

Transport & Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 19 March 2013

Building a Vision for the City Centre

Item number	7.20
Report number	
Wards	11 – City Centre

Links

Coalition pledges	P19 , P24 , P28 and P31
Council outcomes	CO7 , CO19 , CO20 and CO22
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 and SO4

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Executive summary

Building a Vision for the City Centre

Summary

This report presents an option for improving pedestrian space in the City Centre, drawing on the findings of a recent report commissioned by the Council by Gehl Architects. It focuses on movement around the core of the City Centre and specifically opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment and space afforded by the delivery of the tram project.

The report outlines a proposal for a managed change to the way general traffic and public transport services move through this area, and seeks approval to commence consultation on this.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1 agrees the principles for improved pedestrian space in the City Centre and the consequential changes required to vehicle and public transport movements;
- 2 agrees the consultation and engagement plan; and
- 3 notes the intention to report the outcomes of the consultation to this Committee in June 2013.

Measures of success

A wide ranging and clear consultation and engagement process that demonstrates customer focus and commitment to listening to all stakeholders.

Delivering improvements to the City Centre that optimise and complement the opportunities offered by the operation of the tram network.

A more attractive City Centre environment for those living in, working and visiting the area.

Financial impact

The costs of implementing the proposed changes will be determined through the development of the detailed design and will be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

Equalities impact

An Equalities and Rights Impact assessment will be undertaken in parallel with the consultation process. The consultation process will also ensure that all representative groups are fully engaged with and that any proposed changes are fully inclusive for all user groups.

Sustainability impact

A Strategic Environmental Assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the detailed design of the proposed change.

Consultation and engagement

A comprehensive consultation and engagement plan is attached at Appendix 1. This plan aims to assess the understanding of the impacts of the proposed approach on different user groups to allow an informed decision on suitable changes to be made.

Background reading/external references

[City Centre and Princes Street Public Realm](#), Policy and Strategy Committee, 22 February 2011

[Access to Waverley Station](#), Transport and Environment Committee, 15 January 2013

[Edinburgh Revisited: Public Space, Public Life](#), Gehl Architects, 2010

[Local Transport Strategy 2007–2012](#)

[Active Travel Action Plan](#)

Building a Vision for the City Centre

1. Background

- 1.1 Edinburgh City Centre forms the commercial heart of Southeast Scotland and Scotland at large. Its role as a centre for finance and business, retail, entertainment and leisure is widely recognised. Its setting in a World Heritage Site provides an iconic image of the area as well as unique opportunities and challenges. There is, however, a general recognition that the area could perform better as a place for living, working and visiting through a more coordinated approach to the development, management and promotion of the area.
- 1.2 The continuing economic success of the City Centre requires a place that is accessible to all, attractive for visitors, but which also meets the needs and aspirations of its residents and businesses. It hosts a wide range of activities which allow people to work, study, shop, trade and entertain and is a major global cultural and tourist destination. All of these activities place significant pressures on the resources, services and physical space available.
- 1.3 The proposals in this report seek to embrace existing activities and maximise opportunities to enhance the pedestrian experience and make the area a more enjoyable place to move around. Central to improving the pedestrian experience is a need to look at how space is used in streets. In many cases, the way in which streets are used has been determined by what can be accommodated rather than what is desired, with an end result that seems to place pedestrians fairly low in the hierarchy of users, particularly when it comes to the allocation of space. This hierarchy needs to be reassessed, with the quality of the pedestrian experience becoming one of the primary determinants of how these streets are planned and managed.
- 1.4 The Edinburgh tramline is due to begin passenger services in summer 2014. The Council is seeking to maximise the benefits of changes to the movement of traffic in order to complement the implementation of the tram system within the core City Centre area and in line with the broad aims outlined above. The benefits that may be realised include:
 - improved quality of pedestrian experience in the core City Centre area;

- improved access to the City Centre;
- increased space for pedestrian and other uses;
- opportunity for dedicated cycle provision in the area; and
- reduced detrimental impact of vehicles on the City Centre environment.

2. Main report

Policy and Research Context

- 2.1 In 2010, the Council commissioned a report by Gehl Architects titled “Edinburgh Revisited: Public Space, Public Life”. This set out a vision based on a vibrant, liveable city centre and made recommendations for a way forward. Central to these recommendations is a need to enhance the ‘people’ aspect of how the City Centre is managed. The report calls for a change in the management of available space in the City Centre with a more pedestrian-focussed allocation of that space. The study also stressed the need to look at all movement around the City Centre and recognised a need to create “*a place more accessible for all*”. A key issue in the report is the dominance of public bus services on Princes Street with the conclusion that there is a need for a “*rethink (of) city traffic*”, particularly the “*bus network*”.
- 2.2 The Council’s [Active Travel Action Plan](#) (ATAP) sets targets to increase cycling and walking in the city by 2020. The plan provides for significant improvements to walking/cycling infrastructure (and its maintenance) and the promotion of these means of travel.
- 2.3 The proposals outlined below go some way to meeting these objectives by managing traffic movements differently and creating more space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Proposed change to vehicle movements

- 2.4 The Gehl study identified Princes Street as being subject to the greatest detriment from vehicles and proposed a substantial reduction in the number of buses using the street. The bus operators, especially Lothian Buses, recognise this, and are adapting services to provide cross City Centre routes that do not use Princes Street and these are described later in the report. The proposals below describe how eastbound buses on Princes Street may be relocated to George Street effectively halving the number of buses on Princes Street. These proposals have been discussed with Lothian Buses who have indicated their support for the principles outlined in the proposal, and are willing to work closely with the Council to deliver the detailed design.

2.5 The proposal may be summarised as follows:

- to split bus services so they are running eastbound on George Street and westbound on Princes Street;
- to close Princes Street to general traffic in both directions;
- to allow buses, cycles and taxis on Princes Street in a westbound direction only on the south carriageway;
- to operate trams on Princes Street in both directions;
- to allow general traffic on George Street in an eastbound direction only. This will include taxis;
- to develop George Street as the preferred location for the primary cycle route; and
- to minimise the overall net loss of parking spaces on George Street.

2.6 The current and proposed changes are illustrated at Appendix 2 and these will be used to form the basis of the consultation.

2.7 The precise configuration of George Street and Princes Street will be the subject of detailed design and will take into account Gehl's "accessible for all" principle. The key issues to be considered in this context are:

- The creation of additional pedestrian space and the use of this;
- Parking for visitors, residents, people with disabilities and motorcycles;
- Waiting/loading facilities (deliveries, taxi pick up and drop off);
- Cycle provision;
- Taxi stances;
- Bus stops; and
- Pedestrian space (crossings, lingering, outdoor seating, activity space).

2.8 In each case, a balance will need to be struck between the current capacity and what is desirable in the context of the reconfigured streets.

Consultation and Design Development

2.9 Consultation will take place on the broad design detailed at Appendix 2 of this report.

2.10 The detailed design process will establish where there is potential for creating new “*public space*”. The design should look to allocate available kerbside space on both George Street and adjacent side streets and lanes, to best effect, in the context of the uses highlighted in paragraph 2.7. The various stakeholders each place a different emphasis on these. For example:

- Pedestrian space may be enhanced by creating defined activity space such as cafes with outdoor dining on the North side of Princes Street and George Street. These temporary projects will allow the use of such space to be assessed;
- The retail sector will have a particular interest in parking, waiting and loading facilities, both to ensure that good customer access is maintained and to allow their businesses to be serviced efficiently;
- The hospitality sector is keen to see improved space for table and chairs licenses;
- There is a general wish to see greater opportunities for activities that bring life onto the street;
- Mobility groups will focus primarily on disabled bay provision and associated Blue Badge options, but they will also have an interest in taxi drop-off facilities and taxi stance provision;
- The local community will wish to see the current level of resident parking provision maintained;
- Motorcycle bays on George Street are very well utilised currently, so the design should look to continue to service that level of demand, where possible; and
- Cycle groups will wish to see dedicated facilities which will help meet ATAP targets.

2.11 Most importantly all of these groups are pedestrians, so the design of the scheme will aim to strike the optimum balance of all their needs.

2.12 The design process should also take account of relevant policies and strategies and other ongoing local and national commitments, including the Public Realm Strategy, the Local Transport Strategy, Road Safety Plan and the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM).

- 2.13 It is proposed that consultation is undertaken with all stakeholders identified in the attached *Consultation and Engagement Plan* (see Appendix 1). The consultation will look to identify a preferred scheme and determine the details of that scheme, having particular regard to the issues highlighted in paragraph 2.10.
- 2.14 The consultation process will also allow the temporary projects that were recommended in the Gehl report to be discussed and progressed. These are intended to test the practical use of space by the public and can be evaluated before implementation of more permanent design solutions. These include defined activity space on Princes Street and George Street.
- 2.15 The outcome of the consultation process will be reported back to this Committee and will include recommendations as to the further development and implementation of a preferred scheme.
- 2.16 It is suggested that any such scheme should be trialled and that a further report should then be brought to Committee, subject to the outcome of that trial.

Complementary Initiatives

- 2.17 These proposals are complementary to a number of other improvements to the City Centre that will improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, simplify bus movements and maintain traffic flows at critical points.
- 2.18 On the 15 January 2013, this Committee agreed to commence the statutory procedures for implementing improvements works to improve access to Waverley Station. The proposals outlined in this report at paragraph 2.5 complement these improvements and, in particular, eastbound buses travelling along George Street will allow buses to access Waverley Bridge via the Mound, removing the need to turn at the foot of Cockburn Street. This will make it possible to remove the roundabout at this location.
- 2.19 At the same meeting on 15 January 2013, this Committee also approved a stakeholder and public consultation on “Developing a new Local Transport Strategy: Issues for Review”. One of the issues being explored is the introduction of 20 mph limits in more areas of Edinburgh including the City Centre.
- 2.20 Lothian Buses is pursuing initiatives which reduce the environmental impact of their operations, including increasing the number of diesel-electric hybrid buses operating on Princes Street to 25. These and other measures will significantly reduce the detriment to local air quality.

2.21 As part of the preparation and consultation on the new Local Development Plan (LDP) a number of proposals were considered around the change of use of shop units in the City Centre. The Main Issues Report proposed that new non-shop uses be allowed on Princes Street. The Council intends to approve the proposed LDP in March 2013, which will bring forward new policies that will assist in guiding development in line with the objectives for improved pedestrian experience outlined in this report.

Next Steps

2.22 The consultation process will take place following the approval of the recommendations in this report. This will take place over a four to six week period and it is the intention to report back to this Committee with the consultation findings and a project implementation plan in June.

2.23 Following the implementation of the agreed changes and temporary projects a project review and evaluation will be conducted.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

3.1.1 agrees the principles for improved pedestrian space in the City Centre and the consequential changes required to vehicle and public transport movements;

3.1.2 agrees the consultation and engagement plan; and

3.1.3 notes the intention to report the outcomes of the consultation to this Committee in June 2013.

Mark Turley

Director of Services for Communities

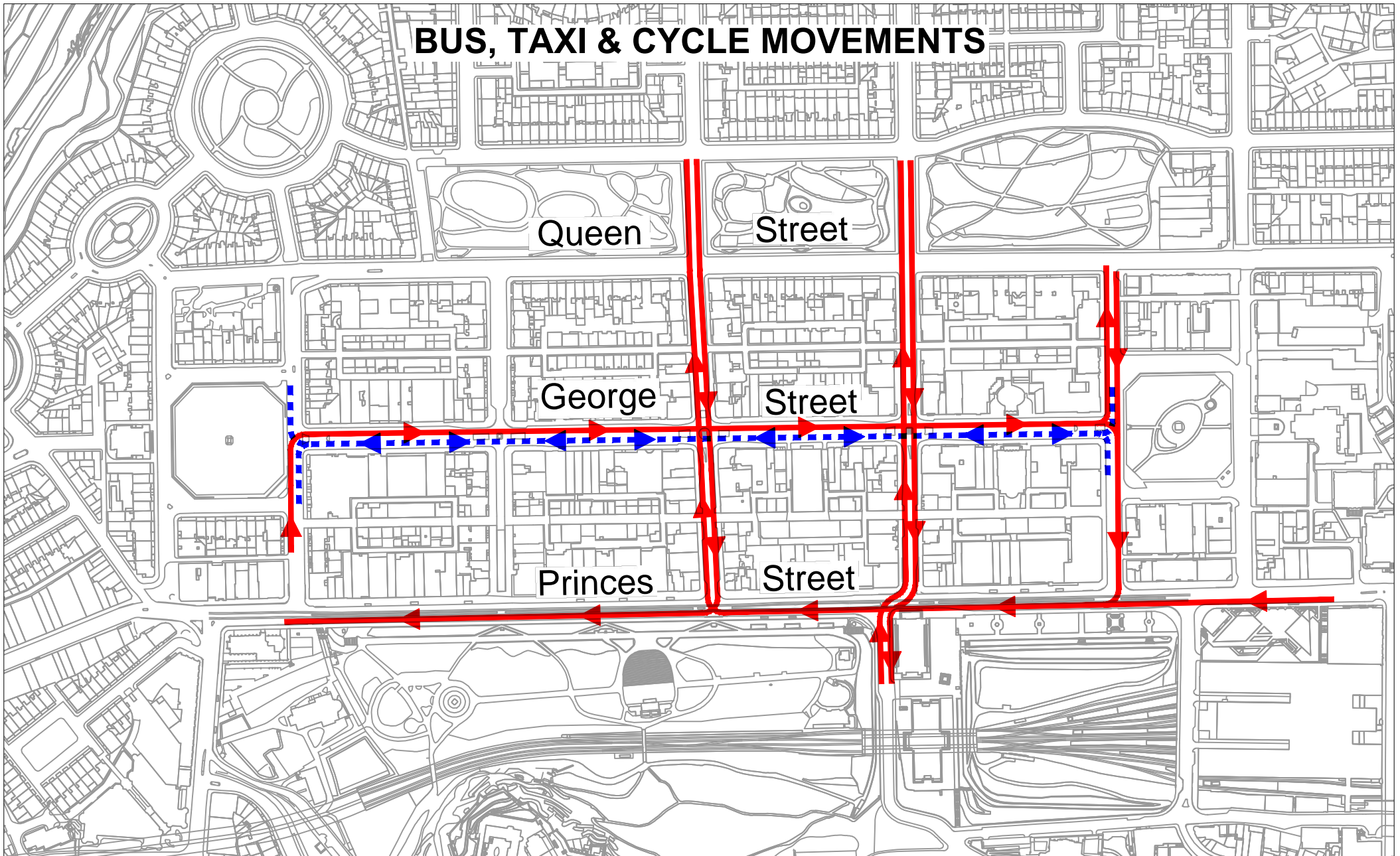
Links



Coalition pledges	<p>P19 - Keep Lothian Buses in public hands and encourage the improvement of routes and times.</p> <p>P24 – Maintain and embrace support for our world-famous festivals and events.</p> <p>P28 - Further strengthen our links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well being of the city.</p> <p>P31 - Maintain our City’s reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure.</p>
Council Outcomes	<p>CO7 – Edinburgh draws new investment in development and regeneration.</p> <p>CO19 – Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.</p> <p>CO20 – Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens.</p> <p>CO22 – Moving efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible.</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO1 – Edinburgh’s economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all.</p> <p>SO4 – Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 – Consultation and engagement plan</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Outline proposals</p>

Stakeholders:	Details	Method of Communication / Consultation:
Neighbourhood Partnership & Sub Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership 	Public meeting/workshop
Community Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Town and Broughton Community Council - West End Community Council - Old Town Community Council 	Meetings
Heritage Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edinburgh World Heritage - Historic Scotland - Cockburn Association - Old Town Association 	Meetings, questionnaire
Development Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civic Forum - Edinburgh Development Forum 	Meetings, questionnaire
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chamber of Commerce - Essential Edinburgh - Retail representatives - Hospitality representative - Trading Associations - Federation of Small Businesses - Unite - Marketing and tourism initiatives 	Focus groups, questionnaire

Stakeholders:	Details	Method of Communication / Consultation:
Users of the City Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitors - Commuters - Shoppers - Markets 	Series of focus groups
Transport Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transport Forum - Taxi Owners Association/Taxi Stance Working Group - Statutory Consultees, i.e. other authorities, police, emergency services (fire and ambulance), freight associations and bus operators 	Questionnaire, meetings
Equalities groups		Meetings, Questionnaires
Elected members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Councillors - MSPs - MP 	Briefings, letters
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents associations and groups 	Letter, drop in event, meetings
Statutory Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning - Licensing 	Questionnaire

BUS, TAXI & CYCLE MOVEMENTS



-  Primary bus and taxi routes
-  Primary cycle route (two-way segregated on George Street)

GENERAL TRAFFIC

Queen



Street

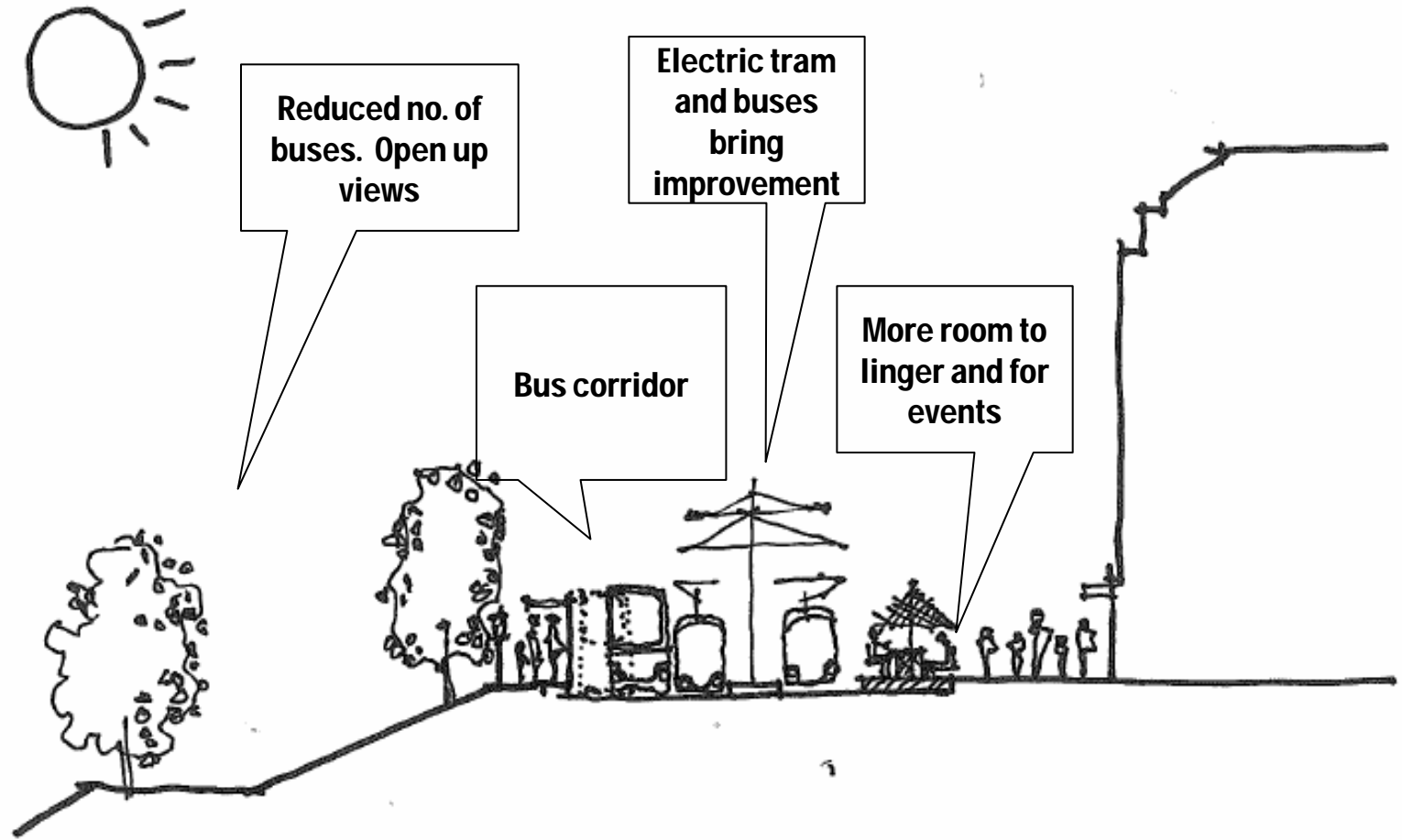
George

Street

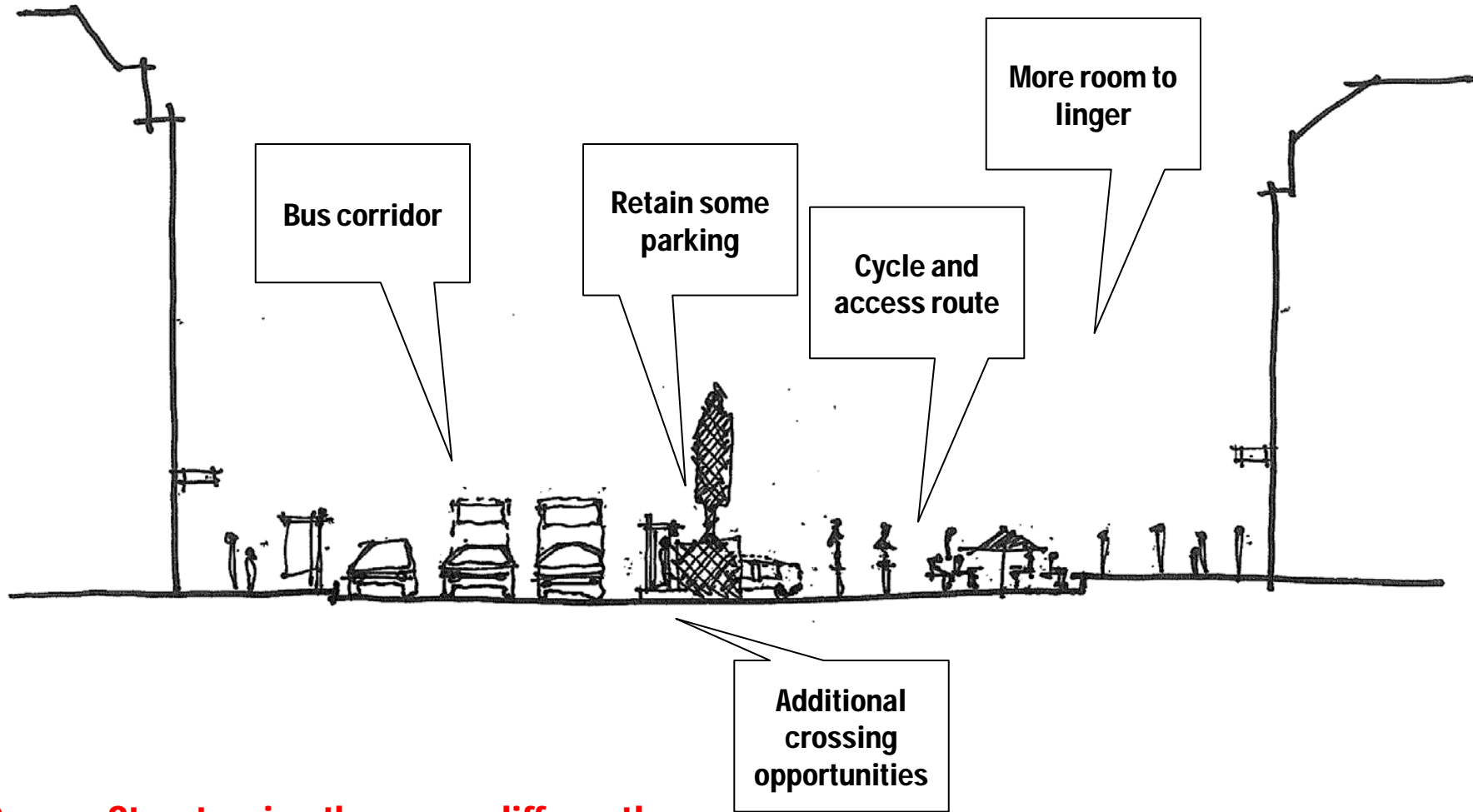
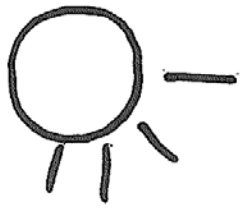
Princes

Street

-  General traffic movements (before and after)
-  General traffic movements to be removed



Princes Street: Using the space differently



George Street: using the space differently