



STATION SQUARE, PAIGNTON



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Context

Torbay Council's Transformation Strategy for Torbay's Town Centres provides the context for the proposed improvements to Paignton Station Square.

Nothing says more about a town than its centre. It is the place that brings people together from across all its neighbourhoods, as well as from overseas, nearby cities, towns and villages. The centre is a town's heart and will be the part of town that most residents and visitors will know. Rightly or wrongly, it will be the place that determines the view of many people of the town in its entirety. Put simply, town centres matter.

Torbay's town centres are evidently in decline and must change. Paignton town centre is, arguably, on the 'critical list'. It is capable of recovery, to fulfil its rich potential, with immediate investment.

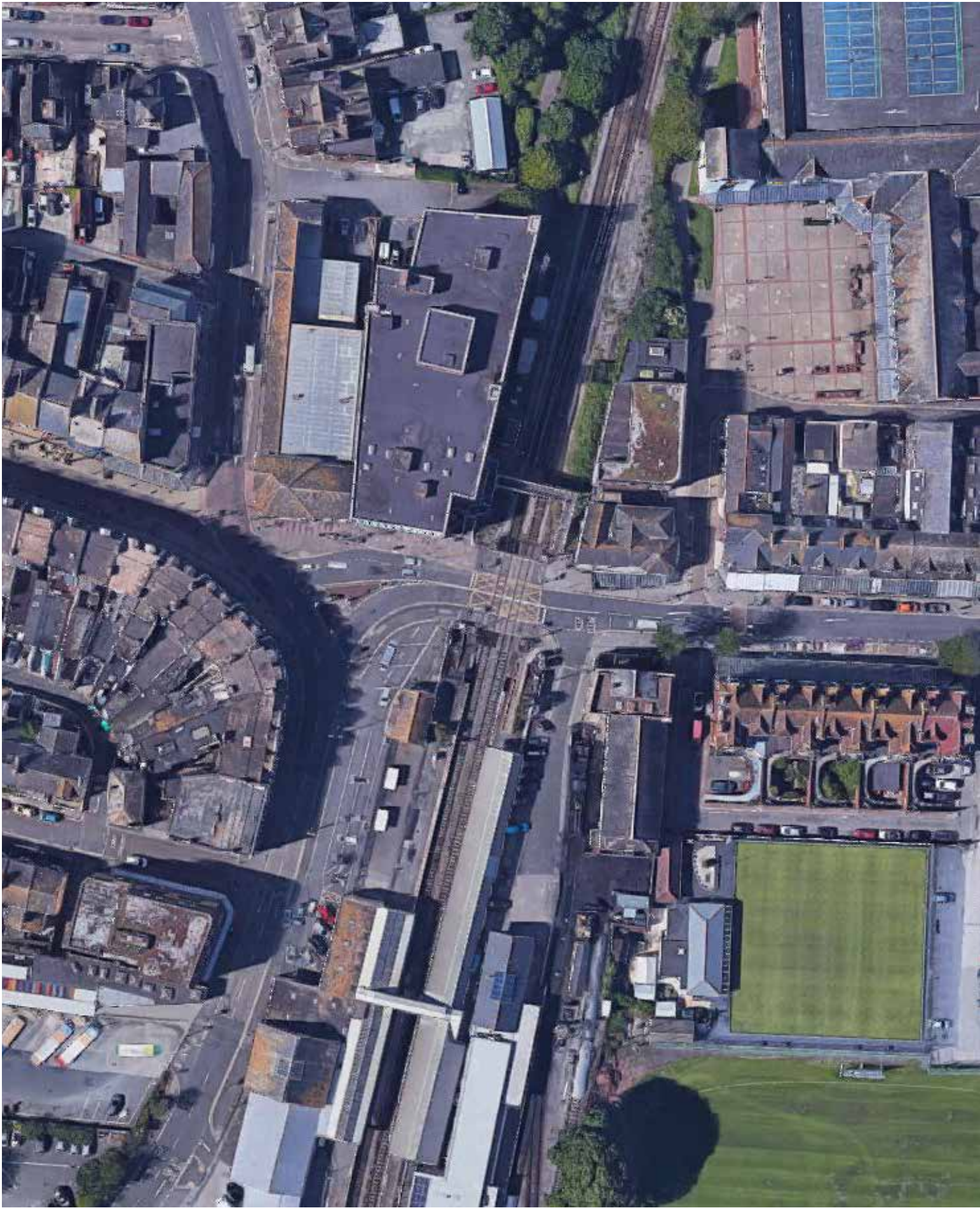
An interventionist approach is proposed in Paignton, using public sector investment to unlock private sector investment. More people will live and work in the town centre, there will

be a more diverse offer and a better experience. Perceptions of the town centre will improve. Paignton's culture, history and uniqueness, not least as one of the main holiday resorts in the region, will be at the forefront of its success.

Improved public space within the town centre will have a number of benefits. It will improve property values, encourage investment, support walking, cycling and use of public transport. It will ensure that visitors to Paignton will have a better experience, increasing footfall and spend in the town centre, creating a community that is vibrant, healthy and resilient to change. It will ensure the town centre is more legible, with easier movement around the town. Different parts of the town, such as the seafront Esplanade, the historic core around Winner Street, the culture of Palace Avenue, and the transport hub of Paignton Station Square, will be better linked together.









Introduction

Paignton Station Square is the focal point of the town centre, the nexus of its fantastic transport links, the social hub of the town. The space has the potential to be framed by high quality architecture and an improving cultural offer, which helps define the strong character of Paignton town centre. It is a diamond that desperately needs polishing.

It is a space that, at the moment, is neglected, gives a poor impression of the town centre, is dominated by vehicles and does not properly connect different parts of the town. It does not encourage people to dwell, discourages investment in the surrounding buildings and begs the question: “Where am I?”. Paignton Station Square must become ‘sticky space’, where people spend time because there are activities and experience that keep them in that space.

Torbay Council commissioned an RIBA Stage 3 detailed design for Paignton Station Square.

TDA and Torbay Culture, acting on behalf of Torbay Council, have managed an experienced design team made up of Kay Elliott Architects, Phil Jones Associates, BD Landscapes, Ginkgo Projects and QSPM.

The work was funded in part by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as part of the Great Place Scheme, and in part by Section 106 monies. This has ensured a focus on place making, community and artist engagement, the history and culture of Paignton and an understanding of place.

The aim is to re-invigorate Station Square to become a vital social focus for the community and visitors to Paignton. In turn, this will empower new and existing businesses and stimulate economic growth, increase footfall and the length of time people spend in this space, and improve the experience of the space throughout the day and night. The length of time people want to stay here and an improved experience throughout the day and night time for all users.



GREAT PLACES ARE MADE WITH DIVERSITY

Creative Engagement

A pre-requisite for achieving a successful outcome, a vibrant town centre and pride in place, is the involvement and support of the local community. The community knows and understands its town better than anyone.

This project has captured that knowledge and understanding through creative workshop sessions, facilitated by a theatre director living locally in Paignton. This fresh approach to engagement allowed for the workshop attendees, which included local business owners, residents, taxi drivers and people with mobility issues, to share their views directly with the design team, working closely with the team to shape plans for the space by focusing on the following themes:

- Physical & Cultural Heritage
- Through the eyes of a visitor
- An imagined future

Artist (Adam Nathaniel Furman) was part of the design team and has also drawn on this local knowledge, as well as the culture and history of Paignton, to ensure the scheme reflects the uniqueness and quality of the place.



Through facilitation the workshop focused on capturing, individual knowledge, memories & views of Station Square.

It built consensus on the main desired character, use & practical considerations needed to inform the evolving design.

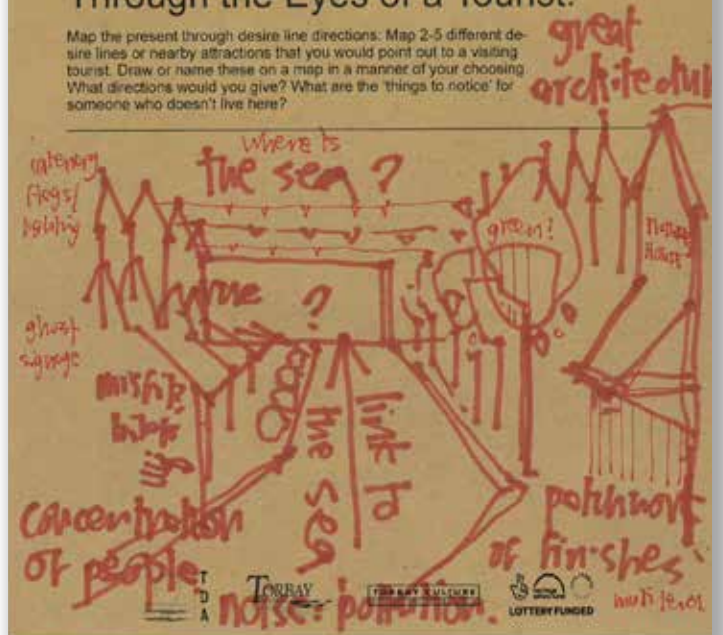
1. Past: A Lived Connection

A letter from the past describing a concrete moment (or three) where you have interacted with that space... this could include writing, a drawing, or a set of lists of different moments. The goal is to capture with concrete detail what your connection with this place has looked like in the past - a series of moments captured

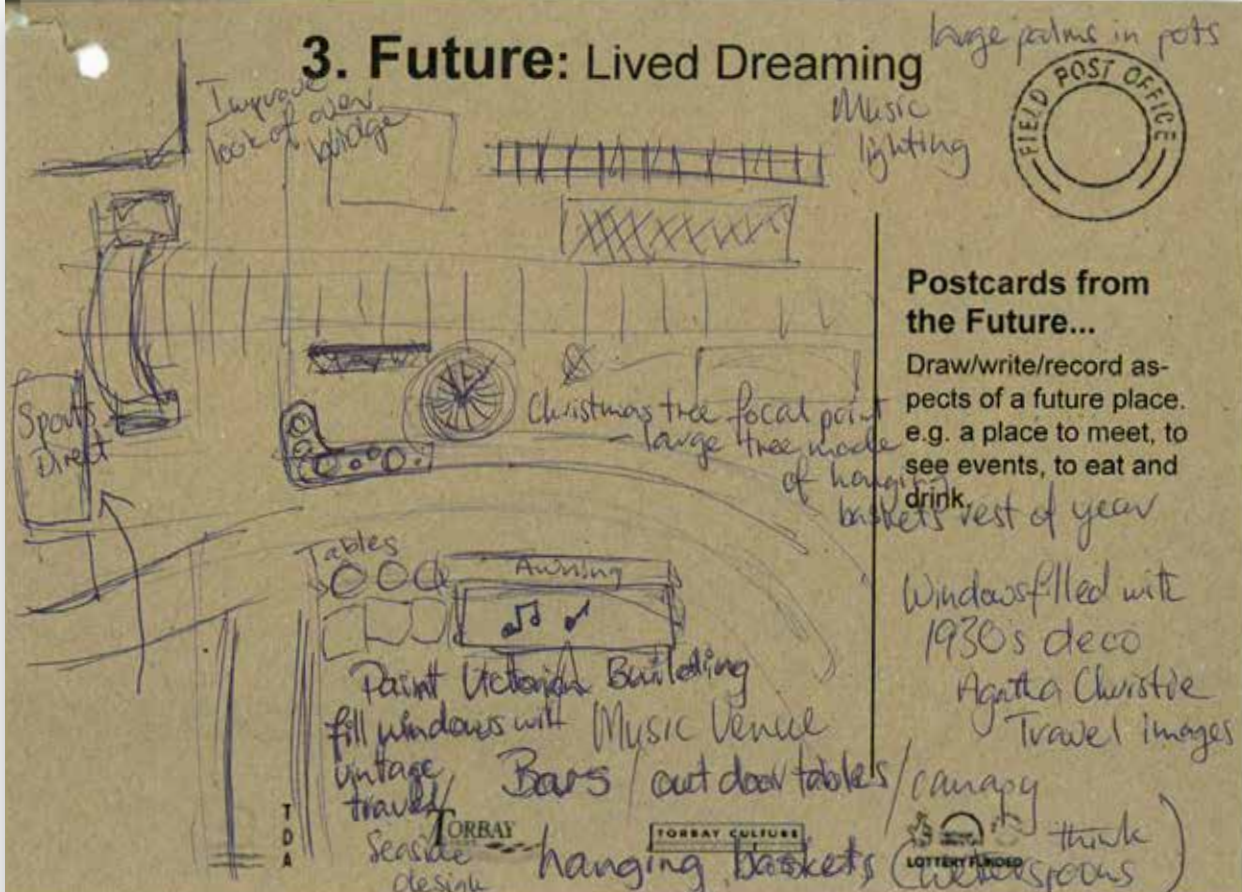


2. Present: Through the Eyes of a Tourist:

Map the present through desire line directions: Map 2-5 different desire lines or nearby attractions that you would point out to a visiting tourist. Draw or name these on a map in a manner of your choosing. What directions would you give? What are the 'things to notice' for someone who doesn't live here?



3. Future: Lived Dreaming



Examples of Workshop output

Existing Use of Space

It was evident, during the workshops, that the importance of Paignton Station Square was understood and there were clear demands for better quality space. The positive attributes of this area were readily identified: it is flat, level and very walkable; it has great public transport connections; it has good architecture, although this is often hidden or not well maintained. The potential of the space, as a point of arrival in the town centre, was underlined.

The community also identified a number of key frustrations related to the impact of the imposing traffic system: The quality of the pedestrian environment, poor legibility of the space and connections to the wider assets of the town. These frustrations, coupled with creative ideas, informed by traffic and pedestrian survey data and the design team's site observations, quickly highlighted the transient nature of this space, its important role as a fulcrum to the town and ways it could be improved.

The key messages, from the community and analysis of the space, were:

- Consider moving road alignment to create more seating potential on west side of Victoria Street
- Consider reducing/moving taxi rank to create public realm
- Increase size of seating area by station storage building to create a clearly defined green space
- Allow for a contemporary design response to valuing heritage
- Explore re-use for Station kiosk/ café building
- Promote Paignton's front door as a stage through artist-led lighting, including linkage with the Picture House and Palace Theatre
- Seek a potential Christmas tree location
- Explore Geopark connections
- Artist commission to explore mapping orientation / narratives within main seating area such as potential of "Kiss me Quick!" or the story of the sea flowing underneath
- Explore potential for issuing Shop front design guidance





Proposals

In response to key messages from the community and technical analysis the design team tested proposals for improvements to the space. The design team needed to ensure, for example, that the proposals met a number of requirements such as: the needs of people with mobility issues, anti-terrorism requirements, Department for Transport policy on shared space and access to the space by large / delivery vehicles. The design proposals are based on evidenced use of the space (by cars, on foot etc) and have been carefully modelled using micro simulation, to show that the improvements work for all users of the space.

Highways / Taxis

The highway has been reduced, without compromising vehicle flows or capacity, to enable increased width of footways and enhanced crossing points (as identified by the pedestrian surveys, formalised to ensure the ease of pedestrians moving about the town). In addition the surface parking and taxi ranks are proposed to be minimised (but improved close by) to mitigate the impact of vehicles on the space and create an inviting space to dwell and enjoy.

Pedestrian Areas & Routes

Maintaining inter-visibility and desire lines is critical to fostering a social space where people are comfortable to stop and enjoy their surroundings. Where possible all pedestrian areas have been increased to give the maximum possible space. These spaces are broken down as:

- Key routes for pedestrians
- Informal seating
- Formal public seating
- Areas outside shop fronts for café seating
- Defined external dining areas



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Poundland

PEP & CO

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Heat Maps

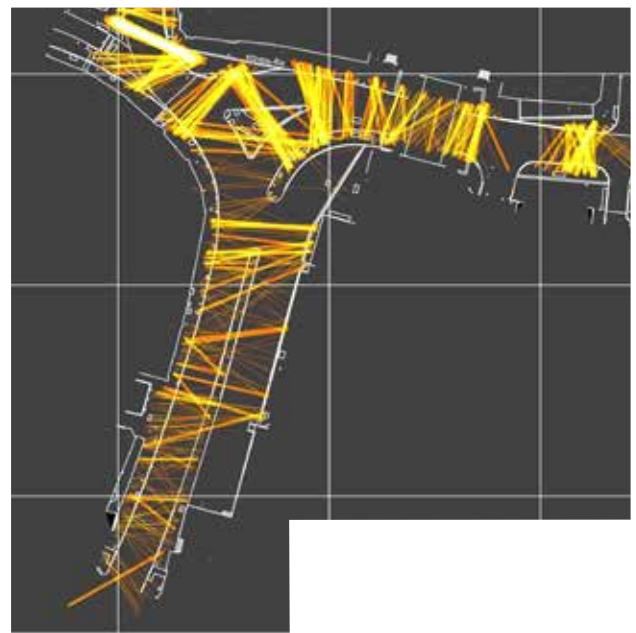
Where do people cross? The routes or desire lines taken by pedestrians across the road were recorded and presented visually on the site plans below. This creates 'heat maps' clearly identifying key routes that pedestrians prefer to use, the brighter and wider the lines, the more concentrated there use. In both

the morning and afternoon periods, the Hyde Road crossing north of Victoria Street and the triangle of routes through the central refuge can be seen as important pedestrian routes. It is obvious for the data that Paignton's pedestrians are comfortable crossing at will along the street.

Pedestrian Desire Lines - Morning (AM)



Pedestrian Density - Morning (AM)



Pedestrian Desire Lines - Afternoon (PM)



Pedestrian Density - Afternoon (PM)







① Taxi Rank

The taxi rank has been reduced to single bay width in lay-by style with 1.2 m width pedestrian route adjacent to accommodate access for disabled users. Sustainable drainage systems and tree planting to be used to screen taxi rank and create safe pedestrian route.

② Pedestrian Routes

Widened pedestrian routes accommodate dining areas, seating and generous avenues with tree planting and sustainable drainage systems as green buffer to the road.

③ Central Public Realm

Public realm extended to include existing central island; creates an area to be developed with artist, safe from traffic with green buffer and tree planting to create a habitable place to stop and dwell.

④ Public Realm

Following comments from the previous workshop the public realm adjacent to Poundland has been reduced; allowing the public realm opposite to be widened.

⑤ Street Furniture

Increased areas of seating along key routes and gathering spaces, including litter bins and cycle stands to form a coherent family of street furniture. These will be used as alternatives to bollards to create safe pedestrian routes.

⑥ Cafe Space

Area to be developed with artist and incorporate key themes; a focal point for the area. This should remain open and flexible to provide a space to be used for events throughout the year and a potential location for the Paignton Christmas Tree.

⑦ Unified Materials

Material palette extended to Picture House and across roadway to emphasise pedestrian hierarchy. Crossing point adjacent Picture House incorporated to match proposals opposite the Station.

⑧ Loading Bay/Drop Off

Loading bay moved south of the main crossing point to create a more generous pedestrian route and green buffer. Bays will be delineated by a change in materials/paving unit size and pedestrian route protected with street furniture elements.

⑨ User Hierarchy

The roadways have been updated to ensure they comply with tracking for all vehicles and have been visually narrowed by increasing paving width in the carriageway. The vehicular route through the central public realm will use different materials of a rougher finish to slow traffic and street furniture and planting creates safe pedestrian zones. The informal crossing points have been rationalised and informal crossing points tie into key desire lines.

⑩ Wayfinding and Accessibility

Increasing the width of the pavements has allowed key visual connections to draw people through the spaces. There is also the potential for artists involvement in bespoke wayfinding. A delineation in the paving using a different texture will allow a clear route for those with visual impairments to follow

Public Realm & New Activity Heat Maps

To enhance the public realm and stimulate the social character of the space two new opportunities have been identified for new cafés. These spaces offer an opportunity to existing or new operators to occupy this space, complementing and improving the town centre offer. This will help activate the space and bring an under-used building back into use. It will help create a sense of arrival and improve dwell times. It is intended that income from new cafes will cover the costs of maintaining Paignton Station Square.

Artist Intervention

A single piece of art is suggested, at the centre of Paignton Station Square, which fuses the geology, as part of the UNESCO Geopark designation, of the place, with Paignton's heritage, architecture and culture. It will be a meeting point for the town centre; it will help create links with other parts of the town encouraging people to explore and appreciate the richness of the place. It will be a visual link, from other parts of the town, back to the centre.

Materials

Paved surfaces and strategic routes will be smooth, robust and high quality. Natural stone has been chosen for its durability and timeless quality. Key routes will be delineated by a change of texture, colour or material for those with visual impairments contributing towards an accessible and navigable space. Seating that is low maintenance, vandal resistant but tactile and comfortable will complement the surface material pallet.

Lighting

A comprehensive external lighting strategy is proposed to provide safe, comfortable and attractive routes and to highlight specific features within the landscape, such as street furniture and tree canopies. Lighting will provide an ambient backdrop and maximise use of the external spaces into the evening, including in-ground directional elements which have a more playful approach. A more detailed lighting strategy will be developed, with artist involvement, at the next (technical) stage of the design process.



Proposed section illustrating increased public space & narrowing of carriageway

Planting

Planting will provide a sensory rich environment that successfully combines biodiversity, enrichment and communal facilities to create a high quality environment. For example, coastal specific planting mixes are proposed, which are vibrant and eye-catching to give a good first impression of the place; linear tree planting will help define routes, create areas of shade over seating and a visual buffer to the road, as well as helping to improve air quality and reduce noise.



Lighting at night



View East towards Victoria St.

Cost Planning

Cost planning has been undertaken throughout Stage 3 resulting in a robust cost plan for the proposal. Rates used are based on initial information which have been verified against similar projects by the Council. These rates were further reviewed and verified with a local Contractor, whose expertise and knowledge is also reflected within the cost plan.

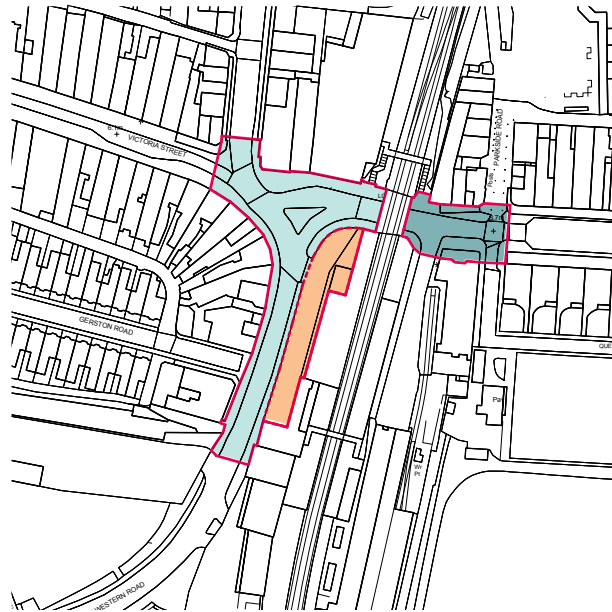
The Stage 3 Cost Plan Summary presents three options for delivery of improvements to the space. The first two options illustrate how a phased approach could impact on the cost plan. A third option, identified by the client, illustrates the two separate land ownerships.

potential to extend the works along Torbay Road to the sea front as set out in the Paignton Neighbourhood Plan.

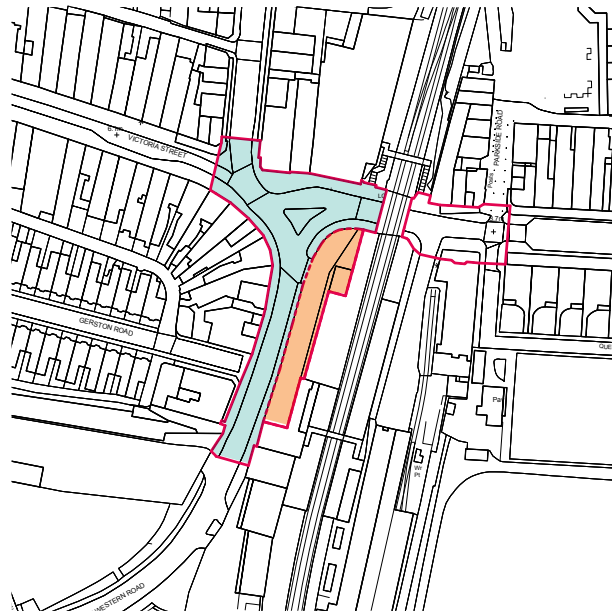
Neither options 2 or 3 would deliver the benefits to the place or to the community that are required in Paignton town centre. For example, option 2 would exclude links to Paignton Picture House – which, as Europe’s oldest and most intact purpose built cinema, is of significant cultural and historic value to the place – and to Dartmouth Steam Railway, as an important part of the tourism offer. Option 3 would, for example, prohibit delivery of significant improvements to the station area and would not allow delivery of commercial space, thereby reducing the ability to cover the cost of future maintenance of public space.

- £1,659,242.50 - Option 1 - Whole Scheme and the preferred option.
- £1,380,992.50 - Option 2 – Initially omitting improvements to the east of railway line
- £1,204,992.50 - Option 3 - Option 2, but also omitting land owned by Network Rail.

Option 1 - The preferred option - the whole scheme



Option 2 - Initially omitting improvements to the east of railway line



Option 3 - Option 2, but also omitting land owned by Network Rail.

