

## **Hastings Town Centre Green Connections project: Bus routing options assessment and analysis**

### Background

Following the lack of support for the changes to bus routes received during the public and stakeholder consultation for Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections 2 subsequent design option have been developed to mitigate against these concerns.

Qualitative analysis of the survey responses and stakeholder engagements highlighted the following key concerns regarding impact to the bus service:

- pedestrian safety impacted by converting the currently pedestrianised section of Queens Road as a bus lane,
- impact to events at Hastings Town Hall,
- easy access to accessible town centre bus stops, and
- further delays to current service.

### Policy context

The East Sussex draft Local Transport Plan 4, which was subject to public consultation in late 2023/early 2024, highlights that our long-term aspirations for bus service improvements are set out in our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) adopted in October 2021. This follows on from the publication of the Government's Bus Back Better Strategy in 2020.

The BSIP has the following mission:

*'Our mission as a local transport authority and bus operators is to ensure that East Sussex residents and visitors enjoy the highest possible quality bus services that provide a frequent and comprehensive choice, reduce congestion and make a positive contribution to better air quality and decarbonisation'*

In order to meet this vision, the BSIP has set targets relating to faster journey times, and improved reliability and punctuality of services.

In addition, the draft Local Transport Plan 4, recognises that that high quality inclusive public spaces need to balance the needs of a broad range of people walking, wheeling, and using public transport who will use these spaces in different ways. Policy C2 – Bus and Coach – states we will focus on improving frequency and punctuality of bus services and delivering significant improvements to the public transport network within our urban areas to support growth and deliver a step change in accessibility.

From an active travel perspective, Policy B2 – Active Travel – in the draft LTP4 identifies that the focus will be on promoting safer, more accessible, and quicker travel by active travel modes integrating with public transport as well as providing high-quality inclusive public spaces and public realm as part of placemaking schemes.

Whilst these draft LTP4 policies seek to complement each other in supporting the delivery of the LTP4 vision and objectives, it is recognised that there will be competing demands between them especially where schemes are considering the redesigning of existing road space. Therefore, an inclusive and balanced approach is required to assess these competing demands on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

### Option 1

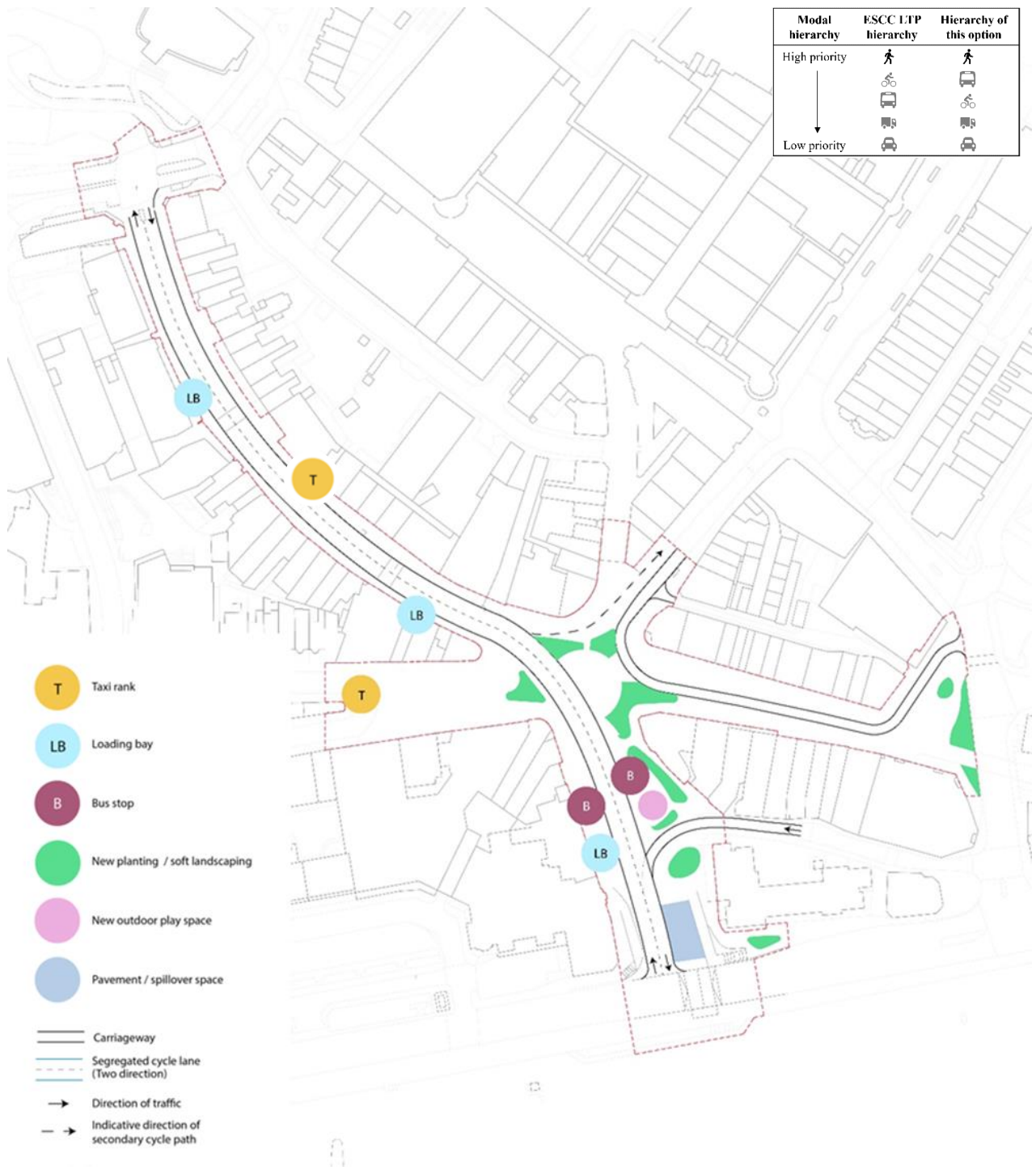
Option 1 retains one carriageway for northbound buses traveling from seafront to the rail station, with southbound buses to be routed along Devonshire Road, South Terrace and Queens Road.

The Havelock Road taxi rank would be relocated to potentially Robertson Street and/or Queens Road, ensuring it is within close proximity to the existing rank and provides adequate provision of spaces.



## Option 2

Option 2 retains both lanes of the exiting carriageway for 2-way bus movements. The carriageway would be widened to accommodate on-road cycle lane in both directions, minimising the available space for additional Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SuDs) and planting on Havelock Road. Whilst retaining two-way bus operations, alternatives which could be explored during the next design stage include introducing priority working pinch points in the carriageway, or reducing the width and introducing traffic signals to manage movements through the narrowed section of carriageway, both of which would allow for more space for the proposed SuDs planting. These alternatives require modelling and a road safety audits before progressing.



### Options analysis

An analysis of the potential options is set out below.

Option	Analysis & Comments
<p><u>Option 1</u> Retains northbound buses only on Havelock Road</p>	<p><i>Option Summary</i> This option allows for a two way segregated cycle lane and planting along Havelock Road, but does not pedestrianise Harold Place as per the consultation proposals. Instead this option would involve buses only travelling northbound from the seafront (A259) to the rail station.</p>

Option	Analysis & Comments
and Harold Place	<p><i>Operational Analysis</i></p> <p>Analysis has identified that this option would have an impact on some of the existing bus operations in Hastings. This includes increases in journey times of between 2 to 3 minutes per service on some routes arising from changes in the southbound routing of these services, albeit some routes would not be affected, and others could see some modest benefits to journey times.</p> <p><i>Policy Analysis</i></p> <p>The introduction of the northbound only bus lane from the seafront to the station on Harold Place and Havelock Road would have a significant dis-benefit by increasing journey times and having a knock on impact on the reliability and punctuality of services which already experience delay based on the current timetable and frequency.</p> <p>This would run contrary to the aspirations set out in the County's BSIP and policies in the draft LTP4 of seeking to improve punctuality and reliability of bus services in East Sussex.</p> <p>However, the provision of segregated cycle facilities in both directions on Harold Place and Havelock Road would significantly improve the provision for cyclists compared to the existing situation.</p> <p><i>Stakeholder Feedback</i></p> <p>Strong support for this option was received at both the stakeholder workshops and subsequently from community groups such as the Garden Town Team, Sustainable Transport Forum and Bus User Group.</p>
<p><u>Option 2.</u></p> <p>Retains both lanes of the exiting carriageway for 2 way bus movements</p>	<p><i>Option summary</i></p> <p>This option proposes that the two way working on Harold Place and Havelock Road would be retained for buses and cyclists only. Any general traffic that currently travels north from the seafront to the station would have to use an alternative route to access the station.</p> <p>Two-way cycling would be accommodated within the existing traffic lanes rather than being fully segregated – LTN1/24 Government design guidance for bus lanes including cycling identifies that a minimum lane width of 4m to 4.5m is provided. The proposed width of both lanes is 4.5m.</p> <p><i>Operational analysis</i></p> <p>From a bus operation perspective, this would be the status quo with buses able to run north and south along Harold Place and Havelock Road. However, in comparison to the consulted scheme which included 'greening' opportunities on Havelock Road, the retention of two-way working will significantly reduce the available space for planting and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).</p> <p><i>Policy Analysis</i></p> <p>From a policy perspective as set out in the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4 and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), the retention of the two-way working on Harold Place and Havelock Road would ensure bus</p>

Option	Analysis & Comments
	<p>journey time reliability is maintained for services in Hastings town centre, thereby meeting the LTP4 objectives and BSIP vision.</p> <p>Whilst segregated facilities are not being promoted as part of this option, enabling cyclists to use the north and southbound bus lanes would be modest betterment on the existing situation where northbound cyclists have to also share the carriageway with general traffic.</p> <p><i>Stakeholder feedback</i></p> <p>This option is supported by the local bus operator, but received objections at both stakeholder workshops.</p>