



NORTH ESSEX'S STRATEGIC NARRATIVE



Gunfleet Sands Offshore Wind Farm – Tendring

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The North Essex Vision

A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity.

The NEEB's 'Delivering for North Essex' plan has been underpinned by a robust and comprehensive review of the region's key opportunities and challenges, outlined within the local strategies and initiatives of the seven NEEB authorities and collated through extensive engagement with councillors, officers and key external stakeholders, including local businesses, HE and FE institutions, and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

'North Essex's Strategic Narrative' has been developed in partnership with Henham Strategy, with it providing greater detail on the opportunities and challenges we are seeking to action and address through our plans to deliver for North Essex. These opportunities and challenges are presented under the key strategic priority for which they apply.



Working together, we can leverage North Essex's core strengths...

Our innovative and thriving SME community and cutting edge HE and FE institutions, delivering good, local jobs

Our dynamic and competitive renewable energy generation strengths, driving net zero progression

Our unique strategic location linked to regional and international partners, supporting inward investment

Our proud urban, rural and coastal communities, focused on supporting prosperous residents and businesses

North Essex's Strategic Opportunities and Challenges

1. Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

With North Essex's substantial SME community driving entrepreneurship and innovation; three highly successful Higher Education institutions leading cutting-edge research in areas including computer and data science; and thriving Further Education institutions delivering the technical skills and qualifications that form the backbone of any resilient economy, now is an exciting time for the region as it looks to ensure its residents and businesses benefit from increased inward investment that helps establish the region's prosperity-enhancing growth sectors.

Innovative Businesses – Opportunities

North Essex is positioned to build on the high proportion of SMEs operating within the region, with a real opportunity to further develop incumbent strengths in the construction and real estate sectors. Alongside reinforcing existing strengths, progress within the region's key growth sectors can add to the region's innovative business landscape, building on the excellent work that has already been delivered to date.

Construction and Retrofit – Building on the region's incumbent construction strengths, Braintree has led work on delivering progress within the advanced construction sector through 'I-Construct'. Using European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding, this programme included the establishment of a 'Construction Innovation Hub' that has been used to support businesses in construction – and construction-related – sectors, nurture early-stage SMEs and facilitate the commercialisation of new ideas, technologies and research. This programme has supported 350 businesses, launched 150 new products and services, and created up to 130 jobs across the South East¹.

Clean Energy – Building on the region's renewable electricity generation strengths, Longfield Solar Farm is a proposal for a new solar energy and battery storage farm within Chelmsford and Braintree that will help meet the UK's need for low carbon energy and achieve the 2050 net zero target. The plans around battery storage will help deliver efficiency, with the energy generated able to be stored during times of low demand and released when needed².

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering – Based in Chelmsford, the company Teledyne e2v is a technology manufacturer that develops specialised components and subsystems in the medical, science, aerospace, and defence sectors. Specifically, this company is looking to help drive the next generation of systems in signal chain semiconductor devices, full spectrum imaging, and high-power radio frequency solutions³.

Digital Tech – Building on the University of Essex's computer and data science strengths, Colchester launched the AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation in June 2022. This new centre will position Colchester as a global focus for all immersive innovation in the XR industry, and will form AIXR's base of international operations, institutionalising the technology for decades to come. This centre is open to all within the community who want to learn about XR, grow within XR, and connect with the most passionate people within the immersive world. (For

¹ I-Construct. Source: [I-Construct](#)

² Longfield Solar Farm. Source: [Longfield Solar Farm](#)

³ Teledyne e2v. Source: [Home | Teledyne e2v \(teledyne-e2v.com\)](#)

background, XR is the umbrella term for all immersive technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality, Spatial Audio and Haptics/Senses)⁴.

Life Sciences – With its proximity to Cambridge and the Life Sciences ‘Golden Triangle’, Uttlesford is playing a leading role in the UK’s life sciences sector through the Chesterford Research Park. This research park offers advanced laboratory and office space set within 250 acres of idyllic parkland, with the modern, dynamic and flexible facilities ideal for biotechnology, pharmaceutical and technology R&D companies of all sizes⁵. Braintree’s Manufacturing Innovation Centre at CGT Catapult will also play a vital life sciences role, working in collaboration with the cell and gene therapy industry to accelerate manufacturing innovation for therapy developers, technology companies and service providers⁶.

These are but a few examples of the excellent and innovative work that is planned and underway within the region to support North Essex’s key growth sectors. The benefits of continuing to develop the region’s early progress in supporting its key growth sectors is seen when looking at the potential impact these growth sectors could have in terms of jobs within the region.

Focusing on the ‘Clean Energy’ growth sector, LG Inform⁷ forecasts demonstrate the number of jobs the region is likely to benefit from as this sector continues to develop. As the table below demonstrates, the region is expected to see significant growth in the number of jobs within key Clean Energy areas, and it is vital the region continues to build on the excellent work already underway to support not only the Clean Energy growth sector, but also North Essex’s other key growth sectors.

North Essex Clean Energy Job Growth – LG Inform 2030 Forecasts						
Area	Braintree	Chelmsford	Colchester	Maldon	Tendring	Uttlesford
Low Carbon Electricity	74	2,258	163	318	90	173
Low Carbon Heat	422	494	534	183	459	242
Alternative Fuels	95	192	135	41	54	39
Energy Efficient	386	452	488	168	420	221
Low Carbon Services	61	189	189	38	37	101
Low Emissions Vehicles and Infrastructure	216	253	220	80	129	112
Total	1,254	3,838	1,729	828	1,189	888

⁴ AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation. Source: [AIXR Centre for Immersive Innovation to Open in Colchester UK - AIXR](#)

⁵ Chesterford Research Park. Source: [Chesterford Research Park](#)

⁶ Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy. CGT Catapult Braintree. Source: [Braintree - Cell and Gene Therapy \(catapult.org.uk\)](#)

⁷ LG Inform. Local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery. Source: [Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery in Braintree | LG Inform](#)

North Essex Clean Energy Job Growth – LG Inform 2050 Forecasts						
Area	Braintree	Chelmsford	Colchester	Maldon	Tendring	Uttlesford
Low Carbon Electricity	177	5,476	359	760	201	414
Low Carbon Heat	635	743	803	276	690	364
Alternative Fuels	140	315	220	66	88	60
Energy Efficient	407	477	515	177	443	233
Low Carbon Services	170	532	532	106	105	283
Low Emissions Vehicles and Infrastructure	376	488	396	140	252	199
Total Jobs	1,905	8,031	2,825	1,525	1,779	1,553

North Essex Clean Energy Job Growth – LG Inform 2030 and 2050 Forecasts

If the region is to make the most of the opportunities its growth sectors present, North Essex must ensure that businesses working within these sectors have the space and resources to scale up effectively and establish themselves within the region. There has already been some excellent work progressed in this space, whether that be through Tendring’s work delivering 24 new affordable business units in Jaywick Sands, or Braintree’s plans around the Horizon 120 business innovation and logistics park that will provide in excess of 750,000 square feet of hi-tech, industrial, office and logistics space. Phase One of Horizon 120 was completed in June 2022, with ‘The Plaza’ providing approximately 30,000 square feet of flexible SME workshop space where individual rooms – as well as conference and event spaces – are available for hire⁸.

Braintree’s Free Funding for Young Entrepreneurs

Braintree’s initiative to provide funding for young entrepreneurs is helping to stimulate business growth within the authority, helping to provide Braintree’s youngest and brightest business minds with the first step up required to establish a business. Alongside funding for their idea, this initiative provides 16-30 year olds with invaluable business plan training and presentational experience that helps them develop career enhancing skills. This initiative should be provided across North Essex to stimulate entrepreneurship, innovation and investment – three criteria critical to productive and proactive business growth.

Innovative Business – Challenges

If the region is to fully seize the opportunities within North Essex’s incumbent strengths and realise the benefits of its key growth sectors, challenges will need to be overcome that are currently inhibiting the region’s innovative businesses from making further economic progress.

Despite the progress being made in the delivery of new commercial sites, like those being delivered in Tendring and Braintree, there is much progress to be made. The lack of commercial sites compared to other areas around the country is one of the main reasons holding back the scale up of many of North Essex’s innovative businesses. It is vital that the region continues to focus on ensuring businesses have the necessary commercial space to

⁸ Horizon120. Source: [Horizon 120 Business Park, Braintree, Essex - Office, Logistics & Distribution, Hi-Tech, Light Industrial](#)

grow, positioning North Essex to benefit from the economic growth that comes with SMEs further establishing themselves within the region.

There is also a challenge in collating the existing initiatives that are underway within North Essex to support business growth and ensuring that key stakeholders are aware of what they are each doing to drive business growth in the region. There have been some excellent further examples of initiatives planned and underway to support business growth within the region including:

- The **Colchester Business Enterprise Agency's (Colbea)** business support delivered in partnership with Tendring, which is helping to catalyse business success within parts of Essex⁹.
- The partnership established between **CB Heating and EDF Energy** in Tendring to support the installation of heat pumps within the region, exemplifying effective local and national business partnerships¹⁰.
- The **University of Essex's 'Knowledge Gateway'**, a research and technology park on the Colchester Campus, providing a unique home for businesses to cultivate ideas, increase motivation, generate ambition and invigorate success. This is helping innovative SMEs establish themselves further, with peer-to-peer relationships established to facilitate business growth¹¹.
- The **South East LEP's (SELEP) Enterprise Adviser Network** which aims to pair senior business volunteers with schools and colleges to build employer engagement plans in order to create powerful, lasting connections between local businesses and the schools and colleges in their area. This is helping to demonstrate employment pathways for students, increasing motivation to progress and secure career enabling opportunities¹².
- The **Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan** that is providing an employer voice and perspective on the region's local skills needs, ensuring residents are developing skills that are most likely to help them secure good jobs of the future¹³.

The NEEB has a role to play in occupying an overarching viewpoint over initiatives being delivered, ensuring duplication of activity is avoided and best business growth practice promoted and scaled up to support further businesses across the North Essex region.

Skilled Residents – Opportunities

To support the ambitions of North Essex's innovative businesses, the region should work on building on its skills strengths, with successful, innovative businesses dependent upon a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

⁹ Colbea. Source: [Office Space Colchester | Office Rental | Business Support \(colbea.co.uk\)](https://www.colbea.co.uk)

¹⁰ EDF investment partnership with heat pump installer CB heating, EDF, May 2022. Source: [EDF investment partnership with heat pump installer CB Heating | EDF \(edfenergy.com\)](https://www.edfenergy.com)

¹¹ Knowledge Gateway. University of Essex. Source: [Knowledge Gateway | University of Essex](https://www.knowledgegateway.co.uk)

¹² Enterprise Adviser Network. SELEP. Source: [Enterprise Adviser Network - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership \(southeastlep.com\)](https://www.southeastlep.com)

¹³ Local Skills Improvement Plan. Essex Chamber of Commerce. Source: [Essex Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ltd -](https://www.essexchamber.com)

When considering North Essex’s skills strengths, a clear place to start is the region’s Higher Education institutions, with the region benefitting from the excellent research and training delivered by the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, and Writtle University College. All three Higher Education institutions have their specific strengths – the University of Essex has strong foundations in the computer/data science and hospitality sectors; Anglia Ruskin in social work and sport science; and Writtle University College in animal and land-based sectors. These institutions play an important role in driving up skills within the region, with the University of Essex’s ‘Skills Fest’ – an annual exhibition of the skills development opportunities available to students and staff of the university – an excellent example of the work put in to supporting skills development across the region.

It is essential that the region’s Higher Education institutions continue to receive the support they need, given the R&D spend of the East of England’s Higher Education institutions in 2019. As can be seen in the table below, the East of England ranked third – behind London and the South East – in terms of Higher Education R&D expenditure, investing £968 million in 2019. This suggests that the region’s Higher Education institutions are playing a leading role in driving innovation and productivity improvements¹⁴. North Essex’s three Higher Education institutions are central to this expenditure and should continue to be supported with these endeavours.

Regional Higher Education R&D Expenditure – 2019 (£ millions)								
London	South East	East of England	North West	Yorkshire and the Humber	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands	North East
2,196	1,361	968	733	610	474	470	353	251

Regional Higher Education R&D Expenditure – 2019 (£ million)

The University of Essex

The University of Essex is a North Essex Higher Education strength, ranking first in the UK for its Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) which bring together the needs of businesses with the university’s knowledge and expertise. This strength needs to be built upon, facilitating the spin out of businesses from the university’s research. A sector where this is clearly possible is Computer Science, with the university ranking in the UK’s top 10 for this subject and acting as host to the Institute for Analytics and Data Science as well as the UK Data Archive. This case study has been included to illustrate the potential of North Essex’s Higher Education institutions. It is vital they partner with businesses and investors to drive innovation and business growth within North Essex.

Alongside North Essex’s Higher Education institutions – and given the region’s incumbent strengths within the construction sector – the region’s Further Education offering is also critical to the region’s long-term economic growth potential. In particular, there are several Further Education institutions that represent the region’s strengths in this area:

¹⁴ ONS. Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, by region, UK. (2019). Source: [Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, by region, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/government/statistics/gross-domestic-expenditure-on-research-and-development-by-region-uk)

- **The Colchester Institute** – Critical to this institute is its ambition to provide education, professional development and technical skills training to young people and adults across North Essex. Vocational learning is an integral part of all the courses offered by the institute and there are two main campuses in North Essex based in Colchester and Braintree. The Colchester site has recently delivered improvements to its main buildings, enabling the provision of new facilities that include Business, Accounting and Computing, Sport and Public Service and Health and Social Care facilities. The Braintree site has a speciality in Digital, Media and Engineering¹⁵.
- **Chelmsford College** – Based across two campuses, Chelmsford College is a general Further Education college that offers a variety of courses, both vocational and professional courses. Like the Colchester Institute, Chelmsford College has undergone redevelopment in recent years which includes a brand new Electrical and Engineering block, a new Art, Design and Media Centre, as well as new welcome areas on both campuses, complete with internet cafes and landscaped areas for students to relax and socialise¹⁶.
- **Stansted Airport College** – With Stansted Airport based in Uttlesford, it is important to acknowledge the partnership the airport has established with Harlow College. Stansted Airport College is the first of its kind in the country, and offers a unique opportunity for those interested to get the first step up into a career within the aviation industry¹⁷.

The importance of these exemplar Further Education institutions is evidenced when reflecting on the diversity of skills attainment across the North Essex region. Some authorities are made up of a greater proportion of higher skilled workers and others a greater proportion of lower skilled workers, evidenced in the table below¹⁸. It is crucial that everyone within North Essex feels they have an opportunity to progress in their careers – irrespective of skills backgrounds – and the provision of Further Education courses is essential to this.

Skills Attainment (2021) – Lower and Higher Skilled Workers Divergence Across North Essex		
District	NVQ Levels 1,2 and 3	NVQ Level 4
Braintree	47.2%	25.8%
Chelmsford	43.1%	33.9%
Colchester	44.6%	32.2%
Maldon	45.9%	25.4%
Tendring	43.8%	19.9%
Uttlesford	42.3%	36.6%

Skills Attainment (2021) – Lower and Higher Skilled Workers Divergence across North Essex

Skilled Residents – Challenges

Whilst there are clear opportunities to support the upskilling of North Essex through collaboration with the region’s Higher Education and Further Education institutions, there are several challenges that are front and centre when supporting economic growth within the region.

¹⁵ The Colchester Institute. Source: [Colchester Institute - Education & Training Courses in Essex](#)

¹⁶ Chelmsford College. Source: [Chelmsford College | Our College](#)

¹⁷ Stansted Airport College. Source: [Stansted Airport College - Home](#)

¹⁸ ONS. Education: Highest level of qualification (Census 2021). Source: [Highest level of qualification - Census Maps, ONS](#)

The first challenge is encouraging and facilitating opportunities for residents to participate within skill programmes delivered across the region. Despite the NEEB running some successful skills programmes – including those in partnership with the Shaw Trust – others have proven less successful in generating resident interest. Whilst part of the explanation for the lack of engagement with some recent NEEB delivered skills programmes could be the lack of regular and reliable transport links between the North Essex authorities, there could also be other reasons for this, including a lack of confidence amongst some residents to engage, as raised by the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Equally as important as delivering quality skills programmes, the NEEB and other stakeholders should carefully consider the audiences they are looking to reach, understanding how they can effectively facilitate resident engagement. As highlighted by the Essex LSIP, Essex employers find that employees lack skills across a range of issues, including soft skills, and often struggle with staying positive and aiming high. Ensuring North Essex’s residents do not fall into these categories will be vital to delivering skilled residents within the region.

Another challenge, is the struggle retaining graduate talent from courses delivered within North Essex. Whilst many choose to study within North Essex – 51,425 students were enrolled at the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin and Writtle University College for the 2020/21 academic year¹⁹ – fewer choose to remain in North Essex following their studies. This is particularly seen within the University of Essex’s Hospitality programmes, with many students moving to larger UK and global cities to apply their skills post-training. To mitigate this from happening, there is a need to better advertise North Essex as a great place to live and work. Further collaboration between the region’s businesses and Higher/Further Education institutions is required to more effectively advertise the good jobs available within North Essex to students.

A final skills challenge relates to North Essex’s UK positioning. For many in the region, one of the main attractions of living within North Essex is its close proximity to London. There are normally 147 trains per day travelling between Colchester and London, and the average journey time is 59 minutes²⁰. This relative ease of travelling to London means many in North Essex live within the region but work within the capital, leading to much of the region’s talent contributing economic growth to other parts of the country. This ‘out-commuting’ phenomenon builds the case for action around promoting good jobs within the region, and facilitating inward investment to draw further good jobs to North Essex.

2. A Green and High Growth Economy

With North Essex’s renewable energy strengths in offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power, alongside innovative partnerships being established between local and national businesses working to deliver net zero commitments, now is an opportune time to focus on promoting the importance of a green and high-growth North Essex economy. This includes facilitating the delivery of the green jobs and skills of the future and building further positivity behind the hand-in-hand relationship of the region’s rural and coastal characteristics and its net zero potential.

¹⁹ HESA. Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2020/21 – Where students come from and go to study. Source: [Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2020/21 - Where students come from and go to study | HESA](#)

²⁰ Trainline. Trains from Colchester to London. Source: [Trains Colchester to London from £10 | Greater Anglia Times & Cheap Tickets | Trainline \(thetrainline.com\)](#)

Opportunities

The North Essex region is positioned to build upon infrastructure already in place that is supporting renewable electricity generation. The region is effectively utilising its urban, rural and coastal characteristics to benefit from greener energy sources. Colchester is leading the way with solar power generation, Maldon with onshore wind, and Tendring with offshore wind. With the number of green jobs expected to increase in the lead up to 2030 and 2050, it is important to ensure the region's renewable electricity generation opportunities result in not only improved environmental outcomes, but also better outcomes for residents through good, career progressing jobs within the region's ever developing green sectors.

The work planned to enhance North Essex's solar power capacity shows North Essex's green potential. Alongside the proposed Longfield Solar Farm in Chelmsford and Braintree, Maldon also has plans to boost its solar power capacity through the proposed Dengie Solar Park – a British Solar Renewables project that plans to build a new 78-acre solar park in the area²¹. These plans to boost solar power capacity are supported by the 'Solar Together' initiative led by Essex CC which – in partnership with the region's six district authorities – is supporting residents to group buy solar PV and battery storage systems to drive demand for this renewable energy source²².

Away from solar power, there are also opportunities for the region to build on the example set in Braintree around EV charging infrastructure. The GRIDSERVE Braintree EV Forecourt is an exemplar for other areas to follow and is the largest of its kind in Europe with 12 high power charges, 12 medium power charges, 6 low power chargers and 6 Tesla super chargers²³. Braintree demonstrates North Essex's EV potential, and there is a real opportunity for the region to promote itself as an exemplar for others to follow within this green economy sector.

In addition, there are many other examples of broader work underway by leading North Essex businesses and initiatives, driving forward green technology and techniques essential to achieving North Essex's net zero transition. Tevva and Global Marine in Chelmsford are respectively driving forward the technology required to electrify HGVs and offshore wind efficiencies, whilst the I-Construct programme mentioned previously has facilitated new construction and technology ideas that will be central to delivering net zero critical retrofitting activities.

Alongside this – and to the benefit of many of North Essex's green businesses – Freeport East represents a critical opportunity to boost North Essex's green and high-growth economic ambitions. Located on Harwich Port, a 112-hectare site is being dedicated to the development of green energy, taking advantage of transport links available from the port and the close proximity to the North Sea's wind farms. The new green energy hub will focus on the manufacture of wind turbine components, as well as incorporating new nuclear sites – Sizewell and Bradwell. This builds on the 2011 designation of Bradwell B as a site for a potential nuclear reactor. Should this come to fruition, Bradwell B will provide an estimated 3,000 construction jobs for local and regional workers and deliver 900 jobs once completed²⁴. Freeport East's Harwich site will create an estimated 3,478 new jobs in offshore wind and provide 77,900 square miles of manufacturing and office space²⁵.

²¹ British Solar Renewables. Source: [BSR | About \(britishrenewables.com\)](https://www.britishrenewables.com)

²² Solar Together. Source: [Group-buying for solar | Sussex \(solartogether.co.uk\)](https://www.solartogether.co.uk)

²³ GRIDSERVE. Source: [GRIDSERVE | Braintree](https://www.gridserve.co.uk)

²⁴ Bradwell B [Benefits - Bradwell B Project Site](https://www.bradwellb.co.uk)

²⁵ [Harwich \(freeporteast.com\)](https://www.freeporteast.com)

Despite the need to build on the excellent progress made to date in delivering North Essex's net zero transition, the importance of maintaining a balance between the development of green economy infrastructure – like solar panels and EV charging – whilst protecting the region's outstanding natural beauty for the benefit of residents and the region's visitor economy is acknowledged. As the region continues its net zero transition, it will be important to continue the promotion of the importance of progressing the region's new Garden Communities that strike a balance between delivering greener homes and further active travel opportunities, alongside maintaining and promoting the region's natural beauty. One of North Essex's key green economy strengths is the opportunity to promote the region's rural and coastal characteristics with it important that areas like Maldon's Promenade Park and Hythe Quay are appropriately protected and promoted as the region continues its net zero transition.

Chelmsford/Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Communities

Both the Chelmsford and Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Communities demonstrate how North Essex is best managing the importance of delivering on its net zero commitments, alongside maintaining the region's important rural characteristics.

The Chelmsford Garden Community will create a community of around 10,000 new homes and include new employment opportunities in north-east Chelmsford. In addition to the new homes to be delivered, the Garden Community will create a new country park, enhanced walking and cycling routes and facilitate new multi-functional green infrastructure that will support North Essex in achieving its net zero ambitions. In 2021, an agreement was signed between Chelmsford City Council, Countryside Zest and Homes England to deliver 80 Net Zero Carbon-ready homes as part of the new community.

Meanwhile, the Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Community will be large enough to accommodate new homes and supporting community facilities and services, alongside employment land for businesses and industrial use. It will be served by a network of green and beautiful spaces to promote wildlife, attractive places, healthy living, recreational activity, sustainable drainage and to tackle the climate emergency; new services, facilities and infrastructure, including a new Rapid Transit System (RTS) and a new dual carriageway Link Road between the A120 and the A133.

Challenges

Despite the opportunities to build on the region's green economy strengths, there are challenges that need addressing through collaborative working across North Essex.

The first challenge is the rural/urban divide when it comes to some green economy infrastructure, and the accessibility challenges faced by some residents and businesses. As the tables below demonstrate, it is the more urban North Essex authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – that have the closest number of EV Charging devices, compared to Braintree,

within North Essex. The more rural authorities – particularly Maldon – have less EV charging infrastructure and relatively few rapid charging devices²⁶.

EV Charging Devices (2023)					
Braintree	Colchester	Chelmsford	Tendring	Uttlesford	Maldon
82	62	44	37	33	14

Rapid Charging Devices					
Braintree	Colchester	Chelmsford	Uttlesford	Tendring	Maldon
82	62	44	37	33	14

EV Charging Devices and Rapid Charging Devices (2023)

The lack of EV charging infrastructure across North Essex is impacting the transition to electric vehicles within the region. It is not practical for many to move away from internal combustion vehicle engines. If North Essex is to achieve its green economy ambitions, further work is required to consider how best to ensure EV charging infrastructure is evenly delivered across the region, ensuring all residents feel it possible to transition to electric vehicle use. Some movement will be seen with Tendring’s REPF funding contributing to EV infrastructure in the district, but more will still need to be done.

Away from the divergence in coverage of some of the region’s green infrastructure, another challenge the region faces is ensuring businesses know of the work already ongoing to deliver progress with the region’s net zero ambitions. Despite some effective partnerships being established to deliver green improvements in the region – for example the partnership between CB Heating and EDF Energy to support heat pump installation – many businesses seem unaware of such partnerships being established. The NEEB wants to work with partners across the region, using its convening role to ensure that those involved in delivering the region’s net zero ambitions collaborate regularly, and work together to scale up effective partnerships already established within the region.

A final challenge is ensuring the region’s residents benefit from the jobs that will become available as the region continues to deliver on its net zero commitments. There is a divergence in skills attainment across the region, and it is vital that North Essex’s residents have an awareness of the good low and high skilled roles the region’s green economy will offer looking ahead to 2030 and 2050. The Essex LSIP found that across the county, there is a paucity of green skills, and this may be partly attributed to a lack of awareness of and engagement with the opportunities available. Achieving this awareness will involve green businesses engaging with the region’s schools, and Further Education and Higher Education institutions ensuring school children and students are aware of the forthcoming green economy opportunities and positioned to gain the skills required to secure the good jobs to follow.

3. A Dynamic and Connected Region

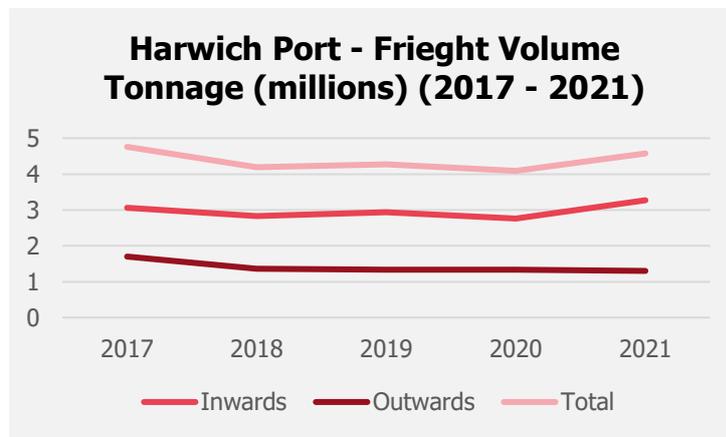
With North Essex’s outward facing transport terminals forming important strategic trading links for the UK and best practice work delivered in the rollout of superfast broadband across the region, it is now imperative the region focuses on how it can drive infrastructure improvements. Specifically, the region should be focusing on how it can increase the region’s roads’ capacity; improve authority-to-authority public transport links; and boost ultrafast

²⁶ DfT. Electric vehicle charging devices by local authority. Source: <https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html>

broadband availability. These improvements will further North Essex’s economic growth potential, through greater inward investment and businesses establishing themselves in the region.

Opportunities

Starting with the region’s transport infrastructure, one of the key opportunities for the region is to build on its external facing transport terminals – Harwich Port and Stansted Airport. As the region moves on from COVID-19 and looks to build on the post-Brexit landscape, these two international transport terminals will play a leading role in supporting economic growth in the region. Starting with Harwich Port, this international transport terminal plays a vital trade role in the region.



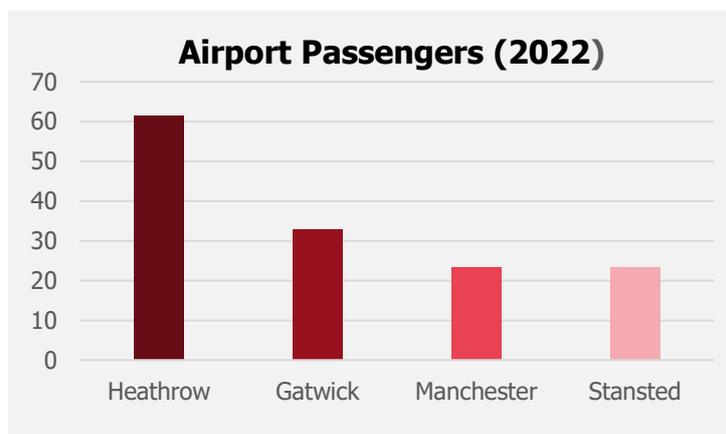
Harwich Port – Freight Volume Tonnage (Millions) (2017 – 2021)

It plays a critical role for the UK when it comes to both inward and outward freight trade, importing 3.27 million tonnes of freight and exporting 1.30 million tonnes in 2021. Also of note is the route analysis of the freight’s start and end destinations, with the majority of Harwich Port’s freight trade coming from, and going to, the EU. This is evidenced by the observation that, in 2021, 98.4% of the port’s freight trade went to and from the EU²⁷. As the UK continues to build its relationship with the EU post Brexit, Harwich Port and the North Essex region will play an important role in facilitating prosperous trade links.

Moving to North Essex’s other international transport terminal, Stansted Airport also plays a vital outward facing role for the region. As the graph outlines below, the airport ranks as one of the busiest in the UK, with 23.3 million passengers passing through the airport in 2022²⁸. Alongside passenger demand, the airport – like Harwich Port – also plays an important role in transporting freight across the globe, with its vital trading links best utilised.

²⁷ DfT. Maritime statistics: interactive dashboard. Source: [UK maritime statistics: interactive dashboard \(dft.gov.uk\)](https://www.dft.gov.uk/maritime-statistics)

²⁸ UK Civil Aviation Authority. Annual Airport Data 2022. Source: [Annual airport data 2022 | Civil Aviation Authority \(caa.co.uk\)](https://www.caa.co.uk/annual-airport-data-2022)



Airport Passengers 2022 (Millions)

Away from the region’s international transport terminals, there is an opportunity for the region to build on the internal transport infrastructure improvements underway. With the A120 planned to be widened where it meets the A12, and the A12 itself planned to be widened between junctions 19-25 and 25-29, the region’s road infrastructure is already being improved to accommodate local residents’ and businesses’ needs. With broader transport infrastructure improvements either planned or being made across the region, including the upgrade to the Army and Navy roundabout, the A131 road improvements, and the delivery of the new Beaulieu Park train station (expected to open in late 2025), there are reasons to be optimistic about the region’s internal transport network. The NEEB is keen to work with partners to see how further improvements can be delivered to best support North Essex’s residents and businesses.

Whilst transport infrastructure improvements will be critical to supporting the region’s economic growth ambitions, an increase in active travel initiatives will also be vital in ensuring residents and businesses can quickly and efficiently move around North Essex. The region’s new Garden Communities will have active travel at their core, and there are other initiatives and projects underway within the region to boost and promote active travel. Significantly, Colchester secured £19.7 million through round 2 of the Government’s Levelling Up Fund for its ‘Co-Creation: A Contemporary Colchester City Centre’ programme, with parts of this funding to be used to help improve active travel within the city. Specifically, the scheme includes plans to improve walking and cycling routes in the city centre by including a new road layout and removing underpasses at St. Botolph’s roundabout. In addition, the scheme will provide a convenient new hub for storing and hiring bikes, e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and e-scooters²⁹. Investment like this – alongside schemes such as Essex Pedal Power – means North Essex has a real opportunity to promote active travel within the region.

Finally – and away from transport infrastructure – it is important to note the success of the Superfast Essex programme and how this has driven an increase in the number of premises across the region that have access to superfast broadband. All of the North Essex authorities benefit from over 90% of their premises having access to superfast broadband due to the success of Superfast Essex. As the region looks to address some of the ultrafast broadband challenges seen across the region, it will be important to learn from Superfast Essex’s successes, with collaborative working key to further ultrafast broadband progress.

²⁹ Colchester City Council. Colchester awarded £19.66m funding for Levelling Up (2022). Source: [Colchester Awarded £19.66m funding for Levelling Up | Colchester City Council](#)

The Superfast Essex Programme

This programme led by Essex County Council illustrates what can be achieved through effective collaboration between central Government, local authorities and the private sector. Funded by Essex County Council, central Government and network operators (Openreach and Gigaclear) the Superfast Essex programme is working to make superfast and ultrafast broadband available to as many homes and businesses across Essex as possible. To date, significant strides have been made with the delivery of superfast broadband across North Essex and it is imperative the programme continues at pace with the delivery of ultrafast broadband across the region. This includes a focus on some of North Essex's rural authorities that are currently lagging behind their more urban neighbours.

Challenges

Away from the infrastructure opportunities present within North Essex, there are also challenges that need addressing to help support economic growth across the region.

The first critical challenge – which is understood by the need to deliver road improvements across the region – is the significant volume of congestion residents and businesses experience when commuting. With the high number of SMEs and a significant level of car use when travelling to work, North Essex's critical roads – including the A120, A12 and A131 – all experience high levels of congestion during peak demand hours. Data presented as part of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 planned widening (junctions 19 – 25) scheme outlines that this stretch of road has 90,000 vehicles passing through it every day, with 9% to 12% of this traffic the result of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), given the importance of this stretch of road to both Felixstowe and Harwich Ports³⁰. Added to this, the data presented below shows Essex as the county with the highest estimated traffic in 2021³¹. Congestion within the region must be reduced to ensure residents and businesses do not continue to lose time in transit and suffer the productivity losses that result.

Highest Estimated Traffic (millions) (2021)	
County	Vehicle Miles
Essex	8.5
Hampshire	8.5
Kent	8.4
Surrey	7.4
Hertfordshire	7.6

Highest Estimated Traffic in 2021 (Billions)

In addition to the high levels of congestion on the region's roads, there are clear rural/urban divides when it comes to both transport and digital infrastructure. There is a clear difference in the travel time to key services within the region's more urban authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – compared to more rural authorities – Maldon and Uttlesford. Alongside the travel time to key services, there is also a rural/urban divide when considering the rollout of ultrafast broadband, with Tendring particularly affected by the different levels of ultrafast broadband rollout across North Essex. If the region is to fulfil its economic potential, it is essential that all parts of North Essex benefit from the same standard of infrastructure, with the NEEB aware

³⁰ National Highways. A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme (junctions 19 to 25). Source: [A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme \(junctions 19 to 25\) - National Highways](#)

³¹ DfT. Road Traffic Statistics. 2021. Source: [Road traffic statistics - Local authorities across Great Britain \(dft.gov.uk\)](#)

of the need to work with partners to ensure the region's more rural areas benefit from the same standard of infrastructure as the region's more urban areas.

4. Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

With North Essex's successes in securing central government levelling up funding; its thriving third sector; and its distinct urban, rural and coastal characteristics, there is a real chance to advance pride in place and boost residents' confidence and economic engagement within all North Essex authorities. Combining the region's outstanding rural and coastal landscapes with fulfilled and motivated residents and businesses will have a significant impact on the visitor economy, with now the time to begin further promotion of the North Essex opportunity.

Opportunities

Opportunities to build on central Government funding, secured as part of the levelling up agenda, is an important way to deliver prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex in pursuit of further economic growth. The excellent work of North Essex's authorities has resulted in successful bids for various levelling up funding pots, and there is a real opportunity for the region to build on this funding to boost economic growth.

Firstly, two of North Essex's authorities – Colchester and Tendring – secured funding through round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund in January 2023. As outlined under the infrastructure strategic priority above, Colchester secured £19.7m of funding to deliver its 'Co-creation: A Contemporary Colchester City Centre' programme and, alongside this, Tendring secured £19.9m for its 'Clacton Civic Quarter' bid. This funding will rejuvenate a key area of Clacton, delivering 28 new affordable homes, a community hub including a new library, an adult community learning space for upskilling residents, and a space for public sector partners including a proposed University of Essex Centre for Coastal Communities³². In addition to Tendring's Levelling Up Fund round 2 success, the authority is also set to benefit from the Levelling Up Partnerships workstream and an additional £6.7m of funding to support regeneration projects around Dovercourt, announced during the 2023 Spring Budget.

This funding success builds on Colchester's £18.2m Towns Deal and the authorities' UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations, with all funding being put towards boosting pride in place and enhancing prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex. The NEEB is keen to work with partners to promote the success of this funding as projects and programmes are delivered, taking the opportunity to make the case for continued central government and wider investor support to enhance communities within the region, boosting pride in place and furthering economic growth.

Alongside the opportunity to build on the successes in securing central Government funding, there is the opportunity to build on the existing initiatives being delivered within the region to enhance community and wellbeing. The region benefits from a strong third sector involvement, with it important to explore how further collaboration with this sector can boost community and wellbeing to drive economic growth. Existing initiatives include:

- **'Community 360: One Colchester'** – A multi-agency group that provides a local strategic framework to target issues affecting local communities within the authority, with the ultimate outcome of encouraging communities to take charge of their own destiny

³² Tendring District Council. Clacton Levelling Up Fund Bid. Source: [Tendring District Council | Clacton Levelling Up Fund Bid \(tendringdc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk)

with an emphasis on community self-help, health and wellbeing; stable homes; safety; prosperity and other outcomes deemed appropriate within the partnership³³.

- **Let's Talk Uttlesford** – This aims to be a safe and trusted online community space where residents can get information and share thoughts and ideas about local issues and initiatives. This includes the Uttlesford Net Zero Hub which provides information on how residents can help support making the authority carbon neutral³⁴.
- **Chelmsford CVS** – An independent support and development organisation set up to champion, support and strengthen local charities, voluntary and community groups. This organisation runs a number of different projects. A particular success story was Chelmsford 100 – a festival which brought together a wide range of individuals and local community groups, asking them to share stories about what living in Chelmsford meant to them³⁵.
- **One Maldon District** – A senior level partnership, working together to ensure a healthier and prosperous Maldon District in relation to place, prosperity, community and safety. One Maldon District seeks to maximise collaboration to ensure there is an abundance of opportunities for enhanced health, wellbeing, community safety and feeling of safety within communities across the district³⁶.

With strong foundations already in place in relation to delivering prosperous and inclusive communities across North Essex, there is ample opportunity to ensure successful existing authority-specific initiatives are scaled up to other parts of the region. The NEEB has an important convening role here and will look to work with partners across the region to achieve this.

Finally, it is worth noting how the success of the region's visitor economy links to prosperous and inclusive communities. With its mix of urban, rural and coastal characteristics, North Essex has foundations to build upon when it comes to its visitor economy, with the sector's further success dependent upon the health, wealth and pride of the residents and local businesses that call North Essex home. For the sector to flourish, residents and businesses need to feel engaged with their local areas, demonstrating a willingness to promote North Essex as a visitor destination. Recent central Government investment secured will help achieve this – boosting pride in place – but there is an important role to play in promoting the region's visitor economy, and the need for more community investment across the region, to strengthen this sector further. There is a strong North Essex opportunity here and collaborative working is critical to strengthening North Essex's visitor economy.

³³ Community 360: Together We Thrive. One Colchester. Source: [One Colchester - Community 360](#)

³⁴ Let's Talk Uttlesford. Source: [Let's talk Uttlesford](#)

³⁵ Chelmsford CVS. Source: [Chelmsford CVS - Inspiring Voluntary Action](#)

³⁶ One Maldon District. Maldon District Council. Source: [One Maldon District | One Maldon District | Maldon District Council](#)

Maldon District Community Container

Exemplifying the work that is ongoing across North Essex to support prosperous and inclusive communities, the Maldon District Community Container is supporting residents in need of help through the creation and running of a storage container stocked with items including food, childcare and household items, cooking equipment, warm packs, supermarket vouchers and other essentials. The container was created following a formal partnership agreed between Maldon District Council, Maldon & District Community and Voluntary Service (CVS), Salvation Army, local Housing Association, Citizen Advice Bureau and other key stakeholders. The Maldon & District CVS ensures items are topped up and use a network of supporting volunteers to manage the container's use. This container has supported many across the authority, including refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine following the devastating recent events within these countries.

Challenges

Despite the opportunities present to enhance North Essex's prosperous and inclusive communities, there are challenges that need to be addressed to achieve this ambition.

Firstly, whilst there are ample examples of existing successful initiatives being delivered within the region to enhance community and wellbeing, scaling these up to become North Essex-wide initiatives can often be challenging and lead to gaps in provision. To ensure that community enhancements are best driving economic growth in the region, it will be important to identify what can prevent the scale up of initiatives, with the NEEB playing an important role in overcoming those challenges.

Additionally, as raised when discussing skilled residents, confidence and optimism in the job market is lacking across the region. North Essex faces issues around supporting inclusive employment, including providing mental health support for both employees and employers. These are significant barriers facing the region and raising morale through community engagement will have to be addressed in order to achieve inclusive economic growth within North Essex's communities.

Finally, the region faces particular challenges when promoting its visitor economy, impacting the extent to which this sector is contributing to North Essex's economic growth. Specifically, there is much regional competition within the East of England when it comes to the visitor economy, with Suffolk and Norfolk popular destinations for many choosing to holiday within England. Despite these regions' popularity, their offerings align to North Essex's urban, rural and coastal characteristics, with there opportunities for North Essex to rival Norfolk and Suffolk as a holiday destination. Alongside further investment to support the region's visitor economy, there is a need to promote North Essex's positive attributes; improve authority-to-authority transport links; and advertise holiday options all year round to boost the region's visitor economy. Once again, there is an important role for the NEEB to play here, ensuring these challenges are addressed when promoting the North Essex opportunity.



LORD ASH

The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of district and county councils offering fully funded business support and skills programme to support economic growth across North Essex. The partnership consists of Maldon, Tendring, Braintree, Uttlesford District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, and Essex County Council. Find out more at www.neeb.org.uk Socials @neebgrowth

Henham Strategy is a public policy and economic development consultancy with a focus on local growth, trade and investment and higher education. We aim to connect local, regional and international actors to stimulate economic growth across the UK.