

The Colchester Orbital Walk (West)

A walking route (clockwise) from Shrub End (Norman Way, South) to High Woods Country Park, via Hilly Fields or Lexden Park, and Cymbeline Meadows

About this route...

- ❖ **Start point:** Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road
- ❖ **Grid ref:** TL978240
- ❖ **End point:** High Woods Country Park Visitor Centre, Turner Road
- ❖ **Distance:** West A: 4.1 miles; West B: 4.4 miles
- ❖ **Bus routes** 1, 75, 79, 92
- ❖ **Facilities at start:** nearest cafés at Prettygate (approx. 1/3 mile along The Commons)

The Orbital West A (via Hilly Fields)

- 1a Take the cut-through at the end of Norman Way (South), by Irvine Road allotments, and continue across greensward to a T-junction of paths with playing fields beyond. After approx. 70m, immediately before a staggered barrier, take a narrow footpath leading into tree-line. Follow for approx. 650m, with playing fields either side, to a gravel parking area. Exit straight ahead on to Park Road and continue to the T-junction with Lexden Road. Cross over and head right, then take the second left onto Sussex Road. Follow to its end at the entrance to Hilly Fields.
- 2a Head diagonally right across the open grassland of Hilly Fields, then wind downhill towards the long white buildings of Colchester Institute. At a T-junction of paths go left, then left again shortly afterwards on Sheepen Way. At Cymbeline Way, head right initially to cross at the pelican crossing. Then double-back and enter Cymbeline Meadows after approx. 200m via a kissing gate (right) onto Water Lane. Follow northwards and cross the River Colne at Sheepen bridge. Water Lane then merges with The Chase Way.
- 3a Approx. 250m beyond the bridge, at a sharp left-hand bend, head right instead (effectively straight on), to take a grassy headland footpath. Follow this gently upwards towards a bank of trees ahead - this is Charter Wood. Here the Orbital West A & B routes merge again.

The Orbital West B (via Lexden Park and Spring Park)

- 1b From Norman Way, at the T-junction of paths (1a), go left. Cross the entrance to Philip Morant School on Rembrandt Way. Continue on the footpath opposite, which runs straight for approx. 400m, parallel to the Iron Age earthworks of Bluebottle Grove on the left (school playing fields right). At a triangular intersection, go left. Shortly afterward, at open greensward, take a foot-worn path hugging the tree-line around to the right, and look for an A-frame barrier leading into the woods directly ahead. This is the entrance to Lexden Park woods and Local Nature Reserve.
- 2b Enter the woods, turn immediately left along the boundary, then right soon after to head into the woodland. At the bottom of a flight of wooden steps head left and onwards through the woods until a short section of boardwalk. Follow this to a further flight of steps leading down out of the woods and into the park's meadowland.
- 4b Head right along the length of the park. In the far diagonal corner, just beyond the lake, exit via a small car park onto Church Lane. Cross with care and go right. At the junction with Lexden Road, adjacent to St Leonard's Church, cross straight over onto Spring Lane.
- 5b Spring Lane (no-through road) runs between Spring Lane Park (left) and Lexden Springs Nature Reserve (right). At its end, at Spring Lane roundabout, head right. At the mouth of the roundabout from the direction of Cymbeline Way, cross with great care, utilizing the central triangular island (with paved path and dropped kerbs).

- 6b Take Spring Lane (north) heading away from the roundabout. This single lane has occasional fast traffic and some sections without pavement, so negotiate with care. Follow for approx. 370m, crossing the River Colne midway. At a sharp left-hand bend, with cottages opposite, Spring Lane becomes Bakers Lane and continues left. Go right instead onto The Chase Way, signposted 'Cymbeline Meadows Farm Trail'.
- 7b Follow past the entrance to Spring Lane Tennis Club (right). Then, where the lane reaches some hard-standing and appears to divide, keep right. At a second parting of lanes, where The Chase Way continues right, go left and merge shortly afterward onto a farm track. Follow across the top of Cymbeline Meadows to Charter Wood, with arable land to either side and beautiful views across to Colchester's skyline. At the entrance to Charter Wood, rejoin the West A.

The final Section

- 8 In the woods, bear ahead and left to take the tunnel under the railway line. On the far side, turn right onto a footpath running parallel, then follow it away from the line with Bergholt Road allotment to the right. Where the footpath merges with Propelair Way, continue straight on for a short while and then take an off-road footpath again as Propelair Way bears away left. Where it finally emerges at Tufnell Way, go right.
- 9 At Bergholt Road, cross and continue almost directly ahead onto a short tarmac drive between houses. At its end, go left onto a grassy farm track, which merges with a gravel access lane along the backs of houses.
- 10 At the end of the lane, take the footpath (right) and follow through trees before it opens out and runs gently upwards between hedgerow for approx. 480m. At the top, pass through a tree line onto open grassland and take the right-hand of two foot-worn paths heading diagonally away. On the far side, enter a short, wooded corridor and bear left. Emerge onto Braiswick Lane, go right and continue along to Mile End Road at the war memorial, opposite St Michael's Church.
- 11 Cross and enter the churchyard, taking the main path through to the right of the church. Leave the churchyard via a footpath in its far corner. After a short stretch between high wooden fencing running between houses, emerge onto Bolsin Drive, part of a relatively new housing estate situated between Mile End and Northern Approach, adjacent to Colchester General Hospital. Go right and follow around to the junction with Dickenson Road. Cross and bear left. A short distance along, turn right between houses on to a foot/cycle path. Keep going straight, crossing two mini roundabouts. Approx. 100m beyond the second of these (on Hakewill Way), turn left to take a short stretch of footpath leading to the Northern Approach Road. Cross here at the lights.
- 12 On the far side, a wide, off-road path sweeps downhill towards the hospital and merges with its road network. Follow the road as it bends around initially to the left, then bear right along the main exit road from the hospital.
- 13 At Turner Road, look across and right for a footpath on the far side. Cross over to follow the path as it runs between houses, off-road, for approx. 200m towards High Woods Country Park, whose trees are visible beyond. Enter the park via an opening immediately to the left of the furthest house. Inside the park, follow the woodland path to the right for a further approx. 300m until it meets the Visitor Centre car park back at the main entrance. The Orbital West ends here.

The Colchester Orbital is a 14-15-mile circular route around town, connecting some of our loveliest green spaces. The route is mapped in 3 sections (East, South and West). Route guides and information on route accessibility are downloadable from the Orbital website:

<https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/the-colchester-orbital>