

Section 5: Development strategy

5. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This section sets out guidance for the key sites identified for redevelopment at the early stages of this study. The principles and illustrative layouts for each key site have evolved through the information, concerns and needs brought to light in discussions with the community and feedback from the consultation. The following preferred options are a result of this consultation.

5.1 The Station / Perry Vale area

5.1.1 Development context

As described in the analysis section of this report, the station area presents one of the biggest issues facing Forest Hill, with the divisions caused by the South Circular and the railway. The present station is a single storey building constructed in the 1960's. It replaced a substantial and prominent Victorian station building and no longer provides a visual and functional focal point to Forest Hill, as did the original. This is exacerbated by its position and relationship to the South Circular which presents a barrier between the station and the rest of the centre. However, the boundary of the Forest Hill Conservation Area follows the line of the railway and includes the station building, its forecourt and all the land associated west of the track. Whilst the immediate area around the station currently detracts from the character of the area, its inclusion within the conservation area establishes the requirement for any development scheme to preserve or enhance its character.

The station is also poorly connected to the eastern part of Forest Hill, the only connections across the railway line being by a very uninviting pedestrian subway leading to Perry Vale. This connects to further station land on the east side of the railway and to a car park used mostly for park and ride. The bridge across the railway leads to the southbound platform and there is another stair that leads down to Perry Vale. These routes are not very legible and due to the lack of environmental quality, are very unfriendly to pedestrians. There are also no means for people with disabilities to make use of the railway or crossings.

The station is bordered by the WH Smith building and a number of single storey buildings which may be able to be incorporated into a comprehensive scheme for the station's redevelopment. The Perry Vale side of the railway consists of an industrial unit and several Victorian buildings in mixed retail and residential uses. Large parts of the site are underused.

The site is considered suitable for a more intensive mixed-use development as well as providing a better passenger transport interchange facility. Issues of integrating the area and improving bus-rail interchanges have been addressed in section 4.3.5, as they are part of an overall need for environmental improvements.



5.1.2 Development principles

- Rebuild the station as a landmark building addressed by a quality public space, reinforcing the station as the heart or central focus of Forest Hill.
- Align the station forecourt to the London Road axis and ensure it is visible from key routes to and from the station area.
- New development flanking and fronting onto the central public space should be of three or four storeys with retail / café ground floor uses and residential / office uses above.
- Incorporate lift access to the underpass in the new station development on the west side of the railway.
- Incorporate ramped access to the underpass from Perry Vale thereby slightly realigning the footway and carriageway.
- Redeveloping the underused Perry Vale land parcels comprehensively with commercial (offices or shops) on the ground floor and two or three storeys of residential accommodation above.
- Ensure that development of the Perry Vale sites is supported in environmental terms by high quality landscaping of Perry Vale and the pavement adjacent to the embankment, and a suitably attractive finish on the embankment wall, possibly some kind of high quality cladding or planting.

- Ensure that new development on Perry Vale provides an active frontage and enclosure to the street, which should function with greater pedestrian priority : provide a generous raised pedestrian crossing of a good quality paving across Perry Vale leading to the ramped access to the underpass. There is also scope to improve direct access to and from Station Platform 2.
- Vehicular access to the Perry Vale development site should be replaced further up Hindsley's Place.

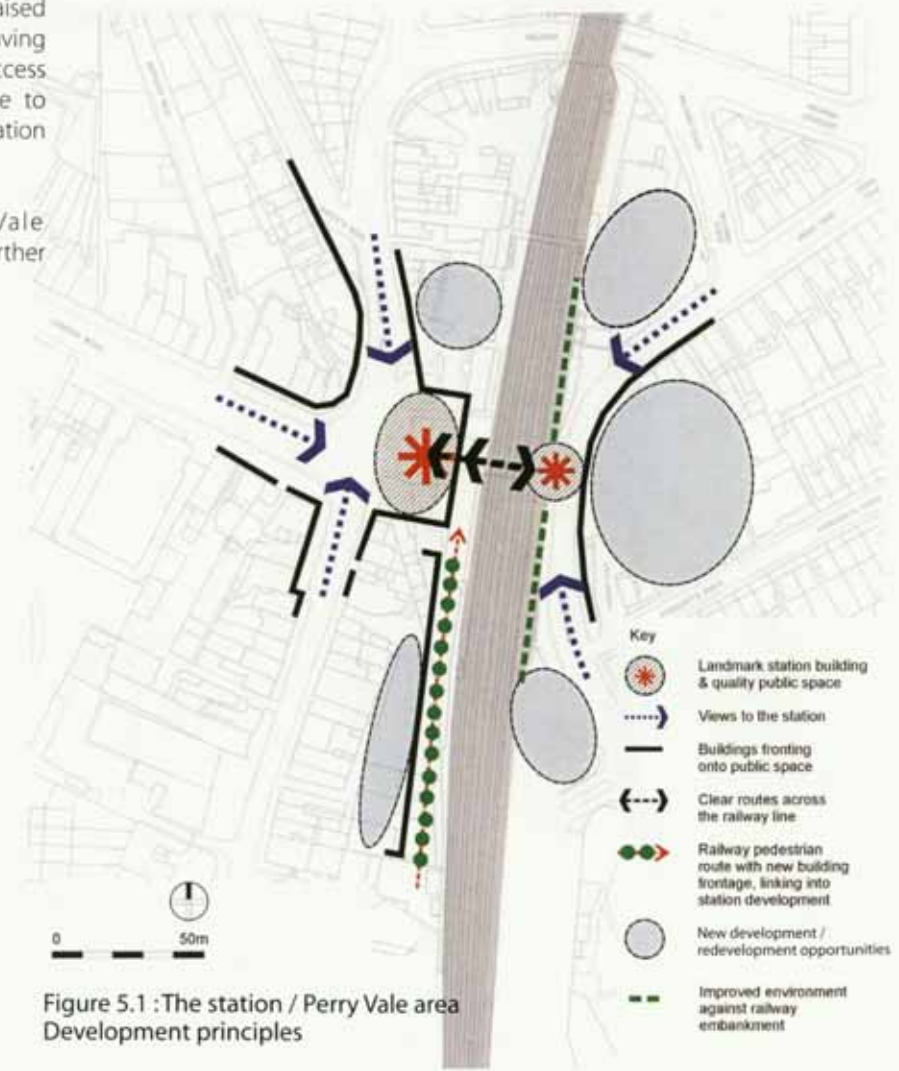


Figure 5.1 :The station / Perry Vale area
Development principles



Possible view of redeveloped station and square on the west side

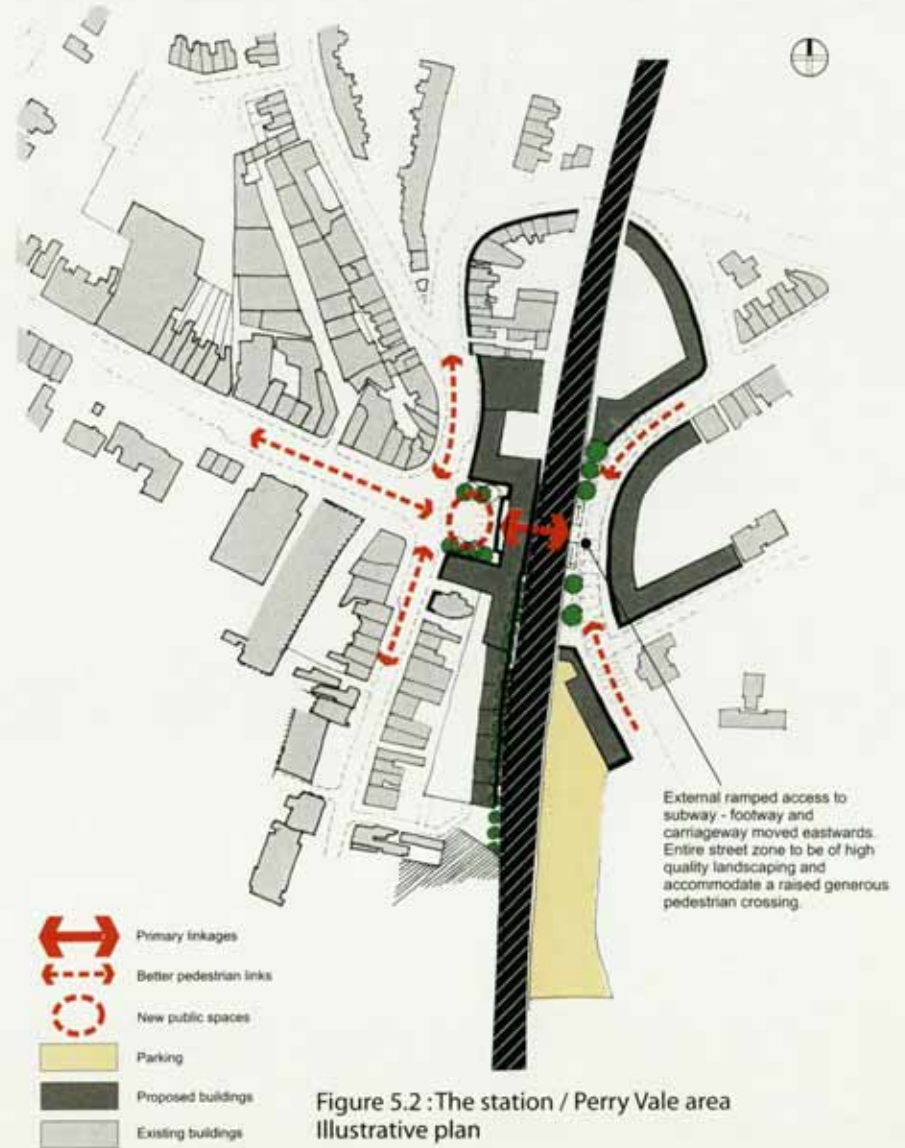


Figure 5.2: The station / Perry Vale area
illustrative plan

5.2 Sainsbury's and the car park

5.2.1 Development context

Shopping in Forest Hill is clearly suffering and this is not helped by the fact that Forest Hill's one major supermarket Sainsbury's has an inaccessible Council-owned car-park with no pedestrian link to London Road. The supermarket building is poor and the chain owns a series of adjacent empty properties which blight the shopping area.

The future of Sainsbury's property, as an essential anchor to the commercial vitality of Forest Hill, is critical to the continuing regeneration of the town centre.

The Sainsbury's site is very sensitive due to its location in a conservation area and its position on the important route from the station to the Horniman. Any new development or improvements to the existing building must preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area, be of a high quality in design terms and make a valuable contribution to the streetscape of London Road.



5.2.2 Development principles

- Retain Sainsbury's on the existing site, with the store's extension or other retail uses in the adjacent vacant shops.
- Reintroduce two storey flats above the development, accessed directly off London Road and set back to the existing first floor building line.
- Frontages to London Road, including the vacant shops adjacent to the Sainsbury's store, should present an active and attractive interface to the street.
- Provide formal and direct pedestrian access from London Road to the car park and Pearcefield Avenue within the site, and independent from the store. This pedestrian route should be generous and well lit, using high quality paving and landscaping. The flats above the extension should overlook the path which should be well managed and maintained.
- Provide a small public space where this public access route meets London Road, as a gateway to the pathway and the streets behind the Sainsbury's site.
- The car park should be better landscaped as a piece of public realm, in line with the other streets and places in Forest Hill (see section 4). This is particularly important in the light of the car park's interface with a sensitive residential area.



Figure 5.3 : Sainsbury's and the car park
Development principles and illustrative plan

5.3 The Library, Louise House and the Pools

5.3.1 Development context

This area consists of the Forest Hill library (Grade II listed), Louise House, the Forest Hill Pools and adjacent open space. It is owned by Lewisham Council and much of it provides services operated by the Council's Education and Culture Directorate.

This key site is independent of the others in terms of programme and use. However it is perceived as an important community centre and, within the conceptual framework of this study, an important activity node and gateway for Forest Hill. There are ongoing discussions about the uses for the buildings and how the buildings may be improved, combined and / or redeveloped. Feedback from the public consultations is that there is strong support for retaining community/leisure uses on the site. This is suitable as an adjacent use to the Library which will remain. However, decisions must be informed by technical appraisals and feasibility studies with ongoing public consultation.

5.3.2 Development principles

Any improvement or redevelopment should respond to the following urban design principles:-

- The building façades fronting the street and public space should be of a high quality whether they are old or new.
- The space in front of the buildings should be quality public realm and not dominated by cars. It could be seen as an extension of the suggested landscaped green space along Dartmouth Road.
- The existing public park north of the Pools should have a more useful function. It provides the opportunity for additional development space and/or parking. If this opportunity is taken, this green space should be reprovided in the space in front of the buildings.
- Any new or redeveloped buildings should form a positive relationship with the proposed linear green space, and should address the longer distance direct view from the station.

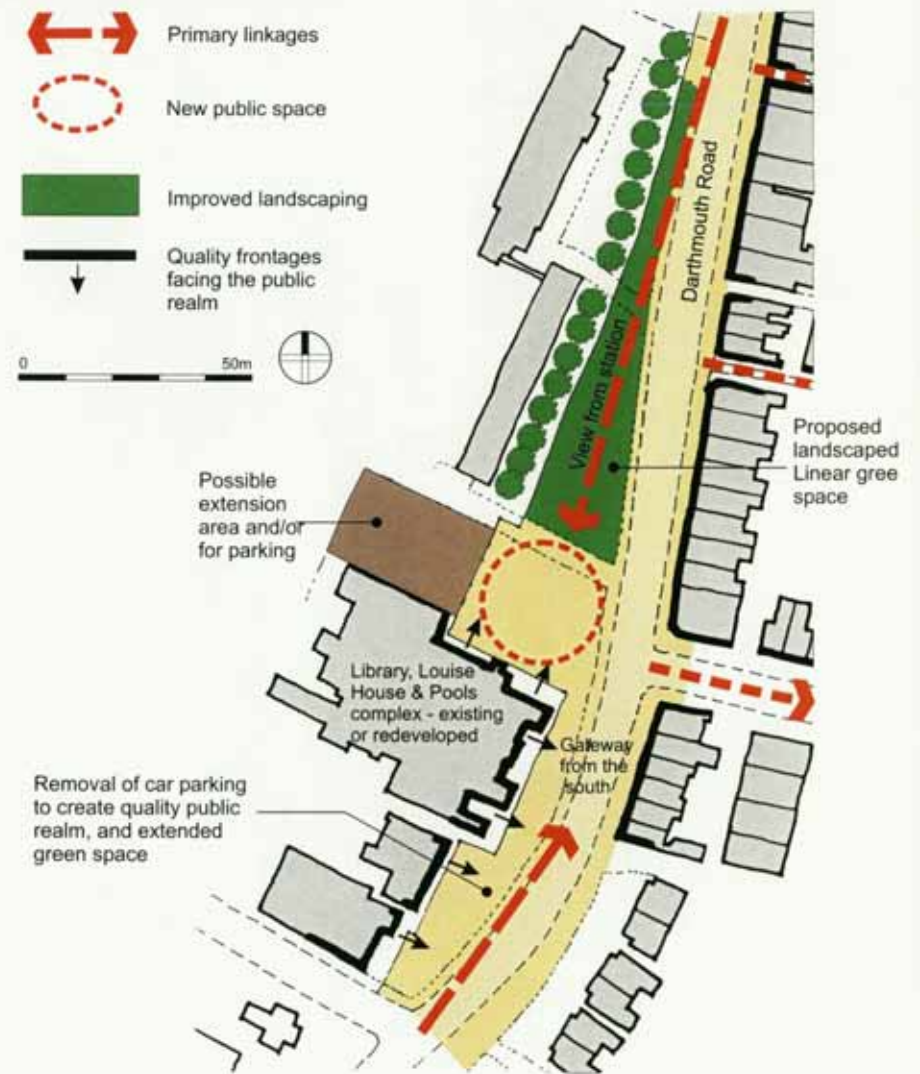


Figure 5.4 :The Library, Louise House and the Pools Development principles and illustrative plan

5.4 Clyde Terrace, Clyde Vale and land rear of Dartmouth Road

5.4.1 Development context

This area consists of a diverse mix of sites, with mixed ownership, located between Dartmouth Road and the railway land, used for commercial purposes, manufacturing, open storage yards and some residential use. Some of the sites are underused. The existing footpath running alongside the railway from Forest Hill Station potentially provides a useful pedestrian link to the town centre and the station, but urgently needs attention if it is to function as a useful and safe pedestrian route.

Part of this site falls within the Forest Hill Conservation Area, within which there is a requirement for development to preserve or enhance the special character of the area. Under Policy URB1, land to the rear of Dartmouth Road between Clyde Vale and the Station is identified in the emerging UDP as a proposals site suitable for a mix of B1 employment, live/work units and public footpath improvements.

5.4.2 Development principles

- If the site is vacated the Council's preference would be to see the site developed wholly for employment based uses. However, any redevelopment of this site should retain employment based uses in the form of small business workspaces and flexible live-work units although there may also be scope for some fairly high density housing and office uses.

- Development should provide for quality landscaping along the railway pedestrian route to the station. This landscaping should fit in with the Forest Hill 'language' (see section 4) and should be well-lit, well landscaped and direct.
- New development should face onto the pedestrian route along the railway to provide activity and surveillance of the route. Some live-work units with residential above working areas would be suitable in this location.
- Provide frontage onto the routes between the railway pedestrian route and Dartmouth Road encouraging pedestrians to make use of the permeability the new development offers.
- Any development must deliver parking to adequately serve the new buildings as they come forward.
- The slope of the land towards the railway line provides opportunity for maximising development potential with higher buildings closer to the railway line. However care must be taken to protect the amenity outlook, privacy and right to light of existing occupiers of adjoining land.

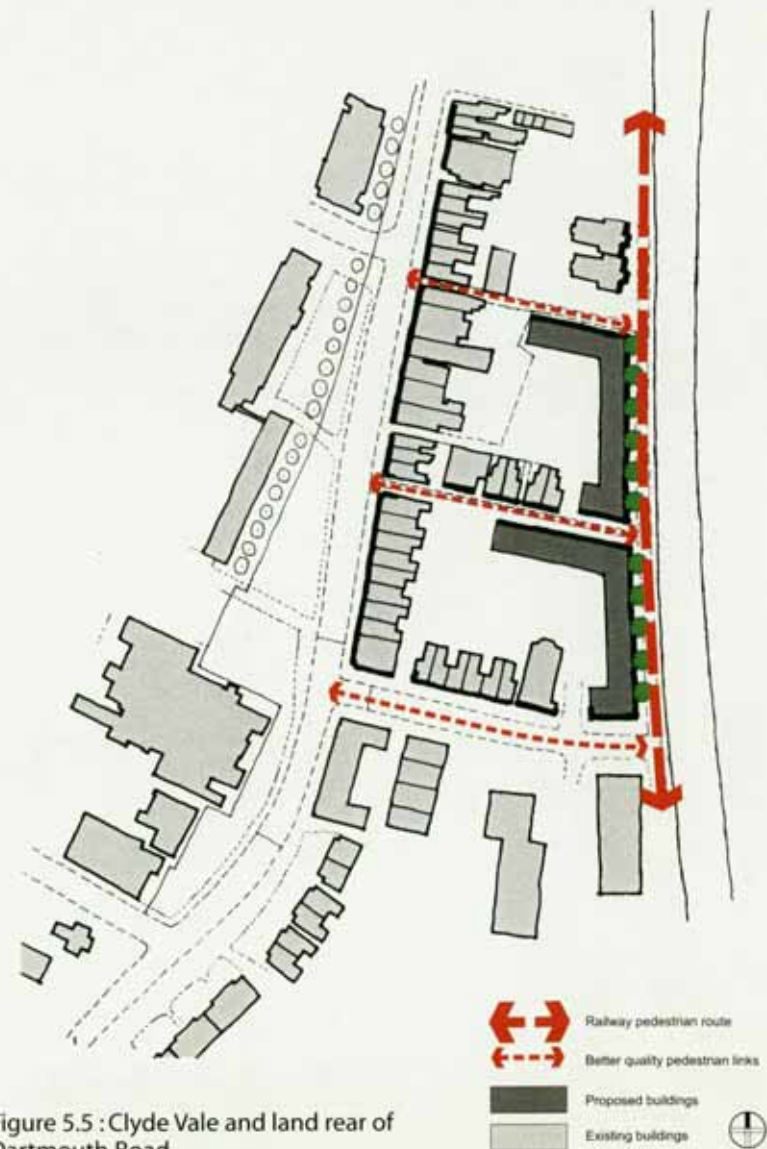


Figure 5.5 : Clyde Vale and land rear of Dartmouth Road
Development principles and illustrative plan

Section 6: Implementation

6. IMPLEMENTATION

This report suggests the following actions within the context of the urban design framework described in sections 3 and 4:

Short term improvements:

- Improvements to the station area
- Route to Horniman
- Dartmouth Road Environmental Improvements
- Perry Vale Environmental Improvements
- Shopfronts
- Bus / rail interchange improvements

The feasibility and viability of the following key sites should be investigated:

- Station area west side
- Library, Louise House and Pools : Technical appraisal, feasibility study and public consultation

The viability of these initiatives and projects has been investigated in broad brush terms. Current market indications are such that the potential for successful development including retail and/or residential is very high. However it is important to develop further detailed viability studies with interested developers and embed the projects in partnership arrangements with landowners and the local authority.

It is envisaged that the specific improvements listed above and the generic improvements set out in the urban design framework will come forward through negotiations with developers in Forest Hill Town Centre. The most likely method of securing these improvements is through the agreement with prospective developers to enter into planning obligations associated with development proposals within the town centre.

Some of the specific improvements outlined above clearly relate to the development of specific key sites considered in the development strategy in section 5. As development proposals come forward for these key sites, contributions towards the costs of implementing these improvements, either in whole or part, will be sought. The appropriate level of contribution from other development proposals in Forest Hill towards the implementation of the improvements set out in sections 3 and 4 and any other initiatives that come forward will be considered during the development control process.