



## Portfolio Holder for Waste and Transportation

Item

19 June 2020

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director, Place and Client Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Jane Thompson</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Greater Anglia's Station Social and Community Development Plan (SSCDP)</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>Castle, Greenstead, Marks Tey and Layer, Mile End, New Town and Christ Church and Wivenhoe Wards</b>		

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns the consultation being carried out by Greater Anglia regarding into updating their Station Social and Community Development Plan. It is proposed to respond to the consultation with regard to Colchester, Hythe, Marks Tey and Wivenhoe Stations.

### 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the information in the report and respond to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Borough Council has the opportunity to influence Greater Anglia's investment plans for improvement to the stations within the Borough.

### 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 If the opportunity is not taken to respond to the consultation then these improvements may not take place.

## **5. Background Information**

5.1 The Borough Council has worked with Essex County Council, the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership and Greater Anglia over many years to bring about improvements to rail stations, their service and their access to encourage sustainable travel. We have supported Greater Anglia in obtaining better rolling stock and improved services, with the ESSCRP encouraged more people to use the rail line and supported volunteers to make improvements to the station environment. We have led the award-winning Colchester Station Travel Plan pilot project which has meant more investment for Colchester Station. The Station Travel Plan pilot led to the successful Fixing the Link project with investment from Greater Anglia and ECC.

There are six stations within the Borough –

- Colchester
- Colchester Town
- Hythe
- Marks Tey
- Wivenhoe
- Chappel and Wakes Colne

This consultation response refers to Colchester, Colchester Town, Hythe, Marks Tey and Wivenhoe Stations

## **5.2 Colchester Station**

Colchester Station is a major interchange station with just under 5million passenger movements per annum. Colchester Station was one of the first pilot, and award winning Station Travel Plans. Due to its success it was chosen as a Fixing the Link demonstration project, which has proved very successful and has attracted funding for a subsequent phase of Fixing the Link initiatives. Colchester Station is the arrival point for visitors to Colchester and it should have a welcome which reflects this. Colchester Station is adjacent to a major new residential development of 1,600 homes and it is anticipated that many of these new residents will use rail to access their jobs and services.

### **Ticket Hall and Forecourt Area**

The station has two main entrances. The south side entrance has lift access to all platforms, but this side does not have the advantage of a car park, with only a handful of accessible car parking spaces by the station entrance. The main car park is located on the north side of the station. However, the north side is currently not easily accessible for those with mobility issues, along with passengers carrying luggage or those with young children and buggies. Currently all passengers arriving on the north side use steps, or a chair lift, to access all of the platforms. The Borough Council are pleased to learn that Access for All funding has now been secured to install a lift meaning that all platforms will become accessible for all passengers.

The ticket hall is tired and not fit for purpose with convoluted customer flow arrangement. Designs were prepared for a new ticket hall in which the Borough Council gave initial advice on the designs. We therefore consider that investment is now needed for a major improvement scheme on the north side for the ticket hall and forecourt area which will improving the function and setting of the station. A redesign of the ticket hall and forecourt area should include a welcome feature to the many visitors who alight here.

This could include interpreting Colchester's history within the design of the new building, as well as information points with maps with places of interest, leaflets etc.

The north side forecourt is also not suitable for a large, modern day station interchange with an array of different modes all vying for territory. Essex County Council commissioned work on the redesign of the forecourt interchange and public space and included Greater Anglia and the Borough Council in assisting with considering of all the users' needs with the emphasis being on sustainable access. The Borough Council consider that now is the time to refresh the plans for the forecourt as well as Greater Anglia's s reconsidering their original plans for the north side ticket hall.

### **Signage and Wayfinding**

The Borough Council has worked in partnership with Greater Anglia and Essex County Council in planning and implementing a Fixing the Link project which looked at better connecting the rail station to the town centre. This led to an innovative wayfinding scheme directing people from the platforms to choose whether to walk to the town centre and the time taken to do so. The route included historical information as well as other public realm improvements and signage. All of the parties contributed to these measures. It is considered that this innovative project could be refreshed to welcome those arriving by train with further improvements to the route adding more clarity for those travelling into the town centre. Any new signage must also be suitable for partially sighted and visually impaired.

The Borough Council are also considering carrying out a wayfinding project which will encourage more people who visit the Hospital to travel by train. We will work with the Hospital, Essex County Council and Greater Anglia to find ways to better link the station to the Hospital and would like Greater Anglia's support for these projects.

### **Cycle Parking**

As part of the successful Station Travel Plan project a secure cycle compound was installed on both sides of the station. A waiting list for access to this facility is in operation, which must be addressed if more people are encouraged to access the station in a sustainable way. The short-term cycle parking is also regularly full and consideration should be given to increasing the spaces of this popular facility.

### **Access to the Station**

Currently those who access the station from the south have to walk or cycle on a substandard shared use pinch point on Station Way and Station Approach. Consideration should be given to allow access from Essex Hall Road/Clairmont Heights via a track within Greater Anglia's leasehold agreement. The existing shared use path currently stops short of the track, and negotiations with the farmer who has access to this land will need to take place. With agreements in place this could easily be delivered and will give a vast number of train users a better access to the station from the Colchester Institute and the south and west of Colchester. Greater Anglia should be encouraged to work with Essex County Council in considering the highway access to and in the vicinity of the station to consider it better access and egress to the station can be designed in then busy North Station roundabout environment.

The Council therefore feels that resources should be directed to all of the above areas for Colchester Station

## **5.3 Colchester Town Station**

Colchester Town Station serves Colchester's town centre and nearby residential areas. The station is the terminus of the Sunshine Coast Line with direct trains to/from Frinton and Walton. The station is also the entry point for visitors arriving in Colchester and a welcoming atmosphere including information is required. Although the station has a direct service to London and to Colchester's main station, Colchester Town station does not benefit from a Sunday service. The improvements the Borough Council wish to see are:

- Welcome information – which could include leaflets, signage and points of interest and maps, which can also be used by partially sighted and visually impaired people.
- a secure cycle parking facility, in addition to the existing, provided to encourage the high number of residents within a cycleable distance of the station to use the station instead of travelling to Colchester station.
- better facilities to enable the trains to be accessible by those with wheelchairs. Often the station is not staffed and are not available to assist those with disabilities.

#### **5.4 Hythe Station**

Hythe station has one of the fastest growing passenger numbers in the franchise area. It currently serves as a commuter station for the residential areas to the east side of Colchester - giving local residents access to jobs and education in Colchester and further on to Chelmsford and London. It also serves as a destination station for the University of Essex.

Hythe Station will be the station serving the Garden Community settlement proposal which is being considered on land to the east of Colchester for approximately 7,000 to 9,000 new dwellings. The University of Essex is also planning major expansion in the near future and this will mean additional customers using Hythe Station. Essex County Council and the Borough Council are currently investigating the potential for rapid transit to serve the area and Hythe station could perform a key rail rapid transit interchange point.

##### **Signage and Wayfinding**

The station is within an easy walking and cycling distance to the University campus, but is currently underused by University students, visitors and staff.

The Borough Council has worked in partnership with Greater Anglia and Essex County Council in planning and implementing a Fixing the Link project which looked at better connecting Colchester rail station to the town centre. This led to an innovative wayfinding scheme directing people from the platforms to choose whether to walk to the town centre and the time taken to do so.

The Council would like to consider a similar project to welcome those arriving by train the Hythe Station to wayfind them to the University to encourage more walking and cycling to the campus and the Hythe area. Promoting this station to the University community with signage and wayfinding is already being undertaken by the Council and we would like the support of Greater Anglia to help promote the Hythe station.

#### **5.5 Marks Tey Station**

##### **Accessible platforms**

Marks Tey station is a busy interchange station linking the main line and is the interchange between the Gainsborough Community Rail Partnership line, serving the

Sudbury area, Bures and Chappel and Wakes Colne stations. The main line is a busy commuter line with commuters travelling to London, Chelmsford and Colchester. The station also continues to be busy at off peak times. The station has two car parks and there are plans to expand the provision on the north side. Currently passengers have to use the footbridge for either the start or return part of their journey. This disadvantages passengers with mobility issues, along with passengers carrying luggage or those with young children and buggies.

The Council therefore consider that investment should now be made to make the station accessible for all.

## 5.6 **Wivenhoe station**

### **Accessible platforms**

Wivenhoe station is a busy station serving commuters travelling to London, Chelmsford and Colchester as well as the stations along the 'Sunshine Coast' Community Rail line. The station continues to be busy at off peak times especially in summer for those travelling to Clacton, Frinton on Sea and Walton. Wivenhoe station's close proximity to the University Of Essex means it is also used by many people connected with the University.

The station's own car park is on the south side allowing short and long stay, and has a number of accessible parking spaces. A free to use short stay car park is also available on the north side, which is managed by Wivenhoe Town Council. This car park is regularly used by those picking up from the station. The station is served by a regular bus service which drops off and picks up at the south side entrance. Cycle parking is also provided on the south side of the station. Currently all passengers have to use the footbridge for either the start or return part of their journey. This disadvantages passengers with mobility issues, along with passengers carrying luggage or those with young children and buggies.

Platform 2 is accessed via Clifton Terrace, an unmade and unadopted road which is not maintained. Clifton Terrace joins platform 2 via a flight of steps. Access from Clifton Terrace is only possible for those with good mobility so pushchairs and wheelchairs are in reality not possible. An alternative access is via an unsurfaced footpath which joins the Wivenhoe Trail on the south side and goes under the rail lines via a low culvert and continues alongside the woods to platform 2. This access does not feel safe, is unoverlooked, has inadequate lighting and is often overgrown as well as the surface not being adequate for pedestrian or those with mobility issues.

The Council therefore considers that investment should be made in improvements which can be undertaken at this station making both platforms accessible for all passengers.

### **Redundant Buildings**

For many years the Station House has remained empty even though approaches have been made by Wivenhoe Colne Radio and Community Rail partnership to find a use for the building. Efforts must be found to find a use for the building as unused buildings attract crime and anti-social behaviour. The Engine Shed have remained a ruin since fire damage more than 5 years ago. The building has remained empty for around 40 years as no use has been found. The building is currently supported by scaffolding and graffiti covered boarding, looking unsightly.

Consideration needs to be given, working with Council Planning Officers and Heritage experts, and possible funders, on what to do with the ruin.

5.7 The suggestions above have been incorporated into the Greater Anglia consultation questionnaire.

## 6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 The response to the consultation includes recommendations to Greater Anglia to improve accessibility both to and within the stations for all users

## 7. Standard References

7.1 This is a response to a consultation by Greater Anglia. There are no particular references in the consultation to publicity considerations, financial, equality, diversity and human rights, community safety, health and safety, risk management or environmental and sustainability implications.

## 8. Strategic Plan References

8.1 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, Work with partners to create a shared vision for a vibrant town centre and Promotes inward investment to the borough.
- **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.

## 9. Recommended Decision

9.1 To note the information contained in this report and to respond to the Greater Anglia consultation as set out in Appendix 1.

## Appendix 1 Greater Anglia Station Social and Community Development Plan Consultation

Please outline any improvements you would like to see made to your local stations over the remainder of the course of the current Greater Anglia franchise.

- Colchester Station
  - New north side ticket hall and forecourt redesign
  - Welcome information
  - Signage and wayfinding
  - Cycle parking
  - Access to the station
  
- Colchester Town
  - Cycle Parking
  - Welcome information
  - More staff to assist disabled customers
  
- Hythe Station
  - Signage and wayfinding
  
- Marks Tey Station
  - Accessible platforms
  
- Wivenhoe Station
  - Accessible platforms
  - Reuse of redundant buildings

*Details of the improvements to be considered can be found in the full report.*

Do you have any local/regional area economic development plans that include any of our stations? If so, please set out the details to us.

*Colchester station is adjacent to the North Colchester Growth Area and should see a large increase in passenger numbers in the coming years. ECC are considering options for improvements to the station forecourt and access to the station. Colchester Station is also benefiting from the Fixing the Link project with investment from ECC and CBC.*

As we re-establish our stakeholder management processes going forward; how would you like us to engage with you on matters concerning stations in your area?

*Individually to each Local Authority, Parish Council and Via ESSCRP*

What funding (direct or indirect) might you be able to provide, or help secure, towards station upgrade schemes?

*Consideration will be given to finding funding through the Section 106 process for new developments which will serve the relevant station.*

Do you have your own independent station improvement aspirations for stations on the Greater Anglia network?

*We work with ESSCRP to promote station improvements, and also with ECC in promoting forecourt improvements to Colchester station and linking these improvements to those planned to improve accessibility on the existing highway network.*