

Report to Cabinet

11 September 2024

Subject:	A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor – Update on potential bus priority measures
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure - Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Executive Director – Place Alan Lunt
Key Decision:	<p>Yes</p> <p>Type (b) - an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to more than £1m.</p> <p>Type (c) – an executive decision which is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.</p>
Contact Officer:	<p>Andy Miller Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk</p>

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval is given to the A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor Option B (Cycle route and limited bus priority) as the basis for detailed design and Full Business Case preparation.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 'In principle' scheme approval for the A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor project was granted at Cabinet on 7 February 2024. Two options were presented to Cabinet as part of that report;

- Option B – This option includes junction improvements at key locations to improve safety and operation, with limited bus priority measures along with a fully segregated bi-directional cycle track along the full length of the route.
- Option C – This option includes full bus priority (bus lanes) along the entire corridor as well as junction improvements at key locations to improve safety and operation, and a fully segregated bi-directional cycle track along the full length of the route.

A further minimum interventions option (Option A) was discounted prior to the project being reported to Cabinet as it did not meet the project's aims and objectives.

- 2.2 The 7 February report noted that further transport modelling and design work was required to establish the feasibility, implications, and benefits of Option C and that a further report would be submitted to Cabinet once this work was completed.
- 2.3 The additional transport modelling and assessment has now taken place. The results of that modelling work show that the provision of extensive bus lanes and other priority measures in Option C will provide journey times savings in Sandwell. However, the bulk of these benefits apply to a single route (the 126) which operates on a 15-minute (4 buses per hour each way) headway. However, there will be a significant increase in cost from effectively adding an additional lane to the corridor in both directions resulting in a much greater loss of mature trees and other vegetation than that required for Option B. Further, the cycle and footway provision would need to be of a lower standard than desirable thus reducing the active travel benefits of the project. Overall, the value of the bus journey time savings when compared to the increased cost, reduced active travel benefits and impact on the streetscape would result in a scheme benefit to cost ratio (BCR) that would not justify the proposals.
- 2.4 It is therefore recommended that Option B (junction upgrades with minimal bus priority measures and full cycle facilities) be approved as the preferred scheme to be further developed through detailed design and to Full Business Case stage.

- 2.5 Officers will now proceed to implement the approvals resulting from the 7th February report to Cabinet, including consultation, submission of the Outline Business Case, and progression to detailed design.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	The A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor includes extensive measures designed to encourage walking and cycling thus contributing to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.
Living in Sandwell	<p>Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this.</p> <p>New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The proposals will make a significant contribution to this objective.</p>
Thriving Economy in Sandwell	<p>The provision of a high-quality transport network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.</p> <p>The provision of a high-quality, sustainable transport network catering for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education, and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor project forms part of the West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport programme for funding period 2022-27. The background to the project and progress on its development (up to January 2024) is set out in the Cabinet report of 7th February 2024.
- 4.2 Three options were investigated in the initial feasibility stage of the scheme of which two were presented to Cabinet in February 2024. Broadly speaking these are;

Option B – Junction improvements along with limited bus priority measures and a fully segregated cycle route.

Option C – Full bus priority along the entire corridor as well as junction improvements and fully segregated cycle route.

- 4.3 The proposals that comprised Option C have been investigated further using transport modelling including both the updated West Midlands strategic transport model and local modelling to validate and show what the expected benefits would be derived from their provision.
- 4.4 The modelling work shows that service 126 (Dudley to Birmingham) would benefit from a reduction in journey times of approximately 7 minutes southbound and 4 minutes northbound. Whilst these are not insignificant savings per journey, the service only operates at a 15-minute frequency so only four buses per hour would derive this benefit, and only at peak times. Off-peak journey times would reduce only by 30 seconds or so. Government guidance indicates that bus priority measures should only be considered where;
- There are frequent bus services (at least one every 10 minutes).
 - There is significant traffic congestion which would be relieved during the hours of operation and that their installation takes into consideration of their impact on other road users.
 - There is space to install them.
- 4.5 The proposals shown in Option C would have resulted in 24/7 bus lanes that would require the removal of around 300 additional trees (compared to Option B) along with other areas of greenery, verge etc. In order to construct the bus lanes, the cycle track and footways would have to be narrower than the desired standard, resulting in less-than-optimal active travel provision. The introduction of a bus lane would also widen the carriageway by 2 lanes in some locations. This would increase crossing distances for pedestrians both impacting pedestrian journey times and decrease general junction capacity on a strategic route. Additionally, residents along the corridor would have to cross both a cycle lane and a bus lane before entering the carriageway potentially reducing safety for residents wishing to access their properties.

4.6 Furthermore, the construction of significant lengths of bus lane would add considerably to the scheme cost, possibly as much as 100%. There is only £29m allocated to the project within CRSTS1 and this would not fund the entirety of the works identified in Option B. As the benefits for bus users would be relatively modest and there would be some disbenefits for other road users, it is highly unlikely that a high enough benefit to cost ratio (BCR) would be achieved for such a scheme

4.4 It is therefore recommended that the bus priority measures that make up Option C are not progressed and that the project proceeds along the lines of Option B with a full segregated bi-directional cycle route and some of the junction improvement measures, as set out in that report. Junction improvements will include cycle and pedestrian facilities, safety improvements and, where modelling demonstrates that benefits are derived, bus priority measures. The junctions to be improved are shown in the plans in the appendix and include;

- Tipton Road
- Portway Road
- Lower City Road
- Causeway Green
- Pound Road
- Queensway
- Brandhall Road

All junction improvements are subject to further detailed design and modelling analysis before final approval can be sought.

4.5 The *Tipton Road* junction (Plan No. 2) includes layout alterations to provide further operational resilience whilst creating a safe effective link for cyclists and pedestrians, including a link to the canal network.

4.6 Improvements to the *Portway Road* Junction (Plan No. 3) are proposed utilising Toucan type crossings to provide a safe crossing at the junction for pedestrians and cyclists. A left turn into Portway from the A4123 is also being considered at this junction. Modelling suggests that the improved arrangement allows the cycle phases to be better integrated with the traffic phases negating any pedestrian/cycle only stage, which will make the junction more resilient and improve the priority for cyclists and pedestrians.

- 4.7 It is proposed to improve the junctions at *Lower City Road/Park Road* with the A4123 utilising a more effective combined single junction arrangement with the A4123 providing for a safer and more efficient movement of all transport modes through that junction and is essential to support the objectives of the A4123 walk/cycle and bus measure project (See Plan No.4).
- 4.8 The Junction at *Causeway Green* includes improvements for the crossing for cyclists and pedestrians utilising the new infrastructure. The strategic modelling showed little benefit resulting from bus priority lanes through improved journey times, which would also require removal of a number of trees, and this is now removed from the proposal (See Plan No. 5).
- 4.9 The junction at *Pound Road* (see Plan No.6) is being reviewed and traffic signals timing optimised to provide for the most effective movement of the new active travel measures and the other transport modes using the junction. The active travel measures have been shown to have zero impact on capacity as the cycle priority can be integrated with pedestrian signal phases. It is recommended that bus priority lanes are not introduced here as will require the removal of several mature trees with little improvement to the journey times of services.
- 4.10 Improvements to *Queensway* and *Brandhall Road* junctions (see Plan No. 7) are proposed to support this project, with a summary of suggested measures as follows;
- more effective junction signalling linking the junctions with provision of Toucan type crossings to facilitate a safer movement for pedestrians and cyclists crossing to schools and local amenities.
 - The inclusion of right turns into Queensway, Parsons Hill and Brandhall Road from the A4123. This will improve capacity and safety for all users of the junction and will also support improved bus journey times.
 - Relocation of some bus stops nearer to signals and pedestrian desire lines to encourage a more safe and greater use of the bus services.

The strategic modelling has shown little benefit would be gained for bus journey times and so no bus priority measures are proposed here.

A consideration of City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding for early delivery of this junction is being made and

would support the OBC submission to WMCA for SAF approval. It should be noted a contribution from the Sandwell Road Safety Fund and from s106 (adjacent development) funds will support the delivery of this project.

- 4.11 The Junction at *Bleakhouse Road* has been reviewed further to the transport modelling and few benefits identified for bus service journey times from any bus lanes and so these have been removed from the project (see Plan No.8).
- 4.13 Please note there are a number of other side roads joining the A4123 which are being carefully considered for the priority of pedestrians and cyclists crossing junctions safely. There has been a Speed Limit Review Study undertaken which has recommended the reduction of speed limits along certain sections of the corridor. In Sandwell this includes the reduced Speed Limit to 30 mph on the approaches to the Burnt Tree junction and also a reduction to 30mph on the approaches to Birchley island. However, the keeping of a free-flowing traffic where possible is also being included in any recommendations further to the review with other options to calm traffic and encourage safe turning of all transport modes in and out of side roads being considered as well.
- 4.14 It was noted in the February report that a 'CYCLOPS' approach is also being considered for possible use at junctions along the corridor and may include junctions in Sandwell. It is an innovative design approach utilising an external orbital cycle track separating cyclists from vehicular traffic in time and space, enabling multi modal transport conflicts at junctions to be managed safely. It has been successfully utilised in Greater Manchester. Its use however, would be subject to detailed junction modelling to ensure it would not reduce capacity at junctions along the A4123 corridor and meets design safety standards. Please note that at this stage the 'CYCLOPS' junction approach is only being considered at the Burnt Tree Junction (see Plan No. 2) and will be considered as part of the project TfWM are completing at that junction, which will effectively link with Active Travel improvements along the A4123 corridor and the A461 corridor.
- 4.13 This project will involve the removal of some trees and some other planting to accommodate the proposals. Within Sandwell the proposals seek to keep as many of the existing trees as possible. Design considerations have been made to the cycle track width and its route to limit tree removal. However, where trees do need removing, including any that may also be

diseased/damaged in some way, they will be replaced in a greater number by appropriate healthy trees as near to the original location as possible. A tree mitigation strategy for the project is also currently being developed, which will encompass the recommendations of current tree strategies along the corridor and includes Sandwell's tree strategy. Consideration is also be made to request advanced CRSTS funding to plant trees at an early stage that are needed to replace those that will need to be removed for project delivery.

- 4.14 As part of the OBC work, the links to off road routes provided by Sustrans, for example National Cycle Network routes 54 and are being explored to encourage a greater take up cycling, especially for short journeys. The promotional initiative for this project will seek to encourage the development of new (and support existing) leisure events and facilities to nurture and develop a culture of cycling and active travel for all and include those that do not currently cycle.
- 4.15 This scheme has £29.0 million City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding to deliver the corridor by 2027. The section of the A4123 from Burnt Tree to Lower City Road (excluding the Lower City Road Junction) is proposed for delivery in 2024/25 by Sandwell Borough Council as early funding has been allocated for this section. The remaining length of the A4123 corridor in Sandwell area will be delivered in sections during the period 2025 to 2027. Minimising disruption to all users of the A4123 and providing Network Resilience is essential and Black Country Transport and Sandwell Borough Council officers are working with TfWM officers to ensure this achieved during delivery stages of the project. It is proposed that The Full Business Case, which follows SAF approval of the Outline Business Case by WMCA will provide a more defined programme for delivery.
- 4.16 The entire corridor is expected to cost more than the £29.0 million allocated. A prioritisation exercise will take place to ascertain which section of the scheme will be delivered in this CRSTS period. However, approval in principle is already in place for the entire scheme in Sandwell so that delivery can subsequently happen in sections according to funding allocations. The remaining scheme will be delivered using additional funding to be sought through a subsequent round of CRSTS or other Government Funding.

Consultation

- 4.17 The scheme in full has not yet been subject to public consultation. A comprehensive public consultation exercise is planned for Autumn 2024 to ascertain local sentiment around the proposed interventions. This will include public exhibitions in all three local authority areas covered by the scheme. As set out in the recommendations on 7th February, details will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure for approval once finalised.
- 4.18 Stakeholder agreement to the scheme has been sought previously through the assurance and appraisal process at the WMCA who have approved the Strategic Outline Business Case. Following this Cabinet review, the Outline Business Case will be submitted to the WMCA for approval, allowing for the release of funding for the final development stage (Full Business Case), and for some funding for early delivery of some elements of the scheme.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative options were set out in the report to Cabinet on 7th February. This report deals with the outcome of the resulting analysis to finalise the preferred option.

6 Implications

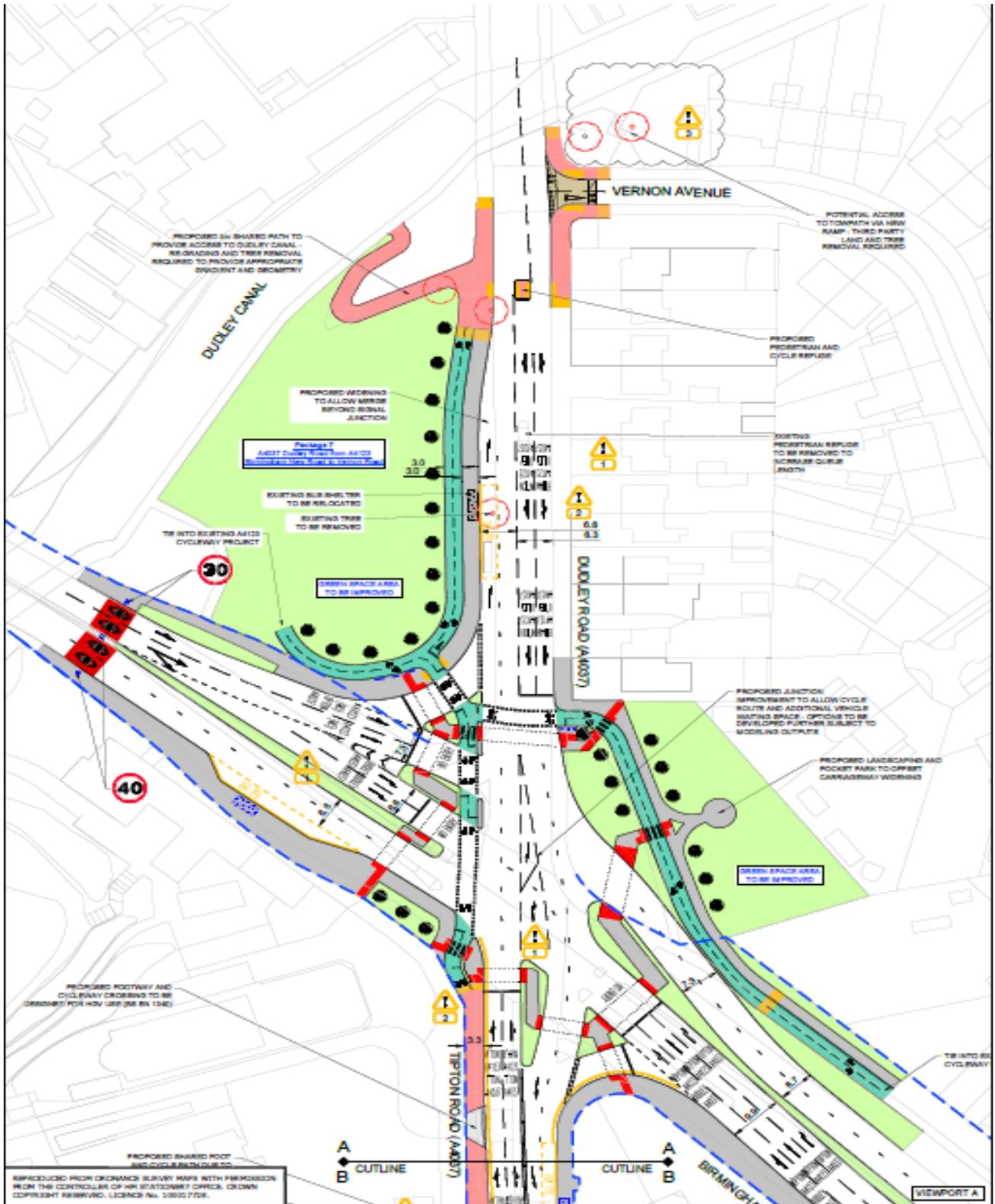
Resources:	<p>The project will be funded through devolved allocations to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as part of its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. All fees, including SMBC staff time recharges, are including the estimated scheme cost.</p> <p>Currently £500,000 is allocated to complete the development (Outline Business Case) of the project along the A4123 corridor and £1,200,000 for the design and delivery of the Sandwell section, Burnt Tree to Lower City Road.</p> <p>Please note since the last report an additional £350,000 has been approved and allocated to complete the development (Outline Business Case).</p>
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<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The scheme involves the Council carrying out works in its capacity as Local Highway Authority.</p> <p>Best Value will have to be achieved in the letting of any external contracts for works.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>A full Risk Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>An Equality impact Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.</p> <p>The project will support marginalised and vulnerable groups providing greater opportunity for all to travel to services and jobs safely and affordably. It will also provide opportunity for greater social interaction between all members of the community.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car, modes. This will contribute towards improved air quality.</p> <p>The active travel measures along a segregated route for walking and cycling will also give a greater opportunity for safe and effective exercise providing proven physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits to the local communities.</p>
<p>Social Value:</p>	<p>There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.</p> <p>When the scheme moves to the delivery stage, the appointed contractor(s) will be required to adhere to the Council's Social Value policies.</p>
<p>Climate Change:</p>	<p>Decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principal theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects within the programme need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases.</p> <p>This project will provide opportunity for a greater use of active travel and sustainable bus services options instead of car use for such journeys providing many benefits, which include reduced carbon outputs and improved air quality, reduced car use and reduced</p>

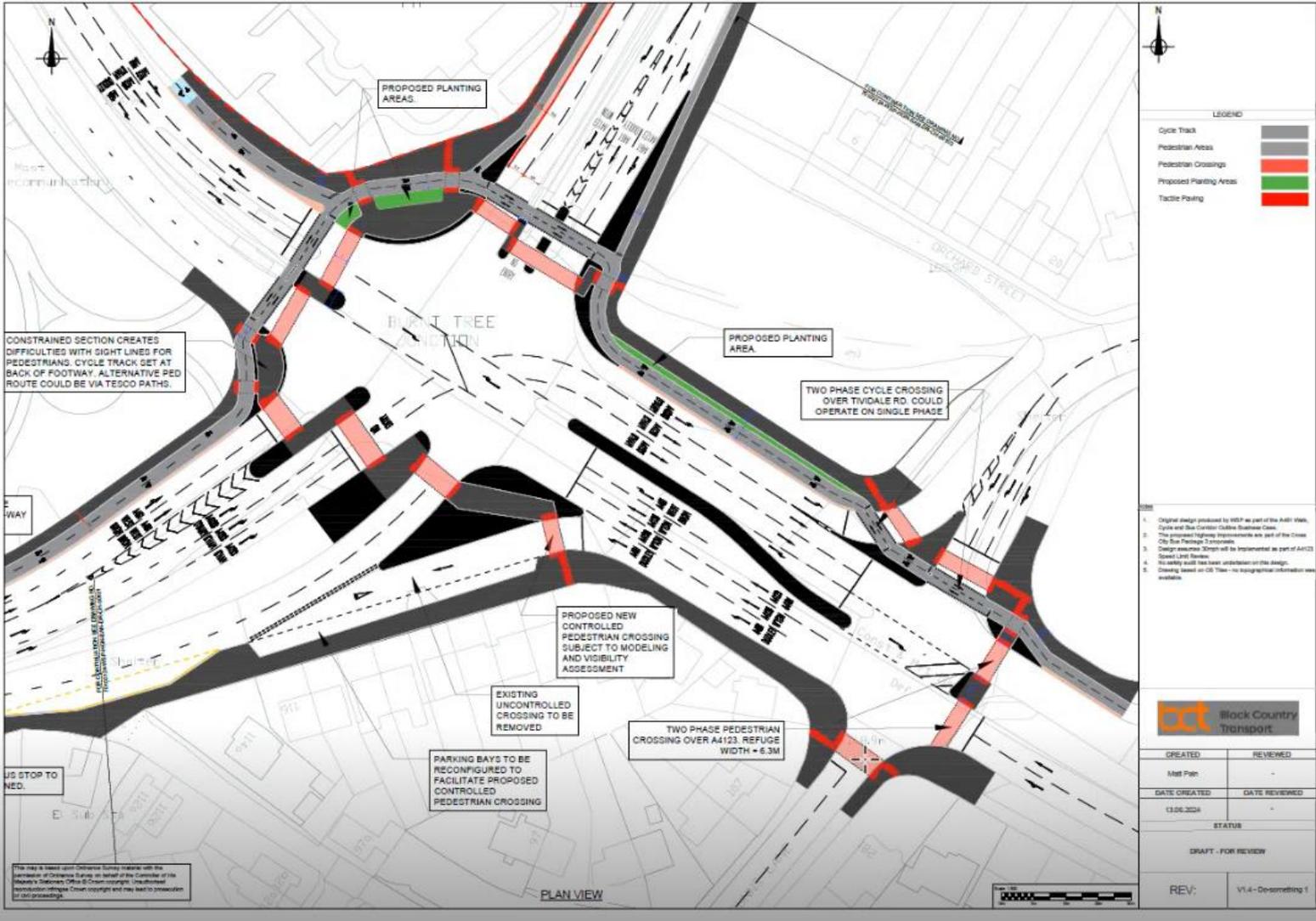
	<p>congestion particularly at pinch points along the A4123 at daily peak times in morning and evening, greater journey time reliability and resilience and a reduced journey time variability with the bus travel.</p> <p>An outcome of the project will be an improved environment.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations contained in this report.</p>

7. Appendix - Junction Improvement Layouts

Plan No. 1 – Tipton Road Junction



Plan No. 2 – Burnt Tree Junction



1. Original design produced by H&P as part of the A4123 Main Cycle and Bus Corridor Outline Business Case.
2. The proposed Highway Improvements are part of the Cross City Bus Package 2 programme.
3. Design assumes 30mph will be implemented as part of A4123 Speed Limit Review.
4. No safety audit has been undertaken on this design.
5. Drawing based on OS Data - no topographical information was available.

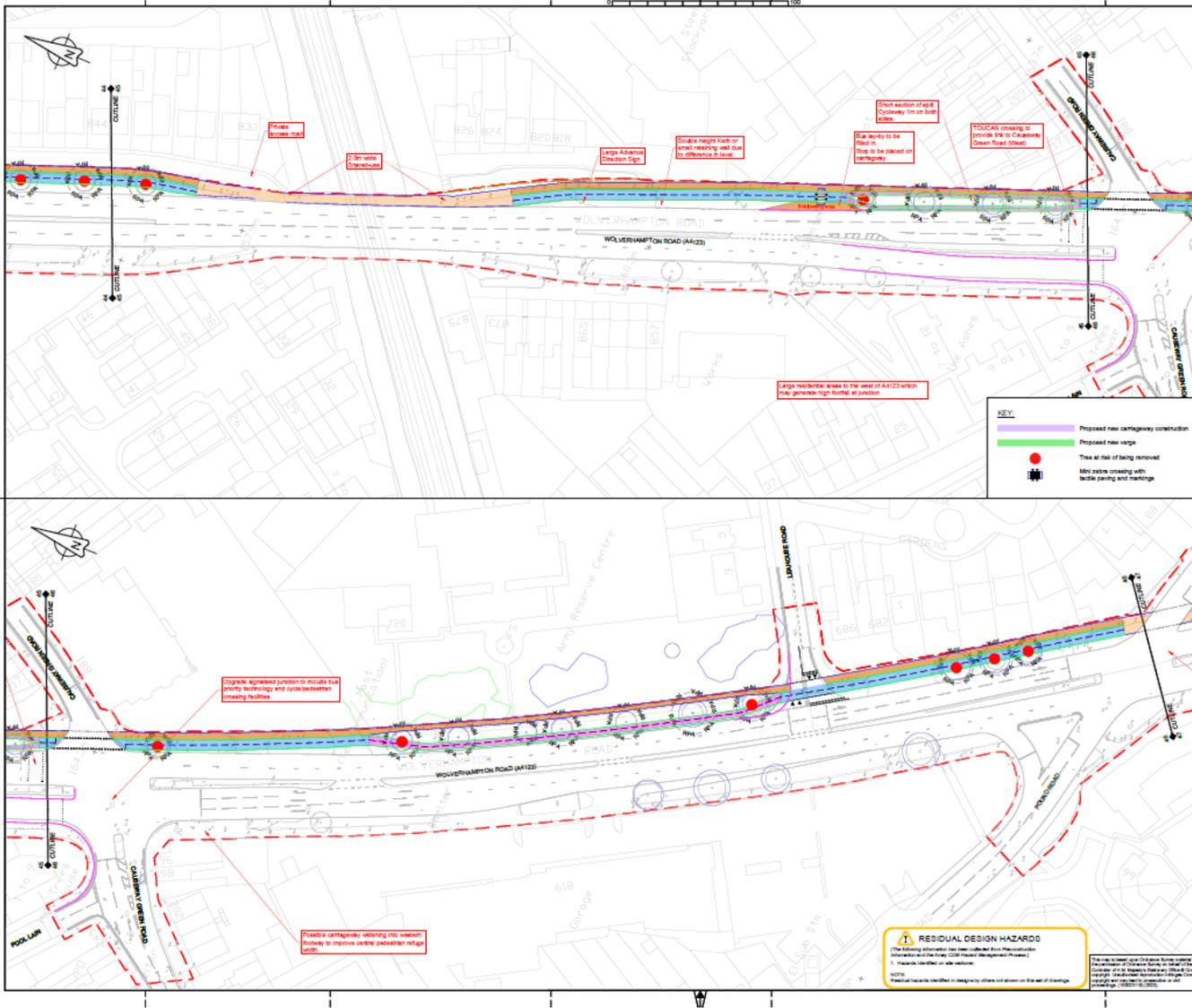


CREATED	REVIEWED
Mat Plan	-
DATE CREATED	DATE REVIEWED
13.06.2024	-
STATUS	
DRAFT - FOR REVIEW	
REV:	V1.4 - Do something 1

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PLAN VIEW

Plan No. 5 – Causeway Green Junction



NOTES:

1. Drawings are to be printed in full colour.
2. All dimensions are in metres unless otherwise stated.
3. The line markings shown in the drawings are indicative only. Detailed Road markings will be agreed with the licensing agency.
4. The proposed signage and signs will be subject to the approval of the licensing agency.
5. All bus stop signage to be provided will have B171 Street View Passenger Information (B171) signs.
6. The survey information detailed in the drawings has been undertaken by other parties and Amey cannot guarantee the accuracy.

KEY:

- Red Line Boundary
- Proposed pedestrian footway 1.5m - 2.0m. Also to include other areas as shown.
- Cycleway 2.0m - Existing Cycle Facility
- Cycleway 2m to 2.5m (where shown)
- Proposed shared
- Proposed Buffer minimum 0.5m
- Proposed 182 kerb
- Proposed Edging kerb
- Proposed 40° Safety kerb
- Sections of route completed or designed by Standard MCC/other under separate APT funded contract
- Review 3rd party land title
- Individual tree or group of trees which should be retained except in exceptional circumstances
- Individual tree or group of trees which should be retained wherever possible
- Individual tree or group of trees which can be retained but are considered newly retained compared to other trees
- Individual tree or group of trees which are unsuitable for retention
- Proposed alteration to side road priority
- Memorial Tree Marker (Assumed memorial tree)
- Road Protection Area

KEY:

- Proposed new carriageway construction
- Proposed new verge
- Trees at risk of being removed
- MtI zone crossing with tactile paving and markings

Revisions:

Revision	Description	Date
PO3	Revised based on Active Travel meeting on 03/05/2024	03/05/2024
Drawn:	VS	04/05/2024
Checked:	WGG	05/05/2024
Approved:	LM	17/05/2024
PO4	Revised based on ABCM Tree constraints survey data	06/06/2024
Drawn:	VS	06/06/2024
Checked:	LM	20/06/2024
Approved:	GG	02/07/2024
Designed:	RC	05/07/2023
Checked:	LM	12/09/2023
Approved:	SC	10/09/2023

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Working on behalf of:

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON
Dudley part of bct
Sandwell part of bct
Birmingham Transport

Project Name:
A4123 Transport Study & OBC

Drawing Title:
**General Arrangement
Option B - Desirable
Sheet 24 of 29**

Project Ref No: COMHA1CWCD018 | Scale: 1:500 | @ A1
 Stage: Preliminary Design | Dimensions: m

Drawing Number: | Originator: | Volume:
 COMHA1CWCD018 - AMY - HGN
 A4123 - DR-CH - 010024
 Location: | Type: | Role: | Number:

Submittal: Submittal Description: | Revision:
 D2: Suitable For Information | P05

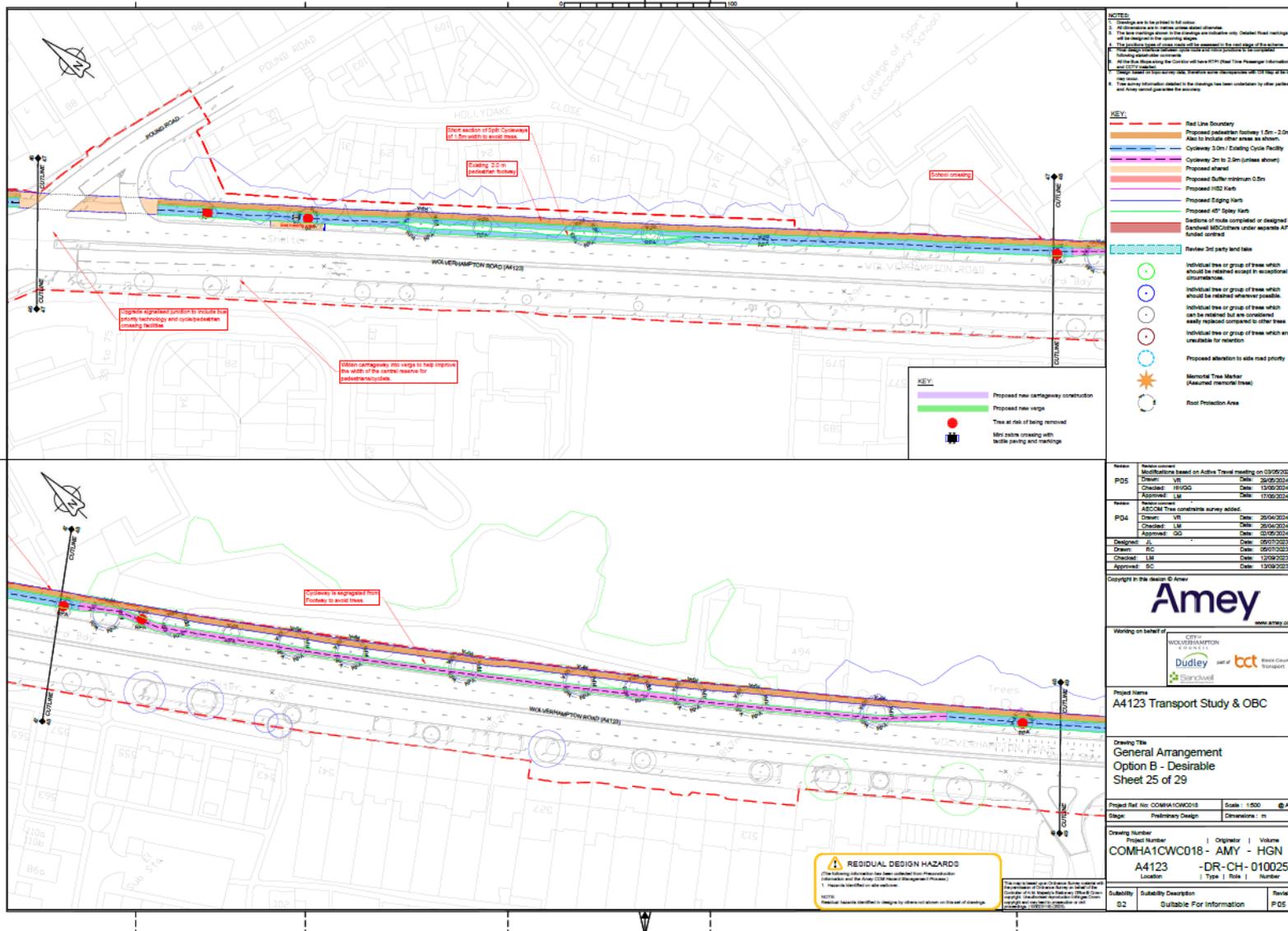
RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS

(The following information has been obtained from the information submitted at the Key Stage 5 (Matters for Consideration) stage of the Key Stage 5 (Matters for Consideration) process.)

1. Hazards identified in this section:

2. Residual hazards identified in this section are not shown on this set of drawings.

Plan No. 6 – Pound Road Junction



NOTES:

- Changes are to be printed in full color.
- All measurements are to be taken as stated unless otherwise specified.
- The site coverage shown is for the proposed scheme only. Detailed field settings will be required in the planning stage.
- The proposed layout of the site is subject to the final stage of consultation.

KEY:

- Red Line Boundary
- Proposed pedestrian footway 1.0m - 2.0m
- Proposed cycleway 2.0m - 3.0m
- Proposed cycleway 2m to 2.5m (unless shown)
- Proposed shared
- Proposed Buffer minimum 0.5m
- Proposed H&S Mark
- Proposed Edging Mark
- Proposed 40' Spiky Mark
- Sections of route completed or designed by Salford MDC/Highways under separate APT funded contract
- Review 3rd party land title
- Individual tree or group of trees which should be retained except in exceptional circumstances
- Individual tree or group of trees which can be retained but are considered likely to be replaced by other trees
- Individual tree or group of trees which are unsuitable for retention
- Proposed retention to site road priority
- Manorial Tree Marker (Manorial mesquite trees)
- Root Protection Area

KEY:

- Proposed new carriageway construction
- Proposed new verge
- Tree at risk of being removed
- Mini palm crossing with tactile paving and markings

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Working on behalf of:

Project Name:
A4123 Transport Study & OBC

Drawing Title:
General Arrangement
Option B - Desirable
Sheet 25 of 29

Project Ref: No: COMHA1CWCD18 | Scale: 1:500 | A1
 Stage: Preliminary Design | Dimensions: m

Drawing Number: | Project Number: | Originator: | Volume:
 COMHA1CWCD18 - AMY - HGN
 Location: | Type: | Risk: | Number:
 A4123 - DR-CH-010025

Subsidiary Description: Suitable For Information | Revision: PDS

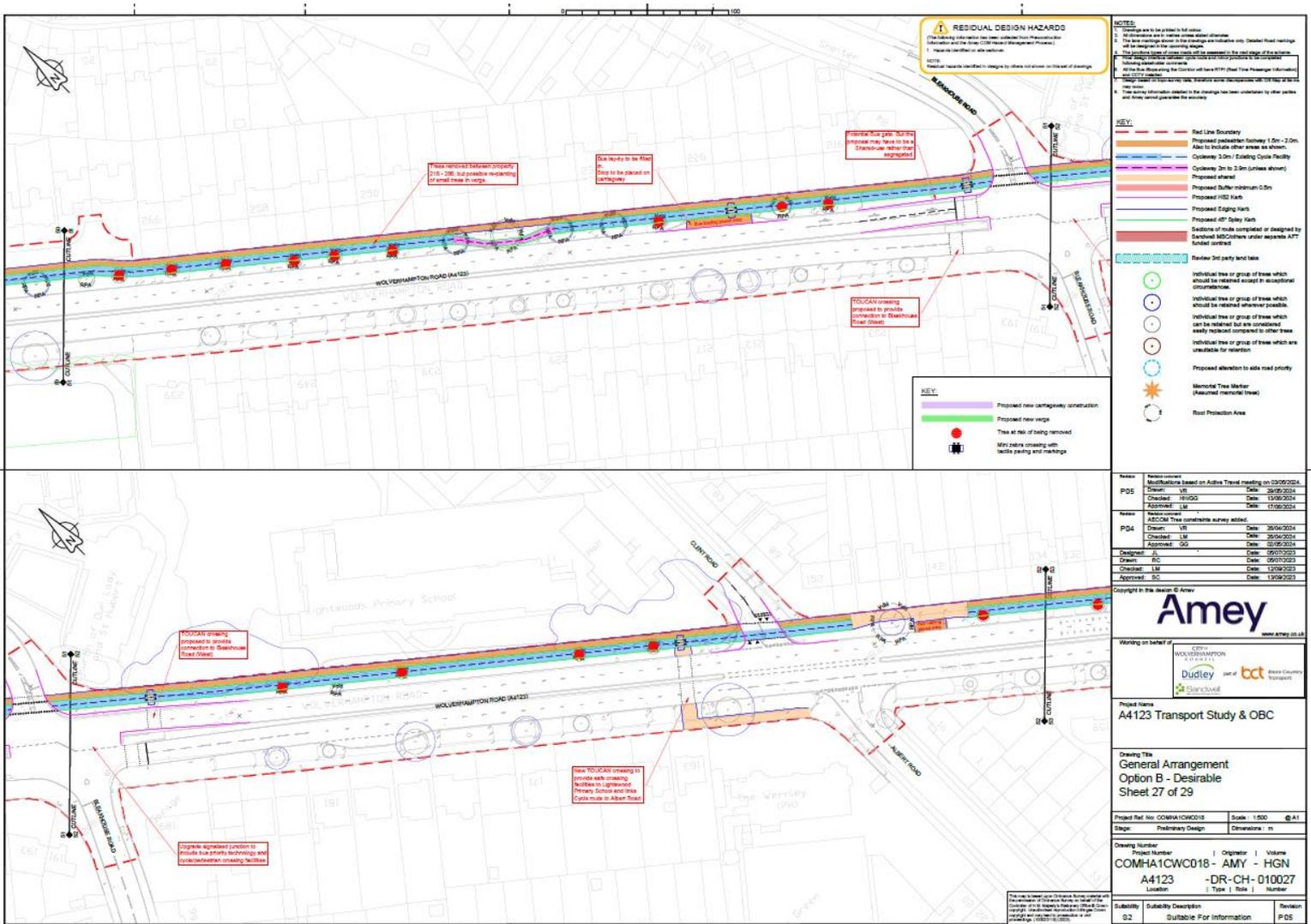
RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS

NOTE: Residual hazards identified in design by client not shown on this set of drawings.

Plan No. 7 – Queensway and Brandhall Road Junctions



Plan No. 8 – Bleakhouse Road Junction



8. Background Papers

West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan: Movement for Growth (2016)

Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) approved by WMCA

Report to Cabinet – 7 February 2024