

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>CIA/3/19</b>

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** City of Inverness Area

**Date:** 21 February 2019

**Report Title:** Accessing Inverness – Next Steps

**Report By:** Hitrans Partnership Director and Director of Development & Infrastructure

### **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 Accessing Inverness is a HITRANS-led project in partnership with The Highland Council to develop outline design proposals for improving walking and cycle routes linking Inverness Railway Station to other parts of the city centre. This design work has been 100% funded by the Scottish Government/Transport Scotland through Sustrans' Community Links Programme. This report summarises progress to date including details of a recent 9-week public consultation inviting feedback on outline designs for streets and spaces surrounding the station. The consultation attracted significant levels of interest and Committee Members will be updated on the outcome as soon as respondents' comments have been processed. Although funding is not yet in place to deliver public realm improvements in this part of the city centre, the project places the Council in a strong position to apply for available grants for active travel infrastructure. The Committee is invited to agree that consultation feedback should inform the preparation of a further funding bid to Sustrans Scotland to progress the project to detailed design stage. The Committee is also asked to agree that the Council takes over the management of the project following the successful completion of HITRANS' work on this first phase.

### **2 Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the contents of this report, including the background to the Accessing Inverness project, community and stakeholder engagement, and consultation process;
- ii. Note that the outcome of the public consultation that closed on 1 February 2019 will be reported to Committee Members at the earliest opportunity;
- iii. Agree that this feedback should inform the preparation of a further bid to Sustrans Scotland for 100% funding to progress to detail design, which will include further public and stakeholder consultation, after the launch of the next funding round in mid-March.

- iv. Agree that the Council takes over the management of the Accessing Inverness project going forward, while continuing to work in partnership with key stakeholders including HITRANS; and
- v. Agree that, subject to a positive response from the recent public consultation, Council officials should scope opportunities for third party funding to enable future funding bids for project delivery and construction.

### **3. Project background and development**

- 3.1 In 2017 HITRANS, in partnership with The Highland Council, applied for Sustrans Scotland funding to look at outline design, feasibility and consultation on improvements to active travel corridors leading to all three entrances to Inverness Railway Station. This project, called Accessing Inverness, is separate from Abellio ScotRail's £6M upgrade to Inverness Railway Station but is intended to complement and add value to that project.
- 3.2 Although funding is not yet in place to deliver public realm improvements in this part of the city centre, Accessing Inverness enables the Council to apply for future grants to improve active travel infrastructure.
- 3.3 HITRANS appointed Manchester-based Civic Engineers to complete outline design and feasibility work, advised by a cross-Service group of officers from Development Plans, Transport Planning and Community Services. This collaborative approach ensured that active travel options were clearly analysed and aligned with priorities identified in the City Centre Development Brief, while complementing proposals put forward in the Council's successful £6.5M funding bid to Community Links PLUS for the Inverness City Active Travel Network.
- 3.4 The following key stakeholders were consulted during the design process:
  - Inverness BID members (via one BID breakfast) and Inverness BID Manager
  - Active Travel stakeholders: 2 workshops
  - Representatives of local access groups (including RNIB): 2 workshops
  - Public transport operators (buses): 2 workshops
  - 'Making Inverness Streets Ahead' group, led by RNIB
  - Abellio Scotrail - to ensure synergy with Inverness station upgrade.
- 3.5 In February 2018, HITRANS funded a study trip to Altrincham, Greater Manchester, to observe similar active travel improvements in the context of a busy town centre with a comparable population, a transport interchange (bus/rail/tram), a Victorian Market and a main arterial route separating the transport interchange from the town centre shopping area, which carries similar traffic volumes to Academy Street. Representatives from HITRANS, the Council, Inverness BID, and Police Scotland met local Council and business representatives and spent time observing how, in practice, courtesy crossings, narrower road layouts and increased pedestrian capacity have contributed to revitalising the town centre.
- 3.6 In May 2018, Members of this Committee attended a briefing on the Accessing Inverness project that presented emerging proposals for public consultation.

### **4. Public Consultation**

- 4.1 The Accessing Inverness consultation was launched on 30 November 2018 with a public drop-in exhibition at the Victorian Market attended by approximately 150 people. **Appendix 1** presents design options and proposals put forward. **Appendix 2** lists the six consultation questions.

- 4.2 The online consultation ran for eight weeks from 6 December 2018 to 1 February 2019 during which the document was available to view and comment on through the Council's consultation portal [consult.highland.gov.uk](https://consult.highland.gov.uk). Feedback was invited on outline designs for three key areas:
- Academy Street;
  - Farraline Park, and the link between Rose Street and the Railway Station entrance;
  - Falcon Square and Crown Road junction.
- 4.3 A second public exhibition took place at Eastgate Shopping Centre on 11 January where Council and HITRANS representatives were available to answer questions on proposed layouts and options. It is estimated that roughly 250 people viewed this exhibition. An 'on the day' poll was used to gather immediate feedback on the outline designs, in recognition that not everyone would register for the online consultation. On the whole feedback on the day was very supportive of the scheme proposals. Members of the public were either given the option to take a leaflet away with consultation responses, of which over 150 were distributed. The second option was sticky dots, which members of the public could place on 4 key questions to gather support for the full scheme, or the various options at Academy Street, Falcon Square and Strothers Lane areas. **Appendix 3** presents results of the "on the day poll".
- 4.4 The consultation was widely publicised in advance and throughout the consultation process by:
- Emails to over 330 stakeholders, agencies and businesses including disability groups, active travel groups, Community Councils, Inverness BID, the Inverness Design Review Panel, and individuals registered on the consultation portal who have expressed an interest in the Inner Moray Firth Area;
  - A series of promoted targeted post on social media, and press releases.
- 4.5 The promoted Facebook post reached 13,275 users. Over 2000 users actively engaged with the post which also attracted 60 "likes".
- 4.6 More than 180 formal comments were received from 51 respondents listed in **Appendix 4**. Although it is not possible to calculate the exact number of people who accessed the consultation webpages, Google Analytics shows they were visited by approximately 1000 users<sup>1</sup>.

## 5 Next steps

- 5.1 HITRANS and Council officers will review and summarise all consultation feedback for presentation to Committee Members at the earliest opportunity, together with the joint HITRANS/Council recommended response.
- 5.2 Subject to Committee approval, consultation feedback will inform a Council bid to Sustrans Scotland's Community Links programme for 100% funding to progress the project to detail design stage.

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<sup>1</sup> users are counted as the number of individual internet browser sessions accessing the consultation online. An individual will be counted more than once if using more than one device or browser.

5.3 It is anticipated that, in going forward, a cross- Service project team will be established to oversee the project involving officers from Development Plans, Transport Planning and Community Services.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Resource**

Funding for the stage 1, outline design, feasibility and consultation has been funded 100% by Sustrans Community Links, in partnership with HITRANS and Highland council.

Funding for the next phase, stage 2 – detailed design and consultation, could be applied for. Sustrans Scotland 100% fund this design stream.

Should the scheme progress to stage 3 – construction, funding could be applied for via Sustrans Scotland for 50% of total project costs. Match funding options would be explored while developing stage 2 materials.

### **6.2 Legal and Risk**

There are no known direct implications with respect to these issues arising from this report.

### **6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)**

Initial stakeholder consultation has already been undertaken with disabled people's groups. Addressing road safety concerns through the widening of the pavement and reducing traffic speeds will be a major positive outcome for vulnerable road users and the wider community. Significant new and enhanced pedestrian infrastructure is proposed. Enhancing infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists through this project will be a major positive outcome.

### **6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever**

The enhancement of Active Travel around Academy Streets fits into the overall network of active travel routes across Inverness. The objective is to achieve more than 10% of every day journeys across Inverness by bicycle by 2020. Through this project walking and cycling journeys will be encouraged even more, as will links with public transport, if it progresses to be built.

### **6.5 Gaelic**

The Council will ensure that its dual language obligations are met in progressing the Accessing Inverness project – e.g. all new signage will follow the dual-language format set out in the Wayfinding Strategy for Inverness City Centre.

Designation                      HITRANS Partnership Director / Director of Development & Infrastructure [Joint report]

Date:                                13 February 2019

Author:                             Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, HITRANS

Nicole Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment

Background Papers: NONE



# Accessing Inverness





# Have your say on making streets and spaces surrounding the Railway Station more attractive for:



Moving



Create low speed vehicle conditions for vulnerable pedestrians to confidently occupy and navigate the streets and spaces.



Amenity



Incorporate green infrastructure into the fabric of the city centre streets, improving amenity, biodiversity & climate resilience.



Cycling



Provide a low vehicle speed environment for cyclists to positively choose to access the city centre by bike.

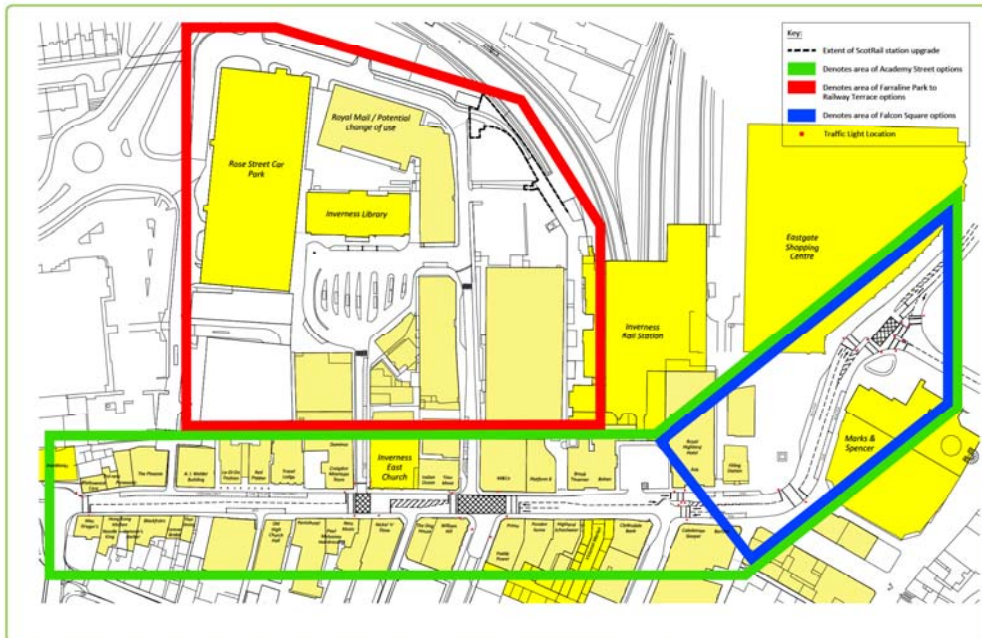


Street Activity



Allow & encourage businesses to engage with the street, creating interest, activity and economic vitality.

## Study Areas



## Existing Streetscape





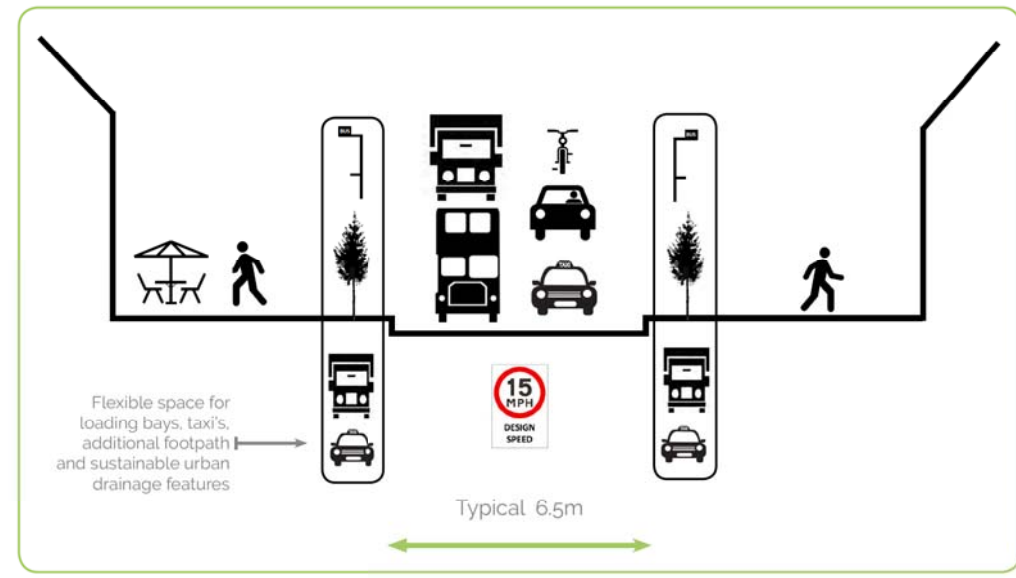
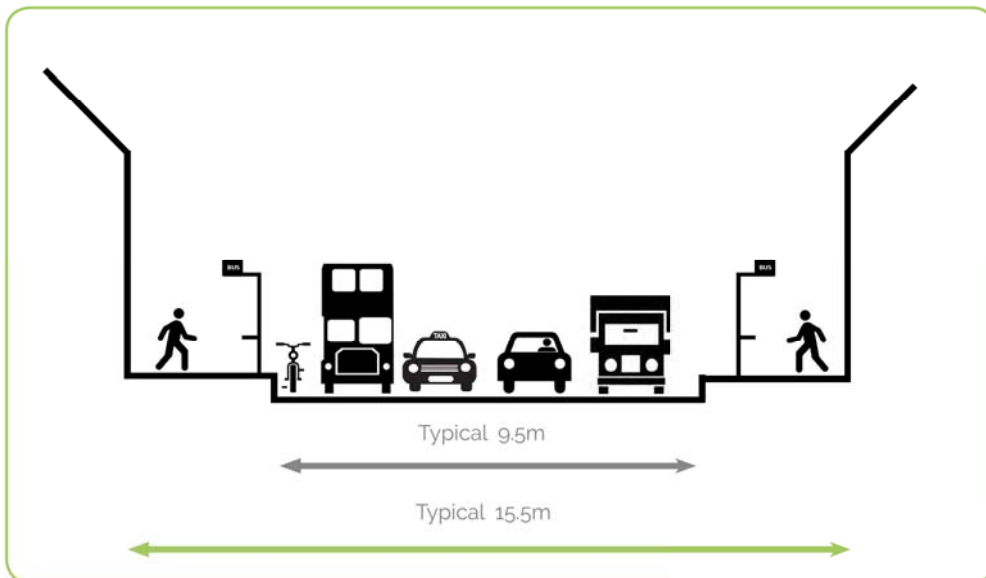
# Have your say on making Academy Street a great place to visit, live and work



Existing Streetscape



Proposed Streetscape





# Have your say on making Academy Street a great place to visit, live and work

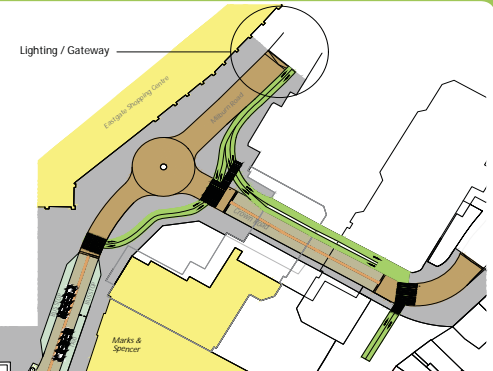
Academy Street is one of the most important streets in the city centre. It has potential to become a more attractive street by balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.

## Proposed Streetscape (Option 1): Courtesy Crossings



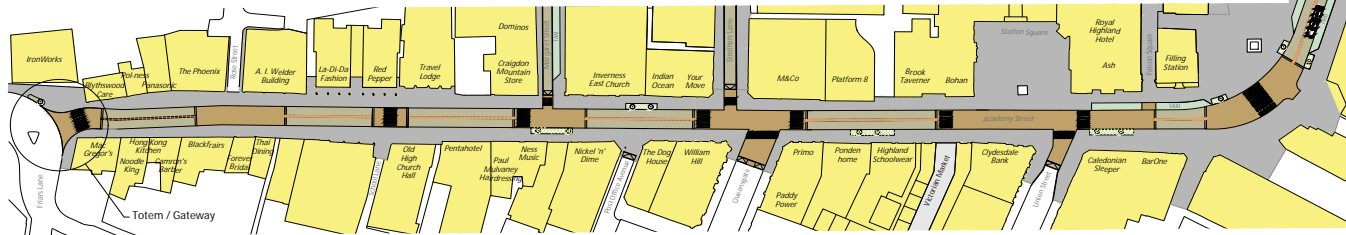
Gateway Examples

- Nine crossing points along length of Academy Street.
- No formal traffic controls or signals. This will remove the vehicle 'dash' to green lights.
- Raised crossing points to emphasis pedestrian priority.
- Narrower traffic lanes and slower vehicle speeds.
- Minimal use of road lines and signs that clutter up the streetscape.
- Cyclists move with flow of traffic.
- Creates space where vehicles and pedestrians are very aware of each others' movements. Commonly used throughout the UK.



**Key:**

	Protected Pavement
	Junction Paving
	Coloured Asphalt
	Green infrastructure trees / rain gardens
	Reserved pick up / drop off only
	Dedicated 2m Cycle Lane



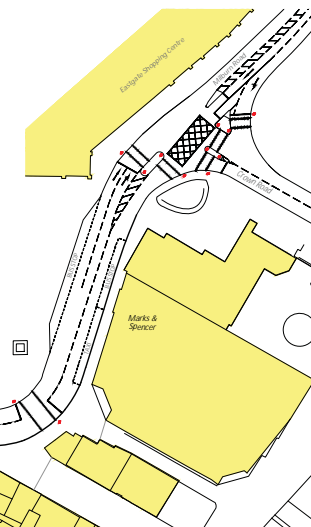
## Existing Streetscape



Existing Gateways

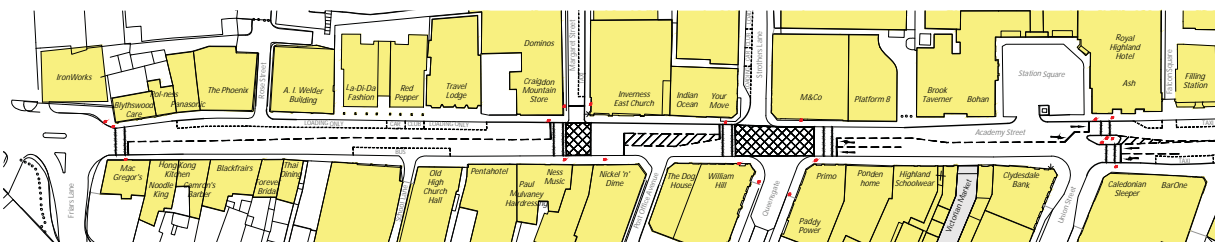
Academy Street is currently designed to prioritise motor vehicle access and movement, bringing with it generous lane widths, queuing and turning lane capacity, along with signal control junctions.

This existing arrangement allows motor vehicles to dominate the street, requiring pedestrians to move along constrained pavements and cross wide traffic lanes to get from one side of the street to the other, with no room made available for trees or soft planting.



**Key:**

	Traffic Light Location
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# Have your say on making Academy Street a great place to visit, live and work

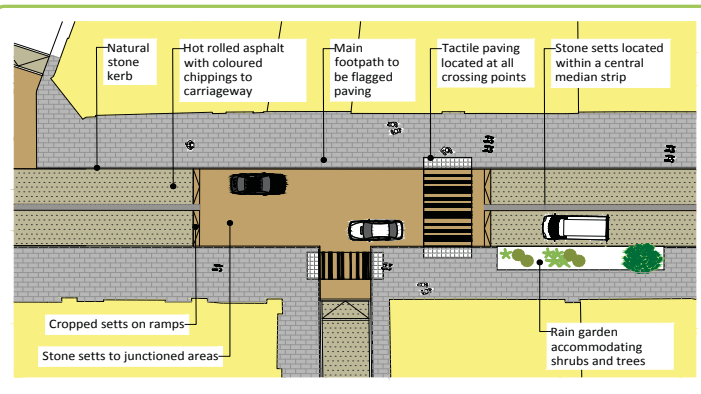
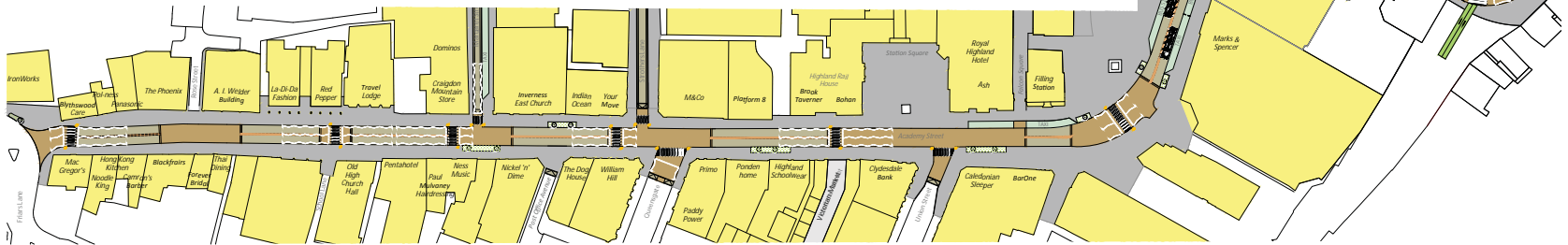
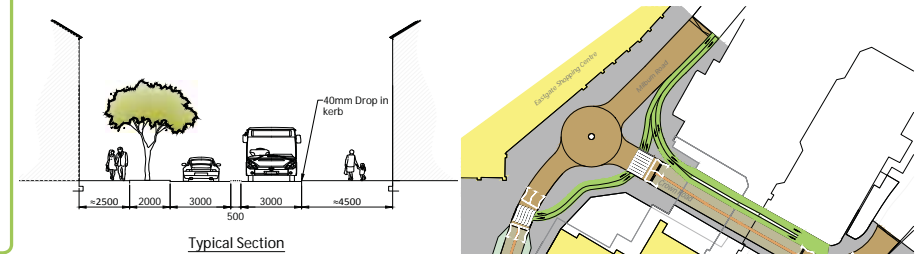
Academy Street is one of the most important streets in the city centre. It has potential to become a more attractive street by balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.

## Streetscape Option 2: Zebra crossings

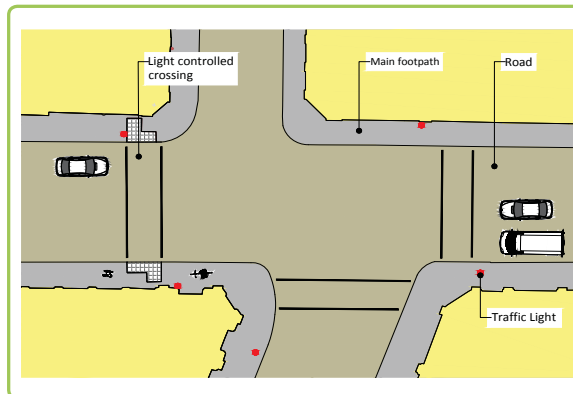
- 7 crossing points along length of Academy Street (based on distance between junctions and set requirements for how zebra crossings).
- Formal signalled crossing, which has paint lines, and amber globe lights.
- Raised crossing point to emphasise pedestrian priority.
- Narrower traffic lanes and slower vehicle speeds.
- Significant use of road lines and signs, and lighting, which detract from streetscape character.
- Cyclists move with flow of traffic.
- This design can feel safer for those with mobility impairments.



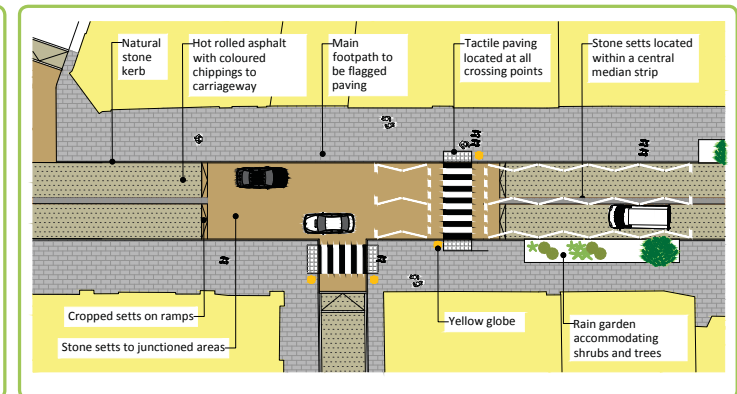
Crossing Examples



Courtesy Crossing



Existing Crossing

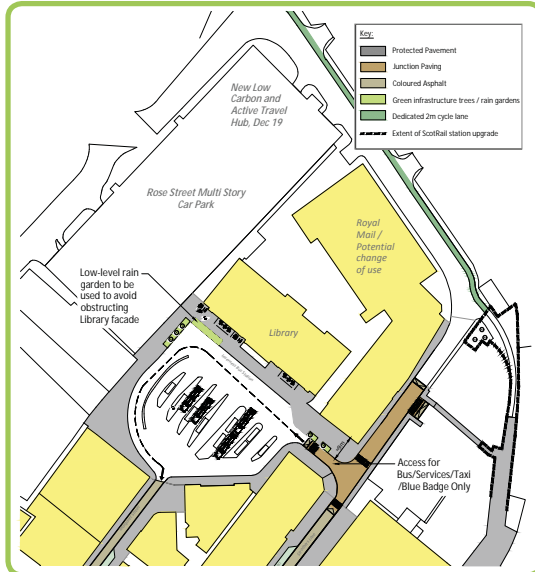


Zebra Crossing

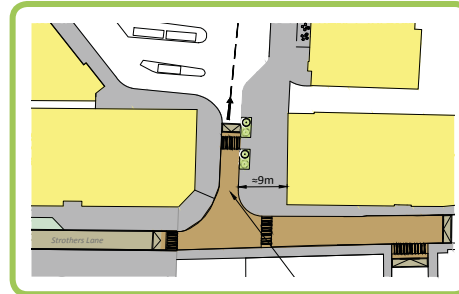


# Have your say on making a safer, more attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists between Farraline Park and the Railway Station

## Proposed Layout

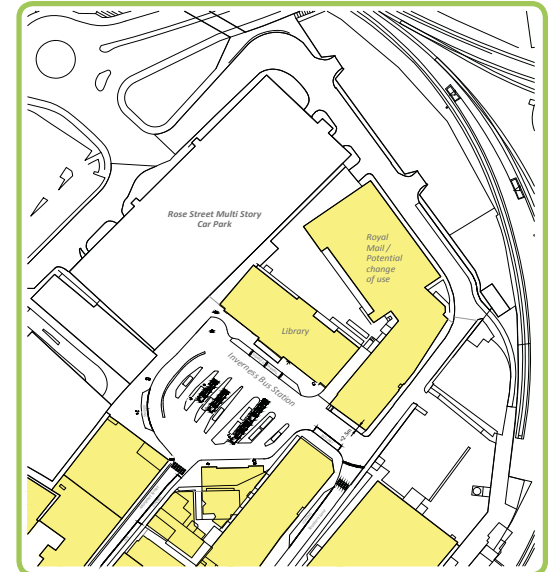


## Proposed Bus Station Entrance



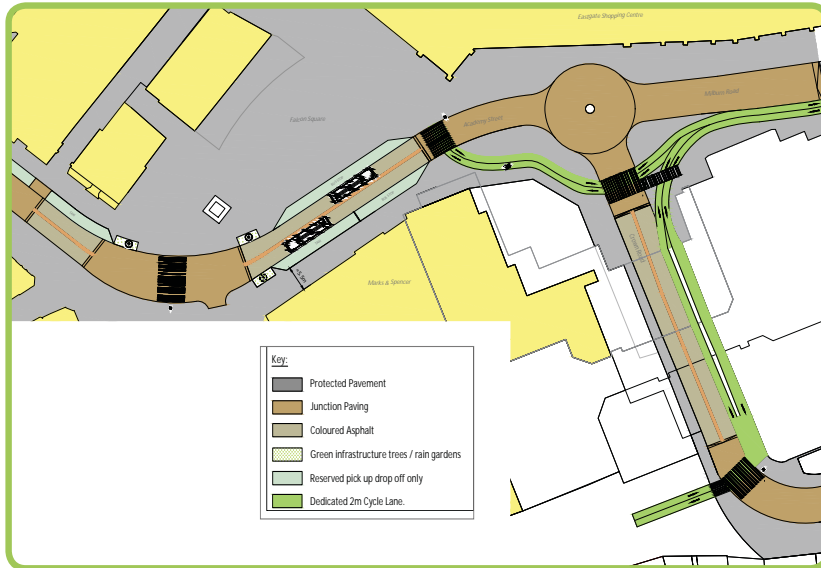
- Improve the pedestrian and cycle environment between the railway station, Farraline Park and Rose Street.
- Make it easier and safer to cross Strothers Lane by narrowing the road width and giving greater priority to pedestrians.
- Provide a segregated cycle lane between the railway station boundary and the A82 underpass.
- Restrict vehicles entering the bus station to buses, taxis and service vehicles only.

## Existing Layout





# Have your say on making Falcon Square safer, more attractive to walk, cycle or take part in street activity & events

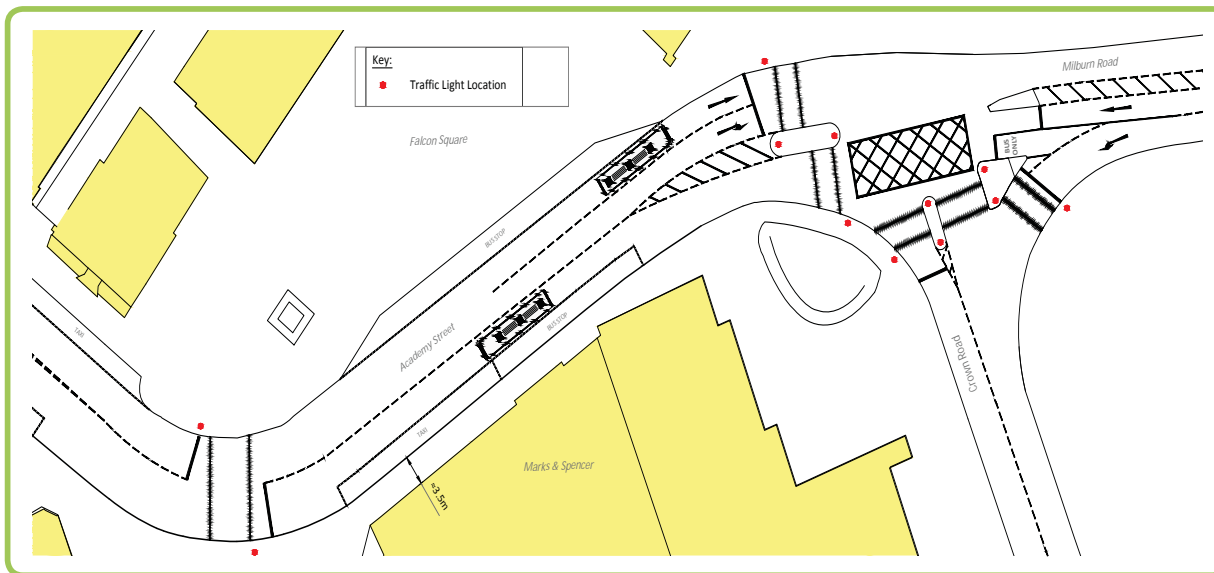


In Falcon Square we propose to make the environment safer and more attractive to walk and cycle by increasing the width of the crossing between the Square and Inglis St.

This will reduce traffic speed and devote more space to pedestrians while retaining adequate space for existing bus stops, which are well used.

A second key proposal is the introduction of a roundabout at the Crown Road junction. This would enable traffic to travel more freely through the junction removing the need for traffic signals, while also enabling the creation of a segregated cycle route between the High Street and Millburn Road to join the Inverness City Active Travel Network.

Proposed Streetscape



Existing Streetscape



# Traffic volumes and parking in the city centre

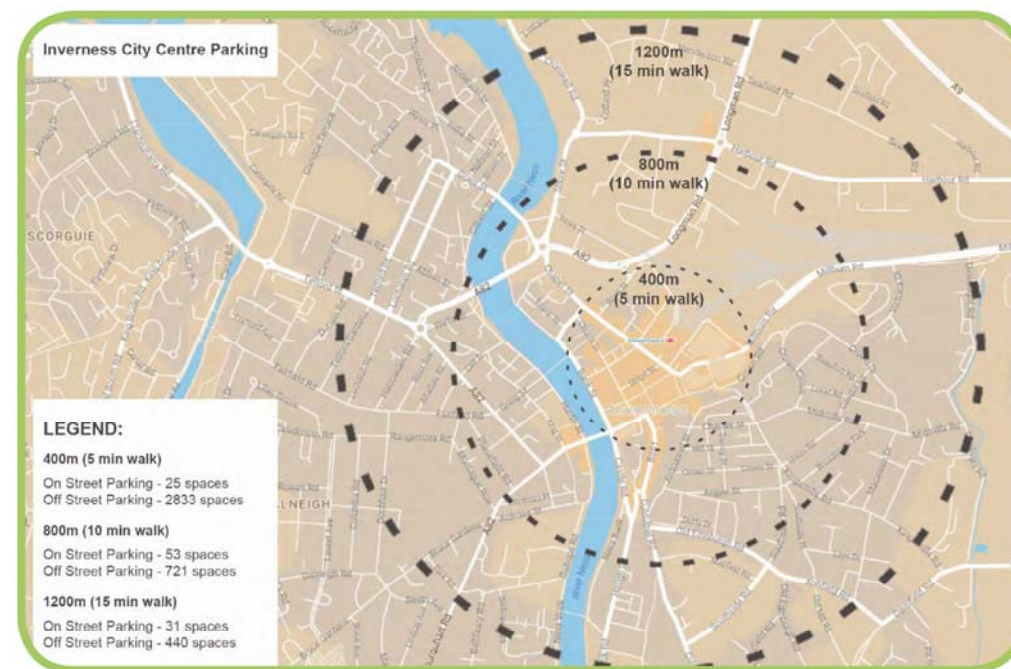
Academy Street has always been a busy motor route but in recent years traffic volumes have reduced.

The supply of convenient car parking in the city centre currently outstrips demand.

Academy Street between 2005 and 2016



The recently completed Inverness West Link (Stage 1) is expected to reduce city centre traffic congestion even further.



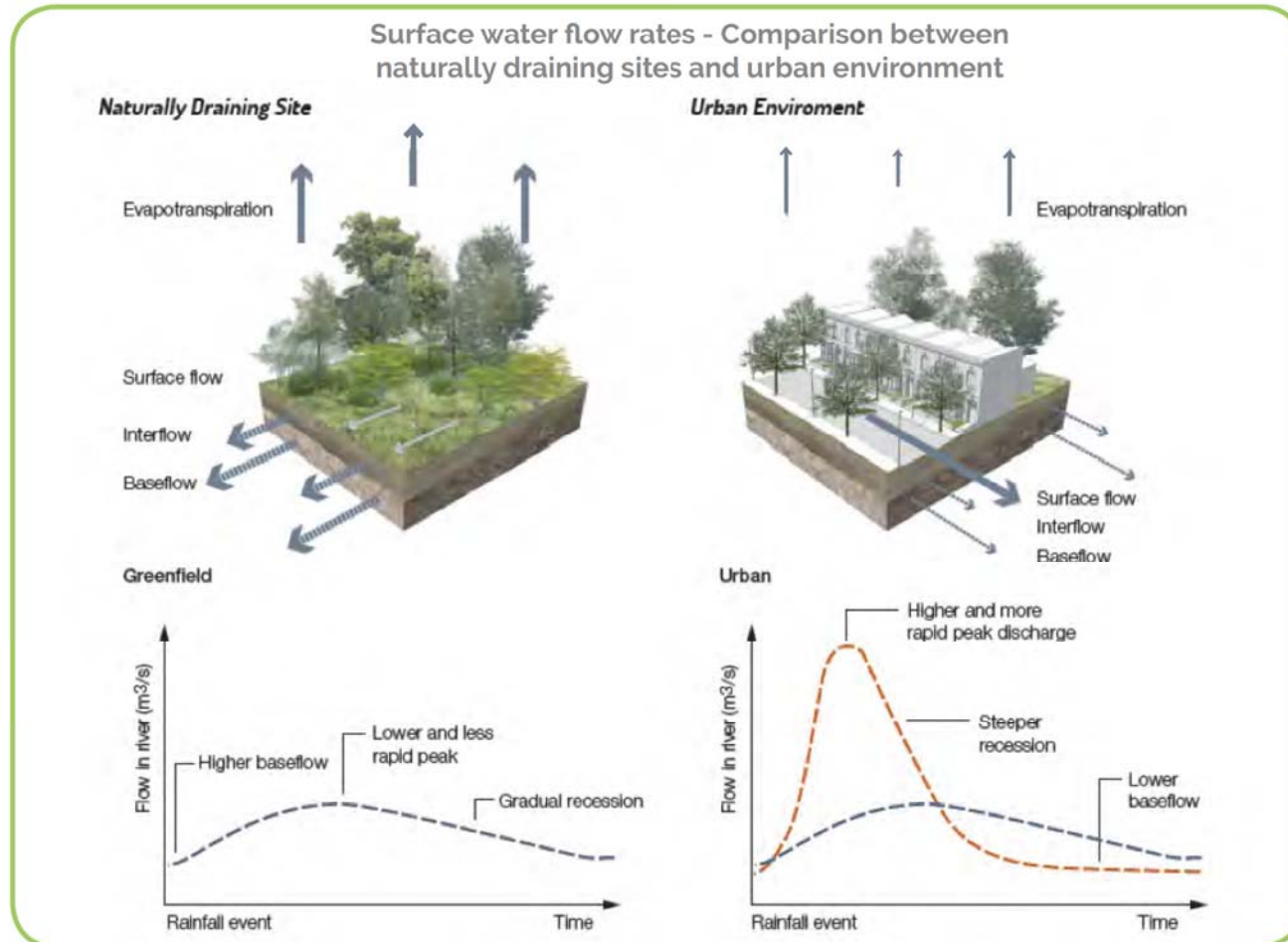
Over 3000 off-street parking spaces exist within 5 minutes walk of Academy Street. A recent study showed that, during peak demand, no more than 66% of city centre parking spaces are occupied.



# Rain gardens explained

A rain garden is a form of Sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) comprised of shrubs, perennials, and flowers planted in a small area designed to hold rain water runoff from hard surfaces, including pavements and carriageways, or slow down its rate of flow. Rain gardens are also effective in removing impurities such as chemicals and residues from rainwater runoff.

Drainage in an urban context is different to a place that is naturally drained. In the urban environment surface water is pushed to a drain or water course, with potential to overflow and cause local flooding. SuDS systems, including rain gardens, aim to imitate nature by managing rainfall in a similar fashion to a field or woodland. They are often designed to slow down, store/and or limit the amount of surface water entering a watercourse.





# Material Options: Standard Quality

## Illustrative Cross Section

Continuous footpath in coloured asphalt, firm and even underfoot, with gentle changes in level



Loading bays at pavement level trimmed with imprinted asphalt



Conservation kerb with contrast in colour tone and texture, along with 60mm kerb face



Imprinted asphalt channel narrowing the drivers view of available highway



Hot Rolled Asphalt with a coloured chipping, makes a very durable & thrifty surface



Imprinted asphalt can be readily driven over, but cause drivers to think before they do





# Material Options: High Quality

## Illustrative Cross Section

These are the preferred materials for application across the streets and spaces. However, the choice of materials will be informed during the preparation of funding businesses cases, using evidence led arguments for each street and space as the opportunities arise.

Continuous footpath in natural stone, firm and even underfoot, with gentle changes in level

Loading bays at pavement level trimmed with textured setts to help sensory impaired navigation

Natural stone kerb with contrast in colour tone and texture, along with 60mm kerb face

Kerb face channel is made of granite setts, narrowing the drivers view of available highway

Hot Rolled Asphalt with a coloured chipping, makes a very durable & thrifty surface

Low profile granite setts (25mm) can be readily driven over, but cause drivers to think before they do



## Accessing Inverness

### Public Consultation questionnaire

**Q1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed changes in Academy Street will make this area more attractive to visit, walk and cycle?**

**Please tick the most appropriate:**

Strongly agree; Agree; Remain neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Please tell us why.

**Q2: We have looked at a range of pedestrian and cycle crossing options for the project area, in particular Academy Street. Please tell us which of the following options you prefer, and why.**

**Tick the most appropriate box:**

Option A, courtesy crossings; Option B, zebra crossings; Other

Please tell us why.

**Q3: The proposals for the Farraline Park / Railway Terrace area have been designed to make this a safer, more attractive environment to walk and cycle. Has this been achieved?**

**Please tick the most appropriate:**

Strongly agree; Agree; Remain neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Please tell us why

**Q4 : To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to develop a cycle route on railway terrace to link with the active travel hub, NCN1 and the Railway station entrance at Strothers Lane?**

**Please tick the most appropriate:**

Strongly agree; Agree; Remain neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Please tell us why:



**Q5: The proposed changes for Falcon Square are intended to create a safer space for walking, cycling and activities that make best use of public open space. Has this been achieved?**

**Please tick the most appropriate:**

Strongly agree; Agree; Remain neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree

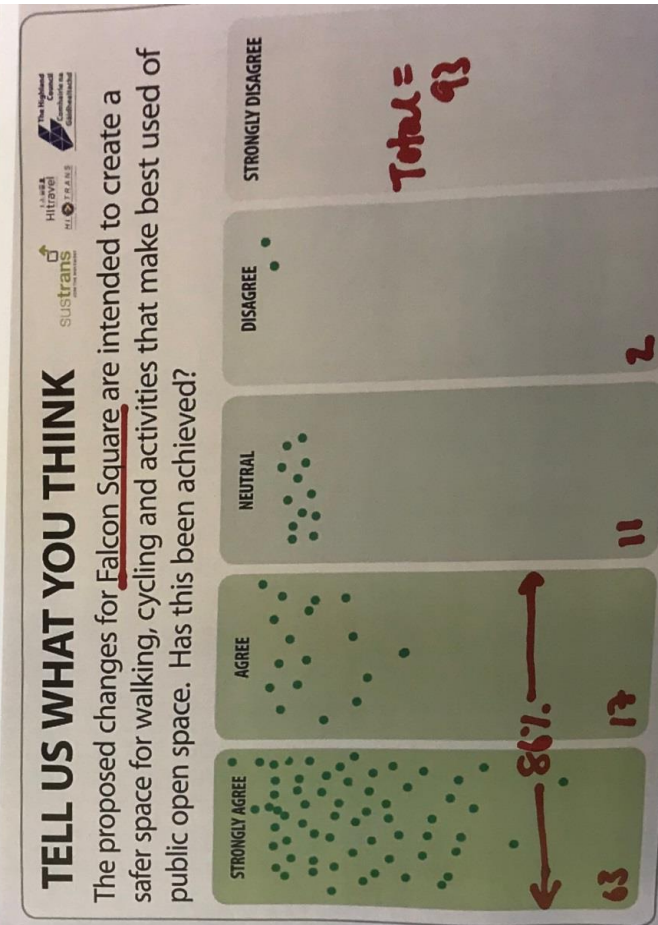
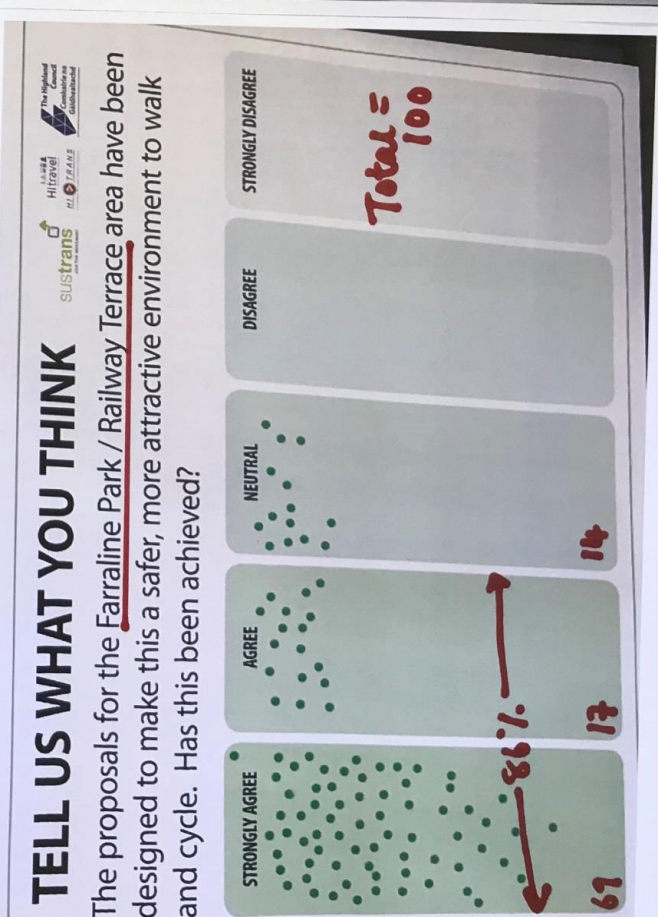
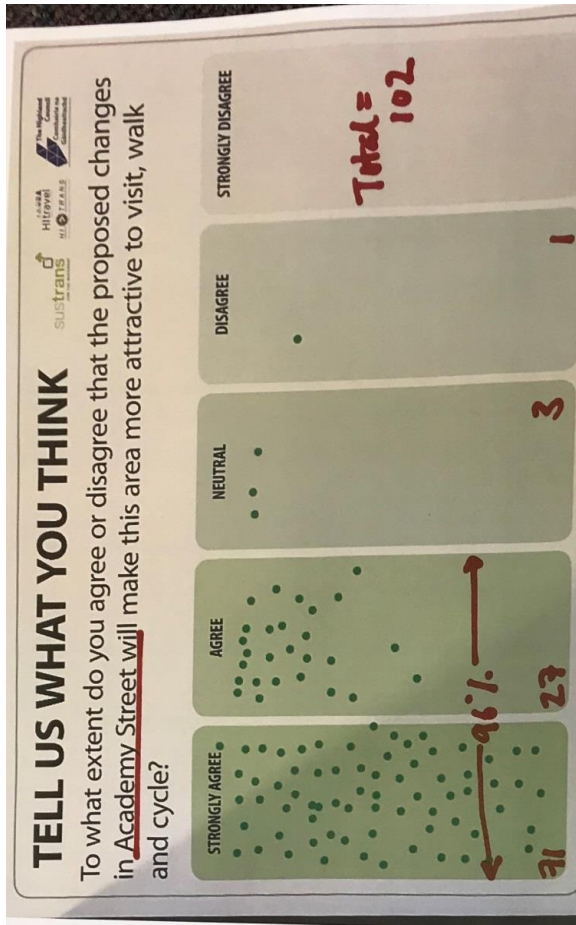
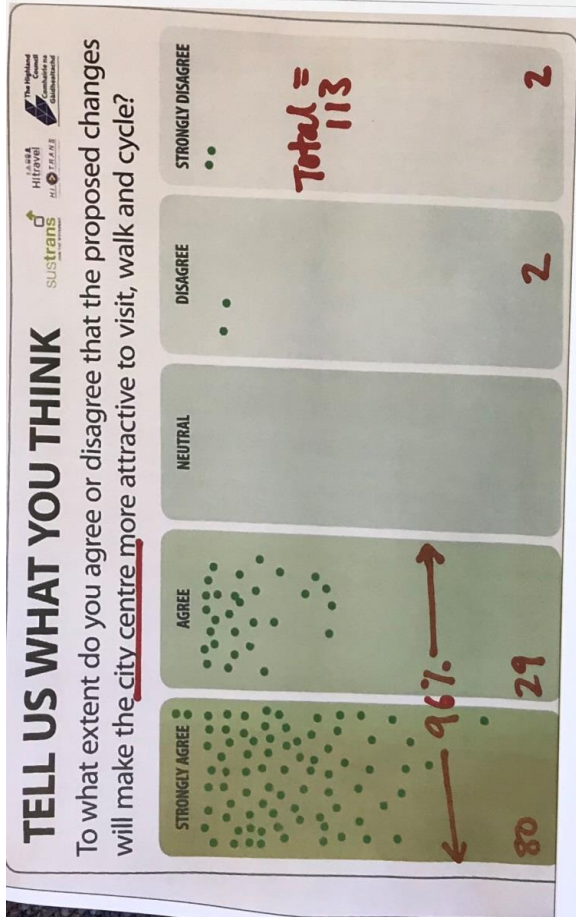
Please tell us why:

**Q6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for use of higher quality materials and rain gardens within the proposed scheme?**

**Please tick the most appropriate:**

Strongly agree; Agree; Remain neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Please tell us why:





**ACCESSING INVERNESS CONSULTATION  
30 November 2018 – 1 February 2019**

**RESPONDENTS**

**Government/Statutory Bodies**

- High Life Highland
- SEPA
- SNH

**Business**

- Eastgate Shopping Centre
- Inverness BID
- Inverness Taxi Alliance

**NGOs (including charities and campaigning groups)**

- Inverness Civic Trust
- Paths for All
- Own Your Street Inverness
- Putting Inverness Streets Ahead  
*[made up of: Access for All - Inverness Access Panel, Autism Rights Group Highland, Deaf Services & Hearing Support Team - NHS Highland, Guide Dogs Scotland, Highland Cycle Campaign, Highland Senior Citizens Network, Highland Visually Impaired Working Age Group, Living Streets Inverness, Ross-shire Access Panel, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Scotland and Sight Action]*
- ACE [Active Community of Empowered individuals]
- National Federation of the Blind of the UK

**Individuals**

Alan Scott	Graham Tuley	Neil Hornsby
Amanda Ophof	Helen Smith	Raphaella Perks
Andrew Lynn	Janet Home	Ross Finlay
Brian MacKenzie	Janis Armstrong	Sandy Taylor
C Campbell	Jenny Mayhew	Sheila Fletcher
David Edmiston	Lynn Macfarlane	Simon Brooks
Elizabeth Shiach	Margot Tuley	Stewart Dickins
Emma Roddick	Martin MacLeod	Stuart Dustan
F Sadler	Michelle Paterson	Susan Hadfield
Fiona Catto	Mick Heath	Tom Matthew
Graeme Watson	Mr & Mrs Colin Jackman	William Macdonald