



Connecting Bishop's Stortford, Dunmow and Braintree sustainably - *Outline Business Case*

Flich Way Action Group



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The Opportunity for sustainable travel

The Flitch Way is a decommissioned railway track that runs through mainly rural Essex for fifteen miles from Braintree station to Start Hill near Bishop's Stortford. It is now an important greenway and wildlife corridor. For most of the way it provides a safe, traffic free environment for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and forms part of National Cycle Network route 16.

Over 220,000 people live within 2 miles of the Flitch Way and there are more than a dozen schools and colleges and many small and medium size enterprises in the area. Stansted Airport with 12,000 workers lies less than a mile from the Flitch Way.

The main drawback with using the existing Flitch Way as a sustainable travel route is that it does not connect easily with any of the centres of population, retail, education or work.

The route through Great Dunmow is on busy main roads with no safe crossing points and via an inadequate and dangerous bridge over the river Chelmer. There is no safe, off road connection from the Flitch Way into the centre of the town.

The Flitch Way going west stops just short of the M 11. There is no safe, direct connection to Bishop's Stortford even though this is less than a mile away. East Herts council estimate that over 1000 residents in Bishop's Stortford work at Stansted Airport.

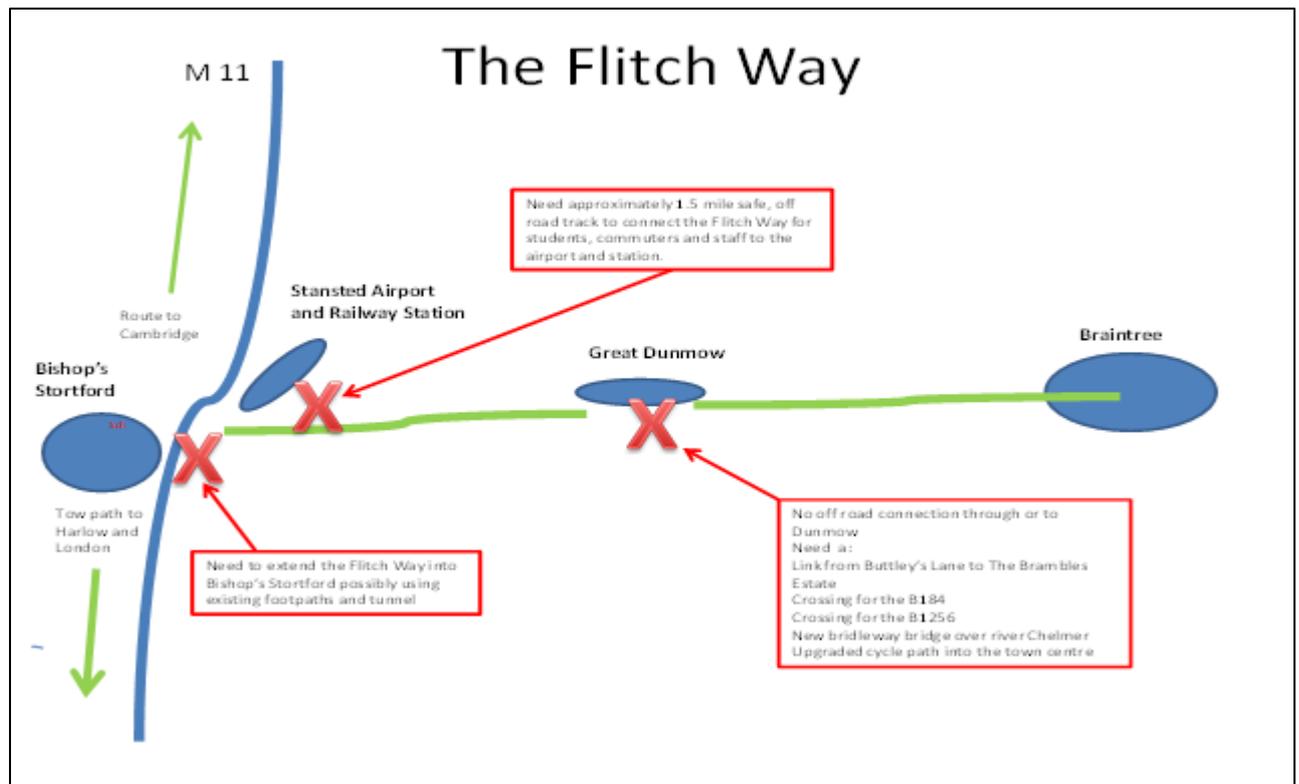
A safe, off road cycle path to Stansted Airport and railway station for employees and commuters has been proposed many times (Essex Cycling Strategy 2000, Essex Transport Strategy 2011, Uttlesford Cycling Strategy 2014, Uttlesford Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2017) but has not yet materialised.

"Walking and cycling are essential parts of the solution to tackling physical inactivity, climate change, air pollution and congestion but for too long walking and cycling have not been given enough attention by policy makers"

House of Commons Transport Committee, 23rd July 2019.

Our Vision

Our vision for the Fritch Way is as a near continuous, safe, off road track linking Bishop's Stortford, Great Dunmow and Braintree so forming an important East-West route for Essex. This could connect with the North-South route from Cambridge to London as well as to Stansted airport and railway station. Such a network would create a major off-road transport and recreational facility.



This track could be used by any non-motorised form of transport.

Benefits

There are many benefits:

- Provide a safe way to travel to work or school without using public transport.
- Improve mental and physical health, decreased obesity so saving NHS resources.
- Help mitigate the effects of global heating by reducing the number of car and bus journeys.
- Help children travel to school without using buses and cars thus improving health and saving money.

- Boost the local economy.
- Improve access and increased foot fall for local shops and businesses.
- Reduce congestion, parking, pollution and traffic.
- Maintain and increase local employment.
- Linking together local communities and improved social cohesion.
- Better access to local parks and countryside.
- Help Active Essex achieve its goal of a million more active people.
- Increase tourism.

Costs

The costs involved in this project are mainly construction needs as much of the track is already in place.

- The footpath from Buttley's Lane to The Brambles estate needs to be designated as a bridleway and be resurfaced. This section of the Flitch Way will become increasingly important when Helena Romanes school moves to its new location off Buttley's Lane.
- In Great Dunmow much of the work to join the Flitch Way through the town has already been completed or is under way and has been funded by developers under S106 agreements. Still needed is a new bridleway bridge over the river Chelmer near Langleys, safe road crossings over the B184 and the B1256 and improvements to the bridge over the B1256 to give better access to the town.
- A spur from the Flitch Way to Stansted Airport and railway station would be less than 2 miles long and could be, at least in part, funded by Manchester Airport Group under their Sustainable Development Plan-surface access proposals. This proposal aims to increase the number of employees using sustainable transport to work to 0.5% by 2019.
- Extending the Flitch Way into Bishop's Stortford and beyond could be straight forward as there are already existing footpaths with a suitable underpass crossing the M 11. Highways England state in their Cycling Strategy 2016 that they will "*contribute towards the development of an integrated, comprehensive and high quality cycling network. This includes facilities which are safe and separate from traffic, that enable users of all abilities to cycle and encourages cycling as a sustainable form of transport*". With these aims in mind, during the re-modeling of M 11

Junction 8, a new bridleway could be provided. A great advantage of this route, if completed prior to planned J8 works, is that it would help to mitigate some of the inevitable traffic disruption.

Funding for the Flitch Way project could be from a variety of sources including local developers through S106 agreements, central government grants, Highways England, East Herts Council, Essex County Council, Uttlesford Council, Manchester Airports Group and others.

Societal Aspects

The World Health Organisation, the European Commission, the Government of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the National Health Service, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and Essex County Council (ECC) all recognise the fact that too few people get enough regular exercise. ECC are supporting the Active Essex campaign that aims to get 1 million extra residents active by 2021. This will help reduce the £58 million annual cost to the NHS in Essex due to inactivity. We believe a project such as the Flitch Way could greatly facilitate this endeavor.

The earth is experiencing a climate emergency due in large to the combustion of fossil fuels. Uttlesford council have declared a climate emergency and are committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A sustainable transport link such as the Flitch Way, encouraging people to make shorter journeys by active travel would greatly help with this aspiration.



Summary

Active travel is a tremendous way to help tackle the scourge of inactivity and climate emergency. Active travel should be encouraged and promoted. One of the best methods to increase the number of people participating in active travel is to provide adequate facilities. This fact has been amply demonstrated in London, Manchester, Bristol and many other locations worldwide. With the advent of e-bikes an easy commuting range of over six miles is readily achievable. The Flitch Way is a fabulous asset that should connect the vibrant towns of Bishop's Stortford, Dunmow and Braintree to schools, colleges, places of work, shops, transport hubs and the wider countryside. If these connections are made the Flitch Way will help to

Save money

Save the environment

Save lives

ADDENDUM

Economics of sustainable travel

Cycling

- Cycling contributes over 3 billion pounds to the British economy (London School of Economics 2010)
- Cycling schemes can achieve more for less with benefit-to-cost ratios (CBR) in the range of 5:1 to 19:1. A CBR of greater than 2 is considered high value by Highways England.
- A typical “cycling city” could be worth £377 million to the NHS in healthcare cost savings in 2011 prices
- Facilities allowing children to cycle to school save on the public cost of school travel amounting to £390 million per annum in the Netherlands in 1987 prices.
- Investment is effective in increasing usage.
- Cycle tourism is influenced by utility mode share: i.e. where cycling is attractive and thus more people cycle, there is a greater propensity for cycle-tourism.

Cycling UK 2016

Horse Riding

"The equine industry in the UK is both vibrant and valuable, contributing £7bn a year to the economy. With around 1m horses in the UK, the industry has a gross output of £3.8bn a year and provides full time employment of about 200,000, many in rural areas".

British Horse Industry Confederation 2015

Walking and Tourism

- Walkers in the countryside contribute to the rural economy
- Walkers in the English countryside spend around £6.14 billion a year, generating income in excess of £2billion and supporting up to 245,000 full time jobs
- In 2008, people in Scotland took over 384 million recreation trips to the outdoors, spending £2.8 billion. Almost 80% had come to walk
- Walking tourism in rural and coastal Wales contributes over £550million to the economy



- Popular walking routes are major assets to the tourist industry
- The South West Coast Path, generates £307million a year for the economy of the region, supporting over 7,500 jobs but costs only £500,000 a year to maintain
- The West Highland Way, Scotland's most popular official long distance route, attracts 75,000 visitors a year, generating £3.5million and supporting around 200 local businesses
- The proposed English coastal path will generate £2,572million per year for the local economies and support 100,000 full time jobs
- Walking brings economic benefits to town and city centres
- People on foot tend to linger longer and spend more. Walking and cycling routes gives benefit to cost ratios of 20:1, compared to road and rail schemes' typical 3:1 ratio.
- More people walking could bring vast savings to the nation's health bill
- Physical inactivity currently costs the NHS in England between £1billion and £1.8billion a year, and around £8.3billion to the wider economy in sick days and premature deaths
- Obesity alone already costs the economy £16billion annually - if current trends continue, this may rise to £50billion by 2050

Ramblers 2019