

Essex County Council Report December 2016

Potential A120 options previewed ahead of consultation

A map detailing nine possible options for a new stretch of the A120 has been released ahead of a public consultation in the New Year.

The options – which run from Braintree to the A12 near Colchester – are being unveiled to make sure residents are aware of the important study to improve the vital road link and the public consultation on route options next year.

The nine options, which have been distilled from numerous alternatives that have been considered, represent the current thinking and may be refined before the consultation goes live in mid-January 2017.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Essex County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth & Partnerships, said that this much needed improvement work will not only help journey times, it will also help grow local businesses not just in Essex but across East Anglia as it is vital we get this right so we can continue to grow the local economy and prove Essex means business.

Upgrades to this road are long overdue and we are keen to get views from residents and business on how best to do this.

We have spent almost a year working up route options for a public consultation and wanted to share the most up-to-date results to get everyone motivated to take part in early 2017.

It is vital that residents and businesses from across Essex and East Anglia engage in this consultation in January to help create a modern road that is fit for purpose.

Find out more about the upcoming consultation by visiting www.a120essex.co.uk

A PDF of the nine options is available through the link at the bottom of this email

<http://collateral.vuelio.uk.com/RemoteStorage/EssexCC/Releases/5985/FINAL%209%20options%20for%20A120.pdf>

Proposed development could provide 'much needed' new homes

Plans for 60 new 'independent living' homes designed to support older people could be built in Coppins Road, Clacton.

The site, which has been empty for over seven years, is owned by the NHS, but is being purchased (subject to planning) by Essex County Council with a view to creating specially designed homes, to allow older people to stay independent for longer.

ECC's Independent Living programme is investing up to £30million into new homes, with the aim of creating up to 1,800 new Independent Living homes, with 24 hour care and support on-site, around the county between now and 2021.

Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member responsible for Housing at Essex County Council, said that this is not simply about building homes, but building the right homes in the right places, and this is a much needed new scheme which will help support older residents living in Clacton and Tendring.

Not only will this bring an underused piece of land back to life, but it will also provide attractive contemporary housing along with green spaces, and services such as a restaurant, coffee shop and hair salon, so supporting local residents to live in their local area for longer, something we know is important to people.

The property transferred to the ownership of NHS Property Services as part of the health reforms of 2013.

Saul Spevack, Senior Transaction Manager at NHS Property Services, said that the NHS was extremely pleased to be working closely with Essex County Council to release this empty site; the new development would provide vital accommodation for older people and help the Government and local authority deliver on their housing strategies.

Vacant sites cost the NHS money to secure and maintain and proceeds from the sale of properties are reinvested in the NHS.

The plans will now be considered by planners at Tendring District Council with a decision expected in the New Year.

Essex County Council's £27.7 million Independent Living programme is a hit in parliament and with residents

Essex County Council's innovative approach towards housing and care for older people – recently welcomed in Parliament as an example for other local authorities to follow – is a hit with Essex residents too.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing and Care for Older People acknowledged ECC's Independent Living housing programme in the House of Lords on Monday 31 October.

Independent Living is attractive, self-contained housing with 24 hour care and support on-site.

Around 2,000 Essex residents will benefit from ECC's £27.7 million investment in the programme to meet demand for housing options that can support and enable older people to live independently.

The new Independent Living homes will be created around the county between now and 2021.

The investment will enable eligible older people in the county - who would otherwise be housed in residential care, or receive domiciliary care in a home of their own that may no longer meets their needs - to live independently.

ECC Leader David Finch wrote to Chancellor Phillip Hammond ahead of November's Autumn Statement, calling on him to make social care funding a priority.

And innovative initiatives like the Independent Living programme enable ECC to make long term financial savings, while at the same time significantly improving the quality and quantity of specialist housing for people in later life.

The Independent Living programme is based on the Extra Care housing model – however, currently, there are just 429 units of Extra Care housing in the county.

89-year-old Winnie Miller is a resident at the existing Helen Court Extra Care scheme in Witham.

Both Winnie and her son Dennis, 62, have felt the benefits this kind of specialist housing can bring to older people in later life.

Dennis said: "Living in a three bedroom house with stairs had become unmanageable for Mum. She wasn't bad enough for a care home; she could live independently. But she needed to live somewhere that had an element of care. From

the day she moved in, until now, Mum's physical health, mental health and general wellbeing have improved beyond measure."

Winnie said: "I wanted to get away because I was on my own. I feel much happier here; it's fantastic. If I'm lonely, I go downstairs and it's like a little family. If I want to be on my own, I close my front door and can be alone in my own home. You please yourself, because it's independent living. To me, it's luxury. I've got everything I want. But, most importantly, it feels like home."

Dennis added: "It's a big wrench for older people like Mum, who have lived in the same house for 60 years, to move. I thought that it would be really difficult for her; but from day one it's been fantastic. I'm now a tremendous exponent of the Independent Living concept. I think it's excellent news that many more older people will have the opportunity to benefit like my Mum has."

ECC's Head of Commissioning for Vulnerable People, Gary Heathcote, delivered a speech outlining the Independent Living programme to MPs, Members of the House of Lords, senior executives from private organisations and members of the public at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing and Care for Older People.

Afterwards Gary said: "It was a privilege to be invited to the House of Lords to speak at the All Party Parliamentary Group on behalf ECC. The event was a great opportunity to share our innovative approach towards housing and care for older people. I was pleased that the Independent Living programme received such positive feedback, with other Local Authorities urged to mirror our innovative approach. ECC is committed to influencing the availability of a range of housing options for the older population, improving the lives of Essex people and enabling them to continue to live independently for longer."

ECC is working with all district councils to identify suitable land for development to meet local demand for Independent Living housing.

The first new Independent Living scheme, Rosebank Park in Harwich, features 70 one and two bedroom flats and will open in January 2017.

The second initial scheme, Beaumont House in Walton-on-the-Naze, features 60 one and two bedroom flats and will open in spring 2017.

A third scheme, in Saffron Walden, will feature 73 one and bedroom flats and will open in early 2018.

To be eligible for Independent Living housing, an individual must be aged 55 or over, require six or more hours of care each week and have a connection to the area where the scheme is located.

An additional 19 new schemes in Braintree, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford are also in the development pipeline.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing and Care for Older People is chaired by Peter Aldous MP and Lord Best.

Its purpose is to highlight the importance of the role of housing alongside social care and health in providing greater choice and more effective support in later life.

To find out more about Independent Living housing:

- Call 0345 6037630
- Email socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk
- Visit www.essex.gov.uk/indyliving

Video content 1: Winnie and Dennis Miller

Three minute video interview with Winnie and Dennis Miller filmed at Helen Court in Witham in August 2016:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM8r23kjidl&feature=youtu.be>

Raw footage available on request.

Video content 2: Winnie and Dennis Miller

30 second sub-titled video interview for social media:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbokMcL1dCU&feature=youtu.be>

Video content 3: Independent Living for Older People

Four minute promotional video was commissioned to help ECC social workers raise awareness of Independent Living housing.

Filmed at Helen Court in Witham in August 2016, the video features interviews with residents at the scheme:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cppsp3fOLpE>

Case study: Winnie and Dennis Miller

89-year-old Winnie Miller, from Chelmsford, moved to Helen Court, a picturesque riverside community of 55 specially designed apartments for older people in Witham, during 2010. The difficult decision to leave her family home of almost 60 years in the Melbourne area of Chelmsford, which no longer met her needs due to her declining mobility, followed the death of husband Dennis.

Her son, also named Dennis, 62, explains: “When Dad died Mum was sort of okay for a couple of years. But living in a three bedroom house with stairs had become unmanageable. She wasn’t bad enough for a care home; she could live independently. But she needed to live somewhere that had an element of care.”

Winnie’s flat at Helen Court is modern, easy to maintain and includes technology to help support her. Her flat has its own front door, a bedroom, living room, fitted kitchen and en-suite bathroom. In addition, Winnie has access to a range of communal facilities and group activities - if she chooses to take part.

Winnie said: “I wanted to get away because I was on my own. I feel much happier here; it’s fantastic. If I’m lonely, I go downstairs and it’s like a little family. If I want to be on my own, I close my front door and can be alone in my own home. You please yourself, because it’s independent living. To me, it’s luxury. I’ve got everything I want. But, most importantly, it feels like home.”

Dennis, who lives around the corner from Helen Court in Witham and watched it being built, added: “From the day she moved in, until now, Mum’s physical health, mental health and general wellbeing have improved beyond measure. Before she moved in, everything was going wrong. Now it’s a completely different picture. It’s been fantastic.”

Helen Court Extra Care housing scheme contains 55 specialist one and two bedroom flats for older people. On site facilities include a residents’ lounge, dining room, garden, activity room, and hairdressing salon. It opened in 2010 and is managed by Hanover. In addition to her son Dennis, Winnie is proud mum to three daughters and has seven grandchildren.

Defra’s new measures to protect poultry against Avian Flu

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Animal and Plant Health Agency has declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone to help protect poultry from a strain of Avian Flu in Europe, by keeping them indoors for the next 30 days.

Full measures, guidance on protection zone restrictions and advice on what to look out for can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-protect-poultry-against-avian-flu>

On this issue Cllr Anne Brown, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Corporate and Communities with responsibility for Essex Trading Standards, said that although no cases of Avian Flu have yet been found in the UK, the risk of infection to our poultry livestock is real and the consequences would be severe.

Defra are quite rightly introducing this Prevention Zone, not only for farmers, but for people who keep birds in their own homes too. We urge you to adhere to the prevention measures while maintaining animal welfare at all times.

As the body responsible for investigating compliance with this declaration, Essex Trading Standards will take very seriously anyone who is found to be flouting these measures.

Council lobbies Government on proposed funding cuts as Essex schools continue to shine

ECC is calling on the Government to delay its plans to cut education funding from next year, amid concerns the outstanding improvements made by Essex schools could be undone.

Under the current proposals, Essex County Council would see its Education Services Grant, which funds statutory responsibilities including school improvement, education welfare services and national curriculum assessment, drop from £10.6million a year to £3million a year from August 2017.

The plans initially came with the Government expecting more schools to become academies and the statutory responsibilities of local authorities set to be reduced.

In Essex though, two thirds of schools are yet to become academies, while statutory responsibilities look unlikely to change, prompting calls for the timing of the funding reduction to be reconsidered.

There are also concerns that the remarkable progress made by Essex schools in recent years could be damaged.

The county is currently celebrating its best ever educational performance, as confirmed by last week's Annual Ofsted Report.

According to the report, which is based on inspection data up to the end of August, 95 per cent of Essex secondary school pupils now attend schools rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted – the highest in the East of England and above the national average of 78 per cent.

At primary level, 91 per cent of the county's pupils attend a school rated as good or better, slightly above the national average of 90 per cent.

Essex pupils also continue to perform well across all key stages, with all outcomes either in the top or second quartile nationally.

Letters have been written to Education Secretary Justine Greening MP and Chancellor Philip Hammond MP, outlining the council's concerns.

Cllr Ray Gooding, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, stated that ECC is committed to ensuring all pupils in Essex receive the best possible education and are fully supportive of the Government's aspiration for 'Educational Excellence Everywhere'; however we have serious concerns about the impact and timing of this reduction in funding.

While we welcome last week's announcement that £50million of new money will be made available to local authorities in recognition of their responsibilities over maintained schools, when compared to the £600million reduction to the Education Services Grant nationally, this is still a significantly reduced pot of funding.

He added that the council takes a very proactive approach to raising educational standards in Essex, as it is vitally important that schools continue to be able to access the support and challenge needed to continuously improve, and we are currently developing a school-led improvement model.

The council is calling for the Government to think again about the timing of the reduction in funding until more schools have been converted into academies and new improvement models have been fully implemented.

Unique 'Pimp My Zimmer' concept reduces falls by 60% at care home

Older people have been personalising their walking frames as part of Essex County Council's unique "Pimp My Zimmer" campaign.

Residents at care homes countywide were inspired to transform their grey and uninspiring walking aids into glamorous works of art by adorning them with bespoke knitted covers, football scarves, tinsel and even fresh flowers.

The contest was part of the council's pioneering PROSPER project, which won a national Patient Safety Award in July for helping to reduce falls by five per cent and pressure ulcers by 20 per cent. The competition was run in partnership with the North Essex Clinical Commissioning Group to coincide with the launch of their TUMBLES advice leaflet on how to prevent falls.

As she lay in bed in the early hours of the morning, Angela Donlevy, manager at Chalkney House care home in White Colne, near Halstead, wondered to herself 'Why are all walking frames grey?'

And so the "Pimp My Zimmer" concept was born. It has since gone on to reduce falls in some care homes by up to 60 per cent and prove invaluable to residents with dementia.

"As a home manager it tends to become a way of life and you are never off the job," said Angela. "About a year ago I woke up after having a vivid dream about walking frames and I remember asking myself why they were all grey. Suddenly it occurred

to me that brighter colours would be more recognisable to people with cognitive impairments such as dementia.

“They often forget their frames or take someone else’s because they all look the same, so people fall and hurt themselves.

“I hoped by involving residents in decorating their frames we could reduce injuries to our residents. Now residents love their brightly coloured and individual frames and are very proud to use them. The home has seen some remarkable results too – a 60 per cent reduction in falls in the past year, which has dramatically reduced potential hospital admissions.”

Sohal Healthcare Ltd, which runs Chalkney House, has now adopted the idea in seven other homes.

Dementia sufferer Betty Gilvary, 80, was falling on a daily basis, because she didn’t recognise her walking frame or understand why she needed it.

So together with staff she spent hours decorating it with pink and blue foam bumpers, floral wallpaper and her name to help her remember it was hers.

“Betty is now very proud and possessive of her walking frame, and doesn’t let anyone else near it,” said Angela. “But most importantly she is using it and her falls have reduced dramatically.”

Olive Fenner, 81, a former grocery worker from Castle Hedingham, decorated her frame with a green and yellow theme, artificial flowers and her name.

“People were always trying to pinch my frame because they’re just grey and all look the same,” she laughed.

“But now they’re decorated you know which one is yours and they’re easier to find.”

To celebrate the launch of the Pimp My Zimmer campaign, residents at care homes countywide were invited to decorate their frames for a competition.

Marjorie Bush, 94, who lives at the Mamora home in Clacton, was crowned the champion for her elaborate knitted zimmer frame cover.

Marjorie, a former Norfolk farmer’s wife and mother-of-two, has been knitting since the age of seven and still knits scarves for the local hospital.

“I did all the knitting myself but one of the staff helped sew it all up for me,” she said.

“I’m very proud of how it looks and I enjoyed doing it. I can’t walk much anymore, but the frame helps me get to the toilet and everyone knows it’s mine.”

Cllr Dick Madden, Cabinet member for Adults and Children, said: “The Prosper project has already made such a difference to the lives of people living in care homes and earlier this year received national recognition for helping to change care home culture and improve patient safety.

“Concepts like Pimp My Zimmer are testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of care staff and home managers in Essex. They are constantly looking for new ways to improve residents’ lives. The fact that this initiative has reduced falls by 60% at Chalkney House is a phenomenal result that we can be very proud of.”

A video of the project can be found here: <https://youtu.be/G6gn1CawauU>