

APPENDIX D. Technical Note ITB16329-009 TN

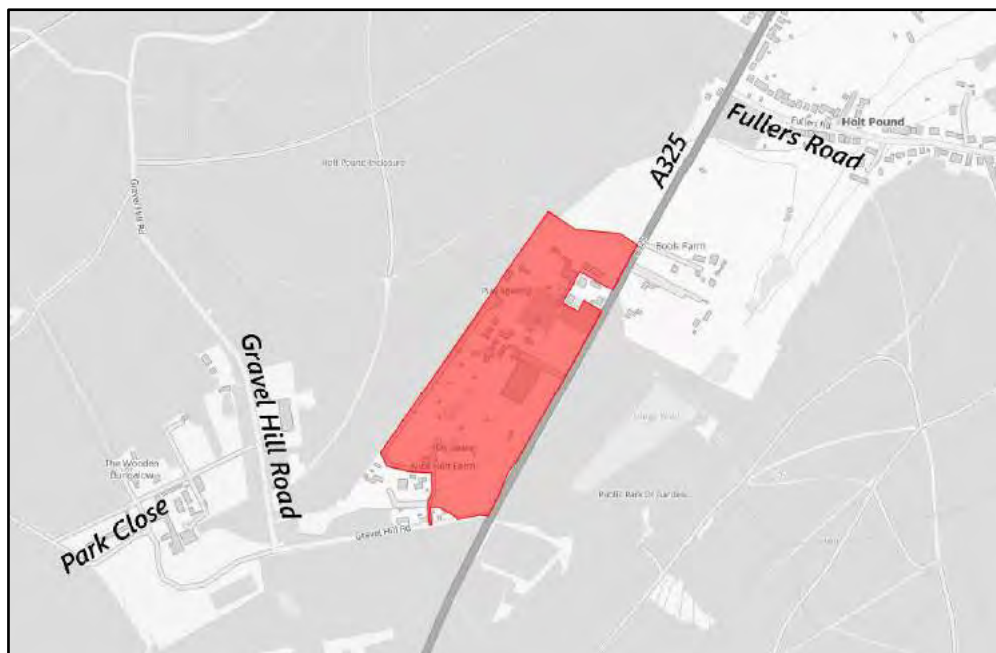
Technical Note

Project No: ITB16329
Project Title: Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld
Title: NMU Review and Potential Improvements
Ref: SAW/DF/ITB16329-009 TN
Date: 21 June 2023

SECTION 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Haskins Garden Centres Ltd (Haskins) is proposing to redevelop the visitor attraction 'Birdworld' alongside their existing Forest Lodge Garden Centre site 'Forest Lodge'. Haskins acquired both businesses in February 2020 and both fall within the wider Haskins Group.
- 1.2 The site is located some 5km to the southeast of Farnham. A site location plan is reproduced below.

Image 1.1: Site Location Plan



1.3 The proposal has been subject to pre-application discussions with Hampshire County Council (HCC), as the local highway authority, at meetings on 26 July 2022 and 6 October 2022 following the submission of the following technical reports:

- A Transport Assessment Scoping Note (TASN) (*ref: ITB16329-005A TN*); and
- An Access Options Appraisal (*ref: ITB16329-006B TN*).

1.4 Further to the pre-application discussions with HCC the following matters were agreed:

- Access, in principle, via a new roundabout from the A325;
- Traffic assessment parameters (including traffic generation, distribution and assignment); and
- The structure of a Transport Assessment (TA) to accompany a future planning application.

1.5 However, officers at HCC also requested consideration and clarification on the following:

- Improved pedestrian connections to Footpath 50 (a Public Right of Way (PRoW)) for routes to Alice Holt Forest;
- Improved pedestrian access to the Gravel Hill Road bus stops on the A325 (including a crossing facility);
- Improved waiting facilities at the Gravel Hill Road bus stops;
- Improved pedestrian and cycle connections to Bentley railway station; and
- Improved cycle connections to National Cycle Network route 224 (NCN224).

1.6 This note therefore provides a review of the existing walking, cycling and public transport facilities in the vicinity of the site with regards to the above and sets out potential improvements where feasible or appropriate. The remainder of this note is structured as follows:

- Section 2 details and reviews the existing sustainable transport provision and Footpaths;
- Section 3 sets out proposed improvements (to be delivered in conjunction with the proposed access arrangements); and
- Section 4 provides a summary and conclusions.

SECTION 2 Existing Sustainable Transport Provision and Footpaths

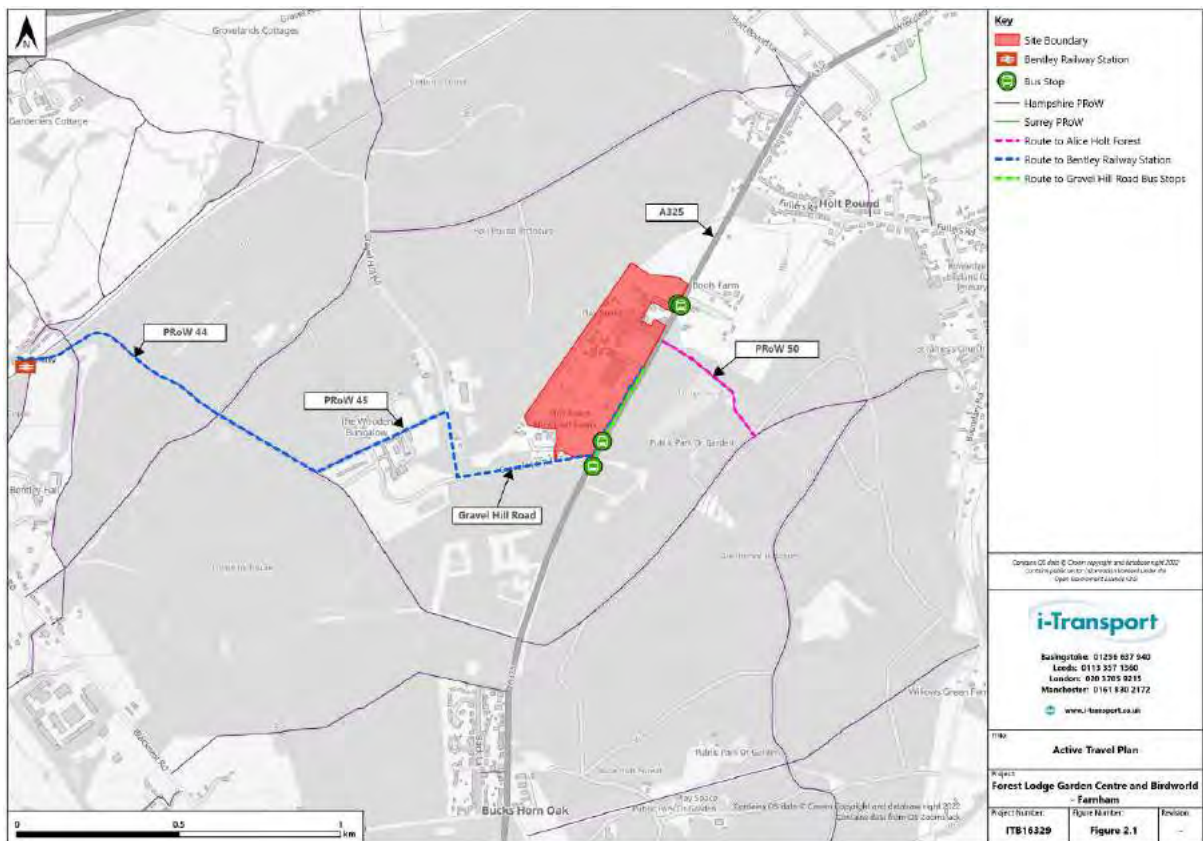
2.1 Overview

2.1.1 This section of the note reviews the following sustainable transport provision and routes in the vicinity of the site:

- Pedestrian/cycle facilities along the site frontage (including the facilities in place at the Gravel Hill Road bus stops);
- The walking route to Bentley railway station via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 (this section of Footpath 44 is also designated as NCN224); and
- The walking route to Alice Holt (via Footpath 50).

2.1.2 The above routes are shown on **Figure 2.1** (an extract is provided below).

Image 2.1: Routes



2.1.3 A detailed review of the routes is set out in the following paragraphs. This review has been informed by a site visit on 8 February 2023.

2.2 A325 Site Frontage and Gravel Hill Road Bus Stops

2.2.1 There is currently very limited pedestrian provision along the A325 site frontage, with no footways on either side of the carriageway linking the site to the Gravel Hill Road bus stops.

2.2.2 The northbound bus stop is a layby with a shelter and short, narrow footway. There is a 1.2m wide footway in front of the bus stop which extends southwards to Gravel Hill Road, with an embankment and drainage ditches situated to the west (some 1m – 1.5m below the footway). The northbound bus stop and footway is shown on **Image 2.2**.

Image 2.2: Northbound Gravel Hill Road Bus Stop (Looking North)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

2.2.3 To the north of the Gravel Hill Road junction with the A325 there is an informal dropped kerb crossing of the A325 to provide pedestrian access to the southbound Gravel Hill Road bus stop (see **Image 2.3**). The footway on the eastern side of the carriageway is 1.2m wide and there is a steep embankment some 2m down to a drainage ditch to the east of the footway.

Image 2.3: Gravel Hill Road Dropped Kerb Pedestrian Crossing (Looking North)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

- 2.2.4 The southbound bus stop is also a layby, however there is no shelter in place and the footway further narrows to 1m in front of the bus stop. The southbound bus stop is shown at **Image 2.4**.

Image 2.4: Southbound Gravel Hill Road Bus Stop (Looking South)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Summary

2.2.5 Whilst there are footways and dropped kerbs in place to link the Gravel Hill Road bus stops, the overall pedestrian provision is poor as the footways are narrow and the highly trafficked nature of the A325 can be intimidating to pedestrians. Furthermore, and importantly, there is no direct footway connection to the site.

2.2.6 Improved pedestrian facilities and access to the bus stops along the A325 could therefore be provided as part of the proposed site access arrangements. Subject to level differences and the extent of public highway, there is the opportunity to provide:

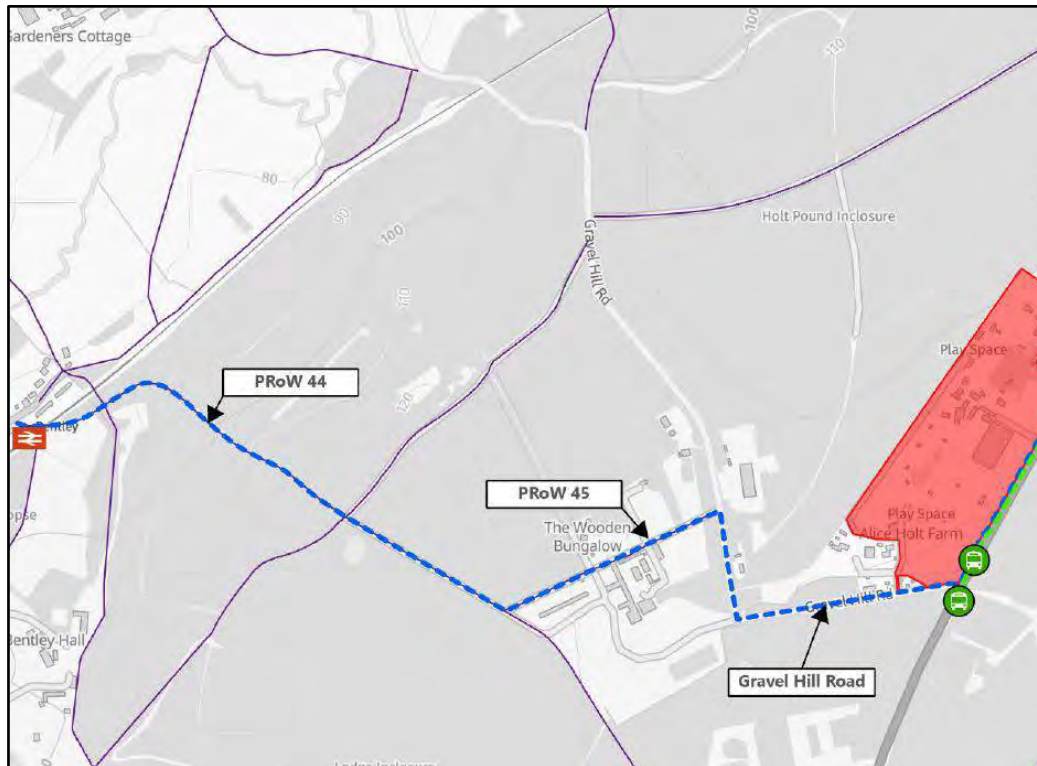
- A new footway connection to Forest Lodge and Birdworld (to tie into the new site access arrangements);
- An upgraded northbound bus stop;
- Improved crossing facilities of the A325 in the vicinity of Gravel Hill Road;
- A new bus shelter for the southbound bus stop; and
- Real time information on services at the bus stops.

2.2.7 Further detail is set out at Section 3 of this note.

2.3 Walking Route to Bentley Railway Station

2.3.1 Bentley railway station can be accessed from the site on foot via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44. It is circa 2.4km in length. The route is shown on **Figure 2.1** with an extract included below. As identified above, there is currently no footway access from the garden centre to Gravel Hill Road.

Image 2.5: Route to Bentley Railway Station



2.3.2 It should be noted that the section of the route at Footpath 44 is designated as NCN224.

Gravel Hill Road

2.3.3 Gravel Hill Road is a lightly trafficked, tarmacked single carriageway typically between 6.5m – 7m wide. There are no footways and it effectively operates as a shared surface. It provides a route to the Forest Research Centre, as well as access to a number of residential properties in the vicinity of the junction with the A325. Part of the route is also signed as the Forest Research Adaptation Trail walking route (details are included at **Appendix A**).

2.3.4 Whilst it is subject to the national speed limit of 60mph and is unlit, it is a pleasant rural walking and cycle route as it is lightly trafficked, vehicle speeds were observed to be low and there is good pedestrian visibility (even at bends). Gravel Hill Road is shown at **Images 2.6** and **2.7**.

Image 2.6: Gravel Hill Road Near A325 Junction (Looking West)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Image 2.7: Gravel Hill Road (Looking East)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Image 2.8: Forest Research Adaptation Trail Sign at Gravel Hill Road



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Footpath 45

- 2.3.5 Footpath 45 routes through the Forest Research Centre and connects Gravel Hill Road to Footpath 44. In addition to comprising a PRoW, it also provides vehicular access to the Forest Research site and is of sufficient width to safely accommodate vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists as a good quality shared surface.

- 2.3.6 The eastern part of the route is tarmacked (see **Image 2.10**) and the western part is formed of compacted hoggin (see **Image 2.9**).

Image 2.9: Footpath 45 (Looking East – Hoggin)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Image 2.10: Footpath 45 (Looking East – Tarmacked)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Footpath 44 (NCN 224)

- 2.3.7** Footpath 44 provides a route to Bentley railway station from Footpath 45. It is also designated as NCN224 and as the local 'Shipwrights Way' walking route. Part of the route is also signed as the Forest Research Adaptation Trail.
- 2.3.8** Footpath 44 is typically an unlit traffic free route¹ comprised of compacted hoggin. Site observations indicate that it is well used for recreational use by dog walkers, walkers and cyclists. It is generally flat however it slopes downhill on approach to Bentley railway station. Whilst typically rural in nature, it is a high-quality recreational walking and cycling route and does provide the opportunity to connect to rail services at Bentley.

¹ There are some locations where occasional vehicle access is required for Forestry Research maintenance. There is also a car park accessed from Gravel Hill Road that is used by walkers.

Image 2.11: Footpath 44



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

Access to Bentley Station

- 2.3.9 Bentley railway station is served by twice hourly services between Alton and London Waterloo via Farnham and Woking. Footpath 44 connects to Bentley railway station via an uncontrolled pedestrian level crossing. There are currently plans to upgrade this crossing to a pedestrian bridge (details are included in **Appendix B**).

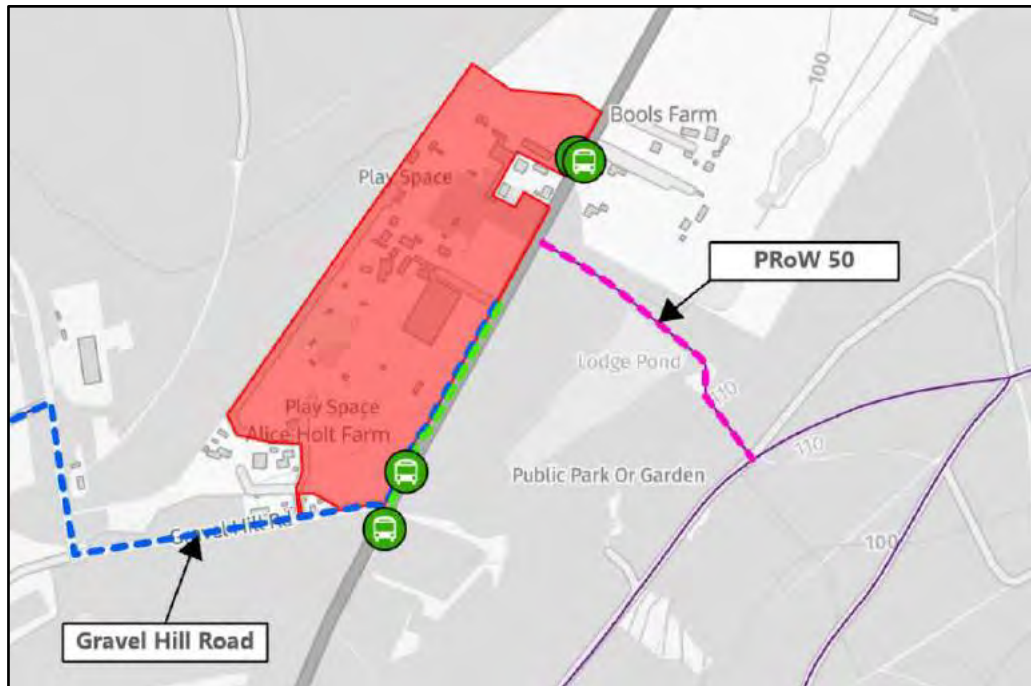
Summary

- 2.3.10 Bentley railway station is accessible from the site via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 which provide a predominantly traffic-free route to Bentley railway station via good quality rural footpaths (including the connection to NCN224 at Footpath 44). Whilst there are no dedicated facilities on Gravel Hill Road, and it operates as a shared surface, it remains a good environment for pedestrians/cyclists as it is wide, lightly trafficked, vehicle speeds are observed to be low and there is good pedestrian visibility. This is confirmed by the fact that part of Gravel Hill Road is signed as the Forest Research Adaptation Trail walking route.
- 2.3.11 No improvements are therefore proposed to the footpaths and connections that comprise the route to Bentley railway station as there are already sufficient facilities provided.

2.4 Walking Route to Alice Holt Forest

2.4.1 Pedestrians may choose to combine a recreational visit to Alice Holt Forest with visits to both the redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld. Alice Holt Forest can be accessed on foot from the site via Footpath 50 routing east from the A325. The route is shown on **Figure 2.1** with an extract included overleaf.

Image 2.12: Route to Alice Holt Forest



2.4.2 Footpath 50 is a relatively wide and level path comprising compacted hoggin. Whilst it is unlit, it provides a pleasant recreational walking route as shown at **Image 2.13**.

Image 2.13: Footpath 50 (Looking East)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

- 2.4.3** Whilst Footpath 50 is a good quality pedestrian rural footpath, there are no dedicated crossing facilities where it meets the A325 (see **Image 2.14**) with sub-standard pedestrian visibility constrained by a large tree on the western side of the carriageway and a fence to the north on the eastern side of the carriageway (this is shown at **Image 2.15**).

Image 2.14: Footpath 50 Connection with the A325 (Looking North)



Source: Google Streetview (April 2021)

Image 2.15: Pedestrian Visibility at Footpath 50 Connection with the A325 (Looking North)



Source: Consultant's Photographs (08/02/2023)

2.4.4 There is therefore an opportunity to provide improved crossing facilities on the A325 as part of the proposed site access arrangements which would provide a dedicated and attractive pedestrian route to the redeveloped Forest Lodge and Birdworld. Further detail on this is provided at Section 3.

2.5 Summary

2.5.1 The following sustainable transport provision and routes in the vicinity of the site have been reviewed:

- Pedestrian/cycle facilities along the site frontage (including the facilities in place at the Gravel Hill Road bus stops);
- The walking route to Bentley railway station via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 (this section of Footpath 44 is also designated as NCN224); and
- The walking route to Alice Holt (via Footpath 50).

2.5.2 The pedestrian facilities and Gravel Hill Road bus stops along the A325 site frontage are of poor quality and currently do not provide direct pedestrian access to the site from the bus stops. As part of the site access works, there is the opportunity to provide:

- A new footway connection to Forest Lodge and Birdworld (to tie into the new site access arrangements);
- An upgraded northbound bus stop;
- Improved crossing facilities on the A325 in the vicinity of Gravel Hill Road;
- A new bus shelter for the southbound bus stop; and
- Real time information on services at the bus stops.

2.5.3 Bentley railway station is accessible from the site via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 which provide a predominantly traffic-free route to Bentley railway station via good quality rural footpaths. Whilst there are no dedicated pedestrian/cycle facilities on Gravel Hill Road, it provides a suitable connection as it is wide, lightly trafficked, vehicle speeds are observed to be low and there is good pedestrian visibility. It is also an existing signed route. No amendments are therefore proposed to this route at this stage.

2.5.4 Footpath 50 provides a direct route to Alice Holt Forest which could be used to combine a recreational visit to Alice Holt Forest with visits to both the redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld. Footpath 50 is a pleasant recreational route however there are no dedicated crossing facilities where the route meets the A325. Improved crossing facilities can therefore be brought forward as part of the site access arrangements.

2.5.5 Details of proposed improvements are set out in Section 3 of this note.

SECTION 3 Possible Proposed Improvements

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 This section sets out possible proposed improvements to the existing walking, cycling and public transport facilities in the vicinity of the site (where feasible and appropriate). These improvements include:

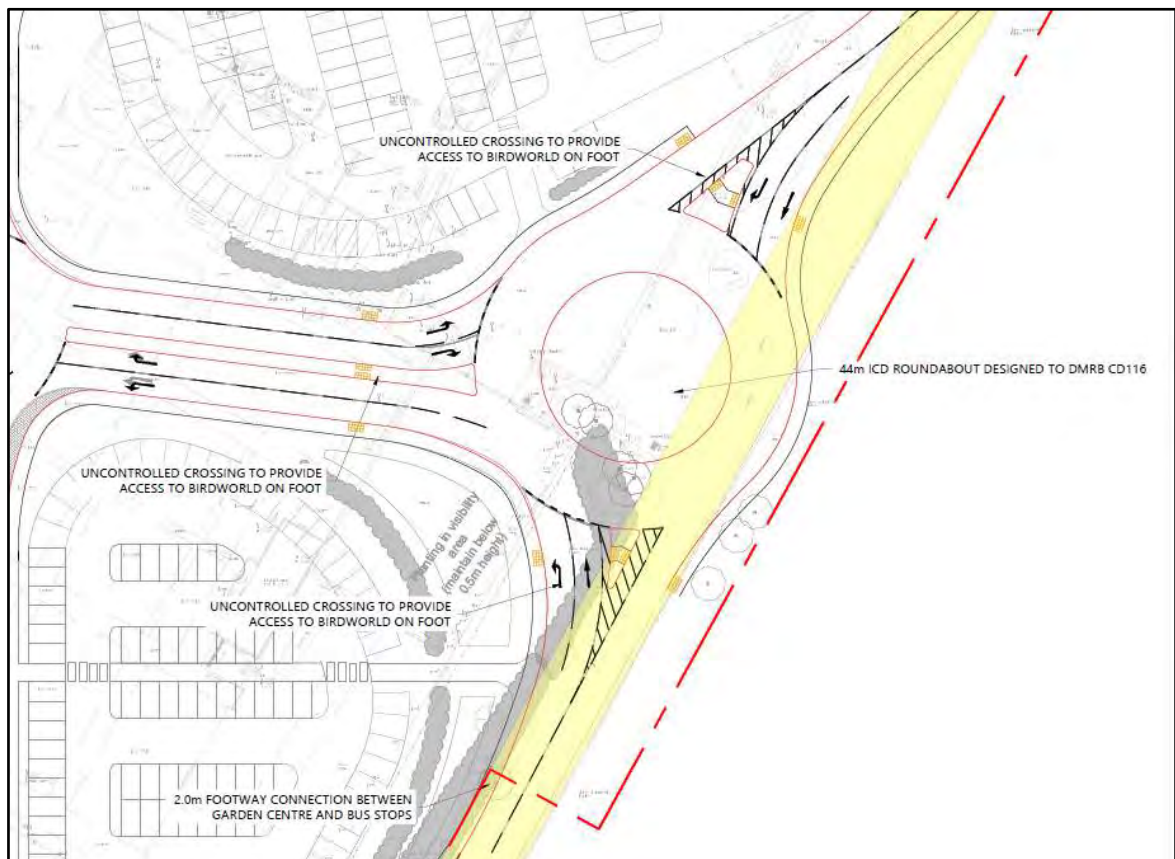
- Improved crossing facilities to the Footpath 50 connection to the A325 to provide a direct route from the site to Alice Holt Forest; and
- Improvements to the Gravel Hill Lane bus stops as well as improved pedestrian connections to the bus stops.

3.1.2 These are set out in conjunction with the proposed access arrangements to the site (a new 3-arm roundabout).

3.2 Site Access

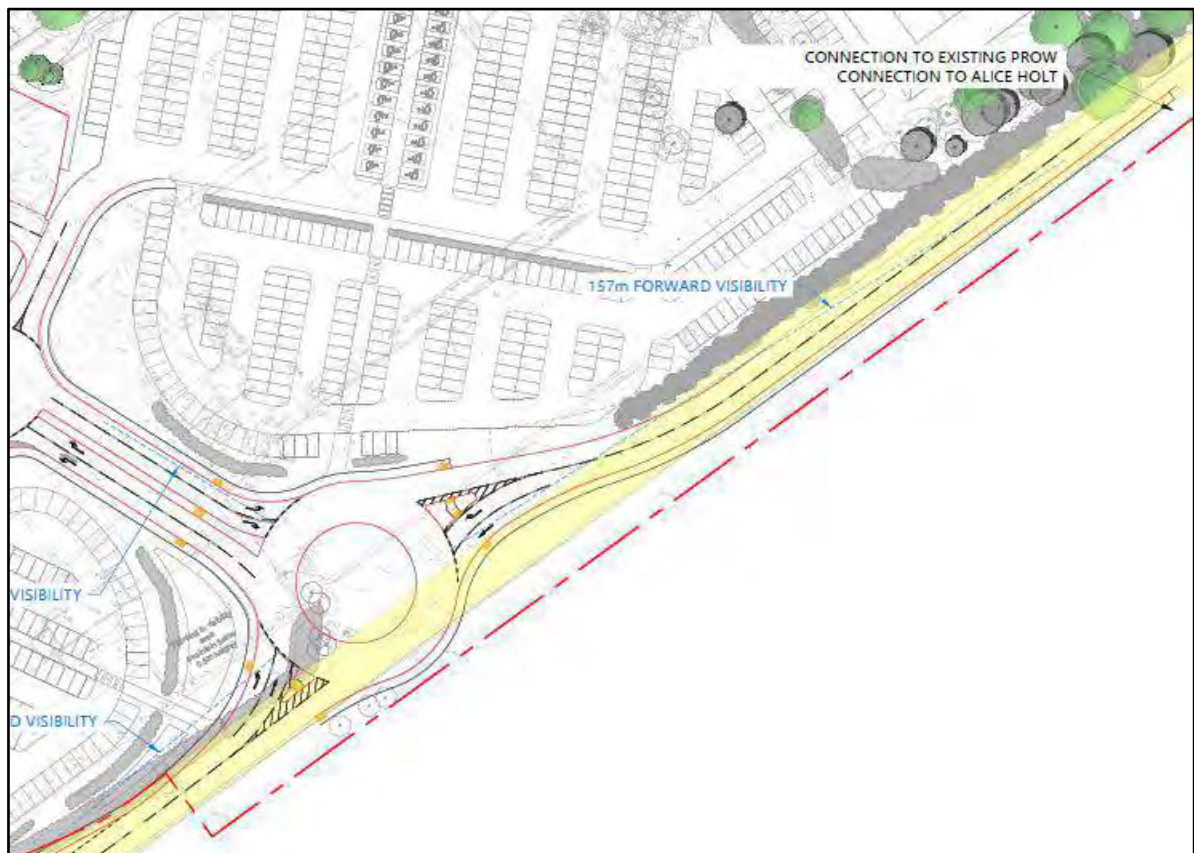
3.2.1 Access to the site is proposed via a new roundabout shown on **Drawing ITB16329-GA-100** with an extract included below.

Image 3.1: Proposed Site Access Arrangements



- 3.2.2 The site access has been designed in line with the prevailing design guidance with sufficient visibility splays and deflection.
- 3.2.3 Footways and pedestrian crossings have been provided on all arms. This will enable direct pedestrian access to both Forest Lodge and Birdworld, as well as access to Footpath 50 and the Gravel Hill Road bus stops (see below).
- 3.3 **Improved A325 Crossing to Footpath 50**
- 3.3.1 To improve pedestrian access to Footpath 50, as part of the site access arrangements a new footway has been provided on the eastern side of the A325 within land controlled by Haskins. This will provide a direct connection between the site and Footpath 50 and is shown on **Drawing ITB16329-GA-100**, with an extract provided overleaf.
- 3.3.2 The provision of pedestrian crossing points at the new roundabout in conjunction with the new footway on the eastern side of the A325 will mean that pedestrians will no longer need to cross the A325 at the existing sub-standard crossing.

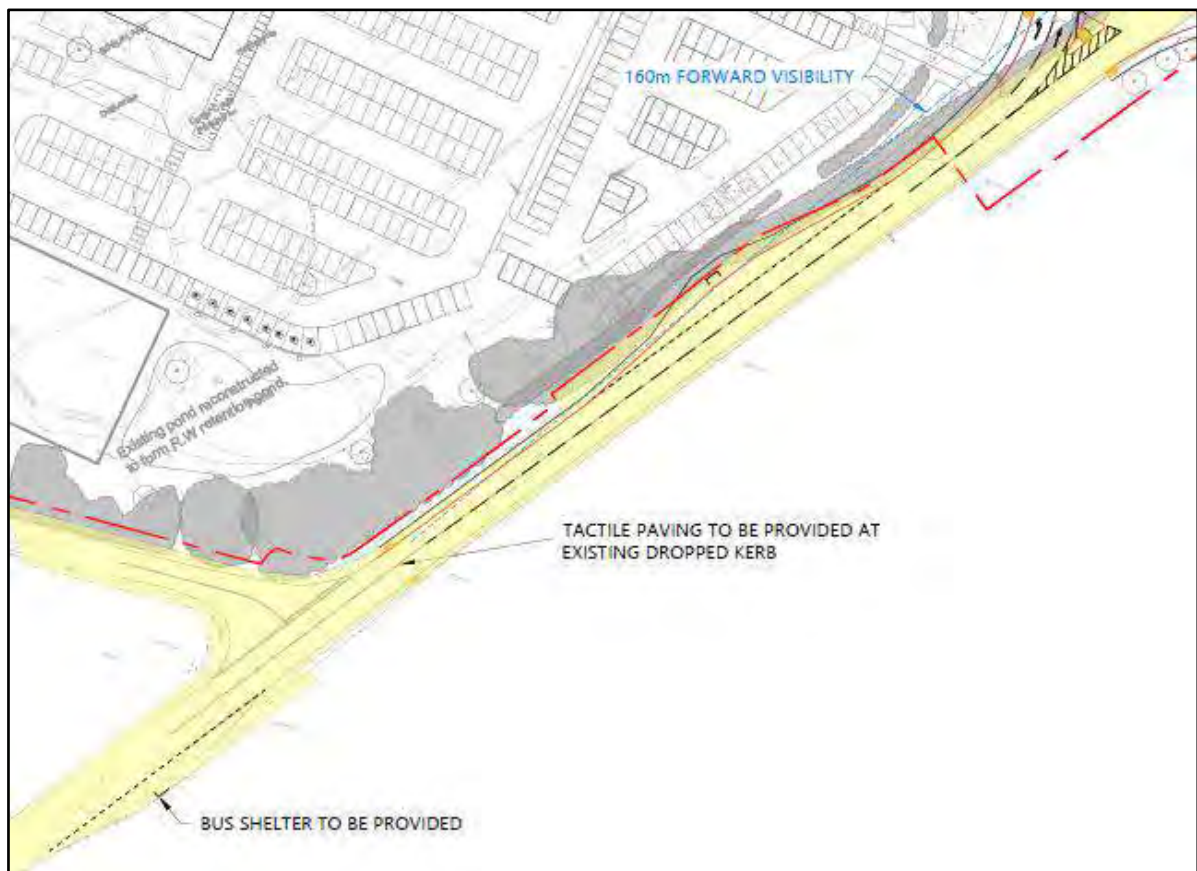
Image 3.2: Proposed Footway Connection to Footpath 50



3.4 Improved Access to Gravel Hill Road Bus Stops

- 3.4.1 The proposed access arrangements will also bring forward improved pedestrian facilities on the A325 and improved access to the Gravel Hill Road bus stops.
- 3.4.2 The northbound bus stop is proposed to be marginally realigned with a new footway connection to the north to provide direct access into the site. The existing footway behind the bus layby that routes southward can also be resurfaced and a replacement bus shelter could be provided.
- 3.4.3 Potential improvements to the southbound Gravel Hill Road bus stop and crossing are constrained by the extent of public highway at this location and the level differences/ditches. Nevertheless, there is the potential to provide upgraded crossing facilities on the A325 through resurfacing the footways and introducing tactile paving at the crossing, alongside the provision of a new bus shelter for passengers.
- 3.4.4 These improvements are shown on **Drawing ITB16329-GA-100** and on the extract below.

Image 3.3: Improvements to the Northbound Gravel Hill Road Bus Stop



- 3.4.5 Real time bus service information could be provided at the bus stops.

SECTION 4 Summary

4.1 Further to pre-application discussions with officers at HCC, this note provides a review of the existing walking, cycling and public transport facilities in the vicinity of Forest Lodge and Birdworld and sets out potential improvements where necessary, feasible or appropriate in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the site. This was informed by a site visit on 8 February 2023.

4.2 In particular this note considers the following:

- Pedestrian/cycle facilities along the site frontage (including the facilities in place at the Gravel Hill Road bus stops);
- The walking route to Bentley railway station via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 (this section of Footpath 44 is also designated as NCN224); and
- The walking route to Alice Holt (via Footpath 50) which could be used to combine a recreational visit to Alice Holt Forest with visits to both the redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld.

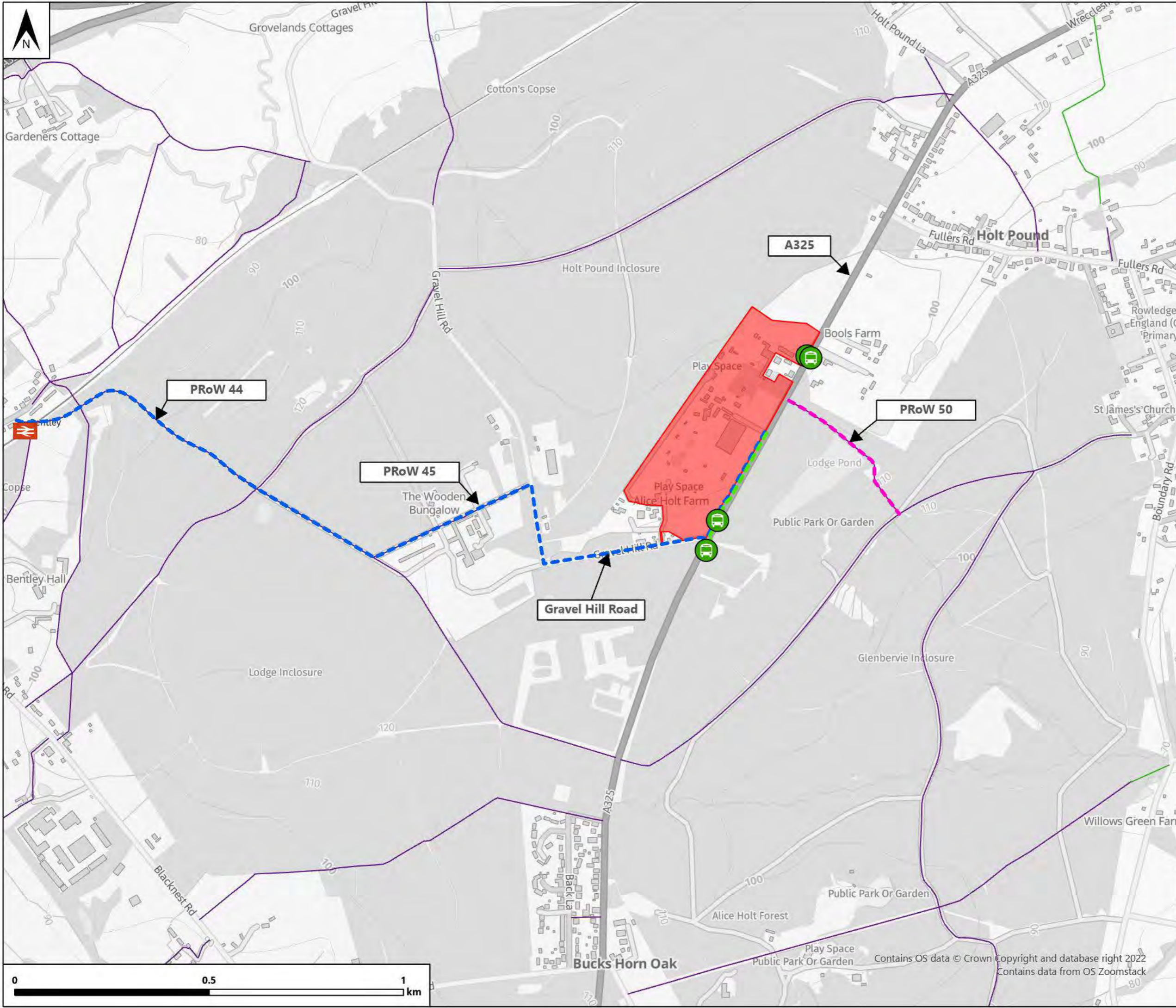
4.3 The pedestrian facilities and Gravel Hill Road bus stops along the A325 site frontage are of poor quality and currently do not provide direct pedestrian access to the site from the bus stops. Therefore, in conjunction with the site access works, the following can be delivered:

- A new footway connection to Forest Lodge and Birdworld which will tie into an upgraded northbound bus stop; and
- Improved crossing facilities at Gravel Hill Road through resurfacing and the introduction of tactile paving, in conjunction with a new bus shelter for the southbound bus stop. The ability to deliver improvements at this location is limited to the extent of public highway and level differences.

4.4 Bentley railway station is accessible from the site via Gravel Hill Road, Footpath 45 and Footpath 44 which provide a predominantly traffic-free route to Bentley railway station via good quality rural footpaths. Whilst there are no dedicated pedestrian/cycle facilities on Gravel Hill Road, it provides a suitable connection as it is wide, lightly trafficked, vehicle speeds are observed to be low and there is good pedestrian visibility. It is also part of the signed Forest Research Adaptation Trail walking route. No improvements are therefore proposed to this route.

- 4.5 Footpath 50 provides a pleasant recreational route to Alice Holt Forest, however there are no dedicated crossing facilities where the route meets the A325. As part of the site access works a new footway is therefore proposed on the eastern side of the carriageway (within land that Haskins controls) that will tie into the proposed new pedestrian crossings at the site access roundabout. This will provide a direct route between the site and Footpath 50 and eliminate the need for pedestrians to cross the A325 at the current sub-standard crossing.

FIGURES



- Key**
- Site Boundary
 - Bentley Railway Station
 - Bus Stop
 - Hampshire PRoW
 - Surrey PRoW
 - Route to Alice Holt Forest
 - Route to Bentley Railway Station
 - Route to Gravel Hill Road Bus Stops

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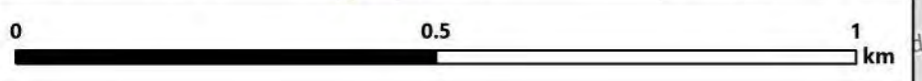
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Title: **Active Travel Plan**

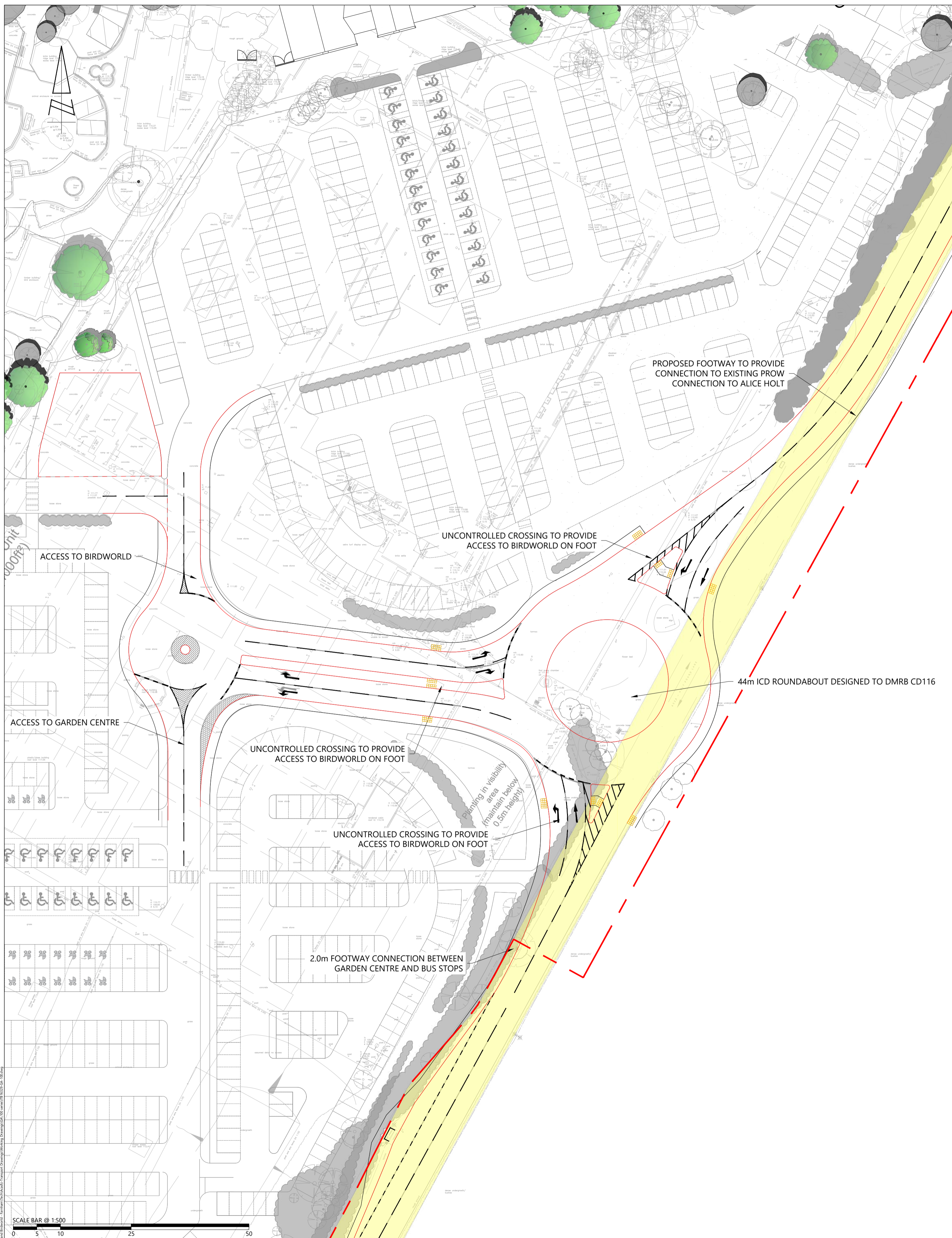
Project: **Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld - Farnham**

Project Number: ITB16329	Figure Number: Figure 2.1	Revision: -
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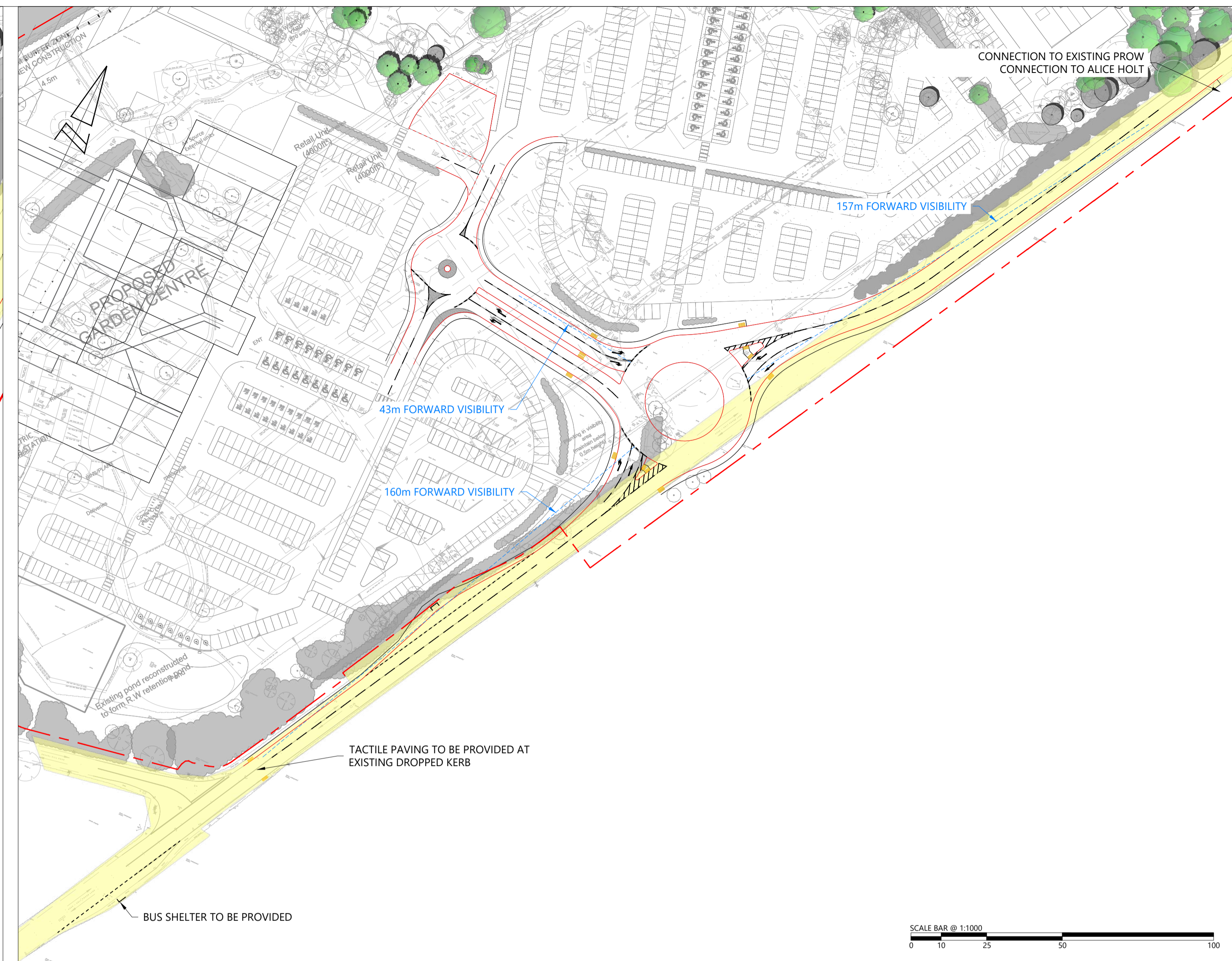


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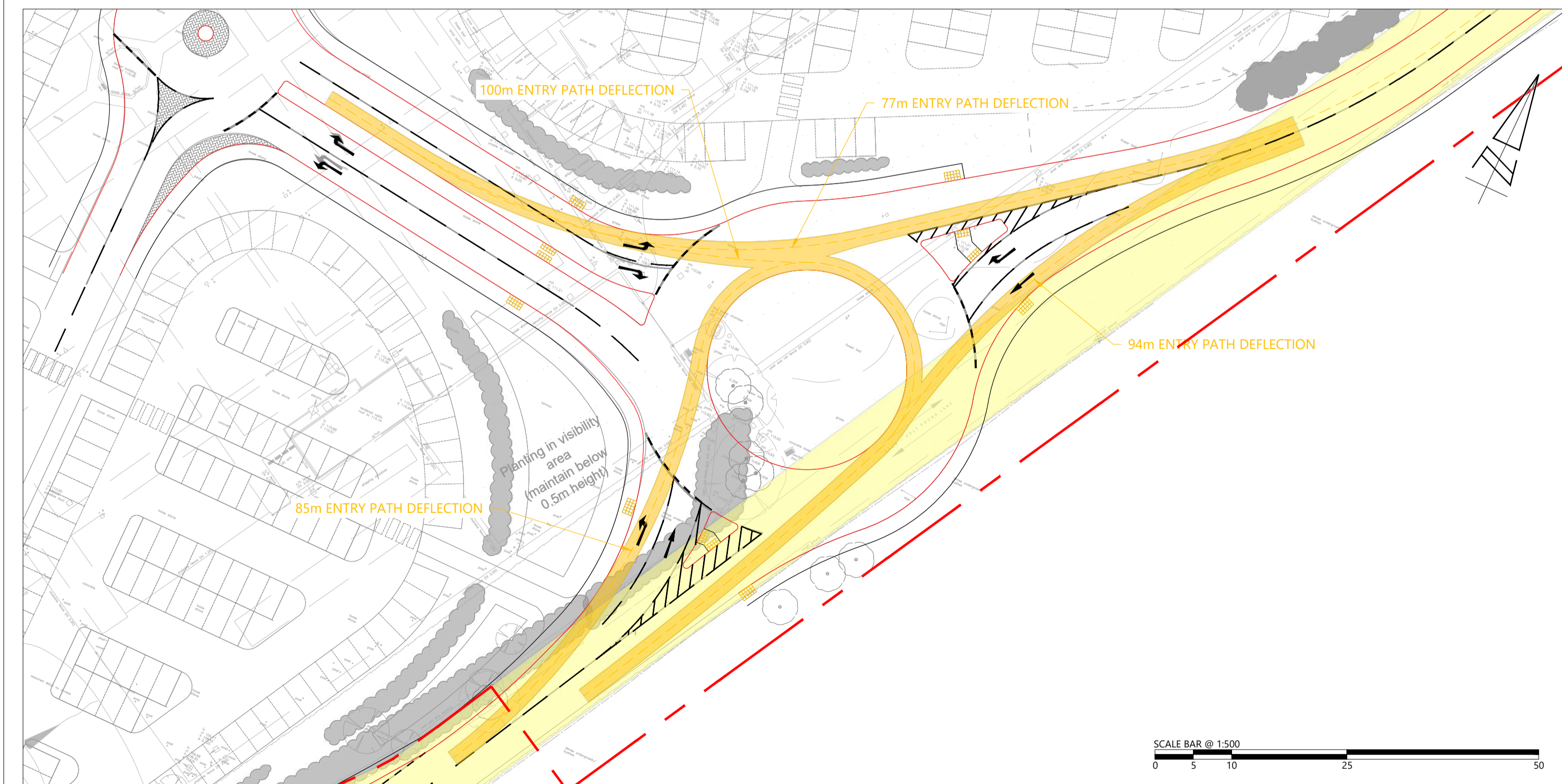
DRAWINGS



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0 5 10 25 50



SCALE BAR @ 1:1000
0 10 25 50 100



SCALE BAR @ 1:500
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Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4EB
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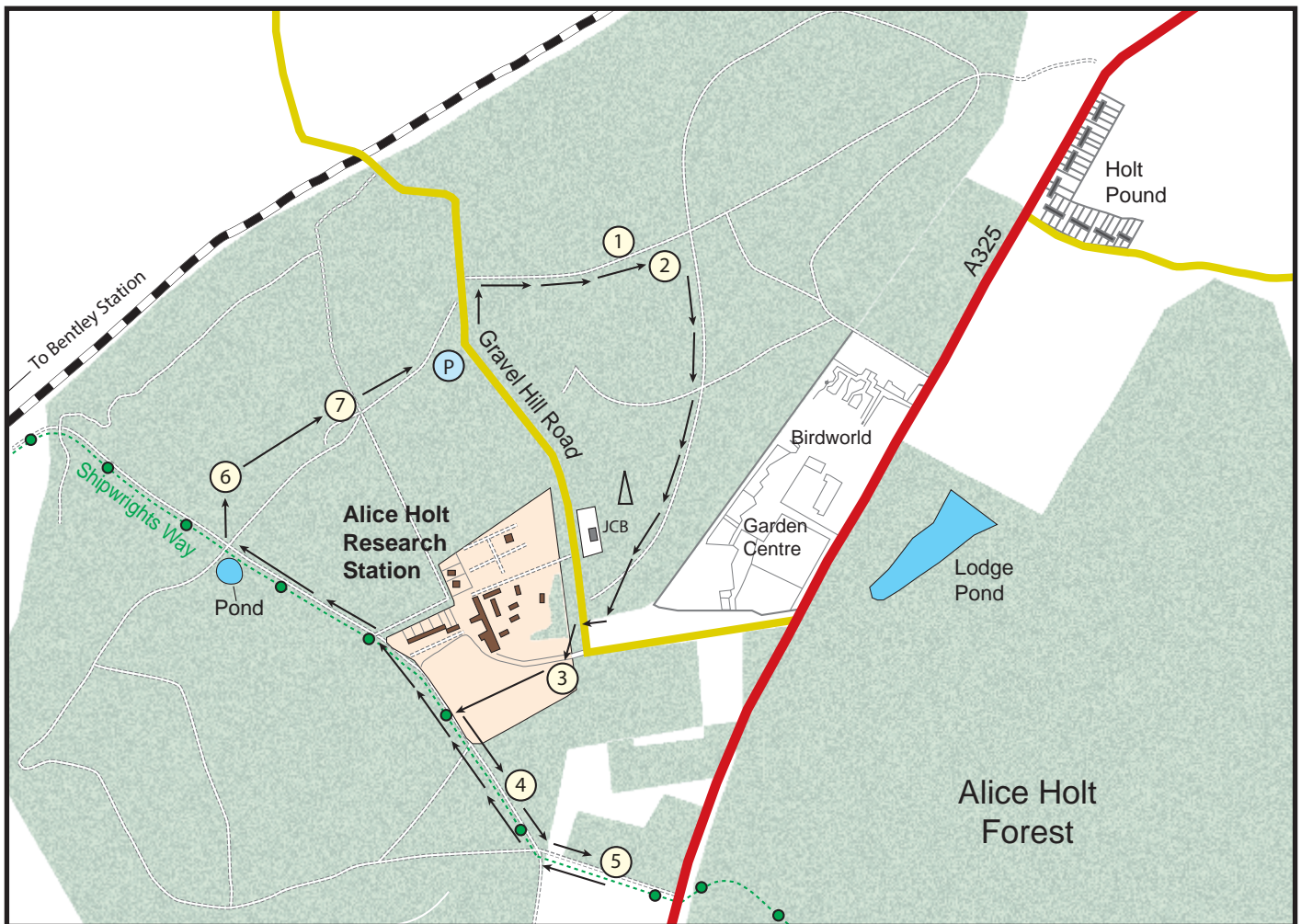
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KEY:

- HIGHWAY BOUNDARY BASED ON OS MAPPING
- SITE BOUNDARY

STATUS	DESCRIPTION	CHK	APP	PROJECT	TITLE	CLIENT	DRAWN	CHECKED	APPROVED
FOR INFORMATION	FOR INFORMATION			FOREST LODGE GARDEN CENTRE	PROPOSED THREE ARM ROUNDABOUT ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS	HASKINS FARNHAM LTD	MC	MC	SAW
							PROJECT No: ITB18700	SCALE @ A1: AS SHOWN	DATE: 13.06.23
							DRAWING No: ITB16329-GA-100		REV: -

APPENDIX A. FOREST RESEARCH ADAPTATION
TRAIL



Alice Holt Climate Change Adaptation Trail Guide

Start: Alice Holt Arboretum car park

Post code: GU10 4LQ (nearest)

Distance: 3 miles with 7 marked stops

Terrain: Wide forest roads which may cross uneven patches of mud and puddles

In south-east England, climate change has already had an impact on trees and woodland and will continue to do so. Oak now comes into leaf nearly a month earlier than it did in the 1950s. In future, this area is projected to become warmer, with more frequent extreme weather events, such as hotter, drier summers and drought episodes.

The trail demonstrates a range of different adaptation measures that can be used to better prepare our woodlands for change and future challenges. The first two stops are managed to show different ways in which Alice Holt Forest is being adapted. The other stops are 20th century research trials that are of fresh interest in light of climate change.

If you're interested in forestry and perhaps own or manage woodland, the accompanying **online worksheet** provides more detail.

Stop 1 Can we increase resilience using species pairing mixtures?

Mature Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra*), underplanted in 2017/18 with two broadleaved species, of different drought tolerances, to meet woodland restoration objectives.

Corsican pine has an uncertain future due to its vulnerability to drought and disease damage. The current mature stand is growing on sandy soil and has been underplanted with either hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) or beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Hornbeam is expected to perform better than beech in future because it has a higher drought tolerance.

Stop 2 Can we reduce drought impact by thinning?

Young Corsican pines were thinned in 2018 at two different intensities, in two adjacent sub-compartments, to try to extend the expected yield of this stand. Hotter, drier summers will increase competition for water but there should be less drought stress in trees where heavier thinning has been undertaken.

Stop 3 Can we encourage natural selection using direct seeding?

A trial plot of 10 different tree species was sown, rather than planted, in 2009 using different types of typical farm machinery. The resulting woodland on former agricultural land established quickly in three years.

Direct seeding can result in many more seedlings compared with planting, which may encourage adaptation through natural selection. Fencing to protect seed and seedlings was critical for establishment. Correct ground preparation and weeding were also important. This stop shows that direct seeding can be successful, and strong, upright stems are encouraged by the high density of seedlings.

Stop 4 What are our options to address changing fire risk?

A trial of coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) involved testing the growth and survival of plants raised from seed from different origins. Coast redwood grows well in a British climate and is available in many nurseries. The species can reach 20 metres in 20 years and is highly valued for its timber qualities. It is lightweight, shows resistance to decay and is resilient to fire.

However, it does show some sensitivity to frost when young. Coast redwood is now being considered as part of Forestry Commission England's diversification strategy.

Stop 5 What can species trials tell us about future risks? Leyland cypress clone bank

This windblown stand of different clones of Leyland cypress demonstrates the importance of trial plots to highlight potential issues with novel species before they're grown commercially. Such trials are important given that extreme weather events are expected to increase in future.

This species was found to be susceptible to wind throw. The stand survived high winds in 1987 but was blown over during a storm in 2012/13. The trial has been abandoned.

Stop 6 What alternative species might suit future conditions?

(Optional – skip if you're short on time or have access difficulties.)

This clone bank of western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) was planted in 1964 from cuttings taken from superior specimens in forests across the UK. Western red cedar is a conifer that has potential for wider use in forestry for timber. Here, however, their dense foliage has blocked light from reaching the forest floor and so there is low potential for ground flora and associated wildlife. But alternative planting strategies could be considered to improve potential for wildlife. The stand established well on a north-facing slope with no thinning and today serves as a source of genetic material for future breeding and selection programmes.

Stop 7 Understanding species diversification

The arboretum and rare tree collection highlights how species diversification and valuable conservation work are important in understanding threats and opportunities from the changing climate. Volunteers from the Alice Holt Community Forum are helping to conserve rare species and identify those that may tolerate future climatic conditions. aliceholtforum.org.uk/ahcf/arboretum/

Stop 8 (Optional) Mixtures of broadleaved species

Once you've completed the trail, there is one more stop a few minutes' drive away in Alice Holt Forest Park. Leave your car in the 'Beech' Forest Centre car park and follow the **Easy Access Discovery Trail** along Orchard Ride. Take the first turning on your left to follow a mile-long loop.

This stop shows the performance of natural beech regeneration (where trees develop from seeds that fall and germinate *in situ*) alongside an area underplanted with UK oaks and one underplanted with oaks from France. Trees from southern areas may perform better in future but we need to find out more about how they will cope and grow in different climatic conditions, such as in changing rainfall patterns here at Alice Holt.

What did you think of the stops on the trail and the questions they raise? If you're adapting the woodlands you manage to climate change, we'd love to hear about your results. You can share your thoughts and get in touch with us [@Forest_Research](https://twitter.com/Forest_Research) using [#AdaptAH](https://twitter.com/AdaptAH).

This trail has been produced by Forest Research in collaboration with Forestry Commission England.

Further information is available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk or you can send us an email at adaptah@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Forestry Commission

APPENDIX B. BENTLEY STATION FOOTBRIDGE
PROPOSALS

10th August 2021

Alice Holt & Buckthorne Oak Level Crossing Closure (Bentley Station)

Project Overview



Objectives of the scheme

Network Rail has a strict statutory duty to run a safe railway network and eliminate risks from it.

Level crossings are one of the key sources of catastrophic risk and in order to improve public safety, Network Rail have a funded strategy to reduce this risk.

Alice Holt and Buckthorne Oak are high risk footpath level crossings located in the village of Bentley in Hampshire. Both routes serve as public rights of way routes within our strategy.

Both crossings have significant and irremovable safety issues e.g. restricted sighting of trains currently mitigated by trains sounding their horns.



Key Driver

The key driver for introducing change at this location are:



Safety

Each Level Crossing on the route is associated with a risk score. Closing both of the level crossings are anticipated to remove the safety risk at Bentley.

Scope

- Stopping up and closure of 2 footpath level crossings: Alice Holt and Buckthorne Oak
- Provision of a pedestrian diversion via the installation of an Access for All style footbridge at Bentley Station
- Decommissioning of the existing station footbridge

The project has recently finished early design work and is planning on commencing more detailed design in October 2021, which is followed by delivery work.



Figure 1: Alice Holt Level Crossing (left) and Buckthorne Oak Level Crossing (right)

Interface with Public Right of Ways

Both crossings serve public footpaths 38, 44 and 55 respectively.

Network Rail's proposal provides for extinguishment of footpath 55 and diversion of 38 and 44 onto the new footbridge.

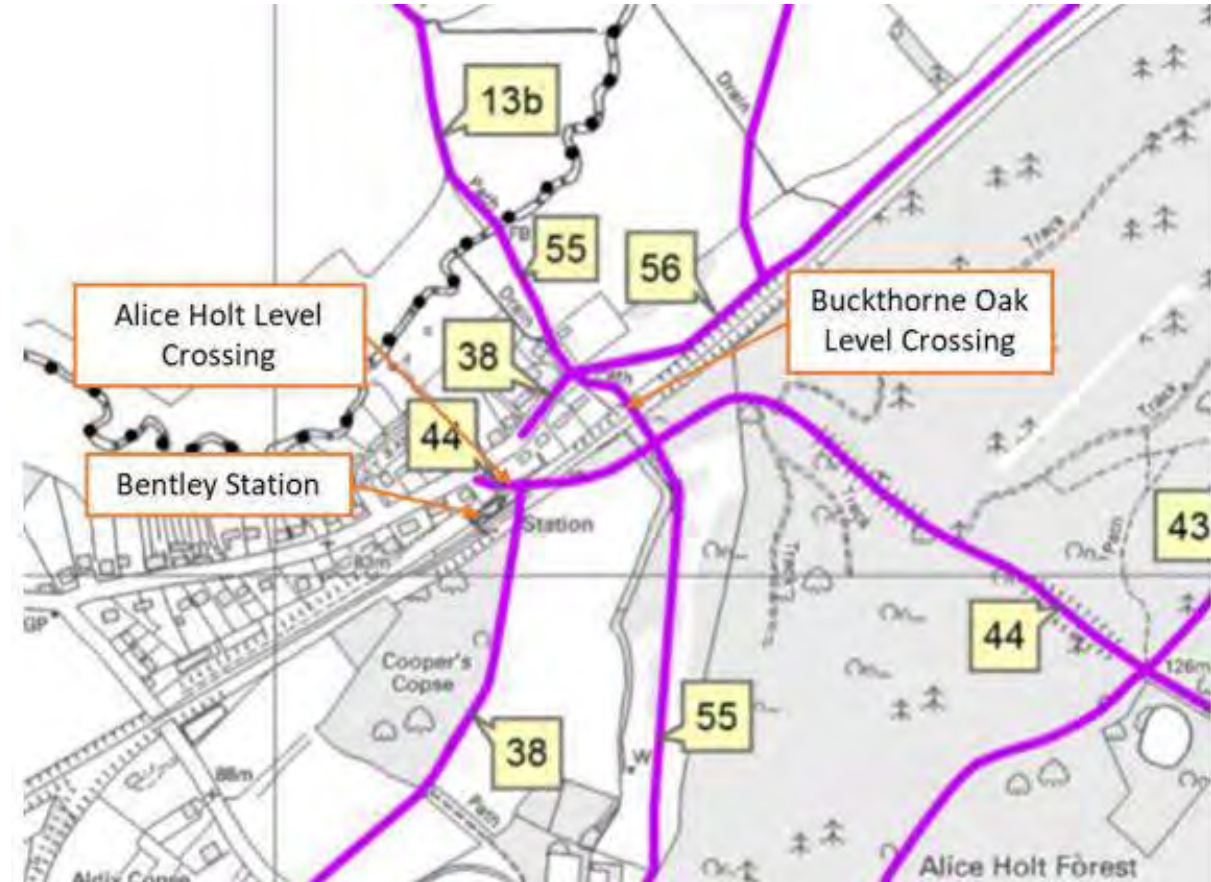


Figure 2: Definite Map of PROW 2010. Hampshire County Council (Snapshot)



Virtual Site Visit





Bentley Station



Alice Holt Level Crossing



Buckthorne Oak Level Crossing





Design Proposal



New Footbridge at Bentley Station

The new station footbridge will be located approximately 40m from the existing pedestrian footbridge and be located just south of the existing Alice Holt level crossing.

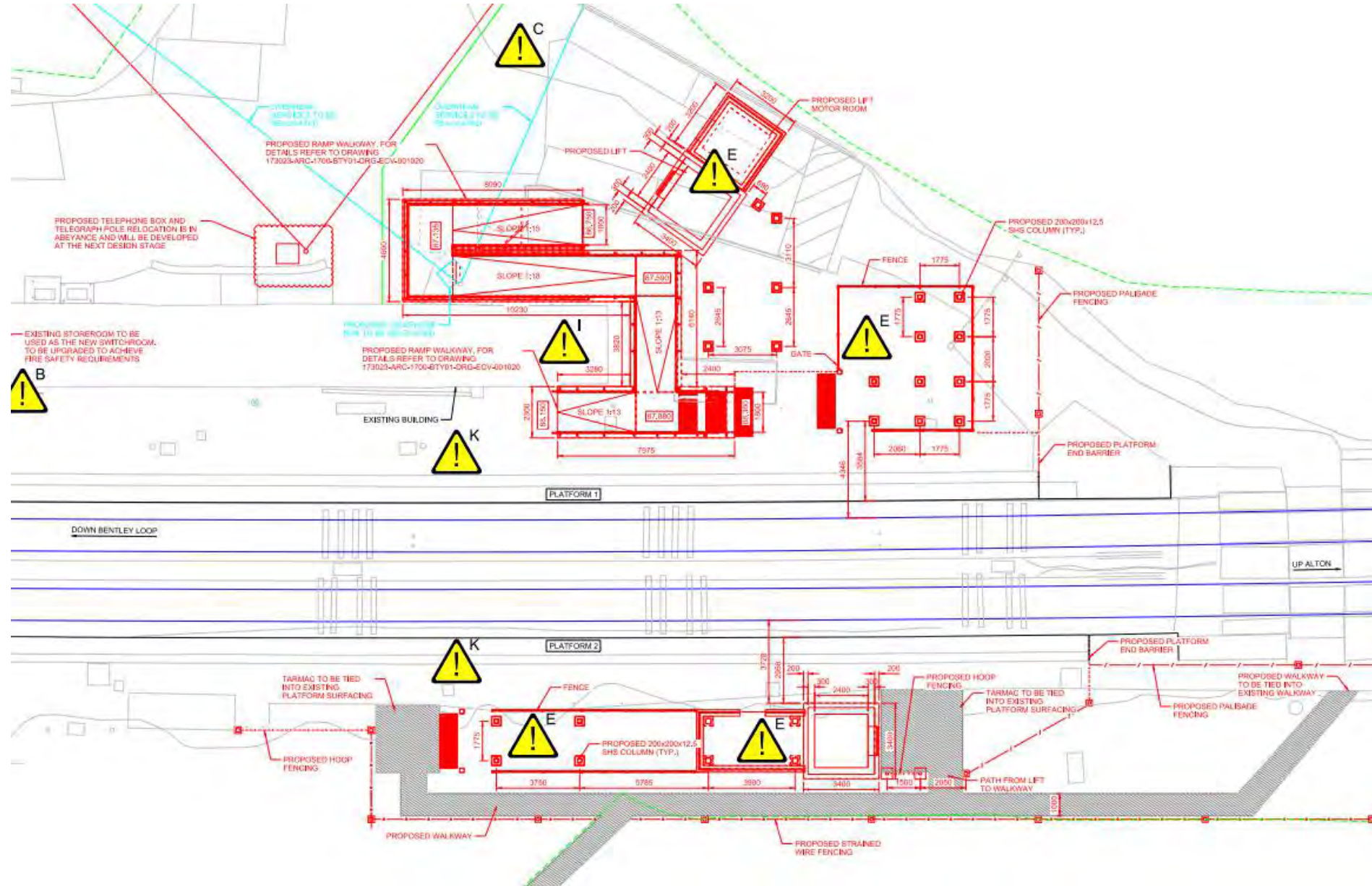
2 staircases are proposed, one for each Platform to allow access to the proposed footbridge.

It will be a stepped structure.

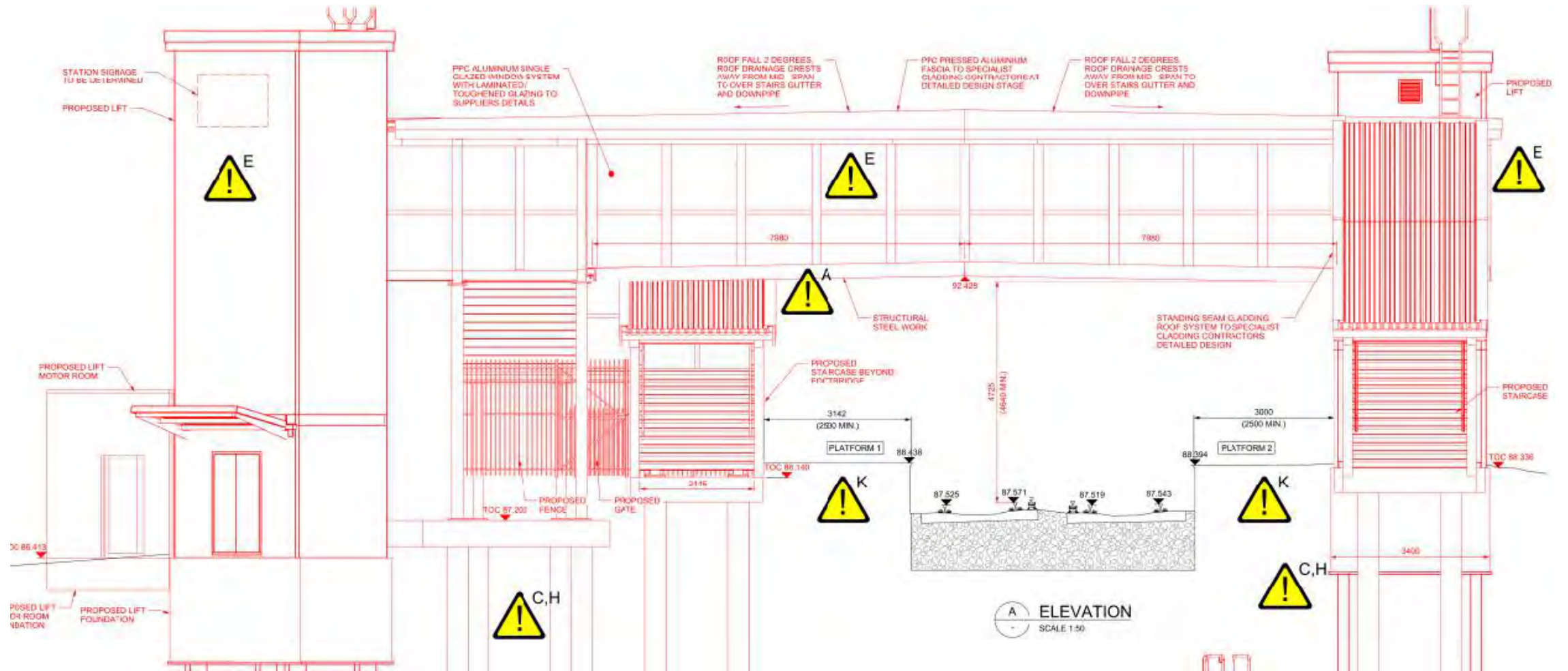
To accommodate disabled/mobility impaired use, 2 lifts(16-person capacity each) will be provided. The lifts will be through lifts to provide simplified access for persons with reduced mobility (PRM).

A new access ramp will be constructed to the North East next to the station building and adjacent to the new structure to provide access to Platform 1.

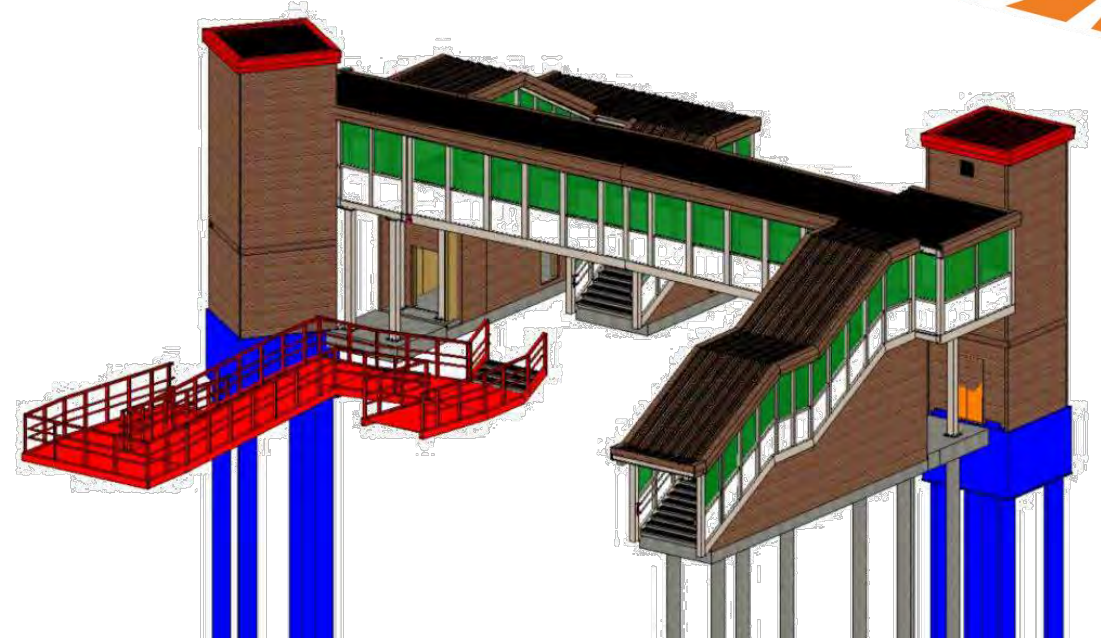
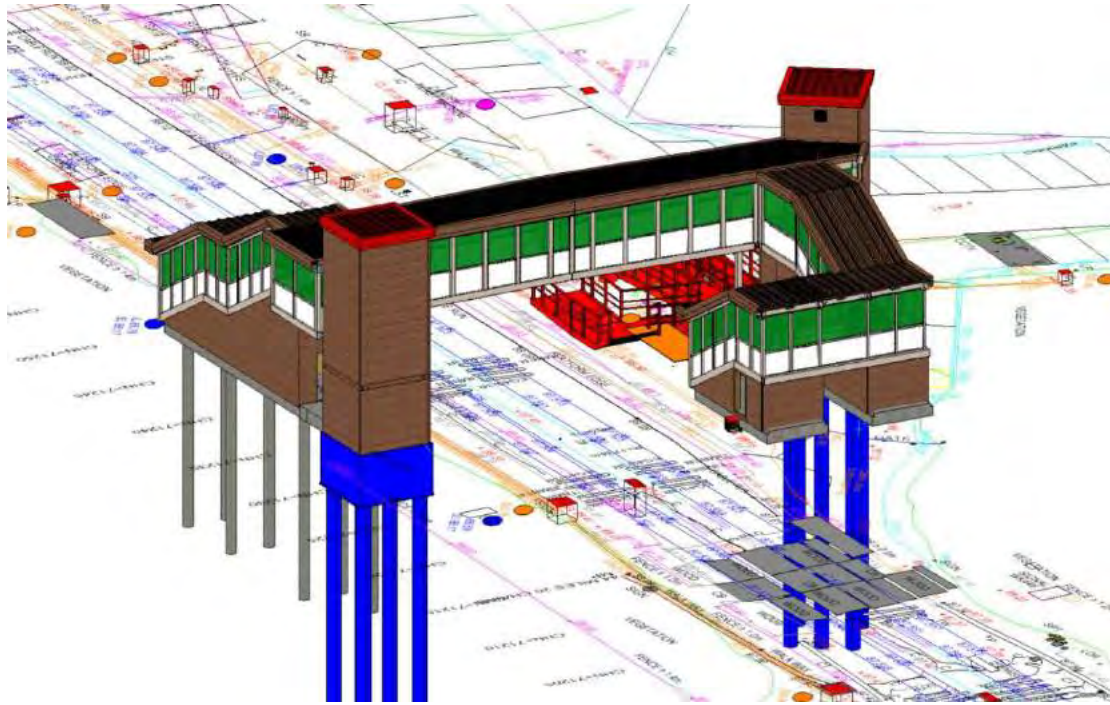
Ground Level



Elevation looking towards Alice Holt Level Crossing



3D Images



Timeline

Please note that these dates may be subject to change when the project progresses through detailed design. Network Rail will continue to identify opportunities to reduce the programme.

Detailed Design Completion	April 2022
Start on Site	July 2022
Open Footbridge	April 2023
Removal of Existing Footbridge	April 2023
Finish of Site	April/May 2023

Impact During Construction

The existing footbridge and station building will remain in service and operational during construction.

The level crossings will remain in use until the legal process for stopping up has concluded.

There may be a requirement to close pedestrian access to the level crossing during mid week nights (when trains aren't running)

There will be a requirement to utilise areas of the station car park for construction, however access into the station will be maintained and these will be in non operational hours (trains not running)



Environmental Considerations

The station is directly adjacent to a National Park boarder which is South Downs National park and Sites of Special Scientific Interest Bentley Station Meadow SSSI which is located 140m east of the station.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken and confirmed that the works would not encroach onto the SSSI and would be within the immediate station boundary, this would mean that there would be no direct impact towards the Bentley Station Meadows SSSI.

The project will follow the mitigation measures which have been provided by the ecologist i.e prior to any vegetation clearances a hand search and visual inspection will be undertaken to confirm no evidence of dormice.



Results from Census

Network Rail have undertaken a census in July 2021 to understand the composition of level crossing users.

	Grand Total	Average total per day	Percentage
Elderly	0	0.0	0.0%
Mobility impaired	0	0.0	0.0%
People with prams	10	1.1	0.8%
Cyclists	430	47.8	33.7%
Encumbered	0	0.0	0.0%
Wearing 'hoodies'	27	3.0	2.1%
Dog walking (on lead)	249	27.7	19.5%
Dog walking (off lead)	20	2.2	1.6%
Children (accompanied by adults)	22	2.4	1.7%
Children (unaccompanied alone)	0	0.0	0.0%
Children (group)	4	0.4	0.3%
Student (Lone)	2	0.2	0.2%
Students (group)	0	0.0	0.0%
Adult (group)	410	45.6	32.1%
Adult Female (Lone)	102	11.3	8.0%

		Grand Total	Average total per day	Percentage
Station Users	Pedestrian	251.0	27.9	20%
	Cyclist	27	3.0	2%
Non-Station Users	Pedestrian	576	64.0	45%
	Cyclist	422	46.9	33%

Further Discussions Points

The current proposal of the footbridge is to be covered/enclosed, however there is a time and cost saving opportunity to have an uncovered bridge, what are the Parish Councils views on this?

How would the Parish Council like to be communicated with during works?

Are there any local events that we need to be aware of in the area?

Would you recommend an approach to letting the residents in the area know about the scheme?