

GC Policy 7 Movement and Connections

Summary

The completed A133-A120 link road is critical to the success of the TCB Garden Community. The TCBGC Community Liaison Group strongly recommend its completion as a matter of priority BEFORE house building commences PLUS radical re-routing of the planned RTS to utilise the link road onto the A120 in an anti-clockwise circular route around and into Colchester, thus avoiding the need for expensive road widening works, saving million of pounds on Clingoe Hill and in central Colchester, and ensuring the TCB Garden Community meets the modal shift and sustainability goals outlined in the DPD and Section 1 Local Plan.

Statement

It is the urgent belief and conviction of the TCBGC Community Liaison Group (CLG) that a radically different timeplan and approach should be taken with regard to the key components of this policy, namely the A120/A120 link road and the RTS (Rapid Transit System), in order to successfully achieve the policy's goals and aims as laid out in the DPD. Without these drastic alterations, outlined below, we do not believe the plan is sound, and worse, that it is in direct contravention of the principles underlying the HIF grant of 99.9M as a result of which at the previous inspection the TCB Garden Community was adjudged as being sound.

The current plan has allocated £21 million to the provision of an RTS which means that there is a shortfall of £21 million to complete the link road. It is the CLG's contention that

- a) The £21 million ring-fenced for the RTS should be instead put towards completing the link road FIRST, so that it is in place before the first houses are built and
- b) the route for the RTS should be drastically changed to a route which does not utilise the A133 Clingoe Hill, already hugely congested, or go through an equally hugely congested central Colchester necessitating millions to widen roads and introduce bus lanes. Instead it should be redrawn to use the route suggested by the CLG and shown below. This is already in part dedicated bus routes and will all be, once the link road is constructed, fit for use for a modern RTS system. That suggested route is shown below. It avoids Clingoe Hill in favour of already dedicated bus routes through Elmstead Road, Capon Road and Boundary Road, links all the key destinations required including the Northern Gateway and Garden Community Park and Choose, the hospital and North Station, together with a stop at the top of Balkerne Hill to access central Colchester, and the University and Knowledge Gateway. It would operate in a loop in an anti-clockwise direction, utilising roads which are already fit for use for a modern RTS system, thus saving millions of pounds. It would be in place as soon as the link road is constructed in full linking the A133 and the A120, ready for the new residents to adapt to new patterns of travel behaviour without the car, achieving modal shift, because all key destinations as listed above are quick, frequent and accessible via the RTS.

The key stops that the new route would link are as follows, starting from the Park and Choose at the bottom edge of the TCB Garden Community on the A133:

- The Garden Community stops (initially the first (southernmost) developed community)
- The A120 employment park, top right of the Garden Community (providing fast transport to work for Garden Community residents who are employed there)
- Severalls Lane and Colchester Business Park, also an employment hub. Shown on the map as being accessed via the Ipswich Road and Severalls Lane, Colchester Business Park does have a route into and through the Business Park from the A120/A12 junction, which may be preferable and give a smoother curve on the route.

- The Stadium
- Colchester Sports and Leisure Park
- Northern Gateway Park and Ride
- Colchester General Hospital
- Colchester North Station
- Top of Balkerne Hill stop for the town centre (by the old Embassy Suite)
- St Botolphs train station
- Bottom of Hythe Hill (for walking access to Hythe station just over the bridge over the river Colne)
- Start of Elmstead Road (for easy access to Tesco The Hythe)
- End of Capon Road, on Boundary Road, for access to Essex University's Innovation Centre, Essex Business School and the Knowledge Gateway Science and Business Park
- Back to the start of the loop at the Park and Choose on the junction of the A133.

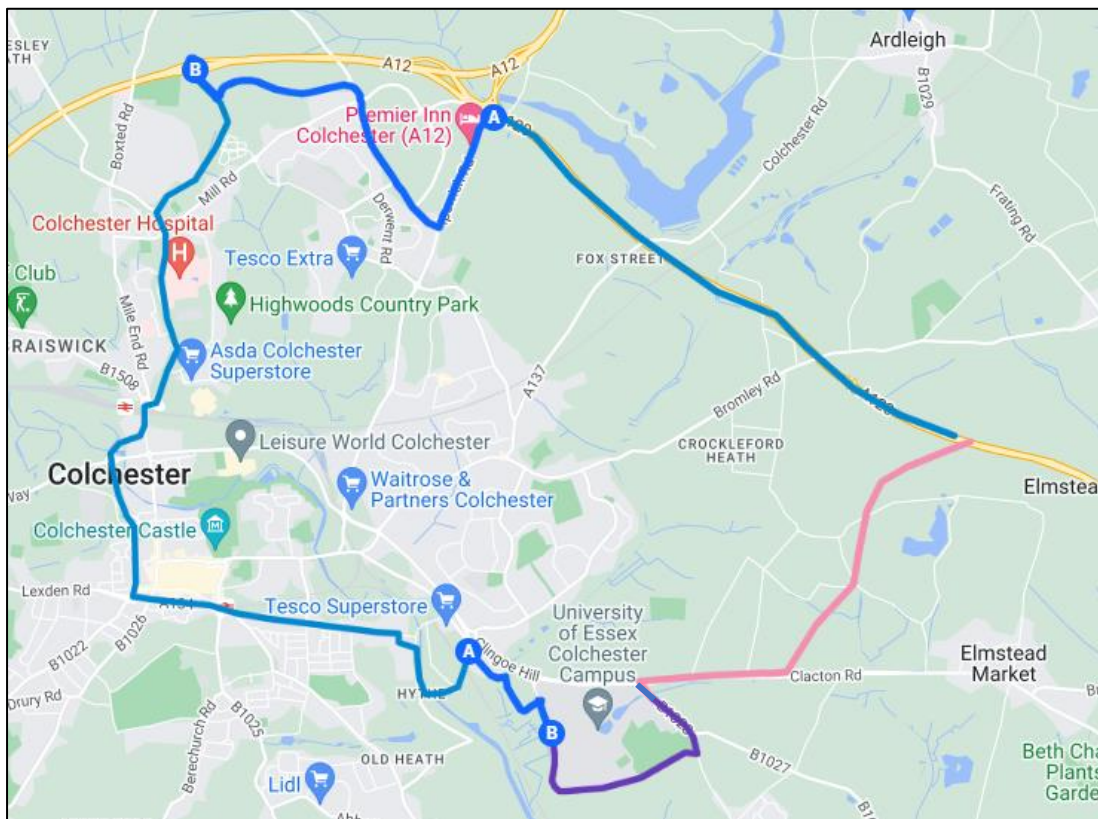


Figure 1 Note: the vertical part of the pink line from Clacton Road to the A120 indicates the intended route of the A120/A133 link road through the Garden Community. A and B at the bottom mark the route from Elmstead Road to University stop on Boundary Road, A and B at the top mark the route from the top of the Ipswich Road A12/A120 junction to the Northern Gateway Park and Ride.

The link to this Google map is shown below. It allows the user to zoom in, move the map around and view in different ways just as you can with a regular Google map.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1jDmOLSmGRF5PHD61n7TSBD5HIZiP_0&usp=sharing

Benefits of the revised approach

The benefits completing the link road in its entirety BEFORE commencement of homes being built together with an RTS that utilises the anti-clockwise route shown are as follows:

- 1) Using the route proposed, no building work for extra bus lanes etc needs to be done on Clingoe Hill, in either direction, thus avoiding the horrendous congestion that would result therefrom.

2) No expensive road alterations need to be made through central and historic Colchester. The new route would skirt the town centre, with a key stop at the top of Balkerne Hill by the Embassy Rooms to access the centre, and then again at St Botolphs train station.

3) This could potentially pave the way for central Colchester to be pedestrianised or remain as it is, being served by local bus routes.

4) The proposed alternative to Clingoe Hill (Elmstead Road, Capon Road, Boundary Road, B1028/27 back to A133) is already a dedicated bus route (First Buses Routes S1 and 87)

5) Much of the route is already in place and fit for purpose for an RTS (A120, Severalls Lane, Axial Way, Via Urbis, plus Elmstead Road avoiding Clingoe Hill above) thus presenting a huge cost saving.

6) The saved cost of works on Clingoe Hill alone would contribute a large proportion of the monies needed for the completion of the link road.

7) The completed link road would immediately begin to relieve pressure on Clingoe Hill by providing a through route for traffic going to North Station or the hospital or the A12.

8) Because of the immediate fast access via the RTS anticlockwise route to North Station or the A120 employment park in the north west corner of the Garden Community or even Colchester Business Park, or Colchester General Hospital, new Garden Community residents working in London or any of the other locations would very easily adopt this modal shift from the outset. If there is a wait of 5-16 years for the link road to be completed this opportunity will have been lost. Much of the soundness of the TCBGC derives from its having the link road and not having to be dependent upon routes into Colchester, either for employment, schools, hospital care, shopping or travel.

9) It would meet the previous inspection's criterion for soundness as the link road would be doing as it was intended in siphoning traffic with onward destinations beyond Clingoe Hill off from the A133 and onto the A120 or beyond.

9) The Park and Choose on the Garden Community with the new RTS anti-clockwise route to access these destinations then also becomes a very real possibility from the outset.

10) Already it is painfully difficult to get a parking space in the hospital car park because it is so overloaded and people often have to drive around waiting for someone to leave before they can park. This will only be exacerbated with a larger demographic. However, with a fast RTS system adopting the proposed anti-clockwise route, residents from all communities east of Colchester can use the Park and Choose on the Garden Community to not only avoid battling with the traffic on A133 Clingoe Hill and beyond but avoid driving to the hospital at all using the RTS with the looping anti-clockwise route proposed by the CLG.

Harm arising from the current plan

The current plan, to proceed with building houses with only three quarters of the link road complete and no specified date for its completion, if ever, together with the currently planned disastrous and hugely expensive RTS route down the A133 Clingoe Hill, will

a) ensure that the modal shift will fail because

b) the RTS will be unable to provide travel to key destinations rapidly such as the hospital and the main train station as limited to A133 routes into central Colchester and

c) by the time the link road is completed, in 5-14 years time, with the possibilities of a better looped anti-clockwise RTS route that that would have provided, the patterns of behaviour not supporting modal shift will already be in place.

- d) It is in direct contravention of a key principle of the TCBGC which states that it will contain all the infrastructure and services for residents WITHOUT having to go into central Colchester
- e) Congestion and traffic on the A133 and Clingoe Hill going into Colchester, already gridlocked at key times, will expand exponentially with both building bus lanes and the addition of RTS priority vehicles, together with the added traffic from the Garden Community who want to go to the A12, the hospital or North Station.
- f) The addition of dedicated bus lanes to Clingoe Hill will narrow it and creating a further bottleneck, more congestion and tailbacks as more traffic attempts to squeeze through a single lane as opposed to the current dual carriageway provision which already has these problems.
- g) It will cause even further distress to local communities and confirm all the fears and objections they have raised about the building of the Garden Community. The CLG proposal however would do the reverse in providing an RTS route that did not use Clingoe Hill, and a joined up link road that alleviated traffic on the A133 rather than exacerbated it.
- h) The £21 million currently ring-fenced for this not fit for purpose RTS, which militates against all of the principles and aspirational and otherwise entirely achievable goals of the Garden Community, will ultimately be wasted, as well as sabotaging those goals, with the loss of £21 million, as the desired modal shift will not be achieved either in the Garden Community or in Colchester City Centre, and a wonderful opportunity to achieve both of these will have been lost.
- i) With only one way in or out of the Garden Community, and the route to Bromley Road as a potential exit blocked from onward travel, the incomplete link road accessing or egressing the Garden Community from or onto the A133 will act as a bottleneck, inevitably causing huge congestion problems on the estate at key times of day, a phenomenon seen already on the Turner Rise Retail Park which was equally built within only one entry / exit road, but at least does not contain hundreds / thousands of homes. This will have the effect of making the Garden Community less desirable as a location to buy houses in, with the potential buyers and existing residents feeling that they are 'trapped' on the development once there, with the knock-on effect that the monies to fund any later completion of the link road become increasingly remote.
- j) This currently planned RTS route, based on an incomplete link road, by the proposer's own admission has a limited 'lifespan' of 10 years (p5 of the TCBGC Transport Evidence Base Part 2 Measures report), 8 years by the time building starts, during which congestion, pollution and frustration of both TCBGC and local community residents will build to even more intolerable levels, and the opportunity to deliver tangible benefits to and as a result of the Garden Community with a complete link road as originally intended together with a properly routed RTS system that doesn't put extra pressure on surrounding road infrastructure, will have been lost. Such inherently short-sighted thinking in these key and fundamental areas makes the DPD inherently unsound.

Conclusion

Very much of the strength and soundness of the TCBGC project relies on its provision of self sustainability ie for schools, healthcare, employment and shopping without having to travel outside of the Garden Community either to put added pressure on road infrastructure, or services found in surrounding communities. The RTS route plan shown in the current DPD, based on a link road that does not link, is in direct contradiction of this. As the point of the link road is to reduce traffic going into Colchester and a central tenet of the Garden Community is to be self-contained, why are huge sums being spent to provide an RTS to increase this traffic and access services outside the Garden Community? And this is at the expense of the mitigating link road, and using the very route whose traffic the link road was intended to alleviate. This is also in direct contravention of the key principles

of the Garden Community and one of the chief causes of controversy, concern and dismay, expressed from the outset, in local communities.

We would contend that the TCBGC Transport Evidence Base Part 2 Measures report commissioned by the Councils and provided by Ringway Jacobs is far too narrow and limited in its outlook and with its RTS proposals and routing is merely providing a very expensive sticking plaster which will not meet demands even 10 years into the future, as the report itself admits: p5 'The RTS HIF project is introducing priority measures on the approach to Greenstead roundabout which is expected to operate satisfactorily up to 2033 for RTS vehicles' but 'In the potential second phase of investment post 2033, it would be expected that the garden community would be continuing to grow but a general increase in car trips could be threatening RTS reliability and worsening RTS journey times on the route west of Greenstead roundabout, which would work against achieving mode share targets and sustainable travel aims.'

Recommended movement and travel routes must therefore adopt a much broader future-proofed approach to accommodate the transport needs of an additional 17,500 people (2.3 persons living in each of 7,500 homes) on the east of Colchester. This is represented by the proposal outlined here by the CLG in putting the unnecessary sticking plaster monies described above and proposed by the current plan, towards completion of the link road as originally intended by the Housing Infrastructure Fund, together with the wider circular and much more economical RTS revised route, shown in the attached file, which will accommodate a thriving community 50 years into the future and beyond, without impinging on or increasing congestion of surrounding road and central Colchester infrastructure. To do anything else is to render the whole of the good work done by the planners in other areas such as Land Uses and Spatial Approach, and the aspirations embodied in both the Section 1 Local Plan and other TCBGC policies hamstrung at worst by this crippling and at best wholly inadequate approach.

Note: It is also of some concern that the plan currently proposed is based on a report (TCBGC Transport Evidence Base Part 2 Measures) by an organisation (Jacobs part of Ringway Jacobs, who describe themselves thus: 'We design, create and maintain world-class, safe, efficient and environment-friendly highway infrastructure for local authorities') which may stand directly to gain commercially and financially from these very expensive and by their own admission inadequate and time-limited plans. It is also of concern that the proposal actually in real terms detracts from the soundness of and benefit to the TCBGC, by utilising funds which should go towards the full completion of the link road, as well as actually exacerbating harm to surrounding communities.

The CLG assert that it is absolutely vital therefore NOT to delay the completion of the link road – it was deemed to be fundamental to the soundness of the TCB Garden Community by the last inspection and on it hang very many of the Garden Community's goals and aspirations. To leave it undone is to strike at the very heart of the soundness of the project. We would therefore urge the Inspector to include our proposals – to complete the link road from the outset and to re-route the RTS – as main modifications in their inspection report to transform the DPD from what is otherwise an extremely unsound plan which may even see the vision of the TCBGC dashed entirely, to one that is sound, pragmatic and meets all its aspirations.

Addendum

We also include another Google map showing the RTS route we propose with the completed link road extended to include the local communities of Wivenhoe and Elmstead Market, shown below:

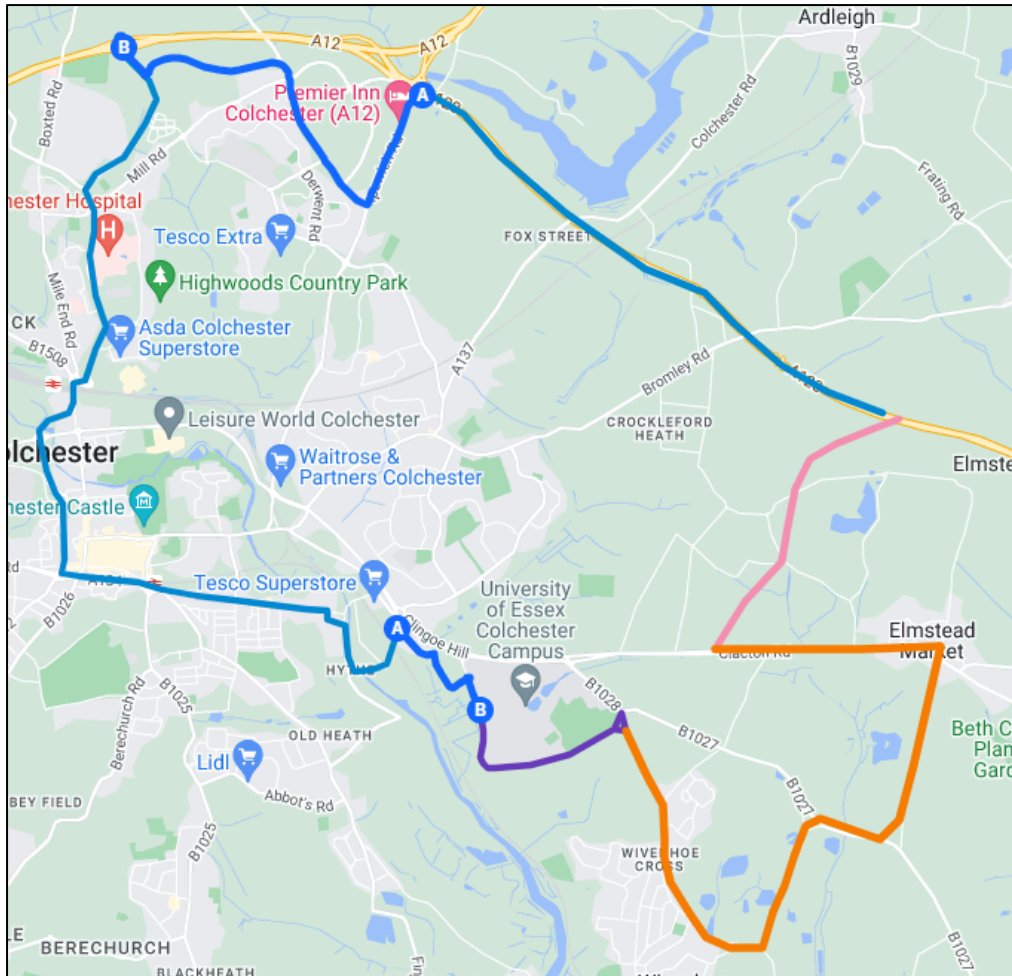


Figure 2 Note: the pink line shows the planned link road route from A133 to A120. The orange line shows the extended RTS route to include Wivenhoe and Elmstead. . A and B at the bottom mark the route from Elmstead Road to University stop on Boundary Road, A and B at the top mark the route from the top of the Ipswich Road A12/A120 junction to the Northern Gateway Park and Ride.

The link to this Google map is shown below. As before, it allows the user to zoom in, move the map around and view in different ways just as you can with a regular Google map:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1l_2-IZXvKwFsP70t6ellW-1Hk6ktVzk&usp=sharing

The benefits from this extension to include neighbouring communities are as follows:

- 1) The extended route would provide value and convenience to Wivenhoe and Elmstead as a spinoff of the Garden Community, helping to ameliorate public opinion
- 2) It would as well help to fund the service whilst the Garden Community population density is still low and usage alone will not do so.
- 3) It would also extend the modal shift desired for the Garden Community into neighbouring communities, whilst giving them much needed extra services.

Note: The only additional cost to this route would be the provision of traffic signals at the end of School Road in Elmstead Market where currently there are none with the result that traffic on School Road waiting to turn left onto the A133 heading down towards the Garden Community has to wait until a convenient gap in the traffic coming from Clacton to be able to do so.

Why necessary to participate in hearing

As a local resident living on the east of Colchester, and representing other residents in the Community Liaison Group from communities surrounding the search area, I am very well aware of the A133 Clingoe Hill congestion problems, and having lived in Colchester for nearly 50 years and at my current address for 40 years, as well as working at Colchester Institute for 15 years on the other side of Colchester, and in Witham and Braintree for 10 years prior to that, I know Colchester and its road network and the frustrations pertaining to that extremely well. As a result of that in-depth knowledge, I am also aware that the current plan is both poorly thought-out, ill advised, unnecessary and actually harmful to the implementation of the TCBGC, about which I and the rest of the CLG are passionate and with which we have been involved, as CLG, for the last three years, and for some of us, since 2011. Having worked with the planners to agree a plan which is basically sound in all aspects apart from this policy, we do not want to see it fail when a much better, future proofed and more cost-effective alternative is available.