



## 03 | Opportunities and Strategies



Introduction

This chapter summarises the issues, opportunities for improvement and proposed strategy outcomes of the study of the towpath.

The research, consultations, and stakeholder correspondence have highlighted a series of physical and behavioural issues, conflicts and possibilities for improvement along the towpath together with constraints regarding retaining some existing conditions.

All the information, comments and input can be categorised into three types of improvement opportunities and strategies:

- Place Specific Improvement Strategies (PSIS)
- Overall Physical Improvements Strategies (OPIS)
- Overall Social Improvements Strategies (OSIS)

This introduction gives an overview of the structure of the chapter which is also illustrated by the adjacent graphic ‘The structure of the study’.

Character Areas (CA)

The character of the stretch of the towpath chosen for the study varies, and the study area is therefore divided into Character Areas, referenced as CA. This chapter starts by an introduction to the defined CAs and identifying the crossing points and bridges along the towpath within the study area.

Place Specific Improvement Strategies (PSIS)

The study of the towpath has shown that the issues and opportunities improvement can be categorised by four Place Specific Improvement Strategies (PSIS):

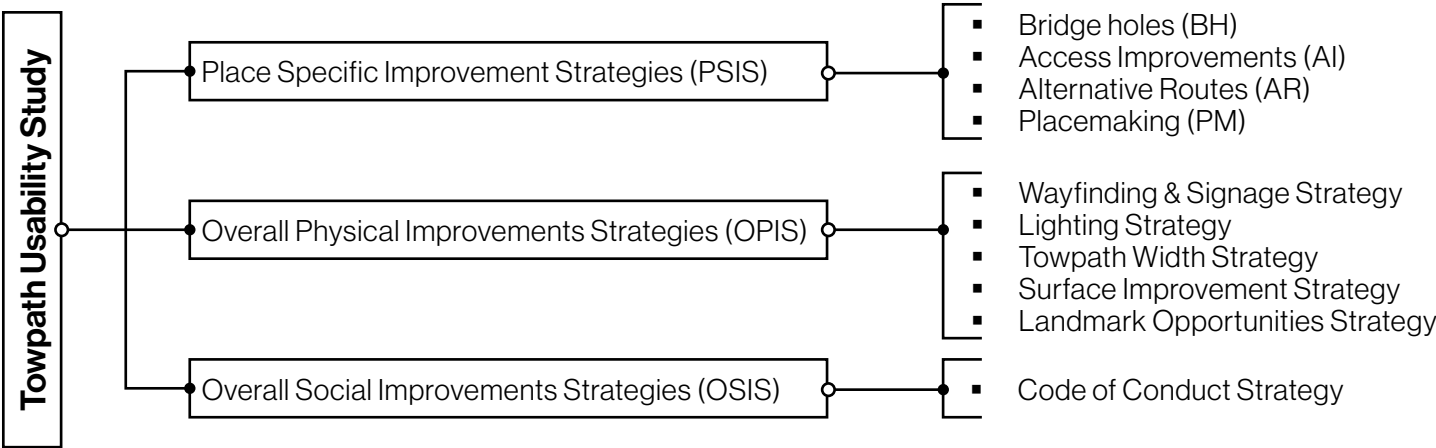
- Bridge holes (BH)
- Access Improvements (AI)
- Alternative Routes (AR)
- Placemaking (PM)

The PSIS are general issues and opportunities for improvement with a place specific reference and each of the four PSIS are illustrated with sketched examples.

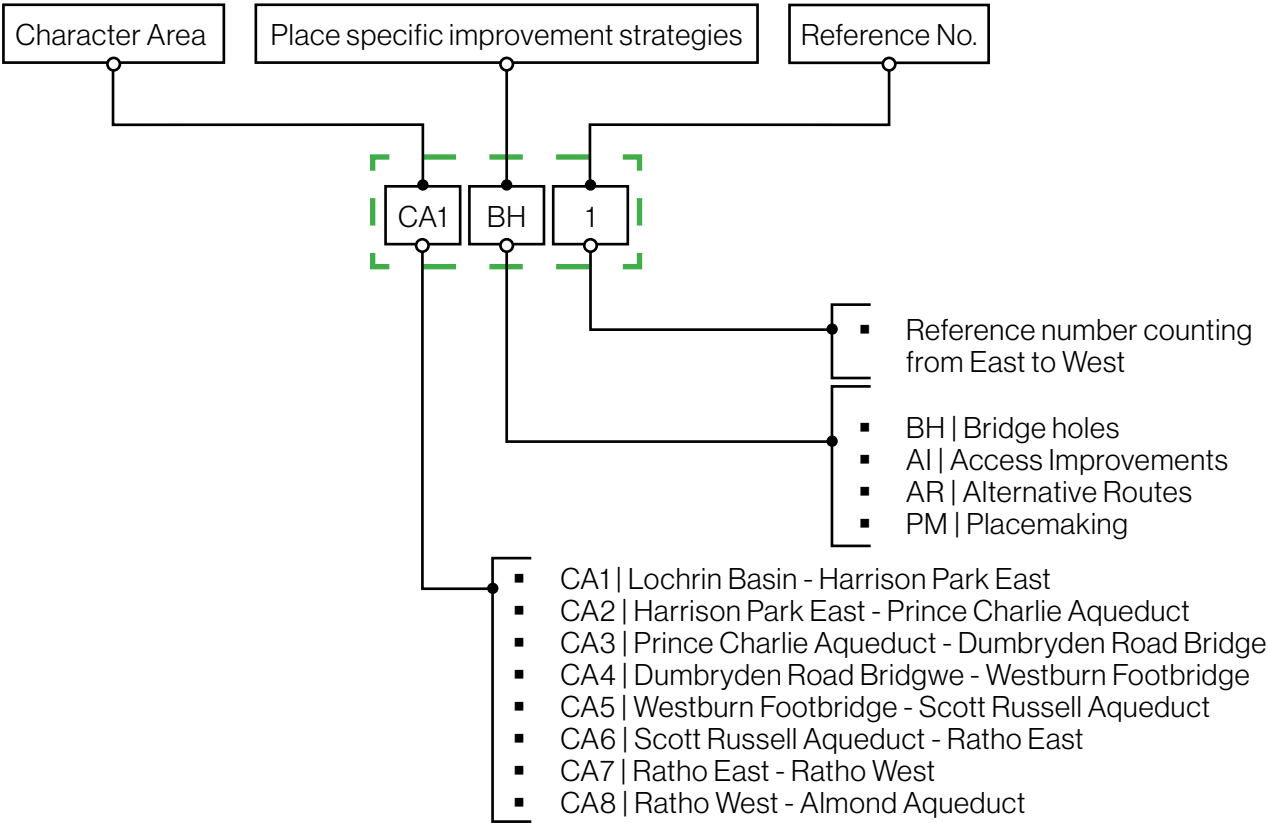
Character Areas and Place Specific improvement Strategies

The following section shows via aerial photos where the PSIS are located. Each location has a reference name based on what CA it is in, which PSIS it is and then it's number within the CA, numerically from East to West. The system for reference names for PSIS is illustrated by the adjacent graphic of the same name.

The study showed that there are opportunities for alternative routes along partly existing paths East of Scott Russell Aqueduct. These are shown in more detail within their respective CA.



The structure of the study



The system for reference names for Place Specific improvement Strategies



**Overall Physical Improvements Strategies (OPIS)**

The study showed opportunities for Overall Physical Improvements Strategies along the towpath:

- Towpath Width Strategy
- Surface Improvement Strategy
- Lighting Strategy
- Landmark Opportunities Strategy
- Wayfinding & Signage Strategy

These may have place specific opportunities (e.g. Wayfinding & Signage Strategy and Surface Improvement Strategy), but are seen as overall strategies which will benefit from being implemented along the whole study area.

**Overall Social Improvements Strategies (OSIS)**

At the Ideas Workshop and through the Walkshops it was strongly expressed a need for a Code of Conduct strategy for the towpath with an educational element to it. This is a long-term strategy, with a focus on hierarchy and use of shared paths which can not be undertaken by the stakeholders alone but will be a start on an overall strategy for the code of conduct for shared paths.

**Test Area**

The Project Team have recommended a Test Area, which can incorporate all strategies. The study has identified such an opportunity from Harrison Park to Meggetland. The final section of the chapter explores this opportunity.



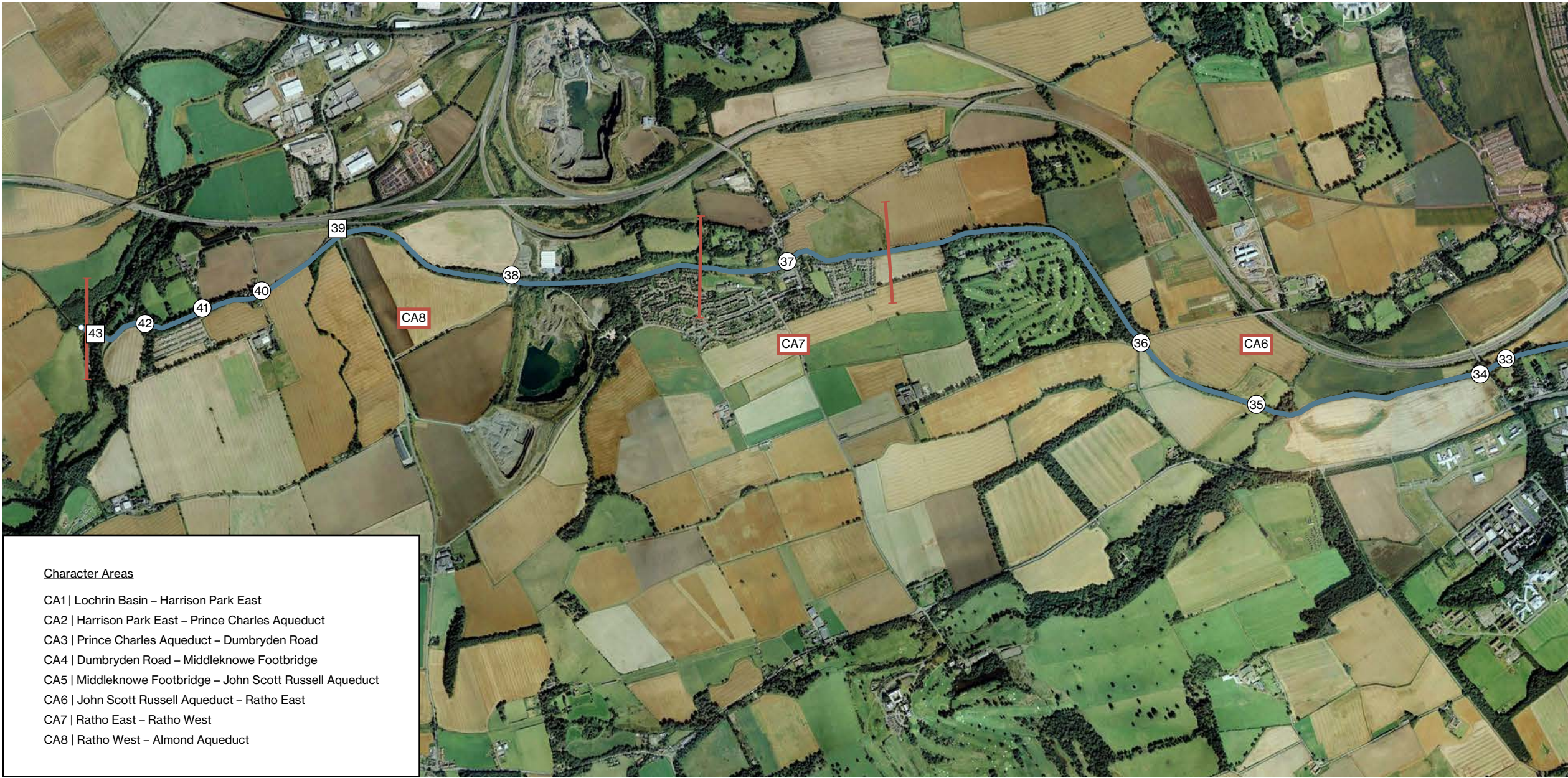
Illustrattion of the suggested Test Area from Harrison Park to Meggetland. Please find more information andfull size of illustration on page 70-71.



# Character Areas

The Character Areas are defined by a significant change in landscape, context and scale as the Union Canal progresses from Lochrin Basin to Almond Aqueduct. This can refer to areas which signify a change from urban to rural environments or may refer to a change in the landscape such as Harrison Park.

The aerial map below shows the entire length of the towpath in question for the study. The canal is marked in blue with crossing points numbered along it and the character areas highlighted in red starting at in the East at Lochrin Basin.



- Character Areas
- CA1 | Lochrin Basin – Harrison Park East
  - CA2 | Harrison Park East – Prince Charles Aqueduct
  - CA3 | Prince Charles Aqueduct – Dumbryden Road
  - CA4 | Dumbryden Road – Middleknowe Footbridge
  - CA5 | Middleknowe Footbridge – John Scott Russell Aqueduct
  - CA6 | John Scott Russell Aqueduct – Ratho East
  - CA7 | Ratho East – Ratho West
  - CA8 | Ratho West – Almond Aqueduct







# Place Specific Improvement Strategies

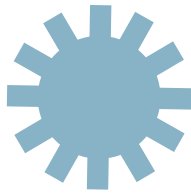
## Bridge Holes (BH)

At many of the bridge holes (specially the original bridges) the towpath going through is narrow and/or sightlines are compromised creating a pinch point and a hazard for all users going through. Often the path under the bridges are uneven cobblestones/setts or a combination of a wide hard stone/concrete edge and a whindust path, which can be slippery when the whindust material is upon the stone.

The study has highlighted a general concern of pinch points at the bridge holes from Viewforth Bridge to the west of Hailes Quarry Park. The path through bridge holes West of Scott Russell Aqueduct often have the combination of hard edge and whindust path, and sightlines are significantly compromised.

There are a series of opportunities to address the pinch point issues at bridge holes via widening the towpath either physically or visually while respecting the requirement for the width of the water space to be a minimum of 4m:

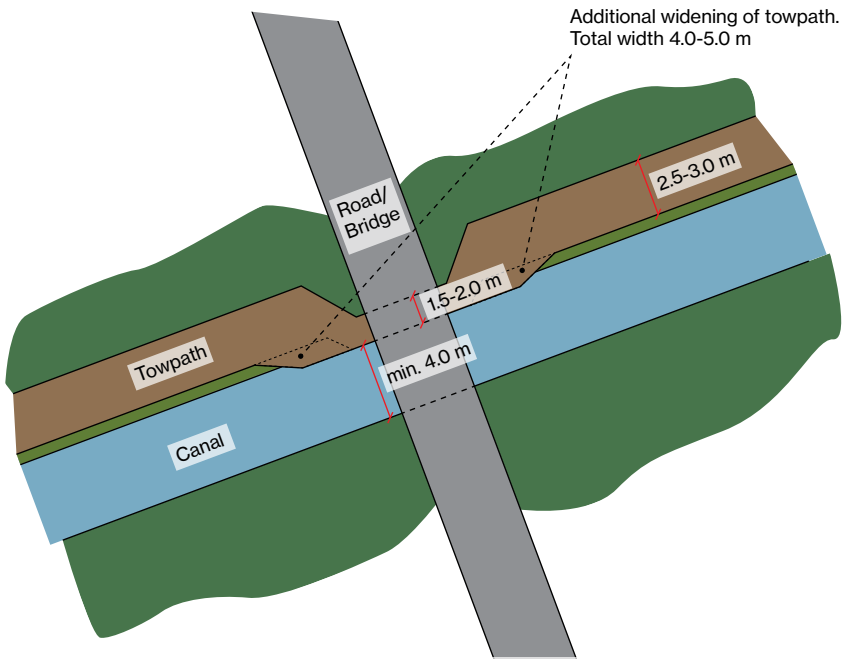
- Soft widening
- Hard widening
- Intrusive (structural) widening or
- Visual widening



Symbol and colour for locations of bridge holes used on the report diagrams



Soft widening | Soft water verge along the canal side widening the towpath on either side of the bridge hole establishing good and longer sightlines for people passing under.

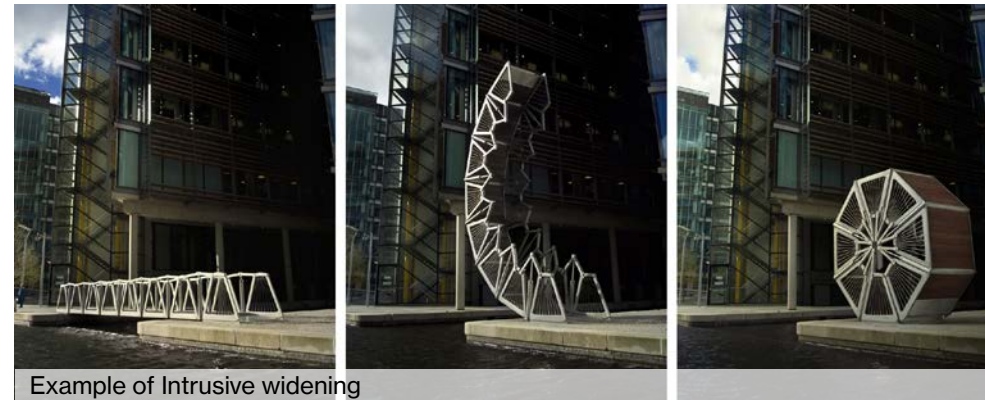


Example of how to widen towpath at bridge hole and improve sight lines with respect to width of water space.



Hard widening | Hard edge along the canal side widening the towpath on either side of the bridge hole establishing good and longer sightlines for people passing under.

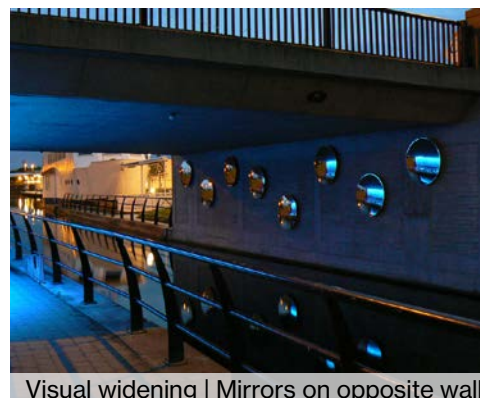




Example of Intrusive widening



Visual widening | Mirrors on opposite wall creating a visual widening of the path by making it possible for users to see oncoming traffic.



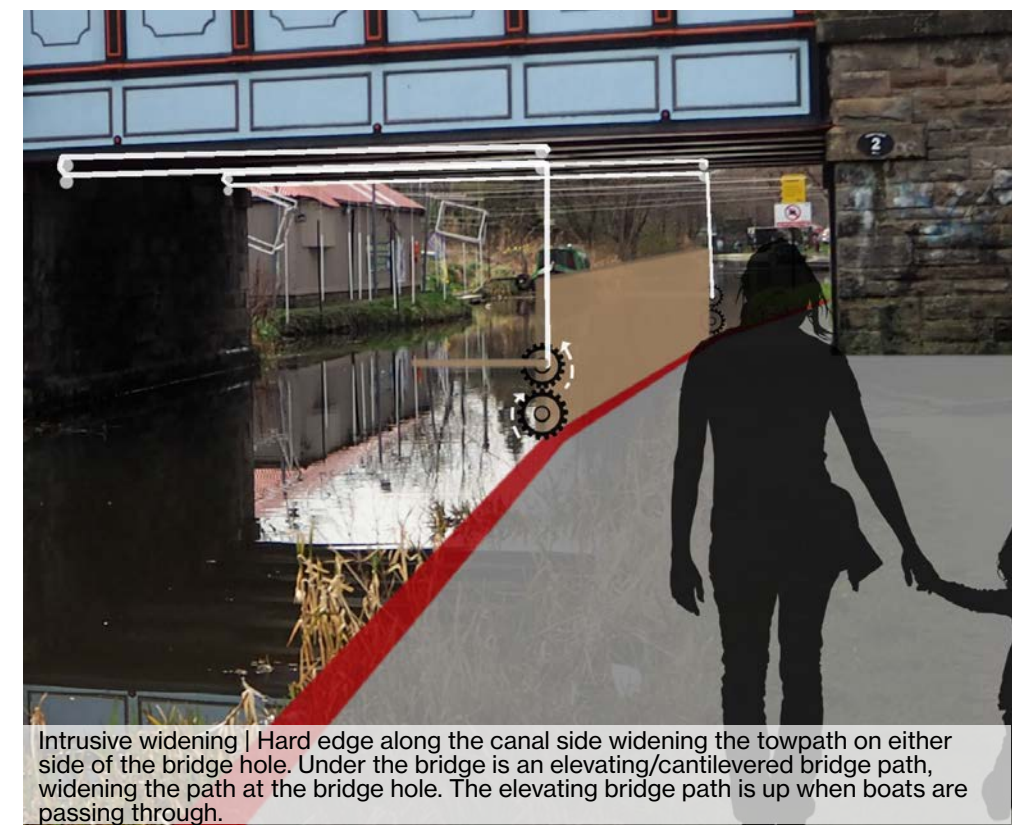
Visual widening | Mirrors on opposite wall



Visual widening | Mirrors on opposite wall



Intrusive widening | Hard edge along the canal side widening the towpath on either side of the bridge hole. Under the bridge is an elevating/cantilevered bridge path, widening the path at the bridge hole. The elevating bridge path is down giving enough space for towpath users passing through.



Intrusive widening | Hard edge along the canal side widening the towpath on either side of the bridge hole. Under the bridge is an elevating/cantilevered bridge path, widening the path at the bridge hole. The elevating bridge path is up when boats are passing through.



Access Improvement (AI)

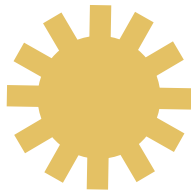
Access improvement opportunities are points along the towpath where it is desired to have an additional access opportunity to/from the towpath to the local and wider context, e.g. existing shared path network. These can be new access points, improvements of access blindspots and/or improvement of existing access point to make these more accessible and convenient for the towpath users.

Locations of access improvement opportunities are based on observed desire routes in the landscape e.g. at Harrison Park and at Wester Hailes and/or requested access improvement by stakeholders via consultation, e.g. at Yeaman Place.

One of the aims of additional access improvement is to guide the public to use these paths to avoid conflicts when people access the towpath via private gardens.

Access improvements can have different forms and could be

- Ramps to connect to existing paths
- Steps to connect to existing road/bridge
- Upgrading desire lines and minor paths to official paths by resurfacing
- Wheeling ramps at existing steps
- Ramps to existing footbridges and bridge crossings



Symbol and colour for locations for access improvements, used on the report diagrams



Steps to connect to existing road/bridge | The steps giving a new access point to the towpath, where there is not enough space for a ramp access.



Ramps to connect to existing paths | The ramp is connecting on either side of a path to an existing footbridge.



Upgrading desire lines and minor paths to official paths by resurfacing | The improvement of the path has created a wider access point to the towpath creating better sightlines.





Ramps to existing footbridges and bridge crossings



Upgrading desire lines and minor paths to official paths by resurfacing



Wheeling ramps at existing steps



Alternative Routes (AR)

Alternative routes are paths giving the cyclist an attractive alternative route leading off the towpath and along partly existing parallel paths, and avoiding in most occurrences the bridge hole conflict points. The alternative routes are mainly to guide commuting cyclists off the towpath to a parallel path, but they will also be designed for mixed and accessible use. Another advantage of the alternative route option is the preservation of existing hedgerows and soft landscape which provides ecological habitat, screening and shelter.

The opportunity for having alternative routes are present at bridges West of Scott Russell Aqueduct, where existing paths are unofficially leading cyclists above and over the bridges and East of Scott Russell Aqueduct at connections to parks, e.g. at Harrison Park and Redhall, where desire lines and existing infrastructure/paths create the base for alternative routes.

Alternative Routes can also go to a wider extent and include good cycle facilities on the parallel city roads. These could particularly be along Dundee Street/ Slateford Road/Lanark Road, but also to some extent Gorgie Road and Colinton Road, to provide good and safe alternative routes for commuter cyclist off the towpath. Feasibility study and proposals for alternative routes have been done by Urban Pioneers in 2014 and presented via the report *Union Canal Towpath - Edinburgh - Proposal for Improvements & Supplementary Cycle Routes*.

Alternative routes can be introduced through

- Signing to existing alternative routes
- Surface change to lead the cyclists off the main towpath in a smooth comfortable curve, to later on return to the main towpath
- Intrusive structural changes such as elevated routes



Symbol and colour for locations of alternative routes, used in the report diagrams



Alternative route leading cyclists above the bridge.



Surface change to lead the cyclists off the main towpath in a smooth curve for later on returning to the main towpath | Alternative route leading cyclists via upgraded woodland path





Alternative route along parallel council owned path



Signing to existing alternative routes.



Surface change to lead the cyclists off the main towpath in a smooth curve for later on returning to the main towpath | Alternative route along parallel council owned path



**Placemaking (PM)**

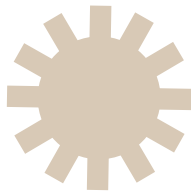
The aim of introducing placemaking along the towpath is to break up the linear nature of the towpath complementing the character of the canal setting and creating nodes which can stimulate a more dynamic experience while travelling along the towpath.

Placemaking can have different level of details, and where there are opportunities to make interventions at key areas, desirable seating can be provided. It can also be effective to combine placemaking with wayfinding and add significant elements to the places, such as integrated seating or art works.

There are significant areas, such as west of Harrison Park, between Leamington Lift Bridge and Viewforth Bridge and at the green stretch at Wester Hailes where significant placemaking strategies could be developed. In other cases, such as at aqueducts and west of Yeaman Place bridge the implementation of seating would be sufficient to provide placemaking.

Placemaking can as an example be in the form of:

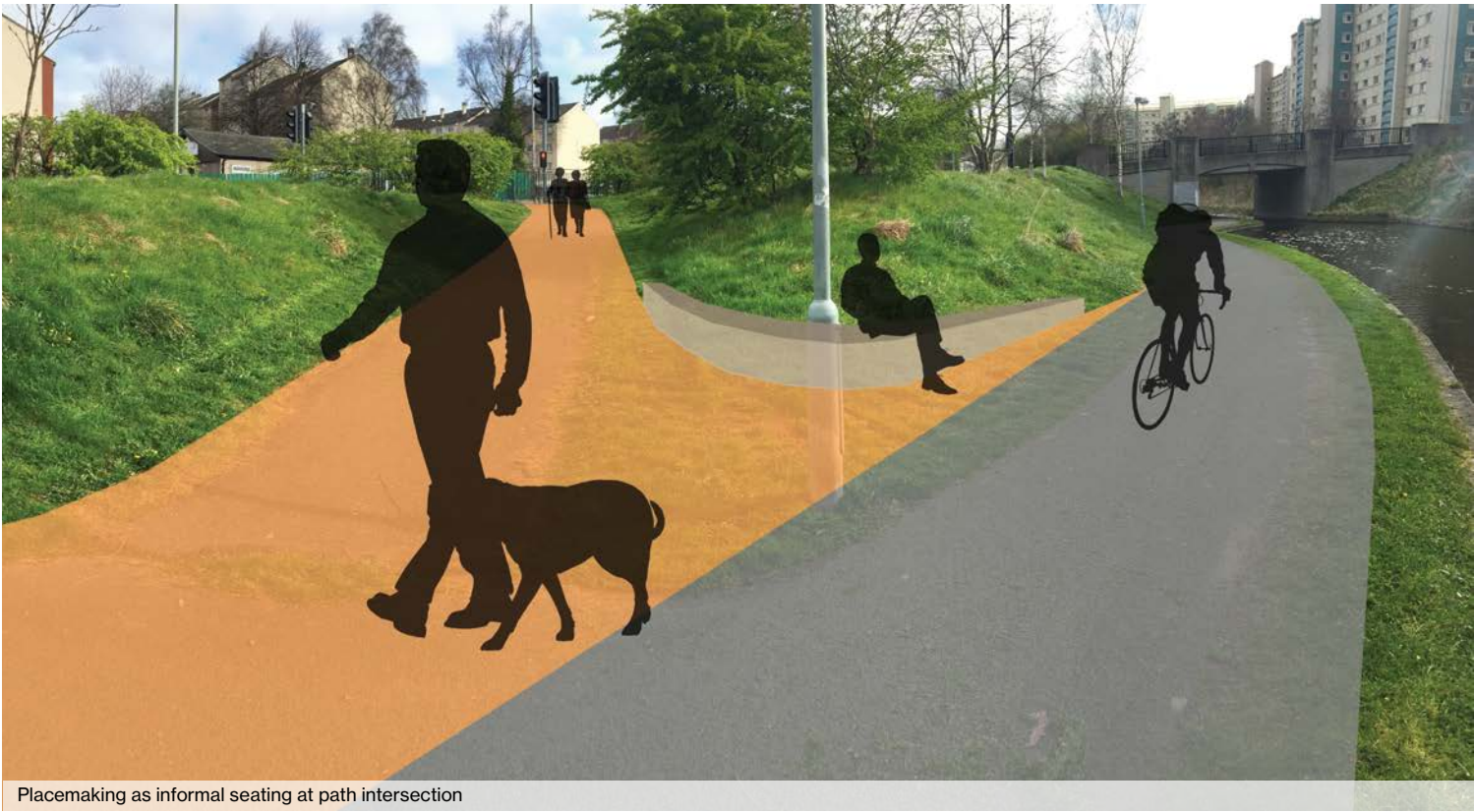
- Seating
- Urban playground
- Lighting features
- Picnic areas
- Surface changes



Symbol and colour for locations of alternative routes, used in the report diagrams.



Picnic area just west of Scott Russell Aqueduct



Placemaking as informal seating at path intersection



