



## **Part 10 Planning Report**

**Athlone Link Road Phase 2 - Coosan Point to The Cresence**

On behalf of **Westmeath County Council**

Prepared by

**CST GROUP / PUNCH Consulting Engineers**

1, O'Connell St, Sligo, F91 W7YV

+353 (0)71 919 4500 [info@cstgroup.ie](mailto:info@cstgroup.ie) [www.cstgroup.ie](http://www.cstgroup.ie)

**July 2025**

**Civil**  
**Structural**  
**Traffic**

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Revision History:</b>	R0	R1						
<b>Purpose of Issue:</b> P=Preliminary C=Comment I=Information FC=Fire Cert PL=Planning T=Tender CT=Contract CN=Construction	I	PL						
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Report By: Killian Landecy  
Killian Landecy

Date 02/07/2025

Approved By: Francis Fidgeon  
Francis Fidgeon  
Chartered Engineer

Date 02/07/2025

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

PUNCH/CST Group Consulting Engineers were appointed by Westmeath County Council to provide detailed designs for the provision of Phase 2 of a new link road from Coosan Point to The Crescent, Athlone. The provision of the new link road will also provide additional parking areas within the CIE bus depot.

This Planning Report has been prepared by PUNCH / CST Group Consulting Engineers to accompany the application to An Bord Pleanála.

The site location is shown in Figure 1.1 overleaf. The purpose of this Planning Report is to describe the scheme, its justification, the planning history of the site and planning policies.

### **1.1 Site Description**

#### **1.1.1 Project Background**

The majority of the site is currently undeveloped scrub land. There is a small portion of the site to the north-east that is currently used for bus servicing and parking. Phase 1 of the link road works were completed to the east of the site some years ago. The Athlone train station and car park is located to the north of the lands.

#### **1.1.2 Proposed Development**

The proposed development will include the construction of Phase 2 of the link road from Coosan Point to The Crescent, provision of additional bus parking within the CIE lands, alterations to the signalised junction at Coosan Point and alterations to the alignment of the existing foul sewer that currently is within the area of the future bus parking.

The proposed works are outlined in a series of engineering drawings by PUNCH Consulting Engineers.

The development will consist of an Active Travel Link Road with segregated cycling facility joining the Crescent Junction (R915) to Coosan Point Road/Southern Station Road Junction, new two-way segregated cycle facility on Southern Station Road (West side) and a 3-metre width shared surface from the Crescent Junction linking to the Athlone Train/Bus Station. The proposed development will also include an extension to the existing Athlone town centre bus depot yard, boundary treatments, signage, drainage and all associated ancillary works to be completed. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) are submitted with this application, together with EIA Screening .



**Figure 1.1:** Location of the proposed development

## 1.2 Scheme Background/Project Context

In 1998 a Traffic Management Plan for Athlone was prepared. Part of the plan was to make Church St (the main street in Athlone) one-way westbound. As a result, diverted traffic would have to travel north along Northgate St to go east along Station Road. To shorten the diversion and ease traffic congestion at the junctions at either end of Station Rd, a new Link Road was proposed as part of the plan. The link road would have the further benefit of removing passing traffic from the railway/bus station. As the station is at a level higher than the proposed Link Road it also means traffic, and particularly cyclists, not destined for the station do not have to ascend to the higher level unnecessarily.

Phase 1 of the Link Road was completed in 2007 to form the eastern end of the Link Road. This included new traffic signal junctions at St Francis Terrace and the Crescent Junction.

Westmeath County Council obtained Part 8 approval in 2017 for a new traffic management scheme for the town centre, which restricts traffic on Church Street to going westbound only. Eastbound traffic now travels east via Station Road. The rationale for the substantial street enhancement scheme is to address the deficiencies of Church Street in terms of pedestrians, other vulnerable road users, economic regeneration and links from the historic Shannon area to the modern Civic Square and Shopping Centre. The proposed



enhancement works form part of a larger initiative encompassing much of the town centre, of which some sections have already been completed, such as Church St, the Civic Square, around the Castle, and in the vicinity of the Athlone Town Centre and Sheraton Hotel. The works include junction improvements at the Coosan Point Road/Station Road junction and the Station Road/St Francis Terrace junction.

This scheme is referred to as the 'Orange' Route town traffic management scheme. The Orange Route scheme is summarised in **Appendix A**.

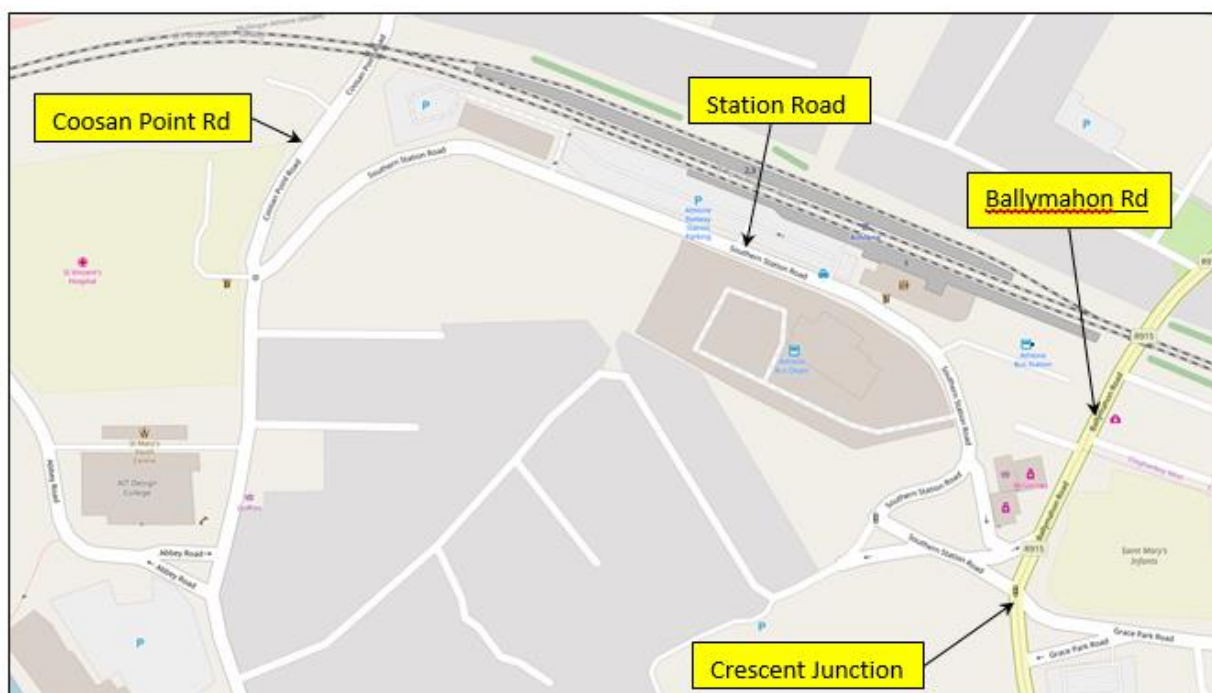
The Council are now currently progressing completion of the Link Road which will provide a more direct route between the Coosan Point Road and Crescent / St Francis' Terrace Junctions.

### 1.3 Existing Road

Station Road is currently two-way and is accessible to cars and buses from the recently introduced signalised junction with the Coosan Point Road to the west and the Station Road/St Francis Terrace signalised junction to the east. The existing road network in the vicinity of the Station Road is detailed in Figure 1.1 below.

The existing Station Road comprises a single carriageway 7.5 metres wide but narrowing to 5.75 metres wide in sections. The road alignment is reasonably meandering reflecting its urban context, with minimum horizontal curve of radius 50m. The grade of the road varies with a maximum grade of 4.5%.

There are generally 1.5-metre-wide footpaths provided on either side of the road. There are no separate cycle facilities provided. The existing road layout is set out in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2:** Existing Road Network

The standard against which design for this scheme is assessed would be the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (DMURS) 2013. Overall, the existing road width exceeds the recommended for Link Streets – 3.25m wide lanes, but the footpath widths are deficient – being below the minimum recommended 1.8m width. Further, the minimum radius of the road at 50mR is below the minimum of 82mR (with super elevation of 2.5%) for a design speed of 50kph. It should also be noted that whilst DMURS encourages reduced radii to promote reduced speeds, the stopping sight distance at the tightest radius is below the minimum 45m required.

### **1.3.1 Junctions**

As set out above the existing Coosan Point Road comprises of a signalised junction, connecting to the western end of Station Road. The junction also accommodates an arm from St Vincent's Care Centre. Station Road connects with Ballymahon Road via a signalised junction at The Crescent at the east end of the section of the road.

## **1.4 Needs and Objectives**

The overall objective of the proposed road development is to provide a link road and associated junctions which fulfil the needs of the overall Athlone Traffic Management Plan, for sustainable transport, in accordance with national, regional and local policy and that is fit for the purpose of serving the community in a manner that minimises impact on the environment.

The specific project objectives are:

### **Environment**

- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in so doing to reduce the impact on air quality nearby;
- To reduce impact of road related noise on nearby communities and dwellings;
- To reduce impact of the scheme on local landscaping;
- To minimise the impact of the scheme on Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity of the site;
- To minimise the impact of the scheme on sensitive architectural/archaeological sites in the vicinity of the site;
- To minimise impact on local tranches of land/local housing;
- To incorporate measures which will minimise impact of the scheme on nearby watercourses.

### **Safety**

- To reduce the collision rate at the junctions at either end of the scheme and Southern Station Road;
- To help achieve the objectives of the Government's Road Safety Strategy in relation to the reduction in fatalities and serious injuries caused by road collisions;
- To improve safety conditions for all road users including cyclists and pedestrians for the link road.

### **Economy**

- To reduce the journey times on the orange route traffic management scheme junctions and on the link road;
- To support the economic performance of Athlone town centre by providing improved transport infrastructure and reducing transport costs;

- To improve the journey time reliability on the link road - particularly at the junctions connecting to the existing road network.

#### **Integration**

- To improve connectivity to strategic road network and railways;
- To meet the transportation objectives of the regional and local plans;
- To support government policy on sustainable mobility and standards.

#### **Physical Activity**

- To provide opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists within the cross section of the road.

### **1.5 Proposed Scheme Design**

The Phase II scheme will involve the completion of the new Link Road between the two junctions mentioned above together with the reconfiguration of the existing junctions at the western and eastern end of Station Road to ensure that there is sufficient capacity at the scheme design year. The layout for the scheme is detailed in Figure 2.1.

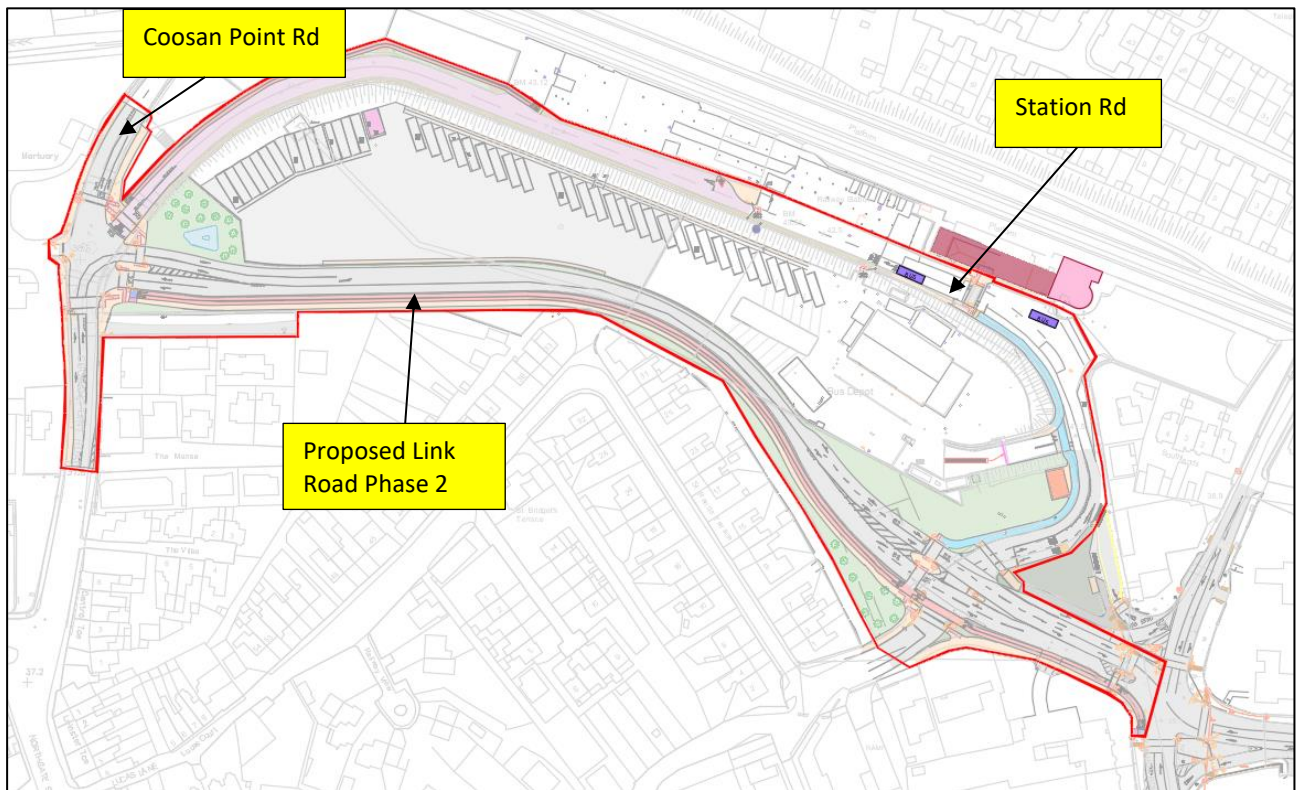
After the completion of the proposed Link Road and junction upgrading works vehicular access to Station Road will be via a re-configured signalised junction with the new Link Road and St. Francis' Terrace at the eastern end of Station Road. Buses will also use this junction. The western end of Station Road which intersects with Coosan Point Road will become a bus-only route and will ensure buses which are on an orbital bus route do not have to perform a U-turn on Station Road.

### **1.6 Scheme Development**

The scheme has been developed with a view to:

- ensuring that travel distances are minimised;
- providing junctions with sufficient capacity at the design year of 2034;
- providing facilities for non-motorised transport;
- minimising land take;
- maximising ready access to the bus and train stations.





**Figure 2.1:** Layout of Proposed Link Road Scheme

## 2. PLANNING HISTORY

A Part 8 Planning Permission was granted for the Link Road in advance of the construction of Phase 1 outlined above. The original scheme (The Railway Field Link Road) commenced the Part 8 Planning process in 2003 and was approved by Athlone Town Council at the council meeting held on Monday 8th March 2024.

Planning permission was granted to Bus Éireann for “a new ESB Substation and Bus Éireann Electrical Building and associated ductwork to facilitate the charging of new electric buses at Bus Éireann Maintenance Centre, Southern Station Road” on 14/07/2022.

More recently planning permission was granted to Bus Éireann for a bus wash facility within the existing Bus Maintenance Depot (planning ref. 2428 granted 11/10/2024). That permission was cognisant of the proposed road and shows the proposed road as part of the application. The permission also included an associated Plant Storage Room and Water Storage Tank.

### 3. RELEVANT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY

Road Development Policy is primarily set out at National level and then descends to Regional and Local Policy. The policy seeks to achieve towns and cities linked by efficient transport networks and underpinned by economic activity and investment. In the context of Athlone Traffic Management Scheme, the following policy documents are applicable:

#### 3.1 National

##### Project Ireland 2040 –National Planning Framework

A long-term plan which will shape spatial, social and economic policy in Ireland for the coming decades. Relevant objectives to this scheme:

- National Policy Objective 2b - *The regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands,.....will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.*
- National Policy Objective 27 - *Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages. This scheme will accord to these objectives by providing*
  - *better traffic flow in Athlone town centre;*
  - *reduced dependence on Church St (the main street) for vehicular trips thereby providing a better environment for shopping, walking and cycling there;*
  - *railway and bus stations that are not directly on the route of passing traffic but very close to it and well connected for vehicular traffic, cyclists and pedestrians;*
  - *a shorter route between the Crescent and the Hospital for cyclists and pedestrians;*
  - *a route for cyclists with dedicated facilities and which avoids the climb along the existing routes which passes the station which is situated at a higher level;*
  - *connectivity and permeability for cyclists;*
  - *more pedestrian priority.*

##### Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A new Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020

Smarter Travel sets out how the vision of a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development. The key goals of this policy which apply to this scheme include:

- *Improve economic competitiveness through maximising the efficiency of the transport system and alleviating congestion and infrastructural bottlenecks;*
- *Minimise the negative impacts of transport on the local and global environment through reducing localised air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions;*
- *Reduce overall travel demand and commuting distances travelled by the private car; and*

This scheme will accord to these objectives by

- *providing better traffic flow in Athlone town centre;*
- *prioritising walking and cycling accessibility as above.*

**Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (DMURS) 2013**

This National Guidance document aims to end the practice of designing streets as traffic corridors, and instead focus on the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The Manual sets out design guidance and standards for constructing new and reconfiguring existing urban roads and streets in Ireland, incorporating good planning and design practice and focus on the public realm. It also outlines practical design measures to encourage more sustainable travel patterns in urban areas.

This scheme will accord to these objectives by

- *prioritising walking and cycling accessibility as above;*
- *providing railway and bus stations that are not directly on the route of passing traffic but very close to it and well connected for vehicular traffic, cyclists and pedestrians;*
- *providing access to the railway and stations from two approaches, one of which is bus-only.*

### **3.2 Regional:**

**Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES)**

The RSES identifies Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and as such targets its significant growth to enable it to act as a regional driver. It states “*Growth Enablers for the Gateway Region area include; Support continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life and securing the investment to fulfil its role as a key Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland.*” This policy is being executed via the overall Athlone Town Traffic Management Plan.

### **3.3 Local:**

**Westmeath County Development Plan 2021 - 2027**

The Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development together with the provision of policies and objectives for the future development of the town and environs. There are a number of policies and objectives that these proposals comply with.

- **CPO 2.16** *Promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.*

The road will ensure accommodation of cycling and walking modes via the off-road facilities along a route with more gentle vertical alignment.

- **CPO 10.11** *Promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in urban areas and in the vicinity of schools.*

The incorporation of cycle and pedestrian facilities will provide required measures and will future proof future connectivity for future road upgrades.

- **CPO 10.12** *Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to stations and other public transport interchanges and request Iarnrod Éireann to provide accommodation for bicycles on inter-city and commuter trains.*

Together with removing significant traffic from Station Road it also provides for cycle facilities to connect to the rail/ bus station.

- **CPO 10.34** *Support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages, including the provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers. Such provision is particularly required in towns and villages bypassed by National Routes.*

The construction of the road will divert traffic away from Station Road – thus improving amenity for bus users in the town.

- **CPO 10.13** *Design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.*

The scheme will improve safety by provision of a modern design standard compliant facility.

- **CPO 10.14** *Encourage and seek sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.*

The proposals provide for both cycle and pedestrian facilities. The route of the link road will result in shorter travel distances for all traffic and being relatively flat along its length facilitates both pedestrians and cyclists better than the existing route.

- **CPO 10.15** *Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.*

The streetscape proposed will be compliant with the design standards with respect to footpath and cycleway widths, compared to the existing route. The construction of the signalised junction at Coosan Road will improve pedestrian and cyclist crossings of the road.

- **CPO 10.16** *Provide better sign posting and public lighting where considered appropriate and ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists.*

The provision of off-road segregated cycle/pedestrian facilities together with an amended road signage scheme is proposed. Public Lighting is included in the design.

- **CPO 10.55** *Improve the standards and safety of our Regional and Local roads and to protect the investment of public resources in the provision, improvement and maintenance of this public road network.*

- **CPO 10.58** *Promote road safety measures throughout the County, including traffic calming, road signage and parking.*

The scheme will improve road safety by provision of a modern design standard compliant facility.

#### **4. DESCRIPTION OF USE OF ADJOINING, ABUTTING OR ADJACENT LANDS**

As stated earlier, part of the land through which the proposed road runs, and north of the proposed road, is a Bus Maintenance Depot.

It is proposed that the remainder of the undeveloped lands to the west of the Bus Maintenance Depot will become a replacement of the lands lost to the road and extension of the Depot.

The lands immediately south are St Francis' Terrace, a long-established housing estate.

To the west is St Vincent's Care Centre Hospital.

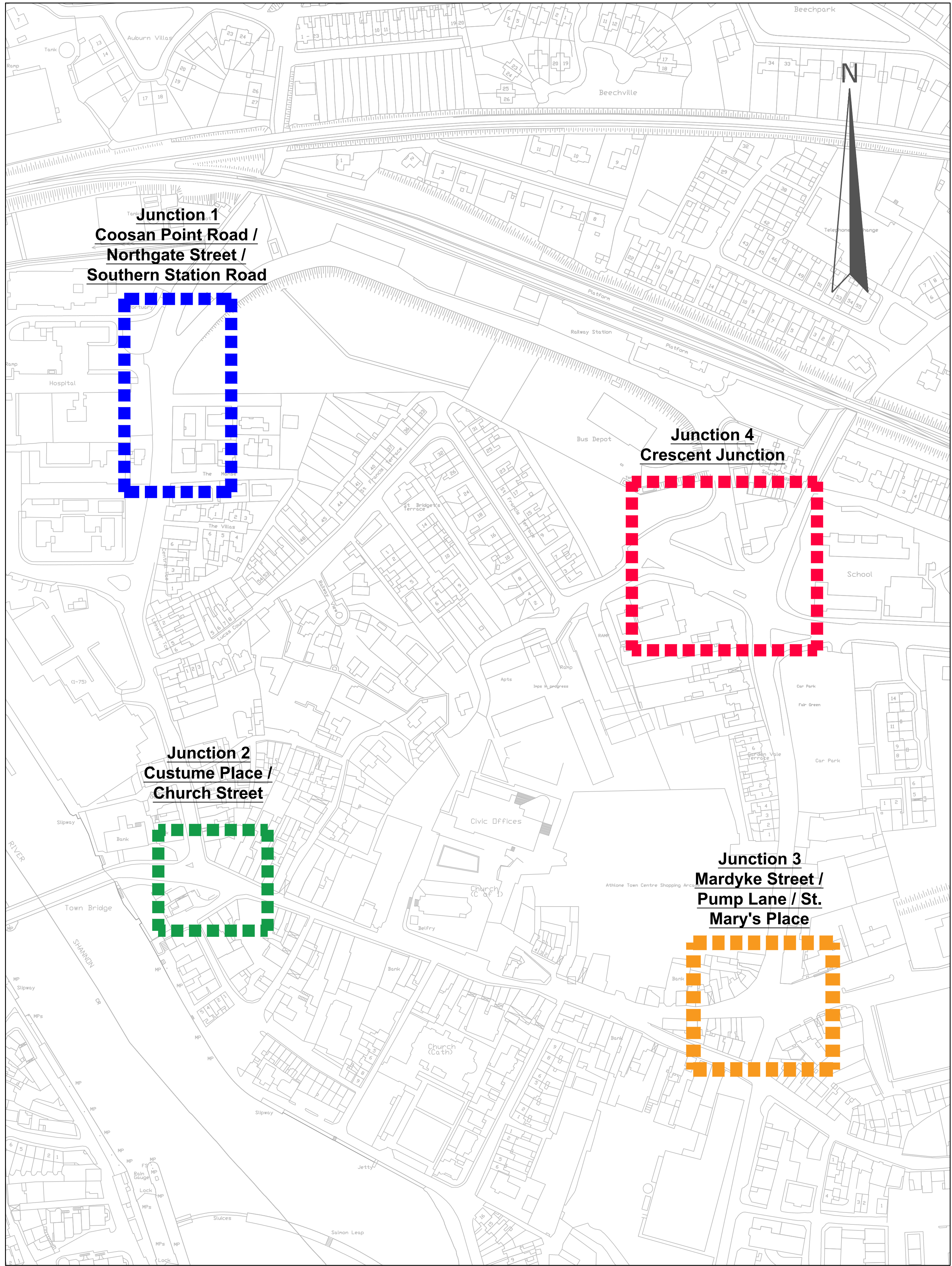
To the east is Phase 1 of the Link Road and the Crescent Junction.



## **APPENDIX A**

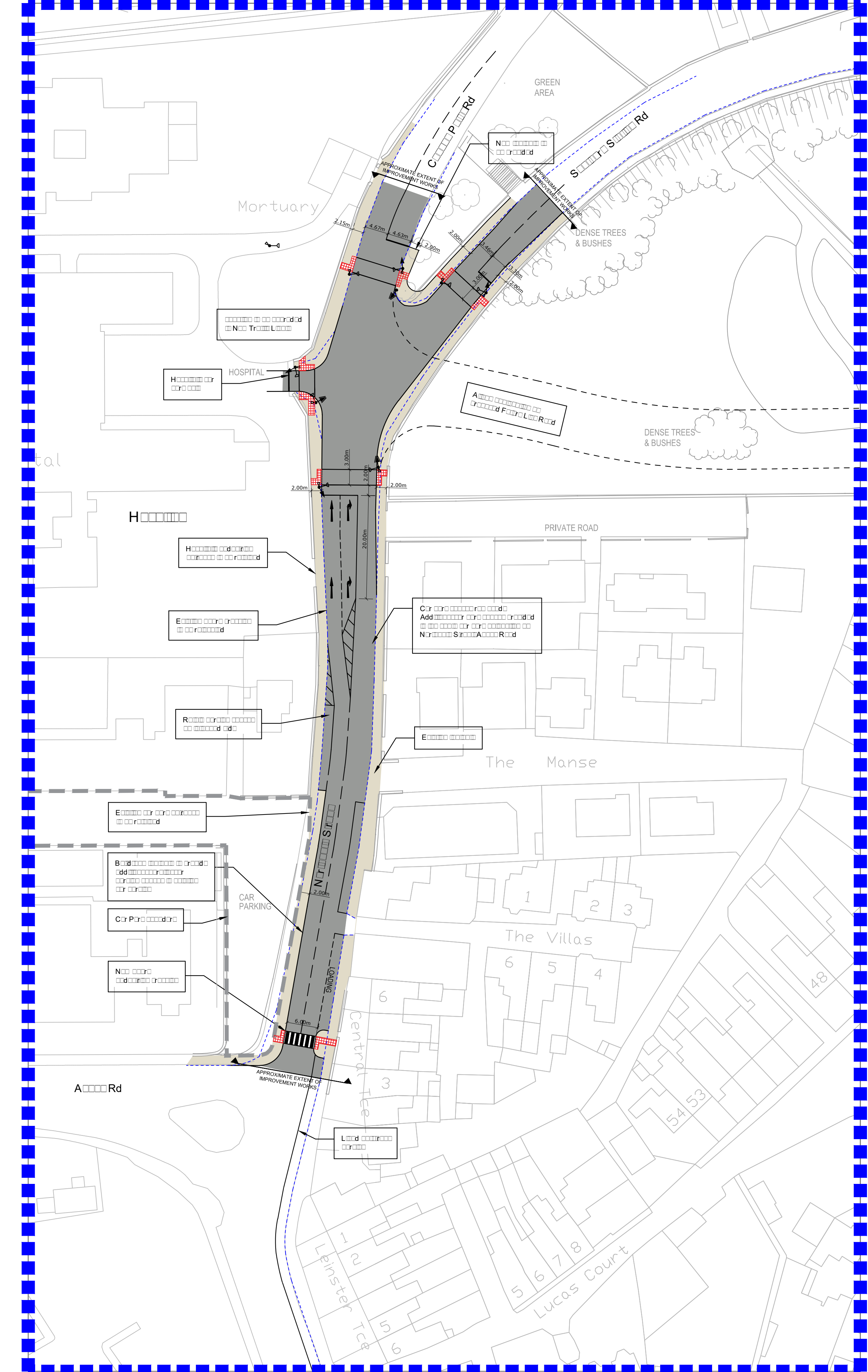
### **'Orange' Route Town Management Scheme**





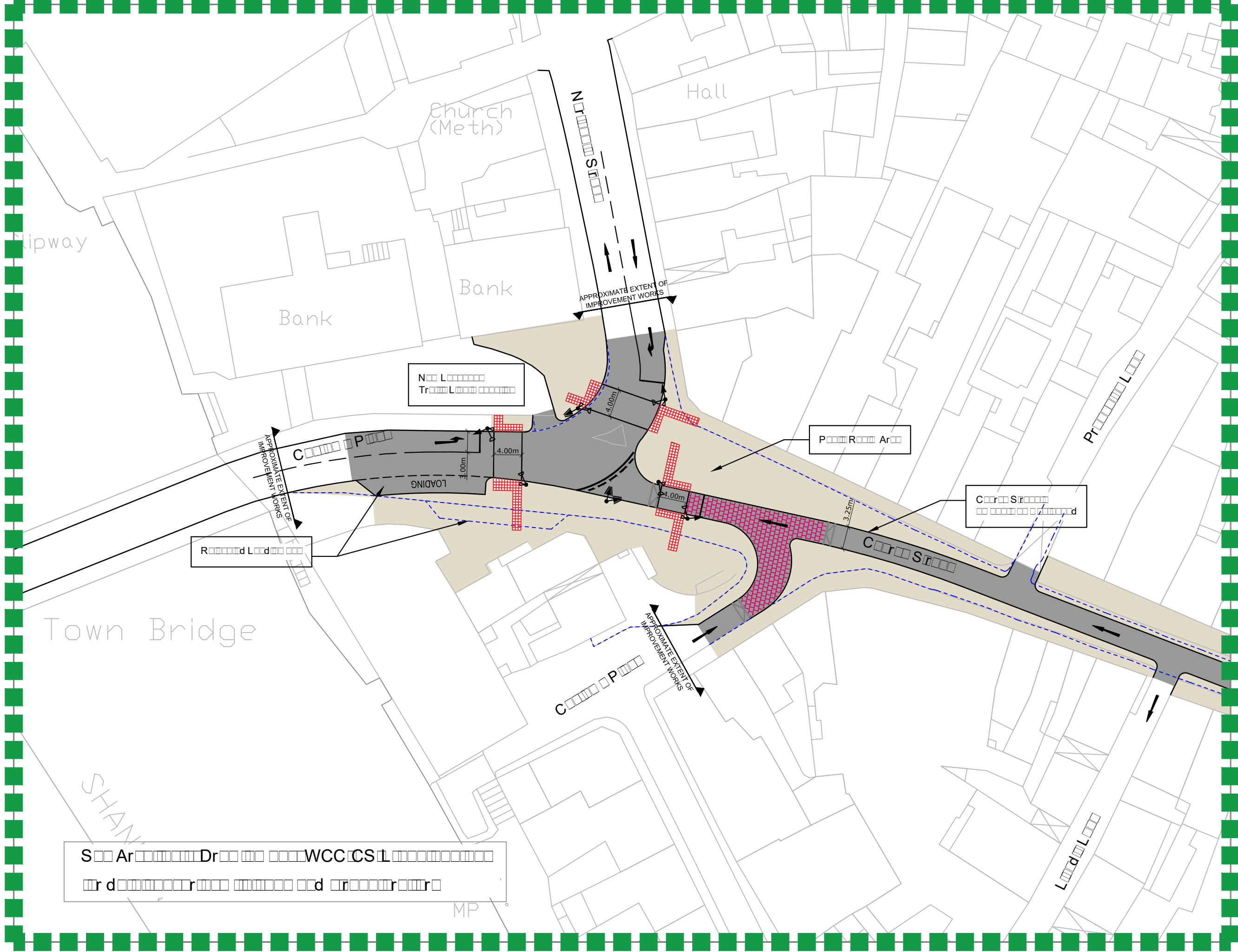
KEY PLAN

- NOTES
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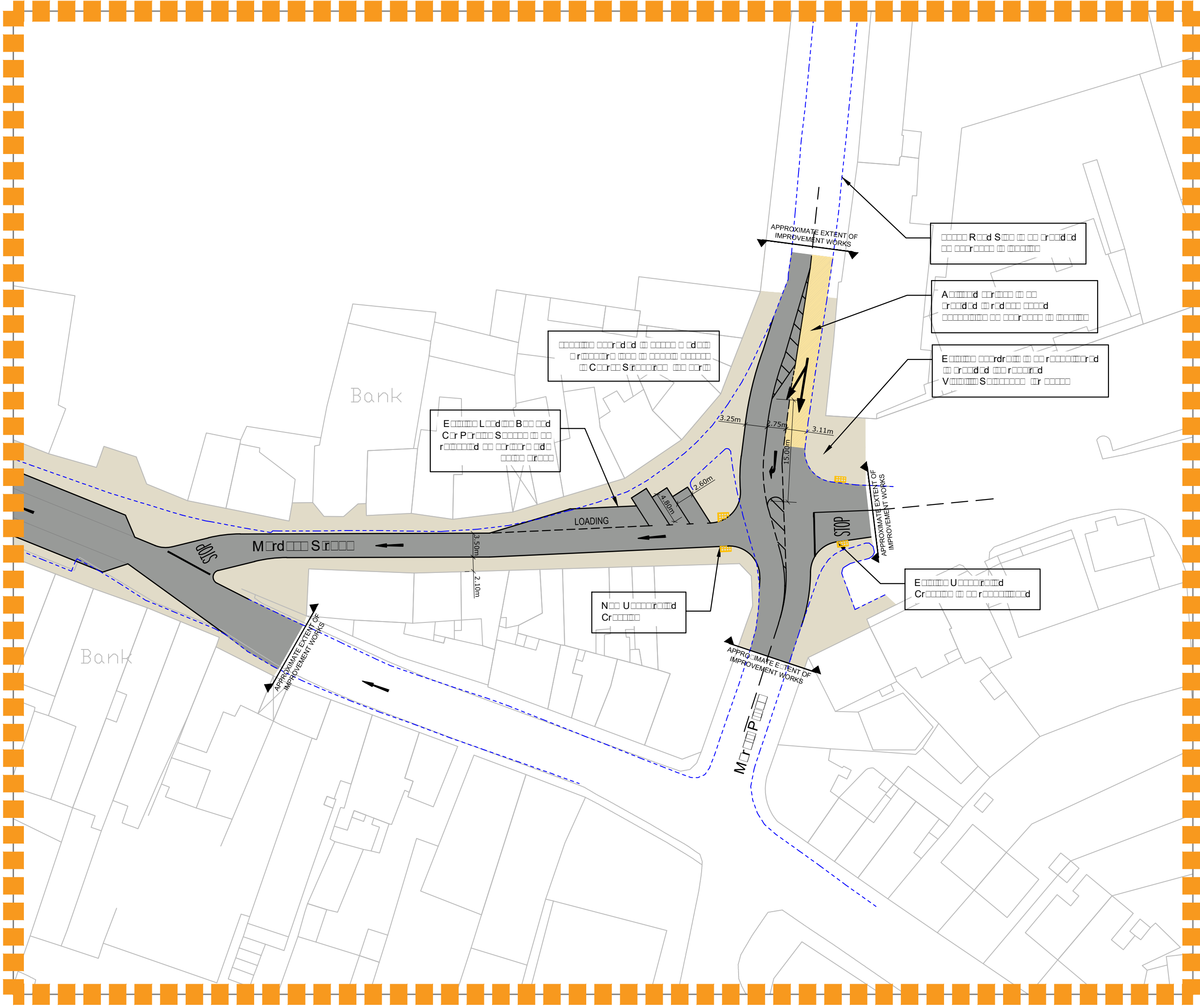


COOSAN POINT Rd NORTHGATE STREET SOUTHERN STATION Rd JUNCTION

- KEY
- 1. Proposed New Road Scheme
  - 2. Existing and Proposed Footpath
  - 3. Proposed Traffic Point
  - 4. Proposed Traffic Point
  - 5. Roundabout
  - 6. Existing Kerb
  - 7. Proposed Kerb
  - 8. Traffic Signal Head
  - 9. Signal and Traffic Signal Head
  - 10. Proposed Traffic Signal and Pedestrian Crossing



CUSTUME PLACE CHURCH STREET JUNCTION

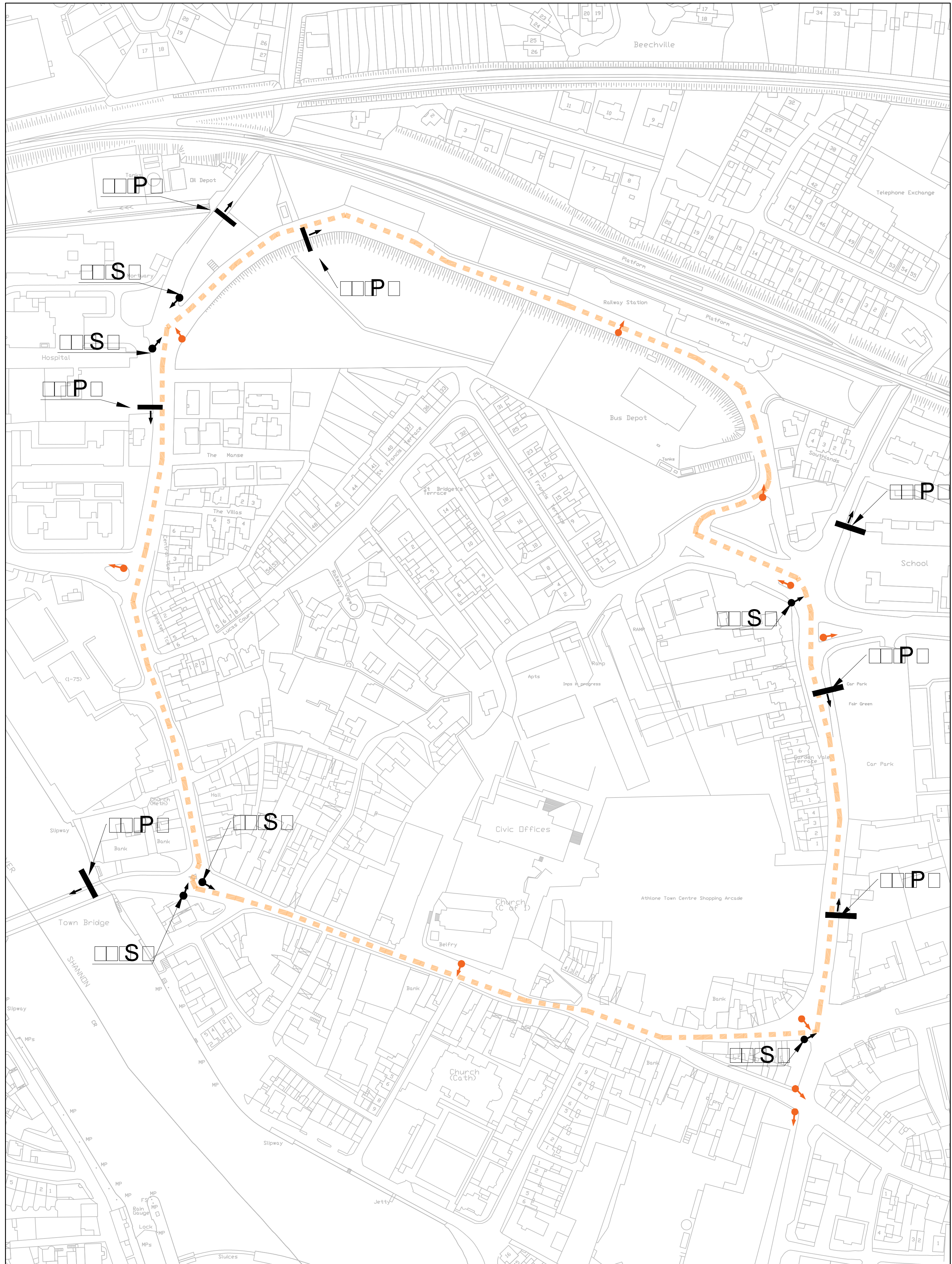


MARDYKE STREET PUMP LANE ST MARY'S PLACE JUNCTION

PART VIII PLANNING PROPOSAL

ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND REPRODUCED UNDER OSI LICENCE N:0000000000 WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL						<div>Nicholas de Jong Associates URBAN DESIGN</div>		<div> WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL Comhairle Contae na h-Iarmhí</div>		<div> <b>European Union</b> European Regional Development Fund Investing in your future</div>		DRAWN <input type="checkbox"/> AMP		STATUS <input type="checkbox"/> PART <input type="checkbox"/>		PROJECT <input type="checkbox"/> Ccrr Str A			
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KEY PLAN

North Arrow

KEY

- Dashed line: Orange Loop Route
- Red arrow: Proposed Orange Loop Route
- Black line: Proposed Orange Loop Route
- Black arrow: Proposed Orange Loop Route

**J2-P1** Directional Signage for the Orange Loop Route

**J1-P1**

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (R363) (M6)

**J1-P2**

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

**J1-P3**

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (M6) (N55) (N61)

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

**J1-S1**

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (M6)

**J01-S2**

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

Cuaird Oraiste ORANGE LOOP

UNCTION COOSAN POINT ROAD NORTHGATE STREET

**J2-P1**

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

An Baile Gaelach IRISHTOWN

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

**J2-S1**

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (R363) (M6)

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

**J2-S2**

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (R363) (M6)

UNCTION CUSTUME PLACE CHURCH STREET UNCTION

**J3-P1**

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

Cuaird Oraiste ORANGE LOOP

**J3-S1**

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

Cuaird Oraiste ORANGE LOOP

UNCTION PUMP LANE MARDYKE STREET

**J4-P1**

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

An Baile Gaelach IRISHTOWN

Inis Óir GOLDEN ISLAND

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Trácht Áitiúil LOCAL TRAFFIC

**J4-P2**

An Cabhán CAVAN

Baile Uí Mhatháin BALLYMAHON

Treo Eile OTHER ROUTES (M6) (N55) (N61)

An Taobh Thiar WESTSIDE

Trácht Áitiúil LOCAL TRAFFIC

**J4-S1**

Baile Átha Luain TOWN CENTRE

Cuaird Oraiste ORANGE LOOP

UNCTION CRESCENT UNCTION

**PROPOSED ORANGE LOOP SIGNS**

Cuaird Oraiste ORANGE LOOP

PROPOSED ORANGE LOOP SIGNS

PART VIII PLANNING PROPOSAL

ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND REPRODUCED UNDER OSI LICENCE N:CCMA:WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL														 <div>European Union European Regional Development Fund Investing in your future</div>		DRAWN <input type="checkbox"/> AMP		STATUS <input type="checkbox"/> PART <input type="checkbox"/>		PROJECT <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/>	
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1, O'Connell Street, Sligo, F91 W7YV  
+353 (0)71 919 4500 [info@cstgroup.ie](mailto:info@cstgroup.ie)  
[www.cstgroup.ie](http://www.cstgroup.ie)

**Civil**  
**Structural**  
**Traffic**