

Long Stratton

Masterplanning
Final Report
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informing the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan

AECOM

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Background and Introduction

01

This chapter is intended to provide context and general information to better introduce the project and its location.

1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

Through the Department of Communities and Local Government, Neighbourhood Planning Programme, AECOM has been commissioned to provide design support to Long Stratton Parish Council. The support is intended to provide design assistance to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's work in producing a Neighbourhood Plan and is designed to complement the plan drafting work that is underway¹.

In particular, this report explores ways in which the village centre can be radically improved when much of the traffic that currently blights village life is rerouted onto a planned by-pass, associated with significant growth of the village.

1.2 Objective

The overarching objective of this report is to advise on how the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group can use the planned re-routing of the A140 as a catalyst to remodel the village centre in a more people-friendly way.

This objective and area of focus was agreed with Long Stratton Parish Council at the outset of the project, being the area where specialist technical support could best progress neighbourhood plan-making.

1.3 Location

The village of Long Stratton is located in the heart of the South Norfolk District, between Norwich and Diss. Its current population is about 5,200 residents. This is set to grow significantly with the construction of 1800 homes for which an outline hybrid planning application is expected shortly.

Significantly, the village's historic spine is the A140, the principal corridor linking Norwich with Ipswich.



Fig. 1.1 Aerial view of Long Stratton, with Town Centre area shown in grey (source: Google Earth)

¹ The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is composed of resident and councillor representatives from both Long Stratton and Tharston and Hapton Parish Councils.

1.4 Process

Following an inception meeting and a site visit with Long Stratton Parish Council representatives, AECOM carried out an urban design assessment of the study area, largely focused on the Street (A140) and the surrounding village centre area.

The following steps were undertaken to produce this report:

- Initial meeting with Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members and a joint site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Desktop research and policy review, including review of information undertaken by the Norfolk Land/Norfolk Homes team promoting the new development;
- Preparation of public realm interventions; and,
- Preparation of this draft report for comment by Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

1.5 The Study Area

The study area focuses on the village centre (shown in grey in Fig. 1.1 across) along the Street (A140), which runs from north to south from Norwich Road to Ipswich Road. The Street is the village's main thoroughfare and shopping destination, and is bordered by commercial and residential properties. As noted above, it is also part of the strategic road network.



Fig. 1.2 Example of footway conditions along the Street



Fig. 1.4 Small public space in the village centre



Fig. 1.3 View of the main east-west pedestrian crossing



Fig. 1.5 Traffic along the A140



Planning Policy Review

02

This chapter notes the existing planning policy context and highlights the relevant policies to which the report proposals should comply.

2. Planning Policy Review

2.1 Introduction

The current Local Plan comprises a group of documents including the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk to 2026 (adopted in March 2011, amendments adopted in January 2014) and the Long Stratton Area Action Plan (adopted 2016). It also includes the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document to 2026, the Development Management Policies Document (adopted 2015) and the Wymondham Area Action Plan; but these documents do not relate directly to the site.

South Norfolk District Council is currently jointly preparing the Greater Norwich Local Plan which will eventually replace the Joint Core Strategy. The draft Greater Norwich Local Plan is due to be consulted upon imminently, (Regulation 18 consultation). Submission for Examination is anticipated in August 2018 and adoption in December 2020.

The Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk and the Long Stratton Area Action Plan have been reviewed and the policies most relevant to the scheme are summarised below.

2.2 Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich, and South Norfolk

Policy 2: Promoting good design

General policy requiring good design in all development.

Policy 10: Locations for major new or expanded communities in the Norwich Policy Area

The Joint Core Strategy identifies Long Stratton as a location for at least 1800 new dwellings and employment opportunities. It also requires improvements to the village centre including traffic management, environmental enhancement and expanded facilities.

2.3 Long Stratton Area Action Plan

Policy LNGS1 Land East, South-East and North-West of Long Stratton

The Long Stratton Area Action Plan requires links between the village and the country-side to the east of the bypass corridor to be enhanced for the benefit of public access and to contribute to green infrastructure.

Policy LNGS3 Town Centre Policy

The Long Stratton Area Action Plan supports proposals within the defined town centre that make use of outside space for town centre uses, including creating a market place.

Policy LNGS9 Accessibility

The Long Stratton Area Action Plan requires development to maximise the permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, by improving access to/from existing and new key services and facilities, such as the town centre.

2.4 Other Relevant Policy Documents

A number of other documents have also been referred to in the preparation of this report, including:

- South Norfolk Place Making Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012)
- Long Stratton Strategy for a Landscape-Led Masterplan (Norfolk Homes, 2017)
- Long Stratton Green Infrastructure and Open Space Strategy (draft - Norfolk Homes, 2017)

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Urban Design Analysis

03

This chapter analyses the site characteristics and highlighting the main constraints and opportunities which will inform the masterplan design.

3. Urban Design Analysis

3.1 Site Characteristics

The Street (A140) constitutes the village spine. It features a mix of retailers, services, and community facilities catering to the village population, and that of its hinterland, as well as residential properties. Bus stops for services to Norwich and Diss are also located along the Street. A number of heritage buildings can also be found in the village centre.

The A140 constitutes an important thoroughfare connecting Norwich to the north to Ipswich to the south and therefore handling a high number of passing vehicles, including a significant proportion of HGVs. Estimates evaluate existing traffic volumes to be between 18,000 and 20,000 vehicles per day¹. As a result, the village centre suffers from issues such as:

- Traffic congestion;
- Noise and high air pollution;
- Severance; and,
- Degraded setting of listed buildings and conservation area.

These issues create a hostile environment to pedestrians and discourage cycling along the A140. In places, **narrow footways** put pedestrians dangerously close to vehicle traffic, and **pedestrian pinch points** are located where the footways recede to accommodate bus lay-bys. Along sections of the western side, the effective footway width is further reduced by **areas of pebbled surfaces that are unsuitable for wheelchair users**. Where the pavement widens at Star Lane and Flowerpot Lane, the spaces are poorly utilised and do not invite pedestrians to remain. **Poorly designed junctions** add to a real problem of pedestrian safety and accessibility. Overall, the Street suffers from **large areas of unattractive hard standing surface** and **poor quality public realm** despite its location at the historic core of the village.

To enable the housing growth, and to remedy the current traffic issues along the Street, the construction of a bypass is planned to the east of the village to divert most of the existing A140 traffic away from the village centre. The delivery of this bypass is required by adopted local plan policy (Long Stratton Area Action Plan) as part of the strategic site allocation of 1,800 homes. Following the completion of the bypass, traffic volumes on the Street are projected to drop to 3,000-4,000 vehicles per day². Pedestrian and cycling green links would connect the Street to future residential areas between the village centre and the proposed bypass, as a result of which the village population is anticipated to grow significantly.



Fig. 3.1.1 High traffic volume, including HGVs



Fig. 3.1.3 Noise pollution



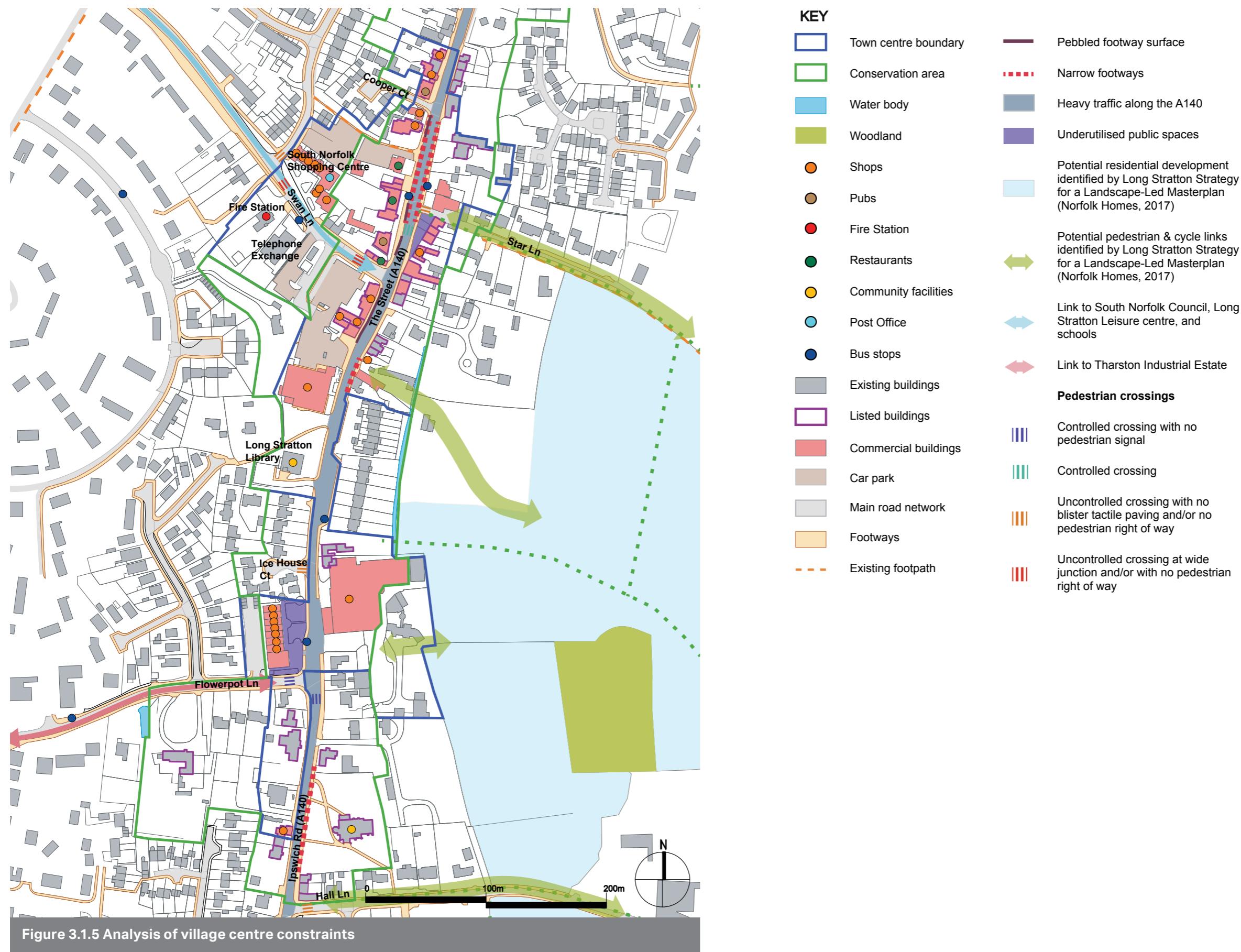
Fig. 3.1.2 Effective footway width reduced by areas of pebbled surface



Fig. 3.1.4 Underutilised space & cycle stands at Flowerpot Lane junction

¹ Source: Cannon Consulting Engineering on behalf of Norfolk Homes.

² Ibid.



3.2 Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility

Because of important traffic volumes and roads that primarily cater to motor vehicles, the village faces many pedestrians safety and accessibility issues, especially at junctions. Many pedestrian crossing points are overly wide, lack blister tactile paving slabs that guide visually-impaired pedestrians, or are offset from pedestrian desire lines. Below is a review of the pedestrian crossing points in the village centre:

- **The Street between Star Lane and Swan Lane**, which constitutes the main east-west traffic signal controlled crossing in the village centre. Pedestrian guardrails are positioned on both sides of the crossing;
- **Swan Lane west of the Street**, an uncontrolled crossing on a pedestrian island. The crossing does not provide pedestrian right of way and is offset from the desire line along the Street, which encourages pedestrians to cross close to the 10m wide junction at a place with no dropped kerbs. The location of the crossing on a main walking route to the schools and the Long Stratton Leisure Centre constitutes a particular threat to school pupils.
- **Swan Lane at St Michael's Road**, an uncontrolled north-south crossing on a pedestrian island. This crossing is also located on the main school route and does not provide pedestrian right of way. The east-west crossing north of the same junction lacks blister tactile paving slabs to guide visually-impaired pedestrians.
- **Flowerpot Lane at Ipswich Road**, traffic signal controlled crossings with no signals for pedestrians, who have to wait for a gap in traffic to cross. Flowerpot Lane is the main access road to and from Tharston Industrial Estate with heavy HGV traffic, and therefore creates a key point of severance for unaccompanied children walking to secondary school, parents with push chairs, and mobility-impaired pedestrians.
- **Hall Lane**, an uncontrolled crossing only marked by dropped kerbs with no blister tactile paving slabs.

Another problem resides in narrow footways, which pose a particular threat to pedestrian safety when they are located adjacent to traffic lanes with important flows of heavy vehicles. This problem can be seen particularly on the eastern footway facing East of England Co-op Supermarket, where the pavement between the building and the carriageway is barely wider than 1m. Narrow footways would remain a pedestrian safety issue even in the case of reduced traffic volumes, and should therefore be widened to improve safety and accessibility.



Fig. 3.2.1 Uncontrolled crossing at Swan Lane-the Street



Fig. 3.2.3 No pedestrian signal at controlled crossing Flowerpot Lane



Fig. 3.2.2 Uncontrolled crossing at Swan Lane-St Michael's Way



Fig. 3.2.4 Narrow footway facing East of England Co-op Supermarket

3.3 Place and Movement Functions

A balanced approach to street design places its place function above the movement function, and as Manual for Streets 2 puts it “as the place function becomes more important, the relative weight given to the movement function will be reduced when deciding on priorities and an appropriate street design”. The existing design of the A140 is oriented towards moving traffic over enabling pedestrian and cycle access. The building of the bypass, although expected to move most of the existing traffic, will not in itself address problems related to inadequate street design. The redesign of the Street will therefore need to focus on prioritising the movement of pedestrians and cyclists over motor vehicles, and on strengthening the Street as a place. How this might be done is the focus of the next chapter.



Fig. 3.3 Street type matrix (source: TfL)



Possible Interventions

04

This chapter explores possible design interventions to improve the public realm in the village centre.

4. Possible Interventions

4.1 The Opportunity

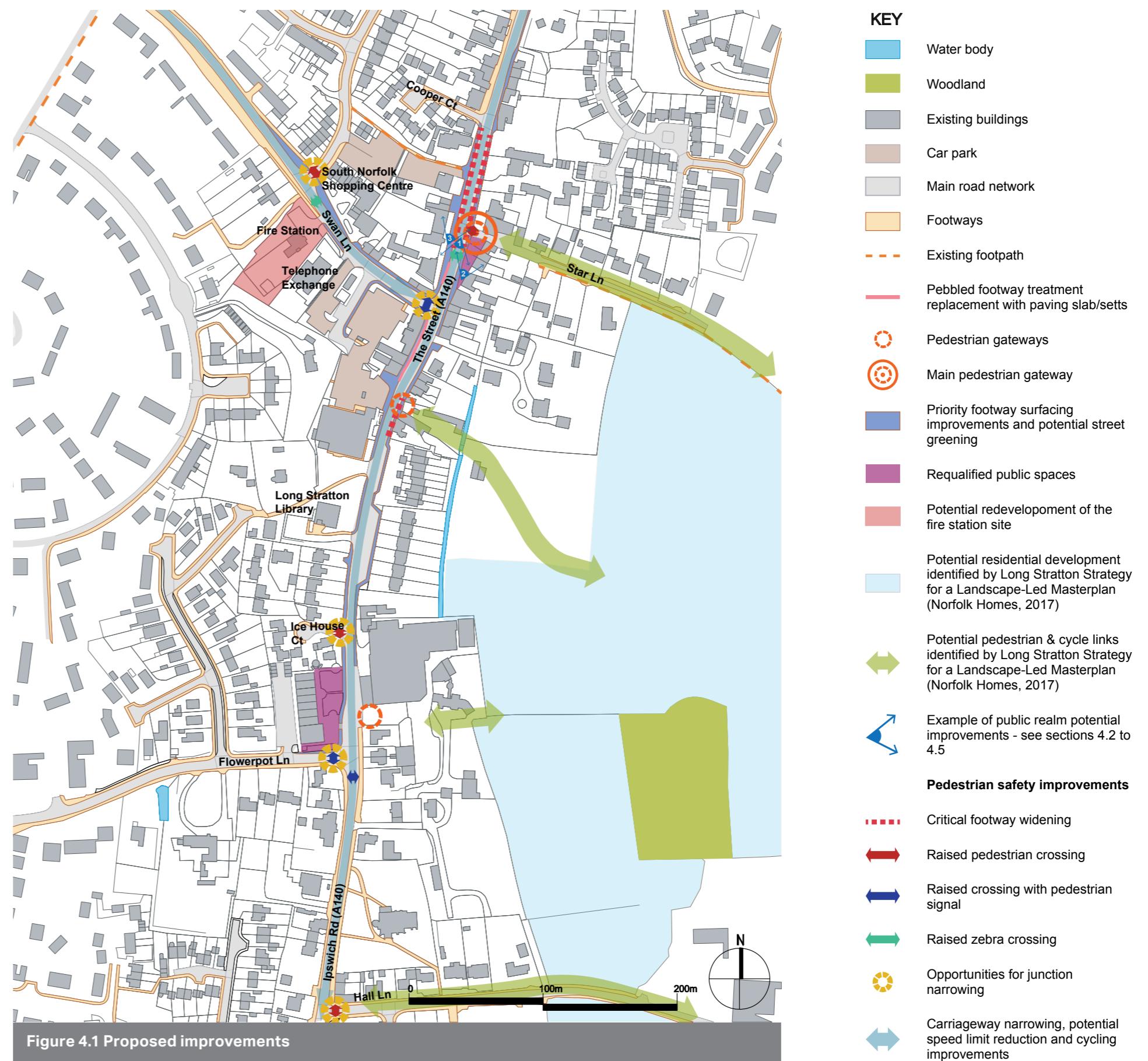
The Street (A140) plays a vital role in providing a sense of place to Long Stratton both as its main shopping street and a major north-south thoroughfare. A number of design interventions could complement the proposed A140 bypass in decreasing the dominance of the motor vehicle and providing a more pleasant pedestrian environment and sustain the role of the village centre as its main shopping destination.

First, **a more inviting walking environment** must be created through the means of well-designed footways. The anticipated reduction in traffic volumes along the Street following to the completion of the A140 bypass is a unique opportunity to **widen the footways** in the village centre. This could be achieved by **narrowing the carriageway** to discourage speeding, as well as **removing the areas of pebbled surfacing** that have no clear function and reduce the effective footway width. Footways are particularly narrow next to bus lay-bys, which create spaces that are difficult to navigate for wheelchair users as well as poor environments for passengers waiting to board. Areas for **new trees** and **street furniture** such as bicycle parking could be created from the space gained from the carriageway. **Repaving footways** with high-quality paving slabs or setts would also reinforce the role of the Street as a place rather than a vehicle thoroughfare, and the use of **paving materials sensitive to the historic context** could heighten the sense of place.

In parallel, there is a need to reduce the motor vehicle dominance, improve pedestrian safety, and encourage cycling in the village centre. Subject to further traffic assessments and road safety audits, **vertical traffic calming solutions** such as raised pedestrian crossings could be introduced to reduce the vehicle dominance and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment on both the Street and Swan Lane, which is the main pedestrian route to the schools west of the village centre. Converting the existing signalised pedestrian crossing between Swan Lane and Star Lane into a **raised zebra crossing** would also contribute to prioritise pedestrians on the main east-west crossing. Other junctions would also benefit from pedestrian safety and accessibility improvements such as **raised crossings, kerb buildouts, and blister tactile paving slabs**. The village should seriously consider **decreasing the speed limit from 30 to 20 mph** to reduce speeding and noise pollution and make cycling more viable, and consider **upgrading the crossings at St Michael's Road and Flowerpot Lane** into raised zebra crossings and signalised crossings with pedestrian signals respectively.

Traffic calming along the Street would provide an incentive to **renew currently underutilised public spaces** created by building set-backs at the junctions with Star Lane and Flowerpot Lane. Although these places are equipped with public benches, they feature unattractive areas of hard standing with minimal landscaping that discourage stopping. Such places are ideal locations for **"pocket park"** treatments with new plants and trees to provide **more greenery**. Designating wider **outdoor seating areas** for adjacent cafés and restaurants could also help anchor these places as community gathering spaces and gateways to the village centre. A **street market** could be introduced. Finally, the potential relocation of the fire station following the completion of the bypass would be unique opportunities to redevelop the sites as additional gathering spaces and improve the retail offer on Swan Lane.

The following pages show some illustrations of how these types of intervention could look in Long Stratton.



4.2 View 1: Main Pedestrian Crossing

The completion of the A140 bypass is projected to divert most of the existing traffic away from the village centre. This presents several opportunities to assert the place of people over vehicles on the village's spine, helping to assert its role as its main shopping street. The measures outlined below would help achieve the desired transformations:

- 1 Raised pedestrian crossings to improve crossing conditions for mobility-impaired pedestrians and families with push-chairs, and decrease vehicle speed at potential conflict zones.
- 2 Opportunity to convert the existing signalised crossing into a zebra crossing to ease pedestrian flows at the main east-west crossing point, subject to further traffic modelling and road safety audit.
- 3 Widened footways and narrowed traffic lanes to improve walking conditions, discourage speeding, and provide more outdoor seating spaces to pubs and cafés.
- 4 Footways resurfaced with high-quality paving slabs or setts to assert the role of the Street as the village's spine and gathering place.
- 5 Areas of pebbled surfacing to be replaced with additional footway space or street planting and bicycle parking
- 6 Pedestrian guardrails removed.
- 7 Opportunities to install new cycle stands.



Fig. 4.2.2 Existing view

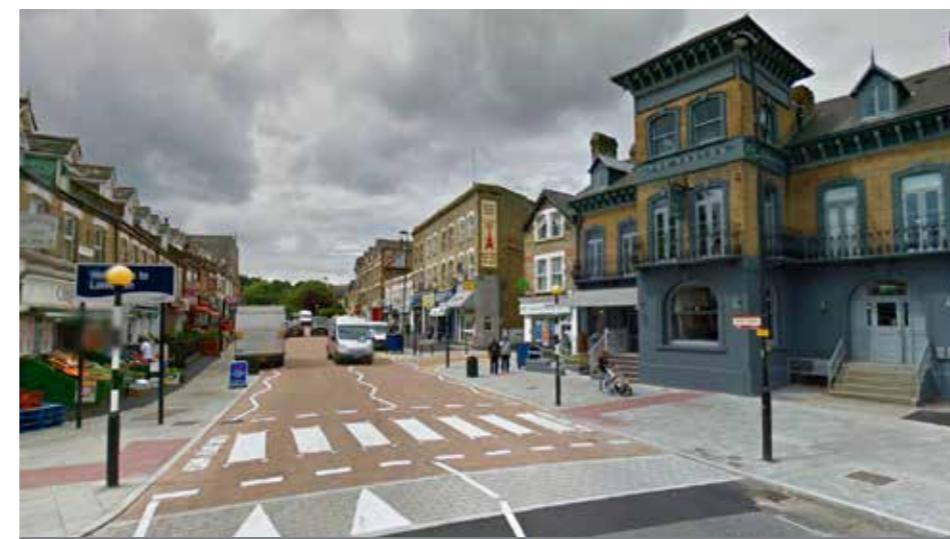


Fig. 4.2.3 Raised pedestrian crossing. Location: Gipsy Road, London Borough of Lambeth



Fig. 4.2.4 Example of high street carriageway narrowing. Location: Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds

4.3 View 2A: Star Lane Pocket Park

This spread presents two design alternatives for the space at the junction with Star Lane, where the Street is at its widest.

The eastern building line recedes at the approach to Star Lane, creating a triangular pebbled space with public benches, low-level planting, and a sign displaying the village name. With the anticipated village extension to the east, Star Lane will become a major pedestrian and cycling connection between the new residential area and the village centre. One design option could use this opportunity to reinforce the role of the junction as a landmark or a gateway through the "pocket park" interventions listed below to create a more inviting green space.

- 1 Bus lay-bys replaced with wider footways to improve bus passenger comfort, improve walking conditions, and enlarge the rest area, subject to further traffic modelling.
- 2 Widened footways and narrowed traffic lanes to ease walking conditions, discourage speeding, and provide additional seating space the nearby café.
- 3 Footways resurfaced with high-quality paving slabs or setts to assert the role of the Street as the village's spine and gathering place.
- 4 Pocket park enlarged with more low-level planting, new trees, and additional benches. Long Stratton village sign retained to mark gateway to the village extension to the east via Star Lane.
- 5 Pedestrian guardrails removed.



Fig. 4.3.1 Proposed public realm improvements



Fig. 4.3.2 Existing view



Fig. 4.3.3 Pocket park



Fig. 4.3.4 Use of seating and greening to activate small public space

4.4 View 2B: Star Lane Market Place

A different design option could use the underutilised space as the location for a weekly market, taking advantage from its natural location as the gravitation centre of the village. Replacing the existing bus lay-by with wider footways and decreasing the carriageway width would help to create safe conditions on market days by discouraging speeding and vehicle dominance.

- 1 Bus lay-bys replaced with wider footways to improve bus passenger comfort, improve walking conditions, and enlarge the rest area, subject to further traffic modelling.
- 2 Widened footways and narrowed traffic lanes to ease walking conditions, discourage speeding, and provide space for a potential marketplace.
- 3 Footways resurfaced with high-quality paving slabs or setts to assert the role of the Street as the village's spine and gathering place.
- 4 Public space enlarged to enable adequate conditions for a marketplace. Long Stratton village sign retained to mark gateway to the village extension to the east via Star Lane. Public benches added to ensure that the space remains active on non-market days.
- 5 Pedestrian guardrail removed.



Fig. 4.4.2 Examples of street markets and programming to activate comparable small public spaces

4.5 View 3: Bus Stop Pinch Point

Pedestrian pinch points are located where footways recede for bus lay-bys. Footways are particularly narrow next to bus shelters and create a sub-standard environment for both bus passengers and pedestrians, especially wheelchair users. The anticipated drop in traffic volumes following the completion of the proposed A140 bypass would reduce the need for bus lay-bys, providing the opportunity to reclaim space for pedestrians.

- 1 Bus lay-bys replaced with footways to improve bus passenger comfort and improve walking conditions, subject to further traffic modelling.¹
- 2 Widened footways and narrowed traffic lanes to ease walking conditions and discourage speeding.
- 3 Footways resurfaced with high-quality paving slabs or setts to assert the role of the Street as the village's spine and gathering place.
- 4 Raised pedestrian crossings to improve crossing conditions for mobility-impaired pedestrians and families with push-chairs, and decrease vehicle speed at potential conflict zones.
- 5 Areas of pebbled surfacing to be replaced with additional footway space or street planting and bicycle parking.



Fig. 4.5.1 Proposed public realm improvements



Fig. 4.5.2 Existing view



Fig. 4.5.3 Natural stone paving applied to a heritage context

¹ The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group also considers that a review of the bus routes serving the area as a whole maybe appropriate.

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Next Steps

05

This chapter concludes the report with recommendations on how to embed findings in the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Summary of Key Proposals

The future growth of Long Stratton will change the character of the village. This needs to be carefully managed as, with careful planning and delivery, many of the coming changes should be for the better. One such example is the re-routing of the A140 round the village and the subsequent downgrading of the Street from a busy part of the strategic road network to a lightly-trafficked high street. Using this as a catalyst for transforming the character of the village centre is the focus of this report.

The report sketches a number of improvements that should be considered, including:

- Improvements for pedestrians and wheelchair users by:
 - Making footways (pavements) wider and designing out pinch points, where practical;
 - Improving pedestrian connectivity across Swan Lane and Flowerpot Lane;
 - Replacing paving and pebbled areas;
 - Changing signalised crossings to zebra crossings; and,
 - Reducing clutter.
- Improvements for cyclists by:
 - Slowing traffic; and,
 - Providing cycle parking and exploring options for cycle routes.
- Improving road safety and reducing the dominance of motor vehicles by:
 - Introducing a 20mph speed limit;
 - Narrowing the carriageway, possibly reducing to single carriageway in places; and,
 - Other vertical traffic calming features (example: speed humps, raised pedestrian crossings, and entry tables).
- Re-establishing the Street at the heart of the village by:
 - Creating or remodelling public spaces;
 - Introducing a small market square;
 - Encouraging businesses, like cafés, to introduce outdoor seating;
 - Planting trees; and,
 - Providing benches.

5.2 Integration in the Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plan policy needs must relate to land use planning – things that must be subject to planning permission. It is not always clear how transport and public realm proposals fit into this category. However in this case, there is clearly going to be an impact to the village centre and the A140 as a result of the 1,800 homes proposed in the LS NP area. In fact, adopted Local Plan policy (Area Action Plan) LNGS1 links the requirement for environmental enhancements to the village centre as well as public transport enhancements along the A140 corridor with the development of 1,800 new homes in the AAP area. The emerging Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan which will provide further detail to the principles established in the adopted AAP will be a good vehicle for articulating detailed requirements for the Town Centre. In the meantime, before the Neighbourhood Plan is made, the improvements proposed in this document will help inform discussions as to the most effective way to deliver the improvements required in the AAP.

Frome Neighbourhood Plan, which is now 'made', shows a way. It includes a policy on Town Centre Remodelling that is very much in the spirit of the recommendations in this report, and could be used as an inspiration.

Frome Policy TC1 – Town Centre Remodelling

Remodelling the Town Centre should provide improvements to the public realm.

Remodelling of the Town Centre [...] which accords with the following principles will be permitted:

- Improve the Town Centre environment for pedestrians.
- Reduce the impact of traffic movement from vehicles and re-order the priorities between motorised vehicles, cycles and pedestrians.
- Enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre, taking into account guidance in the Frome Town Design Statement (October 2015) relating to this area.
- Provide an improved setting and location for the markets.

Demonstrate that it will cause no deterioration in air quality.

Source: Frome Neighbourhood Plan, Frome Town Council, 2016

The focus of this report has been on public realm design interventions. These should be considered alongside other non-design interventions, such as exploring opportunities for supporting or restricting certain types of uses through use classes.

Other things to consider policies for include:

- Redevelopment opportunities for sites within the village centre, such as along Swan Lane, for example in the event of the fire station relocating; and,
- A shop front improvement scheme – could be linked to a shop front design guide or policy within the plan. In some places, this means the local authority provides a small grant which is then match funded by the individual business.

5.3 Delivery

It is recommended the proposals set out in this report are used to inform the direction of the Neighbourhood Plan and, where appropriate, be included as planning policies. The masterplanning report can also be used to inform improvements which are required as part of adopted policy set out in the AAP. Some of the recommendations e.g. the recommendation to implement a 20mph zone along the A140 do not fall under the remit of planning policy and can be implemented alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council will need to work closely with, and apply pressure to, a number of players to ensure that the village centre transformation meets its potential. Included here are: the landowners/promoters of the expansion area; the District Council; the County Council as highways authority; the businesses directly affected; and parishioners.

A good way of improving the chances of the improvements taking place is to link them to the wider development proposals through section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy.

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