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Conway Street & Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead

Stage 01 & 02 Report

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A	27/09/22	Dan Levers	Alice Gallareto	Tom Roberts	Draft for Client comments
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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Study

Mott MacDonald have been commissioned by Wirral Council to undertake a two-stage study to progress concept options for Conway Street and Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead.

The purpose of this report is to provide a focused brief of baseline conditions and showcase the concept designs for the two routes. The following chapters cover:

- **Existing conditions:** a baseline assessment of the current existing conditions and identification of issues and opportunities.
- **Concept options:** outlining potential options for the schemes, derived from the baseline assessment.

Background

Conway Street (A553) is an arterial route which lies on an east-west axis around 300 metres north of Birkenhead Town Centre. It is a key route for bus services serving Birkenhead Bus Station, as well as a key route to Birkenhead Park and the town centre.

Europa Boulevard lies perpendicular to Conway Street is a key gateway to the town centre and Wirral Met College for those arriving by train at Conway Park Station or by bus.

Conway Street and Europa Boulevard are key routes for transport connections for the Birkenhead town centre and wider Wirral – as they provide access to the Bus Station, Conway

Park Rail Station and Birkenhead Park Station transport hubs from the waterfront and the town centre.

Project Delivery

Wirral Council have been awarded £3.9 million from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)'s Future High Street Fund to deliver this scheme. The Council has also made a funding bid of £2.225 million to the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 for the scheme.



Conway Street – looking towards the Bus Station



Europa Boulevard – looking towards Conway Street

1.2 Study Area

Figure 1.1. shows the extents of the study area (red line boundary) and local context, including Birkenhead Bus Station, Conway Park Rail Station and neighbouring streets.

The study area is bordered by:

- Price Street to the north
- The roundabout junction with Argyle Street to the east
- Birkenhead Bus Station, car parking and retail uses to the south, and;
- Conway Street (towards Birkenhead Park) to the west.

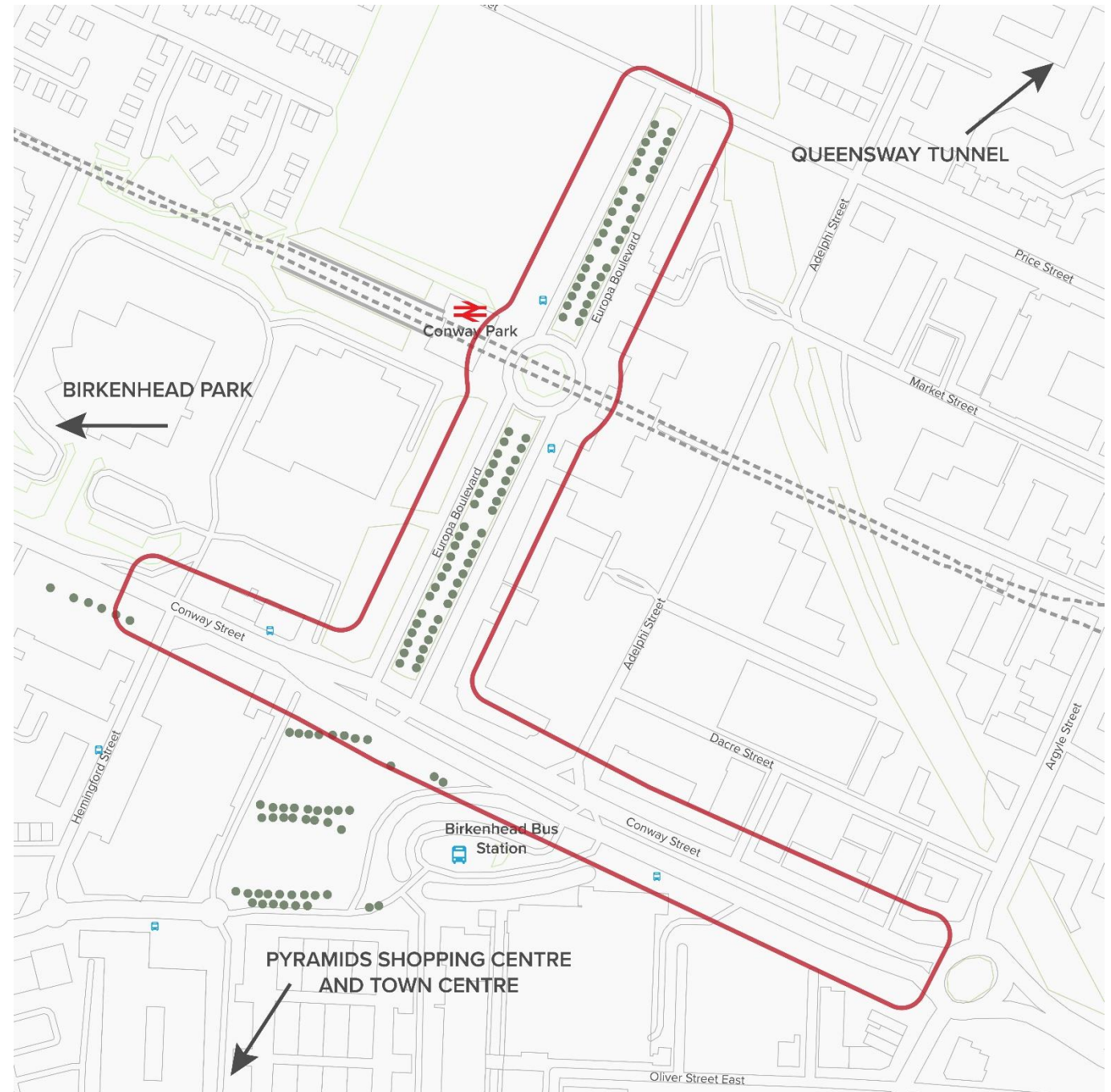


Figure 1.1 – Conway Street and Europa Boulevard Study Area

2 Existing Conditions

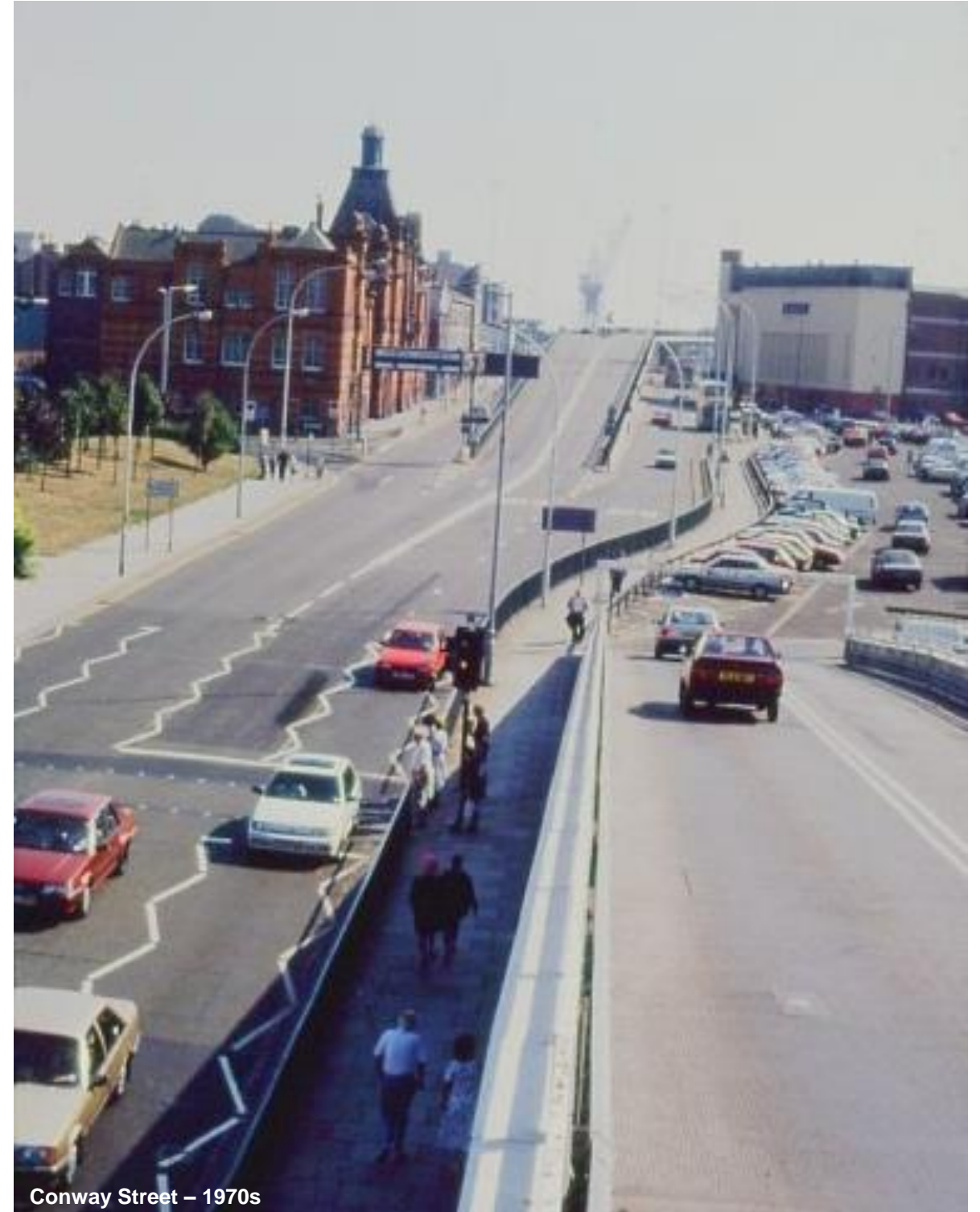
2.1 Then & Now



Conway Street - 1915



Conway Street - 1960s



Conway Street - 1970s



Conway Education Centre – Underutilised listed building



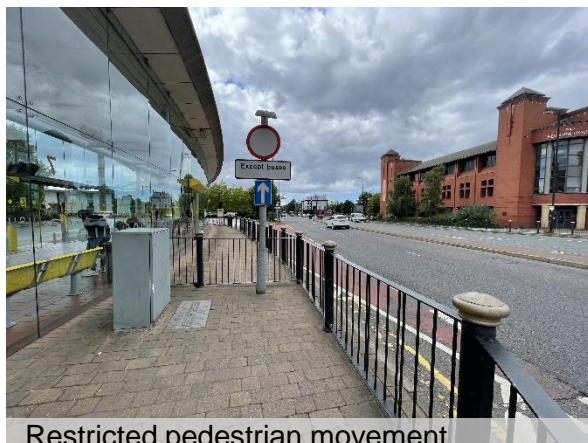
Carriageway dominance



Dog-legged crossings



Excessive junction footprint



Restricted pedestrian movement



Clutter



Guard rail, mixed surfaces



Tired, underwhelming station front and public realm



Pedestrian desire lines over busway



Indirect crossings away from desire lines



Littered, poor public realm and pedestrian space



Underutilised public and pedestrian space

2.2 Existing Land Uses

Figure 2.1 identifies existing land uses across the study area, focusing on ground floor uses. The most prominent land use across the study area is professional services.

There are a small amount of ground floor frontages along Conway Street. The few professional services facing the street are concentrated on the north side, including Wirral Council's Conway Building, which is Grade II listed, and businesses providing legal services.

This trend is mirrored on Europa Boulevard where the most prominent ground floor land uses are also professional services.

The Wirral Met College Conway Park Campus is also located on Europa Boulevard, opposite to Conway Park Rail Station. The station is operated by Merseyrail, with frequent services to West Kirby, New Brighton and Liverpool.

The most dominant land use in the south of the study area is Birkenhead Bus Station, which occupies a large area of land opposite to Adelphi Street. In addition to this, there are several car parks either side of the bus station, and retail uses to the southwest.

There is a small cluster of food and drink and nightclub establishments around Conway Street/Argyle Street roundabout in the east of the study area. These uses tend to generate trips from taxis late at night.

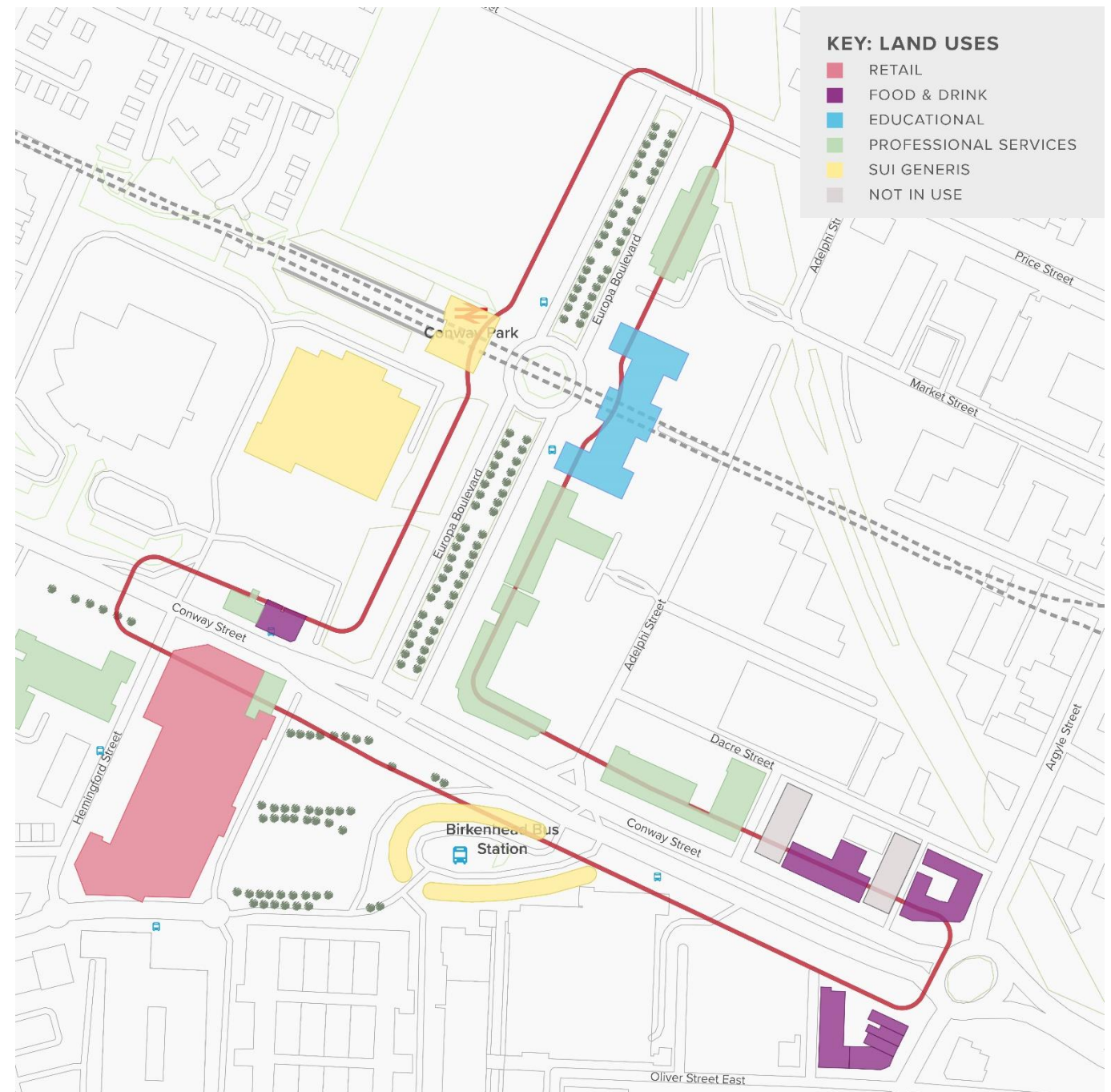


Figure 2.1 – Existing Land Uses

2.3 Car Parking

Figure 2.2 shows the location of on and off-street parking across the study area and in neighbouring areas. In addition to this the plan shows areas for taxi pick up/drop off and loading.

A large proportion of land bordering the south of the study area boundary is allocated to parking for the town centre and retail spaces. This includes the large multistorey car park for the Pyramids Shopping Centre (685 spaces).

Most of the surface level car parks are pay and display, with a small number of private car parking for businesses on the north side of Conway Street.

On-street parking on Europa Boulevard is also pay and display between 8:30am and 6pm, and free outside of these hours.

Loading bays can be found on the north side of Conway Street, with restrictions between 7:30am-10am, and 4:30-6:30pm.

The total parking provision is shown in table 2.1 below.

Multi storey spaces	Public surface level spaces	On street spaces	Total spaces
685	1027	54	1766

Table 2.1 – Car Parking Provision

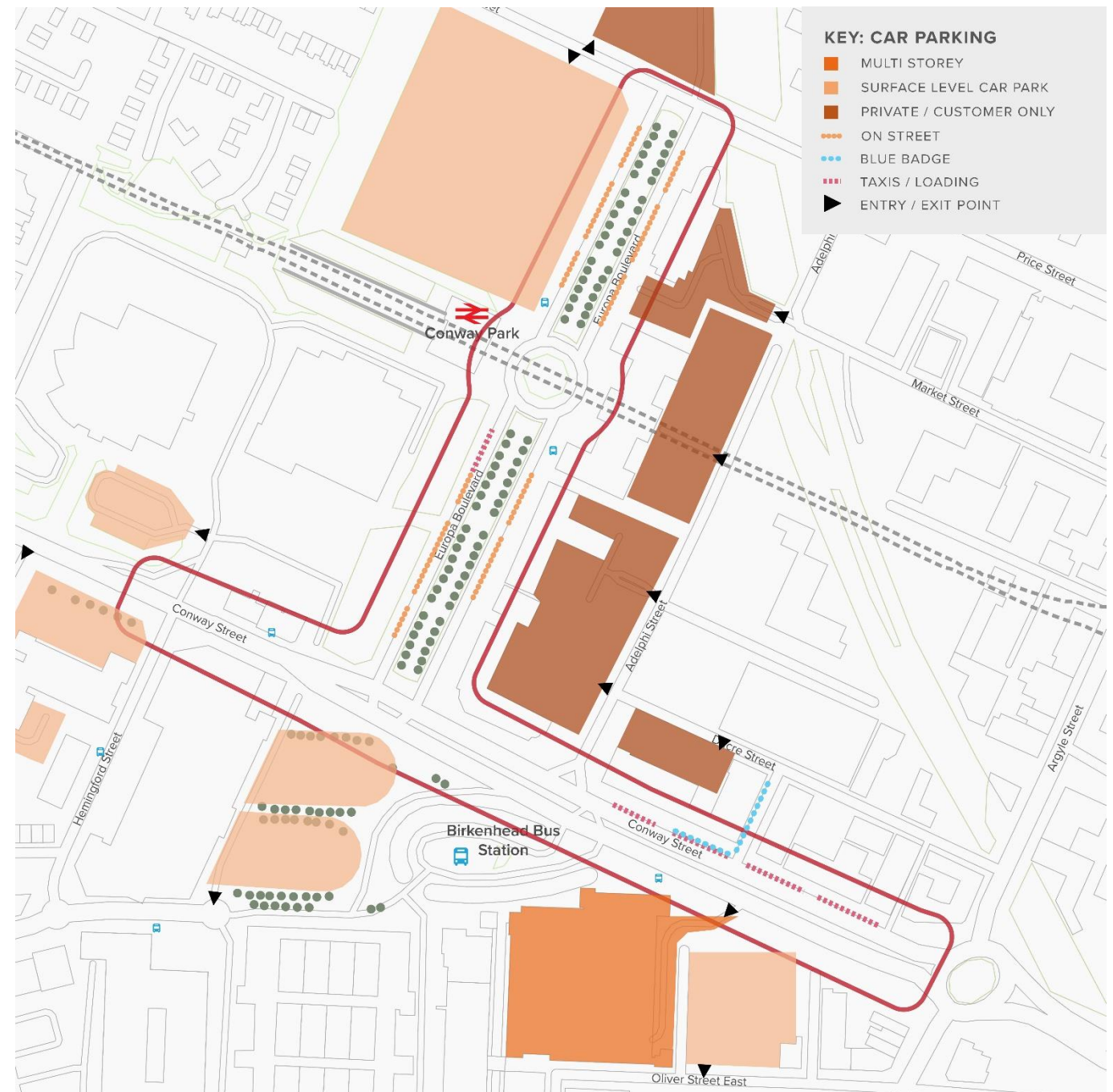


Figure 2.2 – Car Parking

2.4 Listed Buildings

Figure 2.3 shows listed buildings within the study area. In total there are two listed buildings, both of which are on Conway Street.

- The building at 118 Conway Street is listed on the National Heritage List for England as a Grade II:



The Crown Public House is also listed as a Grade II:

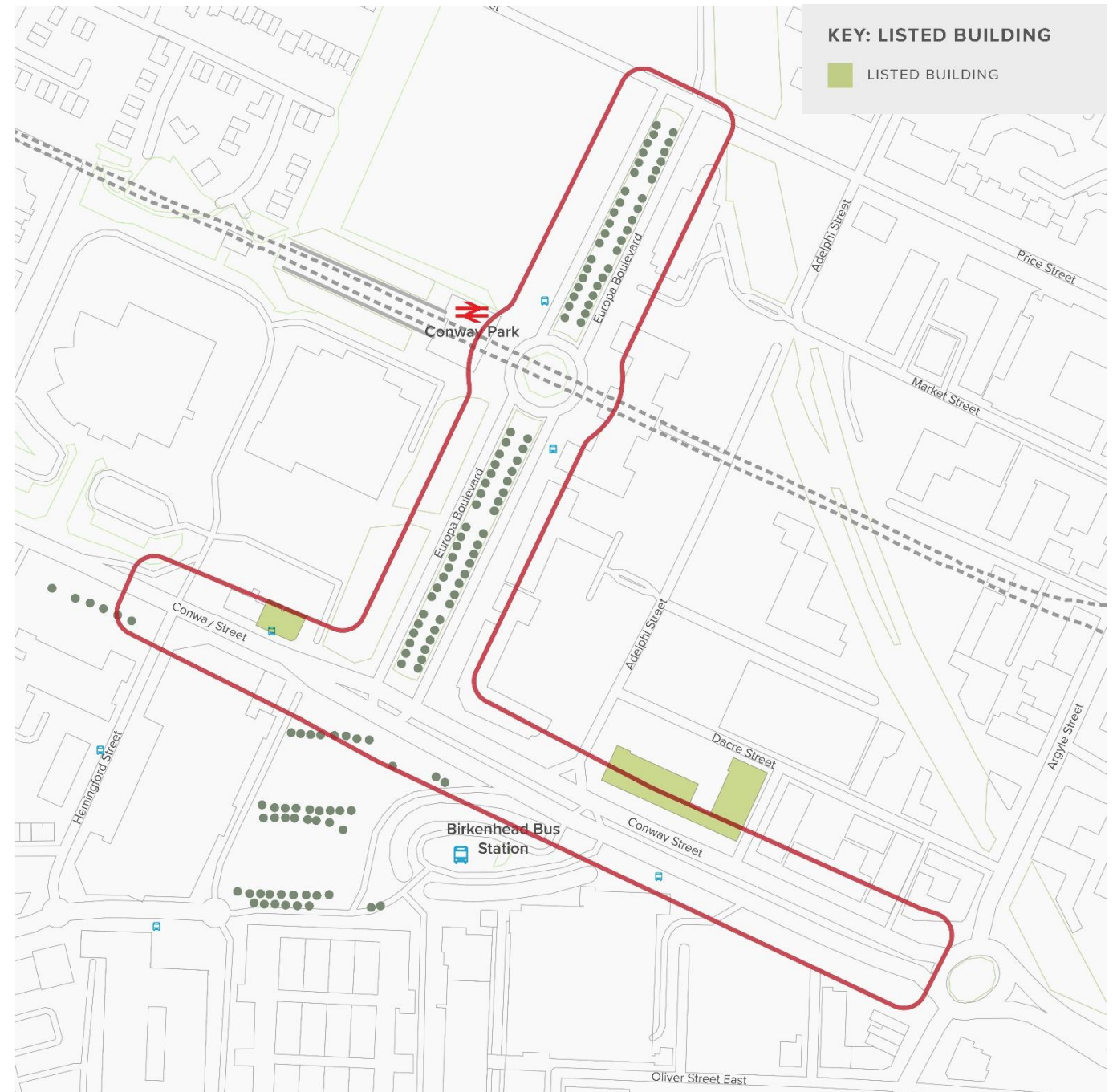


Figure 2.3 – Listed Buildings

2.5 Pedestrian Movement & Desire Lines

Figure 2.4 shows existing signalised and non-signalised crossings points, and pedestrian desire lines across the study area.

The main pedestrian movements within the study area occur between the transport hubs and retail areas. Both the rail and bus station host a high volume of passengers throughout the day.

There are five north-south signalised crossing points over Conway Street. Due to the current indirect layout of the crossings, including long strips of guard-rail, crossing movements are notably more convoluted than pedestrian desire lines.

The current crossing design and guard-rail prevents pedestrians from moving freely within the study area, and creates severance for those travelling east-west past the bus station. There is only one signalised crossing point over the busway, and pedestrians are restricted from crossing by signage and guard railing.



Pedestrian movement restrictions at Bus Station



Informal crossing lines between Europa Boulevard and the Bus Station

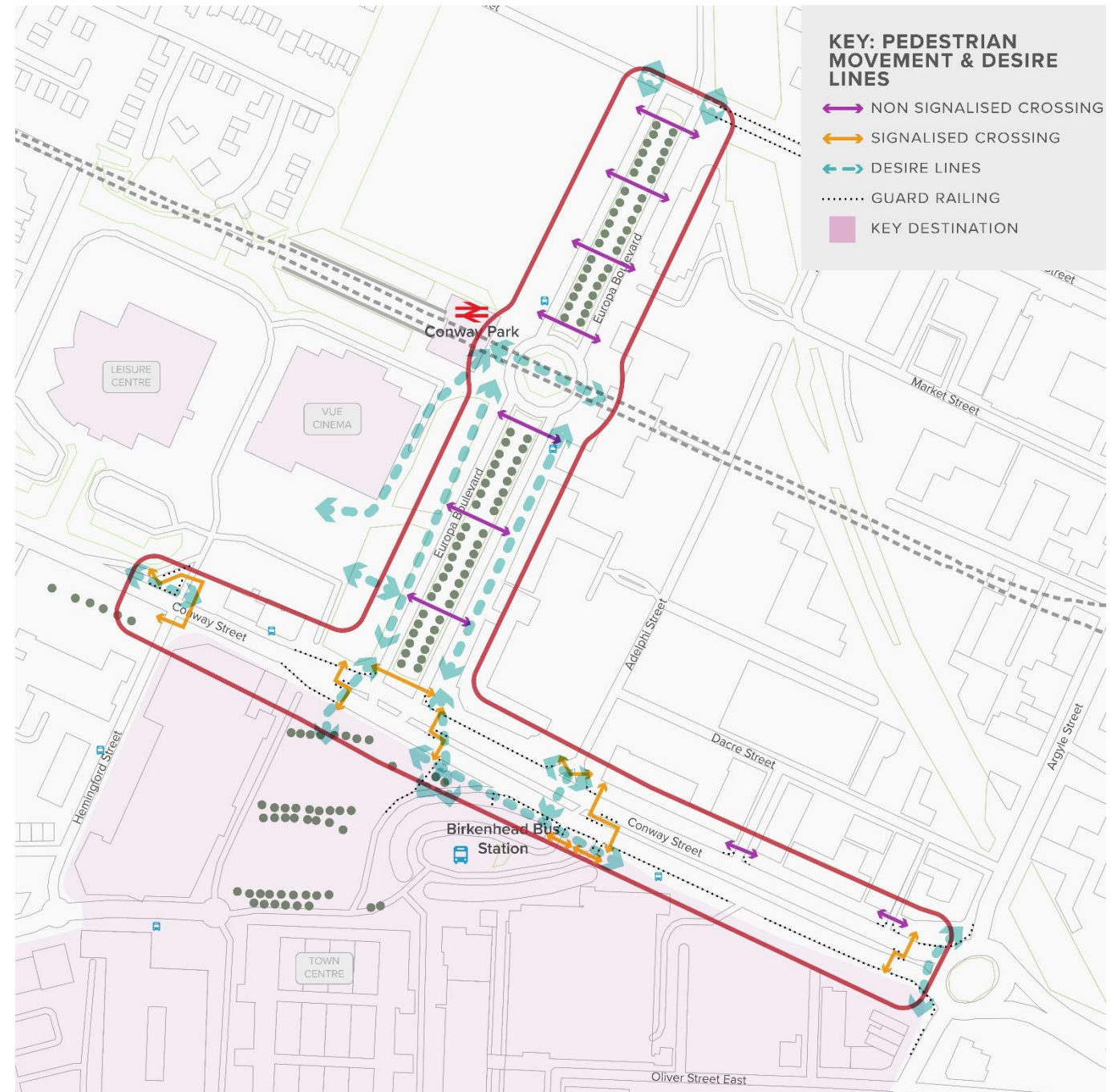


Figure 2.4 – Crossings and Desire Lines

2.6 Recorded Crime

Figure 2.5 identifies crime hotspots across the study area, with reference to Police.uk records covering the area between April 2021-2022.

The key crime hot spots are mainly situated in or around the larger stores and retail spaces (Argos/Wilko). Most of the reported crimes relate to instances of antisocial behaviour or theft.

A high number of crime has also been recorded outside of The Beach night club at the east end of Conway Street - and other venues nearby. The majority of these offences were reported as violent offences, drugs and public order offences.

There have been ten reported bicycle thefts in or close to the study area. Three of these occurred behind Wirral Met College.



Figure 2.5 – Recorded Crime

2.7 Public Transport

Figure 2.6 shows existing public transport within the study area, including both bus and rail routes, services and frequencies, and public transport infrastructure.

Bus

There are four bus stops within the study area (excluding Birkenhead Bus Station). Two of these are located on Europa Boulevard, with the remaining two on Conway Street. All four of the bus stops are sheltered.

In total, nine buses per hour travel eastbound on Conway Street during peak times, comprised of five services which stop on the north side of Conway Street.

There are four buses travelling northbound on Europa Boulevard in the morning between 5AM and 8AM. The bus stop is located outside of Conway Park station.

Birkenhead Bus Station has a total of ten stands, with eight being currently in use. It is served by around 39 services which cover the wider area of Chester, Wirral and Liverpool. There are around 64 buses per hour operating out of Birkenhead Bus Station during peak times.

Rail

Conway Park station is on the Wirral Line loop line of the Merseyrail network. Rail services from Conway Park to Liverpool Central run every 5-10 minutes, and to New Brighton or West Kirby every 15 minutes.

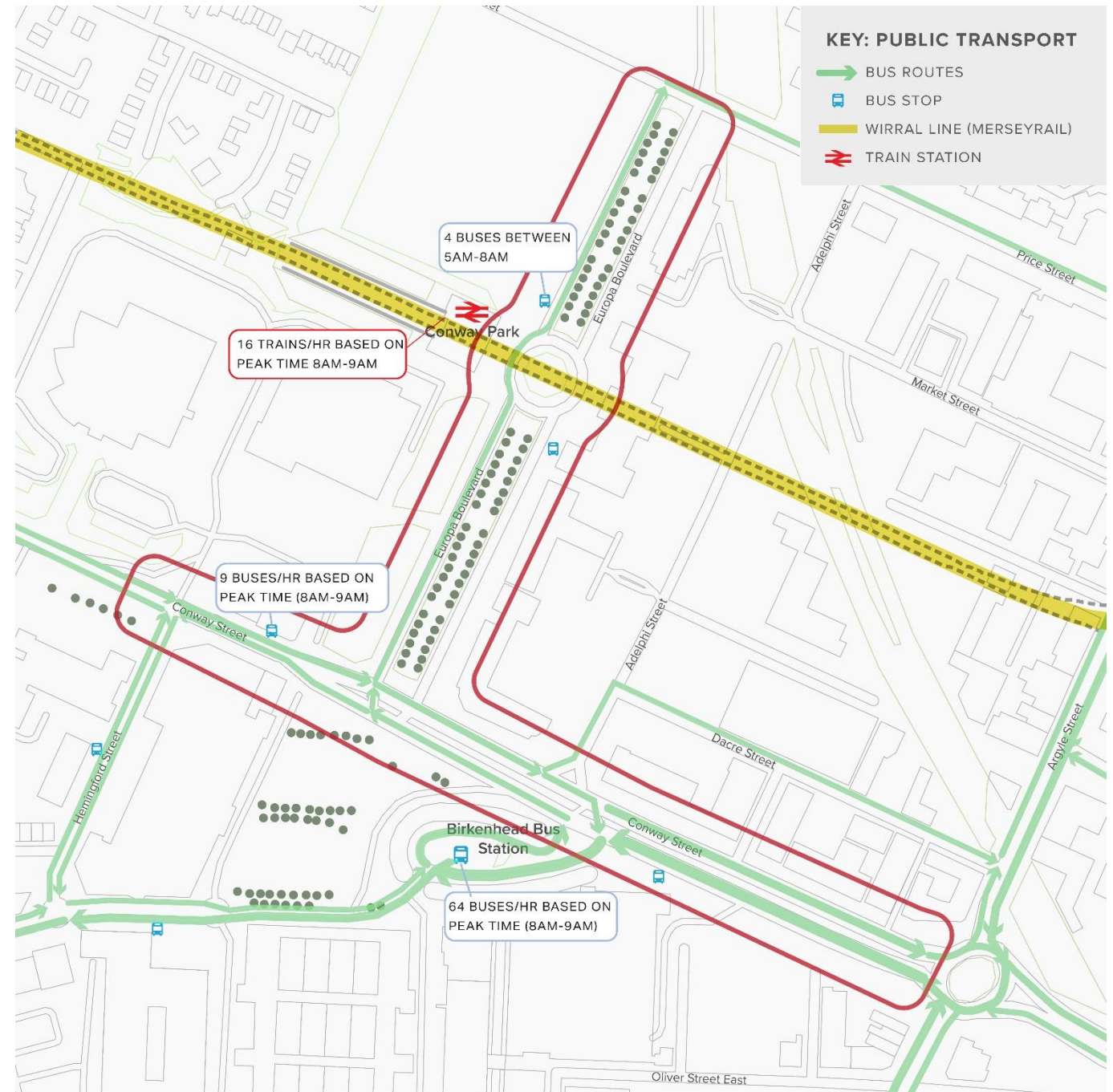


Figure 2.6 – Bus and Rail Services and Frequency

2.8 Traffic Flows

Table 2.2 shows traffic flow data from 2016-2020 for Conway Street, between the A5029 and A552.

The data was determined through a manual count (2019) and estimated (2016-2018, 2020) by the Department for Transport.

Data from the latest manual count shows that the total traffic count was 8708. The most significant vehicle classification was cars and taxis, which accounted for over 83% of vehicle types.

The large drop in vehicles estimated for 2020 can be attributed to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent Government national lockdown measures.

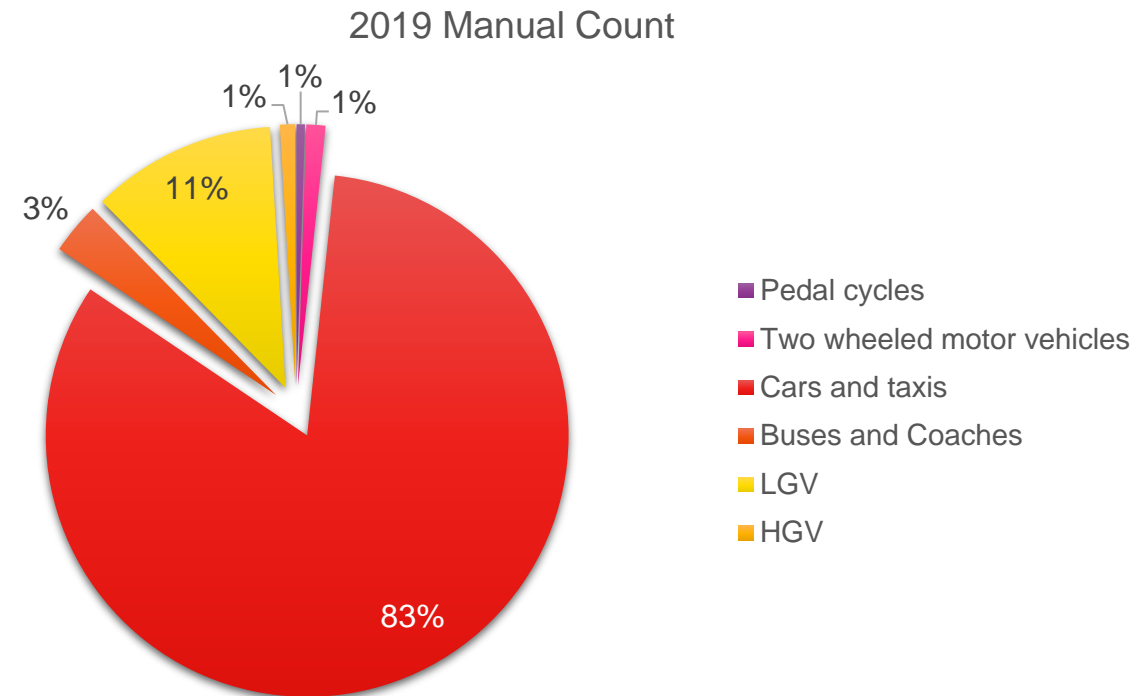


Table 2.2 – Traffic Flow Data (DfT 2020)

Year	Count method	Pedal cycles	Two wheeled motor vehicles	Cars and taxis	Buses and coaches	LGV	HGV	All motor vehicles
2020	Estimated using previous year's AADF on this link	52	76	5501	177	882	73	6709
2019	Manual Count	45	103	7242	279	1000	83	8708
2018	Estimated using previous year's AADF on this link	83	71	8200	353	1597	154	10375
2017	Estimated using previous year's AADF on this link	75	72	8291	390	1568	154	10474
2016	Estimated using previous year's AADF on this link	78	71	8353	417	1489	153	10483

2.9 Active Travel Collisions

Figure 2.7 shows the location of all active travel collisions (involving pedestrians or cyclists) which have occurred within the study area between 2017-2021. In this time there were a total of ten active travel collisions in the study area, including one fatal pedestrian collision in 2018 at Adelphi Street junction.

All of these collisions have occurred on Conway Street. A cluster of three collisions have occurred opposite to Birkenhead Bus Station, of which two involved pedestrians (fatal and serious), and one a child casualty (slight).

Several slight collisions have also occurred to the west and east of the study area.

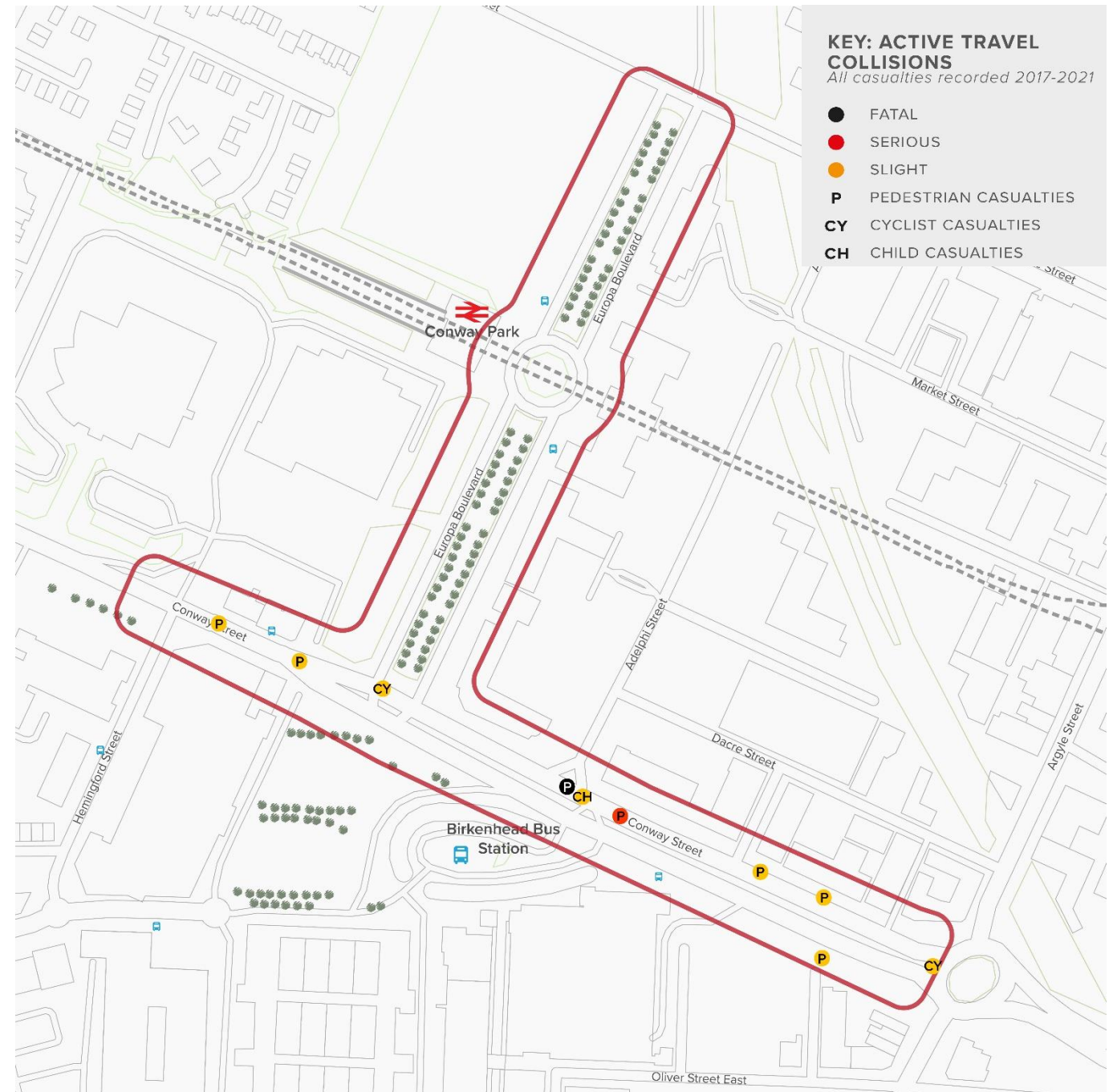


Figure 2.7 – Active Travel Collisions

2.10 Public Realm Conditions – Conway Street

Figure 2.8 highlights public realm conditions on Conway Street.

- The public realm is generally in a tired, underwhelming state. Surfacing is inconsistent through the study area and often patchy, with different colours and materials.
- There is an abundance of signage on the street which has built up and resulted in cluttered footways.
- There are several bollards and an excessive use of guard railing, particularly around the crossings and bus station, which inhibit movement and create pinch points.
- There are a few cycle loops within the study area, but most are in poor condition and did not seem to be used upon site visitation (June 2022).
- The public realm and materials used in the space outside of the Grade II listed Conway Building do not reflect the appearance and character of the building.

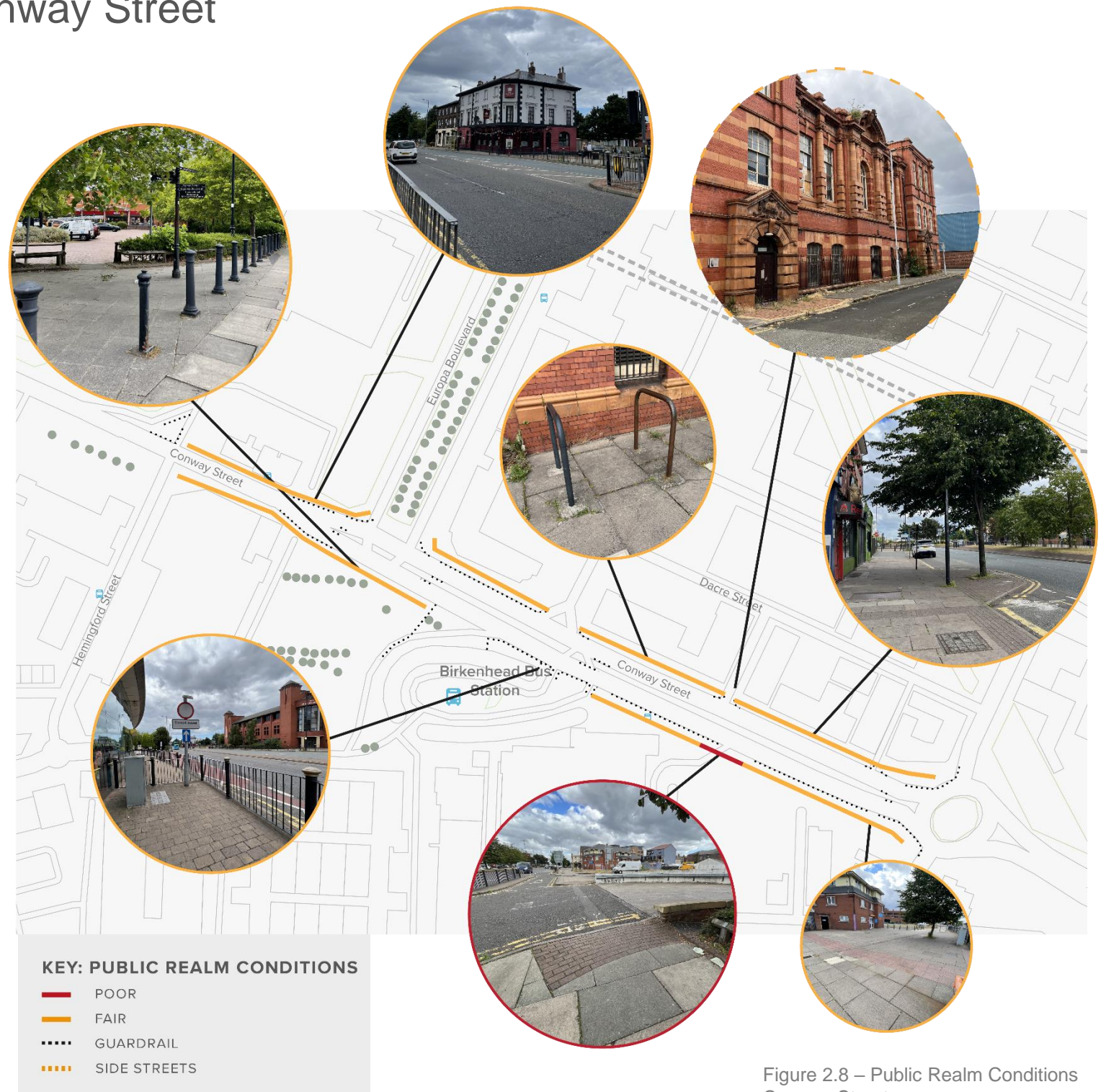


Figure 2.8 – Public Realm Conditions Conway Street

2.11 Public Realm Conditions – Europa Boulevard

Figure 2.9 highlights public realm conditions on Europa Boulevard.

- As is the case with Conway Street, the public realm is generally in a tired, underwhelming state. Surfacing is inconsistent through the study area and often patchy, with different colours and materials.
- Whilst there are a number of benches along Europa Boulevard, street furniture is old and worn and the overall appearance of the area is untidy.
- Bins are placed in various locations along the Boulevard, however there still appears to be a high amount of litter in the area. Bins were observed to be overflowing during a site visit in June 2022.
- The entrance to Conway Park Station lacks in wayfinding and there is a poor sense of arrival to the town centre. In addition to this the current public realm is tired and uninviting with a lack of green space or street furniture.



Figure 2.9 – Public Realm Conditions Europa Boulevard

2.12 Highway Ownership

Figure 2.10 shows the highway ownership across the study area.

Both Conway Street and Europa Boulevard are classified as adopted highway.

Engagement with the Council will be undertaken following further development of the preferred option to secure the necessary permissions to implement the public realm works.



Figure 2.10 – Highway Ownership

3 Issues & Opportunities

3.1 Europa Boulevard

Interventions such as reducing the carriageway width and reclaiming street-space for pedestrians will encourage increased footfall and regeneration on Europa Boulevard.

Public realm interventions to improve the pedestrian experience could include:

- Introducing dedicated active travel facilities to improve the safety and legibility of trips by active modes;
- Decluttering the streets from general clutter (unnecessary bollards and signage) and better maintenance of footways;
- Reducing on-street parking and widening the footway;
- Introducing green infrastructure and better street furniture;
- Delivering façade upgrades at Conway Park Station.

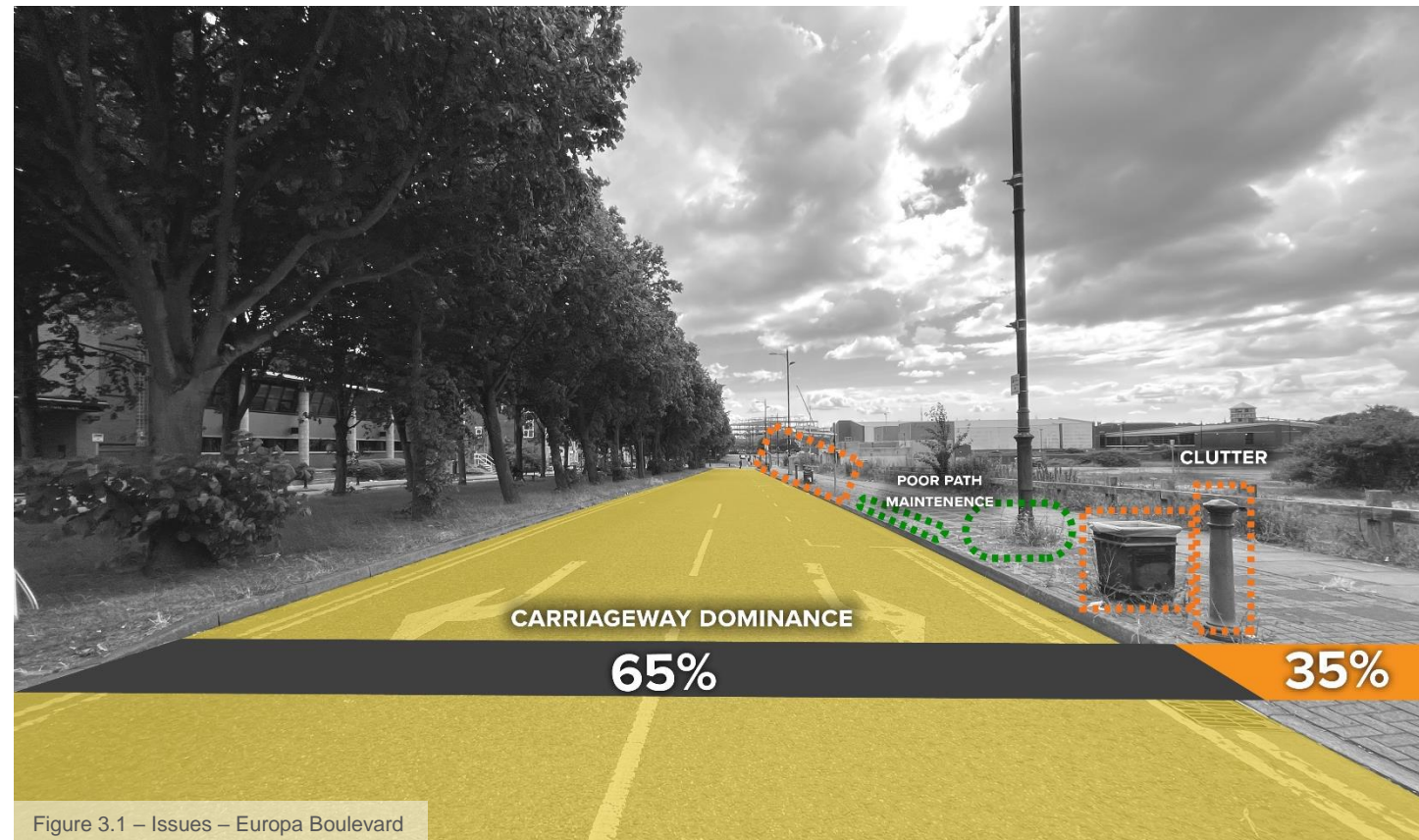
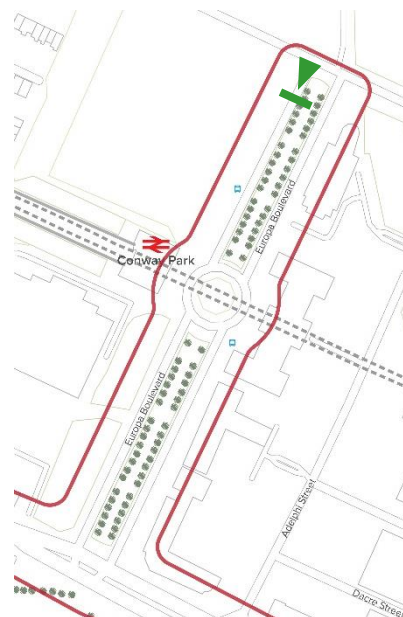


Figure 3.1 – Issues – Europa Boulevard

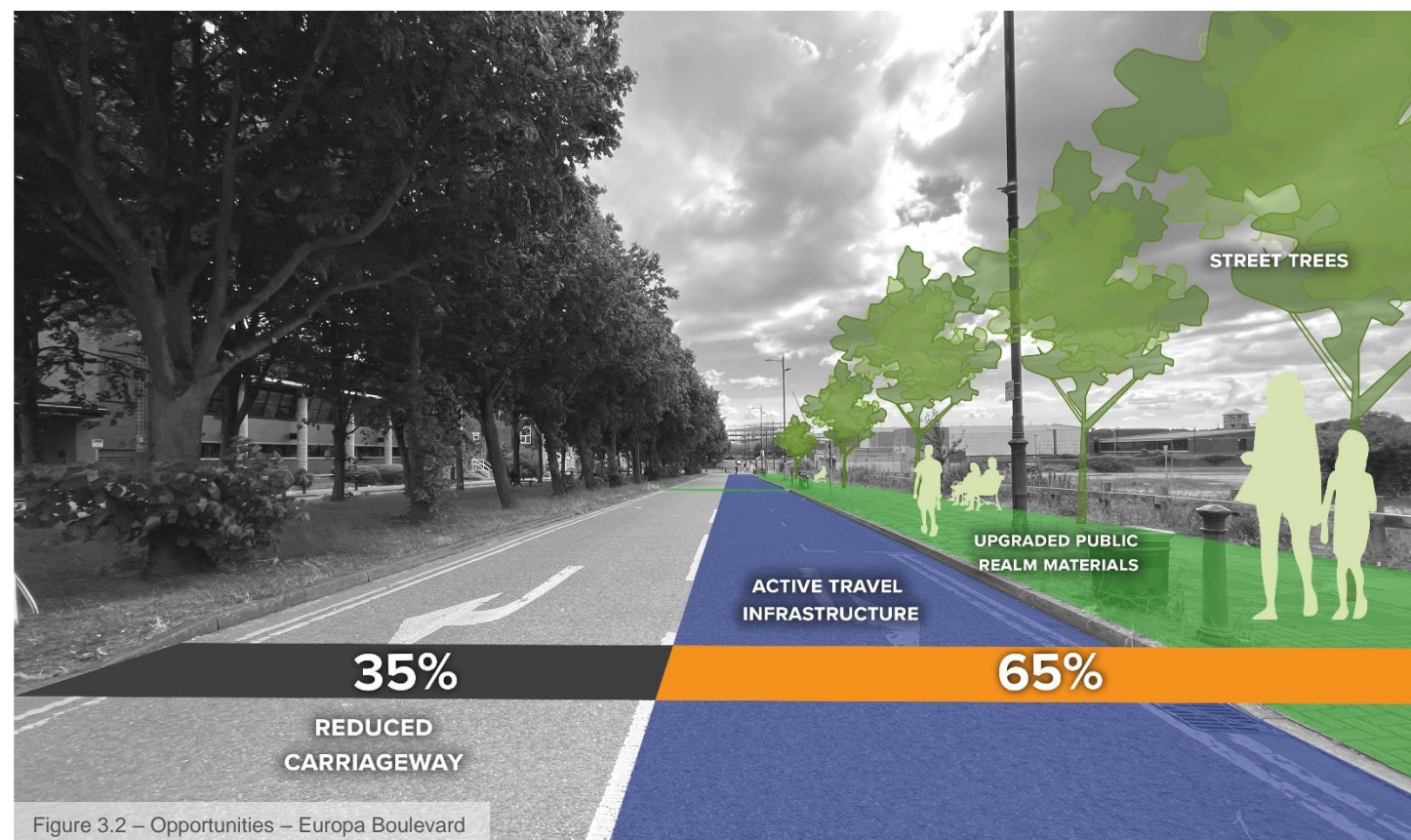


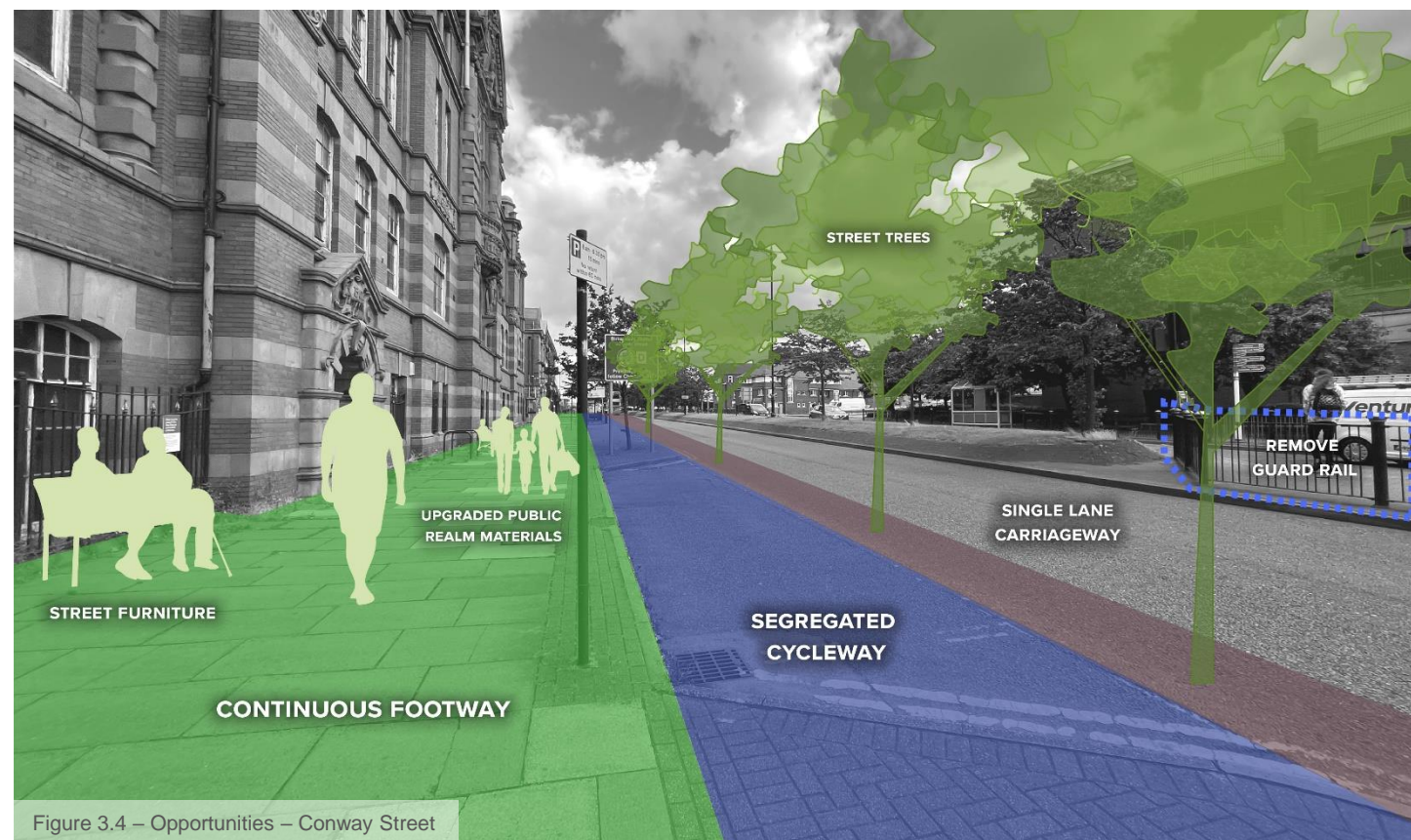
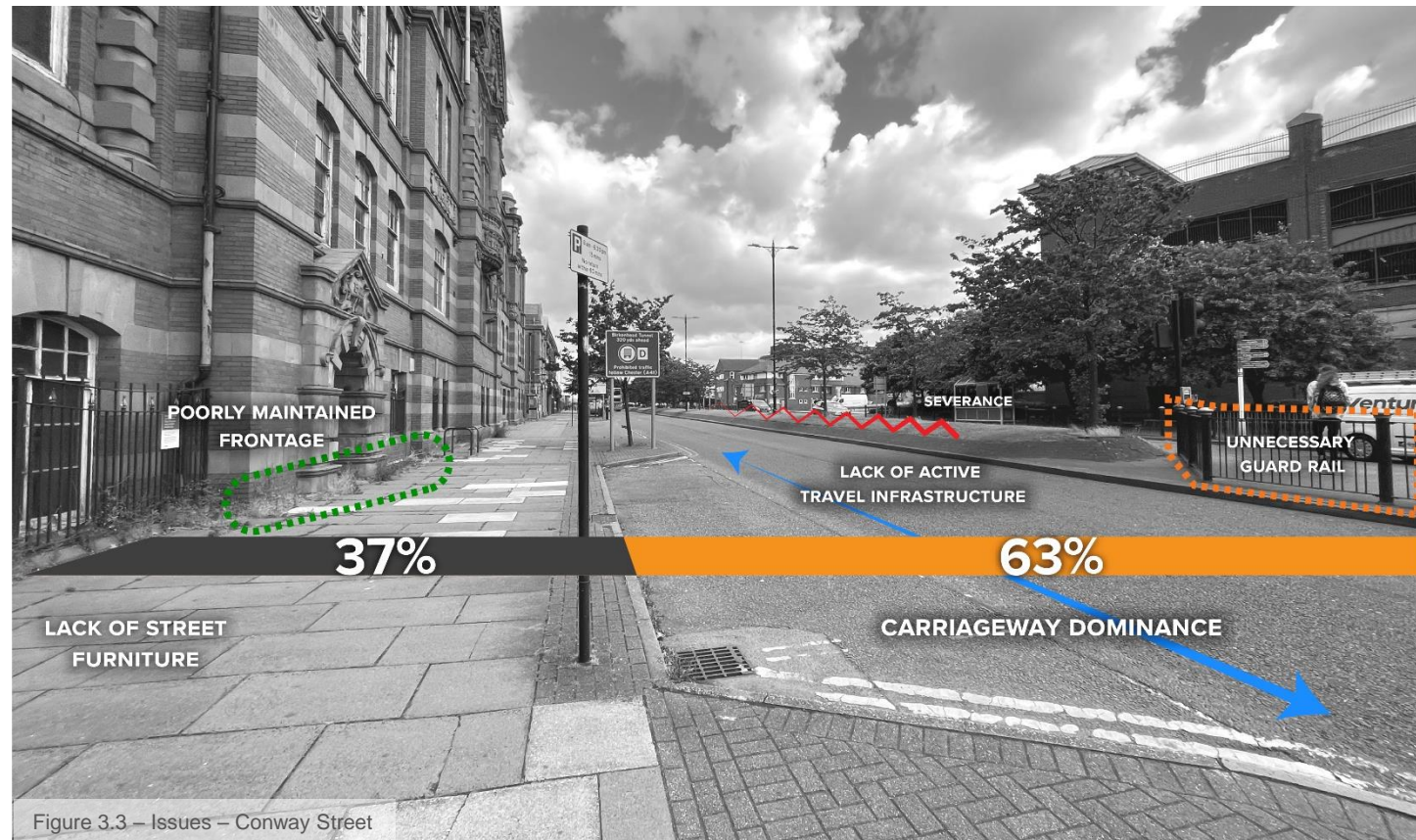
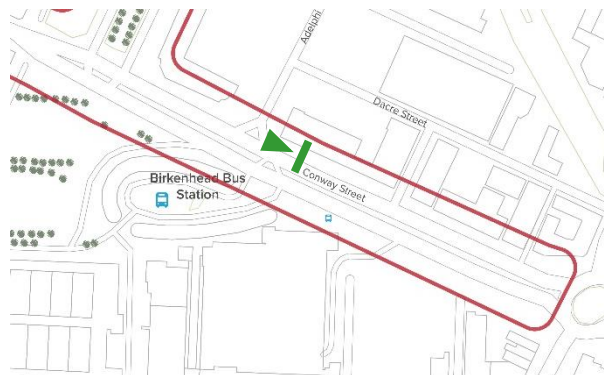
Figure 3.2 – Opportunities – Europa Boulevard

3.2 Conway Street

Conway Street is signified by carriageway dominance, indirect crossings, cluttered signage, and overused guard-railings. In many places there is a lack of dwell opportunities due to a lack of street furniture and green infrastructure.

Public realm interventions to improve the pedestrian experience could include:

- Continuous footways and more legible routes for pedestrians
- More direct crossings following desire lines
- Reduced carriageway dominance and an increase in space allocation for active mode users
- Removal of clutter including guard rails, bollards and poorly positioned signage.



4 Vision & Design Principles

4.1 Vision and Design Principles

Vision Statement

A new Conway Street and Europa Boulevard are key to the renaissance of Birkenhead. They will be beautiful avenues that provide a canvas for the wider transformation of the town centre to build upon.

They will be healthy, green streets that provide a comfortable pedestrian environment and safe cycling infrastructure. A better balance of movement and place will allow easy access for vehicles, but not dominate the streetscene.

Design Principles

- Create a people first space – reduce conflicts between different users and the impact of vehicles on pedestrian movement
- Promote healthy, active travel through the provision of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure
- Create a space with a strong sense of purpose – a canvas for activity, vibrancy and community
- Green infrastructure at the forefront of design proposals
- Promote dwell time through the provision of increased space allocation and street furniture
- Create a strong first impression of Birkenhead at key gateways, including Conway Park Station
- Create a place that facilitates natural navigation through legible design
- Simplify the streetscene and reduce engineering complexity
- Consolidate parking/pick up facilities



5 Concept Options

5.1 Conway Street

Figure 5.1 shows a typical existing street section from Conway Street. Conway Street is a wide, hard-engineered route where pedestrians are often segregated at the borders of the highway.

The pedestrian environment is overall underwhelming and lacks street furniture providing shelter or resting points. The majority of crossings between Argyle St junction and Hemingford St are dog-legged crossings – which prioritise vehicular flow against easiness of crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. In total 4 options have been developed for the street.

Key design features of **Option 1** (figure 5.2) include:

- Single-lane (1.5m) segregated cycle lanes either side of the carriageway
- Widened footways on both sides of the street and a slightly reduced carriageway width on the eastbound carriageway
- Public realm improvements on the north side of the street, including tree planting, resting points and an improved footway surface.

Note: Due to the current location of the bus stop and the bus station on the south facing side of Conway Street, the cycle route would be conflicting with pedestrians and bus movements. This would require a number of additional crossings points for pedestrians.

Key design features of **Option 2A** (figure 5.3) include:

- Westbound traffic lanes are maintained whilst the eastbound traffic route is reduced to one lane.
- The introduction of a segregated bi-directional cycle lane on the north side of the street
- Public realm improvements on the north side of the street, including a widened footway, tree planting, resting points and an improved footway surface.
- In this option there are no proposed changes to the south side of the street.

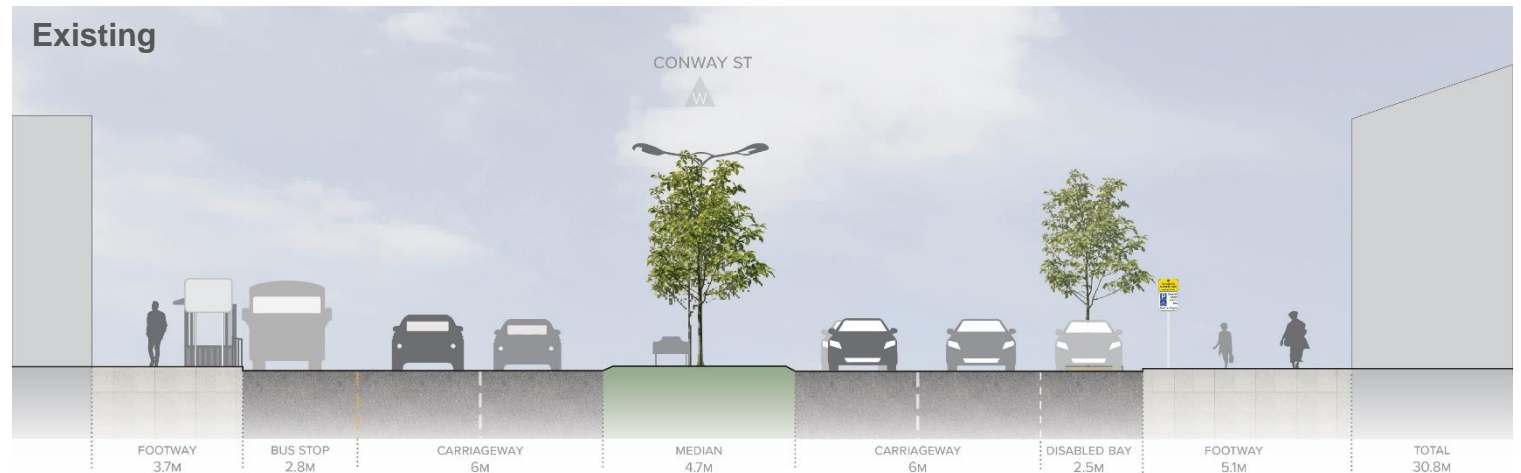


Figure 5.1 – Conway Street – Existing

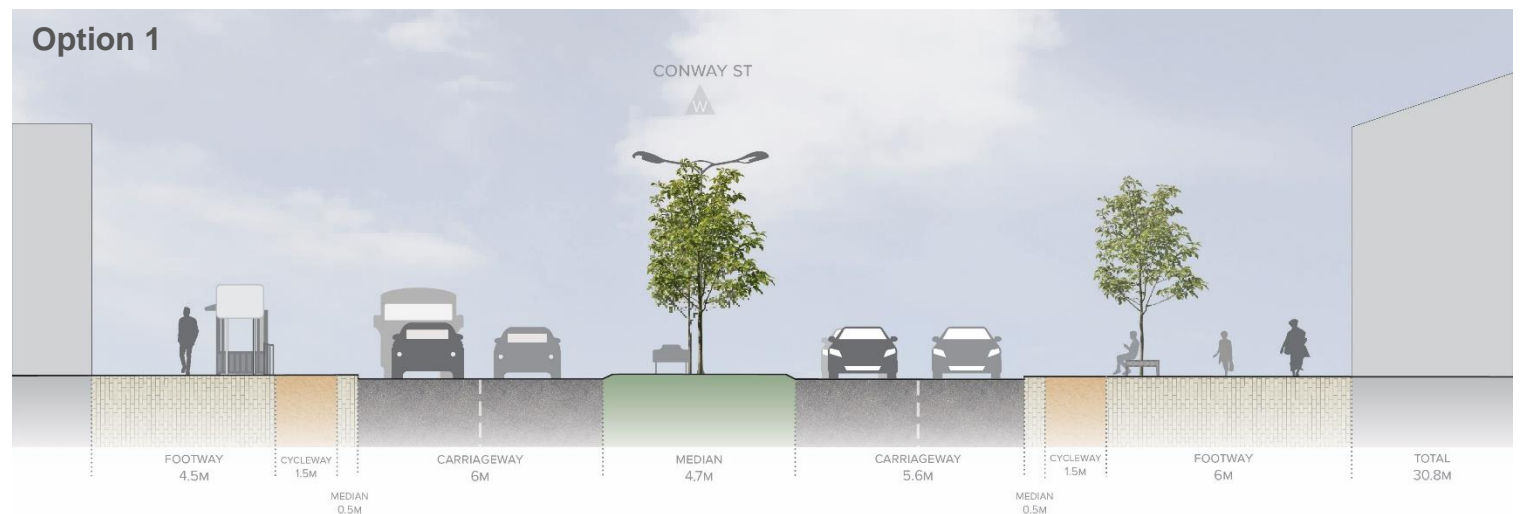


Figure 5.2 – Conway Street – Option 1

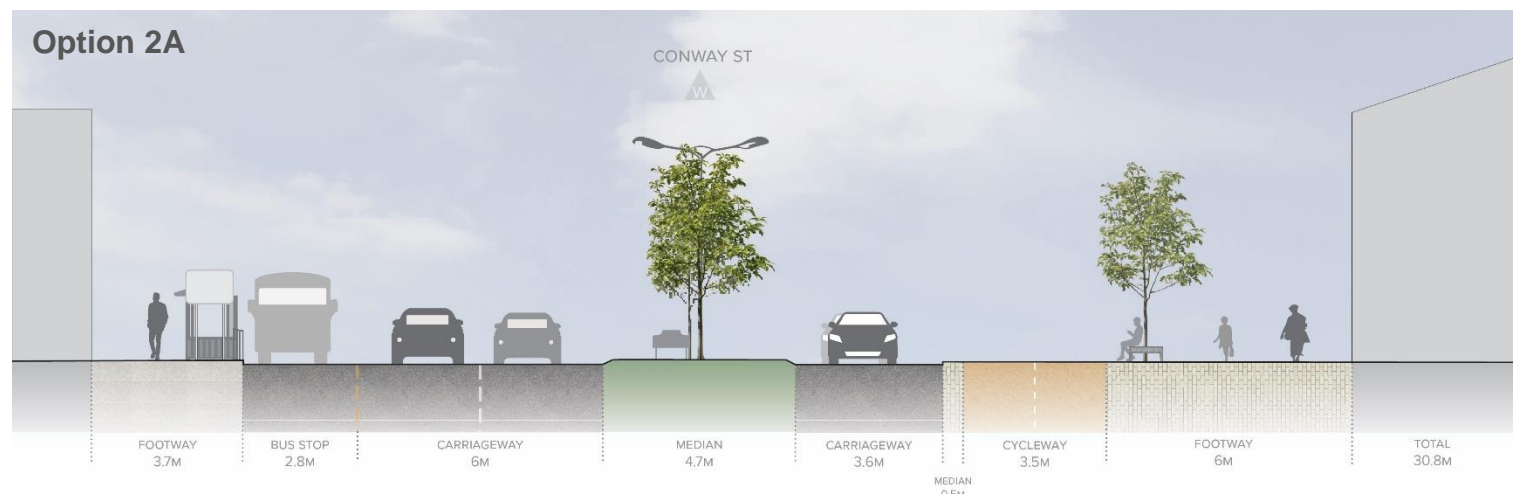


Figure 5.3 – Conway Street – Option 2A

Key design features of **Option 2B** (preferred option) (figure 5.4) include:

- Westbound traffic lanes are maintained whilst the eastbound traffic route is reduced to one lane.
- The introduction of a segregated bi-directional cycle lane on the north side of the street separated from the carriageway by a 2m planted tree buffer
- A slightly narrowed footway (0.6m) but public realm improvements including trees, resting points and improved footway surface
- In this option there are no proposed changes to the south side of the street

Key design features of **Option 2C** (figure 5.5) include:

- As per Option 2B (above) with the addition of a renewed hardscape central median with new tree planting

Key design features of **Option 3** (figure 5.6) include:

- As per Option 2C (above) with the addition of public realm improvements on the south side of the street
- Public realm improvements include the removal of the bus stop area, a widened footway, new tree planting and an improved footway surface

Across all options, the street will also benefit from enhanced crossings and decluttering, including the removal of superfluous signage and guard-railing.

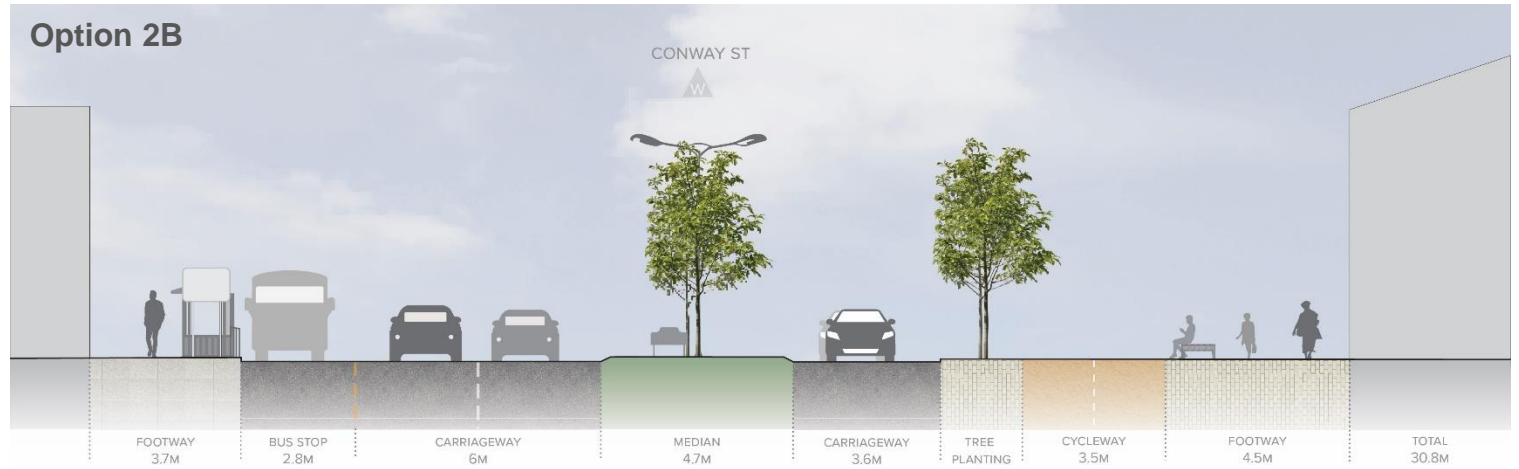


Figure 5.4 – Conway Street – Option 2B

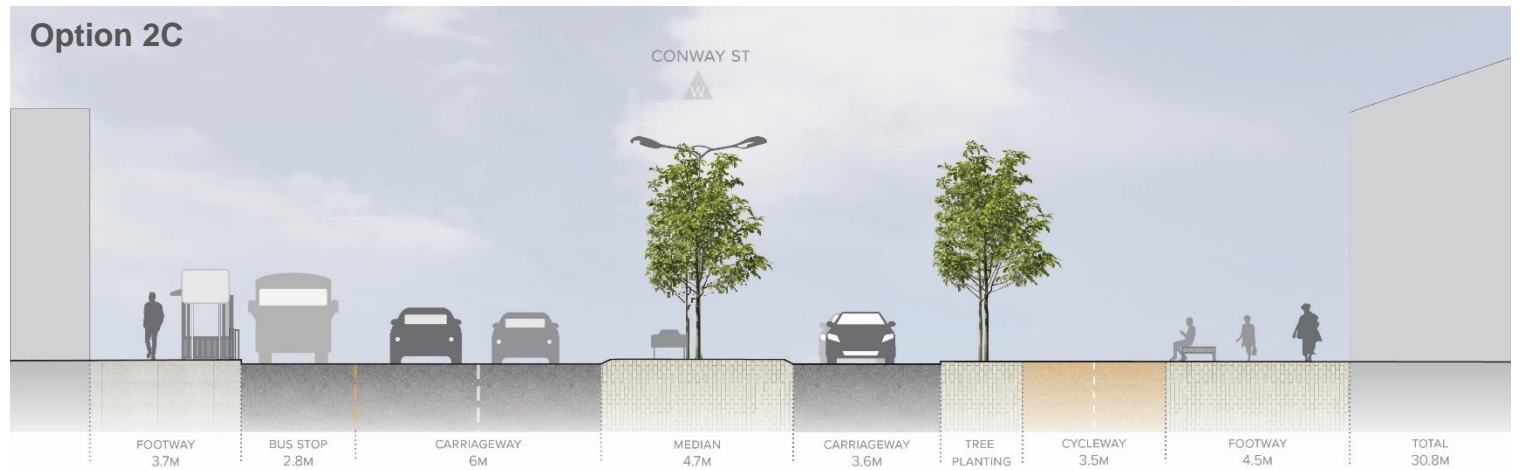


Figure 5.5 – Conway Street – Option 2C

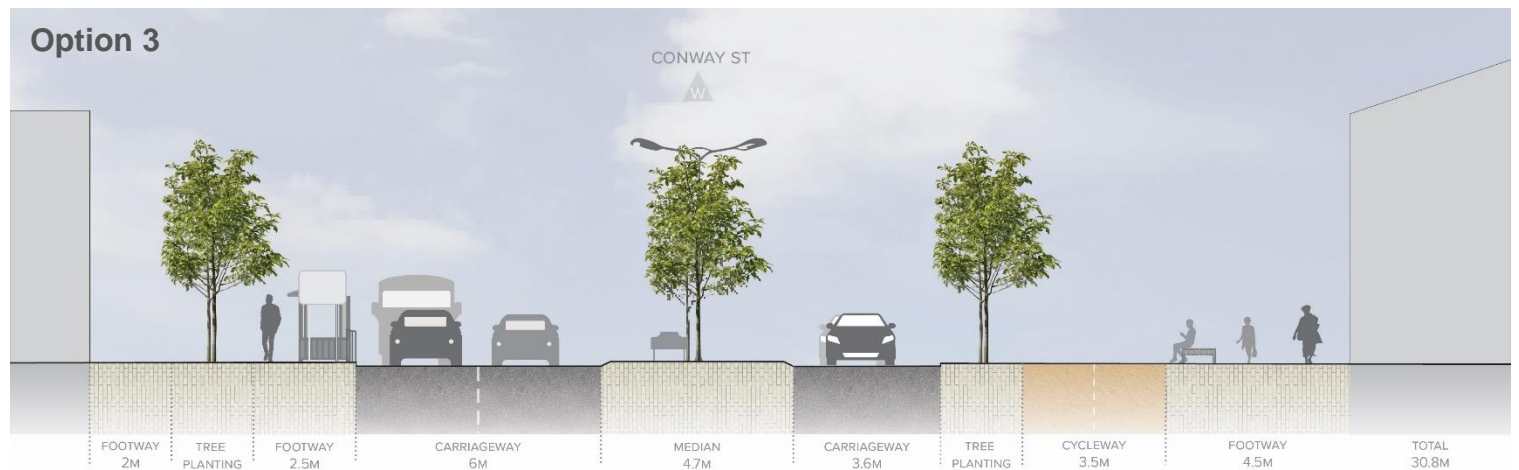


Figure 5.6 – Conway Street – Option 3

5.2 Europa Boulevard

Figure 5.7 shows a typical existing street section from Europa Boulevard. The existing layout is dominated by the carriageway and central boulevard. The space allocation for public realm is poor, with narrow footways, and there is a distinct lack of active travel infrastructure.

In addition to this, the environment outside of Conway Park station is underwhelming and unattractive, with a poor sense of arrival to the town centre and a lack of shelter or resting points.

In total 3 options have been developed for Europa Boulevard.

Figure 5.8 shows design **Option 1** (preferred option). The proposed design aims to re-balance the street space to include active travel movements and enhance the existing central boulevard.

The key elements of the proposed design include:

- Northbound traffic lane is removed and replaced with a bi-directional cycleway, planting and widened footway.
- East side of the street converted to two-way.
- Improved public realm materials.
- Introduction of new street furniture and planting.

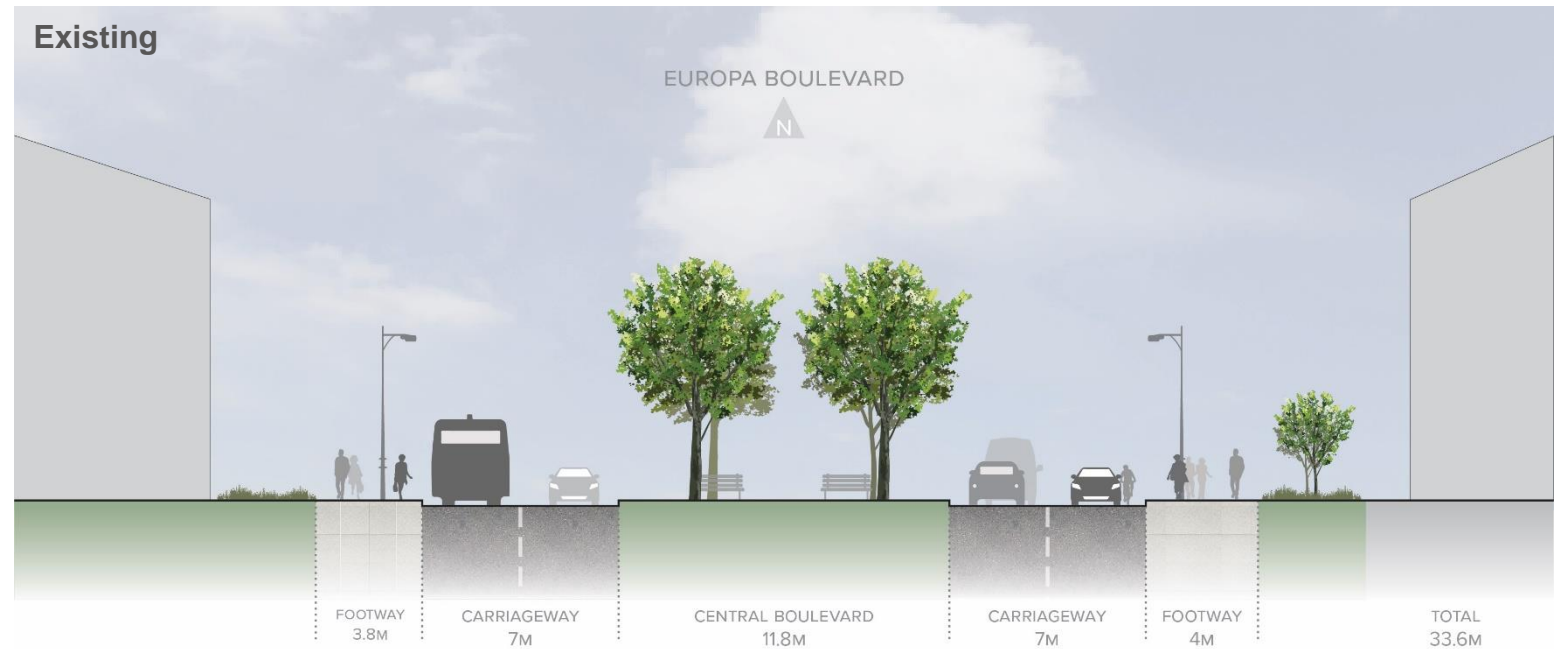


Figure 5.7 – Europa Boulevard - Existing

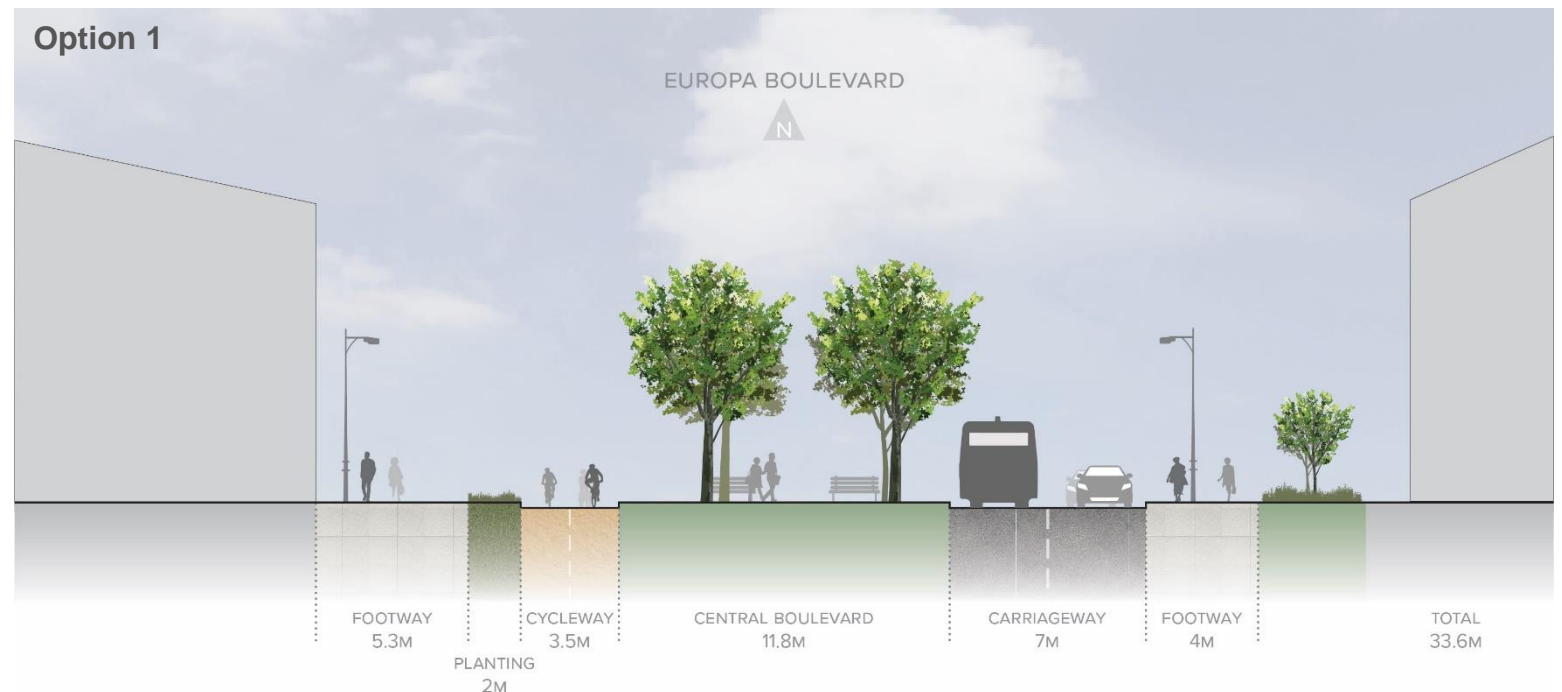


Figure 5.8 – Europa Boulevard – Option 1

Key design features of **Option 2** (figure 5.9) include:

- As per Option 1 with the addition of a linear path down the centre of the central boulevard
- Crown lift on trees on green space.

Key design features of **Option 3** (figure 5.10) include:

- Bi-directional cycleway down the centre the green space.
- Crown lift trees on green space.
- Expansive public realm and landscaping on the west side of the street.

Across all options, the street will also benefit from enhanced crossings and decluttering, including the removal of superfluous signage and guard-railing.

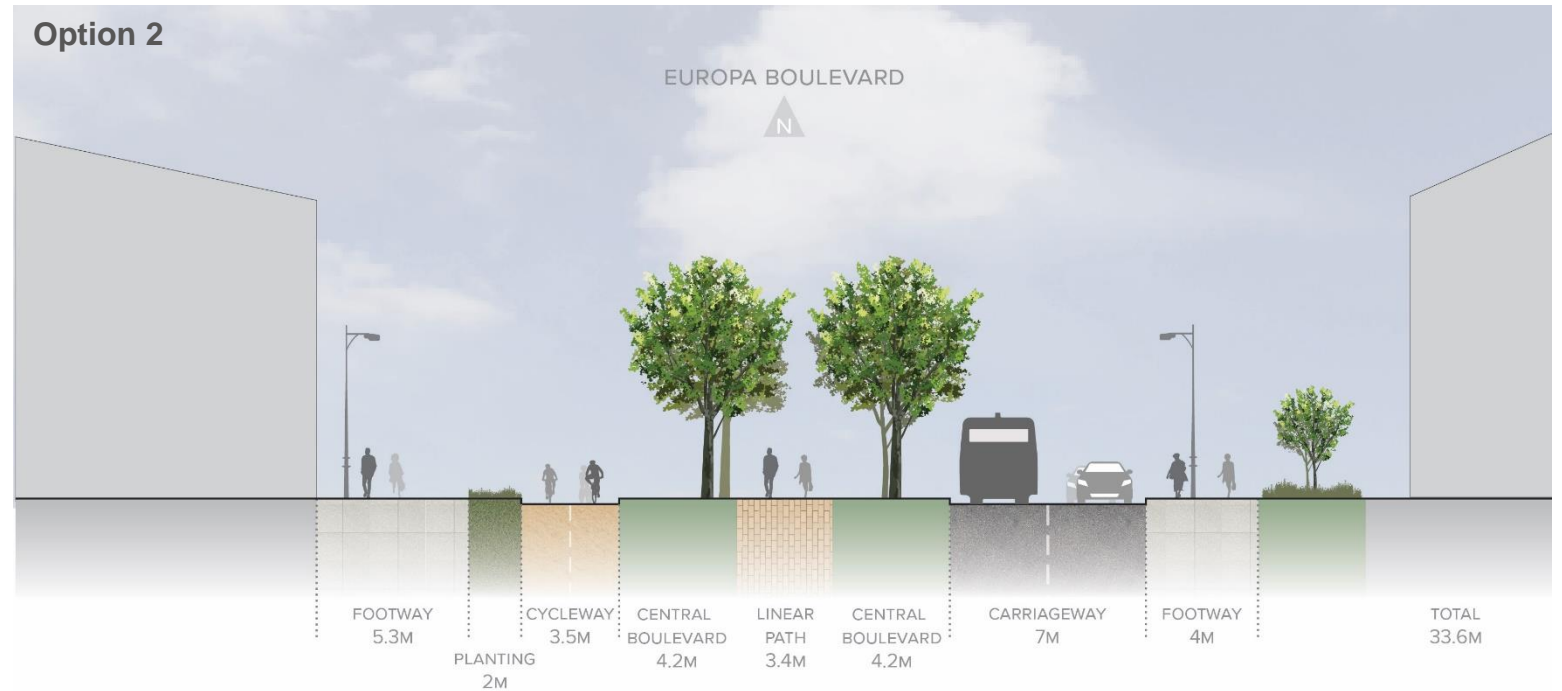


Figure 5.9 – Europa Boulevard – Option 2

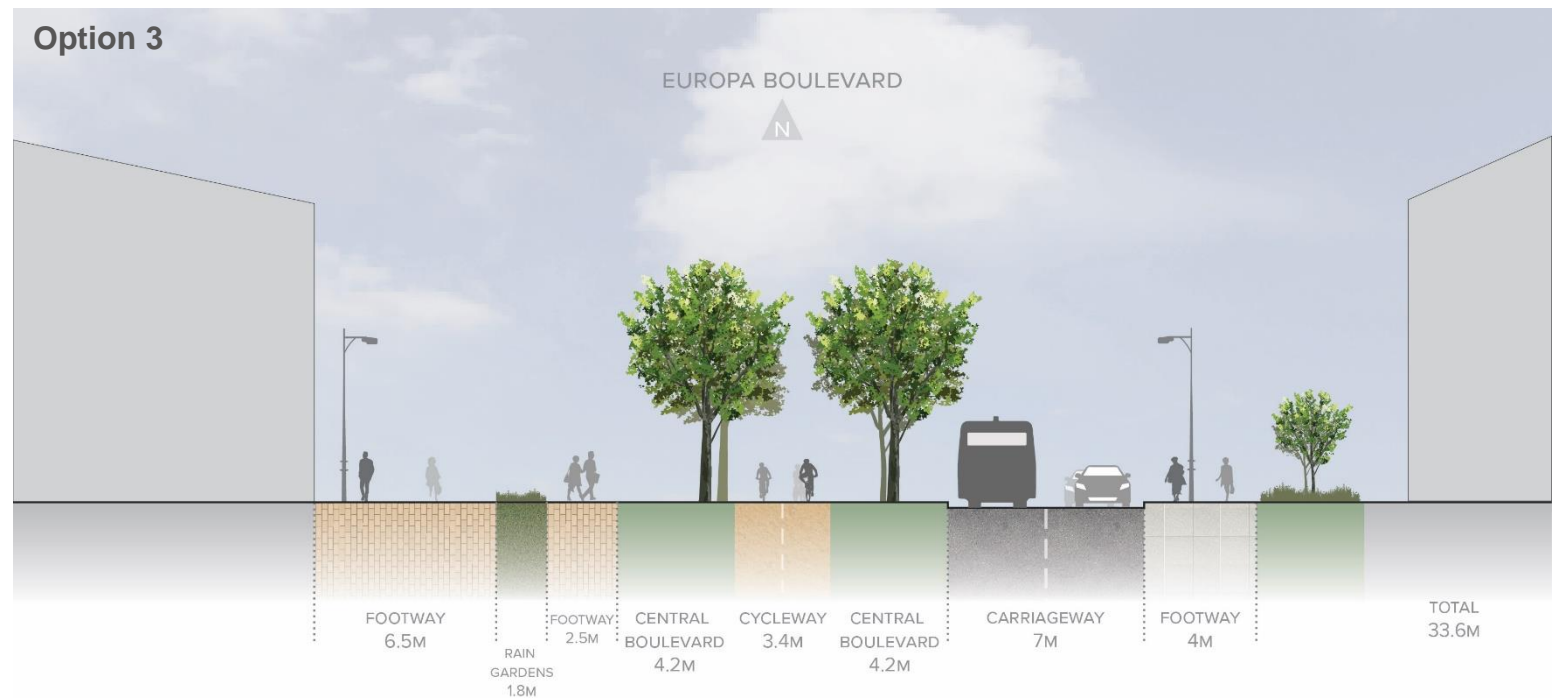


Figure 5.10 – Europa Boulevard – Option 3

6 Concept Design

6.1 Conway Street

Figure 6.1 shows the preferred option concept design (Option 2B) for Conway Street. The proposed design introduces a two-way segregated cycleway between Argyle St junction and Conway PI junction, which can be expanded west when further funding is available. The current tired footway on the north side of Conway St will be replaced by high quality paving – to improve the pedestrian environment and accessibility. This includes the implementation of a new pedestrian supercrossing between the Bus Station and Europa Boulevard (West).

Please note that proposed changes to the roundabout junction with Argyle St are not included within this concept due to the potential need to phase implementation.



Figure 6.1: Conway Street Concept



Bi-directional segregated cycleway and tree planting
Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow



Pedestrian 'Super Crossing' and central median planting
Maid Marian Way, Nottingham



Central median tree planting
Streatham High Road, London

6.2 Europa Boulevard

Figure 6.2 shows the preferred option concept design (Option 1) for Europa Boulevard. The proposed design will see the existing northbound carriageway closed and replaced with a new generous footway and cycleway. This requires the full conversion of the east side lane to two-way traffic flow, and the removal of all on-street parking.

The transformed west side of Europa Boulevard includes new high-quality paving and the installation of a bidirectional segregated cycleway. At Conway Park Station, the current roundabout is to be removed and replaced with a new public space.

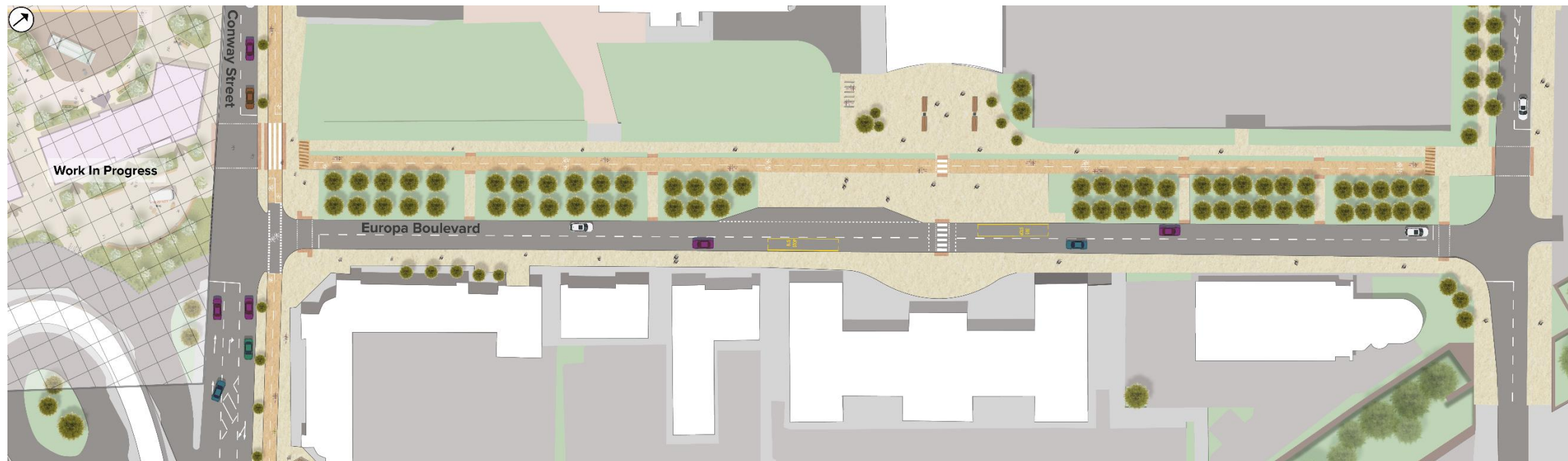


Figure 6.2: Europa Boulevard Concept



Derby Railway Station enhanced public realm



'Grey to Green' public realm and connectivity initiative Castlegate, Sheffield



Lloyd George Avenue (concept design) Cardiff

6.3 Concept Masterplan

Figure 6.3 shows the combined concepts for Conway Street and Europa Boulevard.



Figure 6.3: Concept Masterplan

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