



Local Plan Committee

Item
9

12 November 2018

Report of	Assistant Director Policy and Corporate	Author	Sandra Scott ☎ 282975
Title	Colchester Orbital		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Colchester Orbital is a circular multi-user route around the town's periphery, connecting green spaces, where possible, with cycle routes and bridleways. The route and enhanced connectivity to it is included in the Green Infrastructure Policy and other relevant policies in the emerging Local Plan, recognising the role and value it can make towards the green infrastructure network, pedestrian and cycle connectivity in and around the town centre and beyond.
- 1.2 The community led group – Colchester Green Links and Open Spaces (CGLOS), have made impressive progress with the initial phases of the Orbital project. Under the umbrella of "Walk Colchester" the Orbital route was launched as part of the 2018 Jane's Walk programme, spear headed by Rowena Macaulay. The route itself featured in a number of the events this year including a cycling event.
- 1.3 The inner route provides a continuous network, with many opportunities to enhance its accessibility and connectivity as new development continues to come forward. There is also ambition for an outer Orbital which is linked to longer terms aspirations.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the progress of the Colchester Orbital and the work of "Walk Colchester" and receive a short presentation from Rowena Macaulay on the project and progress to date.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Raising awareness of the existing route and the aspirations for enhancement provides a key link between community ambition, the healthy lifestyles agenda and delivering the Local Plan and other objectives. Furthermore there are opportunities for the Council to work in partnership with the community to facilitate achieving a broad vision and objectives which cut across many priorities, including sustainable transport and connectivity, health and wellbeing and place making.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Background Information

5.1 The Colchester Orbital is a circular multi-user route around the town's periphery, connecting green spaces, where possible, with cycle routes and bridleways. It currently comprises an Inner Route with proposals to create a secondary Outer Orbital Route over the plan period. The key aims of the Orbital project are to create a route that links Colchester's valuable green spaces, to enhance connectivity between them as wildlife habitats, and to create a sense of a green corridor around the town.

5.2 The Orbital project is intended to be proactive and collaborative process helping to identify and improve green infrastructure planning to ensure new development is sensitive to existing green spaces and established rights of way. The strengthening of walking routes on Colchester's urban fringe helps draw attention to the value of the landscape and to support arguments for maintaining strong green connectivity in the face of ongoing development. The project seeks to deliver real alternative sustainable commuting routes, enhance tourism opportunities and to improve opportunities for active healthy lifestyles, including the expansion of walking horizons of mobility-restricted users.

5.2 The aims of the Colchester Orbital are identified as follows;

- To encourage people to engage with the local landscape on foot and via other car-free means (walking, cycling and horse-riding), both for leisure and for health, through the identification, mapping and promotion of a key pathway network.
- To create a route that celebrates and links Colchester's most beautiful and important green spaces, supporting environmental arguments for good connectivity between them as wildlife habitats, and creating a sense of a green corridor around the town.
- To expand the walking horizons of mobility-restricted walkers by: identifying meaningful journey sections with higher levels of accessibility; extending the range of walk options available by identifying accessible bus-walk-bus journeys from the town centre; providing comprehensive route information, enabling would-be walkers to make informed advance choices.
- To encourage walking as recreation / tourism by connecting with environmental and heritage points of interest along the Orbital route. The project will also encourage the engagement of local people who run businesses e.g. cafes, pubs or existing visitor attractions around the Orbital, so that there is an exchange between the two, each helping to promote the other.
- To encourage and support walking as a means of making genuinely useful (car-replacing) journeys on foot where possible. To this end, to identify strategic supporting routes between the town centre and the Orbital, in this way turning a bi-directional, principally leisure route into a set of more purposeful ones.
- To strengthen walking links between Colchester, its suburbs and surrounding villages.

- To promote key bus routes linking with the Orbital, thereby enabling whole journeys from home that are non-car-based.
- 5.3 More recently work has been undertaken to develop the vision with some initial funding committed from the Best Foot Forward legacy fund and Myland Community Council. A pilot project is being developed incorporating the following;
- An online interactive walk/cycle map of the Colchester Orbital which is easy-to-navigate and provides an attractive mapping interface using layered information relating to the route and identifies additional local points of interest e.g. environmental/heritage assets, transport links, cafes and pubs, etc.
 - A mapping facility capable of flexible application to all formats (e.g. website/app) which can be promoted to existing and new local residents and visitors.
 - Hotspot local maps for every Orbital parish; potentially connecting with and supporting independent community maps for each respectively, commencing with Myland as a pilot.
 - Extending the Partnership working and promotion of the Council's role in facilitating further opportunities linked to the Orbital
- 5.4 While much of the Inner Orbital network already exists it is not complete or fully accessible to all. Not all sections of the existing route are currently fully accessible for all potential users. An audit of man-made barriers, such as kissing-gates and styles, by Walk Colchester in 2016-17 has identified 26 such features which could be mitigated through removal, replacement or enhancement.
- 5.5 Opportunities to improve connectivity between existing Green Infrastructure assets, the Orbital and new development will be taken as development sites come forward. New developments will be expected to contribute towards the creation of new paths /green infrastructure where gaps exist and to improve linkages, connectivity, legibility, usability and settings of other spurs of the GI network. Contributions will also be sought, where related to development, to enhance the quality of the existing Orbital route through improved signage, drainage improvements or new landscaping.
- 5.6 The opportunity now exists through partnership working for Colchester Borough Council to help build capacity and skills and provide support through identifying potential funding streams and other resources for delivery. To this end, Cabinet agreed on October 24th to allocate £20,000 from the strategic spending priorities budget to the Colchester Orbital project to take forward further mapping, develop the brand to include app development and explore opportunities to improve accessibility and attract funding.
- 5.7 The attached map (Extract from The Colchester Orbital Book) illustrates the Inner Orbital route at 14- 15 miles.

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:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12745/Policy-and-Corporate>

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The Orbital route is an effective community initiative delivering green infrastructure network enhancements benefiting sustainable transport, open spaces, health and wellbeing and biodiversity. As such it contributes to a number of key themes and objectives in the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-21 including;
- *Responsibility*- Create new routes for walking or cycling and work with partners to make the Borough more pedestrian friendly;
 - *Opportunity*- Promote initiatives to help residents lead healthier lifestyles;
 - *Wellbeing*- Help residents adopt healthier lifestyles by enabling the provision of excellent leisure facilities and beautiful green spaces, countryside and beaches.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 No Public Consultation is required for this initiative

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 Ongoing publicity regarding the effective progress of this project will enhance opportunities to raise awareness and promote wider engagement and enjoyment.

10. Financial implications

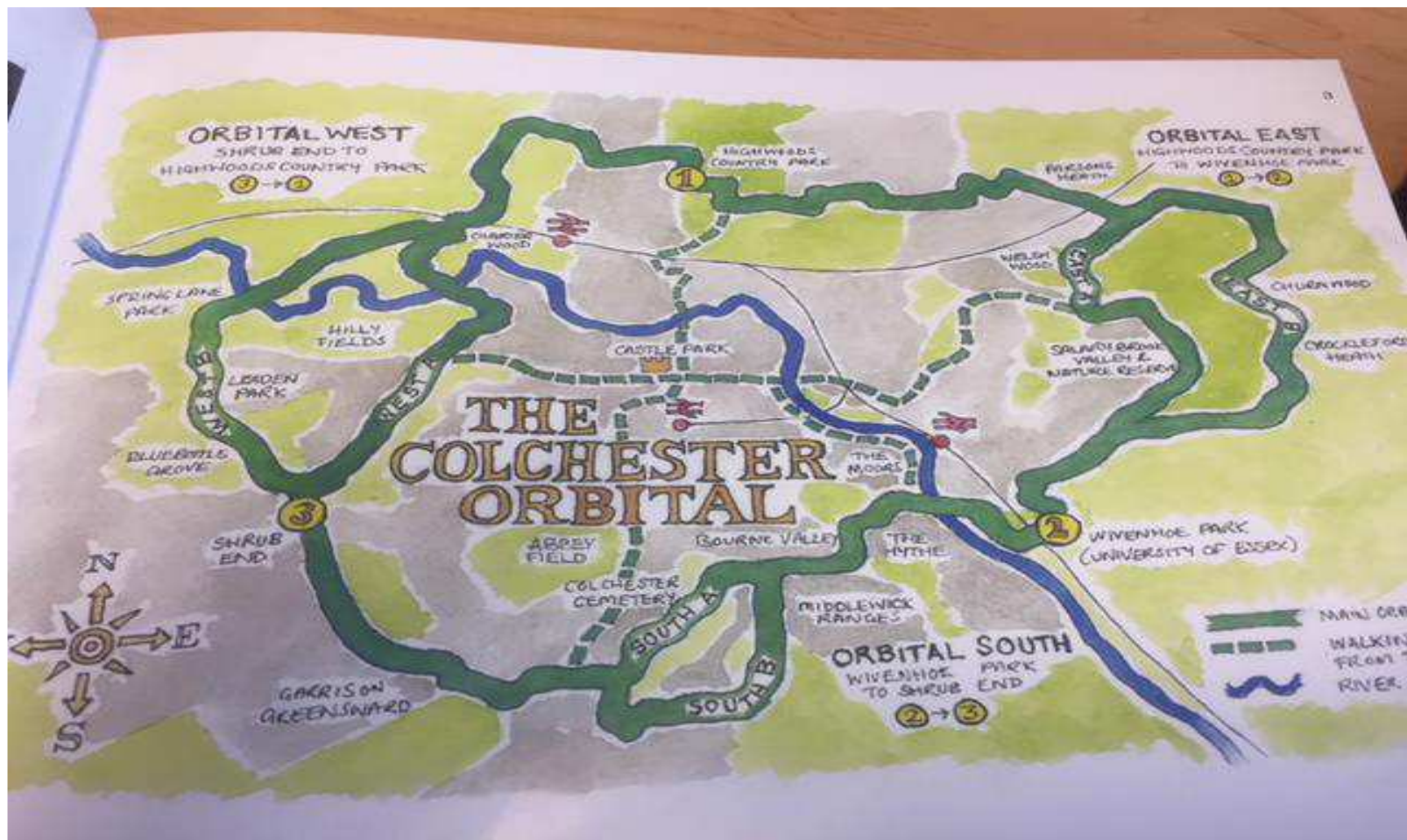
- 10.1 The Council has already agreed to allocate £20,000 to the Colchester Orbital project.

11. Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications

- 11.1 There are no community safety, health and safety or risk management implications for the Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Map of the Orbital Inner Route



Appendix 1 Map of Orbital Extract from the Colchester Orbital Book