



Local Plan Committee

Item
8

7 August 2023

Report of

Rachel Forkin, Principal Planning
Policy Officer

01206 282625

Title

Active Travel Supplementary Planning Document

Wards

All wards affected

affected

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Planning Policy Team are preparing three Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to address the climate emergency. These SPDs are: Active Travel, Biodiversity and Climate Change. This report presents the draft Active Travel SPD and the Committee are asked to approve publishing this draft for public consultation.

1.2 The Active Travel SPD aims to clearly set out the principles the Council expects to ensure that development proposals respond to the climate emergency by delivering a high quality cohesive network of active travel routes and support sustainable growth in line with the adopted Local Plan.

2. Recommended Decision

2.1 It is recommended that the LPC approve publishing the draft Active Travel SPD for public consultation in accordance with the Planning Regulations and Statement of Community Involvement.

2.2 It is recommended that minor changes to the draft Active Travel SPD can be approved by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Committee prior to the consultation commencing.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 The Council has declared a climate emergency and the climate emergency SPDs provide guidance to supplement relevant policies in the Local Plan and encourage applicants to go further than Local Plan requirements.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 The alternative option is to not produce an Active Travel SPD and rely on Local Plan policies.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies. They are a material consideration in decision-making but should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development.
- 5.2 The Council has adopted the Biodiversity SPD and is drafting two other SPDs to communicate Colchester City Council's ambitions in respect of the climate emergency for all development within the city. The three SPDs build on the adopted Local Plan and explain how development proposals should respond to the climate and ecological emergency. The SPDs are: Active Travel, Biodiversity, and Climate Change. All development proposals should strive to achieve ambitious carbon reductions, biodiversity enhancement and promotion of active travel to contribute towards Colchester becoming a greener city that is resilient to the climate and ecological emergency.
- 5.3 The most relevant Local Plan policies to the Active Travel SPD are Policies ENV3 (Green Infrastructure), DM20 (Promoting Sustainable Transport and Changing Travel Behaviour) and DM21 (Sustainable Access to Development). These policies are set out below.

Policy ENV3: Green Infrastructure

The Local Planning Authority will aim to protect, enhance and deliver a comprehensive green infrastructure network comprising strategic green links between the rural hinterland, urban Colchester, river corridors and open spaces across the Borough. It will seek to protect and enhance the existing network of green and blue infrastructure features and to secure the delivery of new green infrastructure where deficiencies and gaps are identified that will benefit communities, wildlife and the environment. The Council will work with access stakeholder/groups to support the delivery of a 'new' multi-user route, the Colchester Orbital, around urban Colchester.

Development proposals that contribute to the delivery of projects identified in the Colchester Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Orbital Project Audit Paper and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Essex will be positively supported.

The Local Planning Authority will seek opportunities from future developments, where appropriate, to improve the connectivity between the Colchester Orbital route, new developments and the wider countryside. Radial connections will be secured between existing green infrastructure assets, existing development, and the Orbital routes new development. This will improve the choices available to residents to access and participate more easily in healthy activities, such as walking, cycling and horse riding.

Proposals that cause loss or harm to the green infrastructure network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development outweigh any adverse impacts. Where adverse impacts on green infrastructure are unavoidable, development will only be permitted if suitable mitigation measures for the network are provided. Key linkages will be constructed to a suitable standard to allow year-round secure usage by all.

The Local Planning Authority will seek contributions or require work to be undertaken as part of new development where appropriate, to create new paths where gaps are evident in the existing green infrastructure network/Orbital routes or to enhance the quality of the existing route.

The use of land and buildings as new allotments, orchards, community gardens and for local food growing spaces and production will be supported, including the temporary use of vacant or derelict land or buildings and the use of incidental open space on housing estates and other open space areas, where this does not conflict with other policy objectives.

Green infrastructure that contributes to the protection and enhancement of water bodies will be supported, including de-culverting, creation and management of ecological buffer strips and new wetland areas to help manage flood risk and reduce diffuse pollution.

Policy DM20: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Changing Travel Behaviour

The Local Planning Authority will work with developers and other partners to increase modal shift towards sustainable modes by improving accessibility of development through the promotion of walking and cycling as an integral part of development, and by further improving public transport. In line with policy SG1 (Spatial Strategy), development that reduces the need to travel will be encouraged and sustainable transport will be improved to provide better connections between communities and their needs. This will be achieved by:

- (i) Safeguarding existing and proposed routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including rapid transit, park and ride, and green infrastructure, from development. New development will be expected to contribute towards maintaining continuity and enhancing these connections where appropriate;
- (ii) Focusing new walking and cycling improvements on areas of employment, education and health facilities, and on the town centre and public transport interchanges;
- (iii) Ensuring new developments are supported by quality public transport linking them to the main urban areas and major centres of employment, health and education. Access to public transport should be within walking or cycling distance of any new development;

- (iv) Reducing the need to travel by car by promoting higher densities near retail centres and public transport hubs, and encouraging mixed use development in appropriate locations;
- (v) Enhancing public transport gateways to Colchester to provide attractive entry points to, and excellent onward connections from, the rail stations in urban Colchester and Marks Tey, Wivenhoe, and Colchester Bus Station.

The Local Planning Authority will also work with partners to accommodate necessary car travel making the best use of the existing network and managing the demand for road traffic. The Local Planning Authority will support improvements to the strategic road, rail and cycle network where appropriate evidence is provided and local consultation undertaken.

Improvements will be made to the road network to support sustainable development and to reduce the impact of congestion. The demand for car travel will be managed to prevent adverse impacts on sustainable transportation, air quality, safety, local amenity and built character by:

- (vi) Encouraging a reduction in through traffic in the town centre to encourage trips to be undertaken by more sustainable modes;
- (vii) Encouraging use of new technology to better manage traffic, provide alternatives, facilitate the use of ultra-low emission vehicles and reduce the need to travel, particularly at peak times.

Where appropriate the use of sustainable travel in rural areas will be encouraged to minimise the impact of transport on sensitive rural areas. The Local Planning Authority will seek to make best use of rural rail services through promotion and improving access at stations

Policy DM21: Sustainable Access to Development

All new developments should seek to enhance accessibility for sustainable modes of transport.

Proposals for development should:

- (i) Give priority to the movement of people walking and cycling;
- (ii) Create safe, secure, convenient and attractive layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians;
- (iii) Link the development to the surrounding walking, cycling and public transport networks taking into consideration the Cycle Strategy SPD;
- (iv) Provide and give access to quality public transport facilities;
- (v) Ensure streets and junctions are designed to provide people-friendly street environments and to give priority to sustainable transport;
- (vi) Incorporate charging facilities for electric and other ultra-low emission vehicles where appropriate, or as a minimum the ability to easily introduce such facilities in the future;
- (vii) Ensuring accessibility for those with impaired mobility; and

(viii) Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and services.

Access to all development should be created in a manner which maintains the right and safe passage of all highway users. Where development requires a new road or road access it should be designed to give high priority to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Development will only be allowed where there is physical and environmental capacity to accommodate the type and amount of traffic generated in a safe manner. Developments that generate significant amounts of movement will require a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment in line with the thresholds set in the latest Essex County Council development management policies relating to highways. Where lower than standard trip rates are proposed development will be expected to demonstrate through a package of sustainable transport measures that the proposed trip rates can be achieved. A masterplan approach to assess cumulative impacts may be required in complex locations with closely related and located developments.

All non-residential developments that generate significant amounts of movement will be required to produce a Travel Plan in accordance with Essex County Council Travel Plan Framework guidance and where appropriate will be required to become members of the Colchester Travel Plan Club. All new residential developments and schools will be required to produce a Travel Plan or provide Residential Travel Packs in accordance with Essex County Council Travel Plan Framework guidance.

- 5.4 The Active Travel SPD aims to clearly set out the principles the Council expects to ensure that development proposals respond to the climate emergency by delivering a high quality cohesive network of active travel routes and support sustainable growth in line with the adopted Local Plan.
- 5.5 Chapter 1 of the SPD introduces the climate emergency and the SPD. Chapter 2 sets out the background, a definition of active travel and reasons why an active travel SPD has been drafted.
- 5.6 Chapter 3 sets out the national context and provides links to relevant reports. Chapter 4 sets out the Colchester context. It includes relevant Local Plan policies and relevant local strategies and documents. Chapter 5 provides details of the active travel infrastructure in Colchester.
- 5.7 Chapter 6 sets out the elements that should be considered as part of new development proposals to encourage and support journeys by active modes. The chapter includes information on providing good quality infrastructure; improvements to existing infrastructure; provision of sufficient and good quality cycle and wheel parking; and information about other sustainable

travel measures, promotion and community projects that will all help to encourage active travel. Chapter 7 sets out planning application expectations in relation to active travel modes.

- 5.8 There is a wealth of information, guidance, toolkits, and best practice available. This SPD is intended to be concise and does not attempt to distill all this information and guidance into one document. Links are provided throughout the SPD to more detailed guidance for those who want to read more.
- 5.9 The Active Travel SPD will be designed by the Council's Corporate and Improvement Service and use the same design as the Climate Change and Biodiversity SPDs. The design is intended to make the SPD user friendly and easier to read.
- 5.10 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening has been carried out, which has concluded that SEA is not required.

Engagement

- 5.16 As part of the process of drafting this SPD, Planning Policy Officers engaged with Officers from ECC, other officers from CCC and Members to help inform the draft. In November 2022, all Members were invited to give thoughts and ideas for matters which they wish to see addressed in the climate emergency SPDs. The key points raised in relation to the Active Travel SPD were:
 - **Ensure good permeability between routes** and developments and connectivity with the wider network;
 - **Ensure sufficient lighting** along cycleways and pedestrian routes;
 - **Provision of secure cycle parking** (covered and lockable) in key locations including at some popular bus stops / hub areas. This should be considered also in rural areas – allowing cycling to a bus stop to get the bus to Colchester but need somewhere safe to store bikes.
 - **Identify key routes** where safe segregated cycling / walking is required especially on popular routes including to schools. A route may be safe for most of the way to key locations but missing bit unsafe therefore not used.
 - **Ensure network is joined up**, safe and inviting to use and perceived as safe by parents for use by school children to encourage alternative to the car to travel to school;
 - **Build on opportunities** that can be provided in the SPD to be proactive to promote / encourage behaviour change particularly among school children- Key to making an impact is to change behaviours of the young- but need the infrastructure to be right and safe to do so.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan, and is available to view by clicking on this link:

<https://cbccrmdata.blob.core.windows.net/noteattachment/Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20June%202017.pdf>

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 'Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability' is a Strategic Plan theme. 'Respond to the climate emergency' is one of the priorities and is relevant to this SPD. The purpose of this SPD is to respond to the climate emergency. Other priorities in this theme are relevant to the Biodiversity and Climate Change SPDs.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 It is a requirement of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 to consult on draft SPDs for a minimum of 4 weeks and to prepare a statement setting out who was consulted, a summary of the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed in the SPD.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The SPD consultation will be publicised through written / email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations who have expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no financial implications.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The three climate emergency SPDs will bring multiple benefits including benefits to health and wellbeing. A healthy environment plays a role in improving health and wellbeing.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 No direct implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 No direct implications.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 14.2 The Council is drafting three SPDs to communicate Colchester City Council's ambitions in respect of the climate emergency for all development within the city. SPDs are material considerations in planning decisions. They build on adopted planning policy and provide guidance on how policy requirements should be implemented. The three climate emergency SPDs build on the adopted Local Plan and explain how development proposals should respond to the climate and ecological emergency. The SPDs are: Active Travel, Biodiversity, and Climate Change. All development proposals should strive to achieve ambitious carbon reductions, biodiversity enhancement and promotion of active travel to contribute towards Colchester becoming a greener city that is resilient to the climate and ecological emergency.

Appendices

Draft Active Travel SPD