

## **Priory Street consultation**

**COPIED TO DOMINIC COLLINS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE SELEP BOARD**

**October 30, 2015**

Dear Alan, Chris, Paul W

Please regard this as our formal response to ECC and CBC regarding the change of flow in Priory Street and alterations to the town-centre cycling network.

Many parts of this scheme are examples of the poorly considered proposals put forward for Selep funding (Mile End Road shared cycle path; Cymbeline Way/Colne Bank crossing and the removal of pedestrian crossings in a busy town centre).

### **PRIORY STREET**

CCC opposes the change of flow in Priory Street. I refer you to my suggestions of October 15, 2014, (copied below) with regard to the future of the road. I understood at the time that ECC was considering changes and I hoped to influence the process. No one got back to me to discuss the matter.

Essex's reasons for the current proposal are unclear; officers have been unable to provide adequate explanations even during the consultation. At their most basic, they would appear to be a way to stop drivers making a U-turn in Lewis Gardens to access Queen Street. (This problem is of ECC's own making: the bus-lane turn into Queen Street from High Street is an orphan from the town centre changes of January 2014.)

CCC believes that the bus-lane turn should remain in place to minimise congestion and pollution and to ensure buses run to time. Ways to stop the U-turn problem could be:

- reinstate the peak-time and daytime car restrictions on High Street (self-policing, so the preferred choice)
- add no-right-turn and no-U-turn signs to the eastbound lane of High Street near Winsley's House with frequent enforcement and fines
- add a long central island to High Street opposite Winsley's House

The current proposals stand to create a rat-run along a generally quiet residential street and add to congestion in St Botolph's Street, which will bring added danger for schoolchildren as well as affecting bus punctuality. Also, we do not believe that ECC has followed the correct procedure with regard to the Equality Act.

On top of this, the scheme does nothing to encourage cycling as promoted by the draft ECC Cycling Strategy; among the proposals for Colchester Cycling Town 2009-11 was the creation of a two-way cross-town route using Crouch Street, St

John's Street, Vineyard Street, Priory Street and Land Lane. The present plan does not acknowledge this need, and will increase the length of journey for anyone cycling to and from town from the bottom of East Hill/Riverside. As such, it is against the sentiment in the ECC draft cycling strategy.

### **Response to CBC (attn Paul W)**

While CBC's changes to the Priory Street car park serve to tidy up the area, they do not address the issue of cars blocking the view of the Roman wall — one of Colchester's prime tourism assets. We would appreciate it if you would look at the planning history of this site, which, in our understanding, consists of a few temporary planning permissions in the 1960s. With the exception of 60 spaces at the far eastern end of the road, we believe CBC has been operating this car park without the correct planning approvals for more than 40 years. The car park was put in place before any multi-storey facility was built in Colchester. Since then, parking provision in the town has expanded rapidly. With the new emphasis on encouraging buses, cycling and walking — as well as park and ride — we would urge you to look at closing the car park (leaving some spaces for residents' use) and supporting the proposal suggested in my letter to Alan Lindsay, below.

### **BALKERNE HILL**

CCC was amazed to see proposals for a new shared-use bridge across Balkerne Hill. This scheme was considered during Cycling Town but rejected because of the cost and the unsuitability of the abutments of the present bridge. Some CCC supporters have questioned why the campaign was not consulted prior to Balkerne Hill being included in the current scheme. They feel that the money could be better spent — for instance on a single-stage up-to-date crossing at the southern end of Balkerne Hill in line with the two halves of Crouch Street. We have already submitted an observation on the line of the new bridge and, should it go ahead, we would like to be consulted about its design. We would add that, given the footfall, cyclists and pedestrians should be separated.

### **OVERALL CYCLE NETWORK**

CCC believes the alteration to the cycle network has been put forwards without much thought. Why take cyclists along Priory Street rather than Queen Street? In doing so you are introducing a right-hand turn on a hill with no protection; Your changes may mean that the top end of Queen Street is quieter and thus better suited for cycling.

We were concerned to see that your plan omitted two-way working of Crouch Street, a scheme installed with funding during Colchester Cycling Town 2009-11. We would seek an assurance that this will remain and be improved on.

Will

## Letter to Alan Lindsay, October 2014

Dear Alan

As you are considering altering the flow of Priory Street, may I put forward a suggestion?

Rather than allowing through-flow of the street and possibly turning it into a new rat-run (especially attractive to late-night boy racers and drug-runners) would it be possible to make it into a large cul-de-sac? This would allow a pedestrian/cycle/disabled-friendly raised area between the junction of Queen Street and the Priory, which has the added advantage of setting off the priory ruins and contributing to the plan for the cultural quarter. It could provide a gateway from town towards the gardens, which I understand are intended to replace some of the Priory Street car park.

1 The street was two-way for its entire length until the late 1960s. The narrowest part of the street is at the Queen Street end. While the East Hill end is narrow, it is sufficient for two-way slow-moving traffic; the width and geometry at the East Hill end is not dissimilar to the turning into Roman Road.

2 Your main reason for reversing the flow is to stop the illegal use of the bus lane into Queen Street, as well as vehicles making U-turns in Lewis Gardens (I should imagine that many of the people doing this want to gain entry to Priory Street).

3 The cul-de-sac scheme would still allow traffic from the High Street to access Priory Street via East Hill, with relatively good visibility for a right-hand turn. Drivers would be able to egress into East Hill and then into Queen Street, legally and safely.

4 Drivers are not used to being able to egress from Priory Street into Queen Street. If the cul-de-sac plan was implemented without a "reverse-flow" transition period, they wouldn't know what they were missing.

5 Any congestion caused at peak times in Priory Street would be self-regulating =97 note how some people started cycling when journeys were made difficult during the High Street closure. It is likely that a cul-de-sac would attract far less traffic than a through route, so congestion would be less and pollution level or reduced.

6 A disabled parking area could be provided at the western end of the Priory Street car park, and a mobility route to Queen Street provided, with the aim of avoiding spine-jarring kerbs.

7 The car park could be rearranged with just one entrance/exit at the eastern end of the road, minimising disturbance to most residents.

8 The scheme would allow for completion of the two-way east-west cycle route from Crouch Street West into Land Lane/Riverside/Wivenhoe Trail.

Note that I had hoped to talk to residents before floating the idea with yourself, but time has caught up with me. I've copied this to Jo Edwards' last-known email address (Jo, please let me know if you get this).

Alan, Paul W, councillors, please let me know what you think!

Best wishes

Will