

Ryde HAZ Public Realm Improvements Project: Summary of projects commissioned but not progressed to Concept Design Stage 6 December 22

Introduction

1.1. This paper describes projects either formally commissioned or informally requested by the Client Manager for the Ryde HAZ, from Hampshire Services, that through the design process were determined not to be suitable to carry further forward. The key areas of work are as follows:

- The development of a full concept masterplan for Phase 1, 2 and 3, with the refocusing of the scope of work to the delivery of a concept masterplan for Phase 1 only.
- The completion of a study on arcades and structures.
- Footpath link from Victoria Street Car Park to the High Street, through Mill Lane at the side of Grace's Bakery (informal request to consider alongside the concept masterplan and barrier study).

1. Concept Masterplan reduced from Three Phases to One

1.2. The proposed three phases of the Concept Masterplan are as follows:

- Phase 1: Pedestrian Zone from Garfield Street to Star Street, including Minghella Square and Co-op Square.
- Phase 2: Streetscape around St. Thomas' Square to the junction at the top of Union Street.
- Phase 3: One-way section of the High Street from Star Street to Green Street/St. Johns Street Junction.

Plans showing the location of each phase is shown in Appendix 1.

1.3. The funding for the Ryde HAZ was originally split into small and specific delivery packages, which were spread throughout the HAZ, including a significant public engagement programme. It was known early in the commission for the concept masterplan that there was not sufficient funding in the budget to encompass the delivery of a comprehensive masterplan from St. Thomas's Square through to Green Street/High Street Junction, but the funding available would be a catalyst, that would set the tone for further work, with funding sought for later phases over time. It was considered that the small funding packages could be aggregated to form bigger more cost-effective implementation schemes, whilst still addressing the thematic areas described for those funding packages. Confirmation of where the priority for spend should occur, took a significant amount of time for Steering Group members to agree and confirm, specifically in association with the brief for the Public Engagement Programme. This lack of clarity made it hard for the Hampshire Services Project Team to focus on the priorities for scheme development. For example, not knowing where the priority projects would be or what they should contain made it difficult to determine spend of the limited funding pots, which had knock-on effects to all design decisions, for example extensive discussions of options for materials occurred, without clear determination until Summer 2022.

1.4. The aim and direction for the concept masterplan project was described in the presentation to Ryde HAZ steering Group, in July 2021. The presentation is attached as Appendix 2.

1.5. In bringing draft ideas and questions to the Steering Group in November 21, during the development of sketch options for **Phase 3**, it became apparent that:

- there was not consensus amongst the Steering Group over the vision for that section of the High Street, which subsequently made it difficult to determine the scale of interventions, for example modest pedestrian pavement build outs, versus more significant change, such as comprehensive widening of footways, and agreeing an approach to car parking (numbers and locations) and to achieve this:
- there would be need for further prefeasibility and public engagement to develop and determine a direction for the scheme in this area, which was not within the scope of work commissioned, but perhaps more significantly:
- the topographic survey confirmed that the levels of footway and carriageway along this section of the High Street, would be complex to resolve in any design coming forward, without the potential for either significant expense in reprofiling the carriageway, or proposed footway widening could have steep and inappropriate cross-falls.

The presentation from November 21 is shown as Appendix 3.

1.6. With the constraints on the budget and timetable for delivery of the Ryde HAZ programme, and this Phase not being top priority, it was decided in agreement with the Client Manager to put this work on hold, until a time when more targeted engagement could be planned, and there were potential funding streams that could be applied.

1.7. It is recommended that a simple 'quick win' that would be worth considering as a separate community project by Ryde Town Council jointly with the Isle of Wight Council, would be 'greening' the land on the corner of Green Street/High Street, which appears to be in Highways ownership. Provision of new planters would be a modest cost-effective project, that could be worked up with the Greening Ryde Volunteer Group, with existing seating painted by local artists.



Figure 1.1. Quadrant plot on the corner of Green Street/High Street, suitable for 'quick win' community project.

- 1.8. Should the Ryde HAZ Steering Group and /or Isle of Wight and Ryde Town Council wish to revisit proposals for this area in the future they should be minded to consider determining a long-term solution, that is in line with the road user hierarchy of: pedestrians first, cyclists second, vehicles third. Taking into consideration the difficulty in resolving steep cross falls and drainage requirements, this suggests considering the value of a level surface, between footway and carriageway, (with footway and carriageway demarcated by a drainage channel following the line of the current highway kerb,) as this may be a more cost-effective and better technical solution than having full/part height kerbs to the footways. An approach to the streetscape 'profile may be found by referring to the proposals for Bell Street, Romsey, as shown on Page 4 of Appendix 2.
- 1.9. In considering proposals for **Phase 2** at St. Thomas' Square to top end of Union Street, draft sketch ideas have been developed and can be revisited by Ryde HAZ Steering Group and /or Isle of Wight and Ryde Town Council in the future. The proposals put forward to improve the pedestrian environment (widening footways were possible, and providing clearer uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points across the carriageway) are of a modest-moderate scale being mindful of:
- limited resources available.
 - St. Thomas's Square and the lower section of the High Street already benefitting from high quality materials, that are for the most part in very good condition.
- 1.10. As with Phase 3, with the known constraints on the budget and timetable for delivery of the HAZ programme, it was decided in agreement with the Client Manager to put this work on hold, but with the sketches provided it would be possible for the Client group to pick up discrete pieces of work and action them as and when funding opportunities arise. Sketches are provided in Appendix 4.
- 1.11. **Phase 1** Concept Masterplan for the **Pedestrian Zone** from Garfield Street to Star Street, including light scale interventions in Minghella Square and Co-op Square, is nearing completion. It is known that the current available budget won't deliver a complete scheme, but that the budget will go a significant way to delivering tangible improvements under a Phase 1a, programme, with funding sought to complete the scheme under Phase 1b.

2. Feasibility Study on Arcades and Structures

- 2.1. Hampshire Services were commissioned to undertake a feasibility study to determine the suitability for including arcades and structures (for events) as a sub-project within the delivery of the concept masterplan. The background for this interest stemmed from the identification of 'spandrels' as an option across the gateways to the pedestrian area, in the Ryde HAZ, and informed by the existence of two attractive and popular tourist arcades within Ryde, namely:
- Royal Victoria Arcade, Union Street
 - Lind Street Arcade, Lind Street.
- 2.2. The provision of covered pedestrian circulation space was considered valuable for encouraging tourism and longer dwell-times in the town centre, during inclement weather. Incidentally during the early discussions on arcades, the potential value to the local economy was raised, regarding the desire to have small start-up premises in market hall type arrangements preferring those to bigger properties that were harder to let, with several in the area having been vacant for some time (but now occupied).

- 2.3. Early in the commission it was evident to the project team that retrospective construction of arcades within the public realm, principally highway, were unlikely to be feasible for the following reasons:
- physical constraints and visual appropriateness
 - capital cost without a suitable budget
 - maintenance and management liabilities.
- 2.4. In summary, key physical constraints, which would make the development of arcades difficult in Ryde are:
- the streets under consideration for the Ryde HAZ, are quite narrow traditional streets, and for the most part there would not be sufficient width to accommodate arcades without impinging on either carriageway space required for vehicle movements or pedestrian circulation space within the footways
 - significant level changes in the High Street in Ryde would require a stepped approach to the arcades, which could result in pavement clutter and obstacles in the form of excessive numbers of posts to support the arcade structures.
 - multiple changes in façade angles, on the gently curving street frontages, would also require significant short sections for arcade structures and have the same implications for posts cluttering the highway, as above.

Details of Victorian style arcades applied retrospectively to streets within Eastleigh Town Centre, Hampshire are provided in Appendix 5. The arcade structures work well in this environment, due to level surfaces throughout, generous footways and consistent shop front and floor heights to the building facades they front, and for the most part the buildings are not of significant architectural merit, making the arcades an enhancing feature.

- 2.5. Physical constraints and visual appropriateness are closely linked. It is worth noting that the existing arcade on Lind Street is an integral part of the original building and was designed and constructed at the same time, and as such provides an attractive facade and circulation space that is entirely in keeping with the building it fronts. Royal Victoria Arcade has an attractive frontage with space for external display and an internalised arcade providing access to small shop units. The arcaded shopping space, was purpose built, is in private ownership and the building is locked at night. Ryde HAZ is situated within a Conservation Area and has several very attractive building facades and listed buildings in key locations. Arcade structures provided retrospectively, in the highway have the potential to obscure attractive facades. Facades built at different times, with varying architectural styles and details, floor levels, shop front heights and different first floor window treatments, such as the provision of bay windows, further complicates the determination of a suitable arcade style, materials choice, construction detailing and scale, making for a complex and costly project to deliver.
- 2.6. The provision of physical structures within the public realm requires robust design and construction to withstand significant wear and tear and weathering, making their provision costly, in plainer environments, and the additional site specific physical and visual constraints in Ryde significantly adds to this complexity and cost.
- 2.7. It was considered out of the scope of the project to consider arcades structures to cover the existing pedestrian lanes that lead from the High Street to the car parks and other spaces, as for the most part the lanes are in private ownership, and the use of limited public funds on private land would be inappropriate. These findings for the provision of arcade structures in the public realm, doesn't preclude the development of integrated arcades within development sites near the highway, or any private land owner making their own enquiries

and determining the feasibility for developing arcade structures. A developer may bring forward schemes including arcades, which can be assessed through the planning process, in the usual manner.

- 2.8. An alternative solution to providing shade and shelter to shop fronts and café spaces is proposed in the promotion of traditional shopfront awnings. Concurrently to the Arcades and Structures Feasibility Study, was the development of the Shopfront Design Guidance¹ for both Ryde and Newport, and within this the use of traditional awnings is promoted and descriptions of appropriate styles described. It is also entirely in keeping with the town's heritage, as evidenced in historical photographs of Ryde with traditional awnings on many shops. Our study recommends this approach as being the best way forward. The provision for awnings on a building-by-building basis, as and when retailers/building owners are carrying out improvements is the most suitable way to provide shade and shelter that is suited to existing building facades and implementation costs and maintenance liabilities sit appropriately with the property owner.
- 2.9. With regards to determining the provision of suitable structures for events within the highway, locations for suitable events structures to be erected are determined to be in the principal squares:
- St. Thomas's Square
 - Town Square (Co-op Square) and
 - Minghella Square.
- 2.10. But on balance, static or fixed features, such as bandstands are considered not to be required within Ryde HAZ area. Whilst they provide valuable focal points where community events are held, with the potential for shelter during inclement weather, they can also reduce the flexibility of the space to be able to accommodate a wider range of uses. The project team developed a series of options for space use for both Minghella Square and Town Square, (which can be found in Appendix 6), to demonstrate that flexible uncluttered spaces, with pavements surfaces in good condition, have more options for different uses, with the potential for event organisers to bring in their own bespoke structures to suit the event held. The examples show the space used for everyday use, Market Stalls and bespoke events.
- 2.11. Regarding maintenance and management responsibilities, as with arcade structures and lockable bollard options (see separate Ryde HAZ Barrier Study) it is considered that permanent event structures could add unnecessary cost, to the Highways maintenance budget² and have the potential to attract anti-social activities. In certain circumstances new permanent features are the right solution, but in this instance, Ryde Town Centre with its relatively narrow streets and spaces (apart from Town Square) we recommend that fixed features would be less valuable than flexible spaces. There is already a significant number of 'fixed' features being provided as following: seating, bins, signage, lamp columns, community notice boards and planters. Further structures unless strictly necessary would 'clutter' the space. Keeping clutter to a minimum is better for: pedestrian circulation, providing clear unimpeded views of attractive building facades and has less onerous maintenance requirements and reduce number of potential hazards, e.g., columns being hit by vehicles, or pedestrians tripping or falling on them, but also the 'theatre' around planning for and erecting temporary structures for events can help to animate the streetscape and be part of the provision of seasonal activities.

¹ [Ryde Example Designs \(iwdesignguide.uk\)](http://iwdesignguide.uk)

² in terms of regular maintenance such as maintenance inspections, painting metalwork, refurbishment of parts that wear, e.g., timber slats, or are vandalised and need replacement.

2.12. Some draft ideas for discussion points around arcades and structures were developed and are provided in Appendix 7. Included in this is some consideration over bunting provision, as advice on bunting installation was also requested by the Client.

3. Potential provision of a new pedestrian link between Victoria Street Car Park and the High Street Pedestrian Zone

3.1. The project team were requested to consider the potential for a short pedestrian link between the Victoria Street car park and the High Street, via the side of Grace's Bakery, as part of the considerations for the concept masterplan. The potential for the footpath was identified in the Ryde Public Realm Strategy by Atkins 2004.

3.2. These considerations overlap with the needs of Grace's Bakery, in that, the Bakery uses the car park for deliveries, and this may become more significant in the future and is developing café space in Mill Lane.

3.3. The key reasons for recommending that the proposals for the footpath are not progressed further are that:

- an existing level change between Victoria Street Car Park and the High Street, of more than 3m, would require significant and costly measures to introduce a ramp access that provides 'access for all', i.e., is able to accommodate people with mobility impairments.
- the footpath route would run through at three plots of land that are in private ownership and would require the knocking down of walls and other built structures.
- there is insufficient space along Mill Lane to provide a suitable footpath, especially with the inclusion of café seating and tables.

Photographs of the potential route for the footpath link are shown in Appendix 7. See Figure 3.1 overleaf, which shows this issues in diagrammatic plan form.

3.4. To ensure that the route adheres to current standards, to accommodate a change in level of 3m and be sufficiently wide for 'access for all' a significant amount of land would be required to accommodate a ramp that would provide a suitable slope with rest spaces and width to allow wheelchair access and passing places. To integrate a suitable path, in this area with these level changes, would require, significant excavation and wall alterations, including demolition of existing walls, and construction of new retaining walls (which could be around 2m high or greater in places).

3.5. The footpath route would need to be directed around the area where an increased amount of loading of delivery vehicles for Grace's Bakery could be expected, making potential safety issues for members of the public, in relation to turning of vehicles.

3.6. The route would run along the rear of 176 and 177 and High Street, and to pass through to Mill Lane may require significant demolition/alteration of the rear of a two-storey building on the property of 177 High Street. The existing gap between the rear of 177 High Street and Grace's Bakery is too narrow to be a suitable public footpath, and very convoluted with multiple 'blind' corners. Land ownership details for Mill Lane and Grace's Bakery and for 177 High Street were sought early in the project and have been provided to the Client. The negotiation and agreement between all parties would be time consuming and costly.

3.7. In addition, to the footpath following several 90degree/'blind' corners, the footpath would also be situated in a significant 'dip' below the level of the car park, along the backs of

properties, making the route feel unsafe of the pedestrian users and increase the vulnerability of the rear of the properties to vandalism and other anti-social activities.

- 3.8. Whilst it appears on the face of it, to be a convenient and advantageous access route, the above descriptions demonstrate that the proposals would be far from easy to achieve, be high cost and not justified in relation to the pedestrian journey time saved. The existing walking distance from the car park along Victoria Street and Garfield Street to the entrance to Grace's Bakery is a typical journey of two minutes. Hampshire Services would not, at this time recommend the installation of a footpath in this location.

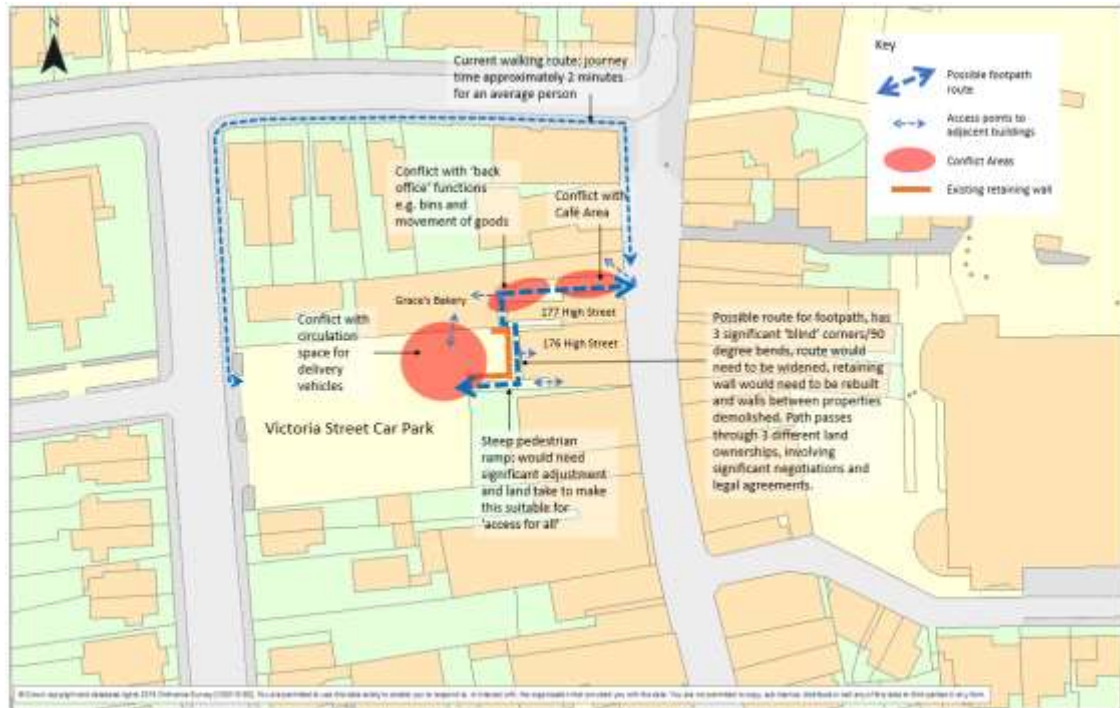


Figure 3.1. Diagram of possible footpath location from Victoria Street Car Park to the High Street, with possible conflicts and issues described.

Appendix 1: Plan Showing Project Phases

Appendix 2: Presentation to Ryde HAZ Steering Group July 21

Appendix 3: Presentation to Ryde HAZ Steering Group November 2021

Appendix 4: Draft Sketches for Phase 2 Proposals

Appendix 5: Photographs of Arcades in Eastleigh Town Centre

Appendix 6: Sketch Plans showing Options for Events in Minghella Square and Town Square

Appendix 7: Draft presentation material for discussions on Arcades and Structures

Appendix 8: Photographs taken May 22 of areas where potential footpath route was considered.

Appendix 5 Photographs of Arcades in Eastleigh Town Centre



Figures 5.1-5.4. Victorian Style Arcades, Eastleigh Town Centre.



Figure 5.5. Victorian Style Arcades, Eastleigh Town Centre.

Figures 5.1. to 5.7. Show photographs of Victorian Style Arcades in Eastleigh Town Centre, installed circa 2000. The Arcades are completely free standing, i.e., not attached to building facades. Constructed on one side of the street only, in wide footways. The arcades are built to a standard height, with the apex sitting above the shopfront signage. Building down pipes are unaffected. Lighting for the footways is included here, with lamp columns to illuminate the carriageway siting in the footway beyond the arcades. The supporting columns are set at approximately 2m apart. The building frontages follow a uniform line, and the footways are essentially level.



Figure 5.6. Arcades adjacent to the pedestrian area. Note: arcade support posts are for the most part situated at regular intervals of around 4ms and are clear of the drainage channels.



Figure 5.7, Arcades adjacent to the pedestrian area.

Appendix 8 Photographs of Location of Potential Footpath Route



Figure 8.1. Photograph of Victoria Street Car Park, looking towards Grace's Bakery Parking bays and narrow lane to back of 176 and 177 High Street, taken May 2022.



Figure 8.2. Photograph of Victoria Street Car Park, and narrow lane to back of 176 and 177 High Street, taken May 2022.

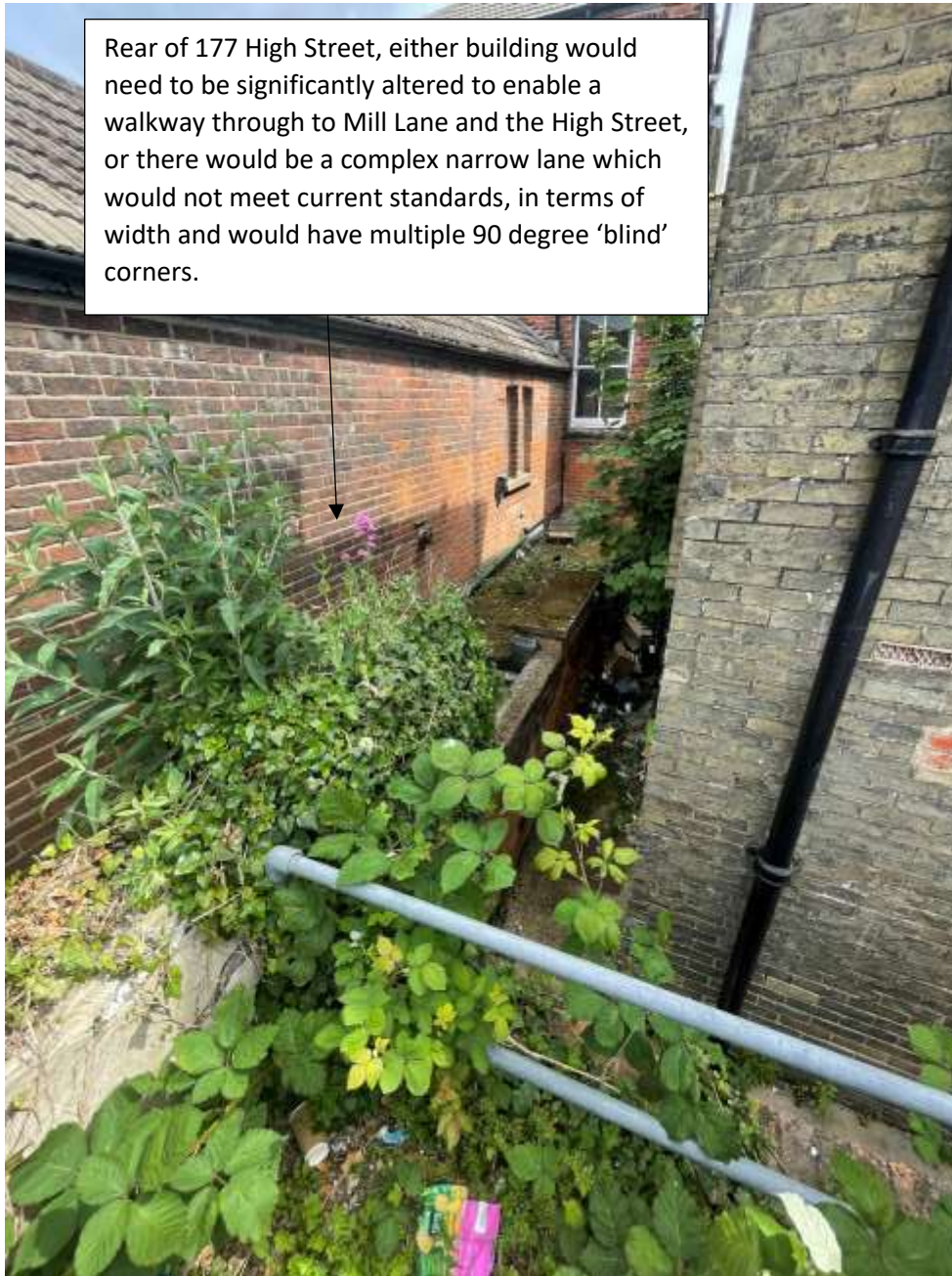


Figure 8.3. Photograph taken from Victoria Street car park of rear of 177 High Street, taken May 2022. Note significant change in level and building in the foreground to the left. There is a narrow gap between the back of this building and Grace's Bakery, but a convoluted bend, resulting in 90 degree 'blind' corners would make route feel unsafe. The route is also not wide enough for modern accessibility standards.



Figure 8.4. (Left) Photograph taken in Mill Lane looking towards the High Street, May 2022. This land is in private ownership. On the right is 177 High Street, which would need to be altered to enable a pathway to be provided.

Figure 8.5. (Right) Photograph taken from High Street, May 2022, looking along Mill Lane. Victoria Street Car park is to the left of this picture, behind 'Slice of Life' Café (177 High Street), and at approximately 3m higher (equivalent to one building storey).