

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 19 April 2007 the Council approved the St James Quarter Development Brief to guide the preparation of detailed proposals for the redevelopment of the St James Centre, New St Andrew's House, the King James Thistle Hotel, and associated car parks. The brief also considered development opportunities that existed, or might exist, immediately beyond the boundaries of the St James Centre that could contribute to the successful redevelopment of the wider area: namely St Andrew Square, Picardy Place and Greenside Row. It is for this reason that the boundaries of the development brief were drawn to include areas that extended beyond the St James Centre. The approved St James Quarter Development Brief can be viewed [here](#) or at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk).
- 1.2 It is in respect of one of these opportunities that this document has been prepared, namely the opportunity to develop land presently occupied by the Picardy Place traffic roundabout and surrounding road spaces, an area which will undergo significant change in the coming years, to

accommodate the tram proposals and associated highway works.

- 1.3 The purpose of this document is therefore to set out the main development principles on which proposals for the site should be based, taking into account the requirements of the tram project and the emerging proposals for the St James Quarter.
- 1.4 The development principles set out in this document will, in the first instance, guide the preparation of more detailed proposals and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the site.
- 1.5 The study area is identified in Figure 1 below. Figures 2 and 3 show the street block that once stood on the site in plan form (extract from the OS plan of 1849) and a photograph of the site taken circa 1965. Fig 5 is an aerial photograph of the area taken in 1950's

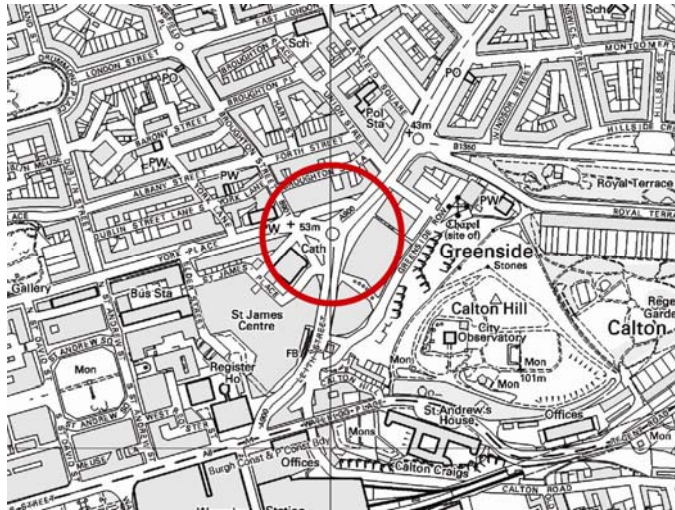


Figure 1 – Study Area



Figure 2 - Historic context



Figure 3 - Photograph of the site – early 1970's



Figure 4- Etching – Historic view to Cathedral – the building to the right is now the Conan Doyle P.H. The building to the left is the corner of the demolished Picardy Place block.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **City Design Initiative**

2.1 In December 2005, the City's Design Champion raised concerns that proposals emerging for Picardy Place at that time failed to grasp the opportunity presented by the tram project to return the traffic dominated area at one of Edinburgh's important city centre 'gateways' to positive urban use. A series of workshops followed that considered how the area could be redefined to act as an important interchange, offer a valuable development opportunity and critically turn it into a 'place for people'; as opposed to the space which was created by traffic management demands. These workshops, and others to develop the tram project and proposals for the St James Quarter, have acted as a precursor to the development principles set out in this document.

### **The St James Quarter**

2.2 The approved St James Quarter development brief describes the changing fortunes of Edinburgh's city centre,

particularly the decline in the range and quality of its retail offer, decreasing market potential and declining rental levels. It also notes the Council's aspiration to consolidate and strengthen the role of the city centre as the prime leisure shopping destination of national importance and as the principal destination for comparison shopping in the east of Scotland. The successful redevelopment of the St James Quarter, and the wider regeneration proposals for Princes Street, are recognised as having the potential to make a significant contribution to this aim.

2.3 The brief also describes in some detail the planning policy context within which proposals for the site and the city centre as a whole will be assessed. It is not intended to rehearse these policy considerations in this document, other than to note that in addition to these the Council has approved guidance on the protection of key views in the city (June 2008) and development briefs (May 2009) for each of the street blocks along Princes Street .



*Figure 5 -  
Aerial view taken in the 1950's*

2.5 In September 2008, HGI submitted a planning application (CEC ref: 08/03361/OUT) seeking outline planning permission for:

- the creation of 65.000 sqm. (gross) of Class 1 retail floorspace (of which 25.000 sqm. will be new floorspace) over 3 levels;
- the reconfiguration of the John Lewis department store
- up to 250 residential properties on the upper levels of the development;
- a new hotel housed within a central feature building and an 'apart-hotel';
- up to 15.000 sqm of office floorspace;
- up to 1800 underground car parking spaces; and,
- the creation of new buildings and streetscapes providing active uses at lower levels with cafés and restaurants leading into new public spaces, including a new public square at St James Square.

The proposals of the planning application broadly conformed to the requirements of the development brief and received outline planning permission in April 2009.

2.6 One issue that requires to be addressed by HGI is the relocation of the King James Thistle Hotel to allow for the comprehensive redevelopment of the St James Centre and office complex. The Council has been working with HGI to identify suitable alternative locations for the hotel. One solution that would satisfy both the hotel operator and HGI, and which is acceptable to the Council in principle is its relocation to the development site promoted by this document. A feasibility study to consider how this might be achieved and the impact of various built forms on the site's immediate surroundings and views to and from the site has been undertaken by HGI. This analysis has been useful in informing the preparation of this document. The Council has undertaken its own urban analysis, a summary of which can be found on page 10 of this document, that considers the planning and urban design considerations of a range of uses and potential developments.

### **The Edinburgh Tram Project**

2.7 The Edinburgh Tram project is the largest infrastructure proposal to improve the city's overall transport network. Parliamentary approval has been given to the construction of tram lines from the airport, through Edinburgh Park, to the city centre to Ocean Terminal and Newhaven beyond (Phase 1a). Phase 1b, to be built at a later date, will run from a connection with phase 1a at Roseburn to Granton. In addition, the Council has approved the location of the tram lines and associated infrastructure, including tram stops (Prior Approvals) at St Andrew Square, and Picardy Place. The construction programme for Phase 1a envisages the laying of tram lines and associated works at these locations during the first half of 2010, with completion anticipated by the end of that year..

2.8 Figure 6 shows the approved tram works for Picardy Place. Notwithstanding its approval, provision of facilities for cyclists have yet to be finalised.



Figure 6 - Prior Approval drawing for Picardy Place

### 3. CONSIDERATIONS

### **Co-ordinated Development**

- 3.1 The Council encourages a comprehensive approach to redevelopment whenever possible, and the preparation of development frameworks or master plans, to identify the full design potential of creating successful places; (Policy Des2 of the finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan (ECLP)). It was for this reason that the St James Quarter development brief considered the opportunity to incorporate and develop land immediately to the north east of the shopping centre (Picardy Place). The Council would expect proposals for the development site to consider how it might successfully be integrated into the redevelopment proposals for the shopping centre, tram stop and associated highway proposals, and create safe and easy access between each element.

### **Land use**

- 3.2 The finalised ECLP Proposals Map includes the St James Centre and the potential development site within a defined 'Central Area' and specifically as a 'Central Area Proposal'. Within the Central Area the Plan seeks to encourage a wide range of development with an emphasis on diversity of provision and mixed uses on individual sites.
- 3.3 The principal planning considerations are set out in policy Ca1 of the Plan. The policy sets out in general terms the requirements that development proposals should satisfy if they are to be acceptable. In summary, proposals will be permitted which maintain and enhance the character, attractiveness, vitality and accessibility of the city centre and contribute to its role as a regional service centre and Edinburgh's role as a capital city. An interactive version of the Edinburgh City Local Plan can be viewed [here](#) or at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk).

- 3.4 The requirements in principle for new development are:
- for comprehensively designed proposals which maximise the potential of the site;
  - a use or mix of uses appropriate to the location of the site, its accessibility characteristics and the character of the surrounding area;
  - for the provision of measures and facilities made necessary by the development including a contribution to the improvement of the public realm in the immediate vicinity of the site; and
  - for the creation of new civic spaces and traffic-free pedestrian routes where achievable.

3.5 In the context described above a range of land uses are considered to be acceptable in principle. However, given the nature of the development site and the tram / highway proposals, only a limited number of uses are considered to be suitable in practice e.g. hotel, office and commercial leisure uses; uses that expect to find a location in the city centre and are an aspect of its tourist, commercial and leisure roles. The Plan notes that mixed use schemes will

often be necessary to secure planning permission, especially those involving larger sites, and that it is particularly important to maintain activity at ground level.

#### **Architectural Interest**

3.6 There are a number of listed buildings that lie immediately beyond the boundaries of the development site. Among these are:

- St Paul's & St George's (Scottish Episcopal) Church, listed category 'A';
- buildings to the south side of York Place, individually listed category 'A' or 'B' and collectively listed as a group, category 'A';
- St Mary's (Roman Catholic) Cathedral, listed category 'B';
- buildings to the north of Picardy Place / Union Place listed collectively as category 'B';
- Lady's Glenorchy's Church at Greenside Place, listed category C(s).



- 3.7 In determining applications for planning permission on the site the Council will, as in all cases, have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, including those identified above and others not specifically referred to. The preservation or enhancement of the setting of listed buildings in the area is an important consideration for the Council, particularly in respect of St Mary's RC Cathedral, and this has informed the preparation of the development principles set out in this document.

#### **World Heritage Site**

- 3.8 Picardy Place lies within a World Heritage Site. In this regard an understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site is considered essential in developing proposals for the site.

#### **Gardens and Designed Landscapes**

- 3.9 Calton Hill is included on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes as part of the entry that considers all New Town gardens. While the development of the site will have no direct impact on the landscape of Calton Hill, the

impact of any development proposals on views to the hill will be a planning consideration.

#### **Planning Agreements**

- 3.10 Developers of the site will be expected to enter into legal agreements to secure an appropriate contribution towards meeting identified requirements. In this regard, reference should be made to the following Council guidelines:
- Movement and Development;
  - Tram Project: Developer Contributions.
- 3.11 The Council will also seek to secure significant improvements to the public realm. One mechanism for securing this, and other improvements, is through developer contributions.

**4. URBAN ANALYSIS**

4.1 In the 1960s, the redevelopment of St James Square to create the present day shopping centre and office complex included the demolition of a triangular urban block which sat in a location that is now the Picardy Place roundabout. The result is the open space, dominated by traffic, which exists today. It is generally regarded as an area that suffers from a lack of definition and containment – a consequence of its function, size and weak edges.

4.2 The site is bounded to the east by the curved sweep of the glassy modern Greenside ‘Omni Centre’ development, to the north by the substantial 4 storey Picardy Place terrace, and to the west by the cathedral and its precinct. The setting of the cathedral altered considerably following the demolition of the Picardy Place block; formerly it was viewed obliquely from Broughton Street (see figure 4), whereas it now enjoys a prominence and open outlook and is an important element overlooking the space.



*Aerial View of Picardy Place / Leith Street - 2006*

4.3 In the late 1980s, major improvements were carried out to reduce the size of the roundabout, enlarge and enliven paved areas available for pedestrian use and to create landscaped areas to the front of the cathedral and properties on Picardy Place (see Figure.8). As a consequence, the area has become more accessible, usable and enjoyable for people on foot. Nevertheless, it remains an area dominated

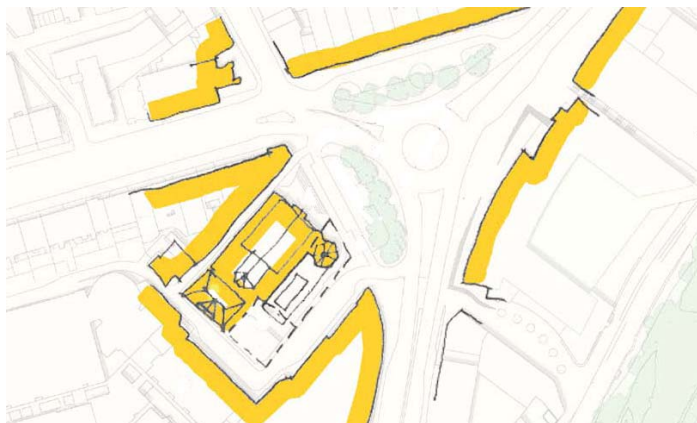


Figure 7: Urban edges and Enclosures



Figure 8: Current Context – Existing Open Space

by traffic and difficult for pedestrians to navigate. The tram proposals and reconfiguration of road space present an opportunity to build upon this initiative, reconfigure road space and create development opportunities.

- 4.4 The paved area created at the front of the cathedral has the potential to become part of a high quality public space linking together the development opportunity site with the redeveloped St James Quarter: It enjoys an elevated position and open outlook and is animated by the Paolozzi sculptures and active uses (the Cathedral and its café / conference facilities, an entrance into the John Lewis department store, and café kiosk) – see area 1 figure 8.
- 4.5 The HGI proposals for the St James Quarter redevelopment promote Little King Street as the principal pedestrian route linking Picardy Place to the new shopping centre and St Andrew’s Square beyond. The route (see Figure 9 on page 12) is animated by a series of spaces of varying sizes and uses. Little King Street is presently an unattractive route for pedestrians, catering mainly for vehicles accessing car parking facilities and delivery points in the St James Centre.



*Aerial View of Picardy Place /  
Leith Walk*

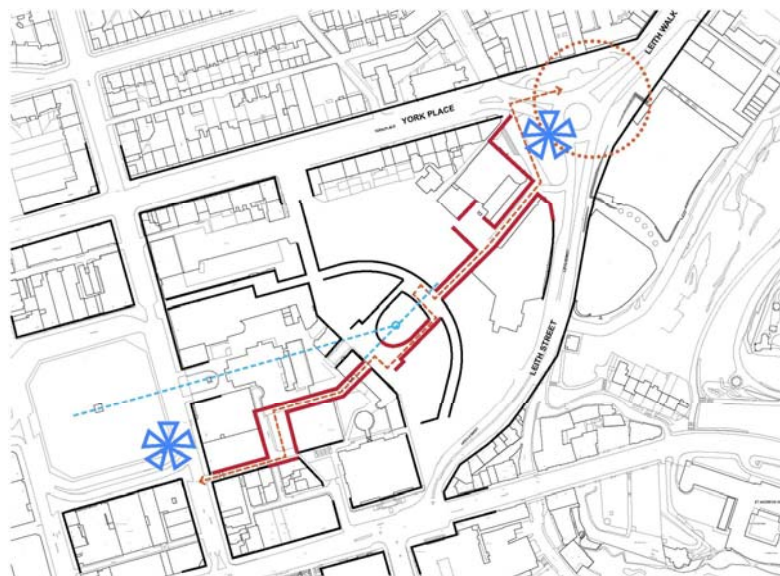


Figure 9: SJQ Masterplan east-west route

4.6 The area to the front of Picardy Place is shared between pedestrians and cars and is separated from the roundabout by a landscaped strip which forms a setting for the Sherlock Holmes statue – see area 2, figure 8. The 1980s improvements allowed for a widening of the pavement to the east of the roundabout, creating space to the front of the theatre and the Omni Centre building on Greenside. The

space accommodates a line of trees, public art (the Giraffes), and a series of steps to address a drop in levels to access the buildings – see area 3, figure 8.

4.7 Pedestrian movement through Picardy Place is confined to these three spaces. There are three heavily used controlled crossings which direct all pedestrian movement around the space using a system of islands and barriers to meet public safety requirements. The experience of moving around Picardy Place using these crossings can be difficult and time-consuming.

**Principal views of the site**

4.8 The principal views of the site are dynamic views from the main streets that converge at this point:

Leith Walk approach

An important approach to Picardy Place is from the north-east along Leith Walk, a main traffic artery to Leith and the waterfront, and the route of the tram. Picardy Place is situated at a point of arrival to the city centre from this direction and is an important 'gateway'. Currently the view on approach is dominated by the uncompromising bulk of the St James Centre sitting at the top of the hill, dwarfing the cathedral buildings and the lower John Lewis extension in the foreground.



*View from Leith Walk at Pilrig Street*



*View from foot of Leith Walk*



*View from Leith Walk at Brunswick Street*

Leith Street approach

Descending Leith Street from Princes Street the eye is led around the curve of the street by the strong sweeping line of the glazed façade of the Omni Centre to the east. The west side of Leith Street turns the corner at the John Lewis department store extension to take up the line of Broughton Street. The only clue to the continuation of this important urban corridor is the Picardy Place terrace turning the corner to align itself with Leith Walk in the distance. Historically the building line of the demolished tenement block followed the Leith Walk / Little King Street axis, rather than the Leith Street axis, and resulted in an area of open space at the southern corner of the site (see figure 12)



*View looking north from Leith Street*

York Place approach

The view from York Place to the west is framed by the strong horizontal lines and distinctive character of terraced properties on York Place. To the north the elegant St. Paul & St. George's Episcopal Church provides relief and marks the junction with Broughton Street immediately beyond. The Picardy Place terrace continues the street edge, stepping down the hill. On the south side of York Place the terraced properties end at Broughton Street, acknowledged by the canted bay of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pub that terminates the terrace. Beyond, the landscaped area at Picardy Place, the Playhouse Theatre and Baxter's Place, stepping down Leith Walk, come into view. Figure 5 on page 4 shows the importance of this building line



*View from York Place*

Broughton Street approach

Broughton Street rises as it approaches its junction with Picardy Place. The view here is of the modern Greenside development beyond, framed by the terraces that step up on both sides of the street and by the rounded corner building to the east on the corner of York Place. On arrival at the top of the street views open up to reveal Calton Hill and its monuments, seen above the Omni Centre and the prow of the John Lewis department store stepping up Leith Street. The gap between the Greenside and Omni Centre buildings mark the presence of a route onwards towards Calton Hill.



*View from Broughton Street*

View from Calton Hill

The view from Calton Hill is composed of the landscaped roofs of the Greenside developments in the foreground and the gap between the two buildings providing a glimpsed view of the landscaped space to the front of the cathedral. Both the cathedral and in particular St. Paul's & St. George's church are important elements in this view.



*View from Calton Hill*



## 5. DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 With the advent of trams and a major transport interchange at Picardy Place, the reworking of the road layout offers an opportunity to re-invent the space. The triangular area identified in figure 10 has been defined by Picardy Place, and the proposed tram stop to its north side, the cathedral steps and frontage to the west, and the busy Leith Walk corridor and Omni Centre building to the east.
- 5.2 Figures 8 & 10 show the current situation and the potential for regaining space for alternative uses as a consequence of the tram project.
- 5.3 The development principles that follow seek to ensure this potential is realised by promoting development that fundamentally changes the character of this important gateway to the city centre from a roundabout prioritising traffic movement to a high quality public place designed around the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. An interpretation of the development principles is illustrated in figures. 11, 12 and 13 .



Figure 10: Emerging Context

**1. Recreate the principal street edge to the north of the site (DP1)**

There is an opportunity to continue the York Place building line and recreate the historic southern edge of Picardy Place. Important considerations for development and public realm proposals in this respect are to:

- integrate the proposed tram stop into the overall design concept;
- address the Leith Walk axis at the northern corner of the site;
- create attractive pedestrian / cycle routes across the site to Little King Street and Greenside;
- acknowledge the fourth corner at the York Place / Broughton Street junction; and
- maintain important views of Calton Hill from Broughton Street.

**2. Provide a high quality public open space (DP2)**

The open nature of the site and its proximity to major generators of pedestrian movement provide an opportunity

to create public spaces that can connect the three sides and become a new Picardy Place. Important considerations in this respect are:

- the potential to create attractive outdoor spaces, animated by appropriate uses and public art;
- the relationship of the space to the tram stop, Cathedral precinct, Little King Street, the Omni Centre, and the potential route to Calton Hill;
- capacity of the space for orientating pedestrians and ordering routes; and
- retention of long views to Leith Walk and back towards the city centre to Leith Street.

Additional considerations include the potential offered by mature landscaping in framing views and defining spaces, the re-siting of public art removed to accommodate the tram works e.g. the Paolozzi sculptures / Sherlock Holmes, and the development of a coherent public realm strategy as a setting for the cathedral and new development.

**3. Signal an important gateway to the city centre (DP3)**

The location of the site at the head of Leith Walk presents an opportunity to create a building (or buildings) of the highest architectural quality. Important considerations are:

- the unfolding and dramatic views from Leith Walk and the relationship of the development to the backdrop of the new St James Quarter;
- the acknowledgement of the importance of the topography of the site and of the wider area, which falls to the north and east ;
- height and massing of new development in relation to key long views from the north, to the closer views from the main approach roads and to the prevailing heights in the immediate context; and
- importance of roofscapes and the setting of the listed churches in views from Calton Hill

**4. Define the Leith Street / Leith Walk urban corridor (DP4)**

There is an opportunity on the eastern side of the site to establish the edge opposite the Omni Centre – see figure 12. Important considerations in this respect are the:

- definition of the building line to the east and the use of built form and open space to establish the character of the new public space ;
- the significance of the southern-most corner of the site, principally in views descending along Leith Street;
- the significance of views from the Leith Walk approach of Little King Street and the main east-west route through the new St James Quarter; and
- implications arising from the height and extent of potential development on the eastern side of the site on views to and from Calton Hill.

**5. Maximise pedestrian and cycle movement and use (DP5)**

New development will be required to expand the opportunities for pedestrian and cycle movements and contribute to a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians. Important considerations in this respect are the:

- improvement in the quality of the three peripheral pedestrian routes and the introduction of additional crossing points to the new public space;
- means by which priority is afforded to vehicles and pedestrians using the road to the front of the cathedral at different times of the day and week ;
- creation of new public routes linking the tram and bus stops to the St James Quarter via Little King Street, and to Greenside via the new public space;
- buildings fronting public spaces and routes and the need to create predominantly active frontages throughout the day;

- servicing and car parking requirements of new development and the need to contain these underground; and
- need to limit surface servicing of new development to that which is essential and which is able to demonstrate minimal impact on pedestrian spaces.

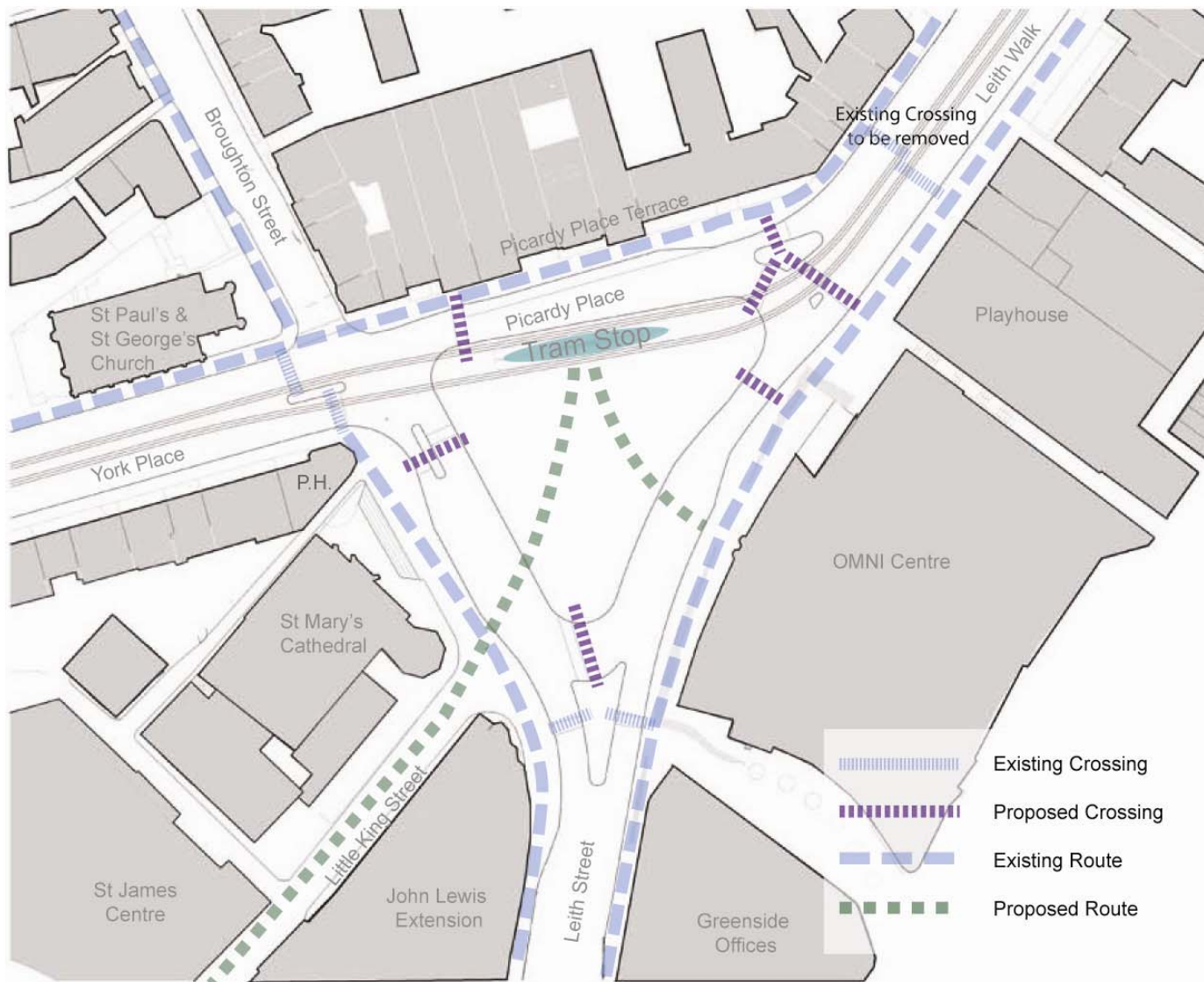


Figure 11  
Existing & Proposed Routes

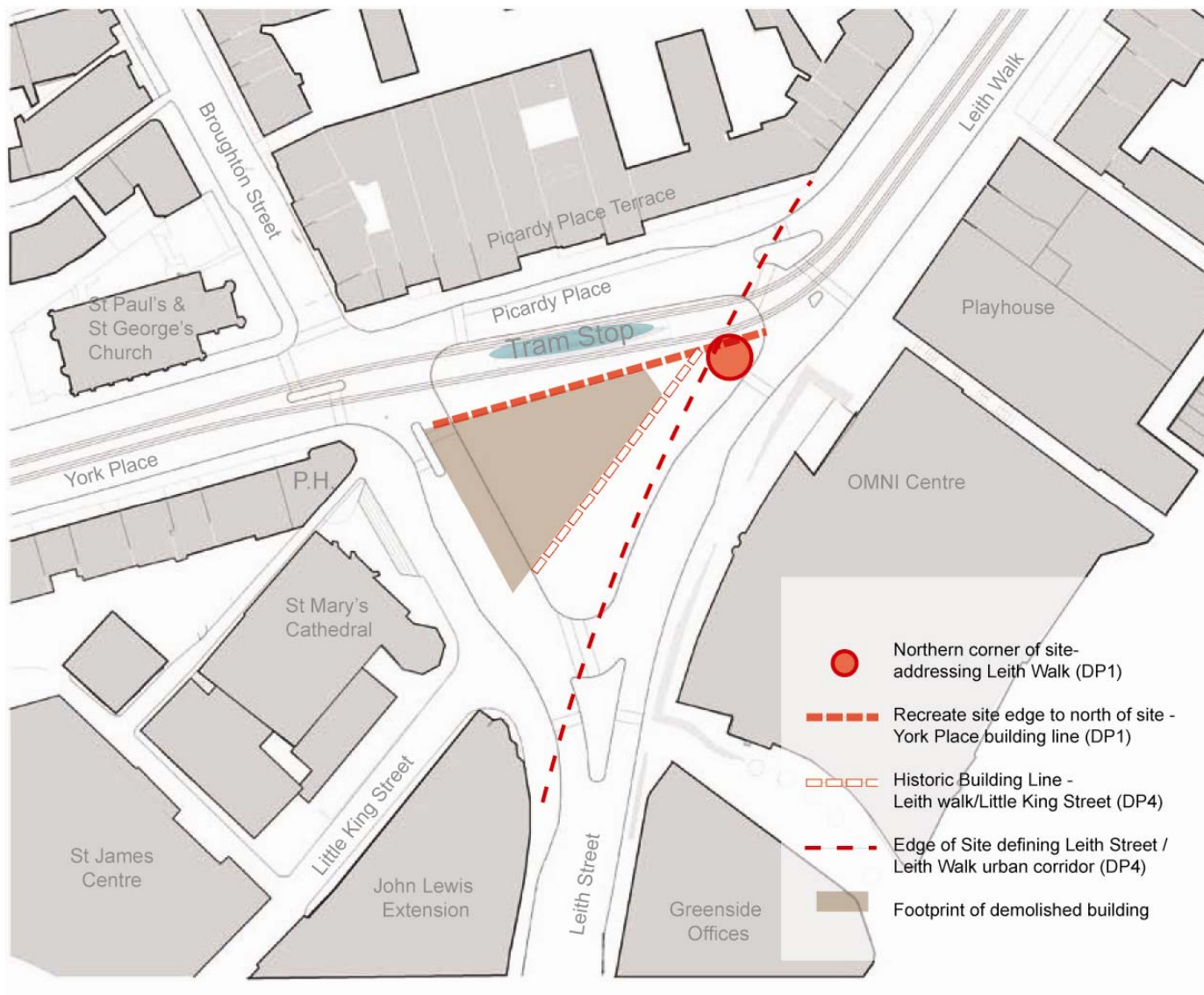
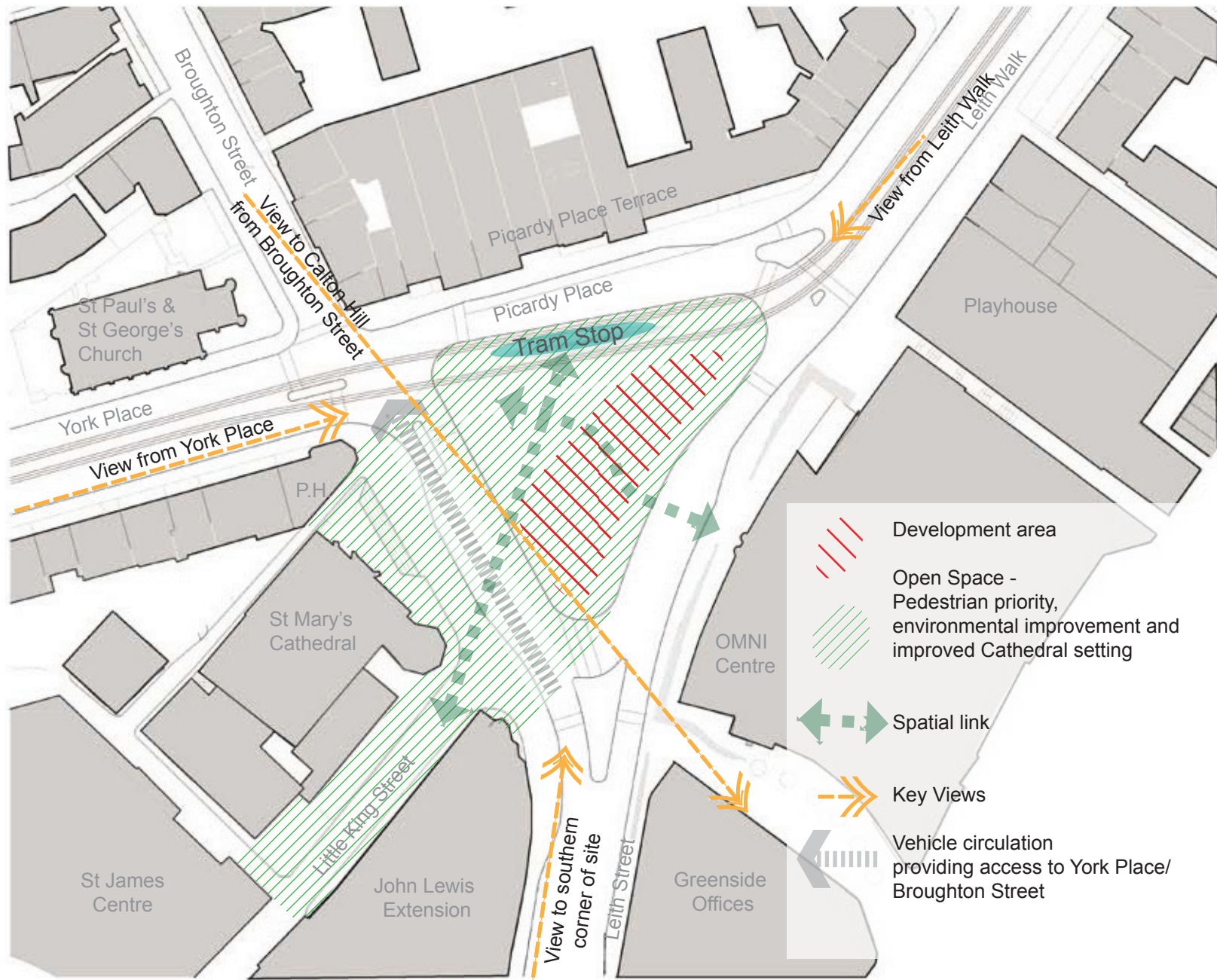







Figure 12  
Site Edges



-  Development area
-  Open Space - Pedestrian priority, environmental improvement and improved Cathedral setting
-  Spatial link
-  Key Views
-  Vehicle circulation providing access to York Place/ Broughton Street

**6. Next Steps**

6.1 The development principles set out in this document will be an important consideration for those preparing detailed proposals for the site. HGI has indicated its willingness to support a limited design competition to secure a high quality design and development of the site based on development principles approved by the Council. Thereafter, the development principles will be used to inform the Councils assessment and determination of detailed proposals that come forward for the area.

6.2 For a hard copy of this document and / or further information on its content please contact either:

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