

Exeter Central Library Enhancement Scheme

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) the enhancement scheme shown on plan No. (C12021/13) be approved at an estimated cost of £198,000;**
- (b) Traffic Regulation Orders for the restrictions shown on drawing (N3224/201/B) be advertised, made and sealed if no objections are received; and**
- (c) the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the local member and the Chairman of Exeter HATOC, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the scheme design.**

1. Summary

This report seeks approval for a new public space outside Exeter Central Library, substantially funded by Local Transport Plan funding. The scheme aims to provide a more attractive pedestrian environment, which maximises the potential for a range of uses and events associated with the library. The scheme also seeks to address accessibility issues and links with the cultural quarter and wider city centre for all users.

2. Background/Introduction

Exeter central library is currently undergoing a major £4 million redevelopment scheme. The scheme, supported by Investing In Devon funding, aims to provide a flagship facility to reflect the modern needs for a major library hub. Extensive consultation was undertaken with public and stakeholder groups to inform the design of the library scheme.

The Exeter City Centre Vision refers to the cultural quarter, which encompasses Gandy Street, the library, the castle, the Phoenix Arts Centre and the recently refurbished Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM). By creating an attractive, pedestrian-dominated, flexible space outside the library, it will encourage more people to visit the area and strengthen the cultural identity of the area.

There is an opportunity in the longer term to better connect the recently refurbished Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), via the Phoenix Arts Centre through to the library and the castle. A presentation to the Exeter Board in September 2012 showed aspirations for further public realm enhancements to help improve the urban environment and create better links for visitors to explore, which members were supportive of. There is currently no funding identified for this scheme and so is a long term aspiration for the city and county councils.

A fundamental part of the decision making for the public realm scheme was understanding how any proposed changes may affect access for people with disabilities. A significant amount of analysis and discussion with disability groups has been carried out to help refine designs for the scheme.

3. Proposal

Enhancement Scheme

The scheme proposal to enhance the upper forecourt area outside the Central library is shown on Plan No. (C12021/13). The scheme incorporates a revised road layout to create a pedestrian friendly space. The design also incorporates a number of features to address the needs of people with disabilities.

Contrasting surface treatments are proposed within the scheme to provide a clear distinction between the pedestrianised area and the carriageway. The carriageway provides vehicular access to five marked parking spaces for use by blue badge holders and will use a tarmac surface incorporating a grey coloured aggregate. The pedestrian area will combine pennant stone paving on the raised level outside the library entrance and a buff coloured resin bound surface on the connecting ramp and surrounding lower level. The resin bound surface offers an attractive alternative to the tarmac but maintains a smooth surface for good quality access for all visitors to the library. It is easy to maintain and provides a good contrast in colour to the vehicular area for people with visual impairment who will know they are in the pedestrianised part of the scheme. Pennant stone is a natural stone material that will co-ordinate well with existing stone features in the library area.

The forecourt will be separated from the carriageway by a band of granite setts. The scheme features a curved ramp combined with steps in a design that offers good accessibility for all users and provides direct access between the disabled parking and the library entrance. Approval of the ramp and stairs are subject to a separate planning process; however, it was necessary to ensure it complemented the public realm scheme.

The pedestrian area will provide an open public space, suitable for a variety of cultural uses and activities. Seating has been incorporated around the outside of the ramp to improve the amenity of the forecourt area and soft landscaping features have been included to enhance the environment. Two existing shrub beds will need to be modified but will be retained within the scheme. An additional shrub bed will be incorporated between the new ramp and steps and three additional tree pits are proposed on the southern boundary of the forecourt along the wall to the telephone exchange building. The forecourt will incorporate improved provision for cycle parking. Cycle parking for approximately 24 cycles will be accommodated around the perimeter of the forecourt area. The telephone exchange building is an eyesore and a combination of planting trees and the provision of cycle parking to activate the space will help improve the external appearance.

To reinforce connectivity between the library and links through to High Street, the entrance from Castle Street will incorporate the same flush level surface between the carriageway and pavements. A gradual ramp will reintroduce a full pavement kerb face in the locality of the proposed disabled parking spaces. The pavement located on the southern side of the scheme will continue from Castle Street throughout the scheme with a concrete paved surface and granite kerbs.

Parking and loading on the upper level will be restricted except for blue badge holders in the 5 marked bays. The entrance to the scheme will be clearly signed as a restricted parking zone to remove the need for additional yellow lines and signing.

Parking & Traffic Management

Consultation has shown that there is a strong desire to maintain the current levels of parking provision for people with disabilities. Prior to any formal decisions being made about the

acceptability of the public realm improvements, it was important to fully understand how the existing disabled parking bays were being used.

Currently, on the upper library level accessed from Castle Street, there are a total of 12 parking spaces dedicated for disabled use between 9am – 6pm, with parking limited to a maximum stay of 2 hours. The existing bays fall below design standards in terms of width and length. The circular layout of the parking means that at times, it is difficult to drive in or reverse out of the bays (exacerbated by the substandard bay design). On the lower level accessed from Musgrove Row there is currently no daytime disabled parking but space is available for two disabled vehicles between 8pm - 8am.

A parking analysis study carried out over a few days was undertaken in early 2012 to understand the occupancy of the bays, the ease of manoeuvrability into and out of the spaces for drivers, and establish whether people were using the bays to access the library or the city centre. This was invaluable data in developing the public realm scheme. The full report is included in Appendix I. Key findings from the analysis show that: -

- on average 7 out of the 12 spaces are occupied at any one time.
- that approximately ½ of all vehicles parked did not display a blue badge
- that approximately ¼ of all vehicles parked were not visiting the library.

The findings indicate that the demand for disabled parking specifically using the library is less than the 12 spaces currently provided. A number of the people using the bays are not people with disabilities and there is a reasonably high demand for people wishing to access the city centre. The report also identified that the layout and size of the current disabled spaces makes it very difficult for vehicles to access and that this problem increases as more spaces become occupied.

On this basis, a redistribution of parking provision between the upper and lower levels was recommended to retain access needs for the library but also provide more convenient spaces for people wishing to access the wider city centre. In consultation with local disability groups and through written correspondence, proposals to provide more parking for people with disabilities at the lower level were supported. Access from Musgrave Row to the city centre was considered more convenient than from Little Castle Street, which has cobbles and a challenging gradient.

Details of the proposed parking changes are shown on drawing (N3224/201/B). Subject to advertisement, the proposed scheme includes the removal of 12 disabled spaces on the upper level, which will be replaced by 13 new spaces split between the upper and lower levels. The size and layout of the new spaces will provide easier parking access for blue badge holders. All new spaces will provide 24 hour parking provision for blue badge holders, but be limited to a maximum stay of 2hours between the hours of 8am - 6pm. The new spaces comprise:

- 5 new spaces on the upper level.
- 5 new spaces on the lower level.
- and a further 3 disabled spaces on Musgrove Row.

On drawing No (N3224/201/B), a reduction of one disabled space is being shown at Bailey Street. Although not directly related to this enhancement scheme. The change is being included within the same order to bring the parking spaces up to similar design standards. The loss of one space is balanced by the creation of the 13 new spaces.

In addition, two new spaces for the Ring & Ride bus service have been accommodated on the lower level. This will provide additional benefit for pick up/drop off of disabled visitors to the city.

To accommodate new disabled parking on Musgrove Row it is proposed that one of the 8 loading bays in the wider area be replaced. Consultation with the City Centre Manager and adjacent businesses is being undertaken to seek their views before advertisement.

The proposed scheme aims to balance disabled parking needs for both the library and city centre and has been considered in conjunction with the creation of space for a further 13 disabled vehicles in other city centre locations. These additional spaces, located in Southernhay, Sidwell Street, Bude Street and Market Street, have been advertised under a separate traffic regulation order.

Timescale for Delivery

It is anticipated that the library redevelopment scheme will be completed early in 2014. It is proposed that this enhancement of the public space outside the library and associated parking management changes are completed in advance of the opening of the new library, currently programmed for Spring 2014. Subject to approval, works are proposed for January/February 2014 with legal work associated with the traffic regulation order changes to be completed by December 2013.

4. Consultations

Stakeholder and community consultation were undertaken as part of the library redevelopment project during 2011\2012. Over 180 people participated in stakeholder workshops and almost 500 local residents completed questionnaires. Information from these events has informed the need and design of these public realm improvements.

The proposed scheme has been developed with inputs from environmental audit and the sustainable travel team. ECC's Landscape Architect has also offered advice on the design.

Feedback has been received from Living Options at preliminary and detailed design stages to identify and address mobility issues. The minimal clutter (aligning cycle parking, trees to the edge of the public realm) and the choice of materials to provide contrast and texture under foot, which assists people with visual impairment, are supported. It was also recognised that officers had been thorough in investigating the effects of displacing the parking bays and that parking on the lower level to improve access to the city centre would be welcomed.

The development of the library and these associated public realm improvements have been reported to Cabinet and the Exeter Board to seek their views. The detailed design options have also been discussed with the local member.

5. Financial Considerations

The cost of the public realm scheme is estimated at £198,000 and includes the costs of the stairs and ramp. These are subject to a separate planning process but will be delivered as part of the complete public realm scheme. The Investing in Devon-funded main library project identified £40,000 towards the cost of the ramp and stairs, which will be combined with £158,000 from the Local Transport Plan. Discussions are ongoing with Exeter City Council for funding support.

6. Sustainability Considerations

The choice of materials ensures that future maintenance costs will be kept to a minimum. The resin bound material still offers an aesthetically pleasing finish in the public realm area.

7. Carbon Impact Considerations

It is anticipated that the scheme will have a negligible impact on reducing carbon emissions. The removal of free private parking outside the Westcountry Studies Library will mean people may choose to travel more sustainably in the future.

8. Equality Considerations

This scheme has been developed to maximise the potential benefits of the library redevelopment project and also supporting access needs for all users. The needs of people with disabilities have been a priority throughout the design process. At a meeting with Living Options, members of the group were grateful for the level of analysis that had been carried out to evidence the alternative disabled parking arrangements. It was also recognised that designers were considering the needs of a range of needs through the choice of materials and the location of cycle parking/trees.

The level of parking serving access to the library is considered a reasonable, proportionate amount based on the survey results. There are wider benefits with additional and more convenient parking being provided elsewhere, which better suits peoples' access to the city centre.

9. Legal Considerations

Land on the upper level shown within the scheme as becoming disabled parking will be dedicated by agreement to become highway maintainable at public expense. The area of land is under DCC ownership and has previously provided limited private parking for the Westcountry Studies library building.

The parking management changes proposed within the scheme are subject to the advertisement of a legal traffic regulation order and consideration by the HATOC of any objections received.

10. Risk Management Considerations

There is a risk that the proposed TROs may receive some objections; however, there is sufficient time in the delivery programme to respond to these at a future HATOC.

11. Public Health Impact

An improved pedestrian environment and more cycle stands will help promote more cycling and walking. The improvements are expected to encourage more people to explore more parts of the Cultural Quarter on foot, with improved pedestrian connections between the city centre, library, Rougemont Garden, the Phoenix Arts Centre and the RAMM. It is anticipated that the scheme will have a small but positive impact on improving public health.

12. Options/Alternatives

Options were considered to make the best use of the available space by evaluating the location and extent of parking provision and vehicle access.

An alternative streetscape option, which had a larger public open space was also considered. This included a zig-zag ramp and two sets of stairs for the main entrance and the Westcountry Studies Library access. Planners considered that this did not integrate access for people with disabilities or with pushchairs particularly well and it also made it a less convenient access for people approaching from the long ramp from the lower level/Gandy Street approach, which is a popular route for many.

13. Reason for Recommendation

The objectives of the scheme are to enhance the public realm, promote access for all to the library and to improve the environment and links within the cultural quarter.

Within the available funding, the proposed scheme reflects the best balance to meet these objectives.

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
1. Cabinet: - Investment in Exeter Central Library: Scheme and Estimate Approval	14 March 2012	SC/12/23
2. Exeter Board Update on the planned redevelopment of Exeter Central Library and the development of the Devon Heritage Centre	24 July 2012	SC/12/23

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sc/cr/Exeter central library enhancement
02 hq 150713

Exeter Central Library

Disabled Parking Analysis
January 2012

Devon County Council
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1. Background

- 1.1. Devon County Council are considering proposals to improve and upgrade Exeter Central Library to enhance the visitor experience and improve links with other attractions in the 'Cultural Quarter' including the Phoenix Arts Centre and the recently refurbished RAMM. Proposed improvements include opening up the main entrance and allowing better linkages between the area outside the front of the building through to Rougemont Gardens. There is potential to create a better pedestrianised area immediately outside the library, which could offer a performance space or spill out seating for a coffee shop associated with the library.
- 1.2. Although the lay out of the existing disabled parking spaces are difficult to manoeuvre in and out of, they provide a convenient point of access for people with mobility issues accessing the library. Any proposals to remove or relocate this parking needs to be supported by evidence to demonstrate that the impacts would be acceptable to people affected by the changes.
- 1.3. There are currently a total of 12 disabled parking bays, allowing parking for blue badge holders only between 9am and 6pm. There is a maximum stay of two hours and no return within two hours. There are also a limited number of blue badge spaces available on Musgrave Row, although parking is currently only permitted between 8pm and 8am. There are some steps and a steep ramp providing access from the lower level to the entrance to the library.
- 1.4. This report provides results and analysis of surveys of the disabled parking spaces outside the library main entrance, which were carried out on Thursday 19th January 2012, Tuesday 21st February 2012 and Friday 24th February 2012 during core daytime hours (09:30 to 15:00).
- 1.5. The purpose of the surveys was to analyse how well utilised the spaces were (i.e. was it operating at or near capacity throughout the day?); who were parking in the spaces (i.e. disabled / non-disabled visitors to the library), and it also recorded other observations, i.e. whether there were any issues with the current layout of the parking, which caused difficulties for drivers.

2. Analysis

- 2.1. During the first survey 64 people parked in the disabled spaces. For the second survey there were 56 people and for the third there were 52. This gives an overall total of 172 people using the disabled parking spaces. Of the 64 from the first survey, 31 did not have a blue badge to display (a further 9 were unknown as to whether or not a blue badge was displayed: these will be omitted from the total number parking in this part of the analysis), meaning 56.4% didn't have a blue badge. For the second survey 18 people did not have a blue badge to display (6 were unknown) so 36% did not have a blue badge to display, and for the third survey 18 people had no blue badge (9 were unknown) therefore meaning 41.9% were not displaying a blue badge. Overall, this means that 67 (24 were unknown) did not have a blue badge to display; 45.3% of vehicles surveyed. This suggests these spaces are often used by anyone and not just for their intended purpose.

Table 2-1: Survey overview of usage

	Thurs 19/01/2012	Tues 21/02/2012	Fri 24/02/2012	Total
Total Parked	64	56	52	172
Total displaying blue badge	24 (43.6%)	32 (64%)	25 (58.1%)	81 (54.7%)
Unknown	9 (14%)	6 (10.7%)	9 (17.3%)	24 (14%)
Did not use the library	18 (29.5%)	24 (43.6%)	25 (51%)	67 (40.6%)
Unknown	3 (4.7%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.8%)	7 (4.1%)

- 2.2. As Table 2-1 demonstrates, a high proportion of visitors are not using the Library when parking in the disabled spaces (40.6%), indicating that the need for the disabled spaces might not be as great if it could be ensured the spaces were only being used for the purposes of the Library.
- 2.3. A large number of drivers used the parking area for turning around. This was relatively easy when the car park was empty, but as more people were parked in the area, it became much more difficult for drivers to manoeuvre. Observations on each of the three days saw that approximately 1 in 4 drivers experienced difficulty with parking in the disabled spaces. This shows there are problems driving in and out of the spaces due to the unconventional circular layout of the parking. Several vehicles resorted to reversing up the road rather than trying to make a number of tight manoeuvres to drive out.
- 2.4. The average length of stay from the first survey for this car park was 34 minutes. It was busiest between 11:00 and 11:59, where 12 vehicles parked in this time. Along with this period of time, the car park was also at or near capacity between 13:30 and 13:59. For the second survey the average length of stay was 42 minutes, it was busiest between 14:00 and 14:29 with 12 vehicles parked at this time, and was also near capacity between 10:30 and 11:29 and between 14:30 and 14:59. For the third survey the average

length of stay was 48 minutes, it was busiest between 10:00 and 10:59 and 14:00 and 14:59 with 11 vehicles parked at this time, and was also near capacity between 11:30 and 11:59. Overall, the average length of stay was 41 minutes and it was busiest between 10:00 and 11:59 and 14:00 and 14:59.

Table 2-2: Survey overview of timings

	Thurs 19/01/2012	Tues 21/02/2012	Fri 24/02/2012
Average length of stay	34	42	48
Peak period (AM)	11:00 to 11:59	10:30 to 10:59	10:00 to 10:59
AM peak occupancy	12	11	11
Peak period (PM)	13:30 to 13:59	14:00 to 14:39	14:30 to 14:59
PM peak occupancy	9	12	12

- 2.4.1. As can be seen from Figures 2-1 through 2-3 below, there is no pattern as to what times visitors arrive and depart from the disabled parking bays. However, the occupancy graphs show clear peaks around 11:00 in the morning and 14:30 in the afternoon.

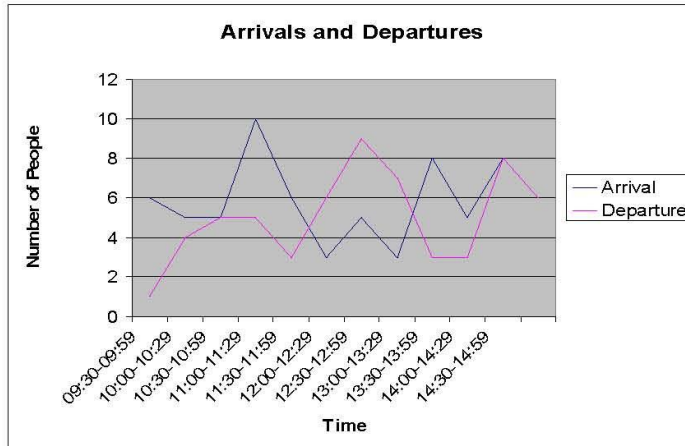


Figure 2-1: Graph to show Arrivals and Departures for 1st Survey

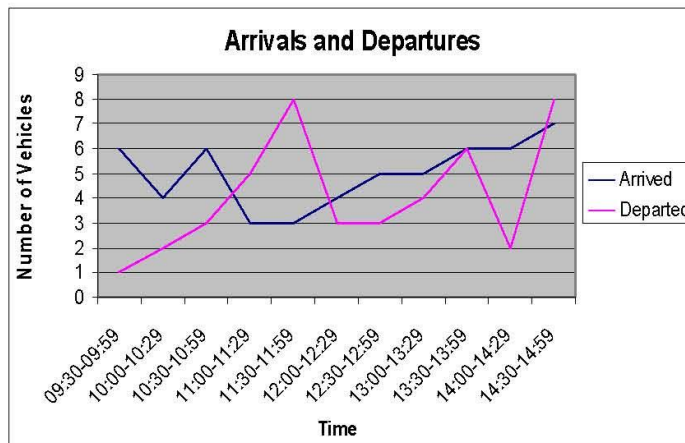


Figure 2-2: Graph to show Arrivals and Departures for 2nd Survey

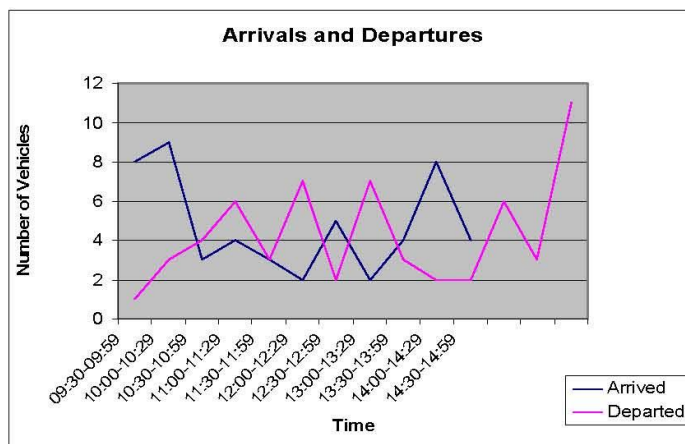


Figure 2-3: Graph to show Arrivals and Departures for 3rd Survey

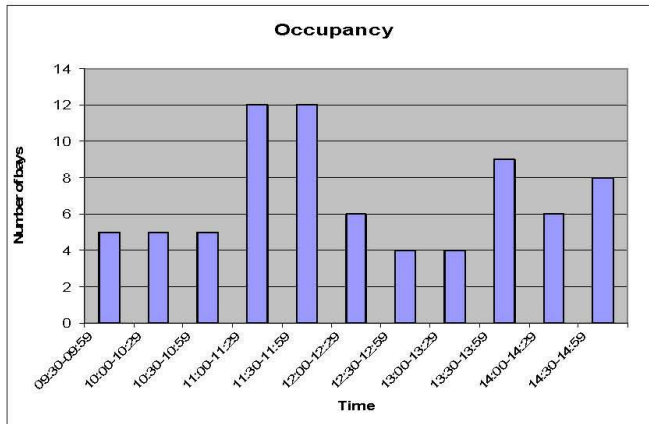


Figure 2-4: Graph to show Occupancy for 1st Survey

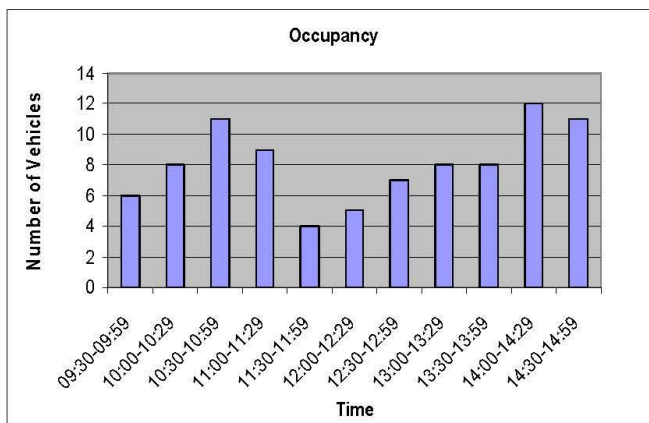


Figure 2-5: Graph to show Occupancy for 2nd Survey

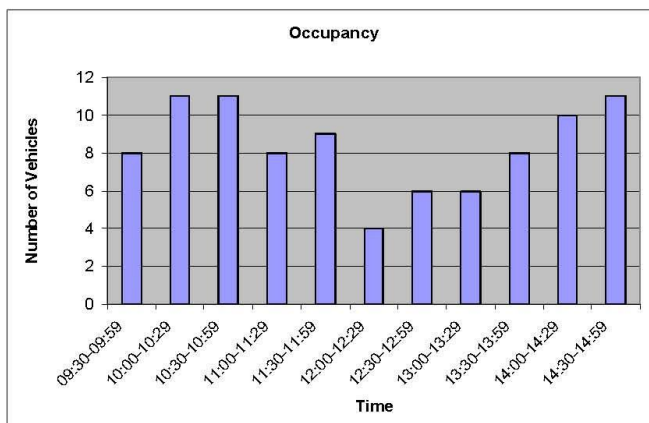
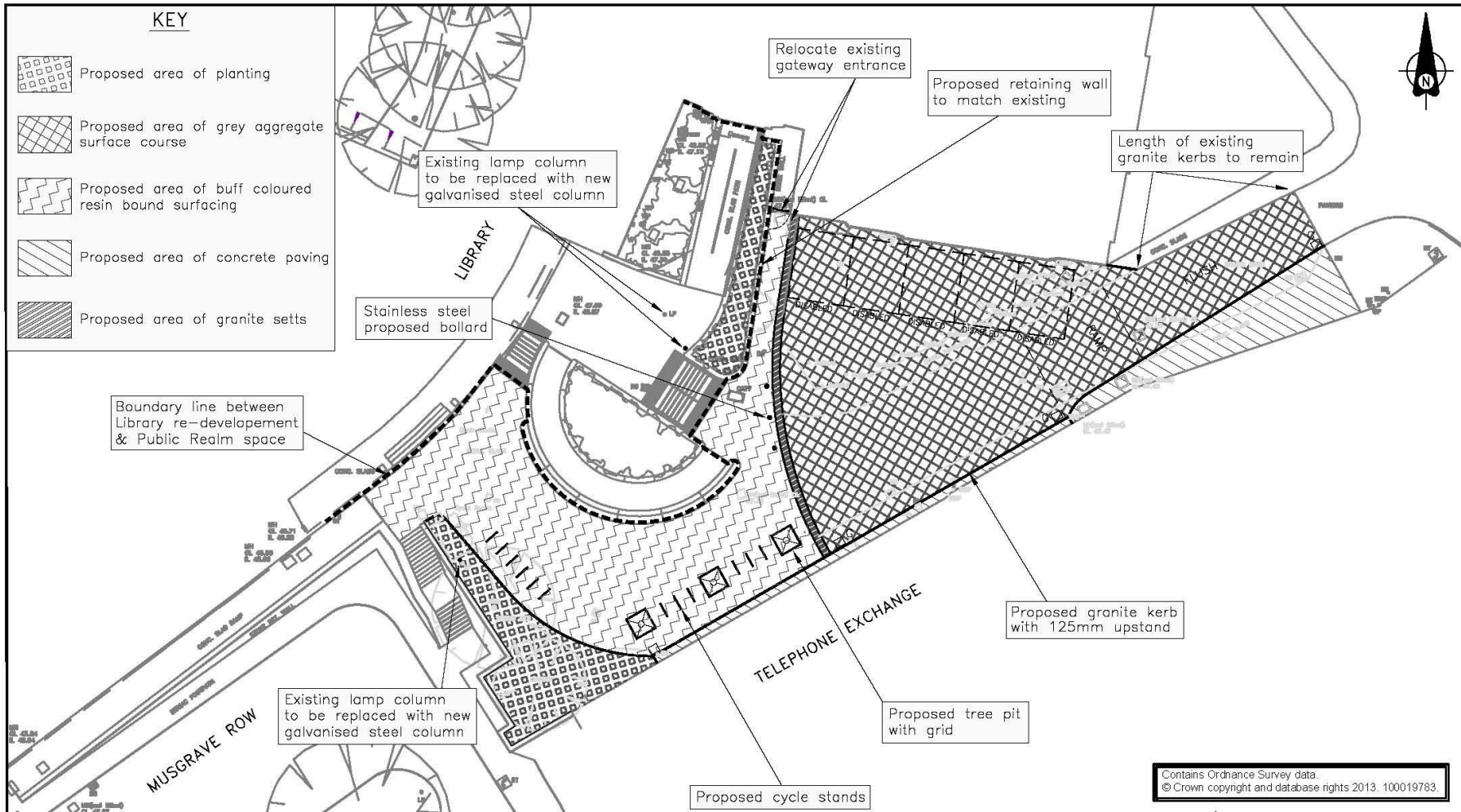


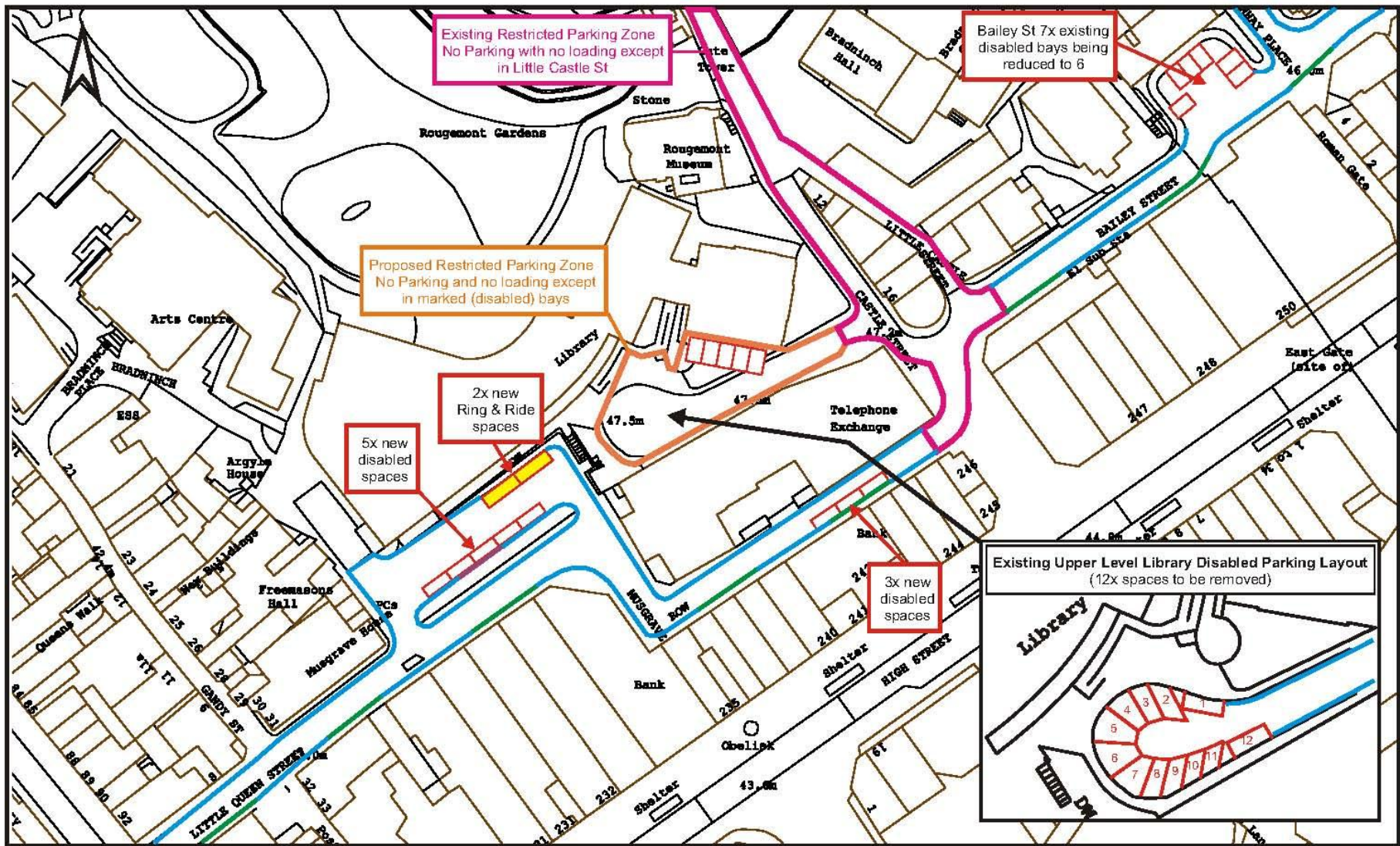
Figure 2-6: Graph to show Occupancy for 3rd Survey

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The car park is reasonably well used throughout the day. The average number of spaces in use over the course of the day is 7, although evidence suggests that just under 57% of people using the spaces do not have blue badges on display and so should not be legally parked there. Furthermore, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of visitors did not actually visit the library.
- 3.2. With better enforcement, there would be greater capacity outside the library. 12 spaces may not necessarily be the total required to provide a sufficient number of spaces for people with disabilities. However, rather than reduce the overall level of parking, spaces could be relocated to Musgrave Row at the lower level, with the existing blue badge spaces brought into daytime use for disabled people. This would maintain the existing level of parking and would need improved access to the library at a lower level, via the service lift or a new facility.
- 3.3. If improved access at a basement level cannot be achieved, people with mobility issues would have major difficulties accessing the library. A compromise might be to provide some limited parking on Castle Street to maintain level access for a limited number of people. It would be preferable for this parking to be in a more conventional layout, and located in an area that doesn't limit the space that could be pedestrianised outside the main entrance. The area of private parking adjacent to the Westcountry library would be a suitable location for a limited number of spaces.



	Engineering Design Group	Exeter HATOC job/title/proposal	EXETER CENTRAL LIBRARY PUBLIC REALM SPACE		date 10/07/13	scale NTS
					number C12021/13	



Exeter Central Library Enhancement Parking Management

- Key
- = Existing No Waiting & No Loading At Any Time
 - = Existing Loading Only
 - = Existing Disabled Only (8pm - 8am)

Drawing No
N3224/201/B

Date
Jun 2013

Scale
N.T.S

