Stage 1 Sketch Option Development

Following evidence gathering and initial public and stakeholder consultations, we developed four high-level sketch options for how we could improve the study area.

These were a starting point to understand what improvements could be brought forward spatially.

To ensure we considered all options, they ranged from 'light touch' improvements to more extensive 'high level' works.

We produced cross sections like the ones shown for key locations in the study area.

Option Appraisal

These options were subject to an appraisal to determine the preferred option to progress to Concept Design. This scored and weighed up the expected project benefits / disbenefits.
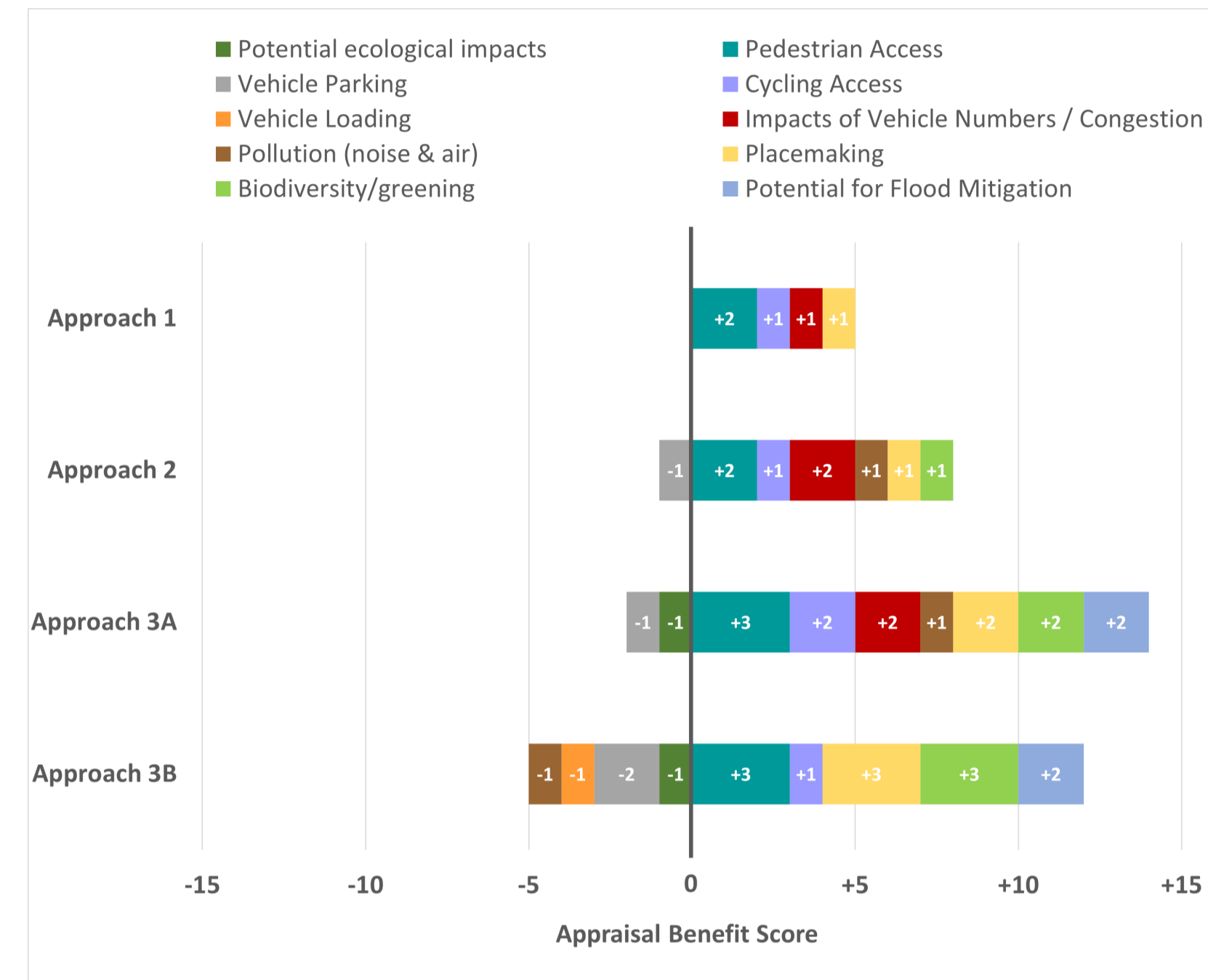
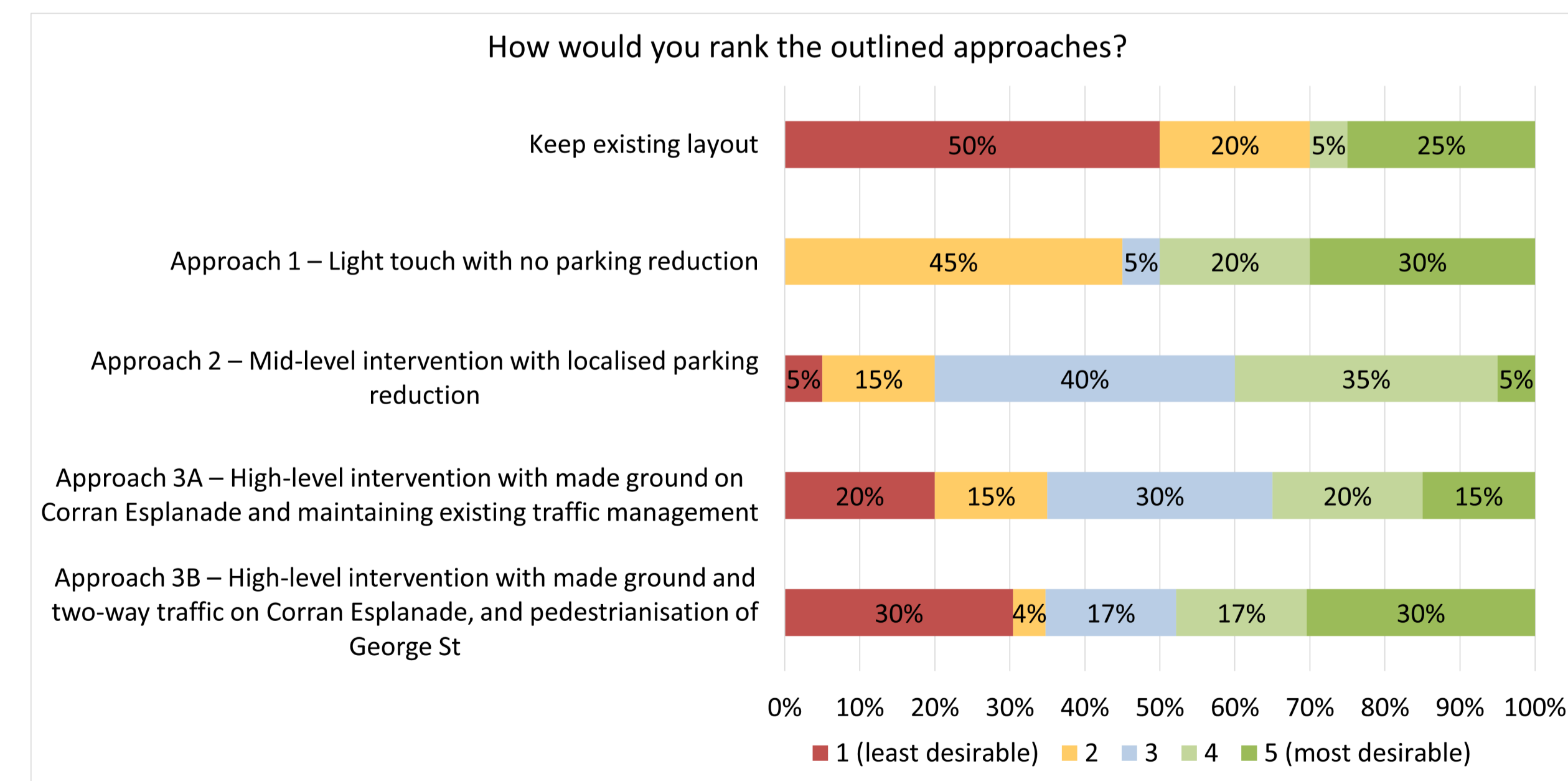Scoring of the benefits / disbenefits were based on this table.

Benefit	Score
Major Benefit	+3
Moderate Benefit	+2
Minor Benefit	+1
No Change / Negligible	0
Minor Disbenefit	-1
Moderate Disbenefit	-2
Major Disbenefit	-3

Legend:
- Potential ecological impacts
- Pedestrian Access
- Vehicle Parking
- Cycling Access
- Vehicle Loading
- Impacts of Vehicle Numbers / Congestion
- Pollution (noise & air)
- Placemaking
- Biodiversity/greening
- Potential for Flood Mitigation

Appraisal Benefit Score

The considerations and rationale for each scoring category are summarised in the table below:

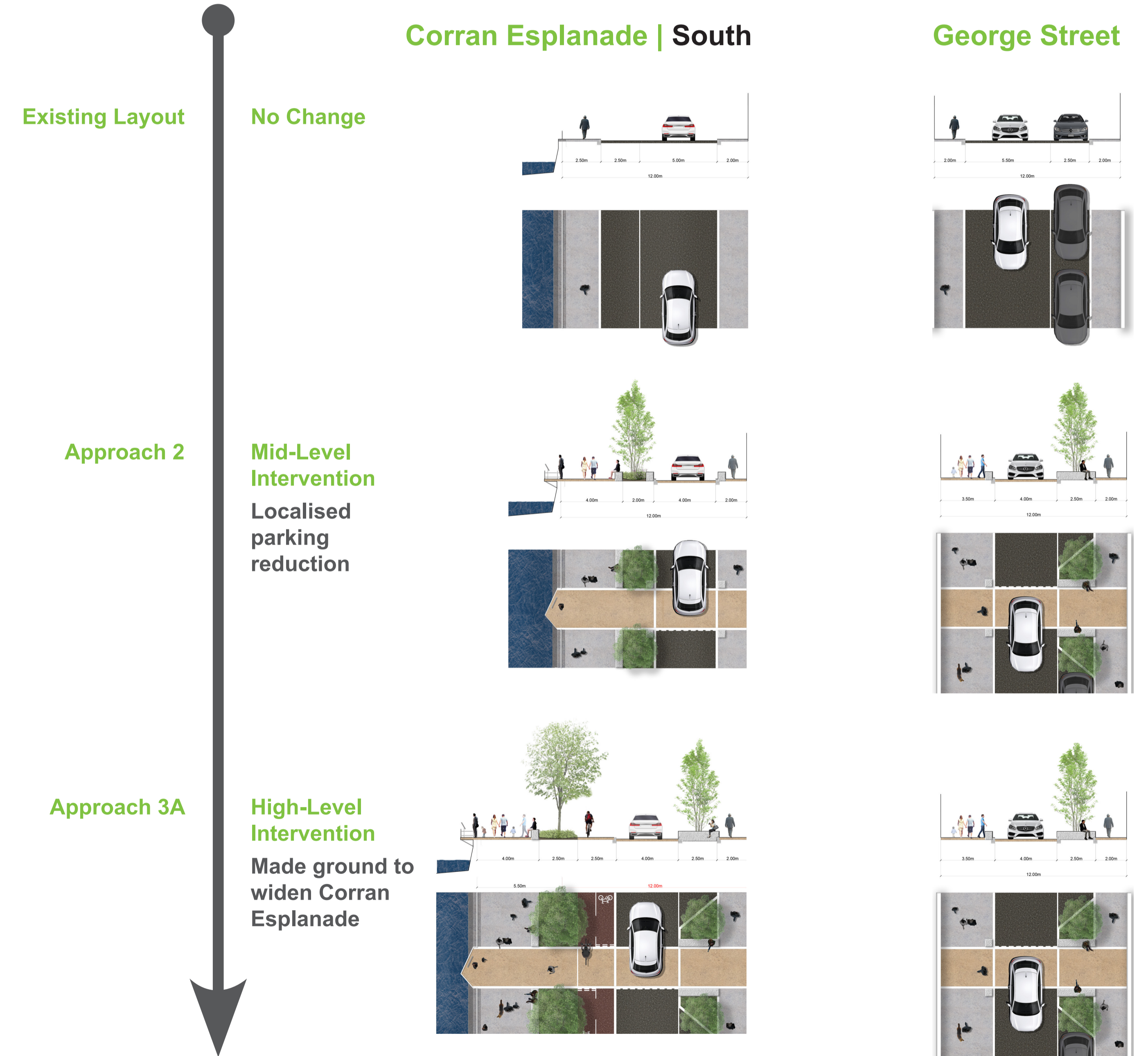|		
Accessibility	Pedestrian Access	Based on ability to provide min. 2m footways throughout, junction/crossing improvements i.e. tactile, drop kerbs, continuous footways.
	Cycling Access	Based on ability to provide dedicated cycle provision. Approaches 1 and 2 assume formalisation of a shared foot and cycleway along Corran Esplanade. Approaches 3A and 3B assume a segregated route on Corran Esplanade.
Vehicle Impacts	Vehicle Parking	Scored by local impact of reduction, i.e. a higher local reduction = lower benefit. This scoring does not account for illegal parking, or additional off-street provision and is intended to capture parking impact in the immediate vicinity.
	Vehicle Loading	Scored by local impact of reduction in informal loading (i.e. single yellow lines). A higher local reduction = lower benefit. This scoring does not account for formalised on-street loading bays which would be developed at Stage 2, so this reflects a worst-case assessment.
	Impacts of Vehicle Numbers / Congestion	Based on whether option increases separation of pedestrians, improves vehicle flow through simplified layout, potential for increase / decrease in daily traffic flow through each location, or potential to reduce or eliminate obstructive and illegal parking.
Environment	Pollution (noise & air)	Based on potential to reduce congestion and idling through improved vehicle flow, or potential for increase / decrease in daily traffic flow through each location.
	Placemaking	Provision of inclusive public gathering /seating spaces, viewpoint definition, artistic intervention.
	Biodiversity/greening	Provision of inclusive planting and green infrastructure.
	Potential for Flood Mitigation	Potential to incorporate flood mitigation measures along the seafront as part of the scheme.
	Potential ecological impacts	Potential for impact to protected species. E.g., Black Guillemots are present within the sea wall which will be impacted by Approaches 3a and 3B. Full details are included within the Desktop Ecological Appraisal (Appendix E).

Public Opinion

We received 85 survey responses to our consultation on these options.

How would you rank the outlined approaches?

Legend: 1 (least desirable) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (most desirable)

Preferred Option

The preferred option is Approach 2.

- Approach 3A scored the highest overall benefit.

- Approach 3A divides public opinion, however many respondents who were against 3A cited expense and justification of cost.

- There are significant uncertainties over sourcing funding for the significantly higher scheme costs of Approach 3A.

- Approach 2 provides the greatest benefit for a significantly lower cost. Unlike Approach 1, it also enables a scheme that could be future proofed to an extent to allow for Approach 3A to come forward should funding be secured at a later date.

- On balance, the preferred approach is to progress Approach 2 (mid-level intervention) to Concept Design Stage. Concept Designs will deliver a scheme that works in itself, but without prohibiting future expansion to 3A should funding become available.

		Corran Esplanade | South	George Street
Existing Layout	No Change		
Approach 2	Mid-Level Intervention — Localised parking reduction		
Approach 3A	High-Level Intervention — Made ground to widen Corran Esplanade		

Oban Town Centre North Active Travel Project
Sketch Option Development

To make the most of the Concept Design, several complementary measures could be implemented to release road space, improve feelings of safety, and encourage a shift away from private car use for short local journeys.

These are general ideas, and do not form part of this project.

Shared Transport and Mobility Hubs

Shared Transport means schemes such as car clubs and bike share where people can use a mode of transport flexibly without having to own it.

An e-bike or car share scheme could be community-led, run by local groups to support their communities and tailored to meet the needs of residents. An e-bike share scheme could help Oban residents make convenient short trips into town, providing an extra boost on the uphill slopes, or to try an e-bike before committing to buying one themselves.

Mobility Hubs bring together shared transport with public transport and active travel in spaces designed to improve the public realm for all.

Shared Transport Case Studies

Isle of Kerrera E-Bikes

In 2021, the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust received funding from the Scottish Government for a fleet of 16 e-bikes, including e-cargo bikes, trailers and accessories.

The bikes give islanders the opportunity to trial the e-cargo bikes for shopping trips to Oban and travelling with young children.

There is also a separate e-bike scheme for visitors to the island.

HiBike, Fort William

HiBike offers e-bikes to residents and visitors in Inverness and Fort William. They are available 24/7 from docking stations using an app or membership card.

In Fort William alone, the bikes have been used for 12,378 rides this year, covering 33,450 miles.

CarBute Community Car Club

Research from CoMoUK suggests that each car club car in Scotland is displacing 15 private cars.

Car Clubs can be community-led, member-based initiatives that provide access cars on a flexible low-cost basis. CarBute is an example of a community Car Club, accessible for both local residents and tourists. It was developed by the local charity Fyne Futures with support from Transport Scotland. The car can be hired for durations one hour to several days at a time.

Concept image of a small market town mobility hub. (Image Credit: CoMoUK)

Visualisation of a mobility hub in Leuven, Belgium. (Image Credit: CoMoUK)

Encouraging use of Car Parks

We undertook parking surveys of the study area over 7 days (Sat 12th – Fri 18th August 2023). This confirmed the study area is under parking pressures during peak season. Weekends are more pressured than weekdays.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking is under more pressure than off-street. **George Street and Stafford Street were 100% occupied for much of the day**. This is likely to be partly due to convenience of distance to shops, and the pricing structure offering 30 minutes of free parking compared to car parks.

Single and Double Yellow Line parking was commonly observed on George Street. Parking demand peaks between 2 and 3pm on weekends. During this time, **9 cars were observed parking unlawfully** on George Street despite there being **10 on-street spaces, and 21 off-street spaces available** within a 3-4 minute walk.

Off-Street Parking

Between 2 and 3pm on weekends (when demand peaks), there was still **at least 21 spaces available** in the study area car parks:

- 4 in the Esplanade Car Park
- 3 in the Corran Halls (South) Car Park
- 12 in the Corran Halls (North) Car Park
- 2 in the North Pier Car Park

The pedestrian experience walking from these car parks to the retail fronts on George Street requires improvement. Desire lines are not met, and lack of accessible footways creates an unwelcoming experience. This is particularly true for the Corran Halls (North) Car Park which is cut off from the study area by poor crossings the A85.

Encouraging Off-Street Parking

Prioritising on-street parking space for essential uses (e.g. people with disabilities, loading and servicing), whilst **enabling general visitors to park off-street**, would release road space on the most constrained sections of George Street.

It would provide extra space for footways, planters and seating to encourage people to walk through the area and dwell, increasing footfall and spend. There is a significant body of empirical evidence (e.g. the **Pedestrian Pound Report**) that suggests **investments in the public realm and walkability increase footfall and trading**.

Measures to encourage people to park off-street could include:

- Amending pricing structures to **make off-street parking more attractive** (e.g. first 30 mins free)
- **Improving walking links** and meeting desire lines from the car parks to the shops
- **Increasing capacity within the car parks**, e.g. through decking, to make it easier to find a space.
- **Improved wayfinding**, e.g. variable message signing displaying available spaces in each car park to provide drivers with certainty over where to find a space. This would reduce cars having to circulate to find a space on-street.
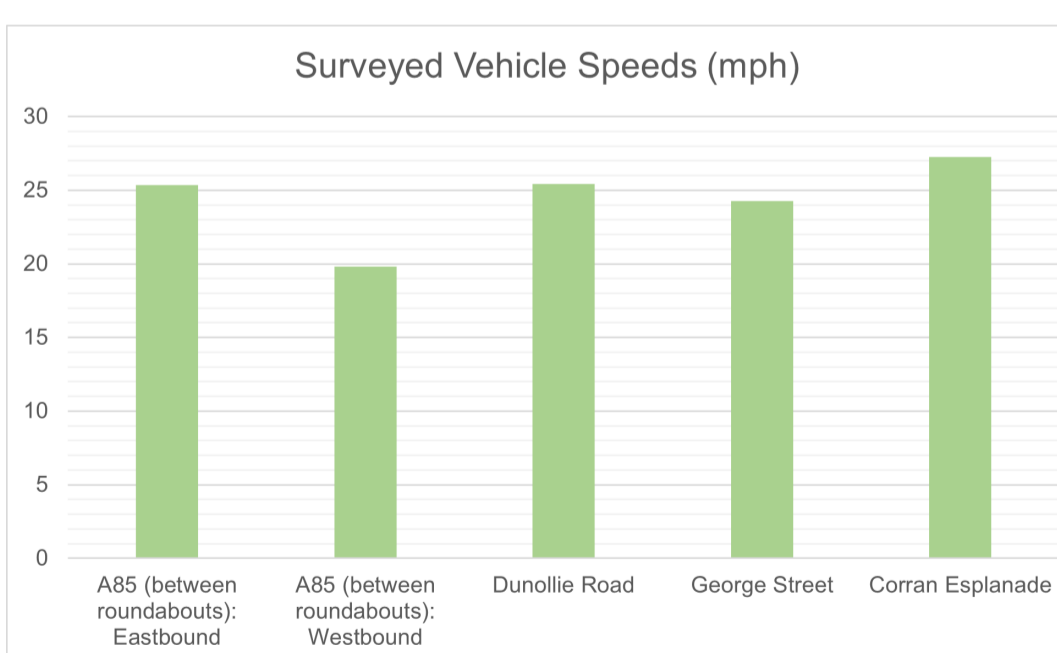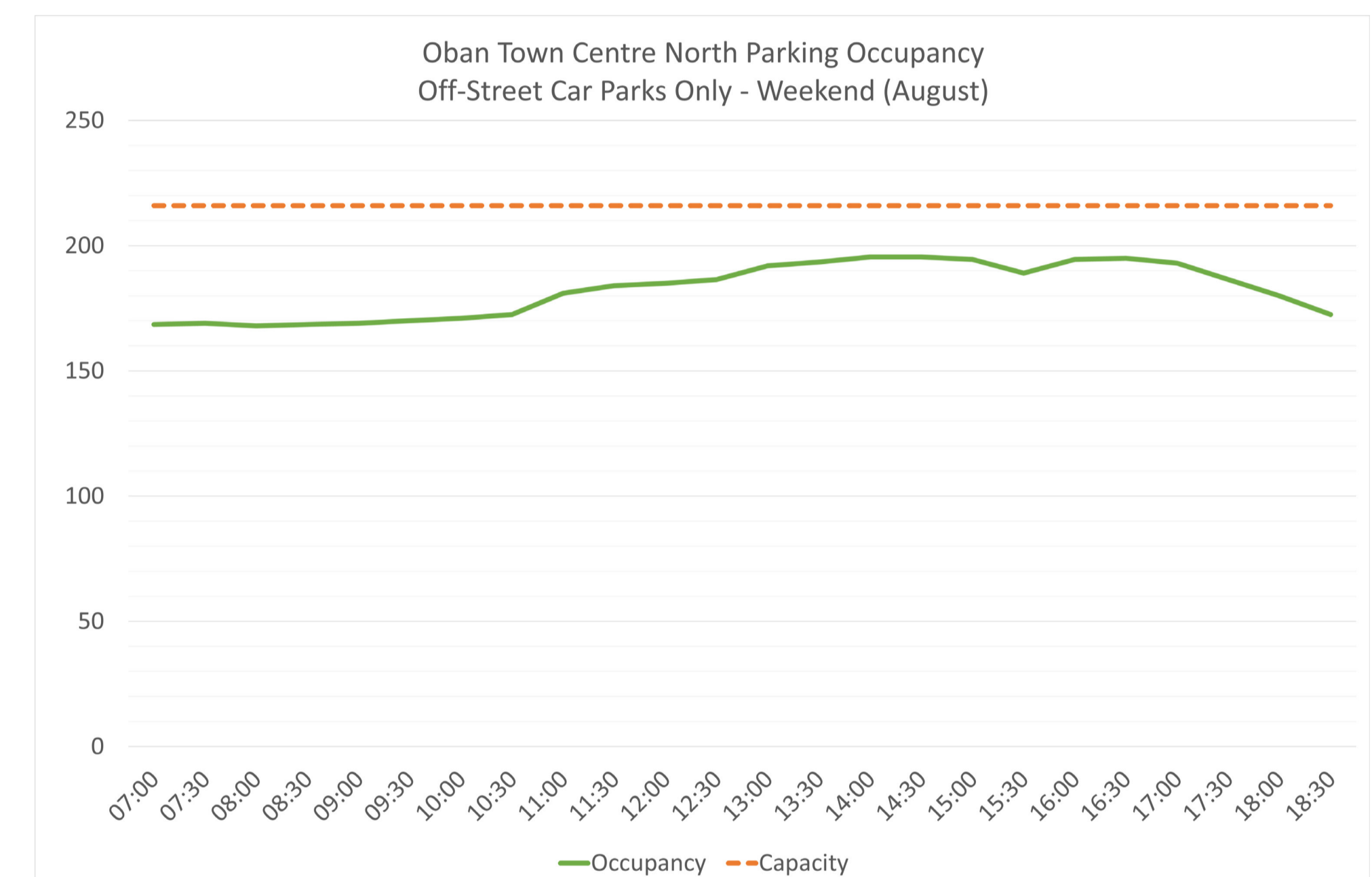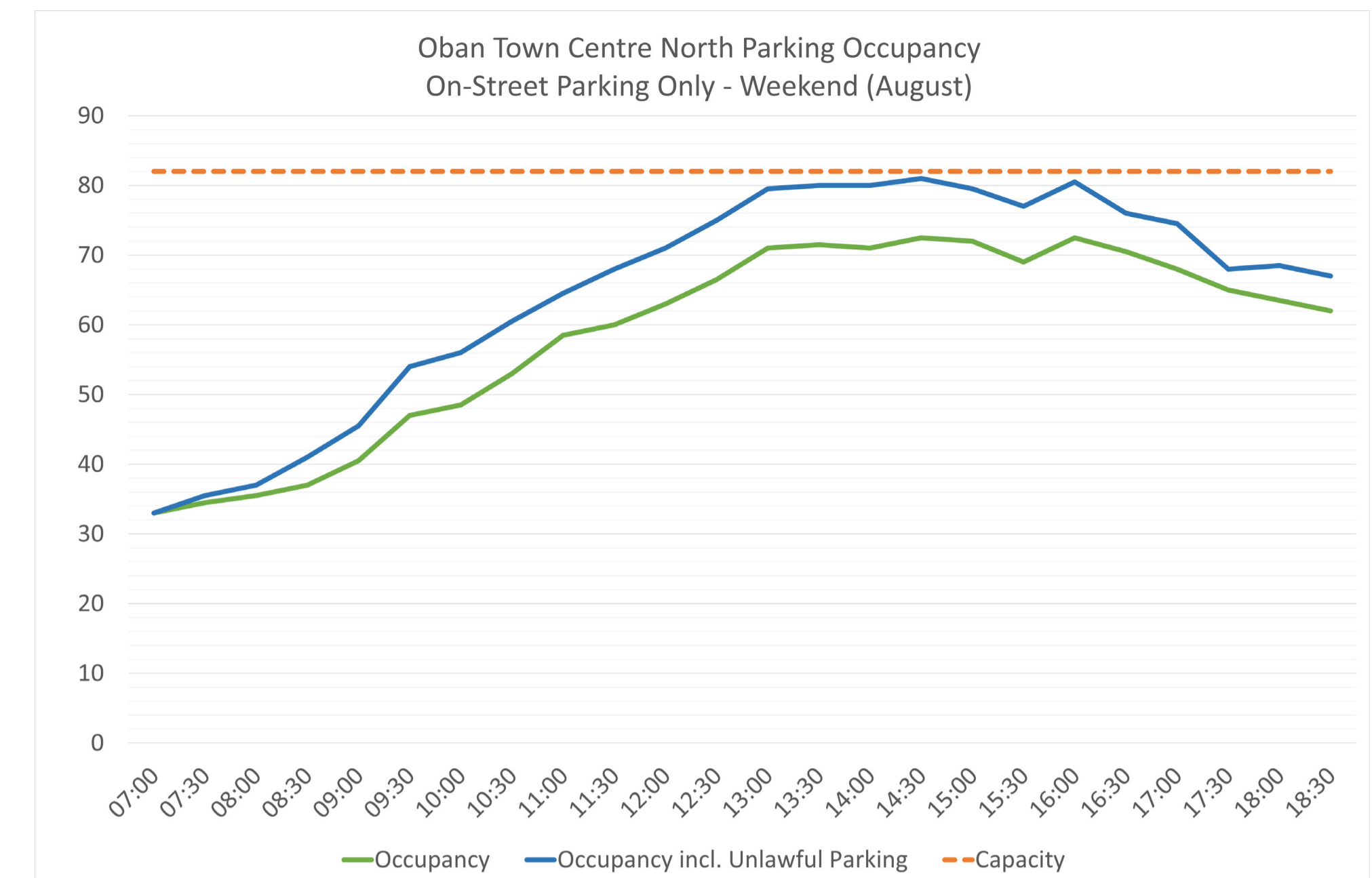
Corran (North) car park entrance

George Street

A85 crossings

North Pier Car Park

Surveyed Vehicle Speeds (mph)

Oban Town Centre North Parking Occupancy
On-Street Parking Only - Weekend (August)

— Occupancy — Occupancy incl. Unlawful Parking - - - Capacity

Oban Town Centre North Parking Occupancy
Off-Street Car Parks Only - Weekend (August)

— Occupancy - - - Capacity

20 mph speed limit

The consultation we have done so far suggests people feel unsafe when travelling in the study area. 42% of responders to our online survey listed safety concerns as a "significant barrier" to travelling actively to and within the study area.

We undertook 7-day speed surveys on the roads in the study area. This showed speeds were highest on Corran Esplanade (27mph), likely due to the road's wide and straight alignment. However generally speeds are not reaching the posted 30mph speed limit.

Reducing the speed limit to 20mph would help to encourage a greater sense of safety amongst pedestrians and cyclists.

Oban Town Centre North Active Travel Project
Potential Wider Measures

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