

BETTER TOWN CENTRE PLAN

Colchester



Colchester Town Centre Supplementary
Planning Document (SPD)



Table of Contents

If you are viewing this on a screen you can go straight to an individual chapter below and you can also click to view any documents highlighted in the text.

Chapter 1 – Introduction	3
Chapter 2 – Spatial Portrait	5
Chapter 3 – Issues and Challenges	7
Chapter 4 – Process for Developing the Plan	9
Chapter 5 – Historic Background	12
Chapter 6 – Vision and Objectives	18
Chapter 7 – Planning Policy in the Town Centre	23
Chapter 8 – Character Areas and Opportunity Sites	50
Chapter 9 – Delivery Strategy and Schedule	52
Appendix A – List of Related Planning Policies	54
Appendix B – List of Evidence Base Documents	55
Appendix C – Glossary	57
Appendix D – Public Realm Strategy	
Appendix E – Lighting Strategy	
Appendix F – Large scale schematic maps from page 25,31,38 and 48	



COLCHESTER
We believe in a better town centre

www.bettertowncentre.co.uk

Chapter One Introduction

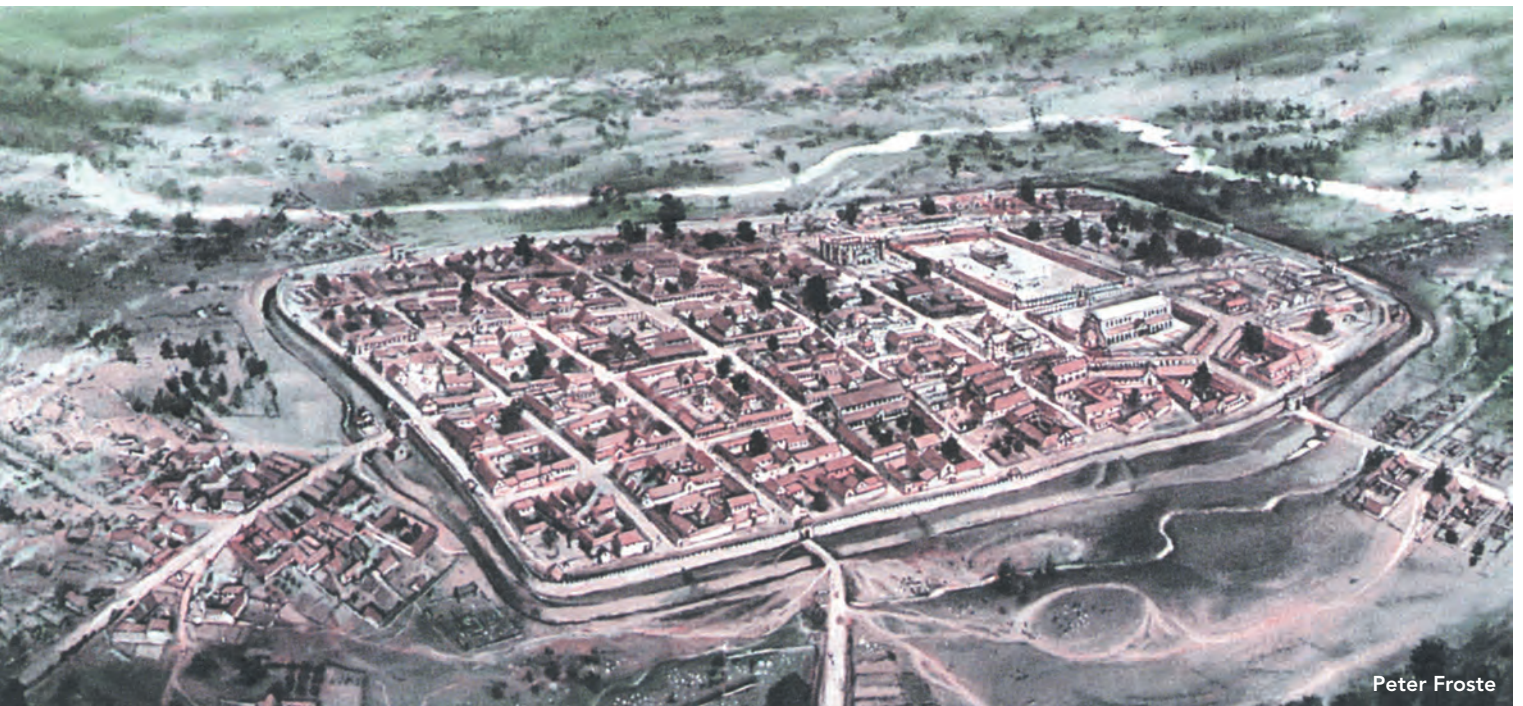
- 1.1 This document sets out the Council's aspirations and plans for Colchester's Town Centre. The Council appreciates that helping the Town Centre to flourish in challenging times requires co-ordinated action and has developed a range of initiatives to help achieve this under a 'Better Town Centre' banner. The following Better Town Centre Plan is intended to provide a guiding framework for these initiatives. It takes the form of a Supplementary Planning Document which provides detailed planning guidance building on Colchester's general policies as set forth in its adopted Local Plan (previously known as the [Local Development Framework \(LDF\)](#). SPDs cannot set out new policy, but instead expand upon how Local Plan policies should be applied. In this case, the Town Centre SPD provides detailed guidance on the delivery of the vision set out in the [Core Strategy](#) for the future direction of Colchester's Town Centre. The SPD provides an holistic approach to the reinvigoration of spaces, uses and activity in Colchester's historic centre during the day, evening and at night that will ensure its continued vitality in a 21st Century context of economic challenges, climate change and new ways of spending leisure time.
- 1.2 Nationally, the challenges facing town centres are being approached both through the planning system, with policies safeguarding the role of town centres forming a key element of the National Planning Policy Framework, and through the wider economic and political agenda with many towns choosing to take up the challenge posed by the Mary Portas review to remake their town centres. In Essex, the role of Colchester town centre is highlighted in the plan guiding future planned investment in the County, the [Integrated County Strategy](#). It states that town centre regeneration is a key driver for development and identifies opportunities for Colchester Town Centre to consolidate its position as a focus for the Haven Gateway area of the region.
- 1.3 [The Core Strategy](#), adopted in 2008, sets the overall direction for all subsequent planning policy documents in the Local Plan, including this SPD. It highlights the role of the Town Centre as the cultural and economic heart of the Borough, and provides that it will be enhanced and extended through regeneration, public realm improvements and a balanced mix of uses that sustain activity throughout the day and evening. The adopted Development Policies and [Site Allocations documents](#), adopted in 2010, provide further guidance on appropriate town centre uses. The general support for mixed uses is tailored to ensure that future development builds on the strengths of existing uses and local character. Relevant planning policies are attached as [Appendix A](#). The Council adopted a Town Centre [Public Realm Strategy](#) along with a [Lighting Strategy](#) in June 2011 and these are attached as Appendices D and E to the SPD. These Strategies should be read alongside this document to give a complete picture of how public spaces in the Town Centre should be designed, built and maintained. In addition, the Council has already adopted an SPD on [Shopfront Guidance](#) which is a further important detailed guidance document for the Town Centre.

Chapter One Introduction

- 1.4 The SPD and other associated planning documents do not provide specific detail on the masterplanning of particular sites, rather they provide guiding principles which should then be applied in the process of developing individual proposals for the Town Centre. The SPD provides a means for co-ordinating and directing the incremental change that will occur over the coming period as the Town Centre adapts to changing economic, environmental, technological and social circumstances.



Chapter Two Spatial Portrait



Roman Colchester in about AD 250, rebuilt after the Boudican rebellion with a defensive wall around the town.

- 2.1 The Town Centre's hilltop location reflects the strategic choices made centuries ago by Roman colonisers, a legacy that remains in the street grid pattern that still underpins the modern town. The Wall erected around the Roman town also still continues to define the Centre, both by its physical presence in many areas and by defining the compact commercial core of the town, which tends to be of a higher density and different character to development outside the walls. The insertion of new roads on Balkerne Hill and Southway in the 1960-70s created strict boundaries between the Town Centre and surrounding residential areas to the west and south sides.
- 2.2 Key landmarks in the Town Centre include the green oasis of Castle Park to the north, which ascends the slope from the River Colne to abut the High Street. The historic restored Castle, built by the Normans on the ruins of Claudius's temple sits at the top of the park. The High Street is distinguished by the park entrance at one end and the Victorian 'Jumbo' water tower visible at the other end, with a range of period commercial buildings and the Edwardian Town Hall with its clock tower in the middle.

Chapter Two Spatial Portrait

- 2.3 Functionally, the Town is characterised by a shopping core centred around the High Street, Culver Square, Lion Walk and the lanes running along the Roman Wall. The St. Botolph's Quarter area to the east is the main focus for new development in the town centre, with the new firstsite gallery development providing the catalyst for culture related development. Residential uses predominate in the historic Dutch Quarter tucked in behind the High Street, North Hill and Castle park, while other residential units are scattered throughout the Town Centre above shops and mixed in with other uses. Office uses are concentrated in the Town Centre fringe, which contains a number of larger modern office buildings, although some of the historic Town Centre buildings have been adapted for office use.
- 2.4 The boundary of the Town Centre is illustrated on the Central Area plan of the [Local Plan Proposals Map](#) and is based on the historic and topographic considerations described above. It excludes Castle Park, but since no new development would be expected to be approved within the park, it is not considered necessary to include it within the Town Centre boundary.
- 2.5 The Town Centre boundary defines the area within which 'town centre uses' are to be located within Colchester. Town Centre uses appropriate to Colchester's town centre are defined by Core Strategy Policy CE2a as including retail, offices, leisure and cultural facilities. The Town Centre is the preferred location for these uses. Proposals for these uses outside the Town Centre will be required to demonstrate they could not be accommodated within the Town Centre, in line with policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.



Chapter Three Issues and Challenges

Meeting the challenge of climate change

- 3.1 The need for more sustainable forms of development to address climate change is a key driver for Town Centre planning in the future. Innovative solutions will be required to the problems of traffic congestion; poor air quality; energy hungry buildings; providing shade and scarce land and raw material resources for new development.

Keeping ahead in a fragile global economy

- 3.2 In common with town centres around the country, Colchester's retailers are faced with an array of challenges including the growth of internet shopping, increasing costs, competition from out-of-town centres and restrictions on consumer spending. [Mary Portas's High Street review \(Dec. 2011\)](#) has highlighted a number of recommendations to support town centre vitality, with a focus on partnership working and a willingness to try new ideas. These recommendations accord with the finding of the [Council's Town Centre Retail Study \(Nov. 2011\)](#) which found that while Colchester was maintaining a reasonably robust retail position, it would need to continue to innovate and develop new retail space to remain competitive. While Colchester's Town Centre shops have a large hinterland, geographical position alone will not be enough to secure recovery from recession and ensure renewed vitality. Colchester businesses will need to exploit the potential of new technologies and digital connectivity [link to [Digital Strategy](#)] to retain their competitive positions.

Ensuring an appropriate mix of uses to create activity and to provide employment, services, culture/leisure and housing opportunities

- 3.3 Colchester has a diverse mix of uses and activities in its Town Centre, but will need to retain and strengthen this diversity of employment opportunities, mix of independent and national retailers, and range of services to ensure resilience in times of recession. A mix of uses and activities is also important in creating an animated atmosphere and active street scene that is physically accessible in both day and evening hours which contributes to the quality of life for residents and the attractiveness of the town to visitors.

Maintaining a high standard of design, local distinctiveness and environmental quality for Britain's oldest recorded town

- 3.4 Colchester's uniqueness is underpinned by its rich historic legacy of buildings, streets and spaces. Safeguarding this legacy will rely on reinvigoration of historic environments with new uses; interpretation of characters and historic events as well as heritage to promote its appreciation; and the creation of new well-designed accessible buildings and high quality materials that will become the legacy for the future.
- 3.5 Interpretation is defined by the Association for Heritage Interpretation as 'the art of helping people explore and appreciate our world to enrich our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of places, people, events and objects from the past and present'. The aim of interpretation is to improve the image and reputation of the place, enhance the experience of the place and in so doing manage or mitigate unruly behaviours and create a sense of civic pride.

Chapter Three Issues and Challenges

Importance of public realm in creating an active town centre

- 3.6 While the Town Centre contains a number of attractive spaces and streets, links between these are fragmented and there are many areas that warrant upgrading. An enhanced public realm will be critical to strengthening the role of the town centre as a welcoming gathering space that serves a wide and changing range of users, including those with disabilities, at different times of the day and night.

Need to address access to and circulation within the town centre

- 3.7 A successful Town Centre inevitably creates significant movements of people. The challenge is to manage this process to encourage more people to travel by bus, foot and cycle to minimise congestion while providing sufficient vehicular access and parking to sustain economic activity and facilitate accessibility where appropriate.

Serving a rapidly growing population

- 3.8 [Colchester's Core Strategy](#) has responded to the ever-increasing population pressures on the south-east by providing for the development of 19,000 new housing units for the period 2001 – 23. The Town Centre will accordingly need to serve more people as a sustainable hub for services, jobs, shops and leisure activities.



Chapter Four

Process for developing the plan

Consultation and partners

4.1 Development and implementation of the Better Town Centre Plan does not just involve land use considerations but touches on a variety of issues and requires the continued involvement of different organisations and interests. The dialogue on these issues has been ongoing, and the Supplementary Planning Document synthesises the results of a number of previous consultations that the Council has carried out through the Better Town Centre initiative. The issues accordingly aren't new, but the proposed approaches in the SPD reflect the latest co-ordinated thinking on these topics and places. The Council's Better Town Centre initiative has relied on a cross-departmental approach in developing the plan, with direction given by a Town Centre Steering Group composed of representatives from each main section of the Council as well as representatives from Essex County Council on transport and urban design. www.bettertowncentre.co.uk. The Council has carried out a number of consultation exercises on the following nine components of this cross-cutting programme to improve the town centre;

- Improving Colchester for you and your family
- Creating quality public spaces and places
- Bringing new buildings and street scenes
- Supporting business and retailers
- Making it easier to get to and around Colchester
- Promoting Colchester
- New things to see do and visit
- Ensuring clean and safe places and spaces
- Changing Colchester after dark

4.2 Consultations on the Better Town Centre programme were themselves following on from a number of consultations:

Colchester 2020 Transport Assembly (February 2009)

Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group (2009)

Castle Park consultation (October 2009)

Street Care Strategy (February 2010)

Chapter Four

Process for developing the plan

- 4.3 The [Statement of Consultation](#) shows key feedback from the two Better Town Centre consultations in 2010. In general, there was widespread appreciation of the town centre and its unique rich heritage, but opinions were sharply polarised on a number of topics including the relative attractions of other nearby town centres, the merits of new town centre buildings, the quality and diversity of Colchester shops, and, probably generating the most controversy, approaches to movement and circulation of cars, buses, pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists in the town centre.
- 4.4 Consultation on the draft SPD included a meeting on 24 May 2012 where a group of town centre business, civic and interest groups made comments which were incorporated into the consultation version of the SPD approved by the 11 June 2012 Local Plan Committee. Formal consultation on the SPD ran from 22 June to 27 July and included drop-in sessions attended by 643 people at the former JJB Sports shop held on Thursday 28 and Saturday 30 June 2012. 26 individuals and organisations submitted formal comments on the SPD. Their responses are summarised in the [Statement of Consultation for this SPD](#). Comments from this stage informed the final version of the Plan presented for adoption at the 17th December Local Plan Committee. Comments did not prompt a significant review of the document, but highlighted the need for the vision and objectives to be accompanied by more detailed proposals, which are provided in the link to the work of the Council's [Better Town Centre project](#).



Feedback from the public consultation in June 2012 captured by local artist Jade O'Bryan.

Chapter Four

Process for developing the plan

Evidence

- 4.5 The SPD is informed by a number of studies carried out by the Council. In the first instance, this includes the wide range of studies carried out for the Local Plan documents that underpin and precede this latest plan for the town centre. These are listed in [Appendix B](#). More specifically, the Council has carried out a [Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal \(2007\)](#) and a [Town Centre Retail Study \(2011\)](#) to inform consideration of particular Town Centre locations and issues.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 4.6 The Council has undertaken a [Sustainability Appraisal](#) for this document to inform the plan's content and to ensure the plan promotes sustainable development. The 2009 Regulations remove the duty to provide a Sustainability Appraisal report for SPDs. However, since the Council is still required to carry out an environmental assessment on all Local Development Documents in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive where significant environmental effects are likely, the Council considered it appropriate to consider these environmental effects alongside the social and economic effects covered by a Sustainability Appraisal. The Council published a Scoping Report for consultation by the relevant statutory bodies (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) during the period 4 November – 9 December 2011 and the comments made have been incorporated into the final Sustainability Appraisal.

Chapter 5 Historic Background

- 5.1 Colchester has been the principal town in north Essex for as long as those words have had any meaning. Modern Colchester, seamed with new roads and ringed with housing estates, industrial parks and hypermarkets may seem far removed from its Roman and medieval ancestors, but like them it is shaped by its site and the surrounding countryside.
- 5.2 The history of Colchester begins before the Roman occupation of Britain. At the beginning of the first-century AD the British king Cunobelin (Shakespeare's Cymbeline) ruled over the kingdoms of the south-east from a capital upon the Colne. This capital was called Camulodunum, after the Celtic war god Camulos.
- 5.3 Camulodunum was a natural objective of the Roman army when Britain was invaded in AD43, and the ridge to the south-east of the native capital was chosen as the site of a legionary fortress succeeded by the first colonia of veteran soldiers to be founded in Britain. This colony became a prosperous town and an important pottery and tile making centre. In the later first century it was fortified with walls which, like the monumental west or Balcerne Gate are still standing today.
- 5.4 The main streets of the Roman town have become the main streets of modern Colchester, except that the High Street once ran through to the Balcerne Gate in the west wall, whereas today it stops at the line of North Hill and Head Street.
- 5.5 By the time of the Norman Conquest Colchester was a town of some importance, with a mint and a court, and the strongest defences in Essex. The Domesday Book shows Colchester to have been a populous place in 1086 with several churches. Of the churches standing today, Holy Trinity has a Saxon tower and St. Peter's is mentioned by name in Domesday Book. The lost church of St. Runwald's in the High Street (demolished 1878), seems to have been another Saxon foundation.



Chapter 5 Historic Background

- 5.6 By the end of the eleventh-century a castle had been built, the largest known of its kind, raised over the base of the Roman temple, all surrounded by a timber and earth rampart with a defensive ditch, around which the High Street has to deviate and bend to the south. A series of recessions in the cloth trade had a severe effect on the town's economy. Salvation came however with the Protestant refugees who fled from Spanish rule in the Netherlands. Those Flemings or Dutch as they were locally known are still recalled today in that area of the town centre north of the High Street which bears their name.
- 5.7 The Siege of Colchester in 1648 was the last time the walls were used defensively to protect the Royalist occupiers against the Parliamentary armies. The built-up area continued to be constrained within them apart from some ribbon development along the approach roads until the early Victorian period when the first of the substantial extra-mural housing developments began.
- 5.8 The Napoleonic Wars brought a garrison to Colchester, but these buildings were demolished in 1817. The military did open a permanent military camp in 1856 thirteen years after the arrival of the railway line from London. The railway fed an engineering industry and encouraged the town to expand rapidly. The churchyards within the town were closed and a municipal cemetery opened in 1856, and six years later the cattle market was moved from the High Street to the foot of North Hill (Middleborough), where it remained for over 100 years. The general market remained in the High Street.
- 5.9 At the centre of the town a bus park, now the site of St. John's Walk shopping precinct, was opened in 1923, and chain stores arrived in the High Street in the early 1930s. The growth of motor traffic began to choke the main streets, and in 1933 a by-pass road was opened on the north side of town, (Avenue of Remembrance/ Cowdray Avenue). By 1939 the by-pass had attracted ribbon development with service roads, and extensive demolition for car-parks had begun in the old town. After the war the unfinished public library in Shewell Road (most recently occupied by Superdry (Fashion Retailer) in Culver Precinct was finally opened to the public.
- 5.10 It was not until the late 1950s that the town's public face began to change noticeably. There was much new housing, commercial and industrial developments as the rail links to London were improved. Above all motor traffic increased. The most important single change was probably the introduction of a one-way traffic scheme in 1963 that temporarily swept the Saturday market out of the High Street. Five of the central parish churches were closed in 1954 with one, St. Nicholas, being demolished, to be replaced by the Co-operative Store, though the churchyard has been kept as a small garden. The bus park moved to East Hill in the 1960s bringing a heavy flow of traffic into the area enclosed by the town walls.
- 5.11 The 1970s saw the construction of a new dual carriageway motor road around the southern and western edge of the historic town, and the town centre saw a major pedestrian shopping development at Lion Walk (opened 1976), followed a decade later by a similar scheme off Culver Street (opened 1987) both of which served to cut Culver Street in two. Both of these developments inaugurated a new street pattern at the heart of the town centre.

Chapter 5 Historic Background

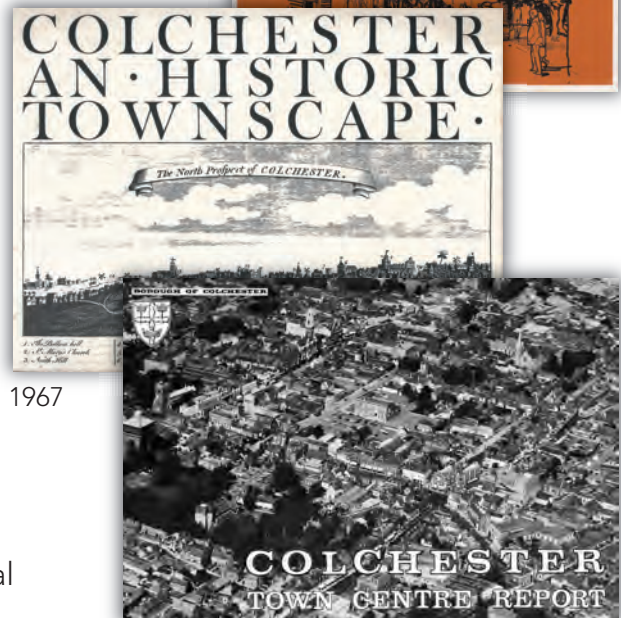
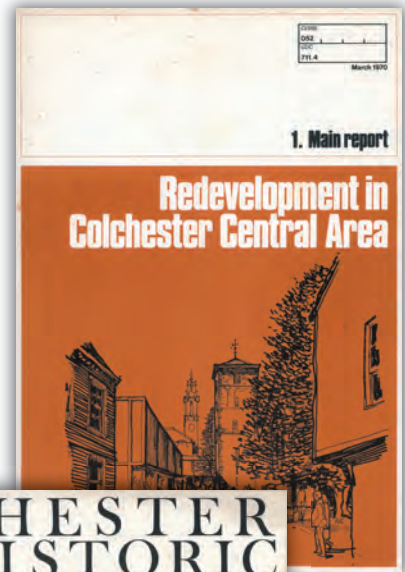
Town Centre Planning Policy History

- 5.12 A review of earlier plans for Colchester's town centre highlights the enduring tension between commitments to preserve and enhance the historic environment and pressures to redevelop to meet market demands, the rise in car ownership, and changes in employment and shopping trends.
- 5.13 Postwar plans for the town centre emerged slowly. A development plan prepared by the County Council was approved in 1957 for the period to 1971. It was based on survey work undertaken during 1949-52.

'Like many other towns, Colchester produced a series of tentative central area plans in the post-war period. As these were largely highway and traffic management based it was not surprising that the overall fabric and townscape was somewhat neglected when in 1967 the Borough Council proceeded with an extensive study of the area in advance of the preparation of a Town Centre Plan.' (Report on Town Centre Revitalisation, 1976)

- 5.14 The Town Centre plan, published in 1969, reflected the prevailing goal of a functional and attractive townscape, and large scale redevelopment was accepted as part of that objective. It was assumed that the centre would remain the focus for shopping and jobs and the plan proposed redevelopment in areas now known as Lion Walk, Culver Precinct and St. John's/Vineyard. Car traffic has consistently been seen as an inappropriate element in the historic core. The 1968 Town Centre Report by Colchester Council stated: *'It is evident from the studies that long term unrestricted vehicular entry cannot be tolerated and private car usage must be limited by the restriction of internal parking space, the improvement of peripheral parking facilities and what is more important the improvement of public transport facilities. Traffic management must play its part and further restrictions on complete accessibility in the town and through traffic must be planned. It is inevitable that these policies will not be wholly popular. However, in the interest of retaining the town's character the unimpeded entry of traffic into the town with its prejudicial attributes must be stopped.'* Extensive constraints on the car in general, however, were not of course supported in the years predating concerns about climate change and a less interventionist view was put forth in the 1967 Land Use/Transportation Study noted:

March 1970



1967

May 1968

Chapter 5 Historic Background

'It is thought undesirable to restrict the use of motor vehicles more than is absolutely necessary and although some form of pricing to control car parking is recommended, this general restriction is not a course which would be suggested without a full investigation of alternatives.'

5.15 The decision in the 1960s to carve out a set of relief roads around the Town Centre was accordingly intended to limit car access to the Town Centre rather than to limit car journeys in general, although the need to provide good public transport was consistently noted. The physical impact of the creation of new roads was the isolation of the Town Centre from the Victorian estates to the south and west. Peripheral car parks were also meant to be part of the solution, although they were never provided at the level anticipated in the early 1960s when it was thought that 10,000 spaces would be needed by 1981. 6300 spaces were proposed in the 1969 Plan, while 3,252 were actually being provided in the 1984 Plan. There was also a commitment to transferring day-to-day food shopping to 'effective suburban centres' to lessen demand in the town centre.

5.16 The success of this approach, however, was questioned by a 1976 study which commented:

'Apart from Kingsway and the new Lion Walk Precinct, the centre of Colchester has recently become a scene of development stagnation and considerable dereliction caused by the run-down of several existing trades and businesses. This is completely in contradiction of the ambitious plans of the 1960s when the centre's economy was buoyant and wages in general continued to spiral in an upwards direction. Today both the national economy and the purchasing power of the weekly wage packet have to a large extent diminished. The traumatic affect of this financial situation upon the town centre has resulted in a drastic slow-down in the previously approved Plan, as developments are postponed and car parks abandoned or shelved and the number of empty shops increase. The opening of the major redevelopment at Lion Walk could not have happened in a worse economic climate as there is a decrease in demand for new commercial premises which has caused shops vacated by occupiers of new accommodation in the Precinct to remain unfilled. Certain commercial stagnation is undoubtedly further affected by the failure to keep up with the planned provision of parking spaces in the town and the present shortage of car parking has made Colchester town centre extremely vulnerable to peripheral shopping pressures.'

5.17 The Colchester Central Area Local Plan, adopted in 1984 confirmed the shift to a more incremental approach. The Plan reflected a 'growing financial restraint and a shift in attitudes away from comprehensive redevelopment towards improvement and small scale new building works'. It noted that only two of the originally envisaged redevelopment areas, Lion Walk and St. Peter's Street had been completed. (Culver Precinct was granted planning permission in 1983, but not completed until 1987-89) The shift to out-of-town shopping was now perceived to be a mixed blessing, with the Council seeking to resist some new development which was considered to harm Town Centre shopping. Clearly, resistance was limited in its effect, particularly since it ran counter to the Council's largely accommodating view of new development.

Chapter 5 Historic Background

- 5.18 A study of UK planning first published in the late 1980s used Colchester as an example of 'trend planning' that sought to tread a delicate path between placating local conservation interests and accommodating new developments, with the balance very much in favour of accommodating new development. (*Remaking Planning: The Politics of Urban Change*, Brindley, Rydin and Stoker, Routledge, 1989). The study used the example of the complicated planning history of Culver Square to illustrate the point that the goal of preserving the Town Centre was bound to be diluted by the constraints of market demand, the Council's interests as a property developer, and the goal of modernising facilities. An additional factor for both Lion Walk and Culver Square was the desire to provide delivery servicing for lorries to minimise the effects of traffic on the High Street and pedestrian precincts. The achievement of this goal required significant excavations at the expense of the loss of sections of the Roman Wall, historic buildings, and at Lion Walk, the medieval street network, with Culver Street cut in two.
- 5.19 The Plan included what it branded as two new planning concepts:
- Mixed Use Areas – they were located around the primary commercial core and were designed to retain the existing range of uses, and to resist large scale development
 - Areas of Development Opportunity – they were similar to the previous redevelopment areas, but broader and more flexible in concept. They included both comprehensive redevelopment and improvement to existing buildings. The 1984 Plan considered a much larger area than the previous Town Centre Plan based on the identified need to provide new offices and residential outside the core area to avoid traffic impact, and the ADOs were largely on the fringe of this wider area;
1. Essex Hall (hospital site, redeveloped for housing)
 2. Colne Bank (new housing along river behind North Station Road)
 3. Headgate
 4. Whitewell Road
 5. Vineyard
 6. Magdalen Street.
- 5.20 The Mixed Use Areas are still with us, although the Core Strategy policies have relaxed the distinction between them and the retail core in the interests of introducing more early evening leisure uses into the retail core. Areas of Development Opportunity have, however ceased to exist since they've mostly been redeveloped (with the exception of Vineyard Gate). The Core Strategy returned the focus to a more tightly drawn town centre, given the continuing need to focus on traffic, public realm and the mix of uses in the historic core.

Chapter 5 Historic Background

- 5.21 The 1984 Plan noted that conditions for pedestrians and cyclists had deteriorated in recent years as traffic flows increased, but proposed to address this by providing a largely traffic free area in Lion Walk and the Culver Precinct. Provision outside this area had a vaguer commitment predicated on additional road capacity – *‘further measures to help pedestrians and cyclists...may be possible when further traffic management measures are introduced and new road schemes built.’*
- 5.22 The 1995 and 2004 Local Plans continued the approach established by the 1984 Plan of promoting the Town Centre as the primary focus for comparison retail, with outlying bulky goods parks and supermarkets considered to complement rather than weaken the Town Centre’s pre-eminence. The focus on the distinction between comparison and convenience retail was mirrored by the methodology of retail studies which measured supply and demand for bulky and non-bulky comparison goods and convenience shopping. This distinction between separate types of demand has tended to become less relevant with the growth of ever larger supermarkets that provide both types of shopping.
- 5.23 The SPD is accordingly the latest attempt to seek a balance between change and preserving a unique resource. This view of the problem from the 1960s is familiar:
- There are....two competing elements – the future increase in demand which an enlarging and more affluent population will make upon all central area services and facilities versus the overriding need to conserve and enhance the fabric and environment of a unique and precious historic centre. (Colchester Town Centre Plan, 1969)*
- 5.24 The main difference now is that the assumption of ever increasing prosperity and growth has started to be replaced by a focus on sustainability as well as an awareness that Town Centre issues need to be addressed through collective effort, with planning documents linked to actions delivered by a range of partners.



Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

Vision

- 6.1 The historic Town Centre will be the cultural and economic heart of the Borough, surrounded by thriving suburbs, villages and countryside. New cultural, retail, office and mixed use developments will be delivered through regeneration of the Town Centre and its fringe.
- 6.2 The town centre will be an even better place for people; a place where local people, business people and visitors want to be. It will be a place which is more accessible with a greater choice of things to see and do for all tastes and ages, during the day, in the evening and into the night. Colchester will be a cleaner place with interesting buildings and streets, where people feel safer and more comfortable and where people can walk and cycle more easily. It will continue to be a place for enterprise with a rich mix of businesses which thrive in reality as well as online, providing people with jobs and purpose. All this will enhance Colchester's image, reputation and competitiveness in the world and provide a firmer platform for future growth, opportunity and local pride.



Figure 1



Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

Objectives

6.3 There are a number of key objectives which underpin the Supplementary Planning Document. They are all inter-related as illustrated by Figure 1 on page 18. They are listed below together with their links to the [Better Town Centre project](#).

6.3.1 **Sustainability** – Promoting sustainability in its widest sense, including prioritising reductions in the town centre’s carbon footprint, enhancing the resilience of Town Centre commercial and social businesses, and promoting social inclusion and accessibility.

Innovation – Ensuring that development in Colchester Town Centre promotes and secures innovation in new techniques for enabling sustainable growth, including encouraging the local business community to implement them.

- [Creating Quality Public Places and Spaces](#)
- [Bringing New Buildings and street scenes](#)

6.3.2 **Activity** – Supporting uses for a lively Town Centre;

Diversity – Ensuring a healthy mix of retail, leisure/culture, business and residential uses.

Retail: Retail is the key driver of the Town Centre economy, and maintaining an appropriate balance between different types of successful retail uses (including both national chains independent retailers and market traders) and between other activities in the main Town Centre shopping areas will be critical to securing its future vitality.

Leisure/Culture: Expansion of leisure and cultural offerings appropriate to different areas of the Town Centre (ie: arts-related activities in St. Botolph’s Quarter, entertainment/restaurants in the shopping core), outdoor spaces offering multi-functional areas for informal recreation and relaxation, and use of traditional, new and social media to publicise and promote these attractions.



Creating a place for you and your family



Creating new public spaces and places



Bringing new buildings & Street scenes



Supporting and growing business and retailers

Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

Offices and Residential: Supporting the provision of office and living space based on the Town Centre's high quality environment, accessibility, and digital connectivity.

Creating welcoming spaces and events through the day and into the evening – Providing a wide range of accessible facilities and spaces for events and activities that bring people into the town centre throughout the day and year. Developing the evening economy so that the town feels safe and inviting after dark.

- Improving Colchester for You and Your Family
- Supporting and Growing Business and Retailers
- Promoting Colchester
- New Things to See, Do and Visit
- Changing Colchester After Dark

6.3.3 **Heritage and Design** – Enhancing the old, creating tomorrow's heritage;

Identity and Unique Character – Reinforcing, interpreting and safeguarding the distinctive character and identity of Colchester and its rich heritage, including its Roman core street grid, unique views, changes in elevation, historic buildings, green spaces, and street scenes. Enriching the existing environment using a creative and dynamic approach to new spaces and buildings.

Amenity – Providing a safe, attractive and accessible town centre that is well maintained.

Quality – Providing a set of design principles for all new development within the town centre to promote a continuous and consistent high quality well-maintained environment.

- Creating Quality Public Places and Spaces
- Bringing New Buildings
- Ensuring Clean, Safe Places and Spaces



Getting to and around Colchester



Promoting Colchester



Things to see and do in and around Colchester



Safe and clean places and spaces.

Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

6.3.4 **Movement** – Creating a safe and accessible town centre to;

- Manage unnecessary through traffic in the town centre, enhancing pedestrian priority
- Provide priority to more sustainable modes of transport including public transport, cycling and walking
- Improve use and operation of public transport
- Deliver a sustainable transport infrastructure to accommodate future growth and enable a vibrant strong economy



Changing Colchester after dark

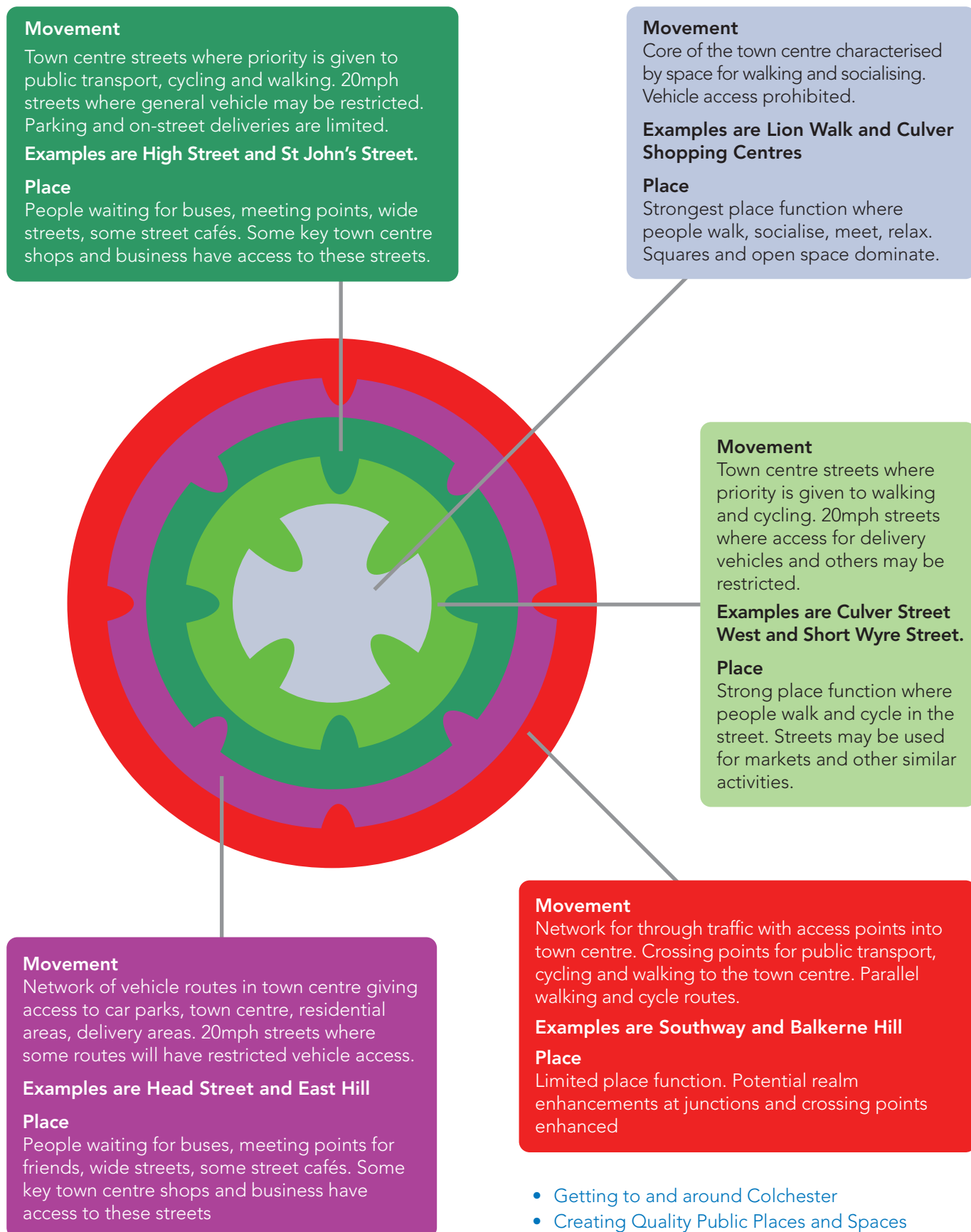
Town centres should be the most walkable part of the network, and should accommodate public transport services, cycle routes and cycle parking, while providing suitable vehicular access and parking to sustain economic activity and facilitate accessibility where appropriate. As centres of public life, town centres must actively enable access by all in society, as well as supporting appropriate access by delivery, service and emergency vehicles. At the same time they should be attractive places to shop, eat, drink, work, play, do business, meet, study, hang around in and look at.¹ Through a range of measures greater priority is given over to more people orientated forms of movement. This approach is generally accepted to help strengthen the economy of a street or area. This approach is being applied to Colchester town centre. Figure 2 on page 22 illustrates the priorities to be given to different transport modes in different parts of the Town Centre.

- [Getting to and around Colchester](#)



Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

Figure 2– Principles of Movement and Place in and Around the Town Centre



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre



- 7.1 The Supplementary Planning Document expands on but does not duplicate policies found in national policy (National Planning Policy Framework) or in local policy as set forth in the Core Strategy, Development Policies and Site Allocations Development Policy Documents. The following section lists policies to help deliver the 4 main objectives listed above will be for the Town Centre.

Sustainability Policy Base

National Planning Policy Framework

Core Strategy Policies SD1 – Sustainable Development and ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling

Development Policy DP25 – Renewable Energy

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

Sustainable Design and Construction

- 7.2 All development in the Town Centre will be expected to meet the highest possible standards of sustainable design and construction. Major new commercial development should seek to achieve a minimum **BREEAM** level of 'excellent'.
- 7.2.1 The Council has adopted a Sustainable Design and Construction **Supplementary Planning Document** which highlights the national commitment to increasing standards of sustainable construction, with progressively higher standards over time for both residential (Code for Sustainable Homes) and commercial (BREEAM). New developments in the Town Centre will be expected to meet and where possible exceed these standards.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

7.2.2 The following sustainable design and construction measures feature in two case studies of best practice retail development:

- Effective procurement and locally sourced materials
- Use of local labour
- High recycling rates
- Natural ventilation
- Use of high efficiency lamps and intelligent lighting controls
- Rainwater harvesting
- Exceeding Building Regulations on insulation
- Ecological enhancement
- Car parking policies

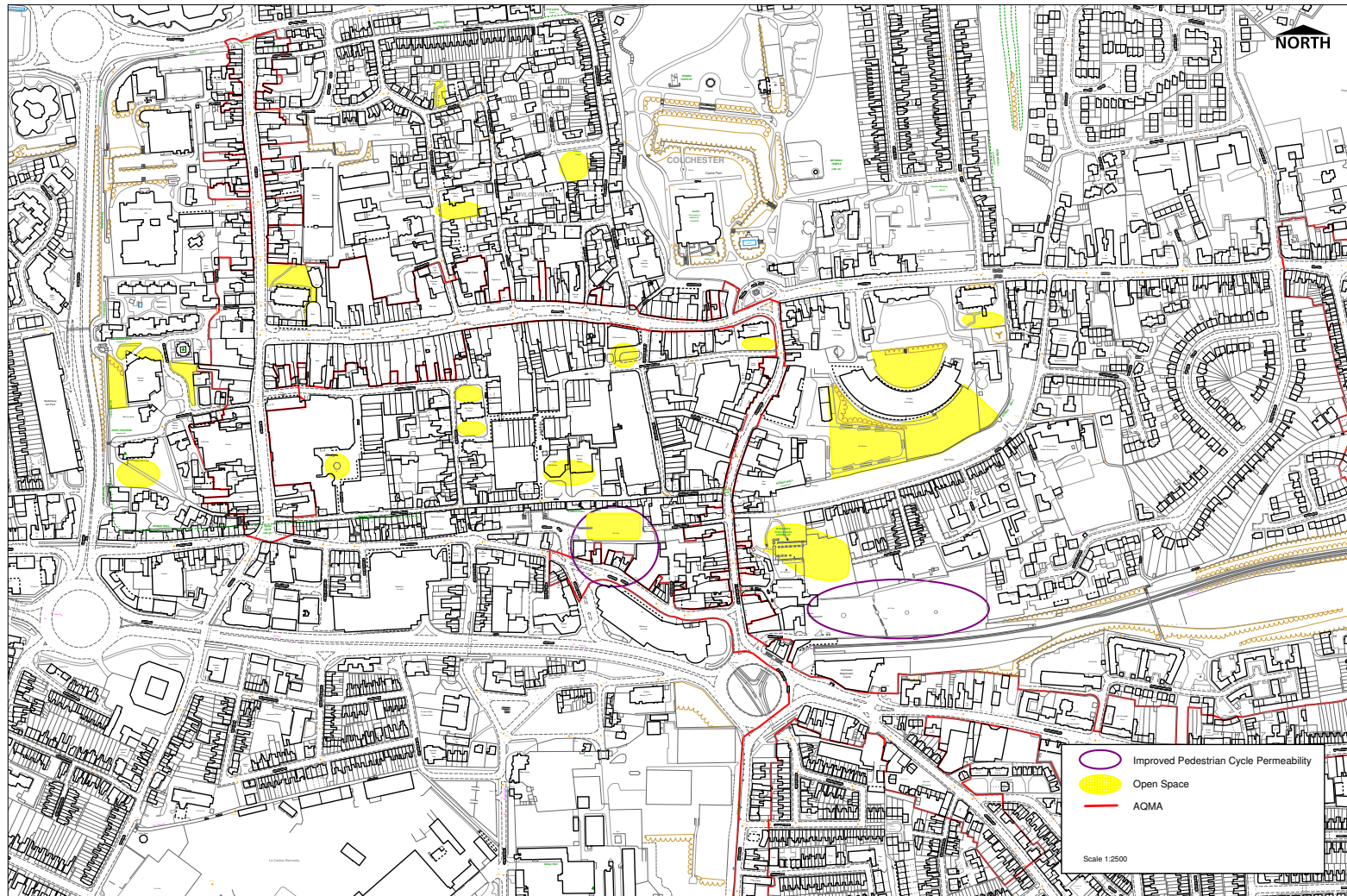
7.2.3 Whilst the Council encourages a flexible approach to BREEAM and the Code for Sustainable Homes and does not want to be prescriptive in terms of which credits should be achieved, applicants should consider incorporating the above measures into proposals.

7.2.4 There is a two stage approach to sustainable energy; reducing energy demand and providing energy sustainably. Development should be designed to reduce energy demand through passive design and energy efficiency measures. For example, buildings should be orientated to make maximum use of daylight and designed to make the best use of natural ventilation to provide cooling in summer; this is particularly important for retail and office developments.

7.2.5 Proposals for new buildings in the Town Centre should include information on the energy performance of the proposed building. For minor development it will be acceptable for information to be included in the Design and Access Statement. Applications for major development should be submitted with an Energy Strategy. Energy Strategies should include, but not be limited to, a description of the development, commitment to carbon reduction and sustainable design, description of how the energy hierarchy has been followed, and what is being done above current Building Regulations. Where different renewable energy technologies have been considered and dismissed this should be explained in the Energy Strategy.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Sustainability Map



© Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100023706

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

7.2.6 Proposals for the re-use of existing buildings will also be expected to incorporate sustainable design measures. However, it is vital that the unique characters of historic buildings and the Town Centre conservation area are not put at risk by unsympathetic alterations, unnecessary intervention, or changing environmental conditions. Opportunities for improving energy efficiency and incorporating renewable energy may be limited for historic buildings and proposals should focus on other sustainability measures such as reducing water consumption, introducing landscaping, promoting sustainable travel and effective waste management.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

7.3 The Council will expect new development to incorporate renewable and/or low carbon energy technologies. The delivery of an integrated Combined Heat and Power and District Heating and Cooling network will be supported to enable existing and new development to achieve significant carbon savings.



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

- 7.3.1 Whilst individual schemes to deliver renewable energy schemes will help address climate change, over the longer term it will be important to develop integrated Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and district heating and cooling to enable existing and new development to achieve significant carbon savings. The Council considers that gas CHP would be preferable to other sources as whilst the carbon savings are not as great gas CHP does not result in transport or air quality issues. Applicants of large scale schemes, particularly schemes that can act as anchor loads³, will be encouraged to work with the Council to initiate district-wide energy schemes, especially where there is an opportunity to link to existing development. Large schemes with a mixture of phases should consider the need to provide space for an energy centre and for buildings that come forward as part of the early phases to be capable of connecting to a district heating at a later date.
- 7.3.2 The Vineyard Gate retail development provides a good opportunity to develop a CHP district heating network. The proposed mix of uses will ensure a diverse energy density. The Council will discuss the opportunity for CHP district heating early on in pre-application discussions for this site and if it is not viable evidence should be submitted as part of the planning application to demonstrate this.
- 7.3.3 Solar photovoltaics (PV) is particularly suitable to the Town Centre. Unlike some other renewable technologies solar PV panels do not take up land (if mounted on the roof), which is a key consideration in town centres. Solar PV also does not require frequent deliveries of raw materials, another key consideration in a town centre site, and is viable on a small scale basis. All new buildings in the Town Centre should consider orientating the roof to face South East to South West with a pitch of 30 to 50° to maximise the potential for solar PV. However, this should not be at the expense of good design principles and the protection of the historic environment. The visual impact of PV panels will be of particular concern in town centre Conservation Areas.

³ Anchor loads are buildings that have a large heat demand and act as a catalyst for district heating schemes. Heat demand is often steady over the course of the day.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Adding to Green Infrastructure

7.4 The Council will encourage development proposals which add to the Town Centre's green infrastructure and enhance its biodiversity through such means as green roofs and walls, tree planting and the provision of green links.

- 7.4.1 Green infrastructure provides a multitude of functions. It protects and enhances biodiversity, provides space for water, encourages healthy living and promotes sustainable modes of transport. It has a key role to play in climate change adaptation by making places more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.
- 7.4.2 Every development provides opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Green roofs and walls, which convert a roof or a wall into an area where plants can grow, are examples of an enhancement whose benefits could serve as a Sustainable Urban Drainage system (SuDS), a biodiversity habitat, an open space (for a green roof) and an insulation source as well as being an attractive design feature.
- 7.4.3 Colchester Borough Council's Comprehensive [Climate Risk Assessment \(March 2010\)](#) looked at climate projections for Colchester and identified numerous risks that are or will be facing the Borough as a result of a changing climate. Of particular relevance to this SPD are an increased risk of flooding, water resource shortages, higher temperatures and the urban heat island effect, and managing ground conditions. The Risk Assessment highlighted a number of adaptive actions that could reduce the identified risks with the expectation that these actions would be progressed into an ongoing Adaptation Action Plan. The delivery of green roofs, green walls, tree planting, SuDS, open space, and sustainable design and construction are all identified as adaptive actions. Development proposals for the Town Centre provide opportunities to implement some of these adaptation measures.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Air Quality

7.5 New development will have regard to the need to improve air quality in the Town Centre. Applicants may be required to carry out assessment into the air quality impact of their development and implement mitigation measures if required.

7.5.1 Many of the main streets within and leading to the Town Centre have been designated as Air Quality Management Areas, reflecting their high levels of traffic congestion. The affected streets are shown on the Sustainability Map. The Council is developing an Air Quality Management Plan for these areas which will incorporate a range of measures, including traffic management; improvements to public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks, technological innovations and continuous monitoring. New development in the Town Centre will be evaluated for its effect on the air quality of the area, and required to implement appropriate measures to improve air quality, in line with Development Policies DP1 and DP2. Specific advice on air quality assessments for new development is published separately as a [Guidance Note](#)



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre



Digital connectivity

7.6 New development will be encouraged to capitalise on the advantages being provided by the expansion of the Town Centre's digital network outlined in the [Council's Digital Strategy](#) To permit e-commerce and increasingly, mobile or m-commerce which will enable consumers and businesses to research, compare and buy goods and services and engage with companies, organisations and each other.

7.6.1 Colchester is pursuing development of a next-generation broadband network using its existing CCTV network which will put it in the forefront of technological innovation. New development will benefit from this enhanced access and will be encouraged to develop innovative approaches to design and provision of facilities which capitalise on this feature.

Evidence Base

Air Quality Management Plan
Digital Strategy

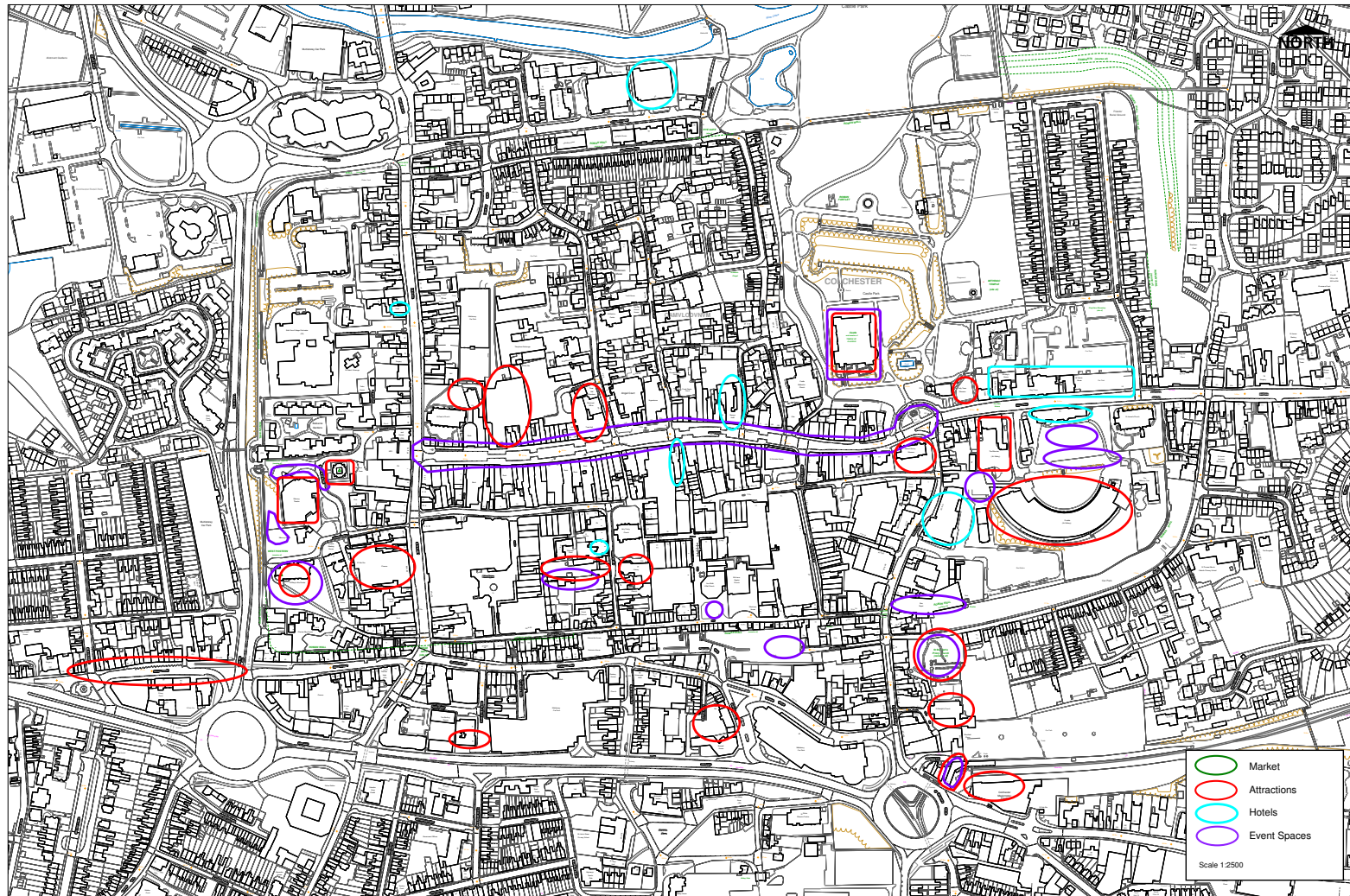
Activity

Policy Base

National Planning Policy Framework
Core Strategy CE Policies (Centres and Employment)
Dev Policy DP6 (Town Centre Uses)
Site Allocations SA TC1 (Appropriate Uses within the Town Centre and North Station Regeneration Area)

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Activity Map



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Mix of Uses

7.7 The Town Centre will incorporate a mix of uses to promote a distinctive identity, maintain street activity, and support economic vitality. In accordance with Core Strategy Centres and Employment policies, the town centre will be the primary location for retail, office, leisure and entertainment uses.

Development in the regenerated St. Botolph's Quarter will reflect the focus on culture with the firstsite gallery at its heart.

The balance between retail and non-retail uses will be guided by the approach in Development Policy DP6 which provides for at least 85% retail frontage in the Inner Core, 50% retail in the Outer Core. A more flexible criteria based approach is applied in the outlying Mixed Use Areas which allows for a wide range of uses as long as they contribute to the area's design quality, activity levels and character and have no significant adverse impact on neighbourhood amenity.



7.7.1 A focus on diversity of use that capitalises on Colchester's unique offer will drive initiatives to invigorate the Town Centre. This emphasis is also found in the [Creative Colchester Strategy](#), which provides a framework for capitalising on the town's creative industries. As the Mary Portas review of high streets observes, town centres should 'become places where we go to engage with other people in our communities, where shopping is just one small part of a rich mix of activities'. A flexible approach to uses in Mixed Use areas is intended to support this rich mix and increase the attractiveness of the Town Centre as a destination for a range of activities.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

7.7.2 Overall levels of development and types of use in the Town Centre are set forth in the adopted Core Strategy as follows:

Residential use – Core Strategy Table H1a lists that the Town Centre and fringe area will accommodate 2000 additional units over the period 2001-2021.

Offices – In accordance with Core Strategy Policy CE2a, the Town Centre will seek to deliver 40,000 sqm of gross office floor space in the Town Centre, Urban Gateways and Town Centre Fringe in the period 2006-2021.

Leisure – The Council will promote a wide range of leisure activities and cultural events in the Town Centre, in particular supporting use of the public realm as a space for art, music, markets, socialising, recreation and relaxation.

This mix of uses is designed to provide a sustainable central focus of activity which can be easily accessed by non-car means of transport.

Street Markets

7.8 The Council will promote and sustain the town's historic street markets and will allocate additional areas as needed for expansion, development and/or relocation of the market on selected days.



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

- 7.8.1 Colchester Charter Market has been in place in some form since 1189 and it is currently situated in various pedestrianised areas of the town centre, including Culver Street West, Long Wyre Street and Culver Street West on a Friday and Saturday. In addition to the official Charter Market, there are further opportunities to expand specialist markets to new locations and times.

Colchester's current market arrangements needs to be set within the wider local and national consideration of the role markets play in contributing to the social, environmental and economic well-being of communities. Studies have identified the role markets play in:

- Providing a sense of place
- Being part of the nation's cultural heritage
- Remaining an important element of the economy, particularly in relation to independent retailing, local employment and business start-up opportunities.
- Offering local access to fresh produce and other commodities
- Reducing environmental impacts e.g. by eliminating excessive packaging/waste.

(Markets 21, A Policy and Research Review of UK Retail and Wholesale Markets in the 21st Century, Retail Markets Alliance, Nov. 2009)

- 7.8.2 Given the restrictions on the availability of Council funding, securing more investment in markets, will require the Council to pursue innovative new approaches to funding and partnerships. Under any scenario however, the Council would retain control over the location of markets. It is accordingly important for new locations to be identified to address the longer term operational and expansion needs of the markets. Sites will accordingly be developed to meet the need for market development based on the following criteria:

- Central to other Town Centre retail facilities
- Adequate facilities and space to accommodate stalls based on stall holder input
- Potential for integrating with related activities and events to create an active public space
- Potential for public realm enhancement and improved streetscape

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Supporting the Evening Economy

7.9 The Council will seek to create a welcoming Town Centre after dark by encouraging a diverse range of uses that provide activity without compromising amenity. The Council will work to achieve and maintain 'Purple Flag' status in recognition of a well-managed town centre at night in order to encourage a high quality and diverse evening and night time economy. This will entail pursuing strategies which cover both the early evening hours when there are opportunities to provide more activities and uses catering to families, older people and town centre workers as well as the provision of bars, clubs and restaurants which predominate in the late evening hours.



7.9.1 The late evening economy is currently most visible along Head Street and the High Street and Queen St/St Botolph's Street. This concentration is considered to amplify problems of noise and anti-social behaviour rather than to allow them to be minimised and controlled. The Council will accordingly work with other agencies to identify monitor and manage the 'stress area' of the evening economy so that resources can be more effectively focused. There will be a focus on the creation or redefinition of spaces for evening economy uses, which diversify the evening/night time offer rather than replicate existing activities in the following areas, including improvements to lighting specified in the Lighting Strategy -

Existing areas – Head Street, North Hill, High Street

New areas – St. Nicholas Square, firstsite and associated open space/related uses, Mercury Theatre area

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

- 7.9.2 The Colchester Night Time Economy study commissioned by the Council provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Colchester's night time economy among users; perceived issues among non-users as well as the economic impact in terms of spend and employment.
- 7.9.3 Colchester town centre is a relatively small geographical area so visitor management principles are being adopted by a variety of town centre stakeholders in order to manage anti-social behaviours, facilitate safe and effective movement through the town centre and encourage a more balanced use of the town centre in the evening and into the night-time. These actions are being consolidated through pursuit of 'Purple Flag' accreditation which recognises well managed town centres at night.

Supporting Tourism

7.10 The Council will pursue innovative approaches in interpreting the town's rich heritage for visitors and the local community. New attractions and visitor accommodation in the Town Centre will be supported subject to their compliance with other planning requirements in line with the Council's planning policy on tourism (Development Policy DP10's) focus on urban areas of Colchester.



Evidence Base

2011 Retail Study

Cambridge Model to Estimate the Economic Impact of Tourism on Colchester Borough (collected annually)

Destination Benchmarking Visitor Opinion Surveys

Local Distinctiveness Audit, Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust, Norwich, April 2012

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Heritage and Design

Policy Base

National Planning Policy Framework

Core Strategy Policies UR1 Regeneration Areas, UR2 Built Design and Character, PR2 People-Friendly Streets

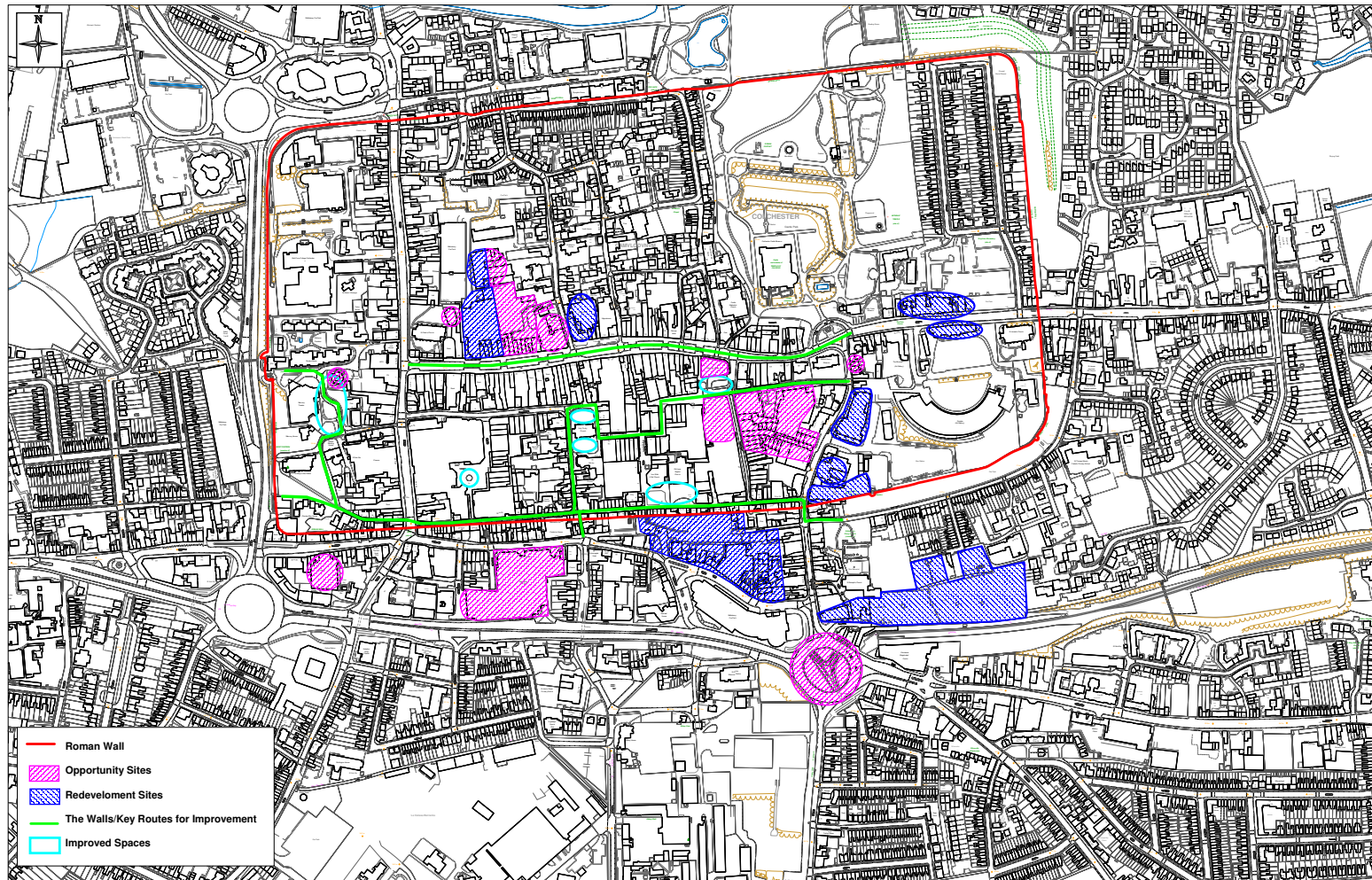
Development Policy DP14 Historic Environment Assets

Shopfront Design Guide SPD



Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Heritage and Design Map



© Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100023706 | Not To Scale | 03/04/2012.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Public Spaces

7.11 The Council will work with landowners and stakeholders to make the most of spaces in the town, including the spaces managed by the Council. The Council will support rejuvenation of the key public spaces listed below through a series of linked designs that reflect the historic ties between spaces and yet gives each space a special, unique identity.

Key spaces –

St. Nicholas Square

Eld Lane Baptist Church/United Reform Church open space

St. Botolph's Priory

Trinity Church Yard

Mercury Theatre/Balkerne Gardens

firstsite open space

Vineyard Gate open space

7.11.1 Spaces are distinct from pavements and movement corridors and provide the opportunity to stop and enjoy the surrounding activities and environments. Town centre developments should provide spaces as appropriate which should be available for all people and which generate interest through the quality of the landscaping, public art; interpretation of heritage features as well as commercial opportunities for street markets, cafés and restaurants.

7.11.2 There are a number of underused spaces in the town centre, some of very poor quality. Many are gated churchyards, with restricted hours of opening. All, however, have the potential make a better contribution to amenity in the town centre and the Council will seek to secure funding for their improvement through associated development, its Community Infrastructure Levy, and grant funding. Further detail on design, materials and maintenance of public spaces is contained in the Public Realm Strategy. ([Appendix D](#))

Enhancing the historic environment

7.12 The Council will work with Town Centre businesses and residents as well as statutory bodies and interest groups to secure preservation, interpretation and enhancement of the wide range of the Town Centre's rich historic and archaeological heritage, including the Roman Wall, numerous listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and landscape/streetscape features. The Council will pursue a co-ordinated and innovative approach to the interpretation of the historic environment.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

7.12.1 The Council and its partners pursue a number of strategies and projects to safeguard and promote Colchester's unique heritage, including an updated Roman Wall Management Plan which is being developed, in partnership with Friends of the Roman Wall.

Town Centre wayfinding and links

7.13 The Council is developing integrated solutions to access to the Town Centre to reduce congestion and facilitate access by public transport and cycling. Within the historic core, access and movement by pedestrians will be prioritised. Any additional waymarking signs will be evaluated in terms of their appropriateness to the existing system. New wayfinding measures will be informed by the findings of [research involving older people's use of Colchester](#) Town Centre which highlighted the importance of landmarks in navigating through the town as well as the correct positioning of signage and its limitation on the pavement.

The Council will develop the following routes to highlight their historic/environmental importance and to link key areas of the Town Centre:

- The Walls – Historic Town Walls, parts of which date back to Roman times, encircle many parts of the Town Centre. The route leading from St. Botolph's Priory to the Hole in the Wall pub, includes many small independent retailers atop the walls. The Council will work with these retailers to develop designs, interpretation and related branding to capitalise on this unique area in terms of offering new opportunities for businesses along this route, new visitor experiences and engender a sense of civic pride by highlighting one of the town's greatest historic assets. The Council commissioned a Local Distinctiveness Audit to initiate the project which identifies the opportunities for improvement in the area along with options for delivering them.
- Tree Trail – The Town Centre includes a number of large and unique trees, with many in Castle Park and other fine specimens associated with other historic buildings, churchyards and streets in the Town Centre. A route for visitors highlighting these trees is under development.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Attractive streetscapes

Please also refer to the Public Realm Strategy ([Appendix D](#)) for specific details

7.14 The Council will pursue co-ordinated action on the following elements of the streetscape which contribute to its overall look and feel.

- 7.14.1. Reducing clutter – All schemes affecting the public realm will be reviewed to ensure they maximise opportunities to reduce clutter, including the hazard to movement it can represent. A rationalisation of the town's signage and street furniture will add to the quality of the environment by reducing pavement clutter and freeing up space for movement.
- 7.14.2. Materials – New developments and public realm schemes will be required to use high-quality materials which enhance the surrounding environment.
- 7.14.3. Local Distinctiveness – The Council will support the provision of unique street furniture for Colchester which will highlight its local distinctiveness; enhance the space around it; encourage use; and interpret historic events and characters.
- 7.14.4. Maintenance – New public realm improvements will be designed for ease of maintenance and longevity, and the responsibility for maintenance will be clearly delegated to the appropriate body.
- 7.14.5. Lighting – Proposals for new lighting will be expected to comply with the [Town Centre Lighting Strategy](#), Appendix E.
- 7.14.6. Banners – Banners for public events will only be permitted, subject to appropriate approvals, when suitably designed and in locations supported by adequate infrastructure.
- 7.14.7. High-quality shopfronts – Applications for new shopfronts will be required to comply with the requirements set out in the Council's adopted [Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#). This includes sympathetic signage. The SPD provides that A-boards outside shops and within the Highway will not be permitted unless permission is sought from and granted by the Highway Authority.
- 7.14.8. Incorporation of public art to enhance interpretation – The Council will identify key opportunities and locations for public art in appropriate town centre locations, including temporary projects such as hoardings around building sites. Art projects will provide visual interest; stories about people and places; and prompts for contemplation or conversation. The Council will seek contributions for public art through Section 106 agreements and through other funding sources.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

7.14.9. Pavement cafés – Pavement cafés will be welcome to add activity to the street in appropriate areas. The extent of areas occupied by tables and chairs will be regulated through a co-ordinated approach with licensing and highways to ensure pedestrian accessibility is not compromised. A map will be made available showing areas where pavement cafés will be encouraged as well as areas which are not considered appropriate for pavement cafés based on the following criteria:

- Pavement width
- Street slope
- Health and safety issues including air quality
- Accessibility

Pavement cafés for other Town Centre areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

7.14.10 An attractive streetscape involves a number of inter-related elements, including unifying design themes alongside unique architectural statements; clear but non-obtrusive signage and advertising; well-managed activity levels and high quality street furniture. The above guidelines are intended to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the individual components that together support a successful urban environment. Further details on streetscape design, materials and maintenance is contained in the Public Realm Strategy. ([Appendix D](#))

Integrating new developments into the town

7.15 New developments in the Town Centre should be designed to integrate seamlessly into the existing fabric. Street connections and new streets must provide continuity, accessibility, and legibility for desire lines from existing quarters whilst expressing the significance of new primary attractors.

7.15.1 New developments need to respect their context, but that does not mean they need to be anonymous. There will be opportunities for them to enhance their surroundings by contributing new public spaces to add to the variety of environments on offer in the Town Centre and the ability to support a range of events and exhibitions available to all. They can also enhance strategic green links. Whilst additional trees are not appropriate in the established street pattern of the historic core, new developments can create opportunities for a softer, green public realm although regard needs to be paid to archaeology and other constraints. New trees and plant material can be placed in containers to address such constraints. New development sites are the only large sites where the public desire for more trees in the town centre can be realised.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Policy and Evidence Base

Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

Study on Older People's Use of Space (OPUS) 2010 – looked at older people's experience of navigating Colchester Town Centre

Local Distinctiveness Audit 2012, Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust, Norwich, April 2012

Movement

Access to and within the town centre

Policy Base

National Planning Policy Framework

Core Strategy Policies TA1 Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour, TA2 Walking and Cycling, TA3 Public Transport, TA4 Roads and Traffic, TA5 Road Network Improvements
Development Policies DP17 Accessibility and Access, DP19 Transport Infrastructure Proposals, DP19 Parking Standards.

- 7.16 Transport improvements in the Town Centre are designed to enhance the pedestrian environment and reduce unnecessary traffic across the town centre. This will help to boost the town's vitality and economic prosperity, while improving air quality at key locations and the reliability of public transport. The changes will also support the park and ride service.
- 7.17 Successful towns are those that are busy with people. The challenge is to bring as many people as possible to the Town Centre and once there will hopefully enjoy the experience. There have been a number of towns and cities that have reduced the level of motor vehicles in their centres such as Oxford, York, Chester, Nottingham and Lincoln following the principles of giving space to people in the Town Centre. In these towns vehicles can still access the centre but is either controlled by time or access restriction where through movement is not possible in the town centre streets. Through movement is possible on routes around the Town Centre.
- 7.18 The Borough Council has been seeking to reduce traffic in the town centre to create a more people friendly environment for many years as the Planning Policy History section above explains⁴⁵⁶. The aspiration back in 1968 included the construction of Balkerne Hill and Southway dual carriageways for through traffic and loops to allow those vehicles needing access to the Town Centre to do so.

4 Colchester Town Centre Report (1968)

5 Colchester's New Transport Strategy (2001)

6 Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 – policy PR2 People Friendly Streets, policy TA2 Walking and Cycling, policy TA3 Public transport

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Figure 3 Schematic – Movement and Access to the Town Centre



(Figure 3 illustrates how greater priority is to be given to people in Colchester Town Centre. It is not intended to be a detailed plan of all routes.)

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

The centre of town is characterised by squares and shopping centres where the priority movement is on foot. There are a number of narrow streets and lanes which give access to the central areas of shops, cafés and bars. These streets act as shared spaces where priority is for walking and cycling movements with part of the streets being used for market stalls, pavement cafés, where appropriate, timed deliveries and residential access.

7.20 The Council, in partnership with Essex County Council, will seek to improve access to the Town Centre by non-private car means including bus priority, reconfigured road arrangements and improved cycle/pedestrian links across major cross-town routes. Measures could include:

- 7.20.1 Linking these narrow streets to the main passenger transport streets are small passageways, steps and routes through shops giving good permeability from the box of streets around the town centre. High Street, Queen Street, St Botolph's St, Osborne St, St John's St and Head Street form the main box around the core of the town centre and will become the main passenger transport drop off, pick up and interchange areas in the town centre. General vehicle access will be restricted in the High Street throughout the day resulting in a significant improvement in the environment for people whether they are shopping, waiting for a bus, socialising or passing through. In the morning and evening, traffic will be allowed into the High Street for deliveries, pick up and drop off in parking bays and through movement.
- 7.20.2 Vehicles will still be given access to Head Street, North Hill (via Head Street), Queen Street, St Botolph's St, Osborne Street and St John's Street throughout the day. These streets give access to some of the car parks which are located on the edge of the town centre. The underground delivery areas serving Lion Walk and Culver Square will continue to be accessible. Disabled parking and delivery bays will be available. The residential areas remain accessible from St Peter's Street, St John's Street, St Nicholas Square, Priory Street and Head Street.
- 7.20.3 The main vehicle routes (red) – A133 Colne Bank Ave/Cowdray Ave/ St Andrew's Avenue, A134 Westway/Balkerne Hill/Southway/Magdalen Street are the main routes for traffic not needing to enter the town centre area. Movement patterns to access inside of these main routes may need to change.
- 7.20.4 The principle is similar to Essex County Council's Traffic Management Strategy Functional Route Hierarchy, but in the town centre area recognises that the people and place function have an important role in the vitality as well as the movement function of a street.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

- 7.20.5 The most sustainable way to access the town centre is to either walk or cycle. New and improved routes will be considered to encourage these modes, for example removing the no cycling order on subways, improving crossing points on roads which sever the town centre from its neighbourhoods, and giving better access by bike on route which lead to the town centre. Walking will similarly be encouraged by an improved walking environment and clearly marked routes.
- 7.20.6 Buses bring many people into the Town Centre. Bus priority will be made, where appropriate, on the main access routes to allow them fast access into, and better circulation around the Town Centre. Colchester Town rail station allows access into the heart of the Town Centre from the mainline rail network. The station forms an important function for the number of people who live, work and visit the Town Centre. The Council will encourage the rail operators to maintain and improve, where appropriate, services to this station.

Movement networks and priorities within the Town Centre

7.21 The Council will develop and maintain new and existing links for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles as illustrated by Figure 3. On some roads this may be achieved by sharing the road space for all users. Some roads may have differing priorities for different modes according to the time of day to maximise pedestrian space during the day and allow for deliveries outside main shopping hours. Vehicular movements will be regulated to minimise their negative effect on air quality and congestion and give priority for buses, taxis and cyclists.

Pedestrians and cyclists

- 7.21.1 Reducing unnecessary traffic in the town centre will improve the street environment and will make more space of other uses for example for pedestrian to stop, browse and mingle; and more space for cafés, stalls and events.
- 7.21.2 Access within the town centre by bike will be improved by allowing cyclists to travel through one way and access only points as well as investigating new routes into the town centre. Suitable cycle parking must be provided at new and existing locations where there is a need, either on street or within buildings (i.e. a cycle centre)

Public transport users

- 7.21.3 The Council will seek to support efficient interchanges between public transport routes, pedestrian links and key Town Centre facilities. The Council will work with public transport providers to promote the frequency, duration, speed, reliability, and capacity of services.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

- 7.21.4 Bus circulation within the Town Centre core is important to serve those shopping working, living or visiting the Town Centre. Reducing congestion in the Town Centre helps buses' reliability, thereby making travelling by bus more attractive. It is anticipated that Park and Ride will be available in 2013 and dedicated Park and Ride buses will serve the town centre. Traffic management measures which assist with the circulation of buses also helps the Park and Ride buses.
- 7.21.5 One of the ways to encourage people to use buses is the provision of quality bus information. This applies to information before they travel so they can make informed choices, information at stops telling them where they have to wait and real time information so they have confidence in knowing how long they have to wait. Whilst waiting, the bus user will need quality waiting facility by way of shelters or waiting areas.

Car users

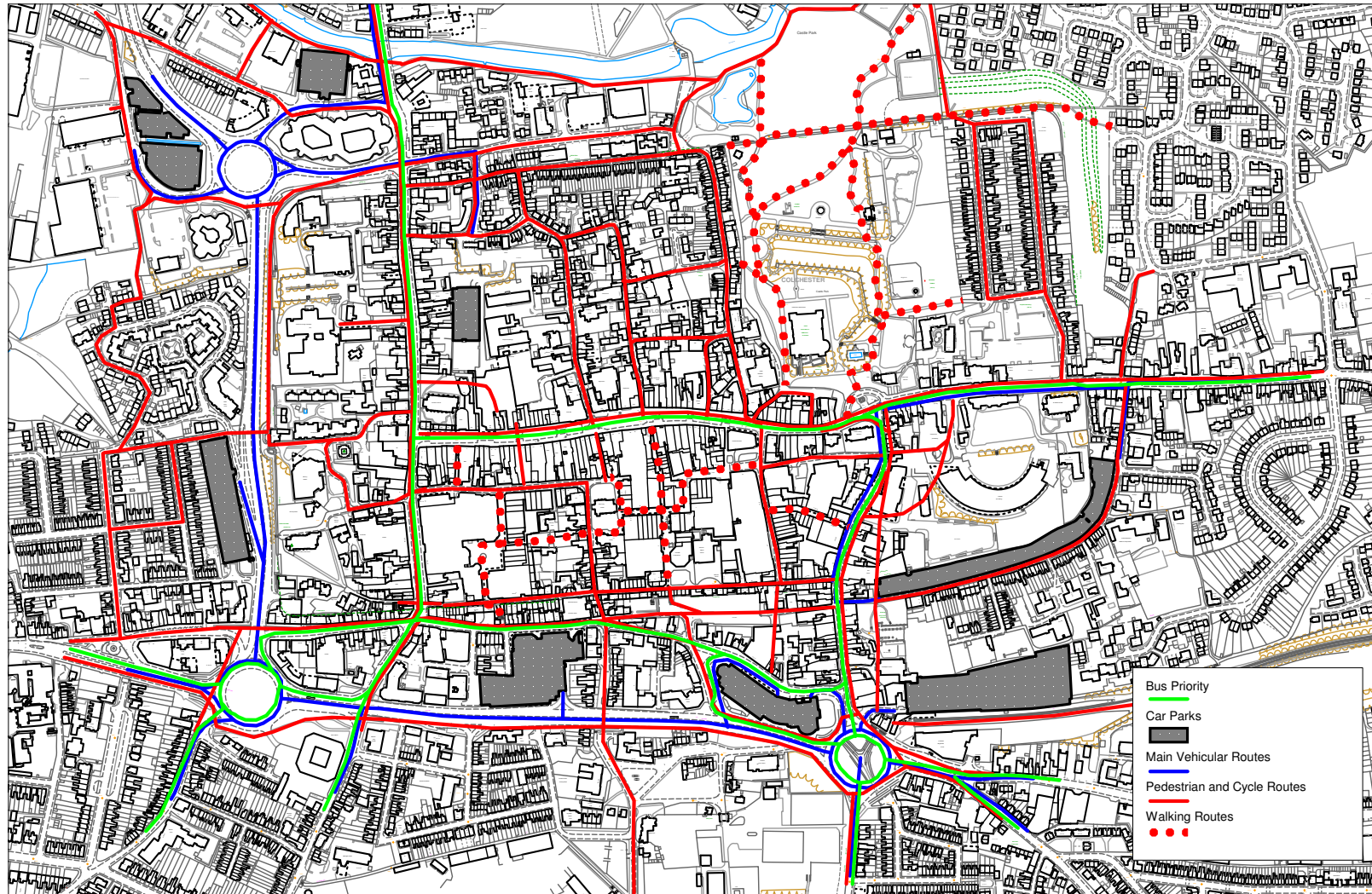
- 7.21.6 The Council will provide appropriate levels of short-stay parking in the Town Centre during the day, evening and overnight, to support the town's commercial activity.
- 7.21.7 The provision of P&R will enable some long stay car drivers who currently park in the town centre core to park in the P&R site, thereby not having to access the core by car. The parking pricing strategy will help ensure the town centre is kept viable and vibrant by offering attractive prices to those that need to park in the Town Centre. The strategy will encouraging car traffic to use the most appropriate car parks, therefore helping to manage congestion and demand.
- 7.21.8 Drivers with disabilities can park in designated bays in the car parks, as well as suitable on street provision where appropriate.

Taxi and private hire users

- 7.21.9 Taxis form an important part of the public transport system and should be allowed good access to the Town Centre at all times. Taxis will be allowed in some roads where private vehicles are restricted and ranks provided where possible for dropping off and picking up passengers.

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Movement in the Town Centre Map



© Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100023706

Chapter 7 Planning Policy in the Town Centre

Access for deliveries

7.21.10 Deliveries to the shops in the Town Centre as well as other service vehicles are the lifeblood of the town. Suitable access must be made available for them. However due to conflicting demands for the roadspace and the need to improve air quality, deliveries will be timed on some roads.

Motorcycle users

7.21.11 Motorcycles will be allowed to access the town centre during the times vehicles are restricted via the bus priority points.

7.21.12 Motorcycle parking will continue to be provided within car parks and on street where appropriate, to help encourage this mode.

Behavioural change and working with others

7.21.13 The Council will work with organisations in and adjacent to the town centre, to help them manage their travel. This could be by way of travel planning for staff and visitors of Town Centre businesses and attractions.



Chapter 8 Character Areas and Opportunity Sites

- 8.1 The Town Centre contains within it a number of areas with a unique identity and function. The following maps illustrates these areas as well as proposals and guidelines to retain and enhance the areas' locally distinctiveness buildings, spaces and functions. Further detail on the Character Areas is contained within the Public Realm Strategy [Appendix D](#) which provides guidelines for uses, materials and urban design.
- 8.2 The Character Areas include both functional areas such as the Shopping Core; and single streets such Head Street/ North Hill. Each Character Area includes a number of strengths and weaknesses which form the basis of enhancement proposals. Key sites for redevelopment/reuse are identified for each Character Area as appropriate and are illustrated on the maps that follow along with the area specific proposals and issues identified on the Key Themes maps (Sustainability, Activity, Movement and Heritage and Design).

The Character Areas are:

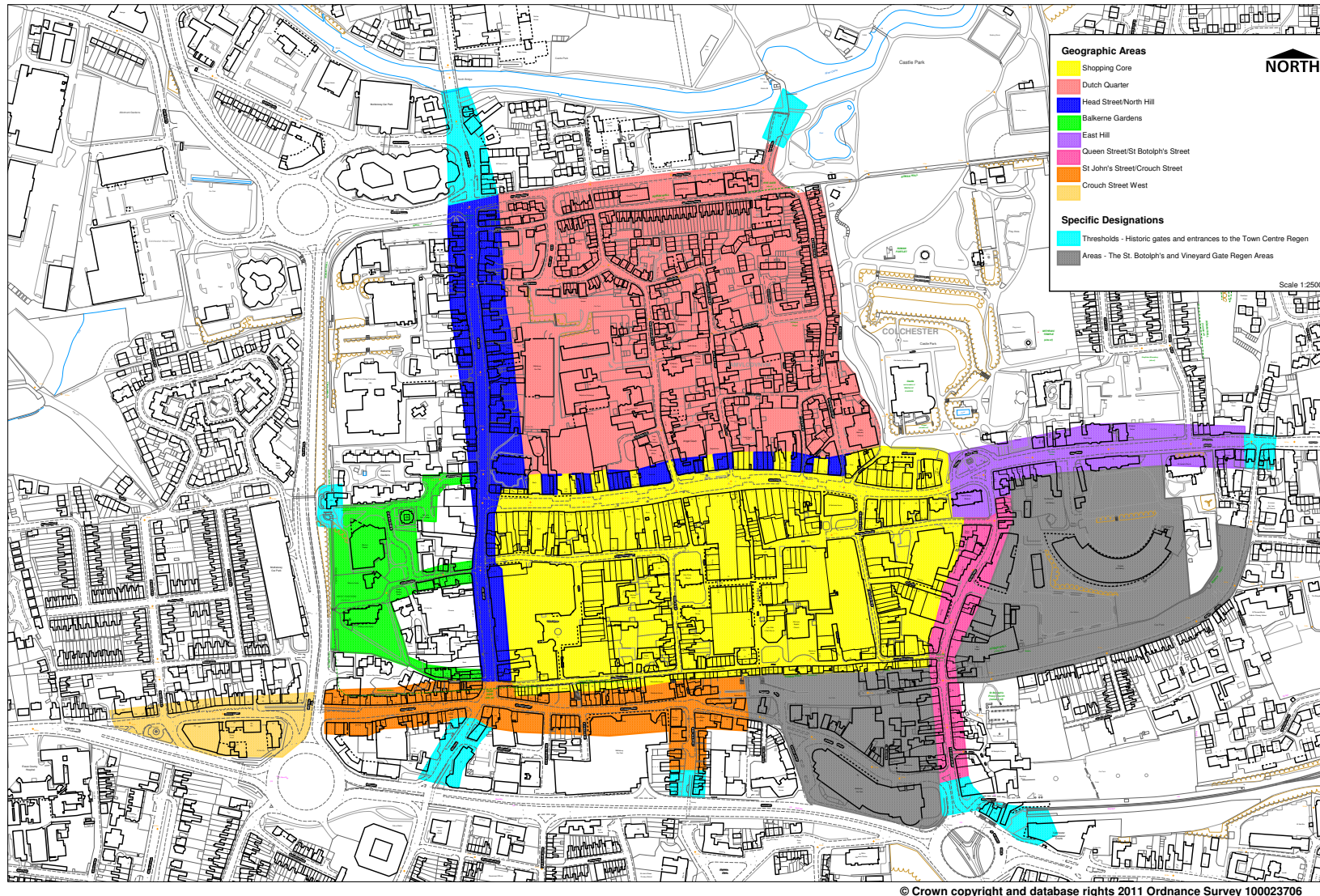
1. Shopping Core
2. Dutch Quarter
3. Head Street/North Hill
4. Balcerne Gardens
5. East Hill/High Street
6. Queen's Street/ St. Botolph's Street
7. St John's Street/Crouch Street East
8. Crouch Street West
9. Vineyard Gate/ St Botolph's Quarter.



West Stockwell Street in the Dutch Quarter

Chapter 8 Character Areas and Opportunity Sites

Geographic Areas Map



© Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100023706

Chapter 9 Delivery Strategy and Schedule

Delivery Strategy and Schedule

Partnership Working

- 9.1 Delivery of the plan relies on an integrated and coordinated approach. Within the Council, the Town Centre Steering Group will coordinate delivery of the Action Plan associated with the SPD. This group will coordinate with a wide range of public, private sector and third sector partners including:

Public Sector

Essex County Council
Essex Police
NHS and Primary Care Trusts

Business

Colchester Retail Business Association (CORBA)
Chamber of Commerce
Individual Town Centre businesses
Colchester Business Group
Large Retailers Forum
Market and Street Traders
Walls Working Group
Colchester & District Hospitality Association
Pubwatch
Colchester Business Against Crime (COLBAC)

Transport

Colchester Hackney Carriage Association
Bus Operators
CBus (Bus users group)
Colchester Cycle Campaign
Greater Anglia Rail Operator

Cultural

firstsite Gallery
Slack Space
Mercury Theatre
Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service
Headgate Theatre
Colchester Arts Centre

Chapter 9 Delivery Strategy and Schedule

Other Institutions

University of Essex
Garrison

Residents' Associations and Amenity Groups

Colchester Tourist Guides' Association
Friends of Colchester Roman Wall
Destination Colchester

Castle Ward Neighbourhood Action Panel

Fair Access to Colchester
Civic Society
Friends of Castle Park
Colchester in Bloom

Voluntary Groups

Colchester Community Voluntary Services (CCVS)
Open Road

Funding

9.2 Commitments within this plan will be delivered through a variety of public and private funding sources. Key among these will be:

- Community Infrastructure Levy charges
- Section 106 payments linked to specific developments
- Grant opportunities at national and European level.

Delivery plan

9.3 The Council's Better Town Centre Steering Group co-ordinates the delivery of Town Centre projects and programmes. Information about how projects are being delivered is available on the www.bettertowncentre.co.uk website.

Monitoring

The success of Town Centre SPD will be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR monitors all Colchester planning policies. It was first published in 2005 and has been continually published each December. Each AMR looks back over the previous year and assesses how the adopted documents have performed in relation to the aims and objectives set out. The success of this SPD will accordingly be measured through the indicators set for the planning policies that underpin it.

Appendices

Appendix A – List of Local Plan policies

The Local Plan (formerly the local Development Framework) provides the overall strategic guidance for the Borough of Colchester, including the Town Centre.

The following policies are of particular relevance:

Core Strategy

- SD1 – Sustainable Development Locations
- SD2 – Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure
- CE1 – Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy
- CE2a – Town Centre
- H1 – Housing Delivery
- H2 – Housing Density
- H3 – Housing Diversity
- H4 – Affordable Housing
- UR1 – Regeneration Areas
- UR2 – Built Design and Character
- PR1 – Open Space
- PR2 – People Friendly Streets
- TA1 – Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour
- TA2 – Walking and Cycling
- TA3 – Public Transport
- TA4 – Roads and Traffic
- TA5 – Parking
- ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling

Site Allocations

- SA TC1 – Appropriate Uses within the Town Centre and North Station Regeneration Areas

Development Policies

- DP1 – Design and Amenity
- DP3 – Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy
- DP6 – Colchester Town Centre Uses
- DP11 – Flat Conversions
- DP14 – Historic Environment Assets
- DP16 – Private Amenity Space and Open Space Provision for New Residential Development
- DP17 – Accessibility and Access
- DP18 – Transport Infrastructure Proposals
- DP19 – Parking Standards
- DP25 – Renewable Energy

Appendices

Appendix B – List of LDF Evidence Base documents

National Planning Guidance

Department of Communities and Local Government,
National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Department for Transport, *Manual for Streets 2*, September, 2010

Essex Level Documents

Essex County Council, *Integrated County Strategy*, December 2010

Essex County Council, *Essex Design Initiative, Urban Place Supplement*, May 2007

Essex Parking Standards, 2009

Colchester Policy Documents

Colchester 2020, *Sustainable Community Strategy*, October 2007

Statement of Community Involvement (adopted 2006, amended in October 2008 and June 2011)

Annual Monitoring Report (December 2005 and annually thereafter)

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Affordable Housing – August 2011

Community Facilities – September 2009)

Cycling Delivery Strategy – January 2012

Shopfront Guidance – June 2011

Sustainable Construction – June 2011

Vehicle Parking Standards – November 2009

Adopted Core Strategy, December 2008

Adopted Development Policies, October 2010

Adopted Site Allocations, October 2010

Digital Strategy (June 2012)

Equality Impact Assessment for the Local Development Framework, revised 2012

Appendices

Colchester Studies

Cambridge Model to Estimate the Economic Impact of Tourism on Colchester Borough (collected annually)

Chris Blandford Associates, *Townscape Character Assessment*, June 2006

Chris Blandford Associates, *Assessment of Open Countryside Between Settlements in Borough of Colchester* (July 2009)

Destination Benchmarking Visitor Opinion Surveys

Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch, *Colchester Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project*, June 2009

Fordham Associates, *Strategic Housing Market Assessment*, February 2008

GVA Grimley, *North Essex Retail Study, Stage Two Report, Colchester Borough*, February 2007 and 2009 update

Heritage Economic & Regeneration Trust (HEART), *Colchester Town Centre Project, Local Distinctiveness Audit*, March 2012

Humberts Leisure, *Hotel Market Demand Appraisal and Sequential Site Assessment*, April 2007 and update June 2009

J Mansell Jagger, *Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal*, 2007

King Sturge, *Colchester Town Centre Retail Study*, Nov. 2011

Lambert Smith Hampton, *Employment Land Study*, May 2007

PMP Consultants, *Colchester Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study*, November 2007

Roger Tym and Partners, *Strategic Housing Land Availability Study*, November 2007 and June 2008 update

Royal Haskoning, *Colchester Appropriate Assessment*, November 2007

Scott Wilson, *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment*, November 2007

University of Swansea, *Study on Older People's Use of Space (OPUS)* 2010

Appendices

Appendix C

Glossary

Better Town Centre – The Better Town Centre improvement programme is a Colchester Borough Council initiative providing a co-ordinated approach to Town Centre working based on the following nine inter-related themes:

- Improving Colchester for You and Your Family
- Creating Quality Public Places and Spaces
- Bringing New Buildings
- Supporting Business and Retailers
- Making it Easier to Get To and Around Colchester
- Promoting Colchester
- New Things to See, Do and Visit
- Ensuring Clean, Safe Places and Spaces
- Changing Colchester After Dark

These themes have been integrated into the key objectives of this document.

Core Strategy – The Core Strategy, adopted in December 2008, sets out the long-term vision for the sustainable development of Colchester and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision. It provides for the enhancement of the environment, as well and defines the general locations for delivering strategic development including housing, employment, retail, leisure, community and transport, which are then given precise boundaries in the Proposals Map.

Community Infrastructure Levy – The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge which local authorities may impose on new development to help fund new strategic infrastructure.

Development Policies – The Development Policies document forms part of the Local Plan (previously known as the Local Development Framework). It provides further details to assist the delivery of the strategic objectives and policies found in the Core Strategy. The Development Policies will affect allocations and designations set by the Site Allocations document and shown on the Proposals Map.

Evidence Base – The Evidence Base for Colchester's adopted planning policies includes all the documents used to inform its policies and allocations, including studies, strategies, and national, regional and local policies. Evidence Base documents can be viewed via links on the Council's LDF website page.

Integrated County Strategy – The document sets out infrastructure and investment opportunities for Essex. It was produced by the Essex Chief Executives' Association with agreement from all fifteen county, unitary and district authorities in Essex. In particular, it highlights the role of Colchester Town Centre as a key focus for sustainable growth.

Appendices

Local Development Framework (LDF) – This is the term set by 2004 national legislation which was given to the portfolio of documents which provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area. The National Planning Policy Framework, adopted in March 2012, changed the collective term for local planning policies to ‘Local Plan’.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policy including the primacy of Local Plans and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Public Realm – Public realm relates to all those parts of the built environment where the public has free access. It encompasses all streets, square and other rights of way, whether predominantly in residential, commercial or community/civic uses; open spaces and parks; and the public/private spaces where public access is unrestricted (at least during daylight hours). It includes the interfaces with key internal and private spaces to which the public has normally has free access.

Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) – The Site Allocations document sets out the criteria for the boundaries shown on the Proposals Map and provides area and use specific allocations.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – A document produced by the Council to add further detailed guidance and information on a particular subject such as Sustainable Construction or Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities. An SPD is subject to a formal consultation period and then is used as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – An appraisal of the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with sustainable development.

Town Centre – The extent of Colchester’s Town Centre is still defined by the walls first built by the Romans two thousand years ago. The precise boundary is illustrated by the Proposals Map and includes the built-up area surrounded by the Walls as well as the St. Botolphs quarter to the east and a further commercial area to the south bounded by Southway. Colchester planning policies place the Town Centre at the heart of its policies for sustainable development.

Colchester Borough Council
Rowan House
33 Sheepen Road
Colchester CO3 3WG

Email: planning.policy@colchester.gov.uk
Telephone (Planning Policy): 01206 282473/476

If you need help reading or understanding
this document, please take it to our customer
Service Centre, High Street, Colchester.

Textphone users should dial 18001
followed by 01206 282222.

We will try to provide a reading service, a
translation, or any other format you need.

December 2012

