

FRIENDS OF
ASHBURTON
STATION

CHULEY ROAD, ASHBURTON

Requested Alterations to the
Chuley Road Master Plan

March 2015



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Introduction

This report has been produced in response to Dartmoor National Park Authority's Chuley Road Masterplan.

Friends of Ashburton Station feel that the Chuley Road Masterplan, in its current form, does not fully recognise the local and national importance of the buildings and their environ, nor does it offer certainty over their safeguards.

This response has been formed from these concerns and offers an alternative plan that, if given the chance, could fully exploit the heritage of the site, providing a valuable resource to promote understanding and to enjoy the special qualities of Ashburton in its locality, whilst also unlocking substantial social and economic benefits.

This document aims to advise the potential benefits that could be realised from the Chuley Road site and how they can be accomplished. The appendices attached provide detailed information and sources that we have used to reach our conclusions.

Why alter the masterplan?

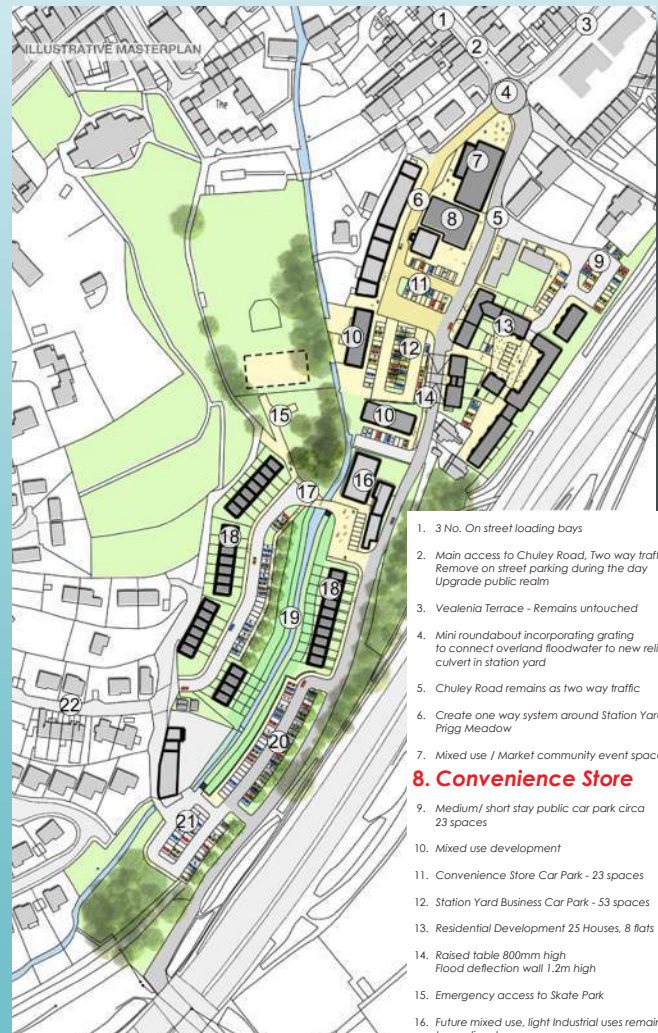
We believe that the current Masterplan offers little to the local community, other than additional housing and car parking and that it does not fully unlock the potential economic, social and heritage potential of the Chuley Road site.

Our proposals could offer much further reaching benefits to Ashburton, supporting many more local businesses, contributing direct and indirect employment opportunities whilst delivering substantial social benefits. Careful planning would still allow the realisation of the additional housing, parking and the aspirations of the respective businesses within a similar timescale but with the added advantage of permitting greater benefits to be attained in the medium to long term.

This document demonstrates how it could be possible to deliver similar housing and parking provision as is currently proposed, without precluding the potential re-connection of the railway.

This could be achieved with minor adaptations to two parts of the current Masterplan; the exclusion of one proposed residential block on the original railway formation, which could potentially be relocated, and the retention of the current commercial building in place of a new convenience store.

Original DNPA masterplan



1. 3 No. On street loading bays
2. Main access to Chuley Road, Two way traffic
Remove on street parking during the day
Upgrade public realm
3. Vealena Terrace - Remains untouched
4. Mini roundabout incorporating grating
to connect overland floodwater to new relief
culvert in station yard
5. Chuley Road remains as two way traffic
6. Create one way system around Station Yard
Prigg Meadow
7. Mixed use / Market community event space
- 8. Convenience Store**
9. Medium/ short stay public car park circa
23 spaces
10. Mixed use development
11. Convenience Store Car Park - 23 spaces
12. Station Yard Business Car Park - 53 spaces
13. Residential Development 25 Houses, 8 flats
14. Raised table 800mm high
Flood deflection wall 1.2m high
15. Emergency access to Skate Park
16. Future mixed use, light Industrial uses remain in short
to medium term
17. Bridge used for emergency and service vehicles
only
- 18. Residential Development
- 34 Units**
19. River reprofiling to increase conveyance
20. Long stay public car park - circa 56 spaces
21. Auction rooms overspill car park
possible public car park circa 37 cars when
not in use
22. Stone Park potential access to residential
development only

Potential Benefits

The opening of a heritage railway has the potential to unlock multiple benefits for an area.

The most obvious benefit is that of heritage interpretation, what better way to understand a heritage landscape than to have it used for its original function?

The buildings, their original purpose and how they interact with each other can be better understood when they are seen in their intended landscape. Alongside providing a window into our social and industrial past a heritage railway can help support and stimulate the local economy whilst bringing social benefits and interaction for the community.

Both young and old can come together to learn new skills and socialize, the railway can, and does, provide a real sense of pride, purpose and satisfaction for people from various backgrounds.

The railway can also provide a valuable resource for educational organizations and groups, teaching a wide range of subjects and skills for all ages including; social, local and industrial heritage, civil and mechanical engineering, physics and chemistry, social skills, customer service, marketing, accounting, volunteer management and other business skills, general maintenance skills and much more. There are so many parts to make up the running of a railway that could be incorporated into a course of learning, assisting local educational institutes.

There is of course the main purpose of most railways, a method of moving people. Although the South Devon Railway is predominately a tourist railway, ie its visitors primary reason for visiting is for a ride on a steam train and not to get somewhere, it could, and would be intended to, be used to transport tourists into Ashburton.

It is unlikely at present that it would be viable, without public subsidy, to run a commuter service, but circumstances may change. The direct connection of the South Devon Railway to the main network would allow the potential to run a commuter service in the future. It would also be possible to consider running a service similar to that at Okehampton, run by First Great Western on summer Sundays during the tourist season.



Key Points

Below are the key points of our proposal, more detailed information for each point can be found in the appendices.

- Substantial and sustainable Economic benefits (AP1 pages 3-5)
- Local employment – direct and indirect
- Heritage benefits (AP1 page 2)
- The site has national importance – the station overall roof is the last example of its type.
- Educational benefits (AP1 page 7)
- Social benefits
- Sustainable – for both for transport and the local economy.
- Potential tourist park and ride scheme for Ashburton.
- Greater benefits for the area than DNPA proposal (See pages 8 & 9)
- Potential for larger economic benefits over a larger area
- Proposal is more in keeping with Ashburton
- Long stay car parking spaces to be provided
- Flood alleviation can and will be incorporated into the scheme
- A valuable asset to the local area



Other Heritage Railway Projects

Historically heritage railways have not been able to fund their extension from current revenue, the railways below have or are in the process of extending their lines, which proves that funding sources are available for such projects. It is these funding sources that we would be looking to use.

- Welsh Highland and Ffestiniog Railways – Their extension involved obstacles that many said they would not overcome.
- Bluebell Railway – Their extension to East Grinstead involved moving a 1960's rubbish tip.
- Kent and East Sussex – Their project involves crossing the A21 trunk road
- Swanage Railway – 'Project Wareham'
- Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway – Broadway Extension
- Lynton and Barnstaple Railway – Their extension involves reinstating a line which was removed in 1935
- Llangollen Railway – Corwen Extension
- Great Central Railway (Nottingham) and Great Central Railway (Loughborough) – Their joint project is to reconnect their railways, which involves reinstating a bridge across the Midland Mainline.
- Bala Lake Railway – Their project is to try and return to Bala town centre to improve the towns' fortunes.

Historically there have been many more extension projects that have come to fruition. There were many that said heritage railways would never succeed but here we are over half a century later and they are still going strong, providing a valuable window into our rich industrial heritage and supporting local economies from Scotland to Cornwall and all the bits in-between.



Stage One Proposal

The outline of stage one could see the residential developments on Tuckers western plot and the old Outdoor Experience plot undertaken as per the DNPA Master plan but with the exclusion of the residential block on Tuckers plot on the eastern side of the River Ashburn. The remaining plots of the Masterplan could continue with their current uses in the interim period.

Station Garage, Chuley Road Garage with hard standings and Tuckers plot on the eastern side of the river Ashburn would be acquired as funding was sourced.

After acquisition the station and overall roof would be renovated and a heritage centre, museum and educational resource facility established. The space created could also be available for community uses if it were beneficial for the community. A heritage bus service would be set up to transport visitors to the heritage centre and there would be activities on site to help fund the ongoing project.

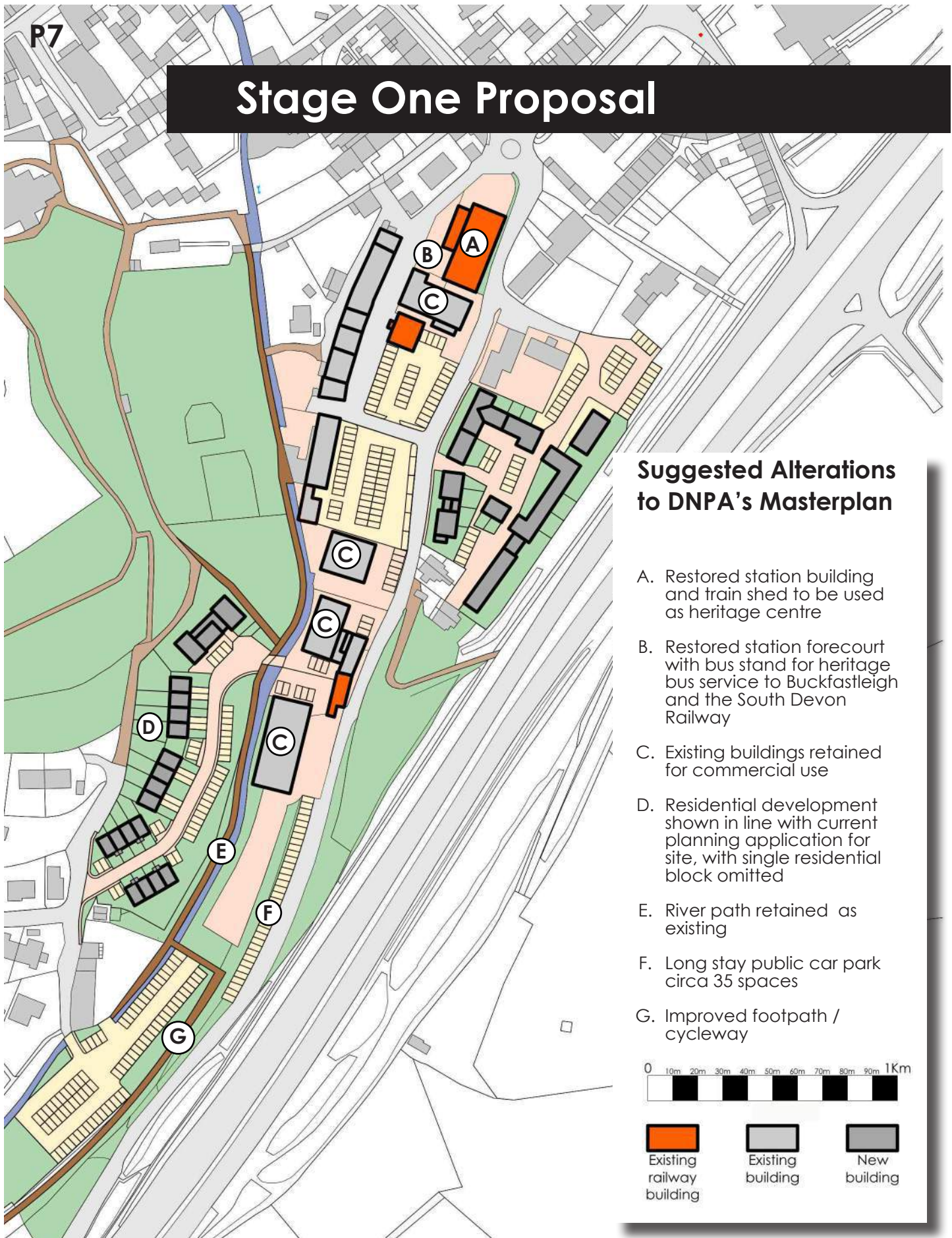
Acquisition of Chuley Road garage would see the buildings retained and let for short/medium term use until the funding was available to complete stage two. The two hard standings that are part of Chuley Road Garage could be better utilised, the southernmost could be retained for local business use and spare capacity in the northerly one used to offer public car parking spaces.

The current building on the Tuckers site could be retained and again let short/medium term.

The letting of the aforementioned premises would generate funds, self-financing further progress of the project.

We envisage that this stage could take place over a time scale of between 2 to 5 years and at an estimated cost of between £2 – 4 million.

Stage One Proposal



Stage Two Proposal

Stage two would see the acquisition of the remaining plots on the Chuley Road site. These would be purchased at a time when funds became available and with agreement of the relevant land owners. We recognize that we may need to relocate some landowners as they wish to continue their businesses but would be unlikely to realise enough from their current plots to fund their own relocation.

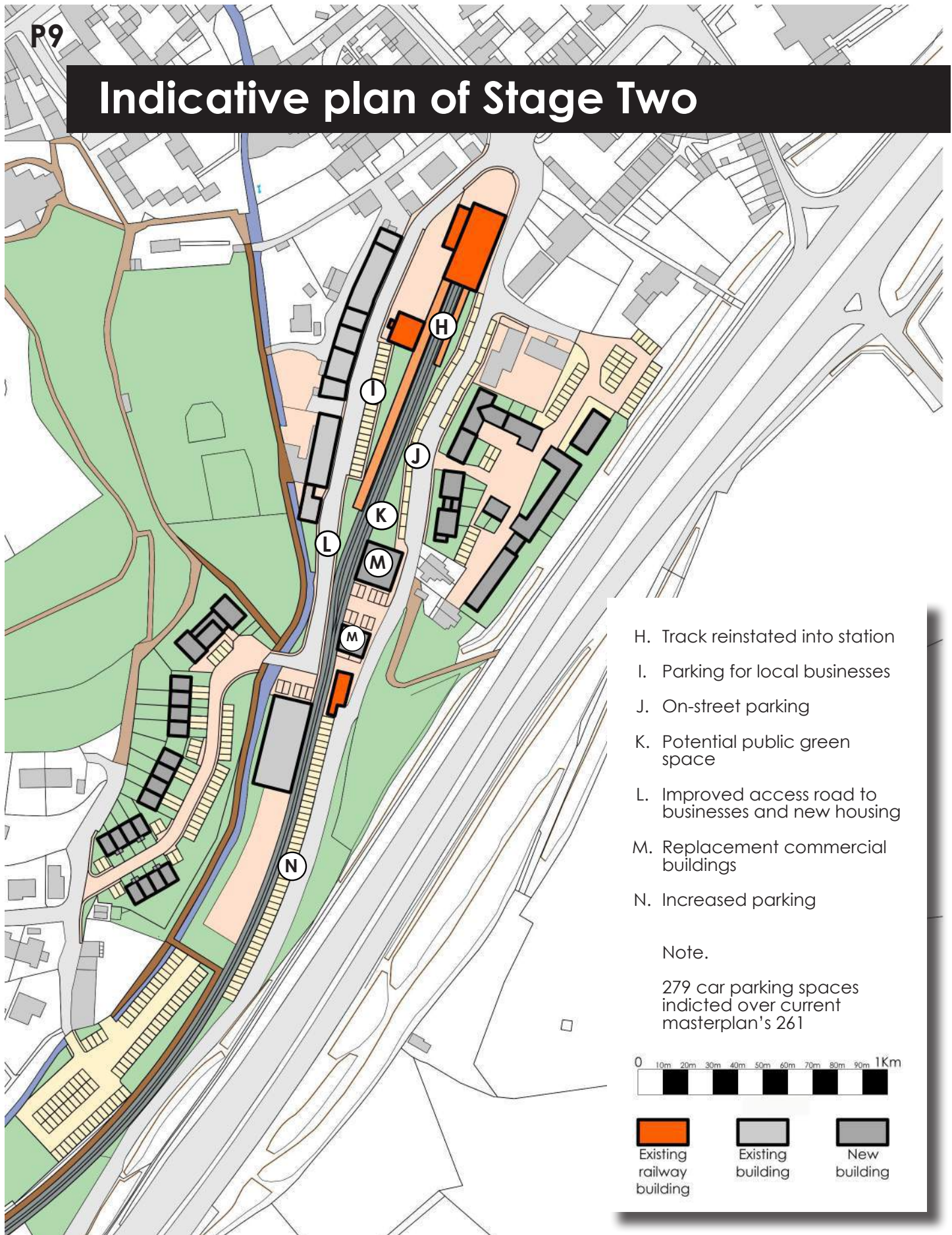
We would not be looking to remove any buildings from the site until such a time as we had enough funding to finance completion of this stage and possibly parts of stage three. Our aim would be to keep the buildings in use, meaning they keep supplying us with income and prevents the site from being derelict for any long period of time. Income from this source can also be used to help fund improvements to the site in line with the longer term goals, for example installing an improved dual use path/cycleway to replace Bulliver's way.

When the required funding was in place we would look to remove the buildings on the railway formation and begin the site transformation. This would involve installing adequate drainage, possible additional flood alleviation works, installation of a new access road on the western side of the site giving access to the old Tuckers site and recreation ground and the possible erection of two small business units for light commercial use. Additional public and business car parking spaces can be provided, with potential to install a level crossing at the southern end of the old Tuckers building next to the engine shed to give access to more additional joint use parking. This would then allow the reinstatement of the railway line and platforms of the station. The line could then be extended from Chuley Road to a point just after the new Tuckers site at Pear Tree this would see the most difficult section of the project completed and reinstating the line onwards to the outskirts of Buckfastleigh should be relatively simple.

Estimating the timescale for this stage of the project is more challenging than stage one as it is based over a longer period and because of that there are many factors that could have an effect on the speed at which it could be realised. Our best estimates suggest a timescale of between 5 and 10 years and at an estimated cost of around £5-10 million.



Indicative plan of Stage Two



Stage Three Proposal

Stage three would be to complete the reinstatement of the line back to Buckfastleigh. A feasibility study was commissioned in 1997 to look for a potential route for the South Devon Railway to get back to Ashburton. This report provides the ground work to prove that it is physically possible for a railway to be reinstated. We have had advice from a railway civil engineer, who also believes that there is potential for a number of deviations at different points for the route, this would allow for a degree of flexibility if problems were identified during the planning process.

A full feasibility study would need to be undertaken to re-evaluate the route but this has not been possible in the timescale afforded to us, it would also require a reasonable investment which is difficult to justify with no securities at this point in time.

If the railway was returned to Ashburton it would be run by the South Devon Railway Trust, who have agreed to apply for all the necessary permissions and requirements for building and running a railway to Ashburton if Friends of Ashburton Station are successful in securing the station site and route to it.





