up with local journeys. We need to ensure each area has Pharmacies, Doctors etc. within communities to limit those short journeys. Where we have local estates at the moment we would be doing them a great disservice if we squeeze more houses on them and remove green spaces.

**Question 4:** *Councillor Bill Frame*

Local residents see reversing the traffic flow in Priory Street as a knee jerk reaction to a scheme in the High Street. Something has to be done, and what is being done will inconvenience the residents of Priory Street. Colchester Borough Council is trying to enhance the Roman Wall at the moment and the Street is narrow with little pavement. At a meeting on Tuesday night it was unanimously agreed that residents would not like the traffic reversed and would like to consult with you about the problem.

**Question 5:** *Jeff Clayton, General Manager Heddingham and Chambers*

Park and Ride: as the name suggest this project achieves its aims if people who normally park in the town centre now use buses to provide relief. Do you think there will be any shift of people living in the North of Colchester getting in their cars and driving to the park and ride instead of into town.



## **Answers**

### **Answer Question 3: *Paul Wilkinson, Colchester Borough Council***

The Plan does cover retaining open spaces to enhance people's lifestyles and policies allow for pharmacies and other such community services are maintained.

### **Answer Question 4: *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation***

Regarding Priory Street: I believe that to simply reverse the flow of the traffic does not create a rat run affect, what it might do is make Priory Street a better car park for off peak times. It does give a greater purpose for people who are driving into High Street I think there is something to be said for easing the traffic for it to exit onto St Botolphs roundabout and allow traffic to regress from the town centre.

I understand it does concern people living in the vicinity but I have to look at the broader picture; it is not a knee jerk reaction. I am trying to do things in an orderly way although I accept some of the things are controversial: I accept criticism where it is due.

### **Answer Question 5: *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation:***

Can I refer to Mr Claytons comments - I do not think it matters why they use the Park and Ride - if they do not take their car into the centre of Colchester it has succeeded.

I do not think we will take away the people around Colchester using their car. The buses in Colchester are a little disjointed at times and we can look at that.

If people go the Park and Ride and if their car does not go into the centre of Colchester during peak times I do not mind where they go, but the purpose of the Park and Ride is to free up the town centre at peak times. The times the Park and Ride operate will be 7am to 7pm: if people want to come in to the town centre in their cars outside that time that is ok. I hope the Park and Ride will boost the economy of Colchester town centre.

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## **Mike Thompson**

*Contract Director, Ringway Jacobs*

## **Maintaining our Assets**

### **Asset Management Key Points**

- There are a huge range of works that we carry out but they all have links to sound asset management.
- Our task is to constantly innovate and challenge the way we carry out the works.
- It is refreshing when we work in Essex to be able to push boundaries and trial new techniques; there is a constant drive to come up with new ideas.
- We have an asset management team in place and they are fundamental to highways.
- We gather information and pull it together and update asset valuation: The Essex roads network has an asset value of £9 billion.
- Sound principles of asset management are required to attract funding.
- Pavement Management Scheme (PMS) system is used to ascertain what repairs are needed.

- Machine based Surveys Scanners travel around the network and survey the conditions of the roads. They cannot work when wet so it is therefore critical to maximise those surveys in the spring months.
- SCRIM machines are able to measure skidding resistance of the road surface.
- Repairs are colour coded to identify priority of need.
- Focus is about trying to repair the carriageway before it becomes colour coded red and is more expensive to deal with; it is all about prevention rather than cure.
- Ad hoc condition surveys are carried out every four years.
- There is a Scheme Manager -a system that allows data to be confirmed.

### **There are Carriageway Hierarchy standards:**

PR1 = All A and some B roads (Red) - monthly

PR2 = Remaining B roads and some C roads (Blue) - quarterly

PR3 = Remaining C roads and all other roads (Green) - yearly

Once defects are found there are priority response times.

PR1 = 2 hours

PR2 = County Routes: 2 working days

Local Routes: 5 working days

PR3 = County Roads: 28 calendar days

Local Roads: Within a non-specified time limit.

More money has been spent in the last year than for a long time.

\*\*\*\*\***LUNCH**\*\*\*\*\*

### **Helen Morris**

*Head of Commissioning Infrastructure, Essex County Council*

### **A Bus and Passenger Transport Strategy Getting around in Essex**

This is an exciting strategy of which there is a digital copy on [www.essex.gov.uk/busreview](http://www.essex.gov.uk/busreview).

This document sets out why buses are so important in Essex.

Helen asked those present to join her in a short quiz.

### **Quiz**

1. The split between commercially operated bus network and that supported with taxpayers money - **85/15%**

Bus companies set the routes times and frequencies for 85% of the network,  
**15% is supported by ECC**

2. What is the annual number of passenger journeys on the bus in Essex?

**45 million**

3. What proportion of trips on public transport are by bus?

Three times as many people as everything else put together (i.e. trains, overground, trams and the underground)

**Facts about buses:**

- Buses are very, very important to realising our economic potential and they allow people to live better lives in Britain.
- Buses can help manage congestion.
- Buses help economies grow without the growth-limiting impacts of congestion.
- As the economy picks up congestion will get worse.
- Buses generate more than they cost on a scale of 3 to 1.
- Buses support really important groups, such as pensioners.
- Essex is a challenging territory for buses because it is so spread out and our population centres are geographically dispersed.

**There are 8 areas of action set out in the Bus Strategy:**

- Partnership working
- Customer quality
- Better well-used services
- Support for valuable (but not commercially viable) services
- Good customer information
- Tailored solutions
- Ticketing
- Focused local planning

We need a diverse supply chain but of high quality, we want more people to use the buses.

The Council wants to encourage growth in bus use.

Expectations are to be able to track your bus digitally and know when it is going to arrive.

Essex is extremely diverse and needs different services and solutions for rural to urban areas.

The Council are looking at smart ticketing so you can use any way of paying across the county: this has been shown to push bus use up by 8%+.

There is going to be a detailed review of growth, market failures and where new routes should be.

Ideas are welcome and will form part of the review following consultation.

**What Next?**

“ASK NOT WHAT THE BUS NETWORK CAN DO FOR YOU ASK WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE BUS NETWORK”.

Helen asked everyone in the room to go away and think about how we can help to improve Colchester and the outcomes of their organisation through increased bus use.

All the big vibrant cities, Bristol, Oxford, Brighton and Cambridge etc. are bus cities – large numbers go into the city by bus.

Buses are the Cinderella of transport but have huge potential.

Everybody has a role to play in delivering that network.

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**Adrian Jones**

*Managing Director, First Essex Buses Ltd.*

**Getting Around in Essex - A Bus Operators Perspective**

Adrian stated that he believes buses are exciting and quoted the following facts:

- First bus run 67% of bus services in Essex
- 90% of total revenue is from commercial services
- There are 1,000 employees
- 326 buses run every day

First Bus have made a major investment of £5.3 million into 23 brand new hybrid vehicles in 2013 and £2.8m in 2014 in micro vehicles

First Bus is one of six operators in Colchester: they operate from Queen Street, Magdalen Street and Haven Road.

There is presently a Travel Shop in Queen Street which is shortly moving to a new home in St. Botolphs Street: this should take place sometime in March or April this year.

A new depot is under construction in Haven Road.

10 buses have been converted to Euro VI emission standards.

Technology has been fitted to vehicles to measure driving standards.

42 Hybrid buses have been introduced.

5 double decker vehicles cost £1m and there are high labour and maintenance costs involved in maintaining them.

It is difficult to schedule buses in and around Colchester due to the level of congestion.

Hot spots for congestion are East Gates level crossing, High Street, North Station and Lexden Road.

The bus stop capacity in Colchester is overused at certain stops and some bus laybys are too short, making boarding difficult, particularly for disabled passengers.

How Priority Measures have helped:

- Changes to traffic priorities in High Street and Queen Street.
- The North Hill bus lane.
- Potential benefits from Park and Ride.

How Council assistance impacts on the operation:

- Support real-time passenger information provision.
- Good working relationship with operators.
- Facilitating community engagement.
- The Council and Bus Companies work together to provide clear and informative roadside timetable information.

Concerns:

- Management of road works.
- Events held in the High Street causing road closures: it is felt that following events roads could be opened up much more quickly.

Infrastructure improvements required:

- Bus stop environment is important; lighting, shelters making kerbs the right height.
- Ensuring bus laybys are long enough.
- Road signs in key locations.
- Effective traffic priority.
- Overhanging trees and branches are an issue for double decker buses.

The “Better Bus Strategy” is a positive step by Essex County Council and First Essex Buses fully support partnership and working together to achieve aims and objectives.

Improvements to meet Customer Expectations:

- Wi-Fi
- Wheelchair access
- E-Leather seats
- Safe Journey cards - via cards free to disability groups
- New Technology
- Apps to monitor buses
- M-Ticketing - now active across the whole of Essex
- Real-Time Information system coming in 2015

Adrian stated that First Essex Buses believe that buses have a positive future connecting the county and will play a positive role in the future of Essex.

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**Sean Perry**

*Head of Economic Growth and Development, Essex County Council*

## **Influencing Rail Investment**

### **Key Facts:**

There are 3 lines radiating from London into Essex:

- Great Eastern Main Line (GEML)
- West Anglia Main Line (WAML)
- Essex Thameside

There are 8 London Underground stations in Essex

There are 2 Operators:

- Abellio Greater Anglia
- C2C

There is also Cross Rail (from 2015)

General Approach:

- Line-by-line approach
- Each line has some common issues: London, mixed traffic, freight
- Each line has some specific local issues
- Involve partners we each have strengths
- Focus today is on the GEML

There is a lot of freight on the lines.

A lot of lines stretch out into rural areas.

*It is accepted that it is key that we have to involve our partners in any decisions.*

#### **Rail Franchise Timetable:**

- Current Abellio Greater Anglia Franchise will run until October 2016
- Greater Anglia franchise to be renamed East Anglia franchise.
- The process to award a new franchise has started.
- A consultation is underway which closes 16th March 2015
- There is an opportunity today for anyone to put their opinion.
- Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) Notice – March 2015
- Invitation to Tender – August 2015
- Contract award – June 2016
- ECC actively pursuing meetings with potential operators
- ECC has met with DfT franchise team and expects to meet again

#### **Network Rail Investment Timetable**

Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process works to a rolling 5 year Control Period (CP) timetable

- CP5 Delivery Plan announced in March 2014.
- Control Period 5 runs from April 2014 to March 2019.

Preparation for CP-6

- CP6 will run from April 2019 to March 2024.
- Long term "Market Studies" published in 2013 – looking to 2043.
- Draft Anglia Route Study published 2014 – looking at CP6 and beyond – consultation just closed.
- Final Anglia Route Study June 2015.
- Government issues High Level Output Specification (HLOS) and the Statement of Funds Available (SoFA).
- Network Rail publishes its Strategic Business Plan (SBP) - how it will deliver the HLOS within available funds.
- Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) then examines the SBP.

East Anglian Rail Prospectus was launched in July 2012; it identifies deliverable strategies in rail investments necessary to support across East Anglia and has wide support.

A key role for Essex County Council and its partners is to make our case and provide evidence within the Local Plan to influence and generate this evidence.

The GEML (Great Eastern Mainline) Vision Group was established in autumn 2009 to bring together partners with a common interest in the improvement of the Great Eastern Mainline. It is composed of a small group: Essex County Council, Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, representative districts, Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP), and the rail industry. It is chaired by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP). It serves to build a consensus, an evidence base, and develops a unified vision between the group members.

GEML partnership was set up by George Osborne to provide a package of investment that delivers £4.5-bn of economic benefits.

What are we asking for:

- A more frequent, faster and better service for passengers.
- The construction of Beaulieu Park Station and associated rail infrastructure north of Chelmsford.
- The provision of additional track capacity between Shenfield and Colchester to enable efficient train pathing and improve service resilience.
- Additional infrastructure investment to increase track capacity, including the introduction of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).
- The remodelling of Liverpool St Station to meet demand.
- Faster journey times on all routes and services with no reduction in service frequency or stations served.
- Increase line speed to 110mph.
- New 110mph trains with significantly improved passenger environment.
- Provision for half hourly minimum service to all stations, including the provision of a passing loop on the Braintree branch.
- Improved stations, better information for passengers, smart ticketing.
- Improved reliability.

### **Community Rail Partnership**

The Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership were established in 1998 with 5 branch lines and 34 stations to promote train travel on the less commercially viable routes.

- The Sunshine Line - Colchester to Clacton and Walton-on-the-Naze
- Gainsborough Line - Marks Tey to Sudbury

What we are looking for:

- Proactive engagement with the rail industry
- Increasing frequency to provide a viable form of transport
- Innovative uses for station buildings – staff on site
- Passenger information and smart ticketing – integration

### **Where next**

- Maintain consensus behind route-based approach

- Continue to develop the evidence base
  - Take forward through Network Rail processes.
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**Paul Oxley**

*Stakeholder Manager, Abellio Greater Anglia*

Abellio Greater Anglia are operating under 2 separate franchises until October 2016.

**Facts**

- Wholly owned by Abellio
- 175 stations
- 1900 trains each weekday
- 2 million passengers a week
- Deliver 9% of all UK rail passenger journeys.
- Complete mix of services – short and medium distance commuting, airport express, intercity and local/regional
- Around 3000 employees
- One of the larger train operators

Franchise 2 is a short term franchise until October 2016.

The investment commitments by the end of franchise 2 are:

- Performance improvements
- Rolling stock refurbishment
- Station improvements
- Growing the market for rail travel

Business planning for the longer term:

- Working with partners to stimulate long-term investment in the route

This is your opportunity to contribute to the specification for the next franchise.

There has been a long history of successful partnerships with Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council and other transport operators.

Phase 2 of improvements to Colchester Station north side ticket hall starts August 2015 and is scheduled to be completed summer 2016. It will provide a new ticket office and gate-line.

**Colchester Station Travel Plan:**

- AGA's 'Premier' STP and a national pilot scheme
- Currently in Year 5 of delivery
- Assists in securing inward investment
- Focus on promoting access by sustainable modes and improving the customer experience
- 2014/15 projects



**Cycle Improvements:**

- Cycle Improvements will be delivered in 2015, providing secure parking and maintenance of bikes.
- 'Bike and Go' development. Will make bikes available to get to Colchester General Hospital etc with options to extend to other links

**Fixing the Link:**

Work will be carried out on encouraging a quality walking route from station to town centre.

**Summary:**

There has been good progress in the first 3 years of the franchise which can only get better.

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**Andy Turner**

*Head of Project Delivery, Ringway Jacobs*

**Highways Project Delivery: Wivenhoe to Essex University Cycle Route:**

Andy advised that this scheme proposal has been discussed for a number of years. The cost was originally estimated at over £1m but having been examined again the cost has been reduced to £750,000. Essex County Council is providing £500,000, the remaining £250,000 is provided by funding secured via the planning system.

There are 2 options but option 1 is the preferred option, with a start date of 23rd July 2015 and an end date of 2nd September 2015. There are potential issues with the preferred option due to high-value veteran trees along the route, which will be affected by road widening. The route is shared cycle and walking use.

A Bat Survey is scheduled for May 2015.

The preferred option is being progressed with detailed design in tandem with an alternative route.

The alternative route is on the opposite side of the footpath. The land is of archaeological interest and is an inferior option.

Both options are progressing and there are teams working on both options and reporting back.

Councillor Bass advised that this is proving a very complex piece of work but he is confident that barring further problems, such as bats, a cycle way will be open following the summer holidays.

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**Helen Akpabio**

*Sustainable Travel Planning Manager, Essex County Council*

**A day in the life of sustainable travel**

Helen asked the following questions:

- Why do people choose the private car?
- When will an alternative be considered?
- What can Essex County Council do to encourage a shift in behaviour?

There needs to be a benefit for people in order for them to change their habits. For instance, free bus tickets for a period of time or gaining confidence to use a bike.

Essex County Council has its own Employee Travel Plans in place for 15 years; 8 years in Essex House:

- Car Share scheme
- Pool bike scheme
- Rail discounts
- Umbrellas

Figures for travel to work:

- Drive alone 72% (32% in Chelmsford)
- Car Share 4.9 %
- Cycle and Train 2.4 %
- Other 2.4 %
- Cycle 2.4 %

By leaving the car at home 1 day a week it can make a difference to your level of fitness and traffic congestion.

Individual members of staff need to take responsibility for their own travel plan.

To engage staff it is beneficial to have a person on site to encourage staff.

Travel Plan accreditation Scheme - Essex Business Travel Plan was rolled out 4 years ago; it needs to be an active Travel Plan to keep it going.

Businesses can gain accreditation for encouraging their staff to engage with the scheme.

Various organisations have received awards at bronze, silver, gold and platinum level. For example, the Gilberd School have achieved gold after having silver for 2 years running.

Colchester Borough Council has been involved in the scheme since the beginning and had silver and has now been awarded gold. They have one of the lowest drive alone rates (53%) across their entire estate.

Essex University are in the scheme starting out on silver and now have gold. Essex University have a number of initiatives in place to encourage all modes of sustainable transport. They encourage bus discounts and there is good engagement by both staff and students.

Key achievements for Essex University;

- Partnership working
- Annual bus pass for £149 a year for staff and students.
- A bike tagging scheme for £2

- ECC Accreditation
- Electric charging points on campus for staff and students free of charge
- Re-cycle bike sales and training

The Sustainable Travel Plan team have fantastic support from the Colchester Travel Plan Club to deliver against our overall objective. The Colchester Travel Plan Club were formed in 2004 when there was a need to manage the impact of congestion by promoting active and sustainable travel and reducing CO2 emissions.

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## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Questions**

**Question 6:** *Councillor Theresa Higgins:*

Asked about sustainable travel and Colchester General Hospital.

There is no cycle parking at the hospital for visitors and no direct bus to the hospital from New Town: you have to change in Head Street.

**Question 7:** *Councillor Julie Young:*

Is pleased to note that Abellio is responsible for its own stations. As it is responsible for Wivenhoe why hasn't anything been done about the lack of disabled access at this station.

She would also like to ask the same question regarding the hospital as Councillor Higgins

**Question 8:** If bats are found to be on the preferred option for the proposed Wivenhoe/University path will it be necessary to adopt the second option.

### **Answers:**

**Answer Question 6:** *Helen Akpabio, Sustainable Travel Planning Manager, Essex County Council*

Thank you for the question. I agree there should be bike racks at Colchester Hospital for all people, not just staff, and we are encouraging hospitals to do visitor surveys to see if this is something people would like. Colchester hospital is not alone in needing to make it easier for people to reach it and work needs to be done around hospital visiting.

*Helen Morris, Head of Commissioning Infrastructure, Essex County Council*

Patterns of visits to hospital are difficult to map and meet by bus service because hospital visits tend to be sporadic (unlike regular commuter routes for example) and throughout the day so mapping what you need is difficult. We need to balance the interests of the traveller and the taxpayer to warrant taxpayer supported services.

We need feedback from users but it is difficult to map visitor numbers, volumes, frequencies, starting points etc; however, if we can get visitor numbers we can feed them into our plans.

*Paul Bird, Director for Commissioning, Transport and Infrastructure, Essex County Council*

We have to look at the impact of patients missing appointments and being late for them, which has a great impact on the NHS.

***Answer Question 7: Paul Oxley, Stakeholder Manager, Abellio Greater Anglia***

We are looking at access to Wivenhoe Train Station; A piece of work is being done on the land around the station regarding access, and also on funding at Wivenhoe Station. There is a helpline for customers with disabilities; they can go to a station with disabled access and they can then have a paid taxi to their destination station.

***Answer Question 8: Andy Turner, Head of Project Delivery, Ringway Jacobs***

The Council are still looking at option 1 and if there are no bats in the trees we will continue with option 1, but if there are we will go across the other side and look at the option for a path there.

***Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation***

The time for consultation is over and the time is here for delivery. We are trying to deliver Option 1 and it is so important, we are determined to deliver it; we cannot go into another consultation.

**Questions**

***Question 9: Will Bramhill, Colchester Cycle Campaign***

There is no provision for bike lanes in the new road layout around Colchester station. If you are a 13 year old boy trying to bike from Myland to School the road is dangerous and difficult to negotiate. I would like Councillor Bass to get out of his car and come and cycle the area with me just to see how difficult and dangerous it is from behind the handlebars of a bike.

***Question 10: Paul Wilkinson, CBC***

We have a declared Air Quality Management Area in the town centre, in the main caused by diesel pollutants from buses. Besides the CVTF investment in 10 buses what further investment are the bus companies going to make to improve air quality?

**Answers:**

***Answer Question 9: Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation***

We are trying to balance transport for all users: it is about working as best as we can together for everyone. At the same time you have to understand that people are trying to make journeys to work, albeit by car, and they are extremely frustrated to be 1 of the 200,000 journeys across Colchester and we have to balance those needs. It is not possible to widen the Victorian bridge but we are trying to accommodate competing interests.

***Answer Question 10: Adrian Jones, First Essex Buses Ltd***

Whilst we had approached our parent Company with a request for several new buses for Colchester the actual allocation of buses in the UK has yet to be finalised so a precise response couldn't be given at the time.

**Questions**

***Question 11: Kim Waterhouse, Essex Bridleways Association***

Would like to know why bridleways are often ignored when other sustainable issues are looked into.

**Question 12:** *Councillor Tim Young*

The Council are a living wage employer I would like to hear from Abellio Greater Anglia and Ringway Jacobs if they are living wage employers.

**Question 13:** *Councillor Bill Frame*

Regarding buses: I would love to get a bus into town but it is cheaper to take my car.

**Question 14:** *Councillor Tim Young*

Regarding Trains: Hythe Station is in Colchester but you have to pay more to take the train to London from the Hythe than from the other two stations in Colchester.

**Answers:**

**Answer Question 11:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

ECC acknowledges that we do not do enough for horse riders, although in some parts of the County we are doing more to ensure bridle paths are used more by the correct people. I do realise that the horse riding fraternity need some support.

**Answer Question 12:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

ECC do not have a policy regarding a living wage but I do believe that the minimum wage should rise to a more reasonable amount to match inflation which is important.

**Answer Question 13:** *Adrian Jones, First Essex Buses Ltd.*

We try to set our fares at a reasonable level to attract customers but we have to cover costs and hopefully make a profit.

Regarding Smart Ticketing: we are not there yet but we are working on it. We need to work closely with Helen Morris and Essex County Council to reach our objectives.

**Answer Question 14:** *Paul Oxley, Stakeholder Manager Abellio Greater Anglia.*

Regarding the Hythe: Season tickets and peak fare prices are set by the Government: off peak fares are kept competitive in line with other partners. In terms of Hythe Station if the classification for this station was changed it would make it more expensive for people from Clacton to travel to it.

**Questions**

**Question 15:** *Councillor Bill Frame*

Pricing structure for Park and Ride of around £3 per person; is their going to be a group concession or is a family of 4 going to have to pay £12 to use the Park and Ride? If so, will they come into town?

**Question 16:** *Councillor Paul Smith*

Colchester is the most car dependent town in the country how can we alleviate this?

**Question 17:** *Councillor Paul Smith*

I have been amazed at how many people cycle to the station now and are there any figures?

**Question 18:** *Ron Levy, Secretary of Colchester Retail and Business Association*  
CoRBA have been active in trying to reduce traffic in the High Street - one question never taken up is that the traffic lights outside the Castle Park work in conjunction with the turn right into Queen Street. As it is used only as a pedestrian crossing the traffic builds up even when the crossing is clear. Could a pedestrian crossing be put in its place?

### **Answers**

**Answer Question 15:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

The price for Park and Ride will be £3 per person except concessions; for concessions then the journey will be free. If four people in a car are deterred from using the Park and Ride by £12 then let them do it, and I applaud a car going into the town centre with 4 people in it. It is cars with one person which we need to stop.

**Answer Question 16:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

The article which stated that Colchester was the most car dependent town in the County was biased and incorrect and no allowances were made due to the fact that Colchester is an ancient town.

**Answer Question 17:** *Paul Bird, Director for Commissioning, Transport and Infrastructure Essex County Council*

We are trying to take this symposium away from just the car to a positive shift with all other forms of transport. Colchester will grind to a halt if everybody uses their car in Colchester.

**Answer Question 18:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

You are absolutely correct regarding the crossing and the Council will be looking at alleviating this problem.

### **Questions**

**Question 19:** *Councillor Julie Young*

Colchester has an enormous amount of pot-holes, will you be doing more scanning to detect them?

### **Answer**

**Answer Question 19:**

*Mike Thompson, Ringway Jacobs*

Colchester has more pot-holes than anywhere else; we are working hard to complete areas 1 and 2 and will be getting round to the others. The main roads will be done by 31st March 2015, smaller roads later.

*Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

There is a substantial increase in money going into the road network; not just fixing the defects but improving the road structure long-term. Colchester is a very big and

important local authority and it is obvious there will be higher totals applying to its roads than elsewhere.

**Question 20:**

Why do bus lanes have to be 24/7? The one in Queen Street is still there on a Sunday when people are trying to get to church.

**Answer Question 20:**

*Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation:*

It is possible to change the timings of bus lanes and this is done at times in other cities. At the moment I do not want to introduce any further uncertainty regarding bus lanes but I will keep it under review.

**Questions:**

**Question 21:** *Councillor Bill Frame*

When is the Bakers Lane Bridge going to be open?

**Question 22:** *Councillor Kevin Read*

Colne Bank roundabout; have you looked at the possibility of putting an underpass there?

**Question 23:** *Councillor Paul Smith*

Street lights in Chalfont Road have not worked for 2 years; it has been raised on several occasions, can I have an update?

**Answers**

**Answer Question 21:** *Andy Turner, Head of Project Delivery, Ringway Jacobs*

On the initial survey it did not look as if there were any electrical cables under the bridge but there were and they have had to be removed. Initially the work was not due to be carried out during the winter during which time the area floods, but because of the cables this happened. However the work will be finished by end of March of this year.

**Answer Question 22:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

The cost of an underpass would be prohibitive and people do not like using underpasses. They seem to prefer jay walking rather than use underpasses and barriers will need to be put up to prevent this. It will be necessary to ensure that the existing underpass is clear and clean for people to use. It is essential to get the Colne Bank roundabout moving. After the implementation of NAR3 it may work in a less complicated way.

**Answer Question 23:** *Councillor Eddie Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Small Schemes Delivery*

I will look into this and get back to you.

\* the Street Lighting Team later advised that all the street lights in Chalfont Road are currently working and all replacement works are complete

## **Questions**

**Question 24:** *Councillor Anne Brown, Cabinet Member for Community and Healthy Living*

We said a third of the borough is rural and there is a lot of ditching: Councillor Bass has set up a pilot in Maldon, can you advise where this will lead?

**Question 25:**

Is section 106 funding available for buses?

**Question 26:** *Councillor Dave Harris*

Street lights; are they up-to-date?

## **Answers**

**Answer Question 24:** *Councillor Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation*

When routes flood it is not always Essex County Council's fault; if we have a difficulty we act and get people round the table, and then we act to ensure that people understand their responsibility and act upon it.

This is ok in rural areas but if you go to Canvey Island, where the flood comes from the sea or the rain we are trying to make sure the sewers and drains are fit for purpose and clear, and establish where the hot spots for flooding are.

**Answer Question 25:** *Helen Morris*

There are 3 issues regarding Section 106 funding:

- The buses themselves,
- Making sure infrastructure is in the right place for the buses,
- Making sure people want to use them.

The optimal solution is to render S106 funding unnecessary because then you do not need a legislative answer, you can have a sustainable bus route that is commercial from the start. If a bus route is not commercially sustainable then you need to look at alternatives. But the best place to start is for bus operators and developers to work together to enable that commercial route without any need for Local Authority intervention.

**Answer Question 26:** *Councillor Eddie Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Small Schemes Delivery*

Street lights; we have no extra money for more street lights but we are maintaining our present stock. Although there are complaints about lights not working this is often do to with waiting for utility companies to look at them. We are looking at introducing LED lights and we are looking at getting utilities companies to react in a timely manner.



## **SUMMARY**

Councillor Bass thanked Chris Stevenson for keeping the meeting in order and all the team and partners for the presentations. Councillor Bass stated that he personally had found the day very stimulating and hoped that it had given those present a broader insight into what Essex County Council and their partners are working with.

Councillor Bass advised that debate at Essex County Council is often about a pothole or a street light and rarely is there discussion and debate on the big and important issues that affect us all.

Councillor Bass stated he was glad this meeting was about Colchester because it has such a lot going for it, with many things going on around it at the moment.

Essex County Council is keen to pursue all methods of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport.

It would be useful to hold other meetings such as this in different locations around the County.