Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

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STEVENAGE CONNECTION

AREA ACTION PLAN

ISSUES + OPTIONS REPORT

DRAFT

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CONTENTS

01 INTRODUCTION

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Stevenage's town centre is undergoing a process of renewal and regeneration. As part of this, the area around the station bounded by the railway tracks and Lytton Way has been identified as a key site for new development and change. This key gateway for the town has the potential for significant transformation, based on its well-connected position only 20 minutes from Kings' Cross. Such development could form a key part of the regeneration of the town centre.

This report is the first stage in the process of producing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the station area. It outlines the key issues that affect the area identified as site TC4 in the Local Plan. It then presents a series of potential options that will form the basis for targeted consultation with stakeholders.

What is an AAP?

An Area Action Plan (AAP) is an optional development plan document which provides specific planning policy and guidance for a particular location or area of significant change. AAPs must be in general conformity with the Local Plan and the NPPF. The key stages of an AAP are summarised below:

- Publication of Issues and Options, which seek the views of stakeholders on Issues and Options for the future development of the area.
- Publication of Preferred Options, to set out the Council's preferred way forward for the area.
- Following consideration of responses to this consultation, the Submission Document will be prepared. This will be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- The fourth stage is the independent Examination of the submitted document. The purpose of this is to consider the soundness of the AAP and representations. A Planning Inspector will be appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the examination.
- The Planning Inspector will produce a binding report that sets out the final version of the AAP. This will then be adopted by the Council and incorporated in the Local Development Framework.

Stages 1 to 3 will each be subject to a 6-week public consultation (in compliance with SBC's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI; 2018) which sets out statutory consultation requirements).

Why create an Area Action Plan (AAP)?

After reviewing Stevenage's Local Plan during the Hold Direction, MHCLG asked Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Stevenage Station Gateway Area (identified in the Local Plan as Site TC4). This is a limited area within the wider Stevenage Central area.

The AAP can create new policy over and above the Local Plan and will require its own Sustainable Environmental Assessment at the Issues and Options Stage. Other mechanisms are available to provide appropriate planning and design guidance.

Figure 1: Stevenage town centre from the air

02 BACKGROUND

02 BACKGROUND

The town centre of Stevenage ('Stevenage Central') is undergoing an extensive process of regeneration, renewal and new development. This ambitious programme builds on Stevenage's heritage as a New Town and its success in attracting people and businesses. Only 20 minutes from London's Kings' Cross, it is exceptionally well-connected and offers similar potential for commercial and residential growth as other locations such as Reading, Croydon and Milton Keynes. The station area is thus crucial for the success of this plan. This section sets out the background studies, policies and activities that form the basis for intervention.

Stevenage Central Regeneration Framework

Published in 2016, the Stevenage Central Regeneration Framework forms the governing masterplan for the town centre, outlining the key objectives, opportunities and vision for regeneration. The core recommendations within the report formed the parameters and basis for the Rail Station Vision study (2017) and underlies the masterplan for the area known as 'SG1'. The Framework has informed the policies in the recently-adopted Local Plan.

Figure 2: Stevenage Central Regeneration Framework masterplan

Fitting within the Local Plan

Stevenage Borough Local Plan policy TC4 ("Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area") states:

Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

a. An extended and regenerated train station;
b. New bus station;
c. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
d. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
e. New Use Class B1 office premises;
f. A new Use Class C1 hotel; and
g. New Use Class A1 and Use Class A3 restaurant and cafe uses.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

i. Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;
ii. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station
iii. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central
iv. A significantly regenerated and enlarged dual-frontage train station of high quality, with associated facilities
v. New public squares on the eastern and western frontages of the train station
vi. High quality office buildings within a short walking distance of the train station
vii. At least one multi-storey car park and cycle parking plus drop-off space
viii. Establishment of an attractive east - west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line
ix. High quality landmark gateway environment to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors

Within this policy context, there are a range of high-level policy objectives which align with the Local Plan and national policy direction for the AAP to respond to. These include:

- Sustainable travel considered throughout
- Green infrastructure in the public realm
- Climate change consideration in all development decisions
- Design of the highest architectural standards

The options proposed for the area included within the AAP will be strongly influenced by the masterplan for the SG1 development which lies to the east and within the town centre. Connections to this development and connections through into the town square and central area will form the emerging physical context within which the AAP sits.

Other Policy Documents

Future Town, Future Transport (2019) is SBC's transport plan responding to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)'s Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). This brings forward modal shift and sustainable transport measures across the county.

The document contains a number of policy actions for the 'Stevenage Gateway' area (approximately concurrent with the AAP area). These are split across short term and medium term plans, and the AAP must respond to them.

Short term action plan – immediate actions:

- Relocation of the bus station to be adjacent to the railway station
- A cycling and walking infrastructure plan
- A cycle hire scheme with docking hubs at the railway station and across the town centre
- Rules to allow e-scooters to use cycleways
- Engagement with Network Rail over capacity and access requirements
- Short-term action plan – Part 2 (2021-5):
- Improvements to the station environment
- Intermodal interchange at the station including bike hire, a cycle hub with covered parking and maintenance facilities
- Demand management for car parking
- Medium-term action plan (beyond 2025):
- Underpass environment improvements
- Bus priority measures on key streets
- Developing proposals for commercial uses in the gateway area.

03 SETTING THE SCENE

03 SETTING THE CONTEXT

The Heart of the Town Centre?

The area around Stevenage railway station is a key location in the centre of the town. It forms the western edge of the traditional town centre 'box' as imagined by the New Town masterplan, and is the first place that many visitors and commuters see.

As Stevenage expands and regenerates in the future, the town centre will expand. The Stevenage Central Regeneration Framework envisages an expansion of the 'box' to encompass land west of the railway, extending towards the Airbus site and taking in intensification of the Leisure Park across the railway tracks. As a result, the station area will move to being at the heart of the town centre, a critical movement node east-west, and one of the best-connected places in the town.

The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4) a proposal for a radically improved new Stevenage railway station, with National Rail having plans for a 5th platform, as part of a broader central area regeneration scheme. The Local Plan Inspector's Report suggested that the railway station be extended as well as regenerated.
From wide engagement with businesses and developers there is an opportunity to significantly enhance this part of the town centre and to enhance east-west connectivity.

The area is thus a key strategic brownfield site opportunity, linking east – west movement. It is a key arrival point for business and visitors, and sits at the heart of the sustainable travel network. Effective use of the land is thus essential to create new employment capacity and jobs, as well as ensure it becomes an attractive and vibrant place in its own right, welcoming people to Stevenage.

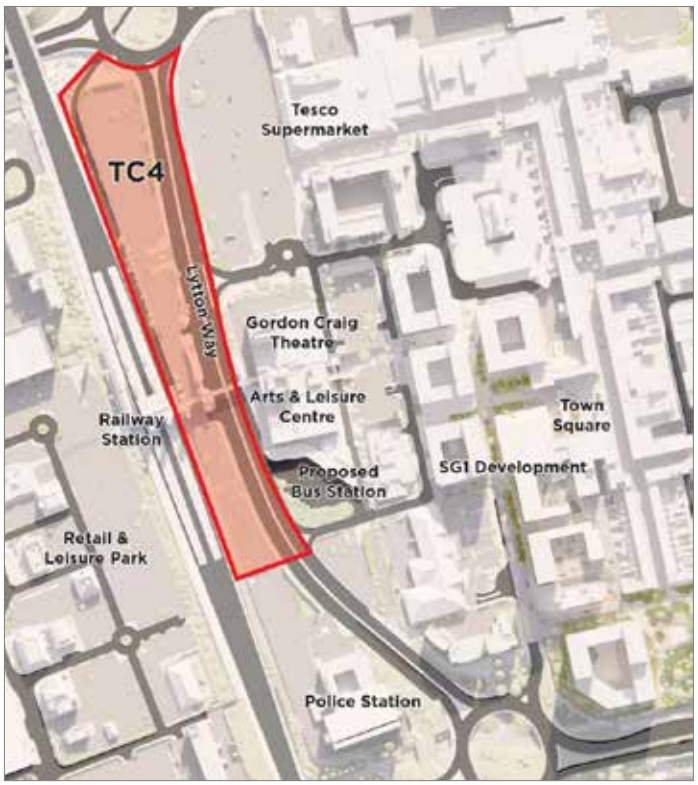


Figure 3: Site plan showing TC4 area and selected nearby locations

The Site

The selected Stevenage Station Gateway AAP area is tightly defined. It abuts the railway land/tracks and includes the dual carriageway of Lytton Way. The ambitious regeneration plans for Stevenage Central anticipated that Lytton Way would largely be redeveloped as part of a major reorganisation of the town's distributor road network.

Most of the site is currently occupied by surface level car parks which largely serve commuters using Stevenage Station.
The constrained nature of the site limits both the volume of building which can be accommodated, the range of uses and how the buildings are organised on site.

The site, designated as TC4 in the Local Plan, is approximately 440m from north to south, and varies between 100m wide at the northern end, to 55m at the station entrance. The total site area is about 3ha. The site is oriented roughly north-south, and is situated to the west of the main part of Stevenage town centre.

Figure 4: Recent station area transformation precedents - clockwise from top left: Oxford, Reading, Sheffield, Slough, Utrecht (Netherlands), Wakefield Westgate

The Opportunity *What can a modern station and station area be?*

Many stations have historically been located at the edge of historic town centres – they were built at the urban edge in the 19th Century. On the far side of the tracks, industrial uses that needed good access to the rail network were often built, or there was marginal land around flood plains. This pattern was repeated in many of the New Towns built post-war, such as in Stevenage. This approach worked when most people lived and worked in the same town, using the station occasionally. In the modern era, intercity connectivity is essential to creating a vibrant, connected, knowledge-based economy such as that seen in Stevenage. Stations are now hubs of development, with pressures to create housing, office space, retail and other commercial space. Without a comprehensive masterplan, the fundamentals of the rail station – that of an accessible transport interchange – can be compromised.

Stations must:

- Be the centre of movement: efficient multi-modal interchanges between all modes of transport, with sustainable modes prioritised;
- Support inclusive growth: responding to the particular needs of their location – for example needs for affordable housing, better commercial space, or regeneration schemes;
- Be at the heart of healthy communities: by making it easy for people to choose active modes of travel at the core of a healthy network, and creating spaces that include nature and prioritise physical and mental health.

Stations are often severing points in the urban fabric – an edge. By turning the station into a public place with a wide and accessible pedestrian bridge, it becomes a link or node to focus around. As the gateway to a place, it forms an essential first impression for visitors, and serves as a reminder to regular users that their town is an attractive, thriving and people-focused place every time they use it.

In the context of Stevenage, the area around the station is a key location for economic competitiveness. Locations a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, such as Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies. Only 20 minutes from the major Kings Cross development and the business area around Farringdon (where Thameslink and Crossrail will interchange), the opportunity to establish a significant business environment adjacent to the station is considerable.

Although the development opportunity is clear, the route towards it requires the creation of a more people-friendly place than currently exists. Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area, and contribute widely across the town.

The Policy & Political Context

Rail transport in the UK has seen enormous growth in recent decades, driven by a combination of increases in commuting due to house price rises, concentrations of jobs in hubs like the City of London, leisure travel and a demand for more sustainable modes of travel. The current COVID-19 pandemic is creating uncertainty about future patterns of rail travel (see below), it remains clear that demand for rapid, sustainable rail travel will be a feature of our medium and long-term mobility future.

Looking to the future, the Transport Secretary has laid out further plans to transform the country's transport infrastructure to help the country 'build out' of COVID-19, supporting the nation's economy, and delivering on the government's key agenda of levelling up the country.

The Government has recently favoured development around stations, in particular for disabled passengers and improving access where possible. The intention is for funding to be made available at a large number of train stations around the UK to make them more accessible. Initiatives will include incorporating accessible toilets and customer information screens, as well as new lifts. This forms a key element of levelling up access for disabled people to transport and opening up opportunities for all.

A range of recent publications set out government policy and best practice thinking which touch upon the themes and objectives to be developed within Stevenage station area.

Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge is a report from the DfT which sets out that in the future active and public transport will be the first choice of transport for most journeys. This will form the basis of the forthcoming transport strategy from the DfT. This is an ambitious and unprecedented document, and gives high-level support for Stevenage's transport strategy and sustainable mobility interventions around the railway station.

Tomorrow's Living Station, a report for Network Rail, envisages railways stations as more than just access points to the rail network, but thriving multi-modal interchanges and mixed-use places, integrated into their communities and responding to their needs.

Our Principles of Good Design by Network Rail, and the Design Council's Think Station report outline core design principles for stations as modern multi-modal travel hubs. Responsiveness to local needs, local context and heritage are important, but good access and excellent mobility functionality are also emphasised.

Building Better, Building Beautiful is a recent report to MHCLG which will inform the upcoming Planning White Paper and revisions to the National Design Guide. It recommends good design and placemaking principles. Although primarily focused on residential developments, it is clear that mixed-use places with a focus on regeneration are essential to creating better towns and cities, based on a 'triangle' of housing, nature and infrastructure. Brownfield sites should be prioritised, and nature given a place in urban areas.

The High Street Report was the underpinnings of the High Street Task Force, within MHCLG. The report recommended a number of approaches to revitalising Britain's town centres for future resilience. These include a better balance of office, retail and residential space, increased town centre residential populations, and more creative provision of facilities in town centres.

MHCLG has supported a range of station-led development opportunities, such as those at York, Taunton and Swindon. The National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016-2021 highlights that the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) will work with local authorities and Network Rail to bring forward land around stations for housing, commercial development and regeneration.

Recent court decisions on the climate change impact of infrastructure decisions (such as at Heathrow, and a pending case on the government's road expansion scheme), provide a concrete basis for prioritising sustainable transport over cars. Stevenage Borough Council has declared a climate emergency and vowed to reduce carbon emissions, and a recent study found that Stevenage is one of the worst 10 cities in the UK for air pollution, relative to its size and population.

The Impact of COVID-19

This report has been prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which has seen significant disruption to the economy and people's lifestyles. It is clear that some of this disruption will drive lasting change in how we use and view the urban areas in which we live. Although it is too early to predict these lasting changes comprehensively, some principles of urban design have come to the fore in recent weeks and months.

In the future it is clear that new development must consider the importance of:

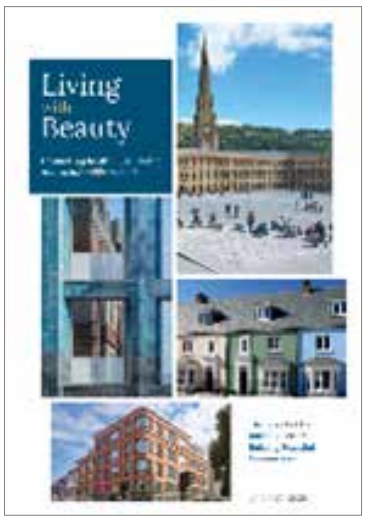
- Local services, shops, healthcare provision and social care
- Provision of space for pedestrians for walking, queueing and socialising
- Comprehensive active travel provision to enable us to get around safely
- Access to networks of open space and integration of nature into streets
- A focus on improving air quality
- Safe spaces for socialising, play and recreation
- Potential demand for larger offices to accommodate distanced desks
- Potential shift to more collaborative spaces including meeting rooms, break out spaces and more reliance on home working
- 'Local working' hubs with good digital connectivity

An important consideration for Stevenage relates to the nature of some of the town's high-tech bioscience and engineering industries. This means that a large number of workers still need to travel to Stevenage to access, for example, laboratory and workshop spaces.

Much media coverage has focused on short-term interventions that local authorities are making to ensure streets are safe for pedestrians and cyclists. These are vital safety measures, but consideration should be given to temporary measures that have other benefits and can be made improved and made permanent in the future. Stevenage already has cycling and walking infrastructure in place which can be positively utilised. In the context of Stevenage's station are, such measures include priority for active travel and improving conflict point safety, as well as increasing space allocated to pedestrians and people versus that allocated to private vehicles.

The impact of COVID-19 on rail travel is uncertain. It seems likely that we will see less peak-time travel in the future, reducing the pressure on rush-hour services as more people work from home or stagger their working hours. Rail demand is likely to return to comparable levels as the economy and situation return to normal in the medium to long term, but potentially spread throughout the day.

Reports (left to right): Decarbonising Transport; Tomorrow's Living Station; Our Principles of Good Design; Building Better, Building Beautiful; The High Street Report



04 ISSUES & CHALLENGES

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Our analysis has divided the issues within the TC4 station area boundary into three categories; experiential issues, functional issues and development issues. Although there is overlap between them, this forms a useful framework for understanding the main challenges to be addressed.

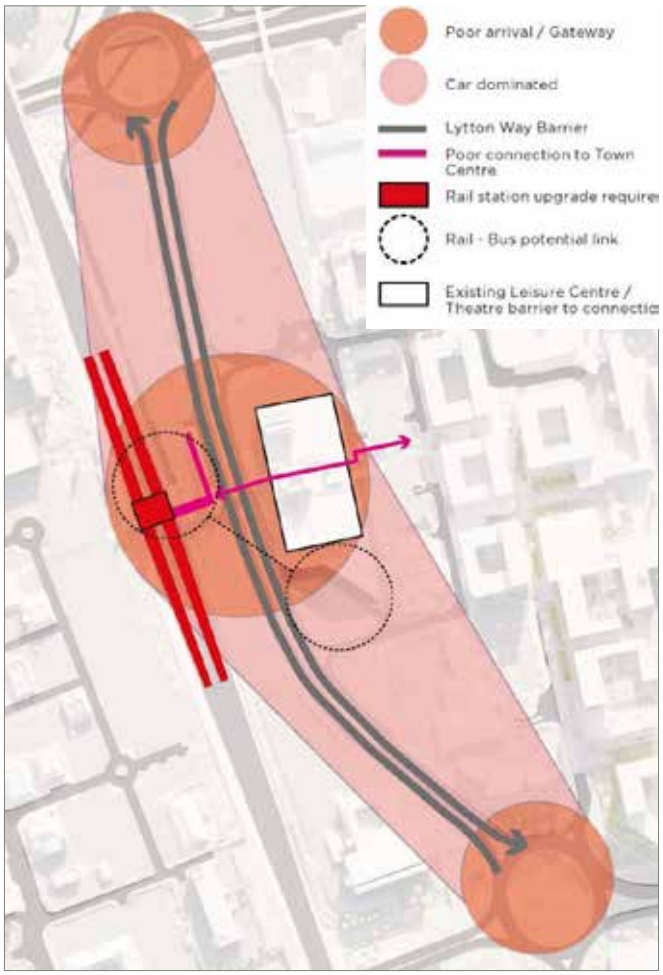


Figure 5: Issues and challenges in the station area

The Experience

The experience of arrival forms an important first impression of a place. Areas around railway stations have to work especially hard, due to their need to integrate considerable transport infrastructure and be highly functional places for a variety of user groups. However, this does not require them to be unattractive, and a great many station environs are beautiful, bustling and interesting places that give the visitor and local alike a representative impression of the town they have just arrived at.

Project for Public Spaces, a respected US non-profit organisation, has published research on 'what makes a great place'? The four key themes work together to create places and spaces that people enjoy and want to go back to. Fulfilling these themes will be an essential part of creating a better station area experience in Stevenage, unlocking development opportunities, better functionality, and a new part of the town centre.

Lytton Way – an 'Urban Motorway'

The overriding driver for this poor experience is the presence of Lytton Way, a wide dual carriageway mostly segregated from pedestrians that takes up a great deal of land. It does not function as an urban street that could host other uses and development along it to create an attractive and enjoyable place.

The downgrading and potential removal of Lytton Way for through traffic represents a major principle of the Stevenage Central Framework. A key focus of the Area Action Plan must be implementation strategies for a reduction in the scale of, and a change in character of Lytton Way to create a high quality, functional and successful environment.

The northern and southern entrances to the station area along Lytton Way are similarly poor, with large roundabouts and highway infrastructure creating an environment hostile to pedestrians. The cycling underpasses that run underneath the roundabouts are wide but lack overlooking and could be perceived as unsafe.

The area around Stevenage station is compromised by:

- Poor access and linkages for pedestrians and over-dominant car infrastructure
- Few uses and activities beyond the station and associated car parking
- Unattractive public realm and landscaping, giving little comfort and a poor image
- No opportunity for street life, connections between people or other sociability

This adds up to a poor arrival experience for anyone visiting Stevenage, a dis-inviting front door for the town and it results in a 'non-place'.

Figure 6: The attributes, intangibles and measurements for a great place (Project for Public Spaces)

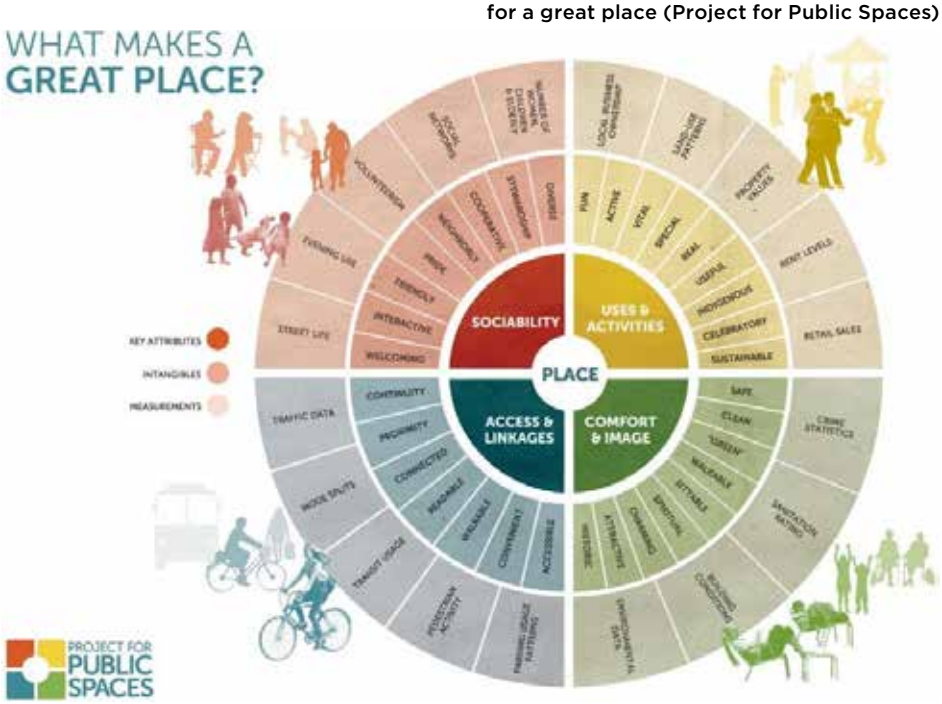


Figure 7: View of Lytton Way from south

Figure 8: View of Lytton Way from north

Landscaping & Public Realm Quality

The AAP area suffers from a public realm that is car-dominated and uses predominantly tarmac and other highway surfacing materials. What landscaping is present is limited to buffer strips of grass, and towards the northern and southern ends of the area, some areas with trees. Street trees are present within the car parks but are surrounded by tarmac surfacing. As a result the public realm is a poor environment for anyone not in a car.

Monofunctional and Lacking Uses

At present the station area is a place of transit and only hosts the railway station as a use. Other than crossing the bridge to the retail park (which is amply provided with car parking), there is little other reason to be in the area other than the station. This results in little human activity on the streets, compounding safety issues, and a lack of interest and attraction.

The Arts & Leisure Centre complex presents a blank edge towards the station and does not contribute street activity towards the street. Uses adjacent to the northern and southern ends such as the supermarket and the police station are surrounded by surface car parking.

Functional Issues

Compounding the experiential issues associated with the station environment are a range of functional issues, where the station area could work better for a wide variety of users.

At its heart, a station and its immediate area must function as a transport interchange and mobility hub, smoothly and safely allowing users of all modes of transport to arrive, leave, interchange between modes and find their onward connections. The current station area could perform significantly better than it currently does.

Poor connectivity to the town centre

At present there are three legible pedestrian connections between the AAP area and the town centre – the overbridge through the Arts & Leisure Centre, Danesgate and Swinsgate. The latter two are surface streets and cannot be reached from the station itself without crossing Lytton Way, which is not possible due to a lack of pedestrian crossings and a barrier in the centre of the dual carriageway. As a result the only real route is the bridge, which runs directly through the station. Although this is a direct route, it then drops into a surface car park which provides a poor entrance to the town. Other issues include barriers for cyclists from the town centre to the train station and the station lift is not DDA compliant, is badly maintained and causes issues for disabled people. The new Bus Interchange does seek to create an at-level crossing to help break the ring road and therefore a good opportunity. A clearer, active and attractive route into the town square from the station is something that should be enabled by the AAP.

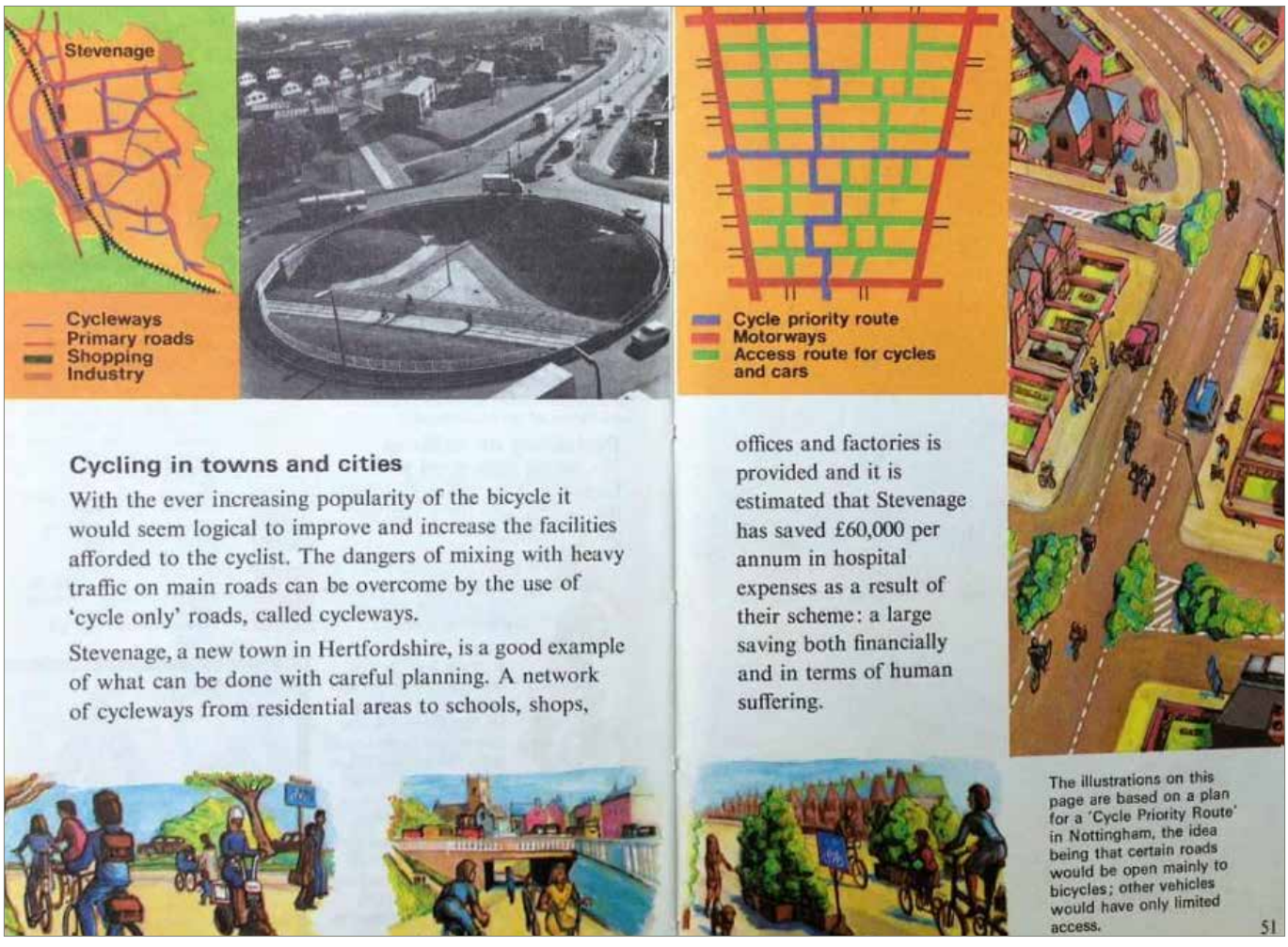


Figure 9: Ladybird book about cycling lauding Stevenage's planning

A barrier to east-west movement

The station area is currently configured as an 'edge' to the town centre, with a single constrained pedestrian connection through the rail station towards the Leisure Park to the west. This constrained connection discourages movement across the railway tracks. Coupled with the poor quality of north-south pedestrian movement and barriers for cyclists through the AAP area, the land is poorly used due to this edge placement.

To realise the aims of the Central Regeneration Framework with the station area as a central node and place within the expanded town centre, a reconfiguration of movement through the area is required. Better connections east-to-west, with the intention of providing a clear pedestrian link all the way from the current town centre to Gunnells Wood Road, require a change to land use and road space allocation outside the station.

Little support for active modes

The station is connected to Stevenage's extensive segregated cycle path network, and hosts 194 bike parking spaces, which are well used. There is, however, limited space to expand the cycle provision due to site constraints. The Stevenage Cycle Strategy Action Plan calls for additional spaces at the station. Although there is CCTV, bicycle theft remains an issue, the current facilities are only partially covered, and are constricted in space, conflicting with pedestrian movements on pavements. To support Stevenage's ambitious cycle strategy, and build on the New Town legacy of Stevenage as a town built for the bicycle, modern, safe and secure cycle facilities must be provided so that station users can easily interchange between local cycle mobility and regional rail mobility.

Walking to and from the station is also more difficult than it needs to be. Footpaths are narrow, and the main route from the town centre runs across a narrow bridge through the Arts & Leisure Centre complex and above Lytton Way. Although this bridge runs down a ramp by the time it arrives in the town square, this does restrict accessibility and requires all users of the station area to climb a level.

It is vital to improve the station-area environment for active travel modes. As shown in Figure 10, accessibility analysis indicates that the majority of Stevenage is within a 15-minute cycling catchment of the station (around 85-90,000 people), and this catchment is increased with the use of electric bicycles. A significant fraction, approximately 45-50,000 people, are within 10 minutes bike ride.

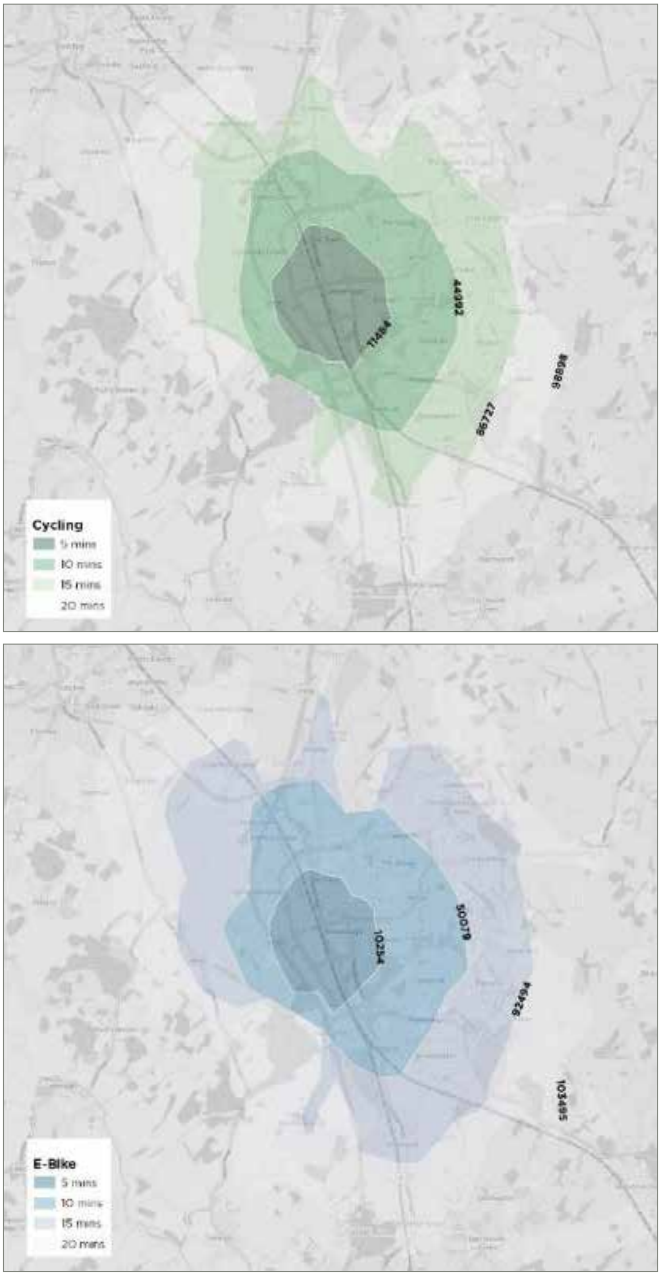


Figure 10: Accessibility isochrones with population enclosed figures (2011) for cycling and e-bike modes

A station in need of an upgrade

Stevenage rail station is one of the three busiest stations in Hertfordshire (along with St Albans and Watford) and is a major stop on the East Coast Main Line. Built in the 1970s, the station buildings are no longer able to adequately cope with the level of passenger traffic through them. With the building of a new terminating platform, and the potential long-term for additional public through traffic using the station bridge to access development on the western side of the tracks, a new station building is necessary.

In 2017 Arup completed a study on different options for a new railway station, based on the parameters set in the Stevenage Central Framework. This reinforced the framework's core principles and the study forms the basis of an understanding for how a new station might interface with the surrounding area. The Arup study found that a new station built on an overbridge to the south of the existing station buildings would be the strongest option. This new axis would align with the Mace SG1 masterplan route into the town centre and the entrance to the new bus station.

Policy TC4 of the Stevenage Local Plan states that within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, planning permission will be granted for an extended and regenerated train station. It is uncertain when a new station would be forthcoming, so it will be necessary for the AAP to include phasing options, which provide future-proofing for accommodating the existing station and the new station, as well as responding to and setting key parameters for a new station building.

Constricted space – except for cars

The area in front of the station is extremely constricted at ground level for any user other than vehicles. There is little pedestrian space for movement along Lytton Way, particularly outside the station where pavements become cramped and filled with street furniture. Pavements have been reallocated as parking space for bicycles, scooters and motorbikes, and also function as waiting areas for cramped bus stops.

Much pedestrian movement occurs on the first floor level, leaving ground level unoccupied except for essential use.

Contrasting this cramped environment for many users is the extensive space given over to vehicles, in carriageway space, slip lanes and car parking. This creates a very large and over-scaled space with underused land.

Figure 11: View of 'The Square' from Arup's Rail Station Vision Study

Figure 12: Public realm colonised by cramped motorbike parking

Figure 13: Walking, bike parking, bus stop and other street furniture in a small space

Safety Issues

A range of safety issues present themselves within the station area. Stations are used day and night, and the area surrounding them must perform the basic function of providing safety and reassurance at all hours. Poor overlooking and passive surveillance of the ground level leads to a perception of a lack of safety, particularly when dark. Cycle paths are also isolated and poorly overlooked. A lack of uses fronting the space other than the rail station, where dwell times are typically low as a place of transit, means there are generally few people about.

The dominance of road infrastructure, with high traffic speeds, no crossing points and barrier fencing down the central reservation creates road safety issues where pedestrians and cyclists are unable to safely navigate the environment.

Accessibility Issues

A single, non-Equalities Act-compliant lift is the only alternative to the stairs to get to concourse level from Lytton Way.

Development Issues

The station area should also be a key location for a range of land uses, particularly commercial space and high density residential buildings, building on the excellent sustainable mobility options. At present, however, the land around the station is used primarily for surface car parking. The key piece of land between Lytton Way and the railway tracks is too constricted in width to accommodate typical commercial or residential developments, and the street environment is too poor to support an attractive, walkable place within which to site new development.

The area around the station is a key location for economic competitiveness. Locations a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, such as Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies. Only 20 minutes from the major Kings Cross development and the business area around Farringdon (where Thameslink and Crossrail will interchange), the opportunity to establish a significant business environment adjacent to the station is considerable.

As a result, this piece of land is valuable for the town and the wider region, and should be more intensively used than it currently is.

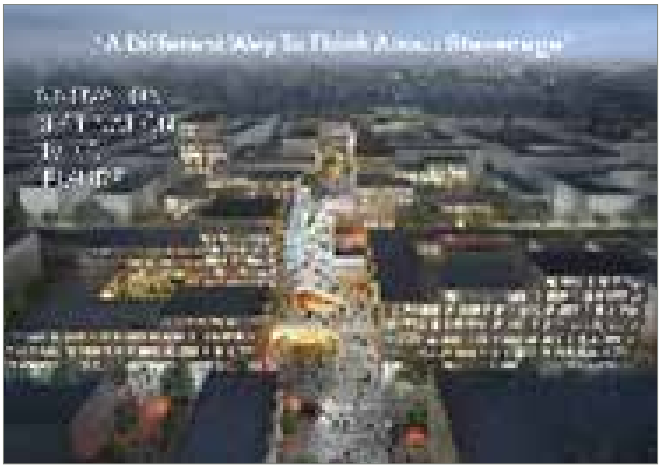
Immediately fronting the station is the existing Arts & Leisure Centre and Gordon Craig Theatre complex, with a high-level walkway running through. It is anticipated that this will remain for the foreseeable future, although the Arts & Leisure Centre part may be moved in the medium-term. As such provision should be made in any options for the area to work well with a fully retained or only half-retained building.

Figure 14: Station Hill development in Reading

Figure 15: Station Quarter, Slough

Figure 16: Ruskin Square, East Croydon

Figure 17: New Santander HQ adjacent to Milton Keynes rail station



Responding to existing work

A significant amount of previous planning and design work has gone on in Stevenage town centre, including the railway station AAP area. The AAP will build upon this work. Much of the previous work undertaken builds in core principles and creates underlying flexibility for future detailed plans to work within.

Stevenage Central Framework (DLA, 2016)

This work established the core principles of movement between the station and town centre, key development sites such as the station, and the principle of removing Lytton Way as a part of the ring road system. It also established the principle of more intensive development to the west of the railway tracks, using the station as a node.

Rail Station Vision (Arup, 2017)

This study was developed by Arup, as Government advisors. It looked at, high-level, urban design options for a new station and how it would interface with the immediate surrounds. All options considered had their merits and there was positive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. As such the parameters established are key to design options within the AAP area. The preferred option in the report is **The Square**, and this is the option worked up in detail. Other options in the report sought to reduce any day to day disruption for commuters and rail operators.

The design work establishes core parameters to respond to:

- Steps to access the bridge, with a lift to provide step-free access
- Stairways approx. 12m wide at top
- Lift accessed through passage next to retail space
- Bridge at +7m from existing ground level
- Space at +3.5m, which provides access into interior courts at first storey level
- Public right of way across bridge, with entrance and ticket line for station on the bridge above the tracks

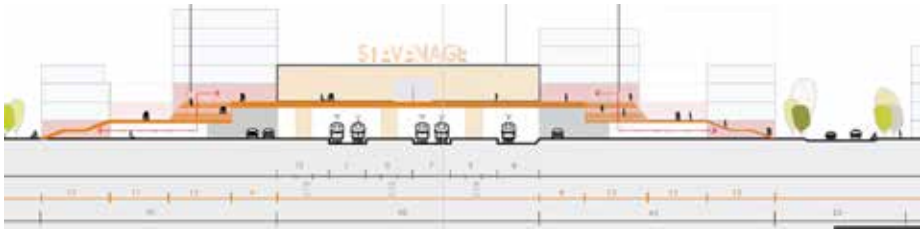


Figure 18: Section of preferred option for new railway station

Although this is a long-term vision of how the station could be configured, in the short and medium-term, the design presents some issues for the AAP to respond to:

- The detailed design presented relies upon the removal of the existing Arts & Leisure Centre complex, to re-route the centreline of Lytton Way across that site. At present this is not considered feasible for SBC, so an alternative configuration must be found
- The taxi and drop-off areas ('kiss and ride') are located on the western side of the station. Although this is a long-term option, the AAP area does not include this land and must include taxi and drop-off movements within its boundaries in order to retain that function
- The steps of the bridge on the eastern side run towards the existing Arts & Leisure Centre and miss the opportunity to align with the routing past the bus station and into town that responds to the Mace SG1 masterplan (see below).

As such the rail station vision provides core principles and parameters to respond to, but is not at present able to form a detailed spatial plan for the centre of the AAP area immediately adjacent to the station. Further detail will be required on configuration of spaces, streets and different mobility modes in the AAP.

The AAP's spatial proposals will reserve a site for a potential new station or enhanced station entrance, following the parameters set out in Arup's work. Reserving a site in planning policy terms ensures that present-day development and proposals do not prejudice future developments to provide a new or enhanced station. Without this approach a considerable and needed improvement for the town could be prevented, and an opportunity lost.

Figure 19: Renders of proposed new station

SG1 Masterplan (Mace, 2018)

The emerging SG1 masterplan (Mace, 2018), proposes the main station-to-town pedestrian route is placed one block to the south of that in the Framework. This aligns with the front of the Arts & Leisure Centre, past the proposed bus station, and then sets up the potential to align with a new railway station building built to the south of the existing station. It will be important to ensure that desire lines are observed between the Mace Boulevard, leading to the Town Square and towards the Station are as direct as possible and maintain visual connection as much as possible.

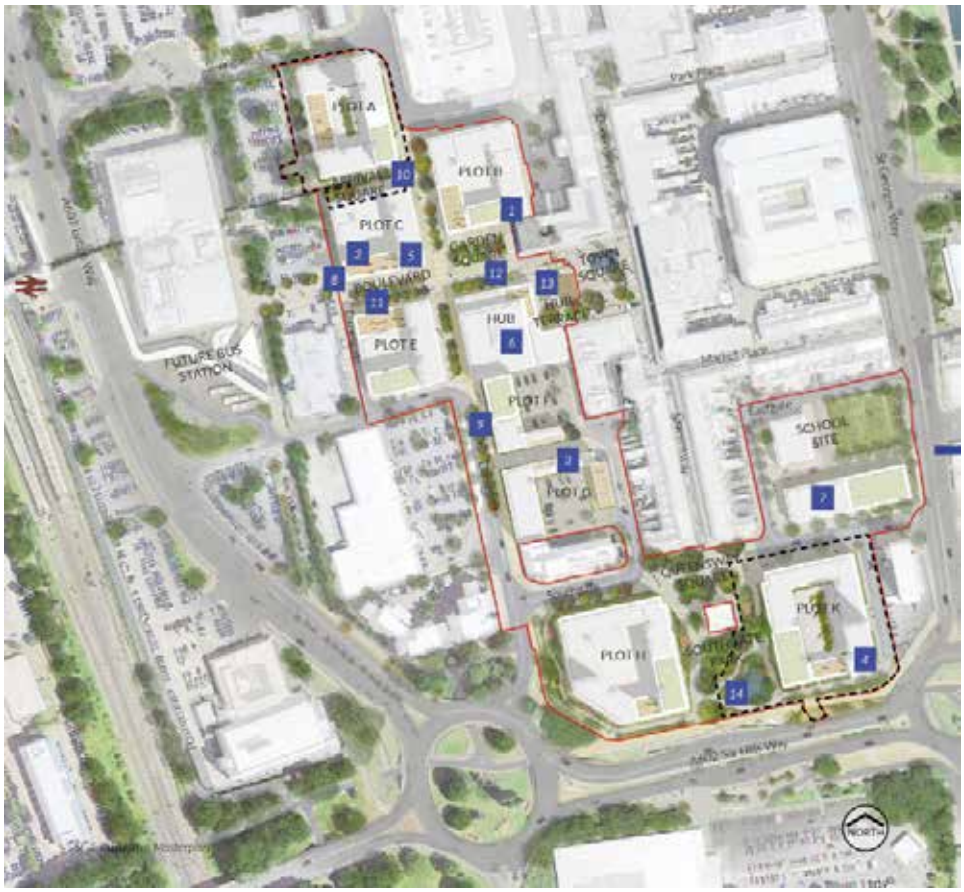


Figure 20: SG1 masterplan from Design & Access Statement (2019)

05 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

05 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

Existing Land Uses

At present the following land uses exist:

- Railway station and associated bridge, access and entrance buildings
- Existing cycleway
- Surface car parking for the station
- Lytton Way highways infrastructure
- Some buffer green space
- Adjacent to the TC4 area is:
- The Gordon Craig Theatre
- Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre
- Stevenage Police Station
- Tesco supermarket
- Stevenage Magistrates' Court

The new bus station (currently under construction) will fall within the AAP area directly to the south of the Arts & Leisure Centre on the existing car park.

Fig x Lytton Way
Proposed Enhancements

New bus station adjacent to Arts & Leisure Centre

Existing Movement

- At present a range of different mobility modes cross the area, as shown in Figure XX.
- Pedestrians: an incomplete network of pedestrian links creates a fragmented environment that is difficult to navigate on foot
- Cyclists: the main cycle path runs north-to-south along the railway line edge and through the underpasses at the northern and southern ends of Lytton Way
- Buses: buses currently run north-to-south along Lytton Way and enter the central bus station along Danesgate. There is a bus stop outside the railway station which is constricted in waiting space and must be accessed via the footbridge. The new bus station will occupy space in front of the Arts & Leisure Centre and it is anticipated in the short term that the existing bus loop along Danesgate will be shortened to not include the old bus station
- Taxis and Drop Off: taxis drop off directly outside the station in a combined taxi and public drop-off area. This is very constricted and lacks much space for waiting taxis. It also encourages public drop-off to block the area due to lack of space.
- Parking: there is extensive surface car parking across the TC4 area and it forms the dominant land use. There are a total of 453 surface public car parking spaces within the boundary, along with additional space in a very constricted car park for station staff directly adjacent to the station.
- Servicing: service accesses to the station and neighbouring land uses come from Lytton Way.
- Although the New Town masterplanning approach promoted separation of traffic modes, there are a number of conflict points between cars and active modes, particularly at the station entrance. There are also issues where cars take priority over pedestrians and force more circuitous routes than necessary. Pedestrian flows are expected to change upon completion of the new bus station.

Fig x Lytton Way
Access & Movement Strategy

Existing Green Infrastructure

The site contains little green infrastructure (GI) at present, except for highway verges and verges within surface car parking. At the northern end, there is some landscaping and grass adjacent to the roundabout on Lytton Way. Within the car parks, there are some trees that break up the parking.
The new bus station (currently under construction) provides some enhancement of GI with trees and grass at the southern edge.

06 EMERGING FRAMEWORK

06 EMERGING FRAMEWORK

Objectives

The baseline analysis presented in previous chapters point towards a series of complementary objectives to address the issues facing the station area. Interventions in the AAP area should deliver:

- **A new gateway and arrival experience:** the station area should create a sense of arrival in a distinctive and vibrant place. It should be welcoming, safe, legible and accessible to all.
- **Enhanced movement & access for all modes:** rationalisation of space currently given over to vehicles will increase space for walking and cycling, making movement and access better and easier for all, with good segregation to ensure safety. Effective transport interchange between sustainable modes should be facilitated by grouping of activities and modes.
- **Green infrastructure integrated throughout:** 'greening the grey', by converting surfaces to permeable green infrastructure and habitats provides relief from dense urban environments, enhances biodiversity, creates more pleasant microclimates, improves air quality and urban drainage, and contributes to attractive public realm and placemaking.
- **New mixed use development to unlock the economic opportunity:** Stevenage's location and connectivity create the perfect conditions for strong economic growth. The station area is the ideal place to locate new development to support this, with sustainable transport connections and under-used land. The AAP will support this with a new mix of uses designed to create a vibrant and successful place.
- **Creating a low-carbon urban village:** mixing new homes, employment, retail and other uses with strong placemaking and exceptional mobility has the potential to deliver on Stevenage's ambitious climate change targets, creating an exemplar development in the heart of the town. It must be flexible to accommodate changing lifestyles, encourage low car ownership rates, and including buildings that are adaptable.
- **Sustainability in mobility, built form and landscaping:** the station area has a significant part to play in creating supporting active travel and other low-carbon travel modes, as well as creating sustainable development opportunities. Development must be future-proofed for new technologies, with resilience and adaptability to new forms of micro-mobility such as e-scooters.
- **Celebrating the heritage of the town:** as one of the original New Towns, with a unique heritage and design, Stevenage's station area must reflect what makes the town special and use it to create a sense of place on arrival and departure.

Key principles

To deliver on these objectives, a set of design principles has been adopted that will be carried through the process of creating the AAP. These are:

- Enhance the station arrival experience to create a people-friendly space
- Improve step-free, disabled and accessible pedestrian links with town centre
- Improve links between rail and bus stations
- Turn Lytton Way into a 'town street'
- Create good access for all travel modes with high quality, attractive cycling facilities, and prioritising sustainable and active modes
- Make ground level the place where pedestrians move
- Consolidate surface car parking to make better use of land and enable development opportunities

- High quality public realm, green infrastructure and creating space and opportunities for landscaping through rationalisation of vehicle space
- Future proof for possible station upgrade, replacement of the Leisure Centre and improved links and development west of the rail station
- Design in flexibility to accommodate changing behaviours and new technology
- Celebrate the heritage of the town in the fabric, layout and design of the station gateway
- Creating a lasting legacy of high quality placemaking
- Putting people first, at the heart of the decision-making process

Options for Lytton Way

At the heart of the issues affecting Stevenage's station area is the design and function of Lytton Way. It severs the station from the town centre, provides a barrier and unpleasant environment for active travel modes and the public realm, uses land inefficiently so as to create unusable development parcels between it and the railway line, and undermine's SBC and HCC's commitment to sustainable transportation.

The Town Centre Regeneration Framework pinpoints the downgrading and potential removal of Lytton Way to through traffic as a key plank of its strategy for good placemaking and regeneration of the town centre. This has been endorsed by the relevant stakeholders and will be carried forward by the AAP as the basis for policy in the area.

To unlock the potential of the AAP area, it is essential first to determine the preferred option for a redesign of Lytton Way. This chapter of the report presents the core enhancements proposed, a range of options for the key central area between Swingate and Danesgate, and then a series of themes that the reconfiguration of Lytton Way will enable.

Core Enhancements

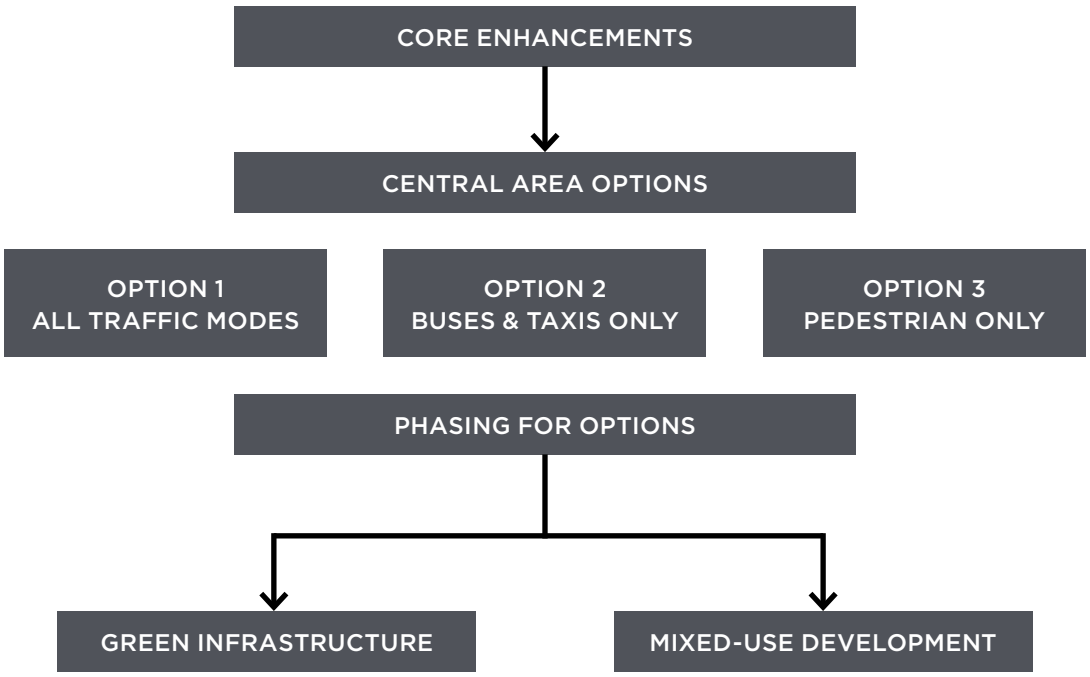
All proposed options for the reconfiguration of Lytton Way have a set of core enhancements, primarily in the northern and southern zones of the AAP area, north of Swingate and south of Danesgate. These apply to all options:

- A reduction in the width of Lytton Way, with the space reallocated to pedestrian or cycling movement, street trees and other landscaped green infrastructure. In these northern and southern areas Lytton Way will remain open to all modes, providing continued access for other parts of the town centre.
- An additional segregated cycleway adjacent to Lytton Way, away from the railway tracks. Making use of the improved street environment along Lytton Way, cycling along this route will become more attractive. Along with built form development along this route, this offers the advantages of creating an overlooked cycling route that will feel considerably safer to users than the current path adjacent to the tracks. It will add movement and vibrancy to the street and create visibility for all modes.
- Improved vehicle access to the police station, making use of the reduction in speeds and change in character of Lytton Way to offer a limited use right-turn access box.
- A large public square that creates a flexible entrance space from the existing station building, future-proofed for a new station or enhanced station entrance further to the south.
- Facilitation of the key East-West pedestrian 'boulevard' route running from west of the railway line through to the existing town centre, crossing at the railway station and the proposed public square in front. The enhancements proposed enable this connection to be made and provide the key spaces through which it will pass through within the AAP area.

- A ‘cycle hub’ located at the southern end of the station square, compatible with existing and potential new station buildings, that contains secure cycle parking, cycle hire schemes, bike maintenance facilities and the potential for a local transport information point to aid multi-modal interchange. Above the cycle hub on the ground floor would be development opportunities.
- Development plots made available by the consolidation of surface car parking into a multi-storey car park.

Sections AA, BB and CC demonstrate the re-allocation of land use and street space from underuse vehicle capacity towards active travel and green infrastructure, improving access for all modes while retaining existing functionality and providing a much improved street environment.

The following headings illustrate the core options available within the central area, defined as that south of Swingate but north of Danesgate.



CORE ENHANCEMENTS

3 options are shown on the following pages for the central zone:

1 - ALL TRAFFIC MODES
2 - BUS & TAXI ACCESS ONLY
3 - PEDESTRIANISED CENTRAL PLAZA

Fig x Core Enhancements
Proposed Enhancements

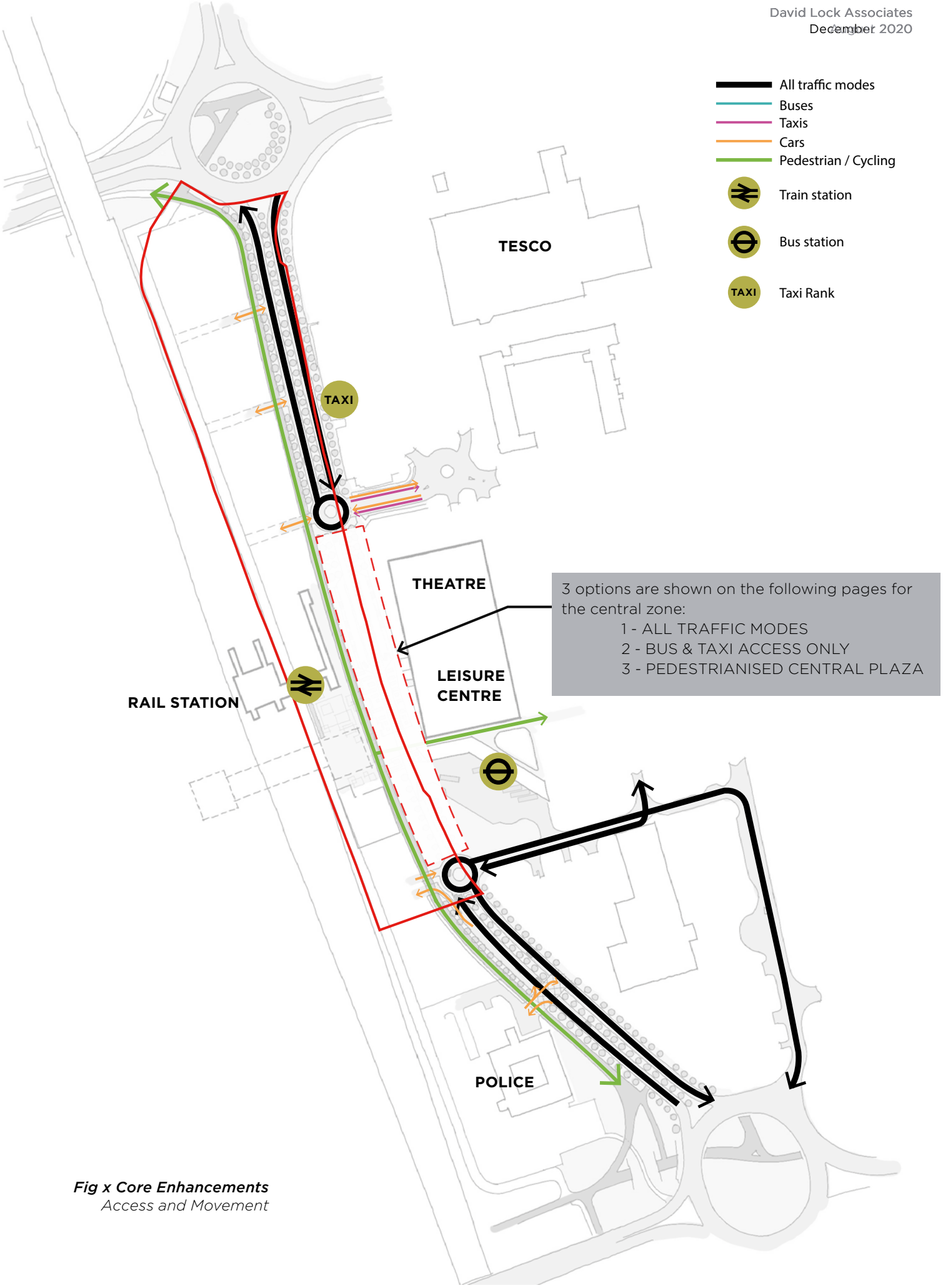


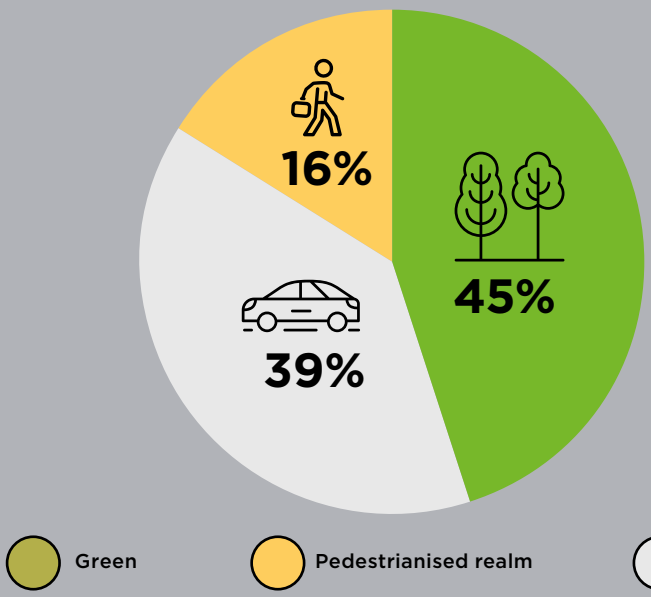
Fig x Core Enhancements
Access and Movement

SECTION AA

Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

01 Proposed overall percentage



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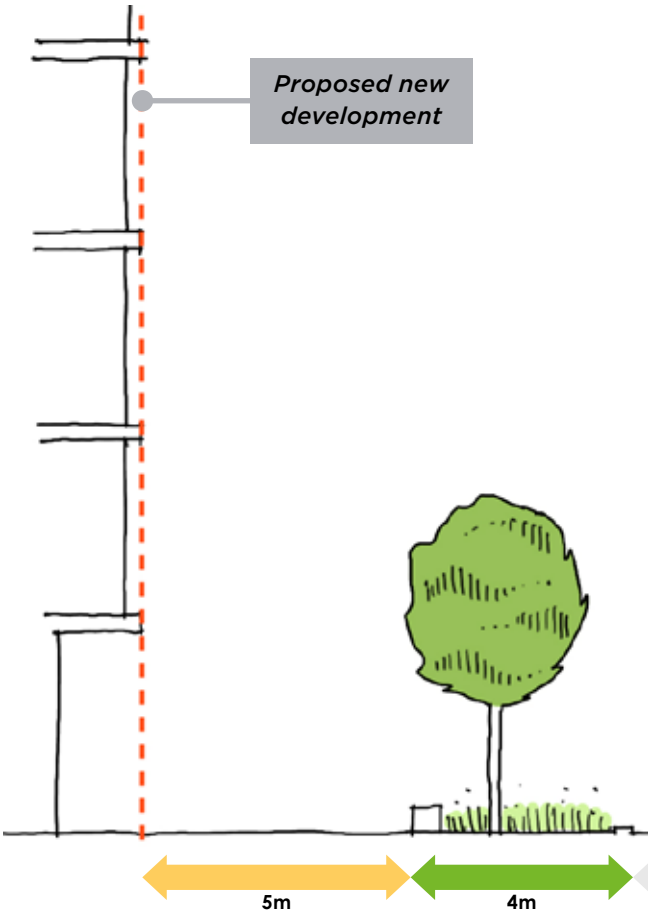
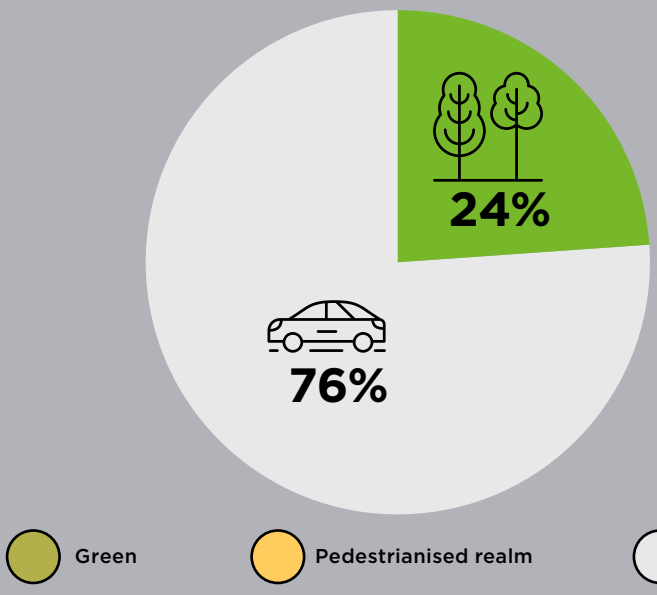
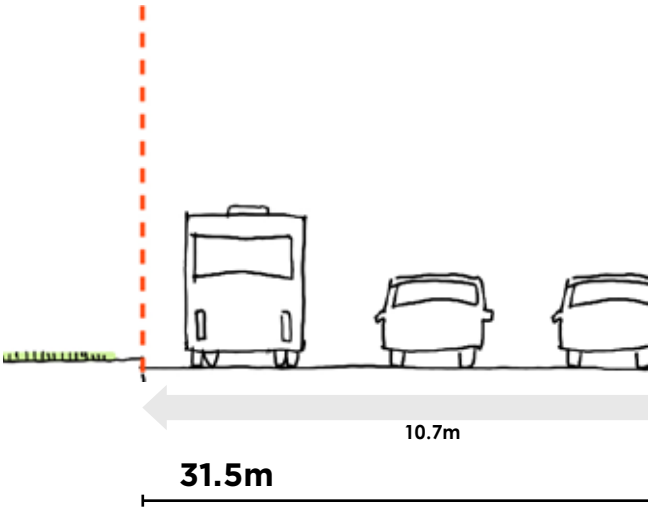
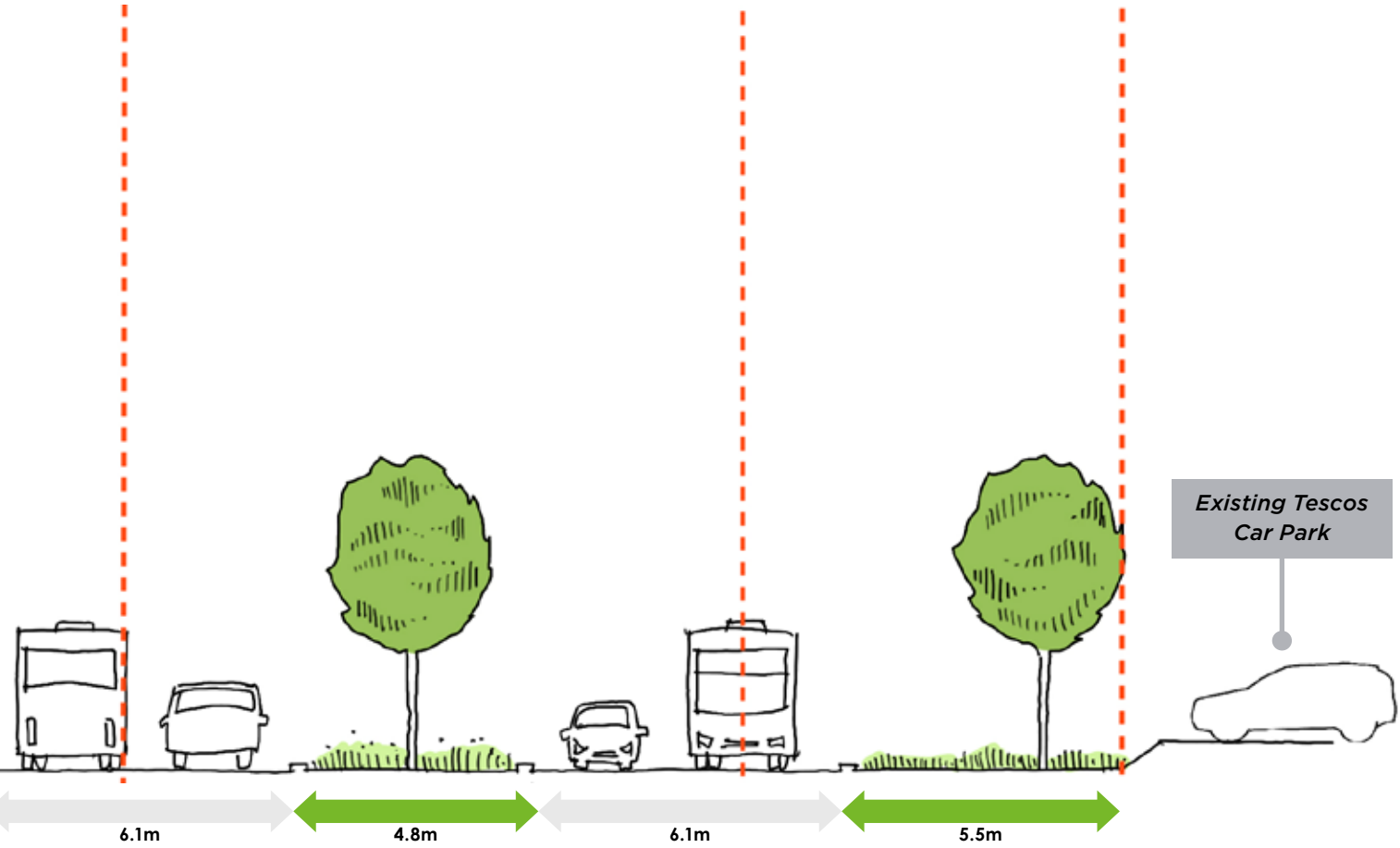


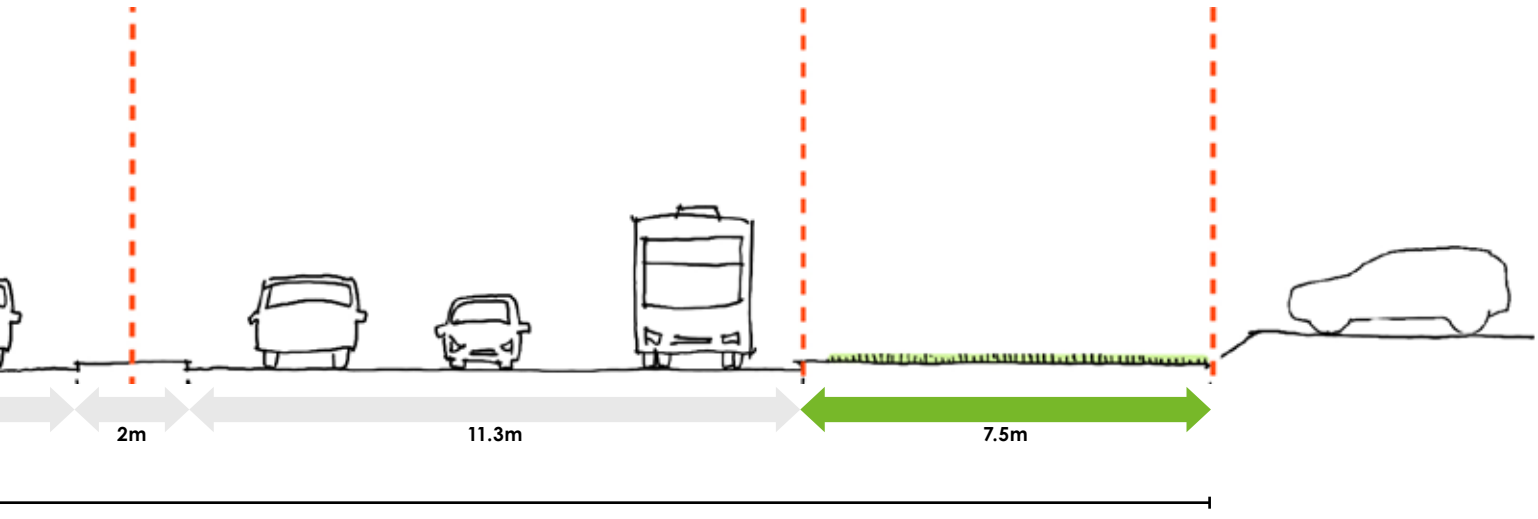
02 Existing overall percentage



02 EXISTING




Existing Tescos Car Park
6.1m
4.8m
6.1m
5.5m

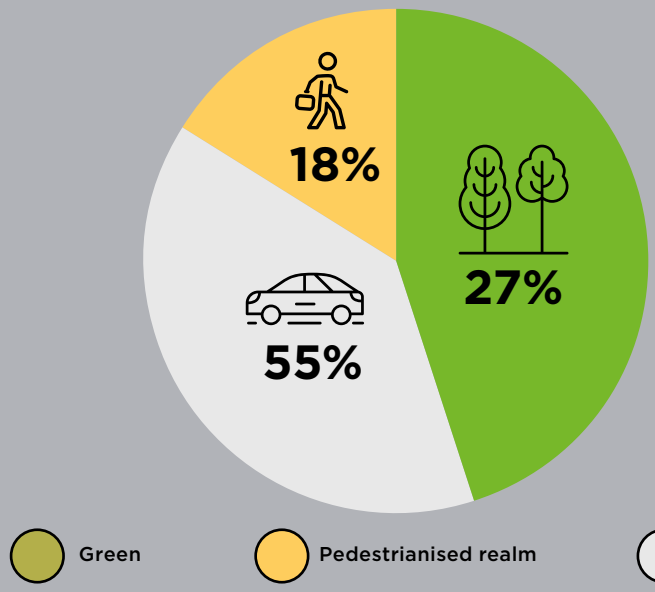

2m
11.3m
7.5m

SECTION BB

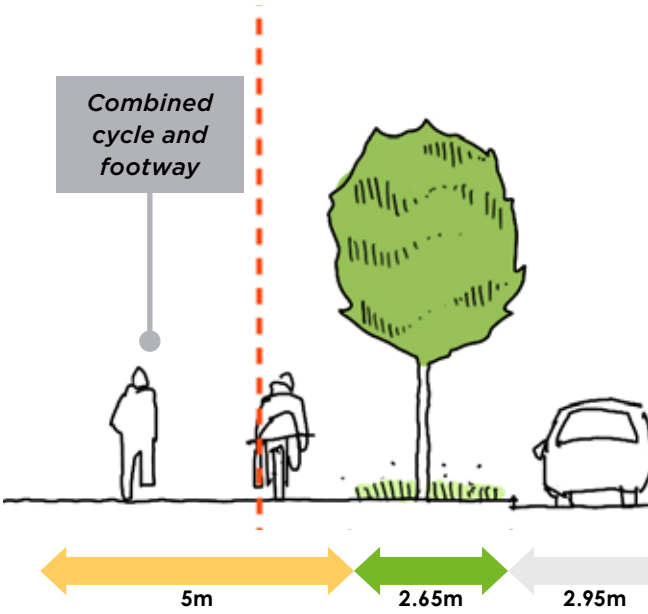
Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

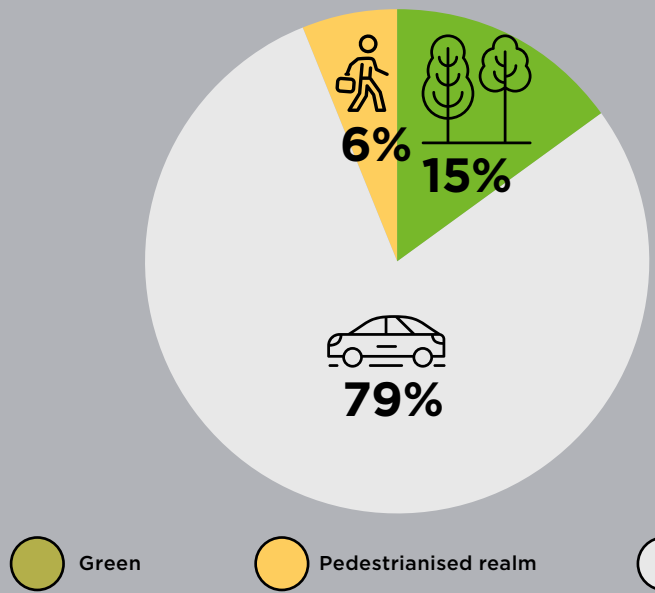
01 Proposed overall percentage



01 PROPOSED



02 Existing overall percentage



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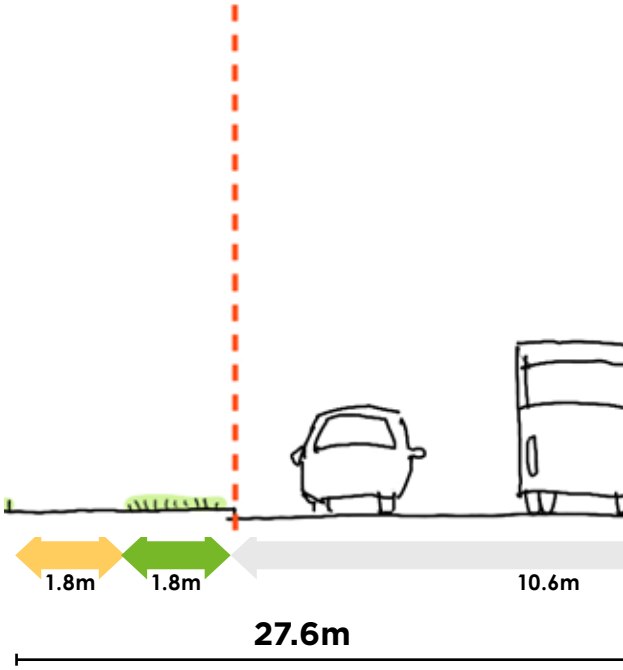
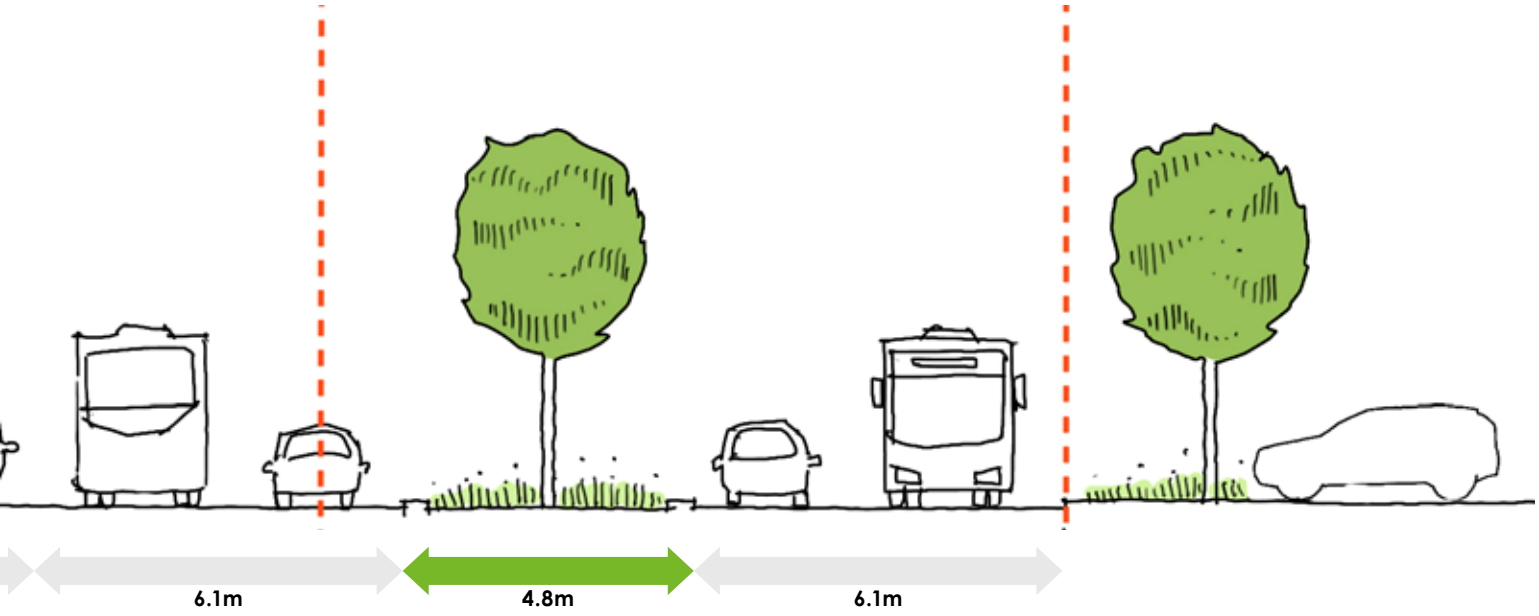
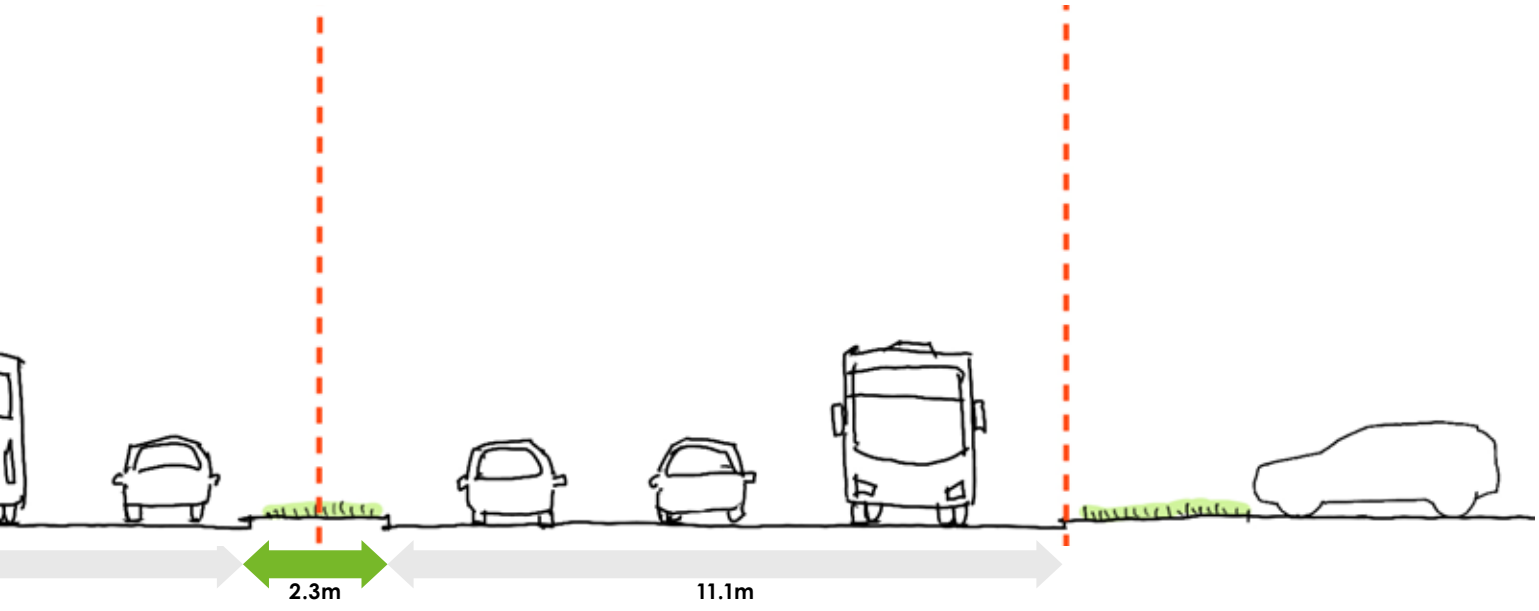



6.1m
4.8m
6.1m

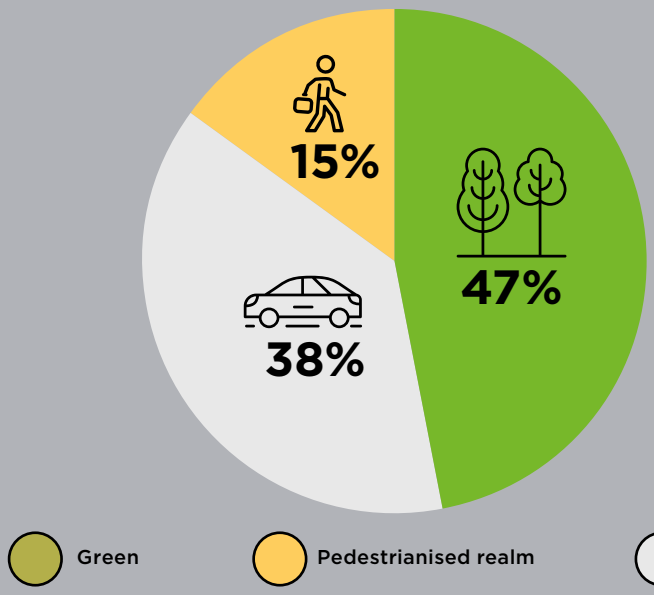

2.3m
11.1m

SECTION CC

Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

01 Proposed overall percentage



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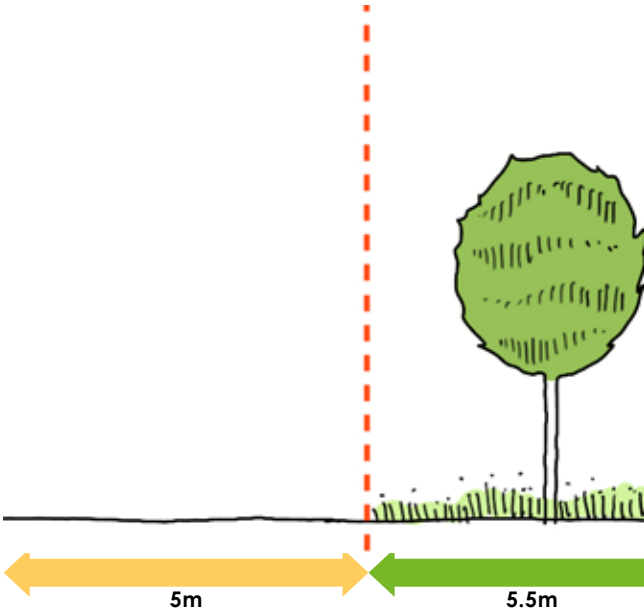
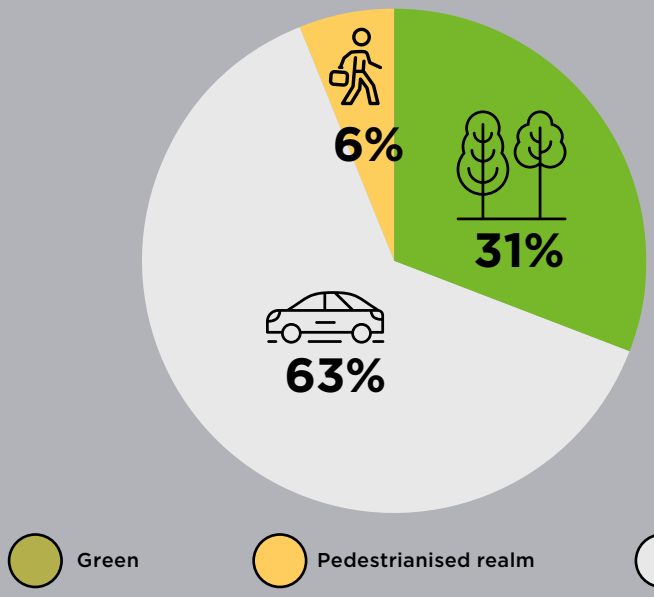


02 Existing overall percentage



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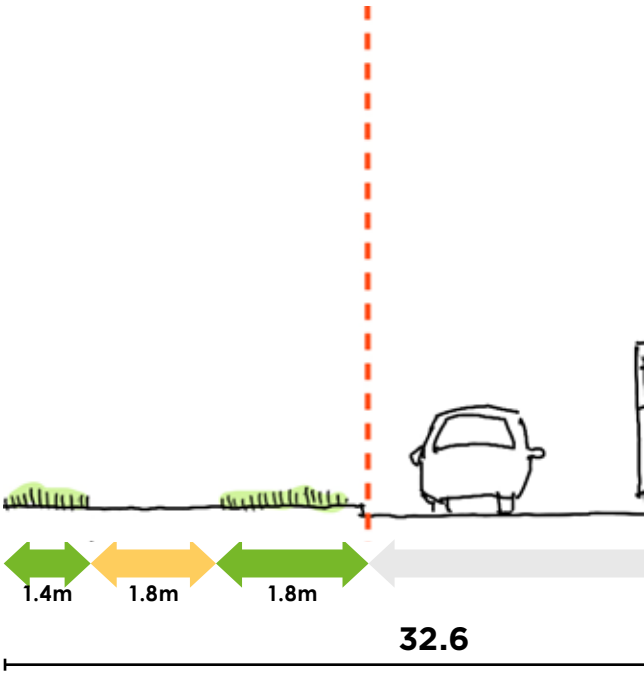
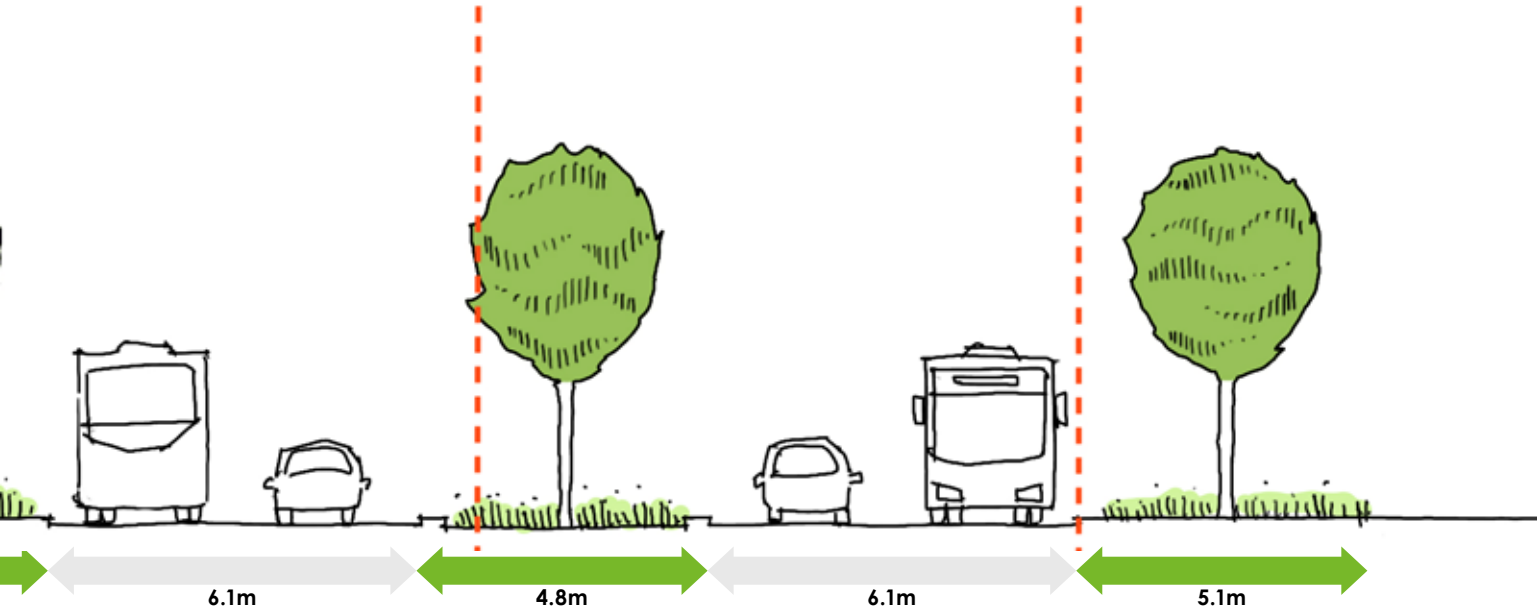
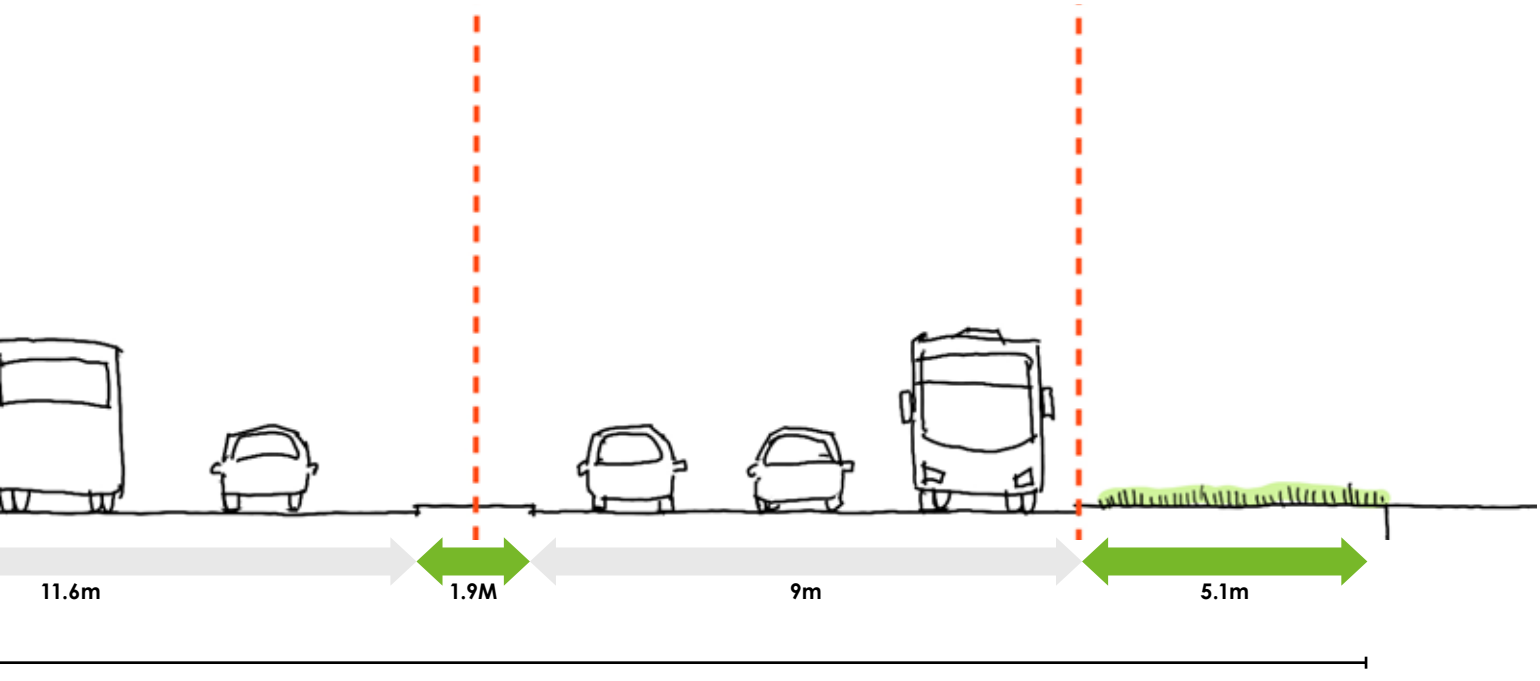
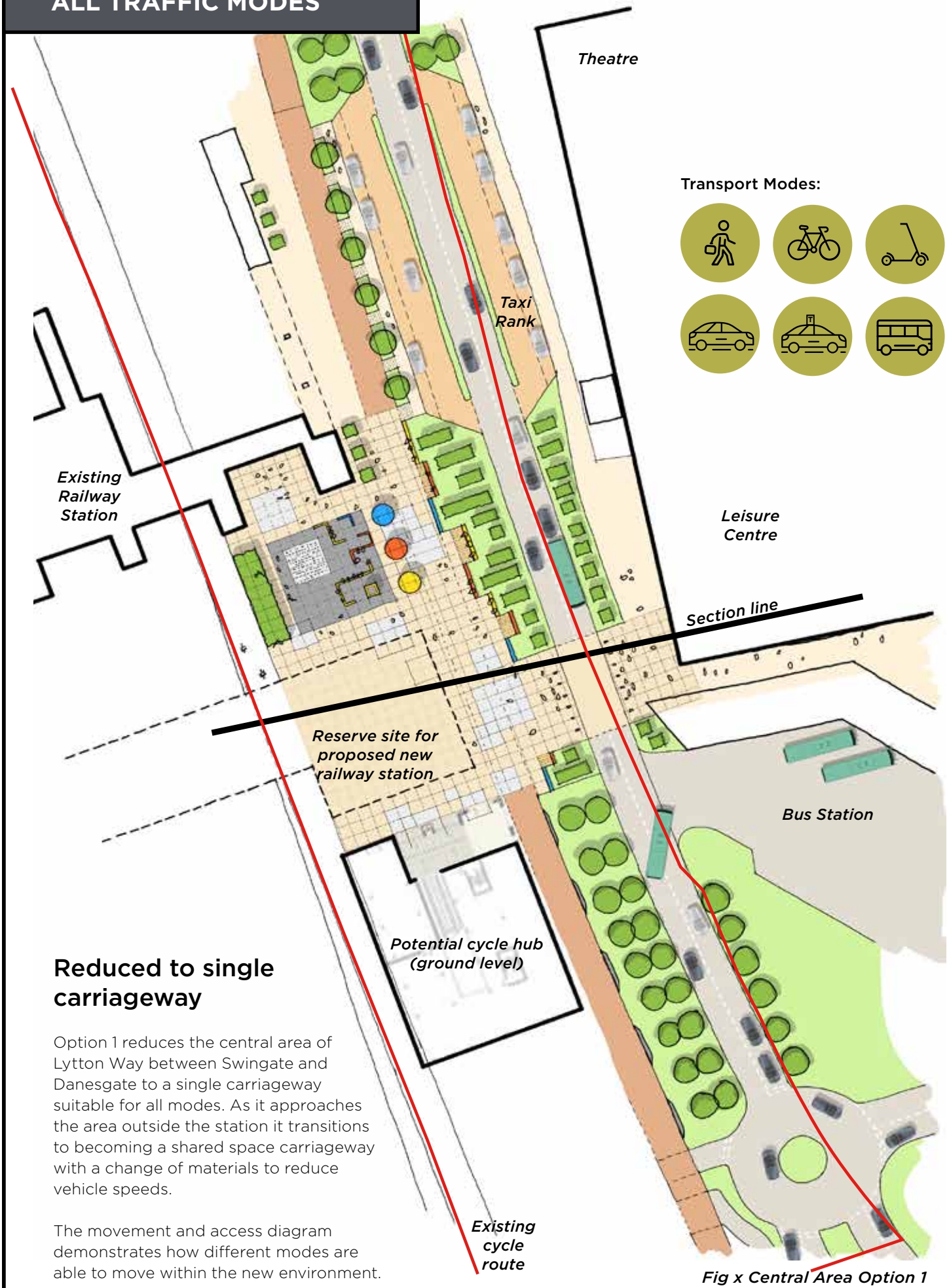



6.1m
4.8m
6.1m
5.1m


11.6m
1.9M
9m
5.1m

CENTRAL AREA OPTION 1
ALL TRAFFIC MODES



Reduced to single carriageway

Option 1 reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway suitable for all modes. As it approaches the area outside the station it transitions to becoming a shared space carriageway with a change of materials to reduce vehicle speeds.

The movement and access diagram demonstrates how different modes are able to move within the new environment.

Fig x Central Area Option 1
All Traffic Modes

Advantages

- Retains through access for all modes
- Significant improvement in space allocated for active modes
- No re-routing of bus routes required

Disadvantages

- Potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians
- Does not clearly prioritise sustainable travel modes

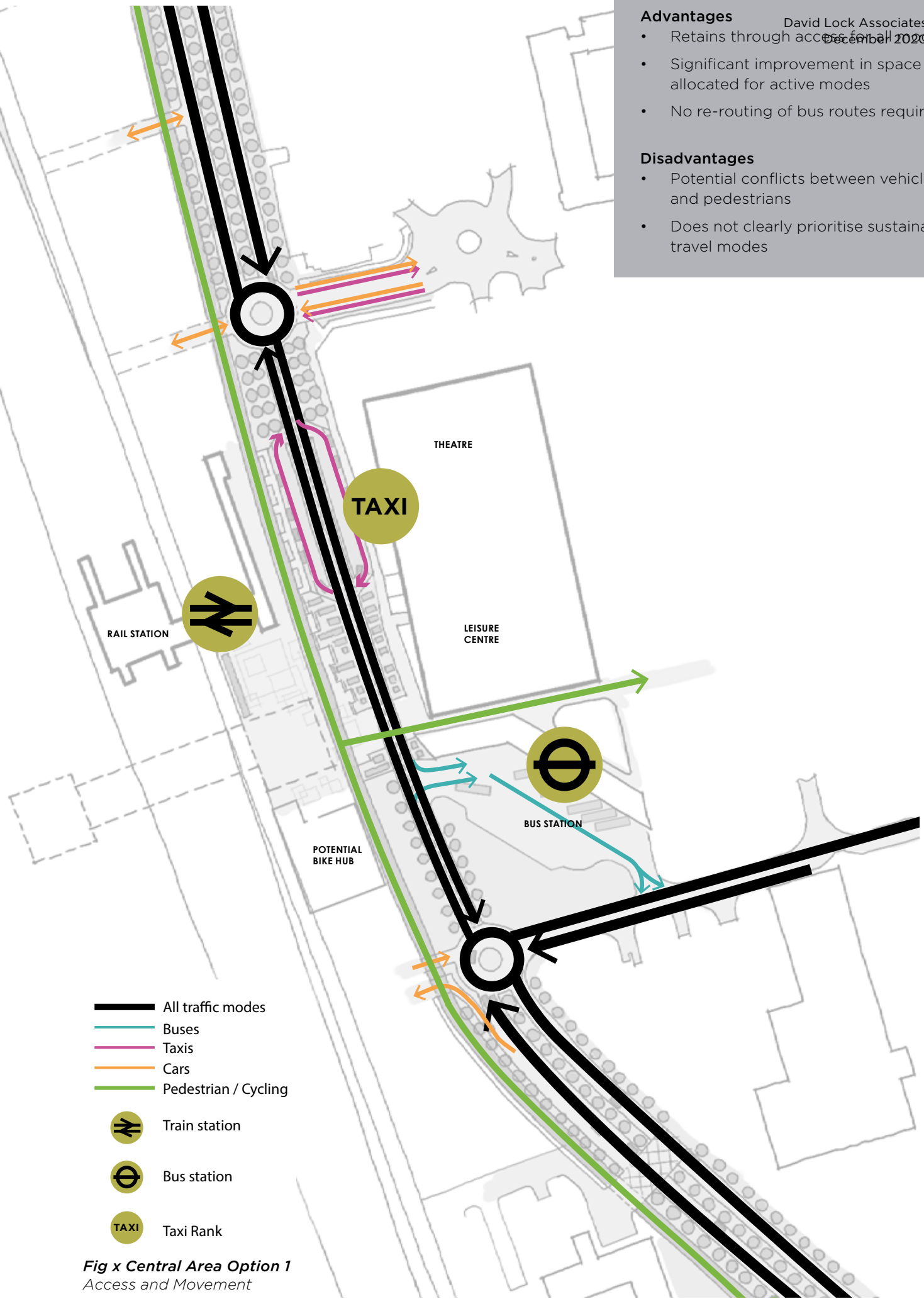


Fig x Central Area Option 1
Access and Movement

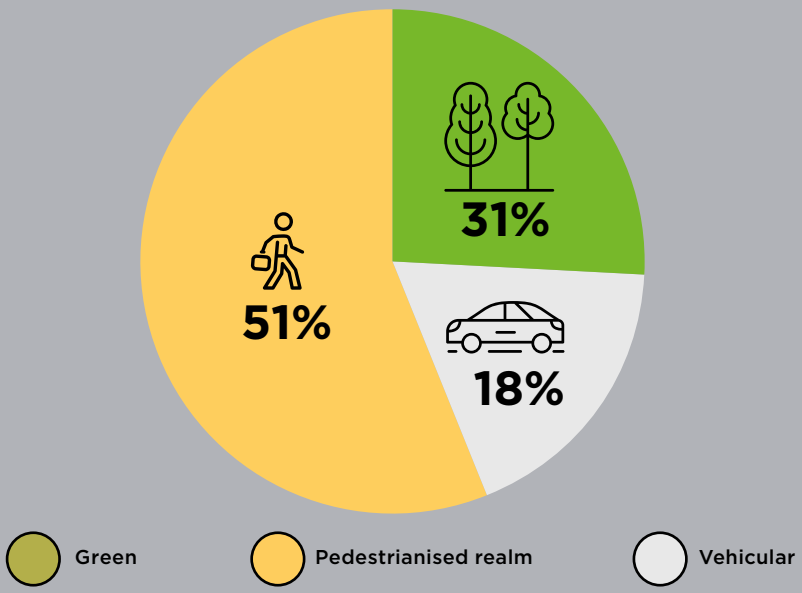
SECTION ALL TRAFFIC MODES

Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

Frideswide Square, Oxford

01 Proposed overall percentage



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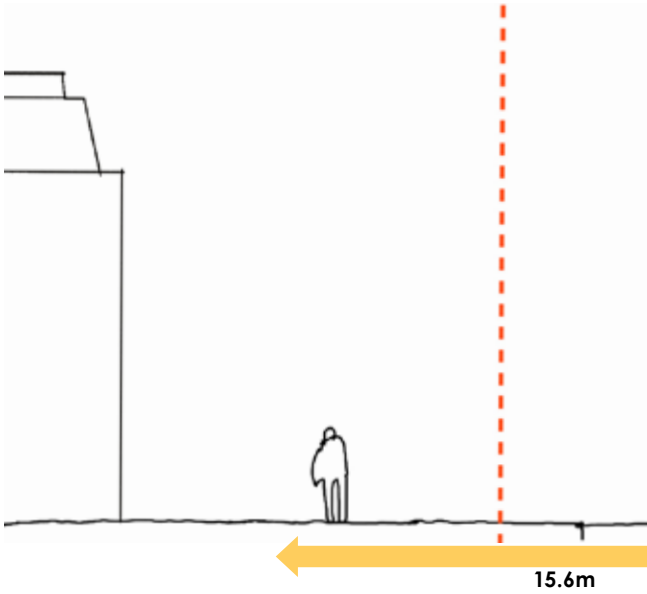
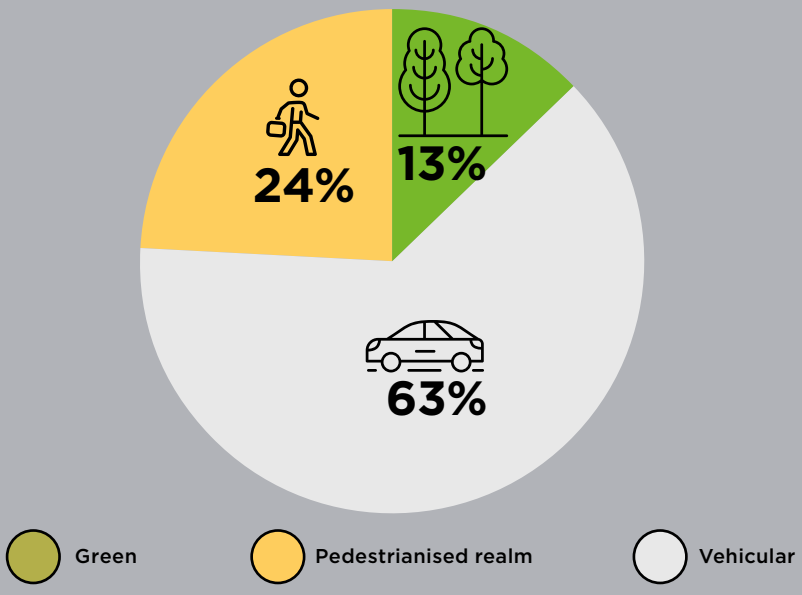


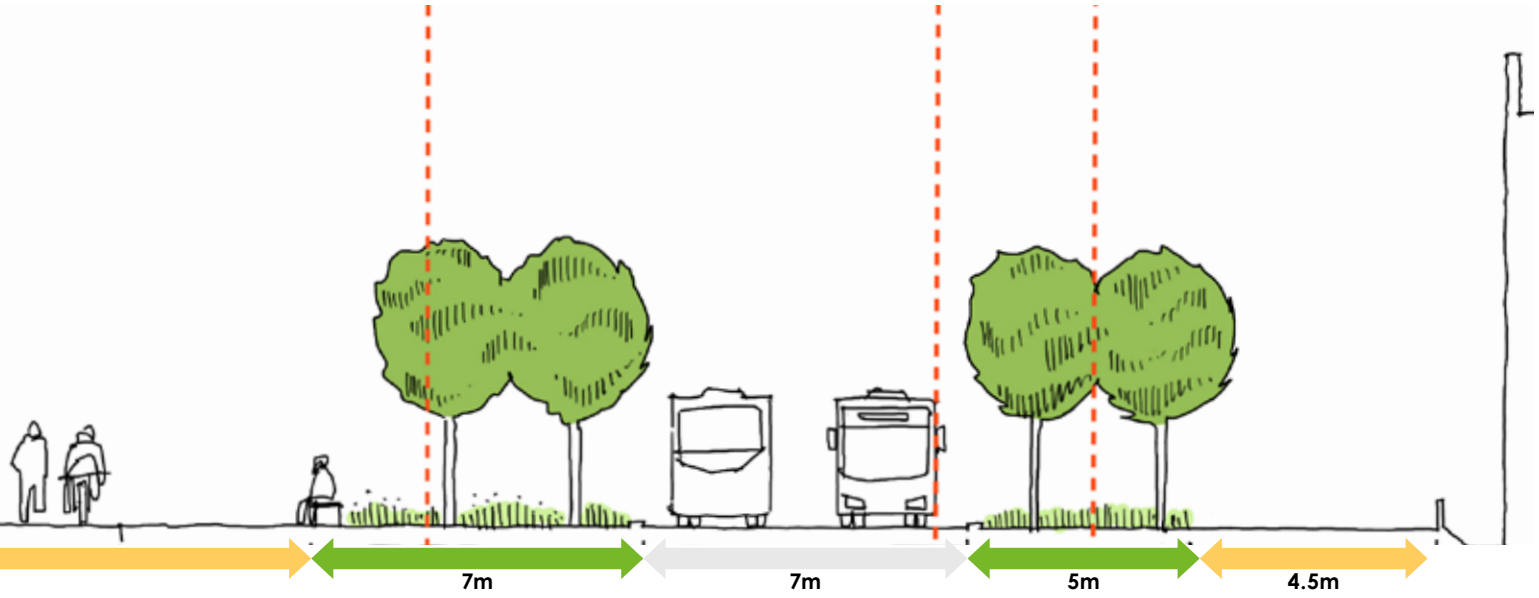
02 Existing overall percentage

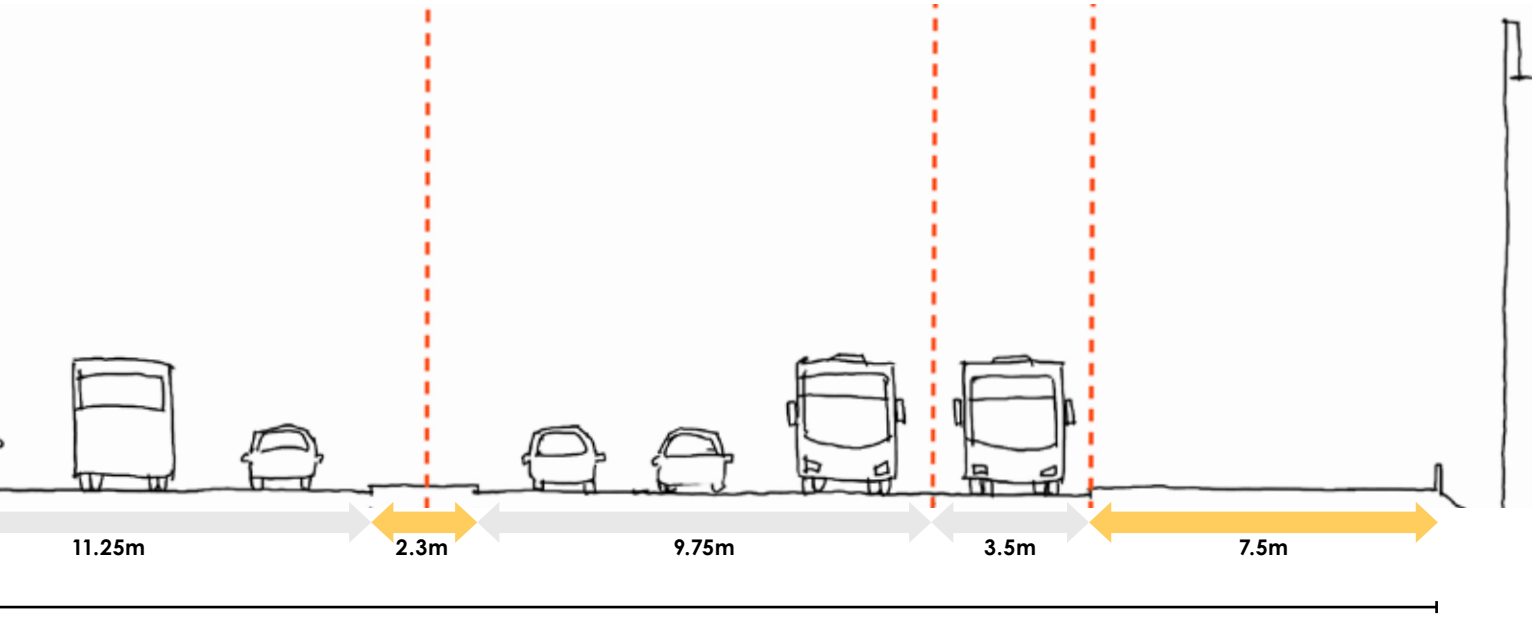


02 EXISTING

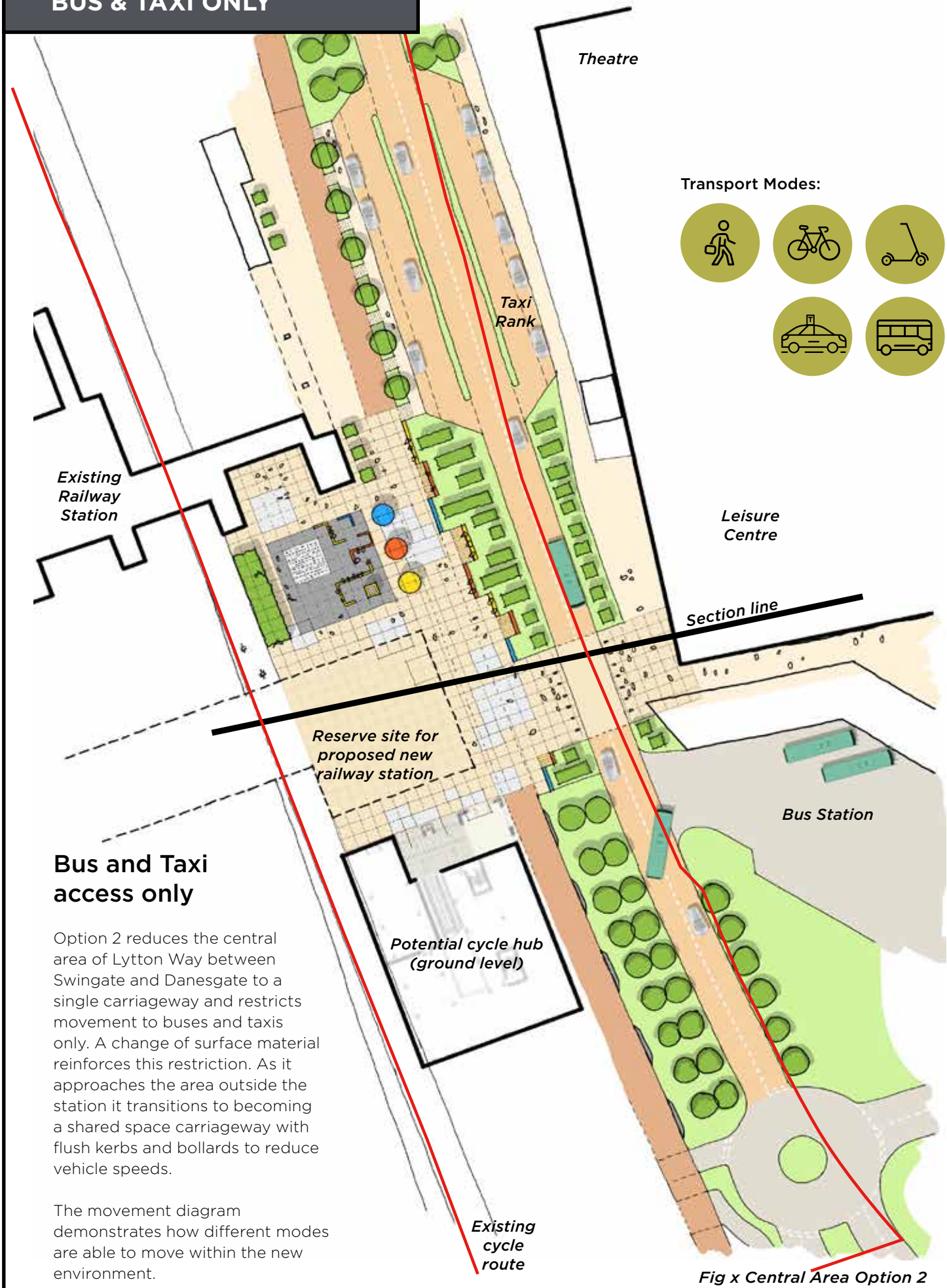
Bahnhofplatz, Aachen, Germany

Slough Railway Station





CENTRAL AREA OPTION 2
BUS & TAXI ONLY



Bus and Taxi access only

Option 2 reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway and restricts movement to buses and taxis only. A change of surface material reinforces this restriction. As it approaches the area outside the station it transitions to becoming a shared space carriageway with flush kerbs and bollards to reduce vehicle speeds.

The movement diagram demonstrates how different modes are able to move within the new environment.

Fig x Central Area Option 2
Bus & Taxi only

Advantages

- Reduction in vehicle traffic makes pedestrian and cycling movement easier
- Reduction in noise outside station
- No re-routing of bus routes required
- Clear prioritisation of sustainable modes

Disadvantages

- Potential conflicts between buses, taxis and pedestrians, although risk much lower than Option 1
- Potentially significant change to traffic flows around Stevenage town centre

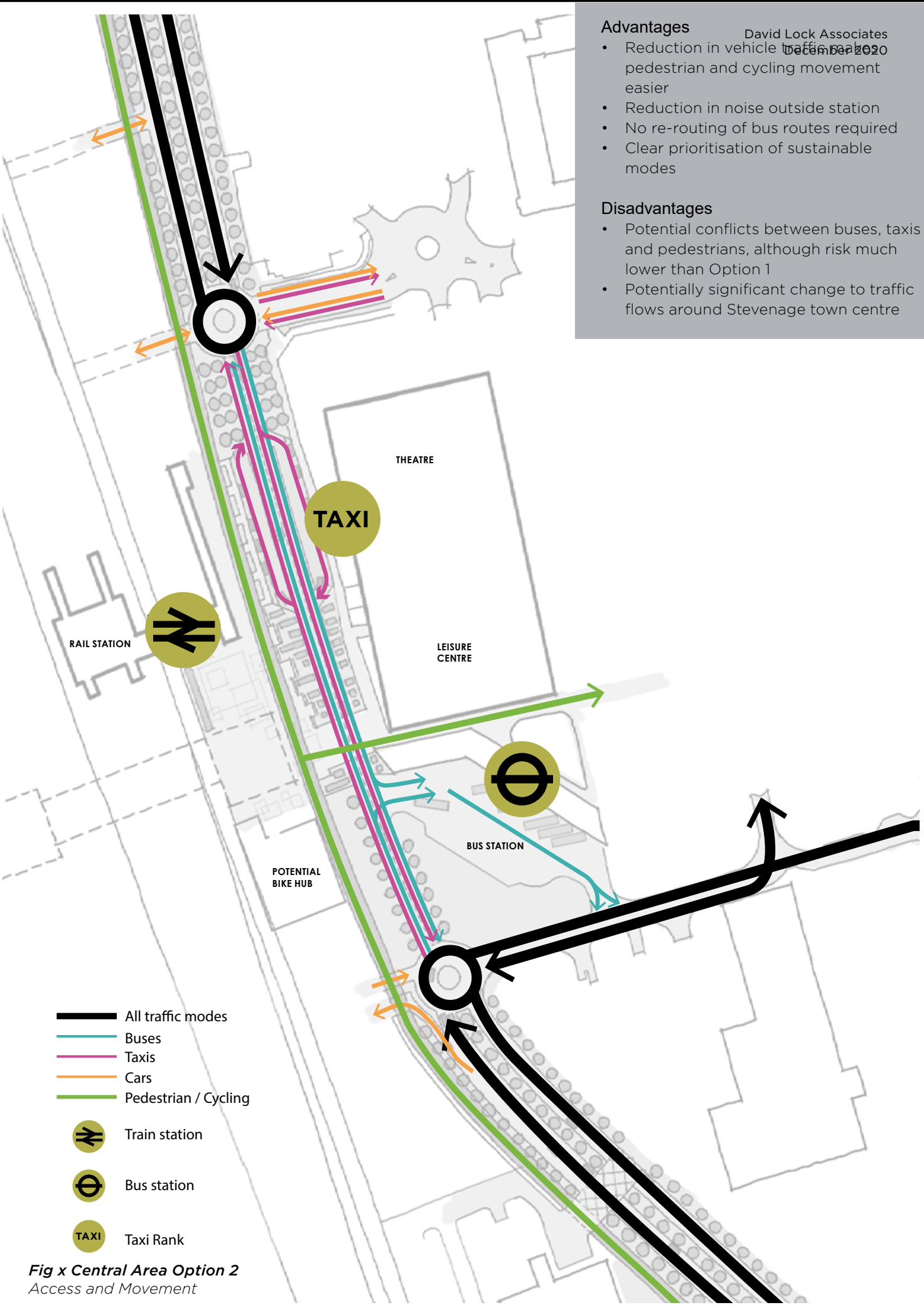


Fig x Central Area Option 2
Access and Movement

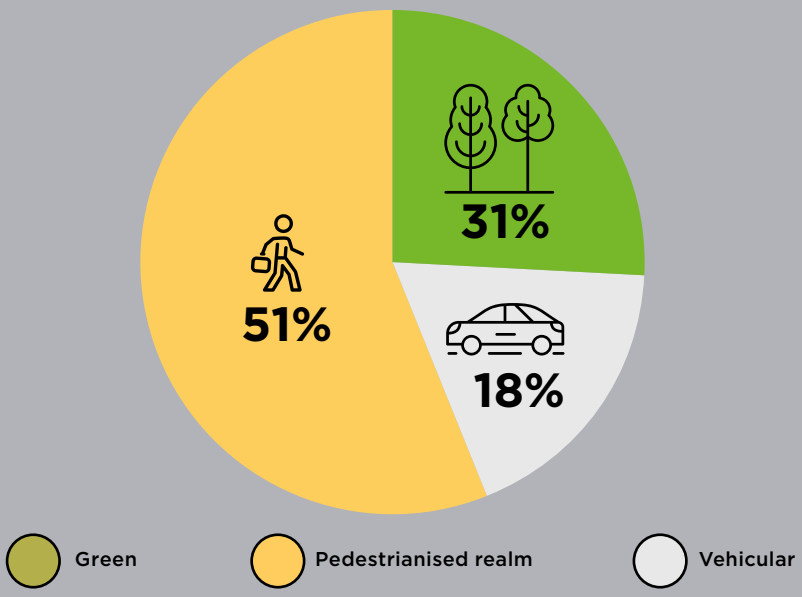
SECTION BUS & TAXI ONLY

Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

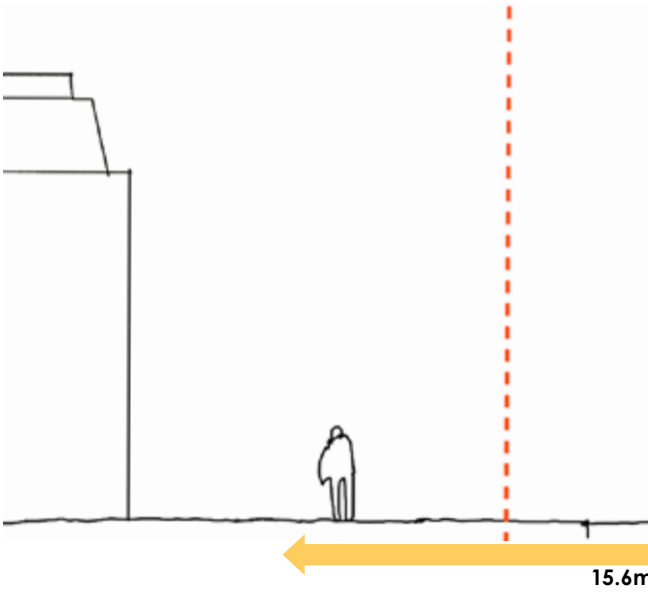
The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

Station Square, Cambridge

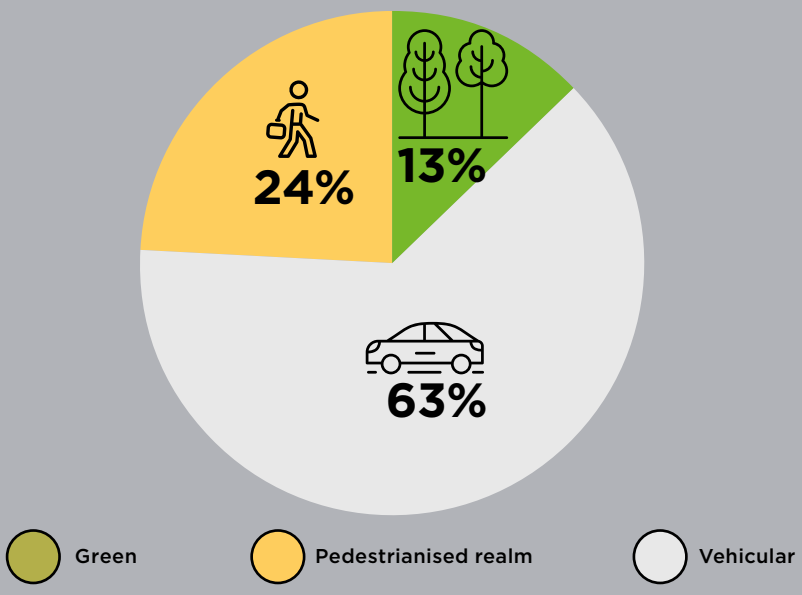
01 Proposed overall percentage



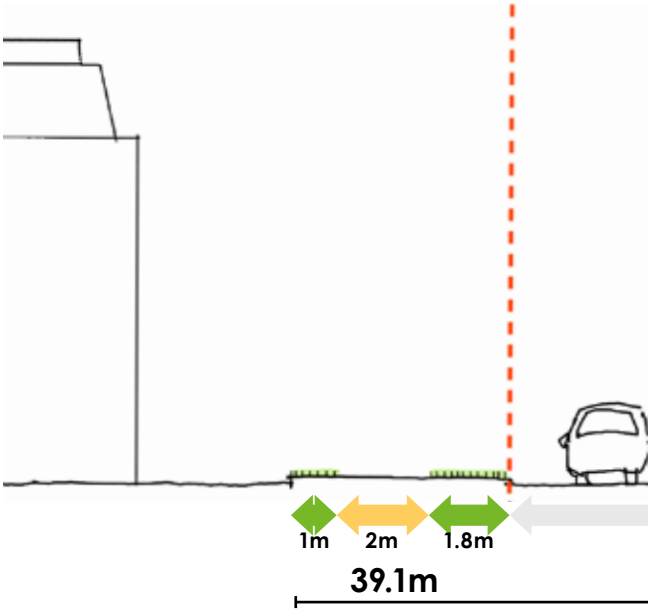
01 PROPOSED



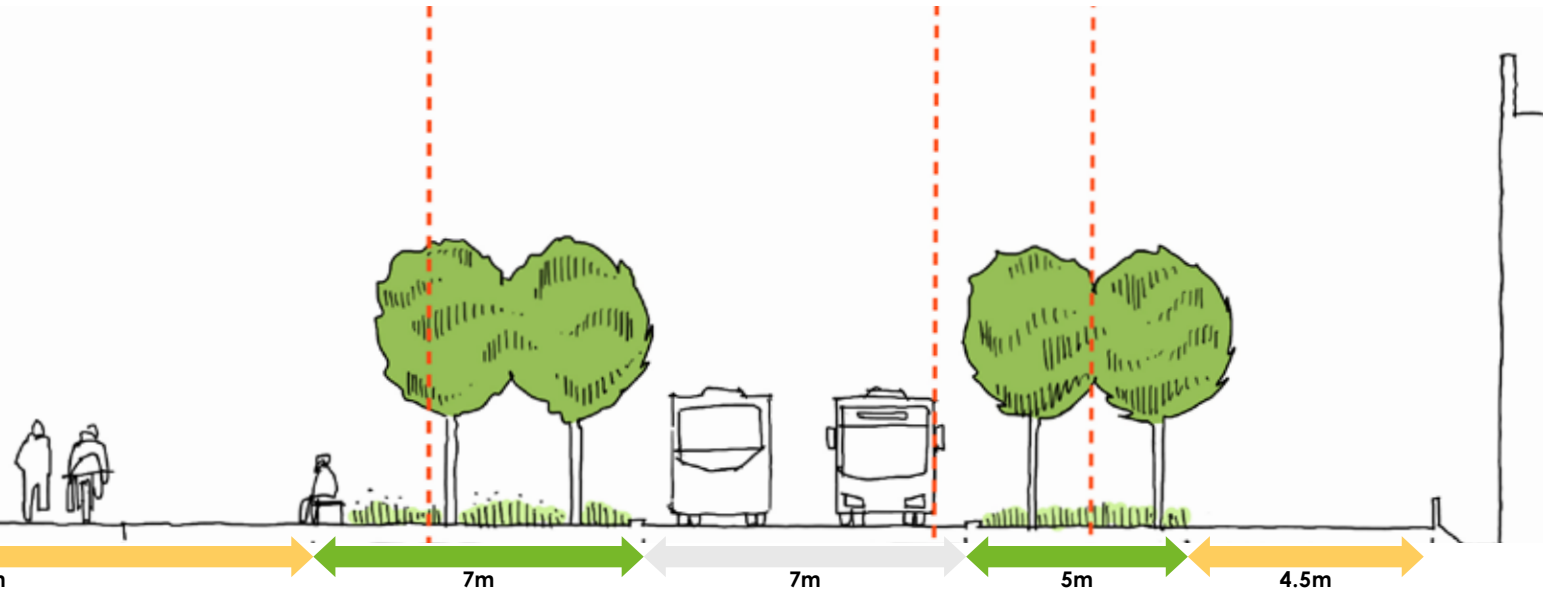
02 Existing overall percentage

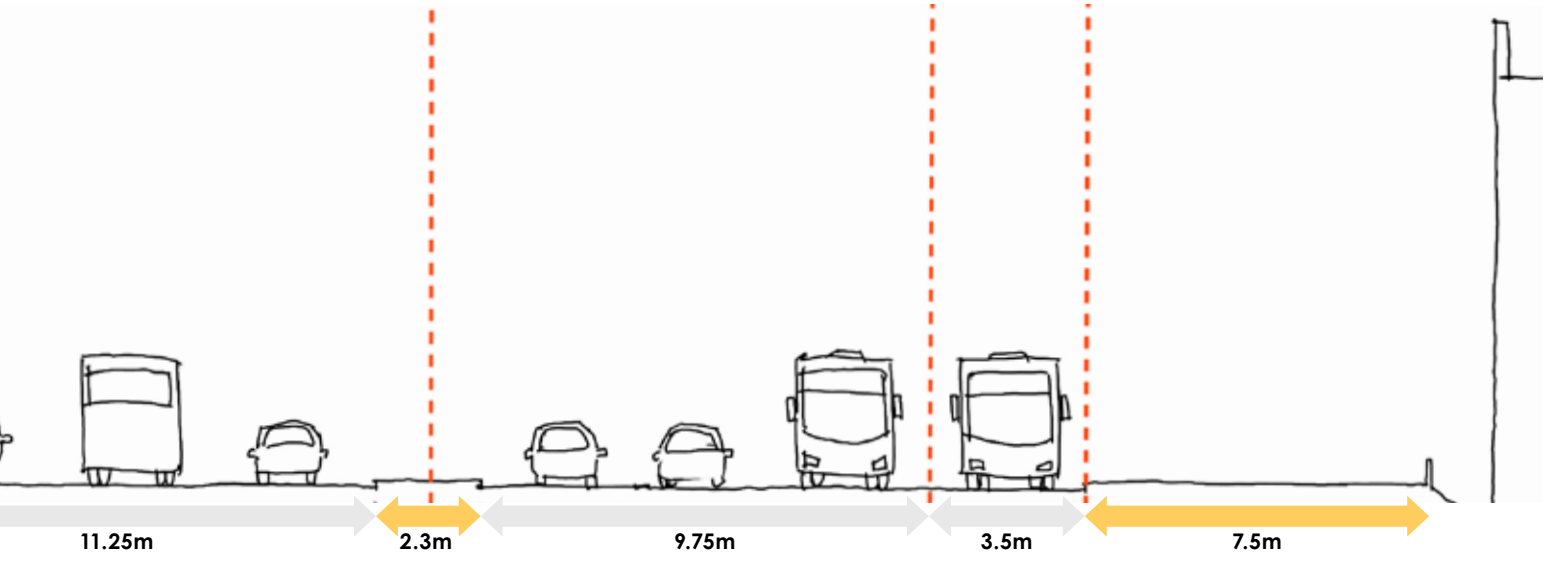


02 EXISTING

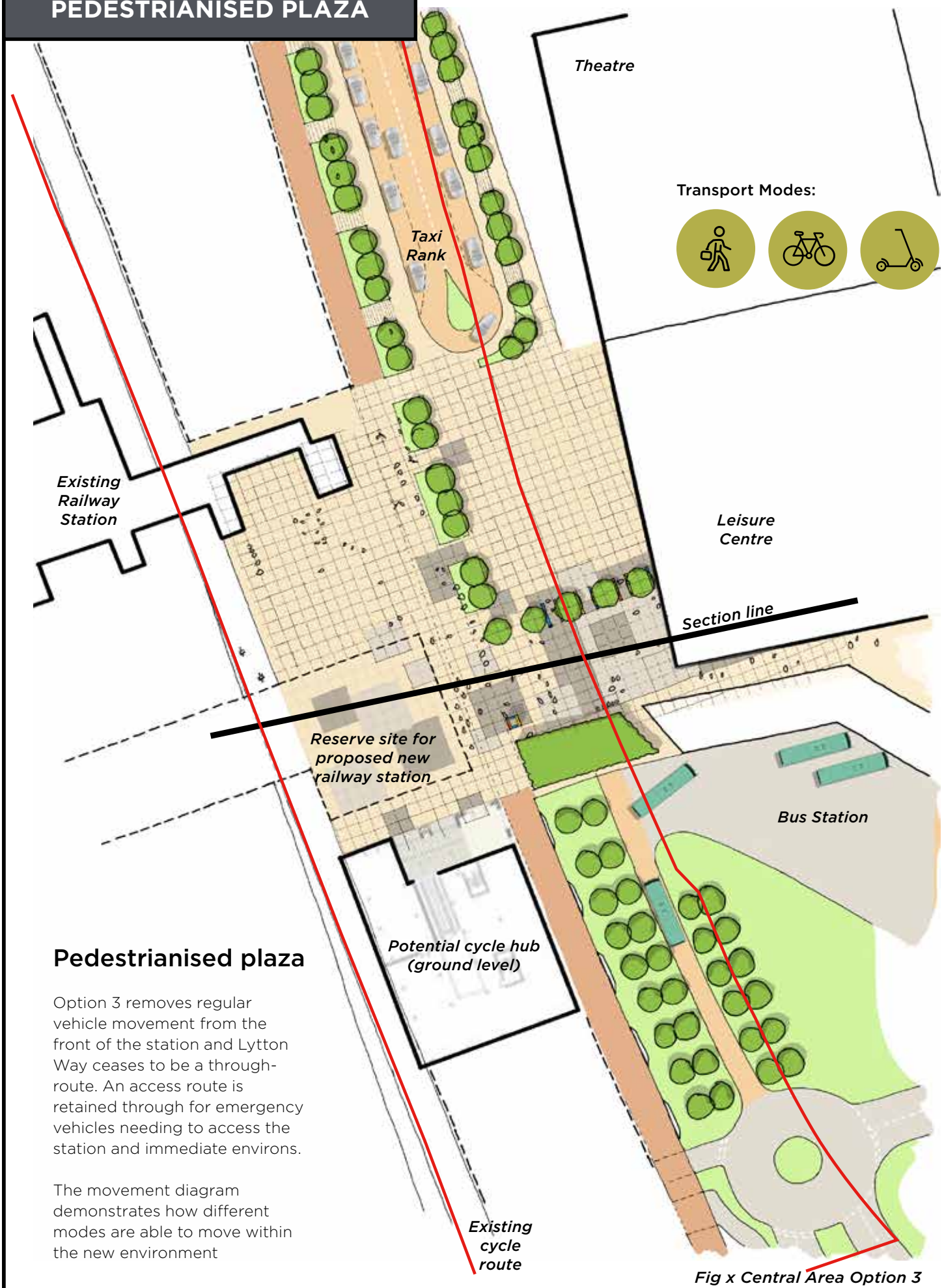


Station Square, Cambridge





CENTRAL AREA OPTION 3
PEDESTRIANISED PLAZA



Pedestrianised plaza

Option 3 removes regular vehicle movement from the front of the station and Lytton Way ceases to be a through-route. An access route is retained through for emergency vehicles needing to access the station and immediate environs.

The movement diagram demonstrates how different modes are able to move within the new environment

Fig x Central Area Option 3
Pedestrianised Plaza

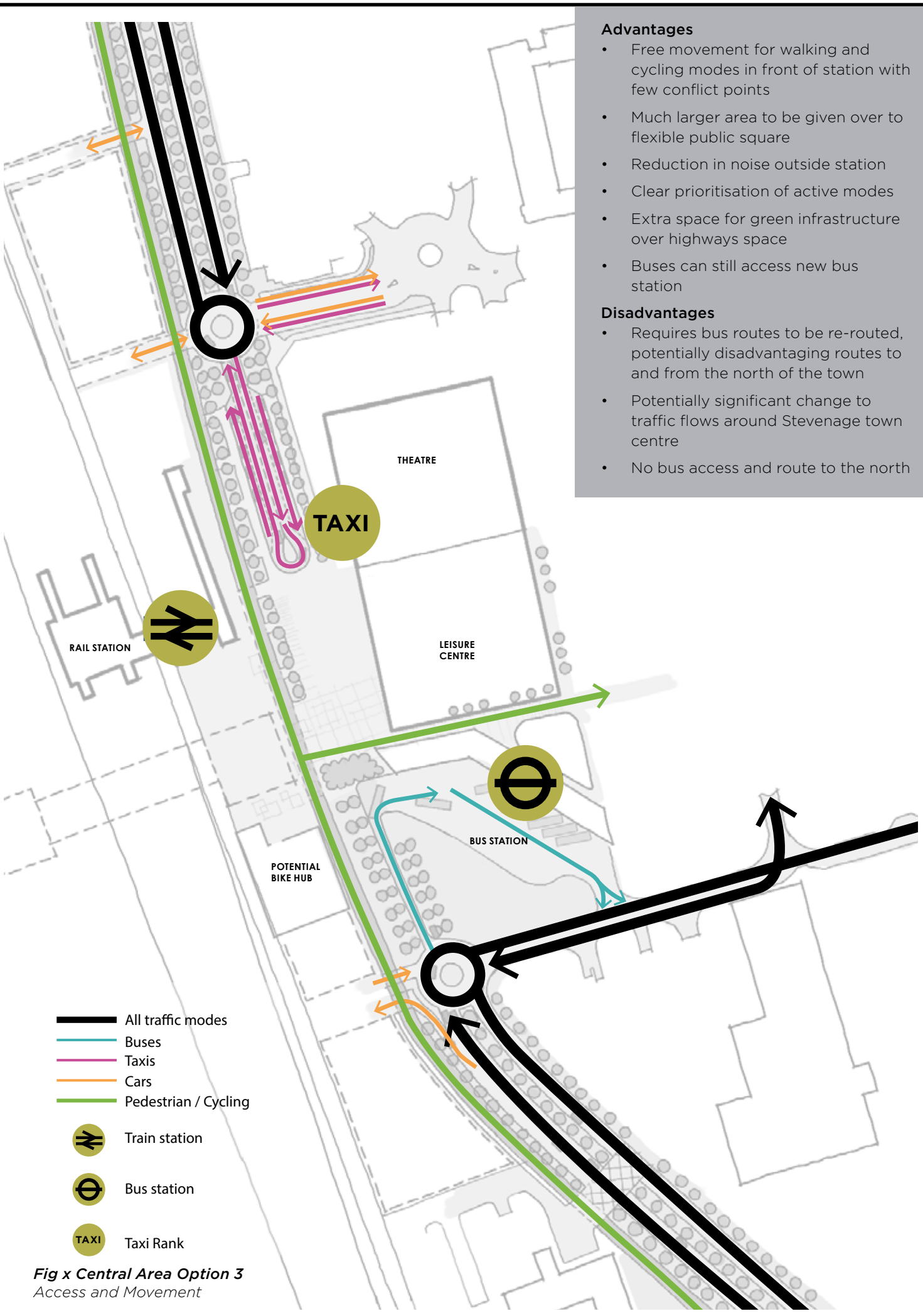


Fig x Central Area Option 3
Access and Movement

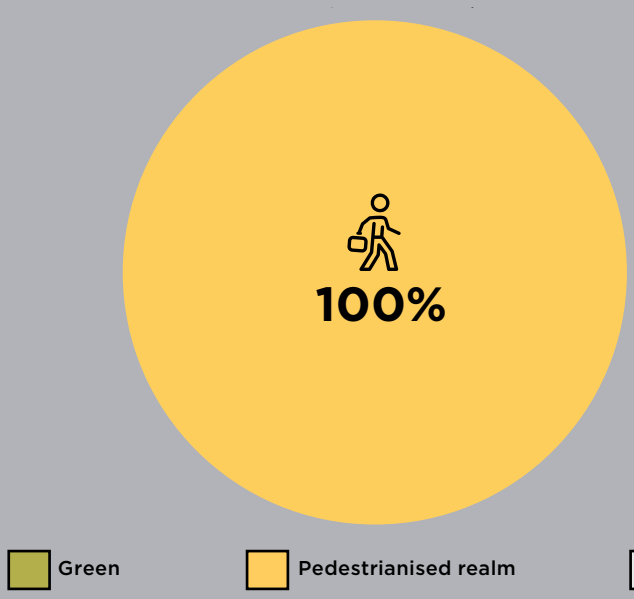
SECTION PEDESTRIANISED PLAZA

Illustrative sections showing the existing and proposed sectional profiles of Lytton Way.

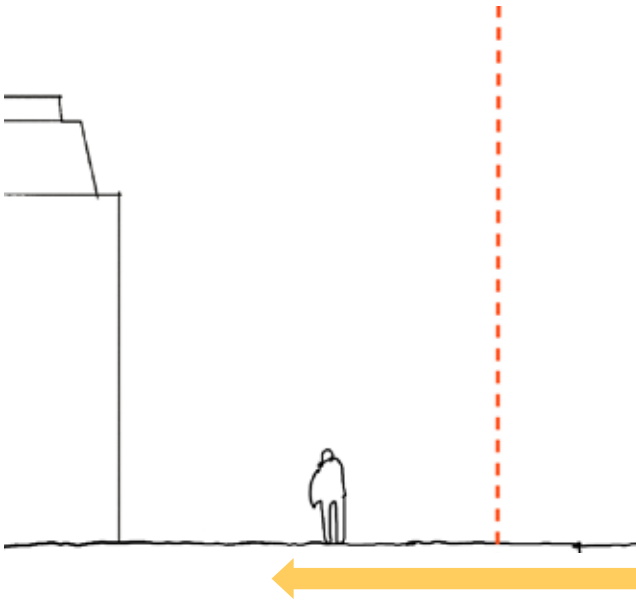
The sections also include an analysis of land-use and activity by width, split into green space, pedestrian realm and vehicular realm. This is represented in the diagrams below showing the splits by percentage of the overall cross section.

Station Hill, Reading

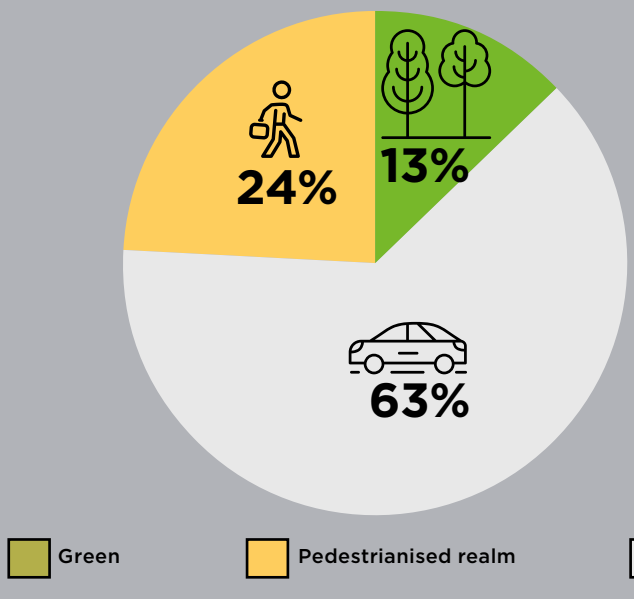
01 Proposed overall percentage



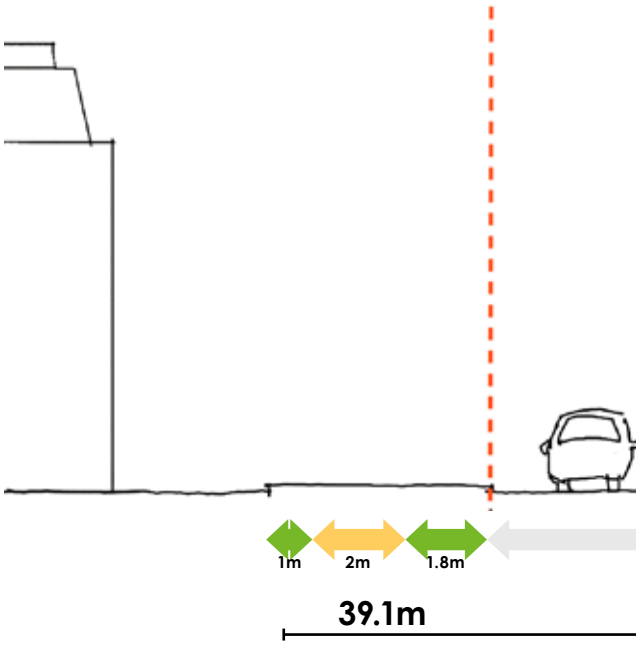
01 PROPOSED



02 Existing overall percentage

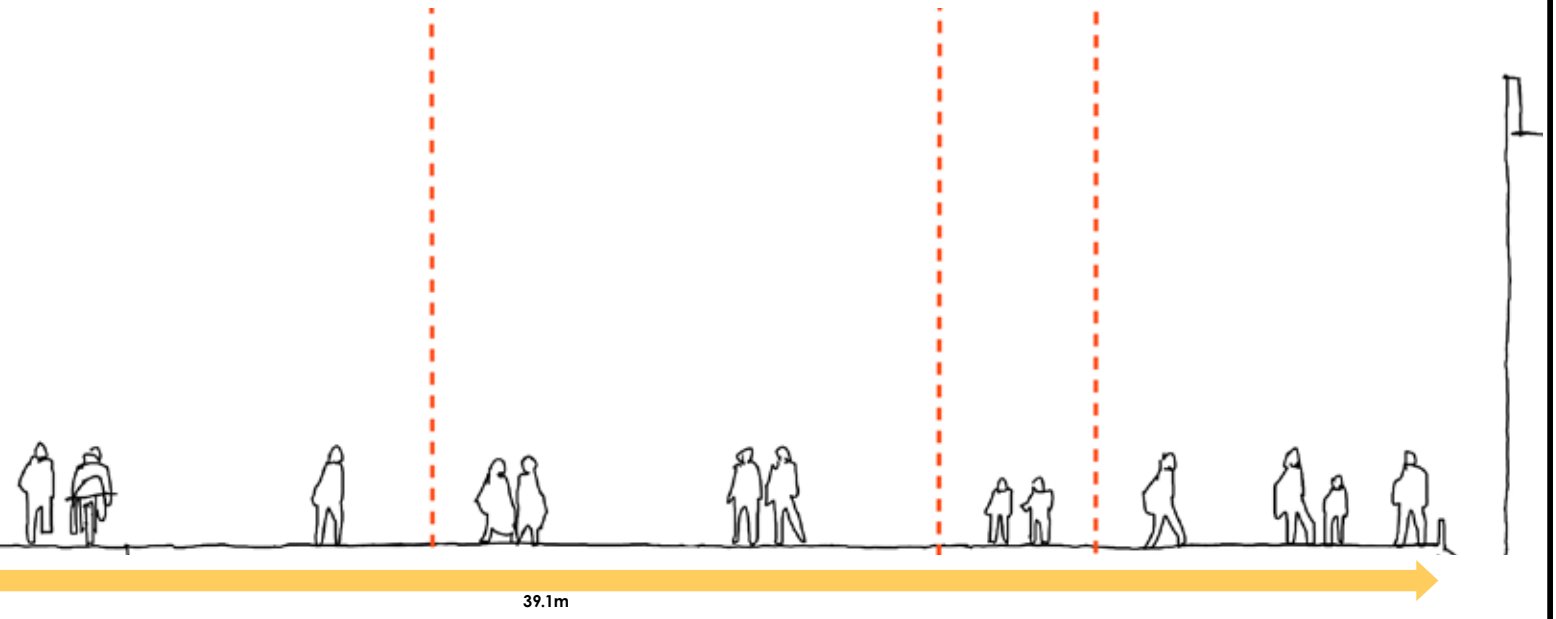


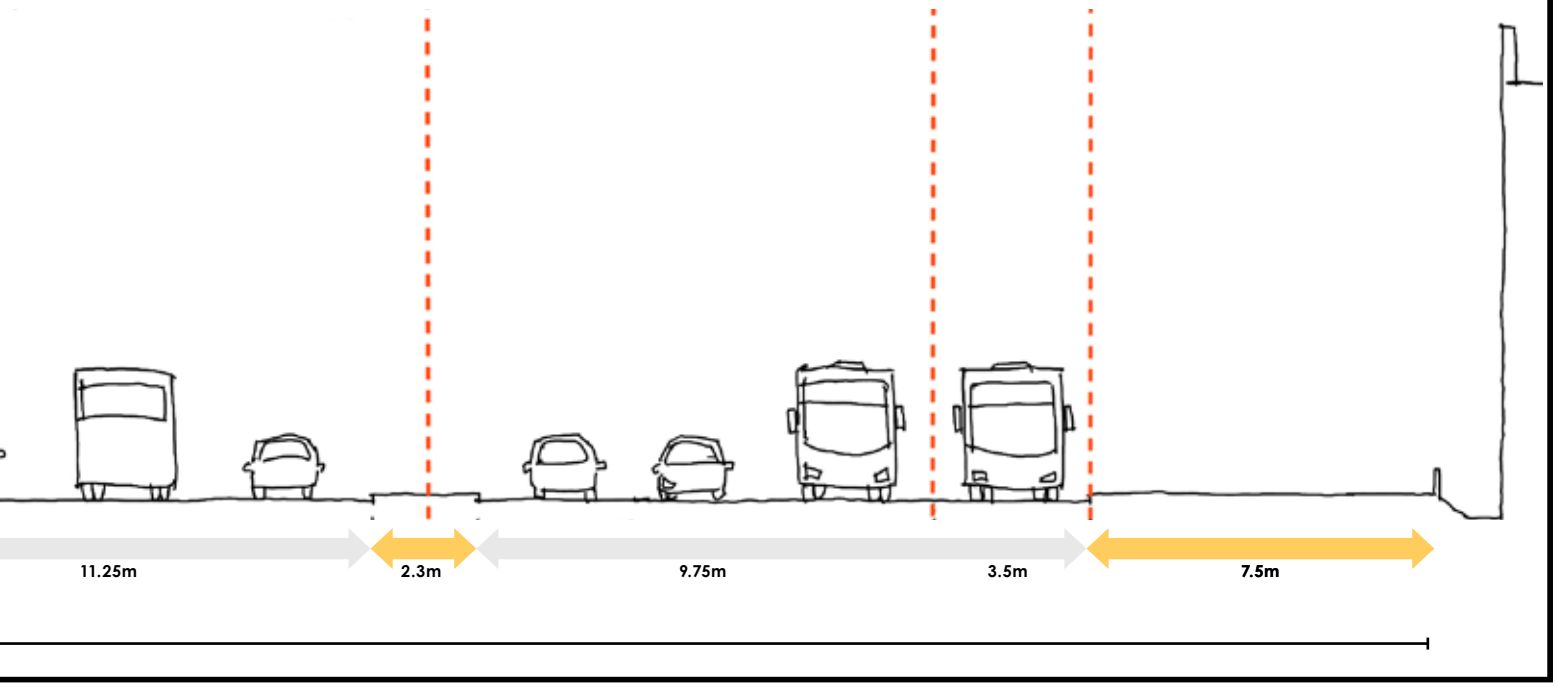
02 EXISTING



Station Hill, Reading

Utrecht, Netherlands





BIKE PATH OPTIONS

The existing bike path along the edge of the railway tracks has been identified earlier in this document as suffering from a lack of passive surveillance and perceived lack of safety and security. Its position constrains the width of potential development parcels that could otherwise back straight onto the railway tracks. Due to its location pushed to the edge, it appears as a back-of-house or service access and feels secondary to vehicles.

However, the bike path does provide a direct, uninterrupted and segregated bike route through the area, although it also functions as the only north-south pedestrian route.

This section proposes two potential options for improving bike access within the station area, building on its strengths while addressing weaknesses.

1. Looking north. Police station on right

2. Looking south with rail station ahead

3. Looking north as bicycle path drops down through cutting

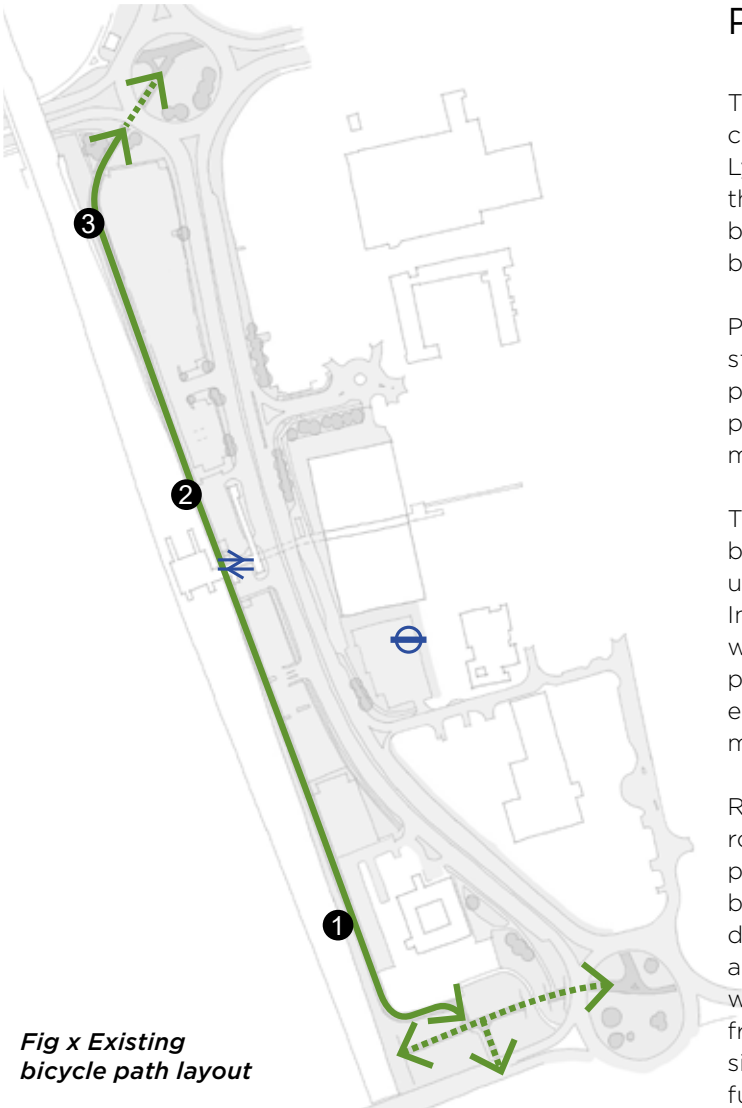


Fig x Existing bicycle path layout

Potential layout 1

This option retains the existing bicycle path and creates a new segregated path within the revised Lytton Way street profile. It is compatible with all three Central Area Options. The provision of a new bike hub facility can be accessed conveniently from both routes.

Provision of the new path within the enhanced streetscape of Lytton Way contributes to an activated public realm and the increased safety and security this provides. It elevates cycling to the street and makes it more visible as a mobility option.

The new path would be segregated from cyclists by use of a different surface colour and small kerb upstands, as recommended in LTN 1/20 (Cycle Infrastructure Design). The routing along the street would create some potential conflict points with pedestrians, and cars at the multi-storey car park entrance. These would need to be mitigated with clear markings and signage.

Retention of the existing path provides an alternative route for cyclists to follow that would not have conflict points, although a future redesign of the station building could alter its path at that point. However this duplication of routes reduces the efficiency of layout and consequently the area of developable land. It would require development parcels to provide active frontages or overlooking on both aspects, rather than simply backing onto the railway tracks. This would further constraint development options.

Fig x Potential layout option 1

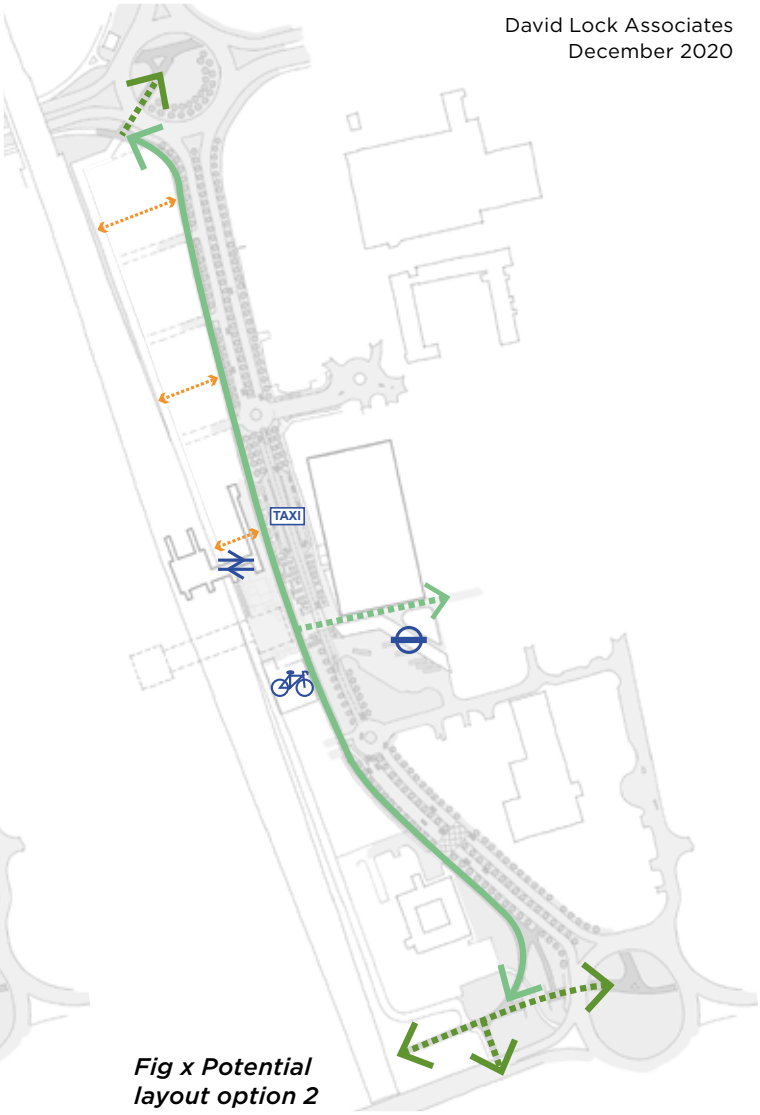


Fig x Potential layout option 2

Potential layout 2

This option removes the existing bicycle path but creates a new segregated path within the revised Lytton Way street profile. It is compatible with all three Central Area Options. The provision of a new bike hub facility can be accessed conveniently from the bike path.

Provision of the new path within the enhanced streetscape of Lytton Way contributes to an activated public realm and the increased safety and security this provides. It elevates cycling to the street and makes it more visible as a mobility option.

The new path would be segregated from cyclists by use of a different surface colour and small kerb upstands, as recommended in LTN 1/20 (Cycle Infrastructure Design). The routing along the street would create some potential conflict points with pedestrians, and cars at the multi-storey car park entrance. These would need to be mitigated with clear markings and signage.

Removal of the existing path creates a more efficient layout and increases the amount of developable land, and the flexibility of the development parcels as they are deeper and could place servicing and inactive frontages adjacent to the railway tracks.

Frideswide Square, Oxford

PHASING AND TEMPORARY USE

To transform the station area towards one of these options requires a phasing strategy that considers:

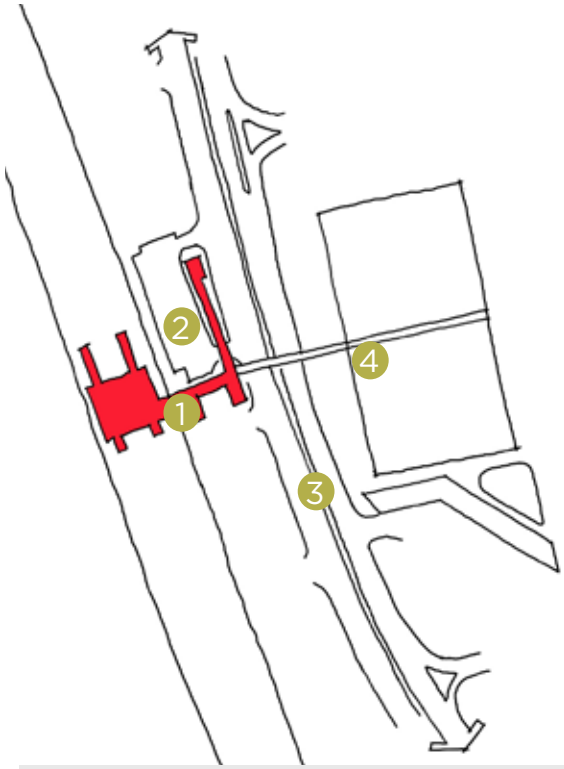
- Timing of highway works
- Provision of active travel infrastructure
- Timing of relocation of key mobility uses such as taxi ranks and drop-off
- Relocation and consolidation of station surface car parking

A potential phasing strategy that is robust and flexible enough to accommodate all three options is presented in figure XX. Phase 1 provides the temporary groundwork for Phase 2, which fully implements the options as presented in this report. Phase 3 considers potential future developments and how they would interact with the options presented.

To enable this phased approach, a strategy employing temporary uses should be put in place. The phasing strategy clearly identifies locations suitable for such temporary uses, which can enliven the space around the station and establish the groundwork and footfall for permanent development in the future. This can provide reassurance to potential developers that a location is viable and visited, as well as creating a safer and more vibrant place during the process of transformation.

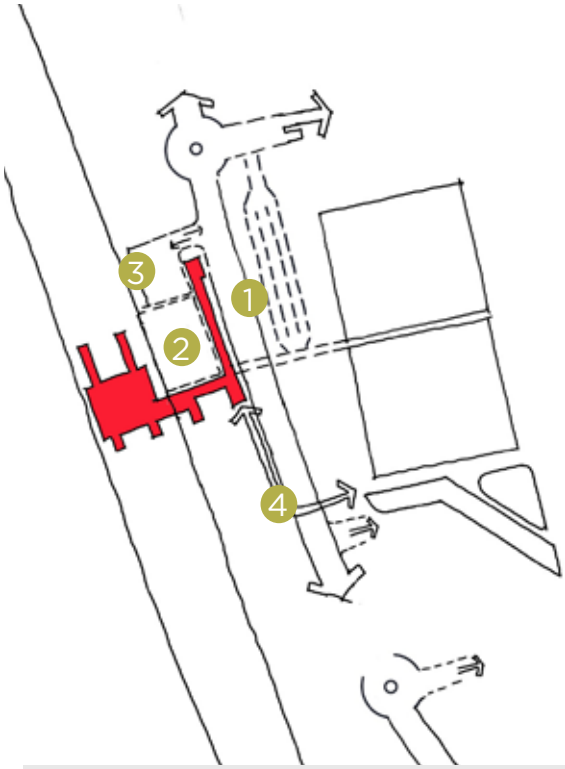
Precedent studies of temporary or 'meanwhile' uses are presented on the following pages.

Existing



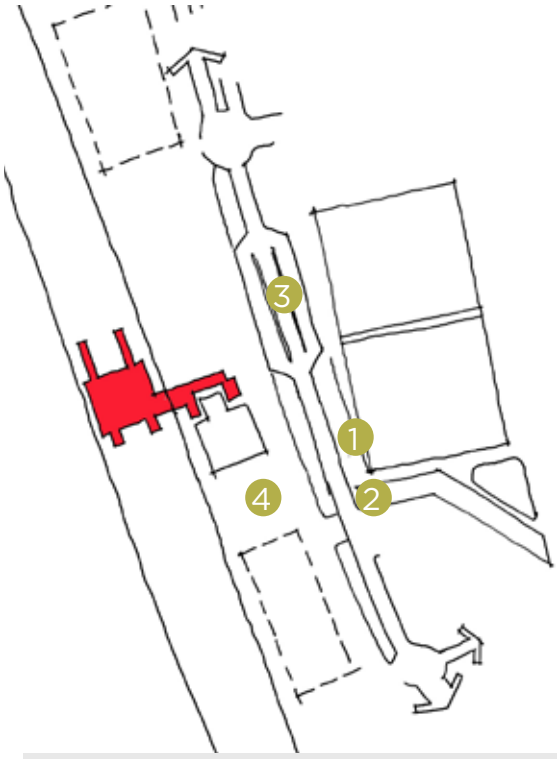
1. Train station
2. Taxi rank and station drop-off
3. Dual carriageway to Lytton Way
4. Sports Centre and bridge link to train station

Phase 1 - Temporary Uses



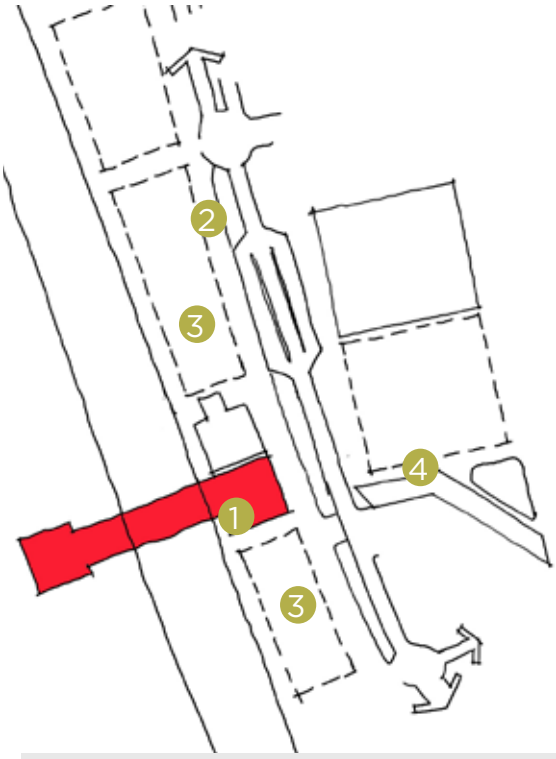
1. Condensing of north and south movements to the western carriageway to enable construction of taxi rank and new Lytton Way Boulevard and removal of pedestrian bridge
2. Temporary pedestrianisation of station drop-off area as 'meanwhile' traffic-free plaza
3. Condensing of taxi rank north of pedestrianised plaza
4. Temporary pedestrian walkway and crossing linking train station to bus station and town centre

Phase 2 - AAP Options



1. Opening of Lytton Way Boulevard along new alignment
2. Creation of a pedestrian super-crossing
3. New taxi rank constructed on-line of Lytton Way Boulevard
4. Creation of new permanent Station Square to south existing train station, future-proofed for new station building to its south

Phase 3 - Future Potential



1. Development of new train station building
2. Completion of Lytton Way Boulevard (shared cycle and footway)
3. Potential development of adjacent parcels
4. Potential redevelopment of the sports centre

PRECEDENT STUDIES 'MEANWHILE USES'

Selection of images of precedent projects to illustrating temporary or 'meanwhile' uses and activation of urban spaces.

The examples include a range of opportunities for planting, exhibitions, seating, play and cafes. installation and removal is typically quick and straight forwards requiring minimal invasive construction / demolition.

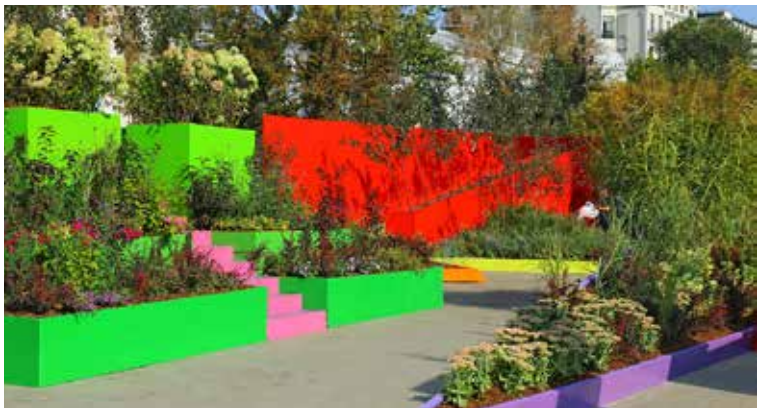
TEMPORARY BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES

Deptford project: *re-purposed train carriage as cafe and community meeting point*

TEMPORARY INTERACTIVE ART / PLAY INSTALLATION

Kalvebod Waves, copenhagen *(JDS Architects)*

Southbank Centre, London



Moscow City day: City without borders
Temporary play & interactive sculpture (Studio Fink)

Barbican, City of London

TEMPORARY GREENING THE GREY

Hammersmith Grove *(project centre)*

GREENING THE GREY
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Stevenage, as the UK's original New Town, was designed to ensure that green open space was accessible to all and integrated within the urban built environment. The station area should reflect this heritage and deliver it as part of a vibrant, rich and interesting urban place. The reconfiguration of Lytton Way outlined in this report, along with all of the Central Area Options, deliver opportunities to re-integrate natural habitats and planted landscaping throughout the environment.

Such a strategy provides relief from hard landscaped environments, gives space for biodiversity, improves microclimates with the cooling or shading effects of trees and plants, offers sustainable surface water management and enhances the experience and appearance of the environment. Above all, new green infrastructure around the station will create a great gateway experience that reflects the green character of the rest of the town.

Opportunities to include green infrastructure exist throughout the proposed options. These include:

- Street trees
- Planted landscaping
- Sustainable drainage features
- Green roofs and walls on new development

CASE STUDY:
SHEFFIELD

One of the most successful urban schemes to incorporate significant new green infrastructure and biodiversity improvements has been the 'Greening the Grey' scheme in Sheffield. Although the scheme covers a wider area than just the station area, it has created significant change throughout the city centre. The scheme has transformed streets that previously only featured hard landscaping materials into habitat-rich spaces, with seating and significantly improved streetscapes. Vehicle space has been reduced and the planting offers separation between transport infrastructure and pedestrians.

A key function of the areas of planting are the collection and storage of rainwater enabled by the increased area of permeable surface. These help to reduce the quantum and slow the flow of stormwater into the City's sewer system.

The planting palette has been selected for its low maintenance requirements. All planting requires a degree of maintenance but the this can be minimised through the selection and specification of the right species. Species have also been selected for their aesthetic qualities to create an enhanced streetscape and also for their ecological value as a food source for insects and birds.






USING DEVELOPMENT TO MAKE A PLACE

The reconfiguration of mobility along Lytton Way enables a range of development opportunities to come forward on land previously used for car parking or transport infrastructure.

Opportunities for investment and development are important to identify within this key location. Beyond this, the design of developments should support the creation of the station area as a functional, vibrant, interesting and useful place for the town – a destination as well as a transit point towards other places.

As well as drawing upon the land uses outlined in Policy TC4, this report also draws upon other documents including the SBC Arts & Culture Strategy to define potential uses that could animate and occupy space around the station.

Key principles that have been adopted include:

- Surface car parking for the railway station can be consolidated into either multi-storey car parks (MSCP) or within basements without losing parking capacity but releasing significant land
- Vertical mixed-use within buildings is possible, particularly with commercial uses such as offices and retail sharing the same building
- Maximisation of active frontages and ground-floor opportunities along the streets, particularly around the new station square environment
- Flexibility of space provided is essential to enable the area to grow and adapt as it is developed. Temporary uses and occupation of space can help bridge the gap between today and the future place.

Flexibility

The recent change to the Use Classes Order (UCO) to subsume use classes A1, A2, A3 and B1 into a single class E (subject to some exemptions), presents both issues and opportunities from a planning policy perspective in this location.

At a policy stage it will be less possible for SBC to restrict or specify particular land uses, especially on the ground floor, without more detailed planning policy or restrictions in place. However, this may not be required as the purpose of the use class change is to encourage flexibility to move between different uses as local conditions require. This could present an opportunity for a more adaptive place that can change uses quickly as the area develops over time. From the point of view of the preparation of the AAP, suggested or anticipated uses will still be included in plans for development options, as the space and servicing requirements for retail are considerably different from those of offices.

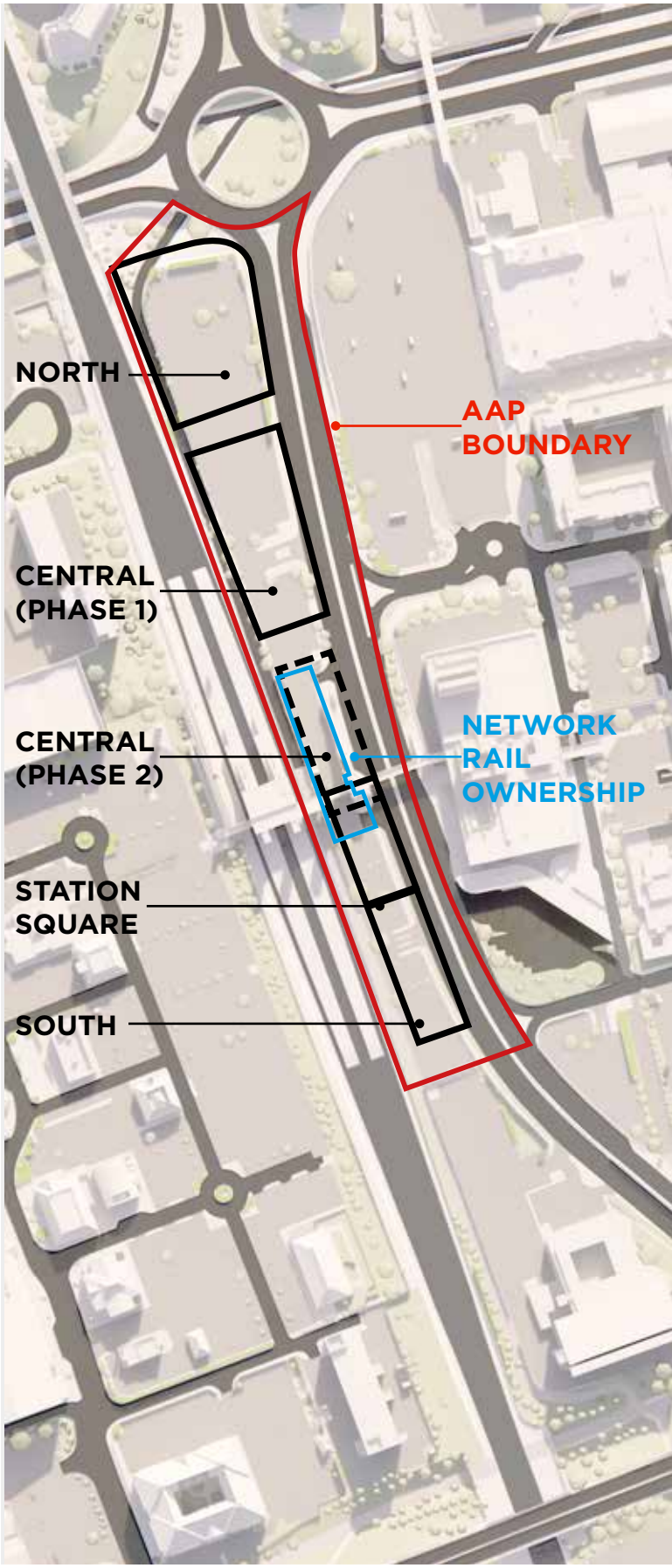
Development Parcels

Four main development parcels have been identified:

- **North:** made up of the existing surface car parks north of the railway station. This land is currently largely in the ownership of SBC and would have the potential to be developed in an early phase.
- **Central [Phase 1]:** made up of the existing surface car parks north of the railway station. This land is currently largely in the ownership of SBC and would have the potential to be developed in an early phase.
- **Central [Phase 2]:** made up of the existing station drop-off areas and immediate surrounds of the existing station, to the north of the proposed square present in all of the Central Area Options. This land is primarily in the ownership of Network Rail, and would only be able to come forward for development after a new railway station building was constructed further to the south, adjacent to the proposed public [station] square.
- **Station Square:** made of the existing surface car parks south of the railway station within the AAP boundary. This land is also currently in the ownership of SBC. This in effect becomes a reserve site, futureproofing the potential to deliver a new rail station should funding become available. As such its delivery is in determinable.
- **South:** made of the existing surface car parks south of the railway station within the AAP boundary. This land is also currently in the ownership of SBC and would have the potential to be developed in an early phase.

For the most efficient use of land, and to deliver the comprehensive objectives of the regeneration policy, proposals for these development parcels should respond to the AAP's Core Enhancements and mobility options, presented earlier in this chapter. At present, plot widths are compromised by the need to provide pedestrian movement along Lytton Way within curtilage. Redistribution of vehicle space.

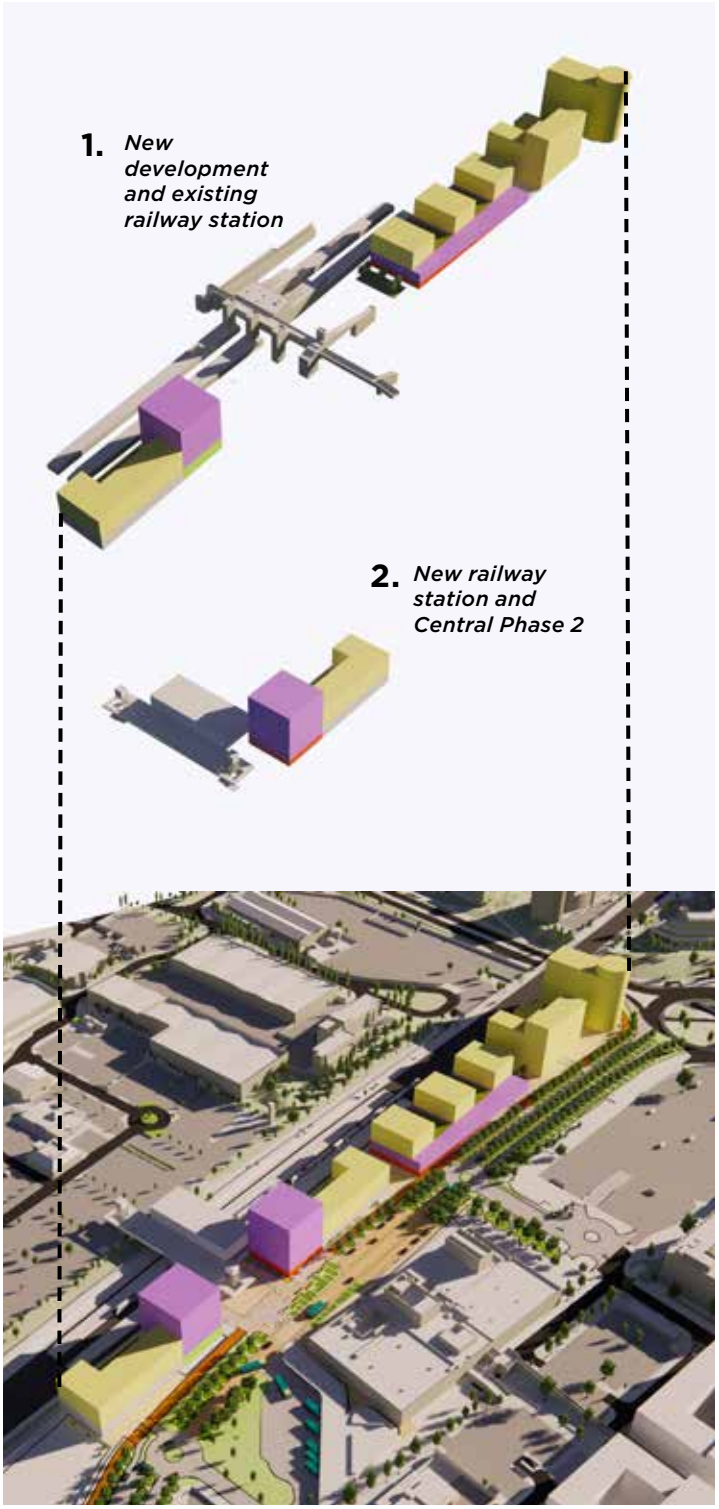
Isolated, uncoordinated development proposals that do not effectively respond to the AAP have the potential to compromise effective placemaking efforts and reduce the overall development gains that could be delivered through a comprehensive approach.



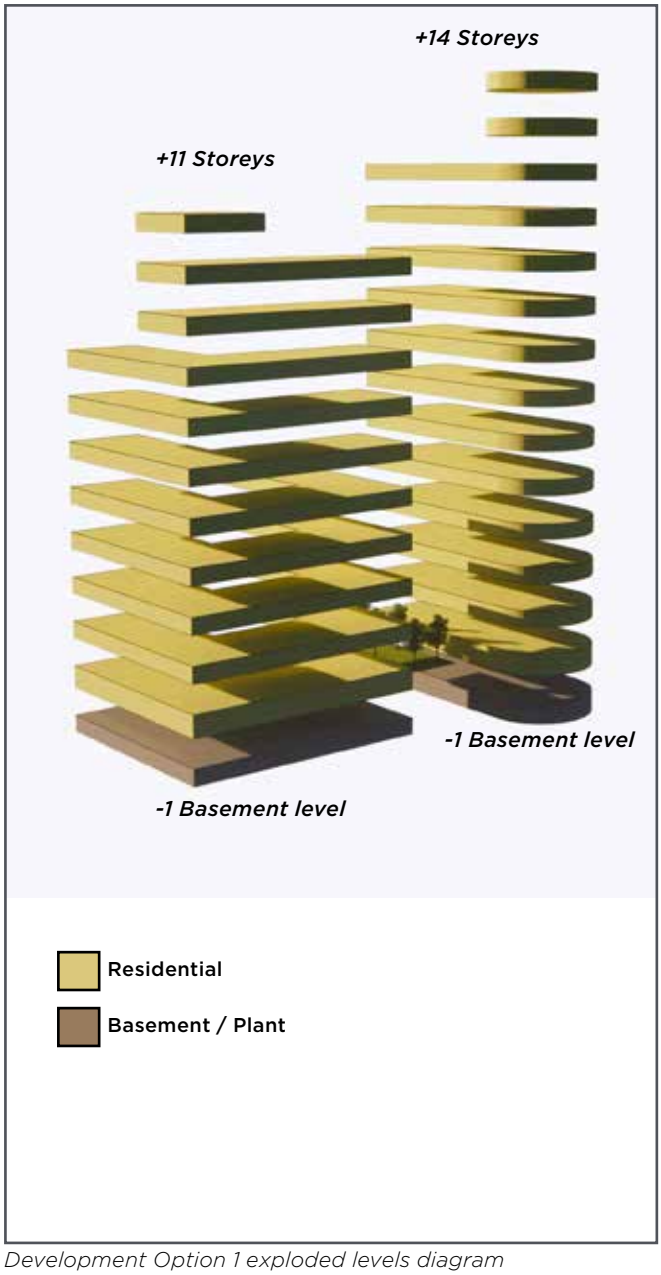
Plan of station area showing new railway station in place

Each development parcel has the potential to support a mix of uses that contribute towards he components of placemaking, as identified in chapter 4. Accompanying the description of the potential uses are some illustrations showing how development in the various locations could be designed. These are illustrative and seek to explore key urban design principles.

Perspective showing potential sequencing of railway station transformation



- **North:** this parcel offers an opportunity to create a landmark development which could predominantly be residential-led. This is a prominent gateway site and given the lack of adjoining development and the need to create a gateway development, storey heights should be a minimum of 6 storeys and could rise to over 10 storeys, dependent upon the configuration of the buildings. A basement storey of surface car parking, to retain a proportion of commuter parking provision, as well as an element of development parking will be required as part of this development parcel with due consideration given to safe access and egress for vehicles accessing Lytton Boulevard.



Development Option 1 exploded levels diagram

North parcel plan location

Development Option 1

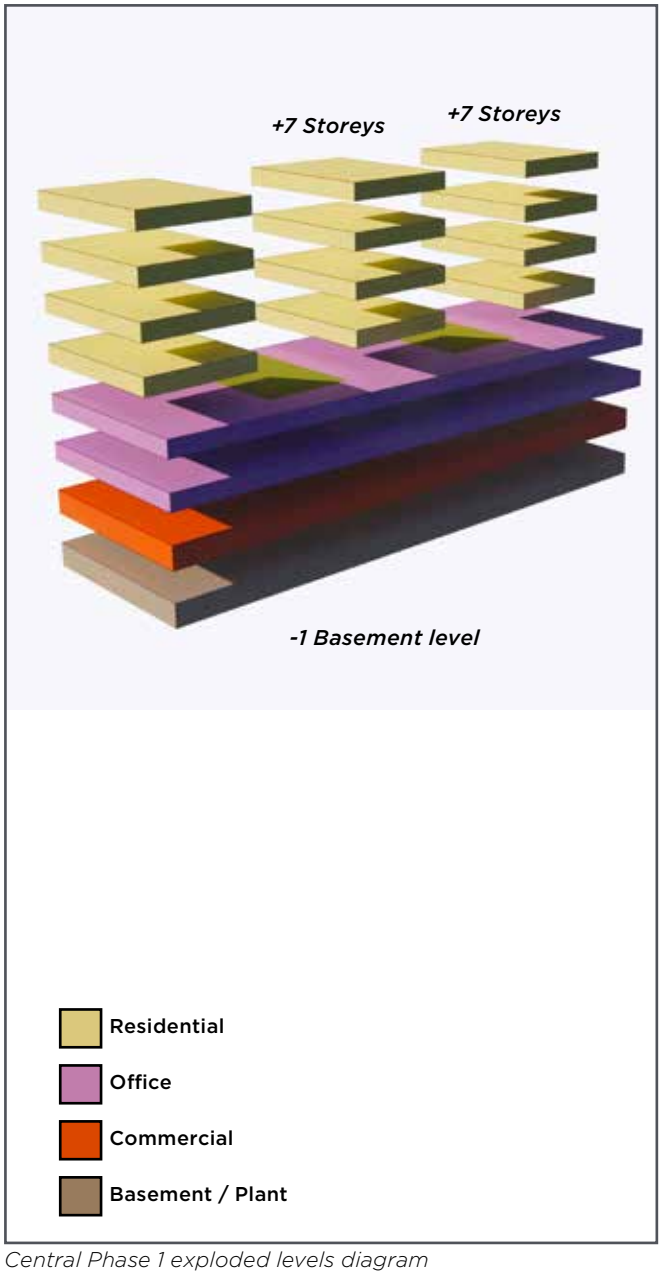
The images below show how a variety of building forms could be developed for the Northern site, and in particular buildings heights can be adjusted to create a fitting gateway development.

Development Option 1

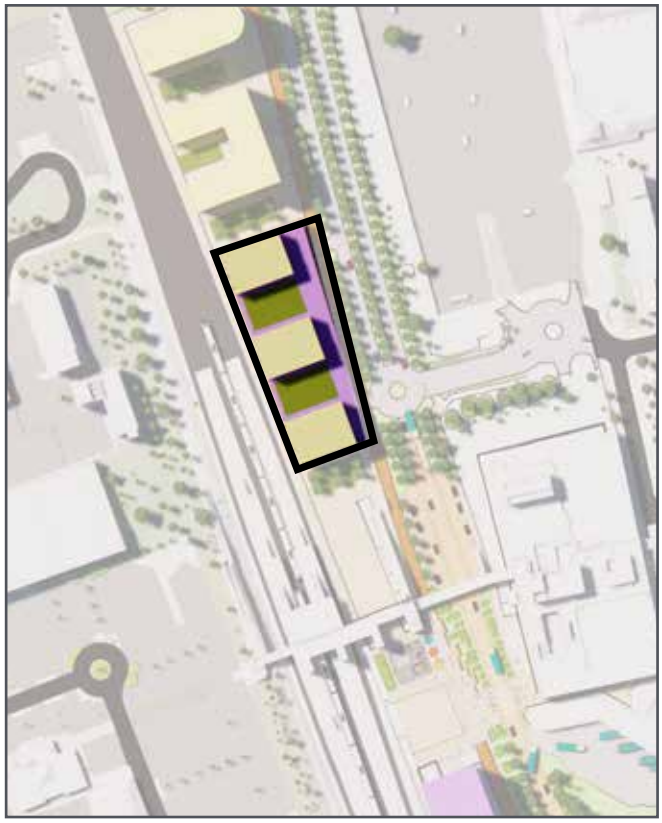
Development Option 2

Development Option 3

- **Central [Phase 1]:** this parcel offers the opportunity to locate a wide variety of uses including a hotel, office space, residential with an active ground floor. Given the lack of adjoining development, storey heights should be a minimum of 6 storeys and could rise to over 10 storeys, dependent upon the configuration of the buildings. A basement storey of surface car parking, to retain commuter parking provision, as well as an element of development parking will be required as part of this development parcel with due consideration given to safe access and egress for vehicles accessing Lytton Boulevard.



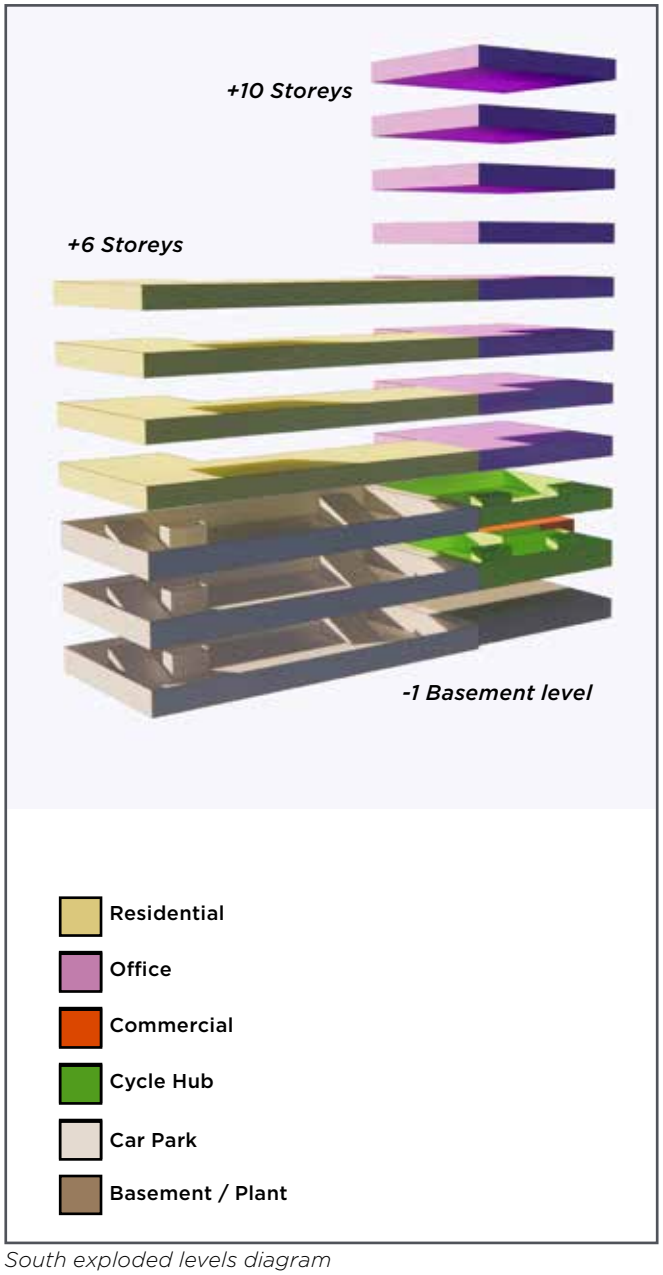
Central Phase 1 exploded levels diagram



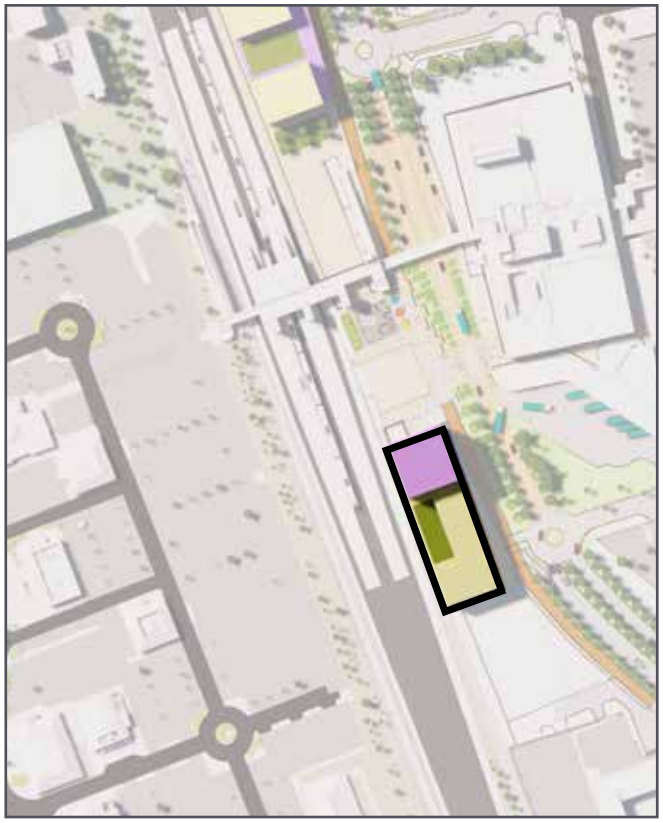
Central Phase 1 plan location

Central Phase 1

- **South:** this parcel offers the best opportunity to consolidate station parking into a multi-storey car park, accessed from the south. Such a car park could provide a platform on which to locate residential development above. The northern end of the parcel would be an ideal location for a high-quality cycle hub, such as that seen in Cambridge or in Dutch cities, providing accessible and secure bike parking and maintenance directly adjacent to the existing and proposed new railway station, as well as the bus station. Offices could be located above the cycle hub, with storey heights determined by market demand and consideration for sunlight into the new public space to the north.



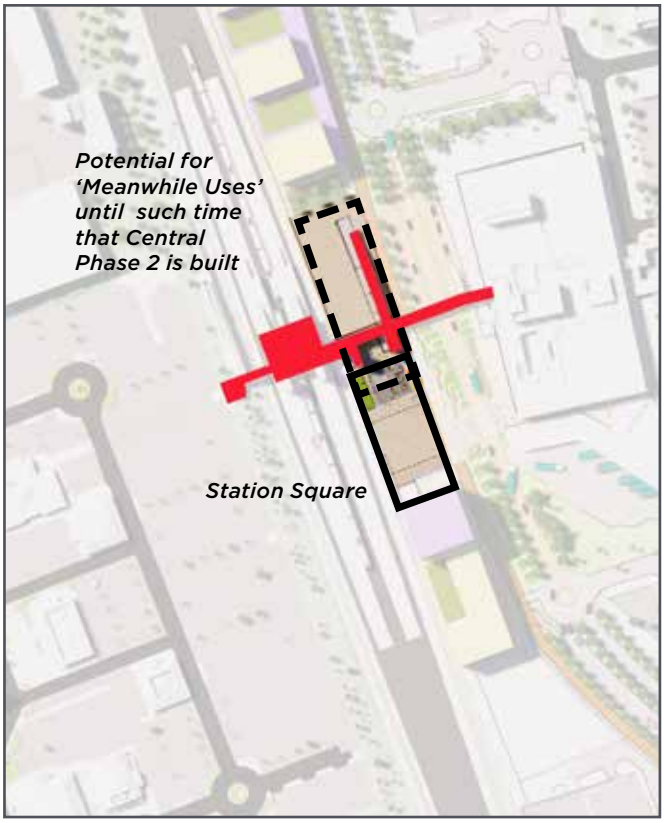
South exploded levels diagram



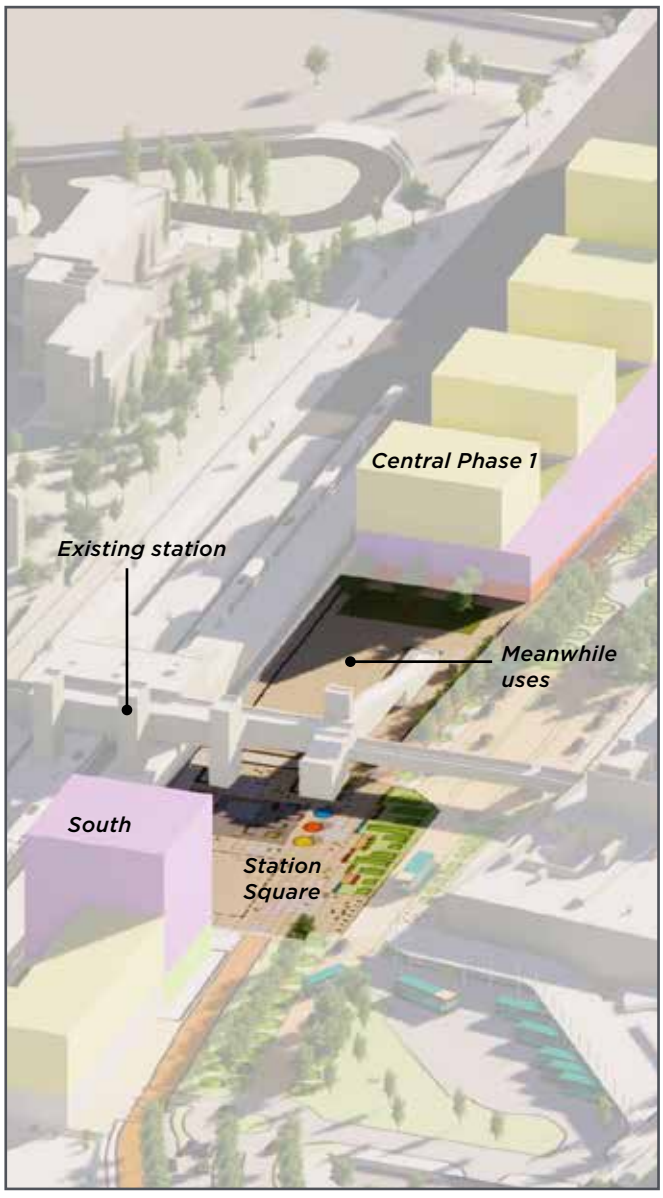
South plan location

South development

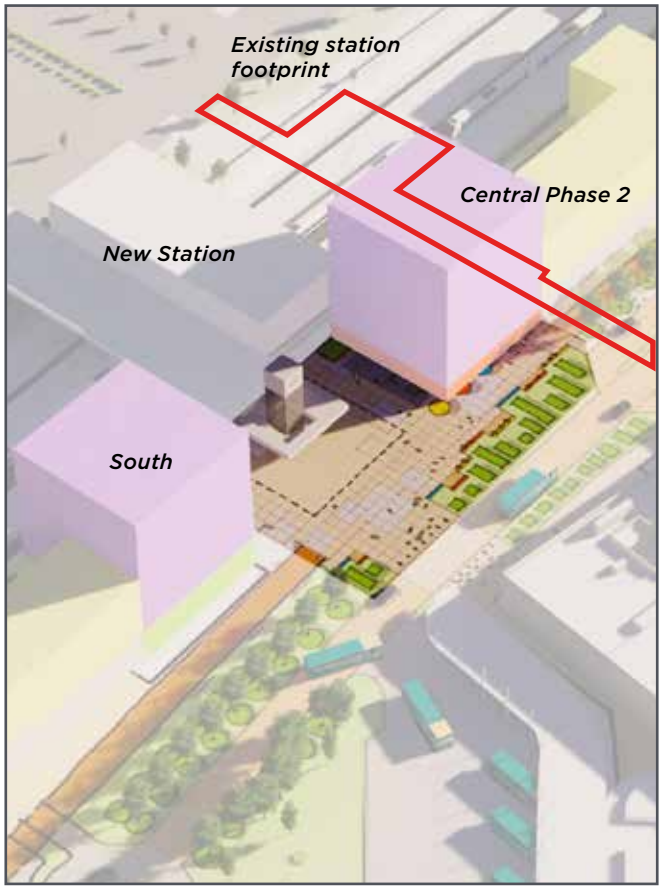
- **Station Square:** Whilst this is designated as a longer-term development site, primarily being occupied by a new rail station building it will also form part of the public realm that will define the arrival into Stevenage. Until such time that the rail station is built the site will perform an important role in being the arrival and departure space for Stevenage. As such this should be a well designed space that will be of high quality and act as an extension of the regeneration of the town centre. The design of the space will need to be designed so that it can accommodate a new [rail station] building in part of the space. The design of the space is also a perfect opportunity to support Meanwhile uses that can evolve and change over time. This could also play a role in supporting SBC's Arts and Cultural Strategy.



Station Square plan location



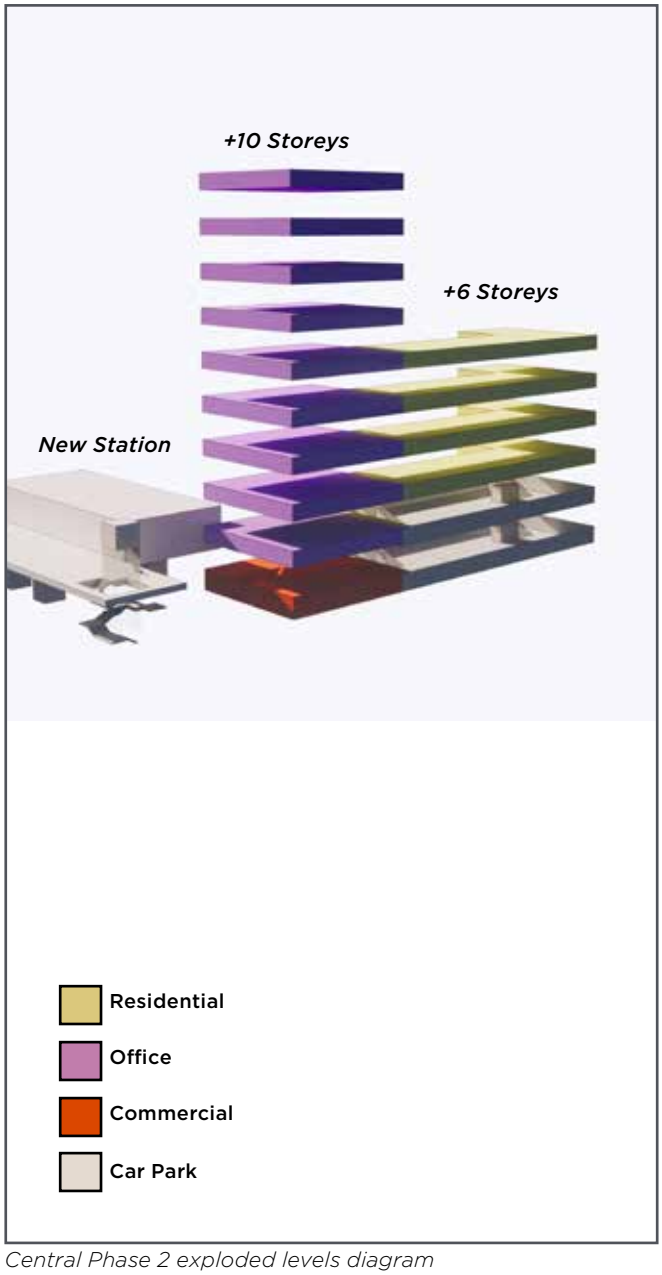
Plan showing Station Square and 'meanwhile uses' area prior to moving the railway station



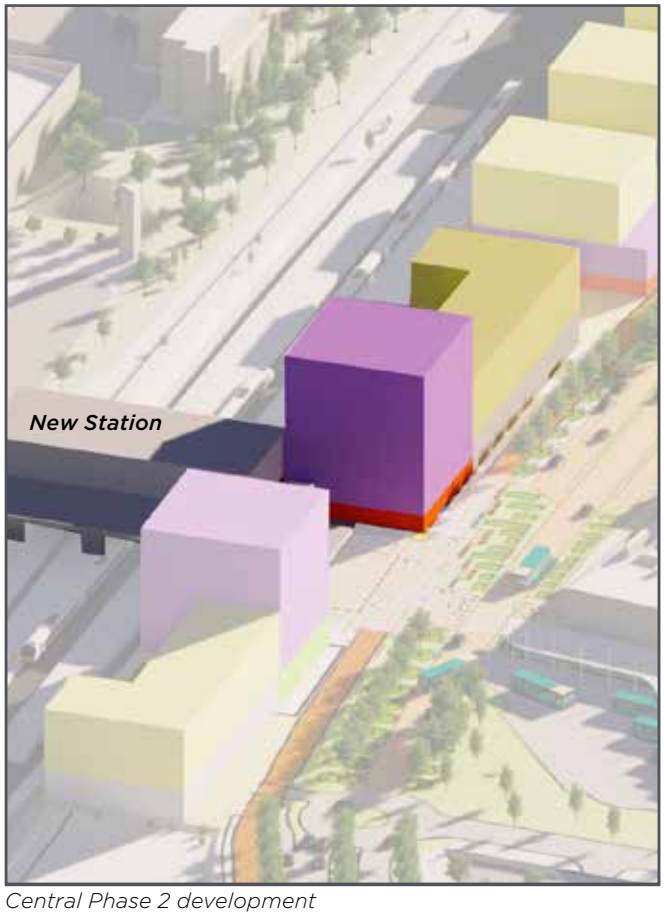
Plan showing new railway station in situ with completion of Central Phase 2 development phase

- **Central [Phase 2]:** this is a longer-term development option that will frame the new public space after a potential new station building is constructed [it would be built largely on the area occupied by the existing rail station]. As such it will have intensive mixed-use, including a vibrant ground floor with retail, café's and other active uses. Above this office uses would successfully capitalise on the highly accessible location. As it is located to the north of the public square, a landmark or feature tower would be appropriate.

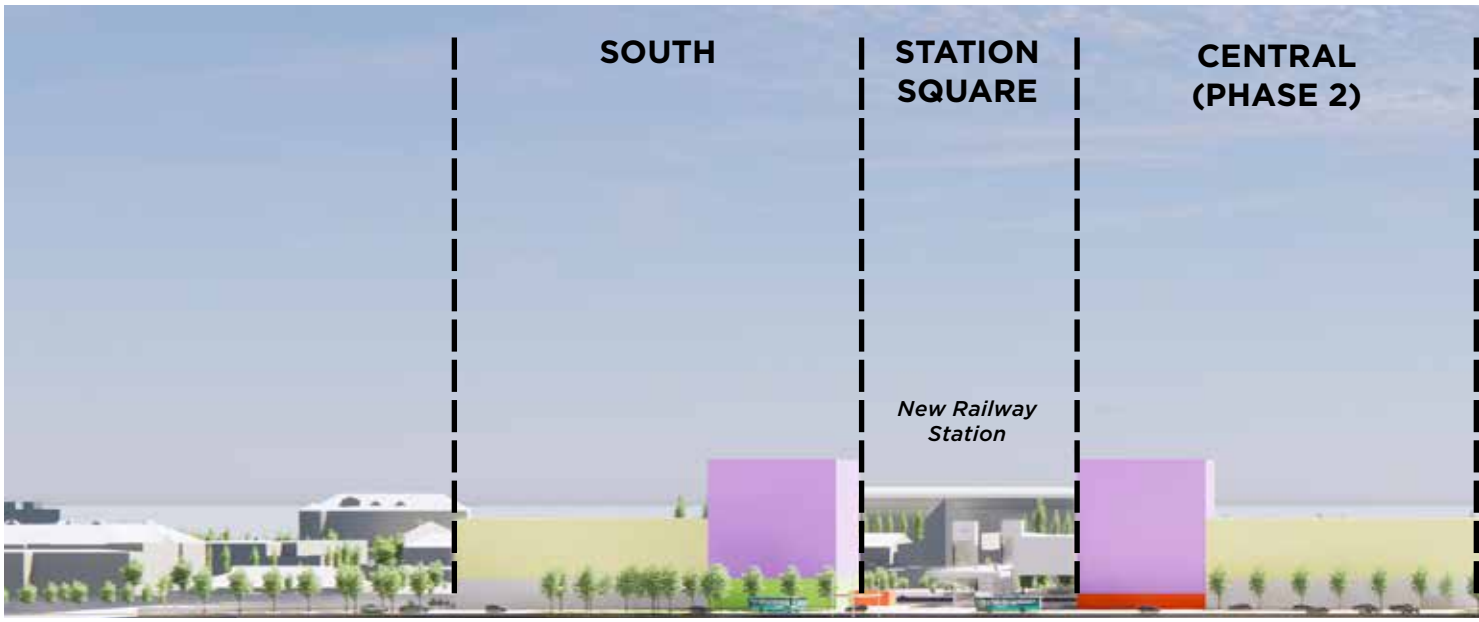
Central Phase 2 plan location



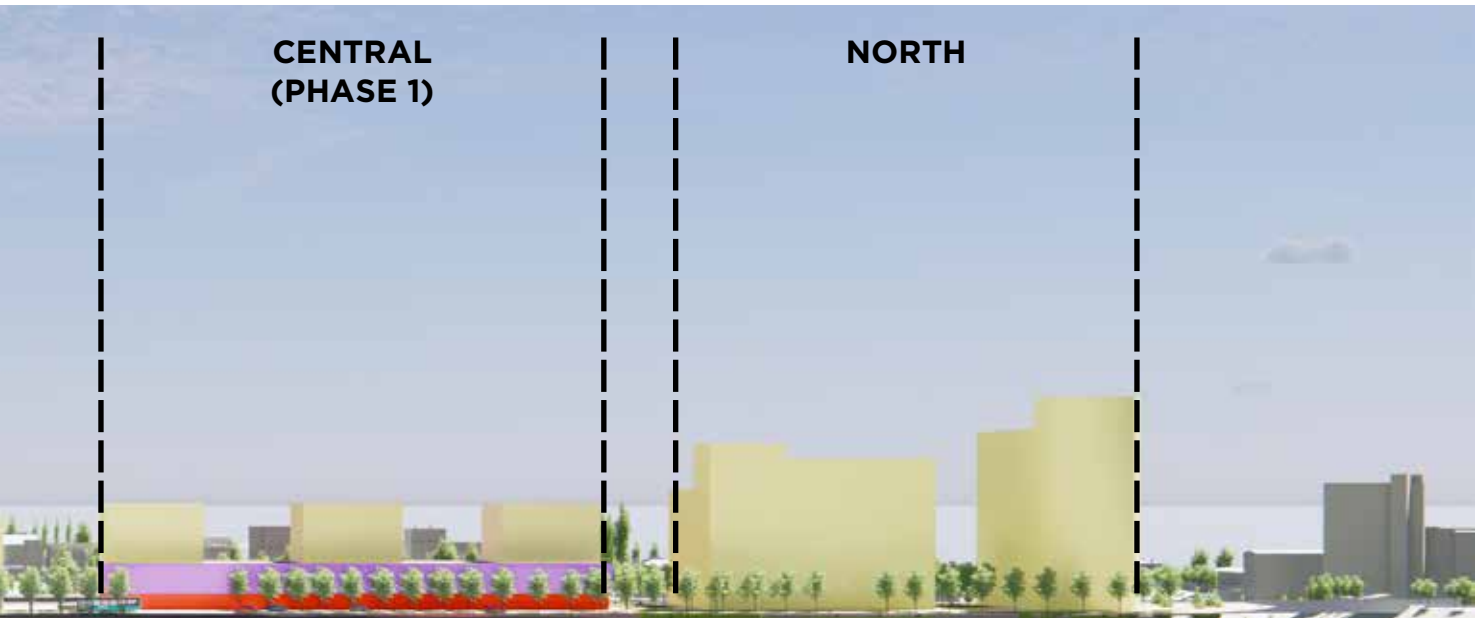
Central Phase 2 exploded levels diagram



Central Phase 2 development



Perspective view of station area 1



Perspective view of station area 2

Parking Consolidation

The surface car parks adjacent to the railway station provide around 450 parking spaces, and are typically well-used. Consolidation of the existing surface parking will be an essential component of delivering the objectives of the AAP.

Key considerations that should be followed when developing car parking proposals:

- Development phasing should ensure that the first existing surface car park brought forward for development should provide sufficient parking that either replaces the parking displaced, or a comprehensive multi-storey car park (MSCP) that replaces all station car parking that will be displaced across North, Central and South development parcels in due course.
- MSCPs require a significant vehicle access, ideally onto a roundabout or controlled junction, and should be considered carefully in conjunction with the circulation proposals presented earlier in this document.
- MSCPs should be screened by single-aspect development or ground-floor uses to preserve the streetscape and active frontage
- Assuming two double rows of car parking, each at 16m wide, a 4 storey multi-storey car park of length 70m would provide full replacement of the existing station parking places. This is approximately two-thirds of the length of the Station South car park, demonstrating the efficiency of multi-storey parking.
- New development such as residential uses and offices may require additional car parking provision, but this should be limited due to the excellent sustainable transport accessibility of the location. Basement parking is likely to be appropriate for these uses.

Two potential locations for a new comprehensive MSCP are proposed:

- Station North car park – within Central (phase 1) parcel
- Station South car park – within South parcel








Advantages and disadvantages against the delivery of the objectives of the AAP, along with commentary, are listed in the table below.

	Station North - Central (phase 1) parcel	Station South – South parcel
ADVANTAGES	• Enables northern half of Lytton Way to be 'town street' with continuous active frontages and no major vehicle accesses across pedestrian and cycling routes • Fits better with character of southern end of Lytton Way – transport, police station and similar uses	• Close to proposed new station entrance • Close to new bus station • Access adjacent to potential new roundabout (as proposed in Core Enhancements) • Efficient in plot width • More direct access from A1(M) junction for commuters • Enables northern half of Lytton Way to be 'town street' with continuous active frontages and no major vehicle accesses across pedestrian and cycling routes • Fits better with character of southern end of Lytton Way – transport, police station and similar uses
DISADVANTAGES	• Distant from proposed new station entrance • Distant from new bus station • Less efficient in terms of plot width • Breaks continuous active frontage from Station Square northwards to North parcel, with major vehicle access across pedestrian and cycling routes • Less direct access from A1(M) junction for commuters • Compromises ability to locate A1 offices on this key site, with potential impacts on overall GDV in AAP area • Does not contribute to potential 'town street' character potential • Further from existing railway station entrance	• Further from existing railway station entrance
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	• Wider circulation proposals presented in the AAP should be considered when siting an MSCP • 'Sleeving' of MSCP with ground floor uses would be required to not compromise quality of street • Wider circulation proposals presented in the AAP should be considered when siting an MSCP	• Wider circulation proposals presented in the AAP should be considered when siting an MSCP

07 CONCLUSION AND FEEDBACK

07 CONCLUSIONS AND FEEDBACK

This report outlines the core issues that are present within the station area as well as the background policy and wider context that affects its development. This is an early stage of the preparation of an AAP, and initial options that focus on mobility are presented for feedback from targeted stakeholders.

Stakeholder Feedback

This report will be circulated to key stakeholders who operate within and around the area covered by the AAP. It seeks targeted feedback from these stakeholders on the following topics set out in Chapter 6:

- The Enhancements for All Options
- Each of the Central Area Options (1, 2 and 3), with a particular focus on issues and opportunities raised by the different mobility options
- The Bike Path Options (1 and 2)
- Phasing approaches

In addition to these, this stage of the process seeks informal thoughts and feedback on opportunities for and the form of Temporary Uses, Green Infrastructure and potential Development Options.

The next stage of the process of preparation of the AAP will be a formal public consultation on more developed options that have been influenced by feedback from this report.

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