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University of Essex

Sustainable Travel Plan

Master Travel Plan

2021-2026

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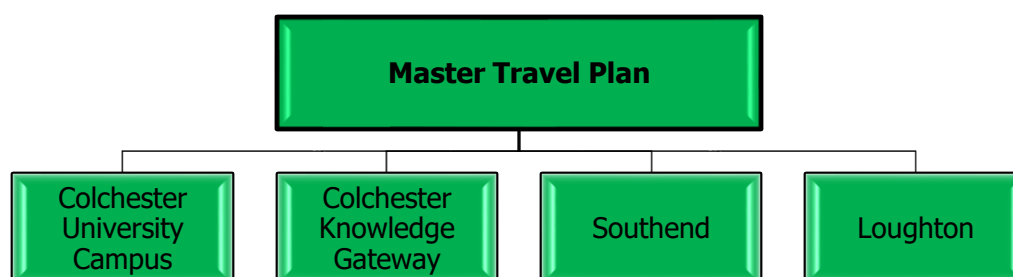
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1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

- 1.1 The **University of Essex Sustainable Travel Plan** is an essential component in supporting the University's commitment to improving the environment, reducing carbon emissions, living sustainably and ensuring that its estate infrastructure is fit for purpose and able to adapt to meet future needs.
- 1.2 Spread across the County, the University of Essex is located in three towns, Colchester, Southend and Loughton, each with their own characteristics, challenges and opportunities. This **Master Travel Plan** report is the lead document setting out the key benefits for those using sustainable travel who study, live and work at the University, and the main aims and actions for achieving them.
- 1.3 It supports individual travel plan sub report documents prepared for each campus location:
- **Colchester** – a campus meeting the needs of a combined 17,000 students and staff, set within an historic landscape but less than 4km from the centre of town. Additionally, the **Knowledge Gateway**, a growing research and technology park currently awarded with University Enterprise Zone status;
 - **Southend** – a town centre campus for 2,000 students and staff with miles of seafront on the doorstep; and
 - **Loughton** – at the border of east London and Essex and home to 500 students and staff at the East 15 Acting School.

Travel Plan Sub Report Structure



- 1.4 This suite of Travel Plan documents, for the period 2021-2026 inclusive, builds on and replaces the previous travel plans for Southend, published in November 2016, and for Colchester, last updated May 2019.

Sustainability Commitment

- 1.5 University of Essex has a dedicated Sustainability team within which three members of staff hold a Travel and Transport portfolio with the objective of reducing the negative impact of University-related travel on the local environment whilst promoting healthy active travel.
- 1.6 The Travel and Transport team are responsible for administering the travel plans on a day to day basis on behalf of all students, staff and visitors and for acting as liaison with relevant stakeholders such as public transport operators, Essex County Council as local highway authority, and the relevant local planning authorities.

Why?

- 1.7 Awareness of environmental issues, in particular climate change, is at a historic high and, put simply, doing nothing to influence current travel habits is not acceptable. This is not a new agenda for a change in behaviour, the time-span for applying travel plan initiatives can be measured in decades, but the need for sustainable travel planning remains as current and as essential as ever.
- 1.8 The University has declared a climate emergency and is currently establishing a target date for net zero carbon emissions. Whether it be the supply chain, business travel, commuting to campus or relocating from home to University, the travel and transport decisions we make have the potential to impact negatively on the local environment.
- 1.9 At a regional level Essex County Council has secured funding to bring forward a rapid transit public transport service for Colchester, choosing its preferred route in May 2020, whilst November 2020 saw an updated national government announcement banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, and the sale of all new hybrid petrol and diesel cars from 2035. These different examples of sustainable transport measures share a common objective to improve air quality but present different challenges and opportunities for the University, with one offering an alternative to private car travel and less need for land to be dedicated to car parking, the other requiring a commitment to enhance car parks and invest in improved electric-vehicle charging infrastructure.
- 1.10 The University of Essex Travel Plan will:
- help to minimise the University's impact on the local road network, reducing congestion;
 - improve the University's environmental performance by reducing carbon emissions generated by commuting and business travel habits;

- increase travel choice for students, staff and visitors;
- commit to a monitoring and review process and adoption of best-practice;
- deliver health benefits through the encouragement of active travel modes; and
- reduce the demand for car parking spaces, potentially releasing land for other uses in the long term.

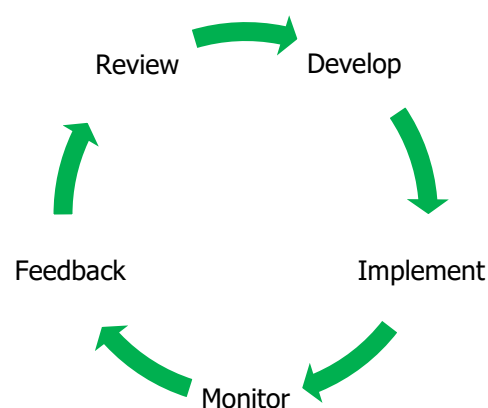
How?

1.11 The University of Essex Travel Plan is a package of measures to promote the use of sustainable travel modes and to encourage a reduced reliance on the private car. The measures will have a slightly different impact for each individual with some people choosing to walk or cycle instead of taking the bus, some switching to the bus instead of the private car and some able to car-share with a colleague instead of driving alone. For many these changes might only occur one or two days each week, or be limited to the warmer weather and longer daylight hours of the spring and early summer. All such changes will yield a benefit.

1.12 Positive measures seek to influence behaviour such as encouraging cycling by improving the number and quality of cycle parking spaces, providing shower and change areas and offering loans for cycle purchase. Realistically, progress toward targets and meeting the full potential of the travel plan outcomes will require the application of some challenging measures. These might include a reduction in car parking supply over time, changes in criteria for parking permit qualification and changes to the charging structure (such as reduced costs for low-emission vehicles/higher costs for high-emission vehicles).

1.13 The University of Essex Travel Plan will continually evolve with a circular process of development, implementation, monitoring, feedback and review.

In summary, the intent of the Travel Plan is to help inform more sustainable forms of travel, not to reduce choices.



2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated in 2019, setting out the core policy areas considered necessary to achieve sustainable development and acknowledging the role of separate but complimentary economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 2.2 Transport specific policies focus on the promotion of sustainable transport, seeking to ensure that development maximises the opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport, takes advantage of existing and proposed transport infrastructure and changing technologies, identifies the environmental impacts of traffic and transport and mitigates adverse effects where appropriate.
- 2.3 Significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, limiting the need to travel and offering a choice of transport modes, helping to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. It is acknowledged that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
- 2.4 The NPPF is specific that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 2.5 Development should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, facilitate access to high quality public transport and offer facilities that encourage public transport use. The transport needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility should be addressed and parking designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.
- 2.6 The NPPF states that all developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan and offers the following definition:

Travel Plan

A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives and is regularly reviewed.

Regional

- 2.7 Essex County Council (ECC) act as the relevant highway authority for all three campus locations. The Essex Transport Strategy for the period 2011-2026 notes road transport as one of the largest

sources of carbon emissions within Essex (30%, 2011) with cars and vans on the 'A' road network being the largest contributor.

- 2.8 The County requires an integrated approach to planning with new development in sustainable locations providing effective travel planning and offers support for the development of travel plans.
- 2.9 Development Management Policies, also published in 2011, seek to minimise the number of trips made by private vehicle through the provision of alternative transport modes with support from separate Essex Cycling Strategy, Essex Walking Strategy, Essex Rail Strategy, Essex Road Passenger Transport Strategy and Essex Workplace Sustainable Business Strategy documents.
- 2.10 All non-residential development proposals with 50 employee or more and any education establishment which increases the number of either staff or students will be required to provide a Travel Plan.
- 2.11 The County has consulted on a Sustainable Modes Travel Strategy (due to report in December 2020), the aim of which is to reduce the number of private motor vehicles using the highway network during peak travel times to help manage congestion. Travel plans are a core contributor to meeting the aim and several support initiatives are offered including the resource of the ECC Sustainable Transport Planning Team, Eastern Region Travel Plan Forum and Colchester Travel Plan Club.
- 2.12 The marketing and promotion initiatives on offer will be of particular relevance to the University of Essex, raising awareness of campaigns for Walking Month, Bike Week, Catch the Bus Week and Car Free Day.

Local

- 2.13 There may be additional transport and travel planning policies relevant to the appropriate local planning authorities in which the respective Colchester, Southend and Loughton campuses are located. These will be presented as necessary in the appropriate individual travel plan sub reports.

3 SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES

3.1 Whilst each campus has its own characteristics it is still possible to summarise those measures and initiatives which support the Sustainable Travel Plan as a whole, these are:

Walking and Cycling

- Multiple locations for cycle parking at all campus locations;
- Promote access to cycle training / bikeability services offered by the County Council;
- Cycle pool hire (Colchester)
- Free access to weekly Dr Bike cycle maintenance;
- Discounted purchase of cycle locks and security tags;
- Bicycle buddy scheme;
- Promote ease of walking, cycling and bus routes to access local supermarkets, rail and coach services

Public Transport

- Promote the Essex County Council interactive bus map and timetable service
<https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/public-transport-maps.aspx>
- For services operated by First Group promote the journey planner service
<https://www.firstgroup.com/essex/plan-journey/journey-planner/>
- Access to University discounted bus tickets;
- Campus bus services (in Colchester);
- Student Union safety bus (Colchester)

Car Park Management

- Managed car parking supply and requirement for parking permits/ paid ticket parking for visitors at the Colchester campus;
- No allocated car parking at Southend and a limited supply of managed car parking at the Loughton campus;

- Electric vehicle charging points (Colchester)

Working Practices

- Electric maintenance vehicles
- Policy for meetings/ business travel
- Bike2Work scheme

Other

- On-site taxi pick-up and drop-off locations (in Colchester);
- Operate a student arrivals 'meet and greet' connection service for airport arrivals at the start of each new academic year;

Marketing, Promotion and Information

- Promote the Access@Essex and AccessAble resources, offering information to those persons with a particular mobility requirement;
- Subscribing to the Living Streets, Sustrans, Essex TravelSmart and Act Travelwise initiatives for up to date newsletters, notice of events, etc.
- University of Essex is committed to sustainable transport and the supporting policy documents are made available on the website, whilst the Travel and Transport Team engage both internally with the Sustainability team created in 2017 and externally with stakeholders at the County Council, with public transport operators and others such as the Colchester Travel Plan Club.

4 CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

Key findings from University travel survey

- 4.1 Travel surveys for staff and students have been undertaken every 1-2 years at Colchester and less frequently at Southend and Loughton. An analysis of results is presented in the relevant travel plan sub reports.
- 4.2 For those persons that are relying on a car for travel, the most significant reasons given relate to a lack of access to public transport routes, inconvenient timetabling or caring responsibilities such as a school pick-up or drop-off.
- 4.3 There have been recent increases recorded in the number of persons driving a car alone when compared with the demonstrable reductions recorded over previous years, and this will be a focus area for the travel plan period considering the impacts of car travel in terms of congestion, emissions and cost and promoting the role that car sharing can play in reducing these impacts as well as reducing the demand for car parking spaces at the campus.

Tackling an emotive subject

- 4.4 The influence of parking charges and the potential role of pre-paid annual season tickets in contributing to the car as a default choice should be considered over the lifetime of this travel plan.

What else is happening?

- 4.5 By 2025 it is anticipated that the Colchester Rapid Transit System and A120-A133 Link Road will be operational, facilitating access between the town centre and new communities on the east side of town and potentially offering a high quality convenient alternative travel mode for persons working at, studying at and visiting the University, reducing the need to park a car on-site.
- 4.6 The new infrastructure might allow drivers to park away from the campus and undertake the last few kilometres of their journey by another mode, such as on foot or by bike, subject to the location of the "Park & Choose" site.
- 4.7 The County Council will be trialling the use of E-Scooters with commercial partner, Spin, for up to 12 months in 6 towns including Colchester. Under the trials E-Scooters are considered lawful on those routes where cycling is also allowed. Subject to broader study, review and changes in law, the future role of the E-Scooter in replacing short car journeys and offering "last mile" connections at one or both ends of an otherwise inconvenient public transport route could be significant for the campuses of University of Essex. Some caution is appropriate however to ensure that E-Scooters do not undermine participation in genuinely active modes of travel such as walking and cycling where there are also health benefits to realise.

5 ROLE OF TRAVEL PLAN SUB REPORTS

- 5.1 For each campus and for the Knowledge Gateway based at Colchester, each travel plan sub report describes the site characteristics, presents an analysis of historic travel data, describes the travel opportunities available, identifies the sustainable travel initiatives existing or proposed to be implemented for the duration of the travel plan, offers objectives and targets and commits to a monitor, review and update process.
- 5.2 Each travel plan sub report is intended to assist staff, students and visitors as a source of information, and may be referred to on a day to day basis independently of this Master Document. When considered together, the strategic travel plan document and relevant sub report will serve to inform the relevant authorities in supporting planning applications for future development proposals and continue to meet the requirements of pre-existing planning conditions.