

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

Explanatory Note

The Leader of the Council has established Delegation Schemes by which certain decisions may be made by the relevant cabinet member or specific officers.

Cabinet member decisions are subject to review under the Call-in Procedure.

From the date the notice of the decision made is published there are five working days during which any five Councillors may sign a request for the decision to be reviewed (called in) and deliver it to the Proper Officer.

If, at the end of the period, no request has been made, the decision may be implemented. If a valid call- in request has been made, the matter will be referred to the Scrutiny Panel

Part A – To be completed by the appropriate Cabinet Member/Officer

Title of Report

St Botolphs Circus Consultation

Delegated Power

To promote and procure the implementation of the Borough Council's Transport Strategy in partnership with Essex County Council, the responsible Transport Authority and other partners to improve infrastructure.

To promote partnership working with Essex County Council, the responsible Transport Authority.

Decision Taken

The Portfolio Holder is asked to agree Colchester Borough Council's response to the Essex County Council consultation on the proposed changes to St Botolphs Circus.

The recommended decision is to express the Council's disappointment at the proposed scheme which does not meet the original project objectives and to ask that ECC review the design and explore funding possibilities to enable a scheme to be developed which will meet the original objectives.

Key Decision

No

Forward Plan

No

Reasons for the Decision

The consultation provides an opportunity to comment on a draft scheme. The proposal currently only reflects Objective 3 of the agreed objectives - 'improving traffic flow' and does not address Objectives 1,2,4,5 (set out in paragraph 5.3). In comparison, the previously circulated draft proposal was holistic and met all project objectives.

Alternative Options

Not to respond to the consultation. This would mean losing the opportunity to influence ECC on how the St Botolphs Circus could be regenerated to deliver key objectives around promoting sustainable transport, healthy lifestyles and successful placemaking.

To respond favourably to the consultation which would mean a conflict of policy with our current and emerging environmental policies and the current work being carried out with the Environmental Task and Finish Group.

To submit an amended consultation response to that proposed in this report.

Conflict of Interest

None

Dispensation by Head of Paid Service

None

Dispensation by Monitoring Officer

None

Approved by Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation

Signature Cllr Martin Goss

Date 2407/19

(**NB** For Key Decisions the report must be made available to the public for five clear days prior to the period for call-in commencing)

Part B – To be completed by the Proper Officer (Democratic Services)

Portfolio Holder Decision Reference Number

Specify Number. WAS-005-19

Implementation Date

This decision can be implemented if no request for the decision to be reviewed (call-in) has been made **after 5pm on 1 August 2019.**

Call-in Procedure

The Decision Notice for this decision was published on the internet and placed in the Members' Room and the Customer Service Centre on 25 July 2019.

A request for reference to the Scrutiny Panel must be made by **5pm on 1 August 2019.**

Signature of Proper Officer Zoe Gentry

18 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Jane Thompson
Title	St Botolphs Circus Consultation		☎ 508642
Wards affected	Castle and New Town and Christ Church		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns the consultation being carried out by Essex County Council (ECC) regarding the proposed changes to St Botolphs circus area. It also proposes a response to be submitted by the Council.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder is asked to agree Colchester Borough Council's response to the Essex County Council consultation on the proposed changes to St Botolphs Circus.
- 2.2 The recommended decision is to express the Council's disappointment at the proposed scheme which does not meet the original project objectives and to ask that ECC review the design and explore funding possibilities to enable a scheme to be developed which will meet the original objectives.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The consultation provides an opportunity to comment on a draft scheme. The proposal currently only reflects Objective 3 of the agreed objectives - 'improving traffic flow' and does not address Objectives 1,2,4,5 (set out in paragraph 5.3). In comparison, the previously circulated draft proposal was holistic and met all project objectives.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not to respond to the consultation. This would mean losing the opportunity to influence ECC on how the St Botolphs Circus could be regenerated to deliver key objectives around promoting sustainable transport, healthy lifestyles and successful placemaking.
- 4.2 To respond favourably to the consultation which would mean a conflict of policy with our current and emerging environmental policies and the current work being carried out with the Environmental Task and Finish Group.
- 4.3 To submit an amended consultation response to that proposed in this report.

5. Background Information

History

- 5.1 The Garrison Masterplan was adopted in November 2002 following public consultation. The relevant Masterplan objectives and response to the consultation can be found in Appendix 4.
- 5.2 As part of the Garrison development Section 106 funds were secured to make a contribution towards mitigating the impact of the Garrison development in the St Botolphs Circus area.
- 5.3 In 2017, ECC and CBC officers agreed a set of objectives for the St Botolphs circus area:
 1. Create a key 'Gateway' access point into the Town Centre for the following users:
 - Pedestrians
 - Cyclists
 - Public transport
 - Vehicular traffic
 2. Improve air quality: The junction is included in the Town Centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Area 1 Central Corridors;
 3. Improve traffic flow, especially if it improves the AQMA;
 4. Support regeneration and economic growth of the area. St Botolph's Quarter has long been identified as an area for investment, including the following proposed developments:
 - Curzon Cinema: a specialist cinema and complementary restaurants
 - Creative Business Centre: currently under construction
 - Vineyard Gate: new major retail development;
 5. Create a place to help stimulate economic growth, reflect the heritage of the area and design out the fear of crime;
 6. Reduce anti-social behaviour.
- 5.4 In 2017 ECC commissioned a study to look at improvements to the area, and four options were put forward for consultation. In December 2017 Cabinet agreed that Option 1 (attached to this report as Appendix 1) was the preferred option for consultation to stakeholders and the wider public. Further work resulted in a Masterplan drafted for the area (St Botolphs Circus Stage 1B Report January 2018 attached as Appendix 1). This was an officer working document and was not formally consulted on or approved. More work was carried out by ECC but no final scheme was put forward for consultation.
- 5.5 Since then ECC have been working on final designs and cost evaluation of the proposals which could be funded wholly by S106 contributions. The revised plans being consulted on are the result of this evaluation.

Key Issues for Consideration

Prioritisation of cars, induced traffic and air quality

- 5.6 ECC are clear that the key objective driving the proposal is to increase the capacity of the roundabout. However increased capacity will 'induce' new traffic to the area as drivers are attracted to a 'quicker' journey. It should be noted that the previous proposal would still have moderately improved capacity whilst delivering other strategic policy objectives.
- 5.7 The lower end of Mersea Road, Magdalen Street and Queen Street are all located within Colchester's Air Quality Management Area (Area 1) found [here](#). Mersea Road AQMA, declared in 2003, is the primary air quality concern relevant to the roundabout. Increasing capacity on the roundabout could improve northbound flow from Mersea Road onto the roundabout which would be beneficial for air quality within the Mersea Road air pollution hotspot. However, without traffic and air quality modelling it is very difficult to quantify any increased traffic volume or air quality impact further afield within Magdalen Street or Brook Street.
- 5.8 With the proposed capacity improvements, the result could be more traffic 'induced' in the area of Southway, St Botolphs Circus, Magdalen Street and Brook Street. Studies show that induced demand is likely to be higher for capacity improvements in urban areas or on highly congested routes - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/induced-travel-demand-an-evidence-review>

Cyclists, Pedestrians and Public Transport

- 5.9 The scheme overall prioritises cars and increases road capacity at the expense of easy to use and navigate, attractive, direct, safe and secure cycle and pedestrian routes to access and leave the town centre (including rail and bus stations) via desire lines.
- 5.10 If the infrastructure provided does not meet the above needs for walkers, cyclists and public transport users, it will not deliver the travel behaviour change and modal-shift required to meet a number of our own and ECC's objectives to enhance sustainable travel behaviour. This would be a significant lost opportunity.
- 5.11 There is huge scope for changing travel behaviour from car to active travel in this area if the right infrastructure is provided thereby supporting and encouraging those who choose to walk and cycle. ECC and the Borough Council are both signatories of the [Colchester Cycling Charter](#). By signing up to the Cycling Charter ECC and the Borough Council have committed to a non-political statement of support for everyday cycling in Colchester. The Charter is a commitment from signatories that they want Colchester to be a vibrant place to live, study, work and do business and that cycling has an important role to play in addressing issues such as congestion and unhealthy lifestyles. It aims to make a Colchester a safe place to cycle.

Defra funded behaviour change project

- 5.12 Following a successful bid to Defra, £249k is being spent on a travel behaviour change project to improve air quality in the AQMA. A key part of the project is to encourage walking and cycling for short journeys particularly through the AQMA areas. An opportunity is being missed if the redevelopment of the St Botolphs roundabout doesn't provide the safe, convenient and attractive cycling and walking infrastructure in the AQMA area to support this.

Existing and new developments

5.13 New Town

The Newtown area is a high-density residential area where a high proportion of journeys could be made by walking and cycling. We know anecdotally and from Colchester Travel Plan Club member surveys that many people living in New Town drive by car for short distance journeys. The area is currently severed from the town centre by the high volume of traffic at St Botolphs Circus. The scheme does not address the severance issue or improve the attractiveness of the area sufficiently to encourage travel behaviour change. This will perpetuate existing problems.

5.14 Magdalen Street Student accommodation

A new 252 bed space student accommodation is currently being built. It is car free and has over 200 parking spaces for bicycles. The development would benefit from improved cycling infrastructure.

5.15 There are also other longer-term potential development opportunities in the area, for example at Britannia Car Park and Vineyard Gate.

Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Climate Emergency

5.16 The Council decided to declare a climate emergency on the 17th July. The commitments debated include support for a newly formed Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group which will consider amongst other things:

- Commissioning an environmental audit which identifies pollution hotspots, wildlife biodiversity and environmental health issues, and an urban impact assessment with an aim to identify areas of improvement across the borough.
- Collaborate with regional and neighbouring local authorities, as well as communities, to encourage practical measures to reduce emissions, reduce carbon footprints and develop community-based renewable energy projects.
- Encourage all sectors of the economy across the borough to take steps to reduce waste and become carbon neutral.

5.17 The council's current Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) 2015- 2020 identified traffic congestion and air pollution as a key challenge in its Climate Change Risk assessment. The ESS as it currently stands, commits to identifying opportunities to deliver sustainable travel.

5.18 In light of these current and anticipated commitments, it would be unwise to prematurely agree a scheme that prioritises cars and increases road capacity at the expense of modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport.

Place making

5.19 The scheme does not include the badly needed quality placemaking and public realm elements of the previous (2017) scheme which are essential to delivering the wider regeneration objectives within the adopted St Botolphs Masterplan (2004). This previous scheme centred on the creation of a large new public plaza extending out from Town Railway Station and seamlessly linking to desire-line crossings across Southway.

- 5.20 The proposals would not fundamentally change the perception of the area as a hostile and car dominated environment for people and business investment. It still inherently leaves left-over and poorly self-policed undevelopable land at the edges and inefficiently creates a large unusable space in the middle. Proposals for 'pocket parks' at the edges of the roundabout might appear superficially attractive, but in reality such peripheral and relatively inactive areas would offer scant amenity and be very vulnerable to crime and anti-social behaviour. For example, the space earmarked on the junction with Mersea Road already suffers from such issues.
- 5.21 By contrast the previous scheme (St Botolphs Circus Stage 1B report) would transform the area into a welcoming people-friendly place, with a large public plaza outside Town Railway Station. It would also create opportunities for significant complementary frontage development on ECC and CBC owned land, which in accordance with recognised good practice place-making would help actively frame and self-police streets and spaces, contributing to an active, attractive, safe and sociable gateway environment. This scheme can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 5.22 There are examples elsewhere in the UK of successful roundabout redevelopment schemes. Two of these are illustrated in Appendix 3.

Funding for a Scheme

- 5.23 ECC is promoting this scheme to improve traffic flow at the roundabout area. However, the Borough Council feel that ECC have an obligation to invest in highway improvements, and supplementary funding to construct the right scheme should be investigated. The Garrison S106 funds were intended to be a contribution towards a scheme to mitigate the development itself and should not represent full payment to implement a scheme to manage the overall capacity of the roundabout.

The Council's Proposed Response to Consultation

- 5.24 The proposed roundabout design fails to meet the wider strategic objectives for the area and the primary project objectives (e.g. having regard to place-making, the historic town centre, public space, being a key gateway, pedestrian and cycle access) agreed between ECC and CBC at the outset of the project. The proposals should be evaluated against all the Objectives agreed in 2017.
- 5.25 ECC and CBC Walking, Cycling, Public Transport, Place-Making, and Health and Wellbeing policies should also be taken into account and incorporated into the design of this scheme.
- 5.26 This design which is subject to consultation differs from the strategic design that had been originally proposed:
- It does not address enhanced cycling and walking access to the town centre, railway station and bus station, from the south and east with low quality shared use paths in a busy town centre area and the planned east -west route which links the Wivenhoe Trail to the town centre via Brook Street development and enters the town at Colchester Town railway station square. Also access into St Botolphs Street northbound is not available (one way) and Osborne Street is dangerous with bus and car movements (as well as being one way).

- It does not accord with the Garrison Masterplan or the Garrison Development Brief for Southway Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) adopted in November 2002.
- It does not provide a large attractive public plaza or facilitate complimentary frontage development needed to mend, environmentally transform and self-police this key town centre gateway, promote the town centre, and in turn act as a catalyst for wider regeneration and investment.

5.27 The Borough Council considers that the proposals should be revisited in the context of the objectives agreed in 2017, and should address concerns relating to accessibility, walking and cycle access, and place making in the area.

6. Standard References

6.1 This is a response to a consultation by Essex County Council. There are no particular references to the consultation, publicity considerations, financial, equality, diversity and human rights, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 This response aligns with the Borough's Strategic plan 2018- 2021 -

- **Growth** – Help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors, and Work with partners to create a shared vision for a vibrant town centre.
- **Responsibility** – Create new routes for walking or cycling and work with partners to make the borough more pedestrian-friendly.
- **Opportunity** – Promote initiatives to help residents live healthier lives
- **Wellbeing** - Work with Essex Police and partners in the Safer Colchester Partnership to make Colchester an even safer place.

Appendices

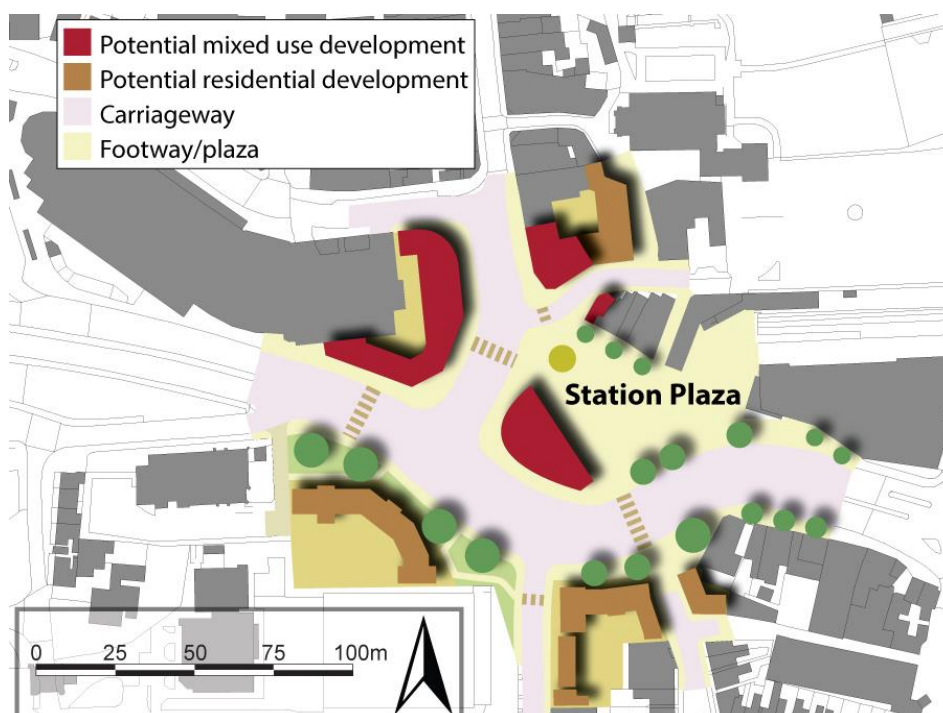
Appendix 1: previous St Botolphs Circus Roundabout Stage 1B report (ECC Final Masterplan) extract

8.1 Final Masterplan



Appendix 2

An indicative masterplan incorporating previous highway proposals demonstrates how the area could be transformed and noting the plaza would be larger than Culver Square.



Appendix 3: Case Studies of successful redesign of former roundabouts

There are a number of precedent schemes where roundabouts have been transformed into people-friendly junctions and acting as a catalyst for wider regeneration.



Elephant and Castle – before (top) and after (bottom and in timelapse at <https://www.shutterstock.com/video/clip-1016843131-elephant-castle-roundabout-time-lapse-above>)





Southend Victoria Plaza - before (top) and after (left and bottom)



Maid Marion Way, Nottingham



Appendix 4

Garrison Masterplan Transport Objectives and results of consultation

Transportation Objectives

- To encourage a shift away from car use, both by providing good connections for pedestrians and cyclists to the Town Centre and Colchester Town railway station...
- To mitigate the effects of increased traffic generated by the development.
- To reduce traffic using the northern end of Mersea Road in order to reduce the air pollution 'hotspot' south of the St Botolph's roundabout

Draft Garrison masterplan consultation – extract from the analysis presented at cabinet 11/11/02

A mixed response had been received in relation to the proposals for Southway with a new foot/cycle bridge over St. Botolph's roundabout being opposed by the majority of those who commented. Overall the responses to the proposals accounted for 90% support in many instances. The Panel felt it was important to publicise the degree of support received.

Paul Cronk confirmed that 107 responses had been received from the Public Exhibition Transport Questionnaire which disclosed that respondents felt existing traffic volumes were too high and that pedestrians preferred not to share facilities with cyclists. The need for an increased bus and train service was highlighted with support for more surface crossings at Southway and Butt Road as respondents felt these were safer to use than subways. The Panel discussed the effect on the movement of traffic along Southway if surface crossings were introduced. Ian Vipond confirmed that the Highway Authority had not ruled out the possibility of surface crossings along Southway although both a subway and surface crossing could be provided. The issue of submerging Southway had financial implications although well designed bridges was an option that had not been ruled out.

Paul Cronk confirmed the main findings revealed from the Postal Transport Questionnaire. A total of 761 responses had been analysed which confirmed that North Station was the favoured train station for local residents with the frequency of service and easy parking as the key reasons for their choice. Results indicated a need for a more frequent train service at Colchester Town Station and improvements to make Southway and St. Botolph's safer for pedestrians.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the Supplementary Planning Guidance be adopted subject to *minor* amendments:-

Background Papers

Links -

[ECC St Botolphs Circus Roundabout Stage 1B report](#)
[Garrison Masterplan adopted as SPD November 2002](#)
[Garrison Southway Development Brief SPD](#)
[St Botolph's Masterplan \(2004\)](#)