

Leamington Spa Station Pedestrian Underpass Improvements

Heritage Statement

Project Background

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Bowls and Para Bowls events take place at Victoria Park, Royal Leamington Spa in July and August 2022. In association with this major event and occasion, Warwick District Council with the support of partner organisations and stakeholders has delivered and is delivering numerous infrastructure improvements in Victoria Park and Royal Leamington Spa.

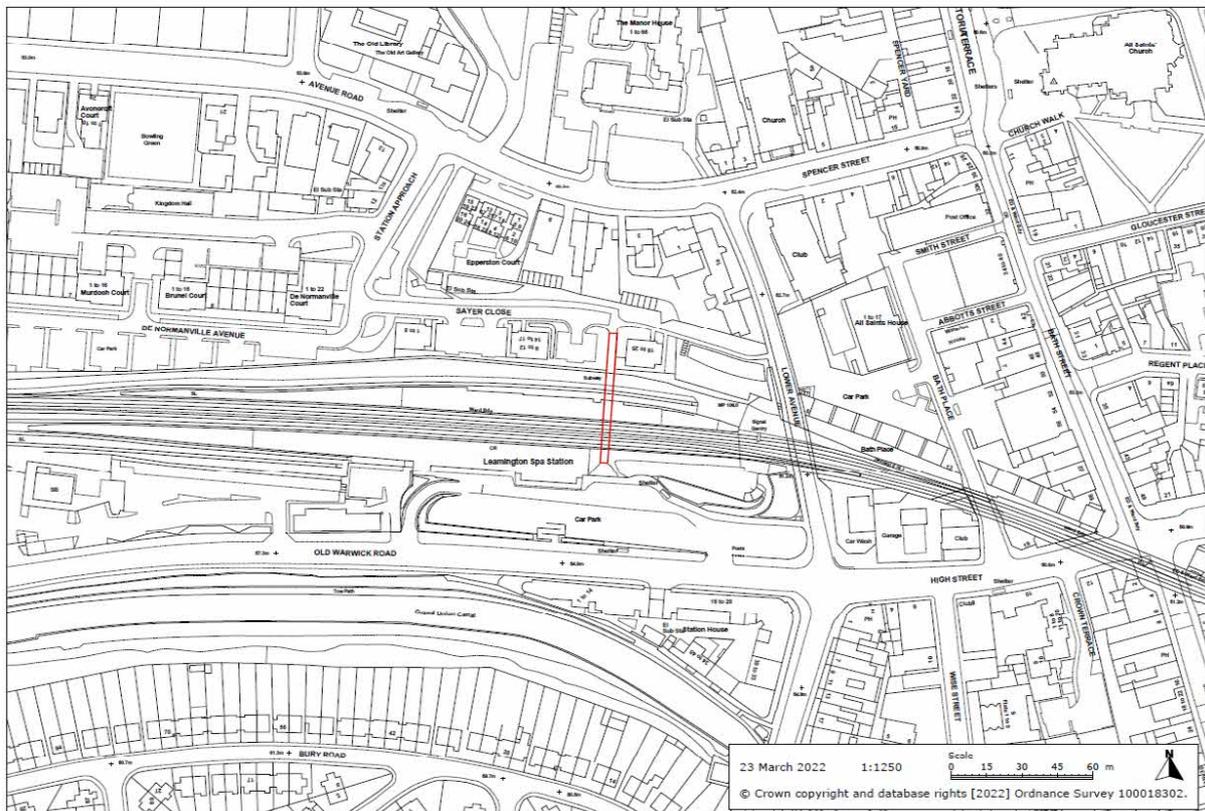
Significant improvement work at Leamington Spa Station is currently being progressed with the support of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Warwickshire County Council, Network Rail and Chiltern Railways to provide an enhanced arrival experience for visitors arriving by train to Royal Leamington Spa for the Commonwealth Games.

These proposed improvements include enhancing Leamington Station's pedestrian underpass including new paintwork, cleaning, the installation of improved lighting and new artwork in the underpass. This document relates to the proposals for the new artwork in the pedestrian underpass.

The site

The pedestrian underpass is located at Leamington Spa Station and accessed on foot via Sayer Close or across the Leamington Spa Station Forecourt that can be accessed from Old Warwick Road and Lower Avenue.

Location and extent of Leamington Station Underpass



Description of the Heritage Asset

The Leamington Spa Station pedestrian underpass is part of Leamington Spa Station. Leamington Spa Station, including the attached platform structure is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. The station is Grade II listed.

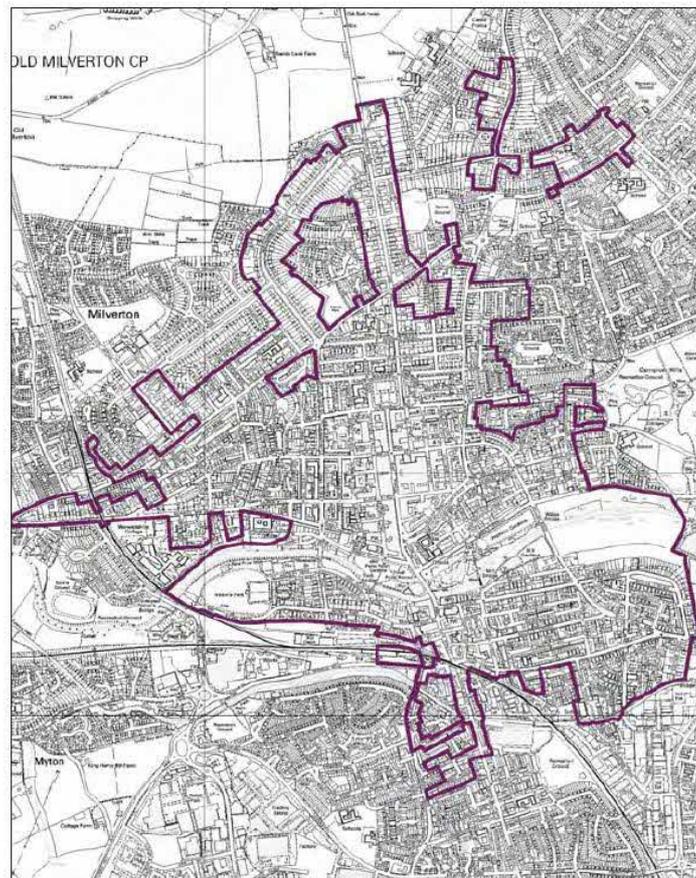
The Main line station 1939 for Great Western Railway replaced the 1853 Brunel station that was demolished in 1935. The exterior of the forecourt is Art Deco neo-classical in design.

The Leamington Spa Station underpass is located in the Leamington Spa Conservation area. The site borders Areas 2 and 6 of the Leamington Spa Conservation Area.

In addition to considering the Listed Building itself, the relevant aspects of the heritage quality and characteristics identified in the Conservation Area Description to this application are considered to be:

The listed railway station forms an important element at the junction with Old Warwick Road.

Extract from Royal Leamington Spa Conservation Area



Assessment and Mitigation of Impact

16 wall-mounted murals are currently installed inside the underpass, spaced over a distance of just over 36m on both East and West elevations. The existing murals were approved and installed in the

station underpass in 2011 with the Conservation Area Forum considering it an “improvement to the conservation area”. The murals have remained in situ from the date of installation until the present date except for a short period of time when they were removed for repair and restoration purposes.

The presence of the existing mural installation in the underpass can be seen from Old Warwick Road but the detail of the artwork is not distinguishable from outside the boundary of the Station Forecourt. From the junction of Old Warwick Road and Tachbrook Road visibility of the installation is minimal.

The proposed replacement installation and new artwork is to be located within the same covered 36.4m length of internal wall space as the existing murals and comprises of a total of 14 wall-mounted designs spaced along east and west elevations. The aluminium signage trays (seven on each side of the underpass) will be sized 3.6m x 1.8m with 5mm folded returns. The trays are to be powder coated white and faced with full colour printed graphics on an anti-graffiti laminate. The signage trays will be installed on the underpass walls using concealed aluminium fixing rails and 3mm washers to elevate the signage trays from the walls slightly. The first of the installations on either side of the wall will be fitted approximately 9.6m from the point at which the Station Forecourt transitions into the underpass.

In addition to the installation of the new aluminium signage trays, two new installations are proposed for north and south facing arches inside the underpass comprising of wall-mounted black aluminium lettering reading ‘The Royal Leamington Spa Colour Palette’. Fixings for the lettering will be M4 threaded studs welded to the rear of the letter and drilled/adhesive fixed to the wall. The maximum projection of the letters would be 20mm. Further technical details can be found in documents AP09 and AP10.

The South facing arch is located inside the underpass approximately 22.4m from the tunnelled entrance of the underpass. The North facing arch is located inside the underpass approximately 17.7m from the tunnelled entrance arriving from Sayer Close.

The proposed wall mounted artwork designs are larger in size to the existing murals but fewer in number and proportionate to the size of the underpass elevations. The proposed layout and spacing of the new designs are recognisably like that of the existing murals. Visibility of the presence of the artwork from outside of the underpass will be similar to that of the current installation. The Royal Leamington Spa Colour Palette lettering is proposed to be installed on internal arches elevated over 2.8m from ground level, above the highest entrance points into the station underpass tunnel from either direction, recessed towards the middle of the underpass.

Visibility of these installations from outside of the underpass will be minimal. Consequently, the proposals are not considered likely to have any additional detrimental impact on the heritage quality or characteristics of the Conservation Area when considered against the current installation.

The existing mural installation in situ in Leamington Station underpass has been extremely successful in establishing that public art is suited to this location in so far as incidents of vandalism have been minimal over an extended period of time. Additionally, the presence of an installation in the underpass has undoubtedly had a significant, long-term effect in reducing incidents of graffiti in the underpass to benefit of the station site and Conservation Area. It is considered however that the proposal to replace the existing murals with a new installation still presents opportunities to provide some betterment which include:

- The proposal to replace the existing wooden fixtures with aluminium fixtures and fittings is considered more suited to the environmental conditions in the underpass and will help ensure the quality, longevity and durability of the installation. The existing wooden fixings for the murals are in now a fair condition given their age and the impact of the damp conditions on the installation materials and will not be able to be repaired and refurbished indefinitely.
- The proposed installation will have a slightly slimmer profile than the existing fixings extending the width of the underpass for pedestrian and cyclists.
- Whilst number of murals in the underpass are to be reduced from 16 to 14 however the individual panels they are proposed to be larger in size than the existing murals. The larger panels will provide some additional screening of the underpass' painted walls which is considered beneficial given challenges faced in keeping the walls looking clean and pristine because of defects in the underpass structure. Defects in the structure mean water ingress from above and staining of the walls in the underpass is problematic. This will continue to be the case as it is cost-prohibitive to repair the structure to resolve these issues. Whilst the walls can be cleaned and repainted to reduce the aesthetic impact of the water ingress, the additional coverage of the walls afforded by the proposed murals will reduce the visibility of water staining on the walls in between cleans.
- The existing murals are painted directly onto ply panels. The ply is vulnerable to damage and graffiti removal and repair of the murals is problematic on the limited occasions it occurs due to the materials used to make and finish the murals not being easily replaceable. The proposal to replace the artwork with aluminium signage trays improves the vandal-resistance of the installation whilst the proposal to use anti-graffiti laminate for the graphic finish makes the artwork easier to clean and maintain. Moreover, if the laminate graphics are damaged the printing and replacing of them with an alternative laminate graphic is relatively simple and cost-effective and could be done without the need to remove the signage tray from site.
- The ability to replace the artwork with alternative laminate designs (subject to future advertising consent) provides betterment in creating a curatable space where the artwork in the station can be replaced and varied at one of Royal Leamington Spa's key transport hubs and visitor arrival points.
- The new fixings will remain temporary in nature and easily removable to facilitate repair, redecoration and refurbishment works in the station underpass as required. The material used will however mean they are less prone to being damaged if removal is required.

The proposed artwork considers the existing artwork that features figures and scenes of historical interest. The proposed design is a variation on this theme and is designed to be a celebration of not only Royal Leamington Spa's history and famous figures but also its heritage assets, green spaces, commercial strengths, and strong sense of community. The design has been informed by a successful community engagement campaign.

The design of the artwork can be shown to consider the location of artwork and the design of the Listed Building in several ways:

- The colours used in of the artwork has been carefully considered to be bold and interesting but considerate of the location of the underpass in the Conservation Area. With regards to this the artist has selected a palette of colours that can be found in the town and Conservation Area or demonstrably representative of the local reference points featured in the artwork.
- The repetition of the blocks of colour suggests travel and movement, referring to the tracks above the underpass.
- It's a modern interpretation of railway posters – as they reference destinations within the town in a bold and innovative way. Further information about the references included in the proposed artwork can be seen in the attached document 'DOC02 Leamington Station Underpass Designs Explanatory Note'.
- The principles of 'Art Deco', which feature throughout the station's architecture, are present in the new work. Art Deco was influenced by bold geometric forms of cubism and the Vienna Secession; the bright colours of Fauvism and more.
- Art Deco also celebrated the use of new materials, which is what we are doing with this new piece of public art. Using aluminium panels and a new high specification vinyl, we can achieve a sleek form with smooth polished surfaces, which Art Deco is famed for.
- Moreover, the new work, like Art Deco, is showcase simple, with clean shapes with a streamlined look.
- The economy was booming during the roaring 1920s, and lively, energetic colours began to symbolise the prosperity of the time. Many of the popular colours featured in the Art Deco movement feature in this new work; canary yellow, emerald green, peacock blue, royal purple and brilliant red.

Supporting Images

Image 1: Exterior of Leamington Spa Station



Image 2: View of Leamington Spa Station Underpass from Old Warwick Road



Image 3: View of Leamington Station and Underpass entrance from Tachbrook Road/Old Warwick Road junction



Image 4: Existing underpass artwork and condition (south view to Leamington Spa Station Forecourt)



Image 5: Existing underpass artwork and condition (north view to Sayer Close)



Image 6: Red lines indicating locations of existing mural installation (1:500)

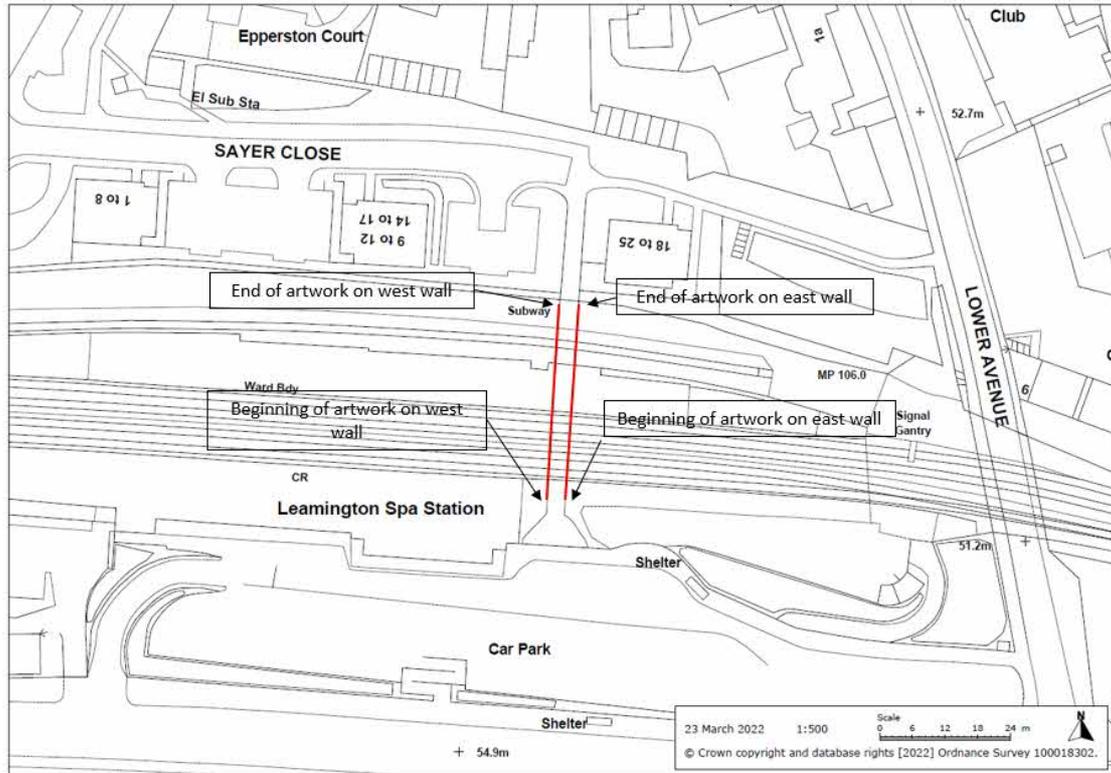


Image 7: Red lines indication location and extent of proposed new artwork installations (1:500)

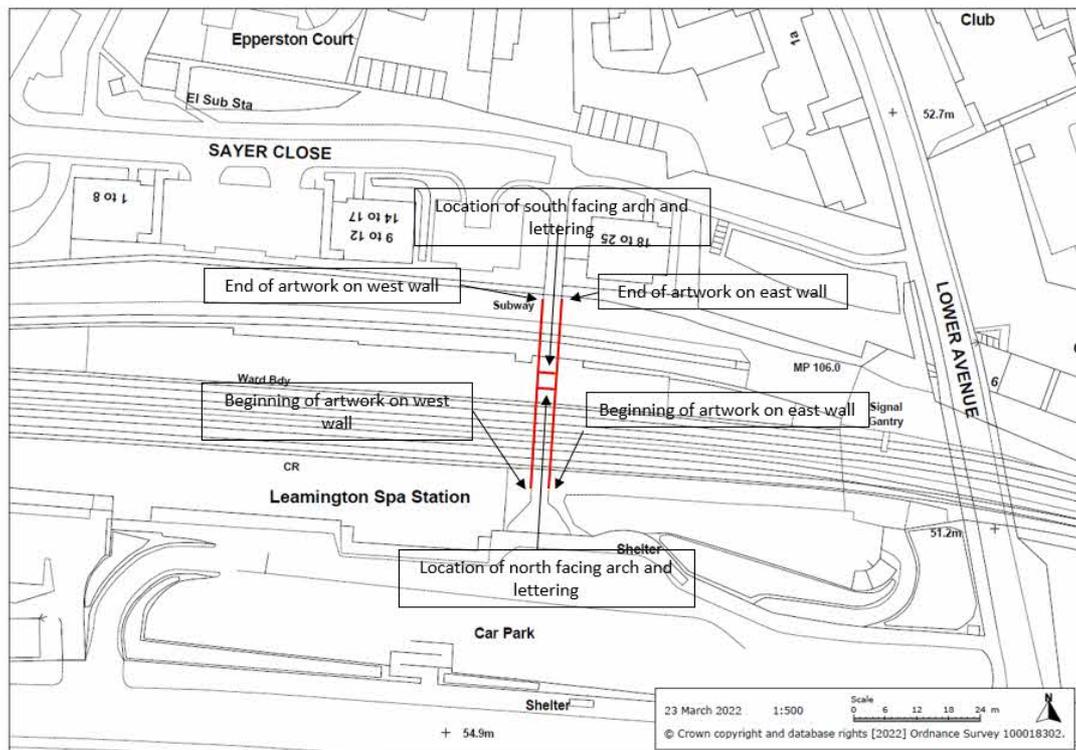


Image 8: Red line indicating distance from station forecourt to beginning of aluminium tray installations (c.9.6m – 1:500)

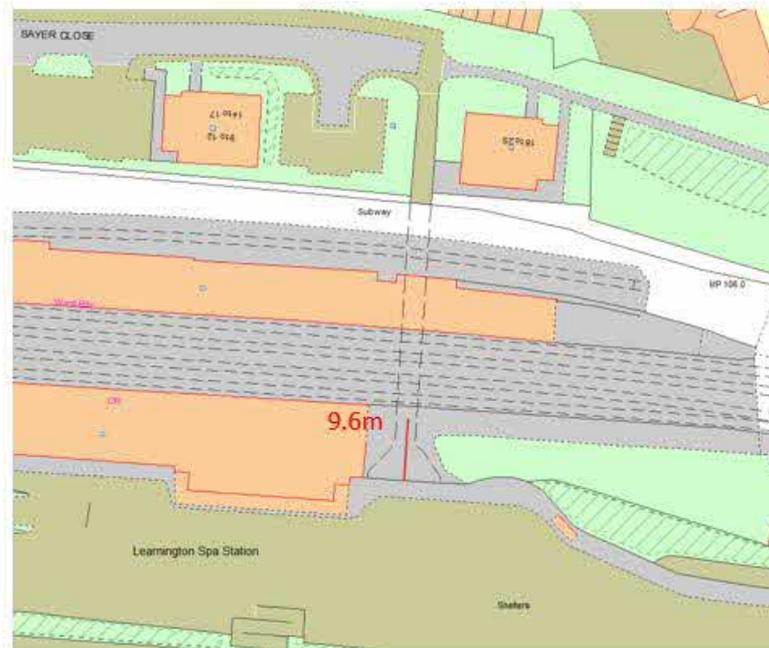


Image 9: Red line indicating distance from underpass entrance at forecourt to south facing arch (c. 22.4m – 1:500)

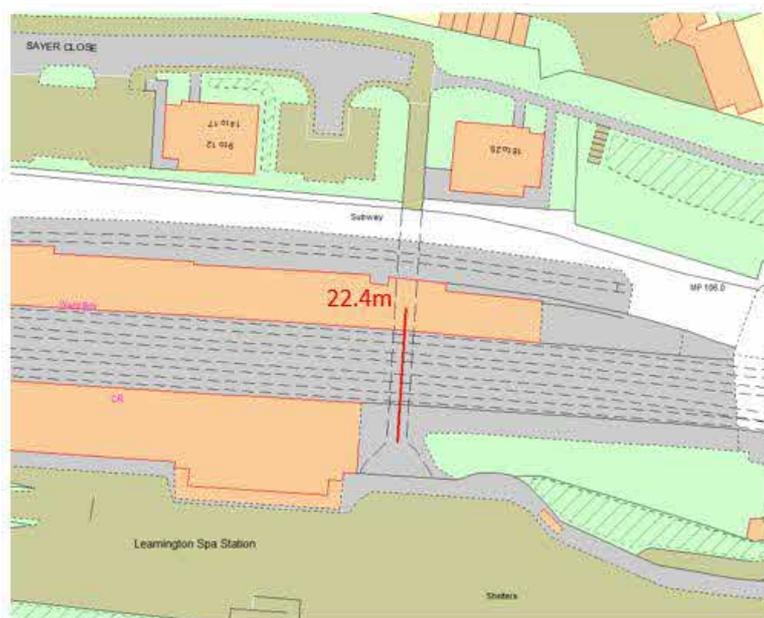


Image 10: Red line indicating distance from underpass entrance near Sayer Close to north facing arch (c. 22.4m – 1:500)



Image 11: Example of existing artwork in situ (west elevation)



Image 12: Proposed sizes and spacing of new artwork



Image 13: Proposed sizes and spacing of proposed artwork overlaid on existing artwork



Image 14: Proposed artwork set to size in situ (east wall)



Image 15: Proposed artwork set to size in situ (west wall)



Image 16: Proposed lettering to be installed on internal arches inside Leamington Spa Station Underpass with measurements



Image 17: Height of internal arch from floor

