

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Cabinet

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **22 July 2020**

Due to current government guidance on social-distancing and the COVID-19 virus, Cabinet on 22 July 2020 will not be open for members of the public to physically attend. Arrangements have been made for the press and public to watch the meeting live via the Council's online webcast channel:

www.youtube.com/user/thurrockcouncil

Venue (for Members only)

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Aaron Watkins

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

	Page
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of Cabinet held on 17 June 2020.	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
4 Declaration of Interests	

5	Statements by the Leader	
6	Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues	
7	Petitions submitted by Members of the Public	
8	Questions from Non-Executive Members	
9	Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
10	Thurrock Council Home to School Transport and Travel Policy Update	13 - 24
11	Hospital Discharge Bridging Service	25 - 30
12	Grays South Regeneration Area: Underpass and Public Realm Option Selection	31 - 100
13	Multi Functional Device Contract Conversion	101 - 110
14	2019/20 Financial Outturn Report	111 - 124
15	Report from Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)	125 - 176

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Lucy Tricker, Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **14 July 2020**

Information for members of the public and councillors

Access to Information and Meetings

Due to current government guidance on social-distancing and the COVID-19 virus, council meetings will not be open for members of the public to physically attend. Arrangements have been made for the press and public to watch council meetings live via the Council's online webcast channel: www.youtube.com/user/thurrockcouncil

Members of the public have the right to see the agenda, which will be published no later than 5 working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

Recording of meetings

This meeting may be recorded for transmission and publication on the Council's website. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be recorded.

Members of the public not wishing any speech or address to be recorded for publication to the Internet should contact Democratic Services to discuss any concerns.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Guidelines on filming, photography, recording and use of social media at council and committee meetings

The council welcomes the filming, photography, recording and use of social media at council and committee meetings as a means of reporting on its proceedings because it helps to make the council more transparent and accountable to its local communities.

If you wish to film or photograph the proceedings of a meeting and have any special requirements or are intending to bring in large equipment please contact the Communications Team at CommunicationsTeam@thurrock.gov.uk before the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will then be consulted and their agreement sought to any specific request made.

Where members of the public use a laptop, tablet device, smart phone or similar devices to use social media, make recordings or take photographs these devices must be set to 'silent' mode to avoid interrupting proceedings of the council or committee.

The use of flash photography or additional lighting may be allowed provided it has been discussed prior to the meeting and agreement reached to ensure that it will not disrupt proceedings.

The Chair of the meeting may terminate or suspend filming, photography, recording

and use of social media if any of these activities, in their opinion, are disrupting proceedings at the meeting.

Thurrock Council Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available throughout the Civic Offices. You can access Wi-Fi on your device by simply turning on the Wi-Fi on your laptop, Smartphone or tablet.

- You should connect to TBC-CIVIC
- Enter the password **Thurrock** to connect to/join the Wi-Fi network.
- A Terms & Conditions page should appear and you have to accept these before you can begin using Wi-Fi. Some devices require you to access your browser to bring up the Terms & Conditions page, which you must accept.

The ICT department can offer support for council owned devices only.

Evacuation Procedures

In the case of an emergency, you should evacuate the building using the nearest available exit and congregate at the assembly point at Kings Walk.

How to view this agenda on a tablet device



You can view the agenda on your [iPad](#), [Android Device](#) or [Blackberry Playbook](#) with the free modern.gov app.

Members of the Council should ensure that their device is sufficiently charged, although a limited number of charging points will be available in Members Services.

To view any “exempt” information that may be included on the agenda for this meeting, Councillors should:

- Access the modern.gov app
- Enter your username and password

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 June 2020 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-in is Wednesday 1 July 2020 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Aaron Watkins

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lucy Tricker, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded and live-streamed to YouTube.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 March 2020 were approved as a correct record.

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

3. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by describing how the world had recently changed dramatically because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but felt proud that Thurrock Council had continued to maintain key services during this difficult time. He highlighted the great work of Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action (TCCA) which had been set up four days after the beginning of lockdown, and had worked hard to deliver food, medicine and provide support for those most vulnerable residents. He thanked the 500 TCCA volunteers who had given up over 6000 hours of their time to deliver 800 shopping parcels, and 500 medicine parcels, and had been recruited within less than a week of the beginning of lockdown. He added that 57,500 residents were being kept up to date with twice-weekly newsletters, and 1,300 social media updates, which had been viewed on screens over 3 million times. He stated that these were now being scaled back to once weekly, but government advice could always be found on the www.gov.uk website. He added that Members briefings were also being scaled back from daily to twice weekly. He also described the Business Buzz e-newsletter which was sent out to 2,000

local businesses and contained information such as how to access grant schemes.

The Leader moved on to explaining how the majority of Council office staff were now working from home, whilst still delivering services, but added that frontline staff had continued to work throughout the pandemic, such as waste collectors. He stated that since lockdown began 2million bins had been collected; 600 tonnes of waste had been cleared; 130 fly-tips had been cleared; and 70 parks had been maintained. He added that 1000 potholes had also been filled in, all within target time; 1050 fixed penalty notices issued; and 50 £400 fines issued for non-payment of fixed penalty notices. He also added that 6000 council homes had been maintained; 37 rough sleepers had been housed; and 750 posters displayed outlining social distancing measures. The Leader continued and stated that £20 million of central government funding had also been allocated to 6150 businesses within Thurrock; and work had continued on projects such as the Grays two-way traffic system and the Tops Club site.

The Leader summarised and outlined the government's advice of staying at home, working from home wherever possible, limiting social contact, maintaining a social distance of 2 metres, and washing hands regularly.

4. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Hebb began his briefing by thanking key-workers that had dedicated so much time during the pandemic to keeping people safe, and continued to do so as the country emerged from lockdown. He stated that central government had allocated £9 million in funding for Thurrock for COVID-19 relief, as well as £20 million to help small businesses, whilst continuing to pay 60% of the nation's salaries during furlough. He continued and described the economic impact the pandemic would have on the Council, and detailed how 10% of income had been lost from fees and charges; council tax arrears had increased by 5%; and residents claiming council tax relief had increased by 20%. He highlighted that these changes would create a funding gap for the 2021/22 financial year, which would be compounded by business rates payments also being delayed. He stated that Thurrock Council had managed to close a funding gap in 2016, and he felt confident that the 2021/22 funding gap could also be closed.

Councillor Hebb continued and stated that Thurrock continued to run economic assessments, which had been helped as the rainy day general fund had been increased 40% since 2016/17, and a £6million Financial Resilience Reserve had been created. He commented that a social services reserve of £1.5million had been created since the pandemic, which was designated for extraordinary use, and could not be used to deal with everyday social services pressures. He stated that due to the ongoing pandemic the Council would need to draw on reserves, and make some service reforms, but mentioned that reserves would not be depleted. He highlighted that any money taken from reserves would be put back in over the next five years.

Councillor Hebb then moved on to discussing the Council's investment approach, and stated that investments had continued to make returns during the pandemic, and had helped to increase the Financial Resilience Fund and financial reserves. He stated that the short-term borrowing and investment approach had received cross-party support during Full Council meetings since 2017, and had helped to deal with financial pressures brought on by COVID-19. He highlighted that Thurrock's investments were focussed in renewable energy, which had not seen a downturn during the lockdown, compared to other Councils who had invested in areas such as high street retail, and were now experiencing investment losses. He stated that the investment strategy was not permanent, but helped Thurrock ensure self-sufficiency, and gave the Council the ability to reform statutory and discretionary services, whilst reducing the amount of investments over time, and that the longer that market is there, the longer council has to find and considerably embed efficiencies. He said members should be factual and accurate with statements made and recognise the commercial nature of the subject to avoid unintended consequences. Nor should members neglect the benefits of the approach such as targeted improvements in our communities and reserves position.

Councillor Hebb outlined the Council's financial position since the rise of COVID-19, but stated that Cabinet wished to retain projects such as Clean It, Cut It, Fill It as much as possible. He stated that Thurrock would have to consider services post-lockdown and continue to make some services leaner. He added that the surplus which had been ring-fenced for tackling anti-social behaviour would continue to be ring-fenced, but the Council had to consider their Medium Term Financial position. Councillor Hebb continued and highlighted the Council's Spending Review, which would enter its second phase soon, and would be adjusted to a post-COVID19 world, and would be presented in the forthcoming review.

Councillor Hebb moved on to discuss the surplus which had been allocated in January 2020, and stated that some of this money would have to be re-profiled and reallocated based on COVID-19 pressures. He clarified that areas such as additional police funding and work against the LTC would continue to occur, and the Council would work to ensure all projects funded by this surplus would be honoured by January 2022. He added that the current capital programme would also need to be reviewed in light of COVID-19 pressures, to ensure affordability. He added that a report would be coming to Cabinet later in the year which would outline the process for developing high-quality housing across the borough, but there were currently no on-going Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) projects. He also stated that in light of the changes brought about by COVID-19, the Fair Debt Summit would be refreshed, and meetings were taking place with the IRV on how to undertake this project and collect council tax and business rates fairly. He summarised and stated that any residents or businesses that were struggling to pay their council tax or business rates should contact the Council as soon as possible, to be able to tackle the situation together.

Councillor Halden began his briefing by thanking all the officers who had continued to work hard during the pandemic, particularly the re-ablement

team who had been able to ensure that hospital to care home transfers still occurred within target time. He stated that the economy could see a future downturn due to COVID-19, but highlighted that the Council's financial resilience, including the £1.5million Social Care Fund would help relieve pressures and maintain extra care beds, whilst reviewing options for the domiciliary care market. He stated that the Council had also set up the Economic Vulnerability Task Force, in partnership with key stakeholders such as Inspire Thurrock to ensure that residents were protected from exploitation during these difficult times, and were supported in finding work. He added that the care system had had to learn to evolve during the pandemic, and a report would be going to the Health and Wellbeing Board in July which outlined the new primary planning areas. Councillor Halden summarised and stated that some projects were continuing during the lockdown, such as improving technology facilities for vulnerable residents to ensure they could remain in their homes for as long as possible, and improved transition services for young adults leaving care.

Councillor Huelin stated that during the pandemic, Thurrock Council and CVS had reacted quickly to the crisis and had collaborated together effectively. She thanked the TCCA and CVS, and felt proud that over 500 volunteers had received DBS checks to be able to start volunteering, and had delivered up to 300 interactions a day, including follow-up calls. She thanked the community for all their hard work, and felt proud that although the pandemic had been a difficult time, Thurrock had shown positive community spirit. She stated that the VSDF funds had been allocated, but all groups had agreed to defer payment to allow the Council to redeploy funds to those affected by COVID-19. She added that the CEDF funding had also been put on hold.

Councillor Jefferies thanked those who had worked hard to ensure that schools could remain open throughout the pandemic for the children of keyworkers. He stated that prior to COVID-19 a group of local authorities across South East Essex had met to discuss local skills and training programmes, but this had been delayed due to the pandemic. He commented that this group was now meeting again, with Thurrock taking the lead on how to build apprenticeships back up after the pandemic, as up to 27% of apprenticeships could be lost because of COVID-19. He added that the Council were also looking at ways to help those who had lost their jobs because of COVID-19, and Thurrock would work help retrain and upskill those people.

5. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There had been no petitions submitted by members of the public.

6. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There had been no questions submitted by Non-Executive Members.

7. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There had been no items referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Items of Urgent Business

The Leader stated that one item of urgent business had been received, relating to the procurement of the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN). He commented that he was presenting this report as he was the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), which promoted collaboration between Councils across the South Essex area. He moved on to mention that the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport had recently undertaken a major digital programme called Digital UK, to increase broadband capacity across the country, including LFFNs, and had allocated a £740million grant for public sector LFFNs to boost the economy. He stated that in 2018 ASELA had developed a bid for this grant, and in January 2019 had been approved a grant of £4.4million to enable full fibre capacity across ASELA. He added that Thurrock was the lead Council for this project, which meant that out of a total of 129 LFFN sites across ASELA, 78 of these (or 70%) were based in Thurrock, which equated to 130km of new dark fibre cables. He stated that the LFFN sites would deliver savings and improved connectivity, and would be installed between March and May 2021. He stated that the procurement route would be through Suffolk Cloud Partnership, which would be agreed through contract approval. The Leader commented that this project highlighted the good collaboration work taking place across South Essex, as this was one of the many projects being undertaken by ASELA. He added that the improved LFFN connectivity to sites would increase business retention and growth, as it would allow these sites to invest in fibre and access gigabit connectivity. He stated that increased access to digital technology would increase job opportunities in the public sector, but would help with new housing projects and business growth as fibre panned out across the borough. The Leader added that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered and agreed the recommendations. He mentioned that the Committee had raised a question regarding why Southend-on-Sea Borough Council had not been included in the bid, and stated that this was because the borough already had full fibre connectivity. The Leader summarised and stated that fibre connectivity in Thurrock was currently only 8%, but the additional LFFN cabling across the borough would help to enable growth, and deal with Wi-Fi blackspots in some areas of the borough.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed delegated authority for award of contract for the delivery of a Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) to MLL Networks Ltd, via the Suffolk Cloud Partnership agreement, to the Director of HR, OD and Transformation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. The total cost of this project is £4.436mn for the rollout of Dark Fibre connectivity and an Irrevocable Right of Use (IRU) of that fibre for 15 years. There is no additional ongoing cost for use of the dark fibre for the 15-year

period.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in.*

9. Grays South Regeneration Area: Appropriations (Decision: 110512)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that Grays had recently received lots of investment for regeneration, with £150million from the private sector, and more from the public sector including the Grays High Street Fund and Town Board. He stated that the project outlined in the report would provide better services for residents and deliver great housing, and had received no public objections in consultation. He stated that this was the final stage in development, and although one person had responded to the consultation, this was only to ask a question.

Councillor Halden raised a point regarding the new working from home guidelines, and felt that the Council's policy of 'fewer buildings, better service' had been ahead of its time. He felt that the Civic Offices development provided quality housing for residents, and allowed for the demolition of the old Civic Offices building, which was rarely used. Councillor Hebb also added that the development of the site would create 80 homes for families, which were close to the train station. Councillor Coxshall added that these could be good starter homes for families in Grays and from across Thurrock. Councillor Maney asked a question regarding the trees and memorials which were currently in Mulberry Square, as these included memorials for Council officers who had died in service. He felt that the trees should be replanted and memorials moved to a different location. Councillor Coxshall confirmed that the trees would be replanted and memorials moved, and the Council were currently considering the land opposite Grays train station. He felt that this would be a good place for the memorials, as it received lots of footfall from those entering and exiting the train station. He added that the Council were also currently considering a permanent memorial to the 39 people who had lost their lives in West Thurrock earlier in the year.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the appropriation of the area of land referred to in this report and shown edged red on the plan at Appendix 2, for planning purposes to facilitate the redevelopment of land to extend the Civic Offices.

2. In respect of the area of land edged red on the plan at Appendix 2 to this report:

(i) noted that it is necessary to use Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to facilitate the development and improvement of the land as part of the planning permission in order for any and all private rights and restrictions that affect the land to be overridden.

(ii) Noted that no objections were received as a result of the public consultation exercise.

(iii) Authorised officers to take such necessary administrative and accounting steps to give effect to the appropriation (including settling claims for compensation arising out of the extinguishment of any rights in the appropriated land pursuant to Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

10. Appointments to Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Leader introduced the report and highlighted Appendix 1 which laid out any changes made to appointments. He mentioned that the recommendation stated that there would be no changes to appointments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Councillor Coxshall thanked Councillor Rice for his hard work on the coastal and flood defence committee, as he felt Councillor Rice had done a good job in protecting Thurrock. The Leader agreed and also thanked Councillor Rice, and felt that coastal defences would not have been placed as far down the Thames without his hard work.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it was agreed that all current appointments, as listed in Appendix1, remain for 2020/21, unless otherwise advised by Group Leaders and/or Cabinet.

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

22 July 2020	ITEM: 10 Decision: 110513
Cabinet	
Thurrock Council Home to School Travel and Transport Policy – Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
Report of: Councillor Andrew Jefferies - Portfolio Holder for Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas - Assistant Director of Children's Services	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy – Corporate Director of Children's Services	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

School travel is primarily the responsibility of parents. However, the Council has a statutory duty to make home to school travel arrangements, free of charge, for eligible children. The Council is responsible for the design and adoption of a policy setting out the guiding principles around such home to school travel.

The Department for Education’s Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, 2014 (“the 2014 Guidance”) states that local authorities must publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age (ages 5-16). Such policies must provide full information on the travel and transport arrangements and explain both statutory and discretionary transport provision.

In order to deliver a cost effective service within statutory requirements the Council adopted the Education Transport Policy in 2016. Hereinafter referred to as “the 2016 Policy”. In line with the 2014 guidance the policy should be reviewed on an annual basis and where necessary undergo minimal adjustments that will ensure the policy meets the changing needs of children and families within the borough, recognises the impact of improved highways and paths and implements amendments to legislation.

Due to the borough-wide impact of certain proposed changes, Cabinet approval is required. The updated policy will be referred to as the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy “the 2020 Policy”. The change in title indicates one of the principle requirements for change as the arrangements made by local authorities are no longer focused on the historical forms of transport (buses and taxis) alone, but

involve more sustainable council-led arrangements for travel such as assistance to walk to school, the provision of bus passes or bicycle vouchers. This report outlines the areas of the 2016 Policy that have been reviewed, the reasons for these and the proposed changes.

1. Recommendations:

**That Cabinet consider the proposed policy refresh to the 2016 policy.
That Cabinet agrees and adopts the proposed refresh of the policy with specific reference to the three areas listed below:**

- 1.1 That families in Temporary Accommodation for more than three months be asked to transfer their children to a school with a place that is nearest to the home in which the family has been placed.**
- 1.2 The implementation of a charging regime in respect of for transport to Post 16 facilities for pupils aged 16-25 with SEND. Pupils will be required to pay the full cost or make a contribution towards the cost of transport. This service is discretionary and the Council may charge for the delivery of such transport.**
- 1.3 That transport be delivered, in accordance with legislation, only when there is no suitable school with a place available within the maximum walking distance from the child's home (two miles for pupils under the age of 8 and 3 miles for pupils over the age of 8)**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Local authorities are required by law to publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age. The 2014 Guidance stipulates that such travel and transport information should be clear, easy to understand and provide full information on travel and transport arrangements. It should explain both statutory transport provision, and that provided on a discretionary basis. It should also set out clearly how parents can hold local authorities to account through their appeals processes. Local authorities should ideally integrate their Sustainable Modes of School Travel strategies into these policy statements, and publish them together.
- 2.2 In July 2016, Cabinet granted approval for the 2016 policy to be added to the Council's policy framework by virtue of Article 4 of the Council's Constitution.
- 2.3 Officers propose that the 2016 Policy be refreshed. This will involve a refresh of the language to ensure it reflects current terminology and practice, a reconfiguration of certain sections with a view to creating a more user-friendly document and the inclusion of new clauses that reflect changes to legislation. The new clauses facilitate the delivery of a safer, more efficient and cost effective Children's Transport service.

- 2.4 The 2014 Guidance stipulates that Local authorities should consult widely on any proposed changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements with all interested parties. Consultations should last for at least 28 working days during term time. Officers organised a public consultation across 33 days via the Council portal in line with the 2014 Guidance. A summary of the consultation and the responses to it have been included in Appendix 1.

The areas officers propose to update and the relevant consultation questions are listed below.

Proposed change and purpose	Question
<p>Temporary Accommodation</p> <p>To support children to enrol in local schools when they are housed in an area for over three months and that area is above the maximum walking distance (2 miles for ages under 8 and 3 miles for ages 8 and above). Children are enabled to avoid lengthy journeys and also to develop local social networks.</p>	<p>Do you think the Council should make families living in temporary accommodation for more than 3 months apply to a school near the place they have been given temporarily in order to avoid long journeys to school?</p>
<p>Charging post sixteen students with special needs:</p> <p>To provide transport to a Post 16 facility for either the full cost or the payment of a contribution towards the cost of transport. This applies to pupils aged 16 - 25 with SEND. The Council has no statutory duty to provide Post 16 transport and where it exercises it's discretionary power it may charge for services rendered. This facilitates effective management of public funds while supporting pupils with SEND.</p>	<p>Do you think that Thurrock Council should charge the families of students aged 16 - 18 with SEND for transport to and from college or other post 16 facilities?</p>
<p>Applying for a school place</p> <p>To ensure the Council delivers Home to School Transport equitably across all economic classes, academic levels and protected characteristics offering families support in accordance with legislation only when there is no suitable school with a place available within the maximum walking distance from the child's home.</p>	<p><u>Part A:</u></p> <p>Do you think that the Council should make it very clear to parents that in order to receive support with transport they must apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the three nearest schools to their home address in the case of applications for a primary school place. - the six nearest schools from their home address in the case of applications for a secondary school place.

	<p><u>Part B:</u> Sometimes we have to place a child at a school because there are no places at their nearest suitable school. The distance to the next suitable school available is such that the child is entitled to transport. If a place later becomes available at a suitable school near their home address, should the Council stop paying for the transport and expect the child to move back to their neighbourhood school?</p>
--	--

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Local authorities are advised by the Department for Education (“the DfE”) to consult widely on any proposed changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements with all interested parties. Thurrock Council has embarked on a full consultation between 11 February and 26 March 2020, with a focus on proposed changes to the 2016 policy. The time span for the consultation exceeded the period of 28 working days recommended by the DfE.
- 3.2 Good practice suggests that where possible, parents should be supported when any changes are introduced as such changes might have an adverse effect on individual family budgets. Thurrock Council consistently addresses this issue by exercising discretion under its Exceptional Circumstances scheme, which supports families who may be adversely impacted by changes implemented during their child’s current stage of education. Officers have also conducted a Community Equality Impact Assessment to ensure particular groups within the community have not been marginalised by a particular change in policy.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The 2014 Guidance states that Local authorities are required by law to publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age. The proposed update of the information regarding education transport and travel within the Policy will provide parents, officers and interested parties with a legally compliant, user friendly document and a swift means of sourcing information around home to school transport.

However, three specific areas require an update to ensure the Council delivers services efficiently, cost-effectively and most importantly, in accordance with current legislation and DfE Guidance. The areas and the purpose for recommending that the areas be subject to an update are included in the table above.

5. Consultation analysis

5.1 In January 2020, the Director of Children’s Services granted approval for officers to undertake a public consultation involving families, schools and a wide range of stakeholders to seek the views of interested parties on the proposed changes to the 2016 Policy. This can be found at Appendix 1.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The 2020 Policy caters for a wide range of issues and consideration was given throughout to ensure that the content of the policy aligned with legislation and corporate policy. The impact on direct users and the community at large was also considered. Where possible any tendency towards adverse impact was either eradicated completely or mitigated. Families receiving certain state benefits have extended rights to free transport under the 2014 Guidance. Also, families whose overall income level places them just above the threshold for qualifying benefit who may struggle to pay for transport may be supported via the Exceptional Circumstances scheme. This enables such families to remain employed and aligns with the Council’s priority aimed at encouraging and promoting job creation and economic prosperity.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Joanne Freeman**

Finance Manager

Current primary pupil growth is causing significant pressure on the statutory element of the Home to School Transport budget. This is due to the fact that the Council is at times unable to place a pupil in a school within a three mile radius. In such cases, the Council has a statutory duty to transport the pupils involved and to bear the cost of the transport.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**

Education Lawyer

The Education Act 1996 in Section 508B, sets out the Council’s duties relating to school transport and makes it clear that free transport only has to be provided for “eligible children” and these include disabled children and those from low income families entitled to benefits.

Local authorities have discretionary powers under Section 508C of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements for those children not covered by Section 508B. A local authority has discretion to provide transport for children who are outside of the statutory eligibility criteria and where such transport is

provided to make a charge for it. There is no requirement for these discretionary arrangements to be provided free of charge. However, if a local authority decides to levy charges this should be made clear in the school travel policy documents.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty under s149 on the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act. S149 also requires that the Council have “due regard” to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it (section 149(4)); and
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Section 149(6) makes it clear that compliance with the PSED in section 149(1) may involve treating some people more favourably than others. However, that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010, (this includes breach of an equality clause or rule or breach of an non-discrimination rule (section 149(3) and section 149(8), Equality Act 2010)

The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149(1) (c)). This includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding (section 149(5), Equality Act 2010).

Local authorities should also consult widely on any proposed changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements with all interested parties. Consultations should last for at least 28 working days during term time.

The Authority must have regard to the DfE’s Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, 2014. Legal services have worked closely with officers in consulting on the proposed changes to policy and the proposal to update the 2016 Policy. They have also advised on the consultation and duties under the Equality Act 2010.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead, Community Development and Equalities

A public consultation has been held around the changes to the proposed changes to the 2016 Policy. It enabled all stakeholders to engage in dialogue with Thurrock Council regarding a range of Education Transport issues. The consultation was held over a period of time that met the timeframe recommended by the DfE. The consultation also provided the empirical evidence required by Council officers to seek Cabinet approval of the proposed update of the 2016 Policy. A Community Impact and Equality Assessment has also been carried out in order to ensure that proposed changes to the 2016 policy have an overall positive equality impact as all children will be treated equally regardless of their religion, belief, or their ability.

7.4 Other implications

7.4.1 Impact of local population growth on school places and transport policy

The growth of the population within Thurrock has led to an increasing demand for school places. This population growth and changing need within the borough may require us to review the policy more often than the annual review. Any changes will be subject to approval via the Council's governance process.

8. Background papers used in preparing this report

Cabinet Report dated 13 July 2016– The report sought (and was granted) approval of the original policy entitled the Education Transport Policy, 2016

9. Appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: Home to School Transport Consultation Summary

Report Author:

Temí Fawehinmi
Contract and Performance Manager
Children's Services

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1

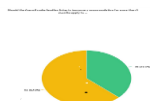
Home to School Transport Consultation Summary

Visitor Highlights	
MAX VISITORS PER DAY	156
NEW REGISTRATIONS	94
ENGAGED VISITORS (Submitted a response)	97
INFORMED VISITORS (Downloaded the consultation, but did not submit a response)	308
AWARE VISITORS (Clicked on the consultation site)	419

List of Stakeholders
A range of internal and external individuals/partners including, among others, Headteachers, Chairs of Governing Bodies, Thurrock Council's CEO, Leader of the Council, Children's Services Portfolio Holder, Elected members, CaPa (support service for Disabled children and their families), Residents via the Thurrock Council Consultation Portal, Transport operators, Internal TBC services (Communications Team, Passenger Transport Unit, Children's Social Care, Admissions Team, Awards and Benefits Team, SEND Team etc.

Respondent Demographics	
Disability	The majority of those responding identified their disability as a long term medical condition, this was followed by those who identified mobility issues (but not a wheelchair user) and then mental health condition.
Ethnicity	The majority of respondents identify as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Northern Irish, British (84.1%), Black or Black British: African (7.1%), Black or Black British: Carribean (1.8%)
Gender	Respondent's gender breakdown is as follows: Female (78.4%) Male (19.8%) "Prefer not to say" 4.5% Transgender (0.9%)

Q1: Should the Council make families living in temporary accommodation for more than 3 months apply to a school near the accommodation in order to avoid long journeys to school?



Yes: 37.1% (36)
No: 62.9% (61)

Summary of the 'Yes' responses

The majority of those supporting a move to a local school after 3 months in Temporary Accommodation felt that children should become settled in a local school as soon as possible for their well-being, friendship building and academic success. Others noted that travelling back to a local school added to the length of the school day and could affect their studies; some also noted the additional cost to the Council and the impact of travel on the environment.

Summary of the 'No' responses

The majority of those who felt pupils in Temporary Accommodation should not move to a local school after three months noted that such children have already experienced high levels of instability and moving schools could affect their studies, mental health, general well-being and confidence. Some were of the view that the Council should offer local housing options and a few felt the decision to move children after three months was financially motivated by the Council. A few mentioned that it should depend on the family circumstance, which should be assessed, and if the circumstances are appropriate then a move should be required.

Q2: Should the families of students aged 16 – 18 with SEND that have a need for transport to and from college or other post 16 facility pay for their transport?



Yes: 27 (27.8%)
No: 70 (72.2%)

Summary of the 'Yes' responses

Respondents were of the view that charging should be implemented, but that it should be means-tested and the young peoples assessed to ensure those with complex needs are offered free travel. Some were of the view that it is unfair to expect mainstream parents to pay and suggested that even if parents of SEND do not pay the full cost of transport/ travel they should contribute. Others felt that PIP or Mobility allowance should be used by young people with SEND to support the full or partial cost of their transport.

Summary of the 'No' responses

Respondents noted that disability was not anyone's fault, but that parents of children and young people with disability face higher living costs due to the higher level of care required. Also, because of the greater amount of time spent caring for young people they often have to reduce their capacity to work meaning less income. Paying for transport could then place further financial strain on the family.

Q3: Should the Council make it clear to parents that transport will only be provided where parents have applied to the nearest three schools to their home address in the case of applications for a primary school place and to the six nearest schools from their home address in in the case of applications for a secondary school place?



Yes: 75 (77.3%)
No: 22 (22.7%)

Summary of the 'Yes' responses

Respondents were of the view that parents who choose a school outside of their local area that requires transport should be made to pay for such transport. It is worthy of note that the question had not specified that SEND children are not involved in the Admission round being considered. Therefore, there were a number of comments around the distance of most special schools. A respondent's comment reflects a view from the SEND perspective: "The point is children with SEN are rarely in the vicinity of the best school for them. Not everyone lives down the road from Treetops. Transport should be provided for SEN children regardless of where they go." The Council does not apply this particular requirement to SEND children, but it does apply separate criteria when assessing an SEND child's eligibility for transport.

Summary of the 'No' responses

The main reasons why respondents were against a child having to move back to a local school were that it might destabilise their schooling what might be the one stable aspect in their lives. Also, noted was the emotional impact of the move on the child i.e. the breaking up of friendships, pupil-staff relationships and the fact that the move to that school in the first place was due to a lack of an available place locally. Some respondents see themselves as disadvantaged as they work and cannot take the child to school or are on a low income and could not afford the transport if they chose to remain at the school that is further away. Also, some respondents mentioned SEND children; as with the summary above the process for SEND transport is carried out separately.

Q 3a: If a place later becomes available at a suitable school near their home address, should the Council expect the child to move back to their neighbourhood school and stop paying for the transport?



Yes: 31 (32.6%)

NO: 64 (67.4%)

Summary of the 'Yes' responses

The majority of respondents in favour of a child moving back to a local school when a place becomes available noted that it was better for the child as less travel time, local friendships from the local school. Also, better for the environment in terms of emissions and traffic. However, many placed the caveat on the option stating that children in exam years (Years 6, 11), children with SEND or safeguarding issues should not be expected to move as it may have a detrimental effect on their studies and/or well-being.

Summary of the 'No' responses

Respondents were of the view that a child should not move back to a local school when a place becomes available because of the emotional, academic, and financial impact of such a move upon the child and their family.

This page is intentionally left blank

22 July 2020	ITEM: 11 Decision: 110514
Cabinet	
Hospital Discharge – Bridging Service	
Wards and communities affected: All Wards	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor James Halden – Portfolio Holder Children and Adult Social Care	
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham - Interim Director, Adult Social Care and Community Development	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris - Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to request that Cabinet approve the procurement of the hospital discharge service and agree to a six months extension of the current contract provided by Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital.

It explains how the fragility of the domiciliary care market's impacted the care availability locally, resulting in Thurrock introducing this service to mitigate risk and build capacity within the system.

The report details options that have been explored before seeking approval from Cabinet incorporating the local direction of travel to delivering an effective health and social care system.

1. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet are asked to:

- 1.1 Agree the extension of the Bridging Service until March 2021**
- 1.2 Agree the procurement for a rapid discharge service and delegate the award of the contract to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Since 2016, Thurrock like many other Local Authorities has seen an instability within the Homecare market. Locally, this resulted in the Council stepping in on three different occasions to stabilise the sector by bringing 1,620 hours of domiciliary care back in-house ensuring vulnerable service users received the appropriate support within their own homes.
- 2.2 This homecare crisis resulted in a waiting list being created for service users who required support. The list was risk assessed on a daily basis and care allocated to those in highest need. This list resulted in a high number of Delayed Transfer Of Care (DTOC) from hospital. This was a significant concern that had been rarely experienced in Thurrock.
- 2.3 Working in partnership with Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital (BTUH) to support the discharge of patients from hospital to the community, the Bridging Service was introduced providing a rapid response from the acute and community hospital settings.
- 2.4 The bridging service supports a rapid discharge from hospital setting by providing homecare for a short period of time until a long term provider can be sourced. The brisk turn around in service users allows the bridging service to assist people home quickly releasing valuable hospital beds. Annually the service delivers 10,500 hours of care at a cost of £211,000.
- 2.5 Initially when the bridging service was introduced in early 2017 its purpose was to build capacity within a stretched homecare system. It has now become an integral part of the way Thurrock delivers support to vulnerable people by ensuring, where appropriate, people are supported to return home from hospital with the correct level of care.
- 2.6 This service has significantly reduced the number of DTOC's. The reporting of delayed transfers of care to NHS England show that Thurrock residents no longer occupy a hospital bed for longer than required.
- 2.7 The success of a rapid hospital discharge service was felt across both the health and social care system resulting in the bridging service being funded through the Better Care Fund.
- 2.8 Furthermore, the achievement and speciality of this service delivered by hospital staff has allowed patients who are eligible for health and social care to be discharged earlier reducing the length of inpatients stay and at times preventing a hospital admission.
- 2.9 In 2019, the Better Care together transformation programme launched a new pilot to develop a new approach to homecare in Tilbury and Chadwell. Based on the Dutch nursing model, Buurtzorg. The aim of the Wellbeing Team pilot is to redesign the delivery of care by focusing on outcomes for the individual and providing a holistic overview of their wellbeing, moving away from more traditional time and task orientated services. The pilot is testing all elements of

supporting a person in their own home by providing personal care, reablement, access to community assists and a hospital discharge service.

- 2.10 Each year, seasonal pressures such as school holidays and winter add stress to a compromised homecare market. This year has already seen an increase demand on this fragile care system due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is essential that there is capacity within an overstretched system and reducing capacity during these periods would risk the Council not fulfilling its statutory duty under Care Act 2014. Additionally, to control the spread of Coronavirus, where possible people should be supported within their own home and not awaiting discharge on a hospital ward suggesting that a rapid discharge service is crucial during this period.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The hospital discharge service has now reached a point in which a decision needs to be made about its future. This decision will need to fit with any future visions for domiciliary care reflexing on the fragility of the local market and the current transformation programme within Adult Social Care including the alternative delivery model for homecare currently being trialled.
- 3.2 To ensure best value for money Thurrock Council undertook an options appraisal of alternative commissioning methods to deliver the Hospital Discharge Service. The options appraisal analysed two different possibilities;
- Stop the provision of this service
 - Procure for a new service
- 3.3 The options appraisal concluded that due to the increase in demand risk associated with Coronavirus and seasonal pressures it is not advisable to reduce capacity at this stage by stopping the services.
- 3.4 While the Wellbeing Team approach is being trialled, we are developing a new vision for services in the community and a new pathway in line with the Better Care Together transformation programme, This new approach will incorporate the hospital discharge service as part of its vision meaning that a short extension will allow stability and time to develop the future model.
- 3.5 Although we do not want to commit to a long term contract until the evaluation of the Wellbeing Teams concludes, procurement regulations state that we cannot extend further than six months. Therefore it is recommended that a service is procured for a short period of time building capacity within the system until we have a clear understand of the future model.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 For Cabinet to agree a 6 month extension to the current hospital discharge contract from 1 September 2020 until 1 April 2021.

4.2 Agree the procurement for a hospital discharge service

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The hospital discharge service impacts on the following Council Priority; *'People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay'*

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Joanne Freeman**
Finance Manager

The Hospital Discharge Service is part of Thurrock's Better Care Fund programme for 2020/21, a joint delivery plan for local services across health and social care. This service increases capacity in the homecare system proactively preventing pressures in residential care. To date the Bridging Service has been funded through the Improved Better Care Fund to the value of £211,000 per annum. Any proposed changes to funding requirements following the procurement process will need to go through the usual governance arrangements linked to the Better Care Fund for approval.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**
Principal Lawyer/ Contracts Team Manager

The Council have a statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 to ensure that vulnerable people are supported to return home from hospital with the appropriate level of care. Legal Services is on hand to advise on any legal implications arising from this report and to ensure that the service is within the law and thus reduce any potential risks to the Council.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**

Strategic Lead – Community Development and Equalities

Community support provided through domiciliary care enables some of our borough's most vulnerable residents to remain independent, including older people, and people with disabilities. The Wellbeing Pilot will highlight the voice of the resident driving the principles for how we transform the service in the future. The final review will be subject to a Community Equality Impact Assessment to inform implementations aiming to improve efficiency whilst ensuring that the new offer remains person centred.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Michelle Taylor
Commissioning Manager
Adults, Housing and Health

This page is intentionally left blank

22 July 2020	ITEM: 12 Decision: 110515
Cabinet	
Grays South Regeneration Area: Underpass and public realm option selection	
Wards and communities affected: Grays Riverside	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Mark Coxshall, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Moore, Interim Assistant Director, Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

The Grays South Regeneration Area comprises a number of projects designed to support the vitality of Grays Town Centre including:

- The replacement of the existing level crossing with a pedestrian underpass.
- The development of the new Civic Centre building.
- The development of new town centre residential accommodation.
- The development of new commercial accommodation.
- Improvements to Grays Beach and the Riverfront.

Recently the Council has started to work closely with New River Reit, the owners of Grays Shopping Centre, to explore mutually beneficial ways of redeveloping the shopping centre site to bring improved commercial accommodation and new residential units to the town centre supporting viability and vibrancy.

Applications are being prepared for the Future High Street Fund and the Towns Fund to bring central government funding into the town, supporting deliverability of both the current regeneration aspirations and the new work with New River Reit.

This report is focussed on progress with the Underpass project. It describes three design options, outlines the current cost position and recommends a preferred option to be taken forward. The preferred option gives the project an opportunity to well integrate the scheme into the wider Grays regeneration plans.

The recommendation is informed by a public consultation exercise which was undertaken in February and March 2020. The report highlights the results of this consultation exercise and demonstrates the benefits of, and community support for, the preferred option.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Cabinet are asked to:

- a) Approve Option C as the selected concept to be designed in more detail through the current Development Services Agreement contract with Network Rail**

2 Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In April 2017 Cabinet agreed a funding package, high level designs, a delivery approach and the next steps towards delivering the pedestrian underpass to replace the level crossing in Grays High Street. The Council then entered into a third party enhancement contract, namely the Development Services Agreement (DSA) with Network Rail (NR).
- 2.2 The DSA provides a clear way forward for the project and has led to the production of three design options, one of which will be further developed to produce a design Agreement in Principle (AiP), a refreshed GRIP 3 cost plan and a construction programme. The Council are contractually committed to complete the current DSA but are not committed to proceeding beyond this; the financial commitment is therefore limited to this DSA stage only.
- 2.3 At the end of the GRIP Stage 3 DSA, a new contract will be required to take the developed option through GRIP Stage 4 (Single Option Development). Before this contract is agreed and any further funds are committed, a further report will be presented to Cabinet outlining the updated budget and cost position and seeking authority to proceed on this basis.
- 2.4 Alongside the current DSA, the Council's urban realm consultants, have been advising both the Council and NR on the associated public square and interfacing elements of this scheme.
- 2.5 Over the past year, the design options for the Underpass project have been through a rigorous process of technical assessment and in May 2020 the Council received the final version of Network Rail's Grays Option Selection Report, which discusses these design concepts in detail.
- 2.6 In March 2020, a public consultation exercise, branded "Transforming Grays", was undertaken. The consultation had an online presence through late February until mid-March and a physical presence at various exhibitions

across Grays Town Centre. The consultation was advertised via leaflets, posters and social media platforms.

- 2.7 One of the key objectives of the consultation was to collate comments from the public on the three underpass design variations. A summary of consultation responses is included in section 3 below to assist in the decision making process.
- 2.8 The Underpass project now requires a decision to narrow the options down from three to one so the single option can be further developed through the remainder of this design stage. It is important to note that in approving an option, Cabinet will not be approving the final design but a design concept to be taken forward through the remainder of option selection and detailed design. It is expected that the option selection process will be concluded in the early part of 2021.

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The three designs produced by the DSA are named “Option A: Crescent”, “Option B: Dynamic” and “Option C: The Plaza”. An extract from the Option Selection Report showing a plan view and high level description of each of these options is included at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Each option has advantages and disadvantages. Chapter 4 of the Option Selection Report, attached at Appendix 2, objectively evaluates each option against pre-agreed criteria and weightings. These criteria are based on the stated objectives of the Council in pursuing this scheme, priorities identified as important by our residents and input from other key stakeholders such as Network Rail and c2c.
- 3.3 “Option C: The Plaza” scores highest against the spectrum of criteria and the Option Selection Report concludes Option C is the preferred design option.
- 3.4 The key advantages of Option C are summarised as follows:
- Good equality of access for people using ramps rather than steps, with the ramps offering similar distances to the stepped access and the number of ramp switchbacks being minimised.
 - Creation of useable hard and soft landscaping areas with an open ‘Plaza’ at the entrance to the underpass on the South side offering a range of activation opportunities (market stalls, coffee carts etc) and promoting good levels of passive security.
 - Creation of a development plot fronting onto the plaza providing further activation, increased security and economic opportunity.

- 3.5 The results of the public consultation exercise undertaken in February-March 2020 mirror the results of the option selection report. Of the responses received, 77% either agreed or strongly agreed with proposals for an underpass. Furthermore, 81% of respondents selected Option C as their preferred option. The full report on the consultation exercise is included at Appendix 3.
- 3.6 At this stage, the cost plans for all the design options could increase the cost of this project but it should be noted that these estimates are based on a very early stage design (mid GRIP Stage 3). A further iteration of the cost plan will be produced by Network Rail at the end of this contract stage (currently programmed for early 2021). This later version of the cost plan, which represents Network Rail's Approved Final Cost (AFC) will have the benefit of a greater level of design, further work on the construction programme and further engagement with statutory undertakers. These factors should all work to reduce the risk element of the cost plan, which currently stands at 37% of the construction and design fee cost, and bring the project cost down. In addition to this design development work a number of strategies are being employed to further reduce the cost and/or increase the budget from external sources. These strategies are detailed below:
- During the remainder of this design stage value engineering options will be identified and pursued and as referenced above it is expected that the risk allowance can be reduced as design becomes more certain.
 - The project team are challenging NR on the level of fee cost required by them to project manage this process. This challenge has already identified savings of between £300k-£650k. Further challenge is being put to NR regarding the allocation of some railway infrastructure costs to the project rather than being covered in their budgets.
 - The project team are examining the future contacting strategy to explore whether efficiencies can be achieved via an alternative tender route.
 - NR have committed to explore whether any further contribution can be made from their own internal funding sources, although no guarantee can be given that this will be successful.
 - Other external funding opportunities to increase the original budget.
- 3.7 The work required to pursue these mitigation options is covered in the current contract with Network Rail or uses internal council resources.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The removal of Grays pedestrian rail crossing, and replacement with a high quality underpass, has previously been identified as a priority by Cabinet. The crossing is recognised as being amongst the most dangerous crossings in the Eastern region and is the only pedestrian crossing that features in the top 10 most dangerous nationally. The underpass is a key project in support of the regeneration of Grays town centre and public consultation exercises demonstrate strong stakeholder support.
- 4.2 A significant amount of work has led to the production and evaluation of the three design options. Whilst the current cost estimates for the preferred option are not within budget further detailed work is required in order to establish a greater level of cost certainty. Whilst this work is already included in the current contractual commitment, the project has reached a decision point which requires a Cabinet decision on the design option that will be taken through the later phase of GRIP Stage 3.
- 4.3 The Option Selection Report produced by NR and the public consultation exercise both identify Option C as the preferred option.

5 **Consultation** (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A public consultation exercise has been undertaken in February-March 2020. The results of this exercise have been discussed in this report and demonstrate support for the proposals.
- 5.2 This report is due to be considered at Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 6th July 2020. Feedback from this Committee will be given verbally at the Cabinet meeting.

6 **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The Council's Economic Growth Strategy and LDF Core Strategy identify Grays as one of the Growth Hubs where regeneration activity will be focussed.

7 **Implications**

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

As outlined in the report, whilst all the options are currently above the approved budget of £27.4m there is no financial commitment required beyond the current contractual commitment for this design stage.

However, the underpass cost plan endorsed by NR suggests a cost of between £22.2 and £25.2m for the infrastructure elements of the project. In addition to this, the Council needs to fund land assembly and the adjacent public realm bringing the total project cost to between £34.9 and £37.9m. Whilst no additional funding is currently requested there is clearly an identified risk to the deliverability of this project at the current point in time.

The report details mitigation options being pursued to reduce the cost of the project and/or to secure additional external funds to support the budget. The report also highlights that a further report will come forward in early 2021 when the AFC version of the cost plan is received and the success of the identified mitigation options is known. This report will allow Cabinet Members to fully assess the budget position before any further financial or contractual commitments are made.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

The Council has completed a partnership agreement with Network Rail setting out joint working arrangements for the next stages of design. A further agreement will be required for the later stages including construction.

The delivery of the underpass will require land assembly and possibly a CPO. The Council has already resolved to use its CPO powers if required but further reports to Cabinet will be presented if the use of powers is progressed.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

The project has been the subject of stakeholder engagement summarised in this report and previous reports to Cabinet. There will be further detailed stages of design and submission of applications for planning permission and other consents. Further engagement activity will take place as the designs are developed which will include an Equalities Impact Assessment. The design will comply with all relevant legislation and standards for accessibility.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Cabinet Report: Grays Development Framework. Decision 01104368 March 2016.
- Grays Development Framework 2016
- Cabinet Report: Delivering the new Pedestrian Rail Crossing. Decision 01104419 April 2017.
- Cabinet Report. Grays Master Plan – Town Centre Framework. Decision 0110443 November 2017
- Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Grays South Regeneration Project: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass. ITEM 5 January 2019.

9 Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1: Plan view and high level description for Options A, B and C.
- Appendix 2: Grays Underpass Single Option Selection Report, Chapter 4, April 2020.
- Appendix 3: Grays Public Consultation Summary

Report Author:

Neil Muldoon
Project Manager
Place Directorate

Appendix 1 – Plan view and high level description of Options A, B and C.



GRIP 3: Option A, Crescent

Option A has retained the same footprint, underpass box position, 1:21 gradient slopes and amphitheatre-style curved design from the GRIP 2 stage.

A number of elements have been rationalised in the design including:

- Replacing the 'off-line' resting areas with intermediate landings on the slopes. These are 1.5m in length and provided every 500mm rise, to conform with British Standards.
- The total number of slopes has been reduced, which has enabled larger swathes of feature planting to be introduced - this creates a much softer visual impact, reducing the dominance of the slopes. It also improves constructibility by removing the very steep sections of retaining features between slopes.



GRIP 3: Option B, Dynamic

Option B has retained the same footprint and 1:21 gradient slopes from the GRIP 2 stage. A new striking geometric design language has been introduced to create a contemporary layout.

Design developments during the GRIP 3 stage include:

- Moving the underpass box position by approximately 10 metres to the west.
- Curved slopes have been minimised for constructibility.
- Replacing the 'off-line' resting areas with intermediate landings on the slopes. These are 1.5m in length and provided every 500mm rise, to conform with British Standards.
- Introduction of wide chunky seat edges along the slopes to replace retaining walls. These create a modern design feature that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.



GRIP 3: Option C, Plaza (new option or GRIP 3 replacing)

Option C is a new arrangement introduced since the GRIP 2 phase. A new sunken town square / plaza connects the underpass entrance to the station. Generous stepped routes lead people in and out of the underpass.

This design was initially developed by Thurrock Borough Council's design consultant but will be taken forward by Atkins as agreed in the design workshop on 17/07/2019 (refer to meeting minutes in appendix)

'Off-line' resting areas have been retained at the north side of the underpass for comparison purposes with the other options.

Option C also involves moving the underpass box position by approximately 10 metres to the west from the GRIP 2 position

Grays Underpass

Single Option Selection Report

May 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5	4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT	27	8.0. SUMMARY PAGE.....	77
1.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6	4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC.....	35	8.1. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DESIGN DEVELOPMENT.....	78
1.2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF REPORT	7	4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA.....	43	8.2. SUMMARY OF KEY PROJECT ISSUES AND ACTIONS PAGE	79
1.3. SCHEME BACKGROUND	8	4.7. OPTION EVALUATION MATRIX	50		
1.4. GRIP 2 SUMMARY	9				
		5. COST ESTIMATES	53	9.0. APPENDICES	80
2. THE SITE	11	5.1. OVERVIEW	54		
2.1. SITE CONTEXT.....	12	5.2. COMPARISON ON OPTION COST PLANS..	55		
2.2. ANALYSIS.....	15				
3. DESIGN REQUIREMENTS AND ASSUMPTIONS.....	17	6. RAILWAY SYSTEMS	57		
3.1. MAIN PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.....	18	6.1. UNDERPASS AND RETAINING WALLS	58		
3.2. UNDERPASS POSITIONING.....	19	6.2. PERMANENT WAY	59		
3.3. DEMOLITION/ REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING PROPERTIES	20	6.3. OVERHEAD LINE EQUIPMENT	60		
3.4. DESIGN ASSUMPTIONS	21	6.4. SIGNALLING	61		
3.5. INTERFACES WITH OTHER SCHEMES	21	6.5. MEP AND DRAINAGE.....	63		
		6.6. TELECOMS.....	68		
4. OPTION EVALUATION.....	23	6.7. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY	70		
4.1. OPTION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA.....	24				
4.2. GUIDANCE AND STANDARDS	25	7.0. CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY..	73		
4.3. THE OPTIONS	26	7.1. ASSUMPTIONS.....	74		
		7.2. OUTLINE CONSTRUCTION SEQUENCE.....	75		

4.1. OPTION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following assessment criteria have been developed to enable a fair and objective evaluation of the three options. The criteria and weighting were agreed on 30/01/20 between Network Rail, Thurrock Borough Council and VolkerFitzpatrick.

1. Alignment:

Does the option convey a sense of continuation for the High Street?

Weighting: LOW

2. Cut and Fill:

Amount of material (m³) required to be excavated and disposed of during construction

Weighting: LOW/MEDIUM

3. Activation:

Extent and quality of activity frontages of public spaces created by the underpass

b) Minimise dead space (area unlikely to be utilised. Wasted space)

Weighting: MEDIUM

4. Cost:

Magnitude of cost associated with the options in relation to the AFC budget allocated

Weighting: MEDIUM (Note: To be confirmed following submission of Option Selection Report + AFC)

5. Integration with Surroundings:

Ease of tie-in to adjacent boundaries. Quality and m² of remaining space for further development or surface level public realm.

Weighting: MEDIUM

6. Microclimate:

Review of shaded areas of usable public dwell space using basic sun path analysis

Weighting: MEDIUM

7. Ease of Maintenance:

Provide easy access for maintenance staff / vehicles to the portal and slope area. Reduce frequency of landscape maintenance.

Weighting: MEDIUM/HIGH

8. Placemaking:

a) Minimise invasiveness of slopes and associated safety measures i.e. guard rails.

b) Design concept and sense of place: Is the space the right scale?

c) Does it relate to the local area's character and history?

d) Is there a clear and consistent design language used?

e) Does it complement and add to the series of public spaces along the High Street, from the War Memorial to the river front?

Weighting: HIGH

9. Disruption to the Public:

Extent of closure of level crossing and overall construction duration

Weighting: HIGH

10. Amenity:

Suitability of public spaces to support a wide range of town centre events and activities which supports continuation of the high street. (Size, gradient, conflict of movement, floor level)

Weighting: HIGH

11. Sight lines:

Providing clear views of key landmarks (High Street to the north, Church and proposed Civic Offices extension to the south) as well as sight lines into portal from a distance. Ensure clear views from access slope into portal, train station, bus station and Crown Road

Weighting: HIGH

12. Heritage:

Framing of views towards the Grade II listed St Peter & St Paul's Church, churchyard and its mature planting from the middle of the portal. Contributing positively with setting of the church and the churchyard.

Weighting: HIGH

13. Accessibility:

a) Simplify slope navigation, total slope length, journey time and number of switch backs (technical compliance is assumed). Slopes and stairs to converge towards same entry and exit points and reflect predominant pedestrian flows.

Weighting: HIGH

14. Safety / Security / Fear of Crime / Anti-social Behaviour:

Minimise hidden viewpoint and blind corners, optimise long-distance clear views (including for CCTV) throughout the underpass. Natural surveillance into the underpass from surrounding buildings and streets.

Weighting: HIGH

4.2. GUIDANCE AND STANDARDS

The Grays Underpass project aims to provide a safer route beneath the railway with enhanced capacity, amenity, inclusiveness and safety.

In preparing the design the team consulted with Thurrock Borough Council and referred to the following guidance:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Thurrock Core Strategy (2015) and Policies for the Management of Development
- Thurrock Borough Local Plan - schedule of saved policies (2012)
- Thurrock Design Strategy SPD (2017)

The design has been with reference to the following:

- BS 8300-1:2018: Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment. Code of practice
- BSI BS EN 81-20 - Safety rules for the construction and installation of lifts — Lifts for the transport of persons and goods Part 20: Passenger and goods passenger lifts - CORR: November 30, 2015

Whilst acknowledging the underpass itself is not within a station, the following standards have referenced where applicable, as good practice:

- Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations: a code of practice by the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland: The Code identifies European and national standards relevant for all passenger

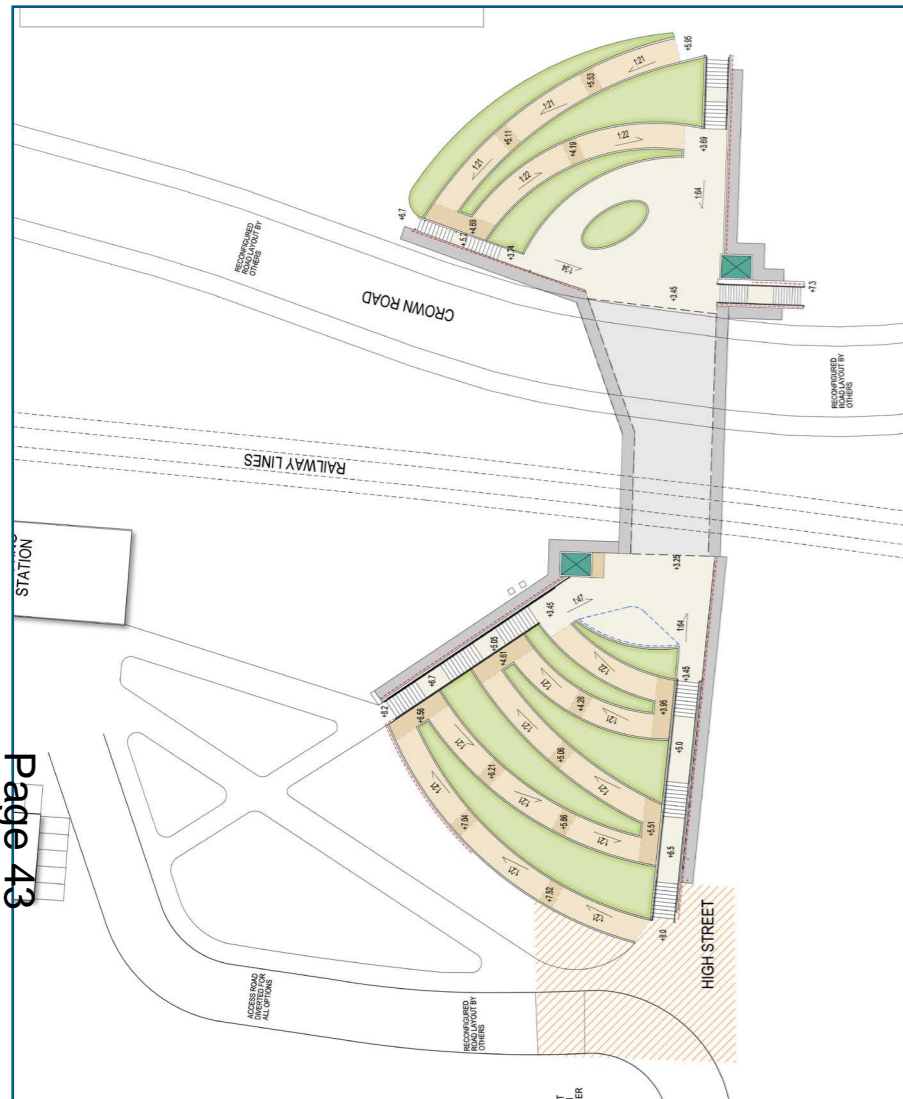
train and station operators in Great Britain.

- PRM (Persons with reduced mobility) TSI: 1300/2014/EU

Network Rail standards and guidance where relevant including:

- Station Capacity Planning Guidance: Network Rail November 2016
- GI/RT7016 Interface between Station Platform, Track and Trains
- GI/GN7616 Issue Two: March 2014
- NR/L2/INI/02009: Issue 6 Engineering Management for Projects
- NR/L1/INI/PM/GRIP100 Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) - Policy
- NR NR/L3/CIV/162 ISSUE 2 - Platform Extensions - Compliance Date: 03 December 2011; Contains NR/BS/LI/371
- AMS-GN-BLDG-001: Guidance on the planning and management of station flooring to public areas - Performance Requirements Guidance
- Letter of Instruction: NR/BS/LI/331 Issue 2

4.3. THE OPTIONS



GRIP 3: Option A, Crescent

Option A has retained the same footprint, underpass box position, 1:21 gradient slopes and amphitheatre-style curved design from the GRIP 2 stage.

A number of elements have been rationalised in the design including:

- Replacing the 'off-line' resting areas with intermediate landings on the slopes. These are 1.5m in length and provided every 500mm rise, to conform with British Standards.
- The total number of slopes has been reduced, which has enabled larger swathes of feature planting to be introduced - this creates a much softer visual impact, reducing the dominance of the slopes. It also improves constructibility by removing the very steep sections of retaining features between slopes.

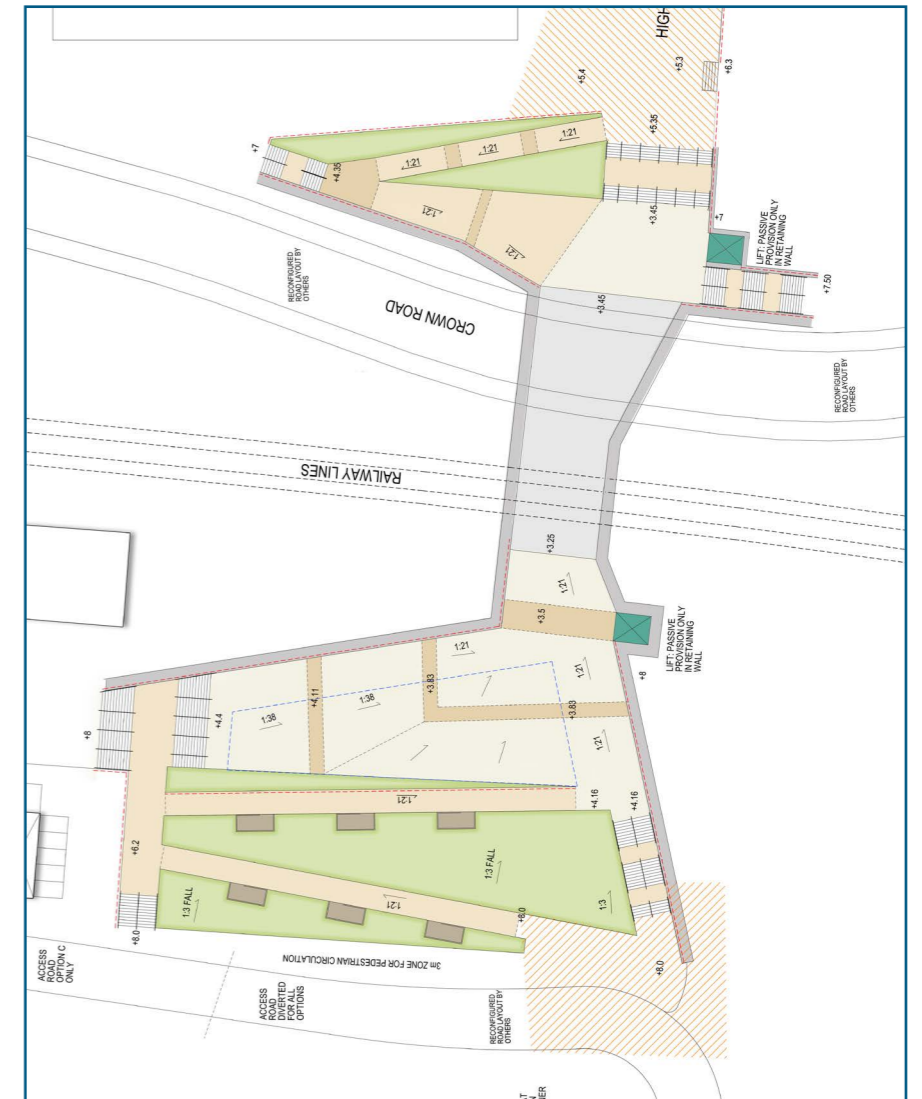


GRIP 3: Option B, Dynamic

Option B has retained the same footprint and 1:21 gradient slopes from the GRIP 2 stage. A new striking geometric design language has been introduced to create a contemporary layout.

Design developments during the GRIP 3 stage include:

- Moving the underpass box position by approximately 10 metres to the west.
- Curved slopes have been minimised for constructibility.
- Replacing the 'off-line' resting areas with intermediate landings on the slopes. These are 1.5m in length and provided every 500mm rise, to conform with British Standards.
- Introduction of wide chunky seat edges along the slopes to replace retaining walls. These create a modern design feature that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.



GRIP 3: Option C, Plaza (new option or GRIP 3 replacing)

Option C is a new arrangement introduced since the GRIP 2 phase. A new sunken town square / plaza connects the underpass entrance to the station. Generous stepped routes lead people in and out of the underpass.

This design was initially developed by Thurrock Borough Council's design consultant but will be taken forward by Atkins as agreed in the design workshop on 17/07/2019 (refer to meeting minutes in appendix)

'Off-line' resting areas have been retained at the north side of the underpass for comparison purposes with the other options.

Option C also involves moving the underpass box position by approximately 10 metres to the west from the GRIP 2 position.

OPTION A - CRESCENT

4.4

4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

Page 45

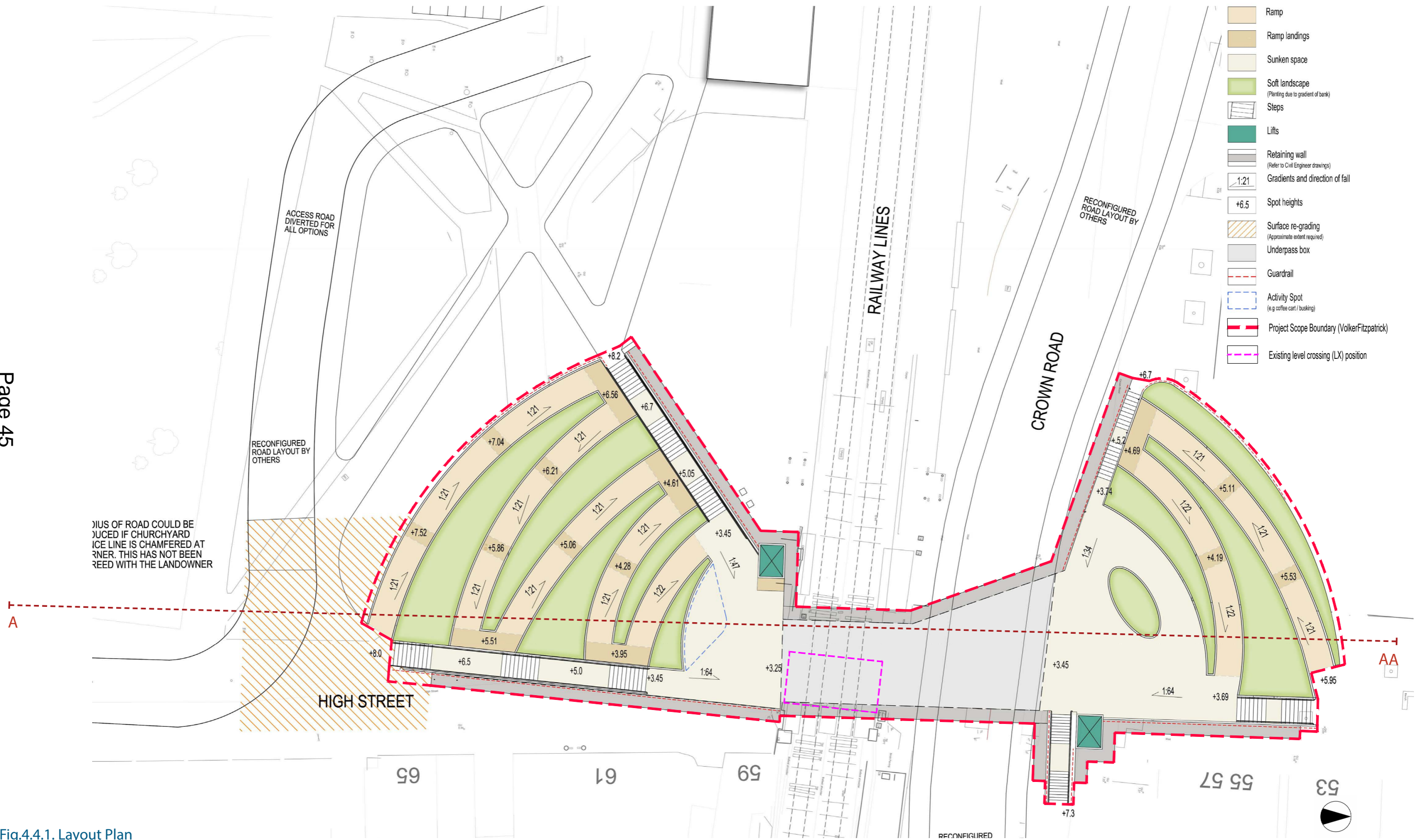


Fig.4.4.1. Layout Plan

4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

1. Alignment:

Option A provides a direct continuation of the High Street north - south.

2. Cut and Fill:

6,100m³

- Rounded to nearest 100m³
- Subject to pavement design depths
- Not including excavation and backfilling for PCC / brick retaining walls

3. Activation:

a) There is limited potential for future activation of the pile walls due to the positioning of steps, however, there is **338m²** space at lower level at north and south, which is sufficient to enable small pop up retailers such as a coffee cart.

b) The required size and positioning of spaces for activation is dependant on the end user's judgement for their desired use.

4. Cost:

Refer to appendices for full cost report.

5. Integration with Surroundings:

Option A has the smallest total footprint of the 3 options. This means significantly more space is leftover at surface level for further development.

- **960m²** of space is available for new public realm between the top of the underpass access, Station Approach and the Station.
- **450m²** remains for potential commercial development between the underpass and station. However, the angular form of this plot creates an awkward constraint for new buildings.

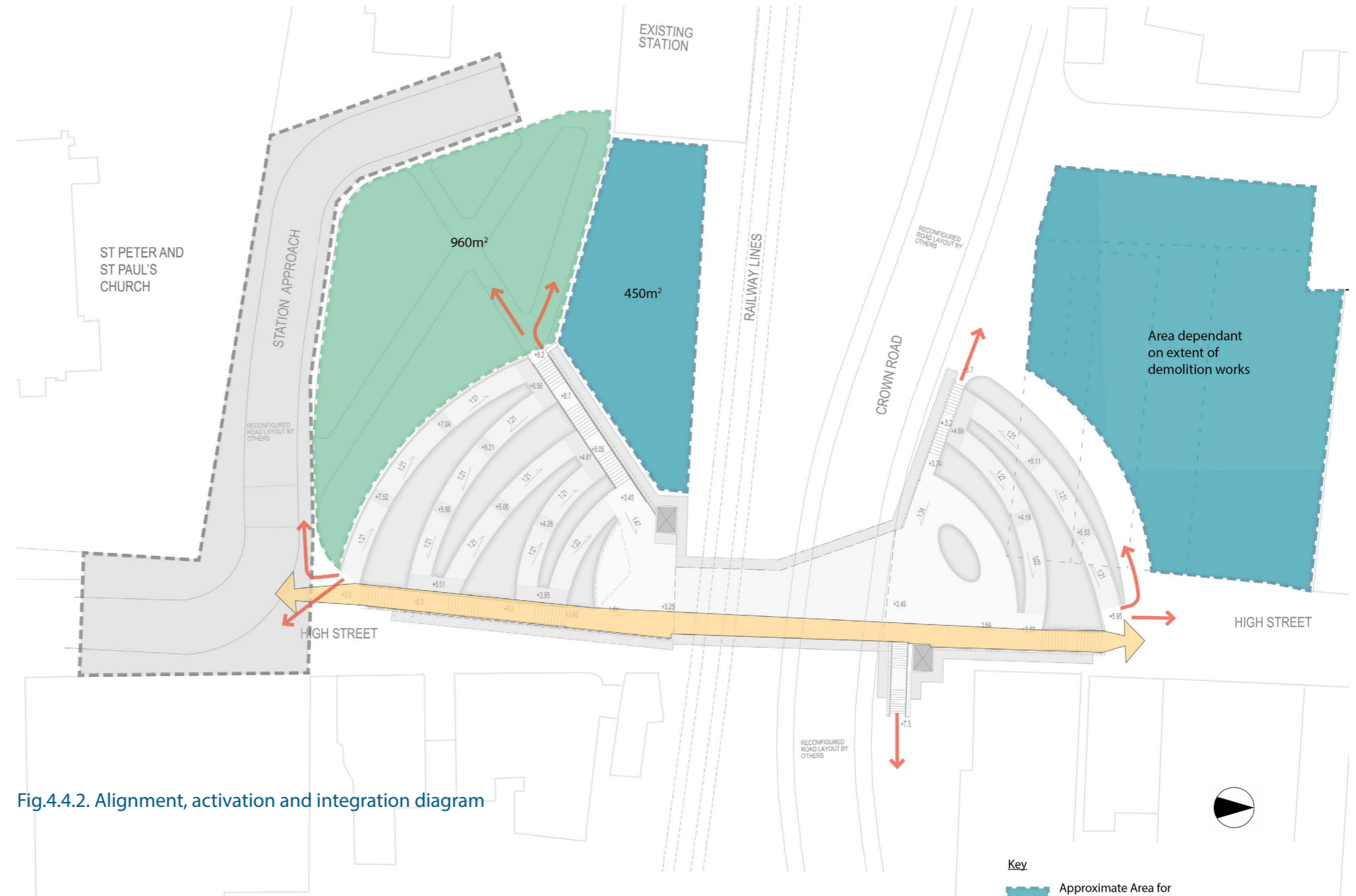


Fig.4.4.2. Alignment, activation and integration diagram

4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

6. Microclimate:

- In the winter months the south and north sides are over shadowed throughout most of the day.
- In Spring the southern side is overshadowed in the morning and the afternoon.
- In the summer there is minimal over shadowing.

7. Ease of Maintenance:

All slopes are designed to accommodate a standard street sweeper with a 5m radius turning circle (Thurrock Borough Council to provide details of exact vehicle specification for tracking).

The soft landscaped areas are 1:2.5 at the steepest points. This is too steep for commercial mowing and primarily evergreen, low maintenance planting is required. Watering, fertiliser and pruning maintenance will be required.



Fig.4.4.3. Placemaking precedents

8. Placemaking:

- Guardrails are only required at upper surface level to prevent falling.
- The area taken up is the most compact of the options and has more of a sense of enclosure. This may make the space feel less welcoming.
- The steep nature of the slope arrangement creates a physical disconnect from St Peter and St Paul's Church, rather than adding to the setting of this important heritage asset
- A simple and elegant curved design creates amphitheatre-shaped space when viewed from the upper levels
- The space created is designed for the movement of people rather than dwelling and other activities. It functions well as an efficient connecting space and has small potential for some pop-up activities at lower level.

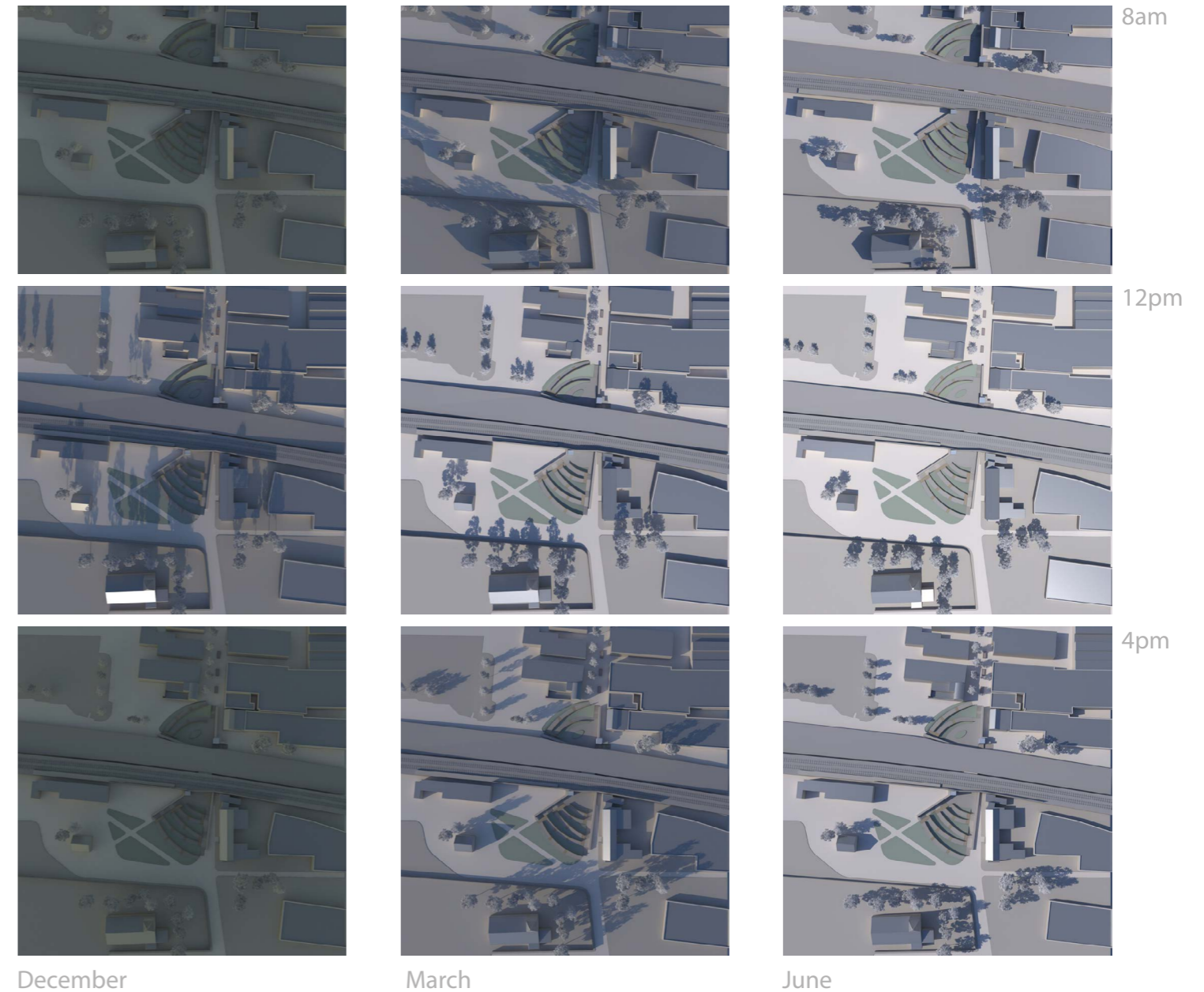


Fig.4.4.4. Sun path analysis diagrams

4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

9. Disruption to the Public:

The existing level crossing must be closed for circa 2 years at the start of the works due to the box position. An alternative diverted route must be provided, but there is nothing that is readily available.

10. Amenity:

There is limited space at the lower level for the extension of any events from the High Street (such as markets) as this would cause conflicts of movement. However, the lower spaces are gently sloping and a good platform is available on the southern and northern side of the underpass for small pop-up retailers or busking / entertainment. At surface level of the southern side there is the potential for a new public plaza between the underpass and station which could host a range of activities and events.

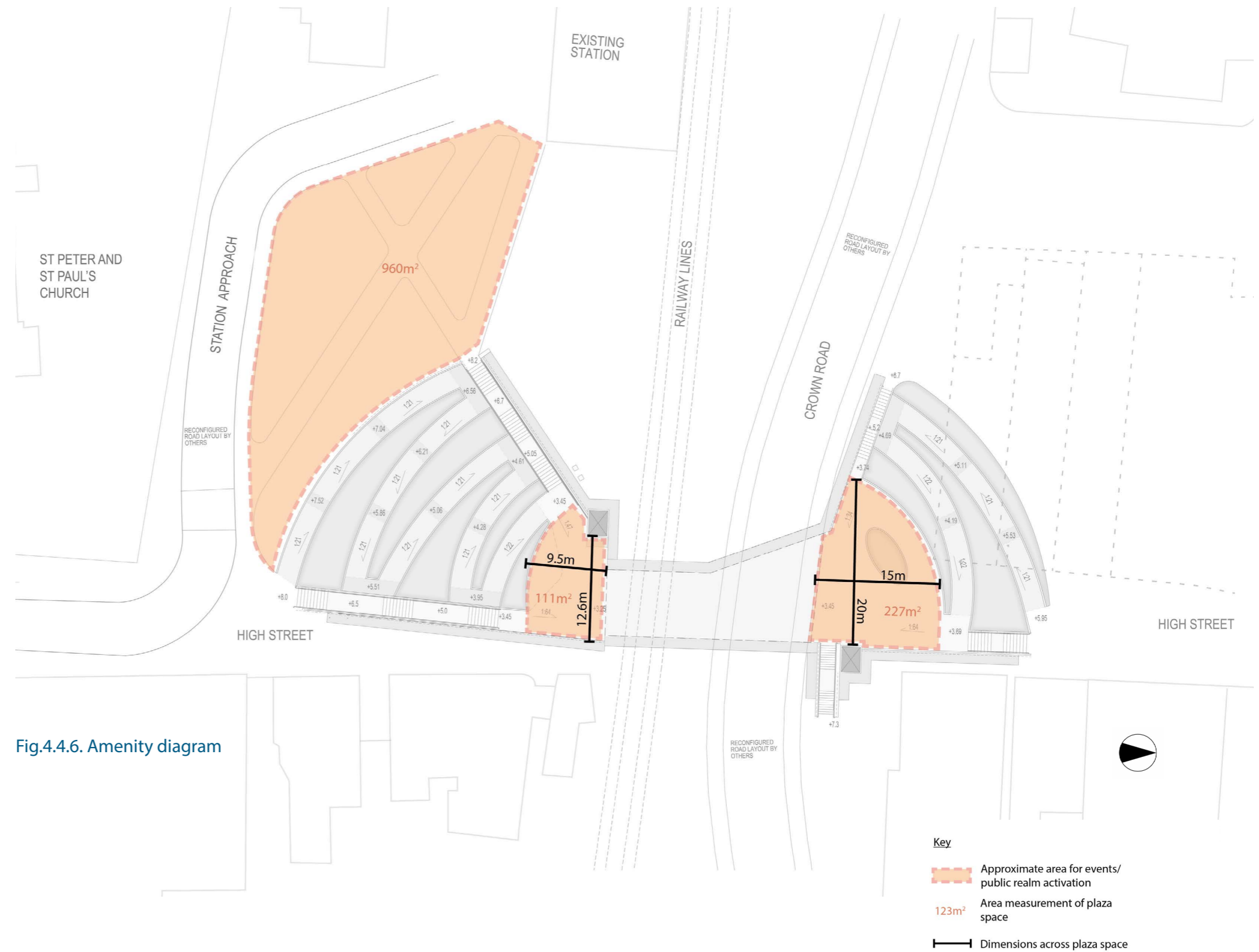


Fig.4.4.6. Amenity diagram

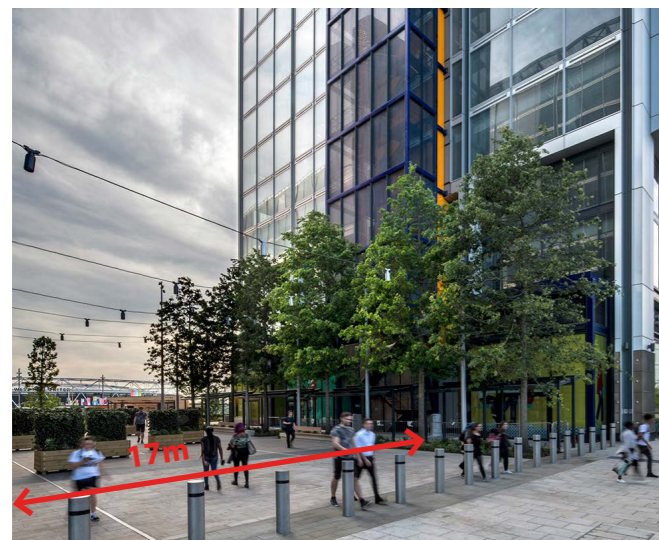


Fig.4.4.5. Space comparison precedent (Endeavour Square, Stratford)

Page 48

4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

11. Sight lines:

From the centre of the portal, people will see a small glimpse of St Peter and St Paul's Church. From the northern side of the underpass clear views to the High Street provided.

This option has the smallest footprint which means that people using the slope and steps have the clearest views down into the portal when descending.

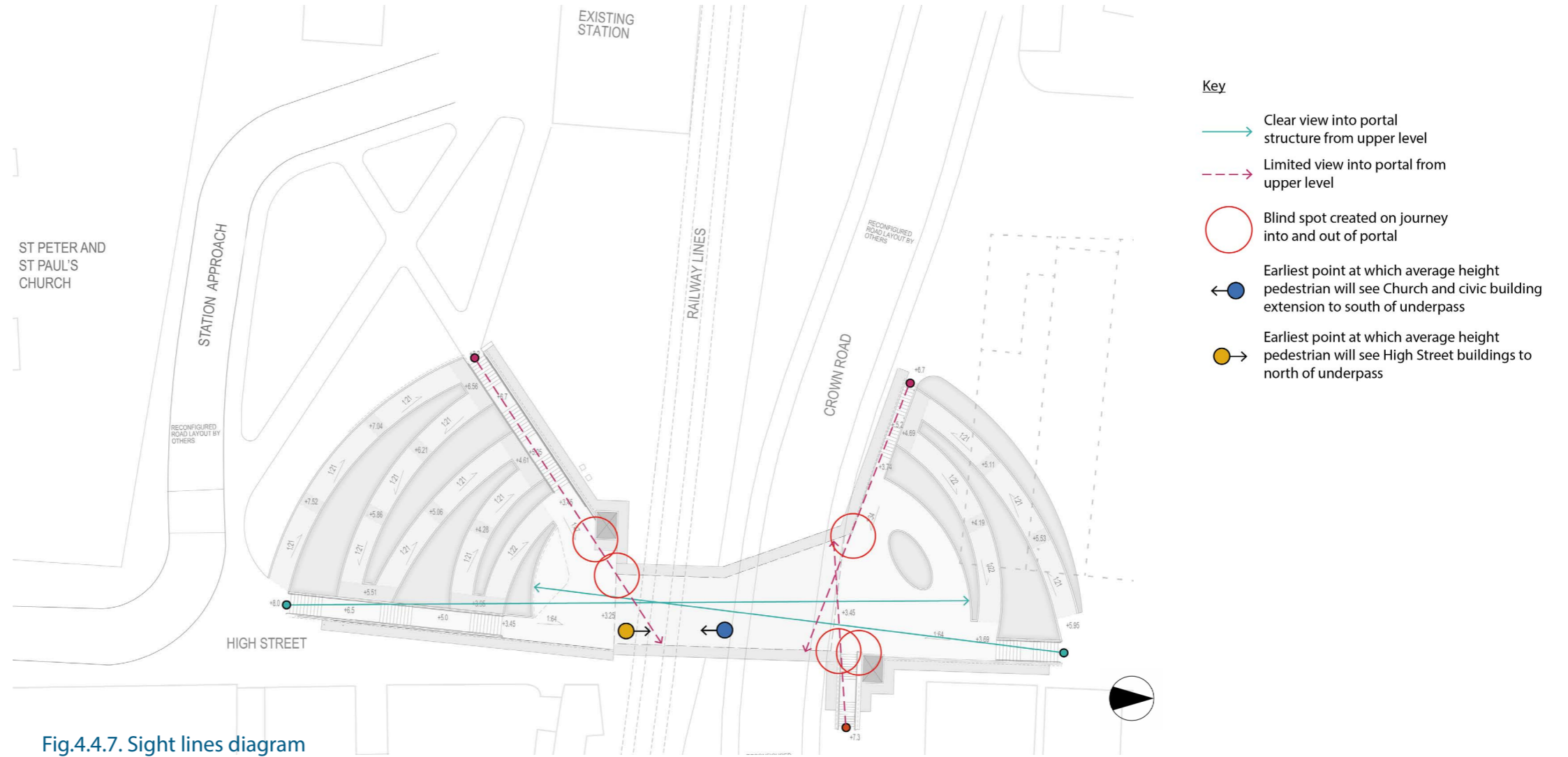
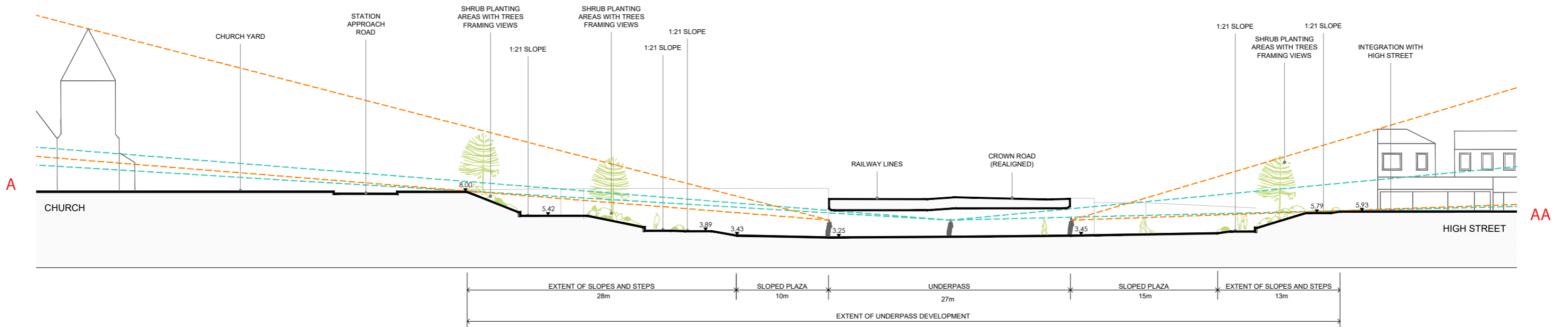
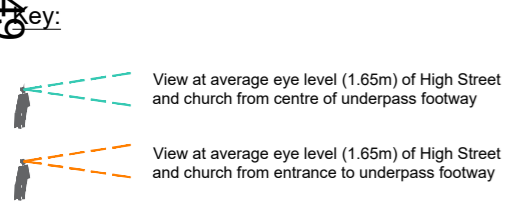


Fig.4.4.7. Sight lines diagram

Page 49



4.4. OPTION A - CRESCENT

12. Heritage:

All options have been designed to ensure the St Peter and St Paul's Church will be visible from the centre of the portal. From the southern entrance to the portal slightly less of the church is visible than other options due to the steeper gradient of the sloped access. This option provides a greater opportunity for enhancing the setting of the church at surface level due to the larger area of public realm to the top of the slope.

13. Accessibility:

Total slope length from the top of slope on both sides: **244m**

Number of switch backs south: **5**

Number of switch backs north: **2**

Slopes and stairs do converge towards same entry and exit points and reflect primary pedestrian flows.

14. Safety / Security / Fear of Crime / Anti-social Behaviour:

There are a **5** no. blind spots where people could hide. There is an opportunity to introduce transparent material to the lifts to reduce these. A further blind spot is created when on the north-eastern narrow stepped access by the lift. CCTV will be essential for crime mitigation in this area.

The maximum distance from an underpass access point into the portal is **38m**. This is the shortest of all options and increases surveillance from other underpass users. However, from the station to the west, views into the portal are limited due to the angle of the pile wall.

3D Sketch Visualisations

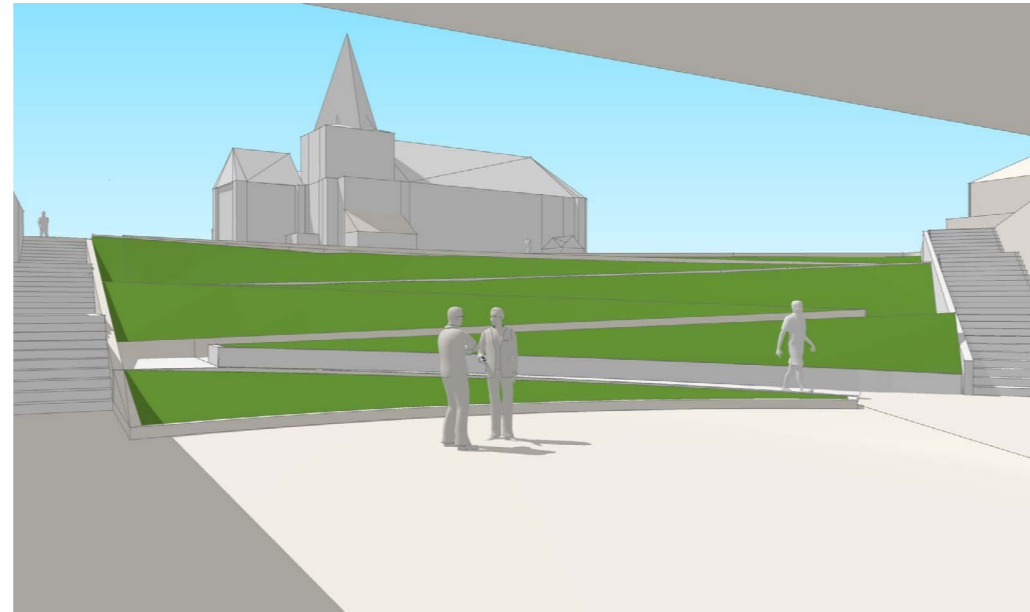


Fig.4.4.9. View looking south towards the Church from portal



Fig.4.4.10. View looking north from High Street towards underpass

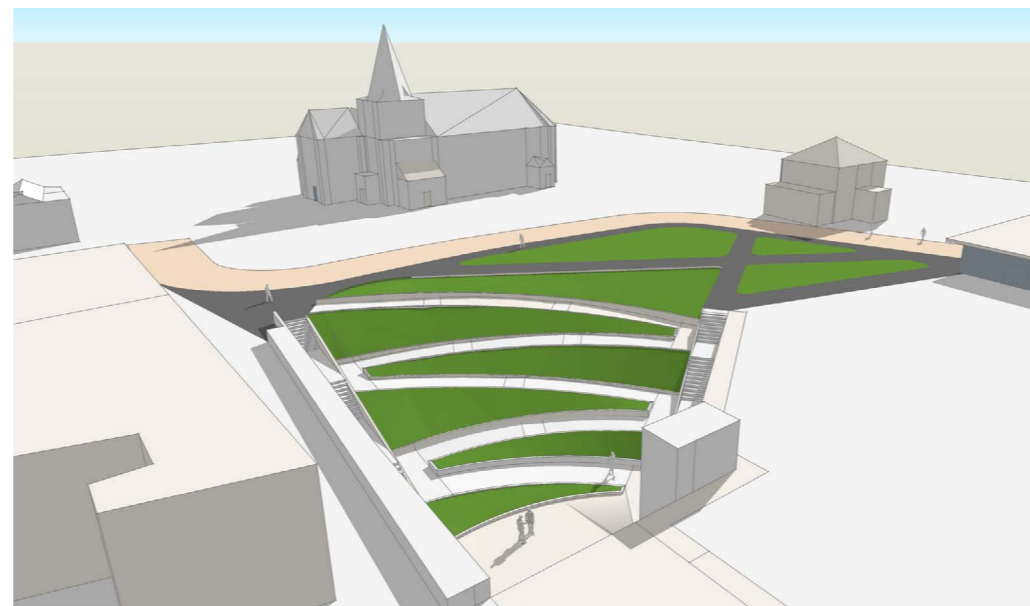


Fig.4.4.11. View looking south west (birds eye perspective)

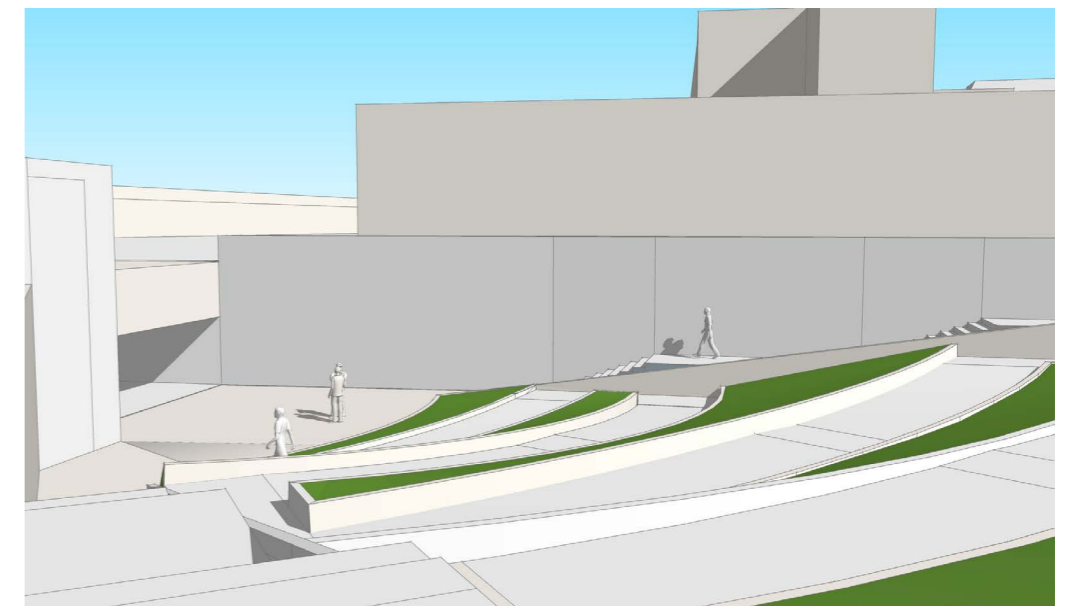


Fig.4.4.12. View looking towards underpass from station access point

OPTION B - DYNAMIC

4.5

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

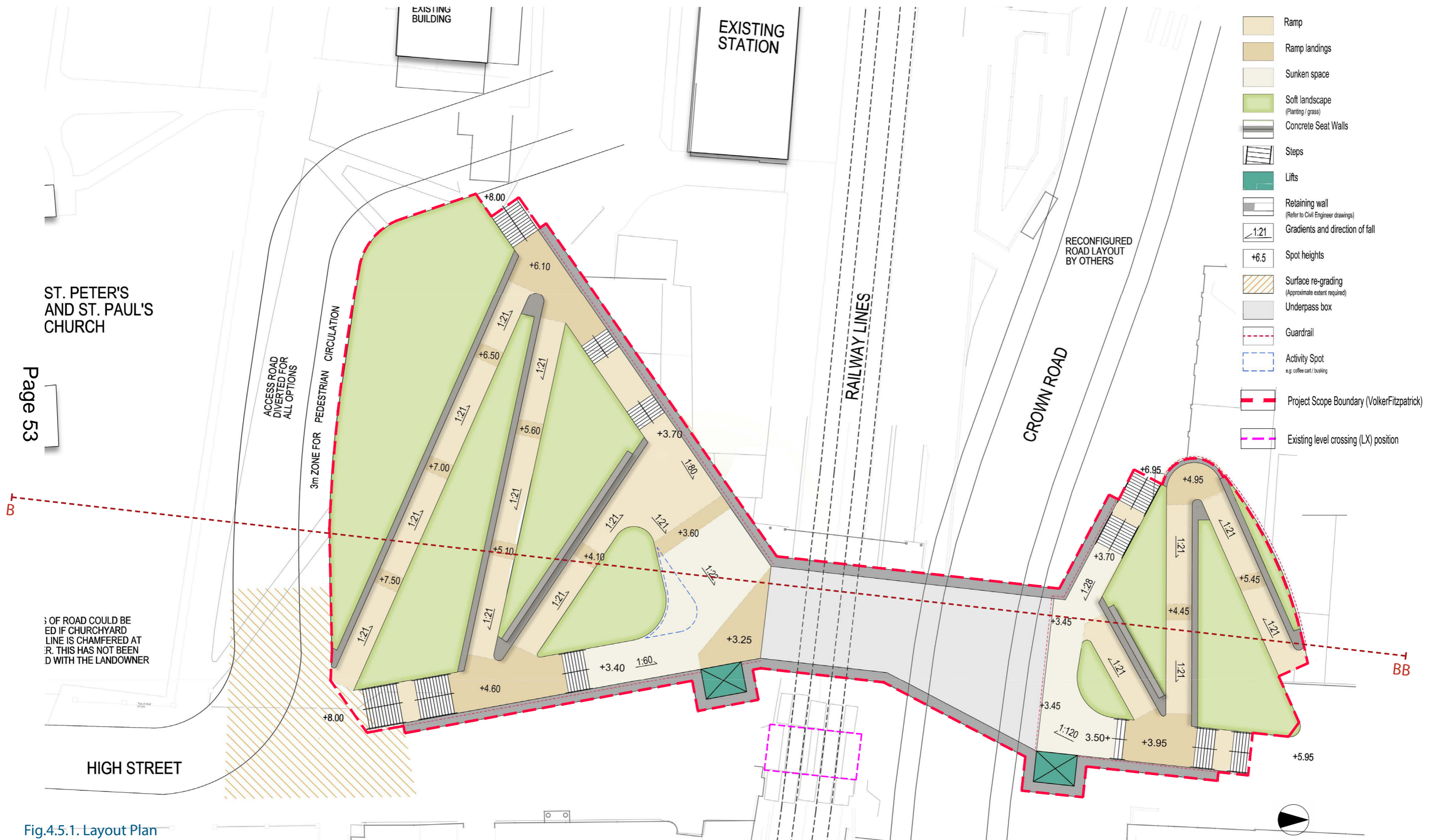


Fig.4.5.1. Layout Plan

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

1. Alignment:

Option B doesn't provide a direct alignment with the High Street. However, the start and end point of steps and slopes do convey a sense of continuation to the High Street.

2. Cut and Fill:

7,600m³

- Rounded to nearest 100m³
- Subject to pavement design
- Not including excavation and backfilling for PCC / brick retaining walls

3. Activation:

a) There is a short run of retaining wall of the south west that could potentially have an active frontage associated with a new development. There is **126m²** space at lower level at the south which is sufficient to enable small pop up retailers such as a coffee cart.

b) The required size and positioning of spaces for activation is dependant on the end user's judgement for their desired use.

4. Cost:

Refer to appendices for full cost report.

5. Integration with Surroundings:

The southern edge of Option B ties in to the edge of Station Approach, with limited opportunity for new public realm at surface level.

A small footprint on the northern edge ties in neatly to existing levels will minimal tie-in work required.

- **422m²** remains for potential commercial development between the underpass and station. However, the angular form of this plot creates an awkward constraint for new buildings.

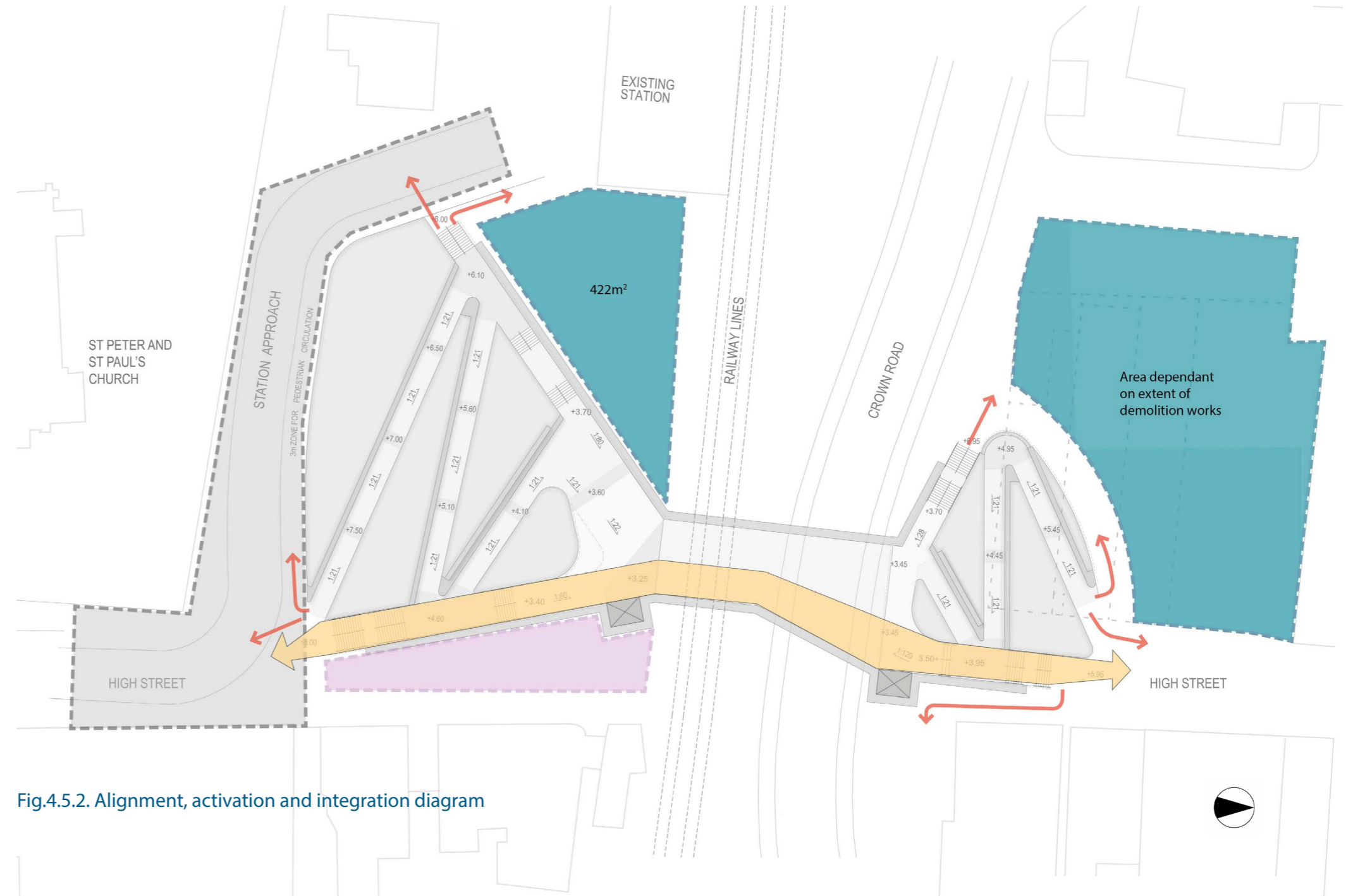


Fig.4.5.2. Alignment, activation and integration diagram

Key

- Approximate Area for Redevelopment
- Area of regrading and realignment necessary to achieve option
- Space requiring activation following permanent level crossing closure
- North-south alignment relative to High Street
- Direction of onward journey into Surrounding Public Realm

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

6. Microclimate:

- In winter the northern entrance remains in shadow through most of the day. The south brightens up around midday.
- In spring the eastern edges are overshadowed in the morning but in sun for the rest of the day.
- In summer there is minimal over shadowing.

7. Ease of Maintenance:

All slopes are designed to accommodate a standard street sweeper with a 5m radius turning circle (Thurrock Borough Council to provide details of exact vehicle specification for tracking).

The soft landscape has the potential to become a high quality low maintenance planting, lawns or wild flower meadows. There is flexibility in the design for this to be decided at the next stage to achieve aesthetic, biodiversity and maintenance

Page 55



Fig.4.5.3. Placemaking precedents

requirements.

8. Placemaking:

- No guardrails are required within the sloped section.
- The layout of the slopes utilise the full length of space between the rail tracks and Station Approach to the south. This allows for much shallower gradient to soft landscape and creates a greater feeling of openness. To the north the shortest length of slope required is used to tie into existing ground levels.
- The contemporary and elegant design will set a precedent for Grays' ongoing regeneration.
- A geometric slope arrangement creates a contemporary design. Simple bands formed by seats to the back edge of the slope draw the eye up the slope, whilst also providing a functional resting / relaxing opportunity.
- The space has been designed primarily for movement, but also a space for relaxing and enjoying the surroundings.

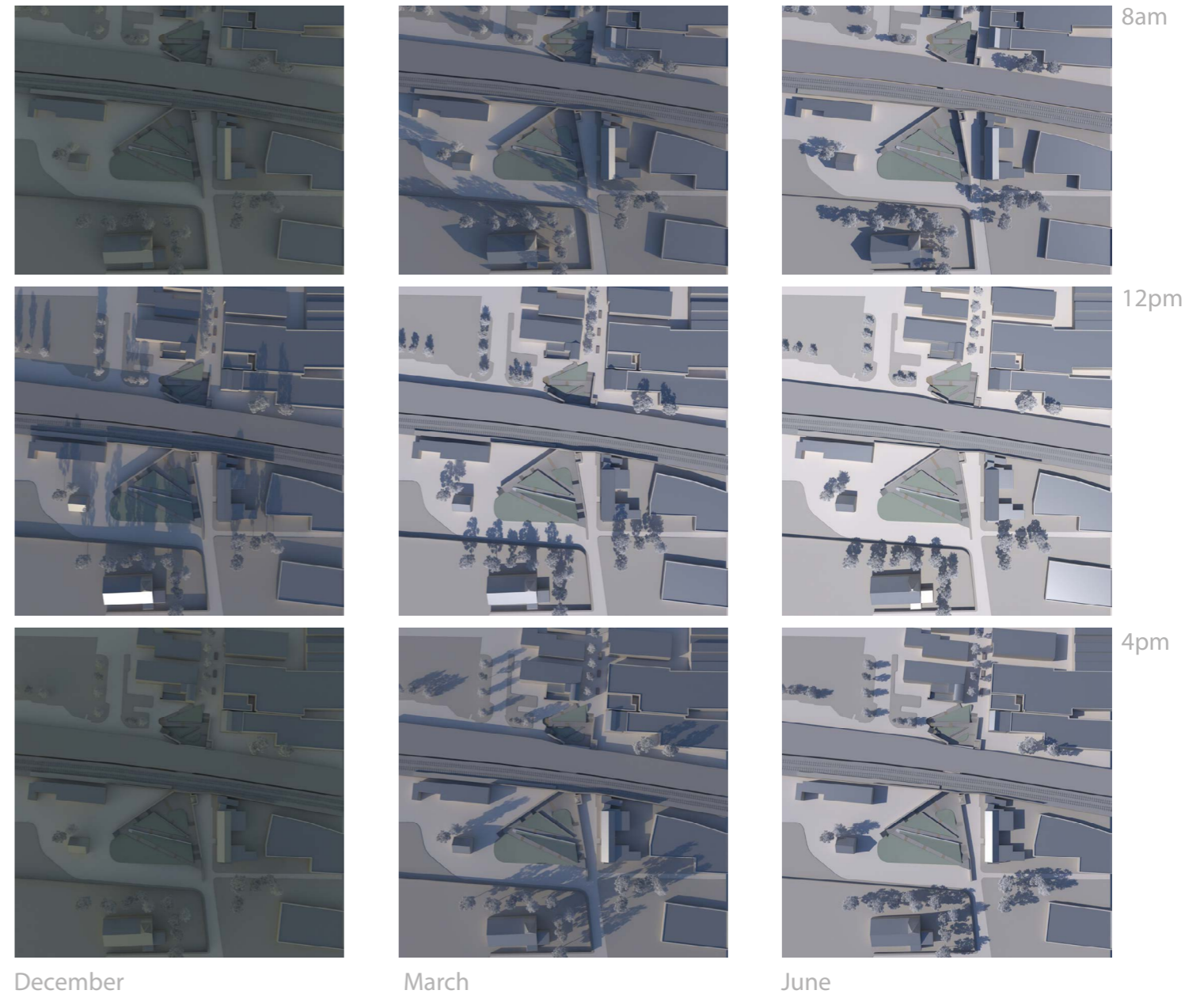


Fig.4.5.4. Sun path analysis diagrams

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

9. Disruption to the Public:

The underpass box has been positioned to enable the level crossing to remain open throughout the majority of the works, minimising disruption to the public.

10. Amenity:

There is limited space at the lower level for the extension of any events from the High Street such as markets as this would cause conflicts of movement. However, the lower spaces provides a good gently sloping platform for small pop-up retailers or busking / entertainment.

Page 56

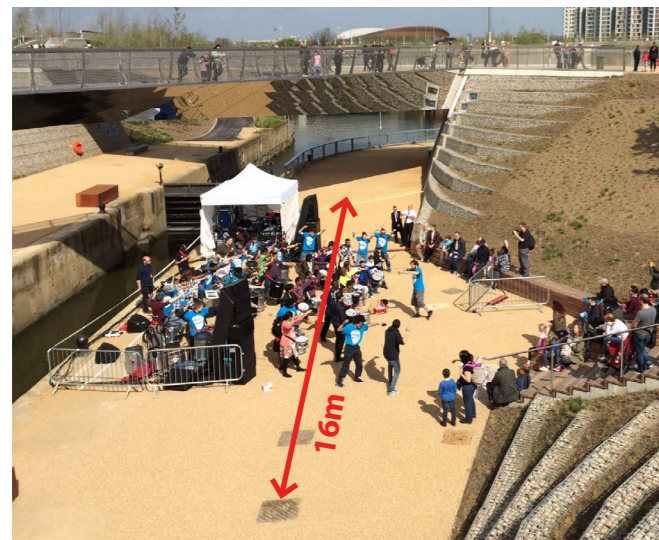


Fig.4.5.5. Space comparison precedent (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park)

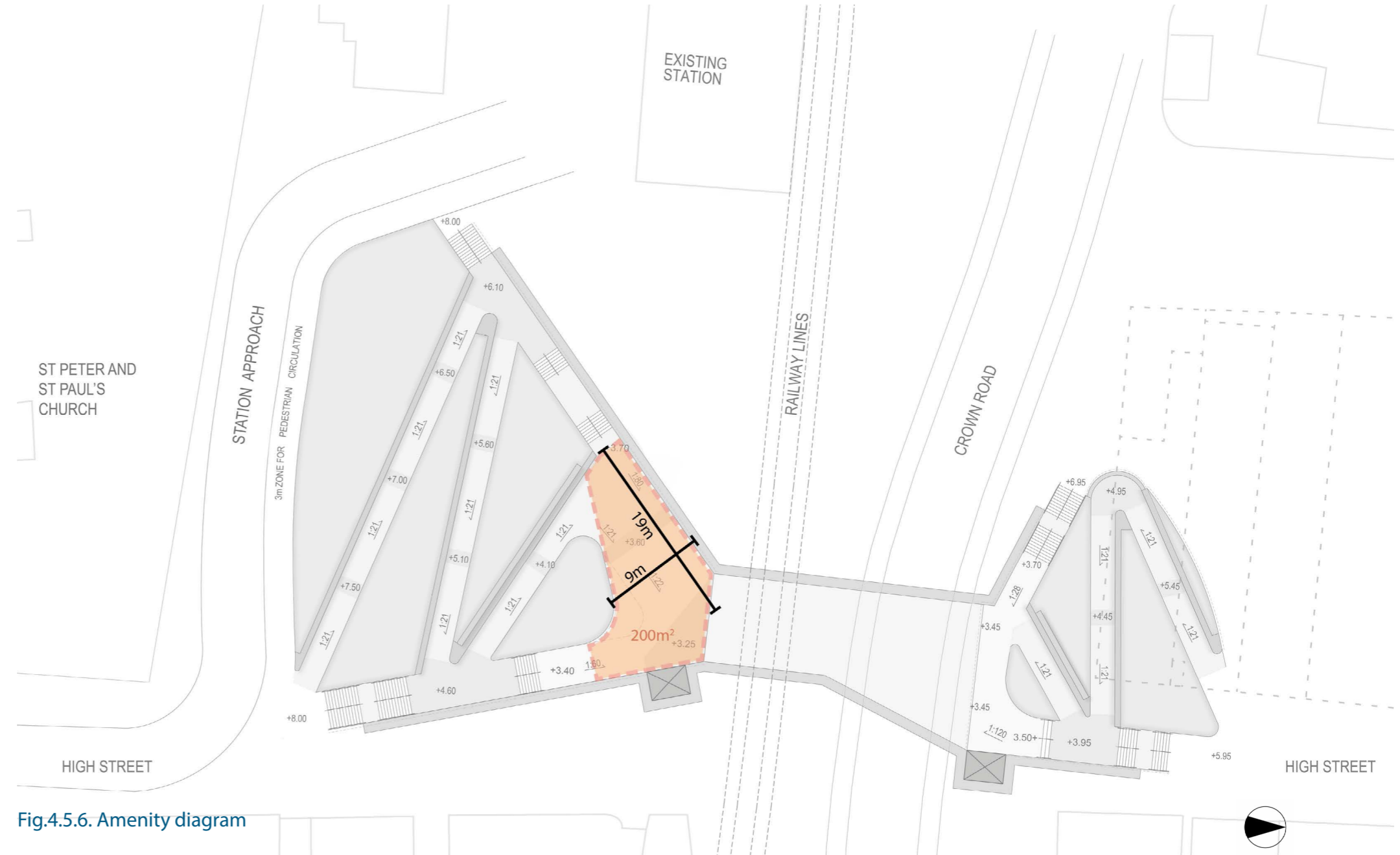


Fig.4.5.6. Amenity diagram

Key

- Approximate area for events/ public realm activation
- 123m² Area measurement of plaza space
- Dimensions across plaza space

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

11. Sight lines:

From the southern entrance of the portal, people will clearly see St Peter and St Paul's Church.
From the northern side of the underpass clear views to the High Street are provided.

The spaced out arrangement of the slopes with large swathes of soft landscape provides good views both into and out of the portal on the northern and southern sides.

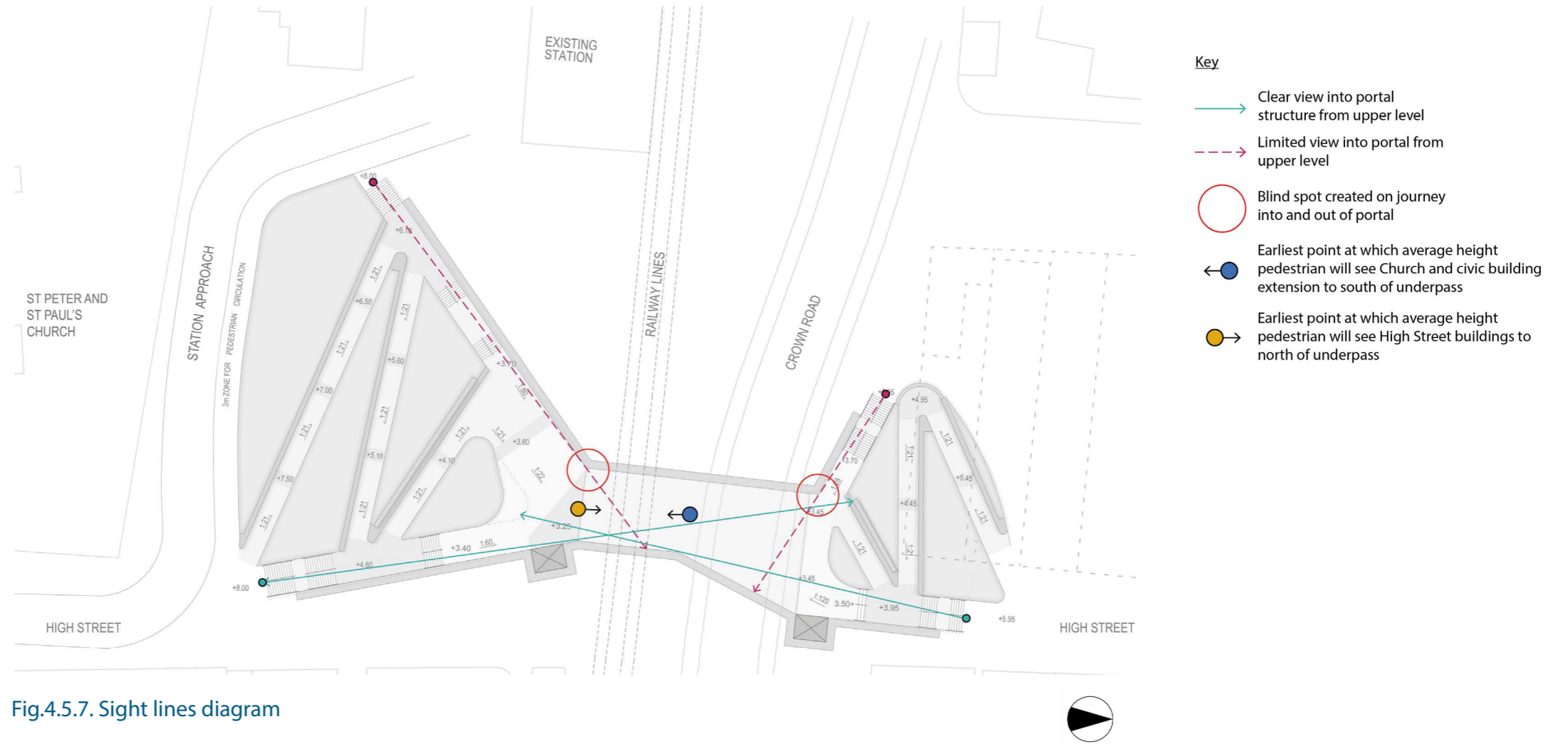


Fig.4.5.7. Sight lines diagram

Page 57

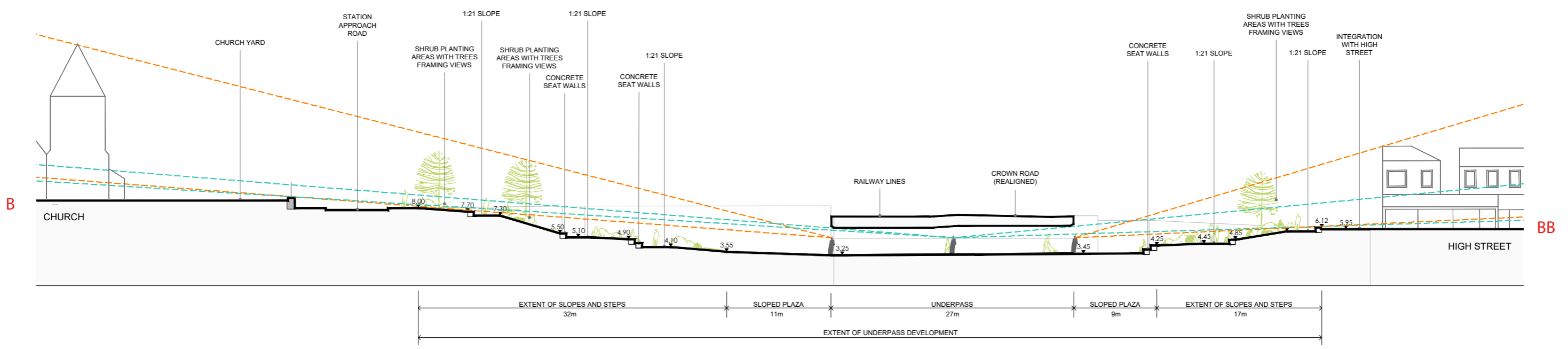
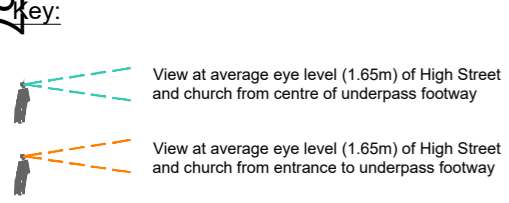


Fig.4.5.8. Cross Section B-BB

4.5. OPTION B - DYNAMIC

12. Heritage:

All options have been designed to ensure that St Peter and St Paul's Church will be visible from the centre of the portal. From the south portal entrance the simple lines created by the slope geometry draw the eye up towards the church, and the shallow sloped gradient provides good views of the church and its setting.

13. Accessibility:

Total slope length from the top of slope on both sides: **212m**

Number of switch backs south: **3**

Number of switch backs north: **2**

Slopes and stairs to converge towards same entry and exit points and reflect predominant pedestrian flows.

14. Safety / Security / Fear of Crime / Anti-social Behaviour:

On the north and south western portal entrance there are **2** no. blind spots where people could potentially hide. CCTV will be essential for crime mitigation in this area. This option has the least blind spots.

This maximum distance from an underpass access point into the portal is **41m**. This is the second shortest of all options and has a good level of surveillance from other underpass users. However, from the station to the west, views into the portal are limited due to the angle of the pile wall.

3D Sketch Visualisations

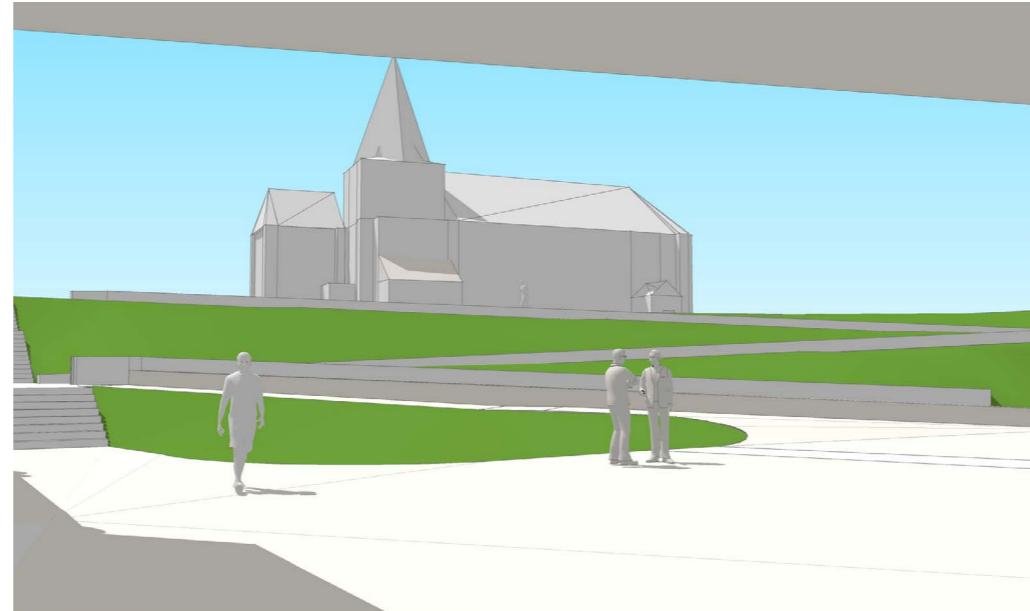


Fig.4.5.9. View looking south towards the Church from portal



Fig.4.5.11. View looking south west (birds eye perspective)

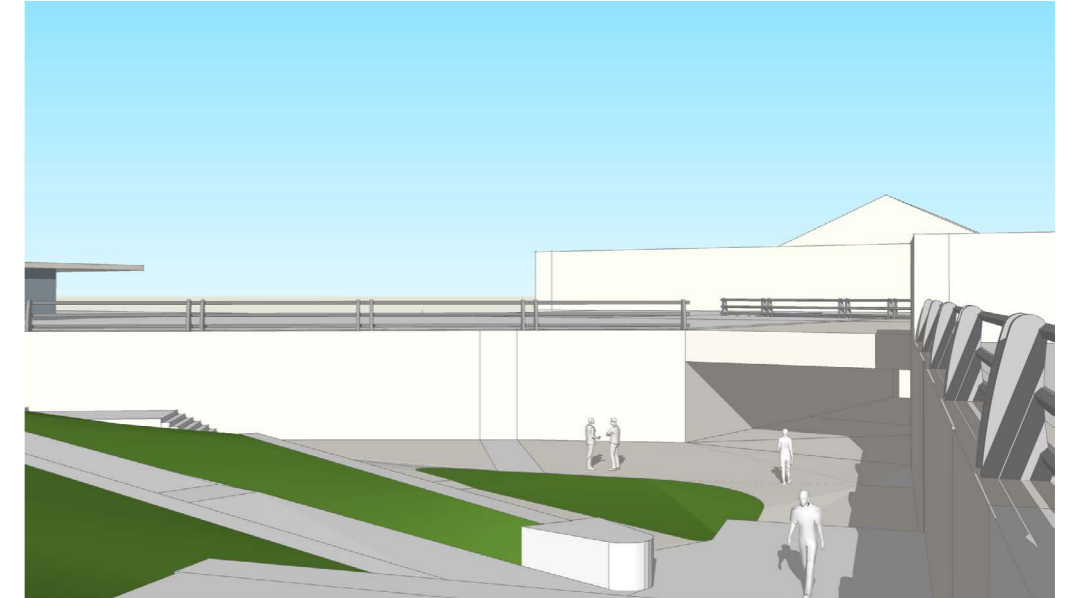


Fig.4.5.10. View looking north from High Street towards underpass

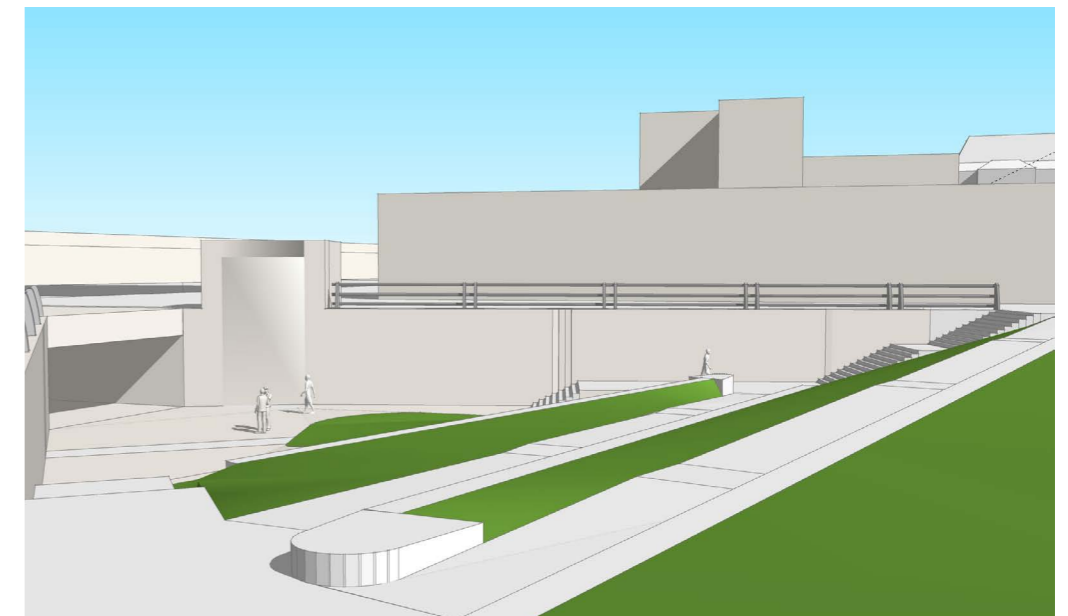


Fig.4.5.12. View looking towards underpass from station access point

OPTION C - PLAZA

4.6

4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

Page 61



Fig.4.6.1. Layout Plan

4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

1. Alignment:

Option C does not provide a direct alignment with the High Street. However, the start and end point of steps and slopes do convey a sense of continuation to the High Street.

2. Cut and Fill:

8,500m³

- Rounded to nearest 100m³
- Subject to pavement design
- Not including excavation and backfilling for PCC / brick retaining walls

3. Activation:

a) On the southern side, there is a long wall between the portal entrance and the station. This has the potential to be activated with a range of south facing retail and commercial frontages. A new large sunken plaza (**660m²**) links from the portal to the station.

b) The required size and positioning of spaces for activation is dependant on the end user's judgement for their desired use.

4. Cost:

Refer to appendices for full cost report.

Additional costs associated with this option are:

1. Large area of ground re-levelling required to northern side of High Street to tie into new level
2. Extending and realignment of Station Approach.

Note: VFL are not providing costs for these additional works as they are outside of the project boundary, however, they are a key consideration in the total cost required to deliver the scheme.

5. Integration with Surroundings:

The southern edge of Option C ties in to the edge of Station Approach, with limited opportunity for new public realm at surface level.

Option C requires the largest amount of tie-in works. At the south, Station Approach requires

additional extension to the west beyond the existing building (in comparison to the other options). A benefit of this additional work is a small new public space creating a more welcoming entrance to the station.

To the north the High Street will require re-levelling with a series of retaining walls along the eastern edge (these works are also outside of the project boundary so not included within project

costs).

364m² remains for potential commercial development between the underpass and station. However, the angular form of this plot creates an awkward constraint for new buildings and access to this area is very limited.

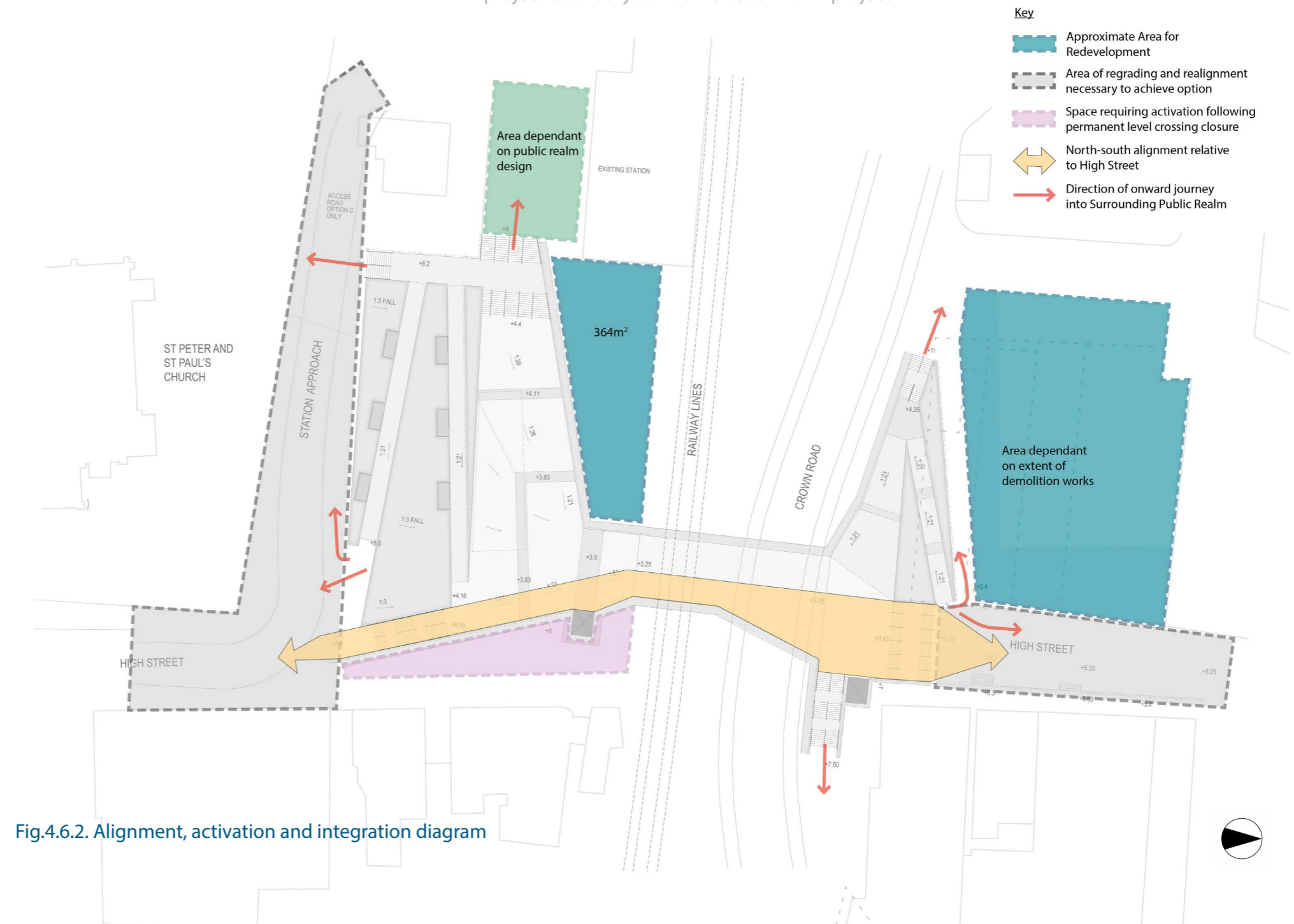


Fig.4.6.2. Alignment, activation and integration diagram

4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

6. Microclimate:

- In winter the northern entrance remains in shadow through most of the day. The south brightens up around midday.
- In spring the eastern edges are overshadowed in the morning but in sun for the rest of the day.
- In summer there is minimal over shadowing.

7. Ease of Maintenance:

All slopes are designed to accommodate a standard street sweeper with a 5m radius turning circle (Thurrock Borough Council to provide details of exact vehicle specification for tracking).

The soft landscape has the potential to become lush with planting, lawns or wild flower meadows. There is flexibility in the design for this to be decided at the next stage to achieve aesthetic, biodiversity and maintenance requirements.



Fig.4.6.3. Placemaking precedents

8. Placemaking:

- A guardrail is required on the lowest slope on the south side, due to the height difference to the new plaza below.
- The southern plaza is similar in scale to Greengate Square in Manchester (Fig 4.6.3). The eventual size of the space will need careful evaluation depending on the range of activities intended.
- The new plaza provides the opportunity for clear south facing views up towards the Church.
- Simple linear slopes delineate a rectilinear new plaza to create a neat and organised space that sits comfortably in its surroundings.
- The new plaza creates a clear connection between the station, church and High Street, with the potential to enhance the character of all of these spaces. Large welcoming steps lead people in and out of the new spaces.

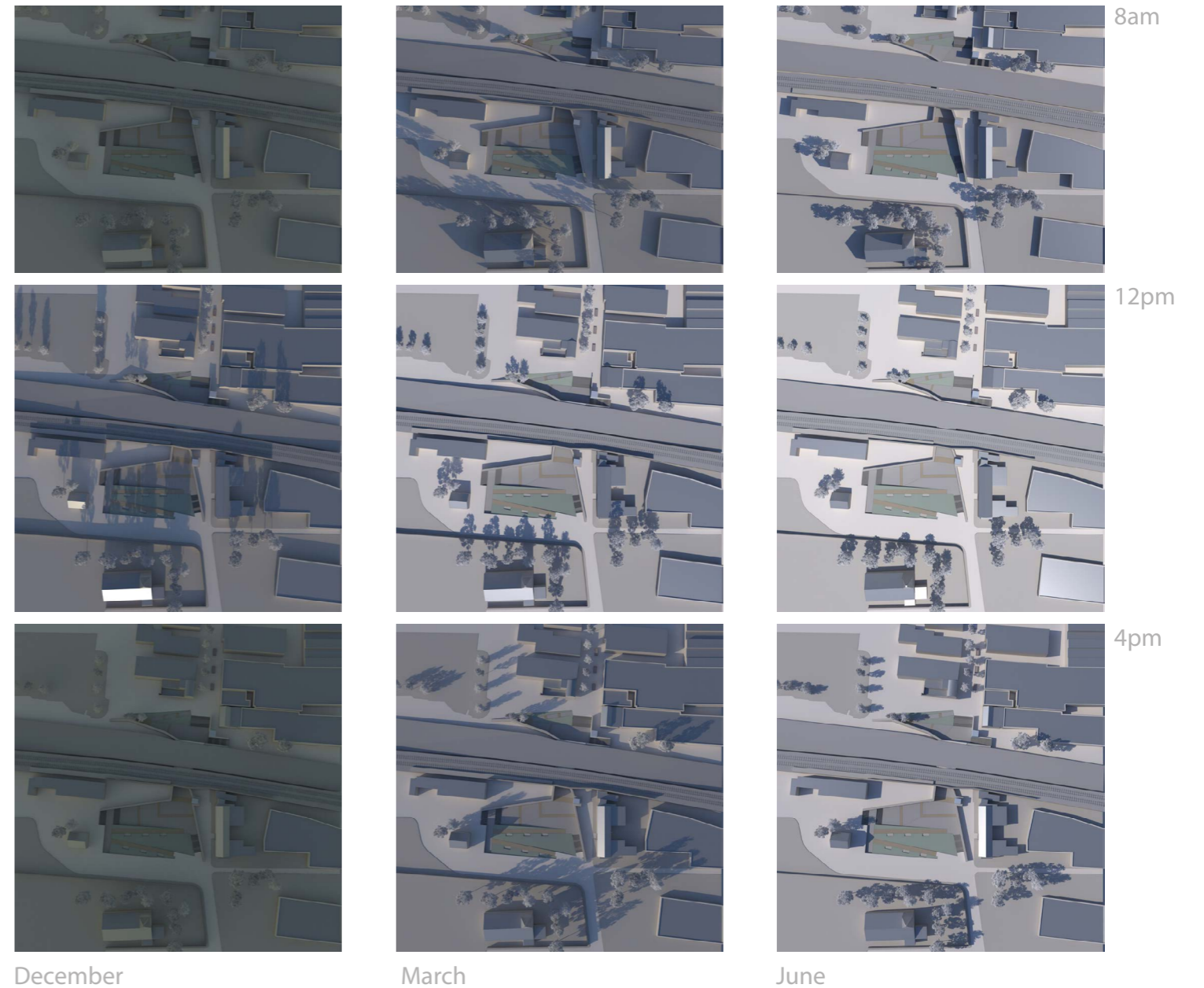


Fig.4.6.4. Sun path analysis diagrams

4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

9. Disruption to the Public:

The underpass box has been positioned to enable the level crossing to remain open throughout the majority of the works, minimising disruption to the public.

10. Amenity:

Option C provides the best opportunity for extension of events from the High Street, within its sunken plaza. However, the plaza is on two fairly steep gradients dropping towards the underpass portal. This will make the space less comfortable to relax in and minimise the type of events that may be suitable.

Page 64



Fig.4.6.5. Space comparison precedent (Greengate Square, Manchester)

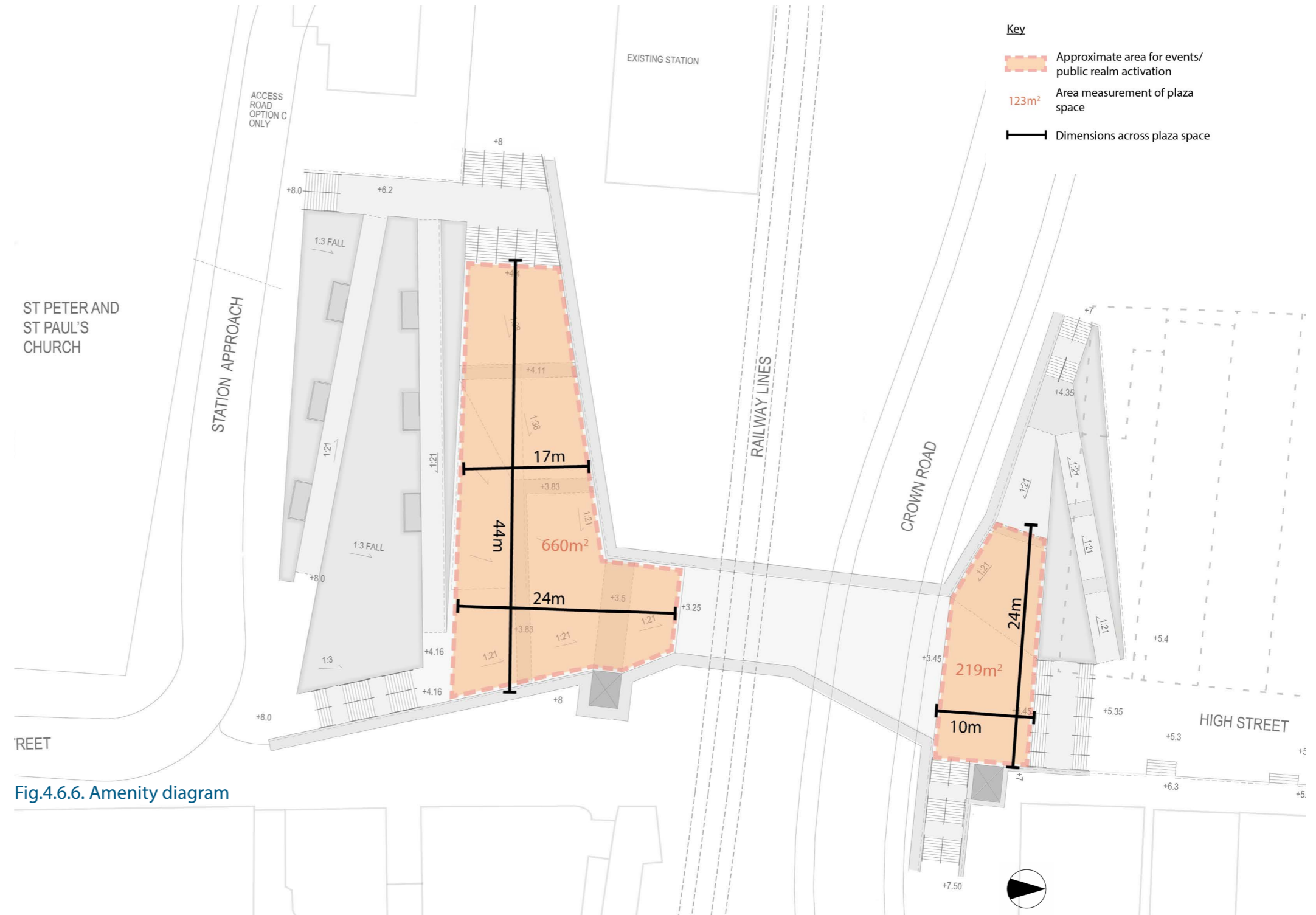


Fig.4.6.6. Amenity diagram

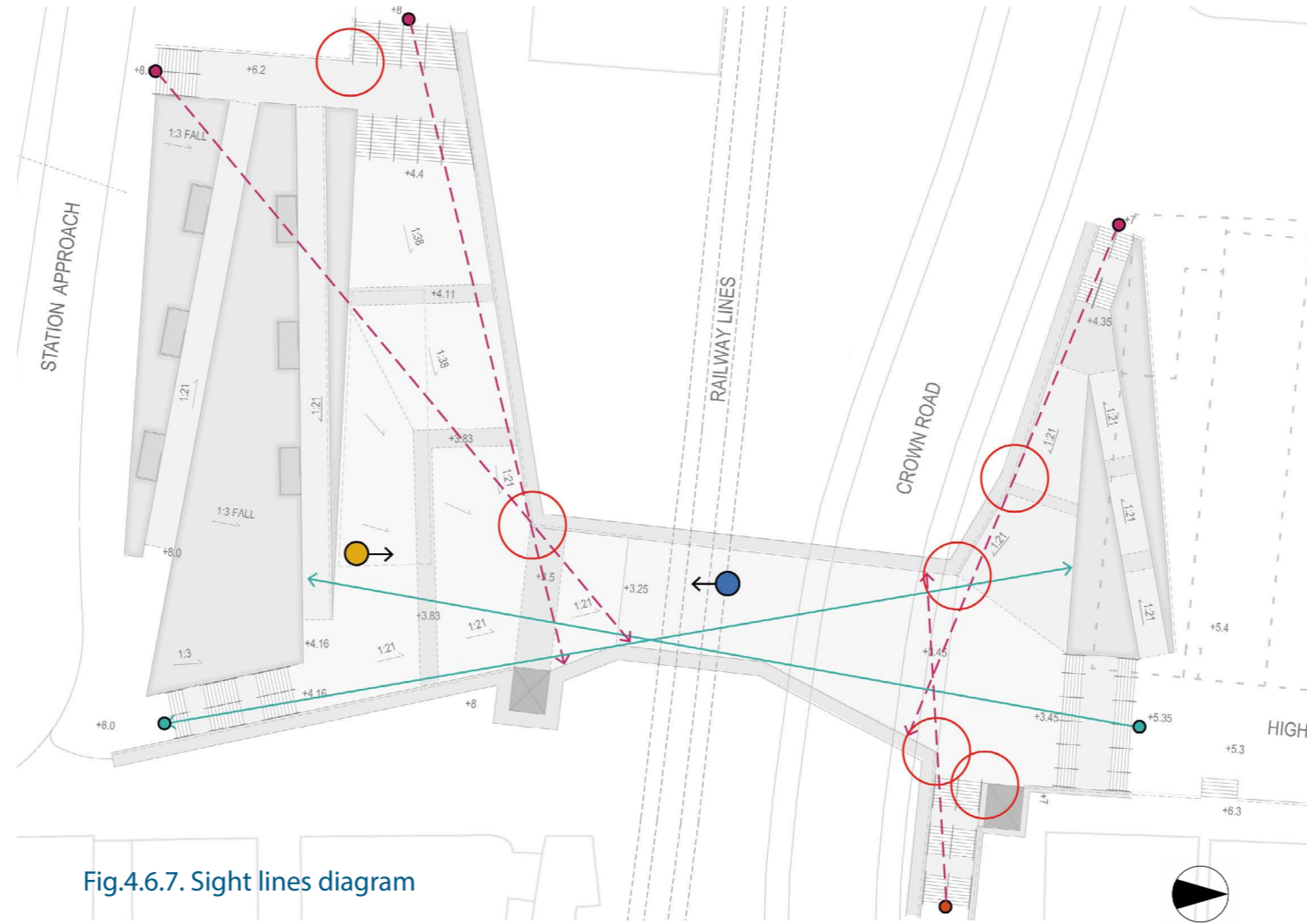
4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

11. Sight lines:

On the southern side, the sloped access has been set back from the portal. This frames clear views of the St Peter and St Paul's Church.

From the station, views down into the plaza are clear, though restricted into the portal due to the angle of the wall.

On the northern entrance, clear views to and from the portal / High Street are provided by the generous wide set of steps linking the two spaces.



- Key**
- Clear view into portal structure from upper level
 - - - Limited view into portal from upper level
 - Blind spot created on journey into and out of portal
 - ← Earliest point at which average height pedestrian will see Church and civic building extension to south of underpass
 - Earliest point at which average height pedestrian will see High Street buildings to north of underpass

Fig.4.6.7. Sight lines diagram

Page 65

- Key:**
- View at average eye level (1.65m) of High Street and church from centre of underpass footway
 - View at average eye level (1.65m) of High Street and church from entrance to underpass footway

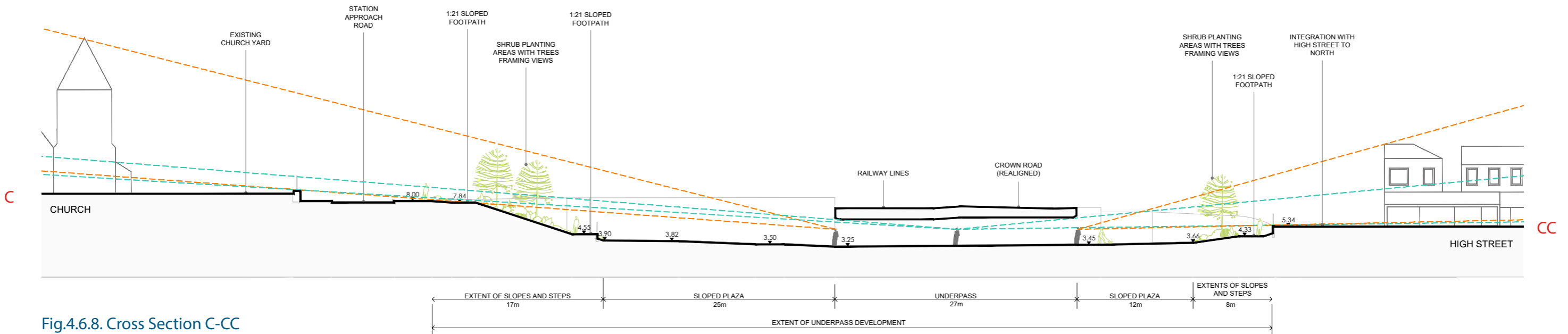


Fig.4.6.8. Cross Section C-CC

4.6. OPTION C - PLAZA

12. Heritage:

All options have been designed to ensure that St Peter and St Paul's Church will be visible from the centre of the portal. A clear visual connection is created between the Church and the new plaza, enhancing the setting of both spaces.

13. Accessibility:

Total slope length from the top of slope on both sides: **196m (+15m to reach High Street on south side)**

Number of switch backs south: **1**

Number of switch backs north: **1**

Slopes and stairs do converge towards same entry and exit points and reflect primary pedestrian flows.

14. Safety / Security / Fear of Crime / Anti-social Behaviour:

There are **5** no. locations on Option C that create blind spots where people could hide:

- The north and south west entrances to the portal
- the north eastern entrance to the portal and lift.
- The south west corner of steps

CCTV will be essential for crime mitigation in these areas.

The maximum distance from an underpass access point into the portal is **50m**. This is the longest of all options and therefore there will be slightly less surveillance from other underpass users. However, from the station to the west, views into lower level are more open which could mitigate the above. In general there is more of a sense of openness which provides an increase in perceived comfort level. Activating the lower level spaces could also increase natural surveillance (careful consideration to be given from the end user).

3D Sketch Visualisations



Fig.4.6.9. View looking south towards the Church from portal



Fig.4.6.11. View looking south west (birds eye perspective)

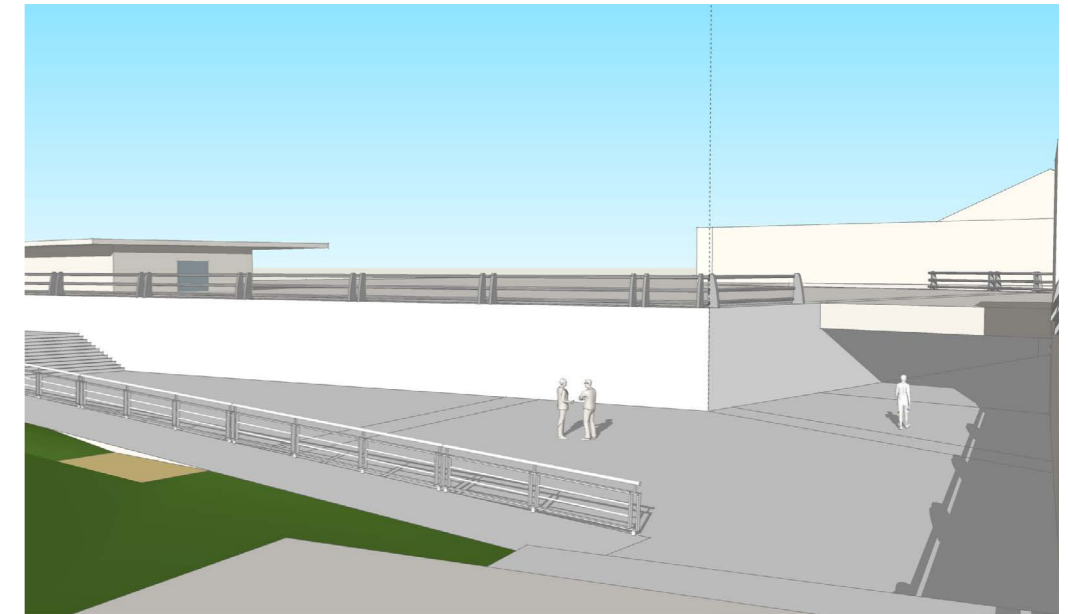


Fig.4.6.10. View looking north from High Street towards underpass

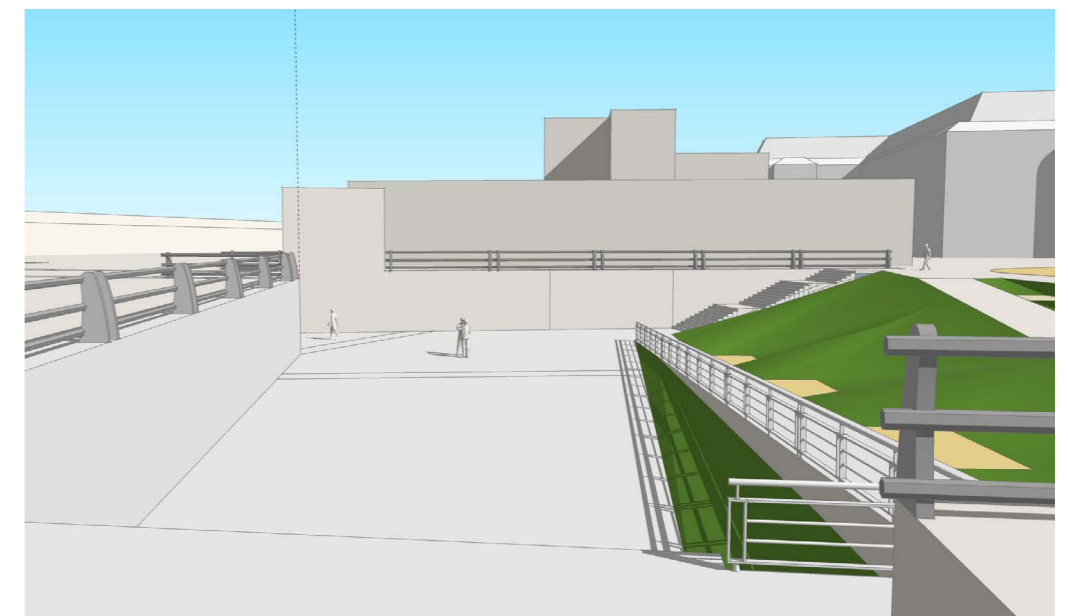


Fig.4.6.12. View looking towards underpass from station access point

4.7. OPTION EVALUATION MATRIX

Option Selection Workshop

The following two pages show the criteria weighting and option evaluation matrix that was completed between Thurrock Borough Council, Network Rail and VolkerFitzPatrick at the Option Selection Workshop on 13/03/2020.

	Option Selection Criteria	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
A	Alignment	A								
B	Placemaking		B							
C	Integration with Surroundings			C						
D	Constructability/disruption to public				D					
E	Cost					E				
F	Maintainability						F			
G	Accessibility and Ease of Navigation							G		
H	Safety and Security								H	
I	Sustainability									I

Page 67

Rating	Rating No.
Very High	5
High	4
Medium	3
Low	2
Very Low	1

Option Selection Criteria	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Criteria Rating	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	5	4
Criteria Weight	8%	14%	14%	11%	11%	8%	11%	14%	11%

Fig.4.7.1. Option Selection Workshop - Criteria Weighting

4.7. OPTION EVALUATION MATRIX

Option Selection Criteria		Sub-criteria	Weight	Option A	Total Score	Option B	Total Score	Option C	Total Score
A	Alignment	A sense of continuation for the High Street is conveyed	8%	3	0.243	1	0.081	1	0.081
B	Placemaking	Invasiveness of ramps and associated safety measures (e.g. minimisation of guard rails)	14%	1	0.135	2	0.270	3	0.405
		Dead space (area unlikely to be utilised. Wasted space) is minimised. Potential to provide active frontages.		0	0.000	2	0.270	3	0.405
		Quality and area of remaining space for further development or surface level public realm.		0	0.000	2	0.270	3	0.405
		Microclimate - using the sun path to maximise benefit of natural light (Passive Solar Design)		1	0.135	3	0.405	3	0.405
		Design concept and sense of place: Is the space the right scale?		1	0.135	2	0.270	3	0.405
		Consistent design language used, which complements and adds to the series of public spaces along the High St, from the War Memorial to the riverfront		1	0.135	2	0.270	3	0.405
C	Integration with Surroundings	Well-coordinated of tie-in with adjacent boundaries.	14%	1	0.135	2	0.270	2	0.270
		Suitability of public spaces to support a wide range of town centre events and activities which supports continuation of the high street. (Size, gradient, conflict of movement, floor level)		0	0.000	2	0.270	3	0.405
		Heritage - design should relate to the local area's character and history, framing views towards the St Peter & St Paul's Church, churchyard		1	0.135	3	0.405	3	0.405
D	Constructability and Planning	Construction programme: Minimal disruption to public during construction	11%	0	0.000	2	0.216	2	0.216
		Minimise Level Crossing disruption during construction stage		0	0.000	1	0.108	1	0.108
		Extent of enabling works and diversionary impacts to the public		0	0.000	2	0.216	1	0.108
E	Cost	Magnitude of cost associated with the options in relation to the AFC budget allocate	11%	0	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000
F	Maintainability	Easy access for maintenance staff / vehicles to the portal and ramp area	8%	1	0.081	3	0.243	3	0.243
		Minimisation of landscape maintenance		1	0.081	2	0.162	3	0.243
G	Accessibility and Ease of Navigation	Simplify ramp navigation, total ramp length, journey time and number of switch backs (technical compliance is assumed).	11%	1	0.108	2	0.216	3	0.324
		Ramps and stairs to converge towards same entry and exit points and reflect predominant pedestrian flows.		1	0.108	3	0.324	3	0.324
		Providing clear views of key landmarks (High Street to the north, Church and proposed Civic Offices extension to the south) as well as sightlines into portal from a distance. Ensure clear views from access ramp into portal, train station, bus station and Crown Road		1	0.108	2	0.216	3	0.324
H	Safety and Security	Minimise hidden viewpoint(s) and blind corners	14%	0	0.000	2	0.270	1	0.135
		Optimise long-distance clear views (including for CCTV system) throughout the underpass		2	0.270	2	0.270	2	0.270
I	Sustainability	Amount of material (m ³) required to be excavated and disposed of during construction	11%	3	0.324	2	0.216	1	0.108
		'Urban Greening			0.000		0.000		0.000
TOTAL:					2.135		5.243		6.000

Rating	Description
3	Fully meets the criteria
2	Mostly meets the criteria
1	Somewhat meets the criteria
0	Does not meet the criteria

Fig.4.7.2. Option Selection Workshop - Evaluation Matrix

Appendix 3

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Introduction

This section of the document provides a summary of consultation feedback received by Thurrock Council (TC) as a response to the Transforming Grays online consultation hosted by the Council between 27th February 2020 - 14th March 2020.

Aims:

The principal objective of the consultation was to measure the level of support for a number of Town Centre proposals that are currently being developed as part of an extensive regeneration programme for Grays.

Additionally, key aspirations, concerns and ideas that could complement some of the proposals were captured.

Participants:

The Council invited residents that live, visit, work and learn in Grays as well as local businesses and community groups, to share their views on potential projects. The consultation was advertised via leaflets, posters and social media platform.

Projects:

There were 20 projects published via the online consultation portal, including the initial design concepts for Grays underpass. This specific project was published in order to help identify a preferred option to take forward to the design stage.

The consultation projects were grouped as follows:

1. The Underpass
2. Grays High Street and Shopping Centre
3. Thames Side Complex
4. Grays Beach Park and Kilverts Field
5. Grays Bus Station

Improve movements and access around the town:

6. Seabrooke Rise Walk
7. Derby Road Bridge
8. Clarence Road
9. Titan Walk

Enhancing the quality of the public realm:

10. London Road
11. South Essex College temporary building
12. Grays Town Park

Building a local economy:

13. Grays Street Market
14. Shopfront Design Guide
15. Digital and SMART Grays

Supporting Communities:

16. Grays Street Art
17. Grays Town Centre Street Lighting
18. Future Lighting Project

Designing Public Spaces:

19. Public Realm Design Guide
20. Gateway to the Town Centre

Executive Summary

Methodology:

An online tool was used to gather responses and the consultation was published on the Council's website: <https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/projects>.

The questions were as follows:

- Question 1; Do you support this proposal?
- Question 2; How can this project be further improved and why?
- Question 3; Is there anything we have missed?

Question 1 was aimed to measure level of support for proposals and there were five answers available to choose from: - strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree.

Questions 2 and 3 were open ended questions aimed to gather ideas and opinions and provide written responses. There was an additional question for The Underpass project asking participants to choose their most preferred option for the underpass layout.

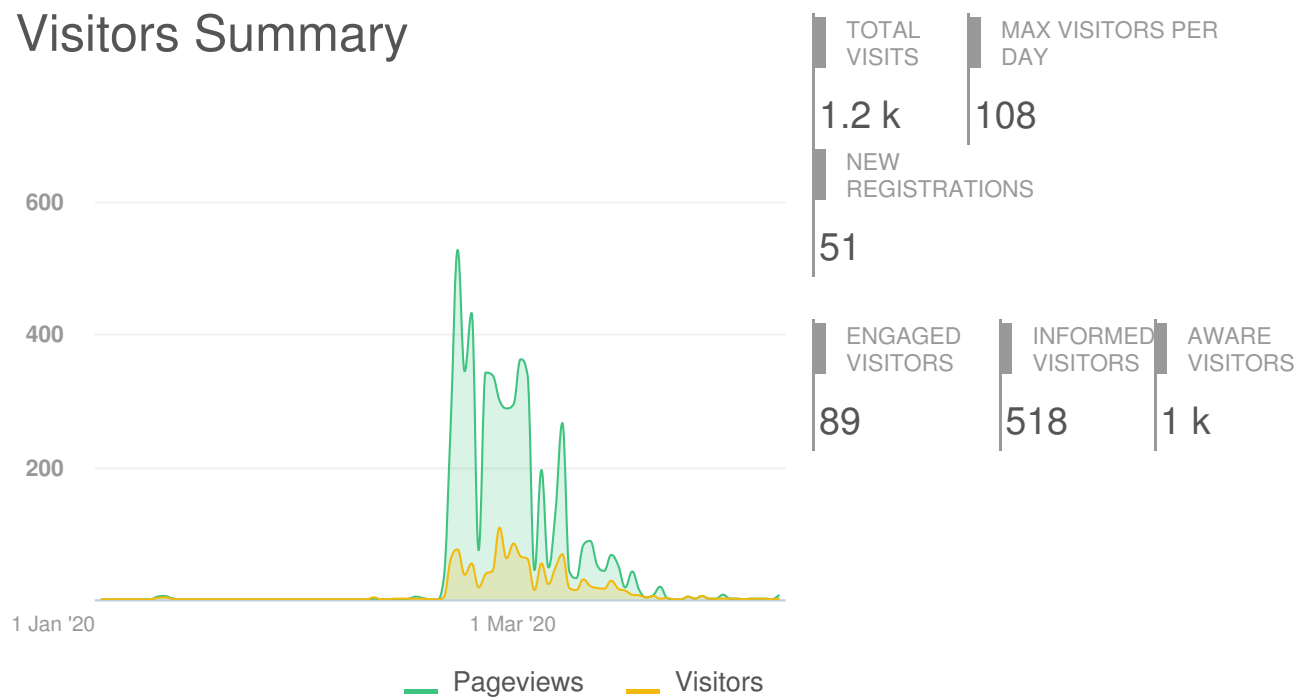
The total number of visitor who accessed the Transforming Grays consultation was 1.2k.

There were 89 participants who actively engaged and provided feedback.

The below summary diagram based on participants' activity indicates that about 1k visitors are 'aware' of the consultation, 518 spent more time browsing the consultation and they are considered to be 'informed' visitors.

This consultation resulted in 51 new registrations to the Council's consultation portal.

Visitors Summary



Summary of all visits

ENGAGED	89 ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS			Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	The Underpass	47 (7.4%)
INFORMED	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0			Grays High Street and Shopp...	39 (18.3%)
	Participated in Surveys	87	0	0			Thameside Complex	37 (14.2%)
	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0			Grays Beach Park and Kilver...	29 (12.1%)
	Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0			Grays Bus Station	15 (15.2%)
AWARE	Posted on Guestbooks	0	0	0			Enhancing the quality of the ...	8 (22.2%)
	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0			Designing Public Spaces	7 (16.7%)
	Asked Questions	0	0	0			Building a local economy	7 (25.0%)
	Placed Pins on Places	2	0	0				
	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0				

** A single engaged participant can perform multiple actions*

** Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project*

ENGAGED	518 INFORMED PARTICIPANTS		Participants	The Underpass	332 (52.0%)
INFORMED	Viewed a video	0		Grays High Street and Shopp...	106 (49.8%)
	Viewed a photo	300		Grays Beach Park and Kilver...	87 (36.4%)
	Downloaded a document	0		Thameside Complex	87 (33.5%)
	Visited the Key Dates page	0		Project Map	55 (55.0%)
AWARE	Visited an FAQ list Page	0		Grays Bus Station	46 (46.5%)
	Visited Instagram Page	0		Designing Public Spaces	21 (50.0%)
	Visited Multiple Project Pages	439		Improve movements and acc...	17 (24.3%)
	Contributed to a tool (engaged)	89			

** A single informed participant can perform multiple actions*

** Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project*

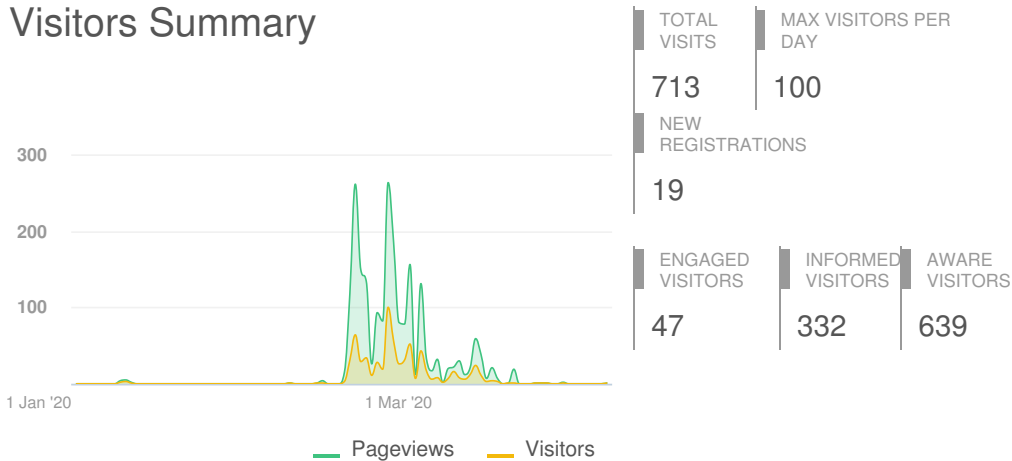
ENGAGED	1,011 AWARE PARTICIPANTS		Participants	The Underpass	639
INFORMED	Visited at least one Page	1,011		Thameside Complex	260
				Grays Beach Park and Kilver...	239
AWARE				Grays High Street and Shopp...	213
				Project Map	100
				Grays Bus Station	99
				Improve movements and acc...	70
				Designing Public Spaces	42

** Aware user could have also performed an Informed or Engaged Action*

** Total list of unique visitors to the project*

1. The Underpass

Visitors Summary

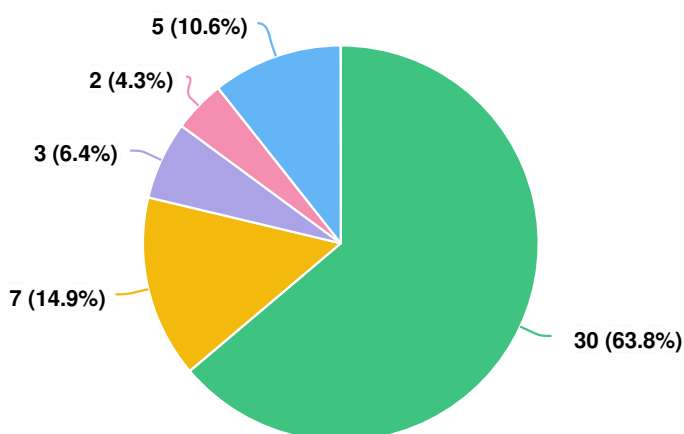


Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 139	Contributors 47	CONTRIBUTIONS 47
---------------------	------------------------	-------------------------

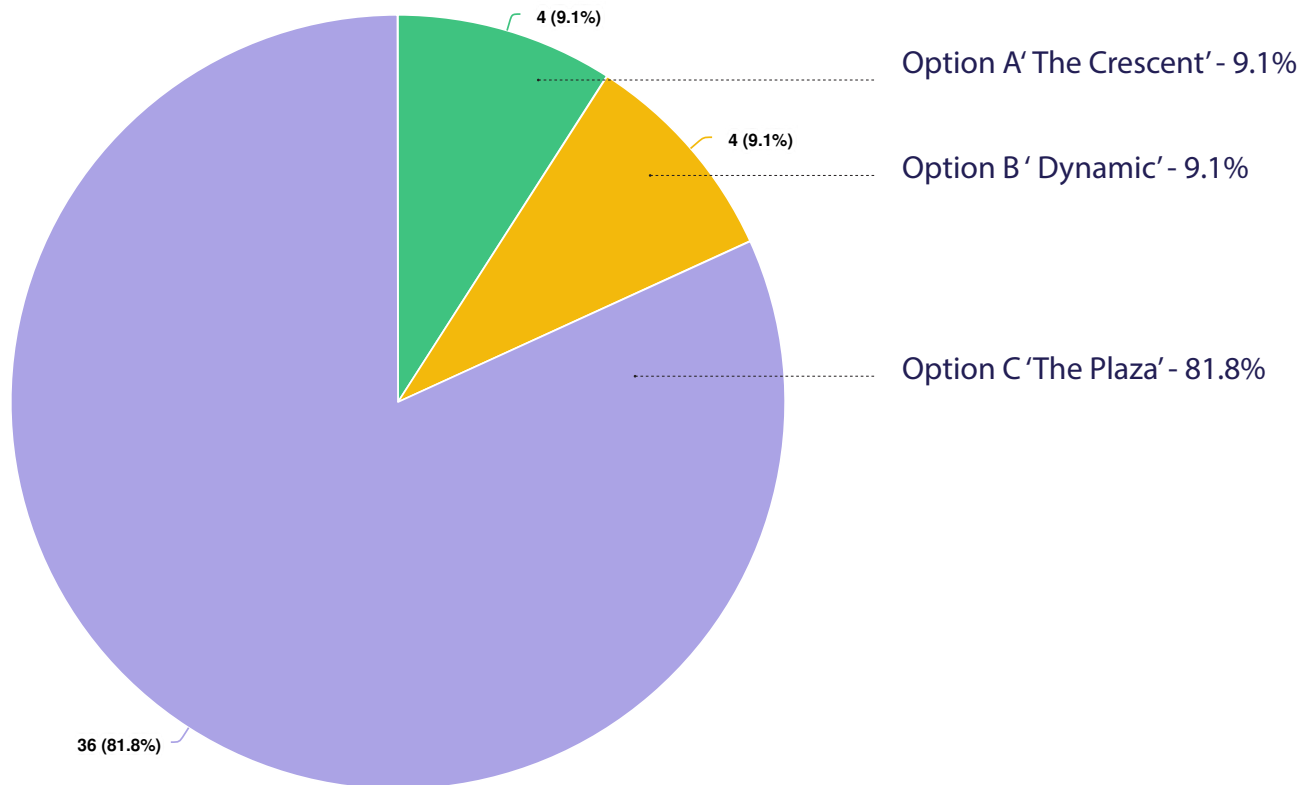
Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 2.
Which of the three proposed options do you prefer?



Question options

- Option C 'The Plaza'
- Option B 'Dynamic'
- Option A 'The Crescent'

47 respondents participated in the Underpass survey.

The vast majority supported the proposal; 63% 'strongly agreed' and 14% 'agreed' with the scheme. 81% of them selected Option C 'The Plaza' as their preferred option. 24 respondents out of 47 provided written feedback to Questions 3 & 4.

Question 3.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- utilise the thoroughfare and provide retail units down in the 'plaza' with cafés servicing the train station and new council offices,
- consider using the 'plaza' as flea market during weekends,
- this is an opportunity for public art created by community,
- by enhancing greenery and creation of green spaces'
- provide seating areas and a water feature,
- introduce good lighting, CCTV for security and regular maintenance of public spaces,
- introduce measures to discourage anti social behaviour and crime,
- create pathways considering desire lines.

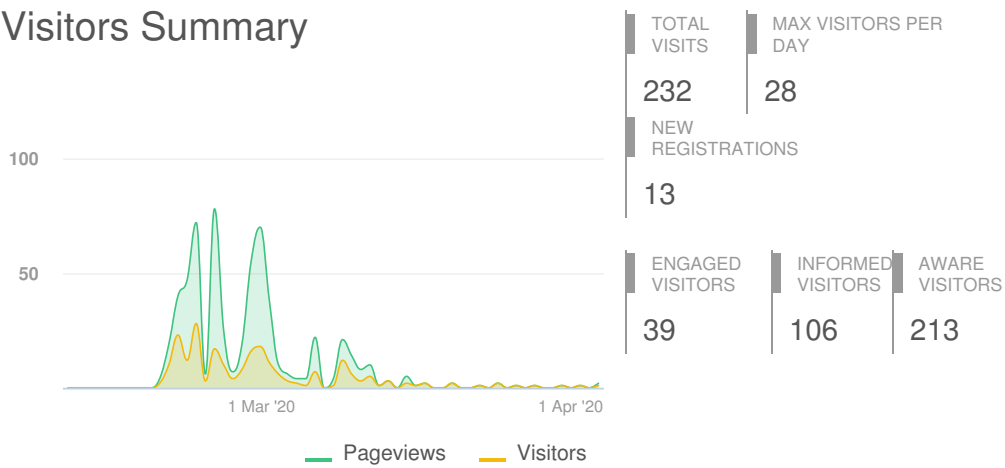
Question 4.

Is there anything we have missed?

- detailed information for users of the underpass with disability (mobility issues in particular),
- the current retail units that will be lost should be relocated within the town first,
- cycle route through the underpass,
- innovative, fun and creative lighting,
- water feature or a clock,
- antisocial behaviour has to be tackled in the town centre as the priority.

2. Grays High Street and Shopping Centre

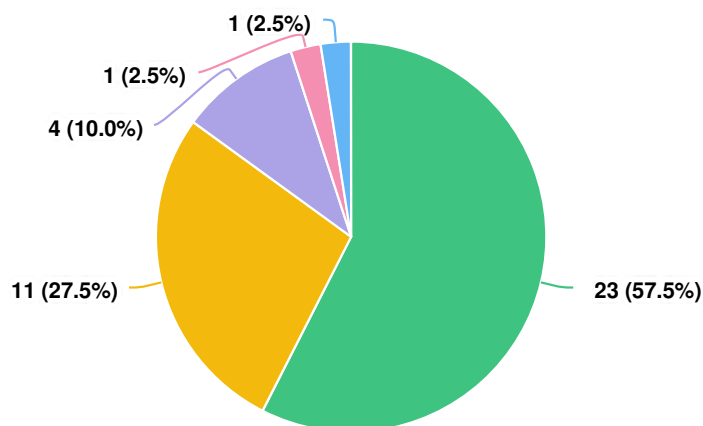
Visitors Summary



Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 102	Contributors 39	CONTRIBUTIONS 42
---------------------	------------------------	-------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

42 respondents participated in the survey.

57% 'strongly agreed' and 27% 'agreed' with the scheme. 29 respondents provided written feedback to Questions 3 & 4.

Some of the key comments include:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- create a better offer that caters for needs of everyone,
- low-end shops such as betting shops, pawn shops and pound-stretcher shops are not what the public wants,
- create a social area with bars, restaurants and cafes and family friendly places in the town centre e.g soft play,
- provide better parking options to encourage more people into the town centre,
- increase security,
- improve shop fronts and make them coherent,
- improve public realm on the High Street,
- better utilise the old cinema building, as e.g a leisure complex or a youth hub which would bring better social value rather than a pub,
- provide 'mini parks' where people can sit, take a break, have a chat, drink a cup of coffee, read a book,
- provide a band stand for performances,
- introduce more greenery; trees and flowers.

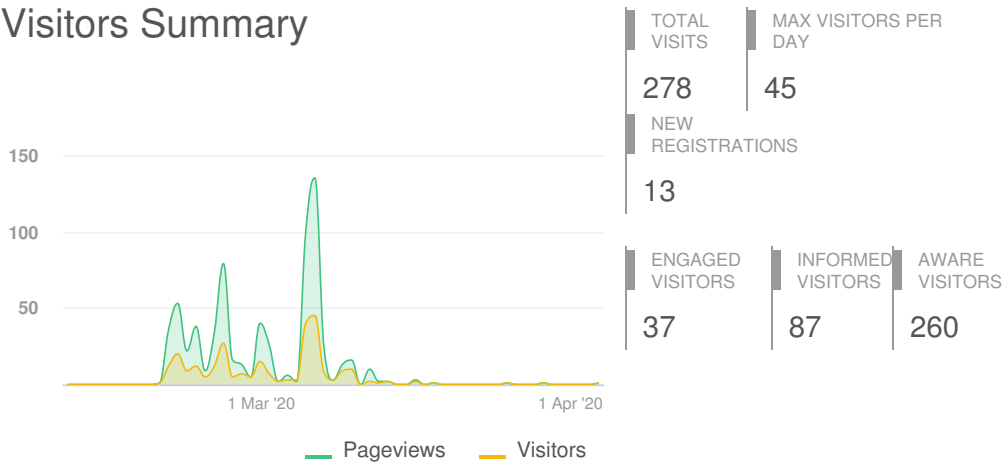
Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

- cycle access and cycle storage in the town centre, especially at the station,
- more policing in the town, security in the centre is the priority,
- a credible night time economy plan.

3. Thames Side Complex

Visitors Summary

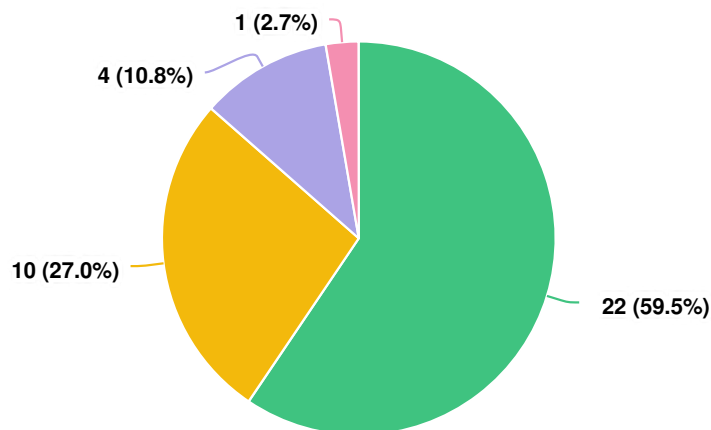


Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 128	Contributors 37	CONTRIBUTIONS 39
---------------------	------------------------	-------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

39 respondents participated in the survey.
59% 'strongly agreed' and 27% 'agreed' with the scheme.

28 participants provided written feedback to Questions 3 & 4.

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- ensure that the social enterprise café and community organisations remain,
- maintain library services, and expand the library
- better promotion of the museum,
- ensure that local people, current users, artists and creatives are fully engaged in this project,
- consider improving the area behind the building;
- improve wayfinding ; better signage and clearer road names,
- brighter and lighter street lighting,
- increasing the amount of trees / greenery in the area,
- ensure regular maintaining of public spaces.

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

- Thurrock is a growing community and deserves a larger theatre suitable for all the professional/ amateur productions,
- ' A nice cafe. Affordable and convenient, with Sunday opening. 'I have to head into London for brunch. I want to do that in my own area. I want to feel a part of Grays not just someone who lives here'

4. Grays Beach Park and Kilverts Field

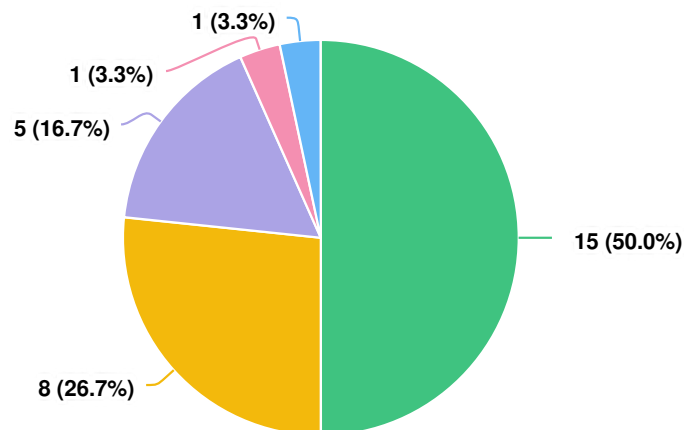
Visitors Summary



Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 98	Contributors 29	CONTRIBUTIONS 30
--------------------	------------------------	-------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30 respondents participated in the survey.

50% 'strongly agreed' and 27% 'agreed' with the scheme.

24 participants provided written feedback; The key comments are as follows:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- by involving Thurrock yacht club,
- by expanding Grays Marina,
- creation of a heritage trail,
- food and drink offer on the river,
- outdoor exercise area in the summer, like yoga or boot camp,
- better lighting along the river walk,
- Introduce better cycling routes,
- adding CCTV to ensure safety,
- integration and acknowledgement of the natural environment and wildlife.

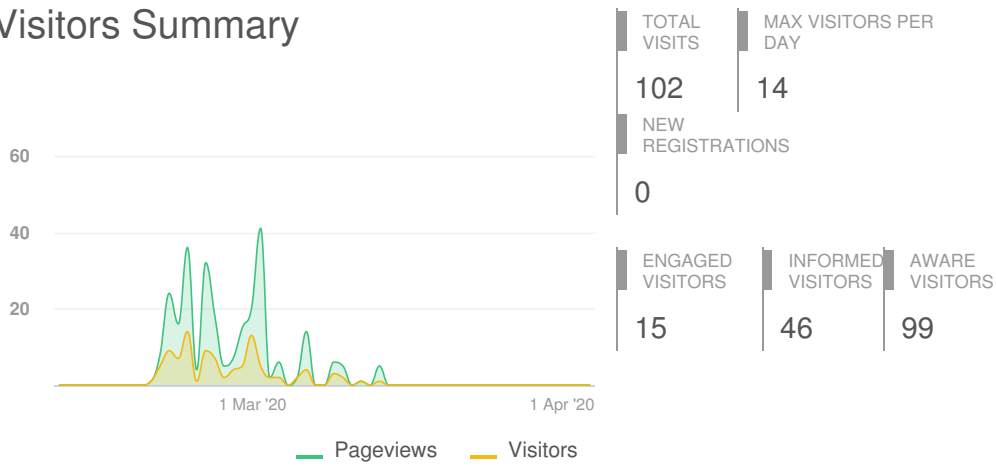
Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

- this project would attract more visitors and therefore more parking would be required,
- wheelchair/accessible access,
- consideration of the yacht club and how it might feature in plans.

5. Grays Bus Station

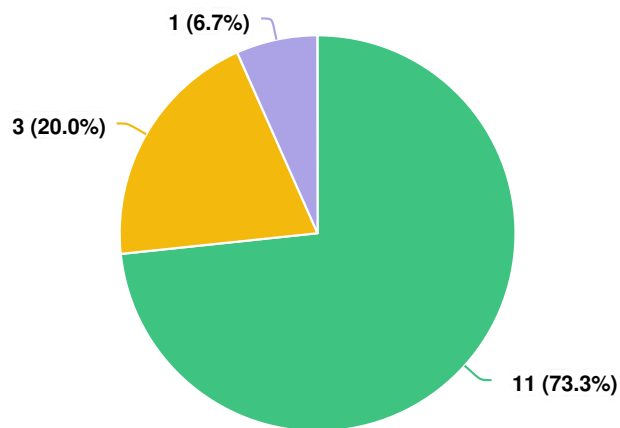
Visitors Summary



Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 27	Contributors 15	CONTRIBUTIONS 15
--------------------	------------------------	-------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

15 respondents participated in the survey. 73% 'strongly agreed' and 20% 'agreed' with the scheme. 8 participants provided written feedback; The key comments are as follows:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- ensure that a strong public arts strategy is in place that links all of the redevelopment together,
- wide pavements to ensure those walking and those waiting for buses are able to do so without issues,
- allow space for car passengers' drop off and pick up,
- better signage or wayfinding information,
- improved shelters DDA accessible,
- better CCTV .

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

- focus not only on buses in Thurrock but also cycling,
- all train stations in Thurrock should have a huge amount of secure and safe cycle storage to encourage commuters to cycle to stations.

IMPROVE MOVEMENT AND ACCESS AROUND THE TOWN

There are four projects included in the 'improve movement and access around the town' section of the consultation as follows:

- 6. Seabrooke Rise Walk,
- 7. Derby Road Bridge,
- 8. Clarence Road,
- 9. Titan Walk.

There were 5 respondents who participated in the survey.

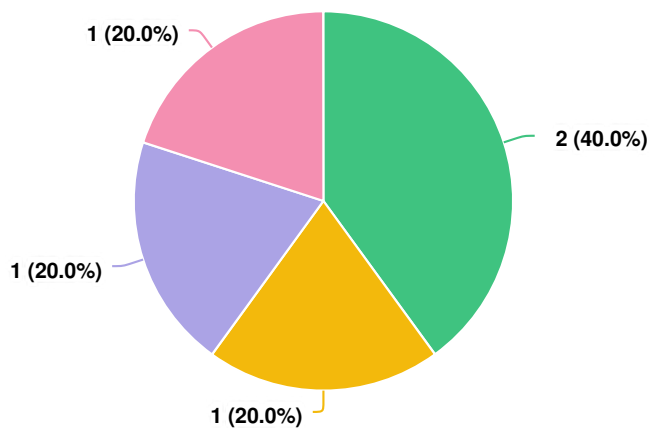
6. Seabrooke Rise Walk

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 14	Contributors 5	CONTRIBUTIONS 5
--------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Do you support this proposal?

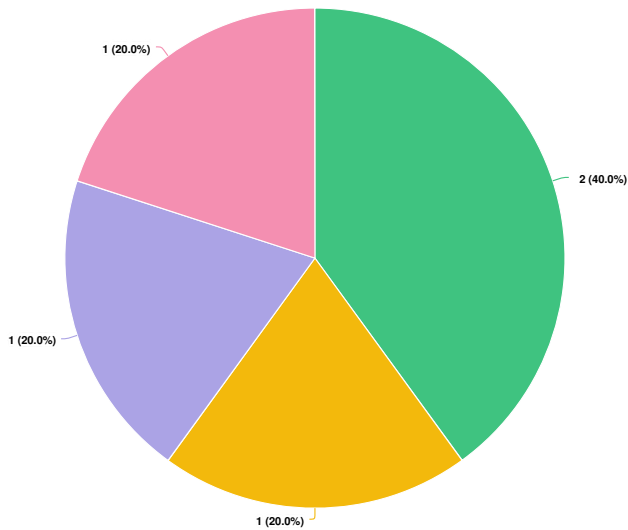


Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. Derby Road Bridge

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

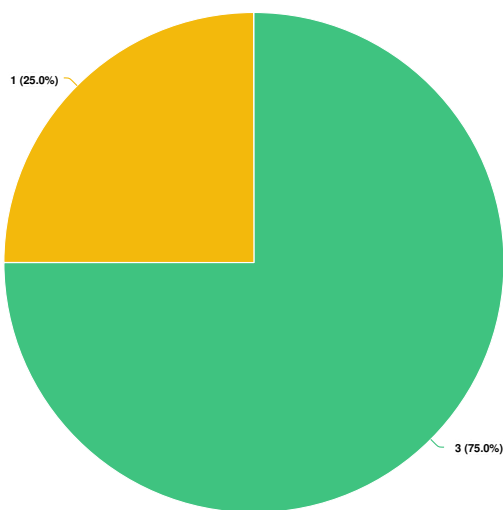


Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. Clarence Road

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?



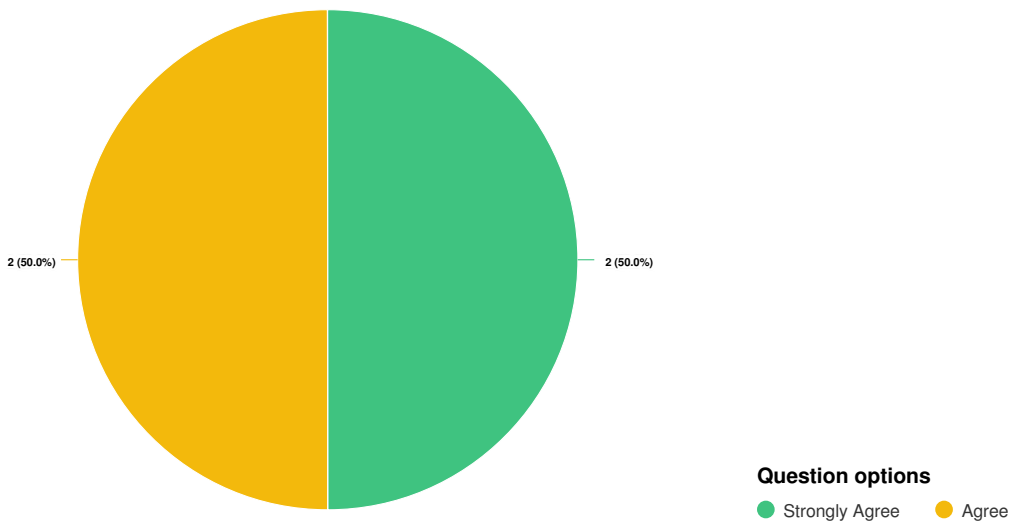
Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

9. Titan Walk

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?



6. Seabrooke Rise Walk - 40% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 20% 'agreed' with the proposal.

7. Derby Road Bridge - 40% 'strongly agreed' and 20% 'agreed'.

8. Clarence Road - 75% 'strongly agreed' and 25% 'agreed'.

9. Titan Walk- 50% 'strongly agreed' and 50% 'agreed' with the proposed improvements.

There were 3 participants who provided written feedback to Question 2;

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

- projects should answer needs of visually impaired people, who should be consulted,
- the proposals for Clarence Road should include, cleaning up and surfacing the back alleyways of the roads off Clarence Road e.g. Bradbourne and Grays.

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

There are three projects in the 'enhancing the quality of the public realm' section of the consultation;

- 10. London Road
- 11. South Essex College temporary building
- 12. Grays Town Park

There were 8 respondents who participated in the survey.

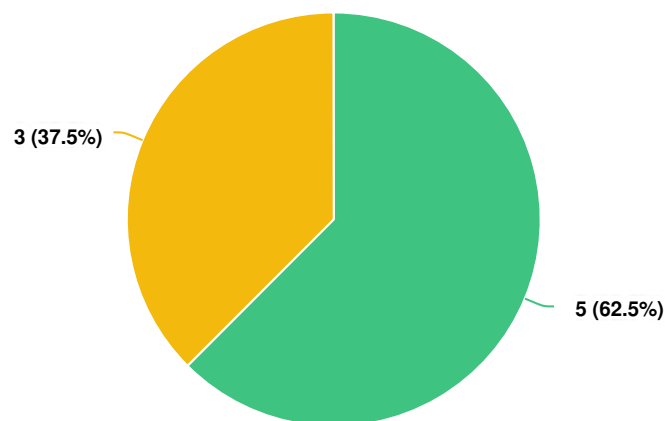
10. London Road

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 11	Contributors 8	CONTRIBUTIONS 8
--------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Do you support this proposal?

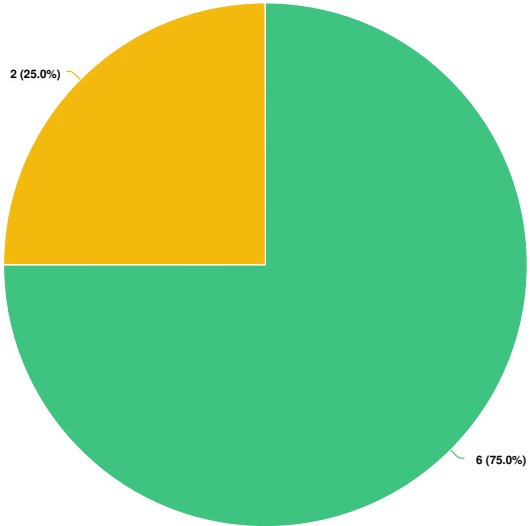


Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

11. South Essex College temporary building

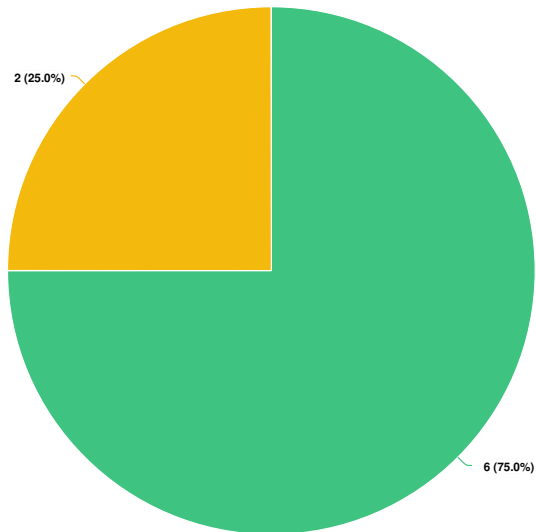
Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?



Question options
● Strongly Agree ● Agree

12. Grays Town Park

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?



Question options
● Strongly Agree ● Agree

10. London Road - 72% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 38% 'agreed' with the proposal.

11. South Essex College temporary building - 75% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 25% 'agreed' with the proposal.

12. Grays Town Park - 75% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 25% 'agreed' with the proposal.

There were 4 participants who provided written feedback; The key comments were:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

LONDON ROAD:

- more focus should be made on encouraging residents to walk or cycle to the Park and Town Centre. Pathways and cycle routes need to be safer for residents to use.

GRAYS TOWN PARK:

- having a place to hire sports equipment may make better use of the courts that are already there,
- the council should be doing more to retain the original features of this Victorian park,
- include the Bridge Road area in this design and to improve the access from there to deter people breaking the fence and walking down the grass,
- poor lighting should be improved.

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

LONDON ROAD:

- more and better bicycle parks, for residents to leave their bikes,
- more benches or resting areas along routes to the park and then from the park to town, for elderly or people with disabilities to stop and rest,
- reduce the amount of traffic through the Town Centre.

GRAYS TOWN PARK:

- better planting, lighting and stone bench that could be used as picnic tables might see this area used more.
- create a destination that is not just a spring or summer option, see "e.g The Quay at Lakeside,
- include a small cafe,
- a key problem in and around the park is parking for the mosque - this could be removed to where the temporary building is with provision of off street parking.

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

There are three projects in this section of the consultation;

- 13. Grays Street Market
- 14. Shopfront Design Guide
- 15. Digital and SMART Grays

There were 7 respondents who participated in the survey.

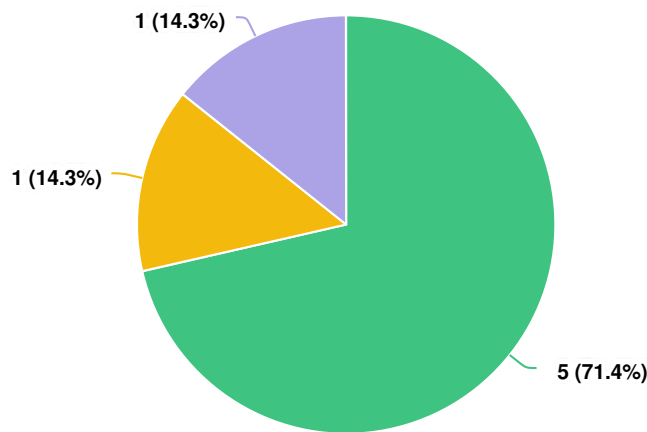
13. Grays Street Market

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 10	Contributors 7	CONTRIBUTIONS 7
--------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Do you support this proposal?

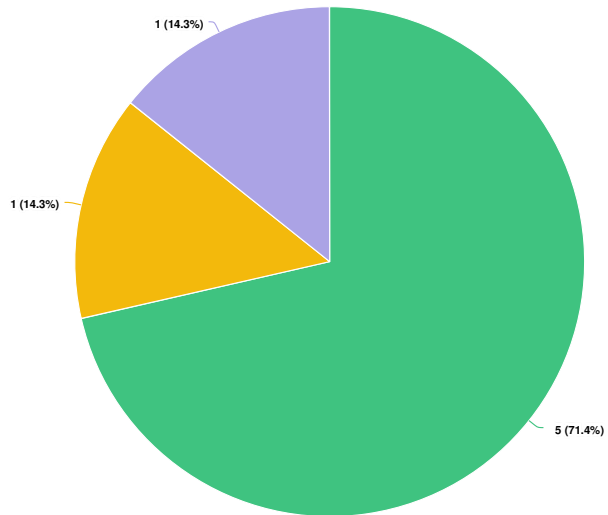


Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Shopfront Design Guide

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

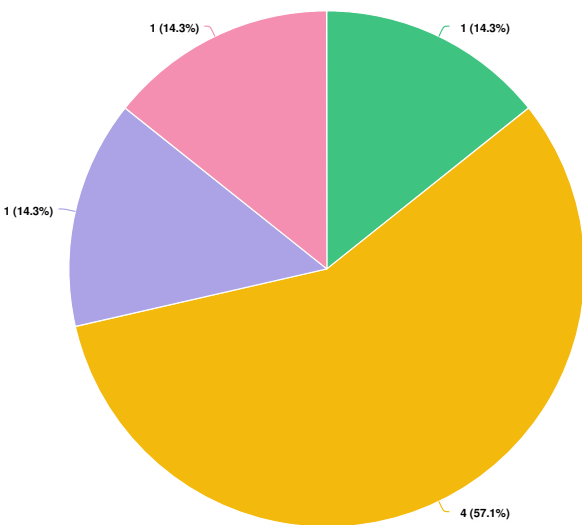


Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree

15. Digital and SMART Grays

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. Grays Street Market - 71% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 14% 'agreed' with the proposal.

14. Shopfront Design Guide - 71% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 14% 'agreed' with the proposal.

15. Digital and SMART Grays - 57% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 14% 'agreed' with the proposal.

There were 6 participants who provided written feedback. The key comments were:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

GRAYS STREET MARKET:

- better markets, stalls selling more local produce,
- attract the right kind of market stalls, farmers market style, handmade objects,
- provide free parking on market days,
- include market superintendent and community policing,
- better standard and quality of stalls,
- regular farmers markets, vintage fairs and speciality events.

SHOP FRONT DESIGN:

- the current high street is too depressing, need more colour and keep it clean,
- improve shop fronts needs to be drastically improve,

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

GRAYS STREET MARKET:

- 'Push the highstreet economy towards the river. Even if people visited the markets they may never realise the river is at the end of the high street, and give people a reason to go to the riverfront.'

SHOP FRONT DESIGN:

- 'Improve the shops in Grays. Improving the look is great, but the shops also need to be something people actually want.'

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

There are three projects included in this section of the consultation;

- 16. Grays Street Art
- 17. Grays Town Centre Street Lighting
- 18. Future Lighting Projects

There were 7 respondents who participated in the survey.

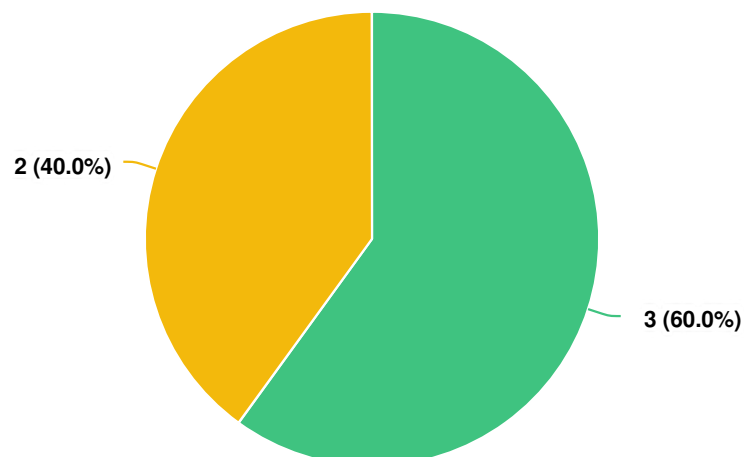
16. Grays Street Art

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 8	Contributors 5	CONTRIBUTIONS 5
-------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



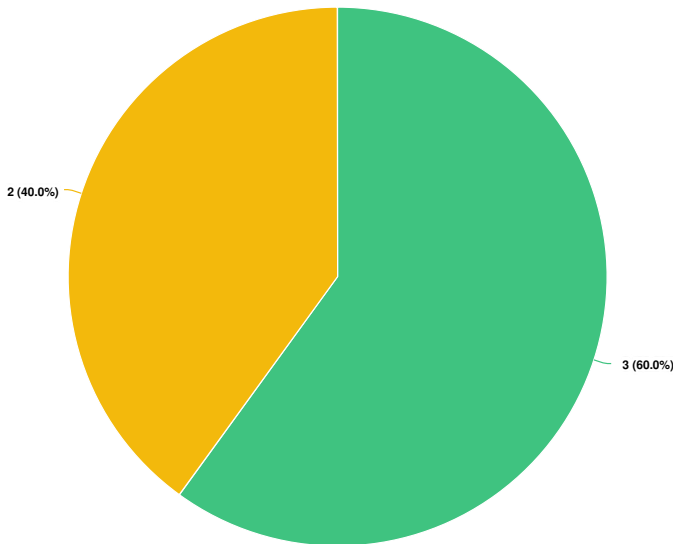
Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

17. Grays Town Centre Street Lighting

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?



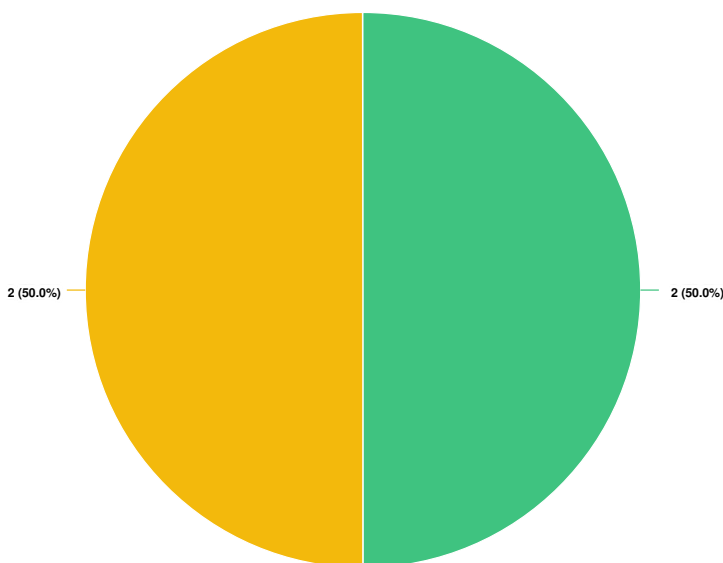
Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

18. Future Lighting Projects

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?



Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

16. Grays Street Art- 60% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 40% 'agreed' with the proposal.

17. Grays Town Centre Street Lighting - 60% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 40% 'agreed' with the proposal.

18. Future Lighting Projects- 50% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 50% 'agreed' with the proposal.

There were 5 participants who provided written feedback; The key comments were as follows:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

GRAYS STREET ART

- allow for changing displays along the lines of the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square,
- open air exhibition art performance space.

GRAYS TOWN CENTRE STREET LIGHTING

- consider areas of heritage where and older interesting buildings,
- use local artists wherever possible.

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

GRAYS STREET ART

- local communities must be involved in the co-creation of and Co-development of any public art in Grays town centre.

GRAYS TOWN CENTRE STREET LIGHTING

- there is no point lighting the State Cinema if it remains vacant.

DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACES

There are two projects in this section of the consultation;

- 19. Public Realm Design Guide
- 20. Gateway to the Town Centre

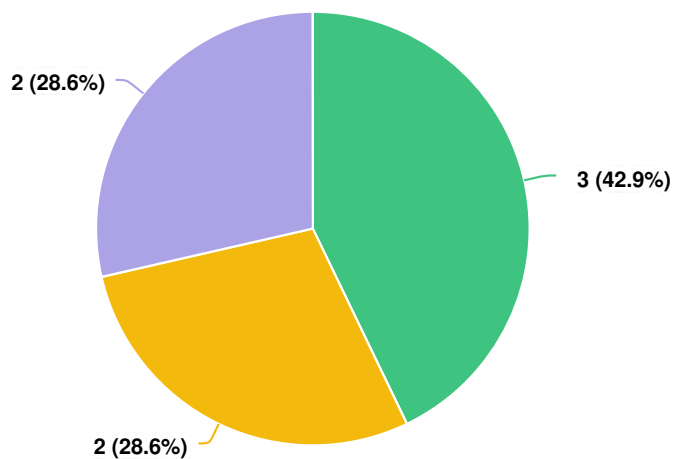
There were 7 respondents who participated in the survey.

19. Public Realm Design Guide

Question 1.
Do you support this proposal?

Visitors 17	Contributors 7	CONTRIBUTIONS 7
--------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Do you support this proposal?



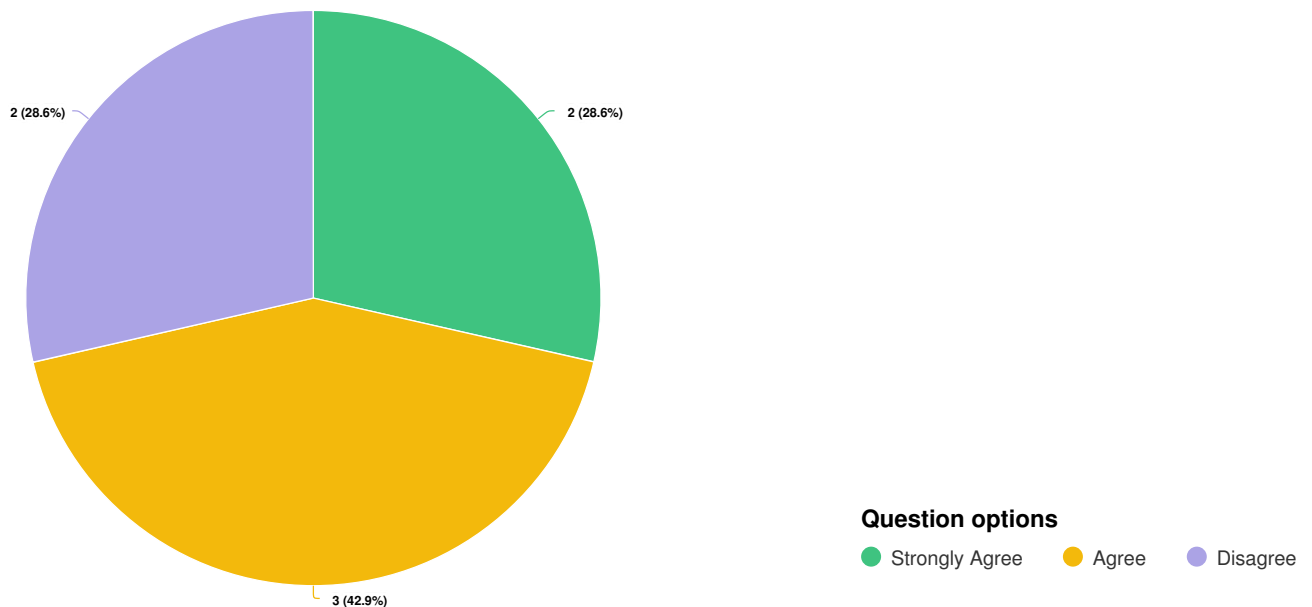
Question options

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

20. Gateway to the Town Centre

Question 1.

Do you support this proposal?



19. Public Realm Design Guide - 60% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 40% 'agreed' with the proposal.

20. Gateway to the Town Centre- 60% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 40% 'agreed' with the proposal.

There were 5 participants who provided written feedback; The key comments were as follows:

Question 2.

How can this project be further improved and why?

PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE:

- provision for cyclists to safely enter and navigate the area - segregated infrastructure.

GATEWAY TO THE TOWN CENTRE:

- transport around the town needs improvement before adding more residential properties in its heart,
- replacing of the roundabout with a cross roads and traffic light system will create further build up of traffic .

Question 3.

Is there anything we have missed?

PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE:

- assure housing developments with large amounts of tree planting and green space.
- provision for safe cycling

CONCLUSIONS

- All the 20 consultation projects have received public support.
- The vast majority of participant either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposals.
- The highest number of participants (47) responded to The Underpass project. This project has also received the highest number of written comments. Option C 'The Plaza' was chosen as the most preferred design option.
- Other projects that a large number of respondents engaged with were:
 - Grays High Street and Shopping Centre - 39 participants,
 - Thameside Complex - 37,
 - Grays Beach Park and Kilvert Field - 29
 - Grays Bus Station - 15

Notes:

- A number of participants felt it was challenging to respond to proposals because they weren't at a development stage that would provide enough information to comment on. These respondents have asked for further details.
- The generated feedback record didn't provide a clear breakdown of responses for the consultation sections where several projects were included under one heading i.e 'Improve movements and access around the town', 'Enhancing the quality of the public realm', 'Building a local economy', etc. It's been assumed that the feedback report follows the order of projects published under each heading.
- The question 2, 'How can this project be further improved and why?' published on the portal included a mistake and read 'How can this option be further improved and why?' which could have lead to miss-understandings and affected participant's responses.

This page is intentionally left blank

22 July 2020	ITEM: 13
Cabinet	
Multi-Functional Device (MFD) Contract Conversion	
Wards and communities affected: None	Key Decision: Non Key
Report of: Councillor Deborah Huelin, Portfolio Holder for Central Services and Communities.	
Accountable Assistant Director: Andy Best – Strategic Lead ICT	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark – Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Thurrock Council are currently under an existing agreement for the provision of multi-functional device (MFD) print technology. This contract runs until March 2021, with the option to extend for a further twelve months. However, in line with the Council’s future operational requirements a revised commercial agreement is sought to enable the reshaping of existing services.

The **new** contract will introduce new inkjet print technology that that will contribute towards lower operational costs, improve performance and reduce environmental impact and carbon footprint. The contractual savings will be used to implement ICT capabilities for outgoing mail-merge, on-site production of annualised mailings and rollout of the technology to Library locations in support of improved flexible working.

This contract conversion will move the commercial model to a flexible fully managed contract model, which can be adapted going forward to the changing needs of the Council and would be procured using a tender or framework approach.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Cabinet are recommended to grant ICT authority to procure a new MFD contract.

1.2 Cabinet are recommended to grant delegated authority to the Director of Finance, Governance and Property to contract award, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock ICT implemented a new agreement for MFD Print systems in March 2017, which rolled out the current Samsung devices within the office environments and Xerox devices within the Print Room. This contract with Apogee Ltd has an initial term until March 2021 with the option to extend for a further 12 months until March 2022 and currently has 82 devices deployed across the council estate.
- 2.2 The current commercial model is based on a fixed lease cost, for years 1 to 4, and variable usage rates per side of print. The current contract spend under this agreement is averaging a total of £49k per quarter or £196k per annum. With this reducing to Usage 'click rates' only for the 1 year extension period.
- 2.3 The current model provides a number of solutions areas including:
 - Fleet MFD units within operational environments across all council sites
 - High Volume Print Room MFD units at the Civic Offices
 - Public Scanning of documents at Civic Offices into Objective
 - PaperCut and AutoStore software to manage print, document release, activity logging, access control, audit reporting and scanning into Objective.
- 2.4 A total of 82 physical devices supported by PaperCut Software, with AutoStore software having been deployed in the Civic Office for public scanning of documents into Objective. All devices are fully access controlled to ensure compliance with GDPR and tracking of user activities.
- 2.5 Currently the council prints an average of 9 million side of print per annum, of which approximately 24% is printed in Colour and 76% in Mono. This represents a notable reduction from the contracted volumes when originally tendered, which averaged 10.24 million sides of print per annum.
- 2.6 It should be noted that this excludes the annualised print runs for council tax and business rates (CTAX and NNDR), which are currently produced offsite under a separate contract.
- 2.7 The new agreement would use a 'fully managed contract model' which combines the traditional lease and usage charges into a single charge based on number of prints. The advantage of this is that it will enable the council to scale down or up the number of devices required; and more importantly ensure that any additional devices required are deployed on coterminous end dates.
- 2.8 This 'fully managed contract model' will also allow for reconciliation of the number of prints which will enable the Council to benefit financially when print volumes are reduced

2.9 The new agreement will enable the Council to take advantage of advances in print technology and to procure faster, more economical devices which utilise inkjet technology and will enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint

3. Additional Identified Needs

3.1 Since the commencement of the agreement a number of additional functionality and service area requirements have been identified:

- I. Introduction of job ticketing and job redirection - so that print jobs over a specific size are automatically redirected to the print room systems. Thereby reducing the fleet device requirements and print volume, and challenging staff on the need to print large documents, rather than reviewing them electronically.
- II. Increased need for carbon footprint reduction – which can be met through the use of the latest inkjet page-wide technologies, providing professional document production with a much lower environmental impact for energy use, consumables, manufacturing and waste products.
- III. Reduction in number of devices required within the Operational locations - due to the adoption of flexible working approaches, mobile technologies and upgrading of office locations and meetings rooms conferencing capabilities to reduce printed material requirements.
- IV. Outgoing Postal Documents Mail-Merging – reducing the number of items posted in separate envelopes, through integration of printed materials into single mail-merged items. Note this will require additional software for intelligent barcoding of documents at printing stage, document mail-merging software and updated enveloping hardware.
- V. Network linked enveloping and folder unit compatible with, and controlled by, the PaperCut software for GDPR print audit trail. Enabling full GDPR audit trails from outgoing mail printing and mail-merging, through to the physical letter printing, folding and enveloping.
- VI. Technology rollout to 10 Library & Hub Locations to support improved flexible working for staff; and extend Public Scanning of documents to these locations to reduce public's need to submit documents physically at the Civic Offices.
- VII. Technology rollout to 10 Library & Hub locations to allow improved public printing support and improved income generation for Libraries from fees and charges.
- VIII. Integration of the annualised Council Tax and NNDR Tax runs into an onsite production model with full GDPR audit trails. Rather than having this fulfilled under a separate external contract model.

4. Savings

- 4.1 Introducing the new solutions would focus attention around creating savings through the following routes:
- I. Reduced energy consumption – with the inkjet solutions using much lower levels of energy both in operation and in standby mode, as they have no hot components (transfer plates) used within laser units to fix the toner to the paper.
 - II. Reduced print volumes – by introducing Job Redirection this will identify and deter the unnecessary printing of large documents, and ensure that staff are challenged not to print unnecessarily. In addition the cost of print in the print room is a lower rate.
 - III. Reduced envelop and postage costs – by mail-merging outgoing letters to reduce the sending of multiple letters to the same addresses.
 - IV. Improving GDPR document compliance and tracking, by automating the tracking of all documents sent from point of production through to final outgoing envelope. Removing a number of current manual processes and procedures.
- 4.2 The aim of this would be a targeted reduction of existing print volumes by a minimum of 10% in the first 2 years of the contract. This would be demonstrable in the new agreement by an annual true-up reduction in payments made.
- 4.3 This is considered feasible as the current agreement (which reduced the total number of deployed units) has already achieved a reduction in annual print volumes from originally 10.24 million in FY15-16 when tendered to 9.06 million per annum for the most recent twelve month period i.e. 11.5%.
- 4.4 Savings for energy consumption, postage and paper are covered in other service area budgets and are not included within the cabinet paper.

5. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 5.1 Option 1 – Continue with current contract and extend by 12 months to March 2022

Benefits

- No change to operational environments
- Allows savings on lease costs to be realised for 1 year extension period of £92.8k

Negatives

- Does not allow ICT to adapt to meet current and emerging service needs, and support the flexible working agenda

- Only achieves a limited 1 year saving
- Could result in significant costs for transition to new provider, in the event that the incumbent where not successful on contract re-tender in 2022.
- Could result in requirement to run existing solution and new solution in parallel during a transition phase. Negating the 1 year contract extension saving.

5.2 Option 2 – Procure a new fully managed contract model using a tender or framework approach. This would include the termination of the existing agreement by mutual consent, which is already in place.

Benefits

- Allows the current contract to be terminated, and new contractual model introduced to meet changed operational requirements and introduce new functionality required
- Leverages current market rates for Inkjet print technology creating a reduction of 40-50% over current usage click rates of 3.5p colour and 0.35p mono per print.
- Creates direct print cost savings which will offset costs for the additional requirements identified for mail-merge, hardware refresh and Library/Hub locations.
- Introduces a more flexible contract model, which allows units numbers to be scaled up/down to the changing operational demands in real-time; with all new devices being on co-terminus contractual terms.
- Creates a direct cost avoidance of £207k for the additional mail-merge and libraries requirements, if they were procured as separate contracts over new 5 year contract term.
- Creates a significant reduction in overall carbon footprint – up to 55% covering primary costs such as energy, and secondary costs such as paper, ink, packaging and manufacturing
- Allows a reshape of the current deployed fleet to meet changing council requirements
- Allows draw down of additional devices during the contract term on coterminous end dates.

Negatives

- Foregoes saving for 1 year extension option of £92.8k, in favour of improved saving offset against increased services

6 Financials

6.1 Option 1: Extend existing agreement by 12 months

Shown below are the current cost model for the existing agreement, invoicing is done quarterly. Under this arrangement a saving would be achieved in the 1

year extension term of the agreement by the fact that all equipment has been depreciated to zero value over the first 4 year contract term.

Cost Model years 1 to 4	Cost Per Quarter	Cost per Annum
Original Lease charges	£19,835	£79,340
Additional MFD device lease charges	£3,392	£13,568
Annualised Usage Charges	£25,763	£103,052
Annual Cost model – Years 1 to 4	£48,990	£195,960
Total 4 Year Contract Cost model		£783,840
Cost model year 5 extension	Cost Per Quarter	Cost per Annum
Combined Lease Costs	£0	£0
Annualised Usage Charges	£25,763	£103,052
Annual Cost Model – Year 5	£25,763	£103,052
Saving for 5 th year extension	(£23,227)	(£92,908)
Total 5 Year Contract Cost Model		£886,892

6.2 Option 2 – Procure a new fully managed contract model

The outline cost model for this is shown below, this includes the additional functionality required for mail-merge, Libraries, MFD refresh and additional finishing hardware; as outlined in section 3 previously.

This outline cost model is based on a ‘capitalised hardware and software charge per print’ using a combined cost per print; which baselined on current annual print volume of 9.06 million sides of print per annum results in:

New Solution Model Costings	Quarterly Print Volume	Combined cost per print	Total Quarterly Charge
Black & white charge	1,725,650	2.190p	£37,792
Colour Charges	539,850	3.718p	£20,072
Total Quarterly Charge			£57,864
Total Annual Charge			£231,456
5 Year Cost Model Charges			£1,157,280

Under this model any reduction in print numbers would be reflected in a charge reduction, done as an annual true-up as shown below. It should be noted that this reduction only applies to the print element only of the combined charge:

New Solution Model Costings	Cost per Print only
Black & white charge	1.988p
Colour Charges	1.988p

Based on the earlier section 3.2, a 10% average reduction over the term of the new contract in print volumes would create a cost reduction on the new agreement of:

New Solution Model Savings	Qtrly Print Volume	Combined cost per print	Total Quarterly Charge
Black & white charge	172,565	1.988p	£3,431
Colour Charges	53,985	1.988p	£1,073
Total Quarterly Saving			£4,504
Total Annual Saving			£18,016
5 Year Cost Model Saving			(£90,080)

This would reduce the 5 year model cost as shown below:

Description	Annual Charge	5 Year Cost Model
Combined Cost per print charges	£231,456	£1,157,280
Combined Cost per print Savings	(£18,016)	(£90,080)
Net of Savings Cost Model	£213,440	£1,067,200

7. Financial Budgets

7.1 ICT currently have a revenue budget of £227k per annum to cover print solutions technology. Based on the option 2 above, procuring a new contract would enable ICT to upgrade the services provided both internally and to the public facing libraries within existing budget envelopes.

Description	Annual Budget
Current Budget – ICT Print Technology	£227,000
Current Annual Cost model – Lease and Usage Charges	£195,960
New Annual Cost model – Combined Cost per Print – No Savings applied	£231,456
New Annual Cost model – Combined Cost per Print - Net of Savings applied	£213,440

7.2 ICT would therefore be able to introduce improved technology and solution to enable business processes and procedures, without any increase in the current revenue budget allocations.

7.3 Combined cost per print charges would remain fixed for the duration of any new agreement, avoiding annual RPI inflationary increases for the 5 year term. This represent an average of 2.9% per annum compound saving.

7.4 This would also release circa £90k of capital funding currently reserved in the Libraries Digital Modernisation programme to support introduction of further

digital solutions into the libraries environments. And allow for further digital enhancements to the public facing service delivery to be introduced.

- 7.5 Lastly, it should be noted that procuring the additional functionality as separate standalone 5 year contracts would indicatively increase the lease costs as shown below:

Description	Quarterly Lease Charge	Annual Lease Charge
Mail-Merge Solution	£3,724	£14,896
Libraries MFD Solution	£4,905	£19,620
Envelop finisher unit	£1,740	£6,960
Total Annual Lease costs	£10,369	£41,476
5 year contract lease costs		£207,380

This represents a further cost avoidance saving of £207k through combining them with the MFD contract using a 'combined cost per print' model.

8. Procurement Route

- 8.1 The preferred route to market would be a framework direct award based on business continuity and improved business service needs delivery.
- 8.2 Using an existing framework allows direct award which will reduce the implementation timescales of the above contract and defers the requirement to undertake a full procurement tender with the earlier highlighted risks.
- 8.3 Any charges relating to the existing agreement early termination by mutual consent, are confirmed as waived by the incumbent.

9. Reasons for Recommendation

- 9.1 Current service needs are not being supported fully under the existing contractual arrangements. With new hardware and software solutions required by multiple service areas being delayed or not deployed.
- 9.2 This approach enables the introduction of the new solutions required by key front-line facing service areas in a cohesive approach. There have been no contractual issues with the existing incumbent and they have consistently performed to contractual SLA.
- 9.3 This route also allows the early adoption of advanced environmentally friendly inkjet print technologies, and will directly reduce the Councils carbon footprint and environmental impact

10. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 10.1 Not applicable – this relates to internal support services

11. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

11.1 This proposal directly supports the carbon reduction & environmental reduction approaches, whilst enabling improved service delivery internally and externally.

11.2 This approach enables staff to work more flexible and be able to print from any library or Hub location, reducing the need to return to base every time documents need to be printed, copied or scanned.

12. Implications

12.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Dammy Adewole**
Senior Management Accountant – Central Services

The financial envelope required by IT would remain unchanged, whilst at the same time being able to expand the level of services provided and the number of Council operational and library locations being supported.

12.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy - Principal Solicitor**
Law & Governance

This report is seeking approval from Cabinet to tender the contract noted in the report. The proposed procurement being considered is estimated at above the relevant EU threshold for contracts of this type, and this means that there is a legal requirement to competitively tender the contract via the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) or via a compliant procurement route such as a framework agreement, and Legal Services note that this procurement will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 ('the Regulations').

Taking the above into account, on the basis of the information in this report, the proposed procurement strategy should comply with the Regulations and Council's Contract Rules.

The report author and responsible directorate are advised to keep Legal Services fully informed at every stage of the proposed tender exercise. Legal Services are on hand and available to assist and answer any questions that may arise.

12.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee – Team Manager**
Community Development and Equalities

The business case does not have any notable diversity or equality implications as this is a refresh of existing print, scan and photocopying technology already in use within the Council IT infrastructure; that takes advantage of changes in the technology & contractual options available, to reduce operational costs and environmental impacts.

Part of the proposed business case will enhance existing services within Libraries improving resident's access to reliable print and photocopying services within the 9 library locations. And will also enable staff to work more flexible using Hub and library locations to scan, copy and print documents.

12.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

13. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Business case model provided by third party – Parts of this have been reproduced in main paper with the consent in writing of all parties.

14. Appendices to the report

- none

Report Author:

Andrew Austin

Commercial Manager - IT

22 July 2020	ITEM: 14
Cabinet	
2019/20 Financial Outturn Report	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director of Finance	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Property and Governance	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The 2019/20 financial year has seen the council deliver the planned surplus of £5.800m which supported the delivery of council priorities during the year and ensures there is funding available to address the subsequent impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21. This has been supported by the delivery of planned investment returns which continue to supplement the other key funding sources to provide financial stability and ensure core services are delivered as well as discretionary priority projects.

Over the course of the 2019/20 municipal year, the Council maintained the General Fund Balance at £11.000m. The Housing Revenue Account Balance has been maintained at £2.175m.

Members should note that these balances remain the most important reserves a Council holds as they are set aside for unplanned impacts on the budget which are now being felt through the ongoing impact of the pandemic. These are some additional reserves which may provide some further financial resilience in the short term if necessary, and while the wider central government funding in response to COVID-19 remains under assessment.

When reflecting on the previous council year, services continued to be protected and Members have used the flexibility to support services during the year such allocating funding to build on the Ofsted good rating achieved in 2019/20 and to address the increases in demand in homelessness in the borough arising from recent legislative changes. The remaining funding from the surplus will now support the response to COVID-19 alongside Service Reviews which will need to balance cost savings with continued high quality service delivery.

The council continues to focus on prudent financial management to meet the financial challenges arising in services. This challenge has increased exponentially through COVID-19 and there remains significant uncertainty, for example in the stability of the adult social care market and in the longer term impact on commercial income streams.

In 2019/20 demand-led social care pressures continued to be closely managed alongside wider budget management controls, further income generation, improved efficiency measures and the reduction of non-essential spend. These challenges have been achieved while improving levels of financial resilience and delivering improved outcomes for residents.

This report provides a high level summary on the outturn for 2019/20 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Expenditure.

In summary, for the municipal year 2019/20, expenditure has been achieved within the overall budget envelope and enabled an increase to balances to mitigate some of the significant financial risk already arising in 2020/21. Capital funding continues to support the delivery of housing and regeneration priorities.

1. Recommendations

That the Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note that the General Fund net expenditure has been met within the overall budget envelope and the General Fund Balance has been maintained at £11.000m;**
- 1.2 Note that the balance on the Housing Revenue Account Reserve has been maintained at £2.175m; and**
- 1.3 Note that there was a total of £101.398m in capital expenditure and some of the key projects have been set out in section 5.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Members have received financial reports throughout the year. The month 9 report showed that the Council continued to identify potential risks to the value of £1.703m (this was after the agreed allocation from the budget surplus to reduce the overall impact of the identified pressures predominately within Children's Social Care, Homelessness and Treasury). These pressures have been fully mitigated by subsequent improvements to the council's treasury position and savings within the support service Directorates.
- 2.2 These pressures were all recognised within the budget setting for 2020/21 with additional funding being allocated to each. Through this, the Council has maintained the General Fund balance at £11m while increasing reserves to

support improvements to services in future periods and ensure financial resilience against planned changes to the funding of local authorities.

- 2.3 It should be noted the impact of COVID-19 had a minor impact in the 2019/20 outturn position but continues to be subject to detailed monitoring in 2020/21 both in terms of projected forecast positions and the wider MTFs.
- 2.4 The table below summarises the outturn position in line with financial reporting requirements, including the movement in reserves, and the prior year position to allow year on year comparison.

Net expenditure chargeable to the GF and HRA balances

	Directorate	
31-Mar-19		31-Mar-20
£'000		£'000
38,465	Adults, Housing and Health	43,086
37,678	Children's Services	41,021
650	Commercial Services	769
2,292	Corporate Costs	(2,952)
2,187	Corporate Strategy & Communications	0
21,972	Environment and Highways	22,724
10,296	Finance, IT & Legal	0
0	Finance, Governance & Property*	18,144
3,505	HR, OD and Transformation	3,927
3,798	Place	3,665
(188)	Schools	347
0	Strategy, Communications & Customer Services**	2,985
120,654	General Fund Total	133,716
(2,519)	Housing Revenue Account	5,521
(131,380)	Other Income and Expenditure	(142,241)
(13,245)	(Surplus) / Deficit	(3,007)
(21,972)	Opening General Fund and HRA Balance at 31 March 2019	(35,217)
(13,245)	Add surplus on General Fund and HRA Balance in Year	(3,004)
(35,217)	Closing General Fund and HRA Balance at 31 March 2020	(38,221)

* Finance, Governance & Property is a change in directorate heading for 2019-20 which reflects the transfer of services from the Place directorate

** Strategy, Communications & Customer Services is a change in directorate heading for 2019-20 which reflects the transfer of services from the Place directorate

2.5 It should be noted that included in the above table is £4.300m received from Central Government in the form of a grant to ease the financial burdens associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This is reflected within Corporate Costs category and is then held as a reserve for use in 2020/21.

2.6 The table above shows the entire opening and closing usable reserves of the Council. It must be stressed that a number of reserves are held for specific purposes (usually called “ear-marked” reserves) and also include those relating to maintained schools end of year balances. It should also be noted that reserves that are not held for specific purposes, such as the General Fund Balance, can provide a one-time form of mitigation and not replace budget deficits on an on-going basis.

2.7 The table below sets out the Council’s reserves by category:

31-Mar-19 £000	Reserve Category	31-Mar-20 £000
909	Education and Schools	949
(1,635)	Adults, Community and Health	(463)
(4,667)	Other Earmarked Reserves	(10,421)
(3,450)	Budget Management Reserve	(5,272)
(4,000)	Financial Resilience Reserve	(6,162)
(11,000)	General Fund Balance	(11,000)
(11,374)	HRA Related	(5,852)
(35,217)	TOTAL	(38,221)

2.8 Notes to the reserves:

- Education and Schools – This includes individual schools balances and Dedicated Schools Grant which are ring-fenced for specific use. This reflects the current deficit DSG position
- Adults, Community and Health – This includes carry forward funding from the Public Health grant and Better Care fund – these are ring-fenced for specific use
- Grant carried forward – ring-fenced grant allocations for specific use as per grant conditions
- Other earmarked reserves – This captures all other earmarked reserves including ring-fenced accounts such as building control and planning.

- Transformation Reserve – This includes the surplus funding and balances set aside to enable specific transformation projects and manage the funding and delivery of these between financial periods
- Financial Resilience Reserve – This reserve has primarily been established to manage the funding implications associated with the fair funding review and the transition into the new system of business rates retention. This anticipates a potential reduction in funding available from historic growth in the system when the business rate baselines are reset alongside wider changes to the system of funding. The reserve also enables wider financial resilience to offset any wider impacts which may emerge – i.e. there is a possible use of reserves for a “one-time” basis for pressures emerging from the COVID-pandemic, as well as any other factors the council would need to react to which may emerge.
- The General Fund Balance – the balance has been maintained to protect the Council from unmitigated budget pressures
- HRA Related – a balance of £2.175m to protect the council from unmitigated budget pressures. The remaining balance represent the capital reserves supporting existing Council programmes.

3. Front Line Service Commentary

3.1 Adults, Housing & Health

Balanced with in-year mitigation

Adults Social Care continues to operate in an ever challenging environment to deliver services within both their internal Provider Services and externally sourced care placements provisions. The demand for residential placements and support for people with learning disabilities, namely autism and challenging behaviours resulted in spend above the budgeted levels. Whilst some additional central government funding was allocated through the continued social care grant, this provided limited mitigation for the cost pressures in these key areas.

The budget has been rigorously managed through a combination of tight management of the waiting lists for Domiciliary Care and ongoing collaborative working with Health partners. This has enabled the Council to achieve one of the lowest number days of delayed discharges from hospital in the region. This is a key national indicator in tracking service user pathways through the Health and Social Care system.

Funds held within the pooled Better Care Fund further supported the directorate in their efforts to stabilise the domiciliary and residential care market but this area remains a high risk with providers experiencing ongoing issues with recruitment and retention of staff. Further investment has been

allocated as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process including the adult social care precept.

A number of new initiatives continued to be implemented in the financial year to pilot alternative ways of working and service delivery.

In the absence of the Adult Social Care Green Paper there is still uncertainty surrounding future funding levels and proposed national reforms to the sector which makes long term planning difficult. In addition, the recent pandemic will have significant long term implications on the delivery of Adult Social Care services in the future and how services are delivered.

3.2 Housing General Fund

Balanced with in-year mitigation

As a result of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and the changes to eligibility criteria for services, the Council's Housing Solutions service continued to receive increasing numbers of households presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness throughout 2019-20. Members agreed to allocate a portion of the budget surplus to this area to offset the significant budget pressure.

Alongside this and in order to establish a longer term plan to be able to meet the increased demand, the service introduced a revised staffing structure to attract a stronger and qualified workforce and strengthen the service delivery. The service also continued to consider alternative accommodation solutions to try to limit the use of expensive nightly rate accommodation and bed and breakfast facilities to both improve the quality of accommodation and reduce the cost.

3.3 Children's Services

Balanced with in-year mitigation

The Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2019 resulted in an improved rating of "Good" for the services delivered by the Local Authority to the children and families in the borough. The inspection outcome reflected the hard work and commitment by the department, further supported by the wider organisation. Additional funding from the budget surplus was allocated to support this process, as agreed by Members.

The number of Looked after Children being supported remained below 300 during the last quarter of the year (largely attributable to the dispersal of UASC across the Easter region) and the Directorate continued to focus on the use of in-house foster care placements as opposed to the more expensive independent fostering agency option. Although spend in this area remained high, there was a stabilisation of costs compared to the previous year.

As in previous years, difficulties in recruitment and retention of permanent staff, being over establishment for a number of posts and a reliance on the use of agency personnel caused an in year budget pressure. It should be noted that the levels of agency staff were lower than the previous financial year and work was undertaken to align the HR establishment list to the budget allocation to address this issue going forward.

Home to School Transport experienced significant budget pressures as a result of a combination of new contracts awarded in September 2019, increased costs for transportation to Independent Schools and an increase in numbers of pupils with Education, Health and Care plans. This continues to be an area of significant risk for Local Authorities across the country.

3.4 Environment and Highways

Delivered within budget

During 2019/20 the Directorate continued to build upon the significant investment made in the previous financial year and ensured funding allocations were in line with the key risk areas. Senior management continued to challenge non-essential spend and to further encourage residents to reduce contamination within their recycling waste.

Effective management of staffing levels provided mitigation to a number of risks identified throughout the year. Recruitment to permanent roles within Waste services reduced the levels of agency staff support in the last quarter.

The Waste contract (which is subject to a variable cost per tonne element for disposal) achieved against budget despite the fluctuating rates.

A mild winter and the use of the Thurrock based weather station allowed for more accurate local forecasting and a reduced need for gritting services than anticipated which also had a favourable impact on the budget.

Additional income was generated from the provision of parking bay suspensions in which parking bays were reserved for a specific purpose and the Local Authority charged the relevant fees.

3.5 Finance, Governance & Property

Balanced with in-year mitigation

During 2019/20 the Authority's asset management and corporate landlord functions transferred from the Place directorate into Finance, Governance & Property.

There was significant spend incurred following a number of conditions surveys across a range of buildings to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. In line with relevant legislation these costs could not be capitalised and remained a general fund pressure. A number of backdated utility charges further worsened the position but this was partially offset by increased rental income from commercial properties.

The Fraud Investigation team were unable to achieve their full income target following the decision to end their contract for work with another Local Authority. Attempts to secure alternative contracts with outside agencies had no significant budgetary impact but these plans remain in place for 2020/21.

The facilities management contract with an external supplier incurred a number of contract variations above the budgeted levels. There are plans to bring this service back under Local Authority management in 2020/21.

ICT incurred a number of software maintenance costs above expected levels which fell outside the scope for capitalisation and consequently became a general fund charge.

3.6 HR, OD & Transformation

Delivered under budget

Non-essential spend was tightly controlled across the directorate, a number of learning and development events were rescheduled and vacancies held to reduce the budgetary impact in 2019/20.

Staff training funded through the apprentice levy was maximised therefore reducing the level of spend allocated against the central training budget. The move to on-line training offers also led to a decrease in spend whilst still maintaining a diverse programme of courses.

The costs of the additional resources required to support the pay review project and the extra capacity needed in the Information Governance Team were absorbed and funded through vacant posts held elsewhere within the Directorate.

The costs associated with the continued roll out of Oracle Cloud were fully capitalised to reduce revenue costs pressures.

3.7 Place

Balanced with in-year mitigation

Overall development income was lower than expected and when combined with consultancy costs related to the Local Plan this caused a significant pressure for the directorate. Income targets and staffing costs have been reviewed as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

The appropriate recharging of staffing time against the relevant regeneration capital project ensured the true cost of the scheme had been reflected for the year and there was no adverse effect on the revenue position. Additional staffing resource required to support the wider Place delivery service was funded through a combination of vacant post slippage and corporate funding.

The introduction of Performance Planning Agreements in which applicants pay a fee to access support for their scheme's planning application process achieved extra revenue in relation to the anticipated levels.

The annual production of the pantomime at the Thameside Theatre received lower ticket sales compared to the previous year and this impacted income levels. As a result, the complex were unable to reach a break even position for the year.

3.8 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Nationally, all local authorities and the education system have struggled to meet the additional demand for payments in support of children with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans; for out of borough placements, independent special school residential placements and for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) top up payments.

The high needs block remained a significant issue for Thurrock, with the number of EHCP's increasing by 4.2%, in 2019/20. This has required both additional top up funding to be paid to Schools and Academies and an increase in demand for specialist placements.

The DSG has a carried forward deficit of £2m. This is a decrease of £0.6m from 2018/19. Discussions continue with the ESFA and the Schools Forum on options available to reduce demand for EHCP's and to increase Thurrock's Local Offer. An updated recovery plan is to be submitted to the ESFA by the 30th June.

3.9 Other Income and Expenditure

The Council's investment approach and continued commercial focus has performed and yielded above expected returns in 2019/20, enabling greater investment in services and improving the level of useable reserves, and thus, increase the authority's financial position and resilience.

3.10 Housing Revenue Account

The HRA was successful in year in maintaining the overall financial outturn, and the level of general reserves in line with the HRA business plan. Throughout the service, expenditure was contained within the budgeted level, but there were some pressures as a result of additional, essential electrical testing works carried out as part of the repairs and maintenance

programme for the year. These were mitigated by staff vacancies which were managed throughout the year.

Rental income exceeded expectation due to a reduction in Right-To-Buy sales. As in previous years this was used to offset a requirement to increase bad debt provision arising from an increase in tenant arrears due to roll out of Universal Credit and reduction of direct Housing Benefit payments. This situation will continue to be monitored closely, particularly in light of the recent situation regarding the pandemic, as the number of claimants continues to rise

There was an increase in the number of water bills received as a result of changes to the supplier agreement on empty properties.

It is essential going forward that the HRA continues to maximise its income in order to sustain the levels of service provided, and to meet new challenging demands as a result of changes in legislation and stock maintenance requirements.

4. Capital Programme

- 4.1 Total capital expenditure for 2019/20 amounted to £101.398m. A summary of this expenditure analysed by service, is set out below and also shows the source of financing.

Directorate	Budget £000	Total Spend £000	Variance £000
Adults, Housing and Health	3,723	1,618	(2,105)
Children's Services	11,870	9,825	(2,045)
Environment and Highways	9,813	6,714	(3,099)
Finance, Governance and Property	6,896	3,344	(3,552)
Housing Revenue Account	29,567	28,656	(911)
HR, OD & Transformation	4,694	3,277	(1,417)
Strategy, Communications & Customer Services	151	34	(117)
Place	50,530	47,930	(2,600)
Total	117,244	101,398	(15,846)

Source of Finance	Budget £000	Total Spend £000	Variance £000
Prudential Borrowing	36,981	26,037	(10,944)
Usable Capital Receipts	353	302	(51)
Earmarked Usable Capital Receipts	5,521	5,521	0
Major Repairs Reserve	10,540	10,540	0
Grants	15,272	11,816	(3,456)
Other Grants	36,138	35,788	(350)
Developers Contributions	5,249	4,204	(1,045)
Revenue Contribution to Capital	0	0	0
Reserves	7,190	7,190	0
Total	117,244	101,398	(15,846)

4.2 The capital outturn position includes expenditure supporting the delivery of the following major projects in 2019/20:

Highways Infrastructure:

A combined total of £41.5m spent has been spent on:

- Highways improvements including major drainage and bridge construction costs for the widening of the A13 between the Orsett Cock and Manorway interchanges
- Works to the Stanford le Hope rail interchange,
- Cycle and bus improvements to Tilbury station
- Works to Orsett Road Grays to enable two way traffic
- Drainage works at Buckles Lane in South Ockendon.

The widening of the A13 continues to face significant cost pressures with a current forecast of the project now expecting to cost of up to £115m, following the detailed VFM study and the plan put into place to resolve issues identified on commencement of the project (i.e. drainage issues, civils issues). Further pressures may arise from the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and constructive discussions to mitigate these risks continue between the Council and the lead contractor. The Council continues to work with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to seek financial support for additional costs incurred. At the revised forecast cost the project continues to meet the value for money criteria set by the DfT.

The Stanford le Hope rail interchange project plan has been subject to a recent review to develop an improved solution with greater accessibility. This

has been made possible by the acquisition of land adjacent to the site which now enables the revised design to be implemented. This also reduces the projected costs under the original design.

Housing:

HRA new build schemes to the value of £15.5m have been delivered in year. This included the completion of the Topps Club development and further spend on the Calcutta Rd and Claudian Way sites.

A further £12.3m has been spent on the continued transformation of council homes, which includes the replacement of kitchens, bathrooms, electrics, boilers, windows and roofs.

Other Services

- £5.4m has been spent on the St Clere's school expansion with a further £2m spent on Tilbury Manor, Corringham Primary and Orsett Heath free school.
- £1.5m spent on the development of the Aveley Community Hub, completion and opening due in 2020/21.
- £1.0m spend on environmental improvements including works to war memorials, improvements to burial grounds and open spaces.

4.3 As at 31 March 2020, the Council had authorised expenditure in future years of £15.8m. In addition a further £189.4m had been previously authorised for use in 2020/21 to 2022/23, giving a total future years' commitment of £205.2m.

This includes:

- £50.0m on East Facing access roads to the A13 from Lakeside;
- £18.7m on housing new build developments;
- £16.4m on widening of the A13;
- £12.8m on the Purfleet redevelopment;
- £12.5m on improvements to Stanford Le Hope rail/bus interchange;
- £12.3m on school expansions;
- £8.3m on a 21st Century Care Home;
- £6.8m on improvements to Grays South; and
- £5.0m on the expansion of the Riverside Business Centre.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 The report presents the financial outturn position for 2019/20. The position will inform the preparation of the financial statements.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

6.1 There has been no consultation on this report. The figures are a matter of fact.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

7.1 This report presents the financial outturn for 2019/20 which supported delivery of the council's priorities.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**
Finance Manager

Council officers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the Council can contain spend within its available resources. Regular budget monitoring reports will continue to come to Cabinet and be considered by the Directors' Board and management teams in order to maintain effective controls on expenditure during this period of enhanced risk.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. This report provides an update and allows members to review the financial outturn in 2019/20.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

There are no specific diversity and equalities implications as a result of this report.

8.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- NA

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

- N/A

10. **Appendices to the report**

- NA

Report Author

Jo Freeman

Finance Manager

Management Accounting

Corporate Finance

22 July 2020	ITEM: 15
Cabinet	
Report from Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Councillor Robert Gledhill, Leader and Portfolio Holder Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

In early 2018, the Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together with other local authorities in South Essex through a partnership collectively known as the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA).

This report sets out ASELA's intention to engage with Central Government regarding the agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver: new jobs and better jobs; new transport infrastructure; and accelerate the delivery of new homes that are essential to support a growing economy.

ASELA have also begun work to consider and explore the most appropriate and effective future governance arrangements to deliver on this potential and shared ambitions and a further report on this will be considered in due course.

1. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1.1 Note ASELA's intention to immediately engage with Central Government ahead of the autumn Spending Review, regarding the economic agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver new jobs, new transport infrastructure, new homes, and the future governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for its existing, and new, residents and businesses as set out in the 'Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020' at Enclosure No. 2;**

- 1.2 **Note the work commenced by ASELA to begin to consider and explore the most appropriate and effective future governance arrangements to realise South Essex's full economic and social potential and shared ambitions as set out in the independent Review of Governance in South Essex at Enclosure No. 3. This report does not seek approval or endorsement of any specific governance proposals; and**
- 1.3 **Note that a further report will be presented later in the calendar year to provide an update on the outcome of the discussions with Central Government and any proposals for more formal interim governance arrangements for ASELA to ensure transparency and accountability.**

2 Introduction and Background

- 2.1 As referred to above, the Council signed a MOU in early 2018 to work together with other local authorities in South Essex through a partnership collectively known as the Association of South Essex Local Authorities ("ASELA" or "Partner Authorities").
- 2.2 The work of ASELA has been overseen by ongoing governance that has included monthly meetings of the authorities' Leaders and Chief Executives.
- 2.3 The report asks the Council to note the recent and planned activity of ASELA and that a further report will be presented to the Council later in the year.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The report from ASELA at Appendix 1 provides an update on work it has recently undertaken and its planned engagement with Central Government over the next few months. Cabinet is only being asked to note the report and is not being asked to discharge any of the authority's functions.
- 3.2 ASELA's governance arrangements currently have no direct formal basis and arise from the MOU and the wider joint working. Part of the ongoing work is to assess whether there are more appropriate forms of governance for the future arrangements of ASELA.
- 3.3 All formal decisions for the Council will be subject to future consideration through the relevant decision making frameworks.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 This report updates the Council on the activity which has been undertaken by ASELA and its intended work in the coming months. Cabinet is asked to note this in order to be aware of and informed about this work.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report has been developed jointly between the constituent ASELA authorities.
- 5.2 Should the proposed work of ASELA progress with a suggestion for any forms of governance changes, these will be considered through the Council's formal decision making framework including consultation with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 5.3 ASELA is undertaking public engagement to inform its wider consideration of the different forms of governance and the potential formation of a Combined Authority.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The report from ASELA refers to the economic agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver new jobs, new transport infrastructure, new homes, and the future governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for its existing, and new, residents and businesses as set out in the 'Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020'.
- 6.2 This prospectus links strongly with the Council's own agenda developing the programme across the three priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**
Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

The report has no direct legal implications, it should be noted that the various proposed forms of governance under consideration will all require each of the authorities to consider this through their own existing governance structures and that in some cases (such as Combined Authority) there would need to be the support of Central Government to proceed.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct diversity implications arising from this report. The aim of ASELA is for the Partner Authorities to collaborate to secure greater prosperity for all residents and communities within the South Essex sub-region regardless of any protected characteristics.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other specific relevant considerations associated with consideration of this report.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None other than those identified in the attached report.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: ASELA report on the Future Governance Arrangements to Realise the Full Potential of South Essex

Report Author:

Ian Hunt
Assistant Director Law and Governance
Legal and Democratic Services

Appendix 1
UPDATE REPORT FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH ESSEX LOCAL
AUTHORITIES (ASELA)

Enclosures: Enclosure No. 1 – ASELA Memorandum of Understanding
Enclosure No. 2 – South Essex Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020
Enclosure No. 3 – Review of Governance in South Essex

Executive Summary

In early 2018, the following councils: Basildon Borough Council; Brentwood Borough Council; Castle Point Borough Council; Essex County Council; Rochford District Council; Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (see **Enclosure No. 1**) to work together through a partnership collectively known as the Association of South Essex Local Authorities ("ASELA" or "Partner Authorities").

The aim of ASELA is for the Partner Authorities to collaborate to secure greater prosperity for all residents and communities within the South Essex sub-region. Despite limited funding and resource, the authorities are working closely together on a number of projects. It has become clear however, that South Essex needs long term investment and greater control over decisions that affect local people, if it going to realise its full potential.

This report therefore, sets out ASELA's intention to engage with Central Government regarding the agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver, new jobs and better jobs, new transport infrastructure and accelerate the delivery new homes that are essential to support a growing economy. A document that summaries the proposals, the 'Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020' is attached at **Enclosure No. 2**.

ASELA have also recently initiated and commenced work to begin to consider and explore the most appropriate and effective future governance arrangements to deliver on this potential and shared ambitions. A preliminary review which considers the various governance options is attached at **Enclosure No. 3** for Members information.

Recommendations

That Partner Authorities:

- 1. Note ASELA's intention to immediately engage with Central Government ahead of the autumn Spending Review, regarding the economic agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver new jobs, new transport infrastructure, new homes, and the future governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for its existing, and new, residents and businesses as set out in the 'Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020' at Enclosure No. 2;**
- 2. Note the work commenced by ASELA to begin to consider and explore the most appropriate and effective future governance arrangements to realise South Essex's full economic and social potential and shared ambitions as set out in the independent Review of Governance in South Essex at Enclosure No. 3. This report does not seek approval or endorsement of any specific governance proposals; and**
- 3. Note that a further report will be presented later in the calendar year to provide an update on the outcome of the discussions with Central Government and any**

proposals for more formal interim governance arrangements for ASELA to ensure transparency and accountability.

Background

Since the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by all councils in January 2018, officers across the South of Essex have been working on a number of work streams to deliver the objectives that underpinned the South Essex 2050 vision.

Progress over the last two years includes:

- Pushing ahead with a strategic and statutory spatial plan – the aim is to have this complete by 2022;
- Bringing forward a framework and plan to re-design local connectivity and public transport – so that residents and businesses can go easily about their daily lives;
- Implementing a new economic and productivity strategy for the region that will locally deliver a significant uplift in economic value over the next ten years – it will form part of the local industrial strategy for South East Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Enabling digital infrastructure and connectivity through the Full Fibre network programme with DCMS, and exploring with Strathclyde University and DCMS, the potential to be leaders in 5G technology for an urban and rural area;
- Focusing on re-energising the town centres – so that they become a blend of commercial, residential and retail space;
- Creating a housing delivery plan in conjunction with Homes England and in line with previously set local SHNA targets set by government – to transform housing delivery in the region; and
- Developing an “impact’ investment fund to attract private sector finance to commercial schemes – the focus of this report.

It has become clear however, that if the full potential of South Essex is to be realised for all communities then the region needs a bigger and stronger relationship with Government and the private sector. The huge impact that COVID 19 is having on our businesses has further served to illustrate that it is important to act now. This has led to the development of the proposals that ASELA propose to discuss with Government.

The ASELA Growth and Recovery Prospectus

South Essex is an important economy locally and nationally. There is however, a significant amount of levelling up that is required in order for it to realise its full potential. Substantial long-term investment and greater powers are needed, to tackle the challenges facing the area, including education and skills attainment, levels of productivity and average weekly wages for jobs in the local area. Productivity (measured as GVA per job) is lower in South Essex than nationally and any place on the periphery of London. While local earnings are boosted by some residents out-commuting to earn higher salaries elsewhere, particularly in London, workplace earnings in South Essex are notably lower than in comparable local areas. Furthermore transport and connectivity in the region needs to be transformed, providing a viable, deliverable and resilient transport system. The current main road artery system and the two major rail routes have historically operated at, or over, capacity. This has a significant impact on productivity and the way people are able to go about their everyday lives.

A range of new interventions are required to tackle these underlying systemic challenges.

The significant opportunity for South Essex to create greater prosperity and quality of life for all its residents and for the benefit of the UK. With an infrastructure led approach to inclusive and sustainable growth, it provides a rich culture, space and attractive places to live. Work is underway to develop a bold and ambitious economic plan to:

- by 2050 to grow its contribution to the UK economy by £15bn
- to create 100,000 new jobs by 2050.
- to help 50,000 businesses to grow and increase their productivity.
- to achieve combined benefits to the Exchequer of £0.5bn per annum from reduced unemployment and increased business rates by 2050.
- to ensure its businesses and residents recover from the impact of COVID 19 and as many of the 12,000 jobs at risk are replaced by 2022.
- to ensure that all new development is underpinned by infrastructure and especially social infrastructure including education and health services.
- to build an economy that is enabled by the strongest digital network for a mixed rural and urban area in the UK.
- to work with partners to establish a Freeport within South Essex.
- to create an integrated public transport system that puts active travel and decarbonised transport at its heart, enabled by a package of transport investment.
- to unlock £5bn of private sector investment.
- to develop places people want to live and enjoy life.
- to create over 5,000 work opportunities for young people aged 16-24 per annum, and 5,000 apprenticeships per annum in the next ten years.
- to deliver a total of 96,000 new homes, including 29,000 affordable homes for key workers, by 2038 – as determined for each local authority by the already agreed strategic assessment of housing need.
- to become carbon zero region by 2040, utilising a combination of innovative energy technology, minimising harm caused by travel and reshaping why and how we move, and designing in the highest levels of energy efficiency in our town planning and building design.

ASELA intends to engage with Central Government over the next few months regarding the agenda for the South Essex region, as set out in the 'Growth and Recovery Prospectus 2020' at **Enclosure No. 2**.

Leadership, decision making and accountability

ASELA Leaders have recognised that in order to deliver the emerging strategic objectives and realise the opportunity that exists in South Essex, effective and appropriate governance arrangements are essential to underpin and enable delivery.

ASELA recently commissioned a review of the existing governance arrangements and the different governance options that exist. A copy of the preliminary review report is set out in **Enclosure No.3**, for Members information. The independent report identifies that the only viable option to deliver the scale of ambition and priorities and provide the area with significant new powers and funding to increase opportunities and living standards through inclusive

growth and productivity improvements would be a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor. This report does not seek approval or endorsement of any specific proposals associated with establishment of a Combined Authority, at this time. Nor is there any intention that constituent council functions should be removed from the constituent councils, with the exception of creating a single strategic transport plan for the area. In particular, sovereignty of local councils over planning considerations and decisions will remain with the local authority. Where existing functions or resources currently held by the constituent authorities are to be shared with a Combined Authority, this must be agreed by the constituent councils.

The establishment of any new South Essex Combined Authority would be subject to the outcome of discussions with Government, ratification by each Council and proceeding through the steps necessary to establish a new Combined Authority as set out below.

It is important to note that the Government have clearly indicated their intention to publish a Devolution White Paper in the autumn which it is anticipated will reaffirm the Government's commitment to the establishment of Combined Authorities with a Directly Elected Mayor. It will of course be essential to consider and reflect on the contents of the Devolution White Paper and what the impacts might be on the future governance arrangements in South Essex and progression of the matters referred to in this report.

ASELA intends to report further to all Partner Authorities later in the year to provide an update on the outcome of discussions with Central Government and the impact of the White Paper.

The independent preliminary report sets out five options for exploration:

- Option 1: Strengthening the current arrangements
- Option 2: Establishing a Joint Committee
- Option 3: Establishing a Local Development Corporation
- Option 4: Establishing a Combined Authority
- Option 5: Establishing a Combined Authority with a directly elected Mayor

The detail of the independent review can be read in enclosure 3 but for ease of reference a summary is provided below.

Strengthening the current arrangements

The current arrangements in South Essex have historically made it challenging to have a single voice for South Essex. The coherence of South Essex in terms of economy, housing, transport and infrastructure means that it is essential that some form of collaborative governance arrangements for the area are put in place.

The current arrangements lead to an overall picture of fragmentation which is a barrier to:

- Delivering a long term strategy;
- Exercising the necessary powers and resources;
- Being trusted by government to receive devolved powers and resources.

Joint Committee

Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables two or more local authorities to set up a Joint Committee to discharge their functions jointly. In this case the joint committee could be established by the seven councils in South Essex or by a sub-set of them. Joint Committees, once established, may be decision-making or advisory and while an “accountable body” is generally appointed to manage the committee and its functions, it has no legal status.

A joint committee would go some way to enhance the transparency and accountability issues ASELA seeks to address in the autumn. The review summarised the weaknesses of a joint committee model as:

- It would not provide the governance and accountability necessary to manage the powers and resources that South Essex is seeking from government;
- It can only use powers devolved to it from the councils that create it, not powers devolved from government;
- It would be relatively easy for one or more councils to leave the committee, undermining its integrity;
- Links with business would be relatively weak: the LEP for example could attend meetings of the committee but would not be a member of it;
- It would be susceptible to the impact of frequent changes in control of the councils in the area all of which have annual elections (apart from the county council).

Development Corporations

Development Corporations have traditionally been established and led by central government and in 2011, mayoral development corporations became possible in consultation with a Combined Authority. In 2018, government considered that local authorities could oversee locally-led new town development corporations. This allows a new town to be initiated locally and then “approved” by the Secretary of State who in turn would agree the instruments needed to establish as new town development corporation.

LDC’s are a well-recognised tool for their role in delivering major housing and regeneration projects as they have enhanced powers, an ability to attract investment and are “insulated” from local politics. They can also span multiple local authority boundaries so would be an appropriate delivery tool for key regeneration and housing sites in South Essex.

The value of local development corporations is questionable as while this body could address local priorities, it would not have any decision-making powers over wider investment in priorities outside its footprint. This option could be a tool a combined authority wants to set up, but not an alternative to it.

A Combined Authority

A Combined Authority is a legal entity that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. They can only be created

by parliament, although the development and administration of a combined authority must be locally driven by the authorities involved. Combined Authorities utilise powers and resources devolved to them by national government as part of a devolution deal and can also have powers delegated to them by the partner authorities. Each group of local authorities can determine the powers it wishes to exercise through the combined authority, and negotiates with government on that basis.

Linked to Combined Authorities is the idea of an elected Mayor for the area covered. The government has constantly expressed a strong preference for combined authorities to have an elected mayor for the whole area. As with a Combined Authority, the precise powers exercised by a Mayor are a matter for the authorities involved and form the basis of the "deal" with government, but a single democratically elected representative for an area is seen by the government as the best way to facilitate a constructive two way dialogue and demonstrate local accountability.

There are currently ten Combined Authorities across the country, ranging from the longest established – in Greater Manchester – to the more recently created combined authority in West Yorkshire. Each has a different number of constituent local authorities and varying levels of devolved funding and powers from Government, and a different level of power given to the elected mayor, where there is one in place.

The core legislation relating to Combined Authorities is the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 amended by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 which sets out the criteria and process associated with establishment of a Combined Authority as summarised below.

To be clear for Members, a Combined Authority is not a merger of authorities or a super unitary, it is a model of governance that enables councils to work together across their administrative boundaries.

Process for Creation of a Combined Authority

The specific key stages and tasks for a group of councils proposing to establish a Combined Authority are set out in further detail below:

Stage 1 - Review:

A group of councils proposing to establish a Combined Authority must carry out a governance review. The focus of this reviews is to consider the potential of different governance models to improve the delivery of the proposed functions of the Combined Authority.

The governance review has to conclude which of governance model would result in the necessary improvements which have been identified. The review will also need to show how the proposals meet the requirement on the Secretary of State, when creating a Combined Authority, to have regard to the identities and interests of local communities and secure effective and convenient local government.

Stage 2 - Scheme preparation:

Having decided to proceed, the councils must prepare and publish a scheme for the Combined Authority and undertake consultation. The legislation does not

specify the contents of a scheme, but it is clear from the other provisions in the legislation that it should:

- confirm the area to be covered and the consent of the relevant councils to the Proposal
- identify the statutory functions to be transferred, report the results of the review and explain why the transfer of those functions to the Combined Authority is likely to improve their delivery
- propose appropriate governance arrangements including membership, voting etc.
- report the results of public consultation on the proposal.

Stage 3 - Order making process:

The Secretary of State introduces in Parliament a statutory instrument establishing the Combined Authority.

Detailed below is an illustrative future timeline associated with the establishment of a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor at the earliest opportunity, should that be the agreed model. A similar timetable would be used if the agreed model is a Combined Authority without a Directly Elected Mayor. It should be noted that the below presents a highly ambitious and challenging timeline which will be subject to a number of factors, including the Devolution White Paper to be published by the Government in the autumn, and others which will be outside of ASELA's control.

Governance Review & Draft Scheme	<p>October 2020</p> <p>Formal adoption of Governance Review recommending the establishment of a Combined Authority and draft scheme.</p> <p>The scheme will outline the area covered, the constitution and functions. This will include details of membership of authority, voting and how meetings will be chaired, recorded etc.</p>
Consultation	<p>November 2020</p> <p>The consultation lends weight to the case that the Secretary of State must consider.</p> <p>It is recommended to consult stakeholders such as Integrated Transport Authorities, neighbouring authorities, LEP's, Regional MPs, Regional public bodies and the public.</p>
Scheme Published	December 2020

	Each constituent council obtains approval of the Scheme and subsequently submits to MHCLG
Parliamentary Approval	March 2021 Prior to parliamentary approval, an Order would need to be drafted, debated in both houses and ratified by Parliament. As part of this, the Secretary of State may undertake further consultation.
Potential Elections for a Directly Elected Mayor	May 2021 An election would need to be held for the Directly Elected Mayor if this is the agreed model.

Interim Governance Arrangements

As referred to above, the work of ASELA has been overseen by ongoing governance that has included monthly meetings of the authorities' Leaders and Chief Executives. The governance arrangements currently have no direct formal basis and arise from the MOU and the wider joint working.

ASELA recognises the importance of ensuring that its governance and operational arrangements are fit for purpose, particularly at this time. The Association is committed to keeping these under constant review and intends to enhance its operating arrangements to ensure transparency and accountability, and will bring forward any proposals for more formal interim governance arrangements for ASELA later in the year.

Association of South Essex Local Authorities

Memorandum of Understanding

between

Basildon Borough Council

Brentwood Borough Council

Castle Point Borough Council

Essex County Council

Rochford District Council

Southend on Sea Borough Council

Thurrock Borough Council

1. Background

- 1.1 Stemming from housing and local planning issues initially, there has been a growing recognition of the opportunity and need for greater cross-boundary working on strategic infrastructure planning and growth across South Essex. In June 2017 Leaders and Chief Executives of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council (the Authorities) agreed to initiate and shape a programme of work through the summer and autumn to explore a joint 'place vision' and the scope for greater strategic collaboration along the South Essex growth corridor.
- 1.2 The work during the summer and autumn has resulted in an emerging vision and identification of strategic growth opportunities that need testing and strengthening with the people and stakeholders of South Essex and beyond. It has also built a strong commitment amongst the Authorities to collaborative working. It was agreed that an Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) should be established to continue this collaborative work.
- 1.3 The Authorities wish to record the intention to establish ASELA and basis of our collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU sets out:
 - a) The core purpose and aims of ASELA
 - b) The principles of collaboration

2. Core Purpose and aims

- 2.1. The core purpose of ASELA is to provide place leadership for South Essex. Recognising that through our collaborative approach we will be best placed to develop and deliver a vision for South Essex up to 2050, promoting healthy growth for our communities.
- 2.2. ASELA will focus on the strategic opportunities, regardless of individual local authority boundaries for the South Essex economic corridor to influence and secure the strategic infrastructure that will help our individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic and social potential.
- 2.3. The aims of ASELA will be to:
 - Provide place leadership;
 - Open up spaces for housing, business and leisure development by developing a spatial strategy;
 - Transform transport connectivity;
 - Support our 7 sectors of industrial opportunity;
 - Shape local labour & skill markets;
 - Create a fully digitally-enabled place;
 - Secure a sustainable energy supply;
 - Influence and secure funding for necessary strategic infrastructure;
 - Enhance health and social care through co-ordinated planning; and
 - Work with and provide a voice for South Essex to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission and Commissioners.

3. Principles of collaboration

- 3.1. Our collaboration will be focused on three key areas:
 - Tackling problems we can't solve individually
 - Creating collective scale and impact
 - Providing the place leadership to promote and sell the 'South Essex' proposition
- 3.2. The Authorities agree to adopt the following principles in working together:
 - We are all in this together – and stronger if we work together
 - We should build our governance incrementally – learning from the lessons from other places who are more advanced
 - Through our collaboration we should be gaining something not losing something
 - Local identities should not be lost
 - We need to be a voice for South Essex

4. Term and Termination

4.1. This MoU shall commence on the date of the signature by each Authority, and shall expire if ASELA dissolves.

5. Variation

5.1. The MoU can only be varied by written agreement of all the Authorities.

6. Charges and liabilities

6.1. Except as otherwise provided, the Parties shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred in complying with their obligations under this MoU.

7. Status

7.1. This MoU cannot override the statutory duties and powers of the parties and is not enforceable by law. However the parties agree to the principles set out in this MoU.

Signed by

Local Authority	Leader/Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee	Chief Executive	Date
Basildon Borough Council			10/1/18
Brentwood Borough Council			10/1/18
Castle Point Borough Council			10/1/18
Essex County Council			10/1/18
Rochford District Council			10/1/18
Southend on Sea Borough Council			10/1/18
Thurrock Borough Council			10/1/18

This page is intentionally left blank

Growth and Recovery Prospectus

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH ESSEX LOCAL AUTHORITIES

JULY 2020



thurrock.gov.uk



Introduction

THE OPPORTUNITIES

South Essex is a powerful region with a proactive attitude to delivering growth. The South Essex authorities and local businesses have formed an association which, for the past two years, has developed joined up proposals and prioritised projects, driving change collectively for its people and businesses.

It is also an active member of the Thames Estuary Board and responded positively to the Thames Estuary Commission's recommendations to Government when it published its vision and priorities for the Thames Estuary. South Essex has used this platform to achieve early successes. It is actively working with Homes England to accelerate housing delivery, it is developing a Joint Strategic Plan with support from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, secure investment from the Future High Street Fund and the Towns Fund, and is rolling out a local full fibre network with support from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

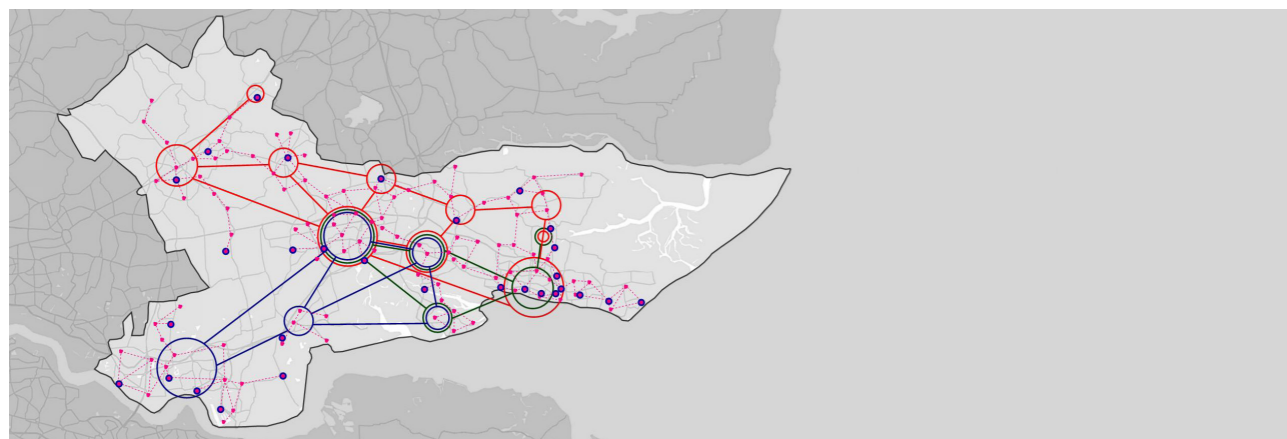
The region is now working hard to build its way forward as it moves its way out of the pandemic, with a vision to deliver for People productive jobs, blue and green infrastructure, physical and digital connectivity, new homes people need and can afford.

The South Essex economy is more vulnerable than most to the negative impacts of the coronavirus. Factors such as a higher prevalence of small businesses and self-employment, and an occupational mix less suited to working from home, are among those that underpin this assessment. Oxford Economics forecast estimates are that the

South Essex economy will contract by 8.5% in 2020, even after allowing for some rebound later in the year. Up to 25% of the regional workforce was furloughed, and it is predicted that 12,000 jobs will be permanently lost as a result of the pandemic. The South Essex authorities want to work quickly and proactively to build back better and make sure that its residents and businesses are guided through the recovery with new opportunities.

The region can also drive the levelling up agenda, over time, seeing more investment delivered here from both the public and private sector. More investment is needed in South Essex if it is to deliver its latent potential, with its proximity to London, the river and the coast, to bring new investment and jobs to the region. The region has seen underinvestment over the past few decades and wants to position itself for a fair share. The region wants to leverage private sector investment through strong partnerships and delivering new homes and infrastructure, including transport and digital.

Its work on connectivity is about ensuring an active travel network can be delivered, which will support local connectivity and a transformative change in movement for businesses and communities, so that the region is not a car dominated place. There are ambitions for better regional connectivity allowing South Essex to better connect to the other parts of the South East, East Anglia and the rest of the country. The area will build on its existing assets and sectors driving more productive jobs and regeneration, making sure its communities have access to the best amenities, green space and homes.




South Essex has a key role in the local economy and is of great importance to UK PLC:


- It is home to nearly 1 million people and generated £17.9bn of economic value in 2019.
- There is a rich culture of entrepreneurialism and is home to leading brands including Ford, Amazon, National Westminster Bank and Olympus among others.
- Industry sectors and clusters are firmly established around Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics, Creative industries and Health.

- It has some key infrastructure crucial to the UK, including:
 - four major ports that are recognised as the UK's fastest growing terminals and vital to the UK fuel and energy economy;
 - an international airport;
 - a Crossrail terminus; and
 - the proposed the Lower Thames Crossing.


There are significant opportunities to create greater prosperity and quality of life in South Essex and by 2050 it plans to grow its contribution to the UK economy by £15bn, through:




50k
businesses
to grow and increase
their productivity




Physical + Social Infrastructure
including Education and Health Services
(ensuring all new development is underpinned by appropriate facilities)




100k
creating new jobs




£0.5bn
combined benefits to
the Exchequer
(per annum from reduced unemployment and increased business rates)




£5bn
private sector investment




economy enabled by the strongest digital network
for a mixed rural and urban area in the UK




5k+
work opportunities for young people
(per annum, and 5,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2030)




£5bn
private sector investment



creation of an integrated public transport
system that puts active travel and decarbonised transport at its heart



Carbon Zero by 2040
(utilising a combination of innovative energy technology, minimising harm caused by travel and reshaping why and how we move, and designing in the highest levels of energy efficiency in planning and building design)



96k
new homes
(including 29k affordable homes for key workers by 2038)

Jobs and Opportunity

SKILLS AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

The South Essex economy is important. With a business base of over 32,000 enterprises providing more than 354,000 jobs and a population of around 800,000, South Essex is a major economy, comparable in scale to the combined authority areas of Sheffield City Region, West of England or Tees Valley. Its relationship with London should not be underplayed, with around 80,000 people commuting to the capital for work. Although the area has, at times, lacked a sense of identity as a major employer, often seen as a dormitory to London.

The area wants to enhance its employment activity. Productivity in South Essex is significantly less than the national and regional average and at £20,143 per capita, is nearly 40% below that of nearby Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LEP. South Essex has a very high proportion of micro businesses and self-employed traders compared to regional and national average, which historically has had an impact on the scope for growth. There are major gaps in adult skills, with overall one in four adults (24.3%) with level 1 or no qualifications, rising to nearly one in three adults in parts of South Essex.

In summary, there has been a lack of investment in major employment areas in South Essex. The review of the green book and approach Government has taken to devolving funding and priority areas is welcomed here and it would like to see further investment in its priority projects.

This has been acknowledged in both the Thames Estuary Commission's report and other policy documents which have set out South Essex's latent potential and wanting to cement South Essex's USP in employment activity including:

- The manufacturing sector in South Essex consists of around 1,700 businesses providing over 19,000 jobs. The sector includes several specialisms that could be developed to increase business productivity and build a thriving green technology sector.
- A number of specialist areas including engineering, machinery and automotive manufacturing that create a solid foundation for high value growth and exploitation of green technology.
- Creative industries that are prevalent in the Thames Estuary Production corridor.
- Niche medical and dental manufacturers, linked to an emerging health sector in Southend. Allied to manufacturing is a notable concentration of engineering and industrial design jobs (over 6,500) located primarily in Basildon.
- High value manufacturing output, product and process design offer a key opportunity to build innovation networks maximising potential applications in software and control systems, sensor technology, quality control and energy and materials efficiency essential for the green economy. Co-ordinated through a centre for green technology and a network of maker centres, South Essex this provides the basis for significant high value growth.

Skills

Skills in the area need to improve and there is significant vulnerability with coastal communities and pockets of long-term unemployment. South Essex has a significant core of low skilled residents and a long-standing pattern where those with higher skills commute into London to work. While mobility is generally a positive characteristic, the labour market in South Essex has become polarised, creating a major barrier to change. A dual strategy will be implemented to improve skills levels, for young people and adults, while also connecting individuals to employment. Aligning skills supply and demand will not only address unemployment and create pathways into work but can be an important incentive to attract business investment. Reducing commuting levels will only happen when there are sufficient well-paid jobs in South Essex. There is also the threat of automation in the region which could impact significant sectors in the area including manufacturing, transport and logistics. Between 2009 – 2018 manufacturing employment in South Essex fell by about one quarter. The South Essex authorities want a joined-up approach to skills that seeks to support those currently in work but also work with employers and future investors to ensure that local people, and new residents, are equipped with the skills they need for productive employment.

Future employment

The South Essex authorities will support the transition of advanced green manufacturing businesses to be more productive and expand high skilled employment. Through improved business networking and strengthening local supply chains, targeted business support to assist firm to access higher value national and international markets and investment in workforce and entrant training.

Knowledge intensive services play an important part in the South Essex economy and offer significant potential to create high

skilled employment. Some 45.2% of jobs in South Essex are in knowledge intensive sectors, compared to a national (England and Wales) average of 48.5%. Across South Essex, the rates are significantly higher in Southend and Brentwood (55.3% and 51.1%), where knowledge intensive jobs form a majority of employment. South Essex has local concentrations of creative, engineering design, scientific testing, computing and education activities that provide a foundation for knowledge intensive growth.

Capturing the opportunity will be driven by extending production facilities present in Basildon, Southend and Thurrock to build the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, along the South Essex coast.

The logistics sector is at the forefront of automation, with employer demand and skills requirement evolving to a more efficient use of space and an occupational shift away from elementary roles to skilled process and technical jobs managing intelligent transport and warehouse management systems. The requirement for digital skills, quality control, performance analytics and communication skills will become increasingly important and it will be vital to ensure that employers have access to qualified local labour to fill vacancies and meet replacement demand.

The opportunity for South Essex is to capture increased value and productivity in the sector to boost the share of higher skilled jobs and value chain activity. With existing and historical locational and infrastructure advantages, South Essex can become a centre for innovation in logistics by growing capacity in digital, AI, data management and control systems technologies. Building on the international recognition the South Essex major ports and access to London, significant benefits can be gained by realising the potential of the sector to generate higher paid jobs, support digital enterprises and offer degree level vocational training through apprenticeship frameworks.

Connectivity

PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

South Essex plans to transform digital and transport and connectivity in the region, providing contemporary digital infrastructure that will see the entire region super-connected to attract a new business base. This is alongside a viable, deliverable and resilient transport system.

In South Essex the transport network, especially highways, operate over capacity. This has significant impact on productivity and movement. The authorities want to rebalance modal priorities in favour of active and sustainable modes and deliver a decarbonised, integrated public transport system. Walking, cycling and greener public transport will become the most appealing and practical choice. These will be supported by quality placemaking initiatives improving public realm, regeneration and community led initiatives.

There are a number of guiding principles underpinning South Essex's approach:



Become the **leading place in the UK for urban and rural digital connectivity**.



Enhancing and connecting local places to reflect the distinctiveness of communities.



Supporting healthier lifestyles by connecting places at a human scale.



Reducing the need for travel by the private car, providing attractive and safer routes for active travel while aggressively reducing emissions with the aim for South Essex to become Carbon Neutral ahead of national targets.



Laying foundations for future working practices by **improving connections between existing and future residential and employment areas**, supporting logistics and advanced manufacturing sector by creating new opportunities to integrate these land uses and reducing the need to travel.



Trialling future technologies to overcome existing challenges and provide flexibility and resilience to respond to the changing needs of employers.



Supporting access to local services, particularly health and education, by active modes and public transport.

Underpinning all this is South Essex's aim to be carbon zero by 2040, with significant progress by 2030. How successful the region is in this aim will highly depend on reducing emissions from transport.

There are a number of key programmes developed to deliver the transformative change:

Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN) '5G Network'

It will be delivered across the sub region, providing an ecosystem for businesses, public sector organisations, educational organisations and the public.

South Essex Active Travel Network

A regional wide active travel programme to provide attractive connections between places which will enable a significant shift to movements by active modes.

Green Blue Integrated Public Transport

A rapid transport network that provides high quality, high frequency direct links to public transport hubs (or living stations).



Visualisation of School Street in Southend-on-Sea

Living Stations

Establishing key public transport hubs (Living Stations) that will be a focus for public transport interchange and opportunities for the delivery of high quality and distinctive public realm, creative employment and retail spaces and education, health and leisure services located at Brentwood, Basildon, Grays, Southend and Southend Airport.

New strategic Interchange Hubs on the River Thames

Located between Tilbury and Southend to support new passenger river services.

Green and Blue Infrastructure through South Essex Estuary Park

Where there is a long term vision to create a single park system that encompasses all of South Essex, framed by five large-scale landscapes and an improved network of blue and green connectors.

Local Connections to Health, Education & Natural Assets

A programme including establishing active routes to schools. These routes will link schools to local communities with enhanced landscaping providing opportunities for play and interaction with green spaces.

Forward Funding of a new EV Infrastructure Network

At scale, providing EV charging points across homes, businesses and existing infrastructure to drive the transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles and securing a step change in decarbonised transport use.

Homes and Place

INFRASTRUCTURE LED GROWTH

South Essex support the idea that investment in infrastructure can support large scale and accelerated housing delivery. Historic delivery rates have been poor in South Essex, with underinvestment in both infrastructure and employment. South Essex want to support the delivery of new homes, with a strong sense of place and community, through growing existing urban settlements or delivering new ones, including Garden Towns.

Across South Essex, a number of new, mixed use, communities will be required to meet long term needs. South Essex intends to build on its heritage to pioneer the next generation of settlements and create a new concept to sustainable living for South Essex. All proposals for housing, including new settlements will be subject to existing planning controls and local decision making. Where a plan for a new settlement is brought forward, it is envisaged that they would be designed around garden village principles offering high quality and inclusive places with a mix of homes, jobs in all sectors, open spaces, community infrastructure, digital connectivity, retail and leisure space that meet need and build cohesive communities.

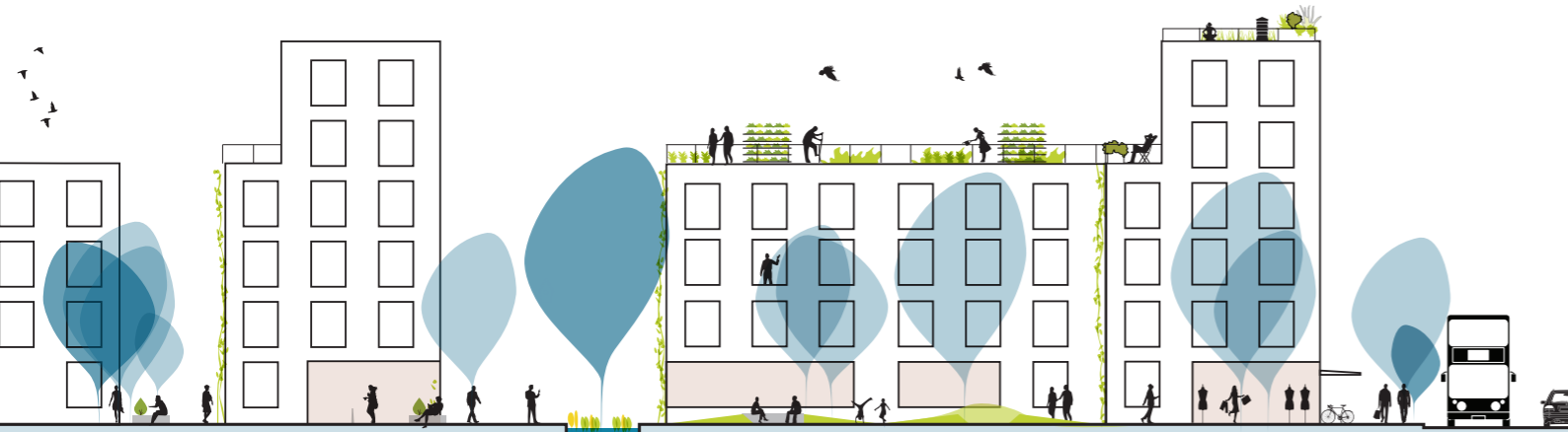
To enable this, the ambition in South Essex is to:

- Put in place a complete suite of up to date local plans, supported by the South Essex Plan, a strategic plan that establishes the strategic planning ambition, and policies to address sub-regional cumulative impacts that local plans cannot fully address.
- Completely transform housing delivery in the region – there is a recognised need

for, and commitment to, a programme of strategic and tactical interventions that would significantly increase delivery rates;

- Co-ordinate strategic land-use with strategic transport planning and provide an ambitious framework to achieve net zero and tackle the climate emergency with urgency and strong leadership
- Be a pathfinder for the Thames Estuary and set about rapid implementation of the Governments objectives for this area;
- Work collaboratively with Homes England, Housing Providers, Developers and Builders (large and small), to deliver a joint plan; and
- Establish a new delivery team – utilising expertise from the public and private sectors.

Over the past six months, South Essex have been working with Homes England on a joint delivery plan. Together they have identified the requirement for 96,000 homes in just under twenty years which equates to 4,500 homes per annum. The area is not delivering this volume of housing and is only achieving around half the requirement. To accelerate housing delivery to the level required will need substantial additional management, and technical capability, to help delivery transport and infrastructure, unlock stalled sites, remediation issues and other factors that prohibit faster delivery.



Visualisation of active travel network

The vision for South Essex is to:

- Unlock up to 43,000 of the 96,000 homes included in the strategic assessment of housing needs.
- Unlock up to 39,000 more construction jobs.
- Generate additional income for the Council of up to £450m one-off payments and £31m gross recurring annual income through Council Tax, Business Rate, Community Infrastructure Levy & New Homes Bonus.
- Increase wider economic benefits for the community by up to £2.2bn

South Essex wants to ensure its housing delivery is a result of strong economic development, new jobs and inclusive growth across the region. This means that the area will invest in its town centres, high streets and new settlements. The ambition is to embed outstanding place making principles in every project so local communities can thrive and see a step change in employment and skills, life chances and health and wellbeing.

Regeneration plans are already underway across the area, for example at Basildon, Brentwood, Grays and Southend, to develop a design blueprint that can be tailored and applied at a local level in towns across South

Essex. The programme will determine the locations where delivery can be accelerated and develop up-date strategies and action plans, this will include facilitating economic recovery and resilience responding to the impact of COVID-19.

To support new modes of living and quality of life, South Essex also wants to invest in its green and blue infrastructure and not see them as a 'nice to have' but rather core to all project work moving forwards. The emerging green blue infrastructure (GBI) framework, along with the mapping and design guidance being developed by Defra and Natural England, will help South Essex and the Thames Estuary to become an exemplar of good green infrastructure delivery, benefitting the economy, people and the environment of the region, and helping to deliver biodiversity net gain and net zero carbon.

The long-term vision is the creation of one single park system that encompasses all of South Essex. A South Essex Estuary Park will be framed by five large-scale landscapes and an improved network of blue and green connectors. These five sites include flood zones, habitats, existing parkland, riverfront, former industrial sites, agriculture land, and special historical features and landmarks:

- Island Wetlands
- Central Thames Marshlands
- Central Woodland Arc
- Mardyke Valley
- Brentwood Parklands

The Proposition

A TRANSFORMED VISION FOR SOUTH ESSEX

The South Essex Authorities have a strong 'can do' attitude and want to see lifelong improvements for its communities and businesses.

The area knows it can do better and is working hard to achieve a step change in productivity, skills, employment and place making.

It can only do this with both support and long term investment, not just from the public sector but by leveraging its assets and opportunity to drive private investment too.

South Essex is placing strong emphasis on joined up leadership and governance, knowing it can achieve greater than the sum of its parts by working proactively together. South Essex authorities recognise that delivery of these proposals will require appropriate governance arrangements to be in place and has already undertaken a preliminary review of governance in the area to assess future options. If the area is going to build back better then it needs a long term strategy with some short term interventions to recover quickly from Covid-19 and create economically and socially resilient communities. At the heart of the work being undertaken by the South Essex Authorities is an ambition to deliver a series of priorities which the leadership know will deliver long lasting and wider benefits for both people and place.

These priorities need support both locally and centrally and includes:

- Providing excellent and contemporary **digital infrastructure** including 5G and connectivity that will see businesses want to invest in the area and start successful and productive enterprises.
- Delivering significant improvements in **connectivity and public transport**, underpinned by investment in active travel projects which benefit people's health and wellbeing and could see major environmental benefits.

- Unlocking **housing** sites to deliver accelerated development seeing new **quality homes**, neighbourhoods and communities brought to South Essex, and enhancing amenity and place for existing local residents.
- Investment in **green and blue infrastructure** to enable new parks and river walks, supporting active use of environmental assets, adding to biodiversity, health and wellbeing outcomes, whilst supporting active and thriving communities.

- Improving **skills** across the region from school aged children through to adult training and education, ensuring that the current and future workforce can access productive and highly skilled jobs.
- A strategy to secure more **commercial development** from employers who can provide productive and well-paid employment, locally.
- Supporting **young people** to achieve their best and build their futures in South Essex.



Visualisation of future Basildon Living Station



This page is intentionally left blank

A governance review of South Essex

Shared Intelligence

June 2020

Executive Summary

This report concludes that a Mayoral Combined Authority is the most appropriate governance arrangement to deliver the ambitions set out for South Essex in Prospectus 2020 produced by the Association of South Essex Authorities (ASELA). The conclusion is based on an assessment of the existing arrangements for collaboration across South Essex and a review of possible future governance arrangements.

The existing arrangements we considered included: ASELA, the Greater Essex Leaders' Group, Transport East and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and its federated body.

We concluded that the current arrangements for collaboration across South Essex and beyond are not capable of delivering the ambitious vision for the area.

South Essex is not benefiting from the arrangements which cover a wider area because of the absence of a single coherent voice for South Essex.

Many of the arrangements cover slightly different geographies creating a fragmented approach.

There is no organisation with an unambiguous focus of South Essex and which is capable of delivering a long term strategy for the area with the support or devolved powers and resources from government.

We considered whether strengthening the existing governance arrangements, including replacing ASELA with a statutory joint committee, would enable the delivery of the ambitions for South Essex. We concluded that simply seeking to strengthen ASELA will not enable the delivery of the prospectus and vision for South Essex. We also concluded that replacing ASELA with a joint committee would not overcome the fundamental weaknesses with the current arrangements but would be an important and potentially useful step on the way to putting more robust arrangements in place.

We have reviewed the case for establishing a South Essex Combined Authority and have concluded that it meets the statutory test for doing so. We are confident that it would:

- Improve the delivery of functions relating to the economy, infrastructure, skills and strategic planning in South Essex;
- Help to secure effective and convenient local government;
- Reflect local identity and the interests of local communities.

Finally we have concluded that Mayoral Combined Authority would have two significant advantages (compared with a non-mayoral one). They are that:

- It would be more likely than a non-mayoral authority to negotiate an ambitious devolution agreement with government;
- A mayor with a four year term of office would provide a degree of stability and certainty that would strengthen governance in the area.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Purpose of the review.....	4
The ambition for South Essex	5
Introduction and context.....	6
A review of the South Essex Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)	8
Review of current governance arrangements – effectiveness and efficiency.....	13
Review of current governance arrangements – effectiveness and efficiency – by theme.....	19
Summary of proposed devolution agreement as set out in the prospectus	20
Options appraisal of future governance structures.....	22
Summary of findings with recommendations.....	27

Purpose of the review

The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) has commissioned a review of the current and potential future governance arrangements in order to determine how to strengthen existing arrangements to deliver economic and inclusive growth. This review also provides an opportunity for some longer-term strategic thinking about what future arrangements may include to support public service reform for South Essex. The review has been conducted independently by Shared Intelligence to set out the options for future governance arrangements.

This review represents one against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and gives rise to a new conversation with partners and stakeholders about the future of South Essex. It presents an opportunity to consider how a new model of local government could make a strategic move to deliver economic, social and public service transformation in a post-Covid-19 setting.

This report considers the economic profile of the six local authority areas, looks at the current governance arrangements as well as the proposed devolution agreement as set out in the prospectus and considers a range of options, assessing their contribution to economic growth. These options include:

- Option 1: Strengthening the current arrangements;
- Option 2: Establishing a Joint Committee;
- Option 3: Establishing a Local Development Corporation;
- Option 4: Establishing a Combined Authority;
- Option 5: Establishing a Combined Authority with a directly elected Mayor.

To ensure compliance with the relevant legislation contained in Section 111 of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act of 2009, this Governance Review considers which model is the best in order to:

- Improve the exercise of statutory functions in the area of South Essex;
- Secure more effective and convenient local government for the area; and
- Have a positive or neutral impact on the identities and interests of our local communities.

The ambition for South Essex

Accompanying this governance review is a Prospectus 2020 developed by the Association of South Essex Local Authorities and Opportunity South Essex. This document sets out that:

“South Essex has a key role in the local economy and is of great importance to UK PLC:

- It is home to nearly 1 million people and generated £17.9bn of economic value in 2019.
- There is a rich culture of entrepreneurialism and is home to leading brands including Ford, Amazon, National Westminster Bank and Olympus among others.
- Industry sectors and clusters are firmly established around Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics, Creative industries and Health.
- It has some key infrastructure crucial to the UK, including:
 - four major ports that are recognised as the UK’s fastest growing terminals and vital to the UK fuel and energy economy;
 - an international airport;
 - a Crossrail terminus; and
 - the proposed the Lower Thames Crossing.

There are significant opportunities to create greater prosperity and quality of life in South Essex and by 2050 it plans to grow its contribution to the UK economy by £15bn, through:

- 50,000 businesses growing and increasing productivity;
- Physical and social infrastructure, including education and health services;
- £0.5bn combined benefits to the Exchequer;
- Creating 100,000 new jobs;
- Delivering 96,000 new homes, including 29,000 affordable homes for key workers by 2039;
- Bringing forward £5bn of private sector investment;
- Enabling the economy with the strongest digital network;
- Creating an integrated public transport system that puts active travel and decarbonised transport at its heart;
- Delivering Carbon Zero by 2040; and
- Developing over 5,000 work opportunities for young people per annum, and 5,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2030.

Introduction and context

The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) is formed of the seven councils of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Essex County, Rochford, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea. Its core focus is to work across borders on strategic issues such as infrastructure, planning and growth, skills and economy, housing and transport connectivity. In February 2020, Leaders agreed to develop a set of proposals to submit to Government by July 2020 and to review the current governance arrangements.

The area is adjacent to London in the West, fuelling workforce, goods and service markets across the South East. It is well connected with a national and international gateway, with an airport – London Southend Airport and four major ports on the Thames Estuary to the South with the rest of Essex to the North. The Port of London is the second largest UK port by freight traffic. This strategic location is a considerable factor in the growth of the area and sets the scene for significant future growth potential.

The area is served by good east-west movement with the A13 and A127 providing strategic highway connections carrying large volumes of passenger and freight traffic within South Essex and westward towards London. The c2c/Greater Anglia main lines carry significant passengers to the capital. East-west roads and rail corridors are one of the key factors underpinning the sub-regional economy and housing market area. However, until connectivity on a north-south level between major employment sites and residential conurbations is addressed, there remains a barrier to workforce flow, housing and commercial growth.

Growth plans for the area however have been recently accelerated by Cross Rail, the Lower Thames Crossing and technology change on the C2C Network. The area benefits from direct road and rail links to the capital and, via the M25, to the rest of the south east and UK markets. Investment in the transport networks, both local and national, is pivotal for enabling site development, alleviating pinch points and other congestion issues, and increasing use of sustainable modes of transport. Activity and investment to date has addressed some of these priorities but does not go far enough to ensure growth can be delivered comprehensively. This is also significant for two reasons. There remains capacity at the ports locally which, with investment, could further open up this area as a gateway allowing more growth and if a trade deal with the EU is achieved, this will improve access to the rest of the country.

There are strong economic links with London providing local prosperity and supporting the capital's economy through close commuting links, with a high share of working residents regularly travelling there for work, making a significant contribution to the capital's economy. With a total of 66,584 South Essex residents commuting to London, the sub-region contributed around £4.3bn in GVA to the London economy overall.¹

The Association of South Essex Local Authorities has a short history of collaboration but during that time, it has worked to build a core vision and set of principles and developed a suite of documents. Since the summer of 2017, it has:

¹ The average GVA per filled job in London in 2011 was £64,551 – source: ONS (2015) Nominal (smoothed) GVA per filled job (£); NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 sub regions, 2002 - 2012

- Developed a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in January 2018;
- Committed to a Joint Strategic Plan and published its Statement of Common Ground in March 2018;
- Published Terms of Reference for its Joint Strategic Plan Members Steering Group and Delivery Board in March 2018;
- Pushed ahead with a strategic and statutory spatial plan – the aim is to have this complete by 2022;
- Created a housing delivery plan in conjunction with Homes England – to transform housing delivery in the region;
- Brought forward a framework and plan to re-design local connectivity and public transport – so that residents and businesses can go easily about their daily lives;
- Implemented a new economic and productivity strategy for the region that will locally deliver a significant uplift in economic value over the next ten years – it will form part of the local industrial strategy for South East Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Enabled digital infrastructure and connectivity through the Full Fibre network programme with DCMS, and exploring with Strathclyde University and DCMS, the potential to be leaders in 5G technology for an urban and rural area;
- Focused on re-energising the town centres – so that they become a blend of commercial, residential and retail space; and
- Developed an “impact’ investment fund to attract private sector finance to commercial schemes.

However, this vast potential is not fully being realised and more needs to be done to bring forward full economic prospects in the sub-region. It must individually and collectively tackle variations in skills and qualifications levels among residents, falling output in higher productivity sectors like Accommodation and Food Services and Agriculture, and there are significant infrastructure for growth demands including transport and housing infrastructure. These barriers must be addressed to raise GVA per head, labour productivity and encourage greater economic prosperity with infrastructure for growth and transport investment coming forward as a result.

An emerging vision and scope for greater collaboration has been identified as a priority along the South Essex growth corridor. The collaboration has been built up over the past 3-years and focuses on:

- Tackling problems individual councils can’t solve individually;
- Creating collective scale and impact; and
- Providing the place leadership to promote and sell the ‘South Essex’ proposition.

Delivering this vision will provide businesses with the skilled workforce they need and require action by all councils, at a South Essex level and across the Thames Gateway.

A review of the South Essex Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)

Economic spatial profile

With a total population of close to 800,000 residents, its working age population is 487,522 and the area represents the largest of the Greater Essex economies with 36% of GVA (£12bn of the Greater Essex £33bn) coming from the area. The area has particularly high employment in sectors such as Logistics, Wholesale and Retail, Health and Care and Advanced Manufacturing. While the area is dominated micro and small companies dominate the landscape with around 90.7% of enterprises employing less than nine people, there are some significant employers and globally known brands such as Amazon, Ford, and MK Electric. It faces a long-term skills challenge with 11% of the population with no qualifications and in some places only 23% with NVQ4+ (Higher Education equivalent).

The latest figures for employment show that there are some 385,300 employed residents living in one of the six authorities in South Essex, while the total number of those who work there is comparatively lower, at 296,000. This reflects commuting patterns and suggests that at least 23 per cent of South Essex residents commute out of the area. (Considering that excess South Essex commuters are replaced by those commuting in, the true number of residents commuting out of South Essex is likely to be higher.) There has been an increase in the minimum number of residents who commute out of South Essex, with the figure at the time of the 2011 census being 18.5 per cent. However, this still represents a substantial amount of self-containment within this market area.

Growth in the working age population is higher than the average for a number of similar areas. South Essex is expected to see a growth in population of 2.41 per cent by 2020, 3.95 per cent by 2030 and 6.21 per cent by 2040 compared to the current figures, an increase in population from 490,620 to 502,430 in 2025, 510,011 in 2030 and 521,090 in 2040. This growth is expected to be faster than a number of comparable areas, in particular Essex. The growth will also be faster, proportionally, than surrounding areas of London, Essex and Hertfordshire.

Skills in South Essex are, however, comparatively poor. The geography has a comparatively lower skill level than all surrounding areas with the exception of Maldon, with 30.7 per cent of residents having NVQ4+ skills. Within South Essex, generally skill levels are consistently low, although Brentwood has a comparatively higher proportion of residents with NVQ4+ level qualifications, at 42 per cent. Over 10 per cent of residents in South Essex have no qualifications, suggesting that the employment specialisms generally require lower skills.

Looking more widely, estimated GVA for the South Essex area demonstrates that, comparative to the other 'quadrants' of Greater Essex, West Essex, Haven Gateway and Heart of Essex², South Essex has the highest GVA, with a GVA of £18,493 million in 2018. accounting for around 43 per cent of the total GVA of the Greater Essex area.

The labour market of South Essex has a particular bias towards Basildon, which is the largest employment area within Essex, with 68,309, or approximately 28 per cent, of all workers in South Essex working in Basildon. This is followed by Southend-On-Sea at 24 per cent and Thurrock at 21

² <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/sites/default/files/GrowonSpaceFeasibilityStudy.pdf>

per cent. Brentwood, Castle Point and Rochford make up far smaller proportions, suggesting that there are three primary economic centres within the South Essex area FEMA, with considerable crossover between them.

This South Essex FEMA is made up of a number of specific sector strengths, in addition to clusters of businesses. The Transportation and Storage sector is a particular strength in South Essex, comparable to Suffolk, with both the Port of Tilbury and the London Gateway Port both making up a substantial amount of the UK's shipping market share. This demonstrates significantly higher comparable employment in Logistics, in addition to transportation and storage in South Essex. In addition, South Essex specifically has a specialisation in human health and social work, construction and wholesale and retail. These sectors all have higher than average employment compared to the average for Essex, the East of England and Great Britain, therefore representing particular specialisms for the South Essex market.

Travel to work

A travel to work area (TTWA) is defined as an area in which has a degree of self-containment, where most live and work within a travel to work area. According to the latest commuting data produced by the ONS from the 2011 Census, South Essex has its own TTWA, the Southend TTWA. This roughly comprises the whole of Basildon, Rochford, Castle Point and Southend-On-Sea, however, only includes parts of Thurrock, the remainder of which is in the London TTWA and Brentwood, which is mostly in the Chelmsford TTWA.

When looking at the commuting patterns for all six authorities in South Essex, it is clear that there is a degree of self-containment, with substantial amounts of cross commuting between the different authorities. Of those who work in South Essex, 79 per cent reside and commute from within South Essex, and for those who are a resident of one of the six South Essex local authorities, 65 per cent work within South Essex. These high levels of self-containment suggest that South Essex is market area, although there is an element of commuting out of the area by the residential population however, it also shows that, as an economic area in terms of employment, the area is self-contained.

Brentwood has highest proportion of residents commuting out of South Essex for employment of the six South Essex authorities, with the borough seeing 58 per cent of its residents commute out of South Essex. Similarly, although to a far lower degree, Thurrock also has 42 per cent of its residents commuting out of South Essex, again a comparatively high level. The remainder of the authorities within South Essex are far more contained, with Castle Point and Rochford both seeing very low levels of commuting to areas outside of South Essex.

Commuter flows out of and into the area differ in their origin, although there are some areas of cross commuting. Residential commuting out of South Essex is largely to Central London boroughs, in addition to nearby authorities. The largest commuting destination for South Essex residents is Westminster and the City of London, followed by Tower Hamlets, likely for Canary Wharf. In addition, there is also substantial amounts of commuting to other Inner London Boroughs such as Camden, Islington, Southwark and Hackney. The other significant commuting destination is nearby authorities. This includes areas of Essex such as Chelmsford, in addition to Epping Forest and Braintree, as well as outer London Boroughs such as Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Newham and Redbridge.

Commuters from outside South Essex are predominantly from Chelmsford and Havering, which demonstrates some of the cross commuting between South Essex and nearby market areas. In addition, there are substantial commuter flows from areas such as Maldon, Braintree, Epping Forest

and Colchester in Essex and Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Newham, Outer London Boroughs which border or are in proximity to South Essex.

The commuting data suggests that South Essex is a self-contained market area, although with some cross commuting between neighbouring areas, particularly to the West. In addition to this, there is also a substantial unreciprocated number of commuters who commute to inner London Boroughs for employment.

Housing Market Area

A housing market area is an area for planning new housing developments and is an acknowledgement that housing markets do not precisely follow administrative boundaries. The South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment³ (SHMA) published in 2016 identifies that five of the authorities in South Essex, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-On-Sea and Thurrock, are part of the same housing market area. This is based on factors including household migration and search patterns, house prices and the rate of change in house prices, and other contextual data. Research conducted by the Ministry of Communities and Local Government in 2010 backs this finding, categorising the five authorities in a housing market area called the “Thames Gateway”.⁴ Separately, Brentwood is considered to be part of the “London Commuter Belt Housing Market Area” by this piece of work, which includes authorities such as Chelmsford and stretches to Dacorum and St Albans in the West. Brentwood has since developed its own SHMA⁵ but in the future will be considered part of the South Essex SHMA.

The evidence presented in the South Essex SMHA is still valid for demonstrating that South Essex is a self-contained housing market area. In terms of household migration, South Essex demonstrates a particularly strong self-containment. The latest available evidence is again based on Census 2011 data, but as presented in the SHMA around 73 per cent of those who moved houses in the year before the census moved within South Essex. Similarly, and importantly, the self-containment within South Essex is higher than that of any authority within South Essex, demonstrating that the area is not made up of a number of housing market areas. The same measure for those moving to South Essex shows similar results, with 74 per cent of those who moved to South Essex in the year prior to the Census moving from a South Essex.

In terms of house prices, the distinction of South Essex is slightly less clear, but still exists. While house prices generally are not particularly comparable in terms of growth, with Thurrock in particular having experienced high levels of growth in the price of housing. However, actual house prices are now even more comparable than at the time of the SMHA, with the September 2019 data showing house prices across Basildon, Castle Point, Southend-On-Sea and Thurrock all being just below or on £300,000, with prices in Rochford being slightly higher, at £335,000. This demonstrates that South Essex continues to have house prices which are below the average in much of the surrounding area.

3

https://www.housingessex.org/assets/uploads/2018/06/South_Essex_Strategic_Housing_Market_Assessment.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-market-areas>

⁵ <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/pdf/25102018093817000000.pdf>

Commercial Property Market Area

South Essex, including Brentwood, has a commercial floorspace breakdown which is comparatively similar to Essex. Both areas have sizable industrial areas by square metre, at a higher proportion than England and Wales, in addition, both areas have a higher proportion of retail space, and a lower proportion of office space. Looking specifically at the differences between South Essex and Essex to determine the differences between the areas, there is essentially no difference in the proportion of industrial space between the two, with both areas having about 57 per cent of commercial space being industrial. However, there are comparative differences between South Essex and Essex in the proportion of both retail and office space, where South Essex has a higher proportion of retail space, at around 22 per cent of total compared to 19 per cent of the total for Essex and a lower proportion of office space, at 10 per cent of the total compared to 12 per cent for Essex.

Looking specifically at the six authorities in South Essex shows that there are comparative similarities. Brentwood has a far higher proportion of office space, and Southend has a higher proportion of retail space. Thurrock and Basildon have a high percentage of industrial space. The table below shows the relative proportions for each of the authorities.

	Retail	Office	Industrial	Other
Southend-on-Sea UA	34%	17%	35%	13%
Thurrock UA	20%	4%	67%	8%
Basildon	18%	9%	66%	8%
Brentwood	17%	28%	40%	14%
Castle Point	31%	5%	49%	15%
Rochford	16%	7%	59%	17%
South Essex	22%	10%	57%	11%

However, separately, the London Industrial Land Report identifies Basildon, Brentwood and Thurrock, along with Chelmsford and the Medway towns, as part of the Thames Gateway/Eastern Quadrant Industrial Property Market Area⁶.

In terms of commercial property prices, there is a similar theme. The rateable value of retail space per square metre in South Essex is considerably higher than that of Essex, and of England and Wales, reflecting the speciality in this area. In contrast, the South Essex retail rateable value per square metre is £168, compared to £149 for Essex, and £151 for England and Wales. Conversely, South Essex has a lower rateable value per square metre for Office space than both areas, at £109 compared to £122 for Essex. In both cases, the price for Brentwood pulls the price of space up, considerably so for office space, where per square metre, office space in Brentwood costs nearly £45 more than any other authority in the area. Industrial space is more similarly priced, although South Essex is slightly higher than Essex and England and Wales. These differences in cost reflect how it is a different market area to Essex, with different specialisms.

⁶ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ilds_revised_final_report_october_2017.pdf

Transport and infrastructure

There are substantial transportation opportunities in South Essex, both by rail and by road. It is important to note that the infrastructure predominantly serves an east west direction, with all railway lines and two of the three major A roads in South Essex running roughly East to West. This provides a natural barrier between South Essex and the remainder of Essex and demonstrates why it operates as such a self-sufficient and functional market area.

The London, Tilbury and Southend Railway provides an east-west connection as the main railway line through South Essex, serving the centres of Basildon and Southend, in addition to Lakeside, the main retail centre. The line extends through to London Fenchurch Street, providing opportunities for business partnerships with businesses in London.

The Great Eastern Main Line also runs through the west of South Essex serving Brentwood. North of Brentwood is the start of the Shenfield to Southend Branch line, which provides another east-west connection through South Essex, serving Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point Rochford, and Southend. Through the connection to the Great Eastern Main Line, the line terminates at London Liverpool street, again opening opportunities for the South Essex area to take advantage of the rapid and close connection.

The South Essex Joint Strategic Plan Statement of Common Ground⁷ outlines a number of rail improvements, including improving capacity and the potential for an Eastern section of Cross Rail 2 from Stratford to Shenfield in Basildon, to serve Essex.

There are also major roads serving the area, with the A127 serving the north of South Essex and the A13 serving the south, with both connecting to the M25, providing east to west road connections across South Essex. The A130 also provides a connection from South Essex to Chelmsford. In addition, the A12 provides a connection for Brentwood to London, and to Chelmsford and Ipswich.

The South Essex Joint Strategic Plan Statement of Common Ground outlines some of the agreed infrastructure improvements needed in South Essex to ensure that the goals for South Essex can be achieved. In addition to road capacity improvement, some of the points include the potential for a new Lower Thames Road crossing which will connect South Essex to Kent.

In addition to road and rail, South Essex is also connected by air and sea. South Essex has an airport, London Southend Airport. This airport is served by both road and rail and provides flights to a number of European destinations. In addition, shipping is particularly significant in Thurrock, with commercial ports in the area connecting South Essex to much of the world through shipping.

The infrastructure of South Essex is a particularly significant part of the economy and provides substantial opportunity to the market for internal connections and for connections to the wider region and London.

⁷ https://www.basildon.gov.uk/media/8838/South-Essex-Joint-Strategic-Plan-Statement-of-Common-Ground-June-2018/pdf/South_Essex_Joint_Strategic_Plan_-_Statement_of_Common_Ground_-_June_2018.pdf?m=636809127016470000

Review of current governance arrangements – effectiveness and efficiency

The councils and their partners in South Essex have an ambitious long-term vision for the future of the area. Delivering that vision will require a long-term strategic approach and an ability to take and influence significant investment decisions in relation to, for example, infrastructure and skills. It will also require a new relationship with government, including devolved powers and resources. In this section we explore whether the current arrangements for collaborative working across South Essex and a wider geography are capable of supporting the delivery of these ambitions.

Transport East

Transport East was established in early 2018 as the sub-national transport body for the East of England. The councils in its area include three county councils (Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk) and two unitary councils in South Essex (Southend and Thurrock). It aims to provide a strategic voice on the transport investment needed across its geography and has input from business leaders, Network Rail and Highways England.

The sub-national transport bodies are playing an increasingly important role in identifying and pursuing strategic transport priorities. Transport investment is key to delivering the ambitions for South Essex, but the fragmented nature of local government in the area is impeding its ability to influence or benefit from the work of Transport East. The two unitary councils and Essex county council are involved, but there is no direct input from the four districts in South Essex.

This in effect means that there are three transport bodies presiding over the area, each competing with individual priorities and not providing a coherent narrative of transport needs and opportunities. In order to satisfy the transport ambitions across South Essex, a coordinated decision-making effort is required.

A more coherent voice for South Essex in Transport East would enable it to play a bigger role in meeting the needs of this important part of its area.

South East Local Enterprise Partnership

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were established in 2011 with a remit to drive local growth, job creation and to oversee all economic activity. Strong business involvement combined with public sector leaders ensure that local economic priorities and activities to drive economic growth and job creation, improve infrastructure and raise workforce skills within the local area are delivered.

The South East LEP is the largest LEP. It covers East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock and has a federated structure with four parts to its geography (see below). The LEP has a strategic board with clear leadership and a shared set of growth priorities which consider required investment in its significant asset base and future investment required across the wider geography.

At the present time, it is in the process of drafting its Local Industrial Strategy, working with its four federated areas to develop ambition and priorities. The draft LIS articulates a strong ambition for SELEP as below:

- The South East is the UK's global gateway; powering trade and prosperity throughout the UK, generating £90 billion a year for the economy.

- To accelerate its role as a global region to drive sustainable and innovative growth. Through targeted investment in people and places and progressing our partnership with London, it will enhance the economic vitality of UK plc by increasing productivity across the SELEP area, delivering £28 billion additional Gross Value Added by 2030.

It also sets out how the ambition and distinctive strategic opportunities, will be supported by a specific focus on:

- Increasing the region's innovation activity and R&D performance, working in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sectors;
- Sustaining a workforce and business base that is fully equipped to respond to new technologies and a changing economy and skills needs; and
- Embedding clean growth principles to secure the shift to a net zero carbon economy, and investing to help the region address and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

South Essex Federated Board – Opportunity South Essex

South Essex makes up one of these federated areas which allows for decision-making and project prioritisation at a local level. Opportunity South Essex is the private-public board whose vision is for South Essex to have “one of the fastest growing and the most sustainable economies in the UK which provides opportunities for businesses, is attractive to inward investors and benefits local communities”.

Despite multiple layers of decision-making, funding and accountability with a Strategic Board, Accountability Board and Investment Board offering scrutiny and prioritisation of investment over the federated areas, it does enable collective engagement with all local authority leaders and allows decisions to be taken at the practical level closest to the communities and businesses affected by those decisions.

In summary the way in which the LEP geography plays out in South Essex adds to the overall story of fragmentation and the absence of a strong, single voice for the area. Opportunity South Essex has demonstrated the value a business-led partnership could add to the area, but it is not capable of enabling the delivery of the economic ambitions for South Essex. its ability to fulfil its potential is constrained by its status as one of four federated boards within a very large LEP and the fragmented nature of local government in the area. There is a need for a mechanism which can provide more alignment between businesses, local government and education institutions to secure economic growth with an unambiguous focus South Essex.

Further and Higher Education

There is a limited offer when it comes to Higher Education. This has long been considered a barrier to growth of the economy and one of the reasons behind the area's long-term skills challenge. This has caused inequality across the South Essex geography as in some parts, only 23% of residents have NVQ4+ (Higher Education equivalent). In comparison to the rest of the UK, nearly 36% have higher skills (30.5% in Essex)⁸.

⁸ Essex Skills Board 2019

In relation to Further Education, South Essex College has sites in Basildon, Southend and Grays. There is capacity for more technical skills to be built up in response to the industry profile of South Essex.

Action to raise skill levels in South Essex is critically important. There is currently not an effective mechanism for local government, business and education providers to collaborate to deliver this.

Thames Estuary Commission

Stretching 40 miles along the River Thames from Canary Wharf in East London to Southend in Essex and Sittingbourne in Kent, the Thames Gateway hosts significant pieces of UK infrastructure and is a major gateway between the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. It is one of the UK's priority areas for growth and has the committed support of the government as well as a large number of private investors such as Ford, Kimberley Clark, Lafarge, BaE Systems, HSBC and DP World. In Lord Heseltine's words the Thames Gateway is "crucial to UK competitiveness".

The Thames Estuary Commission supports the National Infrastructure Commission's aim to reduce congestion and lower carbon emissions. Its focus on nationally significant assets has placed a spotlight on the Thames Estuary. It has a strong vision for quality housing, inclusion of communities through skills and economic resilience and from a South Essex perspective, the Port of Tilbury and London Gateway feature at the heart of plans.

The commission is potentially important for South Essex. However, there are no decision-making powers or substantial routes to inform future plans and allow significant influence for South Essex Authorities. In the "Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission" vision published in June 20189, the South Essex geography is fragmented with 4 of the South Essex councils listed under South Essex Foreshore, and Thurrock as Inner Estuary (two of the "5 productive places").

The ability of South Essex to contribute to and benefit from the work of the Thames Estuary Commission is constrained by the absence of a single voice the area, in the same way as was described above in relation to Transport East.

Greater Essex Leaders

It is clearly important that the leaders and chief executives of the councils in Greater Essex meet regularly. In terms of delivering significant benefits for South Essex, however, these meetings have two weaknesses. First, the group does not have a specific focus on the needs of South Essex. Second, the meetings are informal with no precise terms of reference, resources or decision-making powers.

This is a useful liaison body but does not have the role or capacity to pursue the ambitions for growth in South Essex.

Association of South Essex Local Authorities

In the summer of 2017, the leaders and chief executives of the seven councils (Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council) began to explore a joint place vision and to develop a programme of work through which greater strategic collaboration

could take place across the South Essex Growth corridor. The Association of South Essex Local Authorities was established as a result.

The authorities have worked closely together to provide place leadership which can deliver their collective vision for 2050. The core aims of ASELA are to:

- Provide place leadership;
- Open up spaces for housing, business and leisure development by developing a spatial strategy;
- Transform transport connectivity;
- Support the seven sectors of industrial opportunity;
- Shape local labour and skills markets;
- Create a fully digitally-enable place;
- Secure a sustainable energy supply;
- Influence and secure funding for necessary strategic infrastructure;
- Enhance health and social care through coordinated planning; and
- Work with and provide a voice for South Essex to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission and Commissioners.

Furthermore, work has begun work on South Essex Joint Strategic Plan and the association developed a productivity strategy as a lead into the preparation of the Local Industrial Strategy at a SELEP level.

The association is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. This sets out the role of ASELA and the fact that it shall “expire if ASELA dissolves”. Also, that the MOU “cannot override the statutory duties and powers of the parties and is not enforceable by law”.

In summary our conclusion is that, given its status ASELA has made significant progress. It has developed an ambitious vision for the area, has begun to build the relationships that more robust governance arrangements will require, and it has demonstrated an appetite for collaboration. It is, however, not an appropriate body to develop or deliver the strategy and action required to realise that ambition. In particular:

- **It is not sufficiently robust to adopt the long-term approach that is required;**
- **It does not have the necessary powers or resources;**
- **Government would not be prepared to devolve powers or resources to it.**

Invest Essex

At present, there is no resource within the South Essex councils or ASELA itself to direct inward investment opportunities. Formerly managed through Invest Essex, an investment promotion agency and business support provider covering Essex, this organisation disbanded in 2019.

A new arrangement would need to put resource and focus into attracting the level of investment that would successfully promote growth in the area.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment Areas

Historically, the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment¹⁰ (SHMA published in 2016) identifies that five of the authorities in South Essex, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-On-Sea and Thurrock, are part of the same Housing market area. This is based on factors including household migration and search patterns, house prices and the rate of change in house prices, and other contextual data. In recent years, Brentwood has become a part of the SHMA for South Essex and helpfully reviewed housing plans and policies will start to contain a single assessment on housing demand going forward.

While it is a positive move for the six councils to feature under one SHMA, the ability to deliver these housing targets and consider strategic housing decisions would be more robustly done through a formal structure. This could enable strategic site master planning and encourage developers and investors to come forward with private sector investment.

Health governance and policing

Health governance

The health governance in South Essex is fragmented and complicated with almost as many Clinical Care Groups (CCGs) in South Essex as there are councils (Thurrock, Basildon and Brentwood, Southend, Rochford and Castle Point) and an STP that includes South and Mid Essex (Mid Essex CCG includes Braintree, Chelmsford and Maldon). Therefore, it can be summarised that there is no strategic health focus on South Essex as a single geography.

In relation to the sector as a whole, Health and Social Care make up 12.7 per cent of employment across the ASELA. This is significant when considering the potential for skills development and the economy, the commissioning power of councils with Children's and Adult's Social Care remits and the need to stimulate the market in the post Covid world.

Policing

South Essex is split between two of Essex Police's three "Local Policing Areas". These are divided as Basildon, Southend, Castle Point and Rochford and in relation not the second, Thurrock and Brentwood plus Harlow and Epping Forest.

Whilst the legislation does allow for combined authorities to adopt wider responsibilities for functions, there are no proposals for any governance arrangements at a South Essex level to take on responsibility for health and care or policing. **We are therefore concluding that the current collaborative arrangements across South Essex are adequate for the purpose of this assessment.**

¹⁰

https://www.housingessex.org/assets/uploads/2018/06/South_Essex_Strategic_Housing_Market_Assessment.pdf

Overall critique of the current arrangements

The current arrangements for collaboration across South Essex and beyond are not capable of delivering the ambitious vision for the area.

South Essex is not benefiting from the arrangements which cover a wider area because of the absence of a single coherent voice for South Essex.

Many of the arrangements cover slightly different geographies creating a fragmented approach.

There is no organisation with an unambiguous focus of South Essex, and which is capable of delivering a long-term programme with the support or devolved powers and resources from government.

Review of current governance arrangements – effectiveness and efficiency – by theme

Theme	Existing arrangement	Considerations for a new governance
Transport	<p>Transport East</p> <p>Projects funded through SELEP</p> <p>Individual relationships with Network Rail, CtoC and Cross Rail</p> <p>Fragmented local government with three highways and transport authorities responsible for South Essex</p>	<p>There needs to be a vehicle to provide a single, coherent response to major, national infrastructure investments such as strategic road and rail projects as well as investment in Lower Thames Crossing</p>
Economy and skills	<p>South East Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <p>One of 4 federated areas of SELEP</p> <p>Limited capacity for economic and skills development</p> <p>Fragmented local government with one county, two unitary and four district councils with responsibility for different parts of the economy and skills agenda</p>	<p>A business board or equivalent could be established in order to take forward the growth needs of the area and improve levels of productivity</p>
Housing and infrastructure	<p>Housing growth has not been delivered to its full potential.</p> <p>Fragmented local government with one county, two unitary and four district councils with responsibility for different parts of the housing and infrastructure agenda.</p>	<p>Combined resources, strategic thinking and an ability to draw in investment across strategic sites would provide critical mass of new homes. Delivery at scale would improve relationship with Homes England and make a significant difference.</p>
Planning	<p>Duty to Cooperate is in place and due to produce a Joint Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Common priorities across South Essex and a delivery vehicle would bring forward new homes and commercial appetite.</p>
Overall	<p>The current decision-making process, accountability and fragmentation of organisations and agendas is not fit for the area's ambitions for the future</p>	<p>Decisions need to be co-ordinated in a way that secures maximum economic and social benefit as well as efficiency, transparency and accountability.</p> <p>There needs to be a single strategic constituted body with decision-making powers to drive forward growth and investment</p>

Summary of prospectus

There are a number of challenges and opportunities facing South Essex which need to be addressed to ensure growth is healthy, inclusive and sustainable over the long term. The South Essex Councils of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Essex County Council, Rochford, Southend and Thurrock have produced a prospectus which sets out what new powers and funding is required to increase opportunities, living standards and tackle inclusive growth and further productivity in the area.

This has been built over time and is seen as a positive first stage in an on-going partnership to a comprehensive approach of economic growth and housing delivery. It will also continue to work together to explore opportunities arising from investment in the South Essex strategic growth corridors and other funding streams.

The overall ambitions set out in this prospectus, and which form the basis of a conversation with government include:

- Providing excellent and contemporary digital infrastructure including 5G and connectivity that will see businesses want to invest in the area and start successful and productive enterprises.
- Delivering significant improvements in connectivity and public transport, underpinned by investment in active travel projects which benefit people's health and wellbeing and could see major environmental benefits.
- Unlocking housing sites to deliver accelerated development seeing new quality homes, neighbourhoods and communities brought to South Essex, and enhancing amenity and place for existing local residents.
- Investment in green and blue infrastructure to enable new parks and river walks, supporting active use of environmental assets, adding to biodiversity, health and wellbeing outcomes, whilst supporting active and thriving communities.
- Improving skills across the region from school aged children through to adult training and education, ensuring that the current and future workforce can access productive and highly skilled jobs.
- A strategy to secure more commercial development from employers who can provide productive and well-paid employment, locally.
- Supporting young people to achieve their best and build their futures in South Essex.

The options appraisal in the next chapter set out the five options that have been considered as part of this review, to bring forward the ambitions set out above. These governance arrangements consider the most effective and efficient way to deliver this vision.

In addition to the overall growth ambition for housing, transport and the economy, there are four specific South Essex initiatives which leaders keen to promote. These include:

1. Developing a regional park infrastructure – this would involve working as a collective to join together all of the green and natural assets – marshes, Rochford trawlers, coastal pathway

and parkland area. By bringing a network of these assets together, a Regional Park could be created to deliver greater access to green space.

2. Sustainable energy – the area has ambitions to accelerate the creation and harnessing of clean growth and sustainable energy with an objective to be a generator of its own energy needs. This would reduce South Essex’s reliance on the national grid.
3. Town Centres – each council is pursuing a regional programme with varying levels of place-shaping investment.
4. Garden settlements – there are three major opportunities across South Essex. These are sites at Rochford / Southend; East of Basildon; and a site at West Thorndon, Thurrock and Brentwood. Each could be progressed at pace by joining individual authorities to bring sites together, delivering scale, developing cross boundary masterplans and delivering greater impact across the corridor. It would enable greater capacity, investment and deliver required infrastructure. Strategic master planning across the corridor would also bring greater value and quality design while respecting sovereignty and the role of individual councils.

Options appraisal of future governance structures

South Essex is at an important decision point. It is clear that:

- It is a geography that makes sense (particularly economy, transport, planning, but also potentially for health and police);
- The area faces significant challenges and opportunities, reinforced by Covid-19, and it has an ambitious long-term vision to address and respond to them.
- The current arrangements, most notably ASELA, have developed the vision and demonstrated an appetite for collaboration across South Essex. They are, however, not capable of delivering the vision. There is a fundamental choice between:
 - Putting more effort into making the current voluntary, partnership arrangements work;
 - Making the arrangements a bit more formal and robust through a statutory joint committee;
 - Creating a combined authority (with or without a Mayor).

This choice coincides with the anticipated publication by government of a devolution white paper. It is expected to herald a further round of devolution to mayoral combined authorities. This must be an important consideration because the delivery of the South Essex prospectus hinges on the agreement of a devolution deal with government including devolved powers and resources.

Options appraisal

There are five options which are being considered as part of this governance review. Each option will be taken in turn to assess their ability to deliver against the requirements set out in this report.

- Option 1: Strengthening the current arrangements
- Option 2: Establishing a Joint Committee
- Option 3: Establishing a Local Development Corporation
- Option 4: Establishing a Combined Authority
- Option 5: Establishing a Combined Authority with a directly elected Mayor

Option 1: Strengthening the current arrangements

It is important to note that the current statutory local government arrangements in South Essex are complicated involving: two unitary councils, four district councils and a county council (which has responsibility for the part of the area covered by the four districts). The coherence of South Essex in terms of economy, housing, transport and infrastructure means that it is essential that some form of collaborative governance arrangements for the area are put in place.

As we noted above the Association of South Essex Local Authorities has made the case for governance arrangements at this level and it has demonstrated the commitment of local political leaders to closer collaboration. It has also demonstrated the high level of ambition of the councils in the area and their partners. It is also clear, however, that the association is not an appropriate body to take the decisions or actions necessary to deliver the ambitions for South Essex or to mobilise devolved powers and resources from government.

The other arrangements that are in place share a number of significant weaknesses. Many cover a far wider geographical area and the lack of a single coherent voice for South Essex means that it does not get full benefit from them. Others cover slightly different areas making it difficult to maintain a concerted and integrated focus on South Essex. The overall picture is one of fragmentation.

It is difficult to envisage any circumstances in which the current arrangements could be strengthened to the extent necessary to address the weaknesses identified in the previous section. They are simply not capable of:

- Delivering a long term strategy;
- Exercising the necessary powers and resources;
- Being trusted by government to receive devolved powers and resources.

As other parts of the country strengthen and align their decision-making process in relation to devolution deals involving transport, economic development and regeneration, South Essex is at risk of being left behind. To capitalise on this opportunity, South Essex would need a structure which would enable a single democratic and financially accountable body to deliver growth.

Option 2: Establishing a Joint Committee

The second option considered as part of this review is the establishment a Joint Committee. Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables two or more local authorities to set up a Joint Committee to discharge their functions jointly. In this case the joint committee could be established by the seven councils in South Essex or by a sub-set of them. Joint Committees, once established, may be decision-making or advisory and while an “accountable body” is generally appointed to manage the committee and its functions, it has no legal status. Furthermore, it has no borrowing powers, nor can it impose any tax-raising measures.

This would enhance some of the current perceived governance and transparency issues associated with ASELA and can be seen as a stepping stone towards more advanced governance structures such as a Combined Authority. However, it would not be sufficiently robust to deliver the ambitions for South Essex. There are five fundamental weaknesses with the joint committee model:

- It would not provide the governance and accountability necessary to manage the powers and resources that South Essex is seeking from government;
- It can only use powers devolved to it from the councils that create it, not powers devolved from government;
- It would be relatively easy for one or more councils to leave the committee, undermining its integrity;

- Links with business would be relatively weak: the LEP for example could attend meetings of the committee but would not be a member of it;
- It would be susceptible to the impact of frequent changes in control of the councils in the area all of which have annual elections (apart from the county council).

In summary, replacing ASELA with a joint committee would not overcome the fundamental weaknesses identified in the previous section. It could, however, be a useful step on the way to more robust arrangements and a longer-term solution to deliver the ambition set out in the prospectus as opposed to a short-term, interim measure. It would in particular:

- Be seen by government as a serious statement of intent, paving the way to discussions about the creation of a combined authority and the negotiation of a devolution agreement;
- Provide a more robust basis for the next phase of collaborative work.

Option 3: Establishing a Local Development Corporation

Development Corporations have traditionally been established and led by central government and in 2011, mayoral development corporations became possible in consultation with a Combined Authority. In 2018, government considered that local authorities could oversee locally-led new town development corporations. This allows a new town to be initiated locally and then “approved” by the Secretary of State who in turn would agree the instruments needed to establish as new town development corporation.

LDC’s are a well-recognised tool for their role in delivering major housing and regeneration projects as they have enhanced powers, an ability to attract investment and are “insulated” from local politics. They can also span multiple local authority boundaries so would be an appropriate delivery tool for key regeneration and housing sites in South Essex.

The changes in 2018 also saw a greater emphasis on involvement of the private sector at the heart of these corporations. This was in part due to their track record of leveraging high levels of private sector investment as well as delivering quality projects. The new model is intended to work with local communities in order to understand their specific needs in relation to required facilities, infrastructure and housing as well as a route to gaining additional investment in town centres and regeneration areas.

The value of local development corporations is questionable as while this body could address local priorities, it would not have any decision-making powers over wider investment in priorities outside its footprint. This option could be a tool a combined authority wants to set up, but not an alternative to it.

Establishing a Local Development Corporation would only lead to marginal improvements and does not match the scale of ambition required to fulfil growth for the area.

Option 4: Establishing and a Combined Authority and Option 5: Establishing a Mayoral CA.

Part 6 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, as amended by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, provides for the establishment of combined authorities. A combined authority is a legal entity that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. They can only be created by parliament, although the development and administration of a combined authority must be locally driven by the authorities involved.

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 has removed a number of previous constraints on the area covered by a combined authority, which must include at least two councils and can now include:

- Councils which are not immediately adjacent to each other;
- Part of a county council area.

Where this flexibility is used the legislation contains a more stringent test of the likelihood that the CA will improve delivery. In these cases, the Government must consider the impact on the other councils in the area.

The legislation also:

- Prohibits councils from being a full member of more than one combined authority; and
- Prevents either a district council from blocking the creation of a combined authority in which a county council wished to participate or a county from blocking a proposal in which a district wishes to participate.

We have assessed these options against the three tests set out in legislation and guidance on the establishment of a combined authority:

- Will it improve the delivery of its functions in the area it covers?
- Will the CA help to secure effective and convenient local government?
- Does the proposed CA reflect local identity and the interests of local communities?

We have added a fourth test, which is whether the arrangements would be likely to secure an ambitious devolution agreement with government.

Will it improve the delivery of its functions in the area it covers?

As the previous sections of this review demonstrate, the geography of South Essex makes sense in terms of action to secure economic growth and improved productivity, raise skill levels, and improve physical and digital connectivity. Action in these areas currently suffers from the fragmentation and governance weaknesses of the current arrangements. Experience in other areas has shown that combined authorities are well-based to lead action on these areas through both a far higher degree of collaboration between the councils in the area and securing and exploiting devolved powers and resources from government. It is clear from the analysis in this report that securing devolution of this type is essential if the ambitions for the area are to be delivered. A combined authority would have the powers and responsibilities needed to develop and deliver a long-term strategy for South Essex overcoming the fragmentation that currently exists.

Health and care and policing are also important to the future of South Essex. Our analysis has shown that the current arrangements do not provide a distinct focus on South Essex. In the future, if it was felt to be appropriate, this focus could be provided by a combined authority.

It is also clear from experience elsewhere that the government has been more willing to devolve a more ambitious set of powers and resources to mayoral CAs, than to non-mayoral CAs.

Will the CA help to secure effective and convenient local government?

Four factors currently have a significant influence on the effectiveness of local government in South Essex:

- The number of councils involved. At present, for example, three councils have responsibility for highways and transport in an area in which a single, integrated strategic approach is required;
- The existence of two small unitary councils which, in common with other councils of the same generation, face capacity issues in securing change at the scale required to address the economic opportunities and challenges in South Essex;
- Over a third of South Essex has a two-tier system of local government, with the county council being responsible for a far wider geographical area;
- The unitary and district councils in South Essex all have annual elections and many change control frequently and/or have periods of no overall control. This can make it difficult to provide the stable and sustained political leadership that is needed to deliver a programme of activity that is being promoted for South Essex.

A combined authority would address the weaknesses that can arise in these circumstances by providing:

- The powers necessary to make progress on the key strategic issues;
- Additional capacity for South Essex as a whole on those issues;
- An unambiguous focus on South Essex.

A mayor would add further value including:

- The stability of a four-year term of office;
- The personal mandate and soft power it enables;
- The ability to raise a precept and business rate supplement;
- The ability to set up a mayoral development corporation.

Does the proposed CA reflect local identity and the interests of local communities?

The key to delivering the ambitions for South Essex is a combination of strategic action on skills, the economy and connectivity with place shaping and community wealth creation at a local level. The creation of a combined authority, with devolved powers and resources would deliver the former. It would also free up the councils in the area to empower, enable and support the communities and

places they serve. The role of the councils as members of the CA, alongside a mayor, would ensure a real link between the two. The constitution of the CA could also provide for the creation of a LEP or business board which would have non-constituent member status on the CA and ensure a business voice in the CA's decision-making.

Will it enable the negotiation of an ambitious devolution agreement with government?

At the time of writing the anticipated devolution white paper has not been published. The experience over the last few years, however, is that the election of a "metro Mayor" has been a precondition of an ambitious devolution agreement with government. There is no reason to think that this position will change.

Summary of findings with recommendations

This report concludes that the future governance arrangement for South Essex is essentially one of four levels of ambition:

- Simply seeking to strengthen ASELA will not enable the delivery of the prospectus and vision for South Essex.

- Replacing ASELA with a joint committee would not overcome the fundamental weaknesses with the current arrangements but would be an important and potentially useful step on the way to putting more robust arrangements in place.
- The case for establishing a South Essex Combined Authority meets the statutory tests for doing so. A combined authority would have the powers needed to delivery a long term strategy for the area, but a mayoral combined authority would have two significant advantages:
 - It would be more likely than a non-mayoral authority to negotiate an ambitious devolution agreement with government;
 - A mayor with a four year term of office would provide a degree of stability and certainty that would strengthen governance in the area.