

## Site LG1 – Vehicular Access Background Paper

### Purpose

The aim of this briefing paper is to set out our position in relation to transport considerations and access proposals to serve the LG1 site to help inform the community consultation process scheduled for May and June of this year.

### Background

The location of the LG1 site is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Overall, we are seeking to provide a safe and an easy to use transport system to serve the proposed development that will create the best opportunity for sustainable non-car modes of transport, whilst respecting the need to make provision for car travel and parking. The aspiration is also to provide a series of measures that will improve transport accessibility for the residents of the Grange Estate and embrace new and emerging technologies.

A series of core values and principles have informed the basis of our approach concerning the transport strategy for this site:

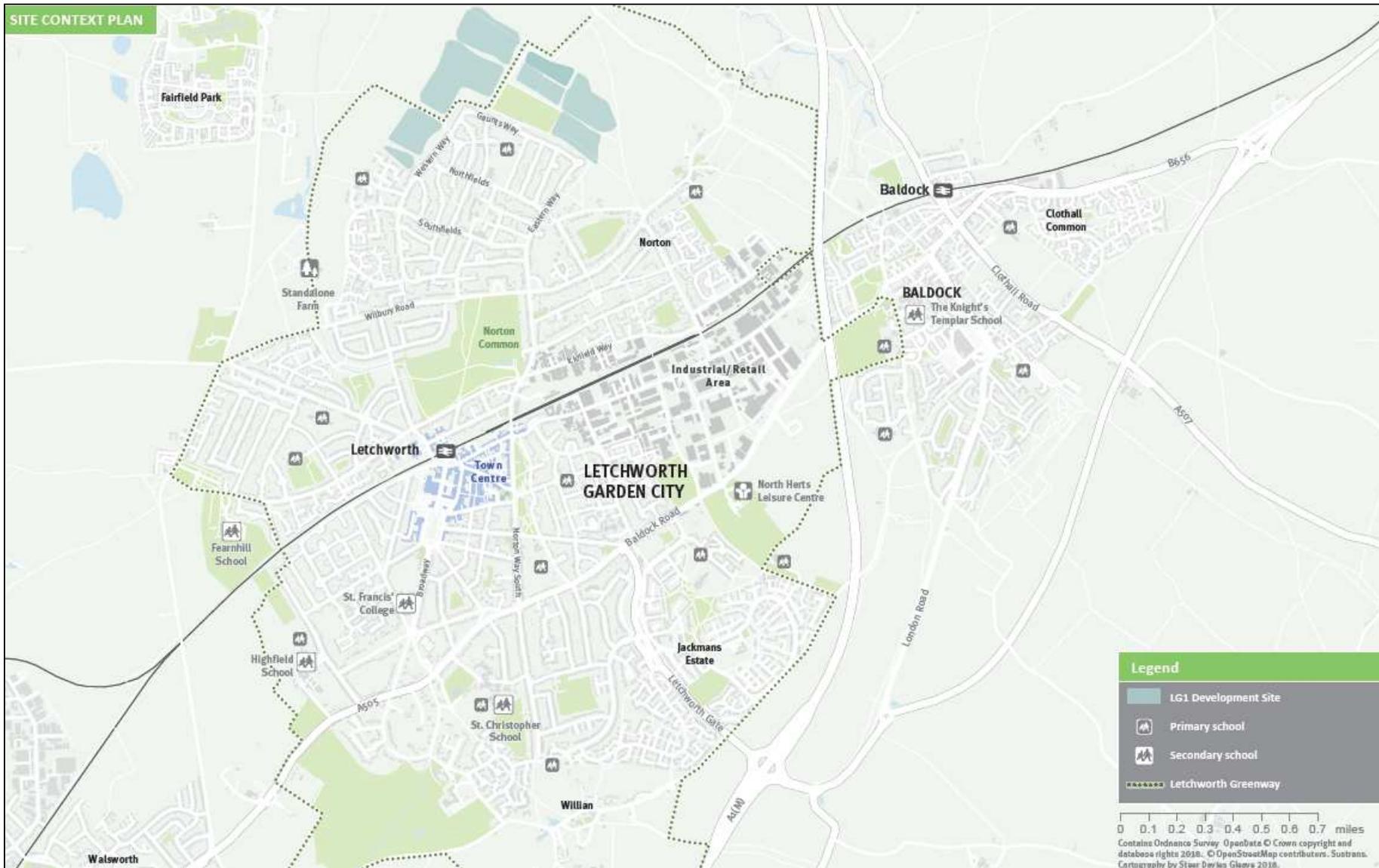
#### *Access*

- Minimise residual impacts of the development on local roads.
- Prevent construction traffic utilising the Grange estate for access.
- Provide enhanced public transport access.
- Reduce car dependence including:
  - the provision of safe, direct walking and cycling routes throughout the development and the surrounding area;
  - the promotion of a car club scheme;
  - travel support and advice for residents implemented through an effective and robust Travel Plan.
- Provide adequate car parking capacity to minimise disruptive on-street parking within the development and prevent overspill car parking.
- Embrace emerging technologies.

#### *Internal Layout*

- Reflect Letchworth Garden City design principles, including tree lined corridors and verges to reflect early Garden City layouts.
- Development of a neighbourhood centre incorporating a community facility, school and local retail along with a transport interchange for buses, cyclists and pedestrians serving occupiers of the new development alongside existing residents within the Grange Estate.
- Discourage rat-running through layout and design.
- A 20mph speed limit throughout.
- Accommodate buses and cyclists.
- Protect existing hedgerows and trees wherever possible.
- Creation of a car free zone around the proposed school.
- Incorporate electric vehicle charging points.

Figure 1: LG1 Site Location



### *Walking and Cycling*

- Improve access from the site to the town centre, station and employment areas.
- Maintain and enhance the Greenway.
- Provide a catalyst for more sustainable travel for existing residents of The Grange and areas north of the station.

The biggest single issue concerning the deliverability of this site concerns transport and in particular the vehicular access points to serve the development both during construction and post completion.

This was identified in early analysis and is a theme that has continued to be raised through community engagement since when this land was first considered for development in 2013.

At that time Cottee Transport Planning (CTP) was instructed to review access solutions to serve the development. In their initial analysis they recommended access from Western Way to serve the development site and ruled out vehicular access further east along Gaunts Way due to inadequate road widths within this part of the Grange.

In their assessment CTP concluded that although the Grange has the technical capacity subject to some local improvements, to accommodate the development, environmental conditions were such that there would be a deterioration of conditions for the Grange residents. As such an additional access should be considered, as well as the proposed route via Western Way. Such an approach also addresses the potential significant disturbance that could arise from construction traffic in order to avoid this passing through the residential parts of the town and the Grange Estate in particular.

Two options for the second access were considered to Hitchin Road to the west and Norton Road to the north.

These were included in the community engagement in 2013 with details supplied to the Local Planning Authority.

### **Local Plan Process**

As part of the Local Plan process, the Council were required by the appointed Inspector to demonstrate that the land allocated for housing is deliverable.

In order to respond to this, the Foundation considered the two second vehicle access options (Hitchin Road to the west and Norton Road to the north). Following advice from its transport advisors, the Norton Road option was considered preferable due to the extent of development within the Fairfield area, possible additional congestion issues, the length of road required and its subsequent visual impact.

Therefore, representations to the Local Plan Public Examination were based on a vehicular access strategy comprising of two vehicle access points serving the site: one via Western Way and a second to link to Norton Road. In addition, pedestrian and cycle routes were proposed via the existing footpath on to Western Way and through the existing Grange Recreation Ground. This was part of representations made by the Foundation, District and County Councils.

The County Council as Highways Authority confirmed at the Local Plan Examination that they were satisfied with the proposed access solution.

As part of the information supplied to the Public Examination, a plan was submitted showing the two access points. This was not considered to be a major issue by the Highway Authority at the hearing sessions.

### **Current Position**

Approximately 2 years ago Steer Davies Gleave (now Steer) was instructed to review the access provisions and take this forward with the Highways Authority.

As part of this exercise, Steer assessed a number of different vehicular access solutions and concluded that the most appropriate access solution was two access points: via Western Way and from Norton Road, with pedestrian and cycle routes via the existing footpath on to Western Way and via the existing Grange Recreation Ground. The indicative LG1 Site Masterplan is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

This has been the subject of detailed discussion with the County Council who believe that this is the most appropriate way to access the site and are comfortable with this approach.

### **Modelling**

To assist understanding of the potential traffic flows and their impacts on the local highway network, highways modelling software can be used to identify likely capacity issues and areas where improvements may be necessary.

Strategic level highways modelling has been undertaken by the County Council for the LG1 site and initial results have been provided. This modelling incorporated all of the development schemes proposed in North Hertfordshire, and background growth associated with developments located in Central Bedfordshire. The forecast number of trips for the LG1 site has also been included. The modelling indicates that in the AM and PM peak, a large proportion of traffic (over 90%) will be likely to use the new access to the north via Norton Way, with less movements using the Western Way access and the Grange Estate. The modelling confirmed that the development will not have a substantive impact on the main junctions linked to the Norton Road access, but some of those already under some strain, may benefit from improvement.

As the County Council model is a strategic model it is less focused at a localised scale particularly in distributing trips by access point. Therefore, Steer has undertaken an independent assessment to examine the distribution of vehicle trips. This has identified that during the AM peak circa 80% of trips would use the Norton Road access with 20% using the Western Way access. This is considered to be a more logical assumption for the AM and PM peak trip distribution.

Although background highway traffic flows (without the LG1 site) and the overall trip generation of the proposed LG1 development are likely to be highest during the weekday AM and PM peaks, the proportional split of trips by access point could vary during the off-peak or weekend periods, with greater emphasis placed on the Western Way access, in response to more localised trips being made for leisure, educational or retail purposes. However, the local highway network will have greater capacity at these times to accommodate greater usage of the southern access. Further consideration will be given to this to understand the potential impact.

Figure 2: Site LG1 Indicative Masterplan



More detailed analysis of the impact of trips generated by the development will be undertaken at the planning application stage in the form of a Transport Assessment. The proposed Transport Assessment methodology will be fully scoped with the Hertfordshire County Council highways and the District Council at the pre-application stage, however at this stage it is considered likely that traffic surveys and detailed modelling will need to be undertaken for the following key junctions as a minimum:

- A507/ Norton Road
- Wilbury Road/ Grange Road
- Wilbury Road/ Eastholm/ Norton Road
- Norton Road/ Green Lane.

These assessments will be used to determine any potential junction improvement options required to address capacity issues as suitable mitigation that could come forward with the development.

### **Western Way Access Design**

The current preference for the junction via Western Way into the development site is a simple junction design, which does not include a roundabout or similar. This has been tabled with the Highways Authority and is supported in principle.

As part of the junction design, we would seek to include measures to improve the road alignment and protect the grass verges, which are currently damaged by vehicles mounting the kerb.

The land surrounding the proposed Western Way access is also such that the design can enable sufficient road width and turning radii to comfortably allow a bus to access the site as well as servicing vehicles.

### **Non-Car Modes**

The intention is that the development will maximise opportunities for residents of the Grange and the new development to access non-car modes of transport.

As part of this, the Foundation has produced a Cycling Strategy for the whole of Letchworth ([www.lechworth.com/cycling-strategy](http://www.lechworth.com/cycling-strategy)) which is the starting point for securing improvements within the town. A cycle strategy will also be developed for the Grange to consider how better links into the town centre (and station) can be provided, such as enhancements to Norton Common, to ensure a cycle route can be used at night-time.

**Figure 3** illustrates the proposed schemes identified in the Cycling Strategy and potential connections to the LG1 site access points including indicative routes between the access points and Norton Common (Indicative Routes A1, A2, B1 and B2). **Figure 4** provides some indicative options as to how cycle routes could potentially be accommodated on-street within the Grange Estate.

The development could help support improved bus provision, with the potential that additional services could be provided that are more regular and usable for existing and new residents; particularly reducing the number of people who have to drive to the rail station or town centre for work.

Figure 3: Letchworth Garden City Cycling Strategy Proposed Schemes and Potential Connections to LG1.

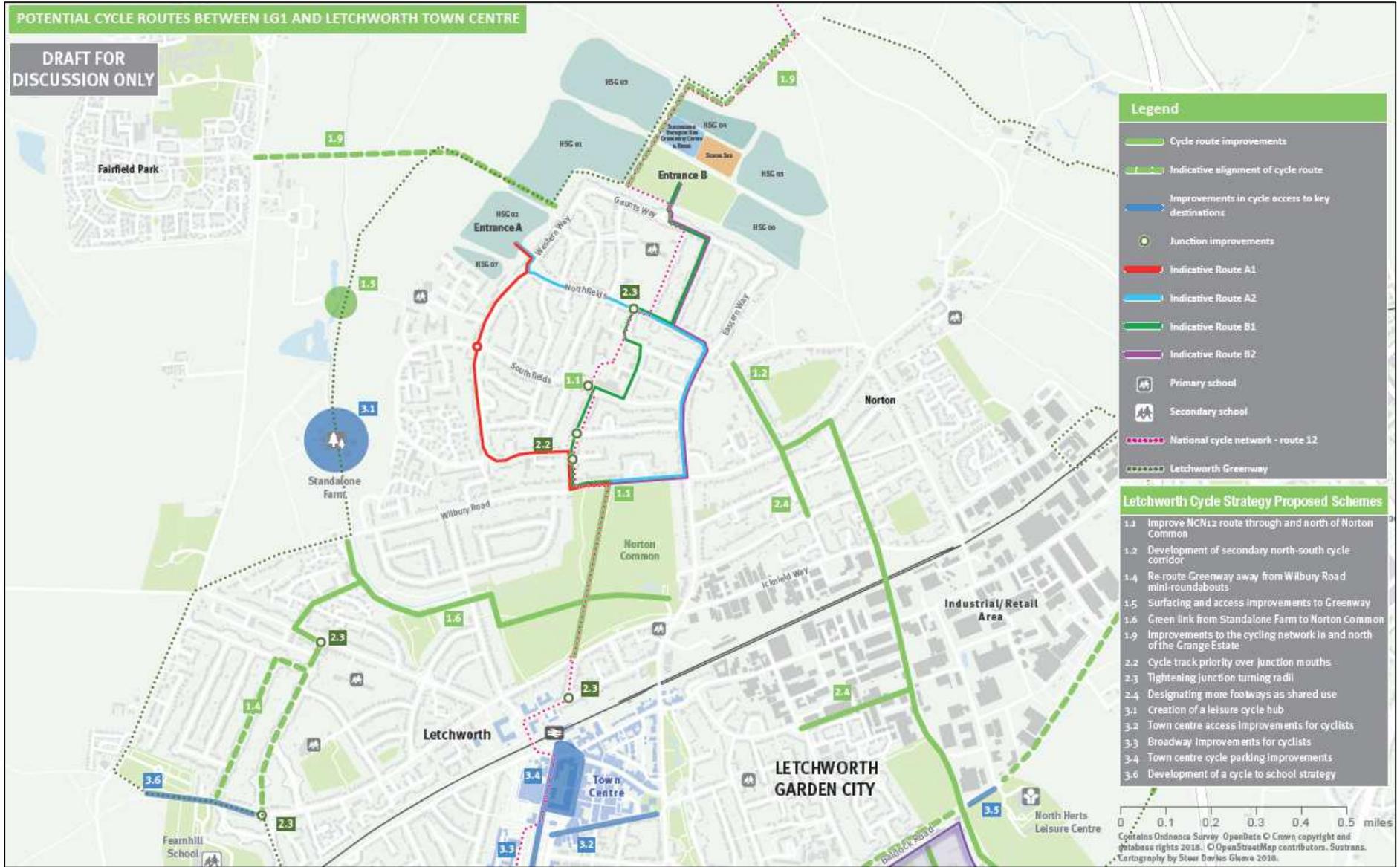
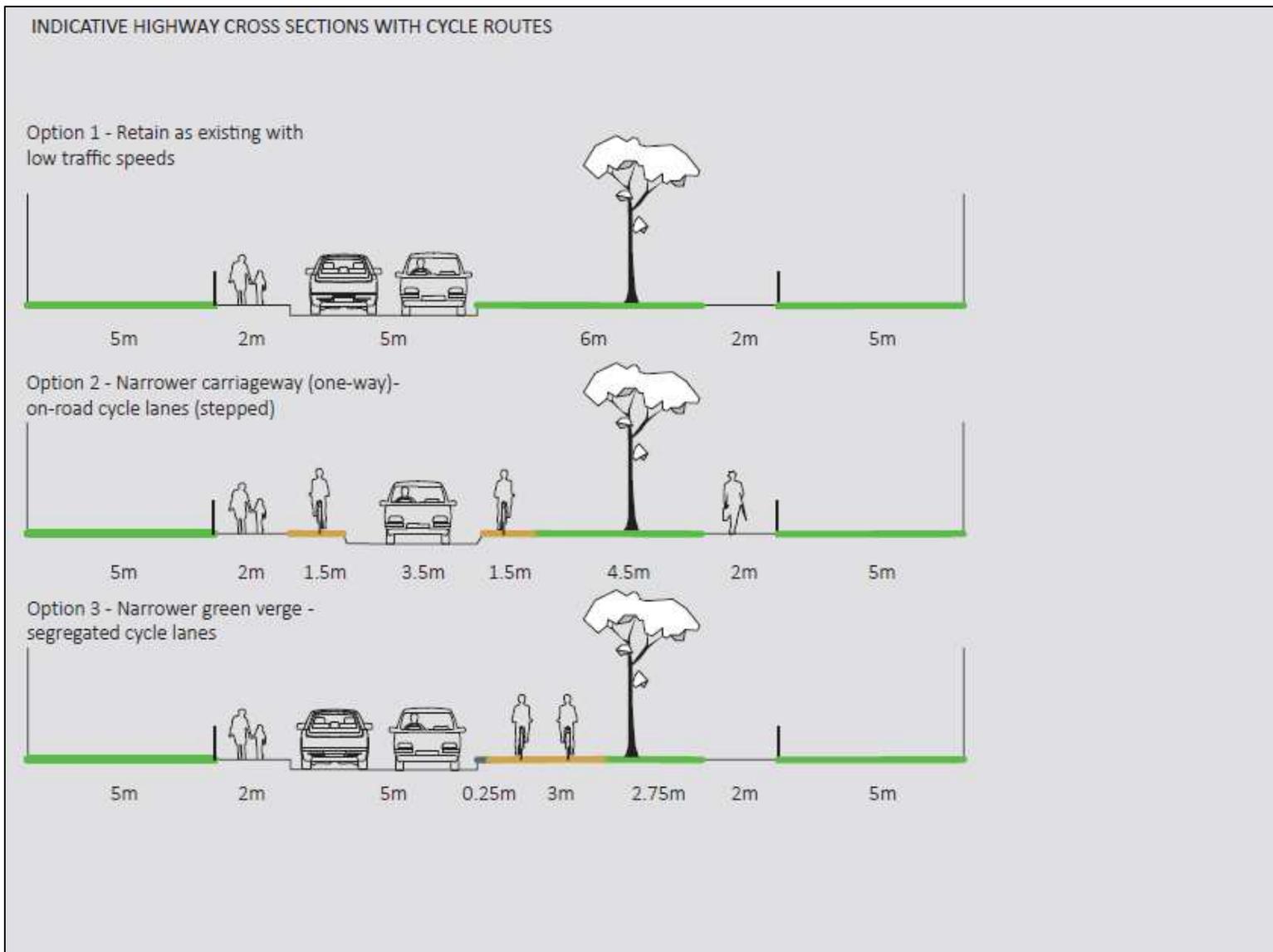


Figure 4: Potential Highway Cycle Route Options within the Grange Estate



Either a new bus route or the extension of an existing bus route into the site via Western Way are being considered as potential options for increasing public transport accessibility to the site and it is important that any vehicular access from the Grange into the site enables bus access.

Further investigations will be undertaken into these options and other potential measures to promote bus access.

A safe car free zone is also proposed to be created around the school to encourage active travel, enhance safety and preserve air quality, and we look forward to discussing possible innovative solutions for school pupils and their families.

### **Emerging Technologies**

The development will embrace emerging transport technologies. Examples of this could include the following:

- Incorporating electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Fast broadband connections to promote home working.
- Integrated ticketing and fares.
- Freight consolidation.
- Accommodating autonomous vehicles.
- Investigating opportunities for on demand taxi hailing.
- On demand mini-buses.
- Developing car clubs and encouraging car sharing.
- Dockless cycle and scooter hire.
- Ebikes and escooters.
- Drone based deliveries.

### **Next Steps**

1. Following the presentation of this background paper, the transport implications of the proposed development as well as town wide issues will be discussed at a Transport Surgery to be held at One Garden City on 8<sup>th</sup> May (4.30pm to 7.30pm) and at the site specific session on 17<sup>th</sup> May at the Grange Academy (5pm to 8pm).
2. Review the proposed transport approach following these sessions.
3. Develop the information arising from the traffic modelling, to present a more rounded understanding of the traffic implications of the development at LG1.
4. Continue to examine opportunities for innovative transport solutions for further consideration and discussion, to promote alternative modes of transport.
5. Provide a car parking strategy for the development.
6. Continue discussion with the District Council and the County Council Highways Authority to agree the final strategy for the site.
7. Contribute to the Development Brief for the site.