Wivenhoe Town Council / C-BUS (Peter Kay) - Matter 6 Hearing statement - Transport.

Because of the significant changes to / revelations about the 'East' RT and link road proposals suddenly introduced by ECC in the Autumn 2019 Public Consultation document, this Hearing Statement is largely concerned with the questions that these 'new' aspects raise.

Q. 5a – A120/A133 Link Road

Since the Inspector's questions were drafted, there has been a dramatic change in the whole circumstances of this road, because of the publication of the route options in the autumn 2017 consultation exercise. **With most of these options severing the 'developable area', this also throws back into the melting pot the whole question of where the northern half of the TCBGC will actually be located, a matter which since 2017 had seemed to have become clear, at least in outline.**

As to the cost of the Link Road, the question is now rendered unfathomable by the multiple contradictory statements on the design standards. The March 2019 HIF application states in the introductory section at p.7 that it will be single carriageway, but then at pp. 28/31 it is stated to be dual. The August Chancellor's announcement of the grant says single. Also Appendix B to EID 049 states single. But the new public consultation brochure says dual. And any further statement given to the Inspector now will have no more believability than the rest!

Q. 5b – Other Highway Improvements

It is not *possible* to implement any other highways improvements, or at least not in the *principal* corridor that would be affected by the additional traffic generated by the TCBGC. ECC has accepted that there is no possibility of 'improving' Greenstead roundabout (beyond the 'Sainsbury's' plan – Appx 2), mainly because the principal traffic flow is Clingoe Hill / Colne Causeway, rather than a straight across flow. (If any scheme *was* deemed possible, we can be sure it would have featured in the many reports!). In any case, even if it were possible to 'improve' the roundabout so that more vehicles per hour could pass through from Clingoe Hill, the principal result would be the *worsening* of congestion in *inner* east Colchester in the am peak, thereby providing a net disbenefit to Colchester road users at large. The futility of trying to 'cure' inner urban car congestion by increasing road capacity has of course long been understood in progressive transport planning.

Q. 16 – Usage and Revenue Prospects

Whilst table 5.16 of the July RT report claims from theoretical modelling that even in 2026 a £0.6m profit can be made on Route 1, with increased profits by 2033, any thinking about the realities will quickly lead to puzzlement as to what people travelling where are going to contribute the £3.2m revenue needed to make this possible! There will be very few houses in the TCBGC, and the University is likely to be excluded from the system. And this profit has

to be achieved from the starting point of a current *loss* of £0.5m p.a. on the already-open section, Cuckoo Farm - town centre!

The RT suffers from uncertainty as to its purpose in relation to other bus services in the corridor. Unlike such 'successful' urban Bus RT systems elsewhere as Crawley and Fastrack, which are the *main* bus routes in the area, the RT here has become envisaged as an *overlay* on existing services. As the necessary speed cannot be achieved by segregation / priority measures, it has got to be achieved instead by reducing the number of stops, as if it were an LRT system (and in particular, it increasingly appears, cutting out the University). Cutting out most of the bus stops from the RT means that the existing bus services *must* remain to serve them, and in consequence they will pick up custom at stops that the RT *does* serve, too.

Where will the RT get custom on the east end of the route now? - other than in the slow-to-grow TCBGC itself. The University was originally stated to be one of the vital points on the route, and as recently as July all options still served it in some fashion; but now two of the three avoid it altogether. *(Note that at p.66 of Section 1 it states that the RT <u>will</u> link the TCBGC to the University – this would seem to need deleting now?)*. St Andrews Ave has only a few dozen houses and no side roads off it, so not much will be gained there. In fact the RT buses would now mostly end up running non-stop for more than two miles, from the south end of the TCBGC to the first likely setting down point in the East Bridge area (by which point the *local residents* are so close to the town centre that most walk rather than wait for a bus).

The north end of the route offers little hope either. It will miss out the large Severalls Hospital site housing development (or at best only stop at its far east end), also the CBC Northern Gateway leisure area. This is due to a failure to integrate planning and transport – in a coherently planned development area the public transport route would pass through the *middle* of the developments. But here the RT bus is only able to run on a road designed for general traffic and P&R buses, which purposely *avoids* trespassing into the areas of housing.

Speed achieved by not stopping / missing out of inhabited areas is a disaster to revenue!

Q. 18 – Connecting Bus Services within the Communities

The rather vague references made to this seem to ignore the fact that, even amongst hardened bus users, the number of people willing to use *two* bus services to make regular journeys is very low. Certainly car-owners would not do so. The number of days that it just doesn't work is too high, especially of course for those travelling in peak periods.

Unless the <u>RT itself</u> provides for the majority of residents within an acceptable walking distance from home, custom will not be sufficiently attracted. The problem is that the distance people are willing to walk depends on the perceived attractiveness of the transit system on offer, and will therefore be on the low side for a Bus RT without bus priority! – especially when throughout car use exists as an alternative.

Q. 20 – The Physical Feasibility of a RT System of adequate quality

Unlike the previous December 2017 and July 2019 RT reports, which revealed no useful progress on the identification of a supposedly-viable 'East' RT route, the new Consultation document, and the associated pdf internal reports on each of the remaining options (only

available on the ECC website and thus only known to a few), do at least result in a position where it is evident what the favoured route is.

ECC themselves have now effectively rejected Options 1 and 2 (as they are now called), i.e. the Barrack St and Greenstead Rd options. For both of these the internal reports declare, in identical wording, that

'the limited opportunity for key infrastructure that will (*sic*) improve the RTS journey time and reliability will likely discount this option'.

Similarly the public consultation brochure states of both (pp. 27 and 28) that

'the [bulk of the] route is largely on residential streets with little opportunity for road space reallocation to RTS, or even RTS priority measures'.

ECC has also once again rejected the Old Heath Rd option (now '4'); and, whilst the alongside-the-railway option ('3') has made a comeback appearance, this is only on the basis that it might be appropriate for consideration at an undefined very distant date, and it is thus irrelevant to the present Plan.

This leaves them with only the new-in-2019 St Andrews Avenue option ('5') now presented as a serious contender. And indeed the fact that they realise that this is their last throw of the 'East' dice is revealed by the way in which its difficulties are less emphasised than those of the other options.

OPTION 5

According to the Option 5 internal report (RTS Section B – Option 5 St Andrews Avenue July 2019),

'this option presents the most opportunities and has the least constraints for (*sic*) infrastructure improvements to achieve the RTS objectives in Colchester. The route is direct and uses some of the more substantial, resilient, roads'.

So what *are* the 'infrastructure improvements' envisaged for bus segregation / priority in this option?

In the town centre, as with the other options, nothing is proposed (as per the July RT report).

Nothing is possible on the Brook St - East St section.

(Note though how in section 2.2 the vague aspiration to a *possible* bus gate at the west end of the High St is within a mere ten lines transformed into something that <u>will</u> reduce traffic levels !!)

Reliance is placed on the new Ipswich Rd roundabout reducing / resolving current peak tailbacks (the relevant ones being St Andrews Ave westbound in the am peak and East St eastbound in the pm peak). However the proof of this pudding will not be evident until some months after the completion of the work. There must now be a large amount of 'suppressed demand' in Colchester at peak periods, and that, in the common way, is likely to result not in reduced delays, but in more traffic materialising to take up the increased capacity, until the delays again reach a level that some drivers will not accept.

Whilst the majority of Eastgates crossing delays will be avoided, the longer ones of 4-6 mins when two trains are passing will not be, as they result, in the pm peak, in the blockage of the mini-roundabout at the bottom of Ipswich Rd, which holds up *all* road traffic in the area.

The reference to using 'substantial, more resilient, roads' can only refer to **St Andrews Ave** (which is the *only* aspect in which Option 5 differs from Option 2). So one might expect that ECC would have gone to town on what can be achieved here! Instead, however, there is only opaqueness and contradiction. The internal report includes a cross-section of St Andrews Ave showing the road widened to dual 2 with the outer lanes bus-only, but the text of this report makes no specific reference to such an idea; indeed it states that 'existing carriageway' will be used by the RT buses except for short sections of bus lane on the approach to Greenstead roundabout. The public consultation brochure (p.29) also makes no reference to road widening for bus lanes, yet it contains a reference to the trees implying that they might have to be cut down!

If, however, we suppose that the bus lanes shown in the cross-section are not a complete fantasy, we must then look to see how this idea would fit in with the overall ECC proposals for this section of the road. These are explained in the 2015 grant application to SELEP (**attached as Appx 1**) for the Colne Bank Ave and Ipswich Rd / Harwich Rd sections [now completed / nearing completion]. Here ECC makes it clear <u>that the whole of the road from Lexden Springs to the Greenstead roundabout needs to be enlarged to dual 2 for ordinary traffic</u>, a job which is slowly being pushed forward in priority order. (The Ipswich Rd to Harwich Rd section is of course being widened to dual 2 for general traffic at this very moment, so there will be <u>no</u> bus lanes there, on what is actually the slowest-moving section).

It is clear from this policy that, even if the Harwich Rd - Greenstead roundabout section *were* to be widened in 2023 to dual 2 with the outer lanes for buses, this would be a very shortlived situation, as the outer lanes would soon afterwards have to be converted to general traffic use to meet the overall policy - OR the road would have to be widened *again* to dual *3*, which would definitely see the demise of all the trees! and a generally degraded environment.

Those who think more conspiratorially might well convince themselves that the main purpose of the invention of 'option 5' in 2019 was to get the road widening here paid for by HIF money on the excuse of the RT, when it is actually only desired for general traffic purposes!

Finally we must turn to the practicability of what is proposed at **Greenstead roundabout** itself. Here the situation is more one of bus priority being achievable only at the expense of road safety! The internal report tells us that

'It is proposed to create two lanes that run directly through Greenstead roundabout, dedicated to RTS vehicles, running east-west. This section will have to be carefully designed / modelled in order to reduce the hazards associated with 4-arm mini-roundabouts'.

The public consultation document however merely reproduces the same words about 'engineering solutions' that are used in referring to the Greenstead Rd - Elmstead Rd cut-through scheme suggested for Options 1 and 2, a quite different proposal. And of course there is no *plan*, such as would enable the public to see properly what new 'hazards' ECC propose to introduce, to add to the already-difficult process of negotiating this roundabout. (<u>NB</u> also that ECC only hope to *reduce* the extra hazards, not eliminate them!).

However it is actually clear what is being proposed from the reference to *4-arm* mini-roundabouts (the mini-roundabouts all being 3-arm currently, as normal with 'magic roundabouts'); and they could have produced a sketch plan very quickly had it been desired to let current roundabout users know what is proposed. As they have not done so, I have done one myself (**attached as Appx 2**), with a caption explaining what the new hazards would be. (Let them produce *their* version if they claim that this is *not* what they mean!).

The scheme, as the internal report notes, results in the roundabout being turned into a 'throughabout'; but 'throughabouts', like our own example at North Station, are generally *fully-signalled* and therefore safe.

As for the Greenstead roundabout - University - TCBGC section, p.39 of the public consultation brochure could be summarised as 'we still have no idea what we should do here'! This section is also discussed below under revenue prospects.

The connection between the RT and Hythe station in this option would be a poor one. (Interestingly, whilst the option 2 internal report specifically refers to the bus stops in Greenstead Rd in that option as providing a poor connection, the stops even further away in Option 5 have no such 'disadvantage'!). Additionally there is no footbridge at the station, and any am peak London commuters running from their RT bus would be liable to find the barriers already down for their (or another) train before they arrived, whereas anyone coming by car from the TCBGC to catch a train would avoid this by arriving on the up side.

It is not really fair to blame Jacobs for the lack of credibility in the RT schemes. They have simply been tasked with creating silk purses out of an impossible set of circumstances. The guilty parties are the three Councils who happily rushed into adopting sites promoted by developers and landowners, without any attempt to consider their transport viability first.

Q. 23 – Mode Share Strategy

The Mode Share report is in one sense very realistic – it demonstrates very clearly that the levels of transfer away from car that the LAs are claiming for the garden developments are only achievable by very 'extreme' measures – notably forcing people to leave their cars in peripheral car parks distant from their houses, so that the journey time by car is increased and so made no better than that by other modes. At p.13 of the report it is actually stated that this will have to be done here.

However when the report comes to its *conclusions* on what should be done in the GCs, the authors seem to be suddenly overcome with the (unspoken) realisation that no UK developer or house-buyer would tolerate such restrictions, and all that it actually recommends is that there should be no parking on house plots, parking instead being on-street close to the house or in nearby 'parking courts'; also that lower parking levels will be applied in some cases. *This is simply a recipe for another archetypal 'streets and pavements covered in stationary cars' (plus underused concrete wastes of parking courts) development!*

By showing how the purported aims for the GCs would only be achievable if unacceptably extremist (in UK political terms) anti-car actions were taken, this report destroys the whole basis of the GC proposals as effectively as anything put out by their opponents!

As the months pass, it becomes ever clearer that Colchester is in reality being pushed further into car-dependency. This year we learnt that the University plans to build <u>two</u> more multi-storey car parks in the early 2020s to ensure that staff are <u>not</u> forced into using other modes. This month we have the promoters of the Tollgate 1980s-style retail development celebrating their full planning permission with a 'drive in cinema', advertised as 'so that you <u>don't</u> have to go into the town centre at Christmas'…..

The **Park & Choose** name is more conspicuously pushed in these new documents (public brochure p.34). However it remains clear that there is nothing *extra* being proposed here (beyond the P&R bus) that would be of use in reducing the amount of car traffic into the town centre – unless, that is, a large number of arriving motorists are seized by an urge to leave their cars here and walk or bike - via Clingoe Hill - to town! (instead of proceeding by car to their free or abnormally-cheap town centre parking). Clearly the purpose of the 'P&C' nomenclature is mainly to cover up the fact that 'P&R' has become publicly recognised as a failure here, so they want to make it sound as if they are now offering something different!

20 Oct: Please redact tables on pages 12 & 13 (highlighted in yellow). ECC will not want to release budget or funding figures for future year packages of works.

SMALL SCHEMES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CASE

For

Colchester Integrated Transport Package (ITP)

Please note that this proforma is designed to collect key information about the project. The scheme promoters are encouraged to attach any additional supporting information to this business case proforma.

Project type (rail, road, LSTF, integrated package, maintenance etc.):	Integrated Package
Type of bid:	Medium Project (total project cost is between £8m and £15m)
Project Location:	Colchester
Project start date:	April 2015
Project complete date:	March 2017
Project development stage:	Implementation

SE LEP Business Case Executive Summary – Colchester ITP

The objectives of this scheme are:-

- To introduce an integrated package of improvements
- To support housing and job growth
- To reduce traffic in the town centre
- To improve existing and new public transport services (Colchester Park & Ride etc)
- To reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality within an identified Air Quality Management Area.

1.2. Brief description

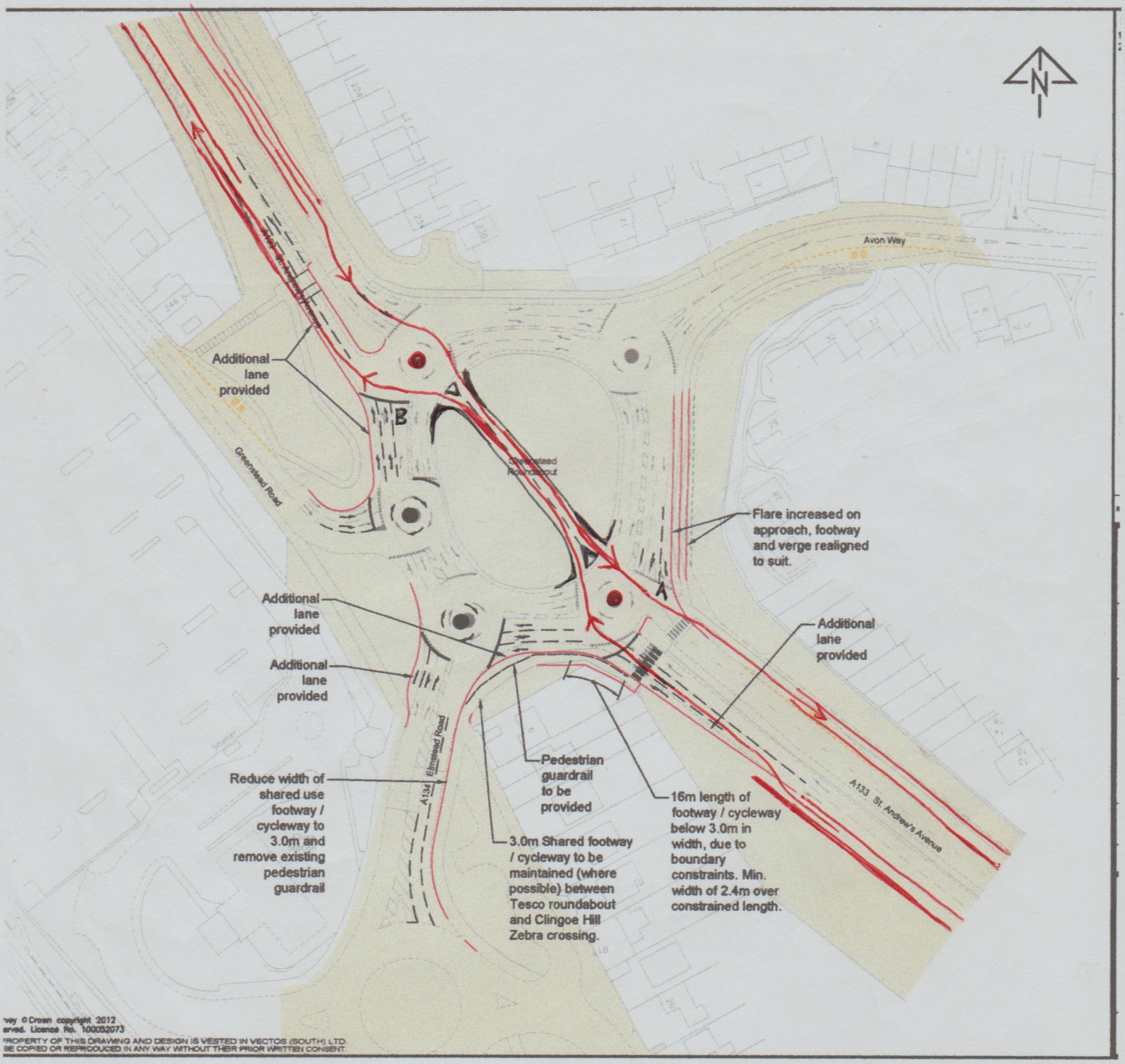
The schemes associated with the Colchester Integrated Transport Package (ITP) focus on traffic and congestion reduction, traffic management measures, and replacement of highway infrastructure, to improve the economic vitality of the town centre while delivering operational improvements across the wider town centre area.

The ultimate plan is to dual the length of the A133 from Spring Lane roundabout at the end of the exit slip from the A12 at the western side of Colchester, through to Greenstead roundabout on the eastern side of Colchester. This is a major corridor with regular high volumes of traffic and improvements can only be introduced on sections of this route at any one time. This ITP package provides improvements to key elements of this route in two strategic areas and is complementary to the introduction of Park & Ride and the Colchester Town Centre Integrated Package and Local Sustainable Transport Fund Package previously approved by SELEP..

The improvement work, that has been identified, consists of the following improvement schemes:-

- **Colne Bank Avenue widening**
  The carriageway will be widened to two lanes each way between Colne Bank roundabout and the Albert roundabout. This section of carriageway is a particular pinchpoint for traffic travelling on an east-west movement along the A133. This will ultimately tie in to the introduction of left turn slip lanes at Colne Bank roundabout and the proposed dualling of Cowdray Avenue (these later components are Developer Funded projects linked to the building of new homes and do not form part of this business case).

- **Cowdray Avenue Bridge replacement**
  Replacement of the bridge on Cowdray Avenue across the main railway line from Colchester to Clacton, Frinton and Walton, with a new structure providing two lanes each way. Preparatory and embankment work will be conducted over a phased period and then work to replace the main deck structure will be conducted at a time when the railway line can be closed to trains for a short period (eg over a Christmas or Easter break – dependent on Network Rail).



APPENDIX 2

What appears to be proposed for Greenstead roundabout in Option 5. The particular 'hazards' to be introduced are that drivers at stop lines A and B would not only have to watch 60-90 degrees to the right (as currently) for gaps in the traffic emerging from the previous entrance, but also simultaneously check 120 degrees to the right in case a bus suddenly emerges from the middle of the roundabout with priority over them.

(Base map – from Sainsburys planning application, with three-lane entrances instead of the present 2-lane. This 'improvement' is adopted by ECC in the 2017 Traffic Modelling report).