

Marsh Barton Rail Station

Report of the Head of Transportation, Planning and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations: It is recommended that

- (a) the Marsh Barton Station scheme shown in Appendix 2 be approved for construction at an estimated cost of £16.0m, subject to funding being in place;
- (b) the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the scheme design.

1. Summary

This report seeks final scheme approval for the construction of Marsh Barton station, which forms part of the Devon Metro rail network. It will boost sustainable access to one of the region's largest employment areas and deliver improved walking and cycling links to the Riverside Valley Park for leisure and onward commuting to RD&E, County Hall and the city centre.

2. Background

Marsh Barton station is a core element of the Devon Metro rail strategy and sits in the heart of one of the largest employment sites in the region, with approximately 6,000 jobs (see Appendix 1). The existing, approximately 30-minute frequency service on the Paignton line will provide increased sustainable travel choices primarily for residents living in Torbay, Newton Abbot, Teignmouth, Dawlish, Dawlish Warren and Starcross, as well as communities along the Exmouth line. These communities currently have limited public transport options for travel into Marsh Barton.

The station will be within reasonable cycling distance of the 2,500 dwelling South West Exeter strategic allocation and Alphington village and so forms an important part of mitigating traffic impacts on routes on the western side of the city. The scheme will also support aims for low-car development aspirations as part of the emerging Liveable Exeter housing plans, which includes proposals for strategic levels of housing in the Marsh Barton area, all within easy walking distance of the station.

In addition, the existing Clapperbrook Lane adjacent to the station provides an important link into the Riverside Valley multi-use trail network for leisure trips as well as commuter journeys to RD&E and County Hall, within a short walk/cycle distance

of the station. Being located adjacent to a high quality, attractive cycle network offers huge potential to improve integration between rail and cycling. Currently the lane is very popular with over 400 cyclists per day recorded crossing the rail bridge; however, it is narrow with poor visibility and although lightly trafficked is not suitable for all young families, people with disabilities or people less confident on bicycles.

Although Cabinet approved the plans for Marsh Barton at its meeting in July 2015, since then several problems were encountered, including significant changes to Network Rail design standards and specifications for numerous components of the scheme. This affected platform design, safety requirements and accessibility proposals, which increased the scope of the project. Inconsistent advice and delays to technical approvals contributed also to rising costs and the scheme became unaffordable. In response to the long list of issues and dissatisfaction experienced, the County Council progressed a successful industry risk fund claim against Network Rail, which is contributing to the new scheme.

3. Proposal

The pause in the project enabled the County Council to re-think elements of the design including improving access to the station and boosting opportunities to better integrate the scheme with strong walking and cycling links in the area. Also, with the Sleeper rail service limiting the hours of night-time construction that can be carried out, designers considered ways to reduce the number of rail possessions to minimise risk of delays.

The station at Marsh Barton will be immediately to the south of Clapperbrook Lane and adjacent to the Energy from Waste Plant. The station will be served by the existing local train service between Exmouth, Exeter, Newton Abbot and Torbay (including stops between those stations) and will generally have hourly services but with some extra peak workings bringing it up to approximately half hourly in the peaks. It will provide increased travel choices for residents living in Teignbridge, Exeter and East Devon, offering direct access to jobs and leisure opportunities.

The station layout itself (see Appendix 2) is largely the same as the previous design and will have two 124 metre platforms, capable of handling six car local trains. There will be cycle parking for 40 cycles (20 on each side of the station), with plans for an electric Co-Bike dock. Three disabled parking bays are included on the 'downside' of the station as well as two rail staff only bays for maintenance access purposes. There will be sheltered waiting facilities and adequate lighting and CCTV to enhance security for people with disabilities using the station. Platform facilities will include ticket machines and there will be help points featuring audio frequency induction loops for customers with hearing difficulties. The scheme received planning permission at the beginning of December 2020.

The key changes from the previous proposal relates to the ramps and access between the two platforms. The previous design included ramps running parallel to the railway, with long ramps and imposing structures due to Network Rail requirements for their asset. The redesign now includes the ramps and a new bridge constructed parallel to Clapperbrook Lane. This will instead be a Devon County Council-owned asset and allows Devon County Council standards to be applied for

their pedestrian bridges. This is more in line with preferences expressed by disability groups who supported shorter length but slightly steeper gradient with resting platforms.

The decision to construct the ramps parallel to Clapperbrook Lane have several other benefits:

- i) it will provide an enhanced, segregated from traffic walking and cycling route linking Marsh Barton into the Riverside Valley Park (avoiding an unsuitable trafficked route with poor visibility);
- ii) it will strengthen both the Devon County Council and Network Rail embankments, which are failing (and enable access to the structural maintenance funding);
- iii) it will be less visually imposing on the platforms, improving surveillance and security for passengers waiting (see Appendix 3);
- iv) it will reduce the extent of Network Rail possessions required for the construction of the station as it can be constructed outside the operational footprint of the railway and so is not constrained by limited construction working hour windows.

Discussions with Stagecoach have indicated a willingness for a minor re-route of the Matford Park and Ride buses via Grace Road Central instead of Trusham Road to reduce the walking distance to the nearest bus stop from approximately 400m to 100m. This was something keenly expressed in consultation with local disability groups. In order to progress this, some parking restrictions will be needed on the corners to aid movement of buses. There are also plans to improve the walking and cycle linkages from the station into the Alphin Brook cycle network, approximately 100m south of the Clapperbrook Lane entrance to the station. These wider improvements will be funded separately from this budget.

A business case was submitted for the scheme in order to secure Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal funding. This showed a 'very high' value for money category.

4. Options/Alternatives

The business case demonstrates that the proposed station represents very good value for money investment, and it has very strong support from the community and wider partners and stakeholders. The previous design could have been refreshed; however, the decision to change the access arrangements has multiple benefits. It delivers significant improvements for people with protected characteristics in terms of accessibility and security; it also helps reduce risk of delays during construction and levers in additional funding.

Not proceeding with the scheme would mean needing to pay back Growth Deal funding to the Local Enterprise Partnership, which would be reputationally as well as financially damaging. All capital expenditure on the scheme would also need to be repaid with revenue funding.

5. Consultations

The station has been supported through the Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council Local Plan consultation processes, with the station included in Local Plan strategic policies to mitigate the impacts of development in the Alphington / South West Exeter strategic allocations.

The station was also formally consulted upon through the planning application process, with broad support for the proposals and a delegated approval decision being made due to the lack of objections. Meetings were held with Living Options, a user-led charity championing the needs of people with disabilities and with the Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF), which exists to “improve public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment”. The groups were supportive of the proposals which will improve access to jobs and leisure opportunities. Concerns were raised in the meeting with DCAF about the potential lack of car parking in the area. With the climate emergency declaration, encouraging increased car trips to a station that will largely be a destination station (i.e. people commuting into the area) was not considered appropriate. Living Options requests for bringing the bus service closer to the station for better integration will be progressed with Stagecoach.

Other feedback related to how the new pedestrian / cycle bridge ties back in with the Clapperbrook Lane and onward connections towards the Riverside Valley Park and proposals were amended to improve upon this.

6. Financial Considerations

The scheme is estimated to cost £16.0m and will be funded by a variety of sources as detailed in the table below:

Funding Source	Amount £'000
Local Transport Plan	2,100
Exeter City Council (CIL)	1,300
Teignbridge District Council (CIL)	1,300
Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund)	4,370
Devon County Council (existing programme)	500
Network Rail Industry Risk Fund	820
Bridge Assessment & Strengthening	2,500
Department for Transport (DfT) New Stations Fund (award pending)	3,110
TOTAL	16,000

£5m is expected to be spent by the 31st March 2021, with an estimated £9m profiled in 2021/22 and £2m in 2022/23.

The funding package includes the DfT New Stations Fund allocation. At the time of this report the DfT have not made a final decision on the allocation of the New Stations Fund. However, we have been working very closely with the rail industry/DfT and have had positive indications of success. The advanced works are required during February – April and will be relatively low cost and can be completed

as a discrete works package with the main works starting in early summer. If the New Stations Fund is not forthcoming, then there is time for a decision to be made either to pause the construction or search for additional funding.

In addition to the capital costs, there may be some initial revenue support needed to cover the operational costs over the first three years. The annual cost of maintaining the new station and costs associated with braking and accelerating for the new stop is estimated at approximately £290,000 per annum, which will be offset by fare paying passengers. Although it is difficult to estimate what the County Council may be liable for, it is estimated that these costs will be in the order of £50,000 per annum for three years.

7. Legal Considerations

Devon County Council and Network Rail are at an advanced stage of formally agreeing permanent transfers of land and formal agreements will shortly be in place with Exeter City Council to construct temporary haul roads across their land. This will also serve as a permanent road for accessing the solar farm and battery storage project on Water Lane.

A formal Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for a 9-month road closure on Clapperbrook Lane will be required to construct the pedestrian / cycle bridge. Access will be maintained at all times for pedestrians and cyclists.

8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

Research has indicated that 27% of all carbon emissions in Devon are generated by on-road transportation and this scheme will support Council aims to reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector.

The new station and enhanced pedestrian / cycle bridge will support mode shift and deliver carbon savings through replacing medium length distance car journeys, particularly from the Teignbridge towns to Marsh Barton and will encourage increased local walking and cycling trips through improved quality and safety of cycle connections into the Riverside Valley / Exe Estuary multi-use trail.

9. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/

new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment / Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

In progressing this particular scheme/proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Councillors and is also available alongside this Report on the Council's website at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/marsh-barton-railway-station/>, which Councillors will need to consider for the purposes of this item/meeting.

10. Risk Management Considerations

After the project stalled, the County Council met with senior officials in Network Rail and GWR in order to reset the project and seek a more collaborative approach as the level of support to a 3rd party promoted scheme was considered lacking. The governance arrangements are now stronger with Network Rail and GWR more directly involved in the Board structure. Weekly design meetings, monthly progress meetings and regular contact including on-site walk throughs with Network Rail and GWR have all helped highlight risks and identify actions to mitigate any issues at the earliest opportunity. Whilst there could well remain frustrations in delays with technical approvals, including an exemption for lifts issue, there have been several examples of proactive initiatives, best practice sessions and Lessons Learnt workshops from other rail projects as well as joint briefings with experts from the relevant specialisms. This has helped create a stronger spirit of partnership working and a shared commitment to the project with all partners taking greater responsibility and a willingness for the project to succeed.

The Risk Register is monitored through the Board meetings and there have been several good examples of efficiencies being identified through the collaborative arrangements in place. For instance, the contractor is looking to make use of rail possessions planned over the Christmas period and Network Rail offered to take on some specialist signalling works having identified an opportunity to de-risk an element of the project with teams available in the area. A package of advanced works, prior to the main contract have been identified to minimise risks of delays to the core scheme.

11. Public Health Impact

As described above, the rail station will be within easy walking distance of major employment destinations and opportunities have been provided either with better infrastructure or facilities (i.e. cycle parking) to improve integration between rail and cycling to enable first/last mile journeys to be made on foot or by bicycle.

The proximity of Marsh Barton to the Riverside Valley Park / Exe Estuary Trail should also encourage use of the station for more leisure pursuits, including access for people with limited mobility.

12. Summary

This rail station scheme is an important infrastructure project that will boost sustainable travel choices for residents living on the rail lines in Teignbridge, Exeter and East Devon accessing jobs in Marsh Barton and leisure opportunities on the Riverside Valley / Exe Estuary Trail. It also delivers a safer pedestrian and cycle link across the railway to promote healthier, active lifestyles for short to medium distance journeys. The scheme fits well with the County Council's climate emergency commitment and supports Local Plan strategic policies relating to growth in Alphington and South West Exeter.

Dave Black
Head of Transportation, Planning and Environment

Electoral Divisions: All Exeter Divisions; All Teignbridge Divisions

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste: Councillor Andrea Davis

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

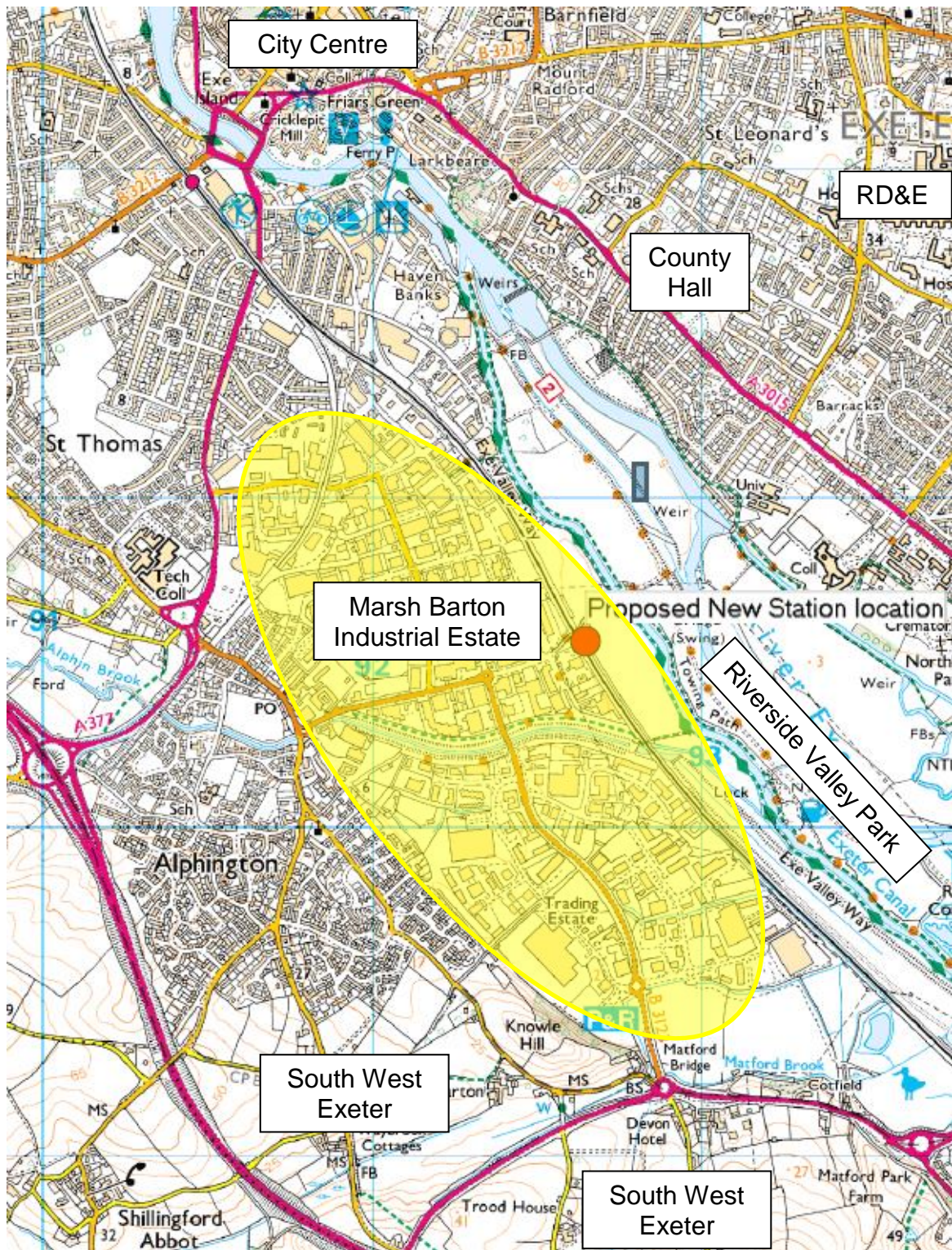
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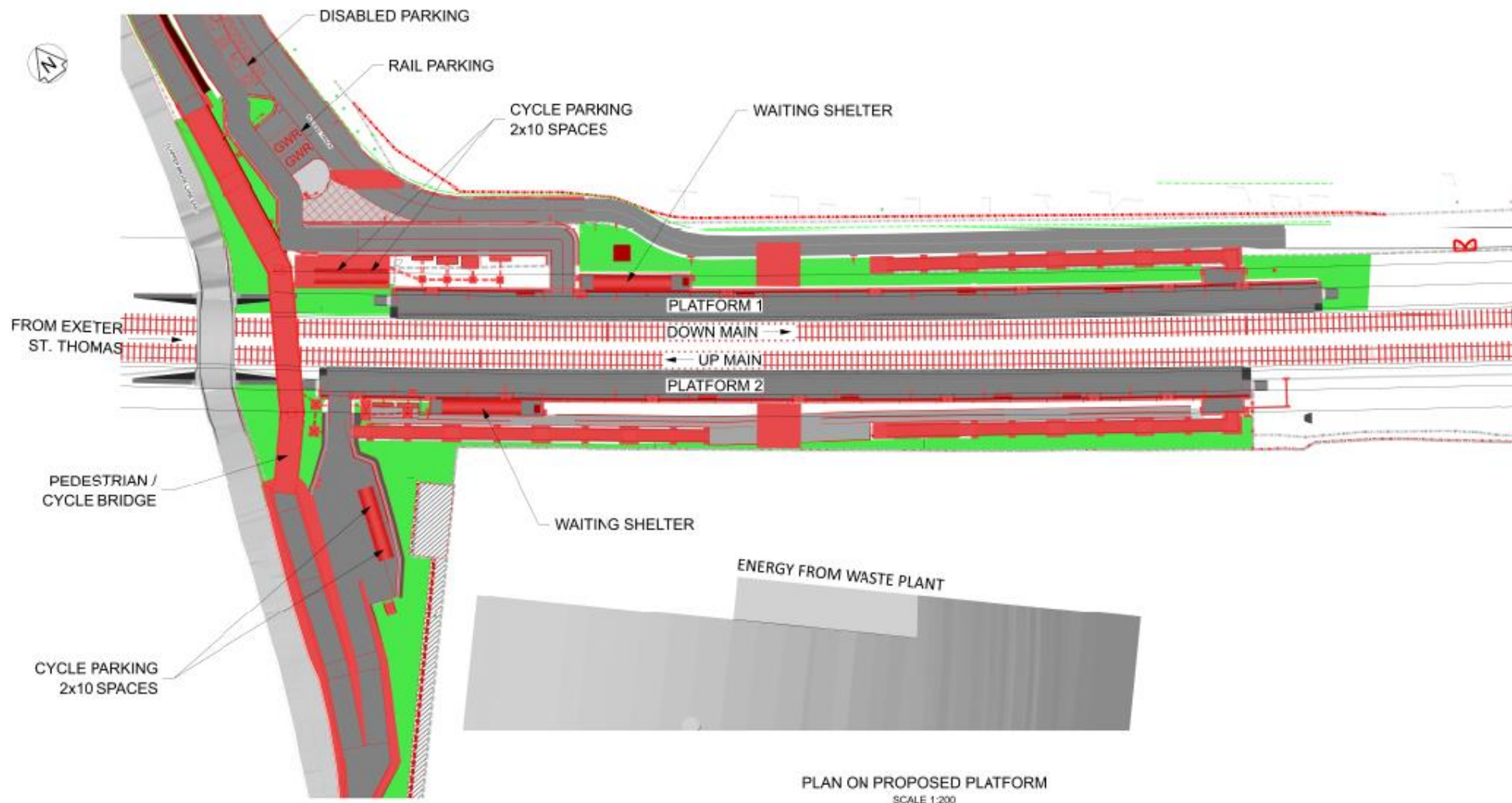
Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Impact Assessment	23 December 2020	https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/marsh-barton-railway-station/

Marsh Barton Rail Station - Final

Appendix 1 to PTE/21/1: Location Plan



Appendix 2 to PTE/20/1: Scheme Plan



Appendix 3 to PTE/20/1: Visual Impression of Station

