

Approved Place Brief: Leith Walk/Halmyre St (September 2020)

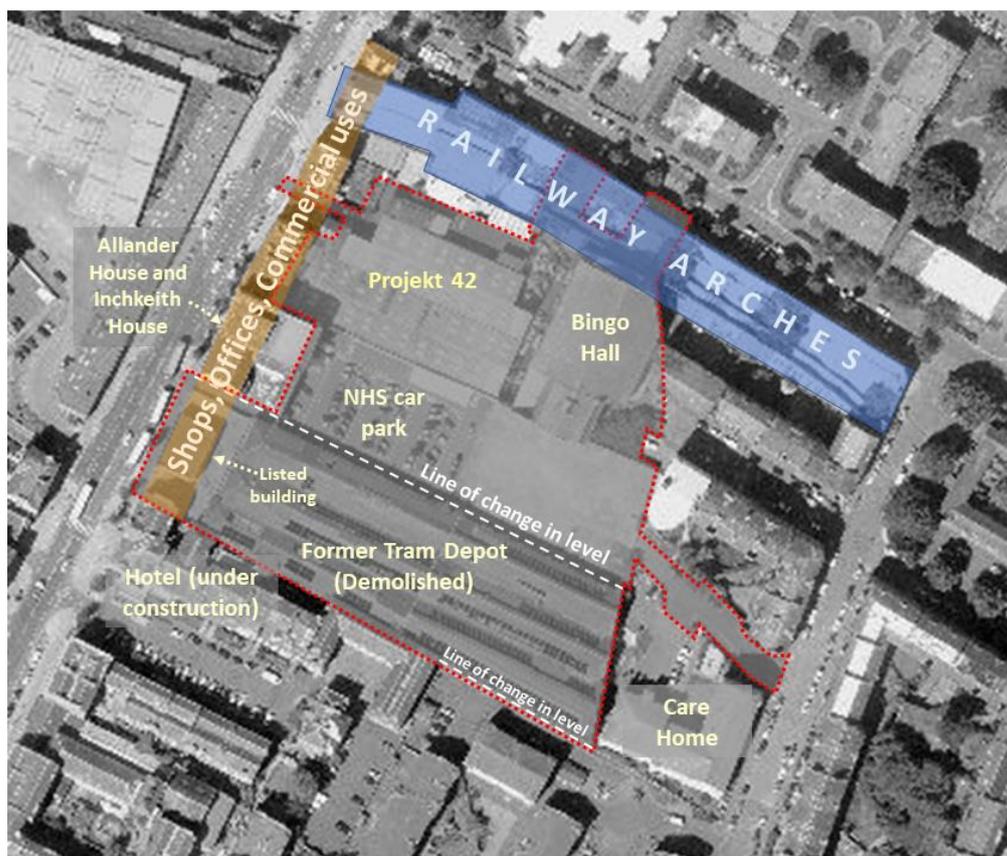


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1. Introduction

1.1 This Place Brief has been prepared to guide the redevelopment of an area of vacant brownfield land to the east of Leith Walk between Leith Walk and Halmyre Street. It revokes the Statement of Urban Design Principles for 131-165 Leith Walk (approved at planning Committee, 25th November 2004). The site is in three main ownerships - the area shaded blue is owned by the Council (formerly occupied by the tram depot), the area shaded orange is an active bingo hall, and the area shaded white includes former government offices (currently used by a community gym - Projekt 42) and a car park used by NHS services.



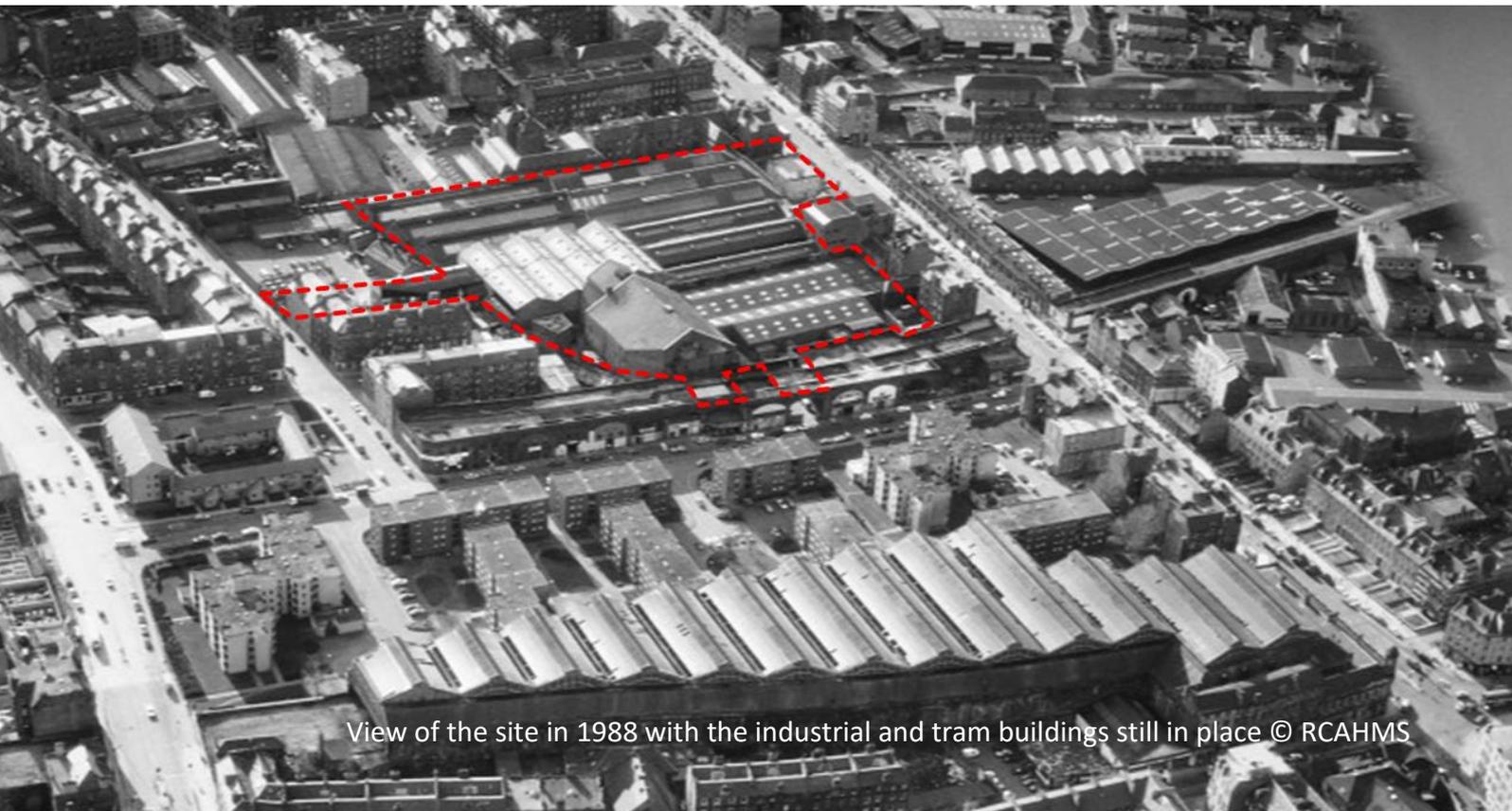
The site sits directly behind a frontage along Leith Walk which contains shops and food outlets, health care uses (Inchkeith House and Allander House), and a number of homes.

To the north the site is bound by former railway arches. These are currently being used as workshops, garages, a local music venue and a bingo hall.

To the east the site is bound by housing and a care home off Halmyre Street and Thorntree Street.

To the south the site is mainly bound by housing although a hotel is currently under construction in the listed Smith's Place.

- 1.2 Careful consideration has been given to the area around the site in order to promote high quality placemaking on and around the site boundary and ensure good connectivity with the surrounding area, particularly in terms of active travel links.
- The site is adjacent to the Leith Conservation Area. The site has a rich industrial past although little remains of the industrial and transport buildings that formerly filled the site apart from the 'C' listed former tram depot at 165a Leith Walk. This is a Modern Movement building from the 1930's which was designed to be free standing (trams passed either side of it as they exited the depot). Further remnants of the industrial heritage are the red sandstone railway arches which form the northern boundary of the site. These are unlisted but important for the character of the area.



View of the site in 1988 with the industrial and tram buildings still in place © RCAHMS

- 1.3 To the south the site is bound by the rear of several 'B' listed buildings on Smith's Place and a high brick wall. A former chemical works at number 17 Smith's Place forms the boundary of the site, this building has been converted into flats which overlook the site. The bingo hall is of merit and the interior is impressive although it is not listed. The western elevation of the bingo hall was formerly part of an earlier mill building on the site.



Listed building at 165a Leith Walk

Railway arches along Manderston Street

- 1.4 An extension to the Edinburgh tram system is to be built along Leith Walk. As a result turning options into and out of the site will be limited. There will be some controlled and uncontrolled crossing points provided along the frontage of the site and the junction at Manderston Street will be signalised – allowing for right turns.
- 1.5 A new hotel being developed at 3-5 Smith's Place has a ramped accessible entrance which is taken from the site.



2. Purpose

- 2.1 A place brief is a set of high level principles established to shape the future development of a site. The place brief sets a vision for the redevelopment of the site and includes site specific placemaking principles.
- 2.2 The place brief for Leith Walk/Halmyre Street has been prepared collaboratively by the Council with considerable input from the local community and other stakeholders including the other landowners. The development of the brief has involved two elements of engagement:



2.3 Over the last few years there have been a number of community led consultation exercises to identify community priorities for the area going forward. The dominant themes coming out of these consultations were to:

- maintain the strength and diversity of the community in Leith;
- reduce social isolation through the provision of new civic spaces and places to meet; and
- have more affordable housing choices to suit people and households with different needs and at different stages of their lives.

2.4 In January 2020 the City of Edinburgh Council held a number of drop-in events in local venues and prepared an online consultation to provide people with the opportunity to have their say on the future of the Leith Walk/Halmyre Street site. The sessions highlighted some of the comments which had been raised at previous events organised by local interest groups throughout Leith.

Key points which emerged from the community engagement:

- There is a strong feeling of community and sense of belonging in the area; generally, people feel safe during the day. Maintaining the strength and diversity of the community is important.
- The architectural heritage and character of the area are to be cherished and protected And unused land should be creatively reused;
- There is a need for environmentally sustainable social and affordable housing choices for people at different stages in their lives. There were concerns about the impact of the scale of student housing and short term lets (such as air bnb) in the area;
- More green and blue spaces and trees are needed with better connections to nearby green spaces.
- Access to facilities and amenities were all rated highly by the surrounding communities although there was a concern about the lack of GP services to support the growing population;
- There is a desire for improved access to social, cultural and leisure activities and affordable places to meet;
- Walking routes have improved in the area but there was a desire for an east to west pedestrian/cycle route to be provided through the site, improving local connectivity and helping to integrate the site with the wider community;
- Most people considered that the area had good access to public transport with connections to the city centre and elsewhere. However, the amount of traffic and parking are key issues in the area; and
- Support to maintain existing local and independent businesses and create affordable opportunities for new businesses.

- 2.5 A follow up consultation was carried out in late spring 2020 on a draft of the Place Brief, this document reflects the outcomes of these consultations.
- 2.6 A full record of the engagement process and the comments received can be viewed in the consultation report which supports this brief. Summaries of the engagement with specialist officers and key agencies can be found in the site analysis report which supports this brief.
- 2.7 This place brief constitutes non-statutory planning guidance. It will be a material consideration in determining future planning applications. Applications will also be assessed against the policies in the Local Development Plan (LDP) in the normal way.
- 2.8 This place brief creates a framework for co-ordinated development across the different land ownerships across the site and is flexible enough to accommodate change. It is likely that different parts of the site will be developed at different times and some areas (such as the bingo hall) may remain in their existing use. Earlier development proposals must not be developed in isolation without due consideration of the adjacent areas.

3. Vision and Aim

- 3.1 The vision is for a development which includes a range of uses reflecting the diverse mix in the area which respects the scale of surrounding buildings. Residents will live in a safe, attractive environment just off Leith Walk which includes tranquil spaces with green and blue infrastructure, where people of all ages can meet.

The development will provide pleasant, well connected routes for pedestrians and cyclists, including an east-west cycle link through the site. Shared space will connect with the site's main vehicular access towards Halmyre Street and parking and vehicular access into the site will be kept to a minimum.

The development should be co-ordinated across the site and will:

- create an attractive new place which fosters the growth of a strong community and good quality of life by providing places where people can meet, with generations living side by side and a range of housing choices;
 - create an appropriate built form which integrates into the surrounding area and encourages active lifestyles by providing safe attractive new green spaces and direct links to local facilities and active travel routes;
 - respond to the character and appearance of the adjoining Leith Conservation Area and safeguard the industrial heritage of the railway arches on Manderston Street and the settings of the listed buildings on and around the site;
 - respond to the challenge of climate change by prioritising walking and cycling routes, integrating SUDs as part of the overall development strategy and incorporating means to reduce energy use and provide low carbon energy and heat choices.
 - encourage active travel through the provision of cycle and footpaths and provide connections to the greenspaces and parks beyond.
- 3.2 It is important that the scale of the built form in the surrounding area is respected and that the height of any development responds positively to the dominant urban grain of the wider area which is four storey Victorian tenement perimeter blocks. It is expected that a variety of building heights will be provided on the site.
- 3.3 There is the potential for a mix of housing to be provided on the site. Student housing may be accommodated but the scale being proposed must be considered in the context of the impact on local services and amenities.

- 3.4 The aim of the place brief is to set high level development principles to help realise this vision and to consider the relationship between the development site and the wider area, to inform future design and planning processes.

4. Opportunities offered by the site

- 4.1 There are some key opportunities that are offered by the redevelopment of the Leith Walk/Halmyre Street site, these opportunities should be investigated as part of the planning process and include the potential to deliver:
- community uses which encourage multi-generational living. Including healthy living and wellbeing uses for all ages such as the Projekt 42 gym and wellness centre.
 - part of a green pedestrian/cycle link between Pilrig Park, the Restalrig railway path and Leith Links.
 - small flexible business spaces on the site.
 - an exemplar of integrating green and blue infrastructure within a tight urban grain and to gain a Building with Nature accreditation for good practice.
 - alternative models of housing including social housing, mixed tenure and student housing.
 - cycle hire facilities.

5. Placemaking Principles

- 5.1 Proposals should accord with relevant policies in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan and, meet the quality aspirations and standards set out in the relevant design guidance. More specifically, the following placemaking principles should be used to guide future development within the site.

5.2 General principles

- A co-ordinated approach is to be taken to the redevelopment of the site*. A masterplan or framework is required which demonstrates a co-ordinated approach for the following elements:
 - provision and location of open space;
 - providing pedestrian and cycle routes through the site;
 - built form and the creation of safe and attractive new public spaces;
 - addressing the changes in level across the site;
 - provision of a sustainable urban drainage system as part of a co-ordinated landscape strategy;
 - vehicular access and parking; and
 - provision of services.

*The approach to be taken regarding the bingo hall is to be agreed with the Council.

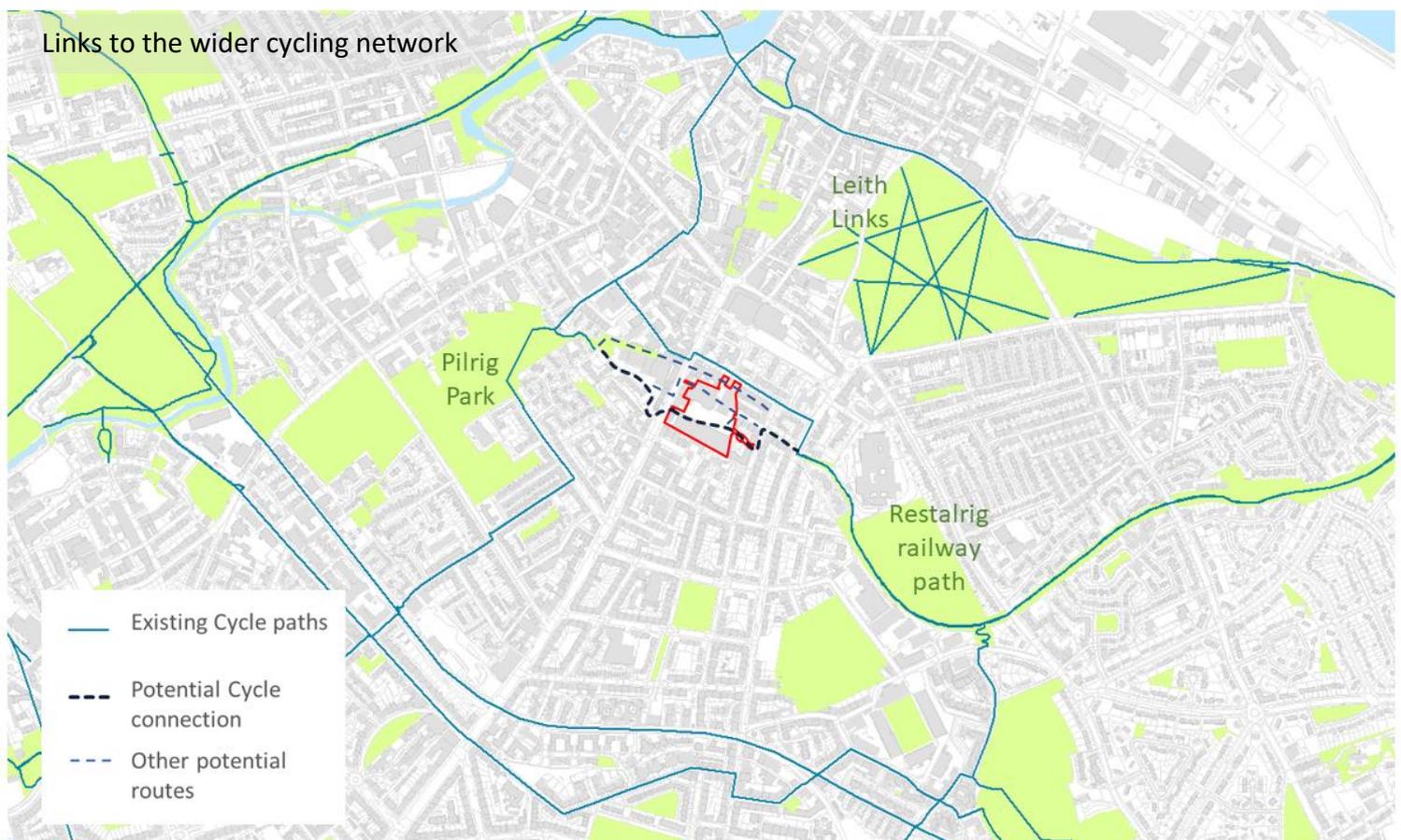
- A Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be undertaken to assess the predicted visual impacts of development on the surrounding townscape, including listed buildings, the wider conservation area and key views.
- The impact of development on the operation of the existing businesses around the site needs to be carefully considered.
- An archaeological evaluation of the site will be required.
- A substation to serve the tram is to be developed in the south western corner of the site and this will require vehicular access. The substation is likely to be clearly visible

from Leith Walk - efforts must be made to minimise its visual impact from Leith Walk and on other development proposed on the site. A standard metal fence boundary treatment would not be an acceptable solution in this location. The public space around the substation must be designed to be attractive and safe for pedestrians.

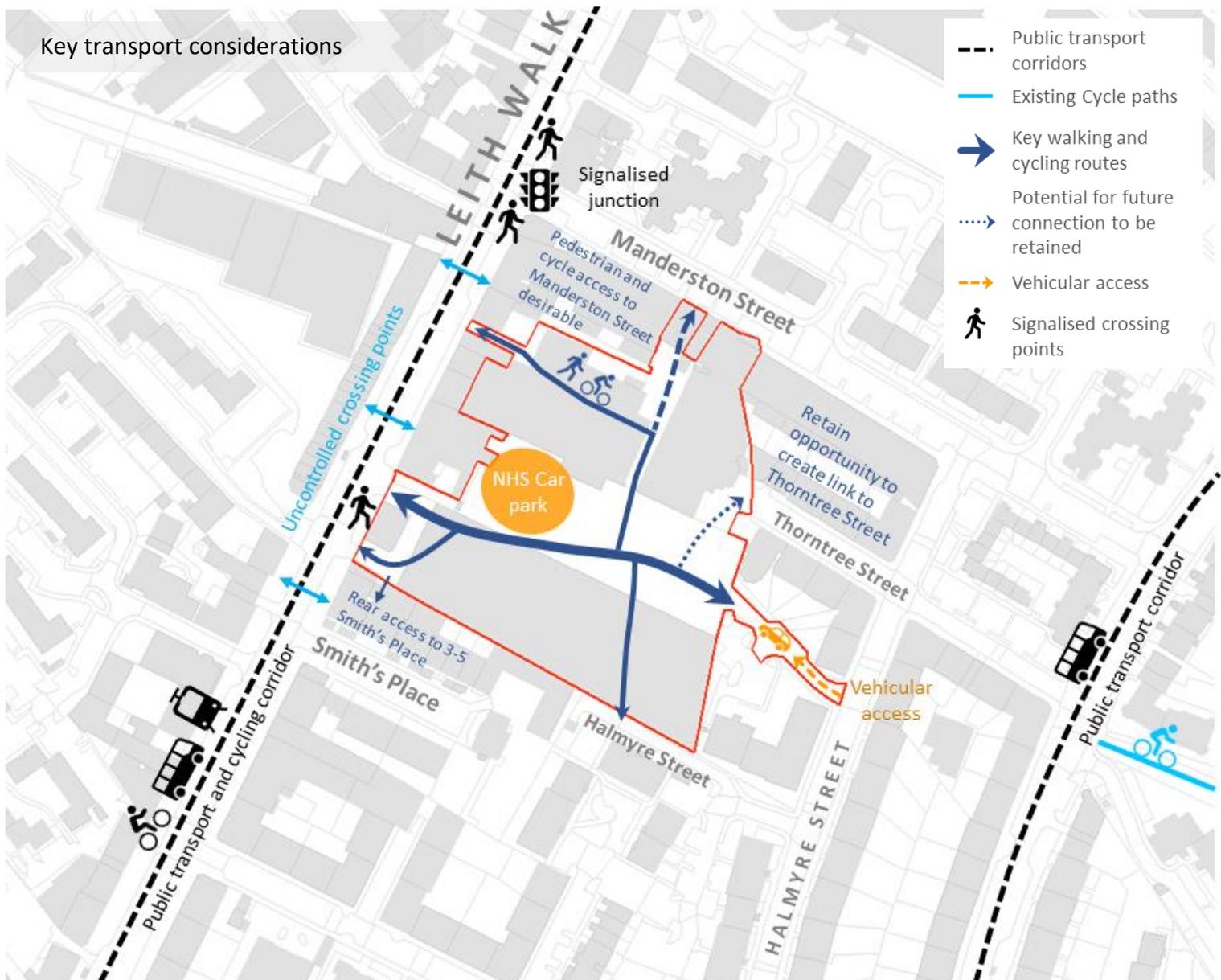
- The potential impact of the proposed development on the Edinburgh Tram needs to be taken into account.
- Proposed development should safeguard the opportunity to deliver a pedestrian and cycle route or other public space above the railway arches - and consider the potential impact of such a development on the proposal (for instance the potential for activity in this area to overlook new development)
- The area of the site is over a hectare therefore space for a range of businesses users must be provided. It is expected that each area of the site would provide some element of business use.

5.3 Movement

- A full Transport Assessment would be required for the site (the approach to be taken regarding the bingo hall is to be agreed with the council).
- A Quality Audit, as set out in Designing Streets, is likely to be required.
- Opportunities for pedestrian and cycle routes through the site and connecting to the wider network need to be maximised - including an east-west route connecting Leith Walk to Halmyre Street and north-south linkages including to Halmyre Street to the south. Outwith the site links to Pilrig Park, the Restalrig railway path and Leith Links are key connections.



- A cycle or pedestrian route through the railway arches is desirable (20 Manderston Street) – with vehicular access maintained for the businesses if required.
- The opportunity to provide a vehicular connection to Thorntree Street in the future is to be safeguarded.
- All new pedestrian/cycle routes are to be well lit, overlooked and fronted by building entrances to provide activity and natural security for these routes.
- Cycle storage should be internal to the buildings - located on the ground floor with good access to adjacent cycle paths.
- Part of the NHS car park is to be retained - this should include car club spaces, accessible parking and electric charging points.
- Other parking provision will aim for minimal general parking usage whilst complying with the Council's parking standards and will also include provision for cycle, electric and accessible parking.
- The main vehicular access to the site is to be taken off Halmyre Street.
- Once the tram extension has been built cyclists and vehicles will only be able to turn left in and out of the site from/to Leith Walk. There will be two uncontrolled pedestrian crossings along the frontage of the site and controlled pedestrian crossings in front of 165 Leith Walk and near Manderston Street. The junction between Manderston Street and Leith Walk will be signalised, which will allow right turns for vehicles.

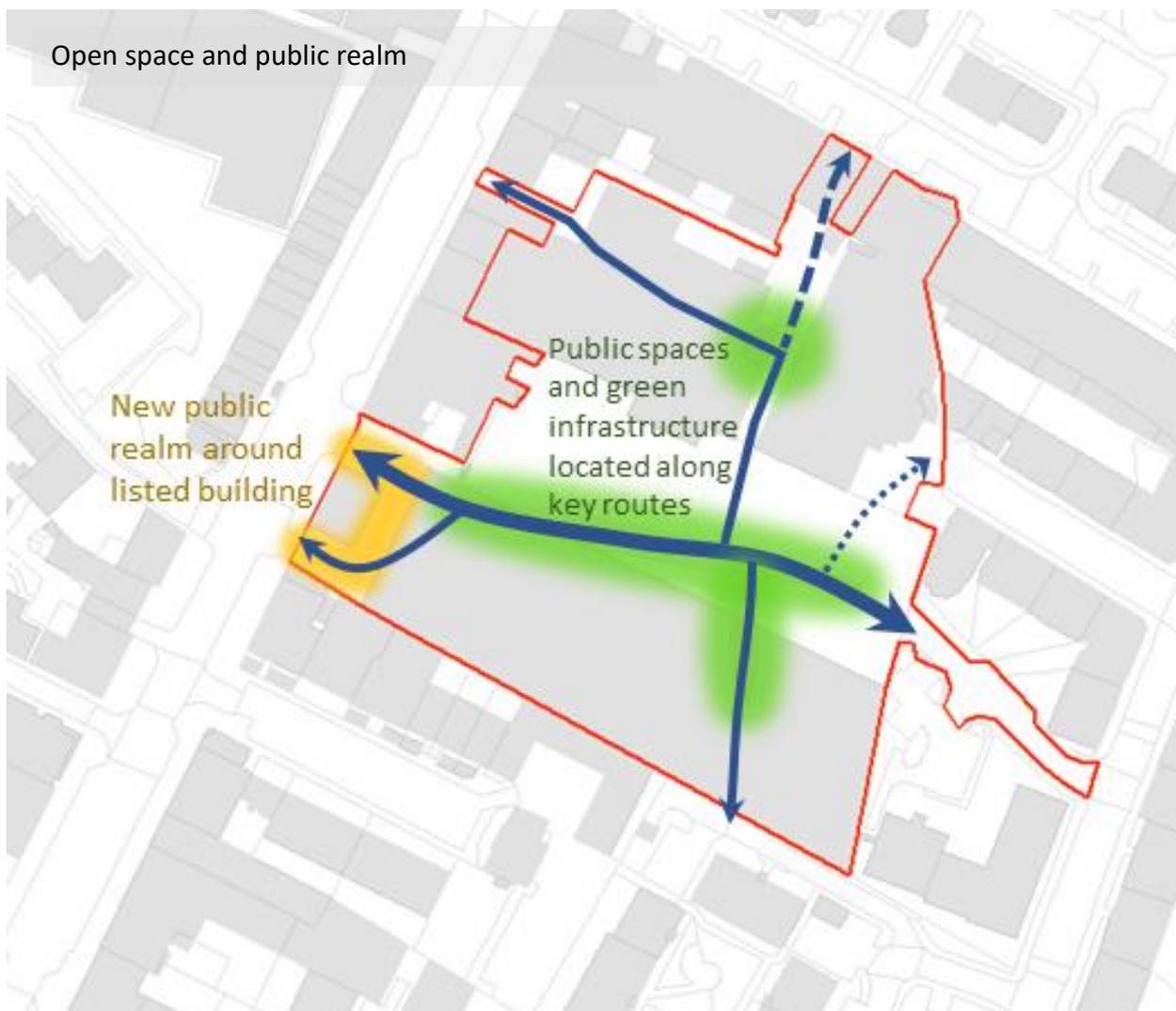


Indicative vehicular access on the site



5.4 Open space

- Well-designed, functional open space and public realm provision is required. The approach to public space provision and landscaping needs to be co-ordinated across the site and different land ownerships and located along key routes through the site.
- A principle open space of no less than 1,500 sq m is required to meet with the range of uses and activities envisaged by the place brief and to form the focal point of the new development and community life. This should comprise a mix of green and hard surface areas. Other areas of public, private and communal open space will also need to be provided in order to comply with LDP open space policy requirements.
- It is expected that new public realm will be provided around the listed building at 165 Leith Walk.
- The open spaces should incorporate green and blue infrastructure (including trees), and be designed to be multi-functional, safe, attractive, comfortable, usable spaces for people and should encourage biodiversity. Edinburgh's Open Space Strategy provides information on the range of uses which could be incorporated as part of new open spaces.
- Sustainable urban drainage proposals should be designed as an integral part of the landscape proposals for the site. It is important that water management requirements do not dominate what should be multi-functional and usable greenspaces.
- New public spaces should be capable of receiving and maintaining reasonable levels of sunlight.
- All public spaces and routes need to be well lit and overlooked.



5.5 Built form

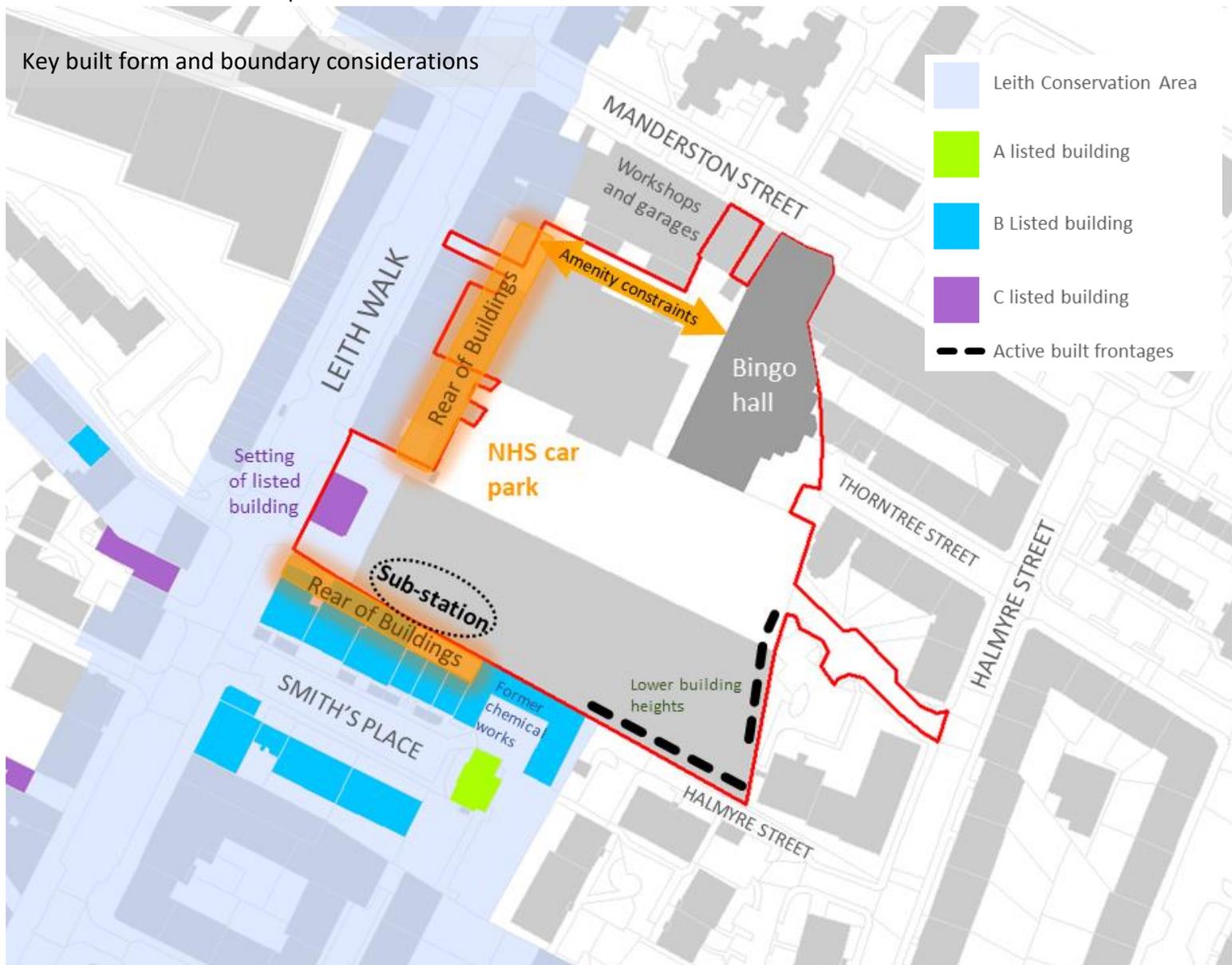
- The built form of the development needs to take into account the impact of proposed development on the character of the Leith Conservation Area.
- The 'C' listed building at 165a Leith Walk is to be retained and it is to remain as a free standing property - No development should adjoin this building in order to help establish an appropriate setting.
- New buildings on the site should not exceed the height of a traditional four storey tenement in Thorntree Street and a variety of roof heights and articulation is expected. The ridge height of the Bingo Hall does not create a precedent for height as its scale and massing is exceptional relative to the predominant urban grain of the local area. The site analysis work which supports the place brief provides a detailed analysis of the urban form of the area.
- It is expected that buildings to the south east of the site will be lower to reduce the impact of overshadowing on public open spaces.



- Proposals should consider the potential for either the retention **or** the redevelopment of the bingo hall and provide a response which would be appropriate in either scenario.
- A detailed building assessment of the bingo hall may be required as part of any future proposals for the building.
- The boundaries around the site need to be carefully addressed:
 - To the north the relationship to the workshops and bingo hall. In particular proximity issues between the workshops/garages and potential residential development need to be taken into account (see section 5.6 other planning considerations and constraints for more details).
 - To the east development should safeguard the potential for a pedestrian/cycle connection to Thorntree Street and provide an active frontage to the Bield Care Home car park.
 - To the far south east the development should provide an active frontage to the apartment blocks along Halmyre Street. The change in level between the site

and the street needs to be carefully managed and a pedestrian/cycle/vehicular access to Halmyre Street should be provided.

- To the south west the development needs to carefully address the rear of the listed buildings along Smith's Place. The relationship of buildings, routes and spaces to the proposed tram substation will need to be part of this consideration.
- To the west the development is fronted by the rear of the buildings along Leith Walk and includes the car park for the NHS buildings.
- The roovescape is an important element of the design as the site will be viewed from above from hills in the city. It is expected that a variety of roof heights will be provided on the site. The inclusion of some flat roofs would need to be carefully considered but if used they do offer the potential to incorporate blue or green roofs and solar panels.
- Daylight, overshadowing and privacy information will be required to demonstrate that the proposal would provide suitable amenity standards for future residents and safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties, particularly those in close proximity to the boundary.
- Cycle and bin stores need to be secure. Stores which are integral to the buildings are preferred.



5.6 Other Planning Considerations and Constraints

Flooding and drainage:

- A Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plan will be required to support any future planning application.
- The use of underground SuDS solutions is unlikely to be acceptable. The Council will not accept maintenance responsibility for underground water storage/attenuation.
- There is a potential culverted watercourse to the east of the site.

Amenity:

- The potential for anti-social behaviour in this area needs to be carefully considered in the design of proposals; entrances, routes and open spaces need to be well lit and overlooked.
- Ground condition investigations would be required including a contaminated land assessment.
- A Noise Impact Assessment may be required to consider the impact of existing commercial properties and road noise on proposed residential properties, and the impact of new commercial proposals on existing residences.
- The impact of the amenity of residential properties of odours from existing ventilation flues and any proposed ventilation flues need to be taken into account.
- A fumes survey will be required on the northern part of the site to consider, the potential impact of fumes generated from the vehicle repair workshops in the locality.

Energy and heat:

- The potential to incorporate renewable energy solutions, minimise renewable energy solutions, minimise energy demand and provide district heating should be investigated, taking into account potential impacts on air quality.



View across the site
looking east towards
Halmyre Street

6. Conclusion

The Leith Walk/Halmyre Street Place Brief has been prepared following extensive community and stakeholder engagement. It represents the first step towards redevelopment of the site with further opportunity for engagement and comment through the planning application stages. The principles in the brief will be used to guide future development proposals and will be a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.



Examples in Edinburgh of the type of places for people we would expect to be created as part of future development on the Leith Walk/Halmyre Street site



The site is essentially backland development within an urban block. Development could be incorporated into this block in a number of ways – the diagrams on the next page give an indication of one approach to the design of future development. The key principles to consider are:

- The need to create a coherent place
- Provision of new public spaces along routes through the site incorporating green and blue infrastructure
- Providing street frontages onto new routes and spaces.
- Heights across the site are constrained by the urban form of the area.

Indicative layouts – these layouts are provided as an indication of one approach to the layout of open space, routes and buildings on the site. With and without the redevelopment of the bingo hall and NHS car park sites.



Leith Walk/Halmyre Street Development Framework

