



Colchester Orbital Guide to Route Sections with Higher Levels of Accessibility

This document is written with a view to *detailing the walk, rather than the walker* i.e. providing information that informs choice rather than second-guessing individual needs. The countryside offers a great range of walking opportunities to people across the spectrum of ability/disability (beyond the limitations of the 'easy access trail'). And mobility-restricted walkers and chair users similarly have many more means at their disposal today for accessing green space electric bikes, mobility scooters and Trampers for example. The options suggested here reflect this range.

We will continue to add to such information as the project develops, as further route auditing takes place, and as new sections are opened up (for example, through barrier redesign and removal).

High Woods Country Park and the BOMA 7 all-terrain wheelchair



The park, which is the start and finish point for the Orbital, itself offers many mixed ability walking opportunities over varied distances and terrain, including shorter 'easy access' trails. The park rangers also offer organised health walks.



The woodland paths are constructed of hoggin (compact clay and gravel mix), providing firm going in dry and summer weather and there are regular rest points through the woods. The Big Garden project, an organic community vegetable garden and orchard, offers therapeutic gardening opportunities for people of all ages/abilities.

An all-terrain wheelchair (see image) is available to mobility-restricted walkers in the park, available from the Visitor Centre, where there is also an accessible toilet (bus: 8/61/65, Primary Care Centre).

High Woods Country Park to St Johns

A surfaced walk/cycle path runs all the way from The Visitor Centre (bus: 8/61/65, Primary Care Centre) across the park to Chanterelle (the last part is hoggin surface, but this can be avoided by continuing on to the Hillridge exit on to Myland Hall Chase, hard-surfaced all the way); then onwards through Highwoods itself, weaving through the leafy backs of houses via off-road routes. The path connects the park first with the Ipswich Road (bus: 93/94/106, Myland Hall Chase), then with St Cyrus Rd (bus: 11, Wilmington Road) and finally St John's Rd (bus: 2 Bullace Close). Except for initial steep gradients crossing the park, it is level the whole way.



There are excellent woodland playgrounds, and a further playground at St Cyrus.

Two staggered barriers currently exist on the route, but both are being improved by CBC. This section of the Orbital offers walks of varying lengths, with excellent connecting bus routes to/from the town centre.

Salary Brook Nature Reserve

Salary Brook Valley offers mostly hard-surfaced foot/cycle paths - gently undulating with significant level stretches - along its full length between the Bromley Road (north) and Clingoe Hill (south). There are occasional gradients and poorly-maintained surfaces that may affect independent access for chair users in places. Overall though access is reasonably good.



The main path runs along the backs of houses on one side with frequent greensward leading up into the neighbouring estate, providing opportunities for parking or access from nearby bus routes (Avon Way, 1/64/75).

On the other side, there are views across the open valley and visibility is generally good.

There are two children's play areas (adjacent to Titania Close and Scarfe/Buffer Way), and three fishing ponds, one with wheelchair access. At either end,

there are nearby 'pit stops': the Beehive pub on Bromley Road, and the Meadows shop/café on Annan Rd, University of Essex.

Circumnavigating the Garrison

The walk/cycle path (0.6m) around the new Garrison site between Berechurch Road (bus: 63 Gymnasium) and Layer Road (bus: 64/64A, Boadicea Way), offers excellent access: hard-surfaced and well-maintained, running through wide greensward where visibility is good and the going almost completely level. There are children's play facilities and no man-made barriers.



For longer stretches of 1-2 miles, the paths beyond in both directions are also excellent: to Shrub End heading clockwise (bus: 1/75, Norman Way), or anti-clockwise to Colchester Cemetery (bus: 8/67, Crematorium) or the greensward of Monkwick (bus: 175, Prince Philip Road).

This is the most accessible part of the Orbital, with easy connecting bus routes to/from the town centre.

Hilly Fields

At the uppermost point of Hilly Fields, close to the entrance point at Sussex Road, is the location of one of Colchester Borough Council's designated 'easy access trails', a short (0.5m) circular walk which runs around the perimeter of Fort Field (site of the fort built by the Parliamentarians during the Civil War siege of Colchester, 1648).



The path is surfaced, visibility is excellent and there are beautiful views across the Colne valley to Cymbeline Meadows (north) and the town centre skyline (east).

There is parking at the end of Sussex Road (or bus: 65/70/71, The Avenue, Lexden Road).

A Lexden Triangle

This level walk around the footpaths bordering school playing fields between Lexden and Shrub End comprises two sections of the Orbital (the West A and West B where they separate at Norman Way), linked by a third path running between them, from Park Road (West A) to Bluebottle Grove, adjacent to Magazine Farm Way (West B).



The three footpaths are surfaced and level. They mostly have hedgerow or fencing to either side, so it is not a walk with views, but very pretty all the same. In summer the hedgerows can get quite overgrown, and there is also a staggered barrier shortly beyond Philip Morant School entrance, which may cause some chair/scooter users problems (we hope to work towards barrier improvement here). There is a car park at Park Road (or bus: 65/70/71, The Avenue, Lexden Road).

Cymbeline Meadows

Cymbeline Meadows is the location of Colchester Borough Council's second 'easy access trail' (see also Hilly Fields). A short distance beyond the Spring Lane Tennis Club on The Chase Way (off Spring Lane), a small parking area on the right for approx. 3 vehicles (including a designated accessible parking space), marks the start point.



The trail runs for approx. 375m gently downhill, via surfaced path, to a picnic spot with wooden picnic tables and benches alongside the River Colne.

Kissing gates preclude wheelchair access beyond the picnic spot (where access via often boggy meadowland becomes trickier in any event). So, for chair users, this particular trail is 'there and back' (0.5 miles)