

BUCKLEY TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENT

REPORT 2 A NEW TOWN SQUARE

Final Report - February 2012



environmentalassociates
urban designers • landscape architects • masterplanners



BUCKLEY TOWN CENTRE

A NEW TOWN SQUARE

REPORT 2

CONTENTS

Introduction

- Objectives 1

Development Options & Design Guidelines

- An Aspiration for a New Civic Space 4
- Development Options 5
- Design Principles 6
- Design Qualities & Materials 8
- Two Development Scenarios 10
- Scenario 1 in Detail 11
- Scenario 2 in Detail 14
- Accommodating Short Stay Car Parking 17
- An Aspirational Public Realm Enhancement Vision 18



environmentalassociates

landscape architects • urban designers • environmental planners

8B Abbey Square, Chester, CH1 2HU, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1244 311666 Fax: +44 (0)1244 401337
email: ea@environmentalassociates.net
web: www.environmentalassociates.net

INTRODUCTION

Flintshire County Council commissioned Environmental Associates in October 2011 to prepare initial designs and design guidance for a new town square for Buckley and the provision of designs and design guidance for associated areas of town centre public realm, specifically, Precinct Way and the semi-pedestrianised section of Brunswick Road.

The study documents have been prepared in two reports.

Report 1 of the Buckley Town Centre Public Realm Study looks at the wider opportunities for enhancement of the town, in particular Brunswick Road, Precinct Way and the relocation of the War Memorial.

Report 2 looks in detail at the specific opportunities to create a new focus for the Town Centre, a town square and new civic space.

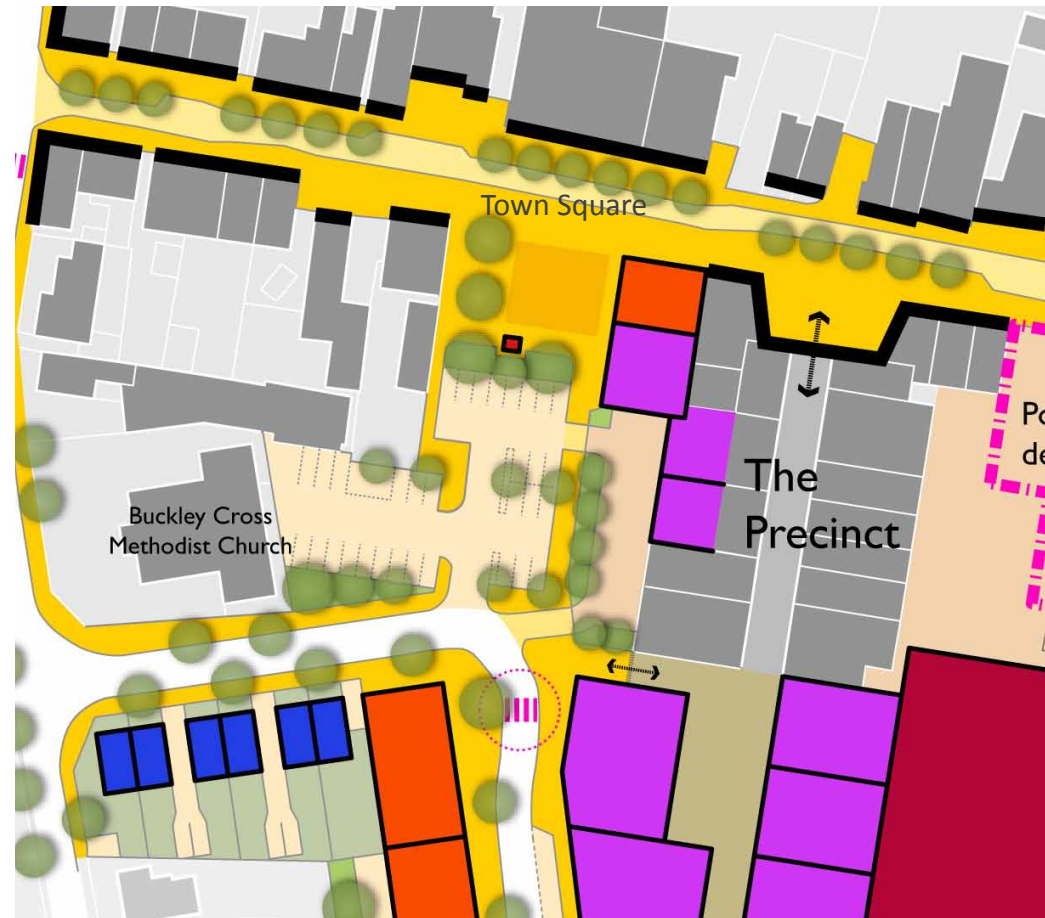
OBJECTIVES

The development of a town square adjacent to Brunswick Road, provides a significant potential stimulus for commercial and social benefit and wider public realm enhancement.

The specific detail design of the square will be finalised as funds and possible development partners are identified. The main purpose of this report is to guide and to control the future design and development of the space, and to provide a benchmark for the quality expected, which will ensure the aspirations set out here and in the Buckley Masterplan are realised and the benefits to the community and economy of the town maximised.

As plans for the various development sites located close to the town centre come forward, this document should be considered as a first step towards guiding change, and can be used to inform negotiation with private sector developers. It is anticipated that potential developers will have an important part to play in the enhancement of the town centre and the development of the town square, through partnership or funding arrangements, such as section 106 agreements.

Fig 1 - Adopted Buckley Town Centre Masterplan - April 2011



A NEW TOWN SQUARE

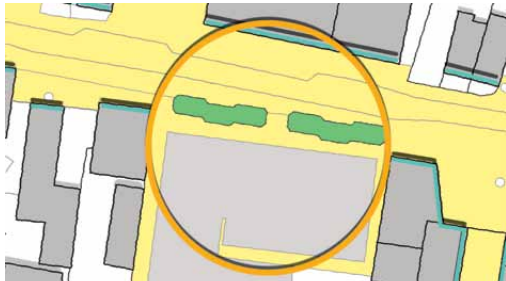
DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS
& DESIGN GUIDELINES

AN ASPIRATION FOR A NEW CIVIC SPACE

The location for a town square is identified in the Buckley Town Centre Masterplan as being on and around the area of the current Brunswick Road short stay car park.

Though no one option or preferred scheme can be selected at this stage, this report explores various layout options for the proposed Town Square and assesses their relative pros and cons in terms of; land assembly, retail footprint, spatial enclosure, movement and the arrangement of activities, landscape elements and parking within the space.

This report also sets out design principles and recommends materials to guide and inform future decision making, design and implementation.



Stakeholder Comment

'Encourage new cafes and restaurants in town and in particular around the square.'

The British Legion and others were concerned that if the war memorial was relocated in the square it may be vulnerable to vandalism and abuse.

Aspiration: To create a multipurpose public space (Town Square) in the heart of Buckley town centre, providing an attractive and 'active' community focus, suitable for daily and yearly activities, with 'spill out' space for cafes, bars, restaurants and accommodating festivals, market days and celebratory events.



DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Option 1 – Square retaining short stay parking, a multi use space with no new building development



New development footprint area = 0 sq.m

Strength :

- The square could be used as a shared space for both parking and amenity purposes.
- The square could be developed immediately and the design could accommodate potential future development
- The square could be extended to the south into the car park for special events

Weakness:

- This option has only one 'active' (north side) existing retail frontage.
- No new retail development to create additional revenue
- Minimal activities, overlooking and surveillance of the square

Option 2 – Square as per Buckley Town Centre Masterplan, May 2011



New development footprint area
Local Authority land = 290 sq.m (3,122sq.ft)

Strength :

- The square has 2/3 sides of 'active' retail/commercial frontage with potential new development on the eastern edge of the square attached to The Precinct
- The square could be extended to the south into the car park for special events.
- All development is on local authority owned land

Weakness:

- The square would result in the loss of up to twenty four parking spaces
- The southern side of the square facade is 'open' to the car park and The Precinct service yard.

Option 3 – Square with new building development mainly accommodated within Local Authority ownership land



New development footprint area
Local Authority land = 339 sq.m (3,649sq.ft)

Strength :

- The square is well defined by a potentially attractive, new development mainly within Local Authority land
- The square has a good number of 'active' frontages which will encourage various activities at different times of the day and year
- The square is physically separated from the car park by new development
- Brings a high degree of activity & surveillance into the space

Weakness:

- The square would result in the loss of up to twenty four car parking spaces
- Difficult to achieve 'active' frontages and attractive facades to southern side (car park elevation) of new development

Option 4 – Square with new building development accommodated on private & public land



New development ground floor area
Local Authority land = 379 sq.m (4,080sq.ft)
Private sector = 127 sq.m (1,367sq.ft)

Strength :

- The square is defined by four sides of 'active' frontage, with new & existing development
- The square has the maximum number of 'active' frontages which will encourage various activities at different times of the day and year
- Brings a high degree of activity & surveillance into the space

Weakness:

- The square would result in the loss of up to twenty seven car parking spaces
- The square is the optimal size, but new commercial/retail development as illustrated, requires public-private partnership
- Difficult to achieve 'active' frontages and attractive facades to southern side (car park elevation) of new development

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

For the square to be a successful, well used space, it needs to be an attractive and inviting area, accommodating uses both during the day and in the evening, a flexible multi-purpose space, which can embrace a variety of events throughout the year.

A successful space is rarely developed as a happy accident and certain good design principles will ensure maximum environmental, social and economic return for investment in the area.

The various options which we have developed and tested with the project team and stakeholders, have also been appraised against a set of good design criteria - a Public Space MOT. These criteria are detailed in the appendix A.

Elements For a Successful Square in Buckley

Spatial Enclosure

The space needs to be well enclosed by buildings, structures and/or planting. In this case the treatment of the boundary between the short stay car parking and the square needs to provide a distinct separation of usage, possibly incorporating elements of visually permeable enclosure, such as; decorative panels or planted trellis.

Covered Walkways, Canopies & Awnings

It is anticipated that parasols, awnings or canopies would be encouraged within the curtilage of any restaurant/cafes.

Retail, Commercial and Leisure Development

For life and vitality the space needs 'active edges' buildings with windows and doors opening onto the square or better still cafes and restaurants which can 'spill out' onto the square. New development around the square should be one to two storeys high.

Architectural Structures

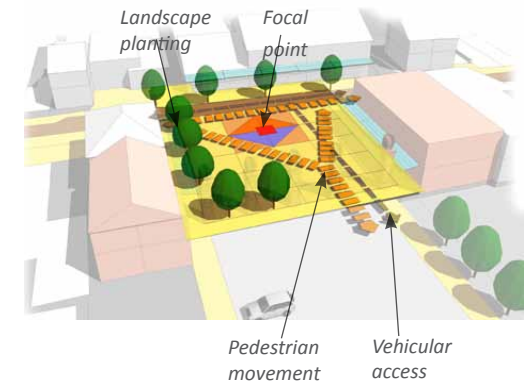
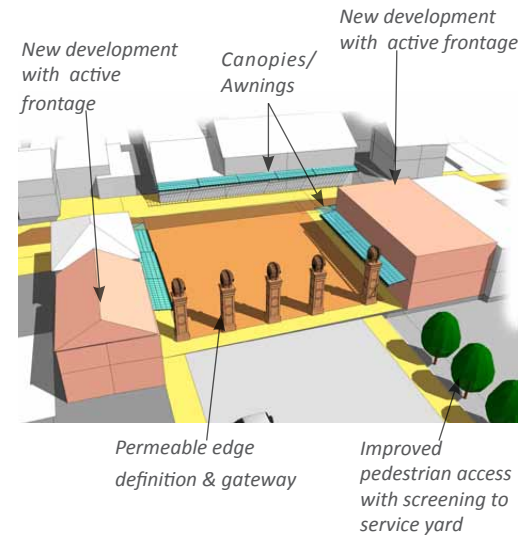
There is currently virtually no cover for pedestrians within the high street. The square would be an excellent location to provide both shade and shelter in inclement weather in the form of a dramatic visually prominent, multi-purpose structure in the form of a free standing shelter.

Access and Movement

There must be easy access for all, including those with push chairs or wheel chairs. Pedestrian desire lines should be unobstructed. Though movement through the space is to be encouraged, it should also allow for more static uses. Pedestrians should have priority in the square, when vehicles are given access it should be on shared surfaces.

Landscape Planting

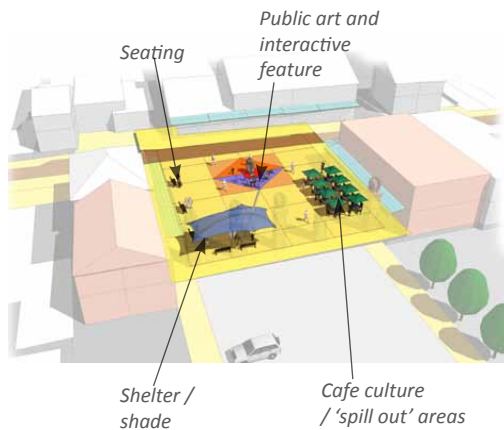
Planting introduces nature, colour and seasonal change into a town. In this case it also provides enclosure and 'gateways' into the space.



Activities, Features, Gateways, Public Art, Lighting and Seating

Designs for the square should provide a range of interesting elements both static and interactive, such as; 'spill out' areas from the enclosing properties, seating, artwork/sculpture, water features, shade/shelter and good lighting for aesthetic and security purposes.

The entrances into the space are important and can be defined with sculpture, structures, or other elements, which create a defined gateway or a locational marker.



A Multi-functional Space

Design should be able to accommodate a variety of activities, such as: market days, festivals, seasonal celebrations and other special events.



A Little More Detail

The specific detail design of the square will be finalised as funds and possible development partners are identified. The main purpose of this report is to guide and to control the future design and development of the space, to ensure the aspirations set out here and in the Buckley Masterplan are realised and the benefits to the community and economy of the town maximised.

The rest of this report explores the materials and design elements of a potential square in a little more detail, looking at two potential development scenarios, illustrating the key elements and design qualities which are important in order to create a successful civic space in the centre of Buckley.



DESIGN QUALITIES & MATERIALS

Paving Materials

A range of colours and patterns of clay paver have been used in the existing landscape scheme along the semi-pedestrianised Brunswick Road. To promote continuity and reinforce the identity and landscape character already established it is recommended that the same brick materials and colours are incorporated into the design of the square.

This paving is clay brick, locally sourced, from Ruabon, utilising the three standard colours of Red, Buff and Blue. This is a hard wearing, robust material, which retains its colour. As long as it is designed and laid properly it will last for many years.

Given the scale and proportion of the square and its pedestrian rather than vehicular use when compared to the High Street, larger modular paving material is considered appropriate. We recommend concrete or natural stone slabs 450mm x 450mm max to create a more prestigious, contemporary finish. Small unit slabs, such as; the Marshalls 'Saxon' range or similar would be suitable.



Introduction of new slab paving material

Planting

We would recommend medium-larger growing trees, with a minimum 2.5 m high clear stem. Where planted in paved areas these require large (min. 2m x 2m), decorative tree grilles and could be protected by tree frames. Where trees in paving areas are located near service runs, root barriers should be included.

Both the tree grilles and tree frames could be bespoke design items, allowing for the involvement of artists or the local community in their design and themed to reflect some element of the Town's Heritage.

Tree Species which would be appropriate include:

- Fastigate Hornbeam
- Ornamental Pear
- Himalayan Birch
- Pillar Crab Apple
- Sorbus Varieties



Art work

Furniture

Furniture should be consistent with the suite of furniture used along the semi-pedestrianised Brunswick Road.

Additional lighting columns will be required and we recommend these incorporate brackets for hanging baskets and also to allow for lighting during special events/festivals. CCTV with a view of the square and adjacent car park should be provided. The design and style of the lighting columns could be something dramatic, a new, vertical, 'sculptural' element.

Opportunities for more 'theatrical' lighting should be considered, such as; uplighting trees and shelters or shade structures. This additional lighting will enhance the evening experience and improve personal safety and security.



Uplit trees and fairy lights



Features & Public Art

The detail design for the square should seek every opportunity to introduce & promote interactive landscape features & public art, which would generate more social interaction, activities and experiences for those visiting Buckley town centre and using the space. A ground level water feature would be an ideal way of introducing some life and activity into the square. Art work and sculpture can be either individual, stand alone items or carefully integrated within the design of paving, seating, walls, screens and other features.



Interactive water feature

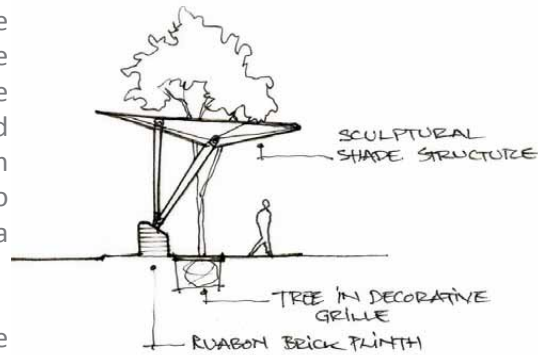


Sculptural canopy & shade

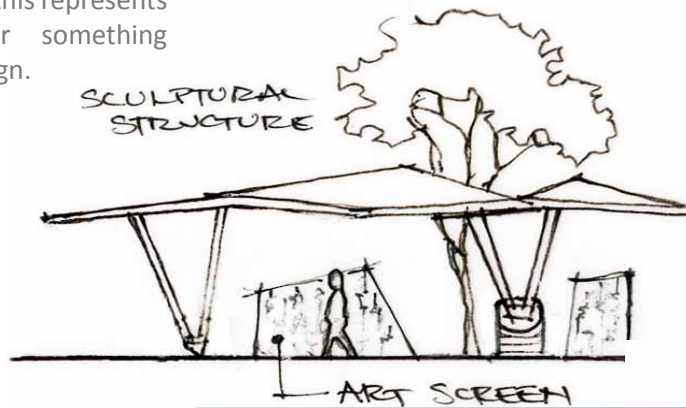
Sculptural Shelter

There is an opportunity to incorporate some form of public shelter within the square. This could be a multi-use structure accommodating performances, events and displays or the shelter could be smaller in size, functioning purely as enclosure to the space and providing cover to an area of seating.

The structure would provide the opportunity to create a significant and striking focal point and a place for socialising within the square. As can be seen from the images here, this represents a great opportunity for something sculptural and bespoke design.



Canopy, art screens & trees



The column supports could be decorated as sculptural elements with a series of decorative (possibly interpretive) semi permeable screens, separating the car park from the square.

This could be a truly inspiring structure if carefully designed for and integrated within the town square space.

The examples here illustrate the successful integration of seating, shade, shelter and tree planting.



Examples of sculptural canopies & shades

TWO DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

At this point in time it is only possible to anticipate how the final design of the square may look. Presented here are two possible development scenarios.

The first looks at a minimum intervention and cost scheme, one which incorporates the short stay car parking while endeavouring to create a more attractive multi-use space.

This particular outcome would not be ideal, the space created would be dominated by vehicles and the benefits to the business economy, the community and amenity of the town centre would be significantly less when compared to completely pedestrianising the space.

However, the incorporation of parking in the short term (1-5 years), could be part of a longer term strategy and a phased evolution to a fully pedestrianised space, which would incorporate the initial design and investment within an eventual fully functional town square scheme.

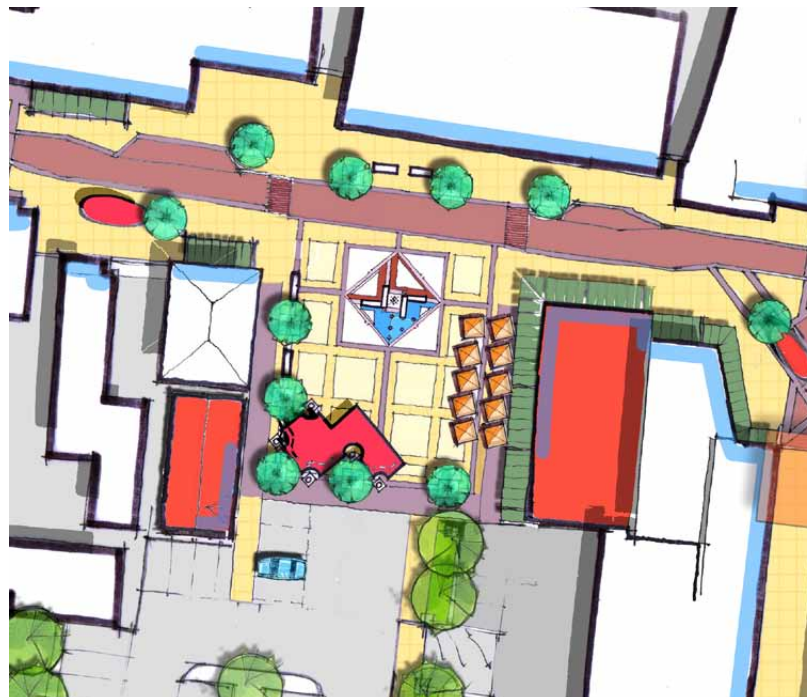
The second scenario illustrated creates a new car free, civic space from 'day one' and is conditional upon the town centre parking being accommodated within a wider scheme of town centre development.



SCENARIO 1

Earlier in this document we looked at several options for a town square layout, Scenario 1 utilises option 1 as the starting point, but should the scheme be developed further to eventually achieve a new pedestrianised town square, then options 2, 3, 4 or indeed another layout could be the eventual design adopted. However, if this space were to evolve from car park to pedestrian square, the preference would be for something close to option 2, (as per the adopted masterplan), as this arrangement scores highest when appraised against the set of town square good design criteria.

The second development scenario therefore looks at Option 2 (the highest scoring square) in more detail.



SCENARIO 2

Assumes that car parking is removed from the square from the outset and for the purposes of illustrating how a successful space can be developed if this were to be the case, we have used Option 2 (the highest scoring square) to illustrate the essential elements of the space in more detail.

SCENARIO 1 IN DETAIL

This scenario is a 'do minimum' enhancement scheme, it begins to create a more attractive focus for the high street while retaining the short stay parking. The car park would be developed as a shared use space, which could be partially or fully closed to car parking and utilised for a variety of activities, such as; markets, celebratory events or as a stage location for performances.

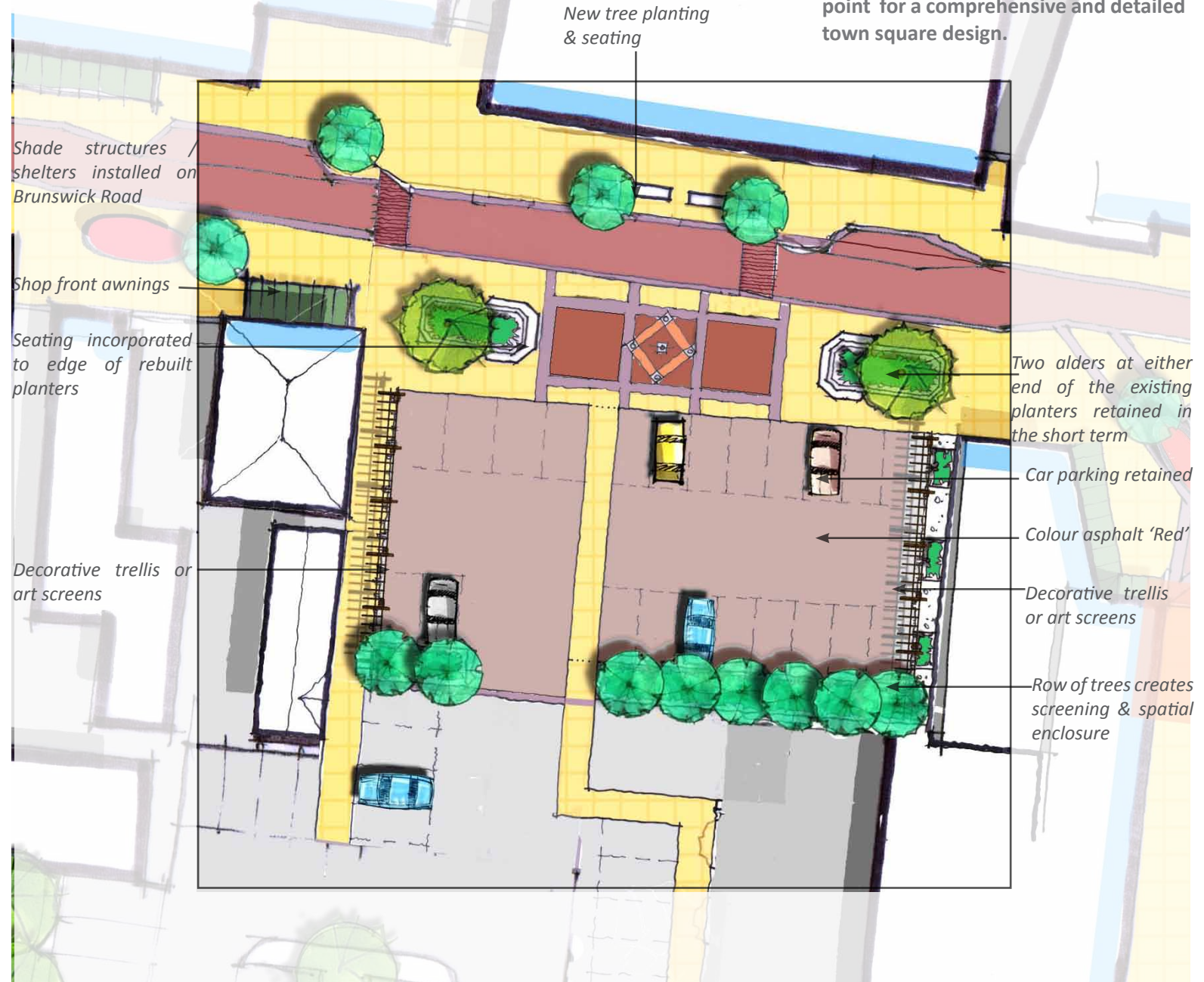
The existing trees have visual impact and amenity value, but it is evident that they vary in quality and potential longevity. The largest and better specimens to the outer edge of the group could be retained successfully (with some pruning), as part of a revamping of the area. However, we believe this would only be a short term solution as these too would need replacing with something more appropriate and manageable in the longer term.

It is hoped that this enhancement of the area would be a stimulus for the evolution of the space into a fully functioning dedicated town square, in the heart of Buckley. A phased process as illustrated over the page.

To fully realise the potential of the enhancements, to invigorate, excite and be memorable, we recommend the input of artisans and interpretive design techniques to give the area some relevance to Buckley, its community and heritage.

Tree grilles, sculpture, art screens/trellis and paving all provide opportunities for artistic interventions.

Fig 2 - 'Scenario 1' interim proposed layout (As 'Option 1')



This plan should be considered as a guide, an aspiration and just the starting point for a comprehensive and detailed town square design.



Scenario 1 Initial Enhancement Proposals - require no loss of short stay parking

- Two large alder trees retained. Central trees and less healthy trees removed and replaced with new planting and paving
- Larger planters created to accommodate retained trees, with integral seating facing the new area of paving
- Car park enhanced and enclosed by new tree planting
- Decorative screens and trellis erected to run in front of unattractive building facades on the western and eastern side of car park
- Tree planting and seating installed in front of Spar
- New lighting



Scenario 1 Multi-Use Space - By removing parking temporarily the space can be utilised for special events, seasonal festivities and market days

- New area of paving can accommodate a Christmas tree
- Services provided
- Decorative lighting installation utilising brackets on new lighting columns
- Space for temporary pavilion or staging
- Space for various arrangements of market stalls



Example of a new civic space incorporating trees, sculpture and a colonnade

Scenario 1 follow on works, conditional upon car parking replacement elsewhere within the vicinity of the town centre, creates a dramatic, high quality civic space and a new focal point for the town centre with:

- Seating & water feature
- Additional tree planting & original trees replaced
- Integration of initial elements of enhancement (planting and paving)
- New paving
- Sculptural elements, shade structure, 'Spill out' space
- Amenity lighting

SCENARIO 2 IN DETAIL

A desirable arrangement of key elements is illustrated on the plan shown here.

The sketch details shown are just one interpretation of how key elements may begin to take shape.

The exact detail of each element from the shade structure and fountains to the paving layout and patterns, can only be undertaken when budgets and all constraints have been fixed.

Detailed design of the space will be a complex process, which will require fixed constraints, agreed budgets and much greater consultation with stakeholders, council officers and potential partners or developers, who may be providing funding through section 106 agreements.

To fully realise the potential of the square to invigorate, excite and be memorable, we strongly recommend the input of artisans and interpretive design techniques to give the square some relevance to Buckley, its community and heritage.

Bespoke furniture, tree grilles, sculpture, art screens and paving all provide opportunities for some unique and meaningful artistic interventions.

This plan should be considered as a guide, an aspiration and just the starting point for a comprehensive and detailed town square design.

Fig 3 - 'Scenario 2' aspirational proposed layout (as 'Option 2')

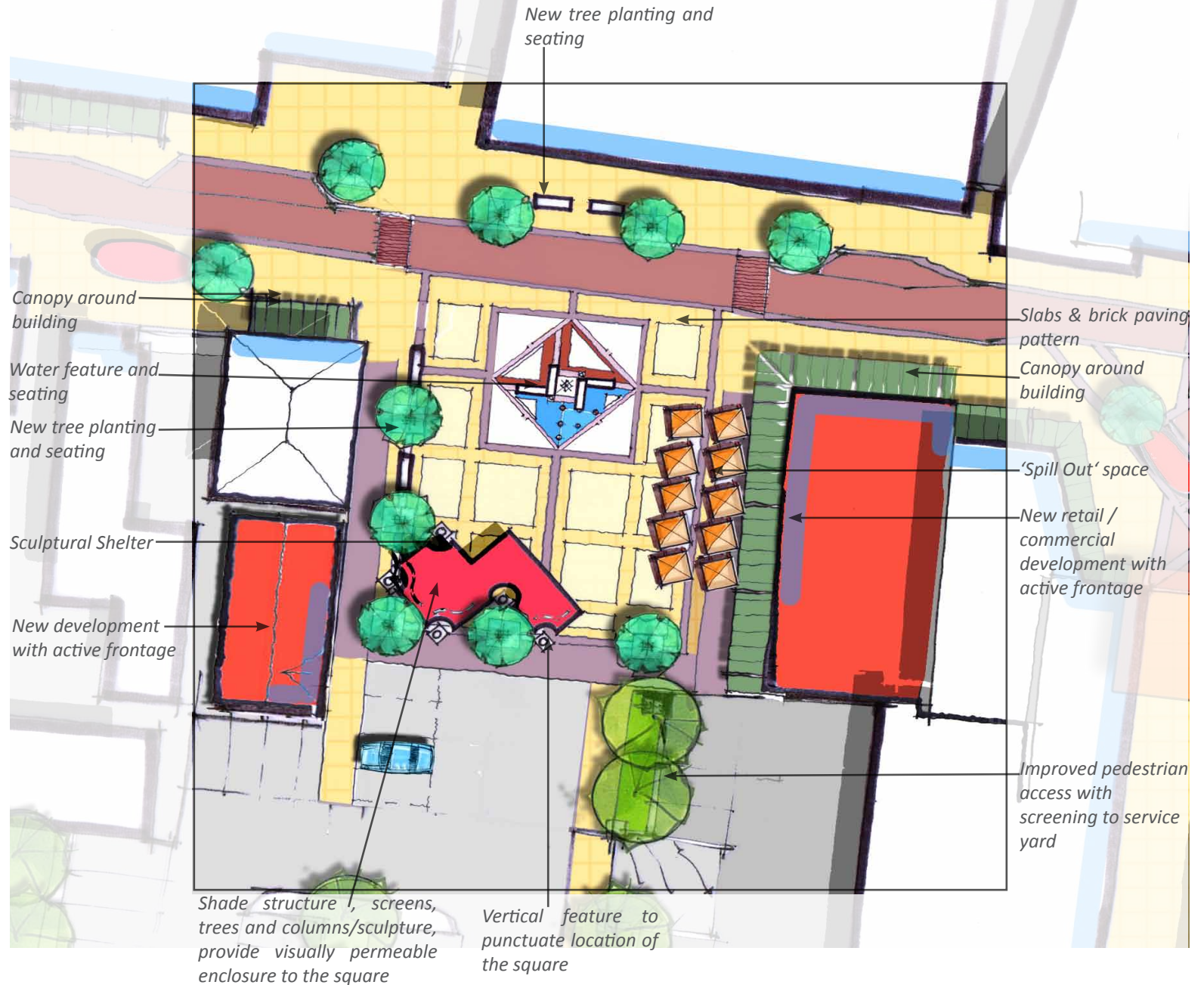




Fig 4 - 'Scenario 2' aspirational Town Square artist impression (as 'Option 2')



ACCOMMODATING SHORT STAY PARKING

The introduction of any option for the town square could result in the loss of dedicated short stay 'town centre' car parking spaces (existing spaces 53 Nos). This is a key issue raised by the Town Partnership and a desire was expressed to retain a maximum number of free, short stay parking spaces close to the high street. The report has looked into various aspirational scenarios for short stay parking spaces to achieve an optimal solution through rationalising the existing layout and essentially through public-private land assembly. **The parking numbers for each option should be considered as a guideline, further detailed design and negotiation would be required when the square and anticipated food store schemes are developed.** For comparative purposes the parking numbers identified on the illustrative layouts do not include any disabled parking spaces.



Stakeholder Comment

'To retain a maximum number of free, short stay parking spaces close to the high street'.

Car Parking Arrangement

Utilising only council owned land



Total parking spaces = retains all existing car parking spaces

Car Parking Arrangement

Requiring public & private partnership



Total parking spaces = 48 bays

Key Partnership

- 1 - Council/Highways
- 2 - Buckley Cross Methodist Church
- 3 - The Precinct
- 4 - The Health Centre
- 5 - Other Private Sector

Car Parking Arrangement

Requiring public & private partnership & realigned entrance road



Total parking spaces = 96 bays

Key Partnership

- 1 - Council/Highways
- 2 - Buckley Cross Methodist Church
- 3 - The Precinct
- 4 - The Health Centre
- 5 - Other Private Sector

Fig 5 - An aspirational public realm enhancement vision for Buckley Town Centre

