

# THE ORBITAL EAST

**1** Take the main path into the woods heading east from the Visitor Centre, past the climbing wall & children's play areas. At the junction of woodland paths, just before Lake Field, go right along the edge of the woods, until the junction with the cycle path (NCN Route 1). Head left here across the valley. At the waymark at the top of the hill, signposted 'Chanterelle & Hillridge', go right. Continue until Chanterelle car park, then go left to leave the park.

**2** Follow Chanterelle for 130m, then go right onto Myland Hall Chase cycle path. Continue as it winds through the backs of houses to join the Ipswich Rd at the BP garage. Go right here, & cross at the traffic lights. On the far side, go right then head off almost immediately left onto a further footpath, signposted to 'St. John's'.

**3** Continue, crossing Chalfont Rd & St Cyrus. At St John's Rd, go left & cross over. After approx. 170m, go right onto Bullace Close. Follow until it merges with a footpath running through a short stretch of woodland ending at a grassy triangle. Go left & take the headland path around the field (hedgerow to the left). At a junction of footpaths at the end of the field, go right, & follow the farm track until it reaches the Harwich Rd at a small farmstead.

**4** At the Harwich Rd look left for a lane entrance on the far side approx. 30m along, signposted 'Private Lane' & 'Public Footpath - Crockleford'. Cross carefully. Follow the lane over a railway bridge, & along to a junction of footpaths at Shaw's Farm. Here the Orbital East A & B routes divide.

**5A** **The Orbital East A (Shaw's farm to Salary Brook, via Welsh Wood)**  
At Shaw's Farm, at the junction of paths, go right past the pond & along the headland (hedgerow to the right) to the end of the field. Just before the next, take a short footpath (right) at a red litter bin, then go left onto Woodlands Rd. Follow it gently downhill, then at the right-hand bend at the bottom, go left into Welsh Wood Nature Reserve.

**5B** **The Orbital East B (Shaw's Farm to Salary Brook, via Churn Wood and Crockleford)**  
At Shaw's Farm, go left & at the farmyard, cross to the far-right corner & take the headland path around the field. Pass a waymark & short bridge leading to a kissing gate (left); do not take! At a 2nd waymark, just after the next right-hand corner, look for a gap in deep hedgerow (left) with a metal kissing gate. Take this and follow a foot-worn path across the next open field, sloping downwards to woodland on the far side. Enter via another kissing gate.

**6A** Follow the main path through Welsh Wood, finally exiting on to Barbel Rd. Bear left, following the road upwards, & left again at Salary Close. At the junction with the busy Bromley Road (initially Bromley Heights), go left & cross over. Head downhill, crossing Longridge. Near the bottom of the hill, take the footpath (right) signposted to Salary Brook Nature Reserve.

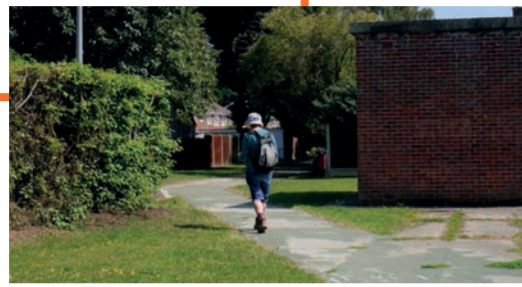
**6B** In the woods where the path forks, go right. Continue over a wooden footbridge & a decked area (don't go left!). Head straight on, as the path slopes upwards & finally opens into a yard with buildings, a gravel track ahead & gate marked 'Do not enter' (right). Look for a waymark on the right & take the headland footpath here. Continue to a wooden footbridge with guardrail. Cross and go right around the edge of the next field, until it meets the Bromley Rd. Go right & walk with caution (no pavement at first). Pass Colchester Cat Rescue & Blenheim Garden Centre. After approx. 400m, cross & take a footpath signposted left into the shared entrance to 2 fields with tree-line between them directly ahead. Take the path along the right side of the tree-line. At the far corner of the field, bear right & look for a wooden stile with a pull-up dog gate (left). Cross into woodland.

**7A** Follow the Salary Brook Trail along the full length of the valley at the foot of Greenstead (open greensward to the left & views of farmland). In the mid-section of the trail, the Orbital East A & B routes merge again, just before Pickford Walk (right).

**7B** Follow a narrow path through woodland. At a wide gate with buildings beyond, continue straight on a shingle path and take a short grassy path coming out on to a field. Go right & follow the headland. At the corner of the field, enter again, and continue for approx. 100m to a wooden bridge and gate into a field beyond. Go right, uphill along headland. At a gravel track, go right and follow as it meanders onwards (approx. 600m). The track slopes down to a farmhouse. Go left at the house & after approx. 100m, turn right on to a grassy path that runs between a meadow (left) & hedgerow (right). Shortly beyond is a wooden stile to a field on the right.

**8** The Orbital now continues again as a single route. At the end of the valley, at Clingoe Hill (A133), take the path bearing right just before the underpass, and head up to the road. Turn left on Clingoe Hill, continue to the traffic lights and cross over to enter the University of Essex (Wivenhoe Park) on Boundary Road. Shortly afterwards, at the roundabout, go right onto Capon Road. Head downhill, then turn left onto Annan Road at the bottom.

**9** The Meadows Pavilion shop & café is on your left. **The Orbital East ends here.**



# THE ORBITAL SOUTH

**1** From Meadows Pavilion shop & café (University of Essex), head south on Annan Rd & over the ramped railway bridge. Continue straight on through the University 'Quays' until the path meets the Colne river. Go right along the quayside, until the path reaches a junction with Colne Causeway. Cross at the pedestrian crossing, go left along the Causeway & cross the river. At the roundabout beyond, go right on to Hythe Quay, signposted to the Town Centre, & almost immediately, cross with caution at the designated crossing point (mouth of the roundabout).

**2** On Hythe Quay continue past 'Assembly Directmail' & (before the Spinnaker Inn) look for a left turn on to a footpath signposted (via yellow arrow) to Recreation Rd & Hythe Hill. The short section of the Orbital that follows has very steep gradients & mixed terrain. The lower end has been improved by a stretch of wooden boardwalk. Beyond this, the path begins a long, steep ascent. At a junction of footpaths at Parson's Lane (marked by a staggered barrier & red litter bin), go left & continue (metal fence to the left, steep bank of trees to the right).

**3** The footpath ends as Recreation Rd (to the right) begins. Follow Recreation Rd for approximately 100m to Old Heath Recreation Ground on the right (note GO4's 'Café on the Rec', offering refreshments & public toilets), then go left on to Scarletts Rd. Follow Scarletts Rd down to a T-junction with Old Heath Rd. Look leftwards for a black weather-boarded building (Butterfly Barns Day Nursery) a short distance along on the far side, with adjacent bus stop. Cross with caution.

**4** Take the earthen footpath that runs along the right-hand side of the barn, towards Bourne Valley. A wooden chicane marks the entrance (& likewise exit at Bourne Pond). Access is in part via a raised wooden boardwalk that meanders for approx. 500m along the undulating, largely level, bottom of the valley, interspersed with some earthen sections. At the end of the valley, exit via the second chicane and take the footpath left, up to Stalin Road. Here the Orbital South A & B routes divide.

**5A** **The Orbital South A (Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Colchester Cemetery)**  
At Stalin Rd go right, keeping to the grass verge (there is no pavement). Walk around the back of the long parking bay ahead, & look for a steep foot-worn path cutting a channel down into the woods. The terrain is earthen, & the path steep at first with a significant camber, but levels out & winds gently downhill to the exit at Mersea Rd. Exit the woods here, opposite the lower entrance to Colchester Cemetery. Cross with caution.

**5B** **The Orbital South B (Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Middlewick Ranges)**  
At Stalin Rd go left, and continue, crossing Roosevelt Way, to a T-junction with Churchill Way. Go right, cross, and shortly after, take a lane (left) towards garages. At the end, bear left on to Jackson Walk & continue until Abbot's Rd. Go left, cross & take the stile opposite on to Middlewick Ranges (Garrison land, occasionally used for army training). Follow a foot-worn path diagonally across the grassland to the tree line ahead. Continue through the trees & emerge onto further grassland, close to the Mersea Rd on the right. Shortly after, exit the Ranges at the main gate & go left on Mersea Rd. Cross over and continue for approx. 200m until open greensward on the right.

**6A** Enter the cemetery via the entrance on the far side of the Mersea Rd. From the entrance follow the main path straight ahead, passed a red brick toilet block with accessible facility on the right. As the path heads gently upwards, pass a turning off to the left. Shortly afterwards, reach the Starlight Florists & Tea Room, housed in a chapel on the right as the path levels out. Beyond the chapel, continue, crossing over the first junction of paths. At the second, go right. Continue straight over the third & then go left at the keeper's cottage. At the next junction, go right and keep straight to the exit gates on the far side of the cemetery.

**6B** Heading away from the Mersea Rd, keep on straight across greensward for approx. 500m in total, crossing Queen Elizabeth Way and then School Rd (keeping school buildings to the right). Then continue onward via a metal barrier, and further greensward with blue outdoor courts (right), with high surround blue fencing. Immediately beyond, at the second school entrance, bear left towards a small roundabout (marking the entrance to the school site from Monkwick Avenue).

**7A** At the exit, go left along the outer perimeter of the cemetery. Follow this footpath for approx. 300m to a sharp right-hand bend at Willows allotment. Continue right. After a short distance, a path on the left marks the point at which the Orbital South B re-joins the South A. Continue straight on past.

**7B** Instead of exiting here, go diagonally across the roundabout & take a footpath on the far side for a short distance through the tree line to a T-junction with a shared foot/cycle path, with the new Garrison buildings visible ahead. Go right, then follow path around the perimeter of the Garrison until a further T-junction of paths (approx. 450m). At this point the Orbital South A & B routes merge once again. Go left here (Cemetery to the right).

**8** The Orbital now continues again as a single route. Head towards the flyover. Immediately in advance of it, a foot/cycle path merging from the right offers a mostly off-road route into town (via Abbey Field), & acts as one of the Orbital's 'spokes'. Instead, go under the flyover & continue parallel to Berechurch Rd for approx. 350m to a junction with a foot/cycle path (signposted left to the Garrison's Physical & Recreational Training Area; straight ahead to Friday Woods). Go right, signposted 'Layer Rd' and continue for approx. 1 km on this off-road walk/cycle path, crossing Fallowfield Rd at Garrison entrance. Cross the Layer Rd at traffic lights & take Boadicea Way (opposite to the left).

**9** Continue on Boadicea Way for approx. 800m, around the perimeter of Shrub End Playing Field & West End Sports Ground, until Shrub End Rd. Cross at the traffic lights & continue straight over on to Norman Way, which reaches a dead end shortly afterwards just passed The Commons (left), at the entrance to Irvine Rd allotments & cut-through to adjacent greensward at Landseer Rd. **The Orbital South ends here.**



# THE ORBITAL WEST

**1** 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. Here the Orbital West A & B routes divide.

**2A** **The Orbital West A (via Hilly Fields)**  
At the T-junction of paths, go right. 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. Exit on to Park Road and continue to the T-junction with Lexden Road.

**2B** **The Orbital West B (via Lexden Park and Spring Park)**  
At the T-junction of paths, go left. Cross the entrance to Philip Morant School on Rembrandt Way. Continue on the footpath opposite, which runs for approx. 400m, parallel to the Iron Age earthworks of Bluebottle Grove (left). At a triangular intersection, go left. Shortly afterward, at open greensward, take a foot-worn path hugging the tree-line to the right; then look for an A-frame barrier ahead, leading into Lexden Park woods and Local Nature Reserve.

**3A** At Lexden Rd, cross and head right, then take the second left onto Sussex Road. Follow to its end at the entrance to Hilly Fields.

**3B** 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. Head right along the length of the park.

**4A** 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.

**4B** 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 (running between Spring Lane Park, left, and Lexden Springs Nature Reserve, right).

**5A** At Cymbeline Way, head right 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.

**5B** 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). 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.

**6A** 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.

**6B** 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'. Follow past Spring Lane Tennis Club (right). 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 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.

**7** The Orbital now continues again as a single route. 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 Propellair Way, continue straight on for a short while and then take an off-road footpath again as Propellair Way bears away left. Where it finally emerges at Tufnell Way, go right.

**8** 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.

**9** 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.

**10** Emerge onto Baiswick Lane, go right and continue to Mile End Road at the war memorial, opposite St Michael's Church. Cross and enter the churchyard. Take the main path through to the right of the church, and 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. Go right and follow to the junction with Dickenson Road. Cross and bear left. A short distance on, turn right between houses on to a foot/cycle path. Keep going straight, crossing two mini roundabouts.

**11** Approx. 100m beyond the second (on Hakewill Way), turn left onto a short stretch of footpath leading to the Northern Approach Road. Cross at the lights. 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.

**12** 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.

**13** 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 and most important green spaces. The route is mapped in 3 sections (East, South and West)



# COLCHESTER ORBITAL

A Walk Colchester and Colchester Borough Council partnership



**ORBITAL EAST**  
High Woods Country Park to Wivenhoe Park (University of Essex), via Welsh Wood (East A) or Crockleford (East B) and Salary Brook Nature Reserve.



**ORBITAL SOUTH**  
Wivenhoe Park to Shrub End, via the Hythe, Bourne Valley, Colchester Cemetery (South A) or Middlewick Ranges (South B).



**ORBITAL WEST**  
Shrub End (Norman Way) to High Woods Country Park, via Hilly Fields (West A) or Lexden Park Nature Reserve (West B), and Cymbeline Meadows.

**ABOUT THIS ROUTE...**  
**Start point:** High Woods Country Park Visitor Centre, Turner Road CO4 3BT  
**Grid ref:** TL 99900 27078  
**End point:** Meadows Café, Annan Road (University of Essex).  
**Distance:** East A: 5.4 miles; East B: 6.5 miles  
**Bus routes (start point):** 8, 61, 65, 68  
**Facilities at start:** Car park; café; toilets; children's play areas.

**ABOUT THIS ROUTE...**  
**Start point:** Meadows Café, Annan Road (University of Essex).  
**Grid ref:** TM 02272 24190  
**End point:** Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road  
**Distance:** South A: 4.2 South B: 4.6 miles  
**Bus routes (start point):** 61, 62, 62B, 74B, 75B, 97, 98  
**Facilities at start:** General store with refreshments and outdoor seating.

**ABOUT THIS ROUTE...**  
**Start point:** Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road  
**Grid ref:** TL 97891 24054  
**End point:** High Woods Country Park Visitor Centre, Turner Road  
**Distance:** West A: 4.1 miles; West B: 4.4 miles  
**Bus routes (start point):** 1, 75, 79, 92  
**Facilities at start:** Nearest cafés at Prettygate. (approx. 1/3 mile along The Commons)

For full bus route information and timetables visit: [www.essexbus.info](http://www.essexbus.info)

**COLCHESTER ORBITAL ACCESSIBILITY**  
Much thought has been given to optimising access for all wherever possible along the 24 miles of the Orbital, and this work is ongoing. Some barriers to access however will inevitably remain. For more about project origins, aims and accessibility, visit: [www.walkcolchester.org.uk/the-colchester-orbital](http://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/the-colchester-orbital)  
For an interactive version of the Colchester Orbital (Walk and Cycle) map, including easier access route options, visit: [www.colchesterorbital.org](http://www.colchesterorbital.org)







### St Michael's Church wildlife sanctuary, Mile End

Designated 'closed' since 2005, the churchyard now incorporates a conservation area that has become a haven for insects and other wildlife, with many wild flowering plants, and trees including oak, yew, holly and lime.



### High Woods Country Park

The park's ancient woodland once lay within the medieval Royal Forest of Kingswood. Today its 370 acres also comprise open grassland and wildflower meadows, a fishing lake, marshy areas, hayfields and scrubland, together the habitat for thousands of bird species and mammals. The Park is also home to Together We Grow CIC at the Big Garden, the Colchester BOMA all-terrain wheelchair, and to various walking groups and volunteer ranger opportunities.



### Welsh Wood

Ancient woodland, home to ash, hazel, sweet chestnut and the uncommon small leaved lime tree. A stream runs along its eastern edge, joining Salary Brook further along. Rotational coppicing, creates an ever-changing range of habitats, increasing the number of species it can support. In spring, the wood is carpeted with bluebells.

### Cymbeline Meadows and Charter Wood

74 hectares of rich mixed habitat, including working farmland, meadow and woodland, intersected by the meandering river Colne. In 1990, the previously cultivated riverside meadows were sown with wildflowers and grasses, and cattle now graze them in spring and summer. Otter, kingfisher and water vole are found along the river, and nightingales heard in spring around Charter Wood (planted in 1992 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the granting of the Charter to the Borough by Richard The Lionheart).



### Hilly Fields Local Nature Reserve

This 80-acre reserve is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument, with extensive Iron Age and Roman remains, and later importance as the site of Parliamentary encampment during the Civil War siege of Colchester in 1648. It is criss-crossed by many other walking trails, all enjoying a rich terrain of grassland, scrub, woodland and marsh, and an abundance of wildlife.



### Lexden Park Local Nature Reserve

This small, 7-hectare reserve is a haven for flora and fauna. The lower grassland meadow is species-rich with lady's bedstraw, lesser stitchwort, knapweed and greater birdsfoot trefoil; its spring-fed lake popular with wildfowl. The southern half is mainly wooded (oak, silver birch, beech, rowan, sycamore, horse and sweet chestnut, lime and pines), with a vibrant display of bluebells in spring each year.

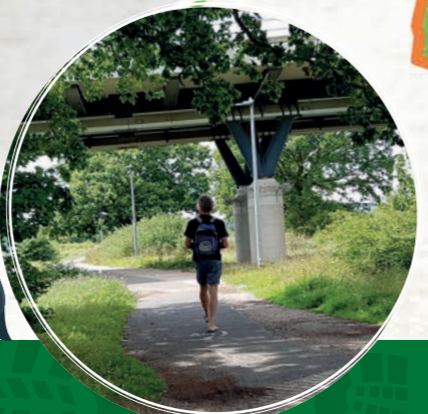


### Bluebottle Grove

The banks and ditch to the left of this long straight stretch of footpath form part of a series of late Iron Age defences protecting the western side of Camulodunum (pre-Roman Colchester). There are also many pre-Roman graves in the nearby area.

### Colchester Cemetery

Home to over 1,500 mature deciduous and evergreen trees, thanks to inspired planting by Benjamin Cant in 1855. Its grounds are also a haven for wildlife, with a wide variety of bird species (Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Coal Tit, and Britain's smallest bird, the Goldcrest). Woodpeckers are here all year round, and hunters such as the Tawny Owl and Sparrow Hawk. Several species of mammal also make their home here (fox, muntjac deer and badger).



### Middlewick Ranges

A Local Wildlife Site with rich biodiversity, mixed open grass and heathland, interspersed with copses, and ancient woodland bordering its south-east sides.

### Bourne Valley

The valley takes its name from Bourne Brook, a former mill-brook which flows along its length. 15 acres of pretty woodland (fine mature oak and sweet chestnut coppice) and wetland are well-hidden here, between Old Heath (east) and Bourne Mill and Pond (west). Blythe Pond sits halfway along, lined with willows, and surrounded by reedmace and reed sweet grass. Four species of bat are known to feed here.

### The Hythe on the River Colne

The Hythe (old English: 'landing place for ships') was founded in the 12th century for the export of grain and later trade of materials such as coal, firebricks and oysters. It remained a significant trading port into the 20th Century.

### Salary Brook Nature Reserve

The Reserve comprises almost 50 acres of pasture, grassland, marsh and ponds, much of it now designated a Local Wildlife Site. The area has a wealth of flora and fauna, including species not often associated with urban areas - the nightingale, reed warbler, lizard, water vole and four species of bat, including pipistrelle.

### Wivenhoe Park

Originally an old deer park, Wivenhoe Park was landscaped in 1776 around a country house, and in 1816 famously captured in a painting by Constable. During the First and Second World Wars, the house and gardens were occupied by the army. In 1964, they became home to the University of Essex.

The park's great collection of trees is commemorated today by dendrologist Christopher Howard's Tree Trail, and Maria Fremlin's Millennium Oaks Collection.



**KEY**

- Principal Orbital route
- Orbital 'spokes': suggested connecting walking routes to the town centre (the most off-road, and/or with green interest)
- Nearest connecting bus stops (see timetable link overleaf)

