

TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY



CONTENTS

	Page
1 Introduction	4
2 Overall Guiding Principles for the Public Realm	6
3 Character Areas	8
The Shopping Core	10
The Dutch Quarter	14
Head Street/North Hill	18
Balkerne Gardens	22
East Hill	26
Queen’s Street/St Botolph’s Street	28
St Johns Street/Crouch Street East	32
Crouch Street West	36
Public Spaces	40
New Regeneration Areas	44
Thresholds	46
4 Materials and Detailing	50
5 Maintenance and Management	58

1 . Introduction

The public realm is the space between buildings. It is the materials and furniture of each street and open area and its character defines the overall experience of an area. It plays a key role in defining a town's wider image and in setting a welcoming or neglected tone for particular areas.

Investment in the public realm reaps returns in improved quality of the environment, but also in more measurable economic benefits to local businesses. For example, a CABI Report on street design quality in London found that improvements added an average of 4.9 per cent to retail rents.

The Public Realm Strategy has been developed to set forth a clear set of guidelines for Town Centre improvements, providing developers, managers and public bodies with the necessary design principles and material guides to implement and maintain a high quality environment.

The planning framework for Colchester, the Local Development Framework (LDF), supports the need to define a consistent, high quality approach to Colchester Town Centre's public realm. The LDF includes strategic policies in the Core Strategy as well as more detailed policies for the Borough in the Development Policies document and in area-specific plans. The strategic policies in the Core Strategy place the Town Centre at the top of the hierarchy for sustainable development and prioritise the conservation of its rich heritage and the provision of people-friendly streets. The Development Policies document provides a policy guiding the mix of uses in the Town Centre.

The Public Realm Strategy is accordingly based on these adopted LDF policies. Its key aspiration is to provide the design framework and criteria to ensure that the quality of Colchester Town Centre's public realm is as high as the standard of its individual landmark buildings and features.

The detail within the Strategy can be further refined since it will be absorbed over time into the wider remit of a Town Centre Area Action Plan. The AAP will contain detailed guidance for spatial options, design, uses, and transport for the Town Centre and is programmed for adoption in 2013. The development of the AAP will include the review of the principles and criteria included in the Public Realm Strategy, so any revisions found necessary can be incorporated into the version of the Public Realm Strategy included as a part of the AAP.

This strategy is compatible with the Essex County Council Street Materials Guide, which provides a further source of guidance for the public realm in general.

1 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABI) Paved with gold – the real value of good street design, 2007. See also Places Matter Economic Value of Urban Design 2007 and 2009 update



2. Overall Guiding Principles for the Public Realm

The following three principles are considered to capture the essence of good stewardship and design for the public realm:

Identity – enhancing and reinforcing the distinctive character and identity of Colchester and its rich heritage.

(In line with Core Strategy policies SD1 Sustainable Development Locations, CE1 Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy, CE2a Town Centre, UR1 Urban Regeneration Areas, UR2 Built Design and Character and PR2 People-friendly Streets and Development Policies DP6 Colchester Town Centre Uses, , DP10 Tourism, Leisure and Culture and DP14 Historic Environment Assets)

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

(In line with Core Strategy policies UR2 Built Design and Character, PR2 People-friendly Streets, TA1 Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour, TA2 Walking and Cycling, TA3 Public Transport, TA4 Roads and Traffic and TA5 Parking)

Quality – a set of design principles for all streets and spaces within the town centre to provide a continuous and consistent high quality well-maintained environment and clear interpretation of the town's features and stories.

(In line with Core Strategy policy UR2 Built Design and Character and PR2 People-friendly Streets and Development Policies DP1 Design and Amenity and DP14 Historic Environment Assets)

The principles will be used to guide the analysis for the different character areas within the Town Centre which follows. The analysis will have regard to specific opportunities in the following areas:

Spaces that need rejuvenating – 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. But all have the potential make a better contribution to amenity in the town centre. 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 rejuvenation of public spaces requires a series of linked designs that reflect the historic ties between spaces and yet gives each space a special, unique identity.

Enlivening use of public spaces – Spaces are distinct from pavements and movement corridors and provide the opportunity to stop and enjoy the surrounding activities and environments. Interest can be generated through the quality of the landscaping, public art; interpretation of heritage features as well as commercial opportunities for cafes and restaurants. Spaces should be available for all people and by providing more choice of spaces, the strategy can support widening the opportunities for interaction.

Enhancing the historic environment – The Council will work with Town Centre businesses and residents as well as statutory bodies and interest groups to secure preservation and enhancement of the wide range of the Town Centre's rich historic and archaeological heritage, including the Town Walls, 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.

Town Centre movement – The Council is developing integrated solutions to access to the Town Centre to reduce congestion and facilitate access by public transport and cyclists. 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. By adopting a strategy for sharing space in the town centre people will have more freedom to enjoy their activities without the domination of the car.

Reducing clutter – All schemes affecting the public realm will be reviewed to ensure they maximise opportunities to reduce clutter. 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.

Incorporation of public art – Key opportunities and locations for public art will be identified for appropriate town centre locations. 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 the Community Infrastructure Levy and through other funding sources.

Maintaining quality – Colchester's Street Services Town Centre team will work to ensure clean, safe and well-managed streets and spaces. 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.

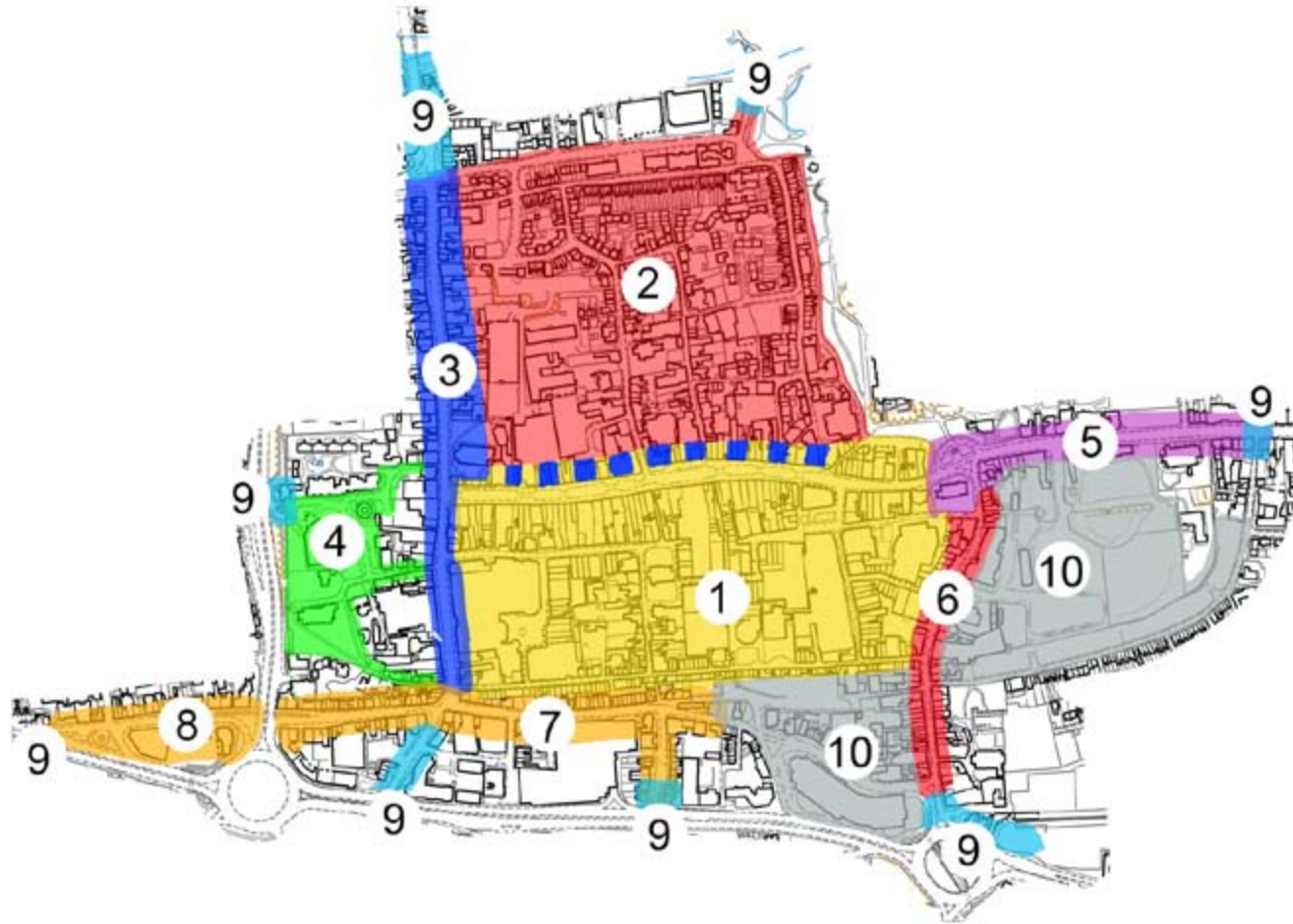
High-quality shopfronts – Shopfronts are a key feature of the public realm in retail areas and play a critical role in defining the quality and character of these areas. Greater emphasis will be placed on securing shop front designs and alterations that are sympathetic to the locality and enhance the building and street scene to which they relate. The Council will adopt guidance for the detailing of shop fronts and the use of appropriate materials.

Improving lighting – Improved lighting in the public realm has great potential to improve the after hours experience of the town centre. The Council's Town Centre Lighting Strategy (available on our web site) provides for a hierarchy of external lighting fixtures, with brightness and colour used to signpost key routes and buildings.

Integrating new developments into the town

New developments in the town centre should be designed to integrate seamlessly into the existing fabric. They will contribute 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.

3. Character areas



Character areas are defined as areas of specific function and/or character within the town centre. The Public Realm Strategy defines their unique characteristics and proposes how to build upon their identity, aesthetic and/or function. Some of the areas identified have a strong boundary. In some cases, a single street or route is defined because of how it functions or because of its aesthetic qualities. The strengths and weaknesses of each area form the basis of enhancement proposals.

The public realm for each area should be designed to emphasis and enhance the identity of the location but also to respond to the impacts that its function places upon the public realm. For some areas or streets the degree of intervention suggested is much more than others, but this tends to be in cases where the current character is seen as having a negative impact on the town centre as a whole.

The character areas are:

Geographic areas

- 1 Shopping core
- 2 Dutch Quarter
- 3 Head Street/North Hill
- 4 Balcerne Gardens
- 5 East Hill
- 6 Queen's Street/St Botolph's Street
- 7 St Johns Street/Crouch Street East
- 8 Crouch Street West

Specific designations

- 9 Thresholds – Historic gates and entrances to the Town Centre Regeneration Areas – 10 The St. Botolph's and Vineyard Gate Regeneration Areas

Underused spaces in the centre. (As these have a common theme they are dealt with in a single section to show how to achieve a series of spaces that are connected by their context but individual in their design).

3.1 The Shopping Core



Character

The Shopping Core is at the very heart of the town, in both a functional and geographic manner. Its mix of old and new buildings lie atop a footprint established during the Roman period. The High Street at the north of the area is the largest scale street in the Shopping Core, but its pre-eminence as the retail heart of the area has slipped over time, following construction of the Lion Walk precinct in the 1970s and Culver Square in the 1980s. The High Street was upgraded to a York stone surface in the early 1990s, which is sympathetic to the fine built form of the High Street. While the southern side of the street is predominantly retail, the northern side includes a more diverse range of uses including bars and restaurants. This latter dual role for both day and evening uses is pertinent to most of the streets outside the core, whereas in the shopping core itself there are fewer establishments catering for the night time economy.

The Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide for a comprehensive approach to the planning and management of access to and within this key area. The High Street is heavily used by vehicles; both private cars and public transport are highly dominant. The single town centre taxi rank with its central High Street location often appears inadequate for the number of taxis waiting for business yet, parking two abreast; the taxis have a strong visual impact.

Cyclists are well catered for in the High Street with good parking facilities in well observed places but the single traffic direction is disadvantageous to cyclists wishing to travel east to west.

South of the High Street the principle shopping core is a series of smaller scale streets in which vehicular access has been restricted to avoid conflicts with the primary function. The character of these areas is fine-grained, with a mix of architectural styles from different historic periods. The area contains a number of Listed Buildings and a section of the Town Walls. The public realm of these streets is a mix of budget conscious refurbishment and, in certain places, very patchy lengths of uncoordinated pavement materials. There is little by the way of street furniture which is a positive, especially on the narrower pavements but the functionality of high kerbs and narrow pavements is not good. Street lighting throughout the core is utilitarian at best with only the Town Hall given architectural illumination.

Also within the shopping core are three private centres. Culver Square, Lion Walk and Priory Walk. All three make important contributions and connections within the core, linking the public streets and in the case of Culver Square providing the town with its most vibrant and active public square. Each of the private arcades remains open to the public at night and therefore has all the functions and perception of true public realm.



Vision

The High Street will become more pedestrian oriented with traffic, highway furniture and parking rationalised to provide a better quality experience for all. Restricted access for through traffic will enable greater freedom for pedestrians during the day. The pre-eminence of the Shopping Core in the Town Centre should be reinforced by continuity and the high quality of materials used for street furniture, signage, and road treatments. A single, high quality material should be used for road surfaces to provide identity and continuity, with variations in gauge and bond used to denote different scales of street. The Council will work with landowners to deliver consistent enhancement of the public realm. Street cafes bringing vitality to the public realm will be encouraged in appropriate zones, with licensing and planning enforcement used to control the safe and appropriate use of public space

Specific Requirements –

High street

Movement - A greater pedestrian priority will be established with the restriction of the private car during shop opening times. Taxi ranks should be distributed in other streets to provide less dominant yet more reachable facilities for people. Traffic impacts of both parked and through going vehicles will be addressed as part of ongoing work with Essex County Council and others on Town Centre transport management.

Street furniture and signage -Street clutter is to be reduced by rationalising highway and other signage in conjunction with changes to traffic movements. Street furniture should be of a single colour and design and to a suitable conservation area standard. Public transport facilities are to be rationalised to provide less dominant shelters (remove advertising) both visually and physically within street café zones

Streets and surfaces – Historic pavement definitions should be retained but redesigns should achieve ease of movement across carriageways by adopting shared surface principles and associated vehicle speed restrictions. The High Street surfacing requires relaying to the appropriate British Standard.

Activity - The Council, through its planning and licensing functions, will support applications for pavement cafes operating in appropriate zones and at appropriate times. The Council will work with operators to provide an effective cleaning and maintenance regime and will work with the police to create a welcoming and safe street environment around the clock.

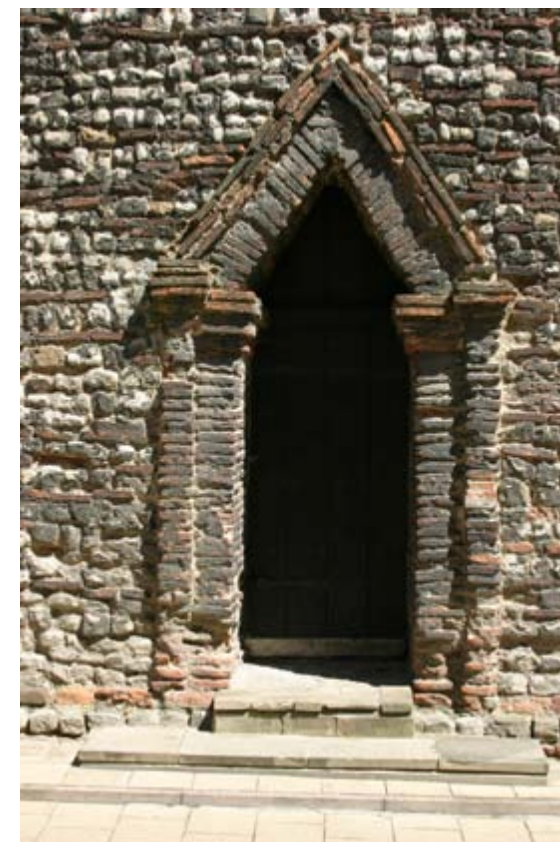
Lighting – The Council's Lighting Strategy (available on our web site) includes a high quality lighting scheme for architectural landmarks; appropriate levels of lighting for different areas of activity; and guidelines for appropriate fixtures and fittings to ensure that lighting has a positive effect on the night time economy.

Other streets

Streets and surfaces - A simple and functional public realm is to be created that enables the free movement of pedestrians. The use of single surfaces or minimal upstands on kerbs will be acceptable to all users because of the existing traffic restrictions. In other streets within the core a stone finish as in the High Street should be used in grades and bonds that respond to scale and character of individual streets.

Street furniture - A simple and robust range of furniture for the core zone and all streets is to be provided that will provide continuity and ease of maintenance.

Materials - The central area of small streets and the High Street is the major retail hub and is relatively free of vehicles for its most active periods. Its importance and historic character demands the highest quality surface materials of all the town centre. For all the streets in the core York Stone in a matching appearance to the High Street will be used. The differing scale and character of each street will require an individual bond and layout of natural stone to enhance the architectural character and ambience. The smallest and solely pedestrian streets will have a pattern of small 100mm to 160mm sets arrange in a layout sympathetic to the overall character. Wider streets will have a larger gauge of York stone pavements with Granite kerbs. The carriageways used by service vehicles will have York stone laid in small sets in fan pattern or small straight gauges for robustness. An alternative to York stone in the carriageway may be considered but a natural stone product, complementary in colour must be used.



3.2 The Dutch Quarter



Character

The historic Dutch quarter was first settled by Dutch refugees in around 1570. Later settlers came in the 17th century and added much to the prosperity of the town through their trade and skills in fabrics. The quarter has a significant numbers of fine buildings with the main character established by 17th and 18th century residential timber framed buildings. Residential buildings dominate the streets apart from the 20th century interventions of the BT tower and Nunns Road car park. There have been some sensitive 20th century interventions where highly sympathetic housing has been introduced to match the historic character of narrow streets and courts. The quality of the buildings, however, is not matched by the quality of the public realm, which is a patchwork of unsympathetic materials laid without a plan or contextual references. The one way system and parking restrictions have been implemented through the use of unsympathetic signage and yellow lines.

Vision

The Dutch Quarter needs a considered and coordinated approach to the public realm, one that is highly sympathetic to the fine historic character. Historic materials should be retained and enhanced where possible.

The area does not have the attractions and footfall of the shopping core and does not justify an expensive carriageway transformation. It does, however, warrant a continuous and good quality paving material and a well chosen single surface for all the carriage-ways.

This is a small, sensitive area where the tourism impacts will be balanced between the following:

Community - ensuring that a sense of community identity is maintained rather than overwhelmed by tourism

Environment - ensuring that the essential elements of what visitors come to see are preserved.

Economy - ensuring that businesses stay in business (including those which do not depend on tourism) and are not disadvantaged by tourism.

Ultimately, this means balancing the impact of tourism so that these essential elements are there for future generations to enjoy and maximising the benefits of tourism for supporting local businesses and local employment.

It is necessary to establish a simple and subtle method of delineating on street parking and parking restrictions with a stone or conservation set as opposed to yellow and white lines. Signage should be minimal and fixed upon buildings where possible. Rationalising the arrangement of all street furniture will reduce much of the clutter adversely affecting the area.

The area has a good proportion of natural stone kerb and this should be retained. It may be that matching stone gullies are concealed under the contemporary carriageway surfaces and when resurfacing takes place these should be uncovered, cleaned and replaced. Where historic patterns of materials exist these features should remain and enhanced where possible.

Specific Requirements

Streets and surfaces - A simple continuous treatment for the carriageway and a separate continuous material for all paved areas will be provided. The visual complications of islands and contrast areas of paving will be abandoned. Elements of historic paving will be preserved and enhanced where existing. A high quality, natural aggregate rolled finish will be applied to all carriageway surfaces. Small gauged, robust paving material are appropriate and can be a cement based product. Natural granite kerbs should be used to match existing. Materials higher in quality than standard materials used in the highway do attract the need for the provider to pay a contribution (commuted sum) to cover the cost of future maintenance

Parking - Parking bays and areas identified with stone or conservation sets. 20 mph and restricted parking zone are to be established that negate the need for yellow lines.

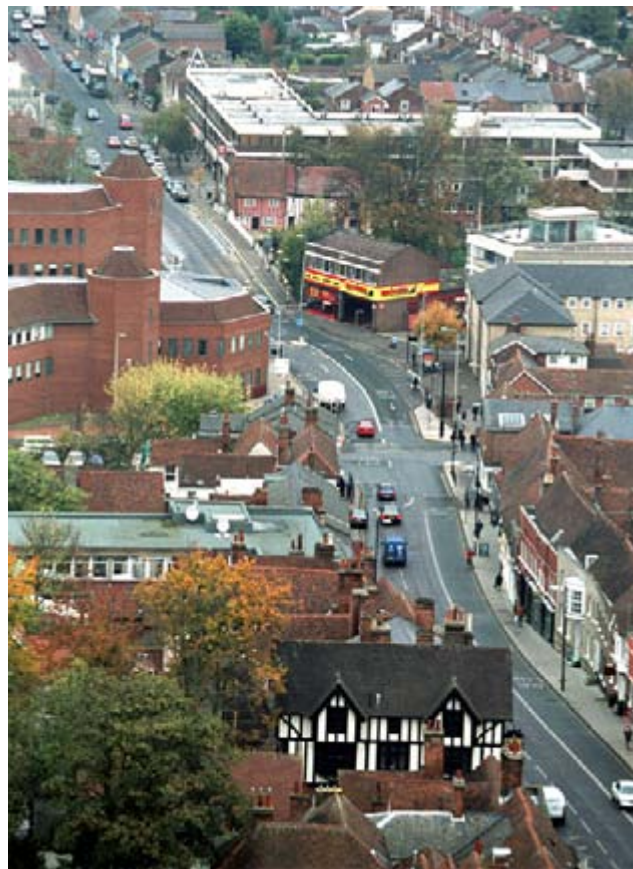
Street furniture and signage - A minimum of street furniture and signage will be provided to avoid visual clutter. 'Colchester badged' bollards and a single lamp column design, approved by Essex County Council will be used exclusively where those elements are required.

Materials - There is a need for simple uniformity of the public realm in this area. A rectangular natural concrete flag should be used for all pavement surfaces; the inappropriate square flag must not be used. In the smaller streets, that are currently laid as a shared surface, a similar concrete flag can be used with the historic carriage tracks reinstated in granite kerb stones laid sideways and flush. The surfaces for vehicles must be laid with an aggregate chippings surface finish. Elements of paving and furniture used as traffic control must be minimal and integrated with simple measures, avoiding islands and contrasting materials.

Where possible small unadopted areas aside the pavement should be laid in the same material as the pavement with minimal delineation of ownership. Alternatively the use of cobbles can be similarly negotiated with land owners to enhance the simple continuity required. Granite kerbs should be used for all raised and flush applications.



3.3 Head Street - North Hill



Character –

Both Head street and North Hill have a large percentage of listed buildings that define a wide street. The procession of fine buildings up North Hill provides a quality aesthetic to the street which has St Peters Church as a dominant landmark at the top of the hill.

Head Street has a mixed use of shops and eating/drinking establishments as well as the only cinema of the town. North Hill has a mix of uses with a prevalence of restaurants over secondary retail and office uses. Both streets therefore have an evening function and together with the High Street provide the focus for the evening and night time economy.

Bus stops crowd parts of Head street where other substantial pedestrian movements compete for space. This pedestrian congestion is undesirable on such a wide street and could be resolved through a combination of pavement widening, carriageway narrowing with a rationalisation of parking on the opposite side of the street. Advertising on the bus stops which detracts from visual amenity is an additional undesirable feature of the current arrangements.

Vision

Materials on North Hill and Head Street should have a continuous pavement treatment. It need not be the same as the High Street but should retain large scale rectangular flag style where overriding is not an issue. Street clutter will be reduced to a minimum and clear pedestrian desire lines will be given priority over the positioning of all furniture.

Taxi provision should be made in Head Street for the night time economy providing a variety of ranks for taxis at night, which are better related to demand than a single central rank. Bus stops should also be reconsidered where spatial conflicts occur on pavements.

Lighting can play a role in legibility of the route from the north through the illumination of landmark buildings at the top of North Hill. The ambience for the night time economy can be enhanced through lighting these streets in appropriate ways. Defining the night time realm can give uses a sense of place and also define its extent so when moving into a different lighting scenario the change enforces the end of the zone both physically and socially.

Specific characteristics

Street furniture - An uncluttered and minimalistic approach to street furniture is required. A single surface material for all pavements will be used, with lesser side junctions bridged by pavement to establish greater pedestrian priority. Some seating on the hill should be provided for anyone struggling to walk up. The same furniture as for the High Street is to be utilised throughout. Advert free bus stops should be installed where changes to physical layout are established. Speed and parking zone should be established with corresponding reduction of highway signage and furniture.

Lighting - Lighting design should provide for the illumination of landmarks buildings and ambience for night time economy. (See Lighting Strategy, Annex 2)

Streets and surfaces - A robust and large scale flag paving material should be used continuously. Where side junctions are bridged by pavement an overridable material of the same colour will be used.

Materials - In these wider scaled streets the 3 by 2 natural concrete flag has been established as an appropriate traditional surface material. This material should be used consistently for all pavements with small regular mortar joints. The pedestrian route should be established across all minor accesses and side roads by using natural concrete pavers where vehicle overriding would damage flag paving. It is vital that the chosen manufacturer supplies both flags and pavers in a matching colour that avoids the variation caused by different sands used in production. A good number of granite kerbs still remain in situ and these should be retained with additional stocks obtained for consistency in both streets.



3.4 Balcerne Gardens



Character

This part of the town plays host to a mix of cultural and residential uses. It has a well established landscape value from the many mature trees and green spaces. The Arts Centre in St Mary's church and the Mercury Theatre are significant attractions within the town centre and together with the Victorian water tower, known as 'Jumbo' create a unique place of striking architecture in a series of spaces. There are also fine houses enclosing the green spaces which are connected to the town via three very narrow streets; Church Street, Church Walk and Balcerne Passage. This space is bounded to the west by the historic town wall and Balcerne Gate, an original Roman feature which continues to function as a striking entrance to the town for pedestrians ascending Balcerne Hill or crossing the bridge from the residential area of St Mary's. The area, however, suffers from haphazard and visually dominating parking arrangements.

Vision

The role of this part of the town as a cultural quarter makes lighting and ambience improvements key priorities. This will not only enhance the characteristics and buildings of the area but also provide a stronger perception of safety for the patrons of the culture venues. There is much green space that can be further utilised for recreational space including St Mary's church yard and incidental spaces which should be reconsidered for their contribution to the daytime use of this area.

There is potential for the creation of a shared space thoroughfare combined with open access to the adjoining green spaces. This would allow for events and organised activities as well as providing opportunities for people to sit and enjoy a quite haven away from the bustle of main Town Centre streets.



Specific Requirements

Public Spaces – Improve existing open space in the area to provide gathering and sitting out space to complement the pedestrian-friendly streets and paths and adjacent cultural/leisure uses. The spaces adjacent to uses associated with the night time economy should also be welcoming after hours. - Incidental spaces should be reconsidered to allow people to utilise the setting as public space.

Street furniture Materials and furniture will be unique to this area and therefore distinct from the materials used in the central streets

Movement – A shared space surface for pedestrians and vehicles will be created in which the pedestrians have greater freedom and priority of movement. Servicing times should be managed to enhance the pedestrian priority and public space function. Private areas should be clearly defined, especially parking courts, with gates and enclosures.

Streets and surfaces - The lanes should be given an historical surface treatment similar to that surviving in Balmerne Passage. Shared space surfacing should be robust for service vehicles yet sympathetic to the desired character.

Threshold - Around the Roman gate a sympathetic floor material should be considered to enhance the setting of the monument and express the threshold of the town centre.

Lighting - Lighting should exploit landmark buildings and look to enhance the green space. The perception of a safe and high quality environment must prevail.

Public Art - This area can be further enhanced as a cultural quarter and a recreational area through public art embedded into the location as functional elements of furniture and as individual sculptural pieces.

Materials -The three lanes that provide access to this important cultural quarter will be used by less vehicular traffic but may still need to be designed for large service vehicles and the emergency services. Balmerne Passage currently has a typical historic treatment still visible in parts, although badly maintained.

The visual character and pedestrian movement through these lanes will be enhanced by reproducing the historic surfacing. This is to be a single, level surface without raised kerbs but using large granite kerbs, laid on the side that would have been spaced for carriage wheels. Between and outside the granite tracks should be laid in small sets either in a small gauge or as regular squares. The three lanes should not be laid exactly the same and the variation of gauged or square form sets will provide suitable variation. The junction between these lanes and Head Street, North Hill will require careful consideration. It is preferable to lose the carriageway junction in favour of establishing pedestrian priority across minor side streets. Therefore the terminus of the main street pavement and the beginning of the lane layout must be elegant and logical.

The more open area around the Mercury Theatre and Jumbo has a very different to the character than that of the lanes from which it is accessed. The open and green nature of this space should be the dominant feature and for this reason the hard landscape will be minimised in scale and a shared surface of neutral coloured paving will be laid. The material can be a tumbled concrete block with drainage channels in the same material although a natural stone surface would be a more traditional and aesthetically pleasing choice. Thresholds and private delineations should be made with granite kerbs or string courses. Hard standings around seating and other furniture should be in the same material but can be laid in ornate bonds such as circles or fan patterns.

3.5 High Street - East Hill



Character

This continuation of the High Street into East Hill has a grand appearance created by fine two and three storey listed buildings which include the former college of Greyfriars and East Hill House. On the edge of the centre and without the central retail and evening uses it has contained office and educational uses until their closure in the last two years. There are now plans to introduce new hotel/restaurant uses into the two major buildings on the street and these will add further diversity and vitality to this end of the town centre and will complement the adjacent new Visual Arts Facility.

The street has well proportioned pavements and only one area of significant clutter at the castle junction. The pedestrian island there is overloaded with a combination of lighting columns, highway and way finder signage and a heavy duty CCTV column, and these impact negatively on views in all directions.

Vision

The stone surfacing from the main part of the High Street should be extended down East Hill to provide continuity and to designate a key entrance route to the Town Centre. Appropriate road surfacing and crossings are further indicators which can establish a stronger sense of place. Increasing pedestrian priority at the Queen Street junction will make a significant enhancement making the quarter better connected to the central area. The Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide a co-ordinated approach to transport management in the Town Centre, including the key access route of East Hill.

Specific Requirements

Design and movement- An appropriate setting for the listed buildings is to be established with suitably calmed traffic and strong pedestrian priority where desire lines cross the carriageway, in particular, at the crossing between the new Visual Art Facility, East Hill House and future uses of Greyfriars. The castle junction should be de-cluttered to improve the general setting and aesthetic.

Lighting - Architectural lighting can be considered for the better quality buildings of this street and to provide a unique highlight for cultural facilities.

Street furniture - The furniture and materials of the High Street should continue through this part of the street.

Threshold - A threshold feature may be created at the war memorial or park gates to give this entrance to the town the same artistic value as the other designated thresholds.

Materials - It is logical that the York stone of the High Street should continue through this street. The sizes and edge details to buildings and other furniture should also be carried through to achieve continuity. The threshold marker for East Hill will need to act as a termination of the York stone and the design of the threshold must detail the transition appropriately.

3.6 Queens Street - St Botolphs Street



Character

Architecturally, these streets contain both gems and unsympathetic additions. This mix, combined with a traffic dominated narrow street, means that the overall visual character is poor. There is a variety of uses including some long established shops and night time venues. There are many fast food outlets which although also well established add to the poor perception of the street, especially in the evenings and night time.

While the street is a key route for pedestrians into the town from the south, the experience for pedestrians is marred by high levels of traffic during the day, behaviour and litter issues at night, and the dominance of traffic and pedestrian control furniture. Although the carriage way has been visually narrowed by white lining the pavements remain narrow in places. Elsewhere the introduction of kerbside barriers has added to the traffic domination and confinement of pedestrians. Private cars often use the vacant highway edge between the carriage way lines for drop off and illicit parking which adds to the many functional and aesthetic problems of the street.

Vision

Much of this street will be remodelled as part of the St Botolph's regeneration program and the public realm will be enhanced in response to the uses and functions that emerge. The character and function of this street will change dramatically and a streetscape upgrade will be an integral part of the regeneration. The Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide a co-ordinated approach to transport management in the Town Centre, including a regenerated St. Botolphs area.

It will be important to provide good access and movement for cyclists and pedestrians using the street as both a destination and a thoroughfare. Bus stops will also be required for this end of the town and opportunities to establish better facilities adjacent to new developments should be considered.



Specific Requirements

Pedestrian Priority - A strong pedestrian priority will be established desire lines. This will be facilitated by parking and speed restrictions. Legibility and desire lines will be established by surface design and lighting for the nighttime.

Street furniture - A clutter free street scene will be established with minimal highway furniture.

Landscaping - Where it is acceptable with regard to utilities and archaeology, tree planting will be included in the new developments. Where space permits large planters can be used for trees if constraints do not allow ground planting.with easy and unrestricted crossing of the carriageway on all significant

Materials - Much of the pedestrian realm in these streets will be substantially remodelled when the St Botolph's regeneration schemes are implemented. For the main, north/south street pattern the concrete flag as specified for Head Street and St John's Street will be used for all paving. Granite kerbs should be reinstated where concrete ones have been previously allowed. Overridable sections at minor accesses to be laid in colour matched concrete pavers to establish pedestrian priority where necessary.

Where new pedestrian desire lines are established across Queens Street a careful consideration of materials should seek to provide strong routes to primary attractions and generators of movement that are directly fronting the street. The route to the Visual Arts Facility, for instance, demands good legibility.

As a priority the current highway dominated scheme of pedestrian control that utilises extensive railing should be reconsidered at the earliest opportunity.



3.7 St Johns Street - Crouch Street East



Character

These two streets have a secondary role with regard to shopping although they have many individual shops that add to the uniqueness of Colchester. They are both dominated by traffic or parking with pavements that are often narrow and feel cramped at busy times or by parked cars in the case of Crouch Street. The predominance of the small independent retail sector has led to a higher turnover in shop units and a greater vulnerability during periods of economic downturn. An improved and more spacious pedestrian environment would be of benefit to the market attractiveness of these streets.

St Johns Street has a major town car park which provides pedestrian access to the core but the arrival from the car park is poor due to unattractive buildings and street furniture and noise from the air system of the car park. The St Johns shopping complex provides a large and well used multi route bus stop. Movement for all these car park and bus users is however restricted by a limited pavement area, which is further constrained by unsympathetic railings.

Vision

The area will benefit from co-ordinated improvements to the wider area, including Vineyard Gate. Extensive pedestrianisation may be possible and a logical enhancement to new retail schemes. The movement and stops for buses could also have opportunities for improvement and relocation as part of wider transport improvements programmed in the Town Centre Area Action Plan.

In the short term an enhancement of these streets must deliver wider pavements where necessary to improve the accessibility and appearance. This street design gives an overbearing priority to motorised vehicles and this should be addressed through speed restrictions and redesign to enable crossings of the carriageway at desire lines and the removal of railings and barriers.

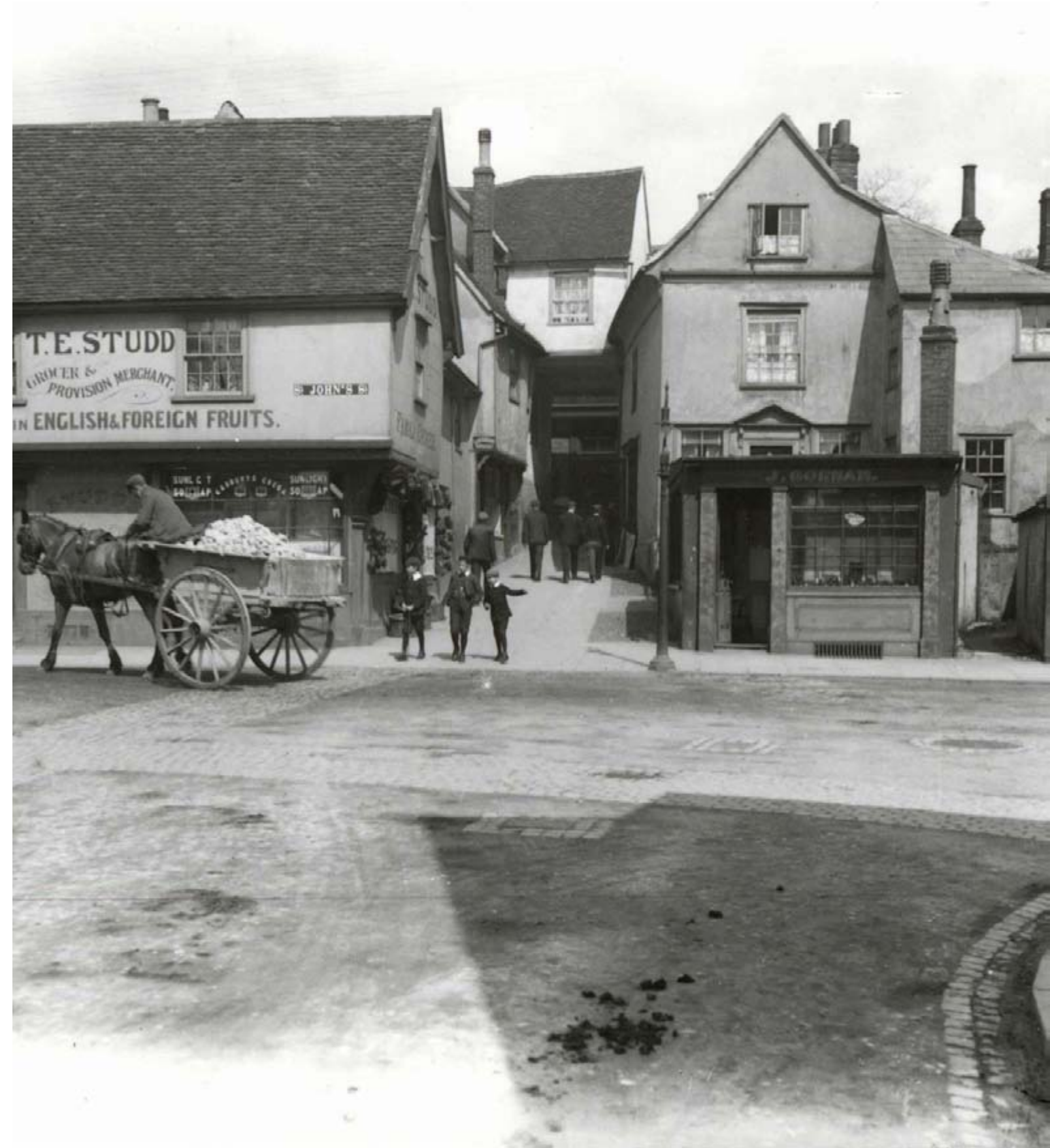


Specific Requirements

Streets and Pavements - Pavements in these streets should be made wider to facilitate pedestrians and exchange activities. Establish single surface treatment for pavements in St Johns and Crouch Street. Materials need not be the same as the High Street but should retain large scale rectangular flag style where overriding is not an issue. Remodel crossings and space at the foot of Sheregate Steps and Head Street junction. Carry pedestrian priority and surfacing over secondary junctions to increase pedestrian priority and functionality for daytime users.

Street furniture, equipment and signage- Street clutter will be reduced to a minimum and clear pedestrian desire lines will be given priority over the positioning of all furniture. Way finder signage should be repositioned in several places where it comprises views of the historic built townscape. The same simple set of street furniture should be used that is specified for the Shopping Core and North Hill. The ambience of St Johns Street will be improved by quietening the air system on the car park.

Materials - The existing design and modifications of these streets avoids overriding by vehicles. This makes the use of large, traditional concrete flags an appropriately robust material for the pavements. The layout and design should be the same as that used in Head Street to establish continuity of the streets outside the shopping core. Minor accesses and side streets will lose the vehicle priority by taking the colour of the pavement across the junction in natural concrete pavers. Granite kerbs should be used throughout with an up-stand of constant size throughout. Bus stops may require the high 160mm up-stand for passenger convenience. The location of bus stops must not prejudice the setting of listed buildings.



3.8 Crouch Street West



Character

Crouch Street has a charming and elegant street scene on the north side. The quality of buildings justifies the area's inclusion in the Lexden Conservation Area. The much younger south side redevelopments provide a larger scale of architecture. The street has a lively character arising from the mix of uses and remains active into the evening.

The busy Balkerne Hill road cuts this part of Crouch Street off from the rest of the Town Centre. Crossings are provided either via an underpass or at a surface crossing with a central island. Restrictive furniture makes this pedestrian route less than ideal.

The current angled parking arrangement provides a dominant feature and gives little opportunity for pedestrians to cross the street. Although the pavements are generally of good width, street furniture and A boards create a cramped appearance. This can be exacerbated by long vehicles overhanging the pavement of the north side from the angled parking bays.

At the western end of the street is a small landscaped space for sitting and bicycle parking. This is a popular space in good weather but it could be further enhanced with more practical bicycle stands and a revamped design.

Vision

Pedestrian improvements at the Balkerne Hill crossing will better connect this street to the centre. Signage and street furniture should be reduced where possible to create better visual amenity and assist the free movement of people. The parking arrangement is to be reconsidered to provide more opportunities to cross the street.

Although recently upgraded the square paving and pavers have a less than sympathetic relationship to the many fine buildings and shop fronts. A more traditional rectangular flag should be considered for future schemes. The west end of the highway should also be reconsidered to create a shared surface, allowing pedestrians more space and priority where there are only service vehicles and access allowed.

The space at the west end should be redesigned to provide better facilities and soft landscape. This space is an ideal opportunity for embedding public art into the streetscape thus providing a far better place for the people that use it and the overall experience of the town.



Specific Requirements

Parking - Parking will be redesigned to provide crossings. There is a significant amount of illegitimate parking that takes place on the opposite side of the carriageway to the legitimate parking spaces and this should be addressed as part of the street management.

Street furniture - The pedestrian realm should be de-cluttered, including and control of A boards. The street furniture chosen for the town centre should be used in this street

Landscaping - Soften the street scene with the introduction of new street trees, in raised planters at new crossing points on the north side.

Public Space - The space and turning head at the west end should be redesigned with high quality materials to an individual specification. Public art can be embedded into the space.

Pavements - A pavement surface of robust quality and traditional appearance, suitable and sympathetic to the conservation area.

Materials - This attractive street of fine period buildings requires a sympathetic public realm. Although this street is severed from the centre by Balkerne Hill and its underpass the treatment of the eastern part of the street should extend to this western side. Large scale natural concrete flags and colour matched pavers are to be used on the pavements on the north side. A granite kerb would be an appropriate detail within the Lexden Conservation Area. On the south side cycling is permitted on the pavement. This new scheme forms part of the Cycle Town Strategy and will be monitored over its initial period. Should illicit car parking on the pavement persist a scheme of physical restriction to cars may be required.



3.9 Public Spaces



Colchester has relatively few public spaces or squares and the only central functioning public square is Culver Square. Around the town, however, are many spaces with the potential to make a similar contribution to the social and functional aspects of the town centre by providing opportunities for people to meet and step out of the hustle and bustle on the street. To have more than one space for such activities gives people choice and adds the vitality of the town. There are other spaces in the town that are not suitable for public access. This is mainly because they lack natural surveillance and could therefore encourage antisocial behaviour. These spaces could, however, be utilised as additional opportunities to enhance the biodiversity and green links within the town centre.

Spaces suitable for public access

Two significant spaces are the church yard to Lion Walk URC church and the adjacent forecourt of Eld Lane Baptist church. These underutilised spaces have the potential to hold events and organised activities but at the current time suffer from poor design and underuse.

The Trinity Church Yard was unenclosed for many years but was subject to antisocial behaviour from a neighbouring public house, now a shop. The church yard would provide a quiet, tranquil space if reopened either permanently or for a limited period during the day in association with its new use as a youth centre.

St Nicholas Church Yard is now barely recognisable, since the church was pulled down all that remains are two walled patches of ground containing horizontal graves stones and two Yew trees. Much of the land around this space is dedicated to highway and yet the potential for this area to function as a square is great.

The Priory is a schedule Ancient Monument and has open, grassed space to the east and south with a graveyard to the north. In the St Botolph's Masterplan this important space will have the Heritage Trail passing through it. The space lacks natural surveillance and has been subject to antisocial behaviour. Better management and new developments will provide a better environment here and allow more people the opportunity to enjoy this valuable site.

To realise the potential for more open spaces landowners of the spaces will need to work with the borough council to rejuvenate the spaces. Some like St Nicholas's have great potential to be integrated into new schemes for adjacent buildings and become vital spaces for people.

Spaces for limited access and biodiversity

There are several other church and grave yards, including several in the Dutch Quarter, that are closed or have limited access. Generally they all lack adequate natural surveillance therefore utilising them as public open space may not be desirable but they will make valuable contributions to the town's biodiversity and green link network with considered planting and design.



Vision

Spaces that will have public access should be designed for relaxing and provide a place of different qualities than the busy surrounding streets. Large spaces must also be able to hold events such as a market or exhibition. Public spaces should have a different set of materials from the streets and contain furniture that is of individual design and bespoke where possible. The integration of public art is important and the inclusion can be made by embedding artist work in the materials and furniture or with individual pieces of sculpture, lighting or other decorative measures. Cafes and street performers will be encouraged where appropriate to add to the diversity of attraction.



Specific Requirements

Landscaping - Trees and other soft landscape will enhance the natural heritage of the site. The Yew tree has a long established relationship with burial spaces and church yards. Where possible the existing trees should be utilised as a feature of each space and its heritage. This will provide a common theme between the spaces, particularly those that have lost the appearance of their original use. A clear aspect should be maintained to deter anti-social behaviour, e.g. the crowns of trees raised, the shrub layer minimised and hard cut back and herb layer well maintained. Spaces not suitable for public access will have soft landscaping that maximises the potential for biodiversity and should be identified and promoted accordingly.

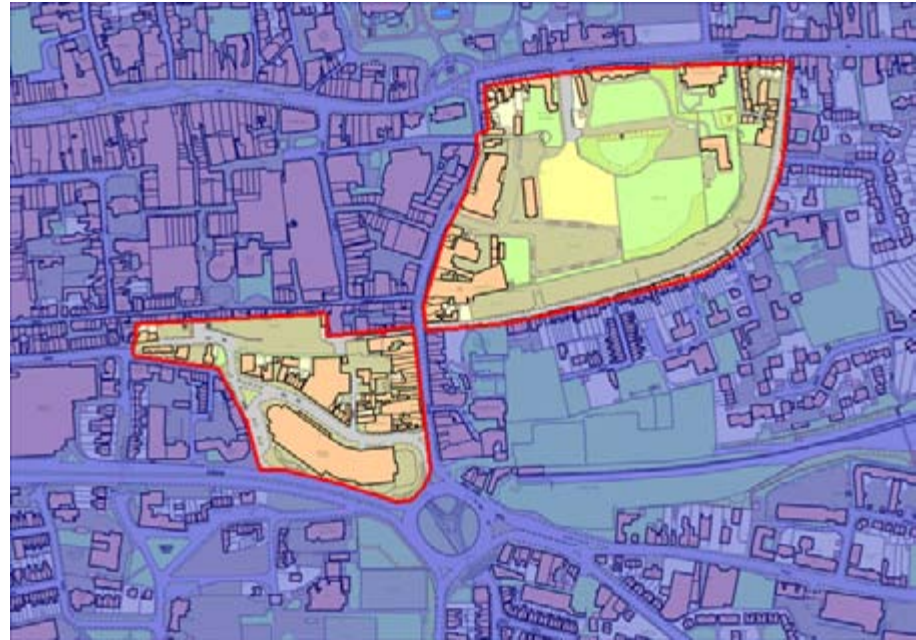
Furniture and Materials - A common theme of materials and furniture should link the spaces. Seating within grave yards should for the most part be avoided as it potentially attracts anti-social behaviour. Seating should rather be set outside the space but focus on it (these particularly focused on any main access points/vistas through the site), this approach helping with passive surveillance of the site. The spaces for public use will be defined by a set of surface materials that are different to the streets.

Public Art and Interpretation - Public art should be a significant element of each public space. Within graveyard sites, where appropriate, the historic element can be emphasised by superimposing a ghosted outline of the church stencilled in as part of the hard landscape layout, supported where possible with an inset interpretation plaque.

Materials - The churchyard spaces and the new spaces within regenerated areas are to be designed so as to create an individual and different experience from that of the streets. In public spaces materials that are unique to the series of churchyards or an individual space must be used. Where a strong desire line passes through a space the street material can be used for this path but predominantly the spaces will be designed to be significant investments in the physical and social infrastructure of the town centre that can be seen as a series of oasis outside the bustle of the exchange space in the street.

The materials chosen for each space should form part of the linkages between the series of related spaces to be used as public open space.

3.10 New Regeneration Areas



The Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide a co-ordinated vision and delivery plan for a range of new developments and projects that will enhance the overall quality of the town centre public realm. New attractors will extend the activities of the town centre, establishing extensions of the shopping core and a new cultural quarter, with the Visual Arts Facility at its centre. The Magistrates Court creates a public new space fronting the Town Station. This space will provide a formal entrance to both the station and the Court buildings.

Vision

New developments need to enhance the 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. These development sites are the only large sites where the public desire for more trees in the town centre can be realised.

Priory Street car park will be redesigned. The imposing town wall to the rear of the car park will be given a more sympathetic treatment at its base and the car park will be softened with tree planting. Improvements to lighting for security and illuminating the wall will be incorporated.

Station Square will be designed to accommodate the movements of commuters and provide a sense of arrival at Colchester from the station platform. This space must also provide an appropriate forecourt for the Magistrates Court, sympathetic to the architecture and the court function.

Specific Requirements

Public Spaces Public Spaces will be designed to a high quality and be of materials unique to the space. Designs must consider the full range of functions and activities possible to provide Colchester with unique and exciting opportunities.

Public Art - Opportunities for new public art as individual pieces, temporary displays and embedded art in furniture will be expected in new public spaces.

Landscaping - The enhancement of green links and planting of new street trees will be required in appropriate areas of new developments. Opportunities for street trees and other soft landscaping, where appropriate, must be fully explored with regard to archaeology and other constraints. New trees and plant material can be placed in containers.

Streets and movement - Street connections and new streets must provide continuity and legibility for desire lines from existing quarters whilst expressing the significance of new primary attractors.

Street Furniture The materials and approach to the public realm will be consistent with the surrounding network as detailed in this strategy.



3.11 Thresholds



Historically, a town gateway served as both a physical and symbolic announcement of entry to a town and the movement from open countryside to a controlled urban environment. In today's less tightly bounded town centres, historic gateways still retain a residual element of their former significance and provide a sense of arrival to opportunities for trade, activity and socialising.

Although Colchester's gateways have differing characters they need to be considered as a group because they mark the thresholds of the town centre. As demarcations of the town centre boundaries these are landmark locations that should announce the arrival at the centre.

Threshold Locations

St. Botolphs

The major roundabout of St Botolph's is a contemporary gateway to the town centre. Although it is heavily trafficked it does provide a point of definition that has strong legibility if only because of the scale of the engineering. The roundabout also has a long underpass providing pedestrians with a disjointed approach to the centre. There are pedestrian crossings as an alternative to the underpasses but the pedestrian is faced with little priority, poor legibility and travelling far from an obvious desire line. The pavement on the north side of the roundabout is the actual threshold but the area is highly cluttered and has a poor sense of place.

Abbey Gate Street.

The street is an isolated residential enclave adjacent to the Town Centre, with fine period terraces and mature trees. An underpass of the arterial route Southway links it to the St John's area. Access to private parking is over paved areas. There is potential for a homezone design approach to reinforce the perception of shared space for vehicles and pedestrians.

North Station Road, North Bridge

The river is a strong landmark and creates a boundary between the North Station Road local centre and the North Hill ascent into the town centre. This area has a poor public realm created partly by the highway clutter and partly by the unkempt appearance of other parts. The important legibility of a route from the north to the town breaks down in this section of street between the bridge and the base of North Hill.

Middle Mill

The bridge over the sluice gates, on the site of the old mill, marks the transition in to the town centre from Lower Castle Park. Once over the bridge there is a small stretch of street called Middle Mill. This space has poor public realm which detracts from its significance. The large and dominant carriageway once served a local authority depot but now the site has been sold the need for carriageway has lessened.

Headgate

The junction of Southway and Head Street defines the beginning of the town centre. It provides an obvious change from the virtually pedestrian free Southway where the pedestrian has a subordinate and highly controlled experience. Currently the only way into the town across the arterial road is via an underpass. Given the growth of population on the garrison and its access via Butt Road works on this junction should seek to rebalance the priorities by providing at grade crossings over Southway. This would enable a better distinction of threshold than the current exit of the underpass.

East Hill

The grand buildings at the top of East Hill where it becomes the High Street mark this gateway. The change in character defines the change in function but a specific boundary threshold is not legible. Given that the Roman wall would be crossing carriageway around the Priory Street junction it would be appropriate to establish the threshold at this point and extend the public realm improvements.

Balkerne Gate

The historic and evocative Roman gateway through the wall promotes a sense of expectation approached from the west, but the sense of arrival once through is compromised by the layout of the pavement and carriageway. Whilst the landmarks of the Mercury Theatre and water tower are impressive in the scene the route through is dominated by the carriageway and the pedestrian realm has a distinctly subordinate feel.

Crouch Street West

The west end of Crouch Street defines the beginning of the town centre at its western edge. Although, like Middle Mill, this threshold has no relationship with the town wall the changes in activity and use of buildings make an obvious statement. This threshold is a pedestrian only and may therefore only require delineation on the pavement.

Vision

Thresholds provide a marker and definition of the town centre and can be unified through a series of public art works designed for each location. Whilst particular to each location they should have a unified theme. These pieces need not be free standing but could be embedded into the location as floorscape (literally a threshold), with lighting or street furniture.

Specific Requirements

Public Art - A series of public art works will be provided that demarcate the boundaries of the town centre and interpret aspects of Colchester's rich heritage.

Materials – a concept for the general principles and selection of materials will be prepared once an artist has been commissioned for the project.

4 Materials and Details

The choice of materials in the public realm and the way in which they are detailed has a great effect on people's perception of Colchester. It is vital that these materials are robust and relevant so that the streets remain attractive and can be maintained to high standards. New schemes will be carefully costed and planned to ensure that all relevant ongoing maintenance costs are accounted for and that an appropriate organisation is designated to ensure ongoing maintenance.

The choice of materials must respond to the built form of the town and enhance the character. They must provide a coherent sequence of streets and spaces from a limited palette and be of high quality so that the public realm contributes to the richness and visual wealth of the town centre. Good quality streets and spaces should be designed to enhance the uniqueness and prestigious heritage of Colchester.

Historic Materials

Evidence of historic materials in the streets of Colchester is limited. Although evidence of Roman archaeology provides good detail of their streets evidence of later periods is minimal.

The Septaria stone and flint are the only really vernacular stones. Both are evident in the churches, castle and Roman wall around the town but there is no evidence to suggest they were used in surfacing and road finishes. Post Roman era historic evidence is negligible and it is not until the 19th century that it is possible to find stone sets and other stone surfaces that were brought to Colchester by train or boat in Victorian times. Maidenburgh Street to the north of the High Street has the Victorian surface remaining with evidence of tracks worn by cart wheels. Other examples exist in Church Street and off North Hill.

From early photographic images it is possible to establish a tradition of flag stones used within the major streets of the town centre, a type of material of size and shape that has created an appropriate perception and formality in the wide civic Victorian pavements.

Early examples of lamp columns and other furniture do exist and should be kept where possible.



Surface Materials Principles

The choice of surface materials should be limited to a small palette of quality finishes. By selecting a small palette the pedestrian will experience continuity through the streets and spaces. By using the palette in ways that respond to the scale and built form a sympathetic richness and variation will add to the overall experience of the town centre whilst emphasising the hierarchy of streets and their functions.

Detailing of materials is crucial to the elegance and beauty of the public realm. Within the design process accurate detailing of junctions with buildings and vertical elements as well as drainage points and access covers must be specific and clear. Paving and all multi piece layouts must be fully considered at the design stage to reduce on site cutting and improvised on site accuracy.

All jointing must be detailed at the design stage to achieve narrow and even joints so that a consistent and safe surface is created.

Any design process for the public realm in the town centre must have the involvement of an urban designer or landscape architect from the Design and Heritage Unit from Colchester Borough Council in association with members of the Highway Authority design team. A series of comprehensive designs should be produced in advance of any works that follow and support this strategy.



Codes, Standards and workmanship

All materials must be installed to the appropriate codes and British Standards. On site handling and health and safety procedures should be observed together with workmanship standards by the design team throughout implementation. Sample panels should be produced prior to full implementation to ensure that the overall scheme will achieve the desired standard and quality.

Contractors should demonstrate that their gangs have been selected for their experience of town centre environments and their ability to manage a project appropriately. Equally the contractor should demonstrate their experience and qualification with the chosen materials, specifications and standards.

Street furniture

Colchester town centre is a relatively small, compact area. The furniture within it should be simple, robust and appropriate to the conservation area status and its built heritage. For these reasons there should be a single type of each element of furniture for the whole town centre. Litter and recycling bins should be sourced from one manufacturer. In consultation the public perception is that litter bins are required. It will be possible to accommodate more bins providing that they are placed considerately, where they will not be an obstacle.

One type of bollard should be used and the unique bollard with the Colchester insignia is the most appropriate. Lamp columns should be plain simple and black. Posts for signage should also be black but only used when a wall fixing cannot be accommodated or negotiated. Some small signs can be on shared posts of lamp columns. A single style of bench and seat should be used on the streets where a vista can be taken or where adequate space allows. North Hill should have some strategically placed seating for people who may tire walking up the hill.

Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council will work together to ensure that bus shelters will not dominate the pavement area. A clearway of 2.4 m for pedestrian movement should not be compromised by shelters. Advertising must be restricted to a single poster per shelter, preferably placed behind the timetable information. The associated signage and information provided at bus stops must be condensed with regard to clutter and obstruction where possible. Signage and adverts that negatively affect the setting of listed buildings will not be acceptable. All bus shelter details to be agreed with Essex County Council.

Highway furniture must be minimised throughout the town. Yellow lines must not be used on stone surfaces and a zone control approach will be established in the core. There will be a presumption against use of guard railing as a pedestrian control within the town centre, in accordance with the Government endorsed Manual for Streets 2 which notes that they 'should only be used when no other solution to a significant safety problem is practically possible, and the adverse effects on amenity, capacity and safety have been fully evaluated and recognised.' (p. 88) Cycle parking should be simple stainless Sheffield Stands. Manual for Streets 2 supports these measures and has guidance for implementation and design. A strategy for reducing clutter must be produced for the town centre. This will include removing yellow lines and signage, adopting zones of parking control and removing redundant furniture.

The furniture in static spaces as opposed to that used in the streets should be of bespoke design and individual to the space. The theme of churchyard spaces can allow for common features of furniture and materials in these spaces but variations for each space must exist. The intended use of the space will dictate what type of furniture will be required. The spaces that will act as public squares will require a co-ordinated set of furniture to meet the needs of all users.

Trees / Planting

Trees are important to the public realm for several reasons. They provide shade, are a significant vertical element in the streetscape, provide a focal point and connectivity throughout the town and also screen pedestrian areas from the surrounding roads.

The principle green space of the town centre is Upper and Lower Castle Park. This area contains numerous fully mature trees that were planted during the Victorian period. It is also evident throughout the town that there are remnants of other tree plantings from the same period, defined quite strongly by the large Oaks, Holm Oaks, Beech, London Plane and Horse Chestnut in various positions. These trees form key arboricultural and landscape features of Colchester and everything possible should be done to retain these key features in good condition.

In general trees are scattered across the 'shopping and pedestrian' areas of Colchester and are few and far between. Principally they are contained within old church yards and the remains of the gardens of large feature properties. At present these areas are relatively unused as public amenity space and are usually isolated from each other. Whilst these 'green oasis' are important in their own right further effort is required to connect these areas and as a consequence improve connectivity throughout the town as a whole.

It is noted that a large number of the trees that do affect the public realm are contained within privately owned land. It is vitally important that these trees are cared for in the same vein as those within publicly owned land as, to a larger extent, it is these trees that will provide the large trees within the streetscape given the fact that there is only limited availability of public owned space for this size trees to be provided.

Therefore the following should be considered:

- Existing trees in public spaces should be monitored and consideration given to succession planting and/or re-planting where they no longer provide high amenity value.
- Existing trees, including those within private land, within 15m of proposed changes to the public realm i.e. installation of street furniture, changes of paving/curbing etc, require due consideration in the form of an arboricultural impact assessment to limit the loss of feature trees that influence the public realm.
- Due consideration will be given to trees that influence and are visible from the public realm prior to any changes to the public realm.
- Where services will be installed by statutory undertakers or agents working on their behalf the above point will be considered and the guidance contained within NJUG 4 used.
- Tree planting should be considered for public space to provide visual interest, shade and connectivity.

- Consideration should be given to introducing tree planting as a unifying element and to define routes and spaces.
- Tree planting should be used to create focal points within the streetscape.
- Where possible all trees should be planted at the natural ground level. Trees behind retaining walls should be avoided given that they will be lost in the long term.
- Appropriate species should be used both in terms of mature size, natural growth habit and origin/provenance.
- The choice of tree should reflect the scale of the space.
- The appropriate size of stock should be used when planting new trees i.e. if immediate impact is required an extra-heavy standard should be used instead of a standard tree.
- New planting should be sited in such a way that they do not conflict with services.

Shrub and Herb Layers

Views across the key spaces, roads and lanes need to be secured by ensuring tree canopies are maintained with a clear stem at no less than 2.5m high. Allowance should also be made for CCTV surveillance; however tree cover should not be compromised for lack of sufficient numbers of cameras.

A clear hierarchy of planting needs to be appropriately established, as outlined above forming the principal structural elements, and in some case, e.g. the yews emphasised as principal features, all bringing character and structure to individual spaces. Beneath this the shrub and herb layer, at a more human perspective should be far more eclectic and flexible in their composition and usage, being used to bring seasonal vibrancy and colour to individual areas, their structure in most cases defined by the layout of the planters, hanging baskets, etc, whilst as with the trees allowing for free pedestrian movement and surveillance.

Shrub and herb layer planting should be robust and well coordinated. Blocks of planting should be used to complement the scale of individual areas and planting pallets should reflect local and climatic conditions, e.g. through the use of swaths of grasses and sedges and introduction of drought tolerant species.

Subtle lighting should be used to highlight/up-light planting to making individual spaces more usable after dark whilst still highlighting the planting.

Lighting

Colchester Borough Council has developed a lighting strategy for the town centre based on work carried out by Sutton Vane Associates which contains criteria for lighting and proposals for the introduction of lighting for landmark buildings and zones.

Way finder signing

The signing for local heritage, attractions and visitor facilities should be clear and unambiguous. The locations of signs and their design should not add to street clutter or detract from the street scene. Way finder furniture should have an appropriate aesthetic and design that people associate with visitor information. Visitor information, however, can often be integrated with other related information such as highways information, and consolidation of different types of signage will be sought where appropriate.

Heritage interpretation need no longer be confined to physical display boards and signage and has been greatly enhanced by the ever expanding potential of digital media. The Council will work with digital providers and businesses to introduce innovative new digital-based forms of interpretation which link mobile phone/computer users to electronic information sources.

Public Art

Art in the Town Centre public realm

Art can be integrated into the public realm in many ways; a key factor of successful integration is the involvement of an artist in the design process at the earliest opportunity. Similarly, the involvement of stakeholders and the public, where possible, give a good sense of ownership and pride, both are key elements the success of a town centre. Public art can take many forms and the diversity of public art is a great asset when building on local distinctiveness and heritage.

Within the open spaces network we will seek to embed the work of artists into the street furniture, creating bespoke designs unique to Colchester and its public spaces. The main focus for new works of public art will be the thresholds and public spaces identified in Section 3. These areas provide the best opportunities for appropriate siting and contemplation of artworks, in contrast to streets where movement and activity is the main focus. Any public art that is placed in the highway will need to be licensed.

The diversity of public art must be taken into account when designing the public realm so that opportunities for lighting, exhibitions and performances can be accommodated. These can be associated with large spaces but intimate, smaller spaces can be successful hosts to all types of art.

Shop fronts

The design and visual richness of shop fronts makes a significant contribution to the public realm. For Colchester's historic centre there are many contextual constraints on design and whilst there is a case for modern, contemporary design where appropriate, the traditional design and proportions are the most dominant and relevant style for the town. Guidance for shopfront design is contained in a Supplementary Planning Document which is available on the Colchester Borough Council website following adoption in June 2011.

Licensing and zoning Street Cafes

The places for pavement cafes should not conflict with movements of pedestrians or simply be a smoking area outside a bar. The Borough Council has a licensing procedure for pavement cafes and has designated zones where this use of the public realm is appropriate. The Borough Council will be adopting a licensing policy to control activities on the pavements of the town centre. This will seek to control pavement cafes, sitting out areas and the use of 'A' boards as advertisements. These elements of activity will be required to achieve three basic principles:

- Not obstruct the public highway
- Not encourage antisocial behaviour
- Provide an appropriate appearance and design within the town centre



5 Maintenance and Management

Maintenance

Maintenance has a far reaching effect on the appearance of any streetscape project. The lifetime of a scheme has to be carefully considered, costed and approved in advance of implementation. Without a full understanding of the level of maintenance required, the costs associated with this and also a firm commitment to carry this work out, the investment in improvements is severely undermined and compromised.

Modern cleaning methods and current specification can sometimes be in conflict and design and maintenance therefore need to come together on a range of issues that includes cleaning, security, litter collection and de-icing. The improved streetscape environment will require ongoing management if the contribution it is going to make to town centre life in Colchester is to be sustained. A critical objective to the ongoing maintenance is both retaining the visual appearance and sense of quality and to ensure that surfaces and features remain safe and useable. This in particular relates to surface finishes with regular checking of paved finishes to ensure that trip hazards are not created through the settlement or displacement of paving units. Such ongoing work relates to providing a town centre useable by all and relates to the need to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant guidance.

Under the provisions of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, a Health and Safety file is required to be prepared and held available permanently. The file must contain information on any future work required after the completion of the project. This would normally include: 'As built' drawings and important production information. Construction details, materials and street furniture schedules and specification reinstatement procedures maintenance requirements apparatus or equipment manuals public utilities drawings.

Maintenance Manual

To ensure that reinstatement is carried out to the same specification as the original works a maintenance manual should be prepared by the original designer before works are completed. This should incorporate:- 'as built' drawings - procedures for maintenance works - the exact materials used - the names and contact information of all suppliers - procedures and specification for reinstatement. The maintenance manual should be distributed to all Colchester Borough and Essex County Council departments and those Public Utilities that wish to carry out their own reinstatement. Through negotiation, the Council will seek to achieve agreement with public utilities whereby those that choose not to carry out their own reinstatement works to the standards specified in the manual should reimburse the Councils for the cost of reinstatement to the requisite standard.

Maintenance of Specialist Elements

Maintenance agreements for any specialist items, such as water features, may need to be drawn up and should be informed by input and maintenance schedules and instructions provided by the relevant consultant and contractor. This will be necessary to ensure these features remain the dramatic focus envisaged.

Training

People involved in the maintenance of the public realm may not have experience or training in specialist, high quality workmanship. Many workers may not appreciate the importance of quality detailing. A skills audit should be carried out to determine where training and recruitment will need to be focused to ensure the appropriate maintenance of the public realm. A training programme should be developed that is specifically tailored to meeting the requirements of Colchester's high quality public realm.

Materials Stockpile

For paving materials not readily available, a reserve of materials used in the scheme should be set aside. This can be stockpiled or laid in storage by the Borough Council for lifting and re-laying when required for repair and larger reinstatement work.

Environmental Education

While there is an increasing intolerance of poor surfaces and uneven paving the awareness of public spaces as an important and valued aspect of our towns and cities is generally still quite low. Even in Colchester, which has an effective streetscape management regime for its existing spaces, the extent of litter and staining, particularly through chewing gum, are persistent problems. The careful siting and adequate provision of litter bins and drainage channels is an important aspect for tackling the problem. The level of investment and frequency given to street cleaning is also important.

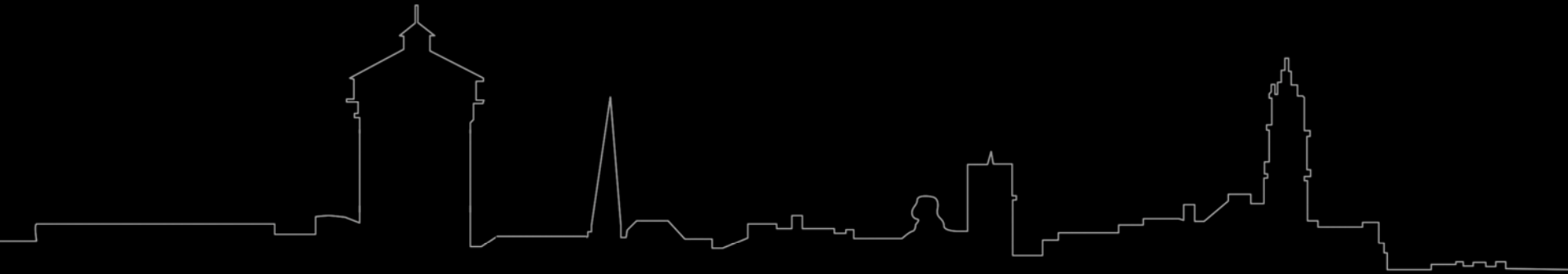
A litter free environment can positively influence behaviour. The preponderance of chewing gum staining in the town centre's streets and spaces indicates that there is a central role for education in raising awareness of the public realm as something of value within the community. Hopefully as the role of the public realm continues to expand into providing a venue for events and civic life then respect for its fabric will increase.

Should you require further information please contact the

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June 2011

Colchester Lighting Strategy



SUTTON VANE ASSOCIATES
LIGHTING DESIGN

Existing lighting conditions



Purpose of Lighting Strategy

- Provide an organised and cohesive lit environment
- Provide framework for future lighting proposals
- Act as a catalyst for future funding



Aims & Objectives

- Celebrate Colchester's unique historic character
- Interpret Colchester's key architectural features
- Improve the perception of a safe experience by night
- Create a sense of place
- Create a thriving evening economy
- Improve wayfinding by night
- Improve lit environment to help influence behaviour
- Enhance forthcoming public realm developments
- Develop a sustainable lighting approach



Project Area & Proposed Zones



- Zone 1: Central Core
- Zone 2: Shopping Core
- Zone 3: Dutch Quarter
- Zone 6: Regeneration Areas
- Zone 7: Other spaces

The Central Core



- The 'heart' of the Colchester by night
- Connecting venues (Murcury & VAF)
- Create a welcoming environment
- Enhance architecture, routes and spaces

The Central Core



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Architectural Opportunities



Tier 1 – Highest Priority

- Balmerne Water Tower (Jumbo)
- Colchester Town Hall
- Cowdray Crescent War Memorial
- Colchester Castle
- Mercury Theatre
- Natural History Museum
- Visual Arts Facility
- St Peter's Church
- Essex and Suffolk Fire Office
- St Nicolas Building

Tier 2 – Aspirational

- 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 30, 31, 31a, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39 and 131 High Street
- Colchester Arts Centre
- Balmerne Roman Wall
- Balmerne Bridge
- Balmerne Passageway

Tier 3 – Lowest priority

- Hollytrees Museum
- Museum Street (depending on Castle being lit)
- Remaining facades along High Street

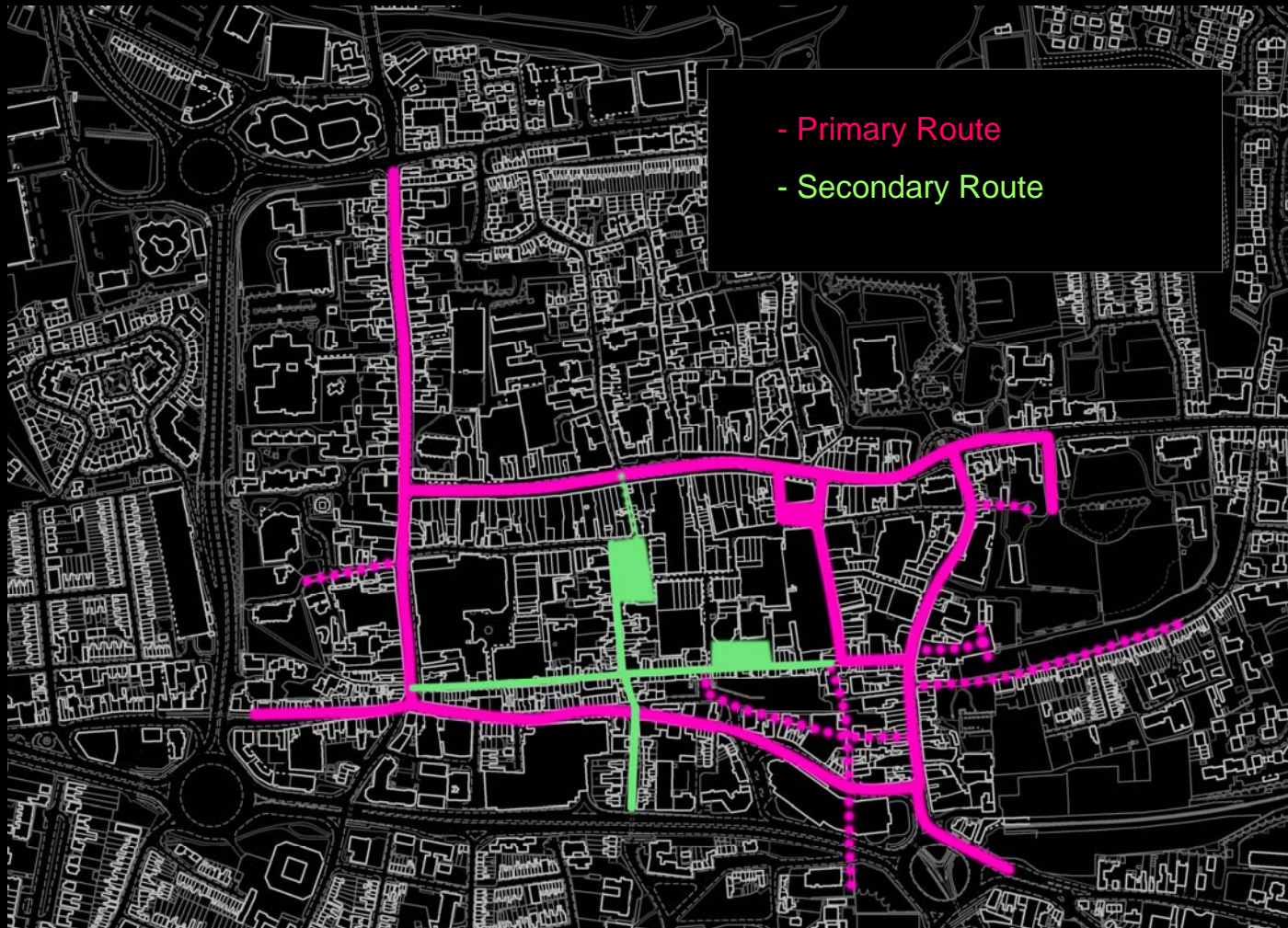


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Routes & Thresholds



Routes & Thresholds (examples)



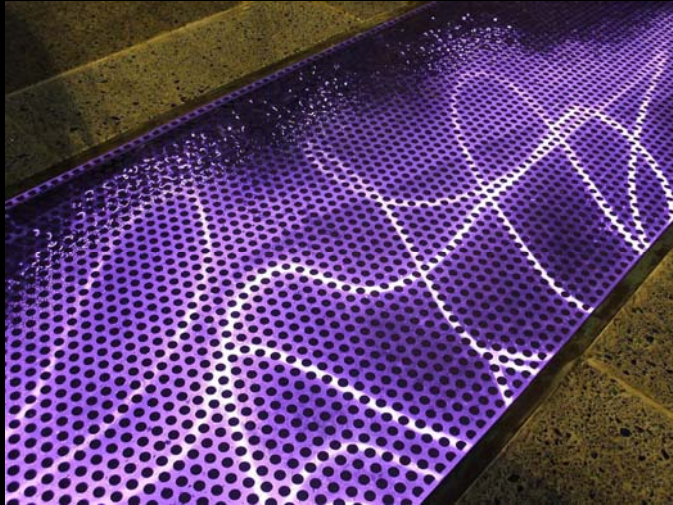
Spaces (examples)



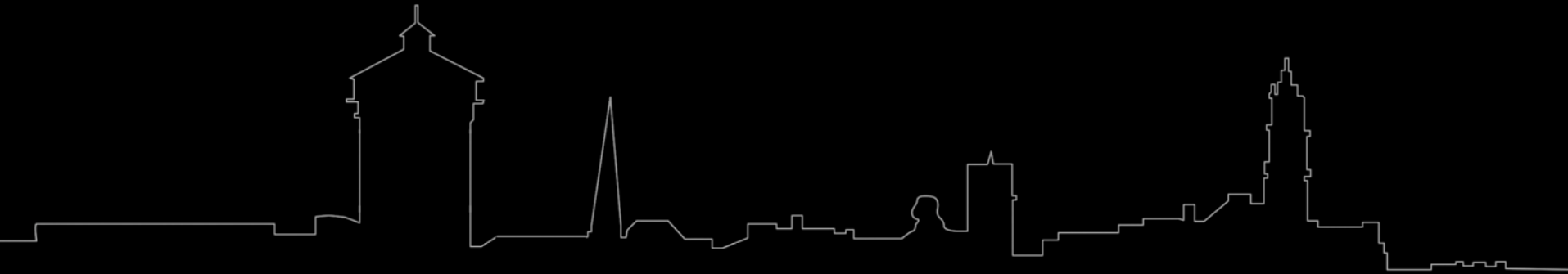
Festive Lighting



Light Art



Colchester Lighting Strategy



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