ARUP

Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)

Oban Integration

Summary Report

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Ove Arup & Partners Limited
7th Floor
1 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 1RW
United Kingdom
arup.com

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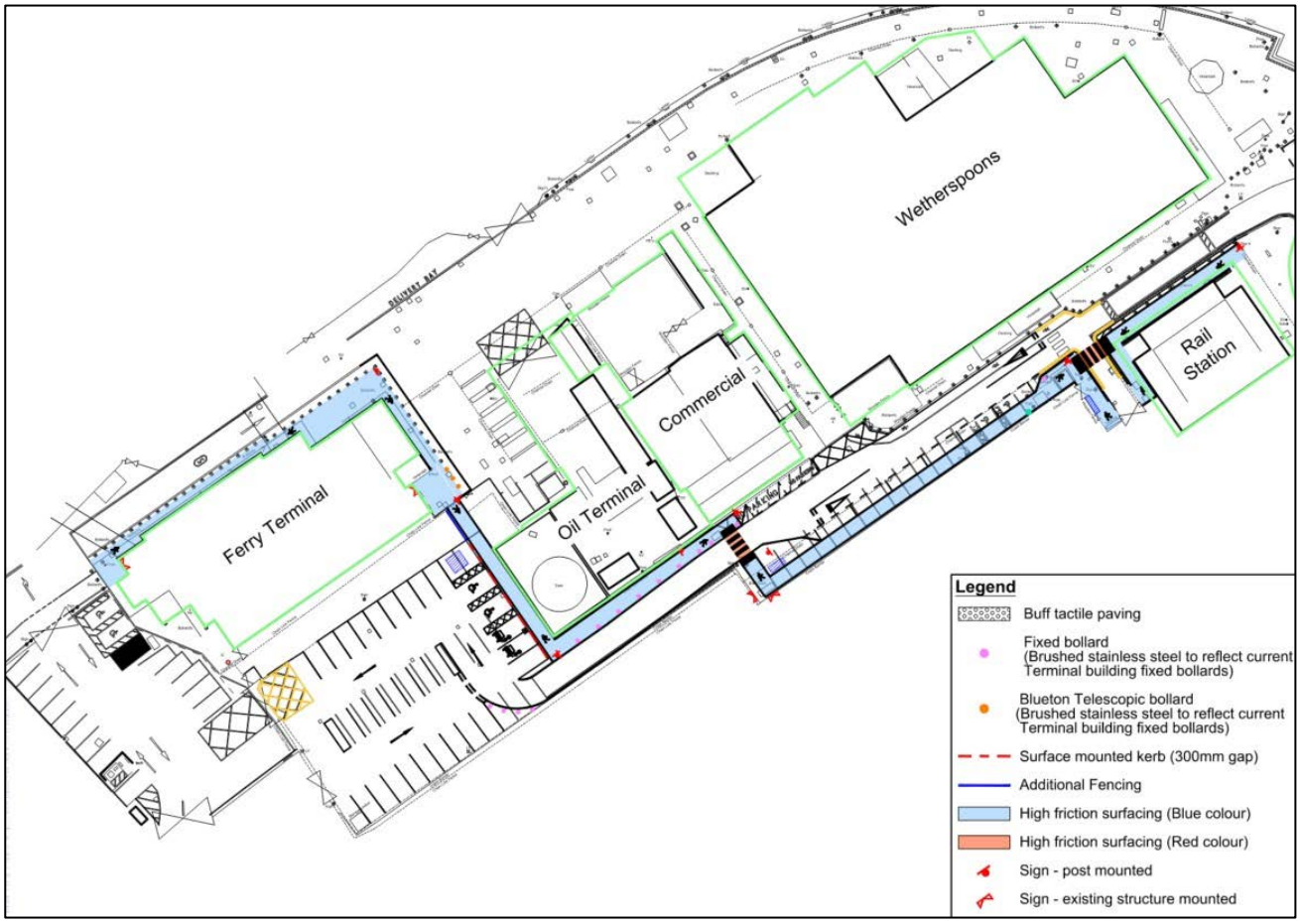
Executive Summary

Ove Arup & Partners Ltd (Arup) has been commissioned by Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) to develop the design for active travel improvements to better integrate Oban Ferry Terminal with Oban Rail Station and, subsequently, the town centre. The Arup commission has resulted in the submission of an Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) bid to Transport Scotland in February 2025 for future funding to conclude the design development and to implement the Preferred Route Option 8 for the Oban Integration improvements identified in Figure 1 and in Drawing 7 in the Drawings section of this report.

The ATIF bid is for the preferred Option 8 in Figure 1, identified through the design development and stakeholder consultation that delivers the stated outcomes identified by previous stakeholder assessment and the stated policy objectives set out by national government, local government and their partners.

Figure 1: Option 8 – Preferred Oban Inclusion Arrangement



Option 8 was identified through stakeholder consultation (Steering Group) and through historic and more recent travel surveys, observations and assessment. The proposals will deliver the identified outcomes to materially improve the integration and connectivity within Oban's Gateway and strategic transport hub, reducing barriers and enhancing economic, social and health opportunities by means other than the private car in accordance the Scottish Government's movement hierarchy and stakeholder targets for sustainable stations and mode share.

The alterations to the ScotRail car park will deliver disabled/accessible spaces to current design standards and ensure pedestrians and those wheeling do not need to utilise the live carriageway. The proposed changes will have little impact on the car park occupancy rate, where the car park is expected to continue operating well within practical capacity.

Option 8 will maintain and enhance the operation of the Port and harbour, rail station and commercial units, while delivering a segregated, level, lit, clear and consistent walkway for those walking and wheeling between the ferry terminal and the rail and bus stations.

It is expected that Option 8 will have no material impact on the operation of the ScotRail car park. The preferred option will result in the removal of 9 out of 37 standard public parking bays whilst retaining the current provision of 6 Scotrail staff, 2 accessible/disabled and 2 EV parking bays. Observed surveys undertaken in February, April and July this year indicate that the revised tariffs introduced by Scotrail have effectively managed the car park occupancy.

1. Introduction

Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) has been commissioned by Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) to develop the design for active travel improvements to better integrate Oban Ferry Terminal with Oban Rail Station and, subsequently, the town centre. The study area and key elements including buildings are indicated by Figure 2 and Drawing 1 in the Drawings section of this report.

The Arup commission resulted in the submission of an Active Travel Infrastructure Fund bid (ATIF) to Transport Scotland in February 2025 for future funding to conclude the design development and implement the proposed integration improvements of the resulting 133m active travel link connecting the Oban Rail Station and Ferry Terminal buildings, as indicated in Figure 1 and Drawing 7 in the Drawings section of this report.

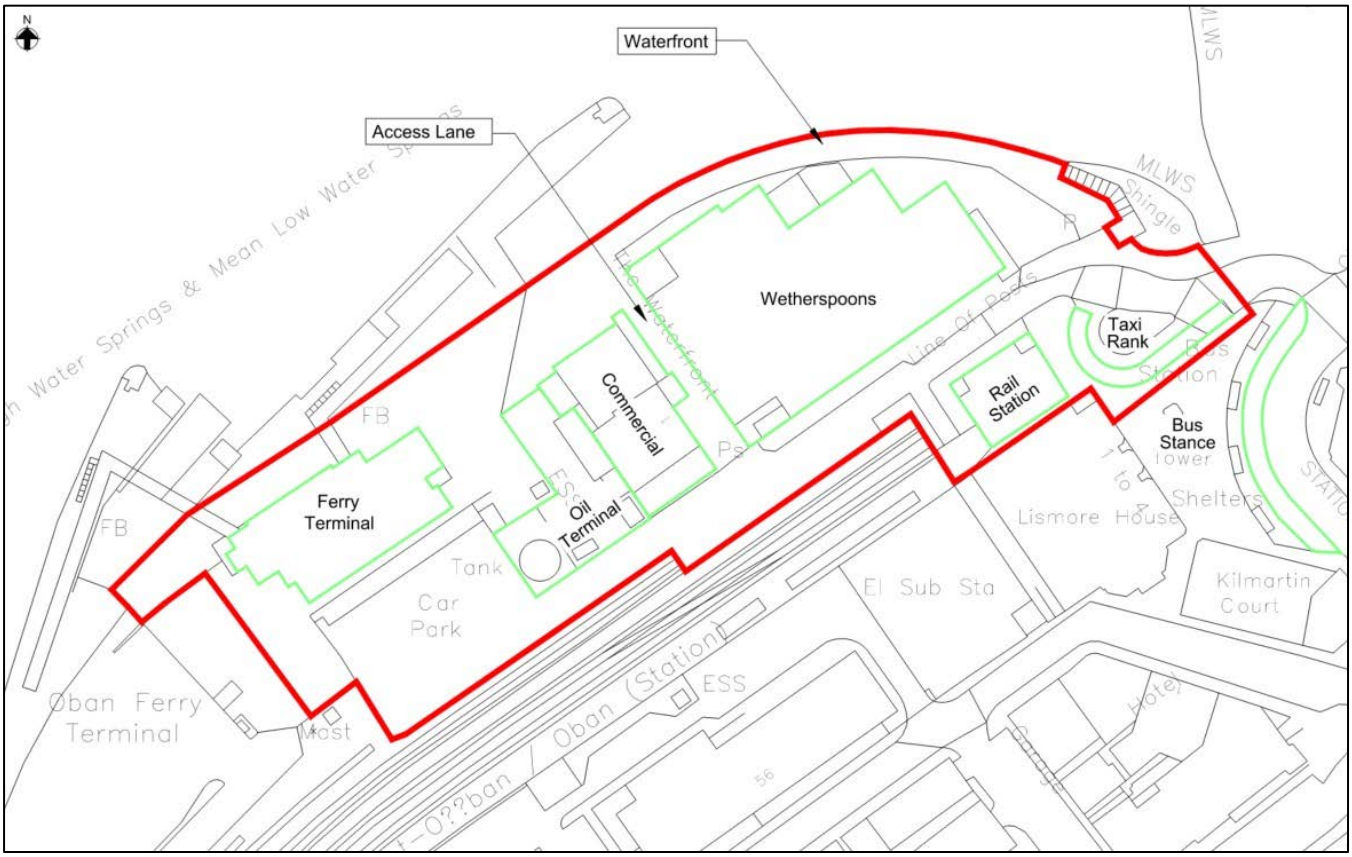


Figure: Study area

1.1 Purpose of This Document

The purpose of this report is to summarise the background and rationale for the proposals and the resulting outcomes that informed the Arup assessment and design for the integration, and to summarise how the assessment has consulted upon and considered alternative route and design options prior to identifying the final preferred Option 8 indicated in Figures 1 and 21 and in Drawing 7.

This will also consider financial and operational implications for the key stakeholders of CMAL/CalMac and Network Rail/ScotRail attributed to the proposals.

1.2 Document Structure

The remainder of this report will discuss the process of the design development as follows:

- **Chapter 2**: **Project Context** – provides a summary of project background, policy context and previous studies in relation to the Oban Integration;
- **Chapter 3**: **Design Process** – provides a summary of the steps taken during this commission in developing the design for the preferred option;
- **Chapter 4**: **Operational and Financial Considerations** – provides a summary of the implications for the operators;
- **Chapter 5**: **Conclusion.**

2. Project Context

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 Overview

Oban is recognised as a strategic hub not only for the local community but also regionally for the Inner and Outer Hebrides communities through the ferry services. There are further ferry connections to communities from these and other close-by ports, making Oban one of the key transport hubs for the island communities accessing Mainland Scotland.

Oban is also linked to both the strategic road and rail networks and public transport services. Through rail services, Oban is a branch of the West Highland Line and has direct bus service connections to Fort William and the cities in the Central Belt. Within Oban all modes are located centrally in the town centre, as shown in Figure 2.

In this context, the area comprising Oban Rail Station and Ferry Terminal is recognised as forming a key element to Oban's Gateway and focal point for the wider town centre regeneration and for sustainable economic growth and social inclusion.

Table 1 summarises the key locations that enjoy access with Oban by rail, ferry and by bus, where this also confirms the current annual rail and ferry passenger numbers passing through Oban's Rail Station and Ferry Terminal in 2023/24 based on the available data.

Table 1: Key locations served by Oban's Transport Hub by rail, ferry and bus

Public Transport Type	Key Locations served by Oban Transport Hub	2023/24 Annual Passenger Numbers
Rail[*1]		
	Glasgow Queen Street	224,124
	Fort William	
	Mallaig	
Ferry		
	Craignure	702,500[*2]
	Coll/Tiree	
	Castlebay-Lochboisdale	
	Lismore	
	Colonsay	
Service Buses[*1]		
	All local town services	Not Available
	Edinburgh	
	Glasgow	
	Inverness	
	Fort William	
	Lochgilphead	

***1 Does not reference all locations served by the rail and bus services on the defined routes**

***2 Ferry passenger numbers on the Craignure service restricted by service cancelations. Craignure service accounts for circa 80% of the Oban's annual ferry passenger numbers. Pre-Covid annual ferry passenger numbers between 789,000 and 821,000.**

In 2017, Argyll and Bute Council completed public realm improvements on Station Square to the north of the rail station building, making the rail station, taxis and bus stances more accessible. Some of the placemaking improvements can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Station Square with enhanced placemaking

Figure 4 opposite shows the current condition of the rail station car park access road that currently provides the shortest pedestrian route between the rail station and ferry terminal buildings via the Access Lane indicated in Figure 2. Figure 2 indicates the clear conflict between pedestrians and vehicle activities as people walk and wheel on the live carriageway on the ScotRail car park access road and that there is no clear or consistent wayfinding to the ferry terminal from the rail station and town centre.

There have been several studies in support of further integration and improved connectivity between the rail station and ferry terminal that are discussed in Section 2 of this report. These identified the main risks and constraints for those walking and wheeling between the rail station and ferry terminal, which in the main have not been resolved.

Figure 4: Oban Rail Station parking access road with pedestrian access to the Ferry Terminal

2.1.2 Previous studies, plans and strategies

Since 2009, there have been several studies that have identified, for instance, objectives and a series of short, medium and longer-term investment within Oban as well as the station-ferry terminal area. Additionally, there are several stakeholder-initiated plans and strategies that support the improvements in the area.

These studies, summarised in Figure 5, have informed the development of this Integration Study and Design as well as informed the creation of the Steering Group for this project comprising Transport Scotland, HITRANS, Network Rail, CMAL, ScotRail, CalMac and Argyll & Bute Council.

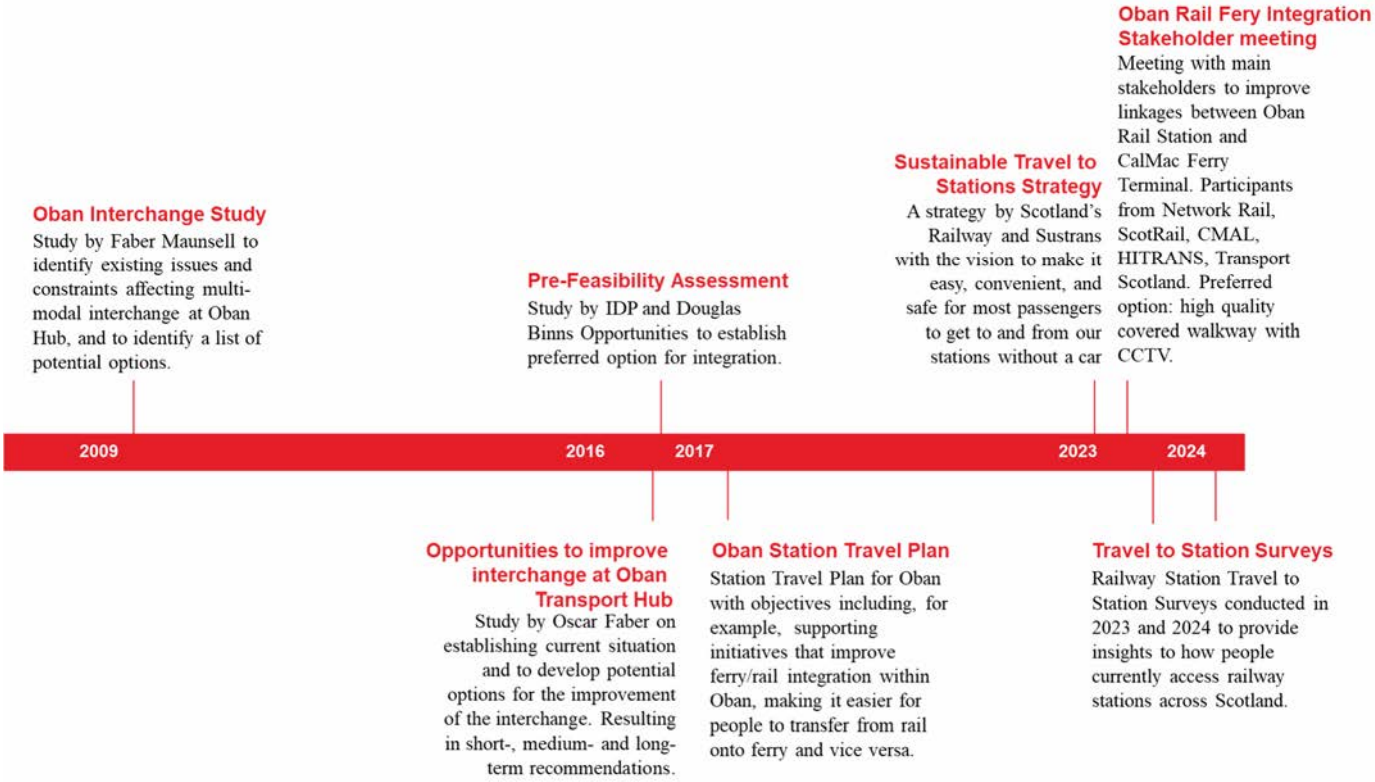


Figure 5: Summary of studies, plans and strategies in the Oban Transport Hub area

Oscar Faber Opportunities to Improve Interchange at Oban Transport Hub 2009 and 2016

In 2009, Faber Maunsell produced a study with detailed plans, and an initial appraisal of the options against the Government's five criteria for transport and the benefits of taking forward each of the options. In 2016, Oscar Faber produced an executive summary of the study that provided the recommended short, medium and long term interventions that could be implemented 'as and when funding became available'. The study stresses the importance of Oban as a strategic transport hub and the need to improve people's transport experience at the hub with the main constraint being available space. Potential interventions identified range from basic signage to relocation of the rail station car park, a footbridge link and additional marshalling area.

Oban Station Ferry Terminal Integration Pre-Feasibility Assessment 2016

In 2016, IDP and Douglas Binns Limited was commissioned by HITRANS to undertake a Pre-Feasibility assessment of options to improve the rail station and ferry terminal layout and enhance integration in Oban. The study examined alternative arrangements for platform layout, ferry vehicle loading arrangements and building integration. The study also considered the required mode of station operation for the varying train types. The study highlights that the lack of direct integration between the rail station and ferry terminal is a major issue. The options considered for the layout of the platforms and sidings to improve the connectivity of station and ferry terminal, are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Oban Station Ferry Terminal Integration Pre-Feasibility Options Summary

Option	Summary of assessment
1. Extend and realign the siding adjacent to platform 4 and form a new platform 5. Increase the available marshalling area by reducing the area of hardstanding around the sidings and slewing the sidings towards the platforms.	This is not considered required at this stage and the introduction of a third operational platform is not considered necessary within the foreseeable future.
2. Widen platform 4 and reduce the length of the siding adjacent to platform 4. Marshalling area alterations similar to option 1 with an additional two storey car park above.	The track and platform layouts in this option are considered feasible at this stage, although the requirement for 3no operational sidings at this time is questionable. It is not considered viable to include a car park deck over the

Option	Summary of assessment
	marshalling yard on a cost return basis. CET facilities can be provided between the new sidings.
3. Construct a new platform 4 and provide an additional siding between the platform 3 and 4 lines. Marshalling area utilises area of current sidings, with a single "seasonal" siding being provided.	This provides operational stabling in an island siding which would also be used for crossover and shunting. This is not considered good practice in terms of operation. This option cannot provide a CET and tanking facility for the sleeper without loss of marshalling area to the ferry terminal.
4. As option 1 with controlled emission toilet facility and a single seasonal siding. A larger ferry marshalling area is provided compared with option 1.	This is the preferred solution and would be based on a shared use of part of the siding area by both the rail and the ferry. It would be proposed that during peak ferry services, e.g. school holidays then the ferry marshalling would be extended up to the CET installation serving Platform 5. During non-peak times the additional siding on the seaward side of the CET could be used for rail operational requirements. This siding would be constructed as a slab track. Whether or not the slab track would be required in the first instance or whether this could be delayed several years would be subject to discussions between the parties and the availability of funding. The use of this siding by the rail would reduce the marshalling by two bays.

Oban Rail Station Travel Plan 2017

The Station Travel Plan for Oban was delivered through ScotRail's wider Station Travel Plans programme. The programme aims to improve station patronage, deliver enhancements to rail station facilities and onward connectivity, and to promote and facilitate the role of rail stations in driving forward sustainable economic development, supported by strong community involvement. In Oban, one of the objectives of the Station Travel Plan is to improve ferry/rail integration within the town to make it easier for people to transfer between rail and ferries (and other public transport modes) for longer distance connecting journeys and to promote the bus/rail/ferry stations as a key public transport interchange in the town. The Plan has identified the following key opportunities that relate to the integration of the ferry/rail services:

- Promote walking and cycling as 'modes of choice' for travel to and from the station by improving the pedestrian routes and cycle parking facilities at the station and improving and promoting bike hire services within the town centre, particularly to visitors arriving by rail.
- Create a better physical integration between the rail station, bus station, ferry terminal and city centre by improving direction signage between each.
- Review and identify potential improvements to pedestrian crossings between the rail station, ferry terminal, bus station and town centre.
- Add value to the new Station Square regeneration project.

Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy 2023 (Rail)

In 2023, ScotRail published the Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy that has the vision to grow the number of journeys passengers make to and from local neighbourhoods to the rail station by healthy and sustainable modes of transport: walking wheeling, on-demand transport and the bus. This aligns with the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) and its sustainable travel hierarchy (discussed further in section 2.2.1). In relation to the Oban station area, the relevant aims include:

1. **Walking & Wheeling**: Grow the modal share of walking and wheeling to stations, from 33% in 2022 to 50% in 2035.
2. **Cycling**: increase cycling trips to stations from 9% in 2022 to 20% in 2035. From 6 million trips in 2022 to 38 million trips in 2035.
3. **Private Car**: Reduce car trips annually from 27% in 2022 to 10% in 2035.
4. **Surveys**: Ensure a reliable baseline for passenger mode share is set and maintained through a twice-yearly survey of passengers

Travel to Stations Surveys 2023+2024

On the basis of the Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy, bi-annual mode share passenger surveys on mode share for travel to stations are conducted. The average results of November 2023 and May 2024 results compared to 2022 baseline and 2035 targets are shown in Figure . Breakdown of seasonality of mode share is shown in Figure 7 opposite. The main headlines from the survey results show the following:

- Oban has a similar mode share for walking to the station as the national 2023-2024 average but 17 percentage points lower than the 2035 target;
- Fewer people cycle to the station in Oban than on average across Scotland, and the share is 13 percentage points below the 2035 target;
- In Oban, more people reach the station by private car than the national average, and reaching the 2035 target requires a reduction of 21%; and
- Active modes are more seasonally dependent than on average across Scotland with walking getting replaced by car use in autumn in comparison to spring. Additionally, cycling trips are lower in spring than in autumn.

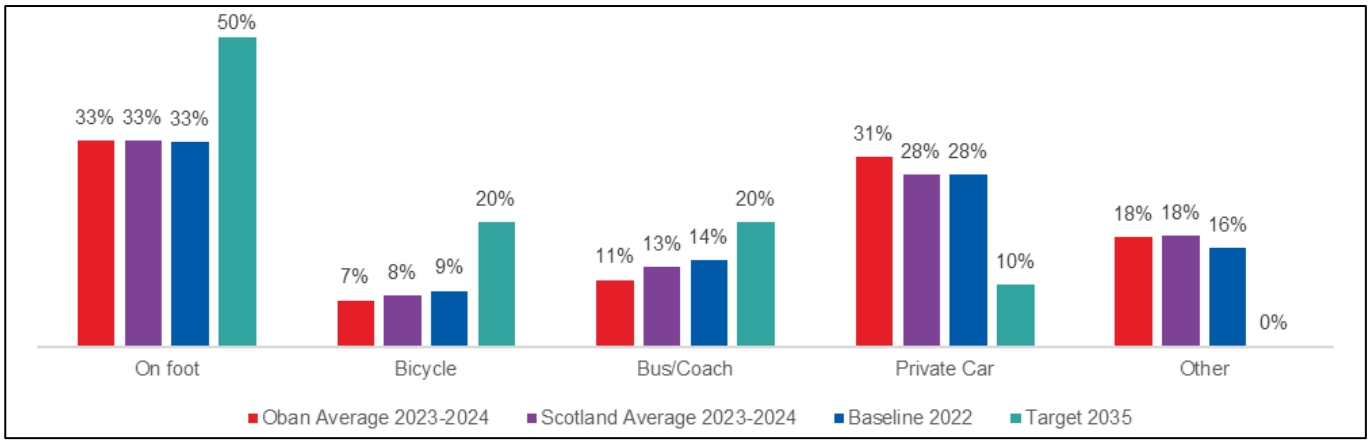


Figure 6: Main mode of transport to station: 2023-2024 average in Oban and Scotland, 2022 Baseline and 2035 Target

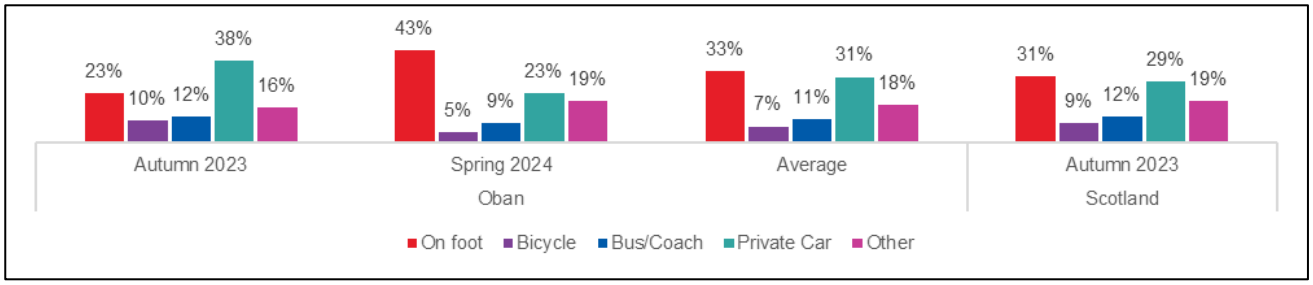


Figure 7: Seasonality of main mode of transport to station in Oban and Scotland

These figures show there are still opportunities for further integration of the rail services with other sustainable modes to further support the decrease of private car use in accordance with the Strategy.

Stakeholder Meeting on Improved Linkage

The key stakeholders consulted and met in July 2023 that led to the commissioning of this study. The meeting covered discussion on improving the linkage between Oban Rail station and the CalMac Ferry Terminal with representatives from the following organisations attending:

- HITRANS;
- Network Rail;
- CMAL;

- ScotRail; and
- Transport Scotland.

The group investigated various routes from the rail station to the ferry terminal and agreed that a high-quality covered walkway was required for walking, wheeling and cycling between the rail station and ferry terminal. It was agreed that the above organisations, with the addition of CalMac, should form a Steering Group to progress the project.

2.2 Policy and Strategy Review Context

This section provides an overview of national, regional and local policies and strategies that have informed setting up the Oban Integration project and that support the proposed design solution indicated in drawing OBIN-ARP-HN-AF-DR-TP-000101 in the drawings section of this report.

2.2.1 National Policies and Strategies

National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)

The National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) prioritises sustainable transport over single occupancy car use through targeted investment in sustainable transport networks and infrastructure, promotion of awareness and improved coordination and integration across modes to encourage and facilitate change in travel behaviour and attitudes in relation to travel.

These priorities are visualised in the sustainable transport hierarchy shown in Figure 8. It shows that walking and wheeling, cycling and public transport use are prioritised over private car use. Through investment, awareness raising and coordination, the NTS2 aims to "encourage demand for active travel and low carbon transport options and encouraging multimodal journeys as the norm".

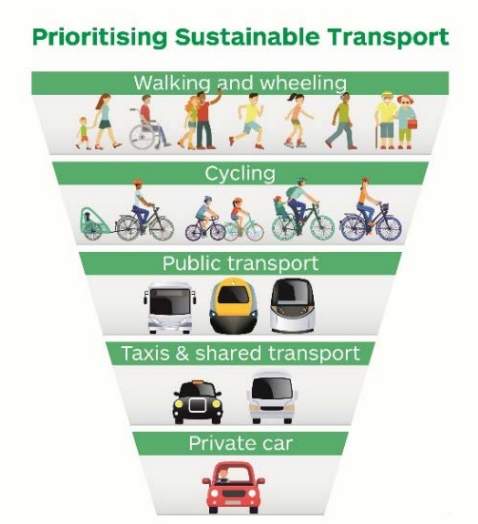


Figure 8: Sustainable Transport Hierarchy (NTS2)

The travel hierarchy has also been considered in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) to aid authorities embed the sustainable travel and investment hierarchy into place plans and decision-making processes. Table 3 provides an overview of the priorities and outcomes of the NTS2. The improved integration of the rail station and ferry terminal contributes to all four priorities set out in the Strategy.

Table 3: National Transport Strategy priorities and outcomes

Priority	Summary
Reduces Inequalities	Provide fair access to services, easy to use and be affordable. This includes issues of poverty and gender, feelings of safety and violence, meeting the needs of young people and an aging population and the needs of disabled people.
Takes Climate Actions	Help deliver a net zero target, adapt to the effects of climate change and promote greener, cleaner choices. This includes air quality changing behaviour.
Helps deliver inclusive economic growth	Help people and goods get where they need to get to with a network and services that are effectively integrated with spatial and land use planning. This includes also reliable, efficient and high-quality services and journey time reliability.
Improves Health and Wellbeing	Being safe and secure for all, enabling healthy travel choices and making communities great places to live. This includes issues around safety and security (perceived and actual), encouraging physical activity and improving resilience such as drainage.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

The NPF4 sets out Scotland's spatial planning principles, regional priorities and national developments and national planning policy. The Oban Integration project supports the following policies within the National Planning Framework 4, as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Relevant National Planning Framework 4 policies

Policy	Summary
Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation	This aims to promote and facilitate development that minimise emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
Policy 13: Sustainable Transport	Aims to promote development that prioritise active travel and public transport and reduce the need to travel unsustainably while also supporting connectivity and local living. This includes providing cycle parking, designing safety measures including safe crossings and taking into account the transport needs of diverse groups of users.
Policy 14: Liveable Places	Aims to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed development that makes successful places that consistently deliver healthy, pleasant, distinctive, connected, sustainable and adaptable qualities.
Policy 23: Health and Safety	Aims to protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards and encourage, promote and facilitate development and improves health and wellbeing.

Strategic Transport Policies Review 2 (STPR2)

The STPR2 has been set to help deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes set out in the NTS2. The Rail Oban Integration project aligns with all five key objectives of the STPR2. These objectives are summarised in Table 55.

Table 5: Relevant STPR2 objectives

Objective	Summary
Take Climate Action	Create better connectivity with sustainable and cleaner transport options.
Address Inequalities and Accessibility	Improve accessibility for residents, visitors and business.
Improve Health and Wellbeing	Create better connectivity with sustainable, smart, cleaner transport options
Support Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth	Improve accessibility for residents, visitors and business.
Increasing Safety and Resilience	Improve accessibility for residents, visitors and business.

Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Approach 2024

The Islands Connectivity Plan sets out a Vision supported by four main priorities for the delivery of future ferry services. The priorities have been based on engagement with ferry communities as well as the views expressed by those who have an interest in the delivery of ferry services in Scotland. Subsequently, the priorities have been specified further into twelve themes based on improvements that need to be addressed. The Oban Integration project contributes to addressing the themes within the Islands Connectivity Plan summarised in Table 6 opposite.

Table 6: Relevant Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Approach 2024 themes

Theme	Summary
Accessibility	Need to deliver improved travel by ferry for all people in Scotland, to unlock long term sustainable economic development for island communities and delivery towards wider Scotland's policies. In particular, need to improve the experience for local communities by improving access to essential services, leisure activities and reducing social distancing.
Integration	Better integration of ferries with public transport, active travel, and other more sustainable alternatives like car clubs will offer more and better onward and connecting travel options – creating a more efficient transport network.

2.2.2 Regional Policies and Strategies

HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy 2024 (RTS)

The HITRANS RTS was updated based on the NTS2 to ensure the delivery of the national outcomes while also reflecting the local opportunities and challenges in the region. The strategies, themes and relevant policies to the Oban Integration project have been summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Relevant HITRANS RTS 2024 strategic themes

Theme	Summary
Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them	Improving the public realm and mobility within settlements by reducing the dominance of the private car and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling. Especially Policy ST1a: **reallocating road space, including parking**, from general traffic to support placemaking to shape improved walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities in communities.
Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities	Facilitating walking, wheeling and cycling within settlements and improving active travel connections between them. Especially the following policies: • Policy ST2a: transformational investment in the improvement of our existing **active travel networks** to make these accessible to all. • Policy ST2e: The RTS supports the **integration of active travel and public transport connections** within our communities. • Policy ST2f: The RTS promotes the adoption of measures outlined in the **Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy** with respect to access to rail stations.
Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport	Addressing the barriers to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information. Especially the following policies: • Policy ST4a: l improve **integration within and between modes of transport at key locations and transport interchanges** in order to provide new travel options and alternatives to the private car • Policy ST4d: provide and enhance **mobility hubs** across the region, in line with a hierarchy reflecting local requirements. • Policy ST4p: ferry network should be **safe, secure and fully and easily accessible to all**. This includes both shore-to-vessel access and movement around the vessel itself.
Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities	Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links. Especially Policy ST5i: improve **door-to-door journeys** through enhancing active travel, public transport and shared mobility connections to and from ferry terminals, combined with other measures to reduce the need to take a car onboard.
Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand	Responding to the challenges arising from the significant seasonal influx of tourists to the region, often in the areas least well-placed to accommodate it. Especially Policy ST8b: The RTS supports the development of **active travel connections** to our ports, airports and regionally important rail stations.

2.2.3 Local Policies and Strategies

Argyll and Bute Draft Active Travel Strategy 2024

The Argyll and Bute Draft Active Travel Strategy 2024 sets out a range of objectives which are relevant to the Oban Integration project, as summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Relevant Argyll and Bute Draft ATS 2024 Objectives

Objective	Summary
B. Improve Infrastructure for Active Travel	Aims to enhance the infrastructure to make walking and cycling safer, more accessible, and convenient for all users, including people with disabilities. Relevant actions include, for instance: • Improve pedestrian crossings, cycle paths/lanes, and bike parking facilities. • Ensure streets are well-lit and safe, especially during evenings and nights.
D. Reduce Carbon Emissions and Improve Air Quality	Aims to decrease reliance on cars and reduce overall traffic emissions, contributing to better air quality and meeting climate goals. Actions include, for instance: • Support policies that discourage short car trips and promote walking and cycling as viable alternatives
E. Enhance Safety and Accessibility	Aims to ensure that walking and cycling are safe, inclusive, and accessible for all members of the community, including children, adults, and people with disabilities. Relevant action: • Ensure accessibility features such as ramps, safe crossings, and appropriate signage.
F. Integrate Active Travel with Public Transport	Promote the integration of active travel with public transport systems to encourage multi-modal travel. Relevant actions include: • Ensure easy access to cycling facilities at public transport hubs (e.g. bike racks at bus stops and rail stations, ferry terminals). • Provide seamless connections between cycling routes and transit networks.
H. Support Equity and Social Inclusion	Ensure that active travel options are accessible to people of all socio- economic backgrounds. Relevant action: • Ensure that active travel infrastructure is designed to meet the needs of diverse populations, including elderly and disabled individuals.

3. Design Development

3.1 Introduction

The design process for the Oban Integration Project is summarised in Figure 9. The process has included establishing a Steering Group on the basis of the previous studies, plans and strategies discussed in Section 0. The Steering Group comprises of the following organisations: Transport Scotland, HITRANS, Network Rail, CMAL, ScotRail, CalMac and Argyll & Bute Council.

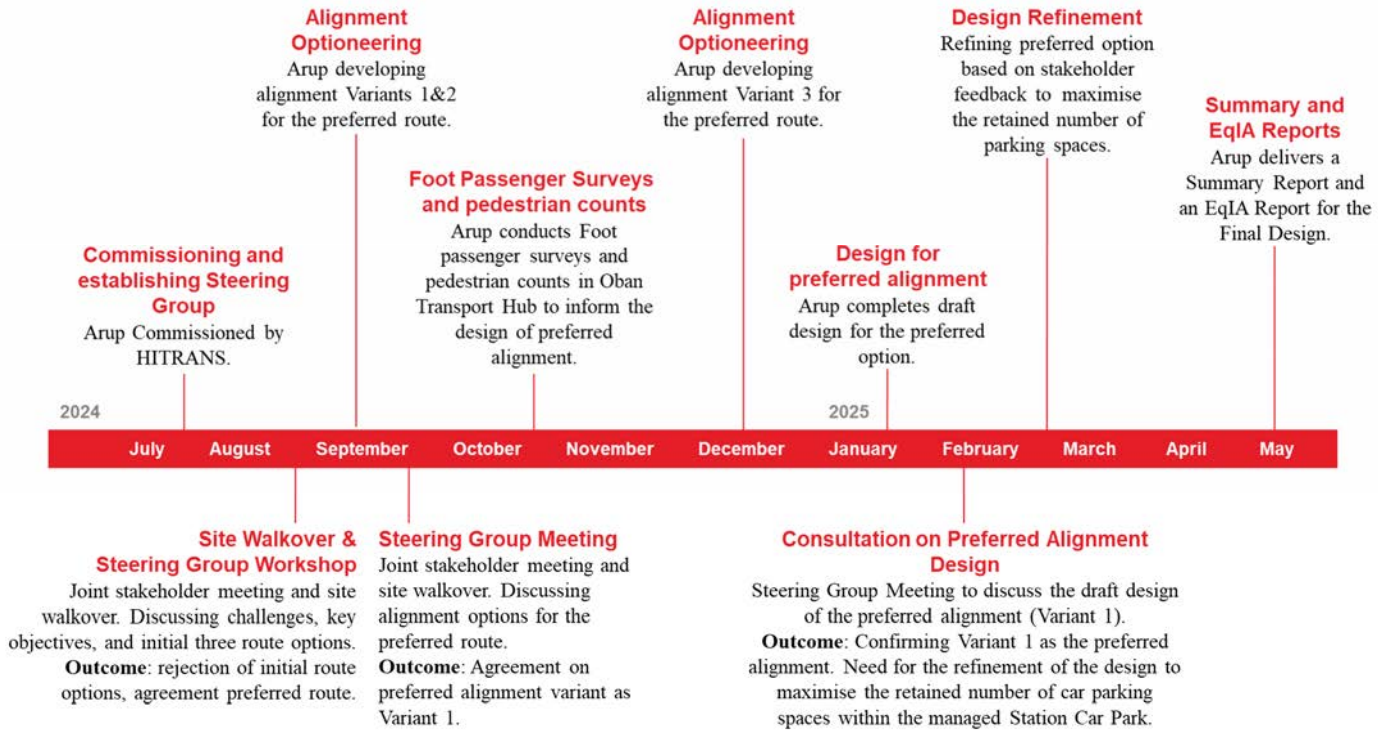


Figure 9: Design & consultation process

3.2 Initial Site Walkover, Challenges and Objectives

Prior to and following the initial Steering Group meeting on 30 August 2024, information regarding the study area was obtained including the title information, utilities, OS and the topographical mapping. This information is indicated in Drawings 1 to 4 in the Drawings section of this report.

On 30 August 2024, the Steering Group and Arup held an optioneering and outcomes meeting and undertook a conjoined walkover of the study area (as shown in Figure 2) to discuss the challenges, requirements and objectives of the project. The meeting was also used to discuss the initial three route options indicated in Figures 10, 11 and 12 opposite, where Appendix C includes the Arup presentation to the Steering Group that highlighted possible route options and options for covered walkway systems.

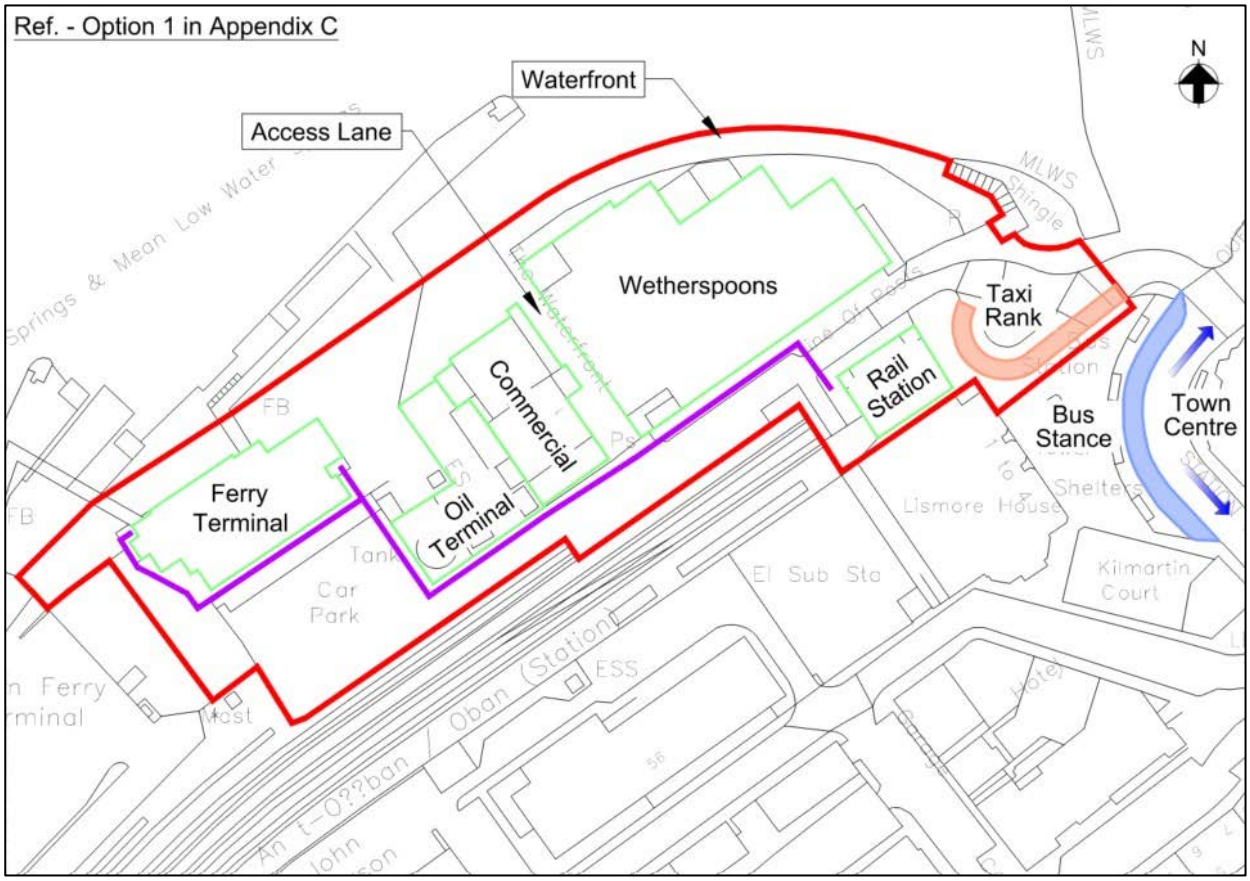


Figure 10: Option 1 - most direct route between rail station & Ferry Terminal buildings (not currently available)

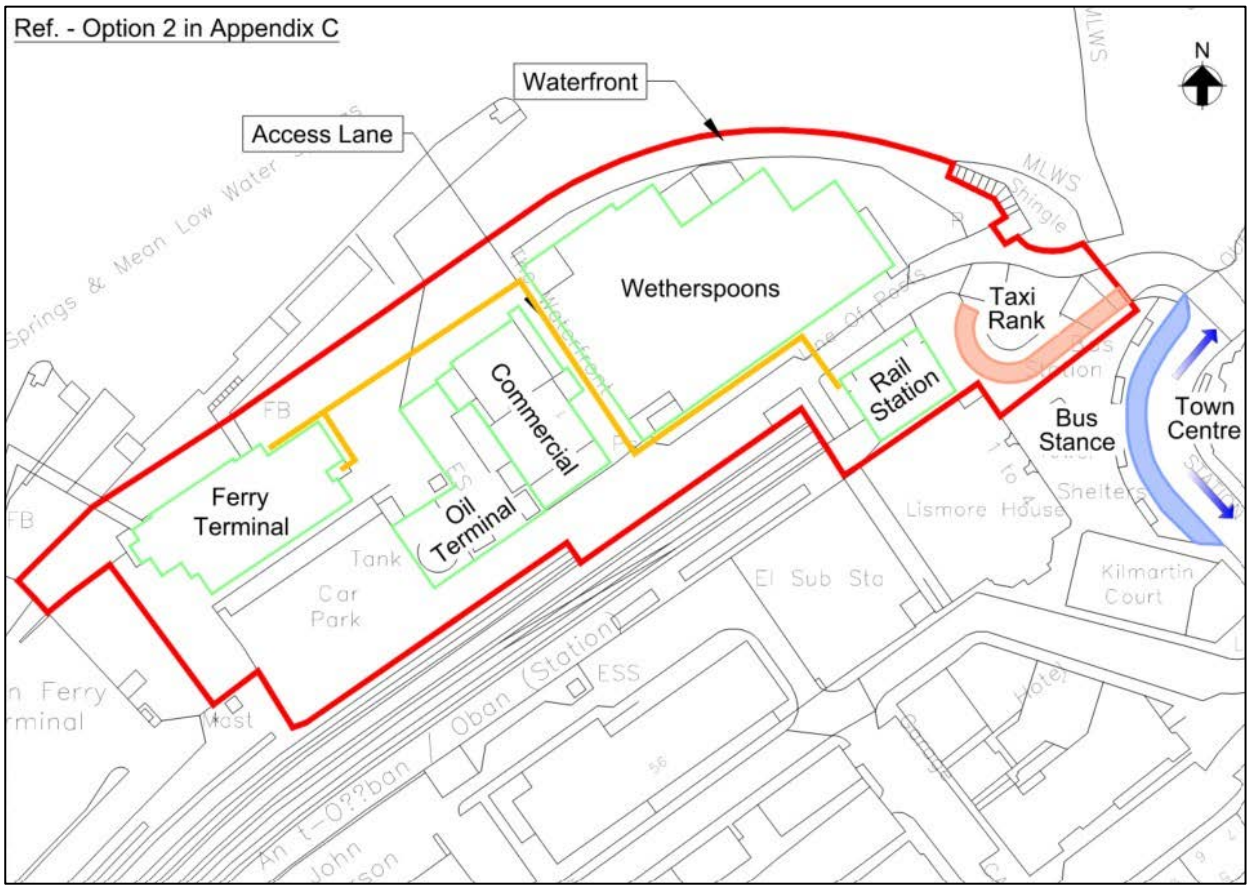


Figure 11: Option 2 – Current Access Lane Route

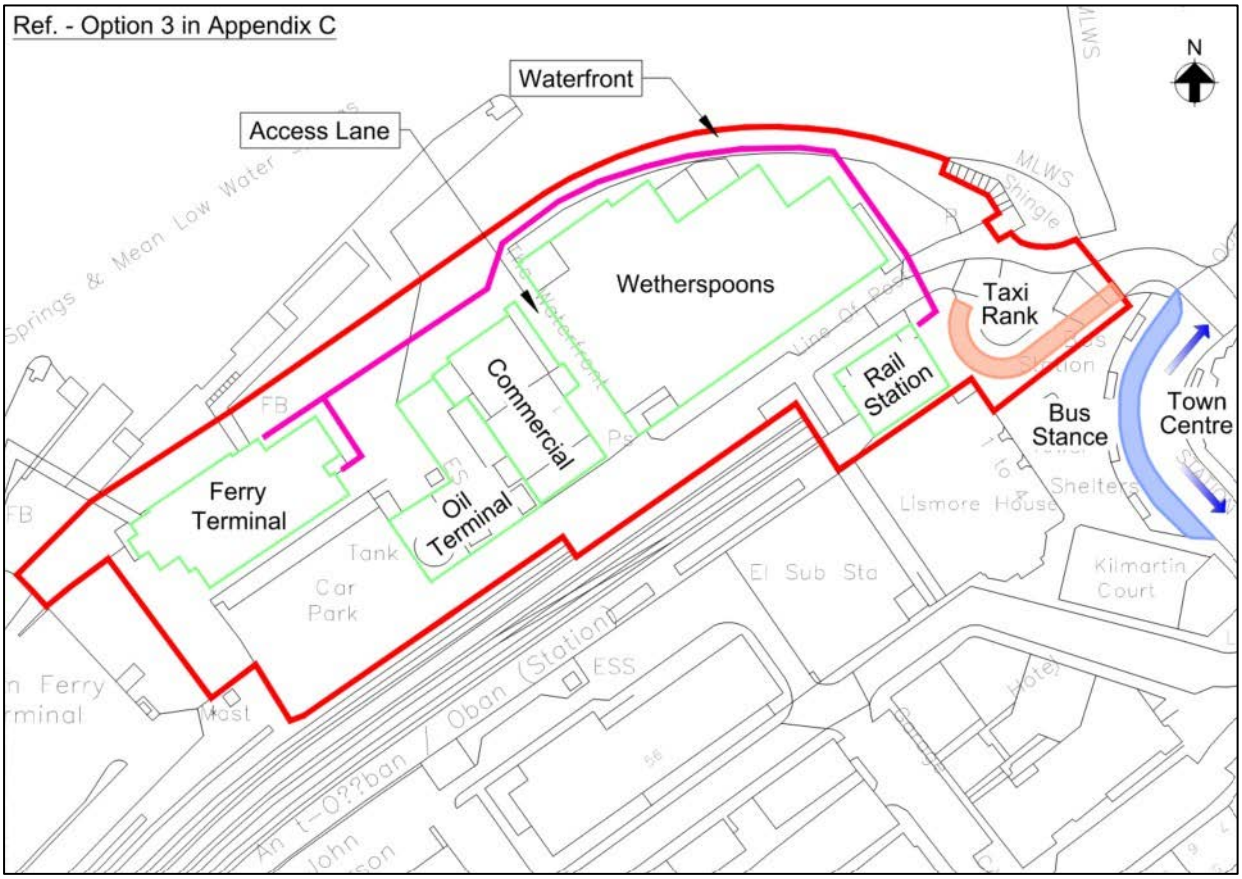


Figure 12: Option 3 – Existing Waterfront Route

3.2.1 Initial Study Area Challenges

The initial site walkover in August 2024 provided an opportunity for the Steering Group to observe factors that deter active travel, inclusion and connectivity between the Ferry Terminal and rail station/platforms and, subsequently, the bus stances and taxis, the town centre services and facilities. It was recognised that these challenges are materially diminishing Oban's Gateway to visitors and represent a barrier to the continued economic benefits attributed to tourism within the area.

The following identified challenges form part of the overall series of issues to be addressed in the short, medium and longer term and are directly attributed to the short-term actions to better integrate and connect the rail station and ferry terminal by walking and wheeling:

- Conflict between pedestrians and moving and parked vehicles on the current routes, including larger operational vehicles attributed to the Port and harbour activities and those serving the commercial units on the Access Lane and Waterfront. Figures 13 and 14 opposite indicate typical existing conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians at the Access Lane and at the northern end of the Waterfront route;
- Lack of physical integration between the rail station and the ferry terminal with people feeling unsure and exposed due to the lack of direction and that part of the route feels like a back alley;
- Insufficient and contradictory directional signage between the rail station and the ferry terminal;
- Lack of dedicated and pedestrian crossings and walkways between the rail station and ferry terminal;
- Poor first impressions to Oban by first time visitors due to a lack of sense of arrival and the station area and locality being unwelcoming;
- Partial and inconsistent marked walkways between the rail station and ferry terminal;
- No intervisibility between the rail station and the ferry terminal and ferries;

- Clutter and obstructions on the current routes; and
- Uneven surfacing and trip hazards.

Figure 13: Typical pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the Access Lane

Figure 14: Typical pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the northern end of the Waterfront route

3.2.2 Project Objectives

The following objectives were identified to respond to the challenges discussed in Section 3.2.1. These have been used to inform the Arup assessment of the route and alignment options and design development for the Oban Integration project:

- Reduce/remove conflict between vehicles and those walking and wheeling between the rail station and the ferry terminal, improving the safe passage of vulnerable users and the operational functions within the study area;
- Create a gateway to Oban for those travelling by rail and by ferry;
- Improve the integration of the rail station, bus terminus and ferry terminal by creating an integrated transport hub that includes a high-quality walkway with CCTV between the rail station and the ferry terminal;
- Reduce clutter and obstructions between the rail station and the ferry terminal;
- Improve signage and wayfinding within the area to the key destinations including the town centre, buses and taxis, the rail station and platforms and the ferry terminal;
- Deliver specific crossing points between the rail station and the ferry terminal; and
- In relation to ScotRail's mode share targets, support the increase of walking & wheeling trips to rail station to 50% and the reduction in car-borne trips to 10%.

3.2.3 Initial Route Options

The Steering Group meeting was used to discuss the initial three route Options 1, 2 and 3 (Figures 10, 11 & 12 respectively), which are combined in Figure 15 opposite. Options 2 and 3 would utilise the existing Access Lane and Waterfront routes.

Option 1 (Figure 10) does not currently exist due to the metal fencing between the ScotRail car park and the Ferry Terminal and would partially utilise the initial section of Option 2 and access the Ferry Terminal building via the ScotRail main car park area and the removal of a section of the current metal fencing.

Option 2 (Figure 11) follows the Rail Station car park access road operated by ScotRail, the Access Lane to the south-west of the Wetherspoons building and part of the Waterfront route.

Option 3 (Figure 12) follows the Waterfront route along the frontage of the Wetherspoons unit, passing the commercial buildings and the oil terminal.

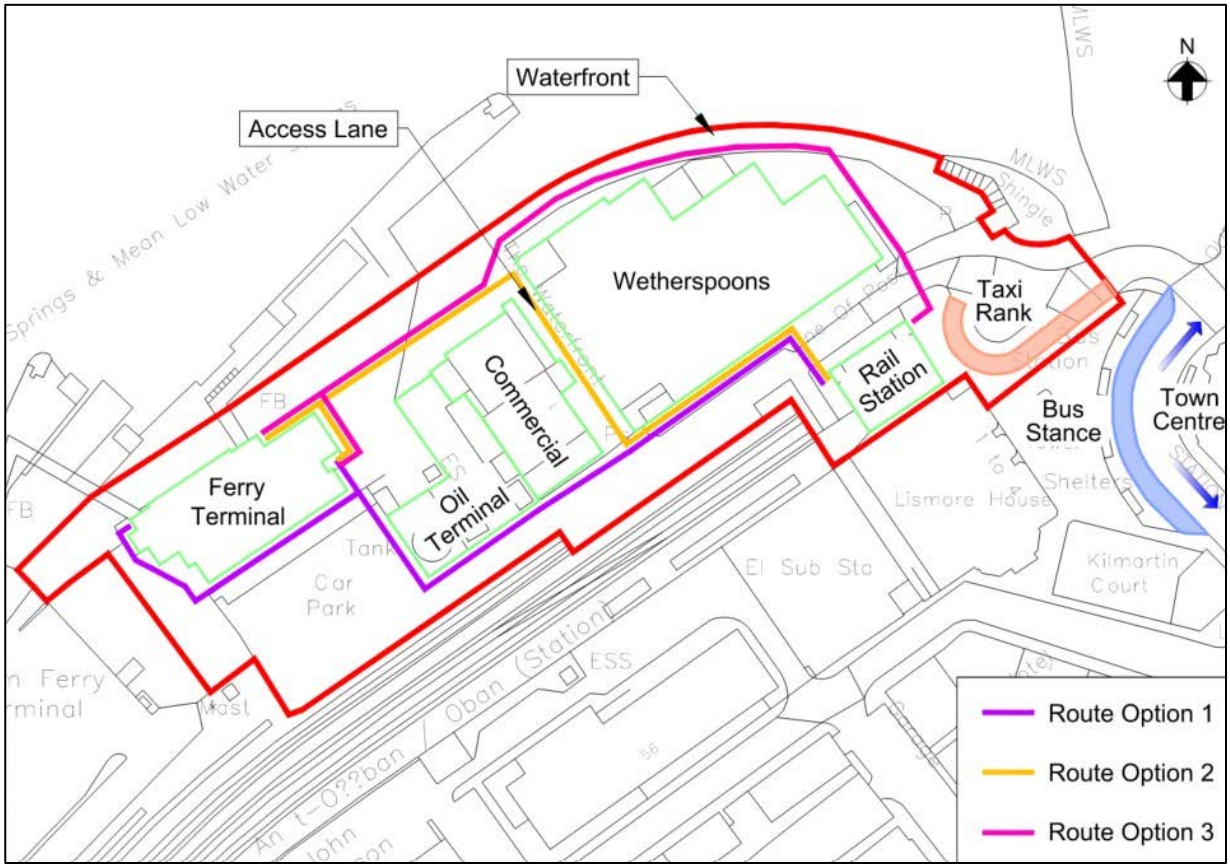


Figure 15: Initial Route Options (Options 1, 2 and 3)

The Steering Group rejected Options 2 and 3 during the initial workshop due to the clear operational challenges and safety concerns as well as compromises and constraints to achieving the stated objectives summarised in Section 3.2.2. The overview of the hazards, constraints & risks of these two route options along the existing Waterfront and Access Lane routes are indicated in Drawings 9 and 10 respectively and summarised in Tables A1 and A2 respectively in Appendix A.

In addition to the rejection of the existing Options 2 and 3, the Steering Group confirmed the preferred route Option 1 shown in Figure 15, which has informed the eventual preferred route Option 8 indicated by Figures 1 and 21 and in Drawing 7 in the Drawings section of this report. Option 8 provides modifications to Option 1 with adjustments that address and remove the vast majority of the operational challenges and safety concerns attributed to the current Options 2 and 3. Drawing 11 and Table A3 of Appendix A identify the significantly reduced risk and constraints attributed to the resulting preferred Option 8.

At 133 metres, Option 1 and ultimately Option 8 are materially shorter than the existing rejected route Options 2 and 3 (at 152m and 180m). The walk distances are indicated in Drawing 8 in the Drawings section of this report.

The Steering Group considered the issue of covering the walkway and canopy options in close proximity to the live rail lines. The Steering Group, led by Network Rail and ScotRail rejected the option of covering the walkway due to concerns over safety, operation, security and maintenance matters. This was also rejected as the canopy structure would reduce the clear width of the walkway and pedestrian level of service, may reduce user confidence in terms of 'encouraging' anti-social behaviours. It was also recognised that the benefits of a canopy would be reduced by the inherent protection from inclement weather afforded by the adjacent buildings and structures along Option 1 shown in Figure 10.

3.3 Detailed Design of Preferred Route Option

From September 2024, Arup began to develop the design based on Option 1, including alignment optioneering, the form of the segregated walkway, car park optimisation, ferry passenger surveys and draft design development and consultation.

3.3.1 Alignment Optioneering

The alignment variants of Option 1 are indicated as Options 4 and 5 indicated by Figures 16 and 17 respectively. These options considered route alignment and crossing locations along the route of Option 1.

This considered issues such as accesisbility and inclusion, pedestrian-vehicle conflict, wayfinding, car parking and the retention of maintenance and servicing funtions for the various adjacent operators.

These alignment sub-options are also indicated by drawings SK-001 and SK-002 in Appendix D, which were circulated to the Steering Group in September 2024. Based on the Steering group feedback the alignment indicated in Option 4 (Figure 16) was confirmed as the optimum arrangement in terms of safety and operation, where these alignments were also included for reference in the subsequent 12 February 2025 Steering Group meeting discussed in Section 3.3.3.

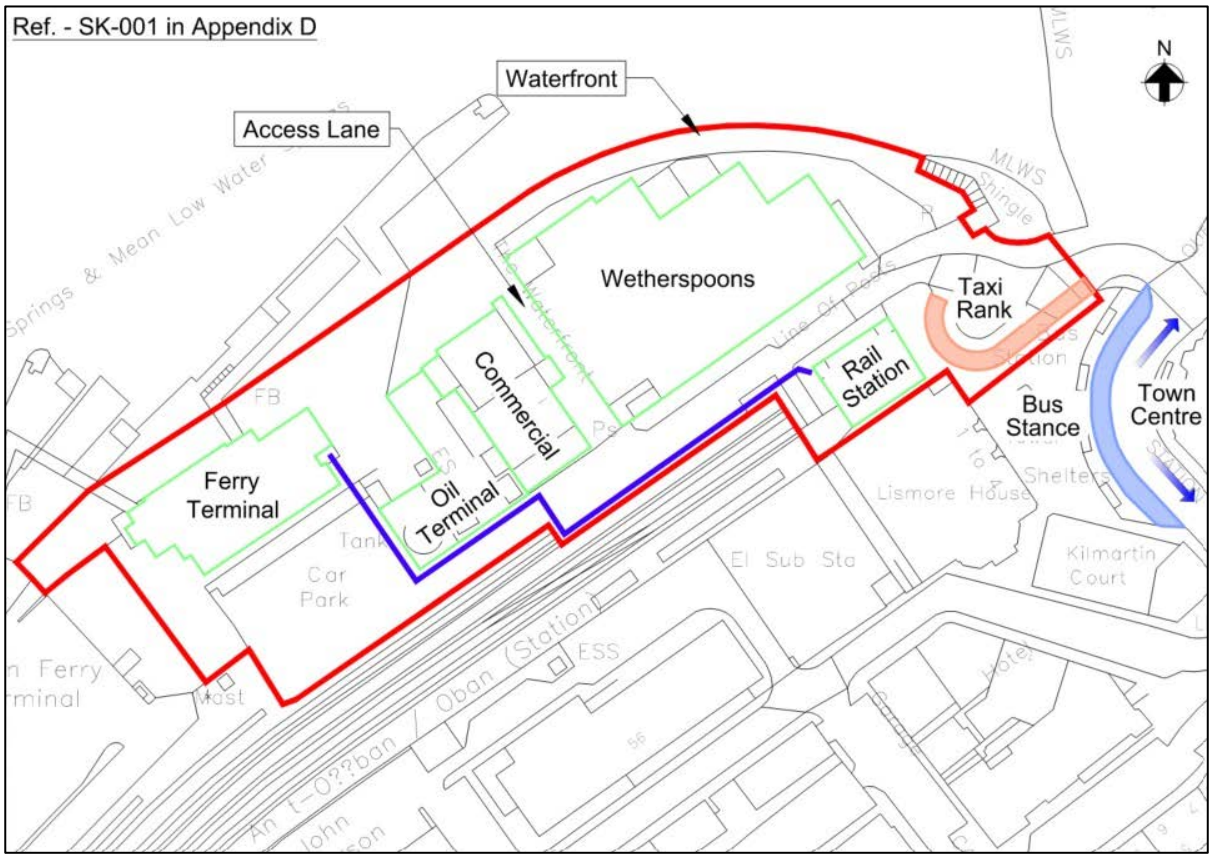


Figure 16: Option 4 – Route adjacent to Oil Terminal

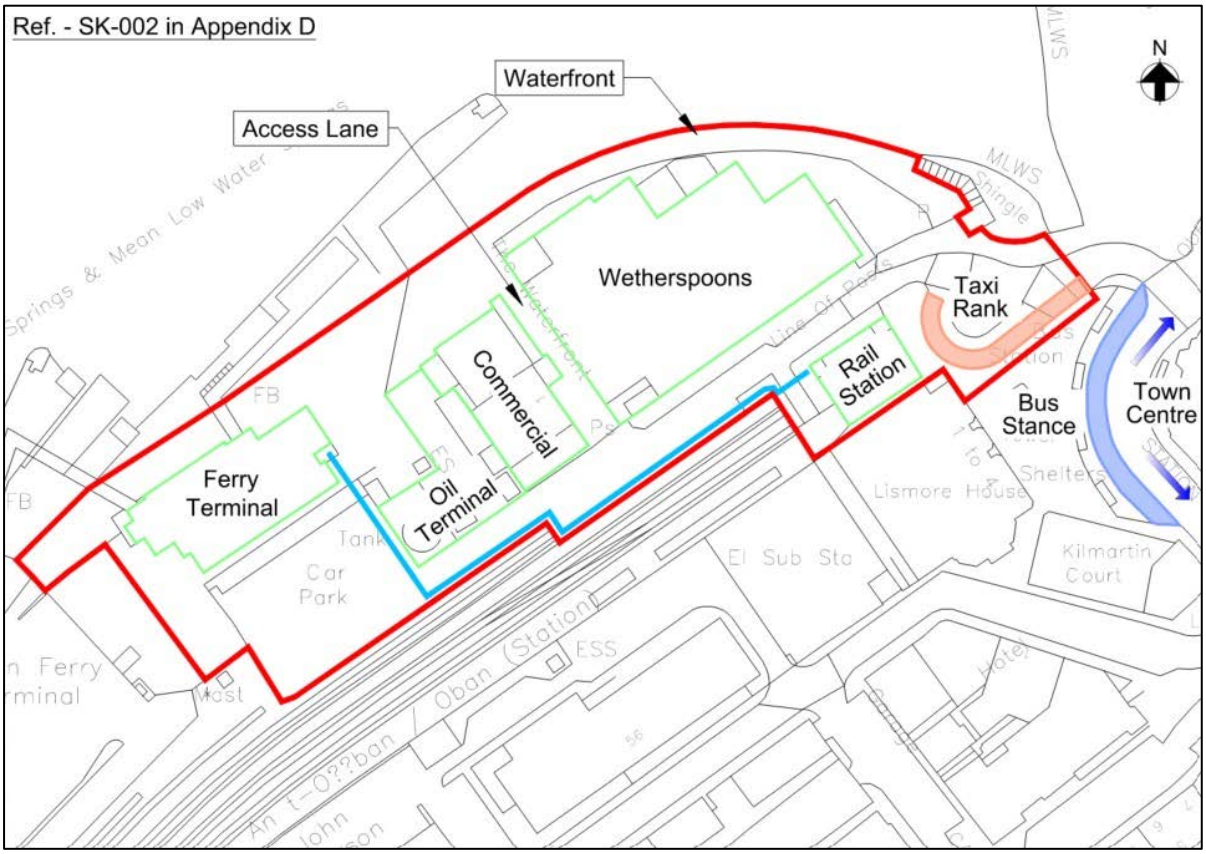


Figure 17: Option 5 – Route adjacent to Rail Platforms

3.3.2 October 2024 Ferry Passenger Surveys

To support the design development of the preferred route alignment (based on Option 4), ferry-based foot passenger surveys were carried out in October 2024 to identify the key issues attributed to the existing routes (Options 2 and 3) that should be considered and incorporated in the emerging design. The key findings of the passenger survey are as follows, where the full Passenger Survey Report is included in Appendix B:

- 70% of respondents walked as their predominant mode of travel to the ferry terminal, while 18% arrive by train.
- 85% of ferry foot passengers currently utilise the Waterfront route and reflects the 71% of foot-based ferry passengers utilising Entrance 2 of the ferry terminal and those from the smaller ferry berths.
- Observations and survey results were undertaken at a time when the weather was good (now/little wind, +13°C, no rain), where respondents confirmed that the use of the Access Lane route increased during inclement weather conditions due to the lack of shelter along the Waterfront route.
- There is almost an equal split of rail passengers walking between the rail station platform via the Waterfront and the Access Lane routes, although the Access Lane route is the most direct.
- The ferry terminal building and ferries are visible from the town centre when utilising the Waterfront route. These are not visible when utilising the Access Lane route, where there is a greater reliance on coherent wayfinding, particularly for first time or infrequent users.
- Directness is the most significant factor when choosing between the two existing pedestrian routes, however other material factors include poor and inconsistent wayfinding along both routes, inclement weather, poor lighting and a lack of vehicle/pedestrian segregation on the Waterfront route and poor surfacing and servicing/refuse activities on the Access Lane route.
- Other identified improvements include comprehensive wayfinding in the ferry terminal linked to any external wayfinding, unrestricted pedestrian access to the rail station platform, greater integration and

timetable flexibility to accommodate delayed services and improve transfer opportunities and reducing the impact of vehicles within the public realm space (Clocktower area) north of the rail station.

Figure 18 summarises key passenger responses on the types of improvements to the integration of pedestrian routes between the rail station and ferry terminal buildings. It shows that passengers prefer a segregated route with clear and consistent signage with a surface clear of obstructions/trip hazards. At the same time, the survey results show that the foot passengers did not see the need for a covered walkway where respondents from the island community confirmed that the use of the Access Lane and ScotRail access road provided sufficient shelter during inclement weather conditions.

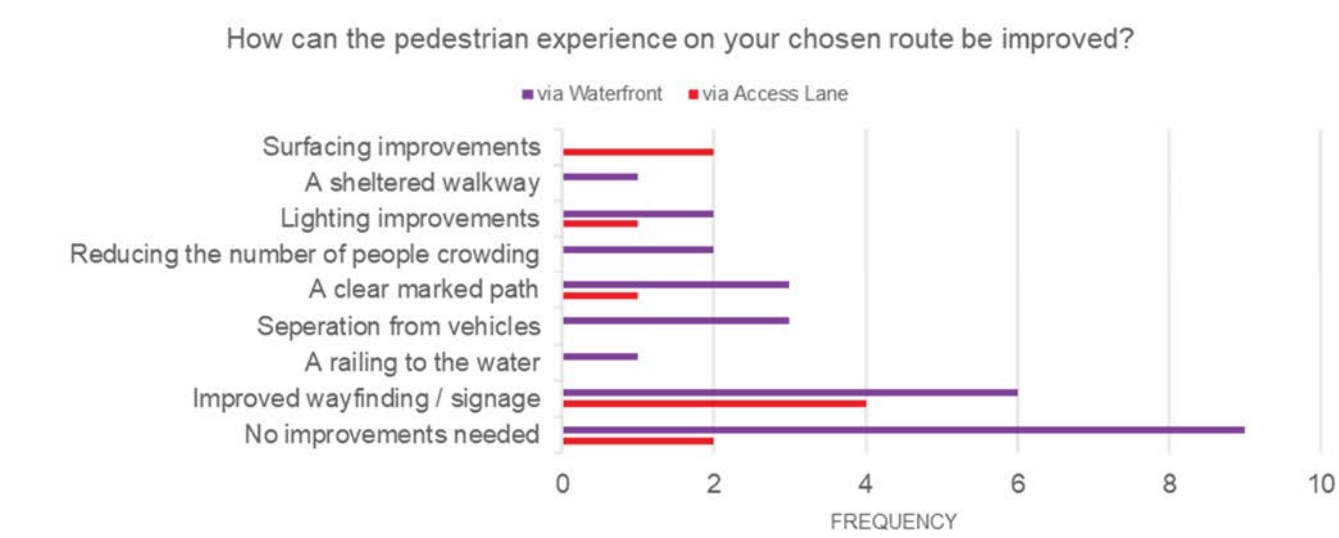


Figure 18: Ferry Passenger Identified Improvements for Integration

3.3.3 Draft Design and 12 February 2025 Steering Group Consultation

As noted, the design development relied on utilities and title search, topographical survey, as well as a subsequent site visit and a passenger travel survey and pedestrian counts undertaken in October 2024.

The resulting preferred route alignment of Option 4 (Figure 16) was presented to the Steering Group on 12 February 2025 (see Appendix D for full presentation). In advance of this meeting ScotRail requested that Option 4 be reviewed to maximise the retained number of car parking spaces within the ScotRail operated car park.

This resulted in various car park arrangements being considered and consulted upon both within the main section of the public car park as indicated by the variants in Option 6 and variants in the staff/Disabled/EV section of the current car park indicated within Option 7.

The Option 6 area is indicated by Figure 19 opposite and the car park variants contained in that area are indicated by Drawing 5 in the drawings section of this report. The Steering Group concluded that the optimum solution for this element of the car park should reflect the minor changes indicated by Option 6a shown in Drawing 5.

The Option 7 area is indicated by Figure 20 opposite and the car park variants indicated by Drawing 6 in the drawings section of this report. The Steering Group considered the merits and demerits of the Option 7 variants contained in Drawing 6 and concluded that these would not satisfy the outcomes and objectives for the Oban integration and would result in significant conflict for pedestrians. None of the options indicated in Option 7 (Drawing 6) were deemed acceptable.

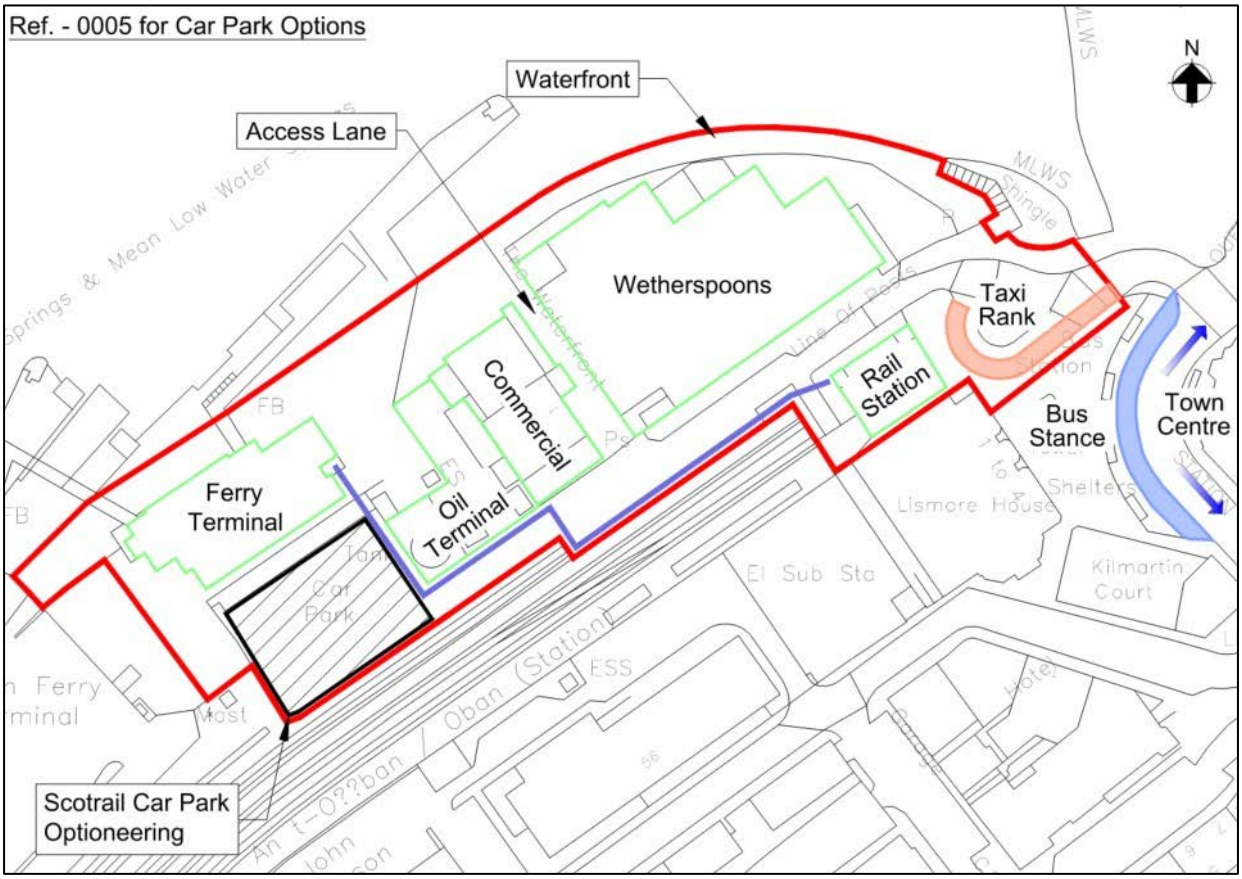


Figure 19: Option 6 – Option 4 route with main car park variants (refer to drawing 5 and Appendix D)

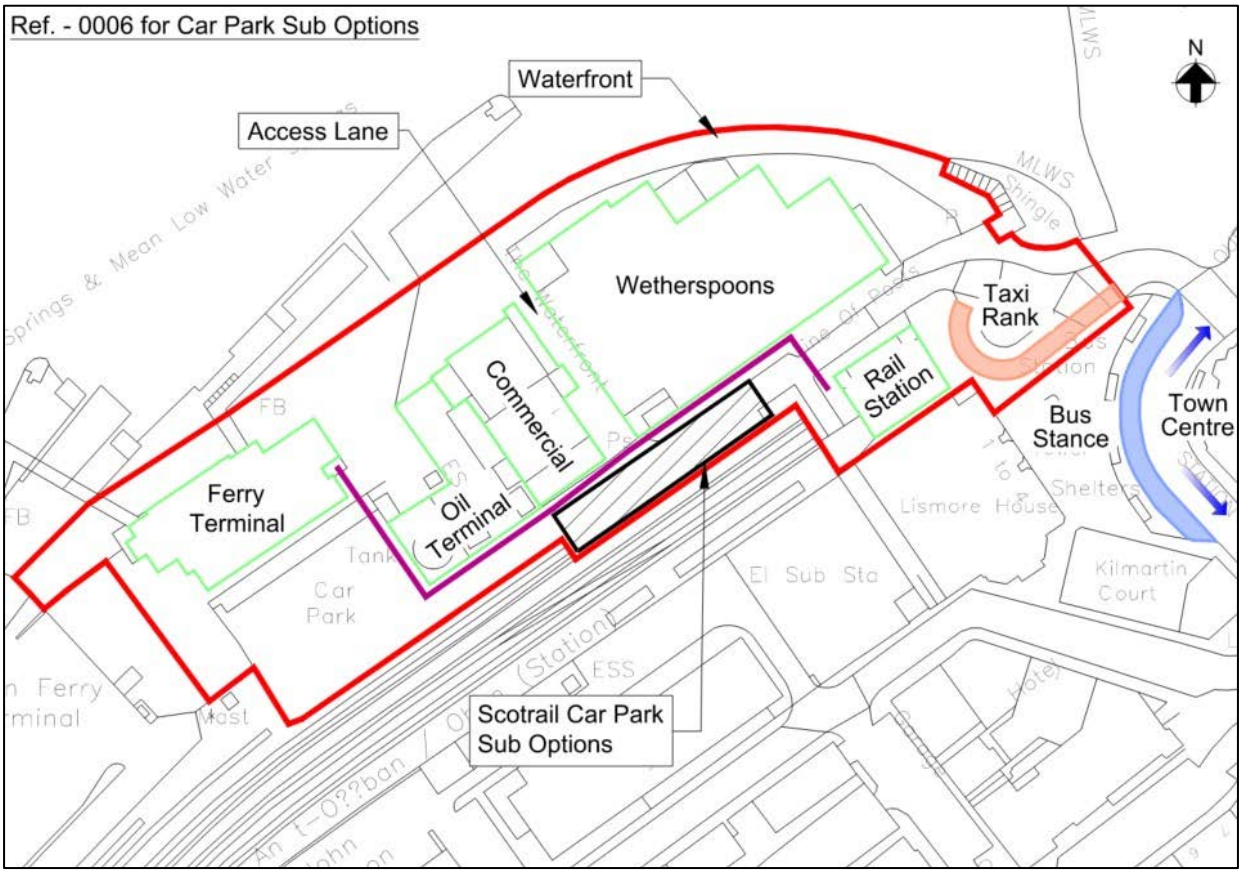


Figure 20: Option 7 – Option 4 route with secondary car park variants (refer to drawing 6 and Appendix D)

The presentation to the February 2025 Steering Group within Appendix D identified that since the introduction of the higher parking tariffs in August 2024, anecdotal evidence via ScotRail and through site observations confirmed the car park to be operating with significant reserve capacity. Table 9 summarises the current daily charging regime at the ScotRail station car parks, indicating the revised Oban tariffs represent the most significant charging regime of all stations across Scotland at £24.00 per day. Typically, daily charges are in the region of £3.00.

Table 9: Scotrail Car Parking Daily Charges

ScotRail Station Car Park	No. of Public Spaces	Daily Charge
Aberdeen	188	£3.50
Airdrie	139	£1.50
Arbroath	18	£1.00
Ayr	214	£3.00
Cupar	116	£1.00
Dumfries	134	£2.00
Dunbar	76	£4.00
East Kilbride	287	£1.50
Falkirk High	206	£2.50
Gourock	111	£3.00
Helensburgh Central	18	£3.00
Inverness (rear car park)	57	£6.00
Kilmarnock	101	£3.00
Newcraighall	560	£0.50
Oban	30	£24.00
Paisley Gilmour Street	75	£3.00
Perth	160	£3.00
Pitlochry	12	£1.50
Stirling	276	£3.50
Wemyss Bay	107	£.3.00

Source of data: ScotRail national website

Table 10 opposite summarises the observed car park occupancy during site visits in February, April and July 2025. These were undertaken by HITRANS staff passing through the Oban Rail Station and Ferry Terminal during the hours of 12:00 and 16:00, indicating the car park operating between 32% and 55%, where the car park is operating well below 'practical capacity'.

Typically, an 85% occupancy rate reflects the practical capacity for off-street car parks, however, this percentage value becomes less critical for smaller car parks such as the ScotRail car park in Oban, where the ease of vehicle circulation and direct access to spaces means that such car parks will operate more efficiently at higher levels of occupancy without impacting on the resilience, customer experience, income and operation. Typically, the practical capacity for smaller car parks is circa 90% occupation.

Whilst the spot counts do not allow for variables such as daily, seasonal or operational factors, it is clear from the multiple site visits since August 2024, including holiday periods, that the revised tariffs introduced by ScotRail have effectively managed the car park occupancy.

Table 10: Observed Spot Count Car Park Occupancy

Type of Space	Existing Provision	12 February 2025 Observed	16 April 2025 Observed	16 July 2025 Observed
Standard Public	37	10	16	24
Staff	6	5	3	1
EV	2	0	1	0
Disabled/Accessible	2	0	0	1
Total Occupancy	**47**	**15**	**20**	**26**
Occupancy Rate	**-**	**32%**	**43%**	**55%**

ScotRail has confirmed the number of complaints from staff and the public have all but ceased since the introduction of the revised tariffs regarding the lack of available spaces. ScotRail has also confirmed that parking revenue has materially increased since that time.

There were a number of illegally parked vehicle associated with businesses on the harbour area that were materially impacting on the safety of existing marked walking routes.

The outstanding action from the Steering Group was to consider further design options to minimise the loss of car parking spaces within the ScotRail car park while reducing the significant pedestrian-vehicle conflict stemming from the sub-options contained in Option 7 and Drawing 6 and to deliver the identified objectives and outcomes for the integration of Oban's Gateway.

No other outstanding matters were identified by the Steering Group members, where it was agreed that Option 4 indicated by Figure 16 represents the optimum route alignment that delivers the majority of the Oban Integration stated outcomes and objectives and that this could be delivered in the short term with limited impact, risk and costs.

3.3.4 Subsequent Refinement and Final Design

Figure 21 opposite presents the resulting preferred Option 8 as indicated by Drawing 7 within the Drawings section of this report. This delivers a compromise of preserving a safe continuous and segregated pedestrian route between Oban's Ferry Terminal and Rail Station, while minimising the loss of standard public parking spaces within the ScotRail-operated car park. This design maintains servicing and operational activities to the rail station and platforms, the commercial units and to the ferry terminal and portside activities.

The Option 8 design changes include reducing the segregated walkway width in places from 3.0m to 2.0m, which in turn enables the retention of parallel parking bays on the ScotRail access road adjacent to the rail platform.

Option 8 results in a total of 38 parking spaces (6 ScotRail staff, 2 disabled bays, 2 EV and 28 standard bays) compared to the current 47 spaces. The observations summarised in Table 9 represent an occupancy rate of between 32% and 55%. The proposed car park arrangement in Option 8 would result in an occupancy rate of between 39% and 68%, well below practical capacity.

All of the proposed parking spaces to be removed are public standard bays, where the number of staff, disabled/accessible and EV spaces will be retained.

Drawing 11 and Table A3 of Appendix A identify that the relocation of the two disabled bays further from the rail station building may represent a constraint for people with mobility issues. The text in Table A3 of Appendix A confirms that this will be mitigated by the fact that the disabled spaces will offer direct access to the segregated and signed walkway with formal crossings, that the disabled bays will now reflect design standards, easing and making safer the access and egress from the specific vehicles for those with mobility and/or other impairment, and that the design removes the need for those using all parking spaces to enter the live carriageway. In addition, it confirms that the eventual scheme could include a seated rest area along the segregated walkway to aid access.

As discussed, the car park typically operates well below practical capacity, where ScotRail has confirmed that the car park revenue has significantly increased as a direct result of the revised tariffs. The car park would be expected to continue operating well within practical capacity with easy access to parking spaces, where the revenue is unlikely to be materially affected by the loss of the 9 public parking spaces.

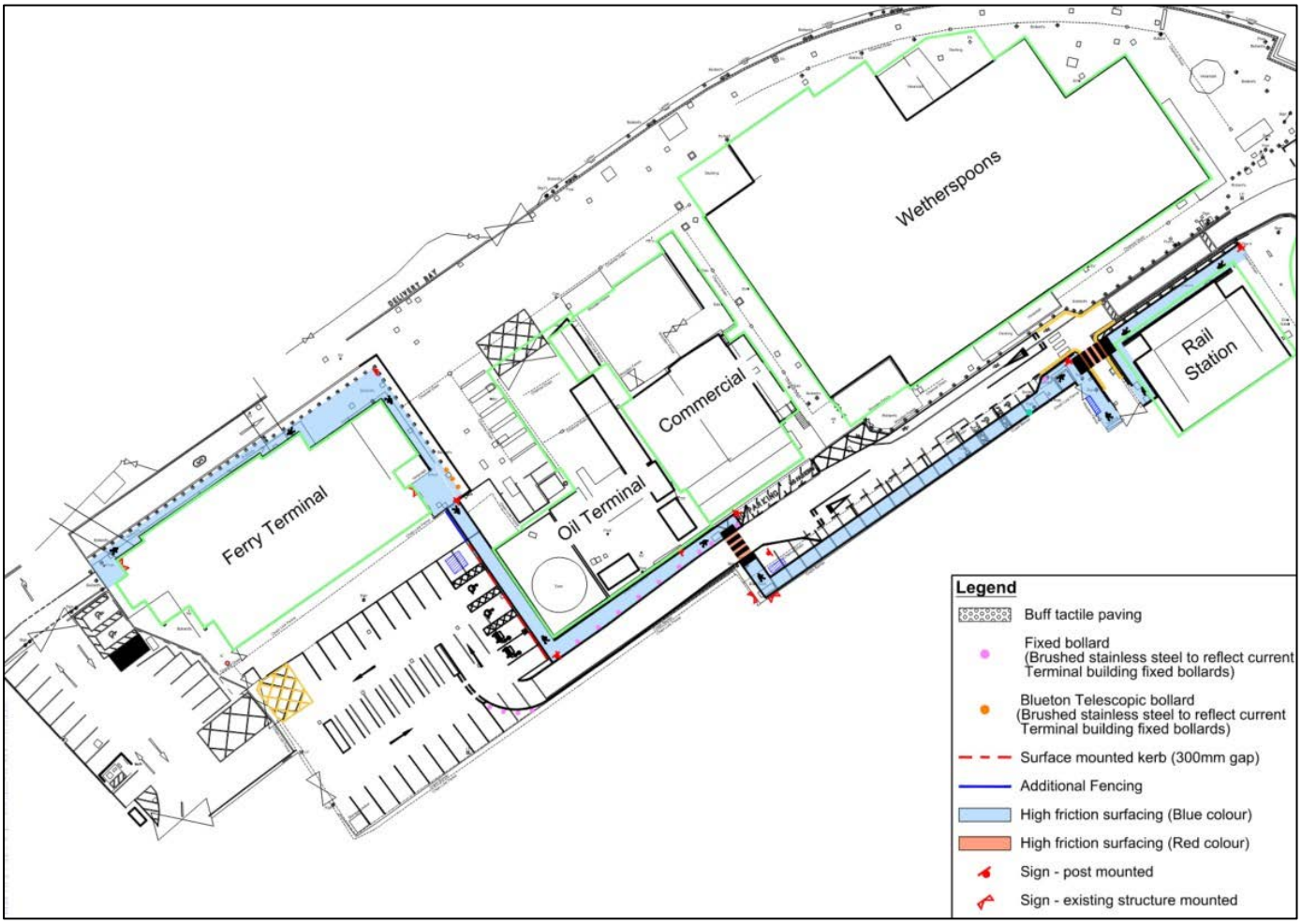


Figure 21: Option 8 Preferred Arrangement

To support the design development and in securing the financing and support for the delivery of Option 8, an Equality Impact Assessment Screening (EqIA) Report has been prepared and can be found in Appendix E. This indicates how Option 8 has considered and enhanced the inclusion and connectivity for various protected characteristics, allied to the reduced walk distance as indicated by Drawing 8, as well as the significant reduction in hazards, constraints and risk identified in Drawing 11 and Table A3 of Appendix A.

4. Operational & Financial Considerations

4.1 Operational Resilience

As discussed, the Oban Integration design and the Preferred Route Option in particular will deliver the key identified objectives set out by the current policy objectives, those identified for Oban's Gateway through previous studies and those defined by the Steering Group stakeholders (Sections 0, 2.2 and 3.2.2), by removing existing barriers to active travel and inclusion within the study area.

The resulting preferred Option 8 in Figure 21 and Drawing 7 maintains and enhances the operational functions within the ferry terminal and port as well as the harbour activities such as the fishing trawlers and other commercial units on the Waterfront and Access Lane. This facilitates a reduction in the numbers of vulnerable pedestrians along the Waterfront accessing the ferry terminal and ferries, reducing conflict and risk with vehicles and allowing the commercial activities to operate in a more controlled environment.

The existing servicing and refuse collections for the commercial units via the ScotRail car park area will continue, where greater segregation with pedestrians and non-commercial vehicles is created via the segregated walkway, controlled crossings and the reorientation of the car parking bays. The service access to the commercial units along the Access Lane will be maintained by the yellow box area and will significantly reduce the current levels of conflict between pedestrians and vehicle/servicing activities (see Figures 4 and 13).

Operational access to the rail station and the port/ferry terminal buildings will be unaffected and maintained as part of the proposals. Indeed, the segregation of pedestrians from these key areas would be expected to enhance the operational effectiveness of these facilities and services.

Retained car parking numbers within the ScotRail car park will be maximised, where 38 parking bays are retained and enhanced. This represents 81% of the current provision and will allow the car park to continue operating within practical capacity with sufficient availability of spaces. This maintains the following provision:

- 28 standard bays (reduction of 9 spaces from existing);
- 6 ScotRail staff bays (as per existing);
- 2 accessible/disabled bays (as per existing); and
- 2 EV bays (as per existing).

The relocation of the accessible/disabled bays further from the rail station is within current standards, where these will be located directly adjacent to the segregated walkway and one of the two car park pay stations. This affords those with mobility/visual impairment and/or other conditions to access services and facilities away from traffic and free from vertical changes and trip hazards. The users will also benefit from clear wayfinding surface material, lining, signing and tactile paving. While not specifically indicated in Drawing 7, the proposal would also facilitate seating along the route to offer a rest area.

This contrasts with the current provision for accessible/disabled parking, which although closer to the rail station, requires those users to enter the live carriageway and to divert towards the rail platform gate to access the only drop kerb and ramped access to the rail station and the town centre. This exposes those with additional needs to live traffic and diverted routing, where little assistance is currently offered by consistent wayfinding (signage and road markings). In addition, those vulnerable users are also required to traverse potholes and other trip hazards given the surface condition of the ScotRail car park access road and the open drainage channels along the Waterfront and the Access Lane.

ScotRail's revised parking tariffs were introduced in August 2024 to increase the availability of parking spaces for rail users and to maintain income. Discussions with ScotRail and anecdotal evidence through various site visits confirmed that the income from car parking has substantially increased since the introduction of the revised tariffs, while the occupancy rate has materially dropped to circa 32%-55% over that same period (refer to Table 10).

This data suggests that the revised tariffs have deterred general longer stay car parking and freed-up the car park provision for staff and rail users. The current occupancy rates also suggest there is increased resilience within the car park operation and scope for ScotRail to further adjust the tariffs going forward should this be deemed operationally and/or commercially beneficial.

The reduction in standard parking bays would not be expected to impact on the current operation, the future resilience or ScotRail's car parking income and will deliver a more efficient car park arrangement to current design standards, along with the necessary pedestrian segregation and wayfinding for staff and the public alike.

4.2 Financial Considerations

HITRANS submitted an Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) bid to Transport Scotland in February 2025 based on the Preferred Route Option. The ATIF is for the capital funding to deliver the detailed design, tender package and for the construction of the Oban Integration proposal in the short term. At the time of writing, the ATIF bid is being considered by Transport Scotland. Given the above there would be no capital funding impact for the operators and landowners within the Steering group.

The construction of the proposals would be expected to result in limited short-term operational disruption to the ScotRail car park, particularly during the scarification and resurfacing of the area. The contractor will be required to identify and agree the programme for delivery of the works with ScotRail, Network Rail. CMAL, and Argyll & Bute Council to minimise the impact on the Port, harbour, rail services, car parking, public areas and the commercial units during construction. The proposals are not significant, where access for all parties will either be retained or diverted via alternative routes for designated periods under agreement and the Construction Management Plan (CMP).

The construction works would be expected to result in partial closure of elements of the car park, which may impact on the short-term availability of parking spaces and to revenue. The impact of this will again be managed and minimised through the agreement of the programme (outwith peak demand periods) and the CMP with key stakeholders in the Steering Group.

The ongoing maintenance (revenue) costs attributed to the Oban Integration proposal should be negligible when considered against the maintenance and management of the current asset portfolio for the Ferry Terminal and Rail Station. The proposals include the scarification and resurfacing of the rail station car park and access road, which are currently in need of localised repair to remove potholes, cracking and trip hazards as well as any programme for reapplying the road markings, etc.

As such, the proposals will renew and refresh the ScotRail access road and car park areas (inc. the provision of an additional pay station), which will reduce the maintenance burden in the short and medium term. In the longer term, maintenance of the proposals will fall to the Port and rail operators and require an element of coordination to ensure any future repair and replacement of wayfinding, materials, etc, remain consistent across the two titles. It would be expected the members of the Steering Group would continue to liaise and coordinate services and resource to ensure the segregated walkway is maintained in a fully coordinated manner to maximise the benefits and to reduce risk. The design of the proposals utilises industry standard signage, surfacing, bollards, and other materials that are cost effective and readily available. The proposal is predicted to have a marginal positive effect on the operator's short and medium-term maintenance (revenue) costs for these areas and expected to result in a negligible effect on the longer-term revenue costs.

In terms of the risk profile, it is clear from Drawings 9, 10 and 11 and the risk assessment in Appendix A that Option 8 will significantly reduce the frequency and severity of hazards and remove constraints and therefore risk for those walking between the ferry terminal/ferries and the rail station, rail platforms and the wider town centre. Whilst Option 8 will facilitate increased pedestrian movement within the ScotRail/Network Rail title, when compared to the current available routes, the residual risks indicated in Drawing 11 and Table A3 of Appendix A are not significant and could be reduced further with minor changes to the crossing location on the ScotRail access road. The overall reduction in risk and the removal of barriers to active travel users and to inclusion within the study area and the Oban Gateway is significant.

5. Conclusion

Arup has been commissioned by HITRANS to develop the design for active travel improvements to integrate Oban Rail Station and town centre with the Oban Ferry Terminal. The Arup commission has supported the submission of an ATIF bid to Transport Scotland in February 2025 for future funding to conclude the design development and to implement the proposed Oban Integration improvements.

The Option 8 proposal for the preferred Oban integration was identified through stakeholder consultation and through historic and more recent travel surveys, observations and assessment. The proposals will deliver the identified actions and outcomes of the Steering Group to materially improve the integration and connectivity within what is recognised as Oban's Gateway and strategic transport hub, reducing barriers and enhancing economic, social and health opportunities by means other than the private car in accordance the Scottish Government's movement hierarchy and stakeholder targets for sustainable stations and mode shift.

Option 8 will maintain and in part enhance the operation of the Port and harbour, rail station and commercial units, while delivering a segregated, level, lit and clear and consistent walkway for those walking and wheeling between Oban's ferry terminal and the rail and bus stations.

It is expected that Option 8 will have no material impact on the operation of the ScotRail car park. The preferred option will result in the removal of 9 out of 37 standard public parking bays whilst retaining the current provision of 6 Scotrail staff, 2 accessible/disabled and 2 EV parking bays. Observed surveys undertaken in February, April and July this year indicate that the revised tariffs introduced by Scotrail have effectively managed the car park occupancy.