

**The Highland Council**  
**City of Inverness Area Committee**  
**2 December 2014**

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CIA/60/14

**Developing Inverness as a 'Coach Friendly' City**

**Report by the Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report invites Members to consider the Evaluation on the Operation of Ardross Street as a temporary pick-up/drop-off point for coaches with a view to making the arrangement permanent.

Therefore the recommendation is for the redesignation of part of Ardross Street as the long-term location for coach drop-off/pick-up in the City of Inverness.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report updates Members on progress from the decisions taken, at the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 11 February 2013, to designate the use of Ardross Street as a temporary coach drop-off / pick-up location and to also evaluate Ardross Street as a long term option for coach drop-off / pick-up in the City of Inverness.
- 1.2 As stated in previous reports there is an urgent need to create a long-term coach drop-off / pick-up point at a convenient location in the City Centre within suitable walking distance of all major attractions. This needs to be agreed and established in time for the 2015 season which begins at the end of March.

**2. Review of Temporary Solution**

- 2.1 In March 2013 Ardross Street was designated as the official temporary coach drop-off / pick up point for Inverness.
- 2.2 To facilitate this arrangement a Temporary Traffic Order (TTO) was introduced for the Northern Meeting Park side of Ardross Street which restricted its use to only Coaches between the hours of 1000 and 1700.
- 2.3 On-street signage was erected to reflect the restrictions imposed by the TTO and the car park ticket machines were covered during the entirety of this period.
- 2.4 During 2013 regular meetings were held with residents and businesses of Ardross Street to discuss their concerns resulting from the implementation of the TTO. Action points taken from these meetings resulted in a revision of the TTO in April 2014 to stipulate that coaches were strictly prohibited overnight on Ardross Street between the hours of 1700 and 1000. This change to the TTO

was reflected in updated on-street signage.

2.5 There were some other concerns raised by the Stakeholders during the period of the TTO which could not be resolved. These included:

- Lack of enforcement of Traffic Order by Council and Police with coaches regularly parking overnight with no punitive action being taken. Cars were also noted to be parking during coach only periods with no penalty imposed.
- Coaches waiting for long periods with engines running causing a disturbance for the neighbouring businesses and causing pollution.
- Ardross Street was too long a walk to and from the City Centre for some older or infirm passengers.

2.6 The Temporary Traffic Order ended on 31 October 2014 automatically reinstating the Permanent Traffic Order returning Ardross Street to car parking only. The coach signage has since been covered and the bags removed from the car parking ticket machines.

2.7 There is now no formal drop-off / pick-up location for coaches in Inverness.

### **3. Alternative Coach drop-off / pick-up Locations**

3.1 A Working Group including Officers from The Highland Council and representatives from the Confederation of Passenger Transport and Local Coach Operators was formed earlier this year to identify alternative locations for a coach drop-off / pick-up area as near as possible to Inverness City Centre. Parameters that were considered to be critical and therefore influenced the discussions included:

- Distance from Coach drop-off / pick-up to the City Centre (Victorian Market)
- Number of Coach bays available. On cruise liner days, when there are more tours than normal visiting Inverness, more than 10 coach bays must be available.
- Car parking that would be displaced by Coaches if solution was adopted.

3.2 The baseline that the group worked from was Ardross Street (**Appendix A**) which is 568 metres from the City Centre and has space for 12 coaches whilst displacing 35 car park spaces.

3.3 The following locations were identified as potential alternatives to Ardross Street:

**Cathedral Car Park (Appendix B).** The Cathedral Car Park is 650m from the City Centre. The location could accommodate 9 coach bays by removing 72 car parking spaces.

*Conclusion: Further away from City Centre with less coaches accommodated and more car parking spaces removed makes this an unattractive alternative to Ardross Street.*

**Church Street (Appendix C).** Church Street is 195m from the City Centre. The location could accommodate a maximum of 5 coaches by removing 30 car parking spaces.

*Conclusion: Although closer to the City Centre this location is unsuitable due to fewer coach spaces and the necessity to remove some city centre car parking spaces which are at a premium.*

**Bank Street (Appendix D).** Bank Street is 146m from the City Centre. The location could accommodate a maximum of 4 coaches by removing 0 car parking spaces.

*Conclusion: Too few coaches accommodated by this solution.*

**Morrisons Car Park (Appendix E).** Morrisons Car Park is 574m from the City Centre. The location could accommodate a maximum of 10 coaches by removing an unknown number of car parking spaces.

*Conclusion: This Car Park is privately owned and would come at a considerable cost to implement this solution. No advantage over Ardross Street as equidistant to the City Centre.*

For ease of reference a map of all locations is attached at **Appendix F.**

3.4 This group could find no suitable alternative solution for a designated coach drop-off / pick-up area, in or around the City Centre, to that which is offered by Ardross Street.

#### **4. Proposal for Ardross Street**

4.1 Ardross Street as the long-term location for an Inverness City coach drop-off / pick-up has support from across the Coach and Transport industry.

4.2 *“As the trade association for the bus and coach industry, the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK supports Highland Council’s proposals for coach parking to remain on Ardross Street as part of Inverness’ bid to become a ‘coach friendly’ location. Passengers benefit from having a central fixed known point of return with good signage to and from the city centre / points of interest”*  
– **Jeremy Tinsley, General Manager, Confederation of Passenger Transport**

*“Having used the drop off pick up and parking point at Ardross St I have found it very useful. On cruise days it is vital to ensure the smooth running of passengers from the ship to spend time in the city” – Kevin Mayne, Owner of Maynes Coaches*

*“Morrison Tours has found the Ardross Street arrangements to be a success in terms of guaranteed coach parking and easily identifiable landmark for the passengers (next to cathedral). These arrangements work for our numerous coaches that we have visit Inverness each cruise season” – Claire Risk, Senior Tour Co-ordinator, Morrisons Tours*

*“From our own experience we would strongly advise continuing to use Ardross Street in 2015. There is no other suitable area close to the city centre which can allow parking, and cater for drop-offs / pickups. It is ideal for touring coaches, and gives particularly good access for coaches servicing the cruise liners coming into Invergordon, by accessing the city from Kessock Bridge to Friars Bridge, along Kenneth Street and on into Ardross Street. This keeps coaches away from Chapel Street, Academy Street and avoids congestion in the city centre. On leaving Ardross Street along the reverse route, it gives a quick exit from the city. We would, therefore, strongly support the continued use of Ardross Street” – Norman Gollan, General Manager, D&E Coaches*

4.3 It is proposed to introduce a permanent Traffic Order, commencing April 2015, which will cover the Northern Meeting Park side of Ardross Street. The order will include provisions for:

- Removal of the pay and display bays along the full length of Ardross Street (Northern Meeting Park side only).
- Change of use of the area to allow coaches drop-off / pick-up during the hours of 1000 and 1700 only. Coaches will be strictly prohibited at all other times.

4.4 In order to facilitate the smooth running of this location as the long-term solution it is understood that we will need to address the following concerns raised at Stakeholder meetings:

- Lack of enforcement of Traffic Order by Council and Police with coaches regularly parking overnight with no punitive action being taken. Cars were also noted to be parking during coach only periods with no penalty imposed.
- Coaches waiting for long periods with engines running causing a disturbance for the neighbouring businesses and causing pollution.

## **5. Enforcement**

5.1 We retain a traffic enforcement resource through the Traffic Warden service however in recognition of the importance of coaches to the economy of the City

it is proposed that a Coach Ambassador be employed between April and October 2015, on a trial basis, to act primarily as a liaison between the residents / businesses on Ardross Street and the Coach Operators ensuring that any concerns are addressed timeously and effectively.

- 5.2 Whilst ensuring the smooth operation of the coach facility will be the Ambassador's primary concern, they will also be expected to welcome tourists to the City, provide directions to amenities, answer questions the visitor's may have and encourage our guests to visit the many points of interest in the City Centre. It is proposed that a review will take place in October 2015 to evaluate the effectiveness of this new role with a view to continuing it for future seasons.
- 5.3 It is proposed that this pilot be funded initially by the Inverness Common Good Fund and a fully costed application will be put forward to the Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-committee in due course. It is hoped to obtain partner support if the pilot project is successful.
- 5.4 Consultation will be undertaken before the Traffic Order is implemented and it is proposed that a programme of regular meetings be established bringing all stakeholders together to discuss and resolve issues.

## **6. Signage and Publicity**

- 6.1 Signage will be required on all main trunk routes in to Inverness and within the City indicating the way to the drop-off / pick-up area. These would be priced and ordered once the location has been approved.
- 6.2 The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) will arrange for the approved location to be advertised in their industry recognised publications and will work with us towards our goal of Inverness becoming a "Coach Friendly" City.
- 6.3 The Highland Council, BID and the transport industry websites will publicise details of the arrangements.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Resource implications**

The cost of implementing the proposal will be signage costs which will be met from current budgets.

Staff Costs relating to the Coach Ambassador role will be detailed to the Common Good Fund Sub-committee.

### **7.2 There are no legal implications**

### **7.3 Equality implications**

Any provision sanctioned by the Council will meet with the terms of the Councils Equalities Policy

7.4 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

7.5 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

7.6 There are no rural implications arising from this report.

## **8. City/Highland Context**

8.1 Inverness is seen as a hub for tourists. By improving the City's status as a place to visit, we will attract more coach operators to the Highland Capital and so also bring significant benefit to adjacent attractions such as Loch Ness and Culloden. The publicity of the City achieving 'Coach Friendly' status will also help the wider Highland economy.

8.2 The consequences of not implementing the Ardross Street solution are far reaching.

8.3 The coach operators travelling to Inverness will have no other choice but to use loading bays and in some cases bus stops thereby causing major disruption to City Centre traffic flows.

8.4 No signage or information will be available to direct coach operators to use the designated area within the City Centre as a pick-up and drop-off point because there won't be one.

8.5 There is a real danger that without a suitable facility coach operators will be forced to bypass Inverness as a tourist destination and take their business elsewhere.

## **9. Next Steps**

9.1 In order to implement the Ardross Street proposal in time for the 2015 summer tourist season the following will need to be achieved.

- Agreement from the City of Inverness Area Committee that the proposal for Ardross Street be implemented;
- A permanent Traffic Order created for Ardross Street for change of use from pay and display parking to coach drop-off / pick-up;
- Signage to be installed across the road network adjacent to the City at suitable and strategic locations;
- Publicity to be produced both electronically and on paper and widely distributed to promote the use of Ardross Street as the Inverness City coach drop-off / pick-up location; and
- A Coach Ambassador to be recruited subject to the approval of an application for funding to the Common Good Fund Grant Subcommittee.

- 9.2 Throughout the whole process the Central Ward Members will be kept appraised.
- 9.3 By making the recommended change now, the City of Inverness will have a sustainable facility which will be a benefit to tourists, coach operators and the businesses in the centre of Inverness.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is invited to:-

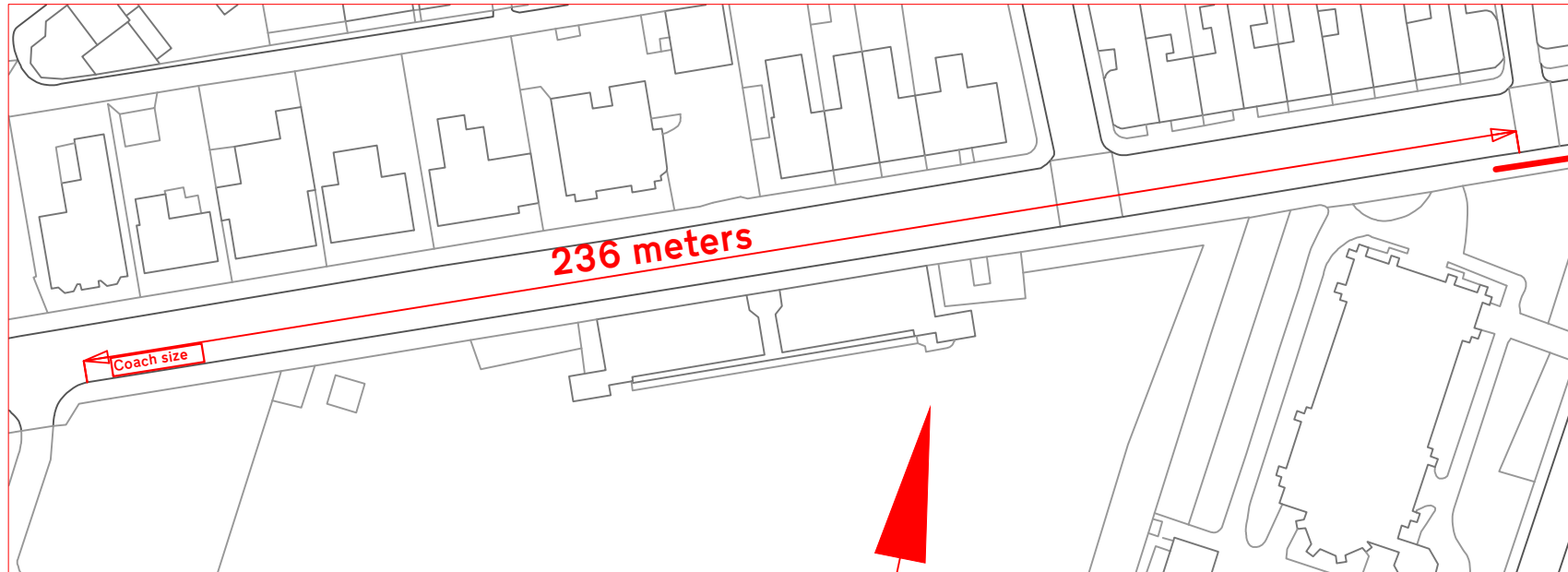
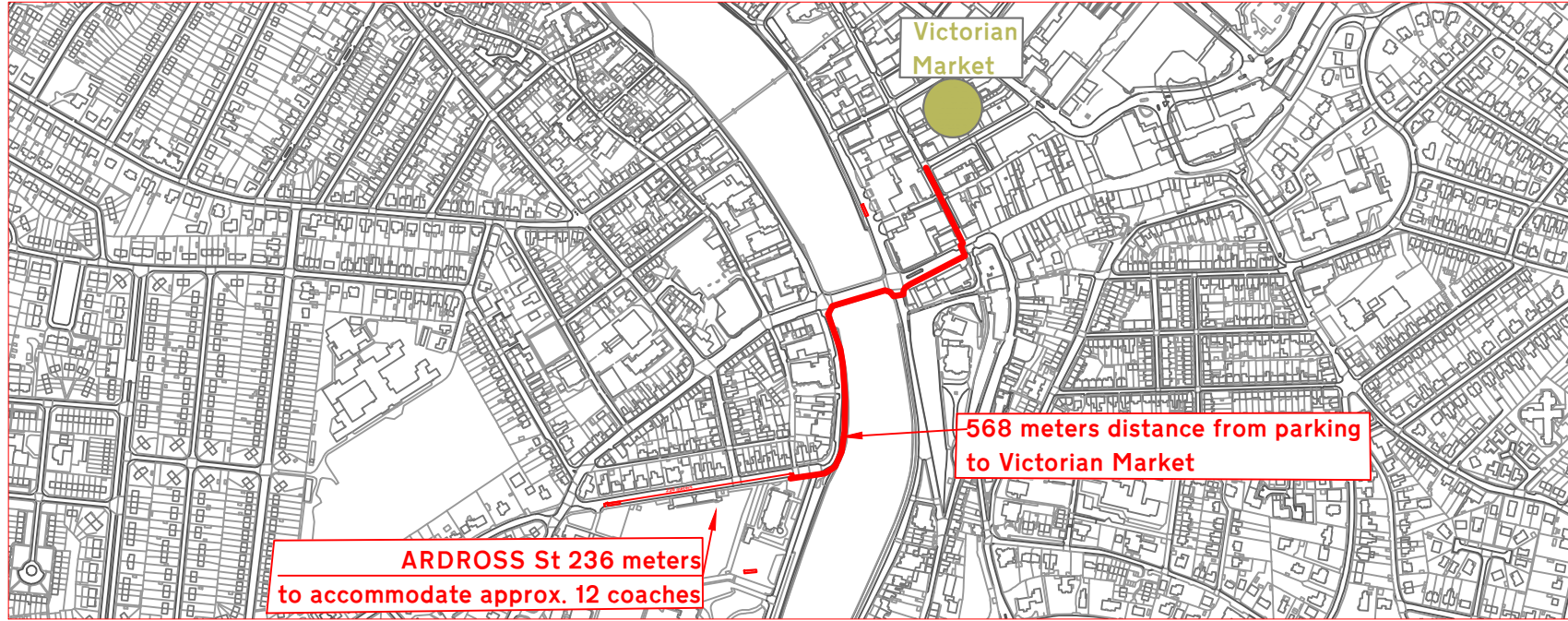
- i. Approve Ardross Street as the permanent Coach drop-off / pick-up solution for Inverness;
- ii. Approve the promotion of a permanent Traffic Order for Ardross Street;
- iii. Note that signage will be installed across the road network adjacent to the City;
- iv. Note that publicity will be produced promoting the use of Ardross Street as the Inverness City coach drop-off / pick-up location; and
- v. Note that an application will be made to the Common Good Fund Grant Sub-committee to fund the recruitment of a Coach Ambassador

Designation: Director Community Services

Author: Neil Young, Transport Officer  
David Haas, Inverness City Manager

Date: 18 November 2014

Background papers: None



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Project  
**COACH\_PARKING  
 OPTION\_1  
 ARDROSS STREET  
 INVERNESS**

Title  
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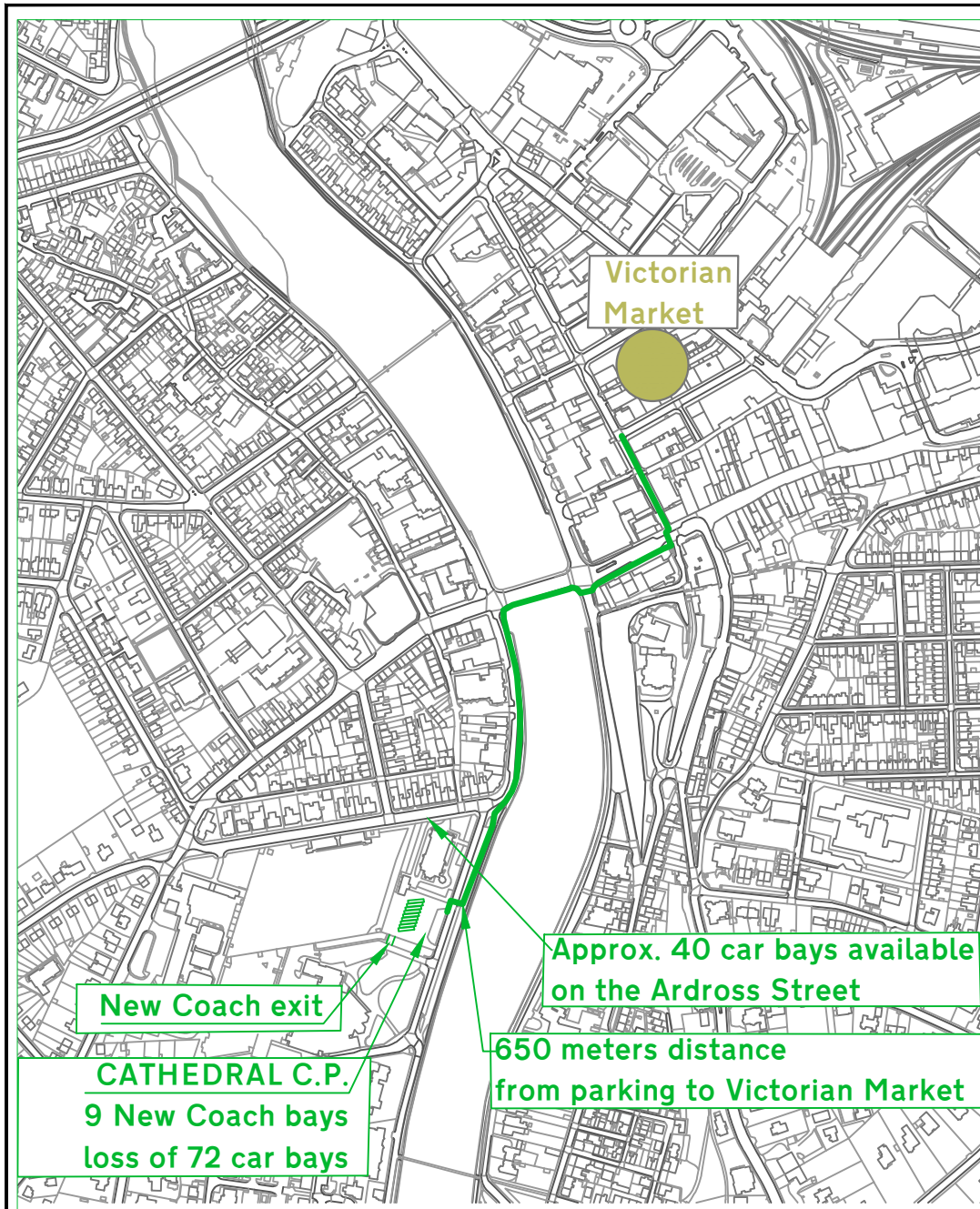
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Project  
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 OPTIONS\_2  
 CATHEDRAL\_CAR  
 PARK\_INVERNESS**

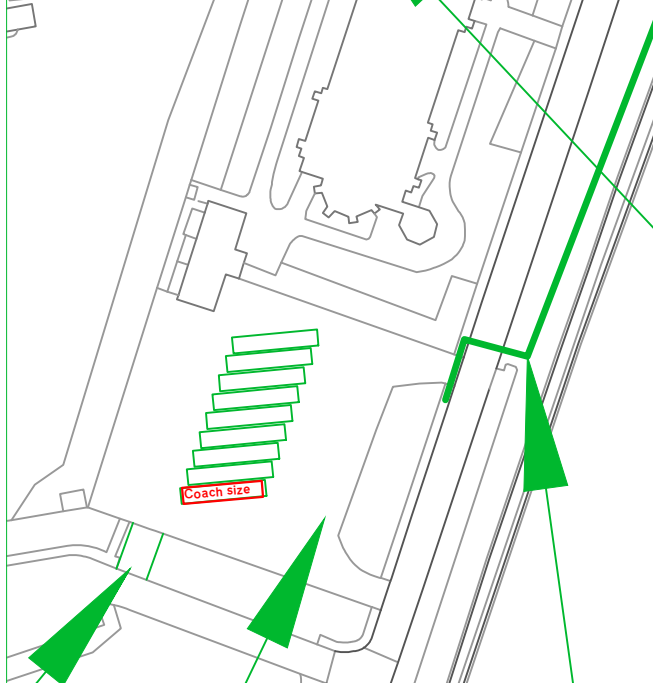
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**Swept Path Analysis**  
 No modification of layout of the C.C.P. required



CHURCH St 49 and 37 meters to accommodate approx. 3 and 2 coaches

195 meters distance from parking to Victorian Market

Victorian Market



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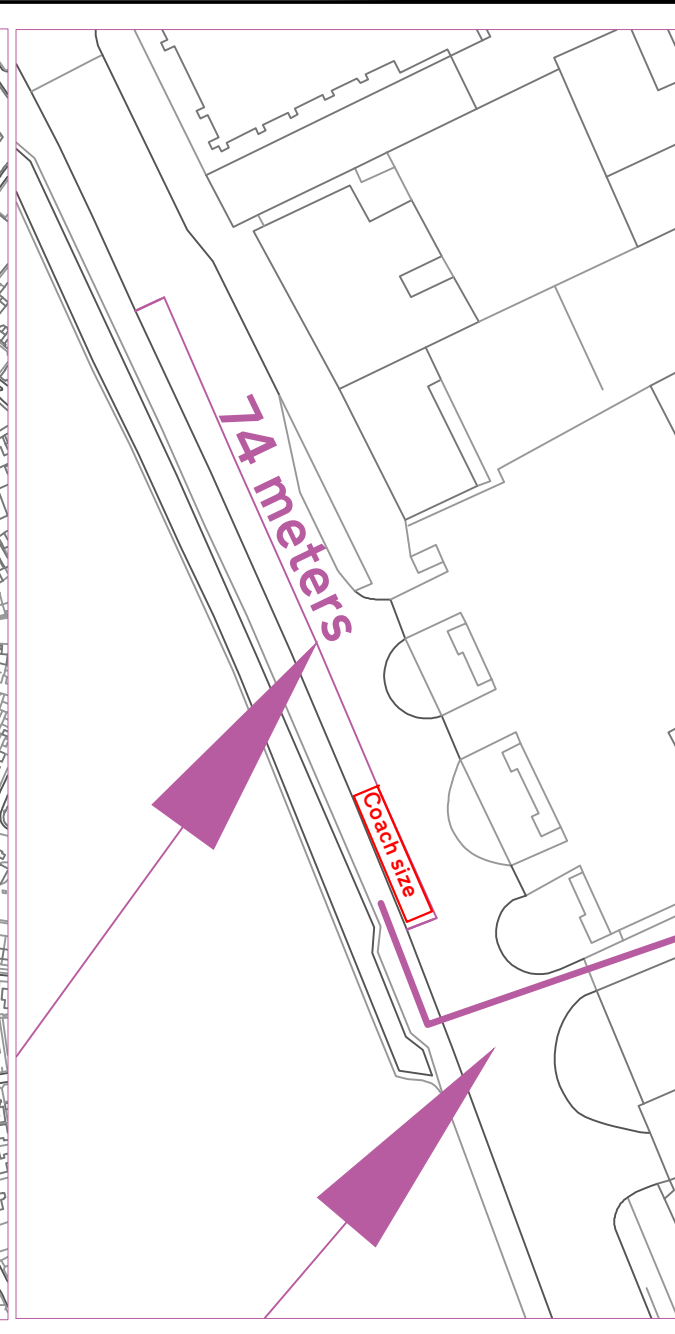
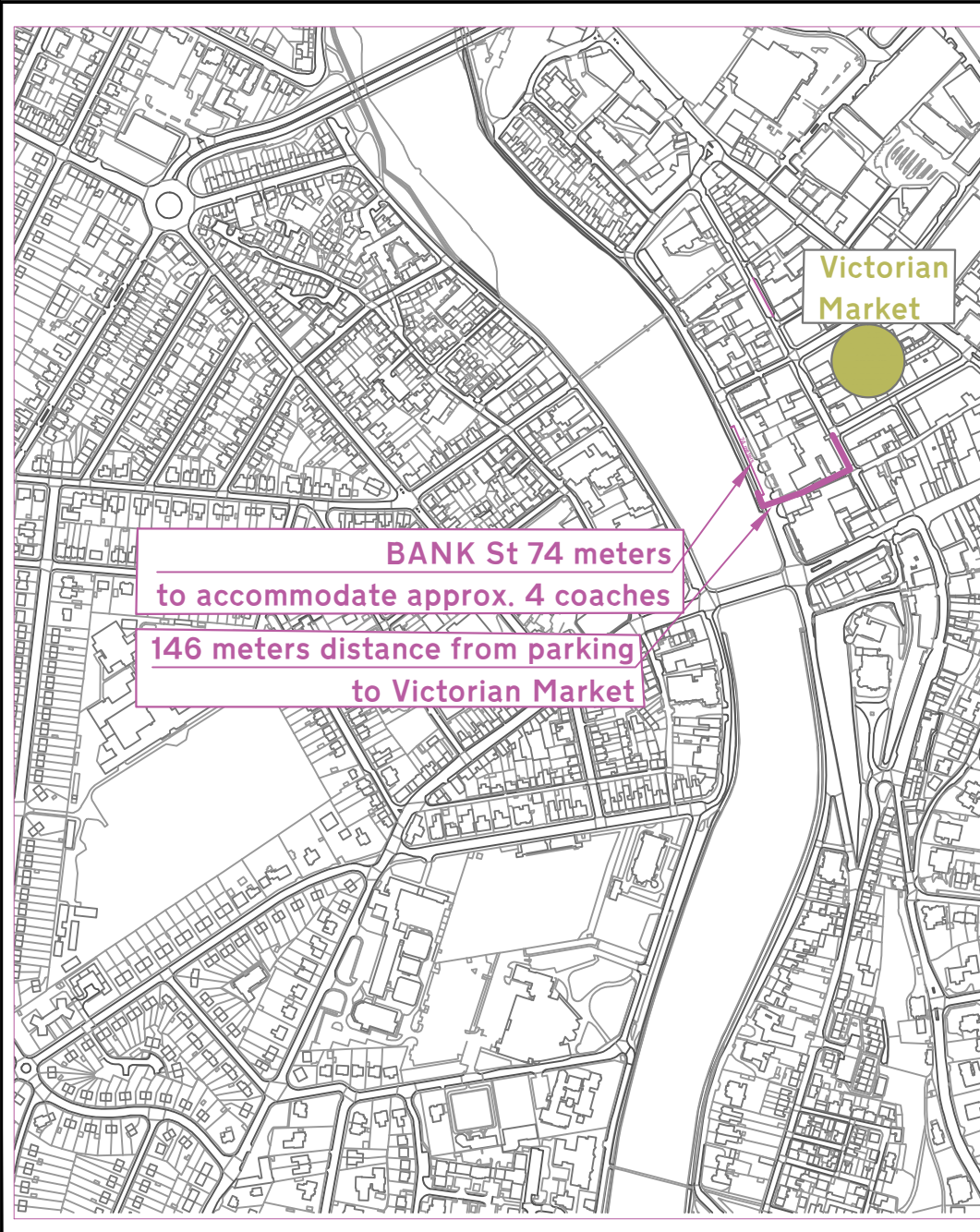
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Project  
COACH\_PARKING  
OPTION\_5  
CHURCH\_STREET  
INVERNESS

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Project  
**COACH\_PARKING  
 OPTION\_3  
 BANK STREET  
 INVERNESS**

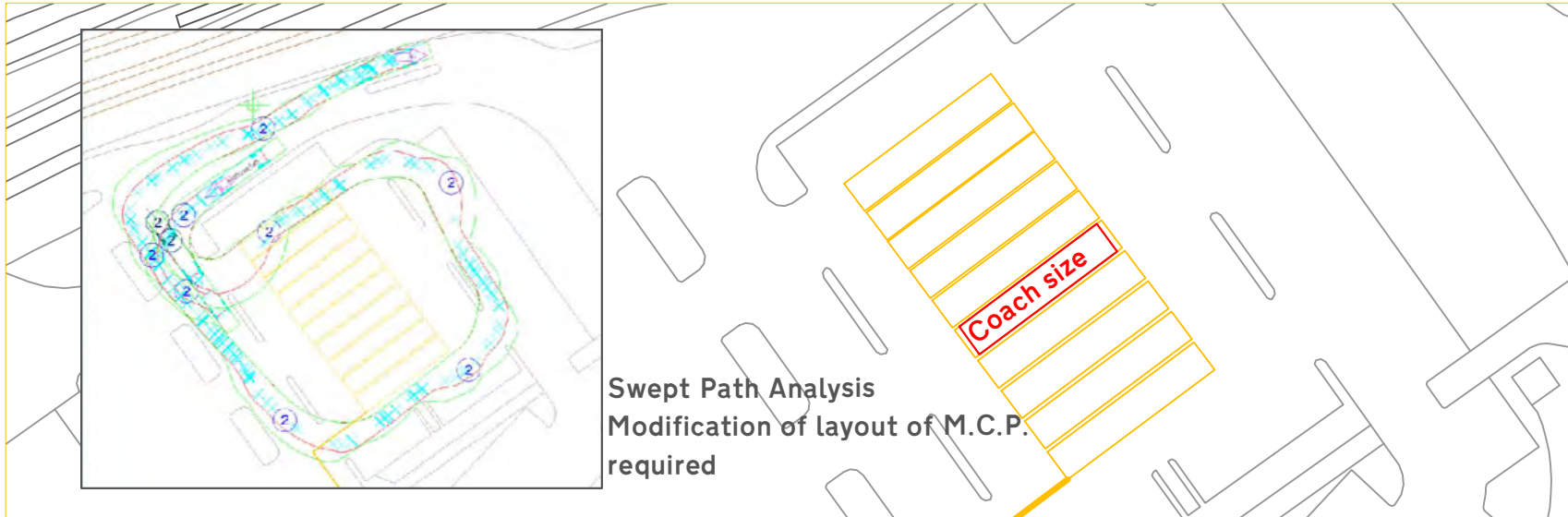
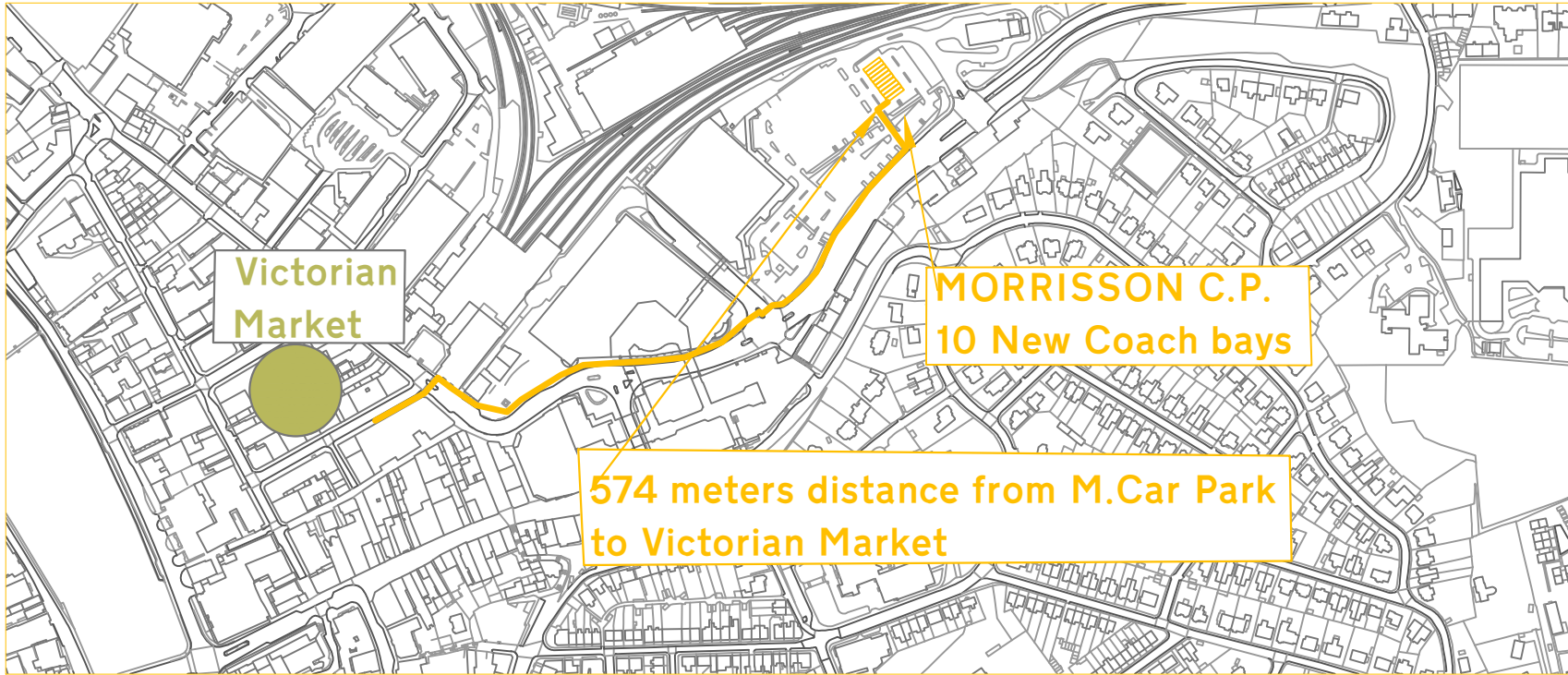
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Swept Path Analysis  
Modification of layout of M.C.P.  
required

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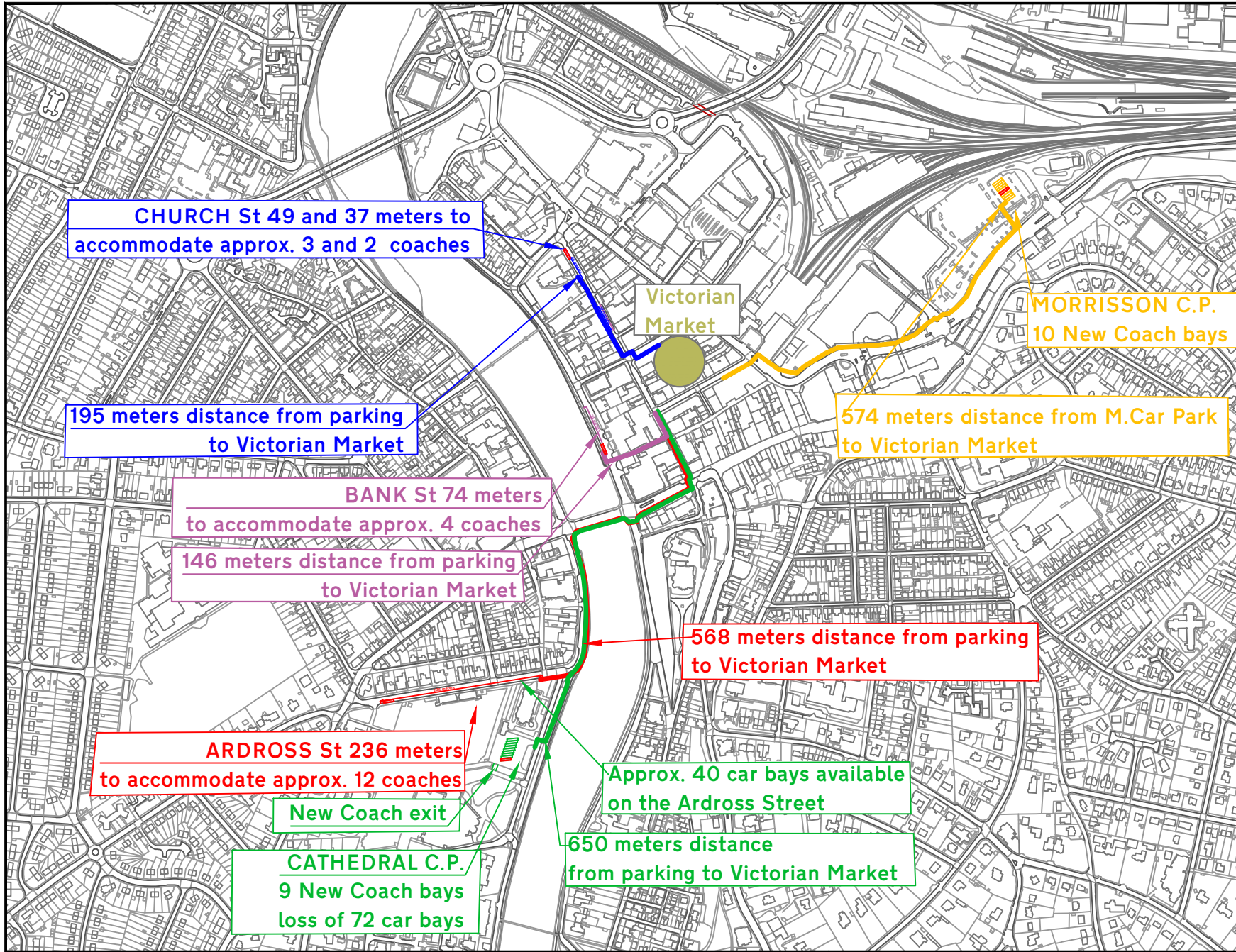
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Project  
**COACH\_PARKING  
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MORRISSON\_C.P.  
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Project  
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