The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**8**
Report No	**CIA/05/26**

Committee: **City of Inverness Area**

Date: **2 February 2026**

Report Title: **Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This paper summarises the findings of the feasibility study commissioned by HITRANS to explore the creation of a strategic multi-modal transport interchange within the 'Station Quarter' area of Inverness. This proposal, together with the improvements to the Inverness Rail Station, has potential to have a transformative impact on the experience of those living, working and visiting the City and using the transport network across and beyond Highland at the same time as providing greater opportunity for building a stronger civic place within this part of the City.

1.2 The paper considers the next steps needed to progress this study and in particular the requirement to engage more widely on its findings.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

i. **Note** the findings of the Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study;
ii. **Note and agree** the proposed engagement plan and associated timelines; and
iii. **Note** next steps as detailed in section 9

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – to date funding for feasibility work has come from HITRANS, The Highland Council and the Scottish Government Bus Infrastructure Fund. In moving forward and to realise the ambition of this proposal funds will need to be drawn from a variety of private/public sources and the project delivered in a staged approach.

Capital, revenue and whole-lifecycle costings have not been undertaken within the scope of this Study and should be considered alongside the investment and funding options to deliver the project.

3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal requirements arising from this report. The project aligns with STPR2 Recommendation 43 and supports Inverness's transformation into a sustainable, accessible, and connected city.

3.3 **Risk** - This Study is exploratory and based on available site information and transport data. It does not include construction costs, revenue projections nor any extensive engineering input with respect to site conditions, constraints and utility infrastructure requirements. All of these aspects are required in a subsequent phase of design and option development to support any future Outline and Full Business Case. It is recommended that early assessment of the existing site conditions and constraints is undertaken to manage and mitigate project risk.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) –** The Feasibility Study indicates that the reprovision of the Bus Station with a new layout would meet current best practice, reduce or eliminate pedestrian / traffic conflict and thereby reduce any residual health and safety risks.

The Feasibility Study recommends the replacement of the MSCP. This would remove any residual health and safety risks that may exist due to the condition of the current MSCP, and the operational restrictions imposed accordingly.

3.5 **Gaelic** – no impact but the finalised study/plan will contain Gaelic headings and subheadings in accordance with Gaelic Language plan.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required at this point. However, stakeholder engagement will inform future assessment of impacts.

5 Background

5.1 Successive City Vision documents for Inverness have highlighted the desire for the city centre to become vibrant, accessible, and attractive. This has included realising the potential around what is now referred to as the 'Station Quarter.' While measures have been taken over the years to improve the bus station, and there have been some promising signs of redevelopment within its vicinity, its configuration remains challenging offering limited capacity as well as severed connectivity to the adjacent train station.

5.2 The recent purchase of the former Post Office sorting office by Network Rail means that the majority of the real estate around Farraline Park, and between it and the Railway Station, is now within public ownership. This, combined with the need to consider future options for Rose Street car park, provides the perfect opportunity to rethink how the area is developed to improve not only the experience of passengers, and pedestrians generally, but also the quality of the urban realm in this part of the City. These aspirations are all clearly set out within the latest City Centre Vision and Masterplan, the principles of which were taken forward in the context of the 2025 Inverness Strategy.

5.3 HITRANS (H&I Regional Transport Partnership) commissioned Austin-Smith: Lord, to explore the feasibility of creating a strategic multi-modal Transport Interchange within the Inverness Station Masterplan area. The study aims to integrate bus, coach, rail, active travel, and car parking into a future-proofed, inclusive and sustainable transport interchange as in **Appendix 1**.

5.4 This feasibility study sits alongside the ongoing preparation of a Masterplan for Inverness Railway Station being progressed by Network Rail / Scotland's Railway. The Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study (Bus Station / MSCP) has been progressed in close liaison with Network Rail / Scotland's Railway to ensure compatibility with the Masterplan for Inverness Railway Station. The Study considers an area deemed to be within the 'collaboration zone' associated with the Inverness Railway Station Masterplan. The aim is that by working collaboratively these projects can deliver on the latest 2025 Inverness Strategy as in **Appendix 2**.

5.5 A briefing for Inverness City Members was held on 7 January 2026 to share the findings of the feasibility work undertaken to date.

6 Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study

6.1 The Study considers the feasibility of a range of key transport infrastructure interventions, specifically a new and reconfigured Bus and Coach Station, a resized replacement multi-storey car park (MSCP) and dedicated Active Travel Hub.

6.2 The key objectives are to:-

- assess viable options for location, size, and indicative design of the interchange;
- evaluate operational needs for buses, coaches, rail replacement services and tourist operations;
- integrate with existing and future transport networks (A82 access, rail connectivity);
- promote sustainable travel (EV charging, active travel facilities, green infrastructure);
- explore options for new MSCP;
- improve user experience, safety, and accessibility for all, including those with sensory or mobility impairments; and
- align with city centre regeneration and placemaking goals.

6.3 The key findings can be summarised as:-

1. The existing Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park need to be replaced.

    a. Bus Station: Currently sub-optimal, undersized, and operationally inefficient. It has 7 'island' stances (operating as 14 stances 'double stacking') causing pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and failing to meet current standards in terms of accessibility, quality of passenger experience, operational efficiency and safety.

    b. MSCP: Current restrictions imposed on operational capacity due to the under-design of structure to meet modern standards and the condition of the structure. Reports by others indicate a restricted future lifespan of the existing structure thereby requiring plans for the reprovision of car parking.

2. There is sufficient space to accommodate the reprovision of Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub all meeting best practice standards as part of a wider mixed-use regeneration of the 'Station Quarter' on land assembled by, and within the ownership of, The Highland Council and Network Rail / Scotland's Railway.

    a. Bus Station: Based on available information initial analysis by transport planning consultants indicates that a replacement Bus and Coach Station with at least 14 stances and ideally 16 stances be located within the 'Station Quarter'

    b. MSCP: Based on available information initial analysis by transport planning consultants indicates that the reprovision of a MSCP providing circa 850 spaces to accommodate spaces currently at TK Maxx and Railway Station car parks, meet future demand and designed to meet contemporary standards including EVs.

    c. These recommendations should be developed and tested in greater detail in the next phase of design work to confirm this initial analysis.

3. There is an opportunity for mixed-use development across the 'Station Quarter' creating a new destination and gateway to the City Centre with improved public realm, and creation of a new landmark civic space at Farraline Park, greatly enhancing the setting of the A Listed library building.

7 Options

7.1 A longlist of options was developed and refined through workshops with stakeholders (HITRANS, The Highland Council, Network Rail, ScotRail and Stagecoach). Twelve options (A–L) were presented, varying by bus station location relative to the library, the details of which can be found via this link

7.2 Options were further refined down to 3 as can be seen within the Preferred Options Draft Visualisations V3 as in **Appendix 3**. These are:-

- Option I: 16 stances north/east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.
- Option J: 15 stances east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.
- Option L: 16 stances east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.

7.3 This was based on a number of key assumptions: Retain A-Listed Library, Maintain pedestrian access from Strothers Lane, Bus/vehicular access from Longman Road/A82, Stop up Margaret Street; create civic square in front of Library, Minimum 14 bus/coach stances, MSCP with ~850 spaces (including disabled and EV), Rail replacement buses accommodated, Mixed-use development zones indicated, Tourist coaches remain off-site (Ardross Street).

8 Engagement

8.1 There have been several rounds of engagement with The Highland Council, Network Rail / Scotland's Railway, ScotRail and Stagecoach, alongside HITRANS during the development of the feasibility study and options.

8.2 Partners are now keen to engage more widely and share the findings of the feasibility work and present indicative options that establish a series of key design principles, namely:-

- Seeking to re-locate a new Bus and Coach Station with sufficient capacity for current and projected demand and improved interchange with rail station.
- Re-provide a circa 850 multi-storey car park (MSCP) to the north of the study area.
- Establish a pedestrian first zone around the 'Station Quarter' including a traffic-free new civic square at Farraline Park.
- Promote a mixed-use city centre regeneration masterplan for the 'Station Quarter'.

8.3 This engagement will seek feedback and an indication of support on these key design principles. With reference to the indicative option, the intention is to invite consultees to indicate any preference and suggest any further improvements to the proposals to inform the work undertaken to date and or the preparation of a preferred option.

8.4 All engagement activity will be carried out in line with The Highland Council's and HITRANS' relevant policies and guidance as well as the National Standards for Community Engagement in planning and placemaking.

8.5 A draft engagement plan is appended for consideration and agreement as in **Appendix 4**.

9 Next Steps

9.1 Beyond finalising and undertaking the stakeholder and public engagement on options, there is work required to formalise the existing partnership working arrangements between the Council, HITRANS and Network Rail/Scotland's Railways. It will also be necessary to undertake additional site constraints analysis (utilities, ground conditions, drainage) and seek property market advice that will help inform indicative phasing and costings.

9.2 It is intended to report back to this Committee on the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement and on the project as it progresses.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive – Place
Date:	16 January 2026
Author:	David Mudie, Strategic Lead, Planning and Building Standards Nicole Wallace, Service Lead Environment, Development and Sustainable Transport
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study Exec Summary Appendix 2 - Network Rail Slide Appendix 3 - Inverness interchange Feasibility Study Visualisations Appendix 4 - Draft Engagement Plan

Inverness Interchange Bus Station & Car Park Feasibility Study

HITRANS
January 2026
Executive Summary

Austin·Smith:Lord

Contents

Project Team

The Project Team have undertaken this Study during Spring and Summer of 2025. The multi-disciplinary team has consisted of:

Client	**HITRANS**
Partners	**The Highland Council** **Network Rail**
Lead Design Consultant Architects, Landscape Architects, Urban Designers, Conservation Architects	**Austin-Smith:Lord**
Transport Planners	**SCP**
C&S Engineers	**Cameron + Ross**

It should be noted that the Civil & Structural Engineering inputs in the Feasibility Study were restricted to advising on the Rose Street MSCP.

Part 00
Introduction

Introduction

Inverness, as a growing City at the heart of a City Region and as the Gateway to the Highlands, is undergoing a strategic masterplanning process to reimagine and guide the transformation of its city centre, and transport infrastructure.

As part of this initiative, HITRANS (the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership) has commissioned the Feasibility Study to explore the creation of a strategic multi-modal transport interchange within the Inverness Station Masterplan area and in line with Recommendation 43 in STPR2 regarding Major Station Masterplans.

This Study considers the feasibility of a range of key transport infrastructure interventions, specifically a new and reconfigured Bus and Coach Station, a resized replacement Multi-Storey Car Park and dedicated Active Travel Hub. These interventions, in combination with enhancements to the immediately adjacent Inverness Railway Station, will greatly enhance the quality of public transport interchange serving the City and the Highlands. The redevelopment of the Station Quarter also presents Inverness with an opportunity to extend and redefine the northern City Centre with a mixed-use development that transforms Inverness at the Gateway to the Highlands.

The proposed Interchange aims to seamlessly integrate various modes of transport; bus and coach, rail, active travel, and car parking into a coherent and future-proofed place that meets the needs of both local residents and visitors. This design-led approach is underpinned by a commitment to ensure that the Station Quarter positively contributes to the quality of the City Centre experience and provides a welcoming, barrier-free and inclusive environment for all, including those with sensory and mobility impairments. Considerations around future technological developments, sustainability, and resilience also form part of the analysis and case for change.

In preparing this Feasibility Study there has been a focus on;

- **People :** Delivering a high quality and inclusive pedestrian and passenger experience for all users, whether accessing the transport facilities or passing through the Station Quarter
- **Process :** Ensuring operational and logistical efficiency, safety and security for the day to day functioning and maintenance of public transport and active travel facilities and the associated mixed-use developments
- **Place :** Focusing on enhance the quality of place-making to ensure an attractive, active, resilient and convivial Station Quarter that contributes to the economic, social and cultural health of the City Region.

Purpose of this Study

This Study has been prepared by a multi-disciplinary design team led by Austin-Smith:Lord for HITRANS to establish the feasibility and potential for reconfiguring and enhancing Inverness Bus Station, Rose Street Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) and Active Travel Hub.

The purpose of this Feasibility Study is to support informed decision-making in the development of a strategic, integrated transport interchange in Inverness City Centre.

Specifically, this Study aims to:

- Identify viable options for the location, size, and indicative design of a multi-modal interchange that accommodates buses, coaches, cars, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Evaluate the infrastructure needs and operational requirements of various transport modes, including rail replacement, express services, and tourist coach operations.
- Assess how the interchange can integrate with existing and future transport networks, including road access from the A82/Rose Street roundabout and connections to Inverness Railway Station.
- Explore promoting sustainable travel options and future-proofed design elements, including EV charging, Active Travel facilities, and green urban infrastructure.
- Recommend solutions for the Rose Street MSCP, including potential replacement, relocation, and interim arrangements during construction phases.
- Improve user experience, safety, and accessibility for all, including those with sensory and/or mobility impairments.
- Support broader City Centre place-making and regeneration objectives aligning with, and enabling, future changes central Inverness.

By addressing these goals, the Study intends to play a critical role in shaping the future of transport and mobility in Inverness, by helping to create a more connected, accessible, and sustainable urban environment.

This Study is exploratory and based on available site information and transport data. It does not include construction costs, revenue projections nor any extensive engineering input with respect to site conditions, constraints and utility infrastructure requirements. All of these aspects, and more besides, are required in the subsequent phase of design and option development to support any future Outline and Full Business Case.

Project Brief and Study Area

Project Brief

The Project Brief at project inception stated the following:

Inverness Interchange Bus Station & Car Park Feasibility: Scope

To inform the Inverness Station Masterplanning process, HITRANS are commissioning a feasibility study into the creation of a strategic multi-modal transport interchange that considers bus, rail, active travel and parking.

The study should consider the potential options for accommodating the following within the Inverness Masterplan area:

- *Bus/coach interchange*
- *Car parking*
- *Active Travel Hub*

Below is a list of key issues to be considered by mode:

Bus

- *Understanding requirements for local bus, interurban and express services. Consider business case for inclusion of other tour coach operations.*
- *Ownership and management*
- *Size and shape for operational needs and passenger facilities – based on current and projected requirements*
- *Access and egress for different options into local and strategic road network*
- *PRM access*
- *Opportunities for improving placemaking and approach from trunk road / town centre*
- *Detailed factors to be considered for all options*
- *Passenger facilities and access arrangements - Share with railway? etc*
- *Stances, floating, herringbone etc*
- *One way / two way*
- *Rail Replacement buses*
- *Cruise coach and other tourism*
- *Event demand*
- *Low emission zone / demand management*
- *Efficient access from Rose St roundabout/A82*
- *Bus length*
- *Foot access to Platform 7 and to rest of rail station*
- *Retail and servicing*
- *Staff facilities*
- *Future proofing – tech, AV*

Car Parking

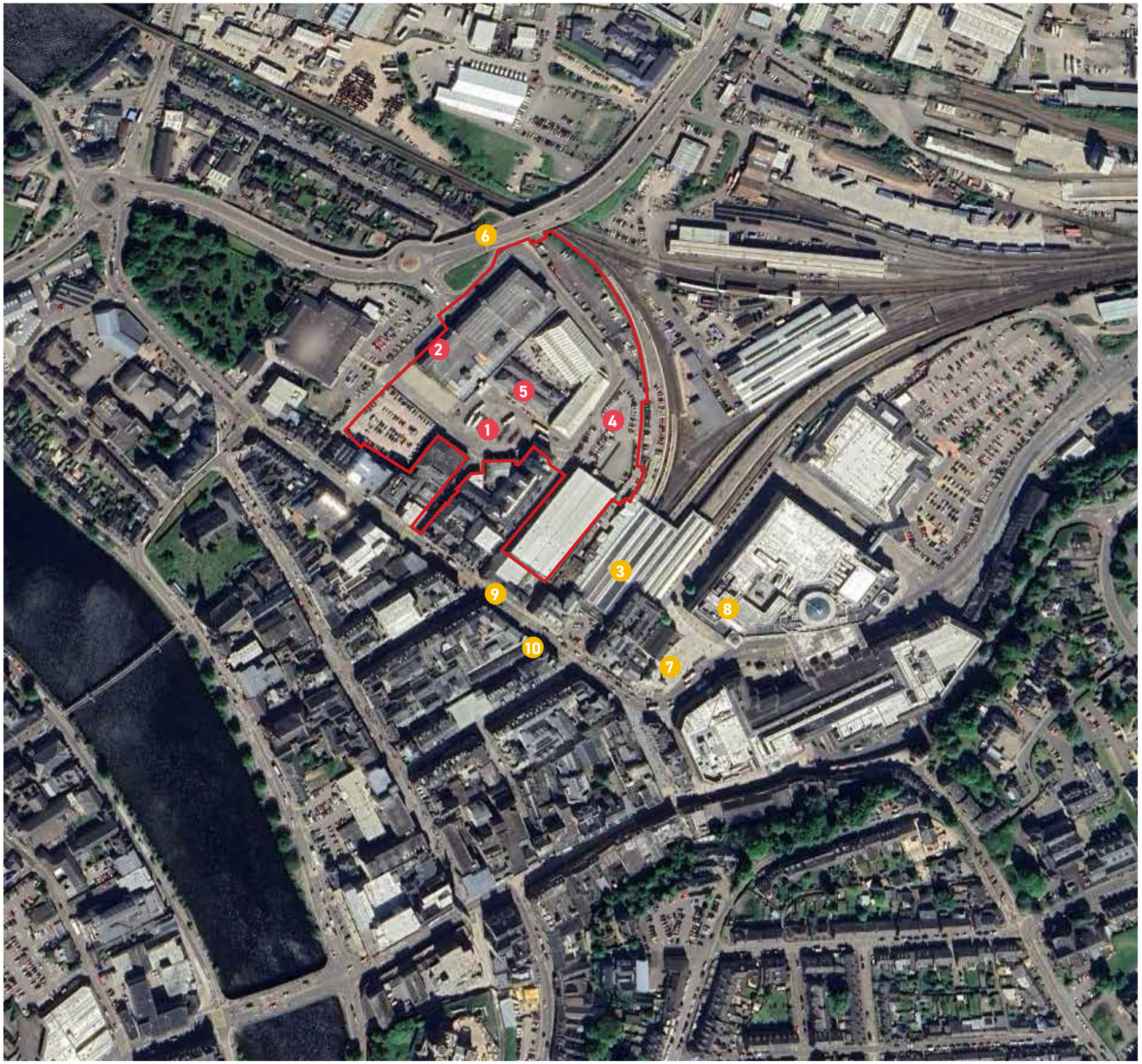
- *Options for the Rose Street multi-storey car park*
- *Replacement*
- *Relocation*
- *Access and egress to trunk road*
- *Pedestrian access and egress*
- *Capacity including an understanding of City Centre capacity and demand*
- *Integration with bus / rail interchange*
- *EV charging infrastructure / provision*
- *Design*
- *Future proofing - solar, battery storage etc*
- *Consider temporary provision in event of reduced capacity during construction*

Opportunities for improving placemaking and approach from trunk road / town centre

Active Travel Hub

- *Access arrangements to above facilities and rail station*
- *Parking provision for cyclists at above or dedicated hub*
- *HI-Bike provision and operation and maintenance*
- *Security*

Study Area



1. Inverness Bus station
2. Old Town Rose Street Multi Storey Car Park
3. Inverness Railway Station
4. Station Car Park
5. Inverness Library
6. Longman Road / A82
7. Falcon Square
8. Eastgate Shopping Centre
9. Academy Street
10. The Victorian Market

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Key Findings

In line with the Project Brief this Feasibility Study has assessed the need to upgrade or reprovide the existing Inverness Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) within a Study Area, and to assess whether the Study Area has the capacity to accommodate facilities that meet current and future needs and standards.

The Study Area is adjacent to Inverness Railway Station at the northern edge of the City Centre. The Study Area currently accommodates the existing Inverness Bus Station and Rose Street MSCP as well as an A Listed Building that currently serves as the City's Main Library and the former Royal Mail Sorting Office. The Study Area is bounded by the Railway Station and sidings to the east and north, the A82 Longman Road dual carriageway to the north, Rose Street to the west and the rear of properties on Academy Street to the south.

Key findings from this Study can be summarised as:

- The existing Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park need to be replaced.
- There is sufficient space to accommodate a replacement Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub as part of a wider mixed-use regeneration of the 'Station Quarter' on land assembled by, and within the ownership of, The Highland Council and Network Rail / Scotland's Railway.

It is therefore deemed viable, subject to more detailed technical design work, to redevelop the Station Quarter to accommodate the requirements of the Brief. Capital, revenue and whole-lifecycle costings have not been undertaken within the scope of this Study and should be considered alongside the investment and funding options to deliver the project in line with recommendations outlined below.

This Feasibility Study sits alongside the ongoing preparation of a Masterplan for Inverness Railway Station being progressed by Network Rail / Scotland's Railway. This Feasibility Study considers an area deemed to be with the 'collaboraton zone' associated with the Inverness Railway Station Masterplan. In accordanace with the 'collaboration zone' this Study has been developed for HITRANS in collaboration with Network Rail / Scotland's Railway and The Highland Council and in consultation with ScotRail and Stagecoach (who operate the existing Bus Station).

1. The existing Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park need to be replaced.

The existing Bus Station is currently sub-optimal from an operational and passenger perspective. It is inadequately sized to cater for the size of vehicles and frequency of services now and does not have capacity for future growth. It currently has 7, mostly island, stances which introduce pedestrian and vehicular conflict. These 7 stances are 'double-stacked' in practice to be equivalent to operating as 14 stances. The current layout fails to meet contemporary standards expected of modern public transport infrastructure in terms of accessibility and quality of service as well as operational efficiency and safety.

There is no scope to reconfigure the existing Station to meet future needs and full replacement / reprovision is recommended.

It is recommended that a replacement Bus and Coach Station be provided with a minimum of 14 stances, and ideally 16 stances; preferably with scope for future expansion. The replacement Station should be constructed near to the Railway Station to provide an enhanced public transport interchange. The new Station should be accessed from the A82 Longman Road with a preference for additional access / egress from Academy Street.

The Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) has restrictions on use following structural assessments and will need to be demolished in future. Retaining and upgrading the existing structure would not be deemed best value. The current MSCP was designed to accommodate 1,000 cars but a combination of structural loading restrictions and increased vehicle size and weight has resulted in a lower operational capacity of 850 cars being imposed.

It is recommended that a replacement MSCP be constructed adjacent to the Railway Station and the A82.

2. There is sufficient space to accommodate a replacement Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub as part of a wider mixed-use regeneration of the 'Station Quarter'

Options Analysis would indicate that there is adequate space within the Study Area to accommodate a new and compliant 16 stance Bus and Coach Station and an 850 space MSCP alongside an Active Travel / Mobility Hub as part of a mixed-use 'Station Quarter' with enhanced public realm / urban spaces that enhance the setting of the Listed Building (Library).

This Options Analysis would also indicate that it is possible to enhance the passenger interchange between Railway Station, Bus and Coach Station and MSCP and that all 3 facilities can better serve the City Centre with careful reconfiguration of the 'Station Quarter' by applying best practice urban design and adhering to the national hierarchy of sustainable travel modes.

Executive Summary

Feedback to date from Project Partners

During the Options Development and Analysis there has been several rounds of engagement with the Highland Council, Network Rail / Scotland's Railway, ScotRail and Stagecoach, alongside HITRANS. The findings below summarise a composite of the engagement to date:

- There is unanimous agreement that the Bus Station needs to be upgraded and be redefined as a Bus and Coach Station.
- Widespread acknowledgement that the MSCP needs to be replaced.
- Recognition that the re provision of Bus Station and MSCP, coupled with the landownership and site assembly by THC and Network Rail, presents a significant opportunity to redefine the wider study area as an northern expansion of the City Centre creating a new 'Station Quarter' as a gateway to Inverness / the Highlands and a link to Longman and the Green Freeport.
- There is widespread support for a new Urban Park / Civic Space at Farraline Park (subject to finding a suitable location for a new Bus Station) and to restore the setting of the Listed Building / Library.

Inverness LIbrary

Multi Storey Car Park

Island Stances at existing Bus Station

Executive Summary

Design Principles

Based on Options Analysis, Project Partner Engagement and Technical Review the following design principles have been identified and should inform any future brief for design development for a replacement Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub within the 'Station Quarter'

Principal factors governing the reprovision of the Bus Station include:

- Proximity to, and ease of passenger interchange with, the Railway Station.
- Pedestrian accessibility to and from the City Centre, Falcon Square and Longman (in that order of priority).
- Increased number of stances to take local buses and inter-urban coach services (min 14 stances, ideally with scope for 16 – with no provision for tourist coach drop-off / pick-up).
- Scope to enable bus access / egress onto Academy Street (with Strothers Lane the preferred routing) in addition to access / egress onto A82 trunk road (Longman Road).

Principal factors governing the MSCP include:

- Setting the future capacity to anticipate future demand, demographics and the trend to larger vehicles and EVs.
- Scope to consolidate surface parking in the Study Area into the MSCP to free up space for future development.
- Location close to the A82 trunk road (Longman Road) to intercept cars / private vehicles and reduce penetration into the City Centre.
- Proximity to, and ease of passenger interchange with, the Railway Station and (to a lesser extent) the Bus Station.

On the basis of the Options Review and Analysis we would note that:

Locating the MSCP north / behind the Library and adjacent to the Railway is preferred:

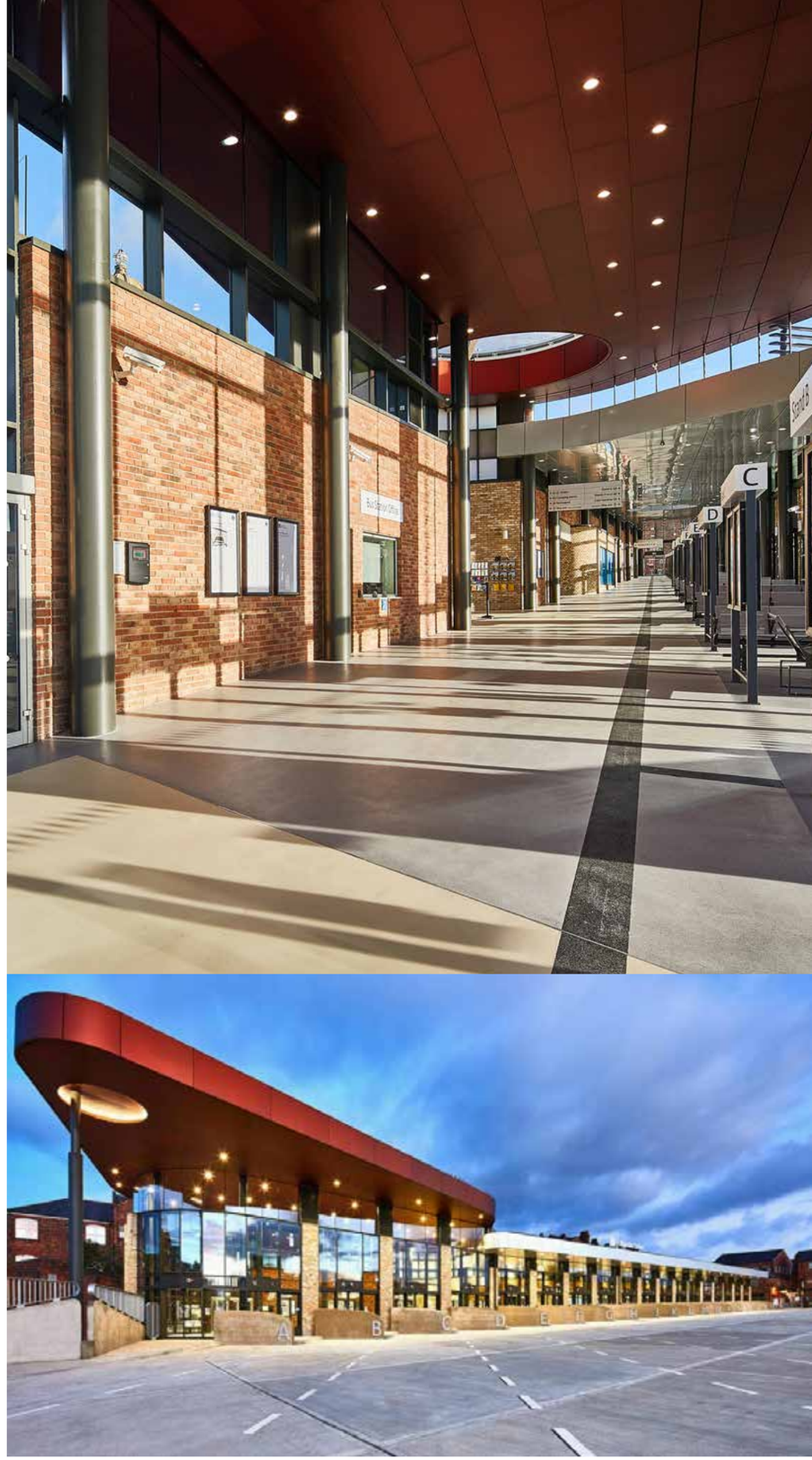
- To intercept traffic coming off the trunk road.
- With good pedestrian access to both Stations and the Station Quarter more generally, to enable construction of (part of) the MSCP to enable the option of phased relocation.
- To locate the MSCP in the least attractive / lowest value location in the Station Quarter and,
- In a location compatible with the current and potential future Railway Station layout, including possible connection to Milburn Rd.

Locating the bus and coach station to the north and/or east of the library is preferred:

- To enable close / direct interchange with the Railway Station and potentially encourage shared Bus and Rail passenger facilities.
- Allowing good pedestrian accessibility to / from key City Centre destinations.
- So long as there is bus / coach access to / from Academy Street, preferably via Strothers Lane and,
- In a location compatible with the current and potential future Railway Station layout, including possible connection to Milburn Rd.

Comprehensively improving public realm across the station quarter with a focus on;

- Establishing a new City Centre Urban Park at Farraline Park,
- With integrated active travel / cycle infrastructure including a Mobility Hub (location tbc)
- Barrier-free streetscapes that are fully accessible / inclusive,
- Largely traffic-free and naturally traffic-calmed to create a pedestrian friendly urban neighbourhood



Case Study - Wigan Bus Station (Austin-Smith:Lord)

Executive Summary

Approach

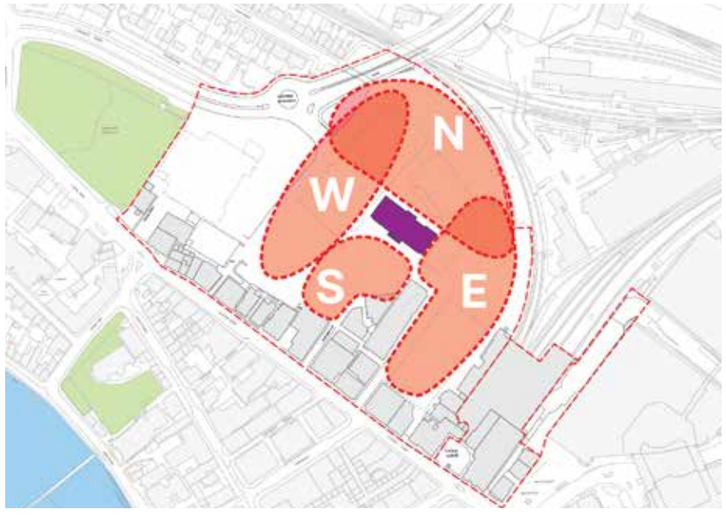
Following Site Analysis and in response to a review of the Project Brief (including assessment of the number and optimum format of Bus and Coach stances and MSCP parking spaces) a long-list of potential Options was developed for review.

Through an iterative process of project team reviews this longlist was honed in discussion with HITRANS.

Throughout the process new / alternative Options emerged to ensure a diverse array of Options. The longlist Options were presented to The Highland Council and Network Rail at an Options Workshop in Inverness on 01 April 2025, with subsequent Workshop sessions with Network Rail, ScotRail and Stagecoach.

The 01 April 2025 Workshop made reference to an Options Assessment 'Scorecard' (refer to Appendix E). The outcome of this process is summarised in the tables in this Report Chapter.

This Report presents twelve Options, catalogued Options A through to L in a sequence defined by the proposed location of the Bus Stations relative to the Listed Building / Library. Option A shows the Bus Station located south of the Library and the sequence then progresses clockwise based on alternative Bus Station locations culminating with Option L and the Bus Station located to the east of the Library.



Potential Development Zones around the Library

Key Considerations and Working Assumptions

These Options shown are indicative and all would require design refinement to ensure compatibility with relevant regulations and requirements.

The Options shown in this Report indicate:

- Retention of the A-Listed Building (Library) in all Options.
- Retaining / enhancing pedestrian access to the Railway Station from Strothers Lane / west in all Options.
- Bus / Vehicular access off Longman Road / A82 in all Options.
- Bus / Vehicular access indicated on Strothers Lane where applicable.
- Stopping up of Margaret Street in all Options.
- The creation of a public / civic square in-front of the Library.
- Minimum 14 stance Bus and Coach Station in all Options laid out to avoid / minimise pedestrian / vehicle conflict with clear delineation between pedestrian and vehicle movements.
- Avoiding island stances (as existing) and only using drive-in, reverse-out (DIRO) or drive in, drive out / sawtooth ('Hybrid') stances.
- Replacement MSCP providing circa 850 spaces (with allowances for disabled and EVs).
- That Rail Replacement Bus Services can be accommodated within the new Bus & Coach Station.
- 'Development zones' shown in all Options areas where potential mixed-use development could occur.

The Options have been prepared:

- In the absence of any site information or assessment regarding site constraints (including ground conditions, buried structures / voids / services / utilities / drainage etc.)
- On the basis that any existing site constraints can be mitigated and site infrastructure / utilities capacities are sufficient to enable future higher density development.
- That re-provision of the Bus Station car parking can be phased to enable development and that this may require off-site / near-site temporary provision.
- On the basis that tourist coach drop-off and pick-up continues to be provided 'off site' (at Ardross Street, as currently) and that no tourist coaches or mini-buses are to use the public transport Bus & Coach Station within the 'Station Quarter.
- It is recommended that early assessment of the existing site conditions and constraints is undertaken to manage and mitigate project risk.

Executive Summary

Emerging Preferred Options

Following initial Options Assessment of twelve Options (catalogued A through to L) against the criteria outlined in the 'Scorecard' and summarised in Part 03 of this Report the following Options have been deemed the most viable and warranting further consideration.

All of the Emerging Preferred Options:

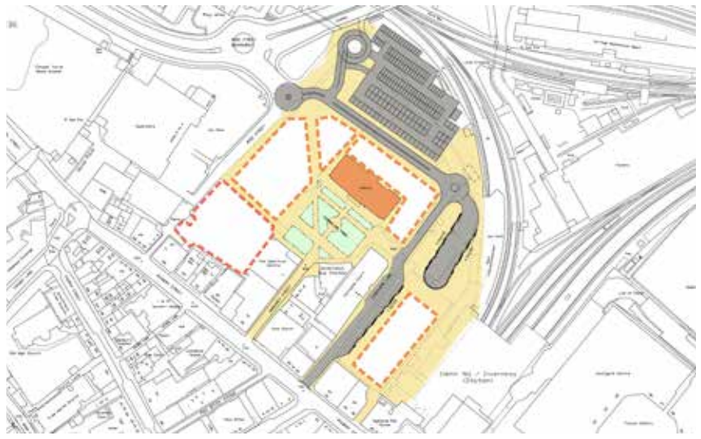
- Propose a Bus & Coach Station located to the east (and north) of the Study area on / near Strothers Lane thereby providing direct passenger interchange between Bus and Railway Stations and bus access / egress from the Longman Road / A82 and Academy Street.
- Propose a MSCP in the north of the Study area adjacent to Longman Road / A82.
- Retain the Listed Building / Library and create a new traffic-free public space at Farraline Park and Margaret Street at the Spectrum Centre.
- The Options provide a range of Bus Station layout alternatives that also affect the relationship between Farraline Park and the Railway Station.

Executive Summary

These Options are:

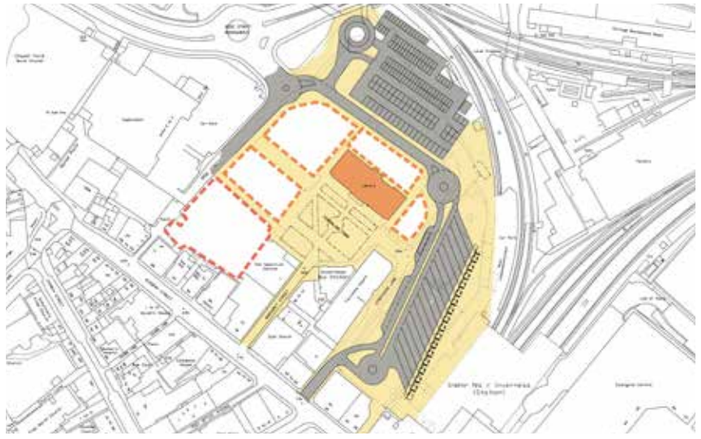
Option I

16 stance Bus and Coach Station located north and east of the Library consisting of 10 bay DIRO behind / north of the Library with a 6 bay drive-through on Strothers Lane in the current TK Maxx / Station car park). New MSCP adjacent to Longman Road at the north of Station Quarter.



Option J

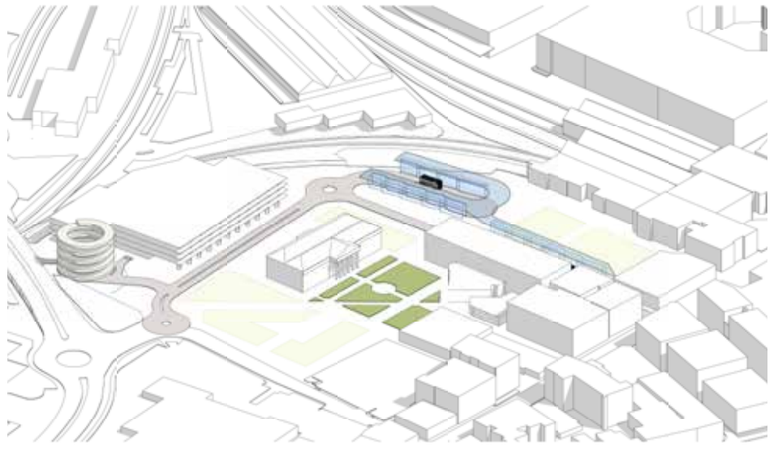
15 stance Bus and Coach Station located east of the Library consisting of 7 bay drive-through on Strothers Lane with an 8 bay horseshoe drive through at the end of Strothers Lane in the current TK Maxx car park. New MSCP adjacent to Longman Road at the north of Station Quarter.



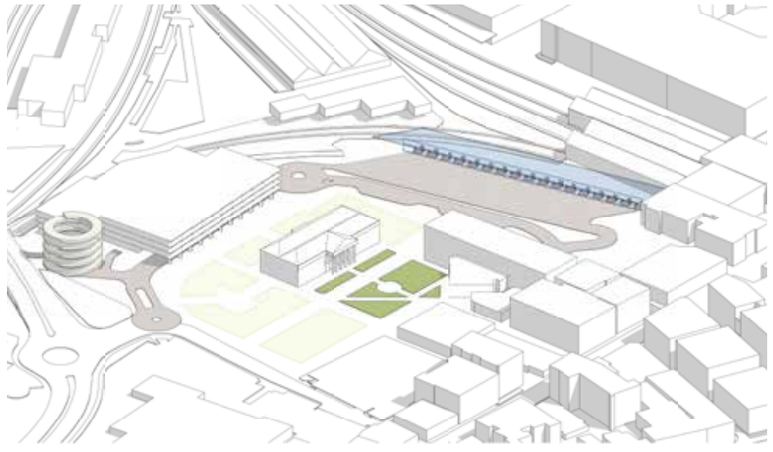
Option L

16 stance Bus & Coach Station located east of the Library and consisting of a DIRO layout on the TK Maxx site with access via Strothers Lane. New MSCP adjacent to Longman Road at the north of Station Quarter.

Aerial view of Option I from west



Aerial view of Option J from west



Aerial view of Option L from west

Next Steps

Based on the findings from this Feasibility Study the following Next Steps emerge and warrant further consideration:

Confirm Partnership Working Arrangements :
It is vital that the principal project partners (HITRANS, the Highland Council, Network Rail / Scotland's Railway) supported by Transport Scotland alongside key stakeholders (ScotRail and Stagecoach – as Bus Station operators) continue to work in close partnership to progress the findings of this Feasibility Study and deliver in line with Recommendation 43 of STPR2 re Major Station Masterplans. Project Governance arrangements (perhaps in a joint venture or other formal structure), the appointment of a Project Champion and partnership with the Inverness Station Masterplan for the Railway Station needs to be clarified to ensure a collaborative, coordinated and focused approach consistent with the Scottish Government's Place Principle.

Project Risk Register :
To guide next steps the Project Partners should establish and regularly review and update a Project Risk Register to assess and proactively mitigate or eliminate project risks.

Landownership / Site Assembly Liaison :
It is extremely advantageous that the Study Area and the land required to deliver the Brief is within the ownership of The Highland Council and railway station. It is vital that all parties / Project Partners commit to discussing any future plans regarding these sites with each other on the basis that coordination of project delivery will require both parties to work in close liaison. It may be anticipated that some form of pooling / equalisation of land values maybe explored to enable development and ensure the best option is developed, rather than the most commercially advantageous for either landowner. The identification of a development partner may also be desirable to enable the project to progress quickly.

Confirmation of the Status of the MSCP Structure and Parking Requirements :
It is important that there is a clear position established vis-à-vis a realistic operational life of the Rose Street MSCP and that a contingency plan is established to provide a temporary and permanent solution to the car parking required in the Station Quarter during the phased redevelopment of the area. This may require the acquisition or leasing of adjacent sites as part of enabling works.

Confirmation of an Operational Brief for the Future Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Hub :
Work to date suggests the number and format of stances and parking spaces recommended for the Bus and Coach Station and MSCP respectively. These operational requirements, alongside ancillary passenger, staff and associated facilities and the Active Travel Hub, will need to be developed to enable a whole-lifecycle costed scheme, a phasing strategy and delivery programme / timeline to be prepared as the basis of a Business Case that takes account of build sequence, staged delivery, inflation, CapEx, OpEx (incl maintenance) and Carbon budgets.

Development of the Business Case and STAG Appraisal :
The preparation of an Outline and Full Business Case that tests the ownership scenarios (public, private, shared ownership) and considers the revenue generation via departure charges, parking charges, commercial offer and cross funding the public transport facilities from land values, TIF or other innovative project finance models. In tandem with the OBC a STAG appraisal progress should be progressed to inform the Business Case.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement Plan :
It is anticipated that ongoing and early engagement with Elected Members (Councillors, MSPs and MP), business community (Business Improvement District(BID), Chamber of Commerce etc.), project partner Boards and other key stakeholders needs to be progressed imminently, prior to public facing engagement. This requires careful stakeholder mapping, messaging and coordination of the Engagement Plan.

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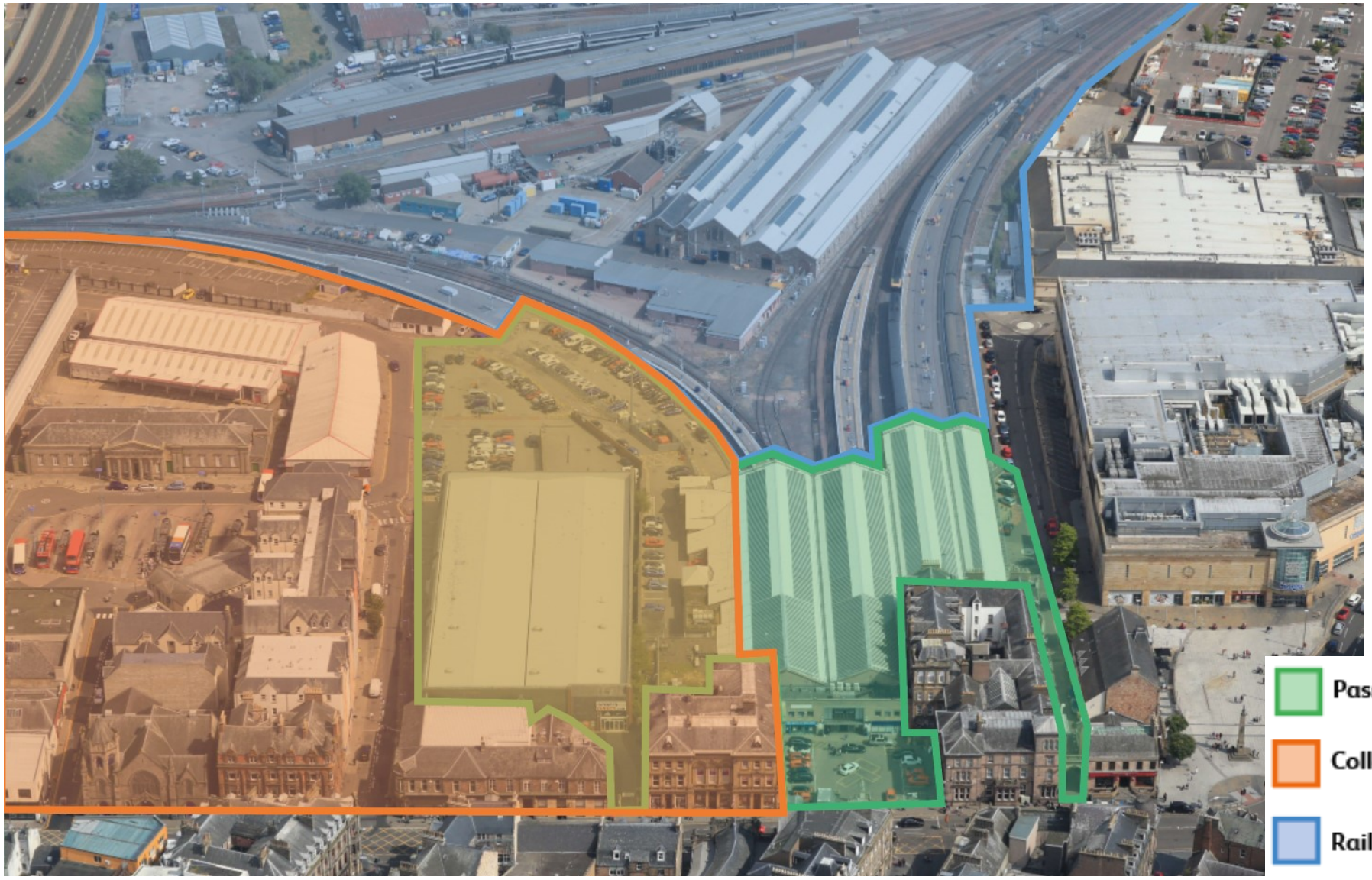
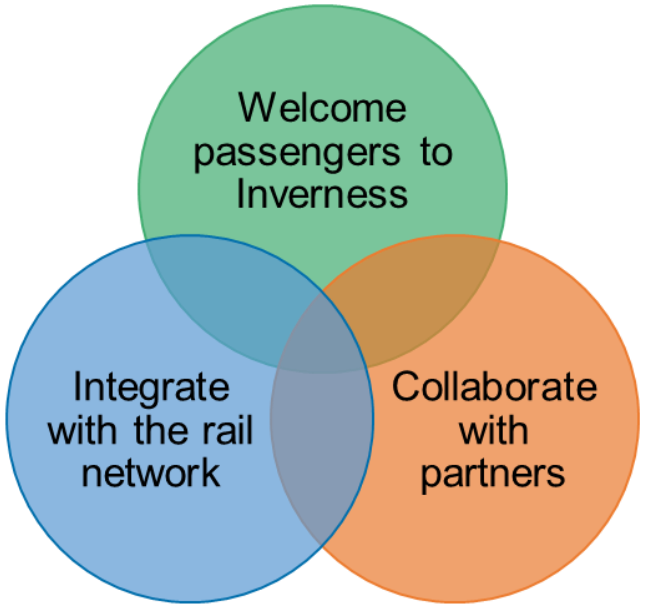
Inverness Station Vision

SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY
GREENER IN THE MAKING





Passenger Zone - Partner working

Collaboration Zone - The Highland Council Lead

Rail Operational Zone - Scotland's Railway Lead

Inverness Interchange Bus Station & Car Park Feasibility Study

HITRANS
January 2026
Preferred Options Draft Visualisations

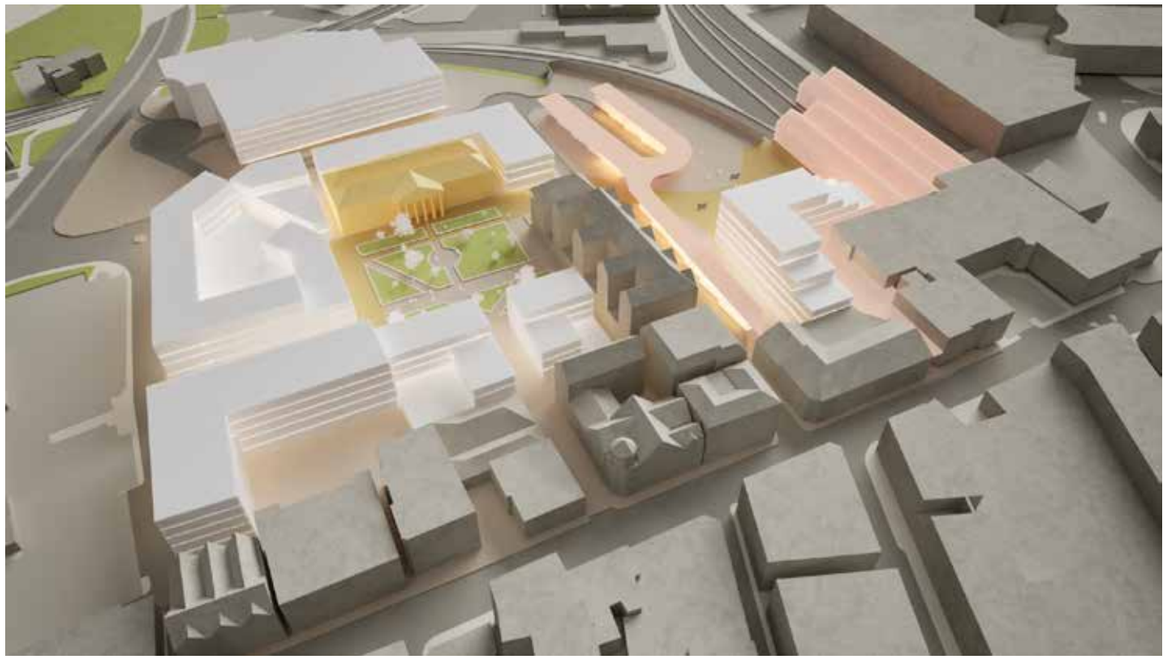
Austin·Smith:Lord

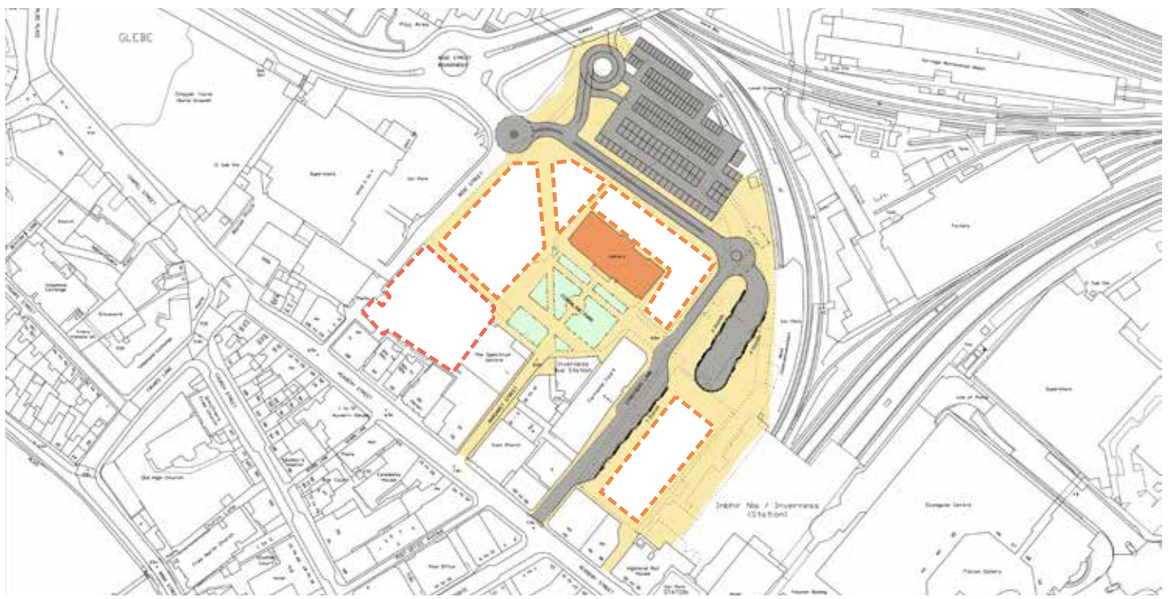
Introduction : Preferred Options

As part of the feasibility study, the following three Options have been selected:

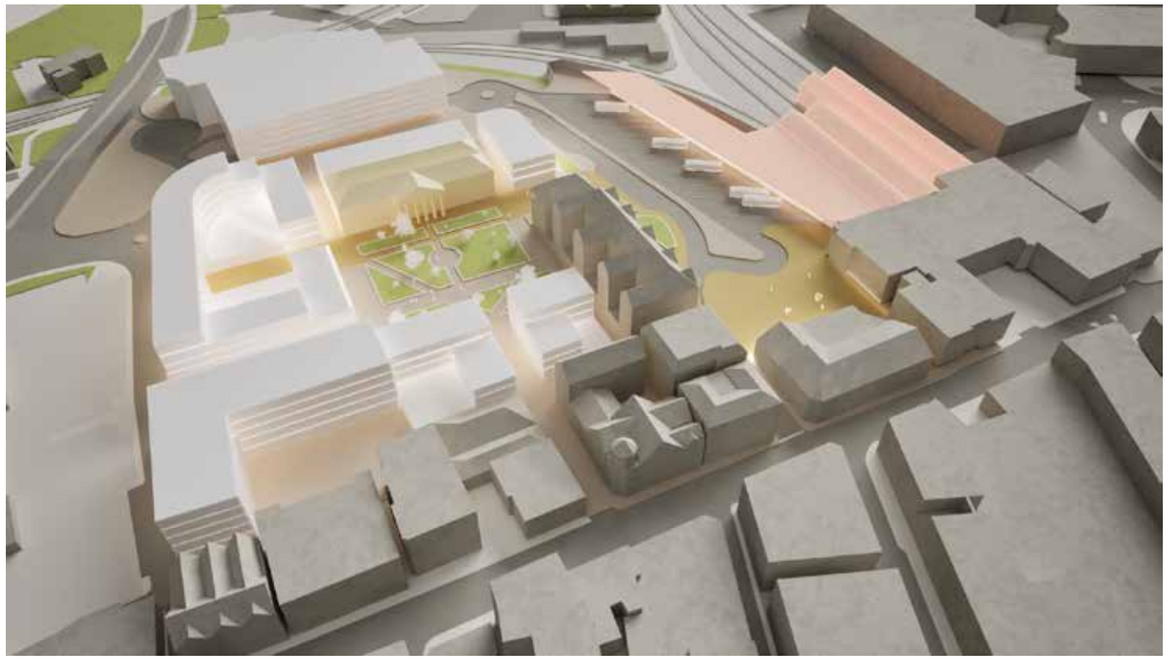
- **Option I:** Locating the Bus Station north and east of the Library with a multi-storey car park to the north and mixed use development to the west, south, and east, in the TK Maxx site.
- **Option J:** Locating the Bus Station along Strothers Lane, with a multi-storey car park to the north and mixed use development around the Library and to the west and south.
- **Option L:** Locating the Bus Station to the east against the railway lines with a multi-storey car park to the north and mixed use development around the Library and to the west and south

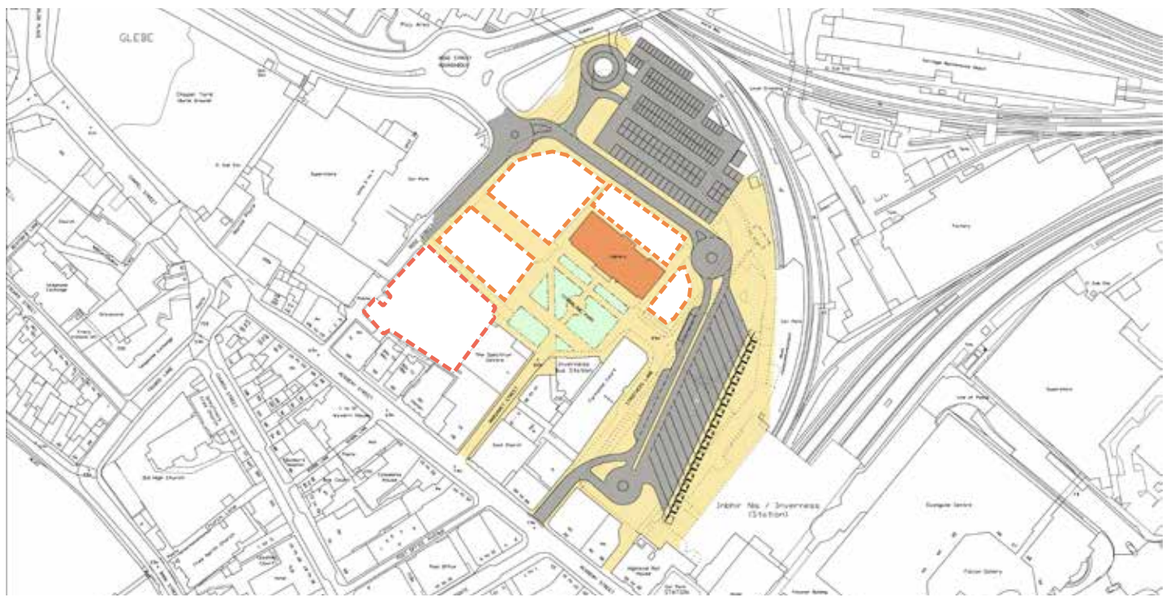
Option I





Option J

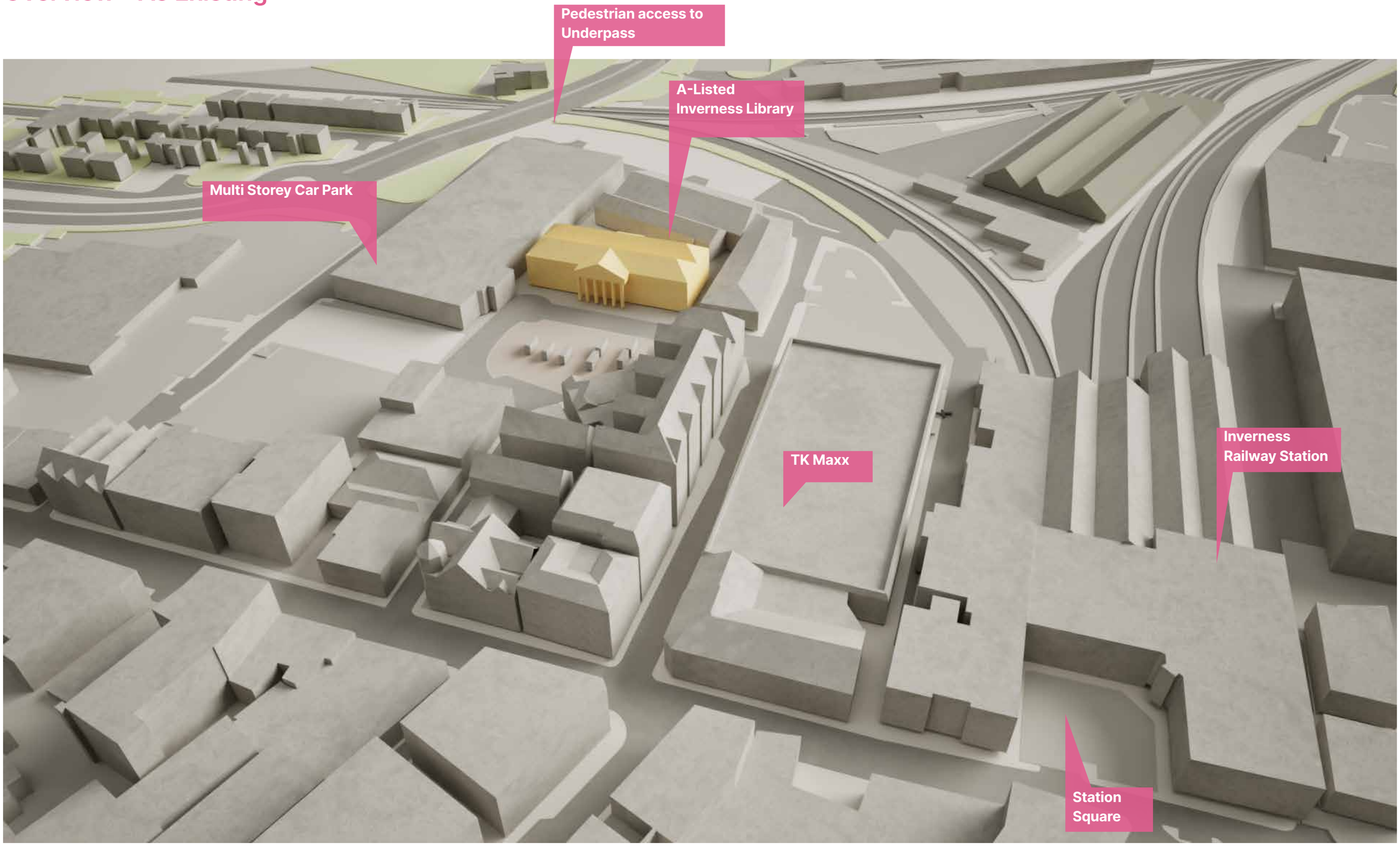




Option L

Preferred Options Visualisations

Overview - As Existing

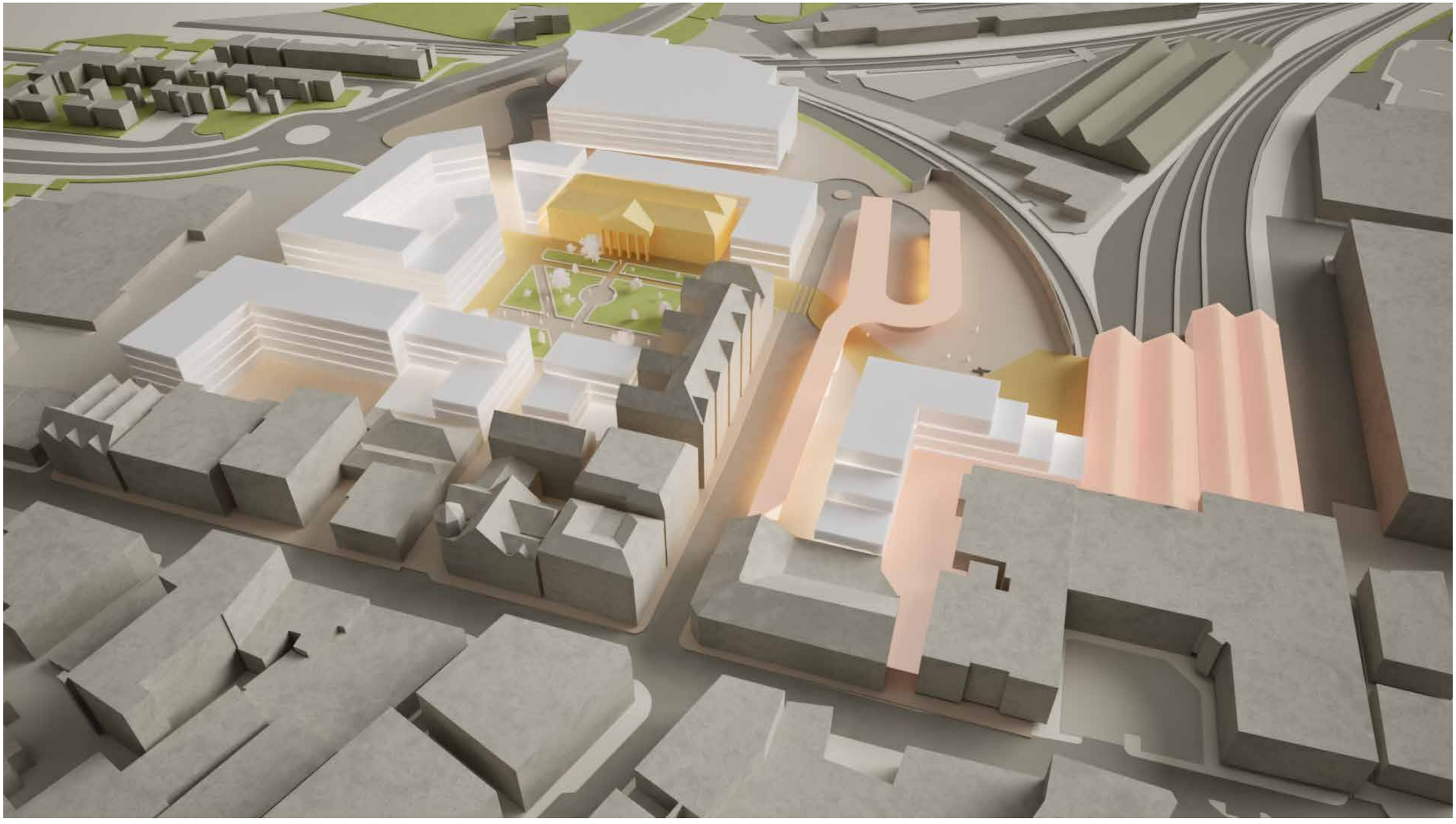


View from south-east

Overview - Option I

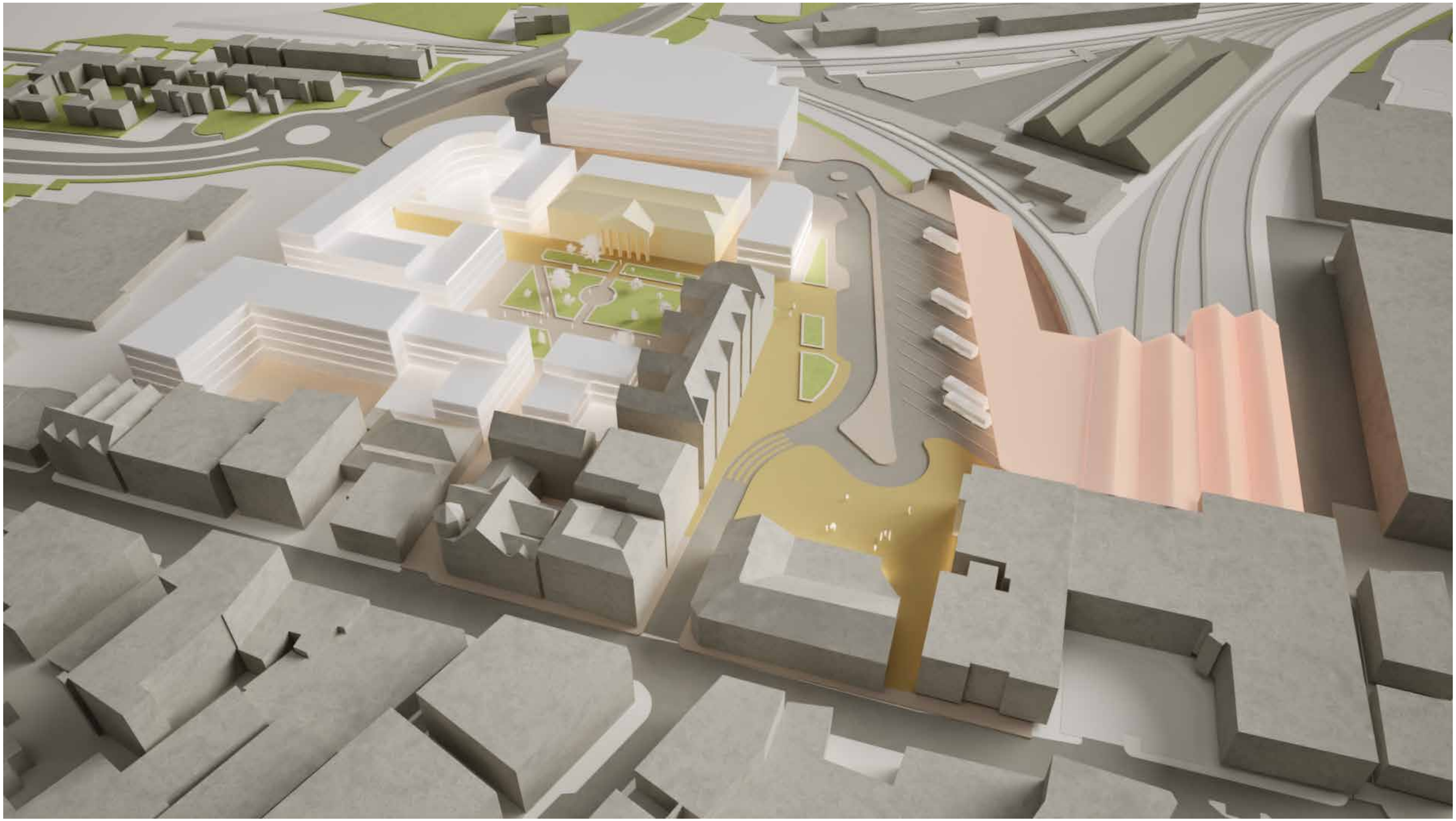
View from south-east

Overview - Option J



View from south-east

Overview - Option L

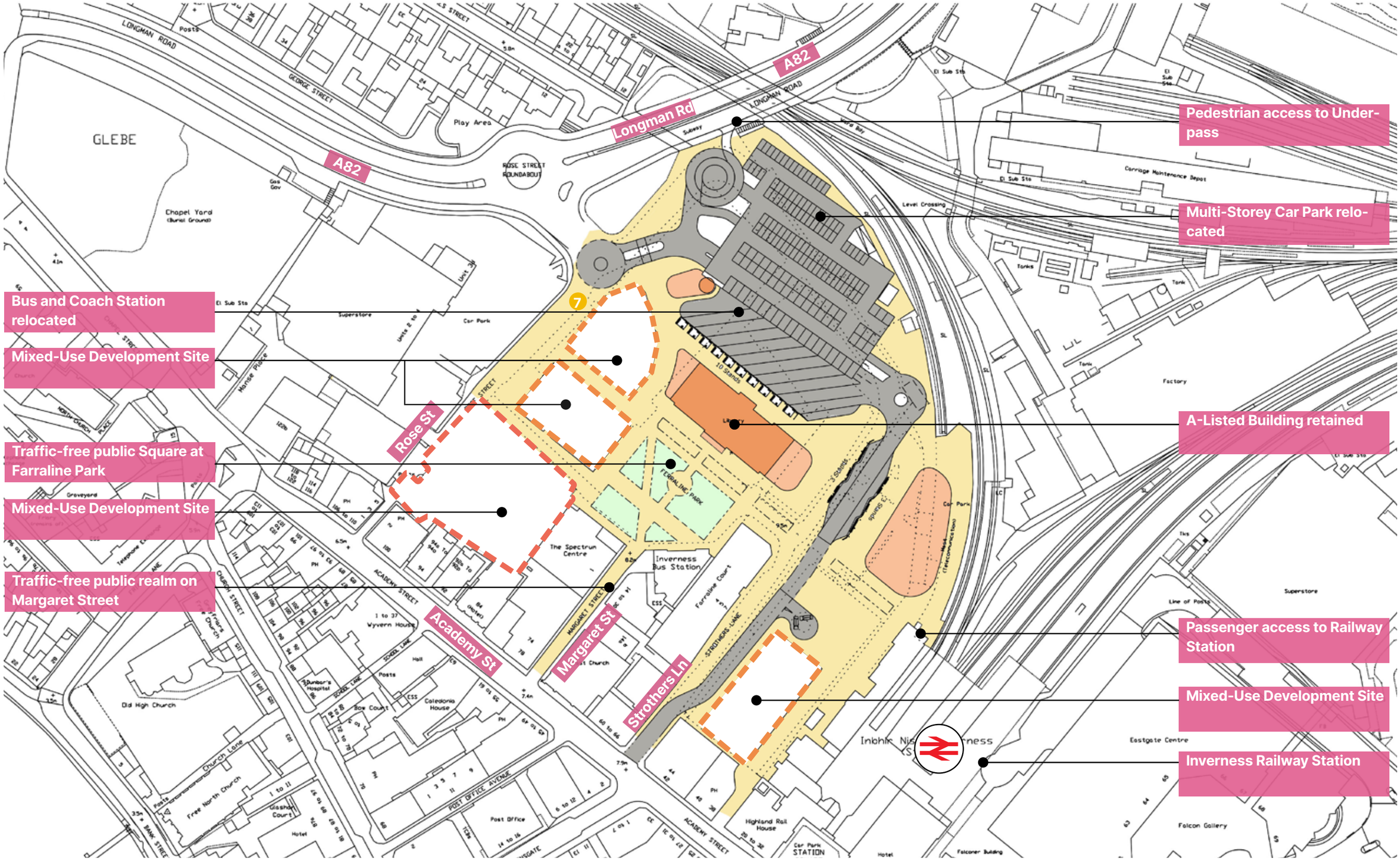


View from south-east

Option I

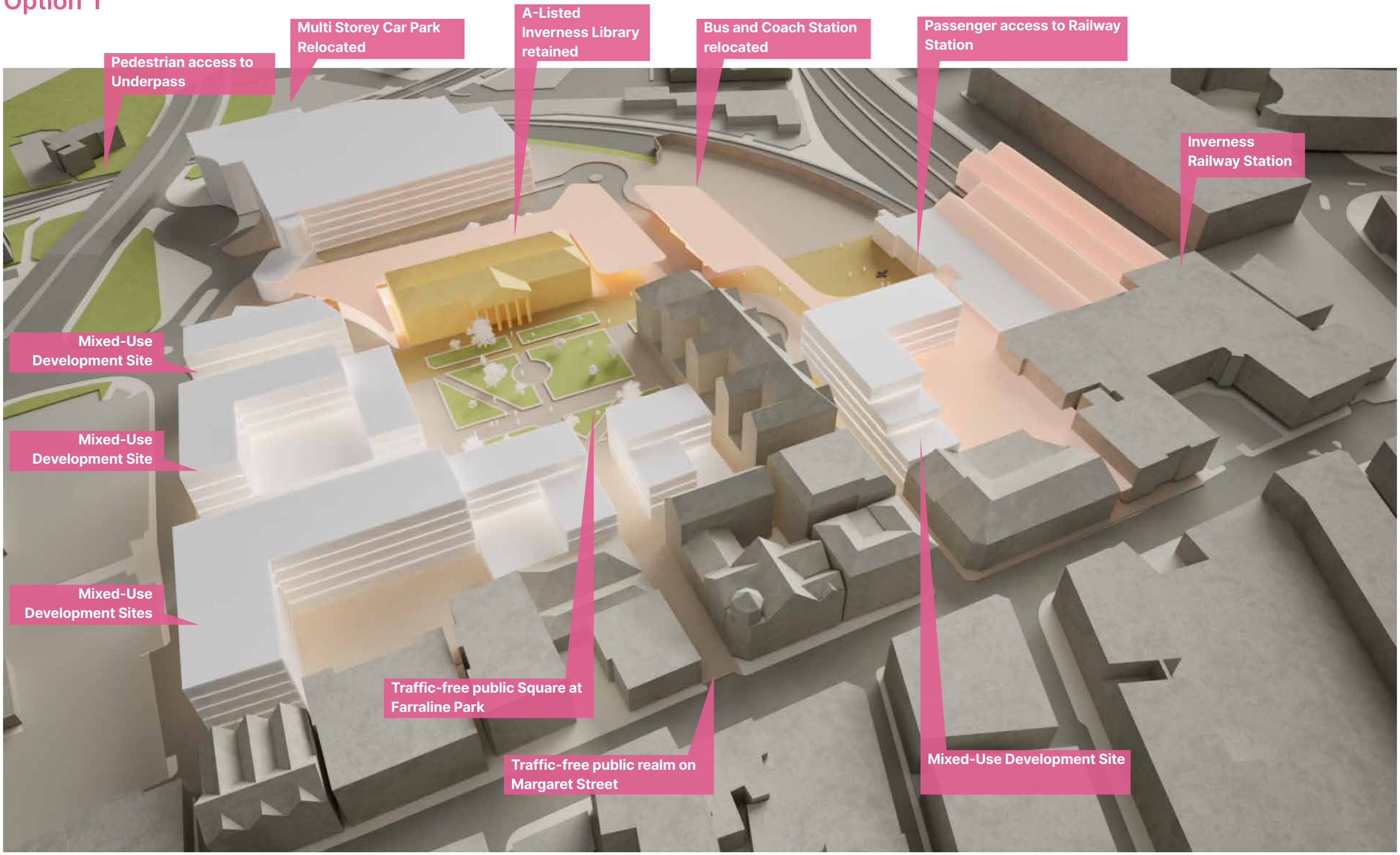
Option I

Library DIRO and TK Maxx Hybrid 16 Stands - 878 Total Car Parking 6 floors



Austin·Smith:Lord

Option 1



View from south-west

Option I

View from south-east

Option I

View from north-east

Option I

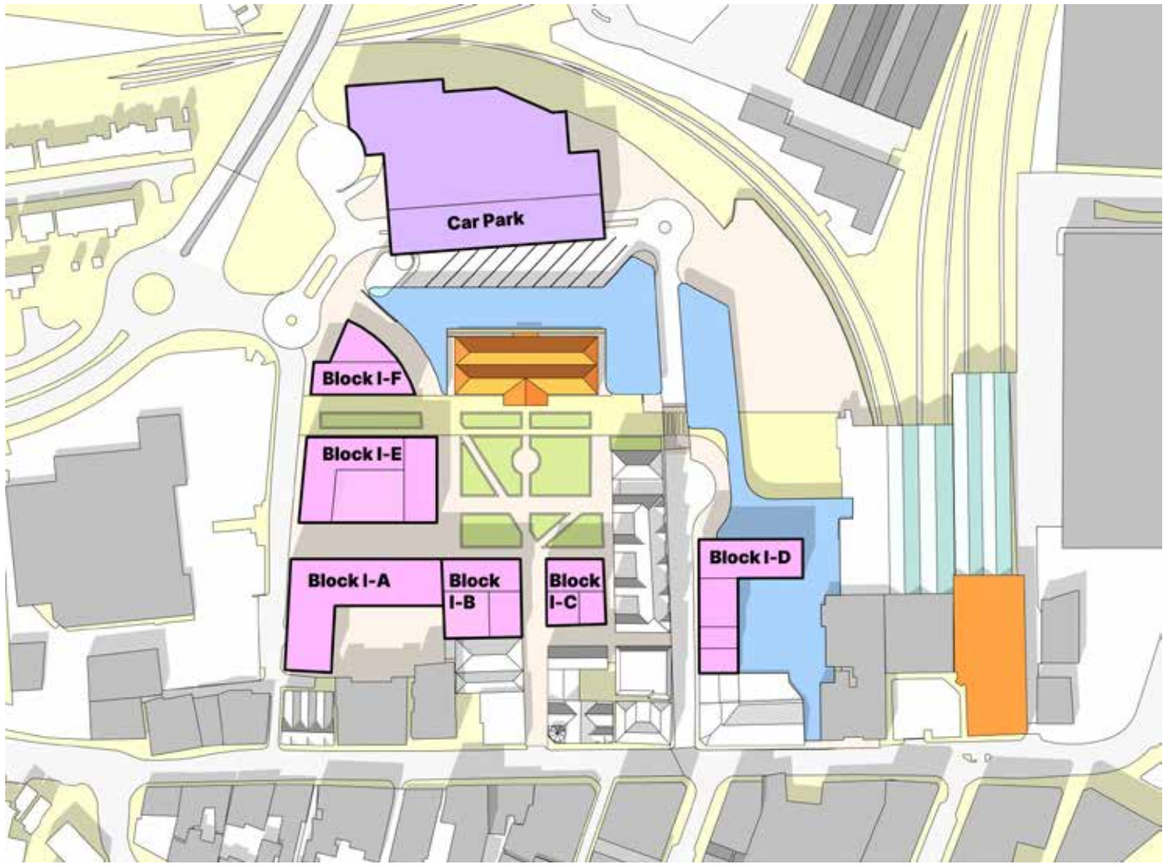
View from north-west

Option I - Area Calculations

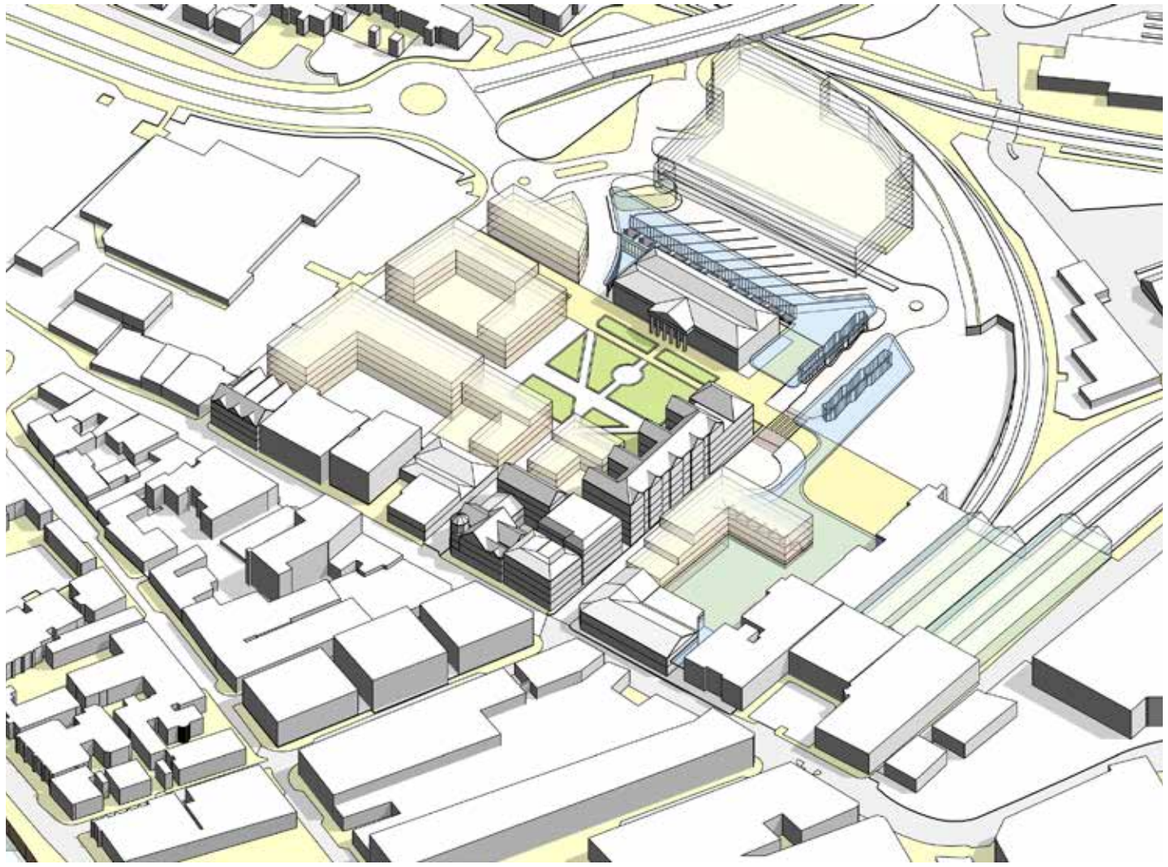
Option I	Car Park	Block A	Block B	Block C	Block D	Block E	Block F	Block G	Block H
Level 5	4,977								
Level 4	4,977	1,516							
Level 3	4,977	1,516	377	277	879	732	462		
Level 2	4,977	1,516	600	440	1,000	1,143	462		
Level 1	4,977	1,516	600	440	1,150	1,143	462		
Ground Floor	3,550	1,516	910	567	549	1,695	708		
Total m²:	28,435	7,580	2,487	1,724	3,578	4,713	2,094	0	0

Total m²: 50,611

Total m² Excluding Car Park: 22,176



Plan View - Option I

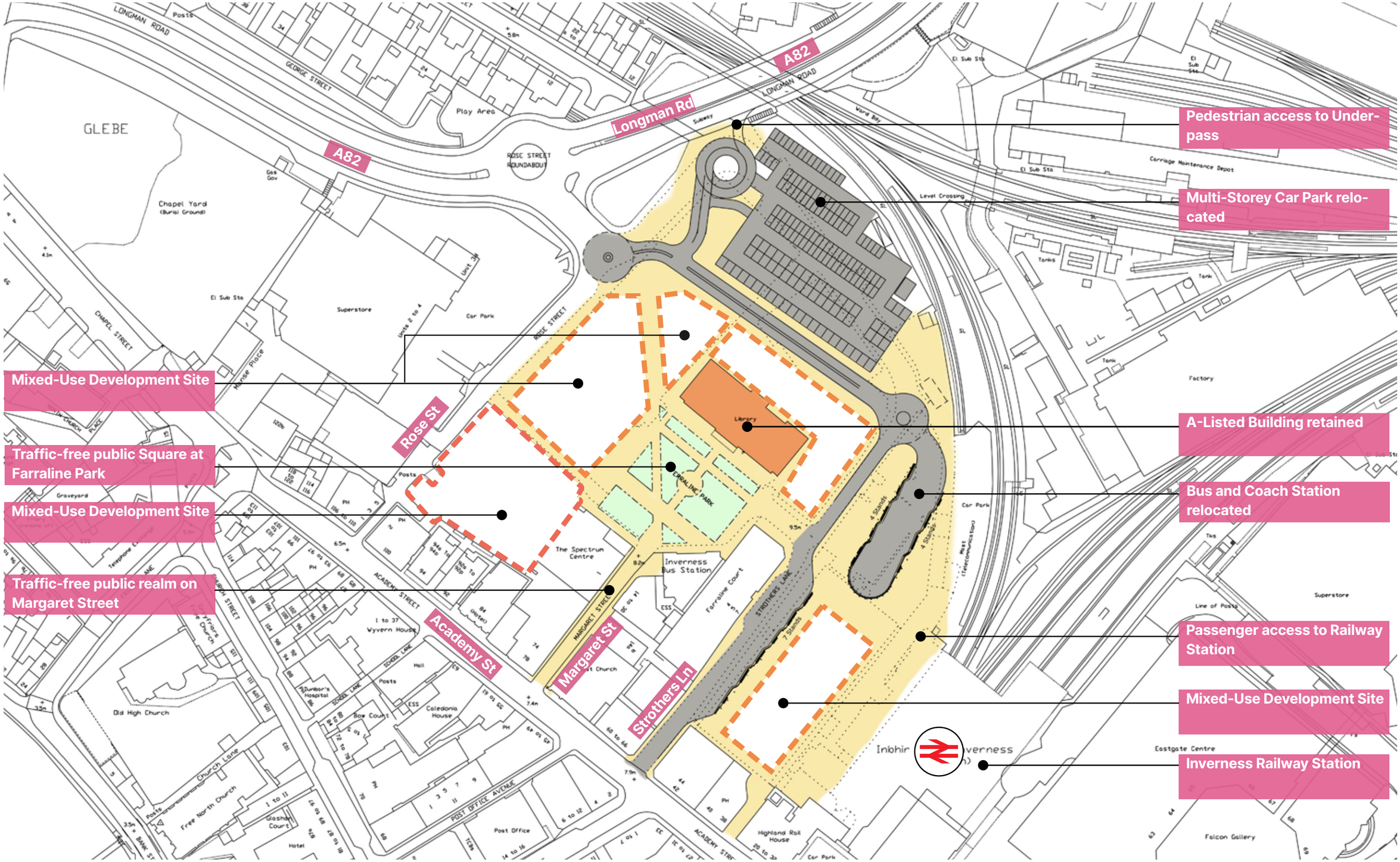


3D View - Option I

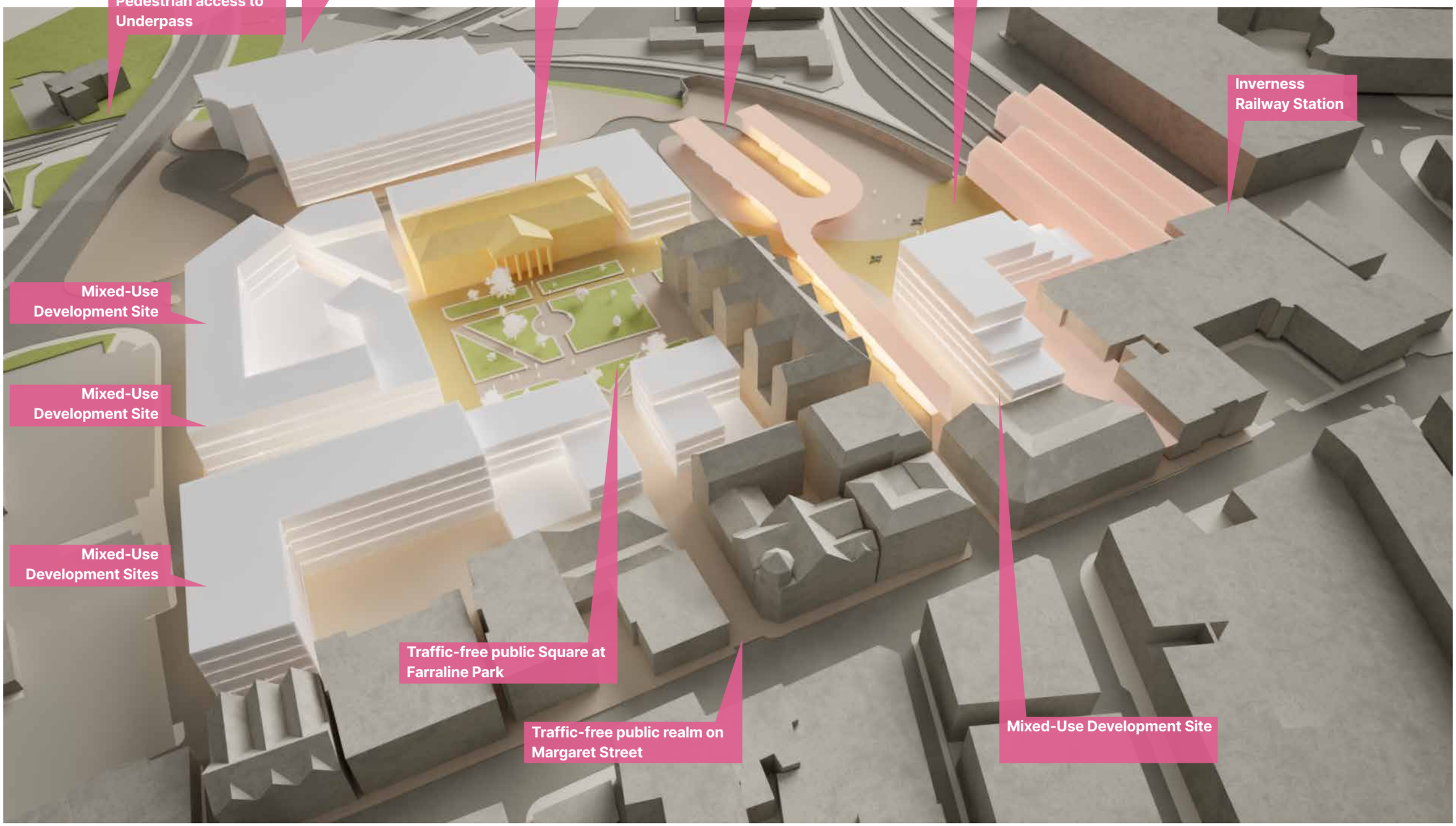
Option J

Option J

Strothers Lane Hybrid and Sawtooth 15 Stands - 780 Total CarParking 5 floors

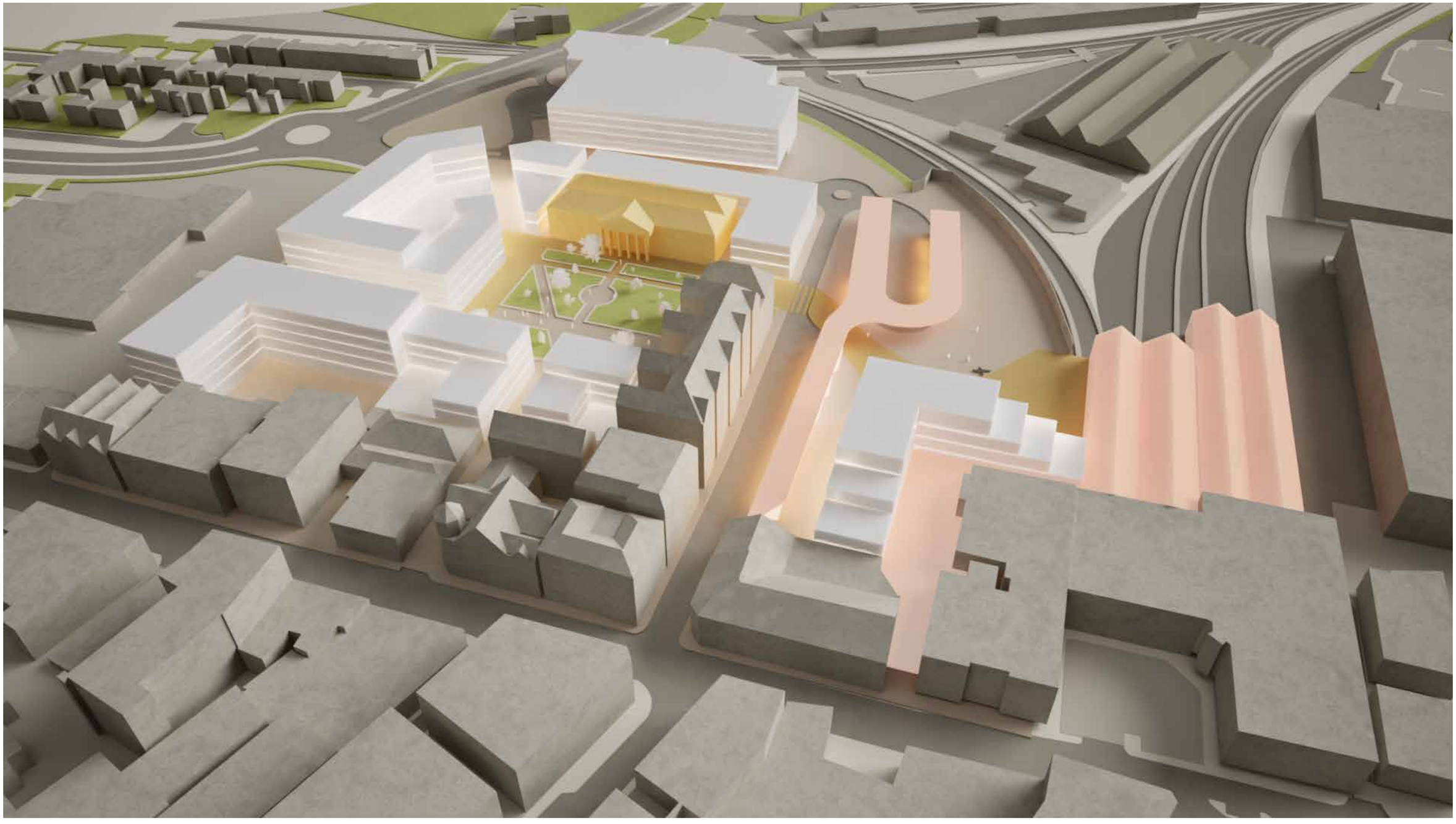


Option J



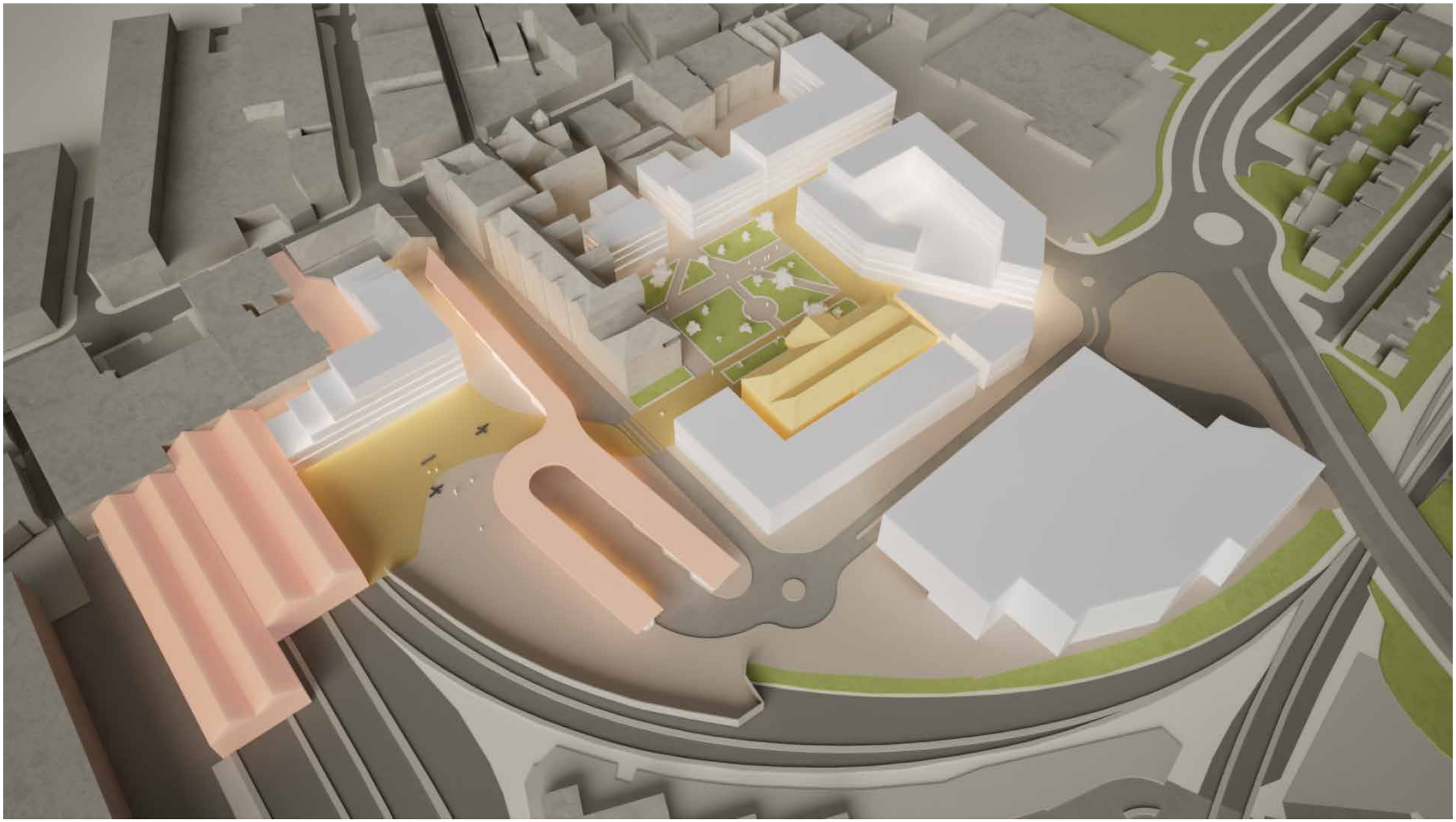
View from south-west

Option J



View from south-east

Option J



View from north-east

Option J

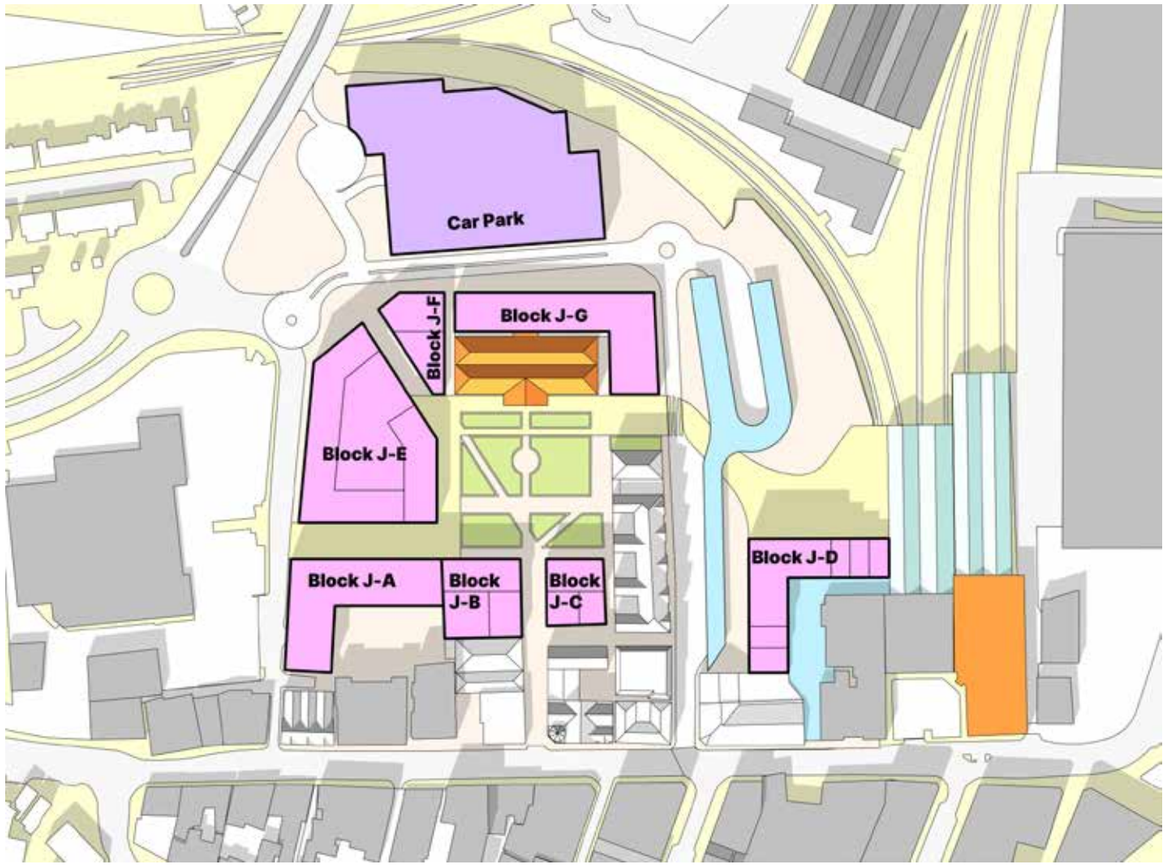
View from north-west

Option J - Area Calculations

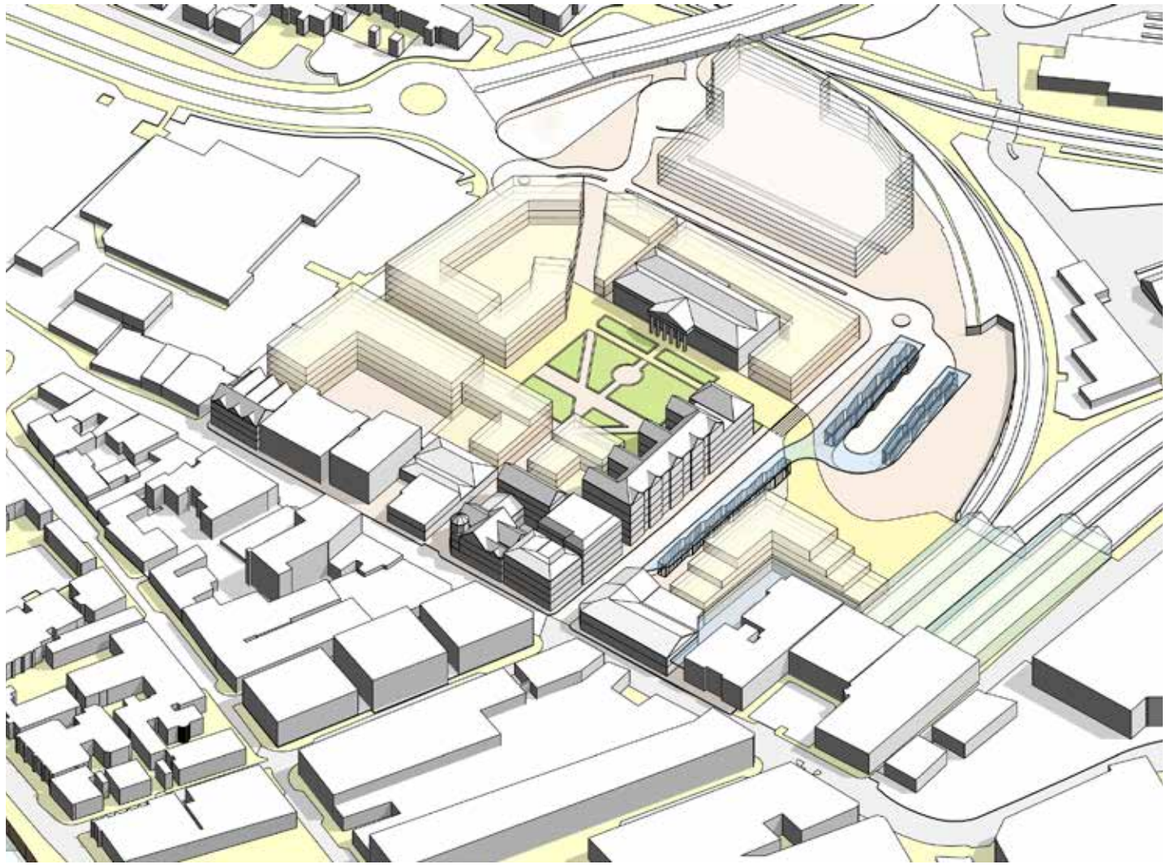
Option J	Car Park	Block A	Block B	Block C	Block D	Block E	Block F	Block G	Block H
Level 5	4,977								
Level 4	4,977	1,516							
Level 3	4,977	1,516	377	277	755	1,337			
Level 2	4,977	1,516	600	440	990	1,890	332	1,597	
Level 1	4,977	1,516	600	440	1,244	3,037	627	1,597	
Ground Floor	3,550	1,516	910	567	1,360	3,037	627	1,597	
Total m²:	28,435	7,580	2,487	1,724	4,349	9,301	1,586	4,791	0

Total m²: 60,253

Total m² Excluding Car Park: 31,818



Plan View - Option J

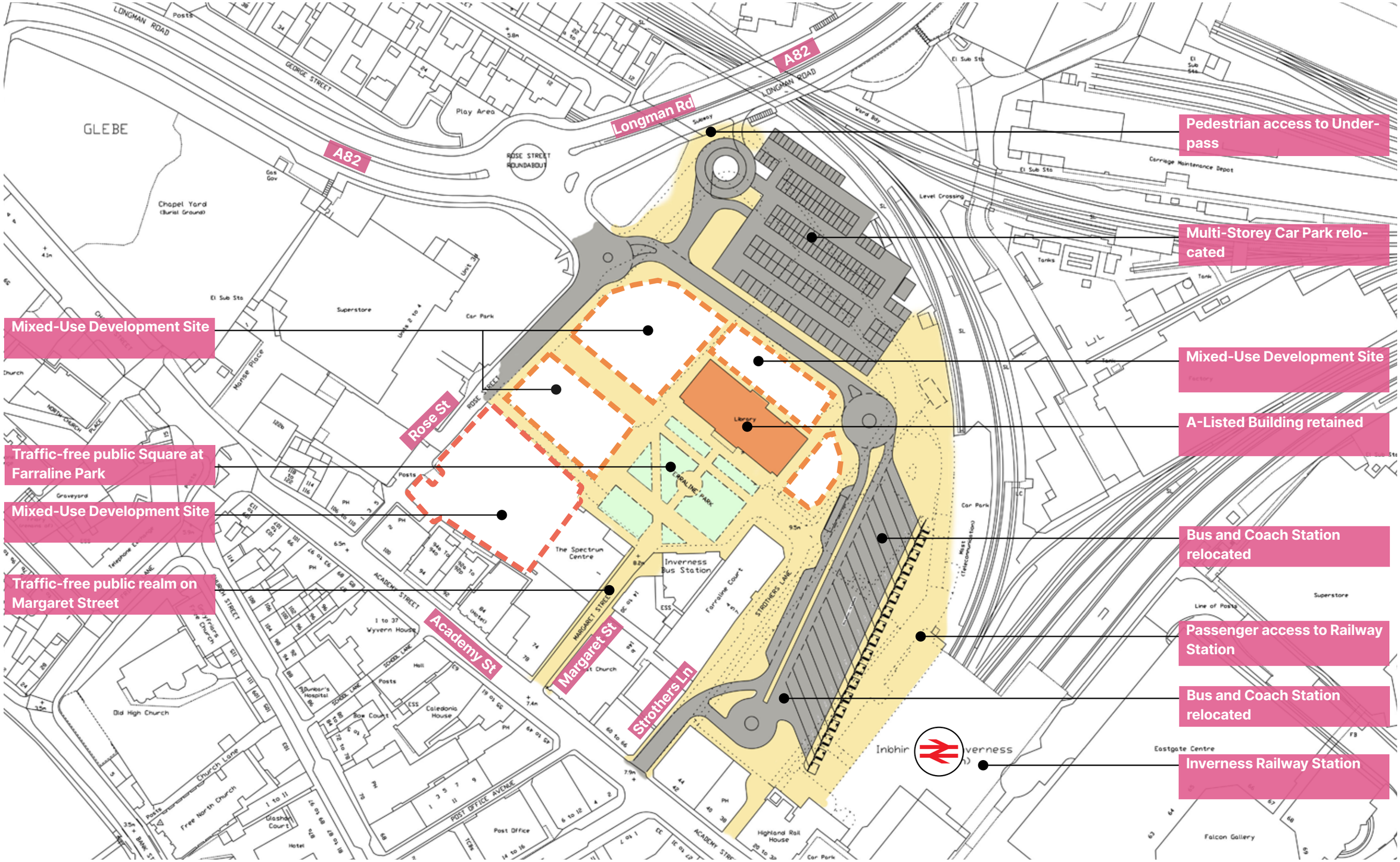


3D View - Option J

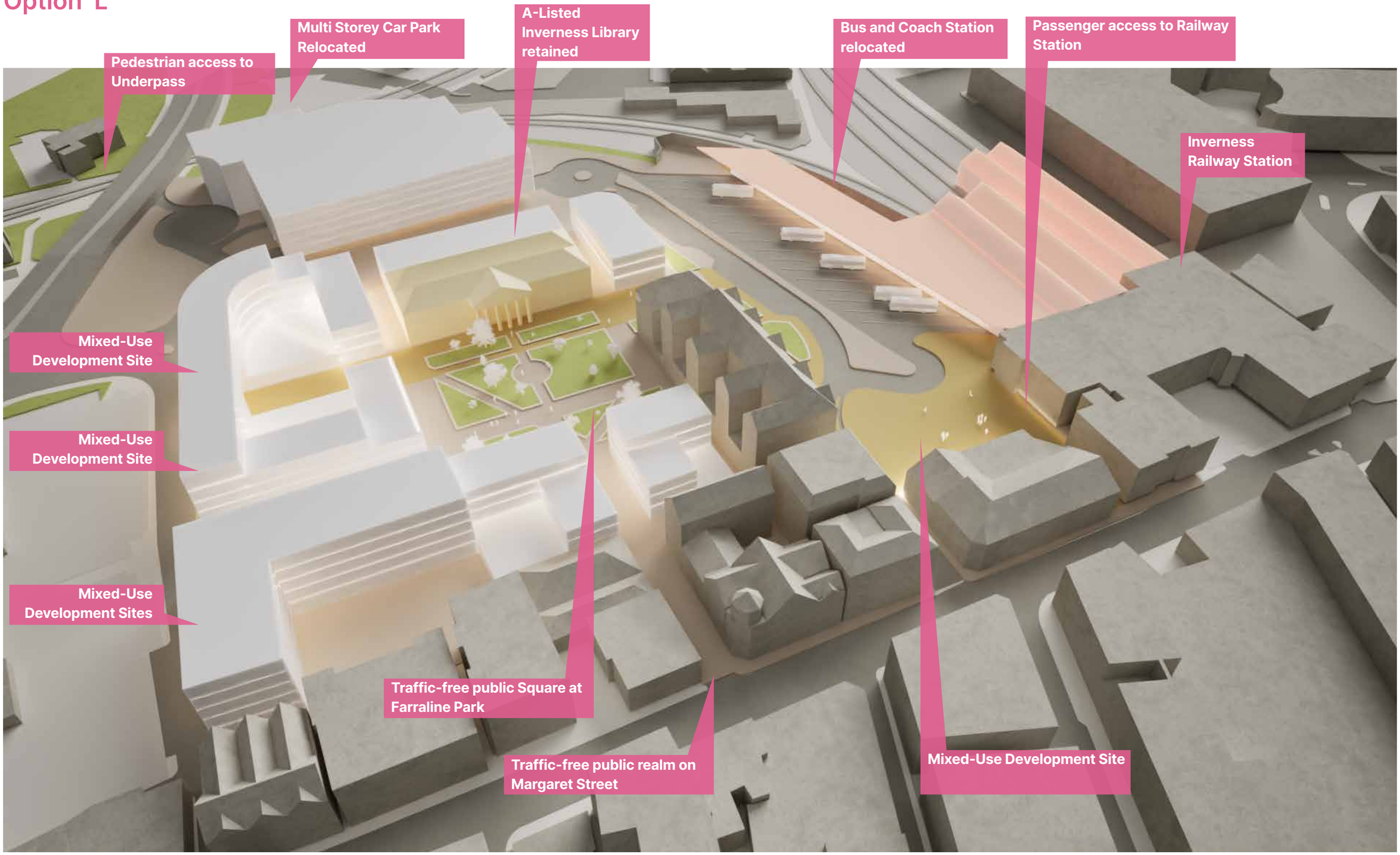
Option L

Option L

Existing Site DIRO 16 Stands- 864 Total Car parking 5 floors

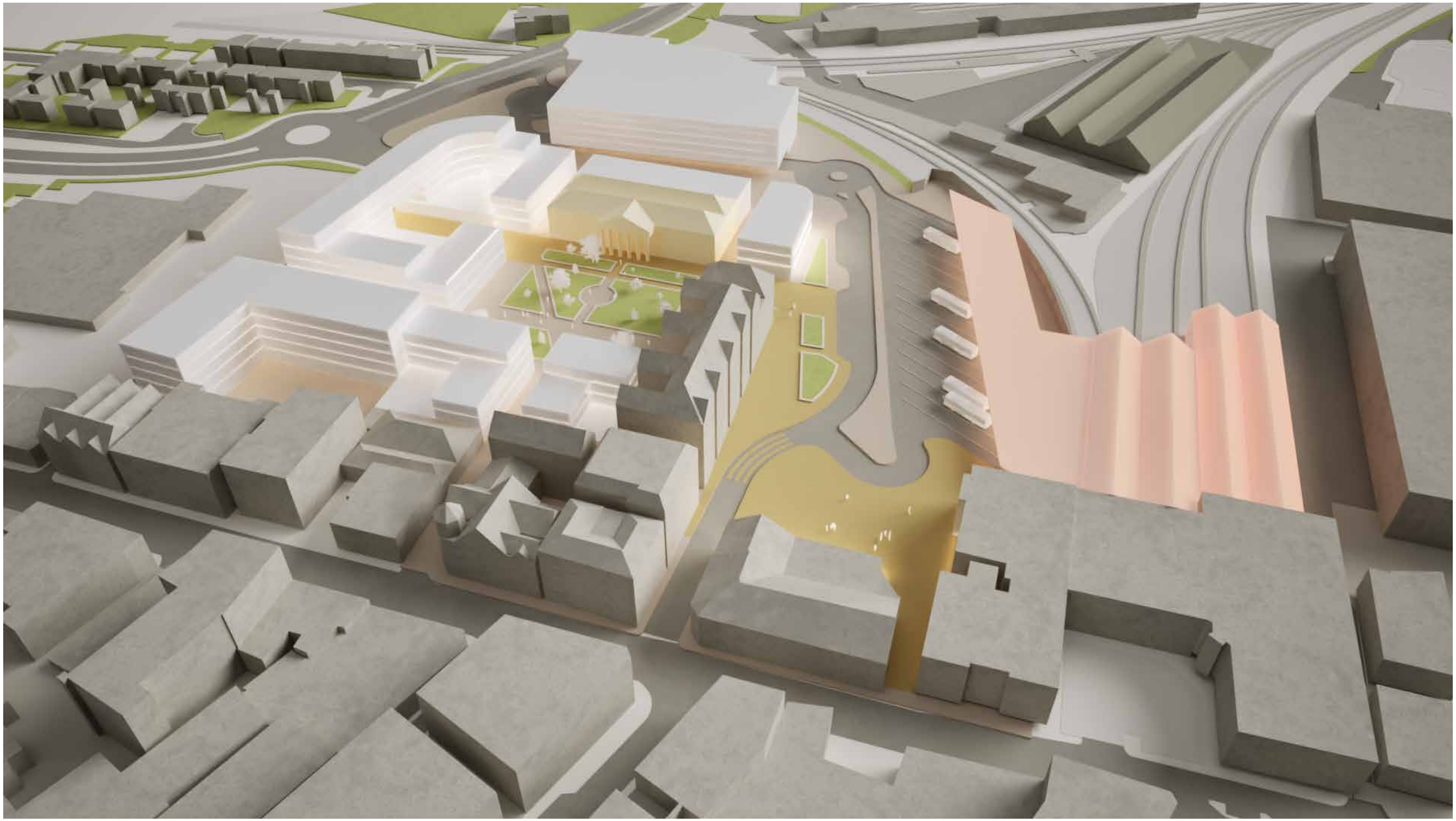


Option L



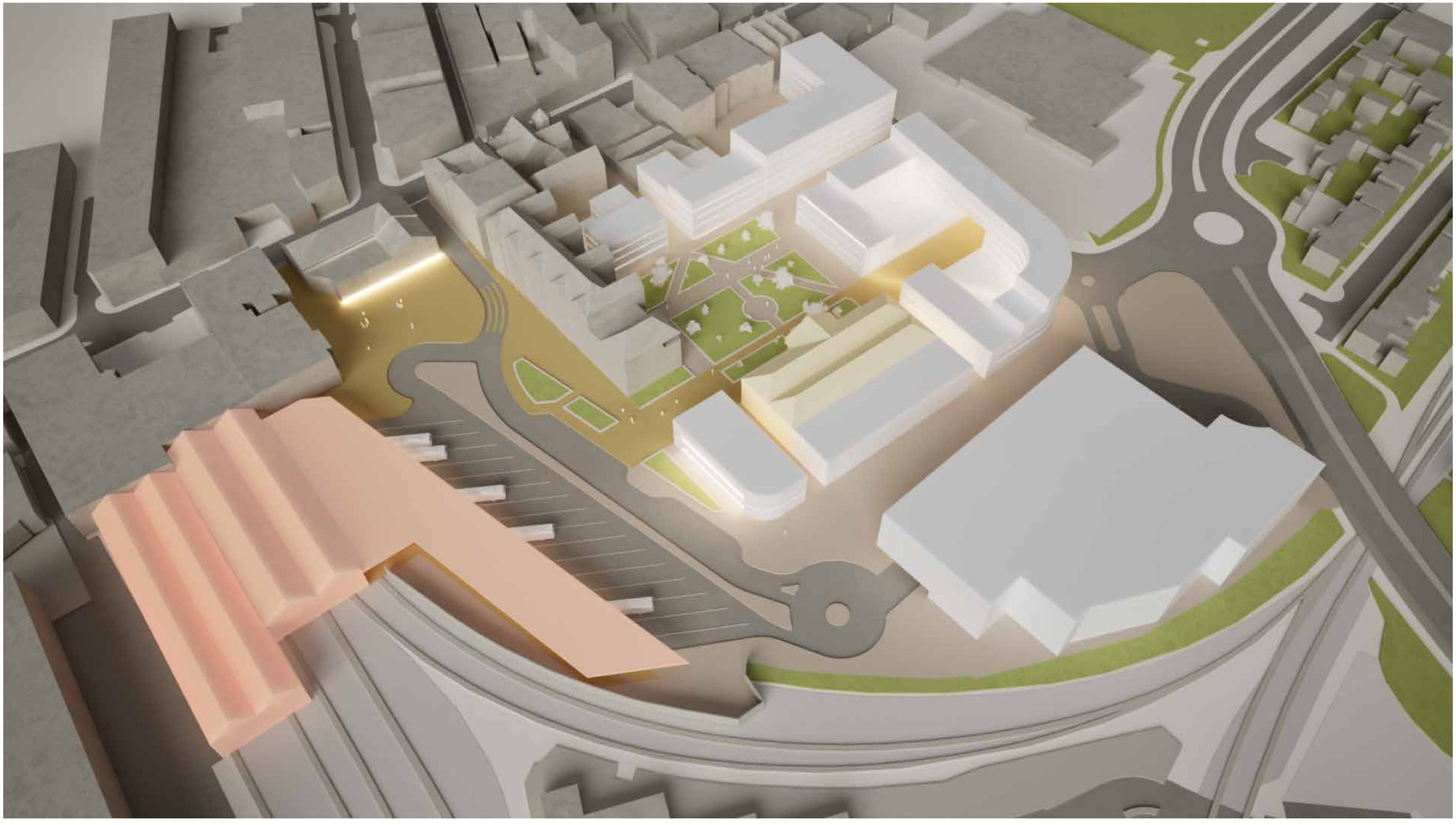
View from south-west

Option L



View from south-east

Option L



View from north-east

Option L

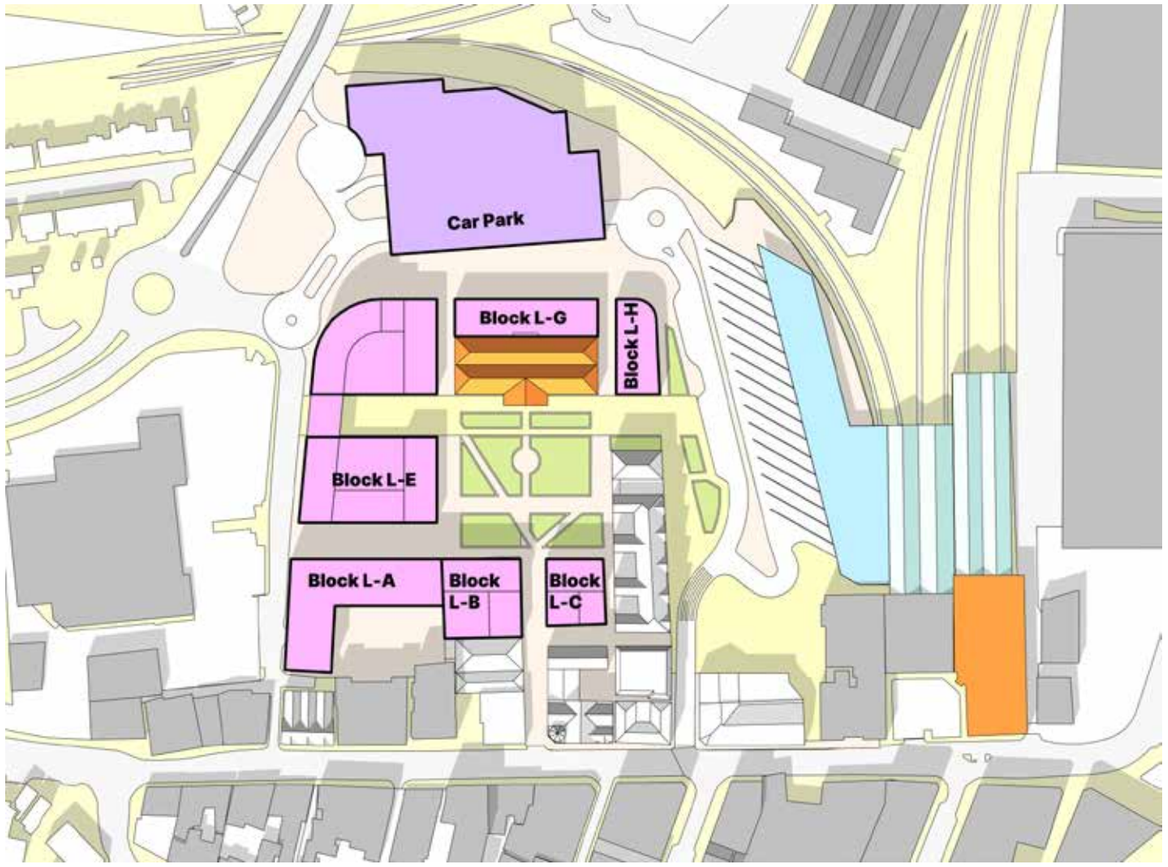
View from north-west

Option L - Area Calculations

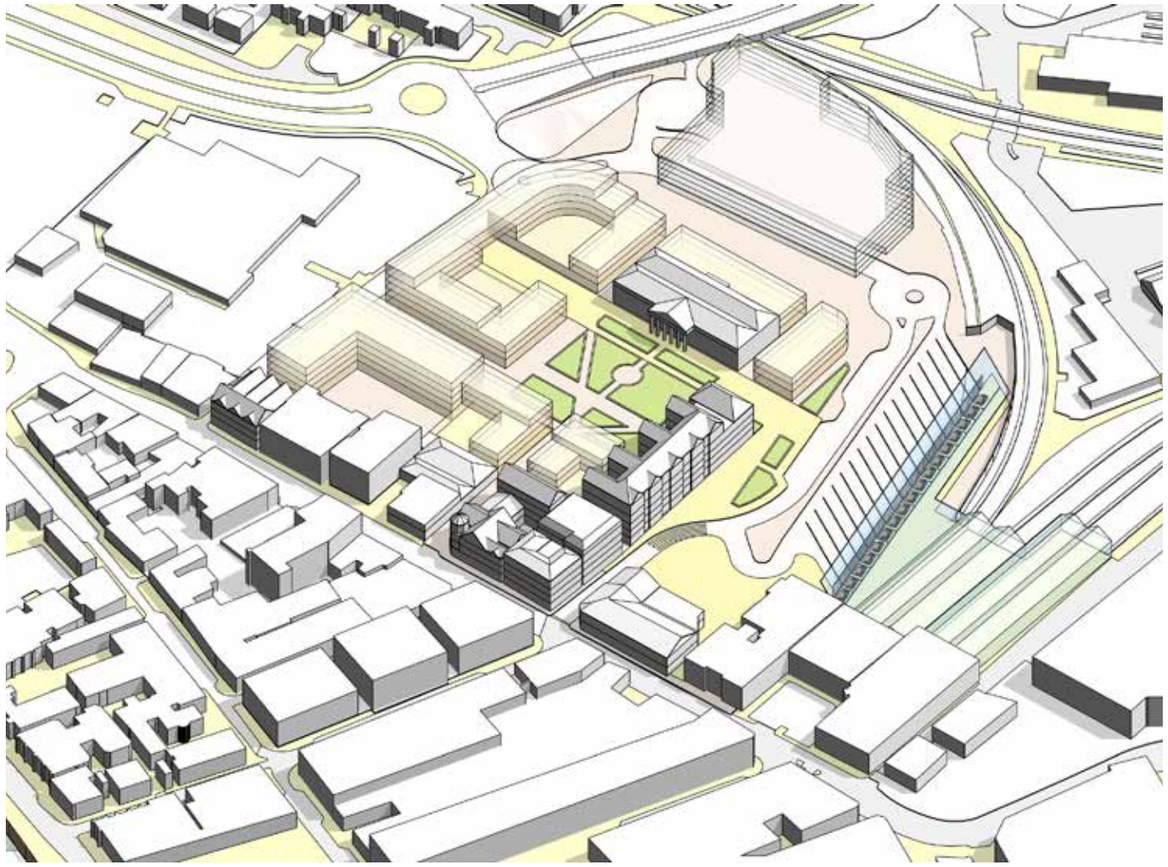
Option L	Car Park	Block A	Block B	Block C	Block D	Block E	Block F	Block G	Block H
Level 5	4,977								
Level 4	4,977	1,516				1,142			
Level 3	4,977	1,516	377	277		1,595			
Level 2	4,977	1,516	600	440		2,257		791	575
Level 1	4,977	1,516	600	440		2,257		791	575
Ground Floor	3,550	1,516	910	567		3,293		791	575
Total m²:	28,435	7,580	2,487	1,724		10,544		0	0

Total m²: 50,770

Total m² Excluding Car Park: 22,335



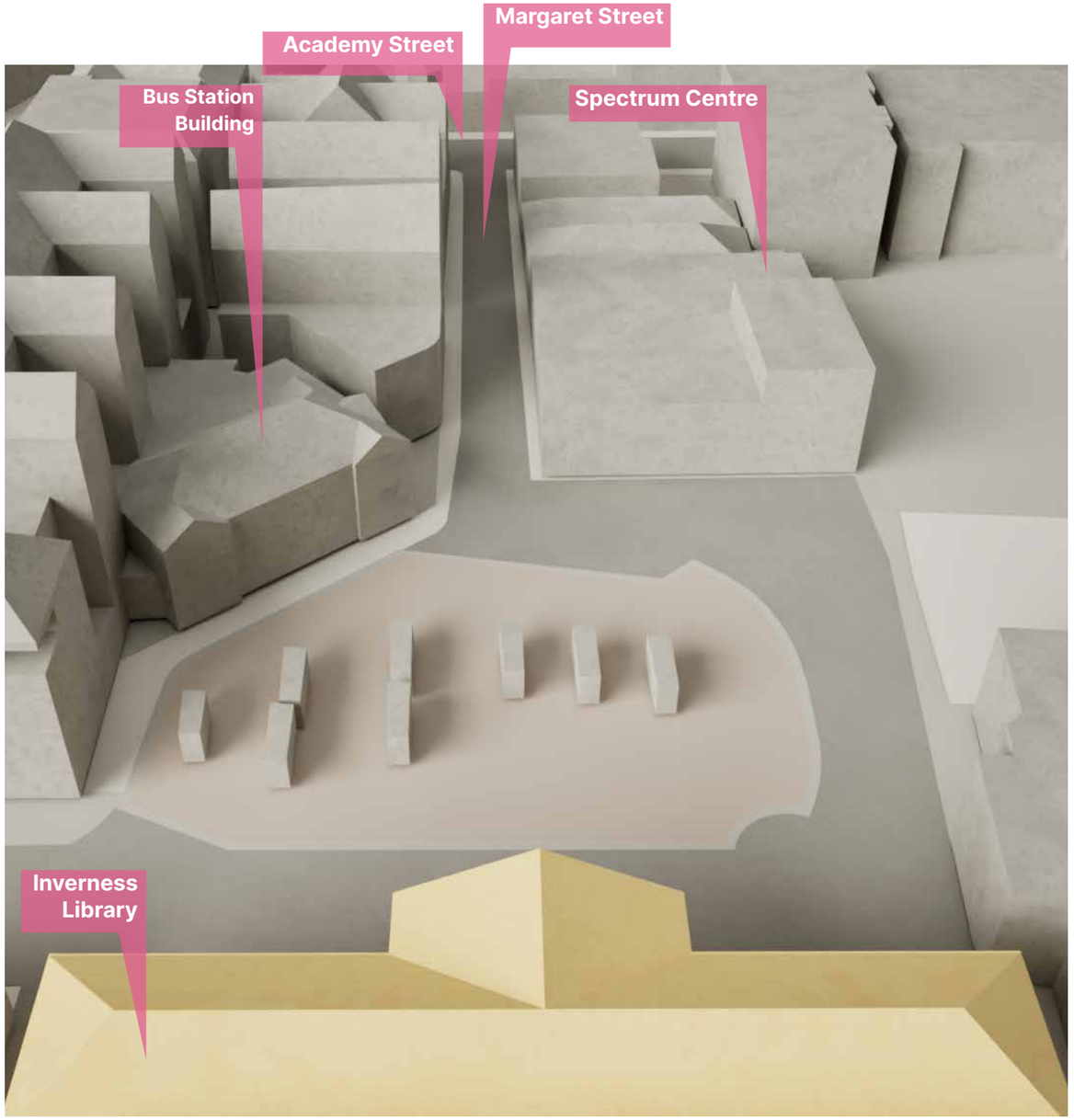
Plan View - Option L



3D View - Option L

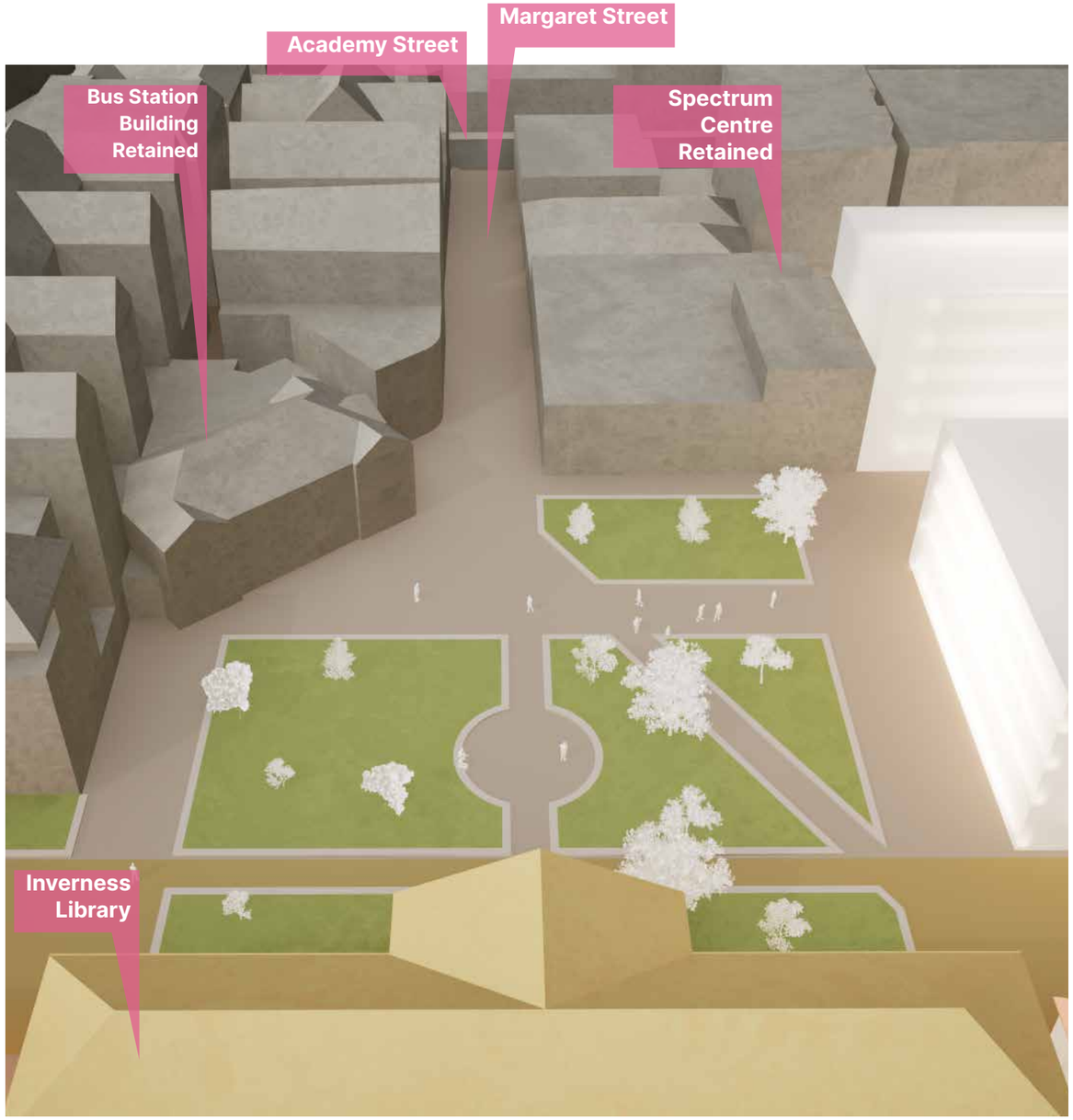
Design Studies :
Farraline Park & Margaret Street

Farraline Park & Margaret Street Study



Farraline Park - As Existing

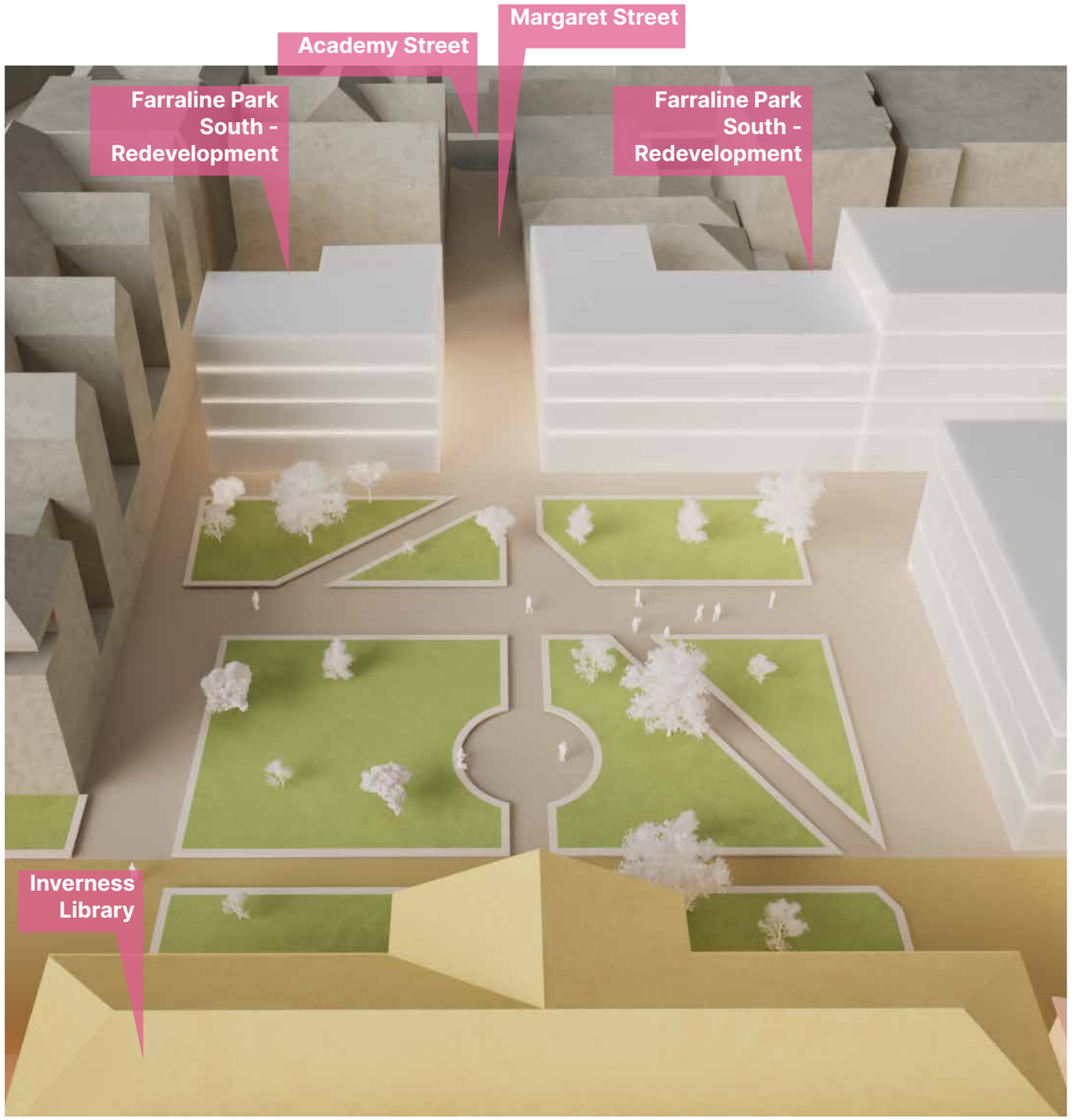
View from north



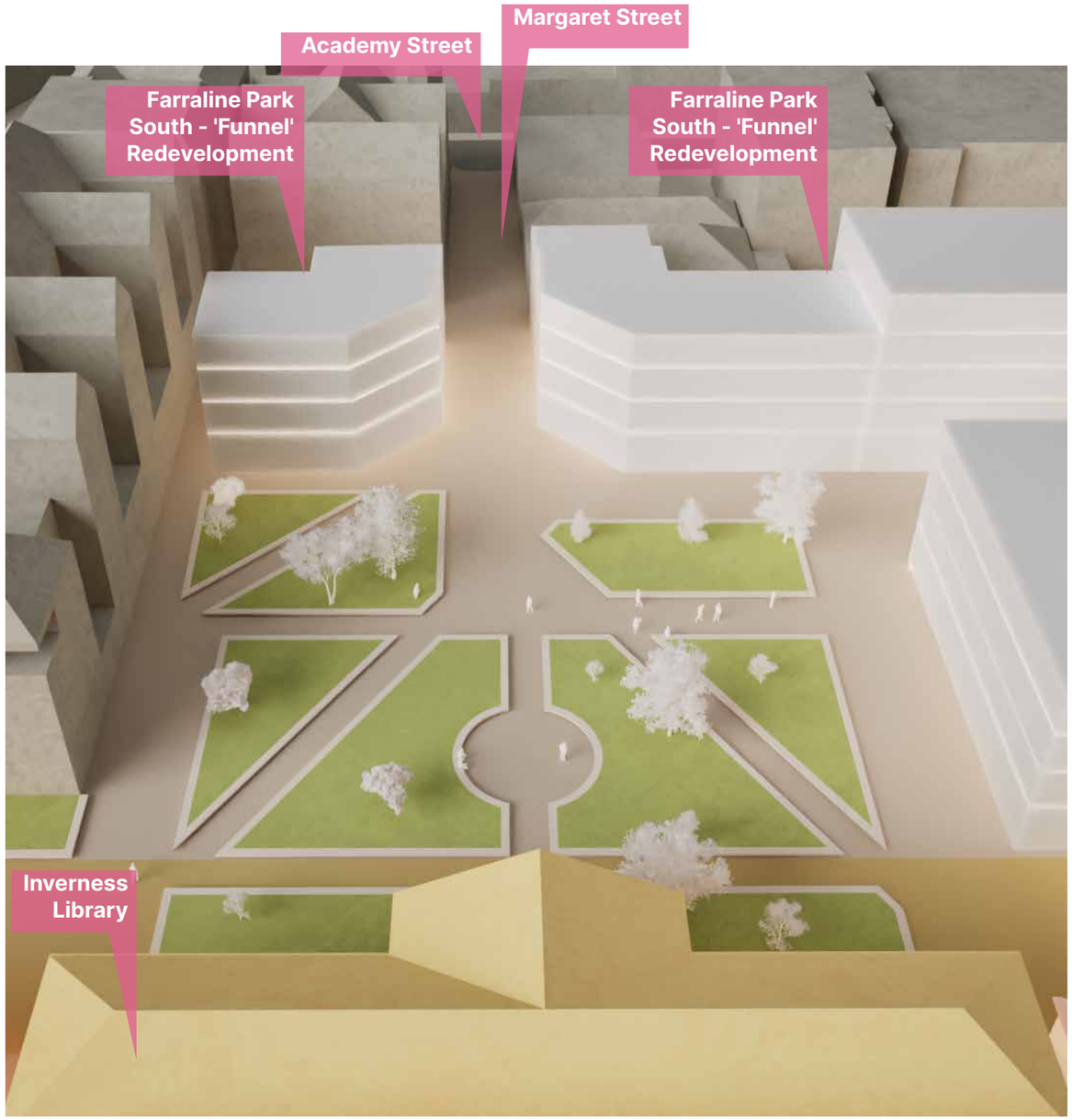
Option 1: Bus Station building and Spectrum Centre retained

View from north

Farraline Park & Margaret Street Study

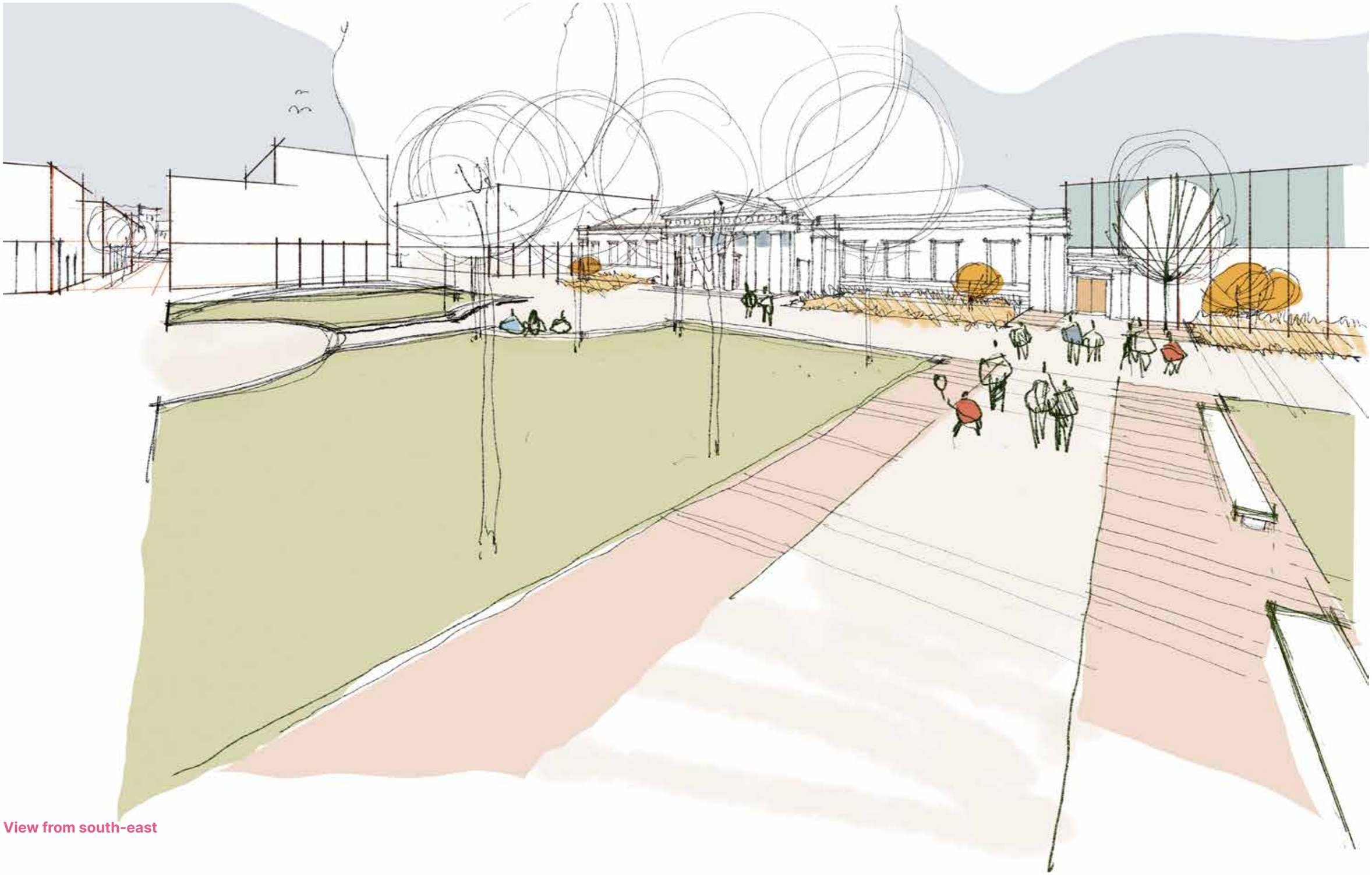


Option 2 - Squared off at south side as per Options I, J, L



Option 3: Farraline Park south sided redeveloped with chamfered corners towards Margaret Street

Farraline Park Study



View from south-east

Farraline Park Study

View from east

Farraline Park Study

View from south

View from north-west

Farraline Park Study

View from west

View from south-west

Austin·Smith:Lord

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Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study : Bus Station and MSCP

Engagement Plan

15 January 2026

Initial actions

- Finalise this Engagement Plan in discussion with HITRANS and The Highland Council (THC) and seek THC Committee approval.
- Establish if an EqIA is required for this Engagement Plan - EqIA to be prepared by others
- Agree event dates and venues
- Establish Objective online platform timeline
- Prepare feedback survey - for online and in-person activity
- Prepare PR materials - PR assumed to be via THC media/comms
- Prepare consultation materials - suitable for online and in person display (staff and unstaffed)

Contents

1. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose: to update and consult the key stakeholders and local communities (resident, business, civic) with an interest in Inverness City Centre and transportation in the Highlands the emerging findings from the Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study prepared for HITRANS in 2025. Specific objectives include;

- Raise awareness of the Feasibility Study, particularly the key findings that;
    1. The existing Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park need to be replaced.
    2. There is sufficient space to accommodate a replacement Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub as part of a wider mixed-use regeneration of the 'Station Quarter' on land assembled by, and within the ownership of, The Highland Council and Network Rail / Scotland's Railway.
- Present a series of indicative options that establish a series of key design principles namely;
    1. Seeking to re-locate a new 14-16 stance Bus and Coach Station adjacent to the Railway Station
    2. Re-provide a circa 850 multi-storey car park (MSCP) to the north of the study area
    3. To establish a pedestrian first zone around the 'Station Quarter' including a traffic-free new civic square at Farraline Park
    4. Promote a mixed-use city centre regeneration masterplan for the 'Station Quarter'
- Seek feedback and an indication of support (or otherwise) on the key design principles
- With reference to the indicative options invite consultees to indicate any preference and suggest any further improvements to the proposals to inform the preparation of a preferred option.

All engagement activity will be carried out in line with The Highland Council's and HITRANS relevant policies and guidance, the National Standards for Community Engagement for community engagement in planning and placemaking.

2. Messaging

Building on the engagement objectives outlined earlier, key messages to convey through the engagement are:

- The redevelopment of Inverness Interchange has the potential to create an exemplar multi-modal (bus – railway) interchange and a new gateway to the Capital of the Highlands connecting to key destinations in the City Centre (eg railway station, old town, Castle etc.).

- The 'Station Quarter' has the potential to transform Inverness city centre and be one of the most significant city centre mixed-use developments in any of Scotland's cities.

- Proposals include the creation of a new civic square at Farraline Park to enhance the setting of the A-Listed Library building and transform the quality of the pedestrian experience across the 'Station Quarter'

- Provide barrier-free accessibility for all and particularly vulnerable users, including those with mobility and sensory impairments.

- Integrate active travel infrastructure to support convenient and continuous connections to the wider network across Inverness

- Prioritise women's safety in the design and management of the area ensure everyone is and feels safe, welcome and able to enjoy the city.

- Adopt a 'people first' approach to significantly enhance the pedestrian experience (walking, wheeling) for all, across an area that should have high footfall.

- Contribute to increased footfall and a 'magnetic experience' to increase dwell time, return visits and spend throughout the day / night, week and year.

3. Participants

Who to engage	Why	How
Steering Group Members and Project Partners e.g. Network Rail / Scotland's Railway, ScotRail, Stagecoach	To sustain partnership working and promote The Place Principle. To build on earlier consultation and on-going project coordination.	By invitation meetings / workshops
Business and Community Organisations e.g. BID, Chamber of Commerce, local Community Council	To raise awareness of the proposals, encourage them to promote the consultation, seek their feedback, discuss their role in implementation	Direct contact By invitation meetings / workshops
Residents and Local Businesses / Building Owners and Occupiers	To raise awareness of proposals and seek feedback	Flyers (door to door where possible), posters, social media, ebulletins to local contact lists, press releases - and word of mouth
Local elected members	To encourage them to promote the consultation and champion the process	Direct contact by THC officers / consultant team, following recent briefing
*Disability organisation if one exists locally	To raise awareness of proposals and seek feedback from disabled people	Council to advise on whether an appropriate channel exists Then direct contact to discuss the most appropriate way of engaging their members
*Other people with Protected Characteristics e.g. New Scots, women & girls, older people	To raise awareness of proposals and seek feedback from other people with Protected Characteristics	Council to advise on whether an appropriate channels exist Direct contact to discuss the most appropriate way of engaging their members/users

* optional extras

4. Engagement activities

At this stage it is envisaged to have an Engagement Strategy in 3 phases as the project and proposals develop;

Phase 1 – Project Objectives and Options Review
Purpose : to outline the project context, brief and objectives. Consult on the general design principles and emerging options to inform design development.

Based.on.findings.from.the.Phase.7.Consultation.a.preferred.option.would.be.identified.(taking.account.consultation.feedback.and.technical.analysis)¡.This.option.would.be.developed.through.to.RIBA.Stage.9

Phase 2 – Proposed Preferred Option
Purpose : to outline the proposed design prior to final technical design. Consult on the design concept, look and feel, phasing of the project and public space design.

Based.on.the.findings.from.Phase.8.Consultation.final.design.development.would.be.undertaken.in.anticipation.of.a.Planning.Application¡.

Phase 3 – Pre-Application Consultation
Purpose : as required by planning policy for 'major applications' a final consultation would be undertaken during a statutory 12 week pre-application period to outline the final draft proposals prior to submission of a planning application. Any design adjustments in response to the pre-application consultation would be cited in the design and access statement accompanying the application.

This Plan outlines the proposed Engagement process to be undertaken under Phase 1 of the process outlined above.

Proposed Activities : Phase 1 – Project Objectives and Options Review

1. Public drop-in events:
    - Target date: second half of February 2026
    - One drop-in event at suitable location – Inverness Library is proposed in first week of 6 week consultation period
    - Weekday event from lunchtime to early evening, e.g. 12 noon til 8pm.
    - Staffed by Council / HITRANS and consultant team.
    - Exhibition Panels / Display information summarising Feasibility Study, including 3 no. indicative options
    - Short presentations/discussions as part of the drop-ins.
    - Encourage feedback – verbal, feedback forms, on display materials (e.g. comment / support for particular initiatives).
    - Encourage completion of survey – online or hard copy – see 2.
2. Online and hard copy Consultation Survey on Feasibility Study : survey feedback form (online at THC Objective platform) and/or hard copy of survey – with online copy of Exhibition Panels summarising the Feasibility Study. Hard copy surveys available in the Library.
3. Public Exhibition Panels / Display Information : summarising the Feasibility Study and directing consultees to online Survey or hard copy surveys at Library.

Survey questions

The online and hard copy survey should be straightforward, accessible and clear. It should:

1. Ask for feedback on key points of the Feasibility Study that we want to test with the local community, particularly:
    - Response to the Feasibility Study findings re needing new MSCP and Bus Station
    - Response to the Key Design Principles / Proposals
    - Indication of preferred indicative option
2. Potential question about priorities for delivery.
3. Give the opportunity to raise anything missing and for participants to be involved in delivery.

6. Programme

Ideally aiming for Council and HITRANS approval of RIBA Stage 2 work by April 2026

tbc	Initial draft of survey
tbc	Final draft survey signed off
tbc	Survey uploaded and THC Objective website project built / QR code created* (TBC)
tbc	Press release and social media release on consultation and events
tbc	Online survey goes live for minimum 6 weeks
tbc	Engagement events – week 1 of consultation period
tbc	Online survey closes
tbc	Engagement Report drafted and inputs to RIBA Stage 2 Report
tbc	Council Executive report drafted and submitted to committee planner
tbc	Council Executive meeting (final report consideration)

7. Publicity

Public communications channels:

- Flyers/posters promoting the drop-in events and online/library consultations will be shared through Council channels, community groups etc, with other graphic assets for sharing on social media as appropriate.
- Printed copies of flyers and posters for distribution as appropriate.

All press releases / statements to the media (print, broadcast, digital) are to be cleared and issued by The Highland Council and HITRANS.

8 Outputs

An Engagement Report would be prepared recording the content and feedback from the various engagement activities, with the intention that it be circulated publicly. A draft would be available within 2-3 weeks of the conclusion of the engagement activities.