

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 16 JULY 2024** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2024.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

3. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME SUMMER UPDATE (Pages 11 - 132)

The Market Towns Programme Summer Update Report is to be presented to the Cabinet.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford

Contact Officer: P Scott – (01480) 388486

4. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3 (Pages 133 - 140)

The Cabinet is to consider a report on Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford

Contact Officer: P Scott – (01480) 388486

5. PRODUCTIVITY PLANS (Pages 141 - 160)

The Cabinet is to consider the Productivity Plans Report.

Executive Councillor: S J Conboy

Contact Officer: O Morley – (01480) 388103

8 day of July 2024

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Please contact Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / e-mail: Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 18th June 2024

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

Councillors L Davenport-Ray, J E Harvey, B A Mickelburgh, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, S L Taylor and S Wakeford.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S W Ferguson.

11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

13 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of the first stage of a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) governance process relating to the prioritisation and spending of CIL funding by the Council as a CIL Charging Authority. In introducing the Report, Councillor Sanderson informed the Cabinet of the options that had been considered and of the benefits of working with town and parish councils. Further on the last point, training and support would be provided on the new arrangements to ensure applicants were able to achieve the key priority of unlocking future growth.

The Cabinet discussed in detail the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's comments. Particular reference was made to the recommendation that increasing the threshold for smaller applications should be reviewed in 12 months. It was argued that inflation since CIL was introduced meant the change was justified. Moreover, the last time applications were submitted to the Cabinet there had been no substantial challenge to the judgements made and all the recommendations had been approved. It would be more beneficial for the Cabinet to focus on strategic projects.

Executive Councillors went on to emphasise the importance of the transparency of the process, of engaging with applicants before bids were submitted and of feeding back afterwards on why applications had not been successful. Councillor Sanderson undertook to devise a timetable to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the new CIL Governance arrangements based on the “Statement of Intent” as set out within the Report and associated Appendix now submitted be approved;
- b) that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Chief Planning Officer after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning to develop, publicise and implement the new governance arrangements as soon as practicable including a transitional CIL round in 24/25 financial year;
- c) that authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to make changes to the documentation required under recommendation b above associated with the new CIL Governance arrangements including the application form to improve understanding of requirements and submission of information;
- d) that the suggested increase in threshold for smaller funding applications from £50,000 to £100,000 with requests for CIL funding allocations over £100,000 being subject to decision by Cabinet be approved;
- e) that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Chief Planning Officer after consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning for the allocation of CIL funding for smaller funding applications requesting £100,000 or less CIL funding, including those from non-parished areas; and
- f) that authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to take forward steps to develop a programme to work more closely with town and parish councils to align local and strategic priorities; and to develop a more programme-led, evidence-based approach including working with partner organisations with such programme being presented to Cabinet on an annual basis for agreement.

14 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 QUARTER 4

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager and the Performance and Data Analyst (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council’s progress with Corporate Plan actions, operational performance measures, corporate project delivery and the Contextual Outcome Measure dashboard. Members’ attention was particularly drawn to the figures for homelessness prevention and the time taken to process new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support, the number of affordable homes delivered and the improvement in Business Rates collection against the target.

Councillor Davenport-Ray expressed approval of the position reported relating to affordable housing and of the openness and transparency demonstrated by the projects and programmes update. Following a question by Councillor Taylor, the Corporate Director (People) stated that the pilot to support residents when they first arrived in the District focussed on key services at an important stage of their lives. Monthly updates would be compiled on referrals made through the project.

Having also commented on the position relating to affordable housing, Councillor Wakeford went on to outline his view that targets should be challenging but

realistic. In that context the Leader congratulated Officer teams on their performance but stressed the need when necessary to communicate clearly why some targets needed to be flexible. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

15 FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 QUARTER 4

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the Council's revenue and capital financial performance for the financial year 2023/24. The figures were consistent with the draft Financial Statement and were better than forecast.

At the request of the Leader, the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources outlined the order of the deficit predicted in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy from year 3 in the context of national trends. On an associated question by Councillor Pitt about the Council's approach in this respect, the Leader recognised the future was challenging and this reinforced the need for good financial stewardship.

Regarding the discussions that took place at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting, Councillor Mickelburgh reported that he had expressed his displeasure to the External Auditor over their fees and stated that the Council expected to receive value for money.

Members were alerted to a forthcoming report to Overview on Scrutiny on the Council's productivity plans and how the Council would improve the use of funding and reserves. Having noted the reasons for the variances in the Capital Programme, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

16 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2023/24

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Chief Finance Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on treasury management performance for period between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. Members' attention was drawn to the impact of higher than expected interest rates and inflation during the period.

Councillor Mickelburgh commented that receipts from the Commercial Investment Strategy property portfolio were lower than expected, but that this was the result of refurbishments being undertaken. He also referred to the technical accounting reasons for the value of a property being lower than the loan used to acquire it. The sale value would be higher than the figure reported.

In response to a question from Councillor Taylor, Councillor Mickelburgh outlined the arrangements for monitoring the condition of commercial properties and for verifying that those arrangements were effective.

Following a question by Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Financial and Treasury Accountant undertook to investigate how social benefits for the District might be reflected in the Council's treasury management and investment activities.

Having noted that, as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, training in this area would be arranged, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be approved for submission to the Council.

17 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

With the aid of the Minutes of the meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Waste and Street Scene delivered an update on the matters discussed by the Joint Group, whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group held on 19th April 2024 be received and noted.

18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

19 CCTV SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Cabinet gave consideration to an exempt report (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) on the CCTV Shared Service Agreement. Having noted the scope the Council would have to consider alternative ways of operating that would give the service resilience and allow it to operate competitively, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the recommendations contained within the exempt report now submitted be approved.

Chair

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Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Market Town's Programme Update (MTPU)
Meeting/Date:	Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) 10 th July 2024 Cabinet – 16 th July 2024
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration & Housing
Report by:	Regeneration & Housing Delivery Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

This report provides the Summer 2024 update on the Market Towns Programme (MTP).

The MTP is an ambitious programme of economic led interventions to renew and reshape our town centres and high streets in a way that promotes growth, improves experiences, and ensures sustainability in the future.

The MTP is funded through a combination of external funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and National Highways.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to:

- Confirm and endorse the extension of the Shop Front Grant scheme on a district wide basis.
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in Consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration & Housing to approve and initiative delivery on new Market Town focused projects and/or reallocate funding within existing programme activities, utilising funding generated from efficiency savings and/or underspend elsewhere within the MTP, should such savings be realised before the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on activity across all strands of the Market Town Programme.

2. RAMSEY TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT

- 2.1. The Ramsey sub programme comprises of three linked activities, which includes:
 - The pedestrianisation of a focused area within the Great Whyte area of Ramsey town centre, positioned between Ramsey Library building and the new Ramsey Town Council Civic Centre. The objective of which is to provide an improved local environment, more capable of hosting events and activities such as the town market.
 - The development of up to six 'shop in a box' small retail units in this pedestrianised location. The units will be used to enhance the retail and cultural offer to residents and visitors, complementing but not duplicating existing retail or service choice.
 - Improvements to the Mews Close car park, including resurfacing and re-marking of bays, for the purpose of mitigating the loss of parking facilities within the proposed pedestrian area and providing an overall improved facility.
- 2.2. The Council is working closely with Ramsey Town Council in the design and development of all three linked activities. Ramsey Town Council, for example, has expressed an interest in managing and operating the 'Shop in a box' units upon completion.
- 2.3. In support of this, the Council has recently commissioned retail advisers to provide guidance to both the Council and Town Council in relation to the 'Shop in a box' project. This contractor will help to develop a business plan for how the retail units will be marketed and managed.
- 2.4. Furthermore, the retail contractor will work with existing local traders to provide training and guidance to help improve business performance and provide support to new or aspiring traders who may wish to occupy the new shop units. This element of the Ramsey programme is funded via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 2.5. In terms of the wider programme focused on all activities in Ramsey, the Council has recently completed a feasibility and options assessment. This assessment has identified a variety of options in which the three projects can be delivered. The feasibility report is included within appendix A.
- 2.6. The Council has consulted with Ramsey Town Council on the different options produced as part of this assessment and will be using this to develop these proposals to a more detailed stage. At which point, the Council and Ramsey Town Council will consult with residents and businesses on their views. The exact schedule for the consultation is yet

to be confirmed, however we are currently aiming to undertake this during Summer 2024.

- 2.7. Subject to the completion of a successful consultation, the Council will target the commencement of improvements to the Mews Close car park by the end of 2024. The two remaining and most significant projects will be delivered during the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

3. HUNTINGDON AND ST IVES PROGRAMME

The Broadway, St Ives

- 3.1. Work towards developing and initiating this scheme has accelerated significantly since the last reporting period. Two Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) consultations have now been completed, with specific attention given to ensuring the views of residents and businesses have been considered fully.
- 3.2. Additional investigatory work was also undertaken during May 2024 which required parts of the Broadway to be temporarily restricted for parking. These investigations have resulted in further amendments and improvements to the scheme design.
- 3.3. Final approval for the scheme to be progressed was made by Cambridgeshire County Council on the 4th June 2024. Work on the scheme is now scheduled to begin during the second half of July and are programmed to be underway for a period of 40 days.

Cattle Market Living Wall, St Ives

- 3.4. This is a potential new project for which the Council would utilise existing contingency funding from within the Market Towns Programme budget as this ceases to become necessary to hold, to undertake exploratory work to consider what could be delivered to improve the aesthetics of this area for the benefit of the community including local businesses and the town's visitor economy. Local Ward Councillors have assisted to identify an issue concerning existing fencing which marks the boundary between privately owned property and St Ives Bus station.
- 3.5. The existing fencing (which backs onto the rear of 'The Courtway at St Ives') is made of corrugated metal, is unattractive and in poor condition. The location of this fencing is immediately next to the Bus Station waiting areas and impacts on the attractiveness of this area seen by many visitors upon first arrival to the town. The Council is therefore seeking to design and deliver either improved fencing and/or a Living Wall type facility to improve the local environment at this location.
- 3.6. Council Officers will work with the Town Council and local neighbours and other stakeholders to develop designs which can form the basis for wider consultation. This work would begin during July 2024, and depending upon

specific design works could be implemented as quickly as late Autumn, if supported by the local community.

Cromwell Museum expansion, Huntingdon

- 3.7. The Council continues to work with Huntingdon Town Council and Cromwell Museum Curator concerning the expansion and improvement of the Cromwell Museum. As reported previously, funding has been allocated from the Market Town programme to the potential acquisition of a property by the Town Council on behalf of Cromwell Museum.
- 3.8. The existing Museum building is constrained in terms of space for exhibitions and visitor facilities. The new and larger premises would be intended to be used as the main Cromwell Museum exhibition space with the existing Museum retained for educational purposes.
- 3.9. Whilst the Market Town programme is providing funding for the purpose of acquiring the new premises, its conversion and refurbishment would be subject to securing significant funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other relevant funding programmes. Acquisition of a building would enable detailed proposals for this to be drawn up and place the Museum in a stronger position to access such funding.
- 3.10. An agreement to purchase the new building has been reached in principle by the Town Council. However, before the purchase can proceed the District Council is providing additional support to Cromwell Museum to better understand the investment required to undertake interim remedial work required to the building in addition to the costs for full refurbishment and conversion, which will form the basis for any future funding applications.
- 3.11. Final approval by the Town Council to proceed with the acquisition is subject to completion of this work. In the event that Huntingdon Town Council do not wish to proceed with the acquisition, the Council will seek to identify alternative activities within the scope of the programme which can be delivered within the 2024/25 fiscal year.

Former Cinema premises, Huntingdon

- 3.12. The Council has begun discussions with Huntingdon BID (Business Improvement District) concerning the former Huntingdon Cinema at All Saints passage. Huntingdon BID has expressed an interest in the property, which is owned by the Council, with a view to bringing it back into productive commercial use as a boutique style cinema with complementary facilities including food and drink.
- 3.13. This enquiry is at an early stage and may not proceed beyond initial discussions. However especially in light of longstanding community interest in the future of the building, the Council considers it is helpful to report discussions at this point. For a project such as this to progress it would be necessary for Huntingdon BID or a partner, they might identify to

secure significant funding from grant or commercial sources to refurbish the building and to initiate operation.

- 3.14. Whilst the Council and Huntingdon BID do not underestimate the level of difficulty in enabling a project such as this, if successful this would significantly contribute to supporting the evening economy and cultural activities within Huntingdon town centre. It may potentially also provide Huntingdon BID with a supplementary income with which to support wider town centre activities.

4. SHOP FRONT GRANT SCHEME – ALL MARKET TOWNS

- 4.1. The Council continues to deliver the Shop Front Grant scheme, across Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Ramsey. The total value of the scheme is £260,000, of which £102,259 in grants have been awarded to date. The overall position on grants town by town is summarised below:

	Huntingdon	St Ives	St Neots	Ramsey	Total
Applications	14	11	17	4	46
Award numbers	10	9	3	2	24
Reject numbers	2	2	10	1	15
To be reviewed	2	0	4	1	7
Grant award	£50,957	£25,040	£19,862	£6,400	£102,259
Total cost of works	£60,724	£34,575	£21,157	£9,643	£126,099
Completions	5	6	N/A	N/A	11
Paid Grants	£21,076	£13,962	N/A	N/A	£35,039

- 4.2. As we are now into the last nine months of the scheme it is necessary to plan for the closure of the scheme and designate a final application deadline. This is so that we can be confident that schemes which have been awarded funding can be fully delivered before the CPCA funding deadline of 31st March 2025.

- 4.3. The Council also wishes to make sure that we have utilised all the funds available by this point and delivered the maximum benefits possible. Consequently, now we can demonstrate successful delivery of grants in the market towns and a significant period of application opportunity to businesses in their centres in line with the original purpose of the funding, we have agreed with CPCA that is appropriate to launch a one-time

extension of the scheme to locations outside of the four main town centres on a district wide basis to conclude the scheme.

- 4.4. This wider district scheme will be open to any independent businesses within the district, but outside of the town centre boundaries. A maximum grant award of £5,000 will be offered (to consider the wider coverage, potentially less prominent locations and the amount of funds remaining) – the maximum £10,000 award will still stand for the town centre scheme – subject to funds remaining. Successful awards in the scheme so far have shown the optimum combination of value and impact can be achieved with significantly smaller grant amounts than the maximum amounts.
- 4.5. The existing scheme terms and conditions will remain the same – for example, applicants will still need to provide three quotes for their planned works, grants cannot be paid for retrospective works and monies are paid on inspection of the completed scheme and evidence of expenditure being provided.
- 4.6. Funding will continue to be offered on a first-come first-served basis, and the wider district scheme applications will be reviewed in September 2024, in order of when they were submitted.
- 4.7. Both town centre and wider district schemes will be formally closed to applications on the 1st of September 2024. This will allow up to six months for all funded projects to be delivered.
- 4.8. The extension to the scheme supports the positive feedback the Council has received in administering the shop front grant scheme with Huntingdon BID and recognising that there are businesses that are not located within the towns that could benefit from this funding.

5. DIGITAL INFORMATION SCREENS – ALL MARKET TOWNS

- 5.1. Work is proceeding satisfactorily toward the delivery of the Digital Information Screens across all four market towns. We are working with our contractor (Trueform) towards installation of the screens across eight locations during 2024.
- 5.2. The screens will require Advertising Consent from the Planning Authority, and applications have now been submitted for this purpose.
- 5.3. Agreement has been reached with Town Council partners in terms of connectivity for the screens and option confirmed for the town map style to ensure most functional / user friendly version offered. During July we will schedule further discussions with each Town Council and other project partners such as Huntingdon BID to consider and review screen content so that this can be sourced and provided to Trueform.

6. SMARTER TOWNS – ALL MARKET TOWNS

- 6.1. The Smarter Towns project was designed to deliver a LoRawan or low energy network capable of supporting connected devices and sensors.

This project has now concluded with the installation of Lorawan networks in key locations across the district. Sensors which have been deployed has included flood sensors on the River Oust to provide an early warning system. These networks link to a wider Cambridgeshire network which has been developed by Connecting Cambridgeshire.

- 6.2. Whilst the initial pilot stage is completed, a small amount of funding is still available. Consequently, we are investigating ways in which to supplement and deploy further sensors that may support the Council's work. For example, the Council currently deploy a network of footfall cameras on time-limited funding, the purpose of which is to help provide an indicator of the economic health of our town centres.
- 6.3. As technology is constantly improving, the Council is investigating as part of a potential Smarter towns 2 project if replacement footfall sensors can be deployed via a Lorawan network more efficiently and at a lower cost. Should viable and lower cost options for this be identified, we will seek to deliver new sensors in target locations by the end of the calendar year. This may be on a pilot basis, should this be considered successful we will seek to plan in wider expansion before the project formally closes in March 2025.

7. ST NEOTS

Priory Centre

- 7.1. The Council's objective in delivering the Priory Centre scheme is to enable a radically improved community and cultural facility, which is financially sustainable in the long term.
- 7.2. Working in partnership with St Neots Town Council, developed a set of initial scheme proposals, which were publicly consulted on during December 2023. These proposals received widespread public support and formed the basis for a 'detailed' scheme which has since been produced.
- 7.3. This detailed scheme consists of internal and external improvements, the latter of which is the subject of a live planning application, consisting of a new building on the northern end of the Centre, alongside other improvements, and additions such as new dormer roof units.
- 7.4. Approximately 80% of the proposed works to the Priory Centre do not require formal planning consent. Work towards improving and refining these elements will continue up to the appointment of a contractor for the scheme.
- 7.5. The procurement process for a scheme contractor has been underway since June 2024, beginning with the drafting of tender documentation. Procurement will be managed as part of a two-stage process. The first of which is to identify contractors with the capability to deliver the scheme, the second stage will be specific to the project requirements.

- 7.6. The target date for the appointment of a contractor is September, with work on the scheme commencing no later than October. Works are expected to take 12 months to complete, as previously announced. However, we will reinvestigate scope to shorten the closure period through efficiency planning, with the contractor once they are in place.

Planning Application Status

- 7.7. The planning application for the scheme, focusing on the north end extension and changes to the roof of the Priory Centre was submitted in March. This application has received several objections. The most notable of which included the following:

- Historic England – impact on the conservation area and the setting to nearby listed buildings
- Environmental Agency – concern highlighted regarding the level of reporting on surface water drainage measures into adjacent River.
- Near Neighbour – objection to scheme on basis of loss of privacy and heritage impact
- Conservation Team, Huntingdonshire District Council – objection raised concerning impact on conservation area and local character.

- 7.8. A full list of consultee comments can be viewed **here**.

- 7.9. Considering the objections specifically highlighted above, it has been agreed with the Local Planning Authority to extend the period for determining the planning application. This will provide additional time for the Project team to review the objections and to initiate a dialogue with those objecting. The purpose of which will be to adjust the planning application to meet concerns, where these are considered appropriate and proportionate to the proposals.

- 7.10. Work on refining and improving those parts of the scheme which are not reliant on planning consent will continue throughout this period and up to the point a contractor is appointed. This includes, for example, agreeing a specification for the interior decoration and equipment provision for items such as audio-visual infrastructure.

Energy Feasibility Study

- 7.11. One of the most important objectives in developing proposals for improving the Priory Centre has been the building's energy efficiency and sustainability. The current Priory Centre is a product of its time (late 1970's and early 1980's) and is highly energy inefficient, with single pane windows throughout and a lack of appropriate insulation.

- 7.12. The design proposals seek to address this by replacing all windows in the Centre and building thermal insulation into the building's fabric wherever practicable. This will be a significant improvement and will complement the

Council's Climate Strategy by supporting the agenda towards decarbonisation.

- 7.13. The Council has also investigated the potential to transition to electric rather than gas in the kitchen equipment used at the Centre. However, as part of our assessment of the building and its infrastructure, we have identified a critical issue concerning electrical capacity to the site, which would prevent any significant increase in electrical usage for the building and its nearby area.
- 7.14. The solution to this capacity issue would be through the development of a new electricity transformer in the area. This is a significant cost which we suggest cannot realistically be absorbed by the Priory Centre project alone without excessive scaling back of the project and what it can deliver for improvements to the structure and usability of the building. It is also unclear whether a transformer could be accommodated in the immediate area, noting the heritage constraint's or whether this would be deliverable within the project schedule.
- 7.15. Services provision in the building (e.g. plumbing) will be upgraded to ensure complete readiness for lower-temperature less carbon-intensive heating systems such as a heat pump. However, the existing conventional heating was recently installed (when an older broken down boiler needed urgent replacement prior to the building works) and is in good working order. This represents significant embedded carbon, and heat pump technology continues to improve. We have established that continued use of the existing boiler is practicable despite works around it. There are also potential opportunities for a more innovative and efficient heating solution at the site location than an air source heat pump that only serves the Priory Centre itself.
- 7.16. To maximise the benefits we can realise against the scheme objectives within the current funding envelope, the Council is therefore now envisaging maintaining dual fuel gas and electricity supply including the gas boiler in the short term, transitioning into less carbon intensive systems ending gas use beyond that. We will investigate less carbon intensive heating system options in partnership with other properties within the Priory Quarter, including the Oast House, and also the library should Cambridgeshire County Council wish to partner with the Council as well.
- 7.17. Consequently, the Council has commissioned an Energy Centre feasibility study for the wider site. This study will consider the optimum energy solutions and how these can best be delivered, including the electricity transformer. This report will be completed by August 2024. The report's findings will provide the Council and its partners with the information we require to make informed decisions and support funding applications to deliver these improvements.

Old Falcon

- 7.18. Over the past few months there has been a series of detailed surveys carried out on the Old Falcon and new designs are currently being

developed to bring the building back into use. The project team are currently finalising the programme with architects and various consultants and intend to carry out a public event during the summer.

- 7.19. The Council are working well with the owner to bring forward a new planning application for the Old Falcon which both parties will submit in a joint application in the Autumn 2024. Following planning submission and subject to the necessary statutory approvals, the owner will then bring forward the new proposals.
- 7.20. The Old Falcon project team are working closely with the wider Market Towns programme team to ensure a comprehensive approach for the Market Square.

Town Centre Improvements

- 7.21. Works are being completed in line with the overall project schedule to January 2025. At the outset of works, we endeavoured to prioritise the completion of the Market Square early for the purpose of enabling the Christmas lights switch-on event to proceed as normal in November 2024, while being clear this could not be guaranteed or relied upon.
- 7.22. Due to an unmarked cast iron main being discovered unexpectedly within the Market Square, we will not be able to provide the entire Square to event organisers by this point. The cast iron main has not been claimed by any utility company and consequently we are unable to determine if it is live. We are therefore proceeding with caution and for safety reasons the mains will be excavated by hand rather than machinery, which naturally takes more time and will impact our ability to complete the Market Square works entirely by the early date of November 2024. We estimate two thirds of the square will be complete and usable by that point, but the remaining third will need to remain fenced off for ongoing works.
- 7.23. Whilst the Town Council has determined the Christmas lights switch-on will not proceed in its normal way in the Market Square, they are developing an alternative programme of festive events spread across the town centre so that this important time for the community and our local economy can continue to be celebrated.

Public Art

- 7.24. This project is funded from the Market Towns Programme budget and is being delivered directly by St Neots Town Council. The role of the District Council in the project is to monitor project delivery by the Town Council and to report progress to the CPCA as the funding body.
- 7.25. Following the completion of tender process the Town Council has engaged The Neotists to act as a partner in delivering the St Neots Art Project. The Neotists will be leading on three sections of work which will see the delivery of the community artwork project. The Neotists will be reporting back to a Town Council working group at each stage, with the Council retaining the sign-off of themes, designs, and the final installation.

7.26. The three stages are as follows:

- Stage 1: Research, engagement, theme, and location development
- Stage 2: Materials, design, and concept stage, followed by public engagement/consultation.
- Stage 3: Implementation, from planning permissions through to manufacture and installation

7.27. The Project is currently in stage 1 and the Neotists, working with a local company have delivered workshops with key community groups and residents to discuss and develop themes and locations. Public surveys have also been run to gather opinions, thoughts, and feedback to inform the nature of the artwork.

7.28. Research around these themes is nearing completion and this will be pulled together and suggested final themes and locations brought to the Council. A summary of the survey results and the workshops is included in Appendix B and C.

8. FUNDING

9. FINANCE UPDATE

Funding source	Grant secured	Spend to date	Balance
1. St Neots Regeneration			
Future High Street Fund	£3,748,815	£2,395,862	£1,352,953
Community Infrastructure Levy	£4,830,000	£0	£4,830,000
CPCA	£3,100,000	£150,477	£2,949,523
National Highways	£3,493,218	£2,188,261	£1,304,957
CPCA Masterplan phase 1 (legacy)	£260,000	£69,862	£190,138
Funding totals	£15,432,033	£4,804,462	£10,627,571

Funding source	Grant secured	Spend to dare	Balance
2. Huntingdon & St Ives			
CPCA Masterplans & Accelerated Funding (*post change control March 2023)	£802,150	£229,764	£567,385
Funding totals	£802,150	£229,764	£567,385

Funding source	Grant secured	Spend to dare	Balance
3. Ramsey			
Local Growth Fund	£1,153,525	£0	£1,153,525
UKSP (revenue)	£221,000	£31,022	£189,978
CPCA Accelerated Funding (legacy)	£295,000	£32,585	£262,415
Funding totals	£1,669,525	£63,607	£1,605,918

Funding source	Grant secured	Spend to date	Balance
4. Programme total			
All funding sources	£17,903,708	£5,097,833 (£1,147,581 increased expenditure versus April update).	£12,800,874

10.COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 10.1. The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

11.KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

BUDGET MANAGEMENT RISK

- 11.1. The projects that sit within the MTP are at various stages and therefore, as work progresses to detailed level, cost reliability and accuracy increases, the level of risk is more certain.
- 11.2. One of the most significant elements of the MTP was the St Neots Town Centre Improvements. The tender process for this resulted in costs being confirmed at a significant cost saving compared to previous estimates. This has lowered the risk for this project and the programme overall significantly.
- 11.3. The Priory Centre project does present an elevated risk level in cost terms currently. As another construction-based scheme it is likely to be affected by the significant inflation this sector has experienced in the two years. Whilst inflation has reduced, we will continue to review the state of the market and develop measures to reduce costs should it be necessary such as value engineering.

PROGRAMME RESOURCE RISKS

- 11.4. The MTP requires different skills, expertise, and external technical support at various stages of project delivery. The programme itself has multiple projects which must be managed simultaneously identifying all interdependences across the programme. There is significant internal and external stakeholder management and detailed consultation with partners and resident/ business groups.
- 11.5. This could result in competing priorities across organisations that will require careful consideration. Mitigation: As part of the project, a detailed resources plan and communications strategy with stakeholders has been developed to ensure the management of expectations and information being shared promptly. The HDC's website is regularly updated with the progress across the core programme sites, more time is being invested in engaging stakeholders, a greater presence on social media and revamping of the newsletter.

REPUTATIONAL RISKS

- 11.6. The MTP is a high priority for the Council, so monthly reporting, governance and timely decision-making are critical to ensure the programme is successfully delivered. A further key element is having in place a well-planned Communications Plan. This is monitored weekly and designed to be proactive, looking ahead several months for potential

issues for which communications and publicity are important tools for resolving.

- 11.7. Further to this, the programme governance and reporting lines will be continually monitored to ensure that the key programme milestones are managed and achieved. A full MTP programme risk register is in place along with individual project risk registers. Given the size and complexity of the MTP it features on the Council's Strategic Risk register, along with the mitigating actions.

LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 11.8. The delivery of the MTP is aligned with the principles and key objectives of the HDC Corporate Plan, specifically it links to:
- Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, through Forward Thinking Economic Growth

12. CONSULTATION

- 12.1. Within the reporting period, it should be noted that a statutory consultation has been undertaken in relation to the Priory Centre planning application. This has resulted in the Planning Application determination being extended to July, initially, to assess and respond to comments and objections which have been received.
- 12.2. A non-statutory consultation is being planned for the end of Summer 2024. This is in relation to emerging project proposals concerning the Ramsey town centre enhancement programme.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.3. This programme contains multiple projects where legal advice and guidance is required as part of project delivery. Project Staff will liaise with the Legal Services Manager as required to ensure appropriate legal oversight and advice if provided when relevant.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.4. The MTP Project team is currently fully resourced in staffing and budget terms to deliver the MTP programme as set out.

EQUALITIES

- 12.5. The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

12.6. Good planning and effective regeneration can improve environments and opportunities for communities experiencing disadvantage. Planning which does not engage with or consider the needs of local communities is unlikely to improve their life chances and may further entrench area-based disadvantage.

ENVIRONMENTAL

12.7. The Council has a duty to ensure we continue to promote an environmentally positive recovery in Huntingdonshire following the impacts of COVID 19. We also have a duty to deliver sustainable place making. In December 2021, the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles. In October 2022, the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living, and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2023 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:

- setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
- an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners.
- an encourager to those that live, work, and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.

12.8. The Council has direct control of only a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire, but we can adopt a key role to influence the district, demonstrating good practice whilst setting policies and strategies to influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth. These principles are embedded within the MTP.

LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A: [Ramsey feasibility study stage 2](#)

Appendix B: [St Neots public art survey](#)

Appendix C: [St Neots public art workshop summary](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Cabinet (FHSF (Future High Street Fund)) 13th February 2020 can be found [here](#)
- Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 28th July 2020 – EXEMPT.
- Report to Cabinet (Market Towns Accelerated Programme) 18th March 2020 can be found [here](#)
- Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 23rd. February 2021 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2022 Update to Cabinet, 17 March 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Summer 2022 Update to Cabinet June 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Autumn 2022 Update to Cabinet September 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Winter 2022 Update to Cabinet December 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2023 Update to Cabinet March 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Autumn 2023 Update to Cabinet October 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Winter 2023 Update to Cabinet December 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2024 Update to Cabinet April 2024 can be found [here](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

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Great Whyte Ramsey, 1905

Ramsey Town Centre

Stage 2 Report

10.06.2024

1. **Introduction**

Project Information

Project **Ramsey High Street**
Ramsey,
Huntingdon
PE26 1HA

Client **Huntingdon District Council**

Sam Caldbeck
St Mary's St,
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Consultant Team

Architects
Project Director
Project Designer

AOC Architecture
Tom Coward
Dan Wilkins

Quantity Surveyors & Project Manager
Director

MEA
Mike O'Hanlon

Services Engineers
Director
Senior Engineer

RED Engineering Design
Stas Brzeski
Jason Anderson

Structural Engineers
Director
Director
Engineer

Simple Works
Phil Isaac
Laura Hannigan
Sinead Conneely

Project Contact

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5	2.0 BRIEFING 2.1 Project Brief 2.2 Project Objectives 2.3 Project Vision and Aims 2.4 Project Priorities
8	3.0 APPRAISAL 3.1 Site appraisal
19	4.0 OUTLINE DESIGN - MEWS CLOSE 4.1 Brief Analysis 4.2 Concept Design
26	5.0 OUTLINE DESIGN - GREAT WHYTE 5.1 Brief Analysis 5.2 Concept Design
37	6.0 OUTLINE DESIGN - SHOP IN A BOX 6.1 Brief Analysis 6.2 Precedents 6.3 Cost Comparison 6.4 Access Requirements 6.5 Arrangement 6.6 Form 6.7 Civil Engineering 6.8 Power 6.9 Construction
72	7.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT 7.1 Construction Cost Estimate 7.2 Options Appraisal 7.3 Target Programme 7.4 Project Risks 7.5 Next Steps 7.6 Survey Summary 7.7 Overview of feedback

2. **Briefing**

2.1 Project Brief

The initial brief and scope, as set out by Huntingdon District includes the following:

- A feasibility study and options analysis concerning public realm enhancements (including pedestrianisation of public highway) and the provision of small self-contained units located in the area to be pedestrianised, capable of being used as short-term flexible retail spaces.

Funding

Huntingdonshire District Council was awarded funding from the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for the purpose of delivering two linked projects in the Great Whyte area of Ramsey town centre.

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome from the implementation of these projects is an improved local environment, including the pedestrianisation of a short stretch of public highway, and a stronger more resilient local economy, enabled by providing an alternative and flexible approach to encouraging new traders and footfall. Whilst these projects are technically separate with independent funding streams, they are effectively a combined scheme. Project 2 for example, cannot proceed without Project 1 being implemented.

Project 1 (Public Realm)

This is focused on the design and delivery of improvements to the local town centre environment, in a central area called the Great Whyte. This project is in receipt of funds totalling £300,000 for the design and delivery of the scheme in its entirety.

Project 1 will require the removal of removal of 16 car parking spaces. It is a critical requirement of this commission to identify locations for re-providing these spaces in nearby locations.

Project 1 Requirements

- Options for de-cluttering, improving amenities, signage, and where necessary, resurfacing or adjustments that will enable a pedestrian only zone
- Ability to accommodate the weekly town market
- Re-provide 16no. removed parking spaces

Project 2 ('Shop in a box')

Previously titled as 'Market Produce Hub' was awarded £1.1M for design and delivery from the CPCA via the Government's Local Growth Fund.

We wish to explore options for the provision of a number of small flexible retail units of a wooden core structure, with a design which is bespoke to Ramsey and informed by the heritage and history of the town. The requirement is to develop a lightweight and flexible structure and space, which will not require intrusive civil engineering works, and which could, if required, be relocated to an alternative location in the future.

We envisage a small retail space which can be let on a very low-cost basis by independent traders, some of whom may be considering moving from online only, to a physical retail presence.

Project 2 Requirements

Explore feasibility of 'Shop in a Box' concept in terms of project budget and scale and impact on local economy.

Critical considerations:

- Ease of Maintenance, Security, Design life
- Units to have electricity
- Water & Toilet facilities not considered necessary due to proximity of facilities within the Town Council Civic Centre.
- Advise on size & number of units. A balance required to avoid 'overcrowding' the Great Whyte Area.
- Concept design will ideally draw on aspects of local history or heritage. There may also be opportunity to incorporate an element of public art.
- Unit size, refer to 'Business in a Box' enterprise at St Ives.
- Engage with local Stakeholders.

Required Outputs

- Feasibility Study & Assessment for Project 1 and 2
- Concept Design up to RIBA stage 2
- Up to 3 options produced, which identify different approaches to the design and layout of the pedestrian zone, incorporating 'project 2' units
- Revised car park plan layout plan for the Mews Close off street car park, identifying options for increased capacity
- Red line plan identifying existing loading bays available for re-designation, incorporated into commission documentation.
- Options assessment
- Recommendations on next steps

Design & Build Budget

The combined project budget for all costs relating to the delivery of Projects 1 and 2 is £1.4M.

Amended extract from Ramsey feasibility and options assessment document.

2.2 Project Objectives

OBJECTIVES

Improved local environment, including;

- Pedestrianisation of a short stretch of public highway with enhanced public amenity
- Additional accessible shop units within public realm
- Re-provision of local market space
- Facilitate stronger more resilient local economy, enabled by providing an alternative and flexible approach to encouraging new traders and footfall
- Relocated street parking including disabled parking
- Designated service bays

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2.3 Vision & Aims

PROJECT AIMS

Mews Close

Rationalise parking arrangement to provide additional spaces to make up shortfall

Great Whyte

Pedestrianisation of Great Whyte to;

- improve public amenity
- accommodate market and shop trading host local events and festivals
- showcase public services

Shop in a box

- Provision of small retail space
- Robust sustainable construction
- Electricity services
- Access and inclusion

To be let on a very low-cost basis by independent traders

2.4 Priorities

MAIN PRIORITIES

- 1. Accessible and sustainable shop in box - low cost retail spaces, with potential for relocation.**
- 2. No net loss of car parking, with a focus on convenient redistribution of 16 spaces including disabled parking bays**
- 3. Service bay strategy**
- 4. understood co-ordination with market square functions and events, to ensure a balanced flexible use of spaces**
- 5. De-cluttering and enhancement of public space to support civic amenity**
- 6. Optimise space layout to promote outdoor commercial opportunities for cafes and restaurants**
- 7. Amendments to public realm to manage pedestrianisation, shop service and fire access**

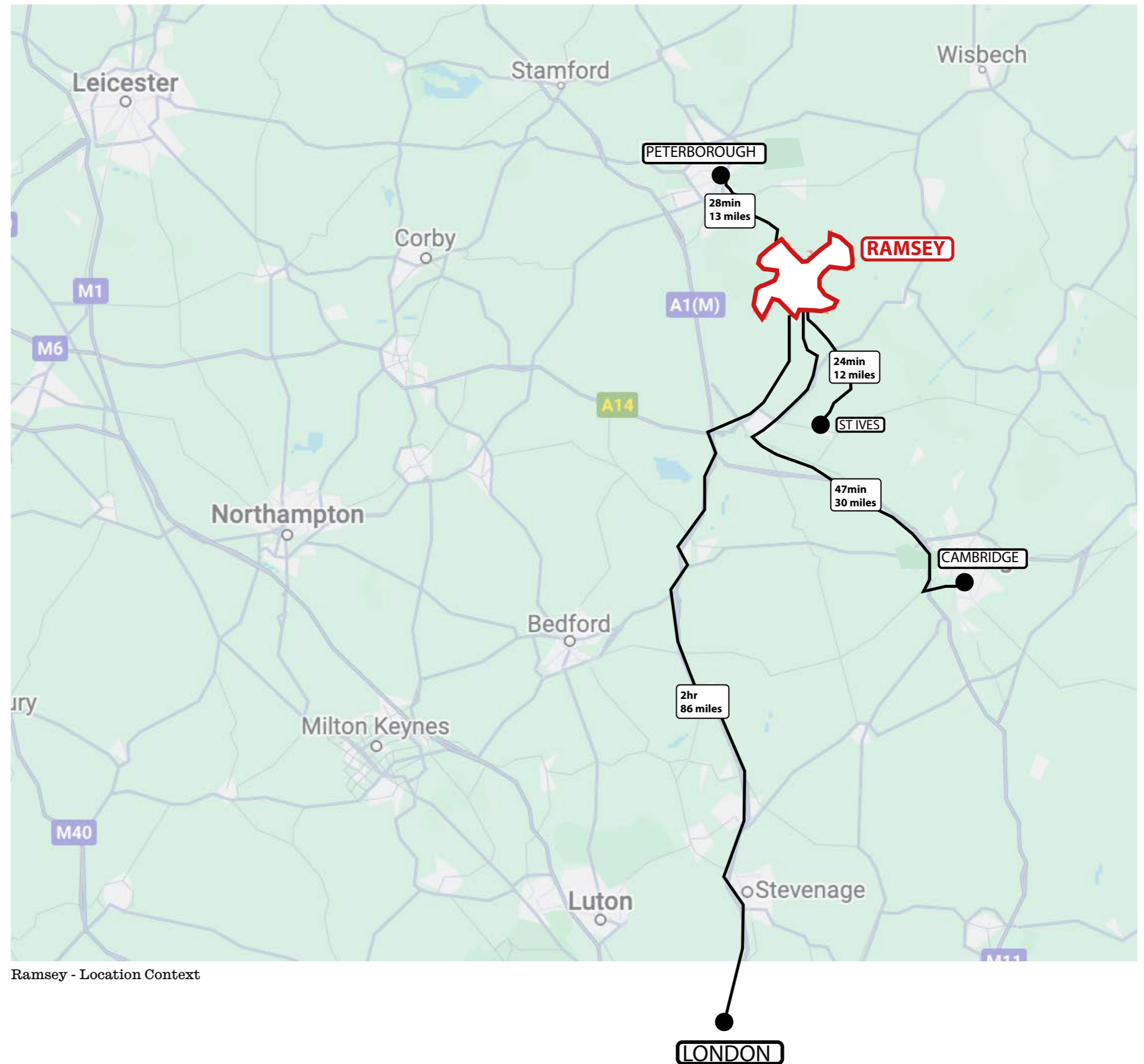
3. **Appraisal**

3.1 Site Appraisal

Ramsey is a market town in the Huntingdon district of Cambridgeshire. It houses a population of approximately 5,700.

Ramsey is located approximately 13 miles from Peterborough, 30 miles from Cambridge and 86 miles from central London.

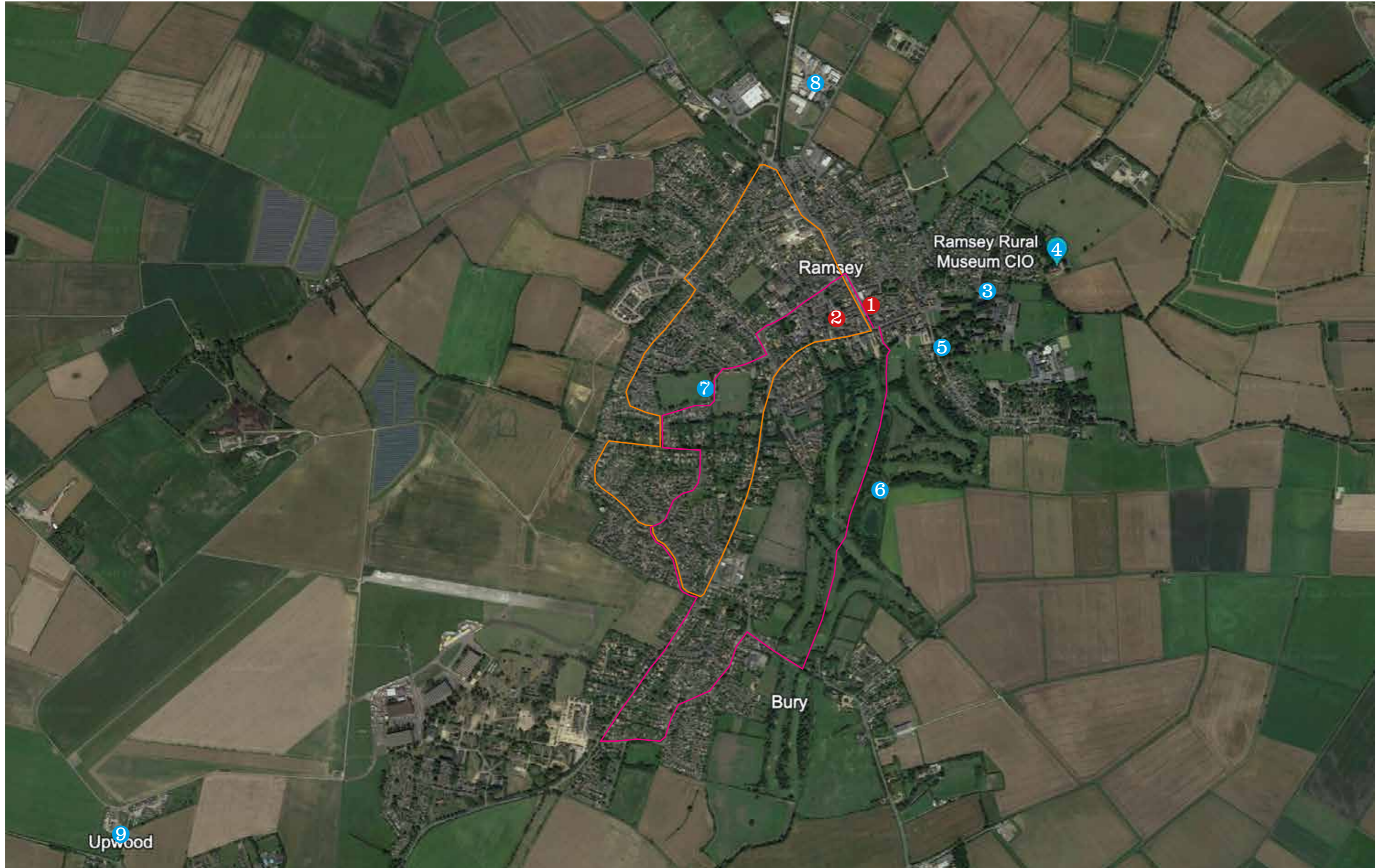
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Ramsey - Location Context

Location Plan

- 1 Site - The Great Whyte
- 2 Site - Mews Close
- 3 Walled Garden
- 4 Ramsey Rural Museum
- 5 Ramsey Abby
- 6 Golf Course
- 7 Cricket Ground
- 8 Business Park
- 9 Ramsey Gliding Club
- Town Walk
- Bury Town Walk



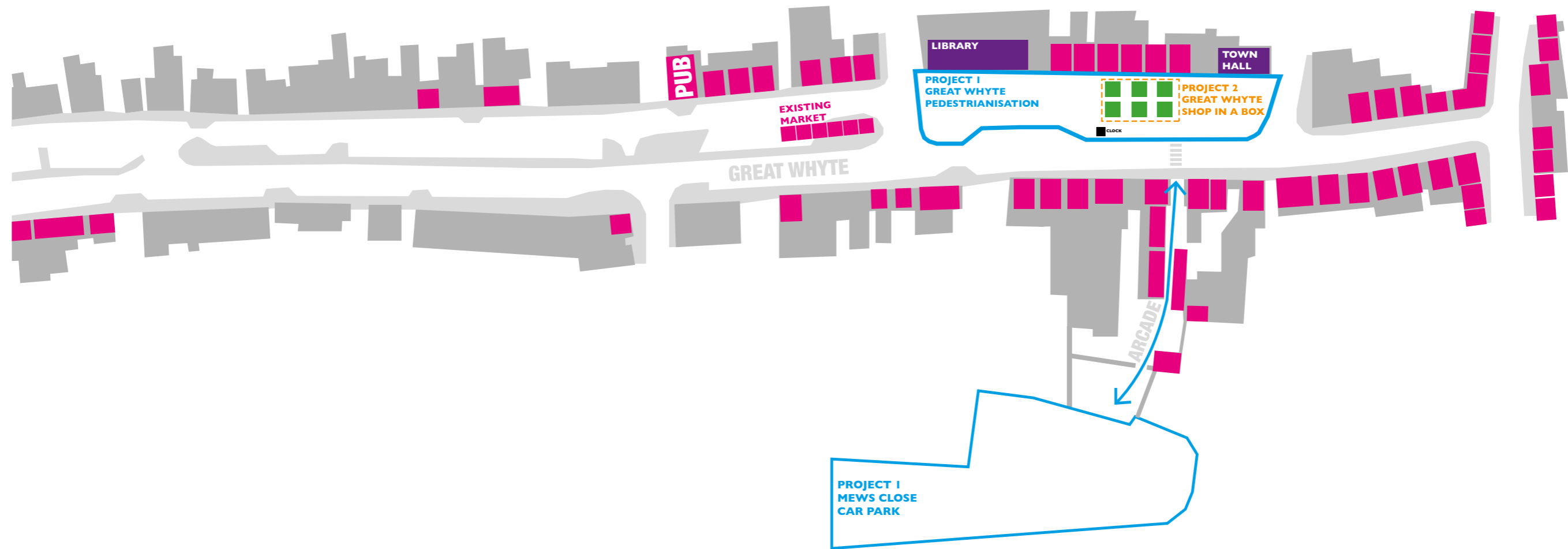
Location Plan



Location Plan

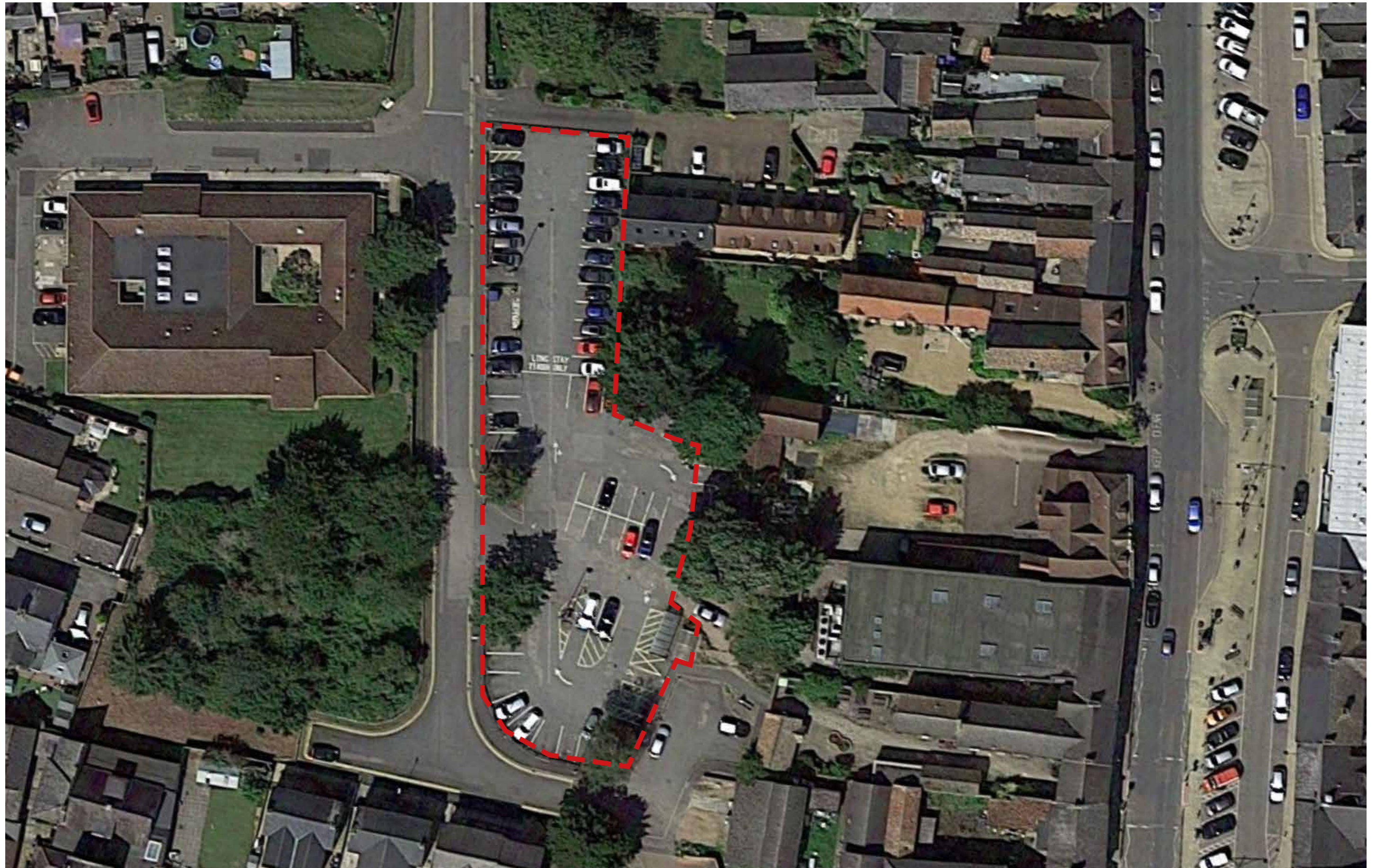
KEY:

- Local Authority Buildings
- Shops & Businesses
- Site Boundary



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Location Plan - Mews Close



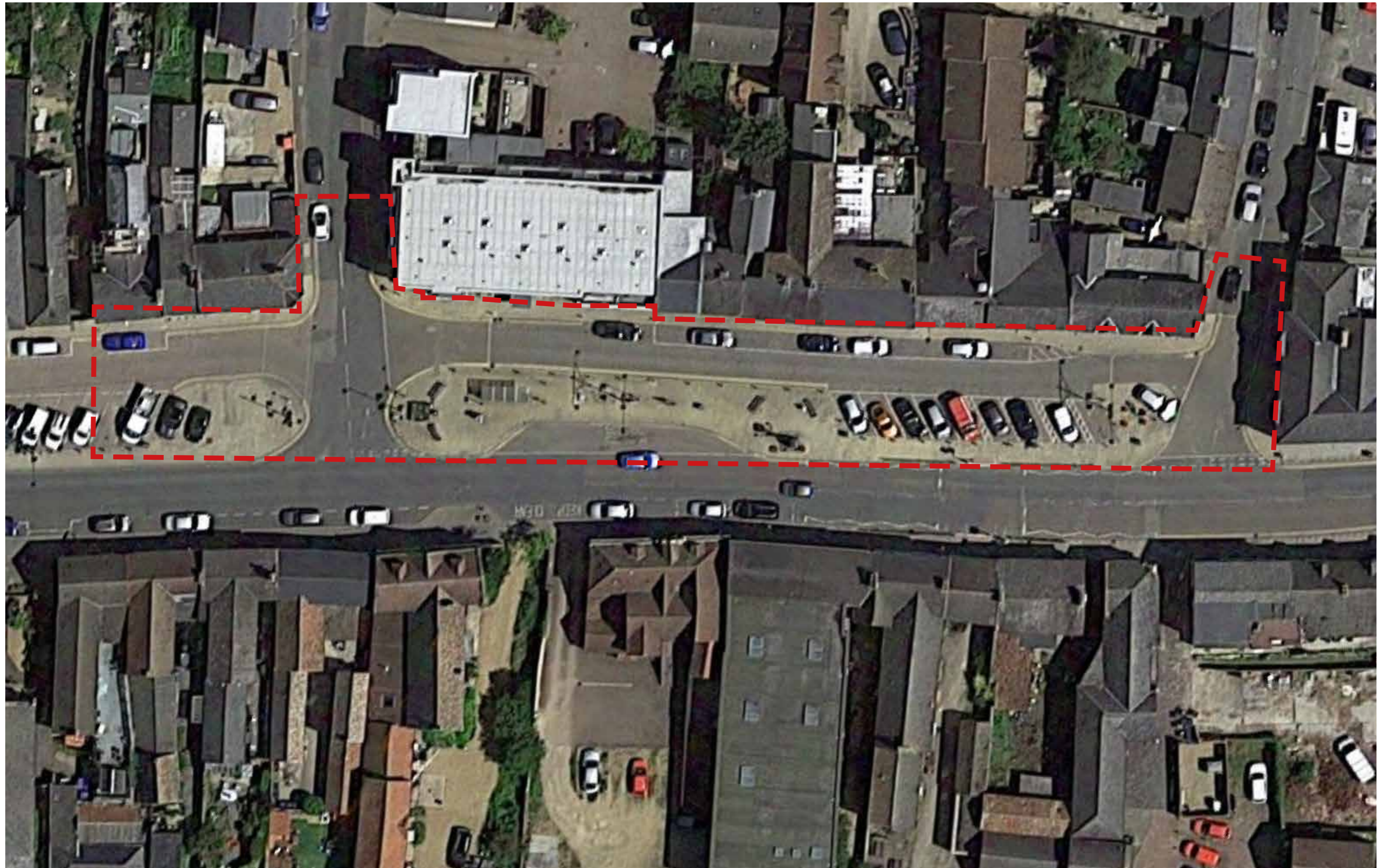
Site Photos - Mews Close

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Location Plan - Great Whyte

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Site Photos - Great Whyte



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Site Photos - Great Whyte



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Local Typology



Historic village scale



Familiar elements across contrasting neighbours



Varied retail features

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Stepping cottage roof forms

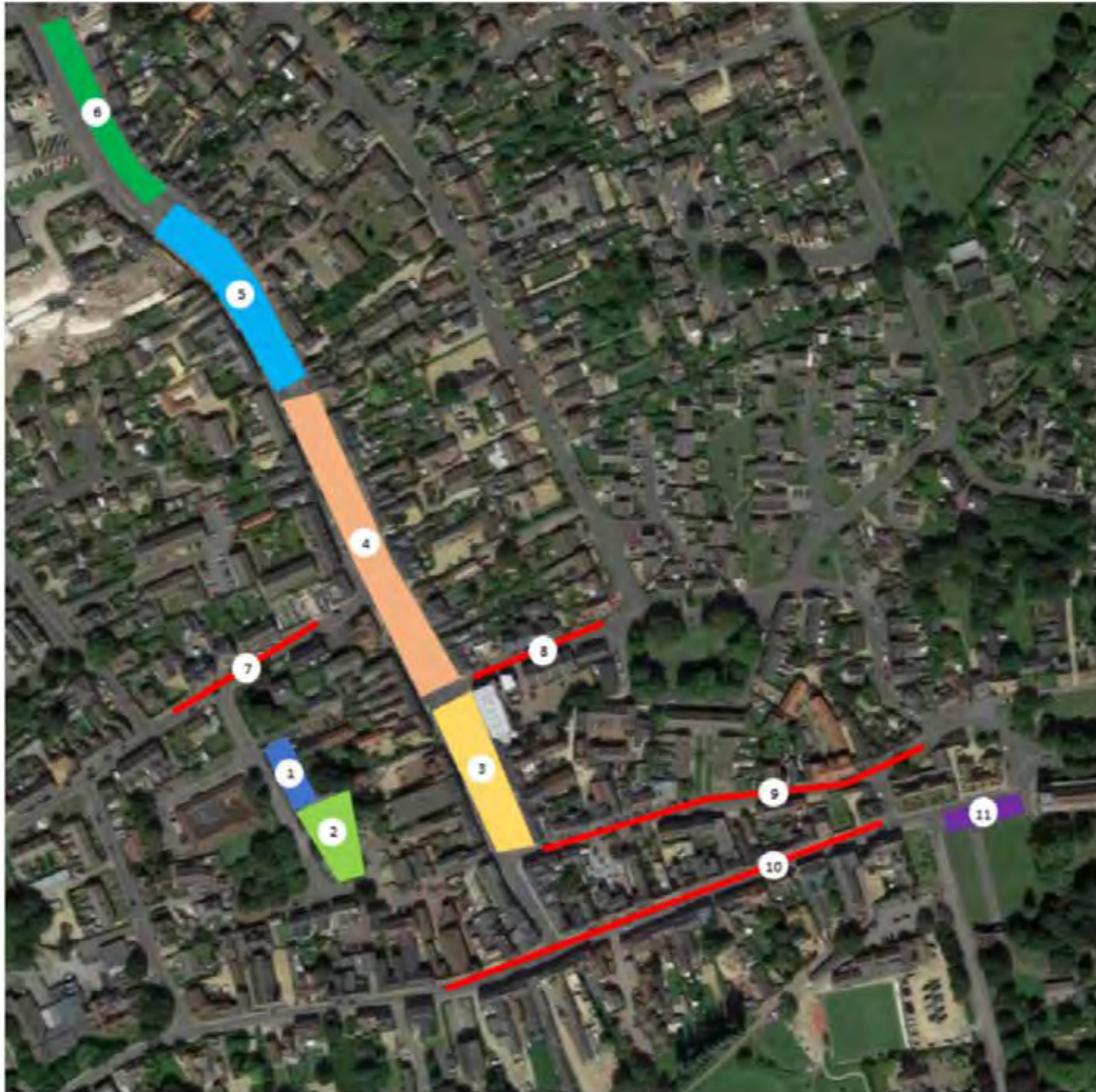
4.

Outline Design

Mews Close Parking

4.1 Brief Analysis

Town Centre Parking Areas



Key

1 - Mews Close Long Stay Car Park
 2 - Mews Close Short Stay Car Park

3 - Great Whyte (South)
 4 - Great Whyte (Central)
 5 - Great Whyte (Central / North)
 9 - Little Whyte
 10 - High Street
 11 - Church Green

6 - Great Whyte (North)
 7 - Whytefield Road
 8 - New Road

Weekday occupancy

Table 1: Parked Vehicles - Weekday

Parking Area	Spaces	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Mews Cl. Long Stay	22	20	20	20	18	20	21
Mews Cl. Short Stay	39	17	26	31	19	16	14
Gt. Whyte South	21	19	16	19	20	18	18
Gt. Whyte Central	86	63	68	68	60	60	59
Gt. Whyte Cent. / N	64	29	32	39	37	34	31
Gt. Whyte North	58	38	36	38	33	29	38
Little Whyte	36	24	23	25	26	22	25
High Street	38	26	24	23	24	22	21
Whytefield Road	12	8	7	6	8	5	6
New Road	12	6	8	5	5	6	3
Church Green	22	15	16	17	19	13	15
Total	410	265	276	291	269	245	251

Table 2: % Occupancy - Weekday

Parking Area	Spaces	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Mews Cl. Long Stay	22	91%	91%	91%	82%	91%	95%
Mews Cl. Short Stay	39	44%	67%	79%	49%	41%	36%
Gt. Whyte South	21	90%	76%	90%	95%	86%	86%
Gt. Whyte Central	86	73%	79%	79%	70%	70%	69%
Gt. Whyte Cent. / N	64	45%	50%	61%	58%	53%	48%
Gt. Whyte North	58	66%	62%	66%	57%	50%	66%
Little Whyte	36	67%	64%	69%	72%	61%	69%
High Street	38	68%	63%	61%	63%	58%	55%
Whytefield Road	12	67%	58%	50%	67%	42%	50%
New Road	12	50%	67%	42%	42%	50%	25%
Church Green	22	68%	73%	77%	86%	59%	68%

Saturday occupancy

Table 3: Parked Vehicles - Saturday

Parking Area	Spaces	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
Mews Cl. Long Stay	22	21	19	19	20	18
Mews Cl. Short Stay	39	32	29	28	27	19
Gt. Whyte South	21	20	21	18	20	18
Gt. Whyte Central	86	64	64	61	53	42
Gt. Whyte Cent. / N	64	35	38	43	38	34
Gt. Whyte North	58	25	22	23	23	20
Little Whyte	36	26	22	23	21	22
High Street	38	29	27	27	26	25
Whytefield Road	12	8	7	9	7	6
New Road	12	8	11	9	7	8
Church Green	22	11	14	12	10	13
Total	410	279	274	272	252	225

Table 4: Parked Vehicles - Saturday

Parking Area	Spaces	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
Mews Cl. Long Stay	22	95%	86%	86%	91%	82%
Mews Cl. Short Stay	39	82%	74%	72%	69%	49%
Gt. Whyte South	21	95%	100%	86%	95%	86%
Gt. Whyte Central	86	74%	74%	71%	62%	49%
Gt. Whyte Cent. / N	64	55%	59%	67%	59%	53%
Gt. Whyte North	58	43%	38%	40%	40%	34%
Little Whyte	36	72%	61%	64%	58%	61%
High Street	38	76%	71%	71%	68%	66%
Whytefield Road	12	67%	58%	75%	58%	50%
New Road	12	67%	92%	75%	58%	67%

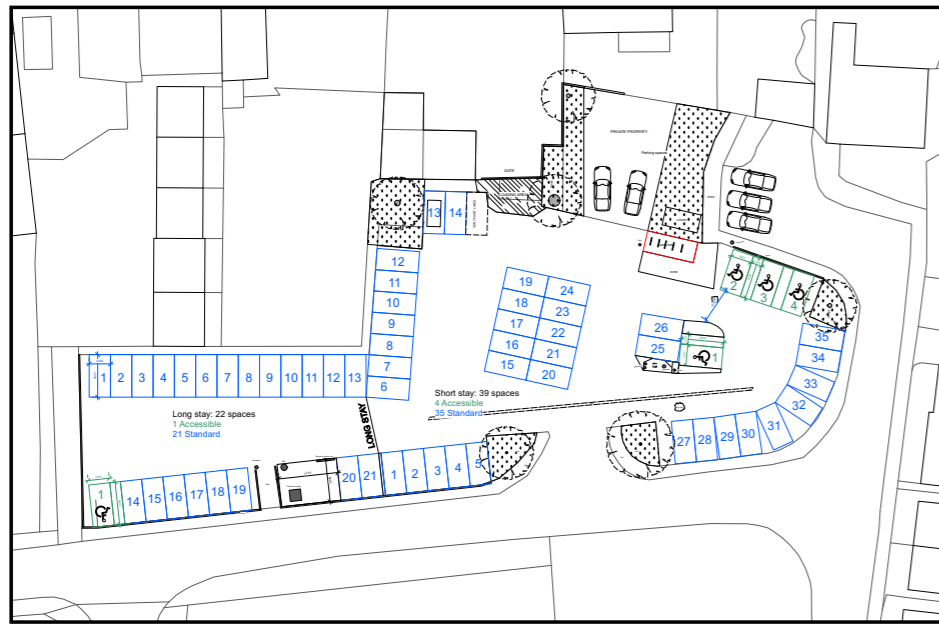
Parking study Data Source document: Ramsey Parking Study 784-B030058

Parking study proposed measures to Mews close

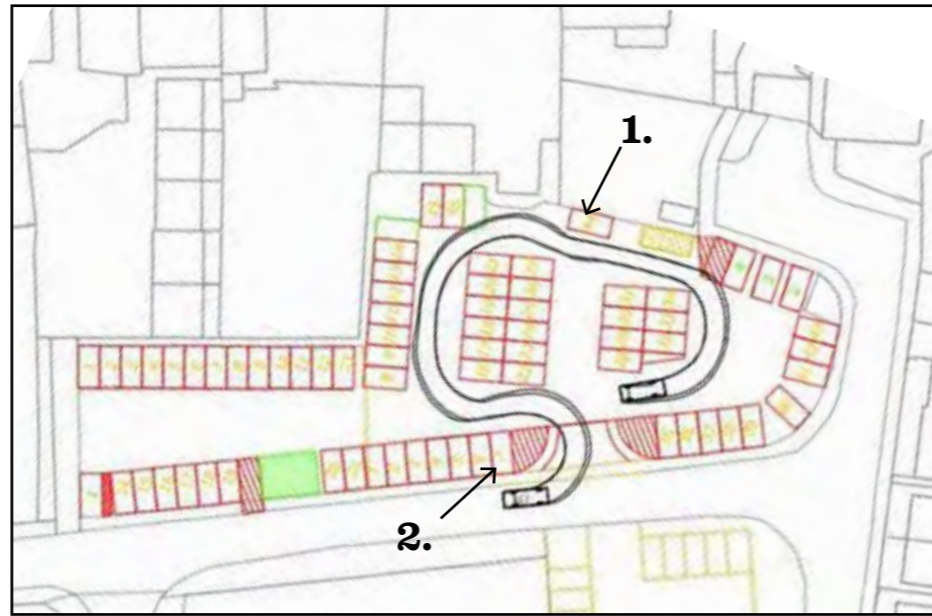
- Rationalise the arrangement to add more spaces
- Remove cycle parking shelter
- Remove trolley parking shelter **ownership TBC**
- Remove/relocate HDC recycling centre
- Remove/relocate HDC skip blocking bay
- Convert some long stay spaces to short stay (increase space turnover)
- Implement 3 hour max stay on Great Whyte
- Enforce time restrictions & double yellow lines on Great Whyte

4.2 Concept Design

Options Overview



Existing
 Long stay: 22 spaces
 Short stay: 39 spaces
 Total: **61 spaces (5 accessible)**



Parking Study
 Long stay: 22 spaces
 Short stay: 47 spaces
 Total: **69 spaces**
8 additional (with notes)

Note:
 1. Blocks access
 2. Removes tree
 3. Loses 1 accessible space

Parking Challenge

16 lost parking spaces including 4 accessible bays

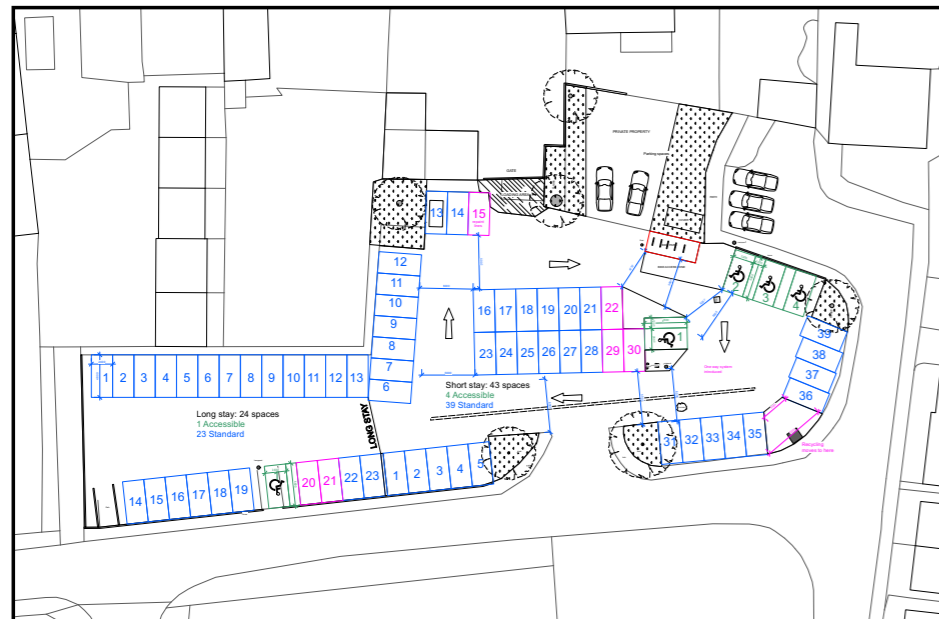
4 accessible bays retained on Great Whyte (see below)

Mews close to provide min. 12 additional spaces

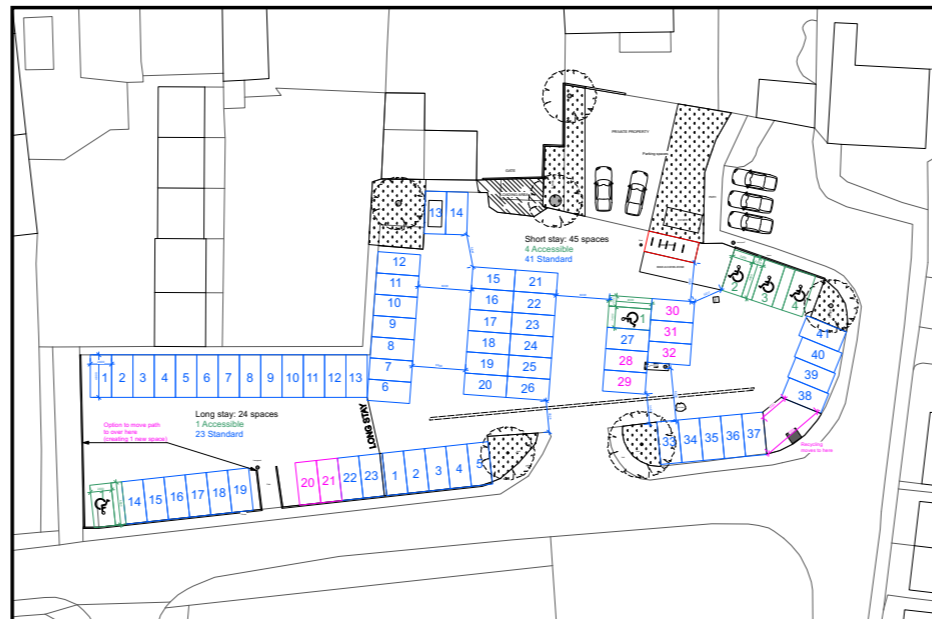
TARGET 73 spaces (5 accessible)

Parking study Data Source document:
 Ramsey Parking Study 784-B030058

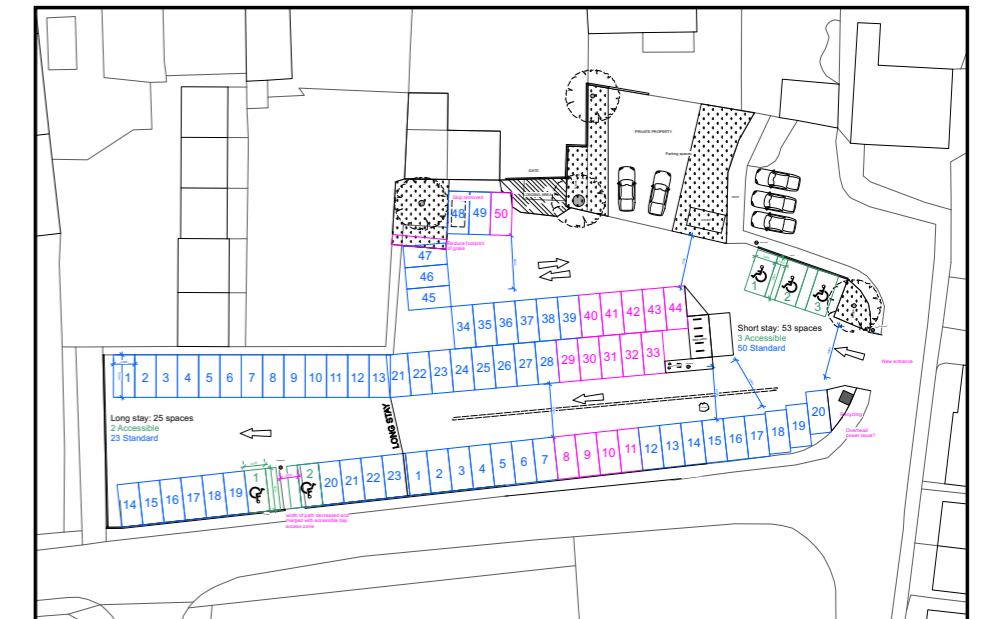
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Option 1- Minimal change- 1 way system
 Long stay: 24 spaces
 Short stay: 43 spaces
 Total: **67 spaces (5 Accessible)**
6 additional
 Note:
 - Delivery access not direct
 - Recycling position requires testing
 - 1 way system implemented



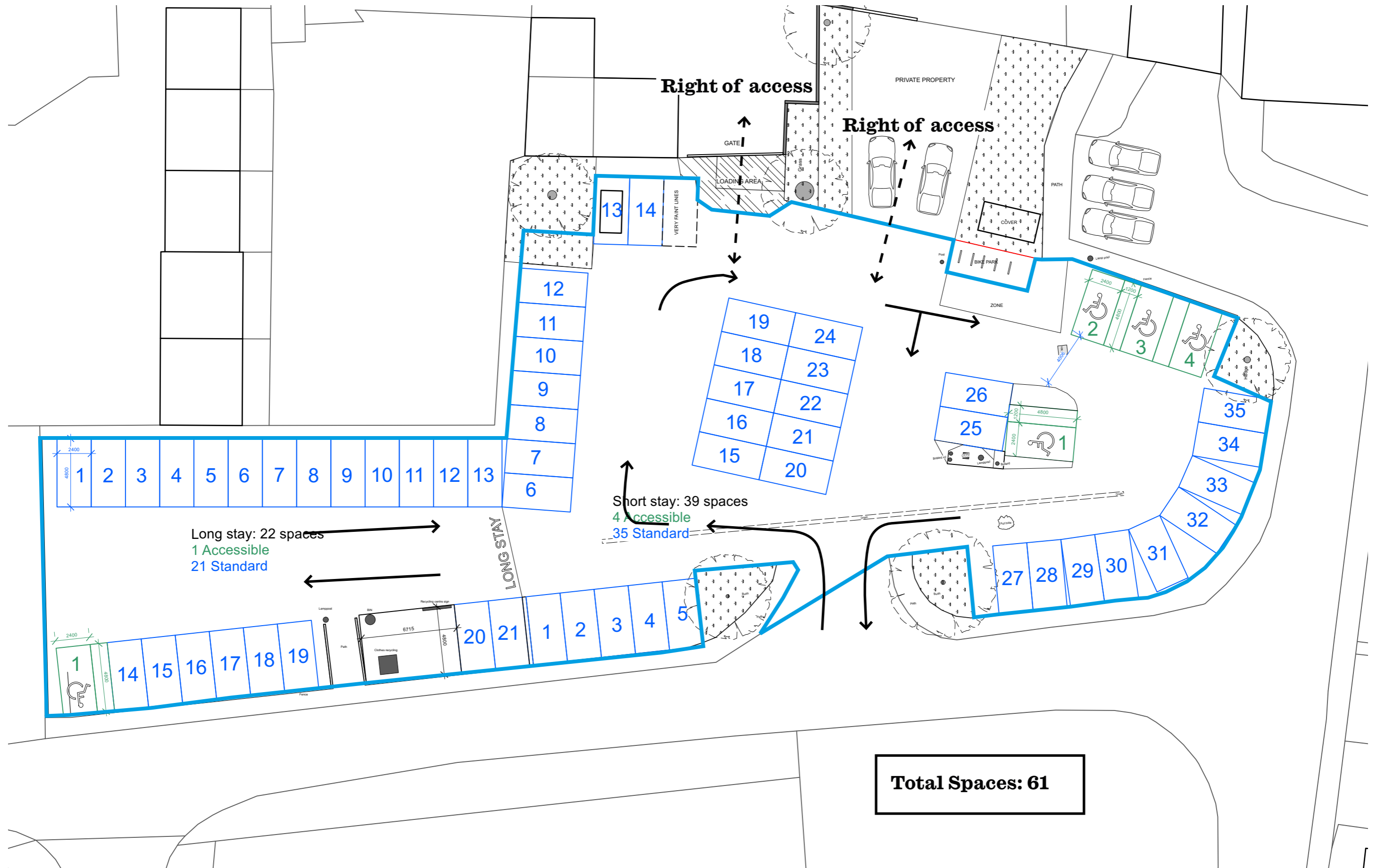
Option 2- Minimal change- 2 way system
 Long stay: 24 spaces
 Short stay: 45 spaces
 Total: **69 spaces (5 Accessible)**
8 additional
 Note:
 - Delivery access is direct
 - Recycling position requires testing
 - 3 metre pinch points
 - CCTV/lamp post position critical



Option 3- Radical thinking
 Long stay: 25 spaces
 Short stay: 53 spaces
 Total: **78 spaces (5 accessible)**
17 additional
 Note:
 - Accessible space ratio changed
 - Bike park relocated
 - Entrance and trees removed
 - 2 Entrances added
 - Recycling position requires testing

Existing Plan

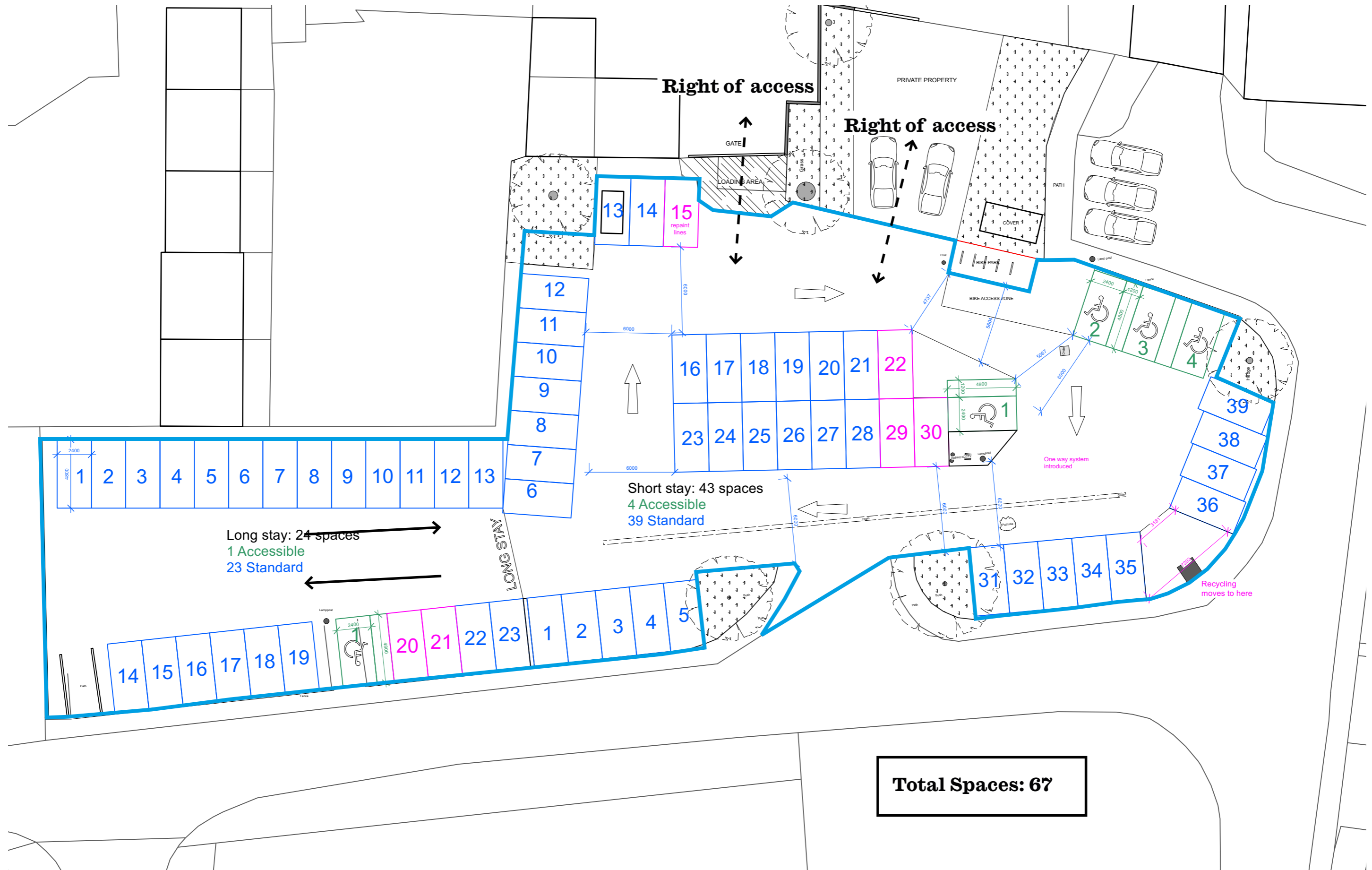
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Total Spaces: 61

Option 1 - Minimal Changes 1 - way System

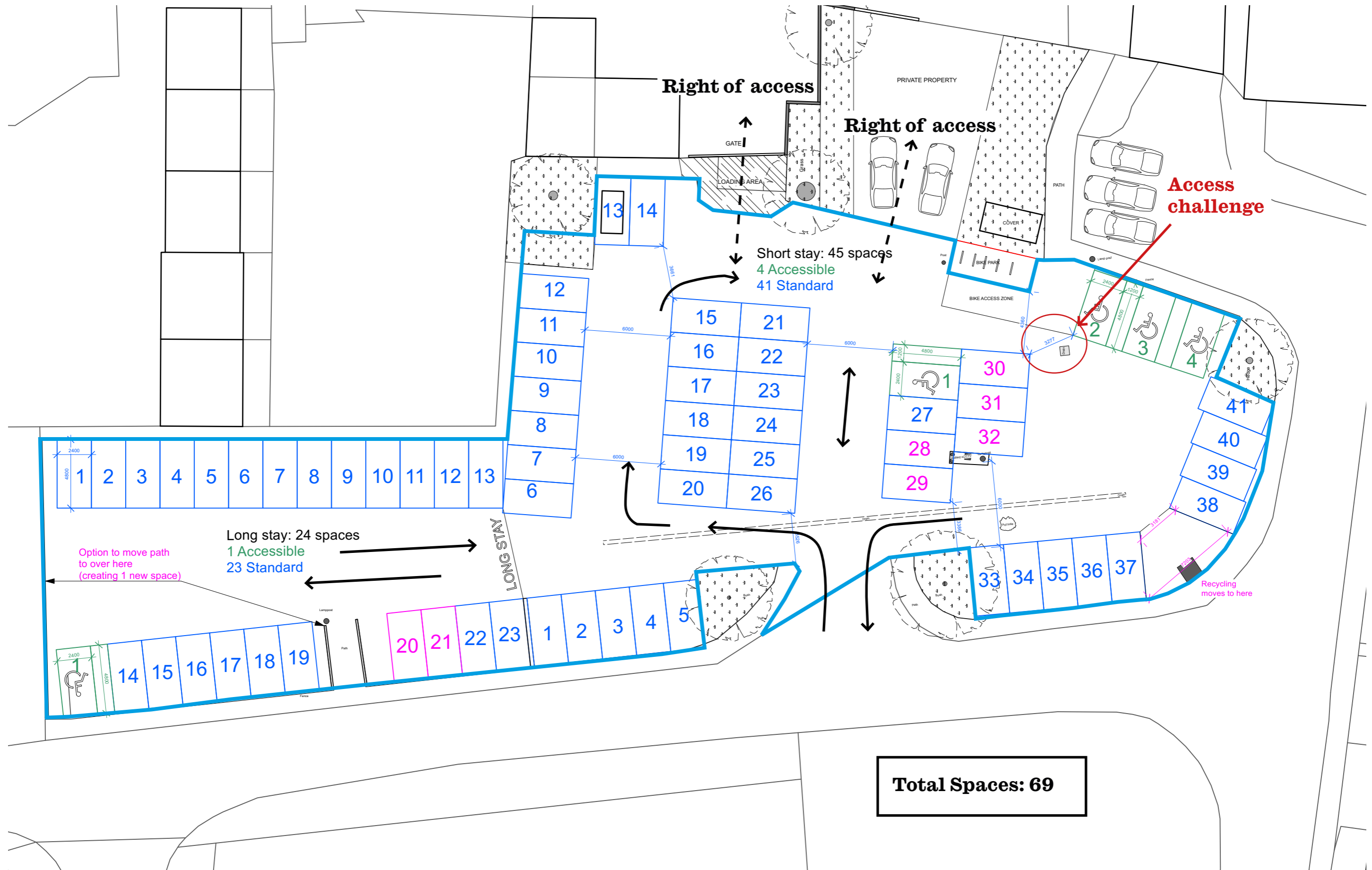
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Total Spaces: 67

Option 2 - Minimal Changes 2 - way System

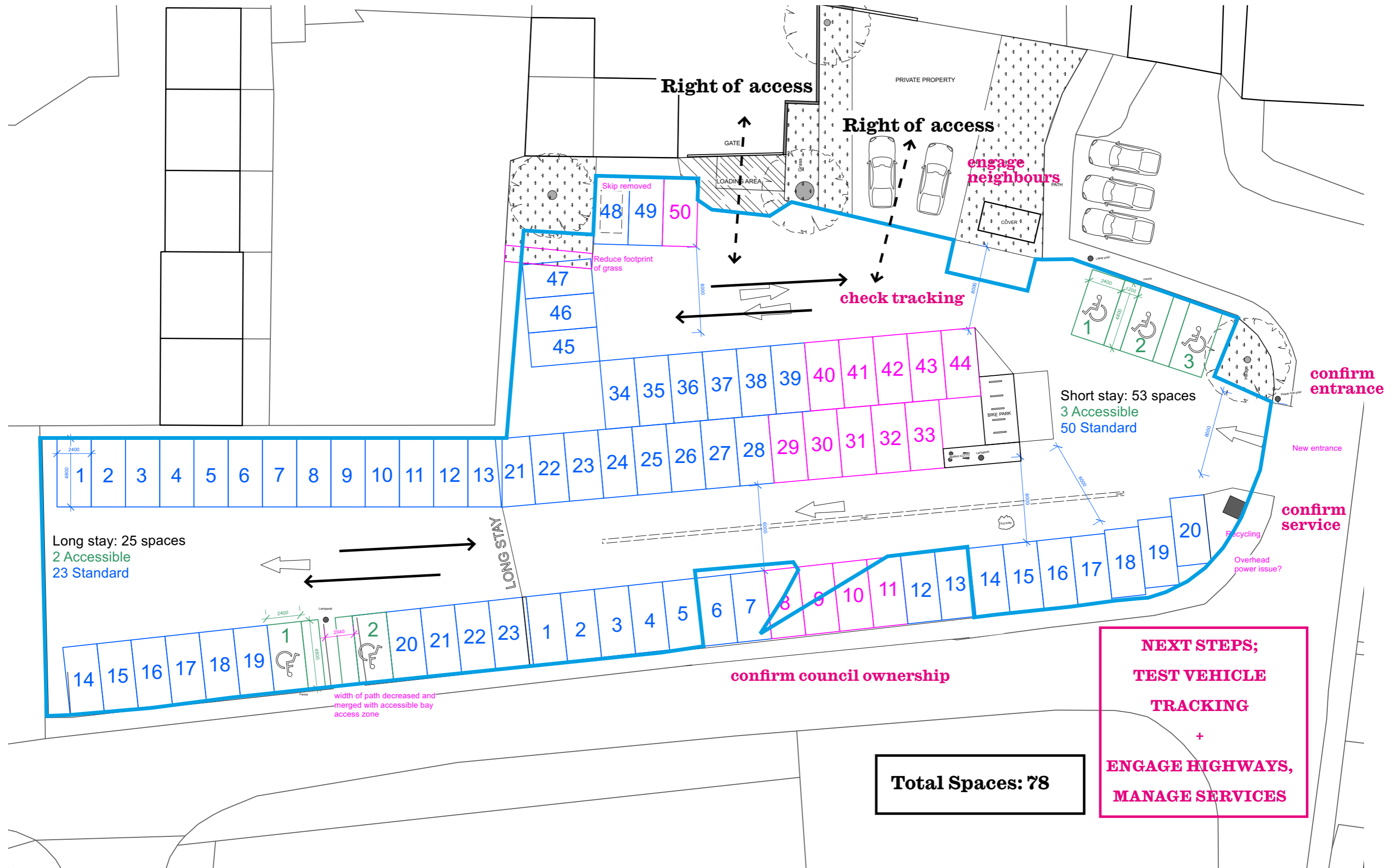
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Total Spaces: 69

Option 3 - Radical thinking

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Total Spaces: 78

**NEXT STEPS;
TEST VEHICLE
TRACKING
+
ENGAGE HIGHWAYS,
MANAGE SERVICES**

5.

Outline Design **Great Whyte pedestrianisation**

5.1 Spatial Analysis

1. The existing car parking provision dominates this section of the Great Whyte, limiting other uses without temporary closures.

2. Pedestrian functions are compressed into the available areas

3. Little space is available for extended retail functions including the proposed shop-in-box provision and existing shops opening onto the street.

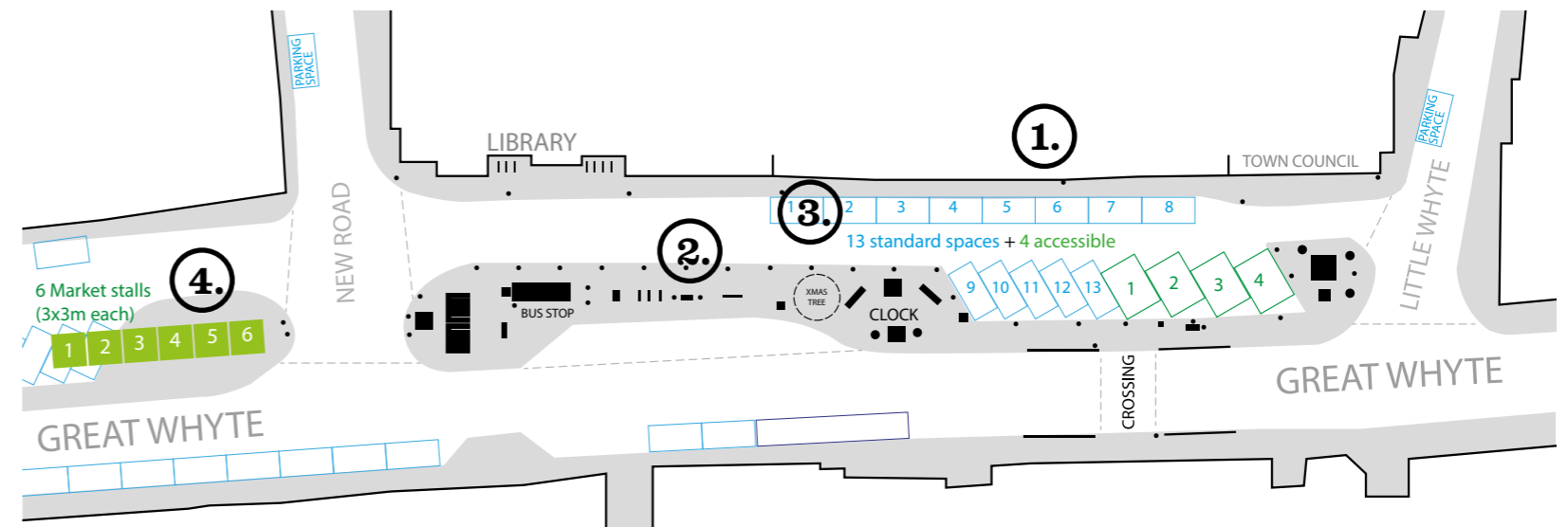
4. The temporary local market claims space when it can impinging into public highway and parking



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Existing
Close to previous location



5.2 Concept Design

Market Stall Arrangement

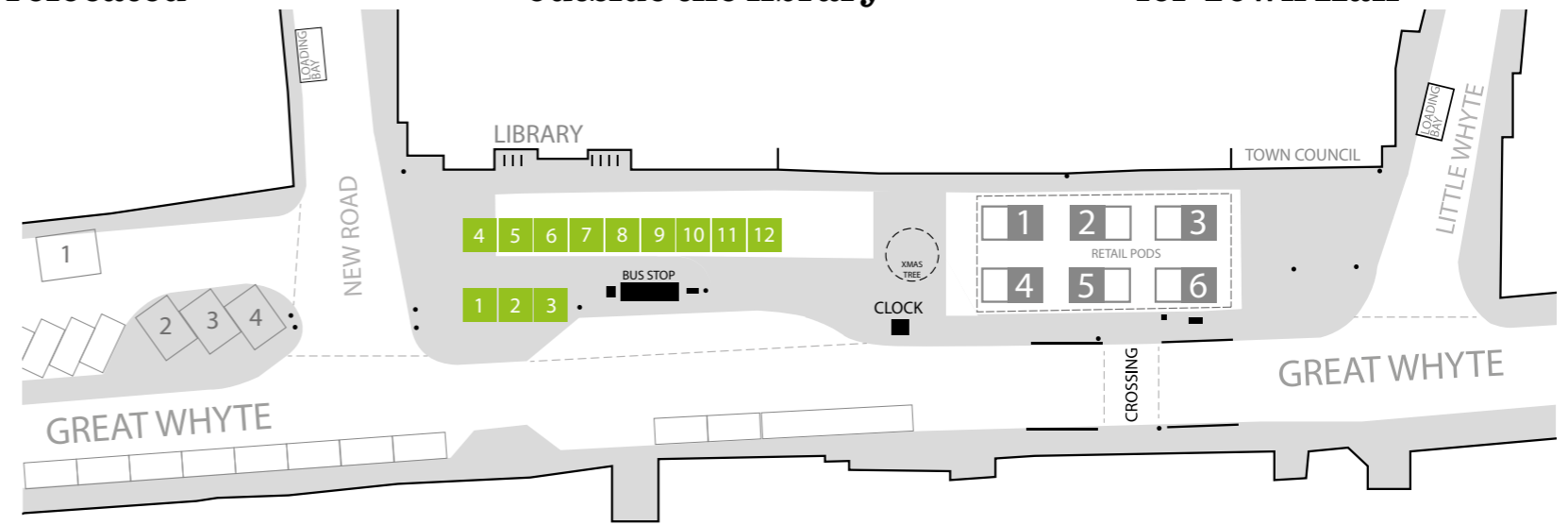


Option 1
Close to previous location

Accessible bays relocated

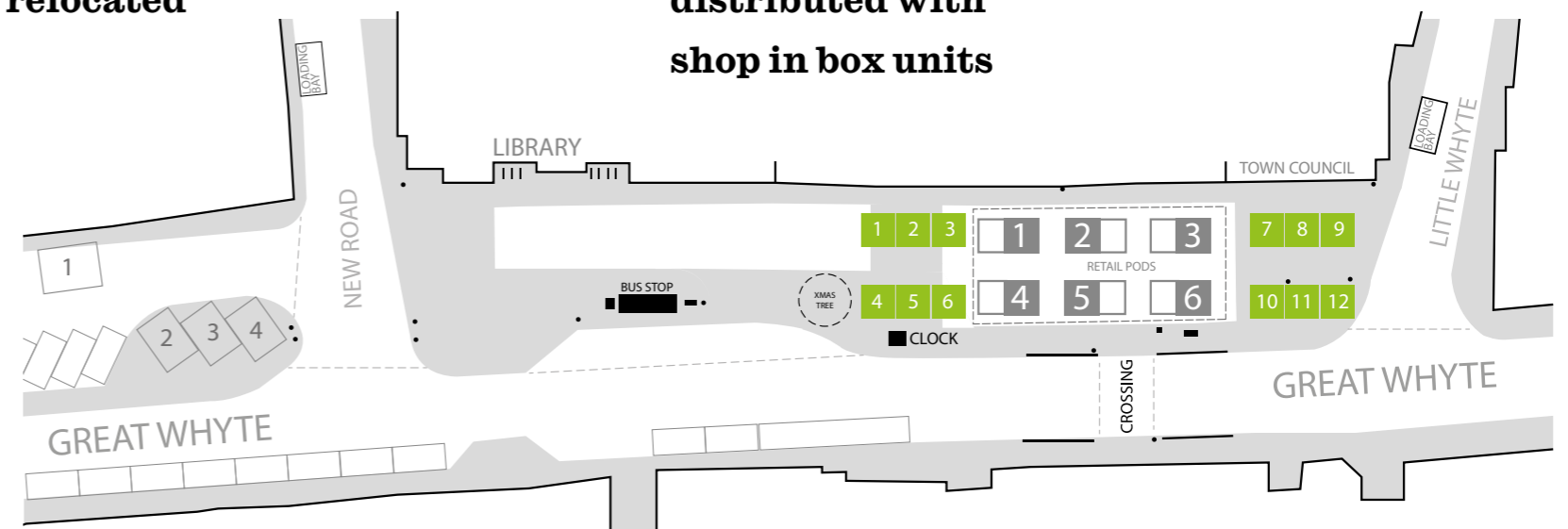
Market stalls outside the library

New space for Town Hall



Accessible bays relocated

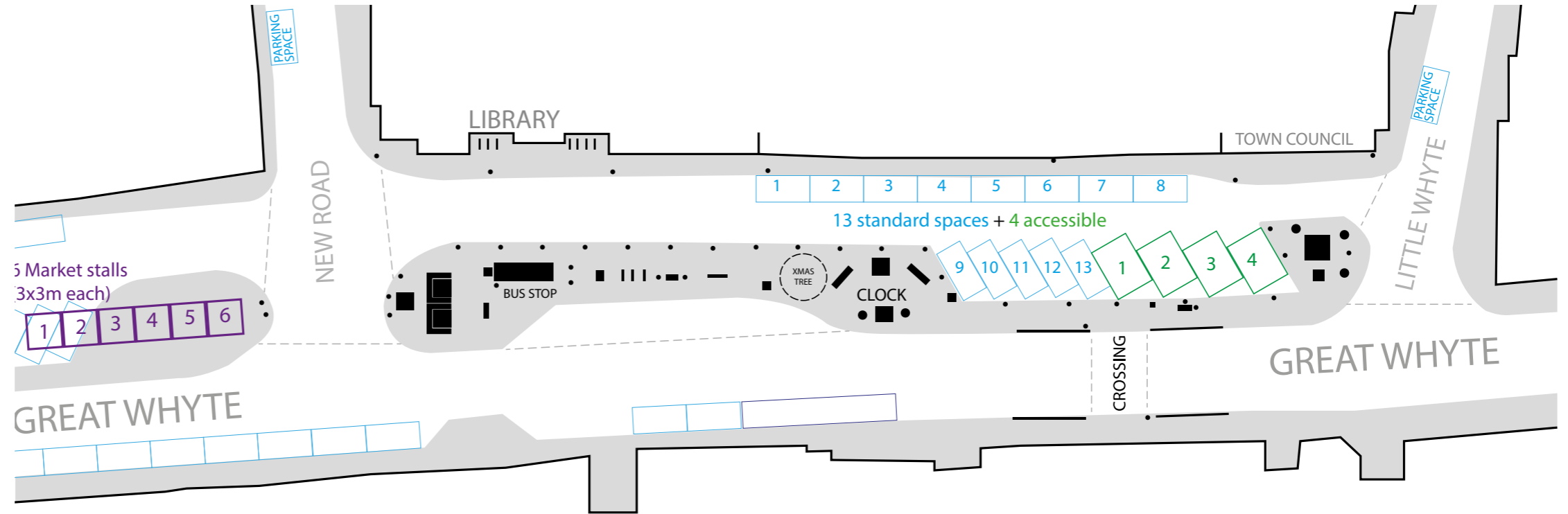
Market stalls distributed with shop in box units



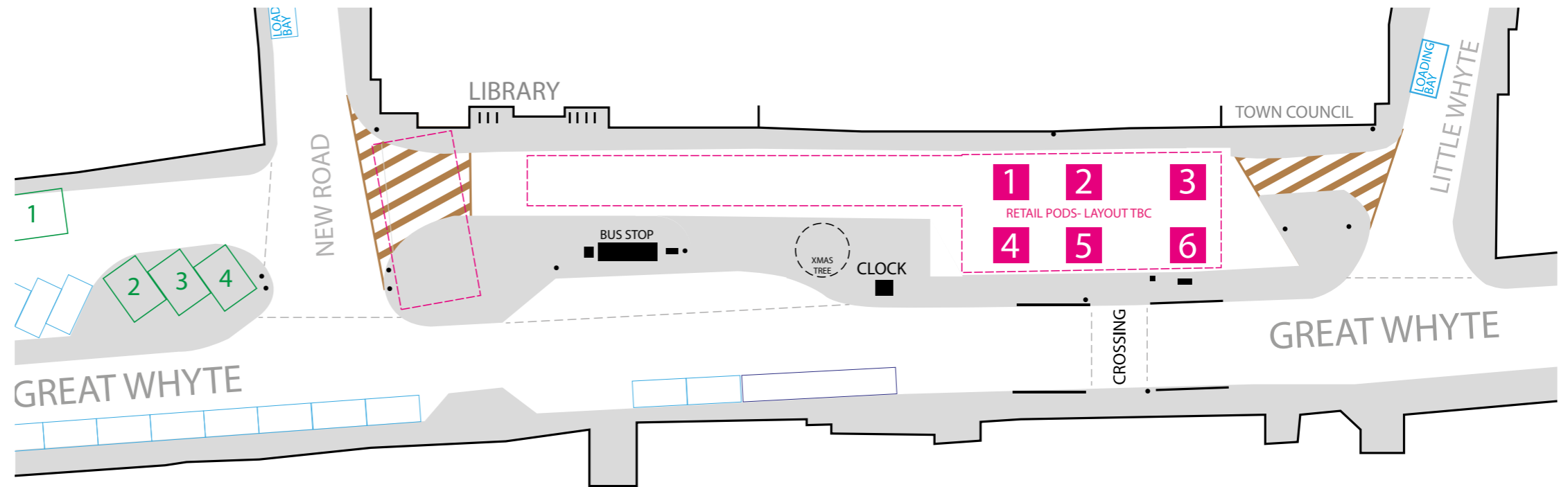
Option 2
Extension of pods

Concept Design

Ground Works

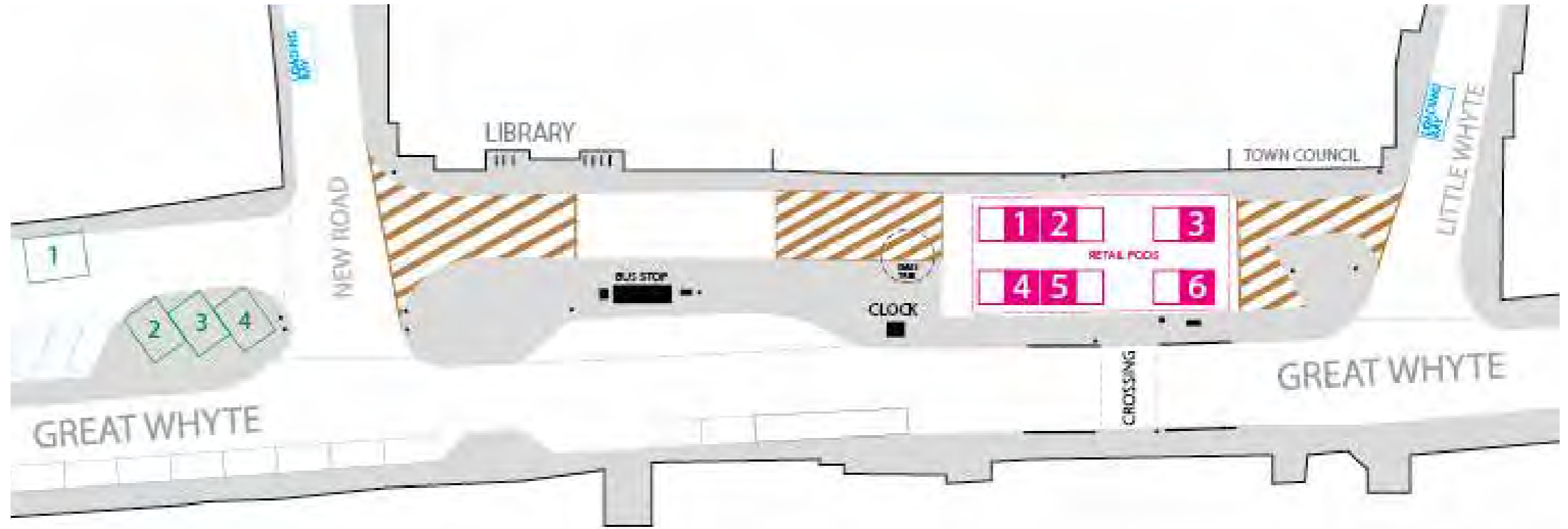


Existing
Remove all unnecessary bollards, signs, street furniture, road markings

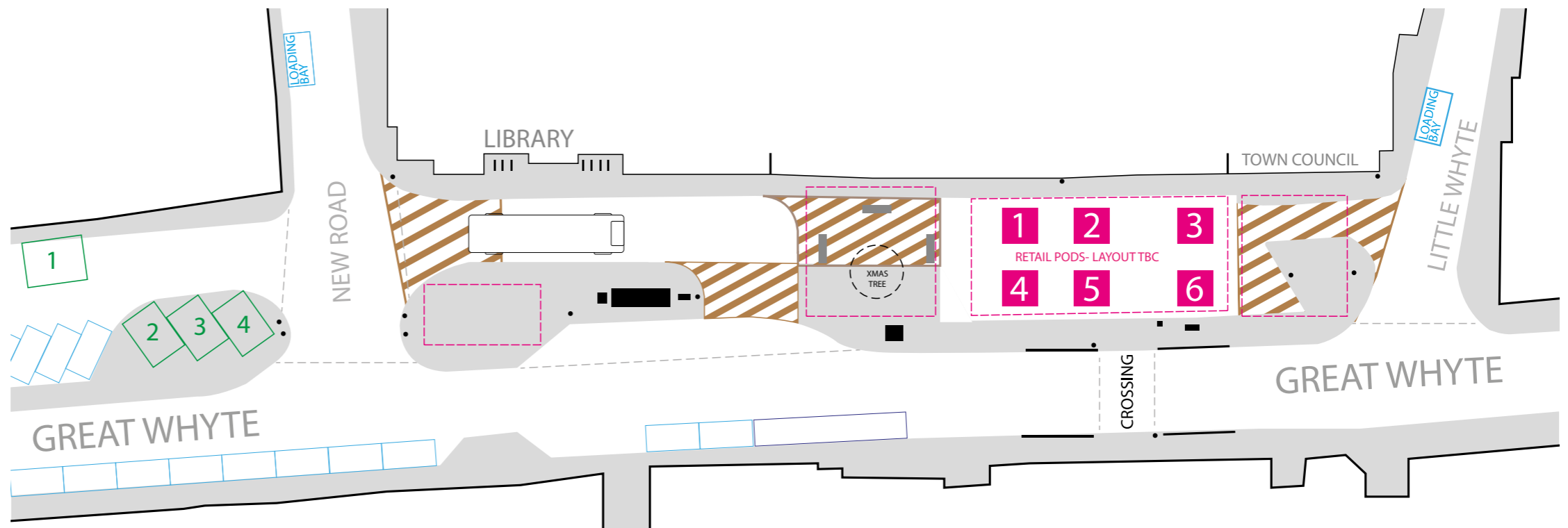


Option 1
Pedestrianised- light touch






- Key**
- Ground works
 - New retail pods
 - Existing paving
 - Standard parking space
 - Accessible parking space



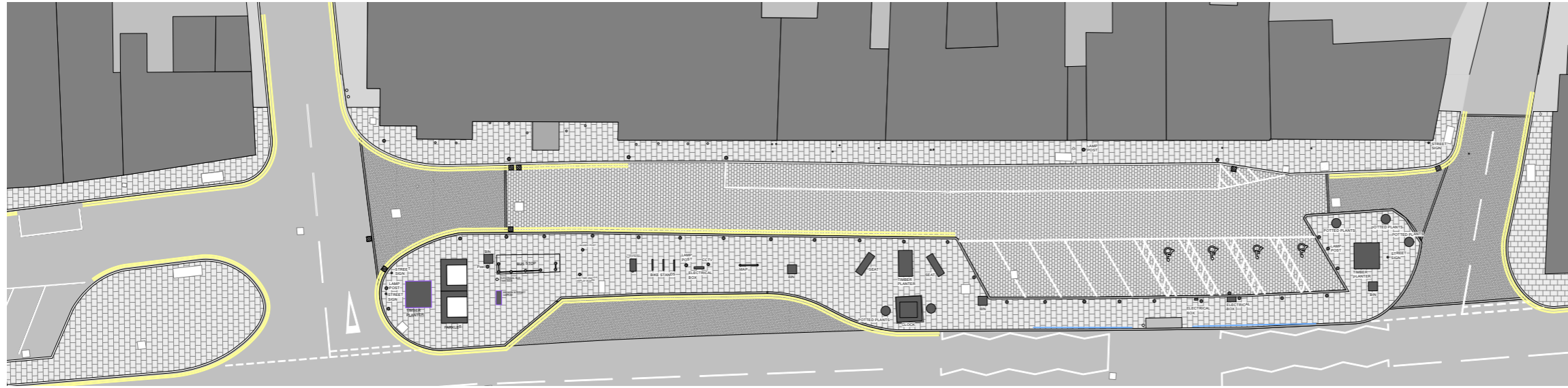
Option 2
Making Outdoor 'Rooms'



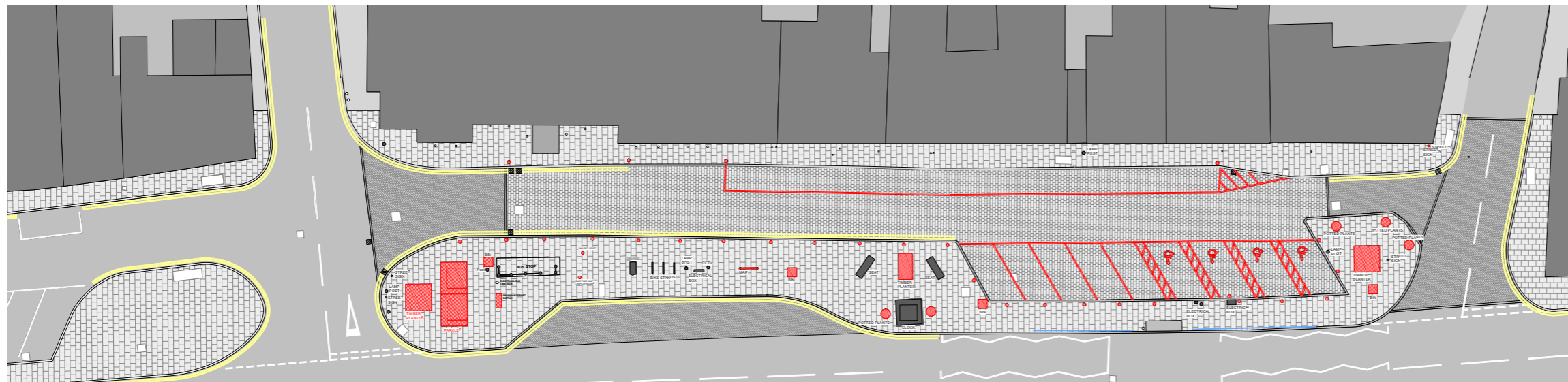
Option 3
Pedestrianised + new bus terminal (not taken forward)

- Key**
-  Ground works
 -  New retail pods
 -  Existing paving
 -  Standard parking space
 -  Accessible parking space

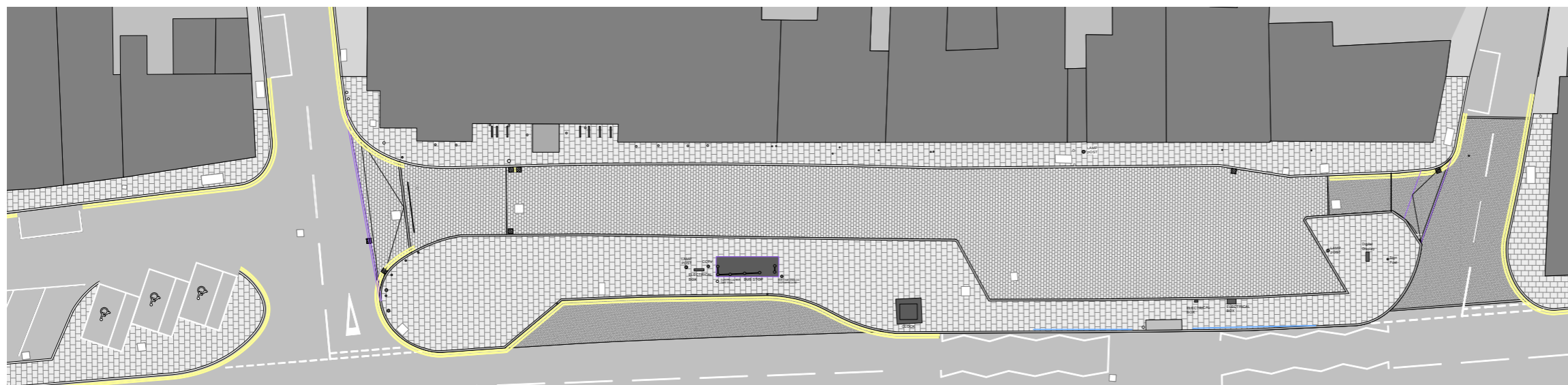
Decluttering of street furniture



Existing Arrangements



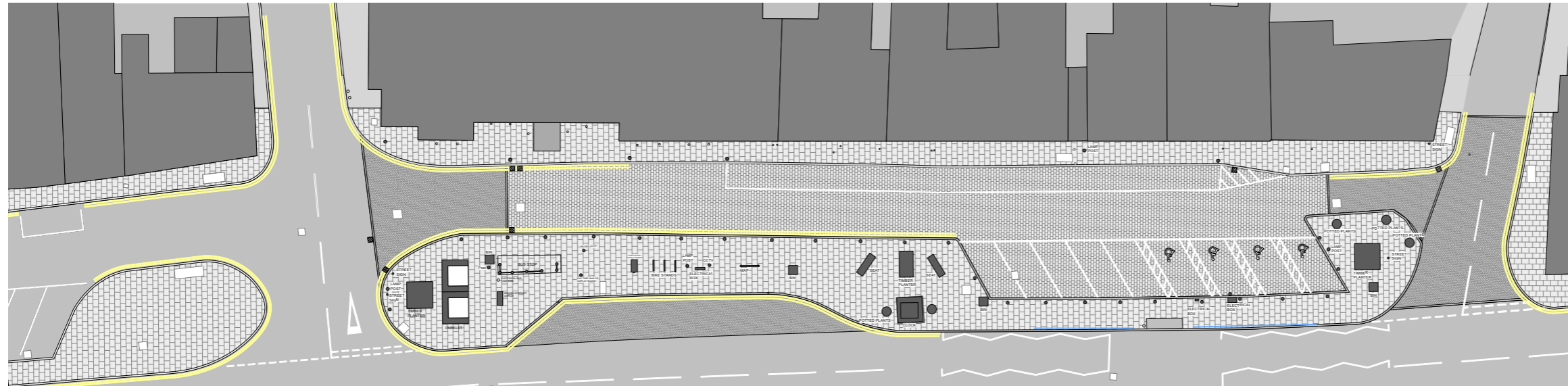
Decluttering suggested through stakeholder engagement with ambitions for new integrated public amenity



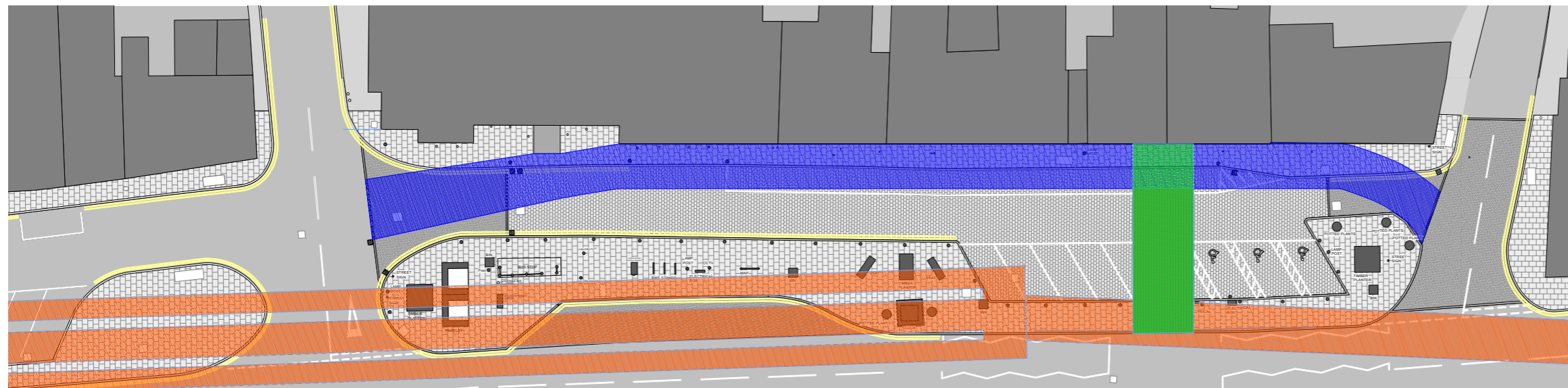
Retained items with space for new additions (subject to cost analysis)

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Site Constraints






Existing Plan



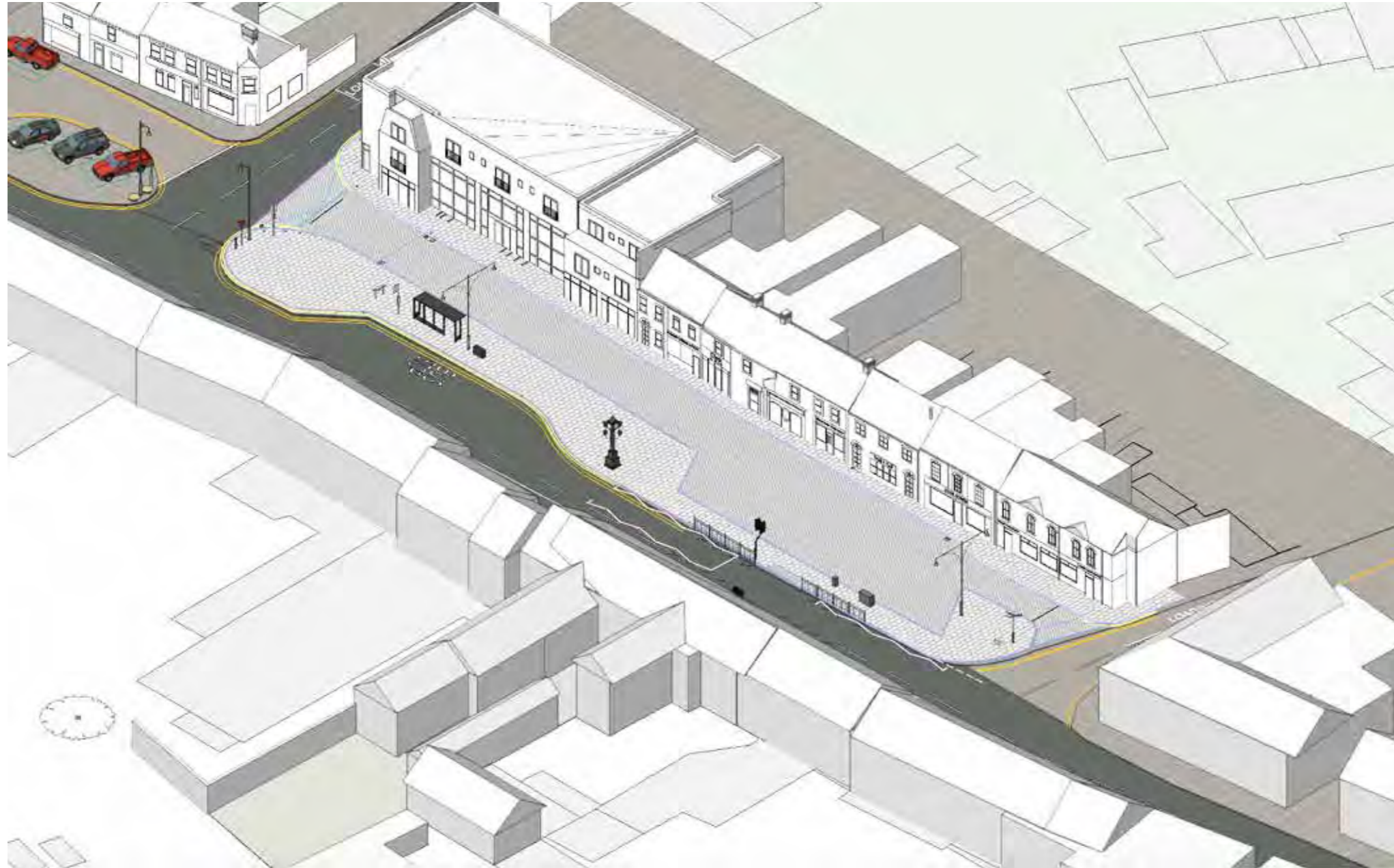
Showing site Constraints

KEY

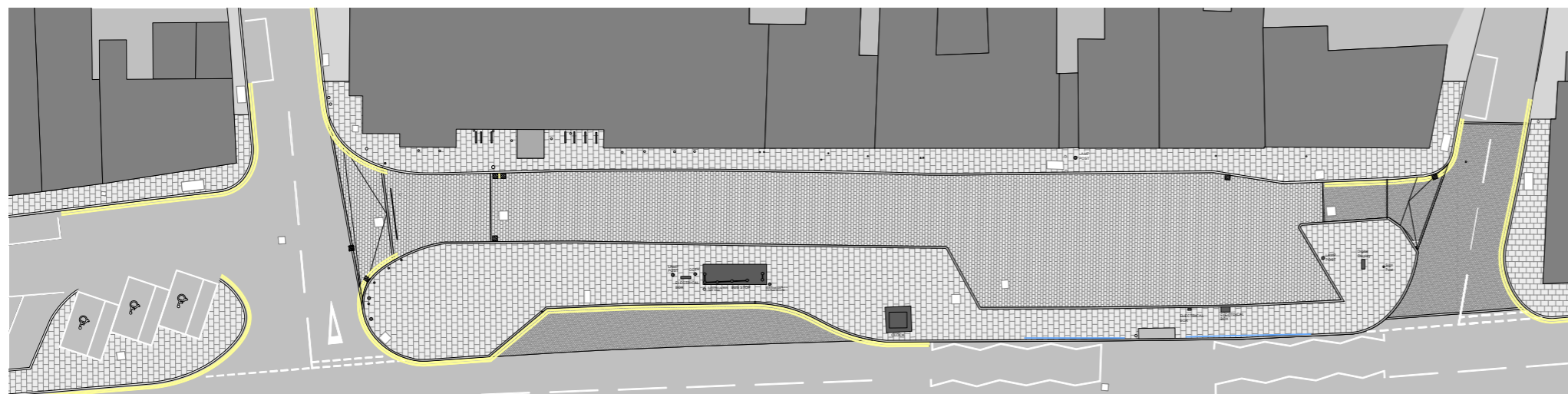
-  Fire Access (min. 3.7m)
-  Access aligned with crossing
-  River Culvert (below ground)

Hard Landscape

Option 1 - Light Touch



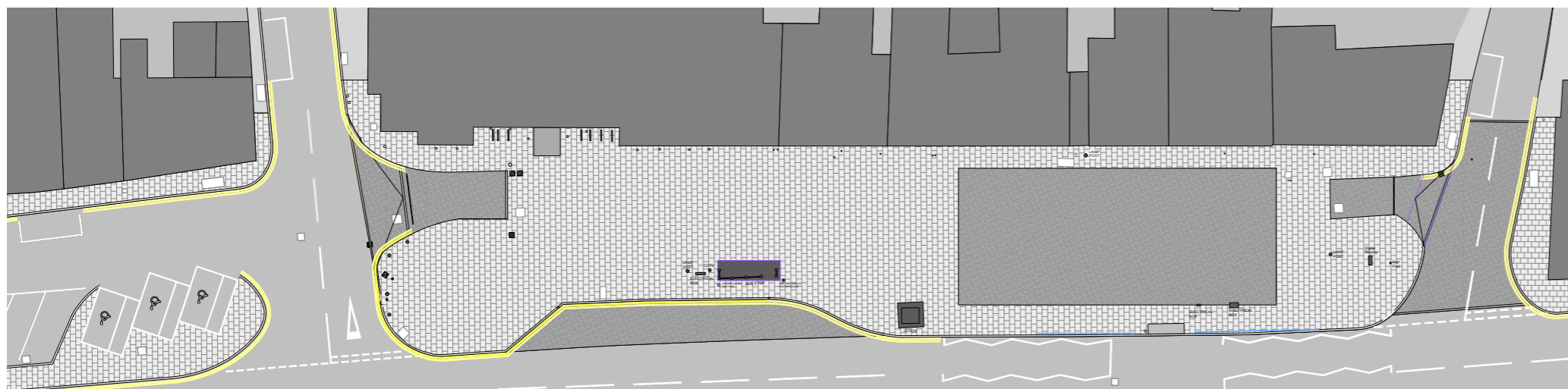
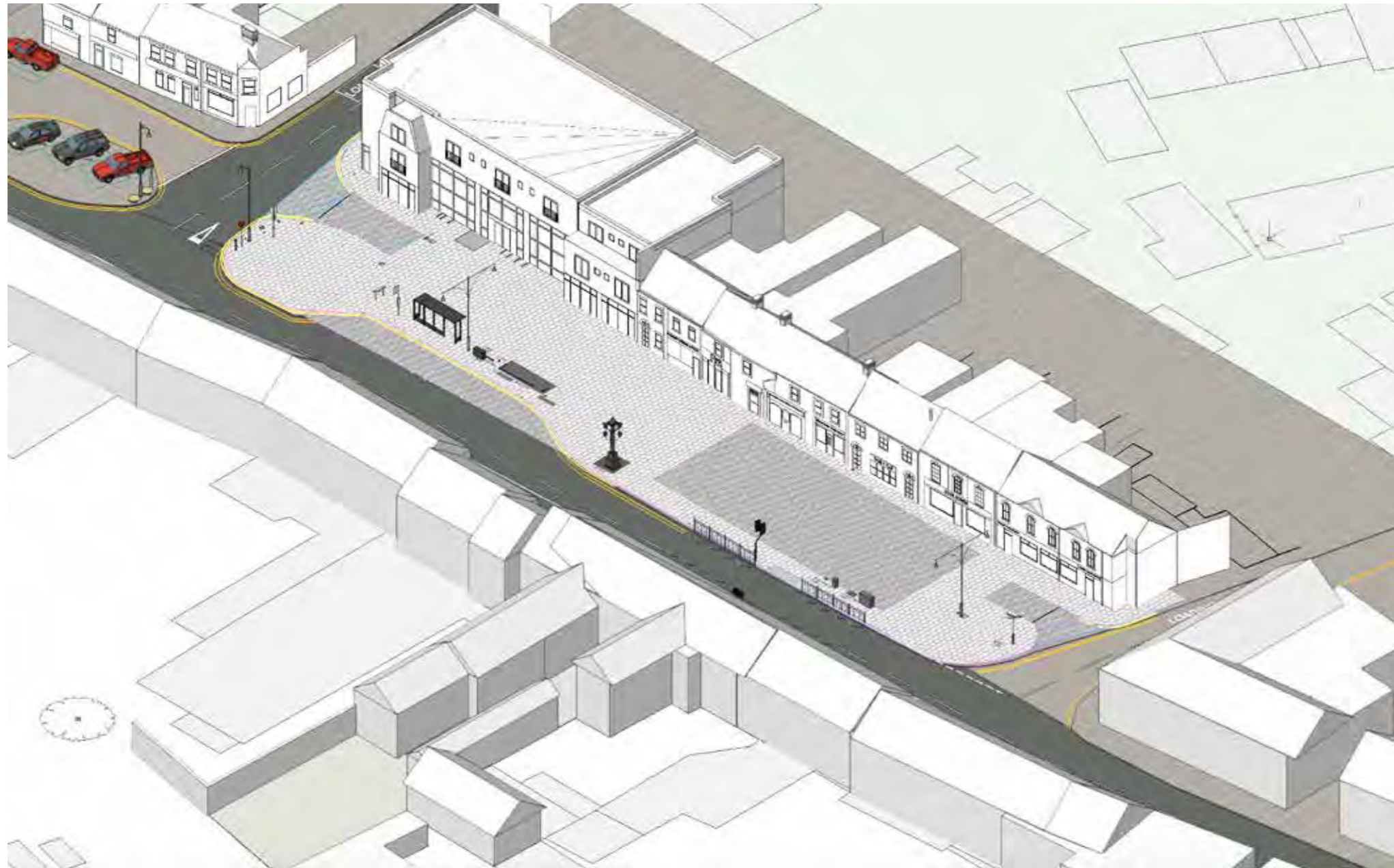
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Option 1- Light Touch

Minimal changes to the hard landscaping

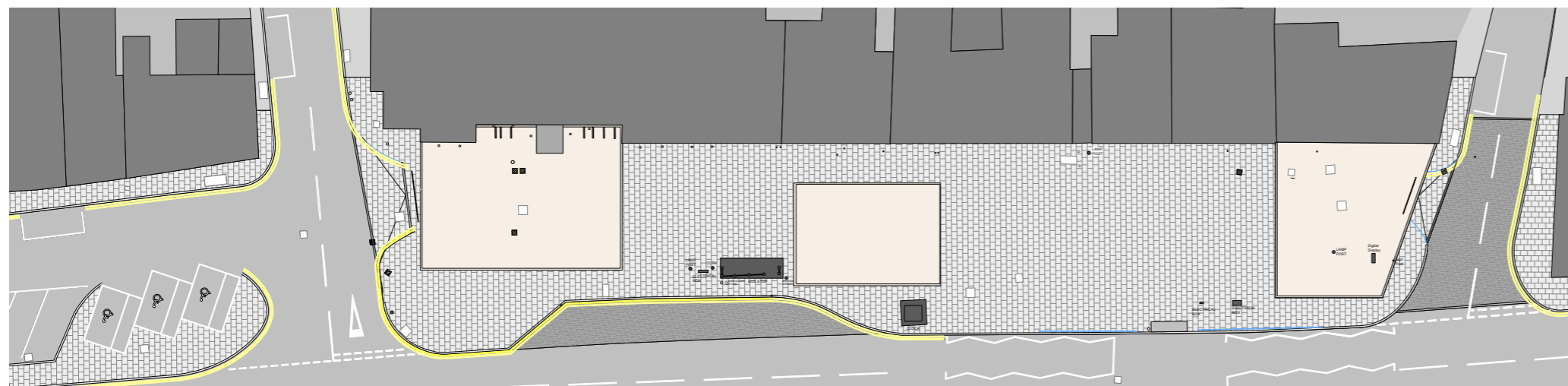
- Pedestrianised
- Installed fire gates and/or bollards
- Rationalisation of parking bays
- Removal of road markings



Option 2 - Large Public Square

Removal of some street block paving

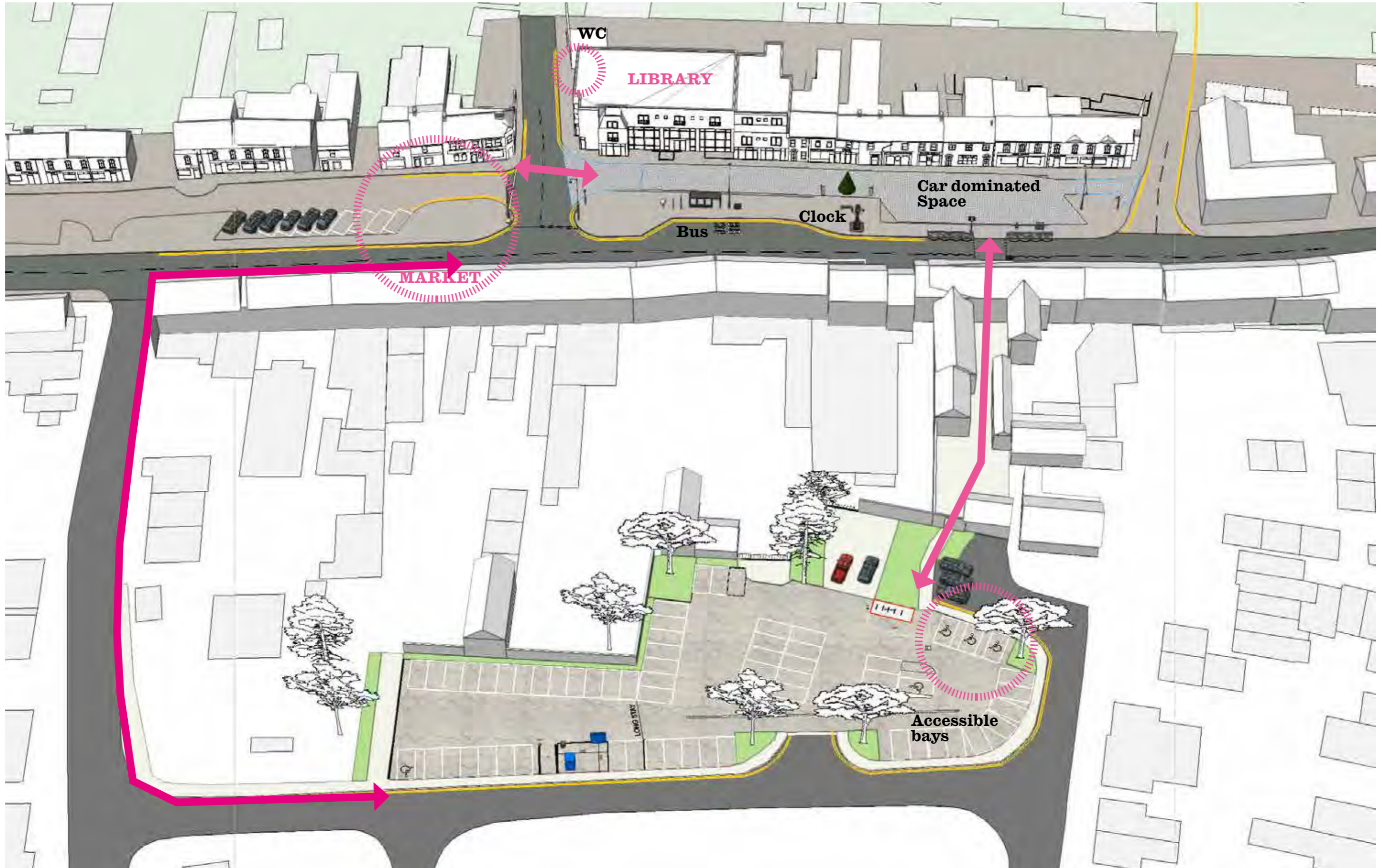
- Pedestrianised
- Installed fire gates and/or bollards
- Removal of road markings
- Repaving of road to match footway paving
- Central quare created with existing road pavers

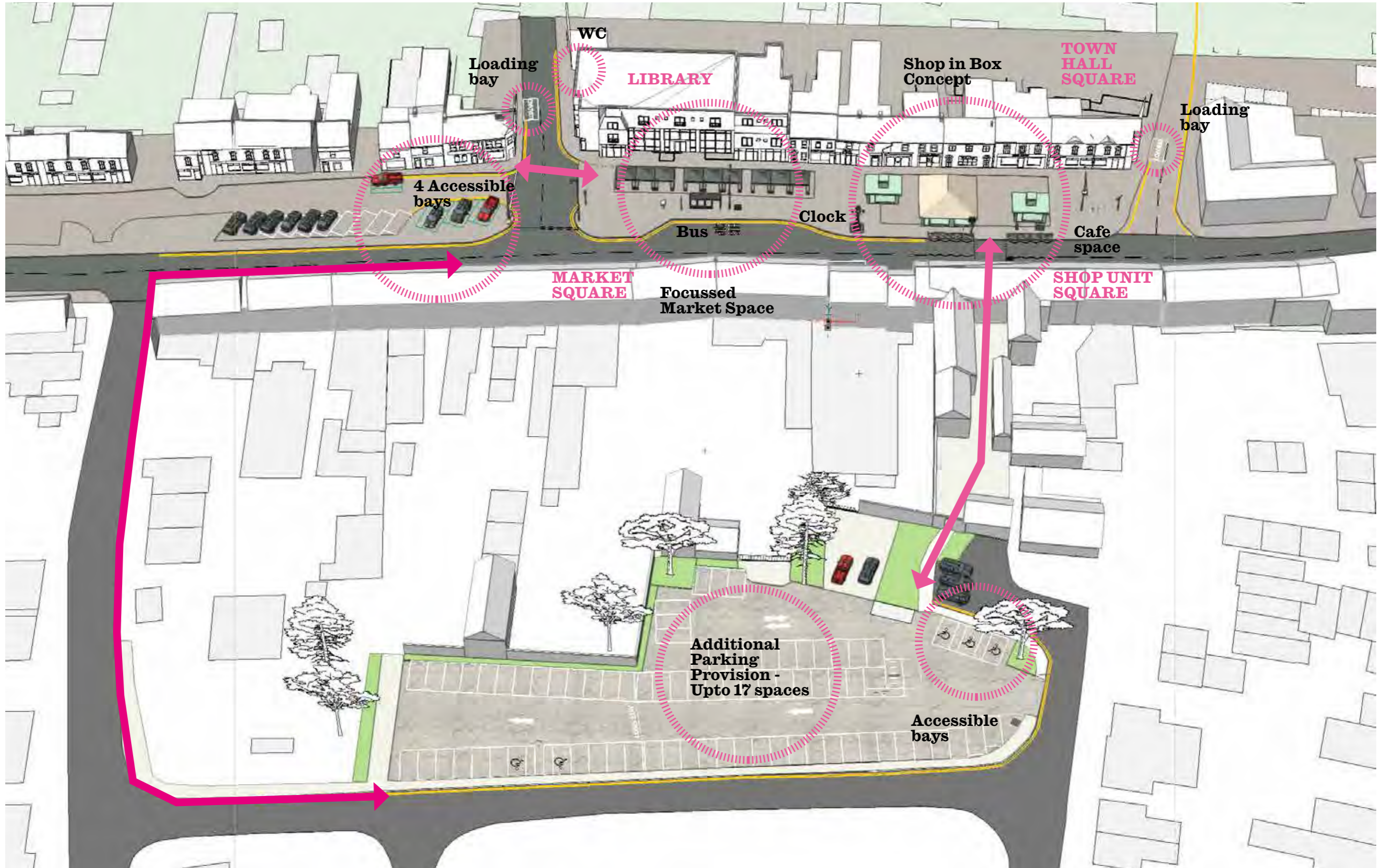


Option 3 - Cluster of Public Squares

More comprehensive renewal

- Pedestrianised
- Installed fire gates and/or bollards
- Removal of road markings
- Repaving of road to match existing footway paving
- Creation of new paving to create squares outside key buildings and to support landscape features





6.

Outline Design

shop in a box

6.1 Brief Analysis

Supporting growth of a small business

Shop in a box

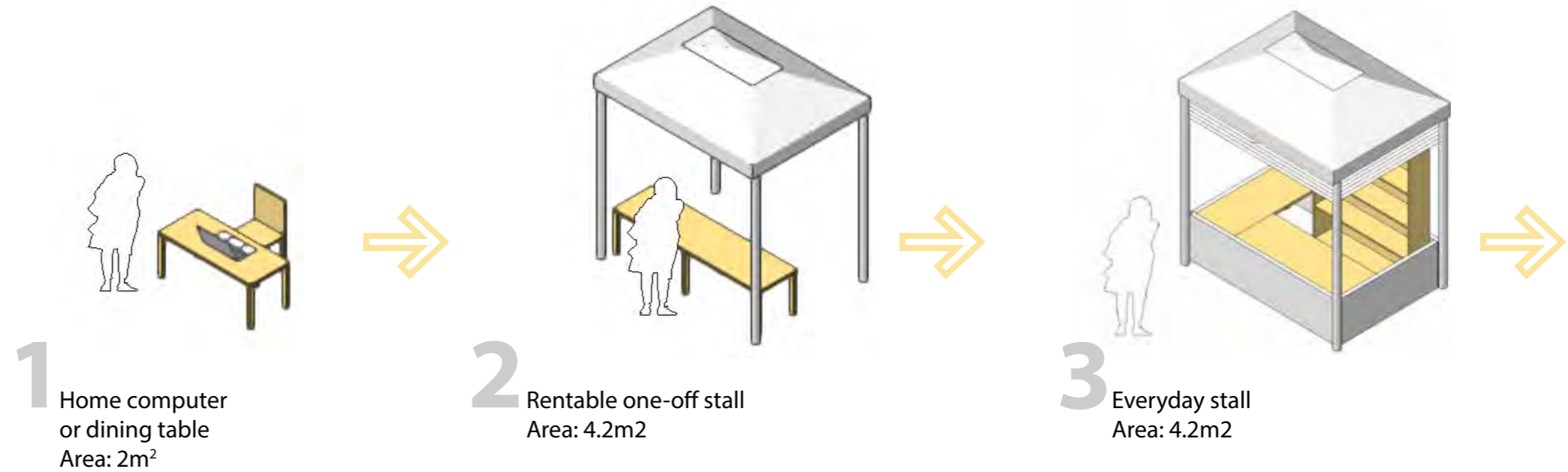
Requirements

Small retail space which can be let on a very low-cost basis by independent traders,

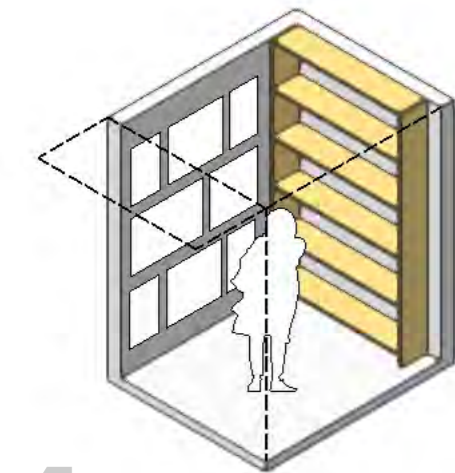
Explore feasibility of 'Shop in a Box' concept - in terms of project budget and scale and impact on local economy.

Critical considerations:

- Ease of Maintenance
- Security
- Design life
- Units to have electricity
- Water & Toilet facilities not required
- Size & number of units TBC
- Engage with local Stakeholders.



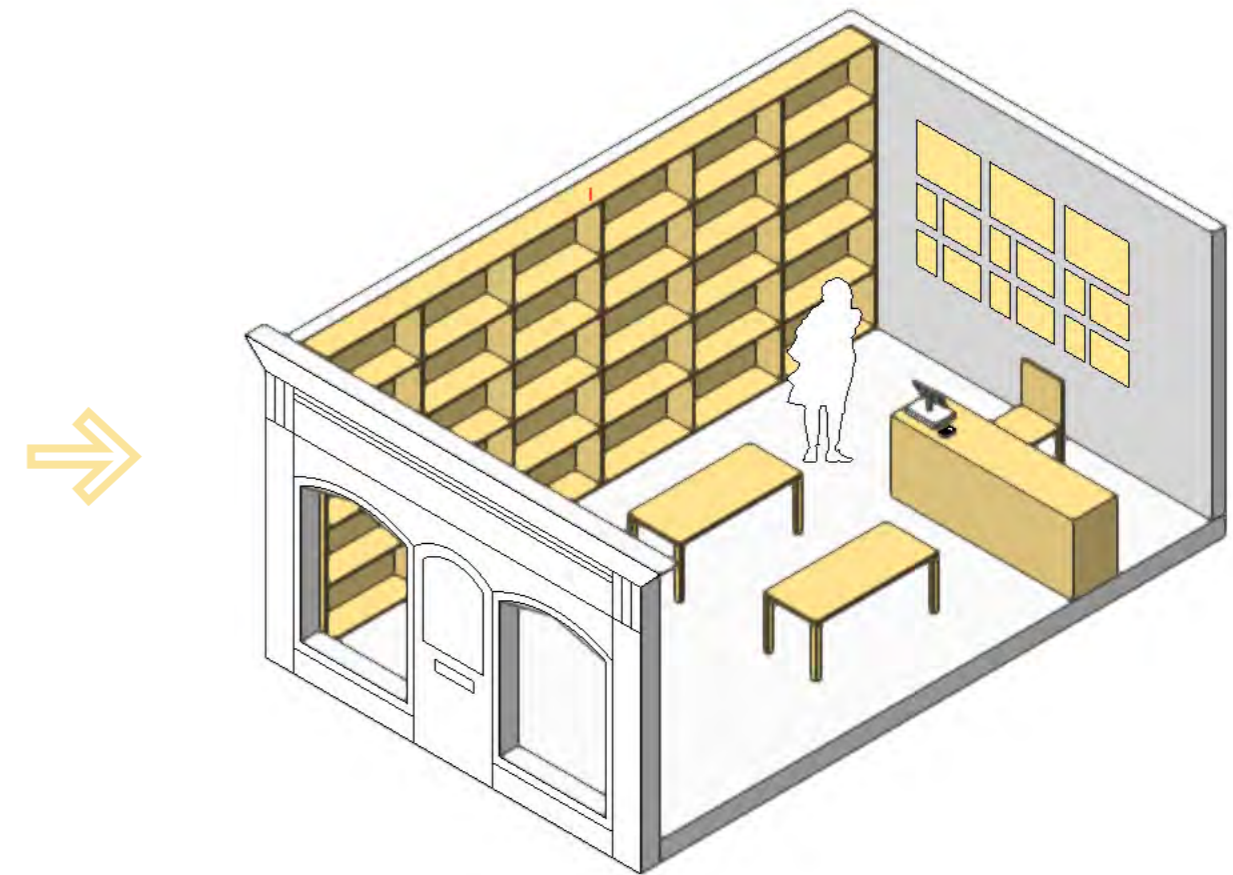
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4 Shop room (St Ives)
Area: 3.9m²



5 Shop room
9m²



6 Small shop on parade
Area: 28m²

6.2 Precedent

Architectural Form

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Burnt Oak Town Centre - We Made That



East Street Exchnage - We Made That

Precedent

Architectural Form

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Cabmens Shelter - London

Precedent

Architectural Form

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Tokyo Toilet Project - Nao Tamura



Tokyo Toilet Project - Tadao Ando

Precedent

Small Scale Retail Units

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St Ives market
Size: 2.5x1.5m



Amble beach huts
Size: 3.5x3.5m



Peterborough market
Size: 5.9x7m

Precedent

Small Scale Retail Units

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Burnham on sea signal box
Size: 3x3m



Lowestoft triangle market
Size: 2.5x5.5m



Leicester Square xmas market
Size: 4.5x2m

Precedent



Great Whyte shopfront



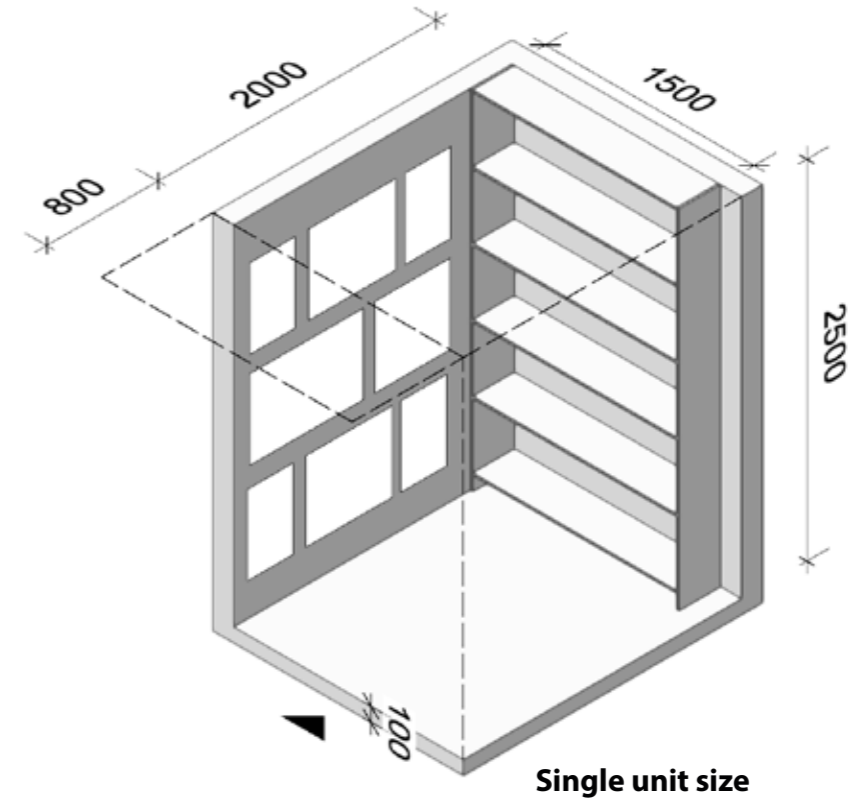
Size: 28.8m²

Precedent

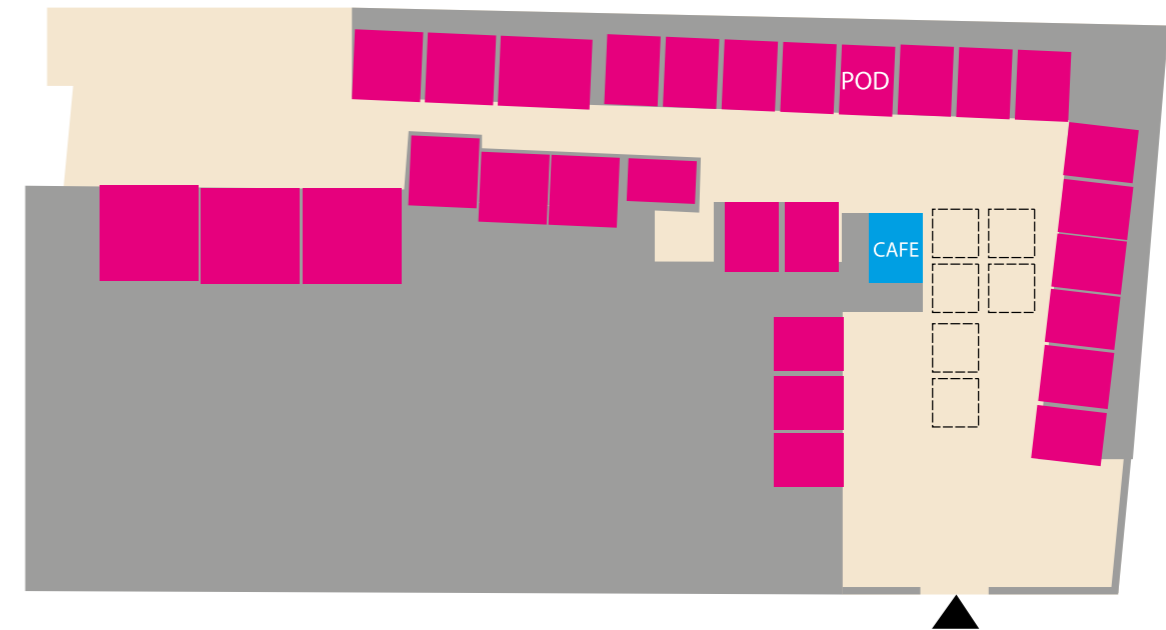


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Courtyard & St Ives - Retail Units



Single unit size

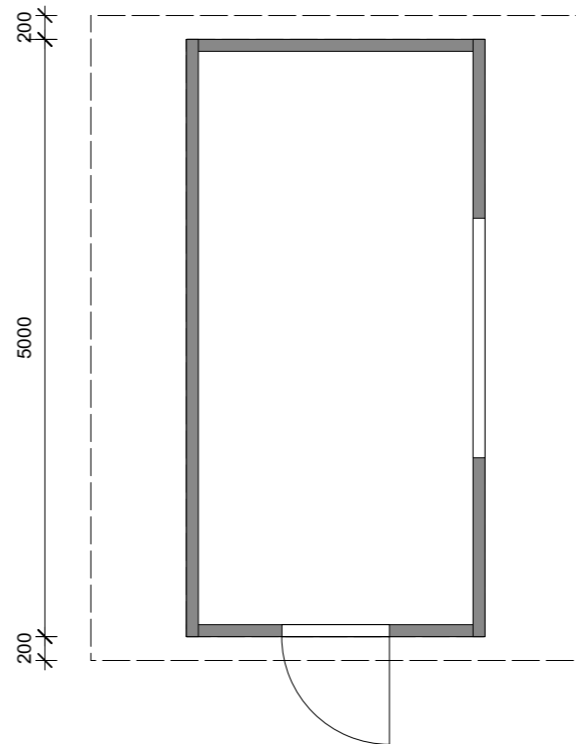
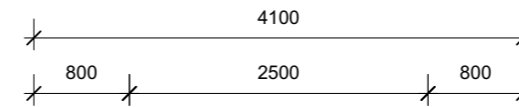
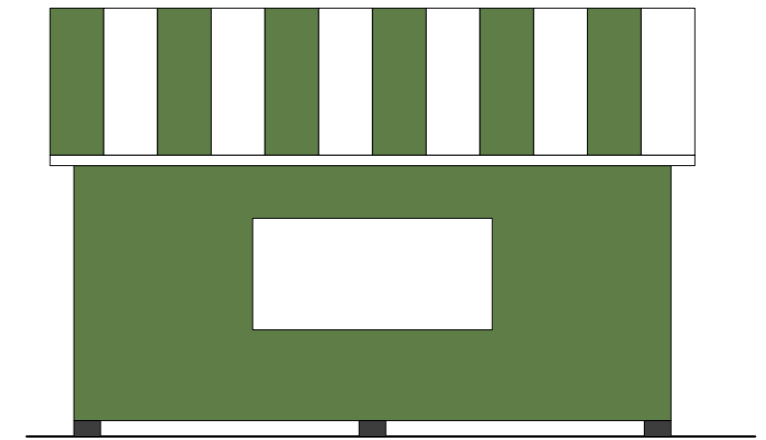
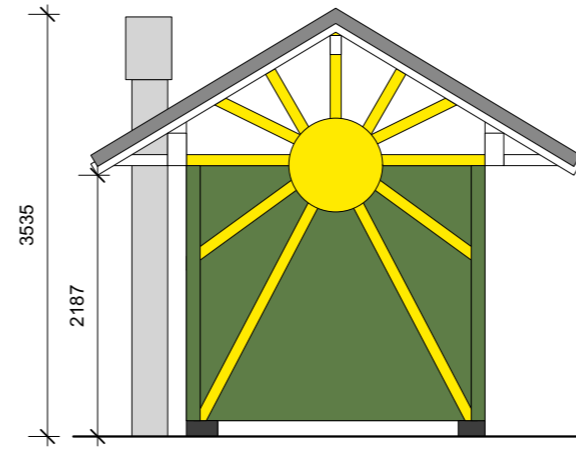


CROMWELL MEWS

- Area plan
- Size: 3m²
- Transport: Built on site
- Access: 100mm step
- Operation: 1 side open

Precedent

Lowestoft - Retail Units



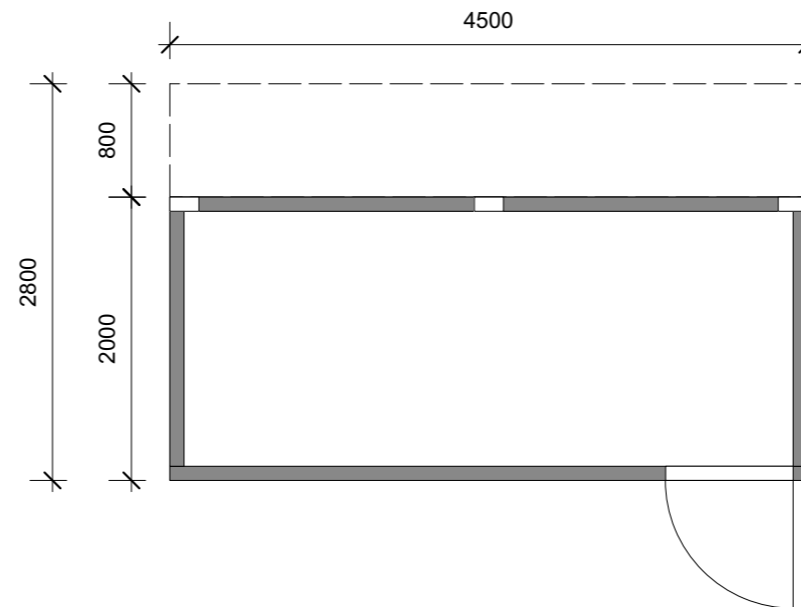
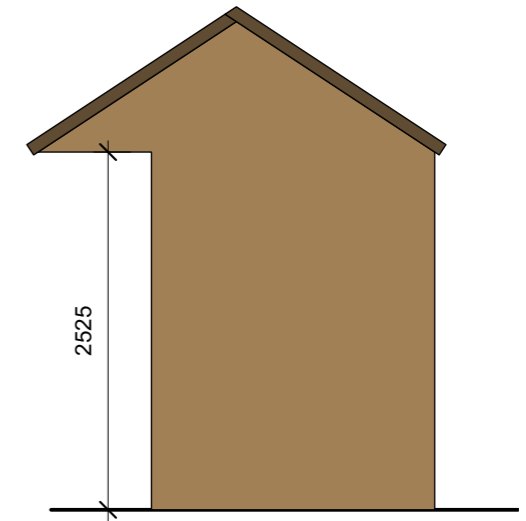
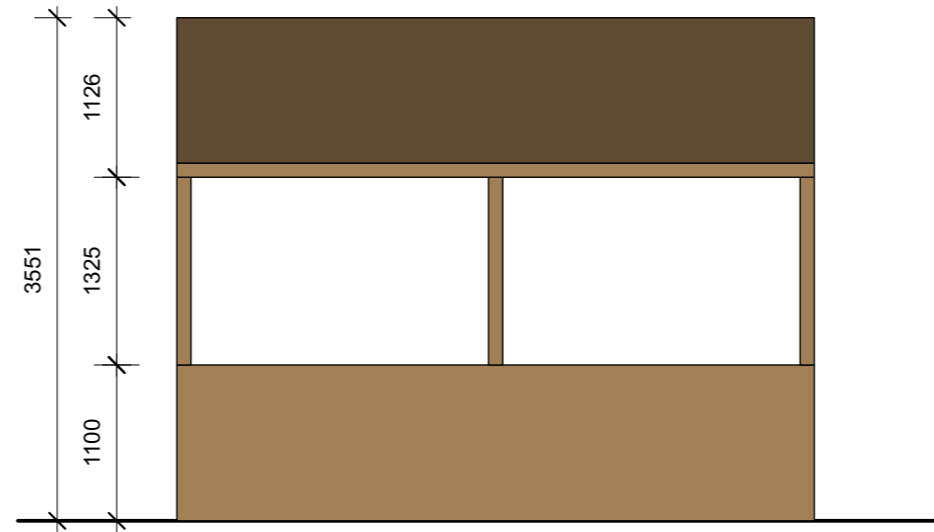
Size: 12.5m²
Transport: Wheels
Access: 100mm step
Operation: Hatch in side

Precedent



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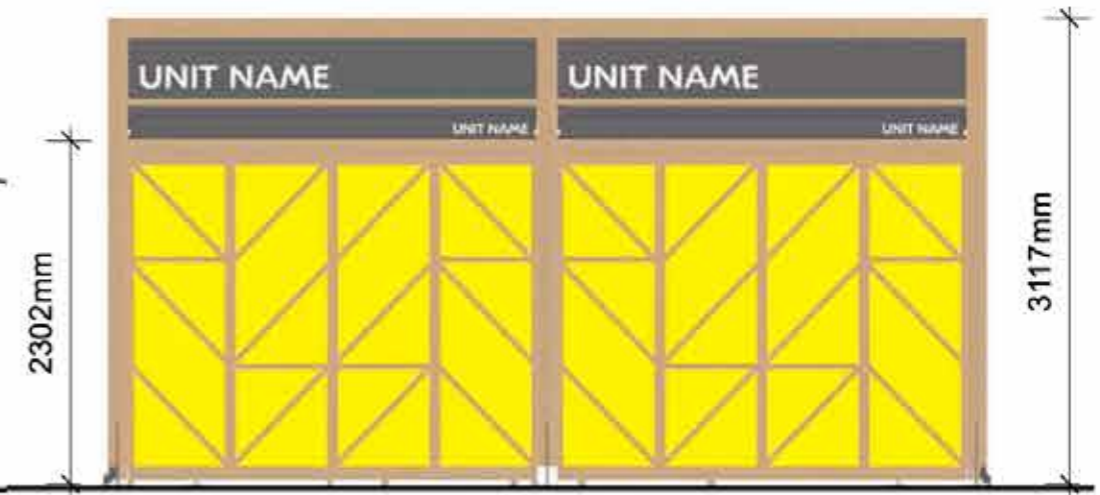
Leicester Square - Retail Units



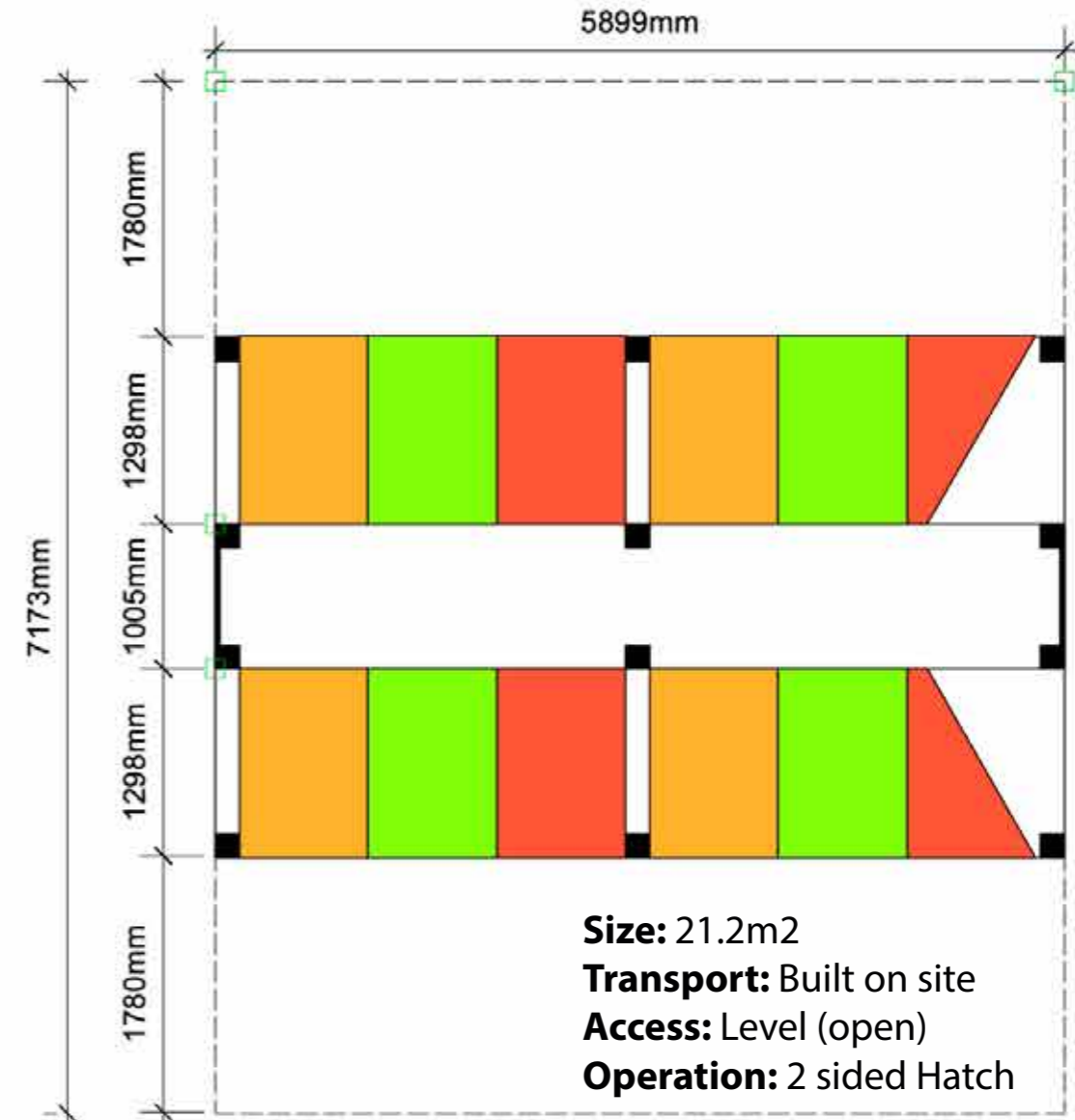
Size: 9m2
Transport: Built on site
Access: Step
Operation: Hatch

Precedent

Peterborough Market Retail Units



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Precedent

Amble - Retail Units

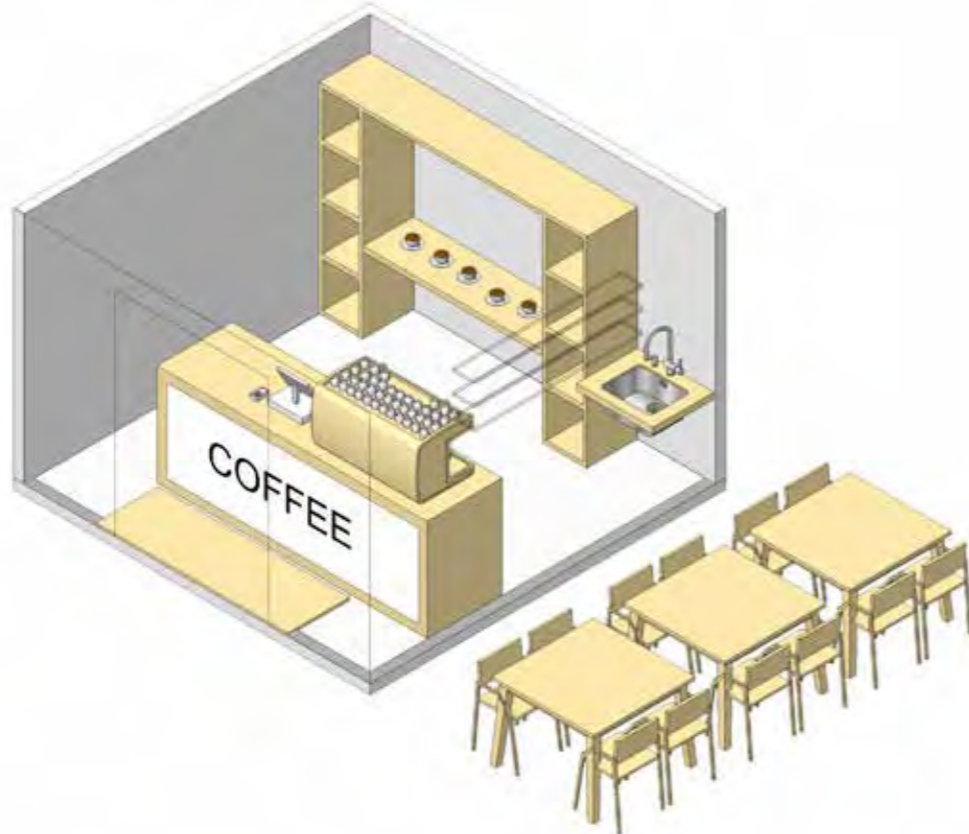
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Gift shop
 Function: Doors open or closed
 Display: 3x internal shelves
 Spillover: Product display on external walls



Sausage rolls
 Function: Doors open only
 Display: External signage
 Spillover: Sauce table



Coffee shop
 Function: Doors open only
 Display: Internal signage
 Spillover: Cafe table & chairs



Puffin cruises
 Function: Doors open or closed
 Display: Internal & external signage
 Spillover: Signage and puffin baskets

Precedent

Amble - Retail Tenants



The boat shed
Art gallery



Lumiere
Candle shop



Lindisfarne Mead
Mead shop



Geordie Bangers
Sausage shop



Bali Wood workshop
Handmade wooden animals



Puffin Cruises
Local boat cruises



Beach Hut
Beachware & Accessories



The sweet pod
Sweet shop



Urban pooch
Luxury dog accessories



Lady Milly
Bags, scarves, jewellery



A Touch of love
Gifts, home decor, seasonal goods



Edie Pebble
Vintage & handmade textiles



Mocha Mondo
Coffee Shop



Glamble
Cosmetics



Sea waves studio
Handmade jewellery

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Precedent

Ramsey's existing pop-up market stalls Great Whyte

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Ramsey's senior lunch club



Windmill Bakery



Fruit & veg market



Cottage cakes and cookies

Precedent

Ramsey's existing pop-up market stalls Great Whyte

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Willow & Wreath Florist



Quiet garden



Butterfly Legacy project



Pebble pots



Artisan Cyder

6.3 Cost Comparison

Retail Units

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Timber Shed
Size: 3.6x3m
Cost: £2k



Timber market unit
Size: 3x3m
Cost: £4k



Metal food pod
Size: 3.5x2.5m
Cost: £7k



Insulated garden cabin
Size: 3x3m
Cost: £9k



Medium converted shipping container
Size: 4.8x2.25m
Cost: £10k



Large converted shipping container
Size: 6x2.5m
Cost: £13k



Medium container with signage
Size: 4x2.5m
Cost: £22k

6.4 Access Requirements



Sunken down + gravel drainage



Open base



Step scribed to site



Consistent height step

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Managing Moisture and Surface water run off

Shop in Box units likely to need a minimum single step change in level entrance or landscape modification for level access



Option 1

- 2.4m ramp
- 200mm ramp height



Option 2

- 1.2m ramp
- 100mm ramp height
- Sunken down 100mm



Option 3

- No ramp
- Sunken down 200mm



Option 4

- No ramp
- Open underside
- Heating issue



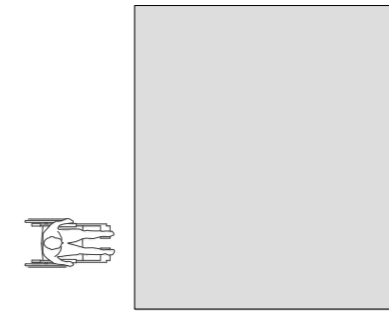
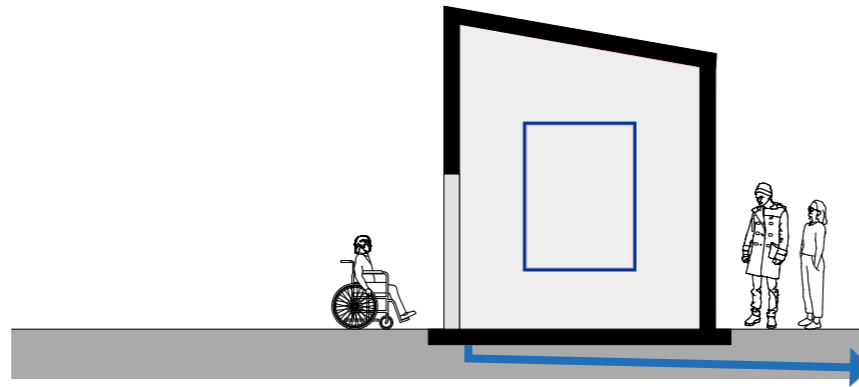
Option 5

- Temporary ramp
- Same as option 1 but with a managed solution
- Single step when ramp not in use

Access Requirements

Units set into ground

Shops inset to create level Access

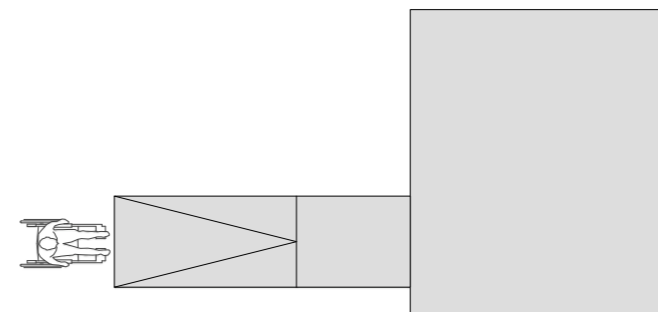
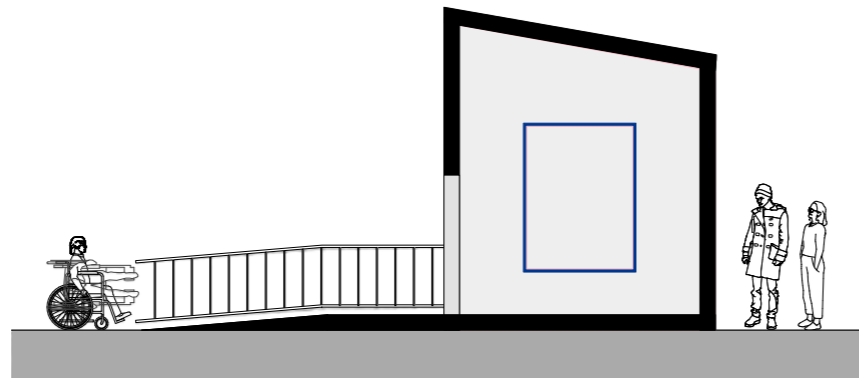


Intrusive surface water drainage management required

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Units on top of existing paving

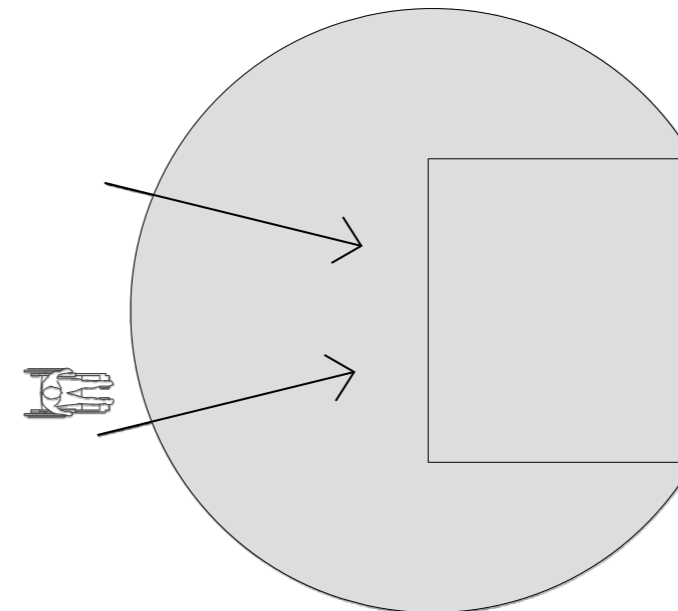
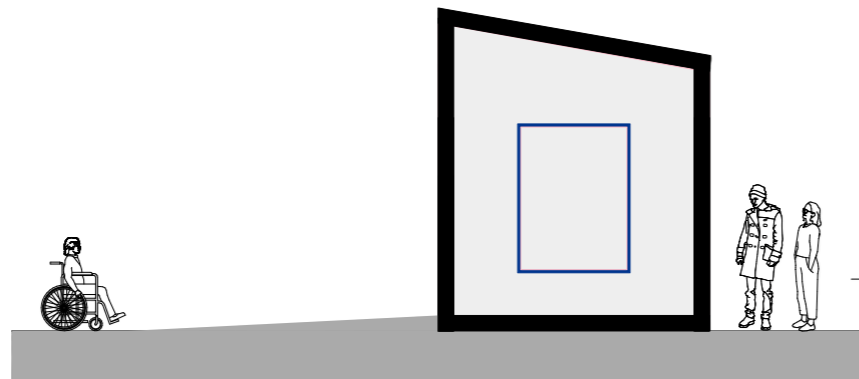
- Shop sit on top of existing paving necessitating ramped access



Decks and ramps intrude into the public realm to manage wheelchair access

Landscaped access

- Landscaping build up to shop entrance

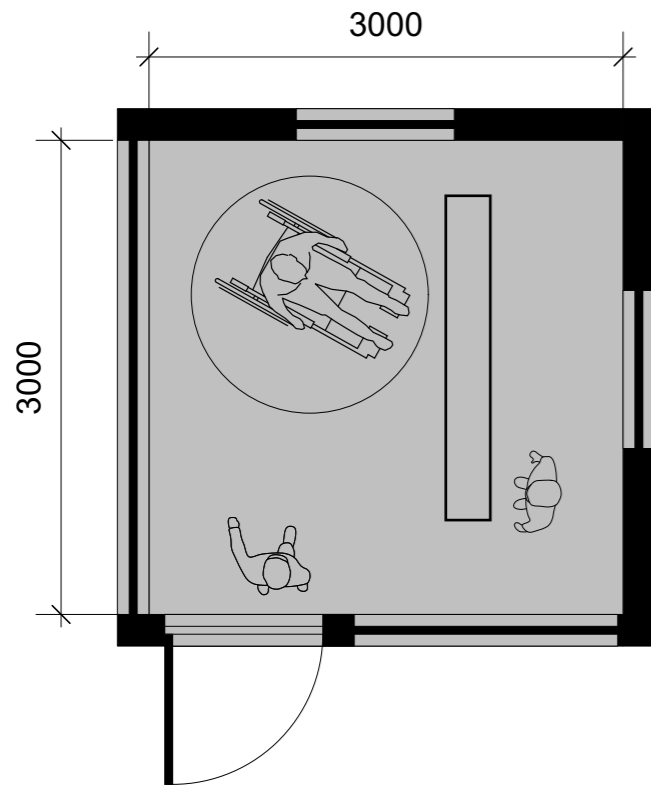


More significant landscape works can manage access and surface water run off subtly

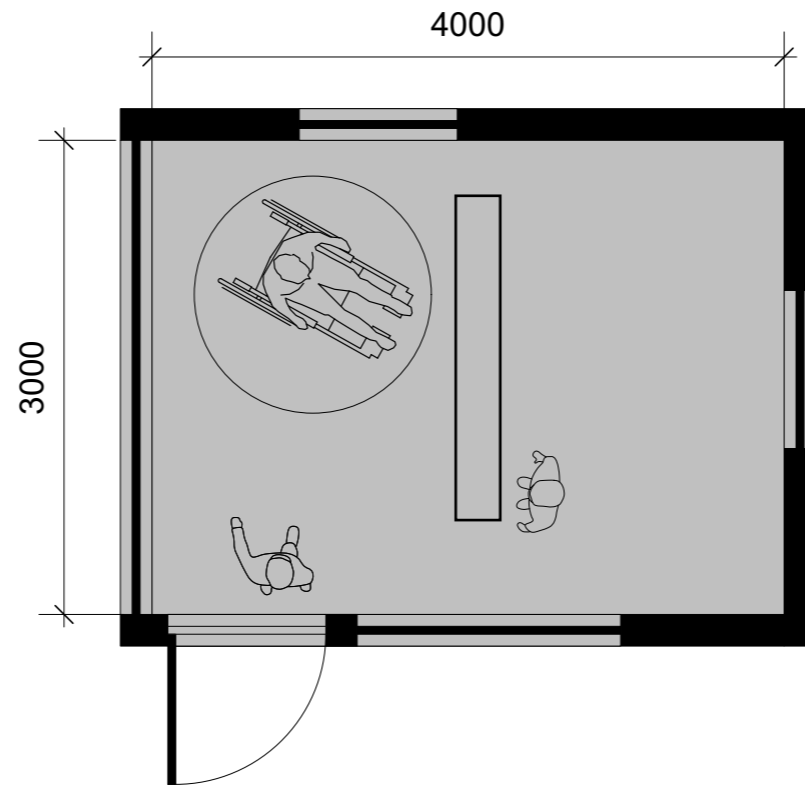
6.5 Arrangement

Unit Size Test

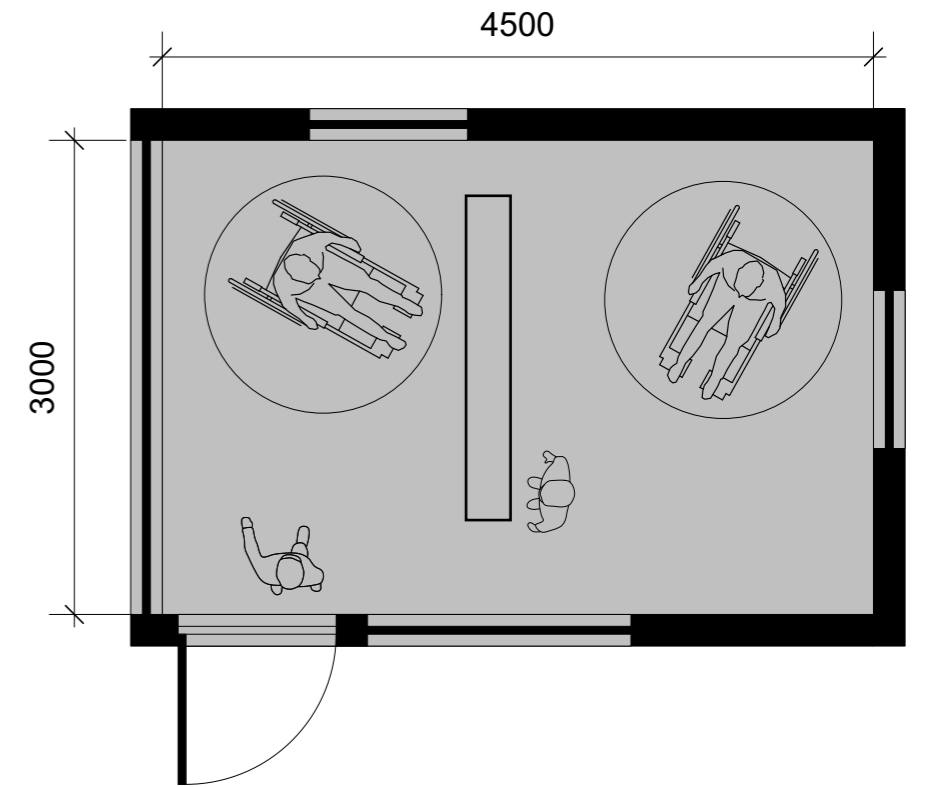
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Internal Area: 9.2m²



Internal Area: 12m²



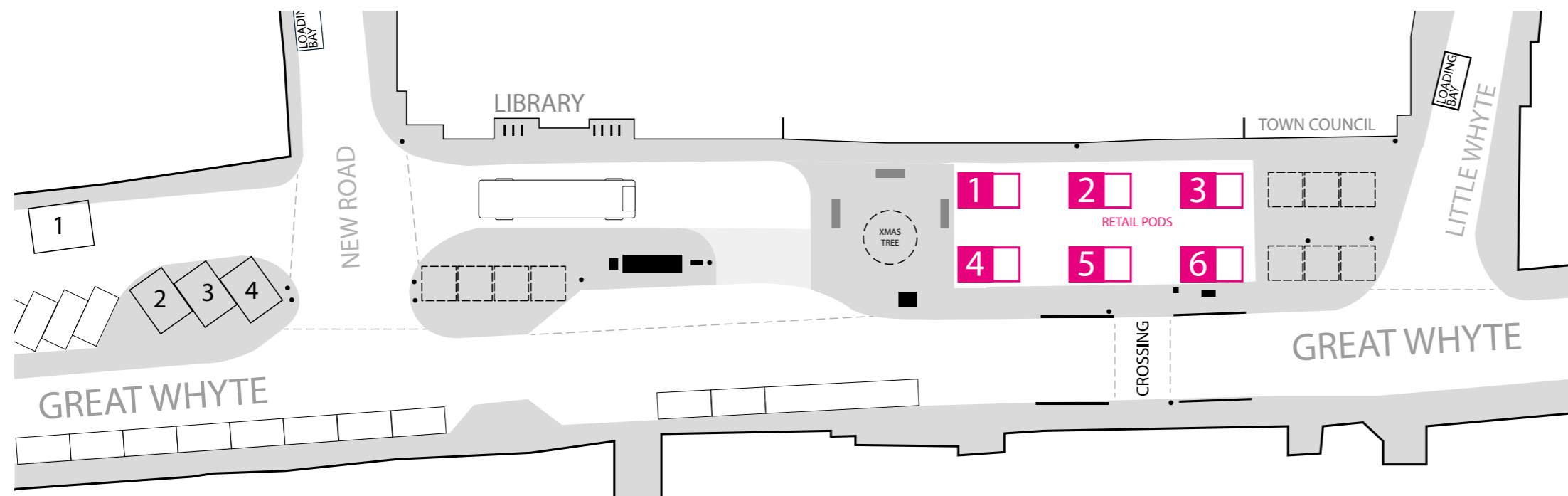
Internal Area: 13.5m²

Increased space for a range of uses including more capacity for more access and inclusion

Arrangement

Linear Array

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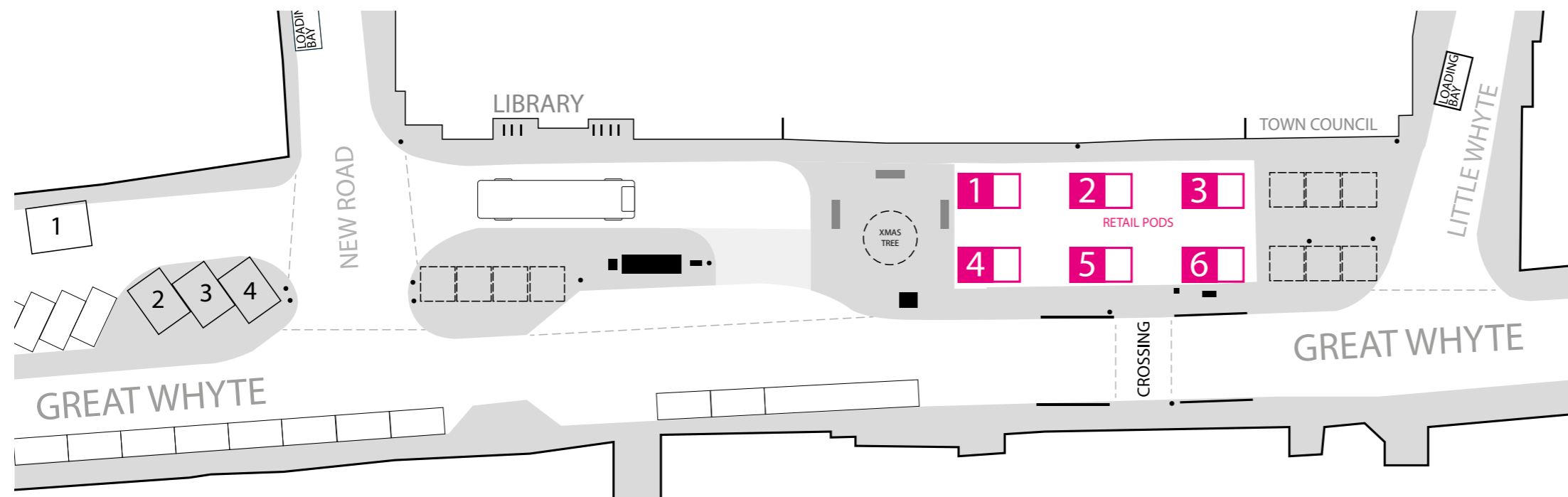


Option 1- All facing same way

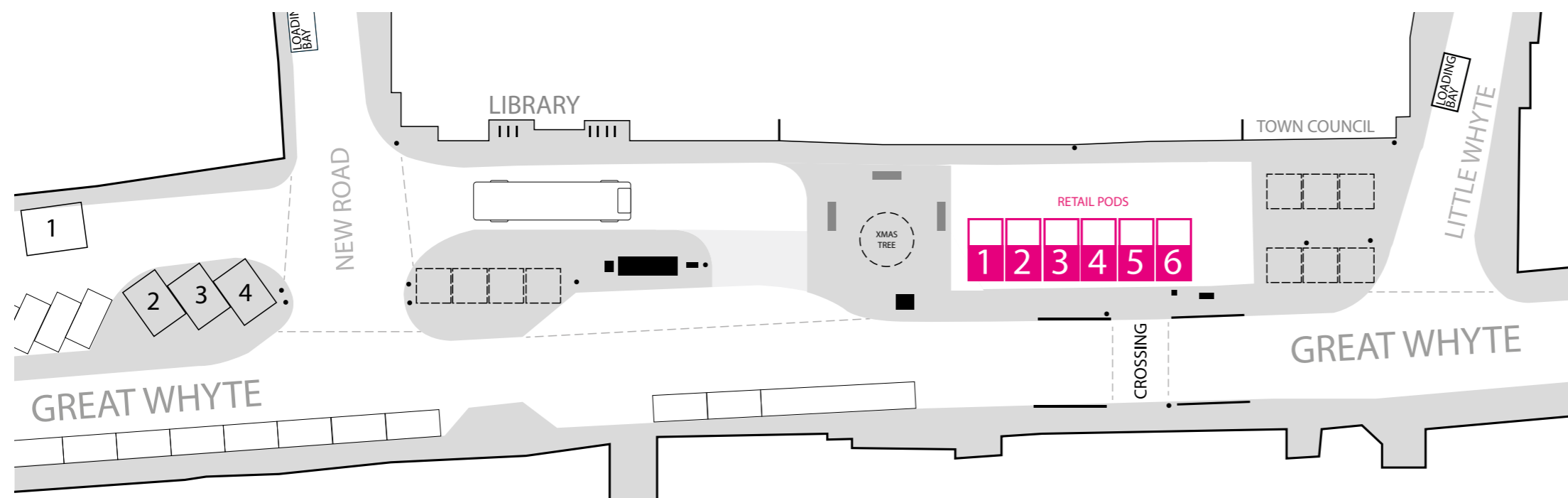
Arrangement

Rotated Entrances

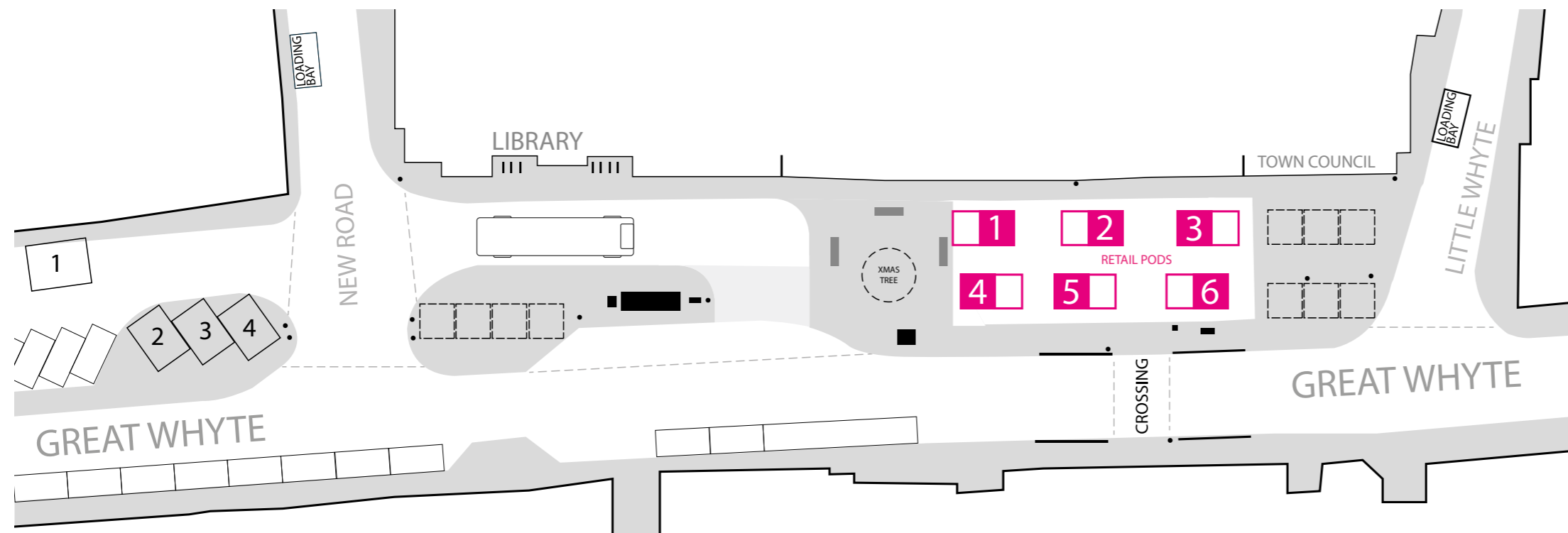
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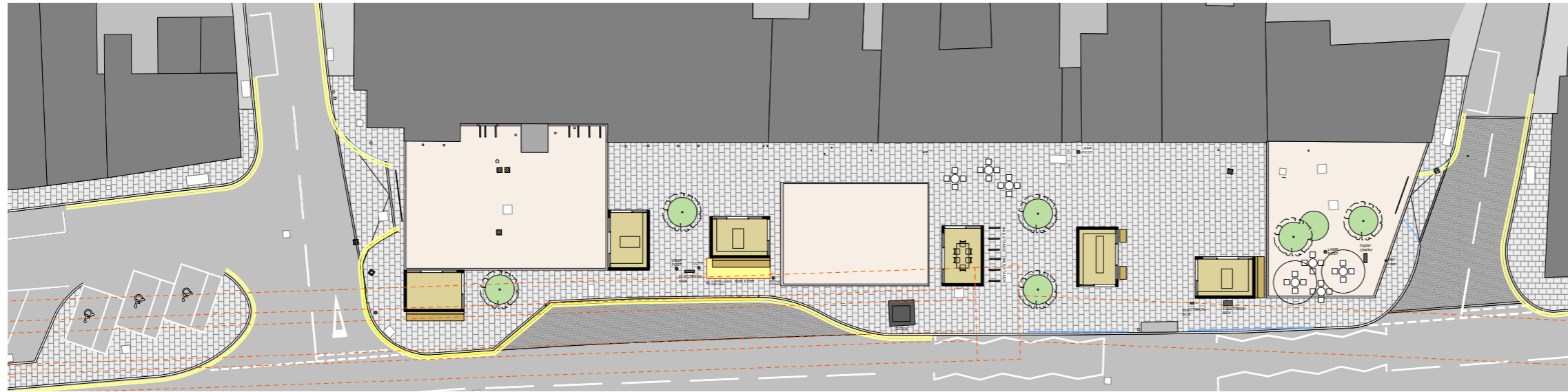
Option 2 - Facing different ways



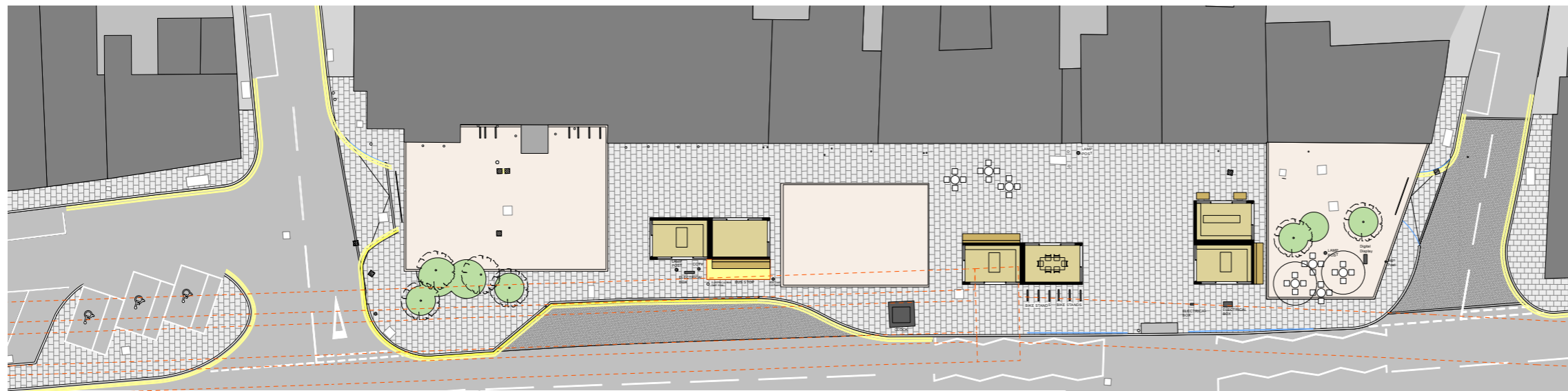
Option 3 - In a Row



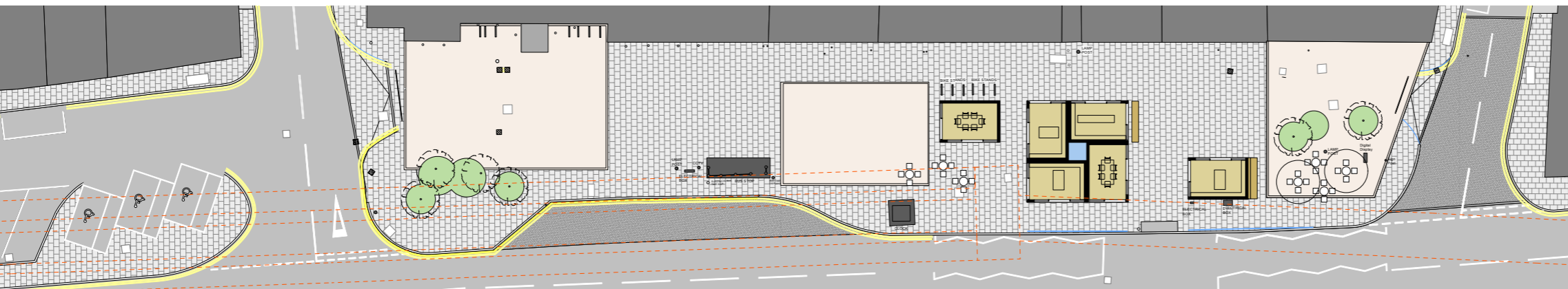
Option 4 - 2 pairs, 2 alone



Option 1-Detached Units
 - 6no. Individual shop units spread along full length



Option 2 - Semi Detached Units
 - Three clusters of made up of 2no. shop units each
 - Bus stop build into final unit

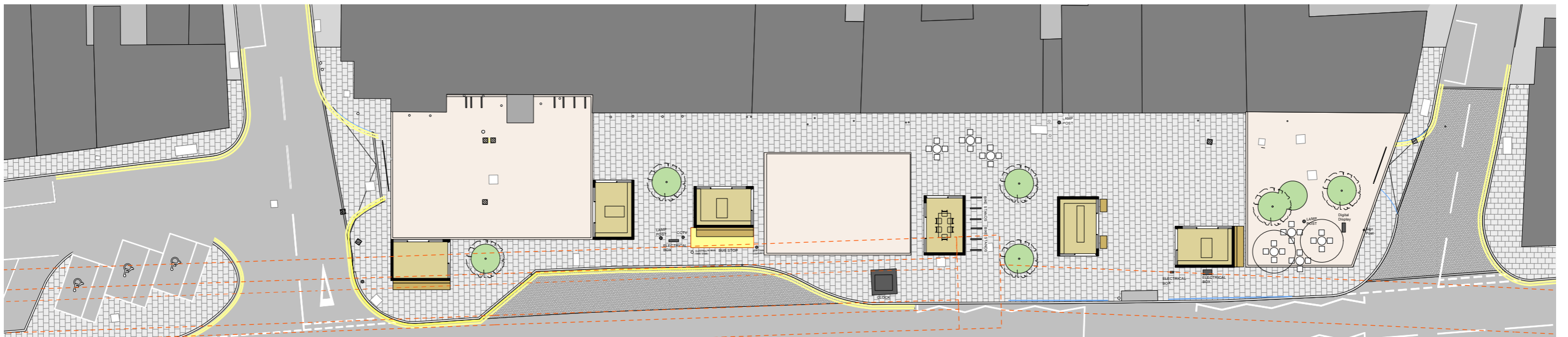


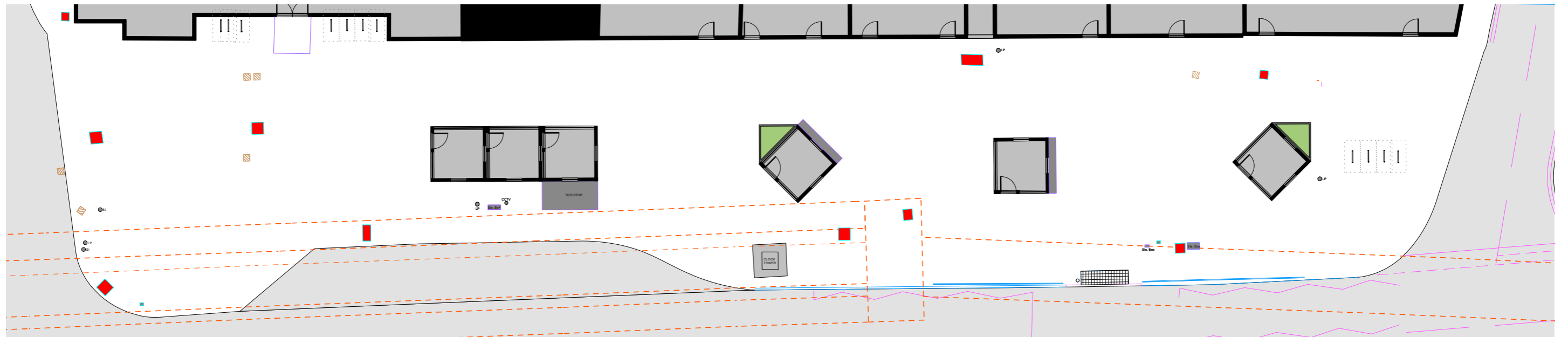
Option 3 - Clustered Units
 - One clusters of made up of 4no. shop units
 - 2no. Individual shop units

Shop in Box units - Option 1

Detached Units

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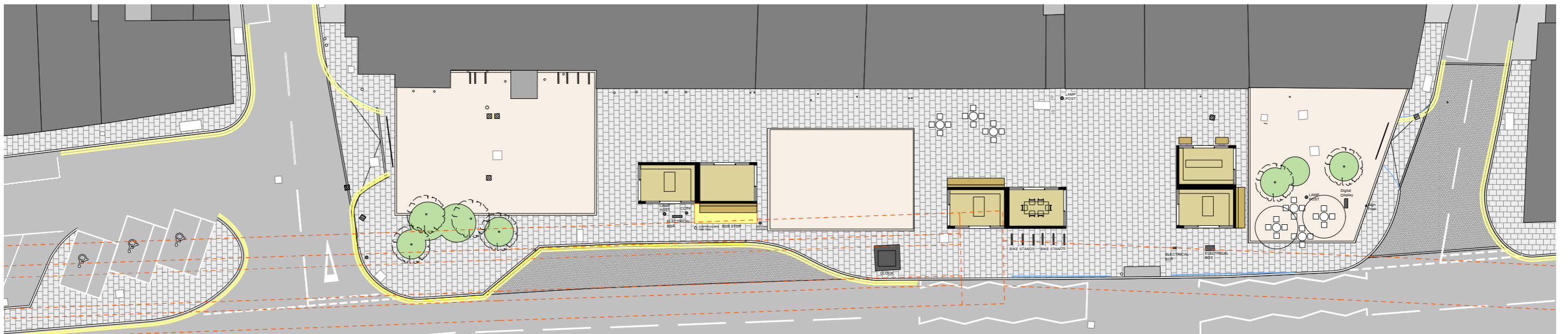


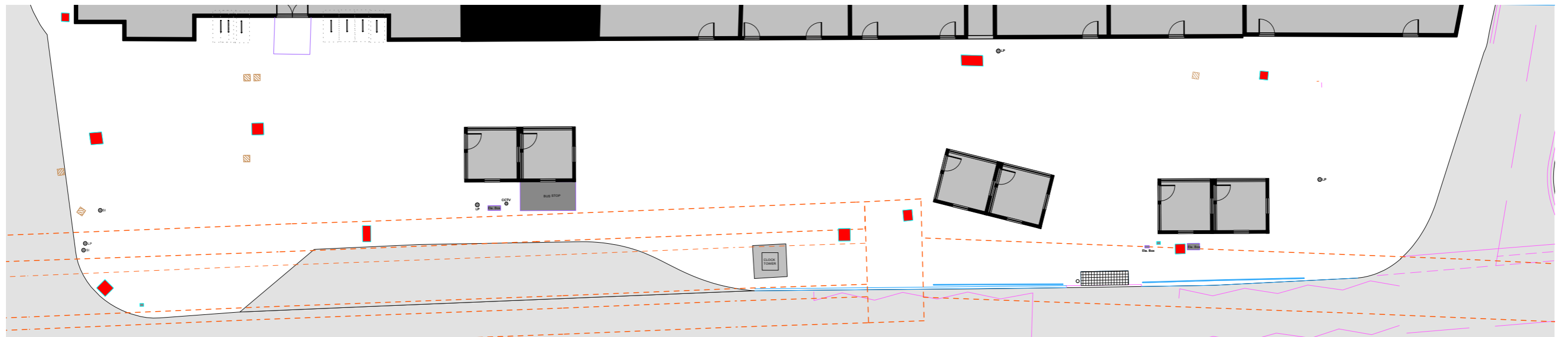
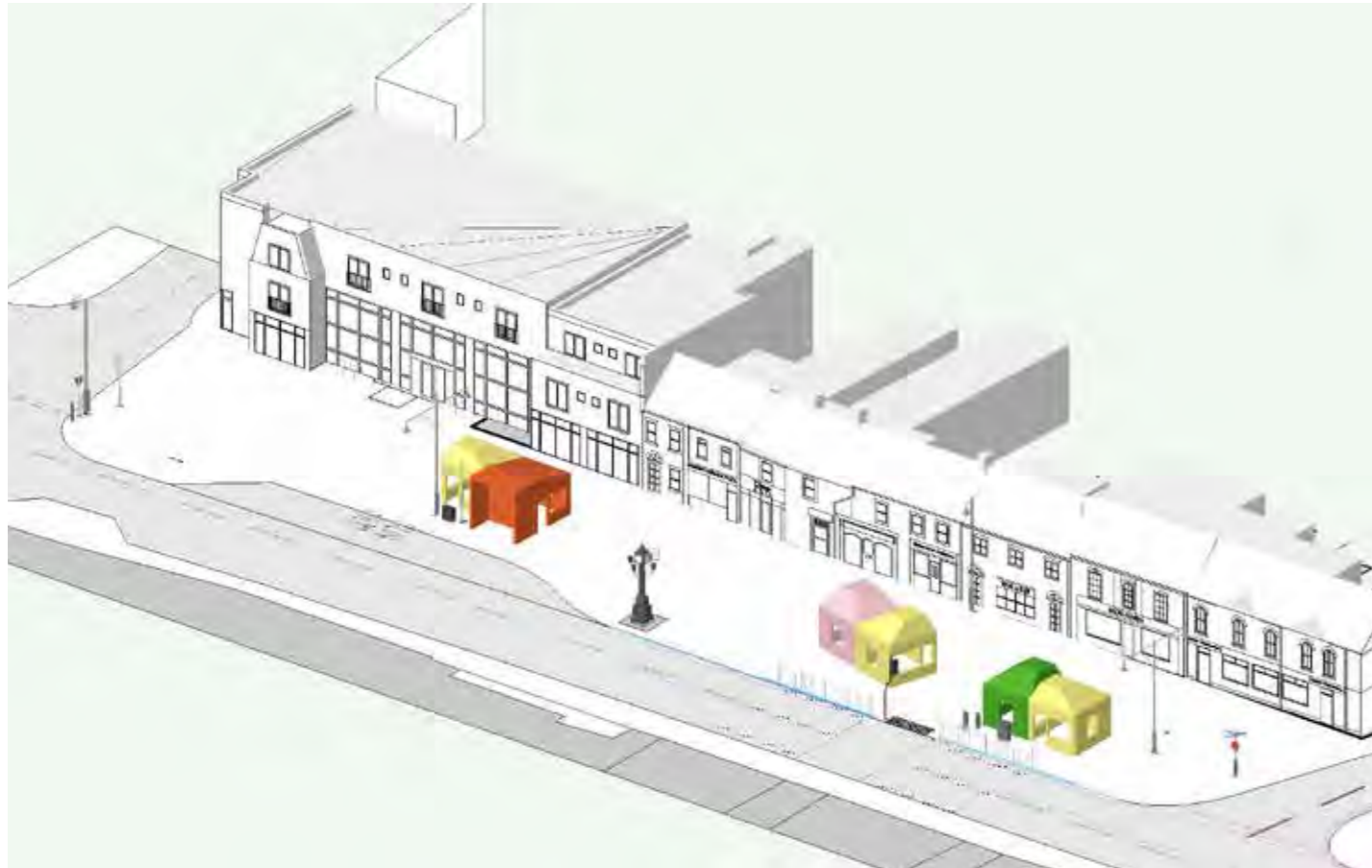


Shop in Box units - Option 2

Semi-detached Units

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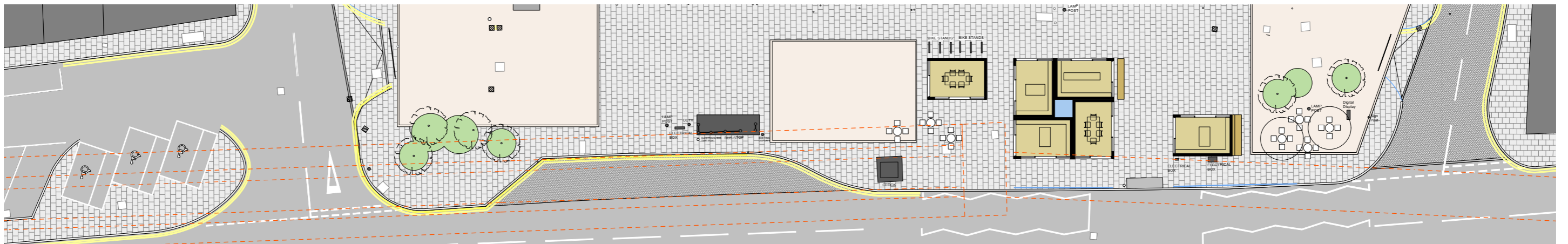




Shop in Box units - Option 3

Clustered Units

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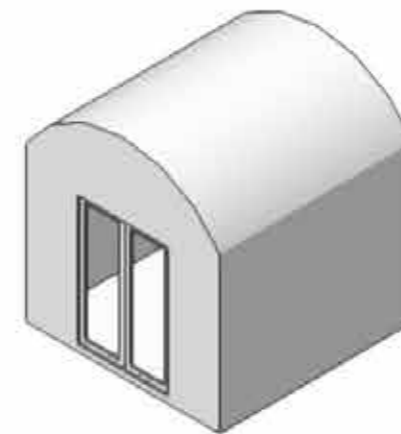
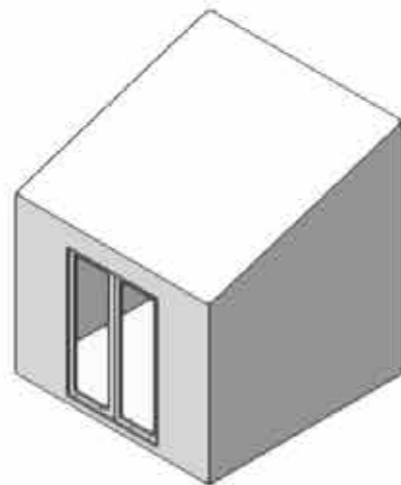
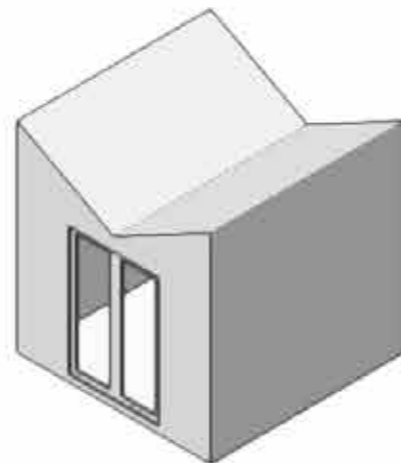
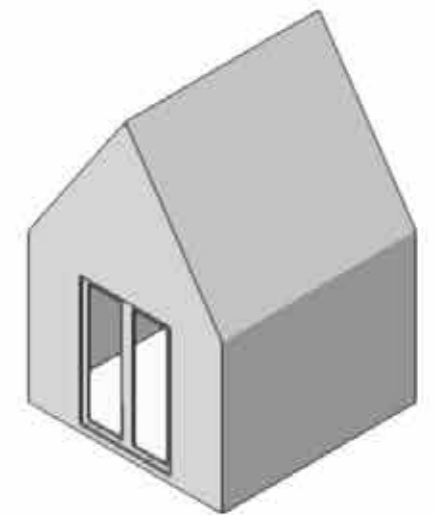
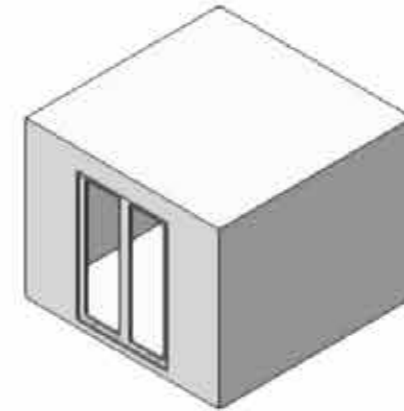
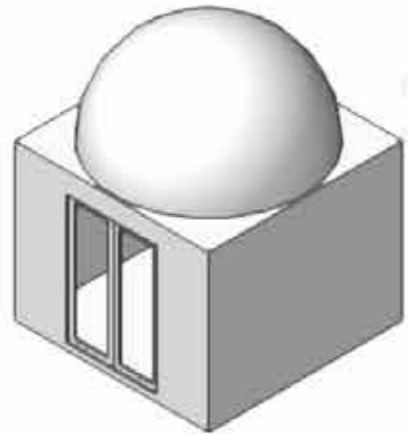
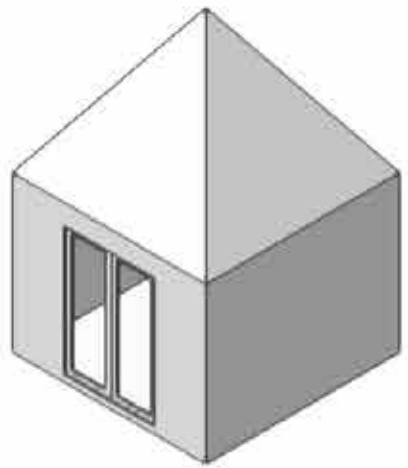


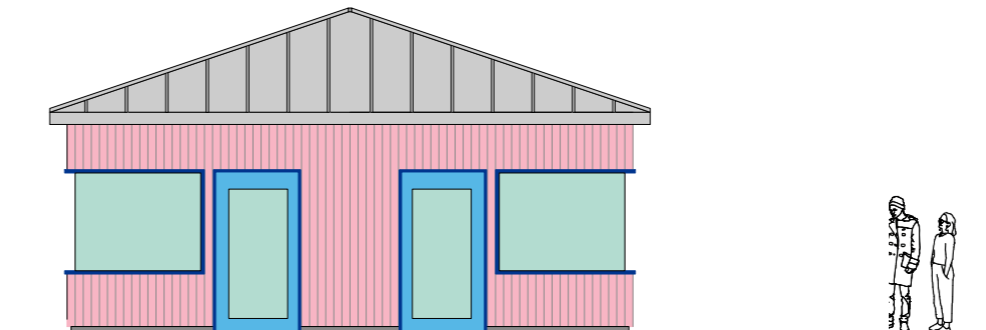
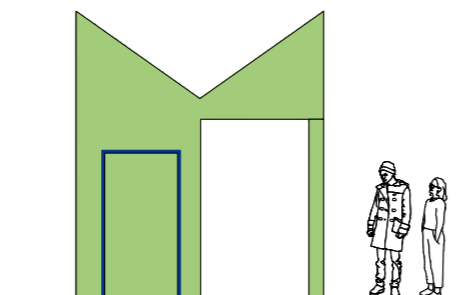
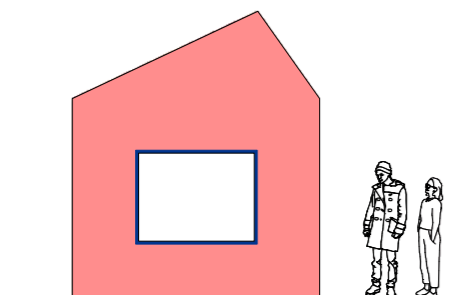
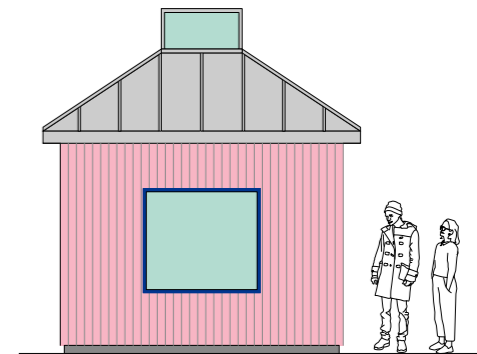
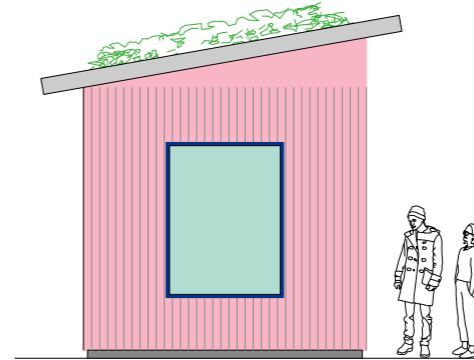
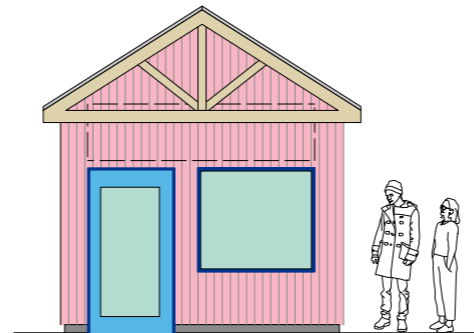
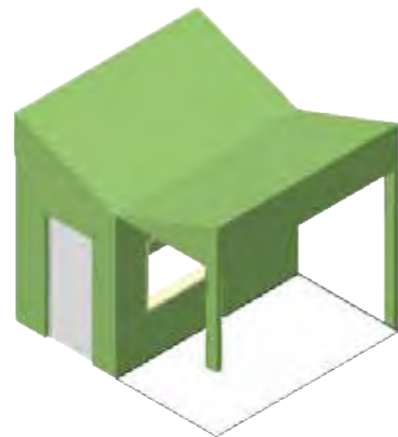
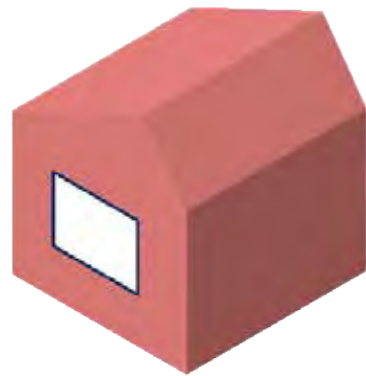
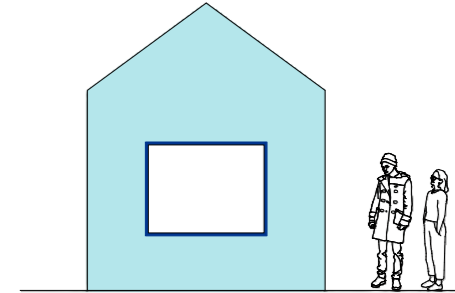
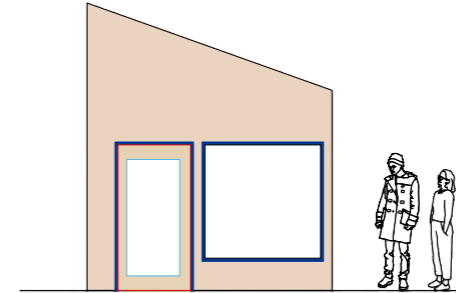
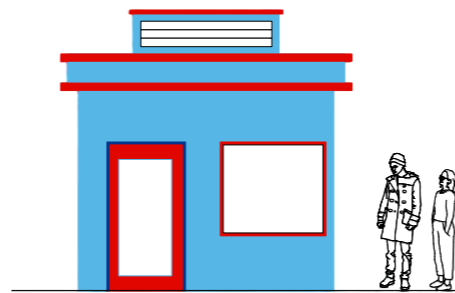
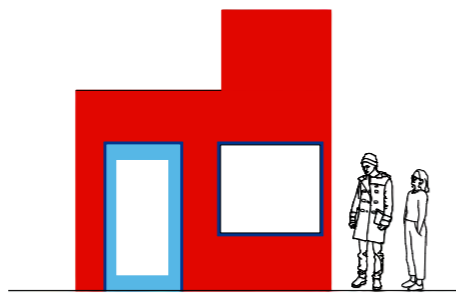
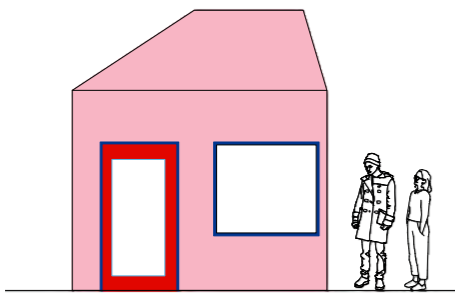
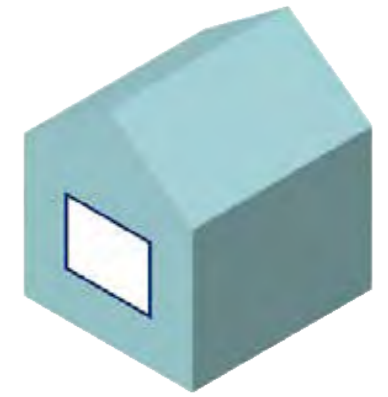
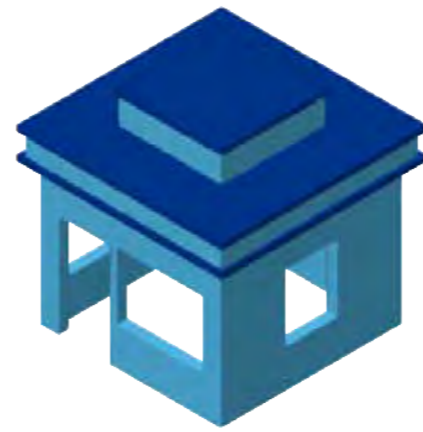
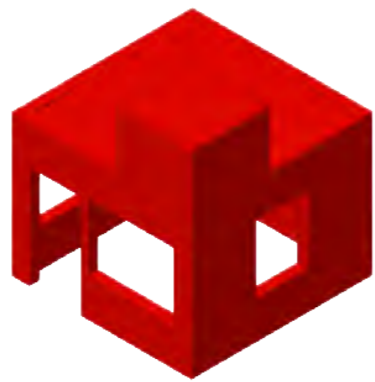


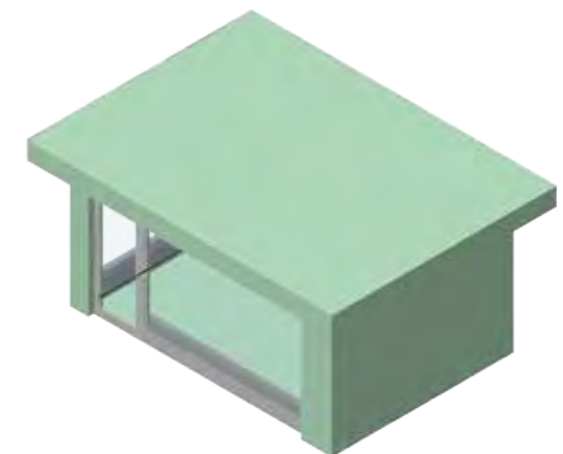
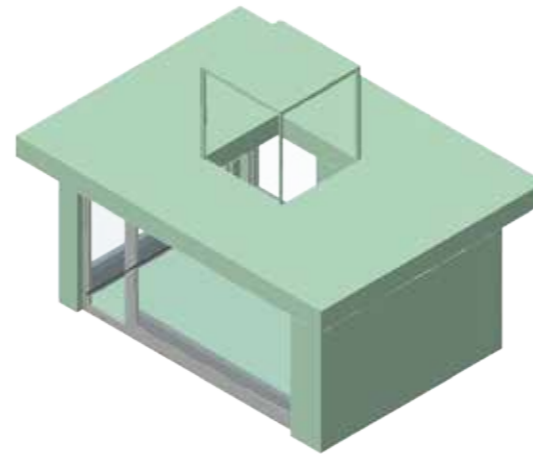
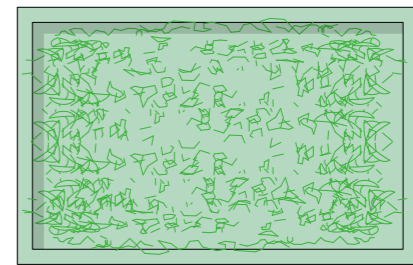
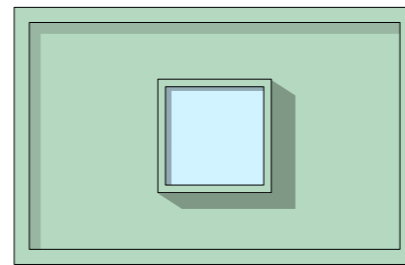
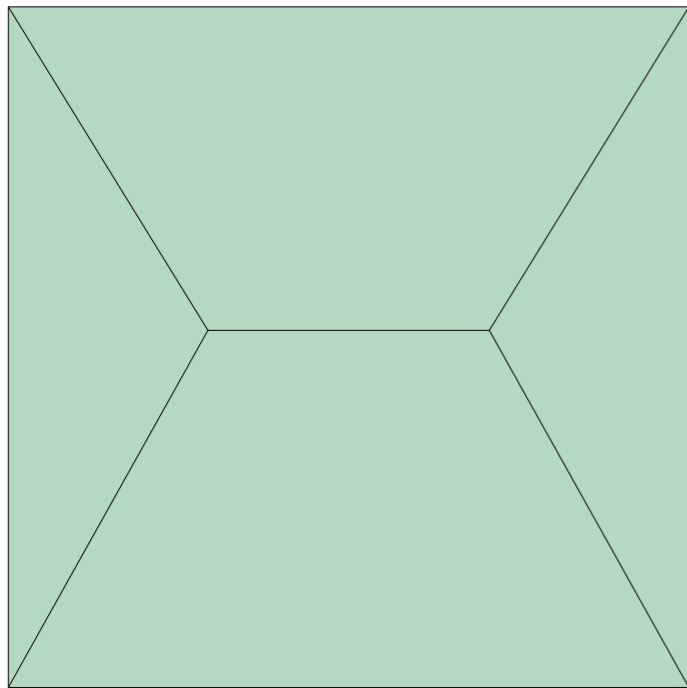
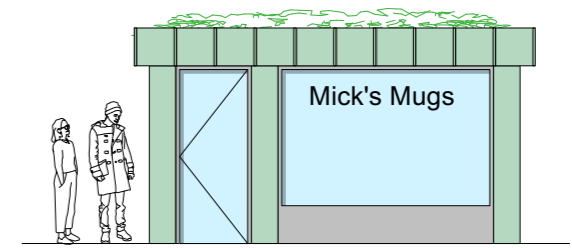
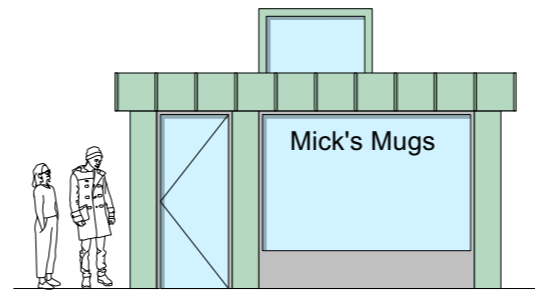
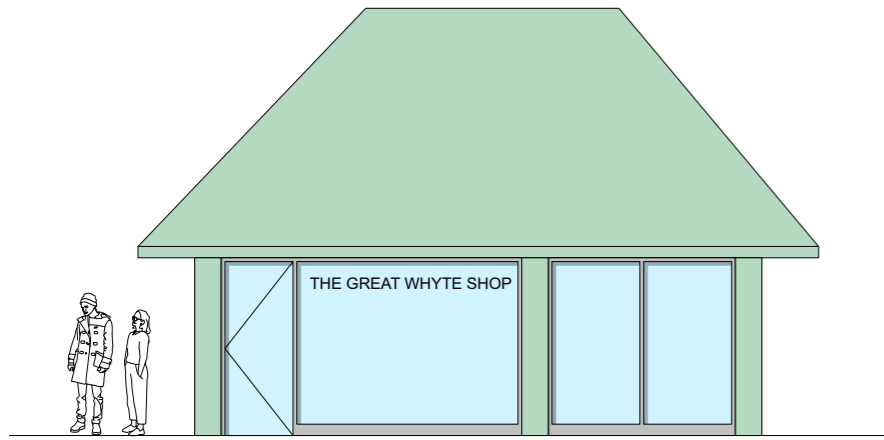
6.6 Form

Roof Forms

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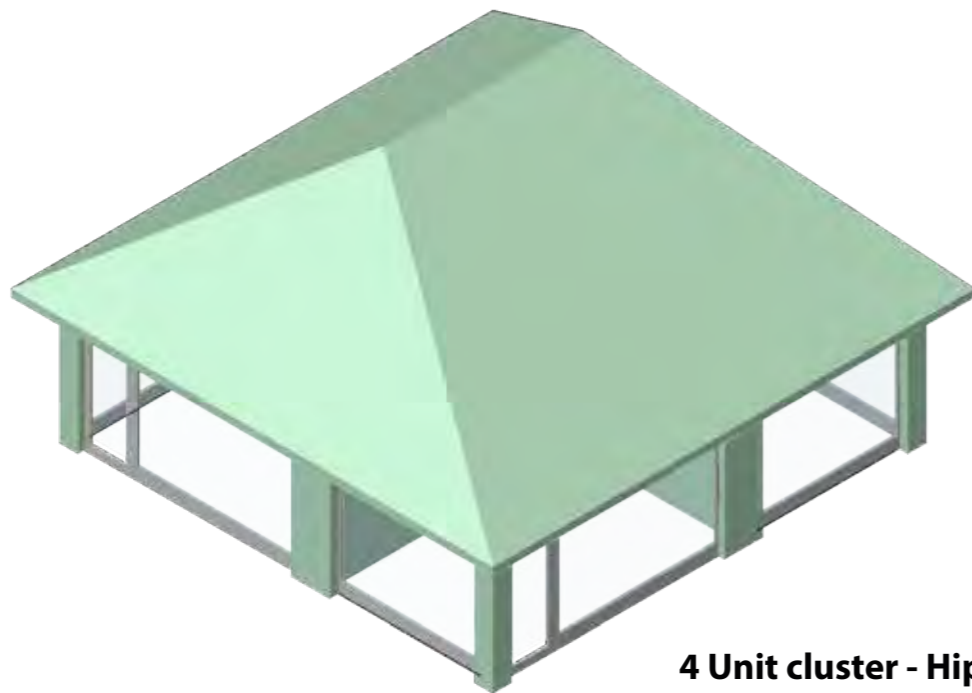




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Singular Unit - Lantern roof

Singular Unit - Flat roof, planted



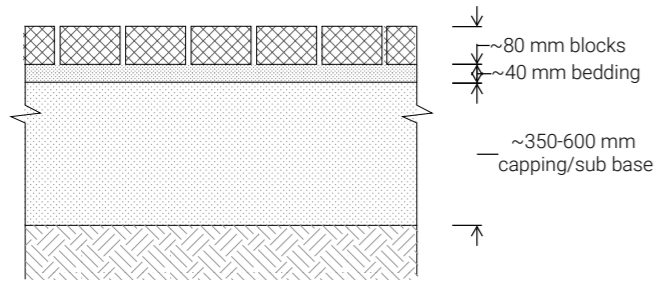
4 Unit cluster - Hipped roof

6.7 Civil Engineering

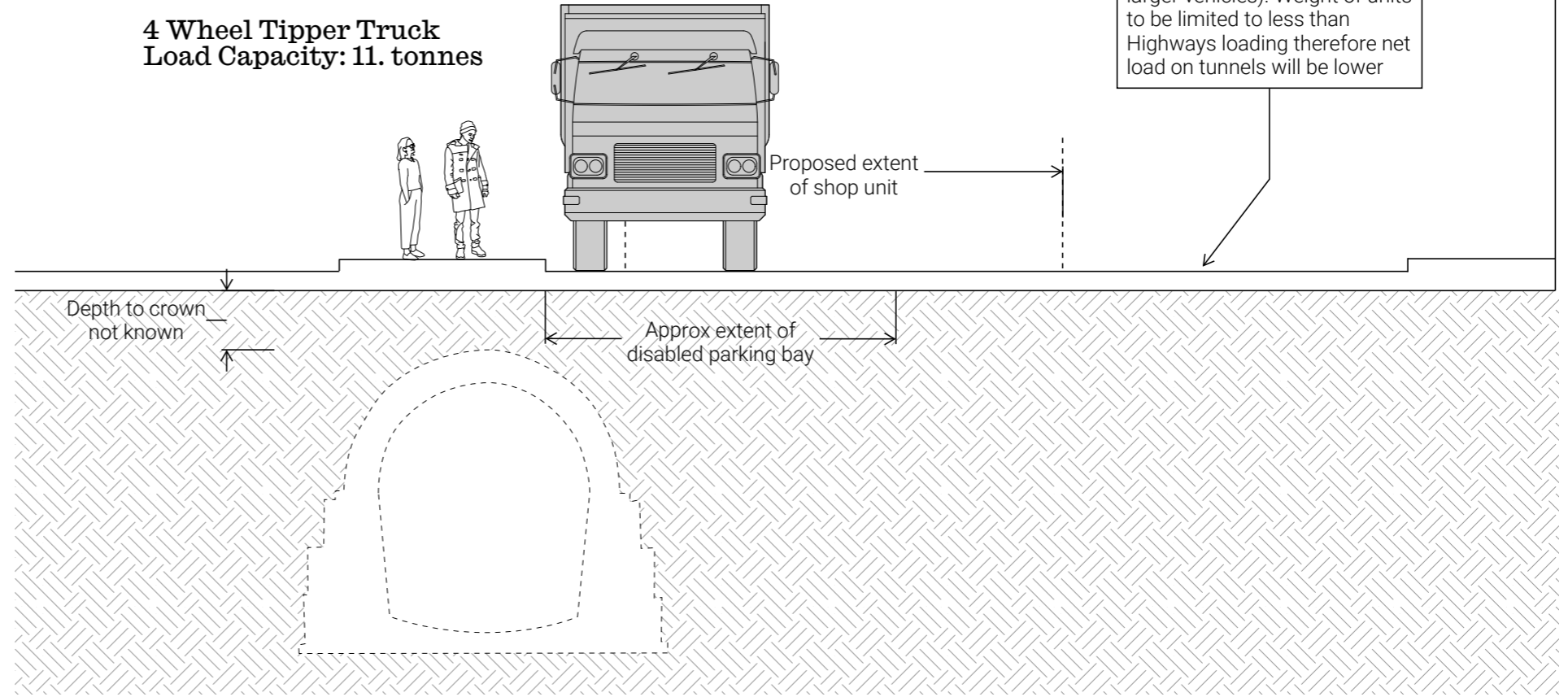
4 Wheel Tipper Truck
Load Capacity: 11. tonnes

Existing roadway assumed designed for Highway loading, e.g. no barriers to medium (or larger vehicles). Weight of units to be limited to less than Highways loading therefore net load on tunnels will be lower

Assumed Typical buildups:
(not project specific)

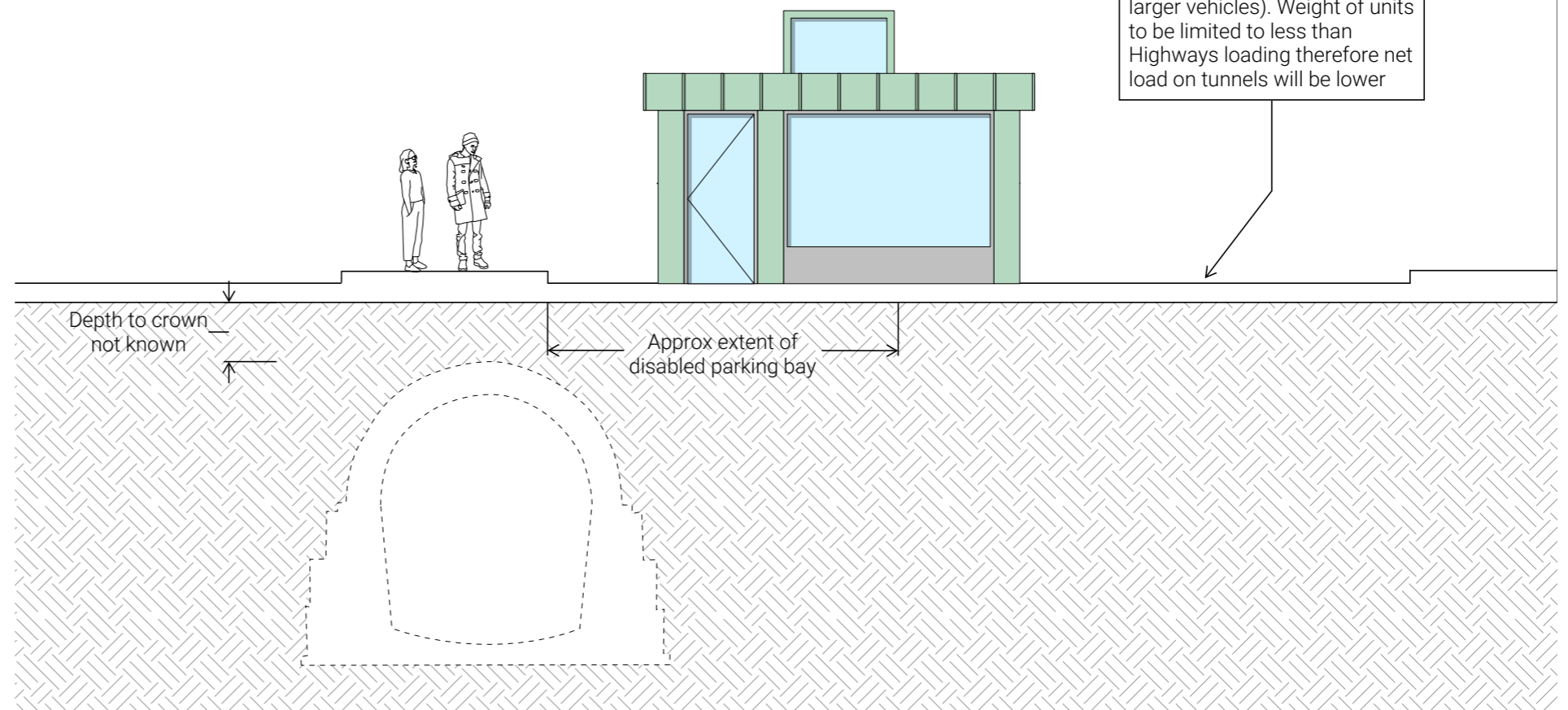


No site investigations have been undertaken to confirm position of tunnels or build ups. All dimensions are indicative and based on typical conditions or approximate survey information.



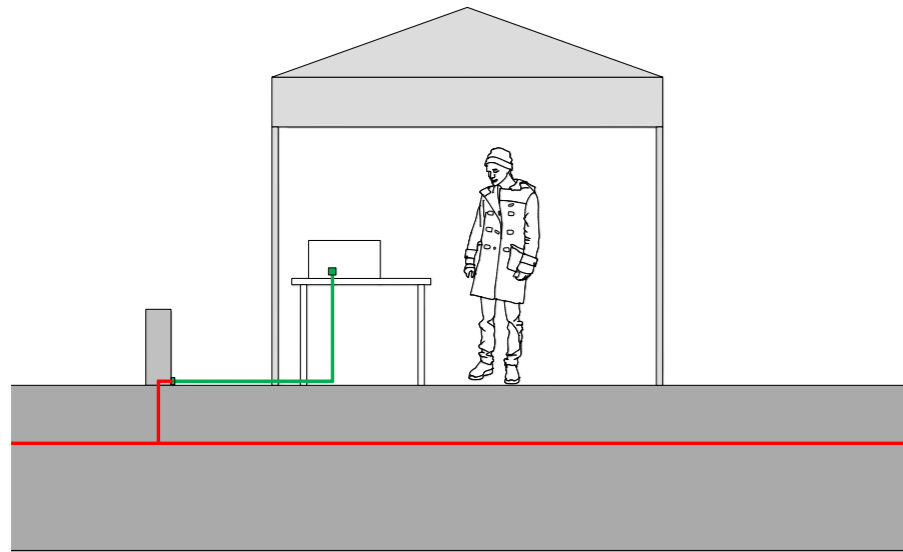
Existing

Existing roadway assumed designed for Highway loading, e.g. no barriers to medium (or larger vehicles). Weight of units to be limited to less than Highways loading therefore net load on tunnels will be lower

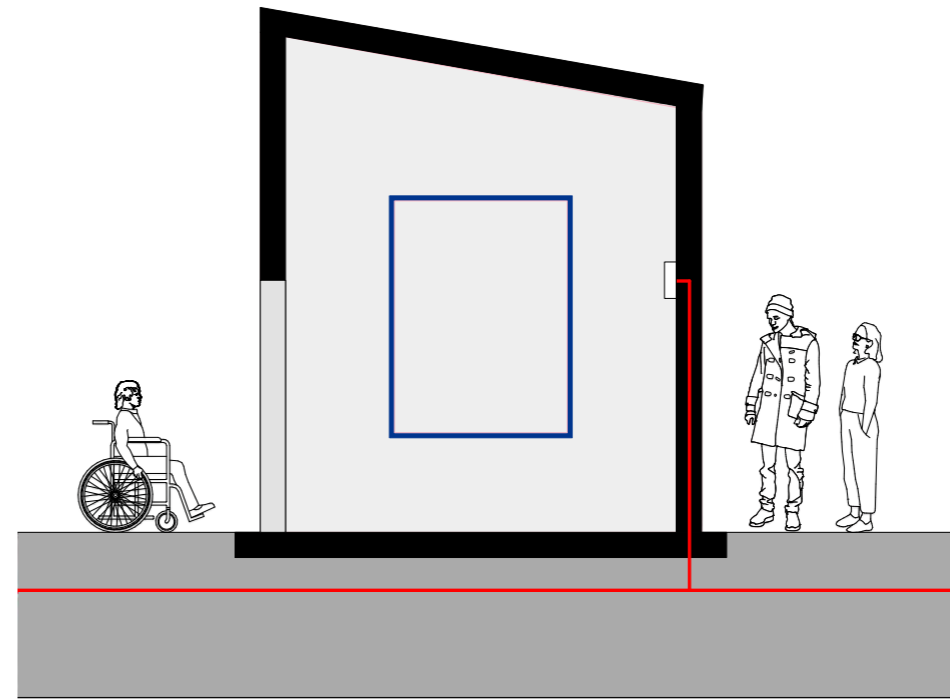


Proposed

Sunday market power options



Retail unit power options



Sunday market power options



Bollard
£1300 + VAT



In-ground unit
£2700 + VAT



Pop-up unit

Notes:

- 100mm diameter ground duct
- 30 amps per unit
- (ballpark power requirement for heater/coffee machine/ lights etc)
- Solar panels- awaiting info- won't be able to provide full power requirement
- UKPN desktop survey- 2 week lead time

Retail unit power options



Consumer unit
Cost: £85
Size: (H)277 mm x (W)321 mm x (D)120 mm



Power meter
Cost: TBC
Size: (H)277 mm x (W)160 mm x (D)120 mm
(half size of consumer unit)



1. Structural box



2. Decorated shed



3. Articulated frame



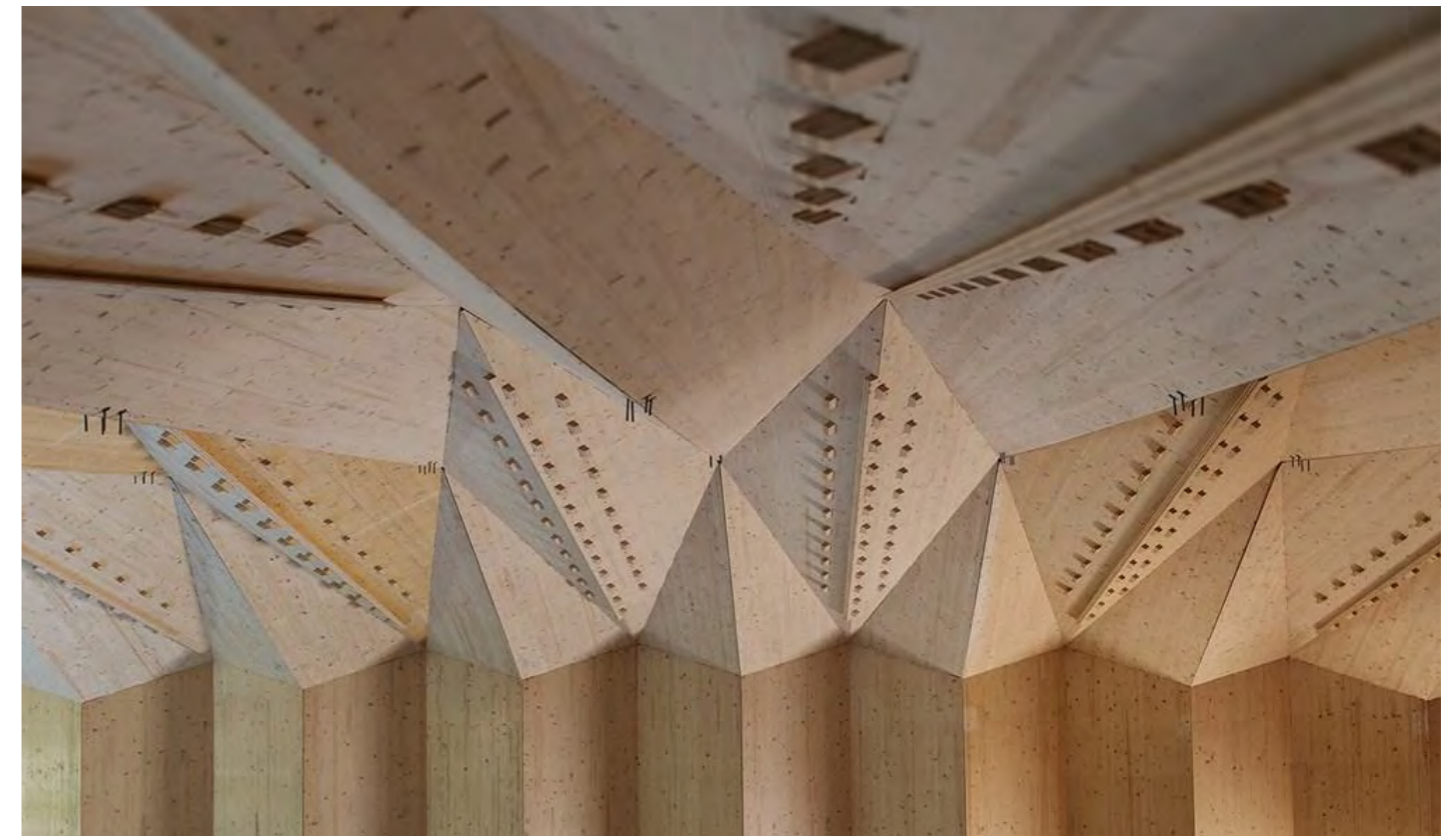
1. Royal Parks Pavilion



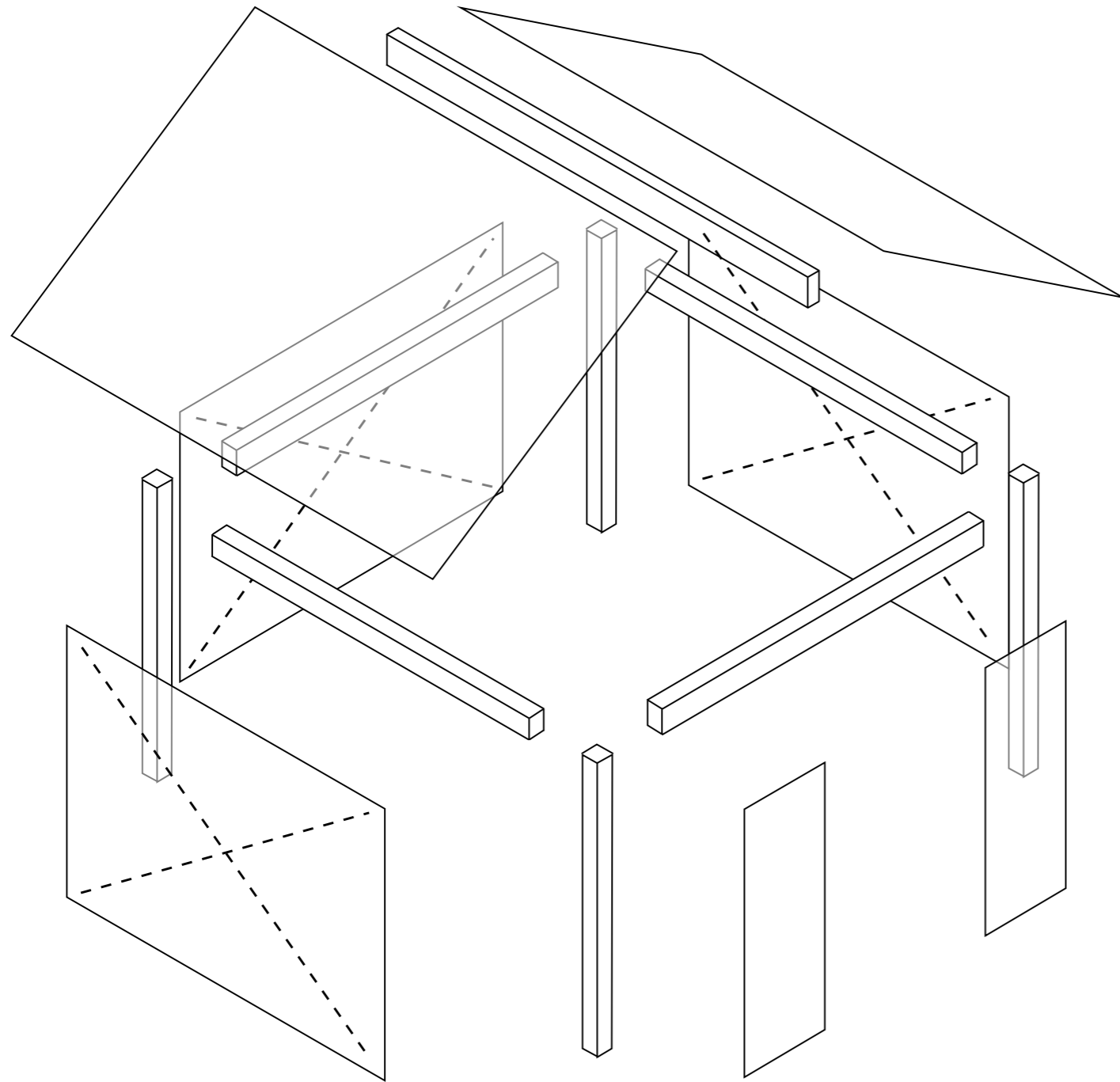
2. My Room in the Garden



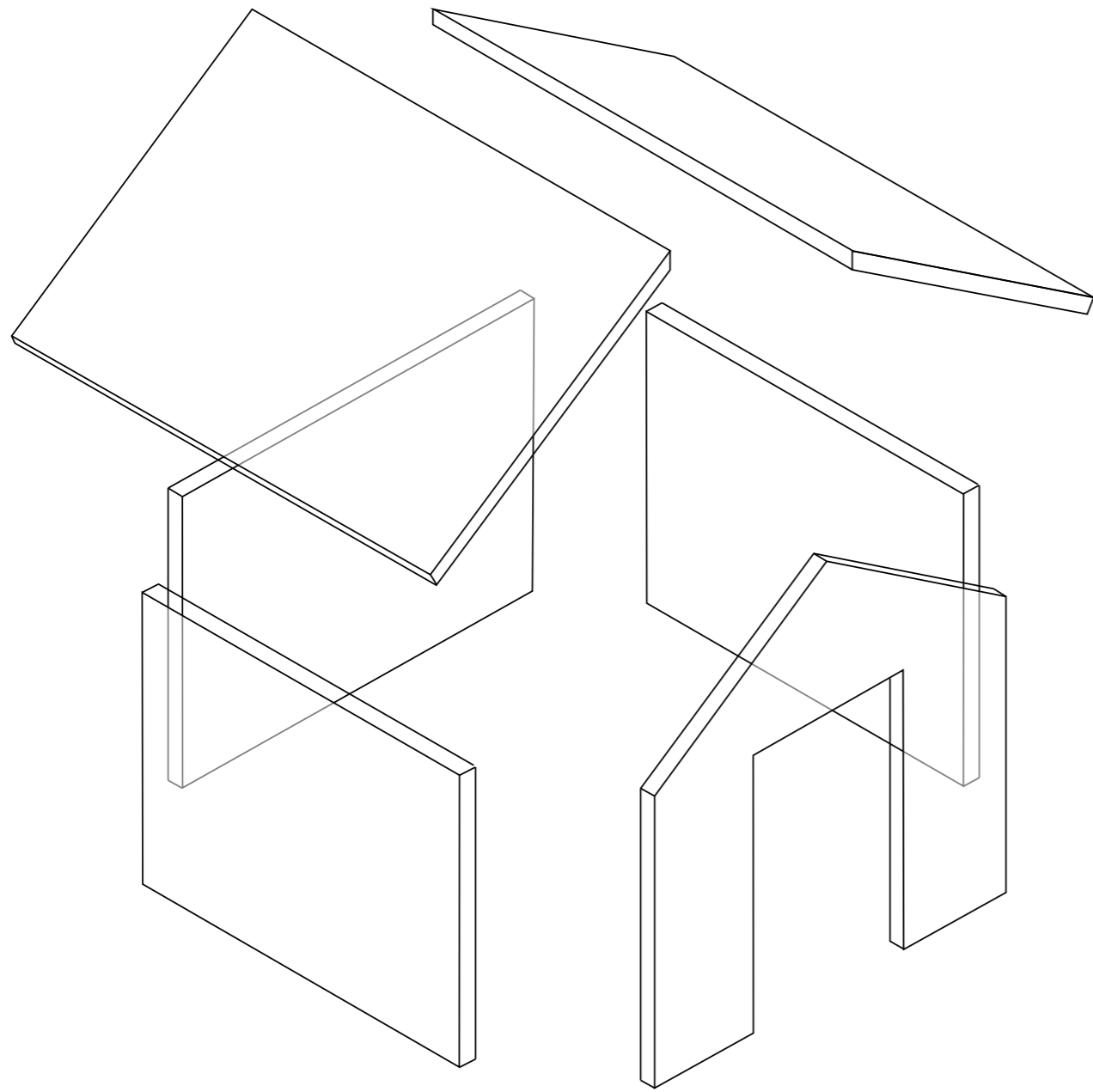
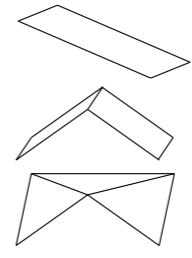
3. Natural Building Systems



4. Vidy Pavilion, Lausanne

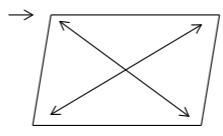


	<p>Roof</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assume sawn timber rafters or fabricated into panels for ease - Numerous options for shape formed either with rafters or through other method (e.g. plywood)
	<p>Bracing/panels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Racking resistance could be provided by wall infills - Alternatively bracing internally or externally could be used, may depend on openings, flexibility and aesthetic
	<p>Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connections could be recessed and hidden or made into a feature; - Could be either simple (pinned) connections or contribute to the stability (moment connections)
	<p>Ground connection/levelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feet on columns to provide min 150 clearance above ground level - Levelling could be carried out through screw footing plate

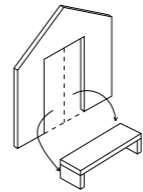
Roof

- Panels could form roof although this would limit shapes to planar options
- Alternatively could use CNC'd plywood ribs or similar



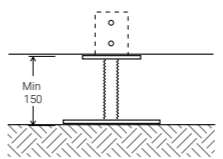
Panels

- Panels could be CLT, SIPs or plywood/OSB cassettes
- Racking resistance provided by panels



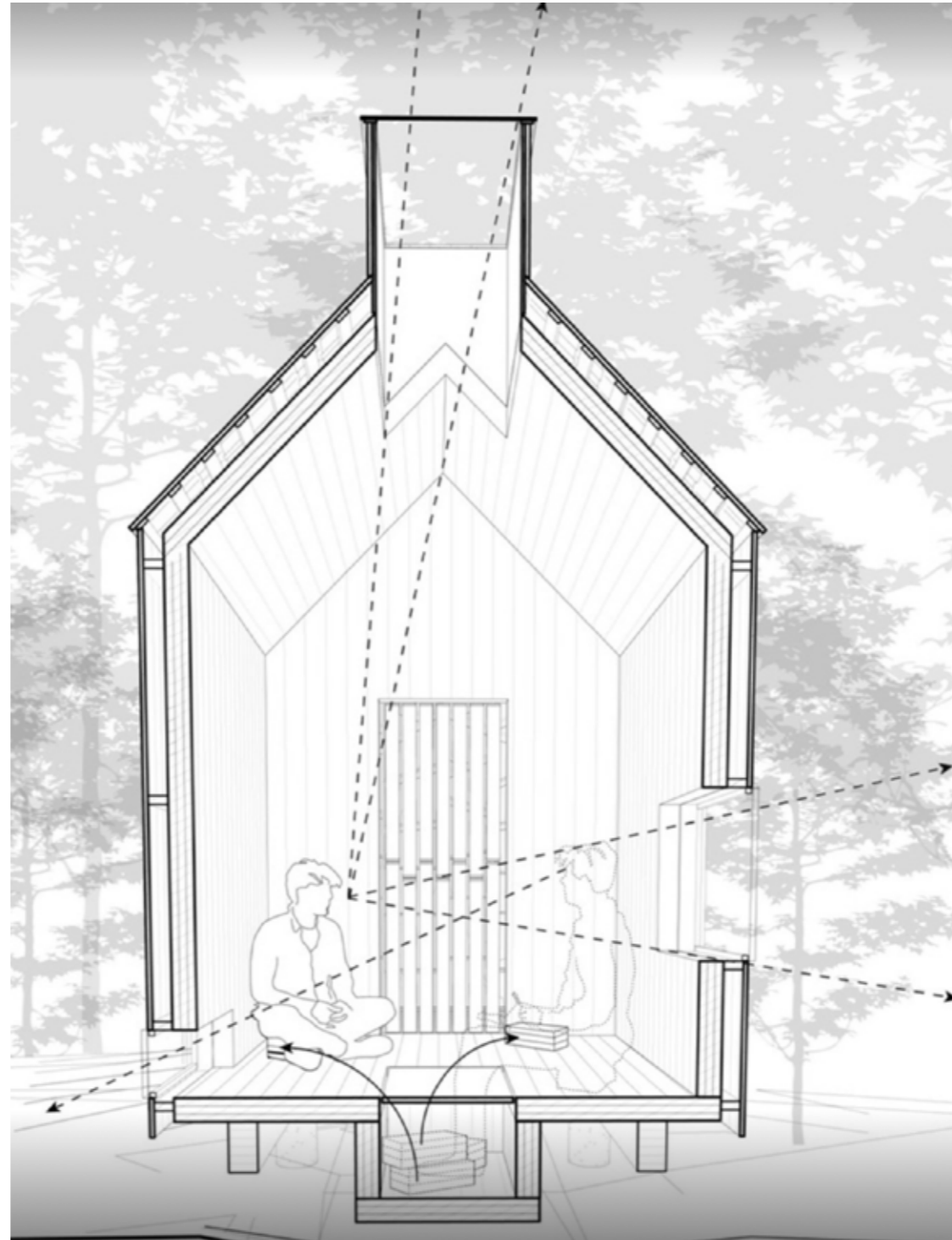
Zero waste

- Aim to minimise waste through reusing cut outs and efficient panelisation
- Cut outs could be turned into furniture for example



Ground connection/levelling

- Feet on panels to provide min 150 clearance above ground level
- Levelling could be carried out through screw footing



Motiv architects Vancouver garage

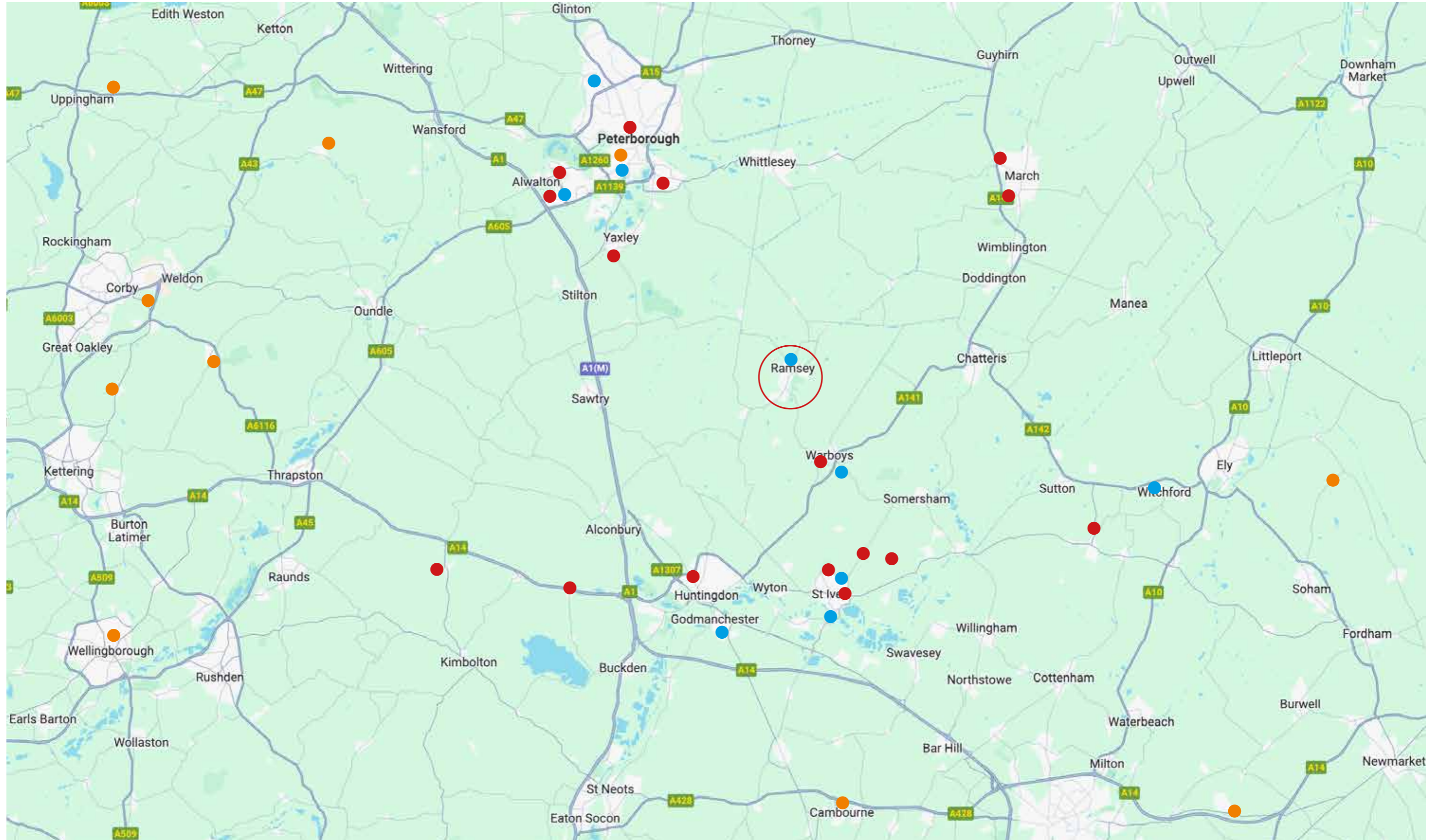
Construction

Local Trades

KEY

- Joinery Workshops
- CNC Workshops
- Saw mills / Timber Merchants

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The Natural Workshop



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- Specialise in:
- Wooden Gates
 - Outdoor Furniture
 - Product Development
 - Idea Making
 - CNC Router cutting
 - Laser cutting
 - Laser Engraving
 - Product Development
 - Sheet Timber Cutting

15km from Ramsey:

Natural Building Systems



- Low Carbon cassette system for small/medium developments
- Based on OSB/Plywood boxes with Hemp Composite

80km from Ramsey:

7.

Project Management

7.1 Construction Cost Estimate

The current construction cost estimate, is outlined on the right by MEA.

For clarity the costing has been split into 3 project elements:

1. Mews Close Car Park works
2. Great Whyte pedestrianisation & landscaping works
3. Shop in a box retail units.

1. Mew Close

	OPTION 1 See p.23	OPTION 2 See p.24	OPTION 3 See p.25
	£119,307	£109,899	£172,664
Total of construction at 2Q24	£119,307	£109,899	£172,664
Professional Fees - 12%	£14,317	£13,188	£20,720
	£133,624	£123,087	£193,383
Value added Tax	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
	£133,624	£123,087	£193,383
Total of initial order of cost for new shop units say	£140,000	£130,000	£200,000

2. Great Whyte

	OPTION 1 See p.33	OPTION 2 See p.34	OPTION 3 See p.35
	£96,768	£246,019	£356,966
Total of construction at 2Q24	£96,768	£246,019	£356,966
Professional Fees - 12%	£11,612	£29,522	£42,836
	£108,380	£275,542	£399,802
Value added Tax	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
	£108,380	£275,542	£399,802
Total of initial order of cost for new shop units say	£110,000	£280,000	£400,000

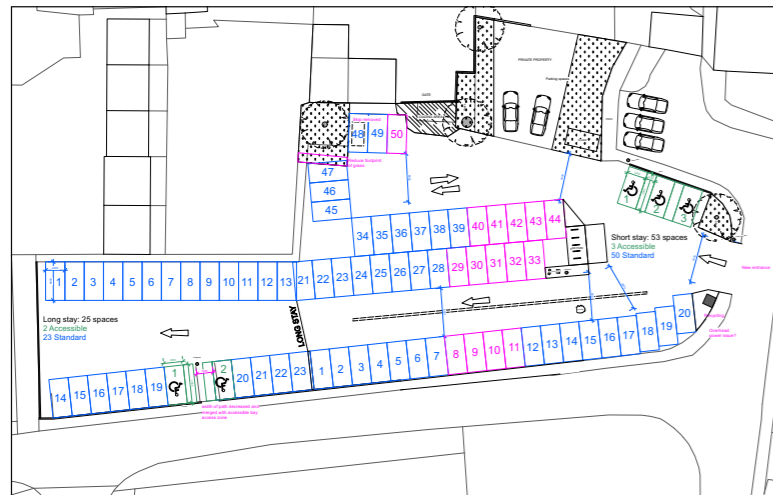
3. Shop in a Box Units

	OPTION 1 See p.64	OPTION 2 See p.66	OPTION 3 See p.68
	£717,651	£714,021	£695,871
Total of construction at 2Q24	£717,651	£714,021	£695,871
Professional Fees - 12%	£86,118	£85,683	£83,505
	£803,769	£799,704	£779,376
Value added Tax	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
	£803,769	£799,704	£779,376
Total of initial order of cost for new shop units say	£810,000	£800,000	£780,000

7.2 Options Appraisal

Mews Close

- Option 1. Light touch 1 way
- Option 2. Light touch 2 way
- Option 3. **Radical Thinking** (preferred option)



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Great Whyte Public Realm

- Option 1. Light touch
- Option 2. Large Public square
- Option 3. **Cluster of Public squares** (preferred option)



Shop in Box

- Unit size**
- 3m x 3m
 - 3m x 4m
 - **3m x 4.5m (preferred option)**

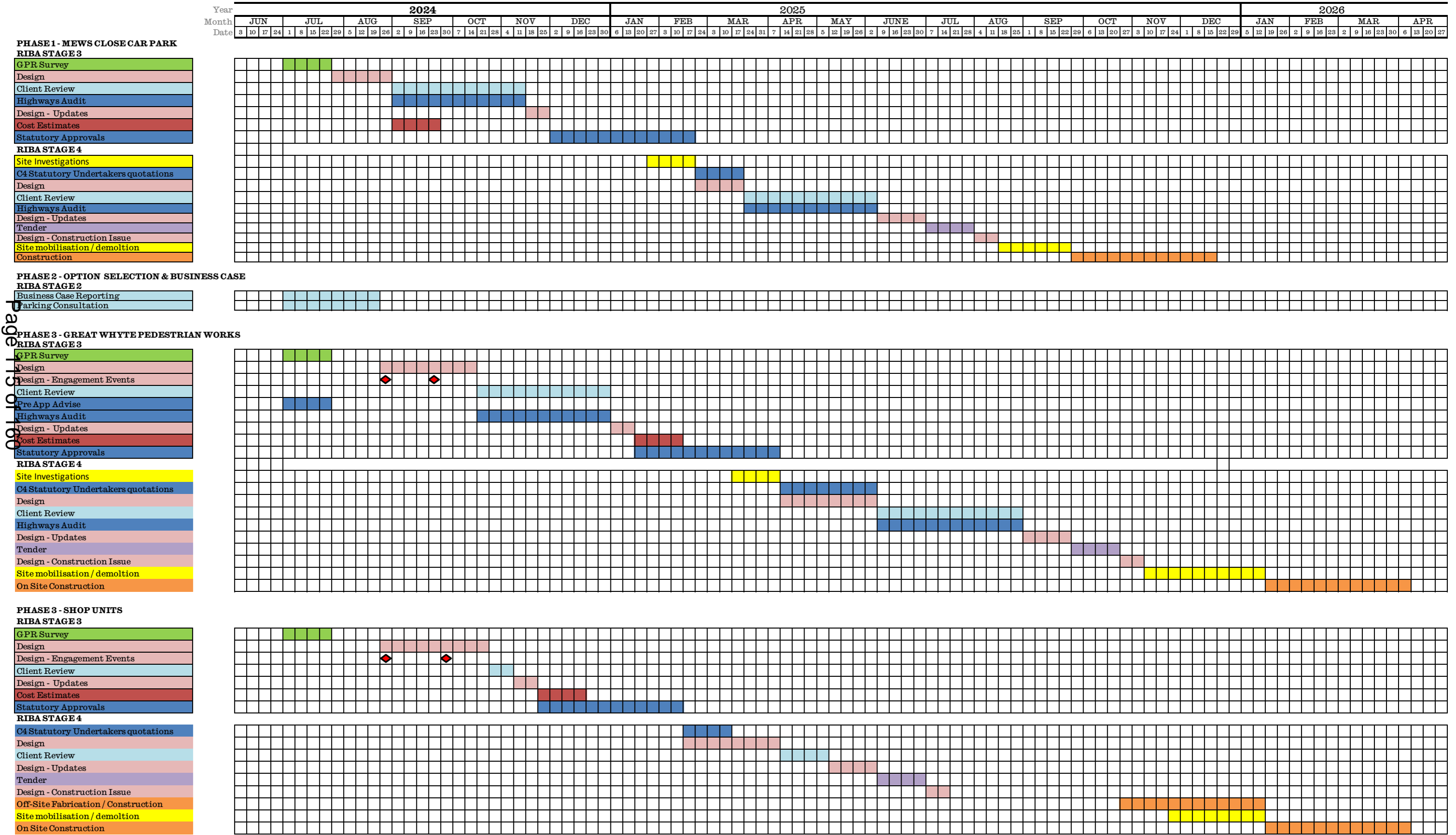
- Unit Configuration**
- Option 1. **Detached (preferred option)**
 - Option 2. **Semi-detached (preferred option)**
 - Option 2. Cluster

- Access**
- Units set in ground (**preferred option**)
 - Units on top of paving
 - Landscaped Access

- Construction**
- Frame construction
 - Mass timber or panel construction
 - (no preference given)



7.3 Target Programme



7.4 Project Risks

1. Risk: Budget & Construction costs

Mitigation:

- Engagement with funders and stakeholders
- Cost Management with contingency

2. Risk: Impact on street parking

Mitigation: Engage with Highways authority and Parking Team

3. Risk: Business Case & Market readiness for Shop in Box spaces

Mitigation: Develop Retail team & Business Case

4. Risk: Statutory Permissions

Mitigation:

- Undertake Pre App review
- Stakeholder Consultation
- Public Consultation

5. Risk: Challenging multi disciplinary design team approach & project management

Mitigation: Appoint appropriately skilled lead consultant to manage design team

6. Risk: Security Requirements of shop units

Mitigation:

- Property security
- Passive surveillance

7.5 Next Steps

1. Funder and Stakeholder Approval

2. Reprofile budgets against preferred options

3. Confirm preferred options for detailed design

4. Public engagement
Retail engagement
Market trader engagement

5. Establish project for relocated car parking - Mews Close project plan

6. Surveys and Investigations to confirm viability

7. Meanwhile tests;
Public events closing highway
Cafe market square offer

8. Develop tender list for highways and shop unit works with local trades

9. Procure multidisciplinary design team;
Lead consultant
Architect
Landscape Architect
Highways Engineering
Civils and Structure
Lighting & Power
Cost & Project Management
Wayfinding & Art

10. Principal Designer
Health & Safety and Building Regulations

7.6 Surveys Summary

The initial topographical survey was completed, February 2024.

- **C2 Utilities Search**
- **Tree Survey**
- **C2 Utilities search**
- **GPR Survey**
- **CCTV Drainage Survey**
- **Intrusive Opening Up Survey**

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7.7 Overview of feedback

The following pages set out feedback received following the end of Stage 2 presentation on 25.04.2025.

Overview of Feedback:

Mews Close Car Park

- Reconfiguring of Car Park required to facilitate development of Great Whyte pedestrianisation
- Pedestrian access between Car Park and Great Whyte to be considered. 24hr access required
- Review lorry access to car park / B&M loading requirements

Great Whyte

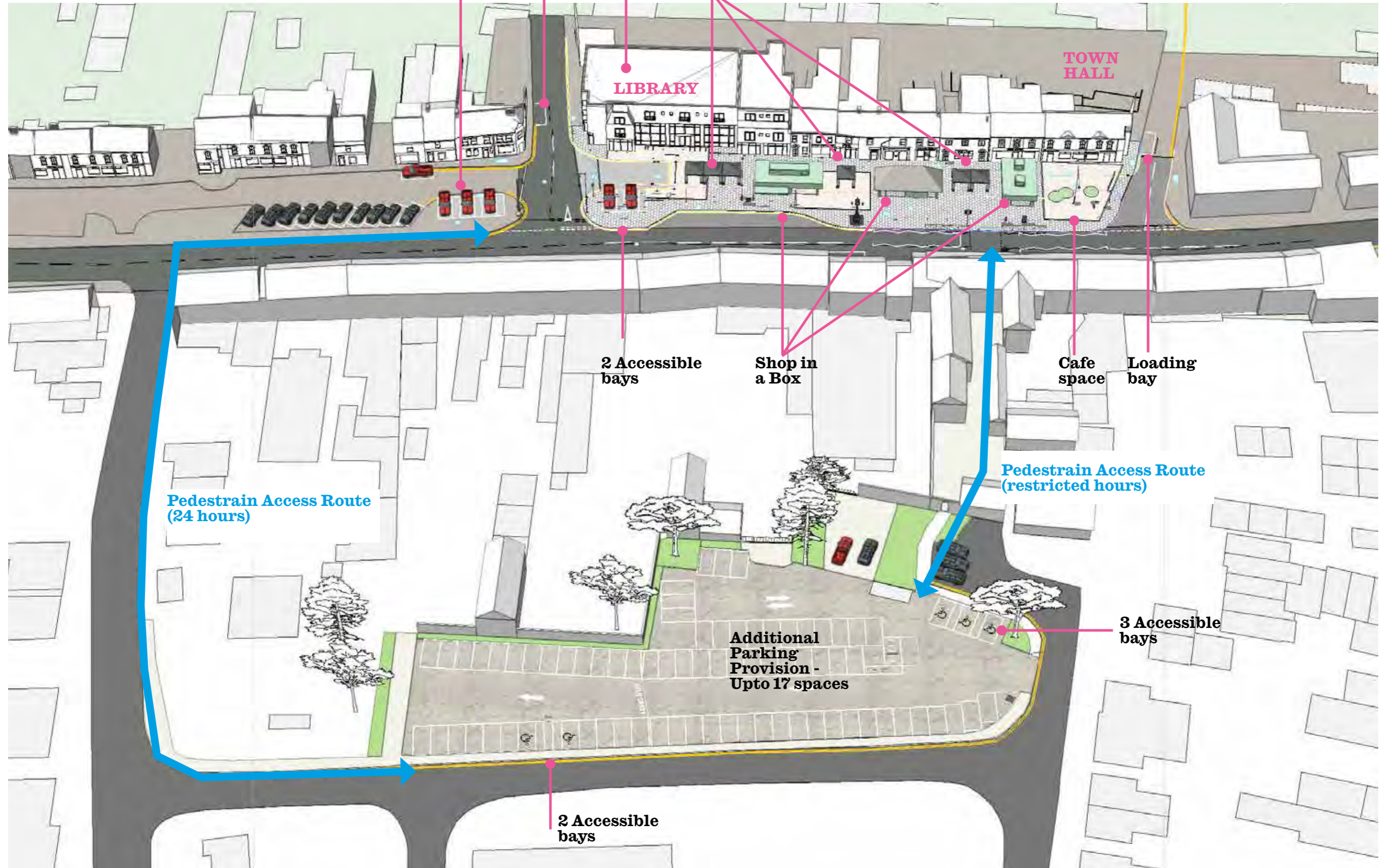
- Comprehensive renewal of paving
- Allow for 2no. Accessible parking bay outside of Library
- Christmas Tree display should remain adjacent to clock
- Digital Display to be position outside of Ramsey Town Council Office
- Space outside Ramsey Town Council to be kept clear for events
- Bus shelter to align with bus doors

Shop in a Box

- Preference for Semi detached or standalone shop units
- Modern feel that is also in-keeping with the history of the town
- Consider sight line through to existing shops

Overview

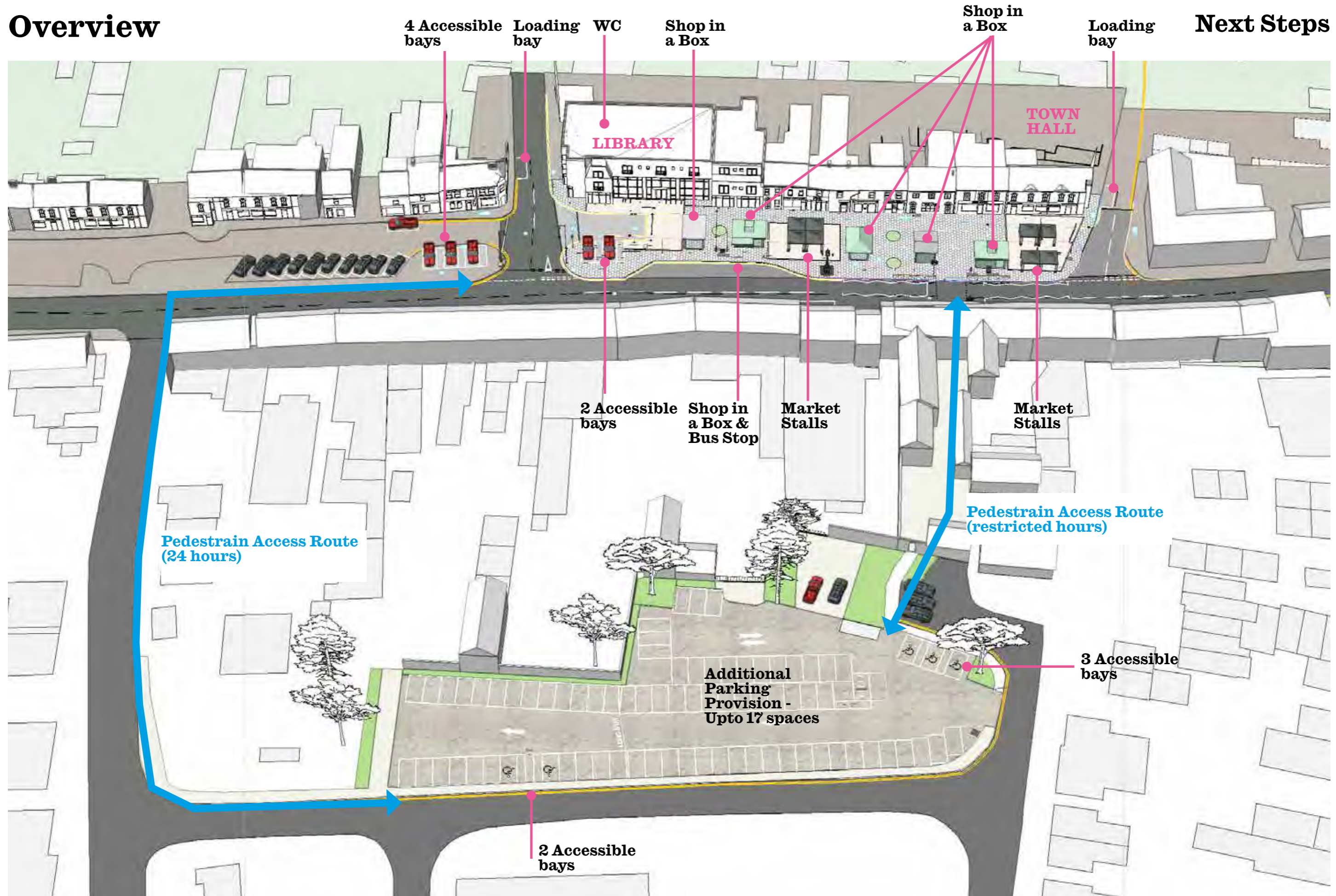
Semi detached



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Overview

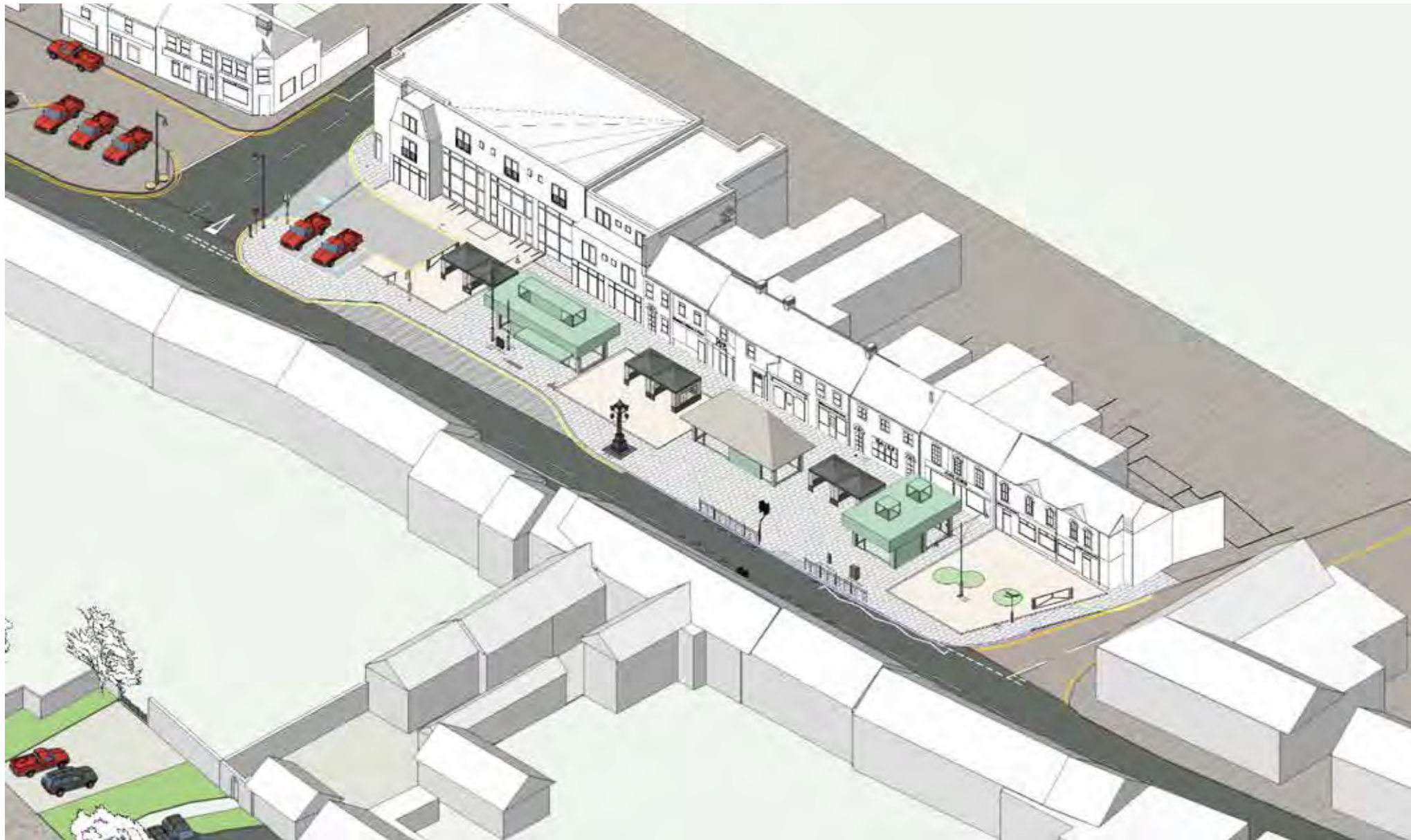
Next Steps



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Hard Landscape + Shops (Semi Detached) + Market Stalls

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Landscaping with parking

Comprehensive renewal paving

- Pedestrianised
- Installed fire gates and/or bollards
- Removal of road markings
- Repaving of road to match existing footway paving
- Creation of new paving to create squares outside key buildings and to support landscape features
- 2no Accessible Parking outside Library
- 4no Accessible Parking outside Butchers Shop
- 1no loading bay to New Road
- 1no loading bay to Little Whyte

Shop in a Box - Semi detached

- 6no shop units housed within three building
- Bus shelter incorporated into shop unit

Market stalls

- 6no market stalls in 3 clusters

Hard Landscape + Shops (detached) + Market Stalls



Landscaping with parking

Comprehensive renewal paving

- Pedestrianised
- Installed fire gates and/or bollards
- Removal of road markings
- Repaving of road to match existing footway paving
- Creation of new paving to create squares outside key buildings and to support landscape features
- 2no Accessible Parking outside Library
- 4no Accessible Parking outside Butchers Shop
- 1no loading bay to New Road
- 1no loading bay to Little Whyte

Shop in a Box - detached units with Market Stalls

- 5no standalone shop units
- Bus shelter incorporated into shop unit

Market stalls

- 8no market stalls in two clusters



Appendices

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A01 MEA Initial Order of Costs

Heartbeat of St Neots | Ad and Survey results

As step 2 in our community engagement campaign, our targeted Neotists ads captured the attention of a broader audience and directed a significant number of participants to complete the survey. The approach has provided invaluable insights and actionable feedback from the St Neots community, meaning the project can be both impactful and well-aligned with local needs and preferences.

SUMMARY

Over the course of 15 days and 3 ads, there were:

- 145 form submissions.
- A total of 2,601 post engagements.
- A reach of 9,686 across all 3 ads.

The Top 3 words that people have chosen to describe how they feel about St Neots are:

- Community
- Welcoming
- Green

1. 'Natural Beauty and Green Spaces' ranked highest for what makes the town unique.

2. The top type of art is **Sculpture**

3. The **Market Square** is where most people want to see the art with a close second being Riverside Park.

4. We have gathered **104 names** to continue communicating with and for you to choose one winner from.

Peppercorn House Suite 1, Second Floor
8 Huntingdon Street, St Neots
Cambridgeshire. PE19 1BH

T: 01480 278750

E: hello@keystone-marketing.co.uk

keystone-marketing.co.uk

Registered in England and Wales. No 7596552
VAT Registration No. 110 4696 41

FULL SURVEY DATA SET

You can access the Typeform report link here:

<https://um1r2y5p11.typeform.com/report/xQeadSU9/suScA1H6D00Uezjw>

AD AND SURVEY DETAIL

The ad was shown on Facebook and the audience was on average 66% women and 34.1% men. The largest volume being women in the 35 and above brackets.

May 23rd to May 29th: Facebook ad V1

- We spent £26 on a 6 day ad.
- We had 92 link clicks.
- Ad seen 3,249 times (reach).
- 1,277 post engagements.
- 14 post reactions, 2 post shares and 2 follows.

Week 1 of 3 Typeform Survey Results

1. 139 views.
 2. 83 starts.
 3. 57 submissions.
 4. That's a 68% completion rate.
 5. It's took people on average about 4 mins to complete.
- Top 3 words that strike a chord with people the most were community, welcoming and green.
 - Natural beauty and green spaces ranked highest when it comes to what makes the town unique.
 - Top kind of art is Interactive.
 - And the market square is the top place people want to see the art.
 - People have been inspired by the open field question so definitely worth reading the responses there.

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Cambridgeshire. PE19 1BH

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Registered in England and Wales. No 7596552
VAT Registration No. 110 4696 41

May 31st to 6th June: Facebook ad V2

- We spent £24.99. *A little less than at the same time on the last ad.*
- We had 88 link clicks. *Slightly less than the last one at the same time*
- A reach of 3,648. *A higher reach than the first week*
- 1,225 post engagements. *Slightly less than week 1*
- 6 Post reactions, 1 post share and 1 follow. *Slightly less than week 1*
-

Week 2 of 3 Typeform Survey Results

1. There were 251 views. *An increase of 112 in the previous 6 days*
 2. 140 starts. *An increase of 57 in the previous 6 days*
 3. 95 submissions. *An increase of 38 in the previous 6 days*
 4. That's a 67.9% completion rate.
 5. It again took people on average about 4 mins to complete.
- The top 3 words that struck a chord with people the most were community, welcoming and historic. *Change to the 3rd choice here.*
 - Natural beauty and green spaces ranked highest when it comes to what makes the town unique. *No change here.*
 - The top kind of art so far is Mural. *This has changed. Light installation is next and Interactive art has dropped to 3rd.*
 - And the market square is the top place people want to see the art. *No change here.*
 - Still worth reading the responses to the open-field questions.

6th June to June 9th: Facebook ad V3

- We spent £23.99. *Spent more per day on the shorter time frame and a more targeted area.*
- We had 88 link clicks. *Same as the previous one. Interesting.*
- A reach of 2,789. *A lower reach but we reduced the local area we were targeting on this ad.*
- 99 post engagements. *Slightly less but poss. because of a shorter time frame.*
- 7 Post reactions, 4 post shares and 1 follow. *The shorter timeframe didn't affect these figures, however.*

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Cambridgeshire. PE19 1BH

T: 01480 278750

E: hello@keystone-marketing.co.uk

keystone-marketing.co.uk

Registered in England and Wales. No 7596552
VAT Registration No. 110 4696 41

Week 3 of 3 Typeform Survey Results

1. There were 349 views. *An increase of 98 in the 3 days of the ad.*
 2. 200 starts. *An increase of 60.*
 3. 145 submissions. *An increase of 50.*
 4. That's a 72.5% completion rate.
 5. It still took people on average about 4 mins to complete.
- The top 3 words that struck a chord with people the most were community, welcoming and green. *A change in 3rd position from the previous ad.*
 - Natural beauty and green spaces ranked highest when it comes to what makes the town unique. *No change here.*
 - Top kind of art so far is Sculpture. *A change from the previous result*
 - And the market square is the top place people want to see the art. *No change here.*
 - Still worth reading the responses to the open-field questions.

An example of the open-field responses:

Has inspiration hit and there's something else you'd like to share with us about what might be at the heart of St Neots?

- The festival and parade..brought everyone together
- Community spirit
- Sensory interaction for children
- Could it have Eynesbury Giant, A monk from the priory and Paynes brewery and Samuel Jones Papermill to celebrate the areas around the area
- Inclusivity and hopefulness
- Growth, living, flowing - maybe a living sculpture like an avenue of blossom trees or something that depicts the flowing of the river. Many people who move here will say they saw the riverside and that helped the decision to stay. Part of the heart of this town.
- Renewal, regeneration & change alongside tradition need to be at the heart of St Neots
- An art installation that is changeable so local artists can display their work
- More Police presence so all the good work, time and effort doesn't get destroyed.

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Transforming Marketing Impact & Engagement

- The heart really should be in the market square
- I'd love to see the local schoolchildren involved
- Something fun and playful that people will interact with, talk about, really selfies with.
- Growing young community
- Community and family events...lots of them!
- Please make it something that can't be easily vandalised
- I'd love to see art fill all of the empty shop fronts, and I think we're becoming a foodie destination which is great!
- I see lots of people stopping to talk to one another in town so maybe more seating

NEXT STEPS

This work concludes Keystone's current involvement in the project, and we thank you again for asking us to support the development of this exciting transformation for the town. From here, we encourage you to review the survey results in full and choose and communicate with your survey winner. We also encourage you to continue to tell the story of the project, and are happy to support you with that through a bolt-on social email service if that is something you'd like additional help with. We also see Meta advertising as a great way to reach your audiences in the future.

Follow-up report by Chantal Palmer
Produced 10.06.24

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Heartbeat of St Neots workshop summary

Workshop 1

Theme votes

History = 10

Community = 15

Creativity = 15

Innovation = 2

Entrepreneurial spirit = 4

Nature and Green spaces = 14

Theme Sketch Game

History = 5 sheets

Detailed objects | masculine colours | happy faces

Community = 6 sheets

People, houses, hearts and a loudhailer | Greens, blues and reds or a rainbow | Happy Faces

Creativity = 9 sheets

Art-related objects or an interesting starburst | Mainly rainbow colours | Happy or contemplative Faces

Innovation = 5 sheets

Either fully filled out pages or pretty minimal | Mix of places and objects | More subdued shades of colour

Entrepreneurial spirit = 8 sheets

Shops, crowns, business | Definitely not rainbows here | Not all happy expressions

Nature and Green spaces = 8 sheets

Lots of tree imagery | Probably the most joy in expressions | Colours as expected

Theme I like, I wish and what if

History

Ancient heritage of town | So many eras | Education side for all ages | Phases of historic growth | Being proud of our history | St Neots Giant | The local heritage groups visit | The stories | The rich heritage of the town | OS benchmarks

Community

Green spaces | Vibrant town centre | People who take action | Community events | Accessible and welcoming | Community activities | Bringing people together | St Neots festival | There is so much going on | Spirit | Huge number of people who care about the community | Pride | Sense of belonging

Creativity

Creative spirit, opportunities, networks, people | The café vibe in St Neots is great | Celebrated publicly and encouraged | Art groups and green spaces | Creative organisations are thriving | More contemporary ideas are being used | The variety of venues | Array of creative options | So many creative people

Innovation

Ideas and Creativity | Innovative council | Opportunity and Innovation | Neotists

Entrepreneurial spirit

Local support for artisan and small businesses | Forward thinking | Open and Happy | Drawing affluence and employment to the area | Networks, community, opportunity, PEOPLE | Being less mass produced

Nature and Green spaces

Our biggest asset | Size and variety | Community gardens | Good for our mental health | Assets of community value | Health benefits | That there are so many parks | Lots of green spaces | Parks | The river | Facilitates Parkrun

Workshop 2

Theme votes

History = 4

Community = 13

Creativity = 9

Innovation = 2

Entrepreneurial spirit = 1

Nature and Green spaces = 11

Theme Sketch Game

History = 5 sheets

Places, people and blood! | masculine colours | happy or thoughtful faces

Community = 6 sheets

Activities, nature, fundraising, a lovely hand | Rainbows | Happy Faces

Creativity = 2 sheets

Art-related objects | Muted colours | Silly Faces

Innovation = 4 sheets

Cogs, horse and cart, Ferris wheel, torch and computer | Range of emotions | More subdued shades of colour

Entrepreneurial spirit = 5 sheets

Quite a nice flame and overlapping circles | reds, greens and oranges | Mostly smiley faces

Nature and Green spaces = 6 sheets

Some nicely detailed drawings | Probably the most joy and peaceful expressions | Colours as expected

Theme I like, I wish and what if

History

Rebellious history | It had 52 pubs, one for every week of the year | How much history there is | The river and how it's still at the heart and how it's changed

Community

How welcoming St Neots is | There are people of all age groups | So many great community groups

Creativity

Youth art projects | Art and Soul | Pockets of excellence and ambition

Innovation

Independent mindset | Rebellion | A428 | Stephen Ferguson

Entrepreneurial spirit

Huge range of community groups | Vibrant independents on the high street | Imaginative enterprises in the area | Farmers Market | Range of different cafés

Nature and Green spaces

Our biggest asset | River and green lung | Ouse Valley way | Best river in the east | Path improvements

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Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3

Meeting/Date: Cabinet 16th July 2024

Executive Portfolio: **Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing – Sam Wakeford, and Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance – Stephen Ferguson**

Report by: Pamela Scott – Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager, Jon Collen Housing Needs and Resources Manager and Claudia Deeth Community Services Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report is to seek a recommendation as to whether Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) should accept funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to facilitate the acquisition of 4 homes under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

The report seeks approval to work with a Registered Provider (RP) to acquire the homes on the Council's behalf for ACRS households and for the Council to provide support for these residents directly through the Council's Community Team.

Recommendation(s):

1. That Huntingdonshire District Council confirm its participation in the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (LAHF R3) and to future LAHF rounds subject to finding a Registered Provider(s) willing to work with the Council to deliver the homes.
2. Delegate the signing of all documents in relation to the LAHF R3 and any subsequent rounds of funding to the Corporate Director of Place and the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing.

3. Agree that the Council provide support to the residents either directly through the Community Team; or in directly through another body; and be responsible for the processing of any grant claims associated with these households under Government grant schemes.
4. Delegate the signing of all documents that enable the Council to accept Government Funding and to use that funding to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing to the Corporate Director of Place and the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing .

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund and to seek approval to take part in the scheme.
- 1.2 To seek reasonable delegations in relation to the delivery of affordable housing in the district so that we can act quickly when opportunities occur especially for the Council to accept funding from Government Agencies including but not limited to DLUHC, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Homes England.

2. BACKGROUND

Local Authority Housing Fund Round 1

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) was notified by the Government on the 22 December 2022 that it had been allocated a total of £2,480,058 of Local Authority Housing Fund Round 1 (LAHF R1) funding. The aim of this funding was to acquire a total of 4000 new homes across the country in addition to the normal affordable housing supply. A total of £500 million has been provided to 182 Local Authorities and the Greater London Authority to purchase the properties. The households targeted were those currently in the UK living with hosts under the Family Visa and Homes for Ukraine schemes and Afghan families that were in bridging hotels under the Afghan refugee schemes.
- 2.2 The funding was split between financial years 2022/23 (30%) and 2023/24 (70%). DLUHC assumed that most delivery would be via stock acquisition, either directly or through partnership arrangements. HDC was awarded £2,052,000 (known as the main element) to deliver a minimum of 19 homes – for families accommodated under the Ukrainian schemes and £428,058 (known as the bridging element) to deliver a minimum of 2 larger 4+ bed home(s) to be allocated to households currently residing in bridging accommodation.
- 2.3 The Council undertook an options appraisal and concluded that we did not want to acquire the units direct and become a social landlord, but our preferred approach would be to work with a Registered Provider (RP) to secure the homes. The Council appointed Stonewater following their Board agreeing to work with the Council on the 10th March 2023.
- 2.4 The Council has been delivering the scheme with Stonewater and has completed a total of 16 homes, a further two properties have been identified and are progressing through the legal process and a further three are being sourced.
- 2.5 Some Councils whilst delivering LAHF R1 offered to deliver additional homes in excess of their original allocation, this was known as Round 2, Huntingdonshire Council chose to remain with our original allocation as we were unsure at the commencement of the scheme whether we would be able to fulfil the original allocation given that this was new activity for the Council.

- 2.6 The delivery of Round 1 of this fund has been difficult due to the cost of property in the district; most properties have either been sourced in the north of the district or just into Peterborough (discussions and agreement have been reached with Peterborough City Council) or in bulk acquisition in St Neots. The financial parameters of this programme have made it extremely difficult for Stonewater to secure properties using the level of grant permitted for each home. As part of the current programme, and to assist with the affordability issue, the Council has supported acquisitions with a total of £7,500 per home from Affordable Housing Commuted sum funds.

Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3

- 2.7 In the Autumn Statement 2023 DLUHC announced that they would be launching a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, to the value of £450 million, to run over the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. There would also be revenue funding available to support delivery of the fund unlike Round 1.
- 2.8 Huntingdonshire has been advised that we have received an initial funding allocation of £614,400 to acquire a total of four homes. The third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF R3) aims are to:
- Support local authorities to acquire good quality, and better value for money Temporary Accommodation (TA) for families owed a homelessness duty.
 - Continue to provide resettlement housing for those on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).
 - support local housing markets by assisting the delivery of new housing stock or new developments to grow overall housing supply.
- 2.9 The amount of £614,400 awarded to HDC is capital grant funding (under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). This funding requires us to deliver a minimum of 1 home for the Temporary Accommodation element, to provide a minimum of 2 homes for the resettlement element and to provide a minimum of 1 home for the large resettlement element. This is based on the median property price in our area of £312,000. To support delivery, we have also been provided with an indicative allocation of £4,550 of revenue funding.
- 2.10 For the large resettlement element the grant element can be up to 50% of median property prices in the area, for the remaining three properties (1 TA element and 2 resettlement element) the grant element can be up to 40% of median property prices.
- 2.11 The Scheme objectives are as follows:
- Reduce local housing pressures by providing better quality temporary accommodation to those owed homelessness duties by local authorities;
 - Reduce emergency and temporary accommodation costs;

- Provide sustainable housing to those on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) at risk of homelessness, so that they can build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities;
- Reduce impacts on the existing housing and homelessness systems and those waiting for social housing; Support local housing markets by assisting the delivery of new housing stock or new developments to grow overall housing supply;

DLUHC have confirmed that they are happy for Local Authorities to work with housing associations, especially if they are the most appropriate delivery vehicle. An expression of interest to participate in the scheme was returned to DLUHC by their deadline of 28 March 2023. This is not binding on the Council as the Council would be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to receive the funds.

Support of Residents

- 2.10 In terms of the support provided to households being accommodated through the Afghan resettlement schemes under LAHF1, HDC partnered with Peterborough City Council (PCC) who had already commissioned a support service for households in their own area. That service now supports the two Afghan households that have moved into the properties secured under LAHF1 plus a further 8 Afghan households that we have helped resettle in the HDC area under our commitment to support the Afghan schemes. The type of support offered has ranged from sourcing furniture through to helping families secure school places for their children. Through existing strong and positive relationships with the community and voluntary sector, they have been willing to provide hands on assistance to ensure that the families have settled and integrated into the communities.
- 2.11 PCC have advised that the support service is at maximum capacity and so are not able to assist with supporting any further Afghan families in the HDC area.
- 2.12 Other options are now being considered and this includes utilising the strong working relationships that the Community Team has with partner agencies as well as the community and voluntary sector to in turn be able to offer direct support to Afghan families being housed under the third round of funding. Alternatively, a neighbouring authority has indicated that they would have capacity to deliver the support officer.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 HDC could decide not to sign up to deliver LAHF 3 – the Council would lose the ability to support the initiative and increase affordable housing supply by four additional dwellings, this could result in Government becoming less supportive to HDC on the demand for people seeking housing through homelessness and the possibility of being considered for future funding opportunities. This activity also supports the Council's Corporate Plan aims of influencing and enabling the delivery of affordable

housing especially in partnership with Housing Associations (Registered Providers).

- 3.2 HDC could continue to work with Stonewater Housing Association to deliver 3 units under this funding programme, Stonewater do not have temporary accommodation in the district; and it is therefore felt not suitable to seek the one temporary unit with them but look for an alternative housing association. We are currently waiting on the outcome of a Board Meeting in June 2024 to confirm whether Stonewater are able to work with the Council. At the same time the Council has also approached HOME group to see if they are interested in working with us to deliver the 1 unit of temporary accommodation (TA) as they already manage TA in the district. This approach would have the benefit of working with an organisation who has recent experience and resource to deliver an acquisition programme and an organisation that operates TA in the district.
- 3.3 The Council could also look at other RP's operating in the District who may be able to work with the Council for the 3 units of permanent housing, there is only one other RP who is likely to be interested in the TA and the Council could contact them if HOME are unable to support the scheme.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

5. RISKS

- 5.1 The main risk to this project is the availability of property on the open market within the budget available. This risk will be mitigated by the following:
- The Round 3 funding has two financial years to complete the acquisition and the Council is only required to source 4 homes, unlike Round 1 where we have had only a year to achieve 21 homes.
 - If Board Approval is secured Stonewater will be able to continue to be the Council's delivery partner, and they have now built valuable insight into the housing market in Huntingdonshire and relationships with key stakeholders.
 - If Stonewater are unable to continue then the Council would look to partner with other RP's currently active in developing in the district.
 - In relation to the TA unit, HOME group currently manage Temporary Accommodation in the District. If they are unable to work with the Council, we would approach Places for People as one of our other main TA providers, to see if they are able to assist. Ultimately the Council could look to deliver only the permanent housing if there was no partner identified for the temporary provision.
- 5.2 In relation to resourcing the project the acquisition element of this project will continue to be managed between the Housing Needs and Resources Manager and the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager. The

support that would be provided by the Communities Team would be from existing resources, given the low number of homes, in partnership with our Trusted Partners (Good to Go). Funding is also available to support this core activity in the same way that families have been supported through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The team built up a strong base of support within the community and voluntary groups following the response to Covid 19 and this remains in place, it is therefore the intention that the support would be provided by the Council with support from this community infrastructure.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The third round of the LAHF is to run over the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[*\(See Corporate Plan\)*](#)

- 7.1 The delivery of affordable housing is a key priority of the Corporate Plan, which is reflected in Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations. This enables us to secure Government funding that will directly benefit the residents in Huntingdonshire by increasing the affordable housing supply by four additional homes in perpetuity.
- 7.2 By accepting this funding, the Council is also continuing a positive relationship with DLUHC and other Government agencies/departments and showing that the Council is prepared to work innovatively to deliver new homes in partnership with Housing Associations in lieu of direct delivery by the Council.
- 7.3 Whilst under LAHF Round 1 the support to residents has been through a third party, namely Peterborough City Council, given the experience gained in administering this scheme the Council feels that it is best placed to support residents direct, this also enables us to support Corporate Plan Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people and supports the Council's ambitions as part of its Community Health and Wealth Strategy.
- 7.4 Under the Huntingdonshire Futures Strategy affordable housing is included in the Pride in Place journey around homes responding to our resident's needs and there is a direct link between quality affordable homes also supporting the Health Embedded journey.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 To accept the funding the Council would need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DLUHC, this will be similar to the MOU signed to take part in Round 1. Legal Advice would be provided by 3C Legal so that the Council is fully aware of its obligations.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager and Housing Needs and Resources Manager will continue to provide support to this scheme alongside the RP who acquires the homes.
- 9.2 Having successfully supported both guests and hosts as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Community Team is well equipped to provide support to the Afghan families that would be accommodated under the LAHF 3 funding. Arrangements are already in place across the network and therefore this will have minimal resource implications for the Community Team.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 In agreeing to the recommendations in this report the Council is able to support the delivery of new affordable homes a key priority of the Corporate Plan.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Funding Prospectus: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-housing-fund-round-3>

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Pamela Scott – Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager,
Claudia Deeth – Community Services Manager and Jon Collen –
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Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Productivity plan	
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny	10th July 2024
	Cabinet	16 th July 2024
Executive Portfolio:	Sarah Conboy (Executive Leader)	
Report by:	Oliver Morley, Corporate Director (People)	
Ward(s) affected:	All	

Executive Summary:

As part of this year's Local Government Finance Settlement, it was announced that all councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This request was formally made on the 16th April by Minister for Local Government Simon Hoare. These plans form part of the continued focus on efficiency within the public sector, and all local authorities have been asked to submit these plans by the 19th July.

Huntingdonshire District Council has worked hard to ensure we continue to deliver efficient and effective services and been subject to external scrutiny to review the effectiveness of this approach. Attached to this report is the productivity plan that we propose submitting to the department for levelling up, outlining our approach.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Comment on and approve the Productivity plan for Huntingdonshire District Council which will form the Council's submission to the department for Levelling Up
2. Comment on and endorse the Council's Continuous Improvement plan.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Councils proposed productivity plan for comment and feedback, prior to submission to the Department for Levelling Up by the deadline of the 19th July 2024.

2. BACKGROUND TO THIS WORK

- 2.1 Local Government is subject to the Best Value duty, and in being held accountable for the value for money test on its activity as part of its budget and overall management. This has been combined with resource challenges, and demand pressures, which have made a culture of continuous improvement core to the way in which local government operates both internally and with partners.
- 2.2 As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, the Government has asked Councils to produce and submit a “productivity plan” outlining the steps we have taken to monitor and improve our productivity. No formal template or detailed list of criteria has been provided, rather the Government are seeking a plan of “three to four pages in length, (which) set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services”. The request includes four themes:
 - 2.2.1 How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.
 - 2.2.2 How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.
 - 2.2.3 Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.
 - 2.2.4 The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 2.3 The minister has been clear that “Individual plans will not be rated or scored”, and that the plans are being commissioned to provide an “understanding of what is happening across the sector”.
- 2.4 As with other Councils Huntingdonshire District Council utilizes a range of frameworks, to monitor and oversee our efficiency and effectiveness. These include our performance framework, our project management methodology, our financial management and budget setting processes, and our overarching governance frameworks, several of which have been fundamentally refreshed recently, and all have been subject to independent external review via the LGA Peer Challenge process.
- 2.5 As part of the preparation for the LGA peer challenge process the council produced a continuous improvement plan which summarized the activity that has taken place over recent years to improve the productivity of the council. This is attached as appendix 1. This document lays out how we have established and managed three elements.
 - 2.5.1 Clear prioritization
 - 2.5.2 Financial and performance management and benchmarking
 - 2.5.3 Transformation of services to boost efficiency and effectiveness.

3. PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

- 3.1 The letter from Minister for Local Government, identified four areas that the productivity plan should respond to. These are broad areas, and hard to address fully in 3-4 pages. A number of these are also responded to within our continuous improvement plan, and it may be useful to read the documents alongside each other. The four questions are: namely:
- 3.1.1 How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources
 - 3.1.2 How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.
 - 3.1.3 Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.
 - 3.1.4 The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

- 3.2 Subject to feedback from Members, the Productivity plan will be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up by the deadline of the 19th July, and uploaded to our website so that residents can see it.

We will review this plan as part of our commitment to develop a transformation plan within the municipal year, building on the work in the continuous improvement plan. It will then form part of the ongoing reporting of this programme. Link to the corporate plan, strategic priorities and/or corporate objectives

- 3.3 The productivity plan links closely to Priority 3 of our Corporate Plan and our commitment to “Doing our core work well”, and ensuring we deliver efficient and effective services.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The continuous improvement plan plays a key part in enabling us to demonstrate the fulfilment of our best value duty, and value for money assessment.

5. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan
Appendix 2 – Productivity Plan.

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Huntingdonshire District Council- Productivity plan 2024/25

Purpose of this document

This document is a response to the request from The Local Government Minister Simon Hoare, to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. To lay out how we will monitor and assess these plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered. Finally, to consider the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

A number of these matters are laid out in more detail in the attached Continuous Improvement Plan and will be subject to further work as we design a Transformation Strategy over the next 12 months.

Huntingdonshire District Council has fundamentally refreshed many of key internal governance frameworks over recent years. These approaches have built on the established work on unit costs and benchmarking to target activity on boosting productivity. Building on an established budget setting focus on statutory duty, and value for money, and enhanced this with:

1. A refreshed Corporate Plan with a limited set of key objectives
2. A refresh of the entire performance framework of the Council
3. A refreshed project planning and service planning framework.
4. A refreshed approach to risk and governance.

1) How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
1.1	Continual focus on value for money, unit costs, and benchmarking to drive continuous improvement. Performance indicators are subject to monthly SLT review, and quarterly public scrutiny. This work will be expanded in 2024/25.	Quarterly performance reporting. Independent benchmarking of costs versus comparator authorities. Metric/KPI – Unit cost reporting and performance reporting
1.2	One Leisure Operating Model review – our leisure centre services support resident outcomes and contribute to holistic support as part of the wider health framework. We needed however to move a self-financing longer term sustainable model. Capital investment programmes are currently being developed for the budget process.	An independent review of our long-term delivery model, alongside a review of staffing structure and costs, and promotion of the service, all endorsed by Members. See the report to committee here . All subject to ongoing financial and performance review. Metric/KPI – Service usage figures and net financial position.
1.3	Customer Transformation and Strategy (Complex Customer Change)	A programme has been scoped and resourced to review and improve the strategic approach to managing and preventing customer contact, and ensuring contact is systematically addressed in the correct location at the minimum possible cost. Project mandate details are here . This will be monitored as part of our standard public quarterly performance reporting. Metric/KPI – financial impact, channel shift and customer satisfaction

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
1.4	Garden Waste Subscription service – in 2024/25 the Council introduced a subscription fee for residents that wished to use its garden waste service.	A core aspect of ensuring we focus on statutory duties but provide a genuine choice to residents. The introduction of a digital by design service to enable residents to sign up digitally. The rationale for the subscription service is detailed in this report . The supporting financials for the decision can be found here . Metric/KPI – budget, number of subscribers, subscription growth rate and renewal rate, customer satisfaction and complaint resolution
1.5	Planning service review – capacity has been invested to support the review and improvement of efficiency in the planning service, with a focus on efficiency and unlocking growth. Building on our position as the 2 nd highest performing planning authority in Cambridgeshire.	A targeted review of the planning service, which will be supported by external challenge by the LGA, which will be published. All metrics remain a core part of public performance reporting, including the public reporting of backlog cases, ahead of direction to do so. Metric/KPI – unit costs, planning performance stats,, and the overall impact on growth and development within the area.
1.6	New Ideas process established – Enabling services to immediately action improvement opportunities supported by a rolling transformation fund overseen by councils S151 officer. A budget reserve established to invest in activity to deliver ongoing revenue general fund benefits.	How it works and what we have achieved is demonstrated here . In the 2024/25 budget £1.0m was earmarked reserve to invest in projects which would facilitate future revenue budget savings or income growth to develop the Council’s financial sustainability. Link to the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy here . Metric/KPI – return on investment, project delivery of approved ideas, ongoing revenue benefits
1.7	Workforce strategy – a comprehension review of the Council’s ability to attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce who truly connect with, and deliver, its priorities and values.	A programme which will ensure we have a workforce with the capability and capacity to deliver the objectives of the council. Workforce Strategy report . Metric/KPI – time to fill vacancies, quality of hires, employee turnover rate, recruitment and retention rates

2) Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
2.1	We operate a 3 Council ICT shared service, which has seen us improve delivery and reduce costs.	Independent review of our architecture estate. 15% financial efficiencies on pre-shared service position realised. We are currently undertaking an independent review of our shared service to identify further opportunities for improvement. Metric/KPI – operational efficiency, cost savings, service quality and user satisfaction.
2.2	Use of AI/Automation to deliver transformation/link to OFLOG report.	We are making use of Co-pilot AI licenses in the authority and have a resourced project to roll-out AI capability to release organisational resources. Metric/KPI – process efficiency performance, task automation rate, cost saving and return on investment
2.3	Using technology and software to reduce data duplication and rework. This is happening across the organisation.	Specific examples include - Implementation of recruitment processing linked to our HR system, removing the need for manual forms and data re-keying. Upgrade of the online learning and training portal, reducing the need for “in person” training sessions, removing the need to maintain manual records. Metric/KPI – increase in data maturity, data duplication reduction, processes automated, percentage of data entries requiring correction

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
2.4	Corporate plan 2023 – 2028 Contextual Outcome Measures	In addition to standardised Power BI driven performance reporting, We have developed an outcome focussed power BI report to show how Huntingdonshire is performing against a range of contextual outcome measures which allows the Council to measure and monitor how outcomes are changing. Supporting co-tasking with partners, and data informed decision making. Metric/KPI – improvement in outcomes, no. of cross sector projects.
2.5	Productivity data, performance dashboard & benchmarking	Quarterly performance information reported to committee. 2023/24 report can be viewed here . Metric/KPI – performance metrics, increase in quartile perf.
2.6	Data sharing with partners	OPCC has funded shared work on a data portal project between HDC and Cambridgeshire Police. Metric/KPI – number of data driven initiatives launched, number of active data sharing agreements, track data sharing security incidents
2.7	LGA Data Maturity Assessment Tool	Assessment completed, and shared. A detailed action plan is underway to support AI and RPA opportunities. Metric/KPI – Data maturity increase.

3) Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes – this does not include programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter extremism.

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
3.1	Approval process for, and monitoring the ongoing use of, consultants.	The engagement of new consultants requires the prior approval of the Senior Leadership team, having considered the justification and affordability of these resources. A report on consultants currently in the organisation, including narrative, presented to SLT monthly for challenge. Metric/KPI – Spend actual v budgeted cost, alignment with strategic objectives, cost efficiency, compliance and quality delivery of services/project
3.2	Establishment controls	Establishment is reviewed as part of the annual MTFS process; vacant positions are removed. Recruitment for positions which are not part of the budget need SLT approval. Metric/KPI – Establishment control, budget variance.
3.3	Energy utilisation	Close monitoring of energy use across the Council’s facilities and prompt investigation of any variations in trends. Investment in energy efficiency technology e.g., replacement lower powered lighting and building management systems. Metric/KPI – Energy spend.
3.4	Procurement spend controls	The Council has a Code of Procurement which is part of the Constitution and must be followed. Refreshing social value policy. Metric/KPI – cost reduction, price variance, procurement cost and user satisfaction
3.5	Budget management and review	All budget managers have online access to their budgets on financial system, the Council’s financial accounting system and are required to review their actual income and expenditure against budget monthly, permitting prompt identification and investigation of unexpected variances. Actual and forecast figures are reported to committees every quarter with narrative to explain any significant variations. Income and expenditure are both reported, rather than simply net expenditure. The Council has a Code of Finance

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
		which details the income and expenditure review measures deployed and the assurance processes in place to capture these. Metric/KPI – forecasting accuracy, return on investment, spend v budget
3.6	Medium Term Financial Strategy	The Council produces a five-year financial strategy, allowing it to manage its finances with a longer-term perspective. Adjustments to revenue budget and service levels can be made in advance of financial pressures, which are more likely to be sustainable in the long term rather than reactionary expenditure cuts. An example of this is the introduction of the Garden Waste subscription service which was successfully introduced to cover forecast deficits in the MTFS. Metric/KPI – revenue growth, profitability, return on investment, project completion rate, benchmarking to industry standards
3.7	Staff Performance and Disciplinary Policy	The Council has a Code of Conduct which all staff are expected to follow, as well as uphold its icare (Inspiring, Collaborative, Accountable, Respectful, Enterprising) values. Staff who do not follow the Code of Conduct or demonstrate behaviours in line with the icare values will be taken through the disciplinary process and their behaviours investigated. This fair and open process removes the need to incur costs relating to discredited staff. Metric/KPI – disciplinary action rate, time to resolve and employee turnover rate, performance reviews

4) Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove

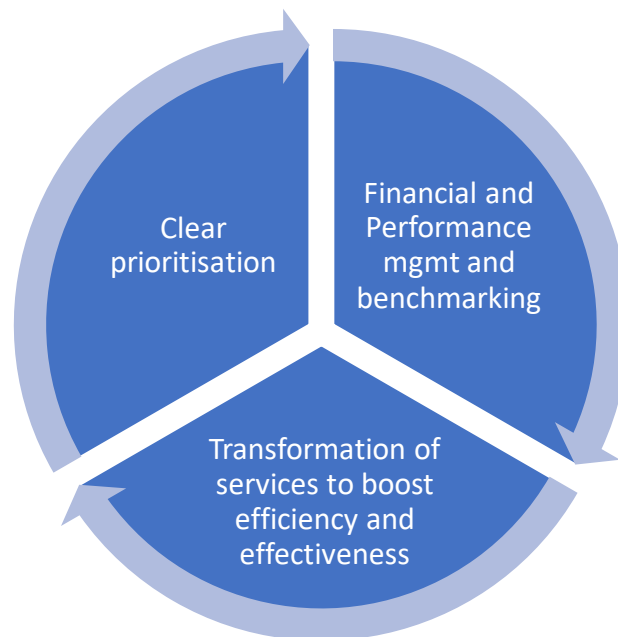
Number	Barrier	Impact/HDC Mitigation
4.1	Single year Local Government funding settlements preventing strategic thinking.	The risks around short-term funding decisions are built into the Council's risk register with mitigations based around forecasting and taking proactive action. This can incur additional costs as we plan for changes that do not occur. Metric/KPI – track project completion rate, staff turnover rate, number of midyear budget revisions
4.2	Forward visibility on funding opportunities for the next twelve months.	Greater and earlier visibility of funding opportunities allows for more effective planning and creates wider opportunities to work with partners, and potentially achieve better outcomes. Maintaining a local dialogue with partners can identify a wish list of needs that could be addressed through short notice funding. Metric/KPI – number of funding applications submitted, strategic initiatives launched, track time to develop funding proposals, number of projects completed on time and within budget
4.3	Capital needs to be matched with Revenue.	Ensure capital investment funding is wherever possible supported by revenue budget to support the ongoing use/maintenance of the asset. Metric/KPI – amount of capital spending relative to revenue
4.4	Clarity regarding future aspirations for Planning – and effective Local Planning	Clear visibility and involvement in development of development framework and clarity on intent, to prevent abortive work.

Continuous Improvement Delivery Plan

Purpose of this plan

This plan lays out how Huntingdonshire District Council will work with its residents, and partners, to maximise the impact of people, processes, and technology to fulfil our best value duty and deliver the objectives within our corporate plan. This will build on the organisational values, the delivery mechanisms of enable and influence as well as do, and the objectives in the corporate plan. It is not intended to serve as a restatement of the Corporate Plan in its entirety, and instead is focussed predominantly on delivery activity, value for money and optimising our ways of working to do this. The delivery of broader Council strategy is out of scope of this document, unless it impacts specifically on changing the mechanisms of delivery or demand.

The headline approach of our enduring change programme is summarised by the diagram below, with clear priorities, being robustly managed and generating a rolling programme of change activity (continuous improvement). This approach recognises that change is dynamic, and constant and we must be able to effectively respond to changing pressures and demands, rather than be driven by a series of pre-ordained activities.



Why does the Council require a continuous improvement plan?

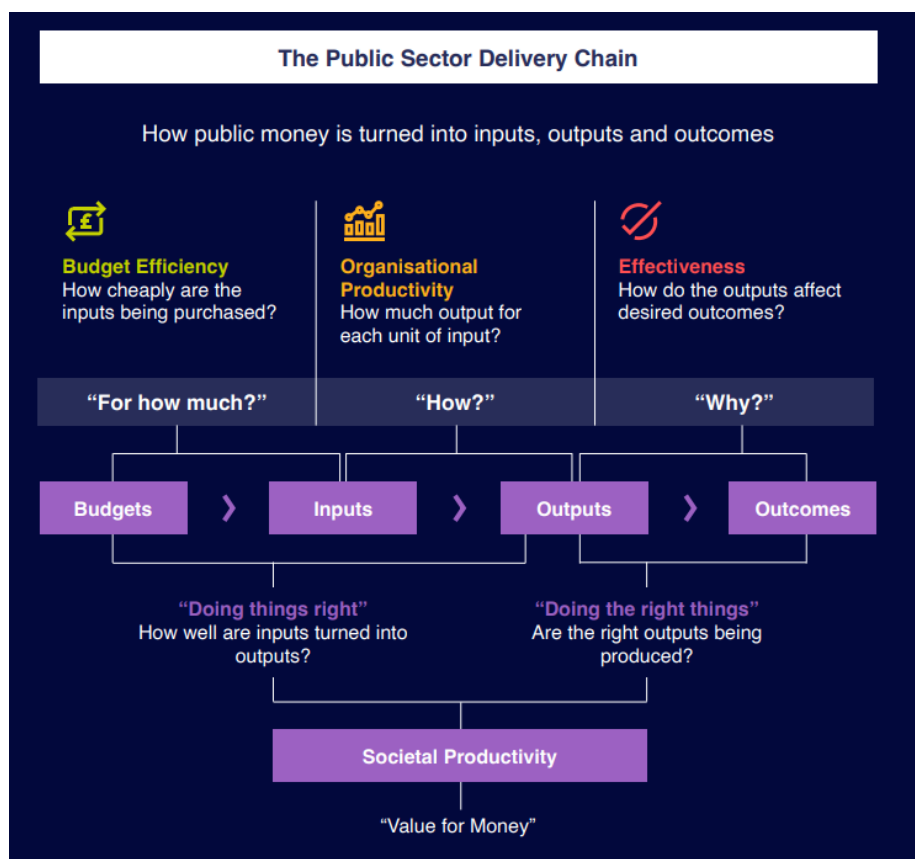
The Council's [Corporate risk register](#) captures the significant risks that the Council faces around reduction in funding, increase in costs, or the increase in demand for services. This is matched by experiences elsewhere across the sector, and the [launch of OFLOG and](#) the new requirement of authorities to publish productivity plans. This risk is also influenced by the increasing reliance on local sources of funding such as business rates, meaning that a downturn in the economy both increases demand and decreases funding, and that our partners face similar impacts and challenges.

Combined with our duties as a Council, and the objectives in the Council’s Corporate Plan, a Continuous Improvement plan therefore focusses our change objectives on a number of clear areas.

1. A need to focus on value for money, and to deliver services as cheaply and effectively as possible.
2. A need to focus on efficacy, and to deliver benefits for residents in the most effective way. This will involve working with and through partners and focussing on prevention which will require sustained focus.
3. Ensuring the Council uses all the levers it has to contribute to the delivery of agreed outcomes, considering its spending and use of estate and employment practices as opportunities to deliver outcomes within the area. The employment of the do, enable, influence model of delivery, with our partners, and residents will be central to this. With honest reflection on the limits of our capacity and capability.

All of these must then be underpinned by a governance and oversight structure that ensures fast and efficient delivery and a clear focus on results, and corrective action where it is required. A robust governance framework will allow for timely escalations as well as robust decision-making and transparent assurance on progress and outputs/outcomes. In many ways this document serves as the forward-looking aspect of the Government’s request for productivity plans, showing how we will continue to respond to the needs of our communities within the resources we have at our disposal.

The diagram below from the Bennett institute, effectively outlines the different elements of public sector productivity, which link closely to the categories highlighted in this report.



¹ [Redefining public sector productivity - Bennett Institute for Public Policy \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.bennettinstitute.org.uk/research/research-summaries/redefining-public-sector-productivity)

What do we mean by Continuous Improvement?

Transformation is defined as “A marked change in form, nature, or appearance.” In terms of this document, continuous improvement is defined as reviewing the way we work – some of the what, but largely how we do things. The way we deliver activities, plan, prioritise and resource in order to meet the objectives of the Council. This will cover governance, risk, and assurance as well delivery. By its nature some of this work will be internal, (whilst the large strategy work will be by its nature external) but will be informed by resident needs, opportunities to deliver differently through partnership or technology, and to reframe problems, in order to meet our objectives for Huntingdonshire as a Place, and to support our Growth aspirations.

Or as Dave Brailsford said when he began his stint leading the GB Olympic track cycling programme:

“It struck me that we should think small, not big, and adopt a philosophy of continuous improvement through the aggregation of marginal gains. Forget about perfection; focus on progression and compound the improvements.”

"The whole point about our approach is that it was meant to be continuous. We learned as we went. You have to identify the critical success factors and ensure they are in place, and then focus your improvements around them."

Background

Within Local Authorities and within Huntingdonshire change and adaptation are normal states. The significant reductions in public sector spending, the increase in demand, combined with the changing demographic profiles of the communities that they support and the opportunities that new technology and the expansion of one-off funding streams has led to this process within local authorities commonly being referred to as “Transformation”.

Within this comes an expectation that each Council will have a clearly articulated plan for how we monitor and influence the cost, speed, and quality of the services we deliver, to demonstrate Best Value, demonstrate strong control and appropriately respond to the internal and external factors that influence us. This plan is a live document and respond in an agile way to the impacts of the ‘known unknowns’ eg: the outcome of the General Election, to continue to define and prioritise change and improvement for the organisation.

This process of evolution and continuous improvement is not new and builds upon a range of assurance and planning frameworks that are already in existence at the Council. A number of these will need to evolve, and in some areas, this will need to be accelerated. This activity will be undertaken as part of a culture of continuous improvement of business process and ways of working that has been taking place over an extended period, is a core cultural aspect of the way we operate and is enabled by HDC’s icare values.

This paper acknowledges the most efficient way to make sustainable improvements is to proactively address the root cause of the issue rather than reacting to increasing demand for services due issues of affordability and a reduction in funding for public services. This explains the clear focus on growth, with the clear evidence of the social and economic impacts of high quality work. The same holds true for all our services, whether they are external or internal - simply doing them quicker does not stop the problem from occurring. Therefore prevention, and removal of need through better design,

focus on inter-dependent resident needs and prevention such as through boosting employment will always be more efficient than even the best transactional response.

What is in scope for the continuous improvement plan?

This plan clearly sets out the ways in which work will be undertaken to improve the outcomes for Huntingdonshire and the District Council through identified and agreed actions in the Corporate Plan and within Service plans (our Annual delivery plan). These areas of work can be described as tactical as they will be relatively short term and will change and improve the way we work. The scope of these can be defined as:

- New delivery or service offers to either our HDC staff or to our residents/businesses
- New and improved ways of working ie: being more efficient and effective with the resources we have available. Such as through the greater use of technology.
- New opportunities developed, either through new and emerging technologies, and/or through new and emerging partnerships across the district

There are other areas of work identified in the Corporate Plan, best described as strategic. These are longer term and clearly define the direction of travel that the organisation needs to take in order to achieve much longer terms goals. These are out of scope of this plan, until such time as the strategy/strategic direction is documented and approved, the resultant Action Plan has been created and the resources required to deliver the Action Plan has been secured. As the continuous improvement plan will be a live document, once the respective actions plans have been finalised the tactical activities can then be included in scope for delivery. Strategic activities that are therefore out of scope for the continuous improvement plan are for example:

- Local Plan
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Commercial Investment Strategy
- Hinchingsbrooke Hospital rebuild

Actions taken by the Council to date to transform services

Huntingdonshire's approach to maximising the cost, quality and speed of delivery of our activity has been driven by three key factors. Prioritisation, internal control and a focus on outcomes for the area and its people.

Huntingdonshire faces many of the same challenges as other parts of the public sector system in terms of financial challenges and demand. In addition, its population is older, and more rural, and connectivity and housing affordability remain an increasing challenge. Evidence clearly points to the key role of employment, social connection and physical activity as being major planks to reduce demand and increase the quality of life locally.

This has seen HDC through several iterations of service improvement over recent times, and has seen this focus upon:

1. Clear prioritization

- a. Central to this has been a focus on the organisation retaining a clear focus on the review of [which services are most valued](#) by our residents and partners. This has been undertaken through consultation and engagement and reviewed over time.
- b. Check and review of the value of services, and alignment to political will, ensuring that the statutory, [and non-statutory split of services](#) informs financial planning at a

political and officer level, and that we are clear with non-statutory services such as economic development, community support and leisure, which key Council outcomes they are contributing to. In addition to the focus on statutory/non-statutory activity, we have consistently engaged with external data, to ensure non-statutory services remain focussed on the key challenges faced by the Council and the sector [NAO – Aileen Murphy](#).

- c. Long term financial planning, and ensuring that [longer term challenges and reforms](#) inform the pragmatic steps we take. This has required strong political leadership to prioritise financial sustainability for the organisation, including the introduction of the garden waste subscription service and the revision to the Council Tax Support scheme.
- d. The worked detail above has informed [Council's key priorities](#), with a supporting action plan and performance framework, and that this underpins all we do.
- e. The development of strategies and the development of that into detailed action plans, such as via the Council's [Climate Strategy](#), and regular quarterly reporting on progress, translating Corporate Strategy into [practical action](#). This is particularly true of the [Place Strategy](#) which informed the do, enable, influence model in the Corporate Plan, and has led to collective action and strategic shifts to better recognise the factors agreed in the strategy, such as the partnership response to maximising investment opportunities as part of UKREIF or the foundational role of [employment in quality of life outcomes](#). A clear restated focus on growth as a significant driver of local benefit, and longer term financial independence.

2. Financial and performance management and benchmarking

- a. Approximately 80% of the Council's net spend is associated with core service activity, and corresponding support services. Performance and value for money of key services are therefore critical, to ensure efficacy, value for money, but also to keep a track on longer term trends. We have a strong financial framework, to support this. A refreshed [Performance framework](#), links all operational and project delivery to our corporate plan, with clearly [defined governance, tolerances and intervention points](#). This provides a strong evidential basis for benefits realisation. [Unit cost activity](#) and benchmarking is firmly embedded in several services, particularly in operations. Combined with a focus on our [key outcomes](#), and how we are contributing to those. However, this needs to be more firmly embedded across the Council and there is an action in the Corporate Plan to expand this work. The review and implementation of a refreshed [long-term operating model](#) within our leisure operation, combined with active review of the services structure and purpose has delivered [more usage, at lower cost](#), as part of a transformation of the service as a whole.
- b. HDC have fundamentally refreshed our [service planning](#) process, and [project methodology](#) in support of the corporate plan. Enabling full line of sight across all activity, and into project governance and budget bids, to address issues of project delivery and benefits realisation.
- c. Data maturity work to support the opportunity for greater automation and efficiency.
- d. Refreshed [risk strategy](#) and register to ensure an enhanced preventative agenda.
- e. We also strongly recognise the role of external review of our internal controls, such as external review of our governance arrangements via Peer Review and Peer Challenge, as well as by benchmarking and review of best practice and near misses.

3. Transformation of services to boost efficiency and effectiveness
 - a. Digitising of activity. The Council has over the past 6 years engaged on a programme of overhaul of back-office systems and a push toward digital self-service. This has been well evidenced by the [digital service design](#) of the new garden waste subscription service, with the total calls on the subject representing just over 25% of the [rate of subscriptions](#).
 - b. Implemented improvement activity in dedicated areas. Including a [dedicated programme to support the further commercialisation of one leisure](#), with a similar programme in [development management](#). Which has seen us publicly publish a list of backlog applications, to ensure transparency around performance.
 - c. Council Tax support (CTS) scheme – a [redesign of the CTS scheme](#) in light of the objectives in corporate plan, resulted in a radical overhaul of the scheme, recognising the cost of operating the current scheme, and the contribution that could be made to wider outcomes by reform.
 - d. Our previous [transformation programme](#), recognised the key role that organisational capability and culture plays within a change programme. These findings were central to the commissioning of a workforce strategy and the allocation of a dedicated training budget to support this cultural change. Whilst the digital vision remains strong, we have recognised and learnt from the [cultural barriers to maximising digital benefits](#) until we embed greater technical capability alongside the increasingly supportive continuous improvement process. Or as the HBR article above puts it :*“Digital transformation is an ongoing process of changing the way you do business. It requires foundational investments in skills, projects, infrastructure, and, often, in cleaning up IT systems. It requires mixing people, machines, and business processes, with all of the messiness that entails.”*
 - e. A [preventative approach](#), which focusses on enabling and influencing as much direct delivery in terms of community outcomes, is based on a social determinant model, and a focus on improving social determinants which will improve overall quality of life. This is strongly informing our economic development approach, with its strong focus on high quality local jobs. This approach is widely evidenced as being a key means of preventing expensive crisis demand.

Controls and management for transforming services within HDC

Central to the delivery of this change is the appropriate management of priority, performance and the realisation of associated benefits. Over the last 2 years the controls and management for change and continuous improvement have been reviewed, refreshed and embedded across the organisation and across management levels. These are regularly promoted, and all staff are supported through the organisational processes through regular communications, Intranet pages and key support roles.

Service plans - creation, monitoring and review throughout the yearly cycle of work

HDC delivers a robust annual service planning process through a service plan template to standardise two months in advance of the deadline date for submission, drop-in sessions and staff intranet page. Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members will review all the service plans (circa 23) and comments, question, suggest amends are fed back to managers to finalise their plans. Corporate services, such as HR, Finance, ICT, Communications, Improvement and Delivery, also review the plans in order to plan their pipeline of work for the following financial year. Service plans are reviewed by managers and their teams once every quarter to update the deliverable activities for the year and record performance.

This financial year we have also introduced the consolidation of identified activities within every service plan into an [Annual Delivery Plan](#). This will be updated by service managers regularly to provide transparency on progress against the key priorities to be delivered by their service.

New areas of work

All officers are encouraged to raise ideas for efficiency savings, income generation, or change activities to deliver the Corporate Plan and statutory changes through a light touch MS project form [Ideas Process](#). The submissions are reviewed by corporate services (HR, Finance, ICT, Information Governance) and then presented at a Stage 1 review panel. Ideas that are approved to progress are offered Business Analyst support to help define a greater level of detail for the idea through a Stage 2 proposal document. Once completed the idea is reviewed again at a Stage 2 review panel, The membership of the review panel is the Section 151 Officer, the Chief Operating Officer (whose responsibilities also include SIRO and 3C IT Intelligent Client for HDC) and the Chief Delivery Officer. This approval process quickly weeds out activities for which no case exists, or which do not align with corporate priorities.

If approved the idea is then determined whether to be delivered as part of the organisational portfolio of projects and programmes, with a responsibility to provide monthly highlight reports, of from within a service, with a requirement to update on progress once a quarter. A number of ideas are progressed as discovery and pilot activities to better evaluate the desirability, feasibility and viability of scaling to a larger project of work.

A rolling Transformation reserve fund is utilised to cover the initial implementation costs of change initiatives, with clear invest to save principles used before funding is awarded.

Portfolio control and management of projects and programmes

Successful delivery of projects and programmes are supported by the Portfolio Management Office, through the use of templates contained on the [staff intranet pages](#). A monthly meeting operates, Major Change Delivery Board, through their terms of reference are in place to act as a route for escalation of risks and issues, for assurance on progress and for key decision making eg: project start, project close, change requests.

Major Change Delivery Board also commissions ad hoc reviews for projects/programmes delivered over 2+ years delivery in the form of a 'health check'. This is a six-to-eight-week activity where areas of focus are agreed, a series of stakeholder interviews are undertaken along with a thorough review of the original documentation. The resultant report will then propose a number of recommended actions that can be undertaken by the project to ensure the expected outcomes and benefits can be realised by the end of the project. A pipeline of health checks is being created, based on the duration of the projects and programmes in the portfolio.

Continuous improvement through a Community of Practice

A Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model (P3M3) self-assessment was undertaken in April 2023 (scheduled for completion again in May 2024). This process assessed the maturity of a number of key project and programme delivery elements both at an organisational level and project level. The responses to the self-assessment are then used to identify key areas for development with the aspiration to achieve the highest maturity level 5, continuous improvement. As a direct result a Community of Practice was introduced in January 2024 with an invitation for all staff to meet every four months, promote individual and team successes, share good practice and identify common risks and barriers in the organisation and externally.

An MS Teams channel for the Community of Practice has been established and colleagues from other local Councils have been invited to attend so cross-Council staff can share good practice and relevant training opportunities.

What are the key areas of HDC work?

Taking as a starting point the three spheres of organisational delivery, namely: [Business strategy and organisational process](#), [People and culture](#), and [Technology and data](#), we have committed to a series of key actions in order to enable us to continue to deliver continuous improvement against the delivery objectives of **efficiency** (value for money), **efficacy** (improvement on outcomes), and delivery on **priorities** (delivery to cost, time and quality of the organisations objectives).

Business strategy and organisational process

Key action 1 – To improve the robustness of our key efficiency metrics, in the form of unit cost data, informed by strengthened benchmarking data, to ensure we can track the impact and benefits of change activity, and to target intervention where necessary.

Key action 2 – To agree the future service design process with specific regard to technology driven processes, as part of the renewal of shared service agreement.

Key action 3 – To deliver the customer change programme, and to deliver a long-term strategy for our customer contact.

Key action 4 – To deliver the Councils Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy and Economic Growth Strategy, to define clear requirements from service delivery moving forward.

Key action 5 – To continue the ongoing development of our investment portfolio of projects and programmes eg: annual P3M3 assessment, PMO role out and improved controls and reporting.

Key action 6 – (New) To better align the activity of support services, by producing a corporate support charter, to outline how support services will work with operational teams. With a particular focus on expectations and the improved use of information through the integration of data to minimise rekeying, and to provide a single view of the truth across finance, people and performance, to drive the business and strengthen our control environment.

Key action 7 – To implement all actions within the peer review of our Audit function, and the actions identified within the areas Corporate Peer Challenge.

People and culture

Key action 7 – To deliver the workforce strategy and supporting action plan to ensure a clear plan for organisational competencies and supporting training plan.

Key action 8 – (New) To review the current performance and reward framework in light of the completion of the workforce strategy, and the recognition of the increasing number of calls on service managers time, if we wish them to innovate their services. We will continue to group, and allocate time for task completion as we have piloted with the compliance task list previously. Ensuring the efficient management of key tasks.

Technology and data

Key action 9 – To review and update the objectives and delivery plan for the Council's draft digital strategy.

Key action 10 - To undertake further data maturity activity, to ensure we are best placed to make use of analytics and automation opportunities.

Key action 11 – To undertake a pilot to develop a business case for realising the opportunities of the use of Artificial Intelligence.

Key action 12 – To continue to pursue joint working with partners on the use of shared intelligence activity to better inform service delivery. Informed by the review of hosting options.

Key action 13 – Development of phased plan to maximise benefit of data warehouse, and its links to organisational portal.

Key action 14 – (New) To refresh application roadmap, informed by the review of hosting options.

How is HDC proposing to deliver this activity?

All of the activity below is captured within the [areas Corporate Plan](#), or [service plans](#). True change being something that is embedded with the core ways of working of the organisation. Delivery of these is monitored via the Council's Major Change Board, with onward reporting to Scrutiny and Cabinet. All numbers next to the actions relate to the Corporate Plan (CP) or Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) unique ref number.

Business strategy and organisational process

- Continue our Customer Services improvement programme to ensure that our customers are always at the heart of what we do. A fundamental [review of customer contact](#) and [dedicated role](#). CP53.
- Deliver an independent Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council that will assess, challenge and improve what we do. CP58
- Deliver a Community Health and Wealth Strategy, to link broader social determinants of health with a Community Wealth Building approach. CP1
- Refresh our Social Value Policy and explore larger opportunities to maximise local benefit through a Community Wealth Building approach to procurement and the roles of anchor institutions CP4
- Commence work on a new Housing Strategy for 2025-2030. CP18
- Refresh the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy – as a key mechanism for increasing employment, and increasing NNDR receipts. CP30
- Continue the Development Management Improvement programme to improve the performance of the planning service. CP54

Service activity

- CCTV - Increase revenue from internal and external projects **CC001**
- Make commercial waste service more profitable **CW001**
- Corporate Plan operational performance indicator target setting and use of benchmarking – including DQ Template completion and Member challenge based on analysis of trend/ contextual information. **BIPM003**
- Continue to develop and formally communicate the results and findings in our Contextual Outcomes Dashboard. **BIPM004**
- Ongoing monitoring of, and responding to, changes to national performance frameworks (e.g. Oflog/DLUHC). **BIPM005**
- Support the expansion of unit costs used to demonstrate productivity. **BIPM009**

- Write a new Data Quality Policy. **BIPM010**
- Data Warehouse development – potential use for integrating cross-service/system data if this aligns with HDC aims, or alternatively as storage for data collected through e-forms (with reports to be developed via Power BI). **BIPM012**
- Implement the co-location of the CAB and RAI Teams and develop a new working model to support residents in need. **COS014**
- Publish Procurement Pipeline **COA010**
- Restructure of open spaces and countryside is likely to create a financial saving in future years and to improve efficiency. , This change in working methods started in 2023/24 with integrated, *team meetings and , *reviewing SLAs , * reviewing event management, * reviewing survey techniques and analysis, In 2024/2025 outline structure options will be proposed and discussed with the teams and HR regarding changes. **CTRS005**
- Commercial manager will be jointly appointed before new countryside centre opens following retirement of Countryside Manager. Funded within the business case for HCP, this person will work across all green spaces in time and manage the commercial aspects of events, cafes and countryside centre functions **CTRS006**
- Complete a further review of the Document Centre following the outsourcing of print to save £50k **CS011**
- Establish benchmarking with other councils and the private sector. **CS014**
- Planning improvements **PS009**
- Successful delivery to completion of the One Leisure Programme **ID003**
- Defined data analysis tasks to support the defined outputs and outcomes of project/programme delivery or BAU; green bins, One Leisure, planning **ID004**
- Development of the Portfolio Management Office function to provide a greater level of report, using more automated methods and systems. This will be facilitated through the appointment of a new role; PMO Manager **ID005**
- Development of a more robust process for commissioning work tasks for the service; for both PMO and Analysts **ID006**
- Development of user-centric service design offering for services through advice & guidance as well as tools, templates and training **ID008**
- Work schedule planning developed for all members of the team to manage current and pipeline work demands **ID009**
- Market Operation Efficiency Review (Markets), To understand if resource is appropriate whilst maintaining safe operation. **PM009**

People and Culture

- Complete the remaining elements of the Workforce Strategy to prepare the Council for the changing skills needed in our future workforce and ensure we can continue to attract, retain, and nurture talent. CP52

Service activity

- Staff Communications Network. Develop stronger processes for embedding communications planning in all projects, initiatives and key decisions, making sure we are well-planned and face fewer unexpected demands **CO026**

Technology and data

- Assess, and where prudent, use the emerging national benchmarking data from the Office of Local Government (OFLOG) to improve our performance. CP54
- Bring forward and expand our use of unit costs to demonstrate productivity within priority service areas. CP60

Service activity

- Testing of new pilot system in Operations, ahead of tender SP4, SP8, SP49
- Digitising and mapping of all trees and continue work on waterways **AA001**
- Manage and maintain the waste services asset management system. **WM006**
- Change over from Gladstone Plus 2 to Gladstone 360 **AL008**
- Explore findings from our Data Maturity Assessment (via the LGA Data Maturity Tool) by identifying areas to improve and seeking best practices from others. **BIPM006**
- Work with colleagues to establish and deliver Data Maturity within the Council. **BIPM006**
- Support OPCC SVD project - Police partnership data portal proof of concept (we are only expecting to provide internal data and liaise with suppliers and services). **BIPM007**
- Roll out mobile working in Environmental Health and Licensing via Tascomi **COS012**
- Work on a drones policy within HDC (flagged now for early consideration) **CTRS011**
- Storm Enhancements, introduce email handling, Introduce webchat, Improve Reporting **CS002**
- IEG4 Enhancements. Introduction of IEG4 Data Warehouse reporting. Roll out of new CRM Lite application - Customer Excellence Centre. Ability to delete and link customer records to each other. Customer timeline history/audit improvements. Business Portal will be available where companies can have accounts with multiple staff associated. We need to check if there is an additional charge for this. **CS003**
- IEG4 – Customer Portal contract review, Establish the strategy across the 3 Councils and procurement process. **CS004**
- Explore how AI could be used to enhance self-service options and improve efficiency. Prepare costs, options and benefits paper for the ideas board. **CS009**
- Web content review with high hitting service areas. **CS012**
- IMS Procurement input **CS018**
- Idox TLC NLIS Level 3 Automation - enabling local land charge searches to be completed via the NLIS portal and sent back via the VPN through Idox TLC instead of physically uploading **ERDS001**
- Consideration of use of gov.notify to communicate with electorate **ERDS004**
- Digital Innovation in Leisure **OL004**
- Digitisation of Parking Permits (Parking) **PM006**

How does these activities relate to each other? Continuous improvement plan on a page.

