

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020

Dear Downs Committee,

Many thanks for inviting us to attend the special meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> January when the committee will revisit the Downs Place and Movement Framework with a presentation from Richard Goldthorpe.

The resolution from one of your autumn meetings mentions that Cycle Sunday has been invited to present data from a traffic survey of Circular Road. We have not yet commissioned the survey as we have decided that we can't spend any more charitable money on the leisure loop proposal at present. We appreciate that there are ongoing discussions about creating new routes, both segregated and shared use paths in several places around the Downs. This includes consideration of routes and surface materials. We are keen to see the outcome of these discussions before proceeding with the survey. We also think that data collected in the Spring/Summer will be more useful to all of us as it will include cars using Circular Road for leisure activities in the evenings.

Despite not having data on the traffic survey, we would very much like to come along and discuss the Leisure Loop with you at the meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> January. We could do a short presentation about it, as some members of the committee have changed since we visited the Downs with members to walk the route back in May. We could also update you on our conversations with the National Trust and visit to Kingston Lacy in October to look at one of their new multi-user trails. I am teaching every Monday now so could reliably get there for 4pm and join the meeting then.

Please find attached the proposal from May 2019 that we developed with John Grimshaw and Caroline Levett of Greenways and Cycleroles. Also attached is a map with an alternative route for part of the section from Stoke Road to the Sea Walls. This shows which stretches of the loop would be entirely new and those that would be created from existing paths.

We look forward to hearing from you and very much hope to see you all on January 20<sup>th</sup>,

Kind regards,

Vicki Cracknell and Johnny Wood.

## Downs Leisure Loop - a proposal for discussion



*View from Downleaze looking south*



Developed by Cycle Sunday with Greenways & Cycleroutes Ltd  
May 2019



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Appendix 1 Initial Proposal March 2019

Appendix 2 Wessex Ecological Consultancy Report May 2019



Traffic-free Cycle Sunday, 2018

## The Downs Leisure Loop - Summary

The 442 acre grassland plateau of the Clifton and Durdham Downs is a place of immense importance to the city of Bristol – for its beautiful and iconic landscapes, its history, its rich ecology, and as a popular place for people to come and enjoy themselves.

The Downs are widely used by the people of Bristol for recreation and fitness. The Downs Football League play here regularly, along with many other diverse sporting groups, and many leisure events take place each year including the Downs Festival.

The site is managed and conserved by the Downs Committee, who since 1861, have protected the area from development. The majority of the Downs consist of fairly level grassland crossed by avenues of trees and roads. The Downs are designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. They include large areas of unimproved calcareous grassland which support a rich and diverse flora. There is also a considerable amount of scrub and tree growth mainly in the south and eastern part of the site and which supports a good variety of bird and insect species. There is a continuous programme of work to manage and control the extent of the scrub, to maintain the ecological and landscape balances. The layout of roads around the Downs has gradually developed, largely from the formalisation of desire lines during the 19th century.

The landscape and uses of the Downs are discussed in detail in *The Downs Place and Movement Framework*<sup>1</sup> commissioned by the Downs Committee in 2015. This report written by the City Design Group has formed the foundation of the current proposal for the Downs Leisure Loop.

### Why new paths? The amenity value of accessible shared-use paths

Well-made paths to improve access to and movement of people on the Downs would be popular, not only with those on bikes but also with pedestrians who benefit from a flat dry surface, especially people with wheels: buggies,

mobility vehicles and wheelchairs. For the past four years, families and those less confident riding a bike have come to Cycle Sunday events to safely explore the Downs by bike. The event has demonstrated a high level of interest in cycling around the Downs.

Given the flat terrain, the Downs are ideal for walking, running and cycling. Walkers and runners have marked out a series of “desire lines” across the Downs and these have become badly eroded in places. But access for people on bikes is limited. There is one cycle path along Stoke Road but other than this, people riding bikes can only access the Downs on the roads. And as traffic levels have increased over recent decades, these roads have come to feel unsafe and a barrier for many cyclists, particularly children.

In Bristol, latest census data showed that 29% of households do not have access to a car<sup>2</sup>. Visitors can reach Stoke Road by bus. A new path leading to the café at the Seawalls would create a welcoming and accessible route for them. It would mean that people in wheelchairs who don't have a car can make their way safely to the Seawalls. Bike hire at Café Retreat on Stoke Road would provide an opportunity to cycle around the area.

### The route

This proposal sets out a loop of 2.3 miles in length around the western area of the Downs. It would follow Rockleaze and Downleaze, Circular Road, Ladies Mile and a short part of Stoke Road. The proposal outlines the three sections of the loop:

Building a new path along Rockleaze and Downleaze along a heavily eroded “desire line” from Stoke Road and leading to the new café at the Seawalls.

On Circular Road options include making the road one way, and/or installing physical traffic calming measures to enforce the 20mph limit.

Reconstructing the narrow, poor quality footpath along Ladies Mile, adjusting the course in some parts.



This proposal has been developed by Cycle Sunday working with the local charity Greenways & Cycleroutes. It has taken account of the landscape and ecology of the Downs, including guidance from a recent ecology survey (see Appendix 2: Wessex Ecological Consultancy Report May 2019).

The working title “Downs Leisure Loop” has been used throughout the document. It would be great to hear ideas from the Downs Committee about what the route could be called.

Details of the route are set out on the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> City Design Group, Place Directorate (2015) *Place and Movement Framework: Clifton and Durdham Downs*. Available at: [https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Downs%20Committee/201511231400/Agenda/1123\\_11.pdf](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Downs%20Committee/201511231400/Agenda/1123_11.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Bristol City Council (2012) *Key Statistics about Bristol from the 2011 Census*. Available at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/statistics-census-information/census-2011>

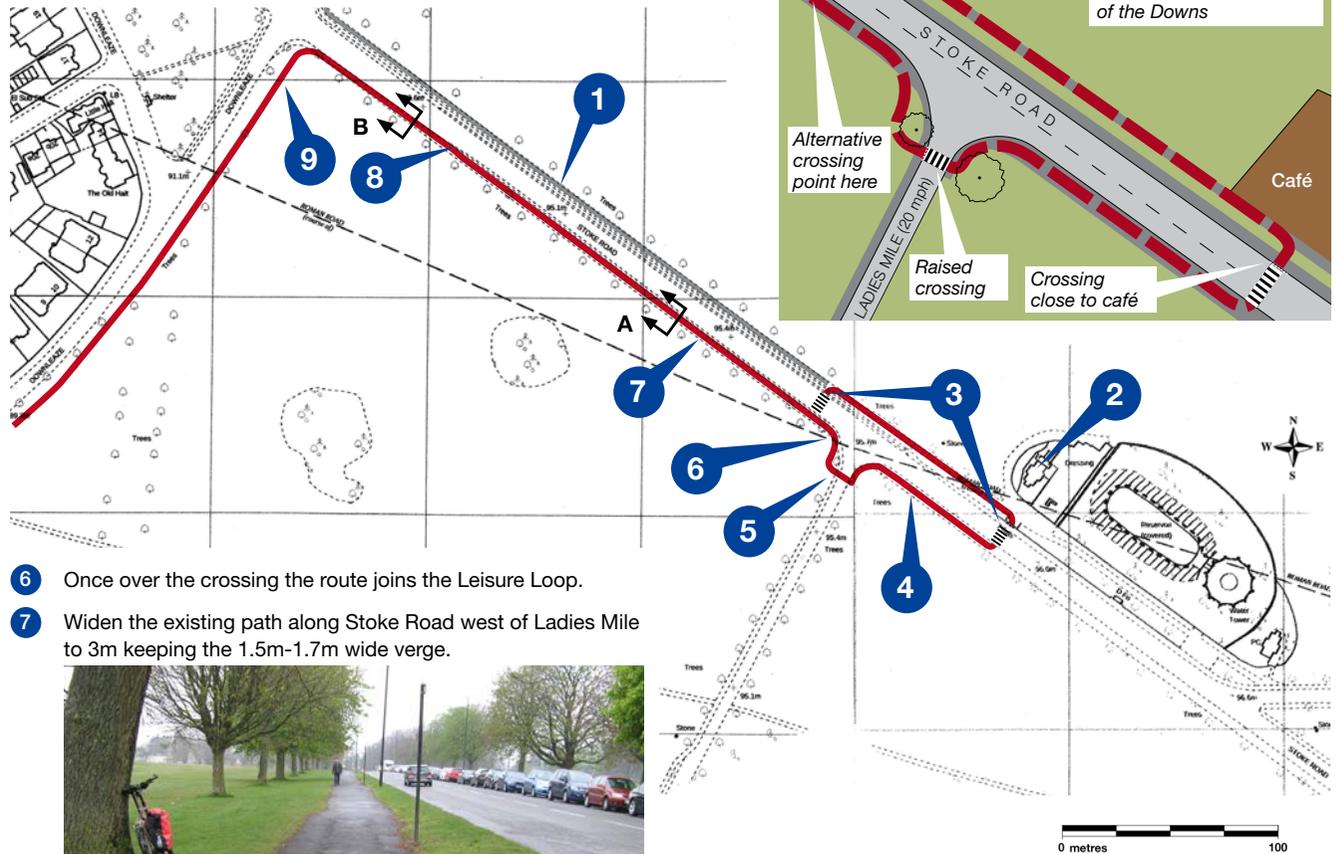
# Proposal for a Leisure Loop on Clifton Downs - suggested details

## Stoke Road Section

- 1 There is an existing cycling route on north side of Stoke Road, set back from the roadside footpath.
- 2 Café provides a very useful focus of routes on the Downs.
- 3 Proposed raised zebra crossing to link across Stoke Road where heavy flows of traffic in effect divides the Downs in two. A central crossing is very much needed. Its location could be either near the café or to the west of Ladies Mile. The latter location would have the advantage of avoiding the need for a secondary crossing of Ladies Mile, whilst the former might relate more naturally to the café.
- 4 Existing wide, and little used footway is suitable for shared use.



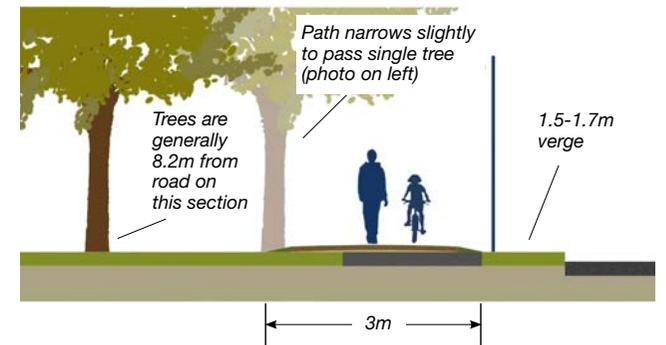
- 5 A raised shared use crossing at this location would serve to indicate to drivers that they are entering Ladies Mile, a place which is not a main road, and has a 20 mph speed limit.



- 6 Once over the crossing the route joins the Leisure Loop.
- 7 Widen the existing path along Stoke Road west of Ladies Mile to 3m keeping the 1.5m-1.7m wide verge.



Cross section A: Stoke Road

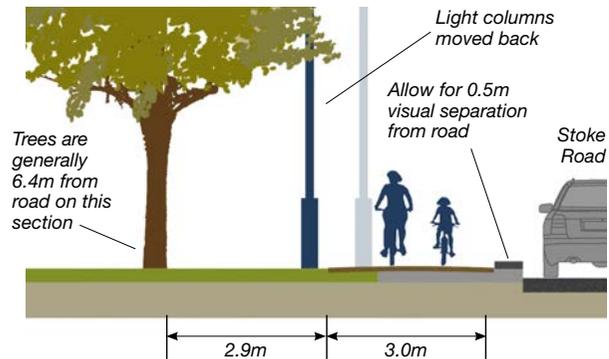


### Stoke Road Section

- 8 At this end of Stoke Road the verge is lost to road widening. The existing path needs widening to 3.5m to allow for a clear visual separation strip alongside the road. Two light columns now need to be set back a further 1 metre.



Cross section B: northern end of Stoke Road



- 9 The view here shows the connection to the road crossing at the lights and to the Downlease leg of the loop.



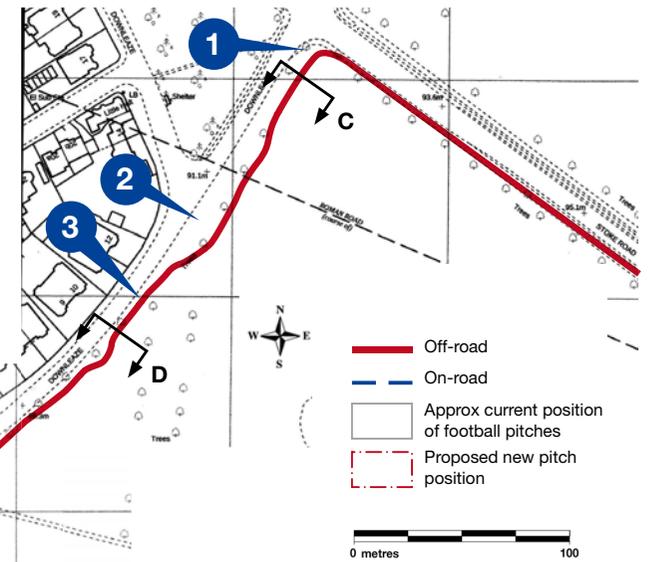
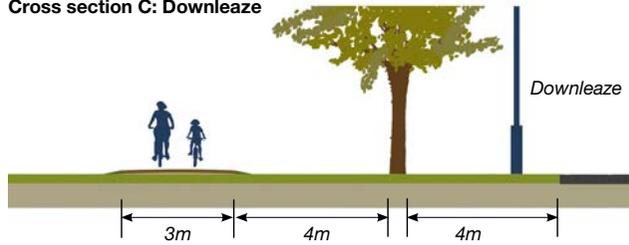
### Stoke Road to Downleaze, Rockleaze, Sea Walls and Circular Road

This section follows the general line of the well-trodden eroded path near the edge of Durham Downs.

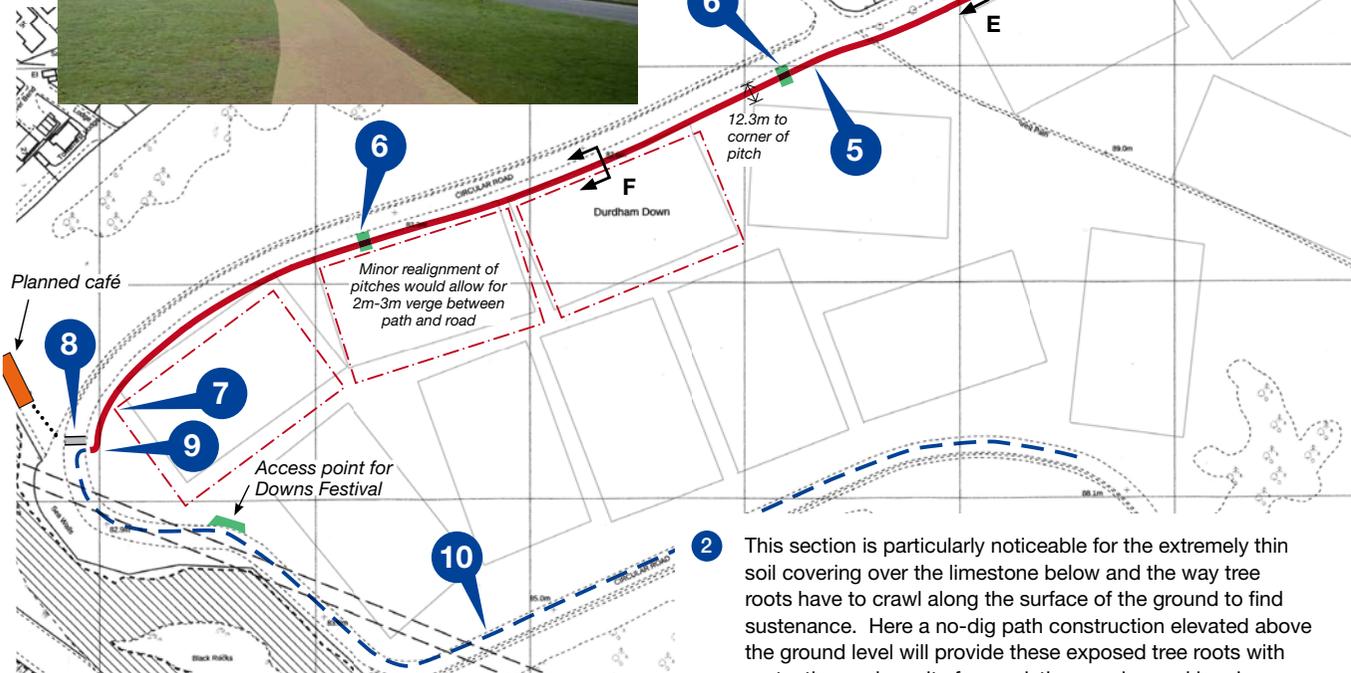
- 1 Link to existing crossing over road and the Stoke Road section of the Leisure Loop. Follow existing well worn path line, keeping outside tree canopy as far as possible.



Cross section C: Downleaze



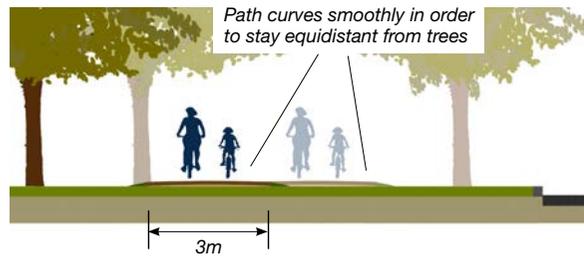
- 3 Past the end of the Avenue the path would meander around to give trees as wide, and equal, a berth as possible.



- 2 This section is particularly noticeable for the extremely thin soil covering over the limestone below and the way tree roots have to crawl along the surface of the ground to find sustenance. Here a no-dig path construction elevated above the ground level will provide these exposed tree roots with protection and respite from existing running and jogging traffic. See "no dig" construction detail on page 9.

## Stoke Road to Downleaze, Rockleaze, Sea Walls and Circular Road

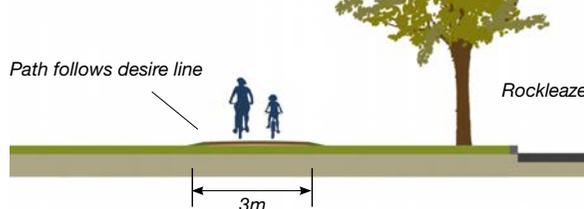
**Cross section D: Downleaze**



- 4 Make a careful junction with existing cross paths, with pedestrian priority signage.



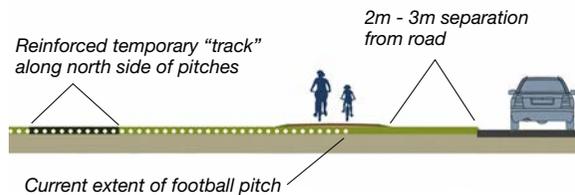
**Cross section E: Rockleaze**



- 5 Once past the path junction, the Leisure Loop can move closer to the road keeping as wide a grass verge as possible but generally not less than 2 or 3 metres in order to maintain its attractive feel, separate from traffic.



**Cross section F: Path to north of football pitches**



- 6 Two 6 metre sections of the path in this zone will be constructed with reinforced base to act as crossing points for heavy vehicles for the Downs Festival. The path surface will not look different.

- 7 Along the way 3 football pitches will need to be marked out 2 or 3 metres to the south. At this point the corner of the furthest pitch comes within 3 metres of the roadside, so careful thought is needed as to how best to fit pitch and path in together.



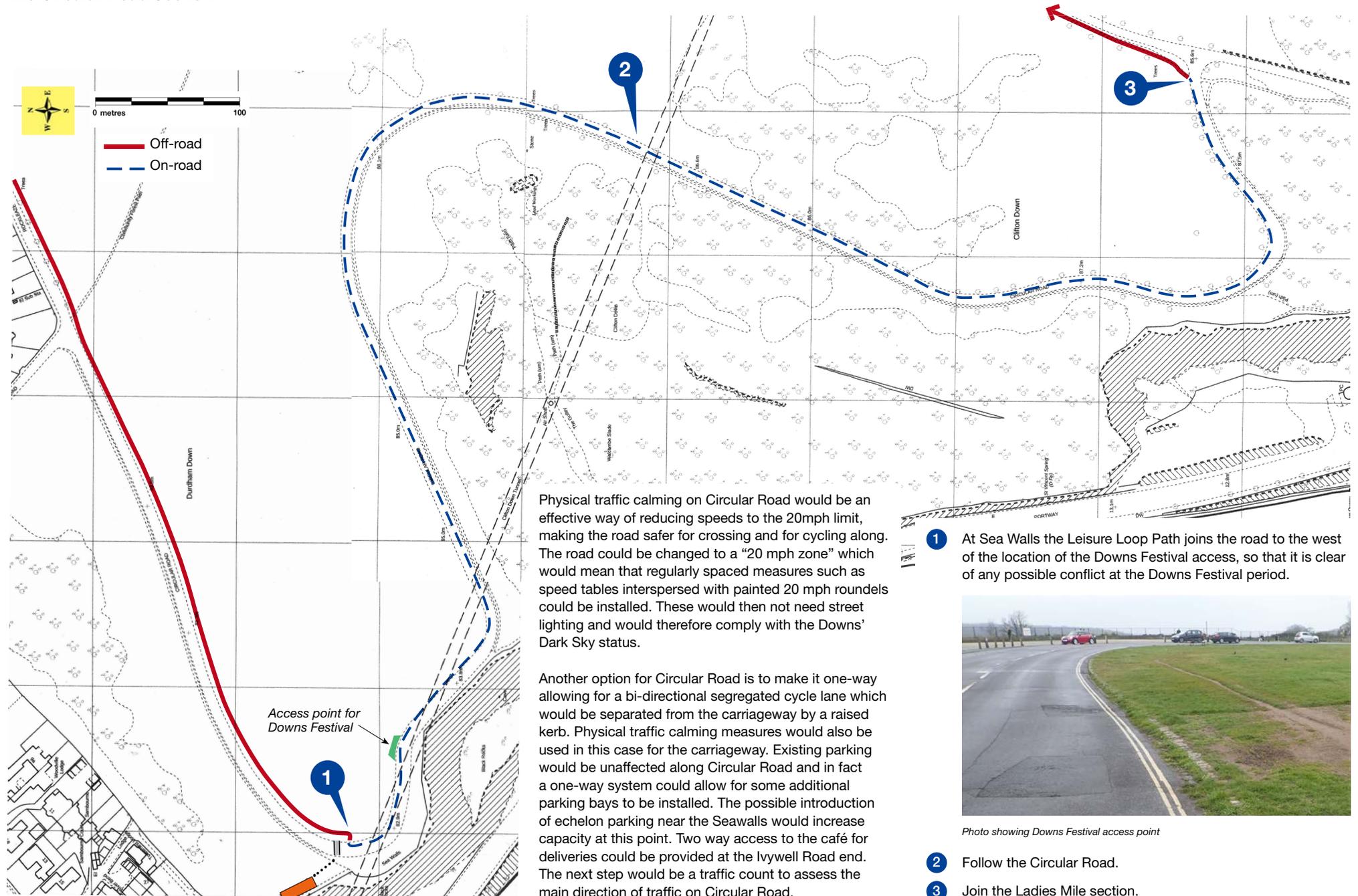
- 8 The planned new café will be popular. The Leisure Loop should have a clear connection to fit with a carefully marked out crossing of the Circular Road, possibly a zebra crossing.



*Proposed café design (Chris Goodsall Architects)*

- 9 The Leisure Loop should join the Circular Road at Sea Walls. Once the Leisure Loop is in place, the line of the Festival boundary fence would need to be slightly adjusted.
- 10 Cyclists continue on the Circular Road, whilst pedestrians can cross to the footpath on the other side.

### The Circular Road Section



Physical traffic calming on Circular Road would be an effective way of reducing speeds to the 20mph limit, making the road safer for crossing and for cycling along. The road could be changed to a “20 mph zone” which would mean that regularly spaced measures such as speed tables interspersed with painted 20 mph roundels could be installed. These would then not need street lighting and would therefore comply with the Downs’ Dark Sky status.

Another option for Circular Road is to make it one-way allowing for a bi-directional segregated cycle lane which would be separated from the carriageway by a raised kerb. Physical traffic calming measures would also be used in this case for the carriageway. Existing parking would be unaffected along Circular Road and in fact a one-way system could allow for some additional parking bays to be installed. The possible introduction of echelon parking near the Seawalls would increase capacity at this point. Two way access to the café for deliveries could be provided at the Ivywell Road end. The next step would be a traffic count to assess the main direction of traffic on Circular Road.

1 At Sea Walls the Leisure Loop Path joins the road to the west of the location of the Downs Festival access, so that it is clear of any possible conflict at the Downs Festival period.



Photo showing Downs Festival access point

- 2 Follow the Circular Road.
- 3 Join the Ladies Mile section.

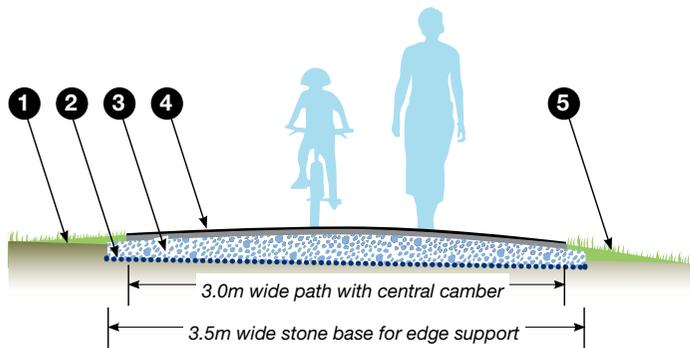
## Typical construction details proposed for paths on the Downs

Any paths need to be sympathetic and appropriate for the Downs. Paths need to have a durable surface as they will take heavy levels of public use, and they need to be well constructed so that they last for many years with only modest amounts of maintenance. Paths should not feel urban, so no kerbs will be used and the grass verges will be allowed to grow in slightly to give a soft edge. The exact line of the paths, to be agreed on site, will avoid straight sections but will move around a little in response to the presence of trees or other natural details. There will be no street lighting. The overall ambience should be one of having enjoyed walking or cycling along the paths.

The width will be generally 3.0 metres so as to be suitable for shared use although a slight narrowing at pinch points is acceptable provided visibility is good.

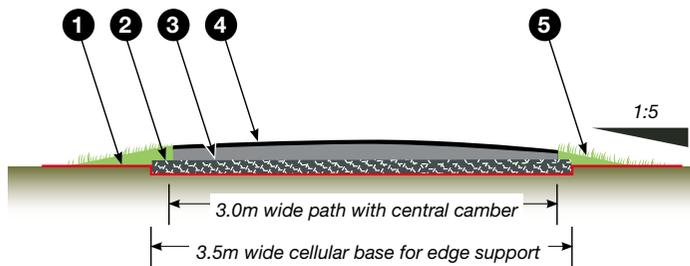
There will be two basic types of construction, depending upon whether or not the path is running past trees. In the first case the layer of base stone can be placed direct on the ground, whilst in the second case a cellular 'mattress' minimises compaction and root damage whilst at the same time providing voids for the root system to flourish.

### Standard path arrangement on open ground



- 1 Excavate a thin layer of soil, or down to the rocky base, and set this to one side to be used to build up the shoulders at the end of the work.
- 2 If there are any sections of poor soils then lay a layer of polypropylene filter fabric to secure the base.
- 3 Construct a sound stone base 150mm thick and 3.5 metres wide. This extra width is needed to secure the sides of the finished path instead of using kerbs.
- 4 Lay the finished surface layer 3.0 metres wide. This typically will be a machine laid tarmac surface 60mm thick arranged with a central camber. This can then be finished with limestone dust brushed in to give the most natural look possible.
- 5 Build up soil verges either side to reach the edge of the tarmac. These should slope away from the path at 1:5 so as to allow for easy mowing. At the end of all this work the path will run on a slight 'causeway' some 150mm above the general ground level.

### Standard path arrangement near trees



- 1 Remove the barest minimum of soil, just sufficient to level the ground. This is known as 'no dig'.
- 2 Lay a layer of Geoweb Tree Root Protection mattress, or similar. This will have cells between 75mm and 100mm deep as shown in the photograph. This are filled with a single size stone so as to ensure that there are numerous voids above the tree root zone.
- 3 Lay a thin layer of base stone of up to 100mm thick.
- 4 Finish with the tarmac wearing surface and dust.
- 5 Build up the verges and shoulders with a 1:5 slope.

Note that where the path coincides with an existing path, then that path will be dug up, and its excavated materials used as part of the new work, unless agreed otherwise. Any sections of path to be abandoned will be carefully dug up and then the ground soiled and either seeded or turfed to restore the area to grassland.

### Crossing for heavy plant

These will generally consist of a pad of fibre reinforced concrete across the path on the line of any maintenance or event construction traffic.



Construction and finished path through Wormside Wood (Grade II Listed), part of the Waddesdon Greenway Project 2018

### The Ladies Mile Section

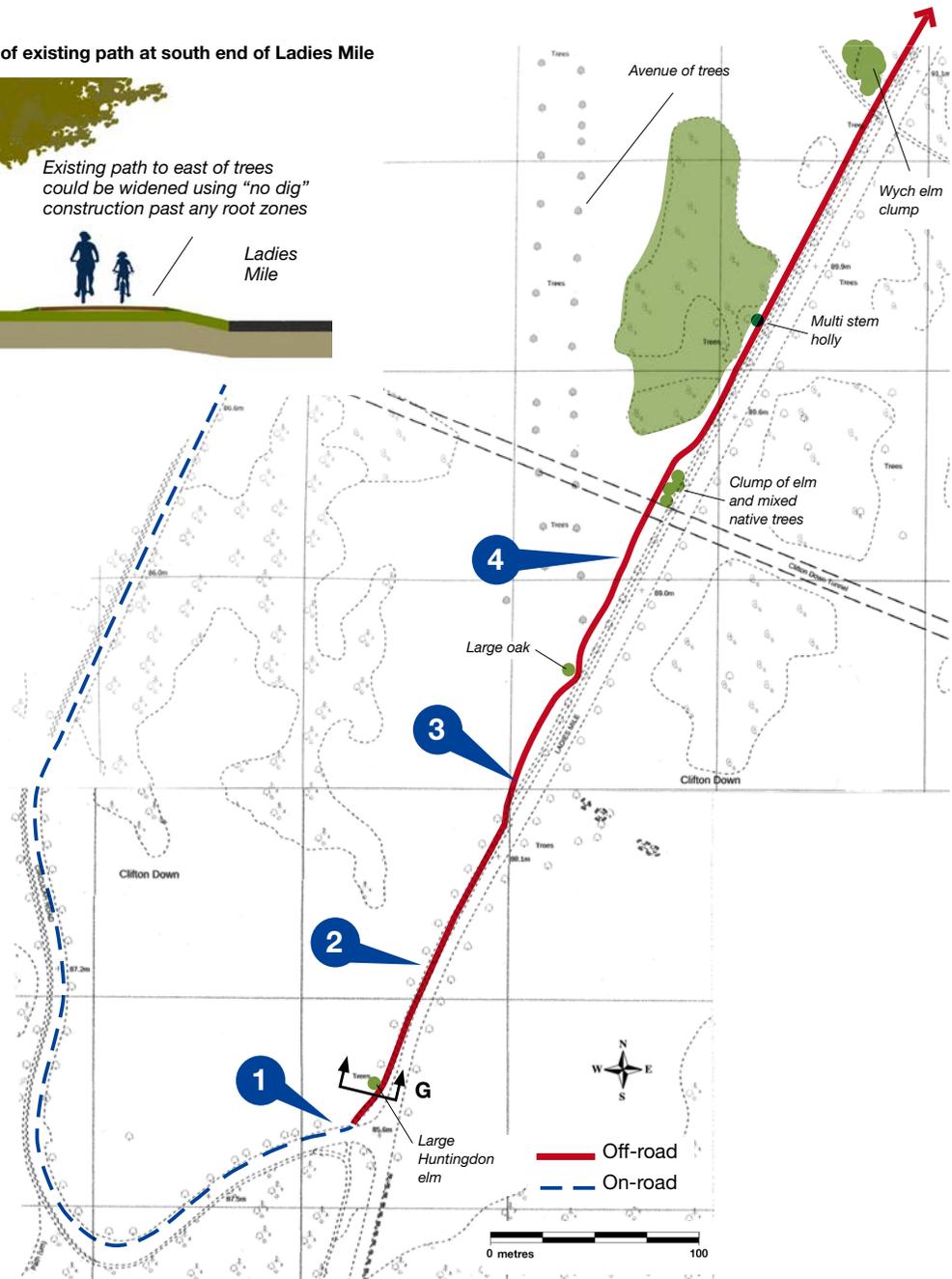
An existing tarmac footpath runs along the whole length of Ladies Mile. The path is narrow, only 1.5m wide on average, and is badly broken up in places, especially past trees. Our general proposal is to construct a new path. In some parts this would follow the line of the existing path, taking this up and replacing it with a newly constructed wider path. For much of its length, the new path could be set a little further back from the roadside trees. Careful removal of the existing path and re-soiling and re-turfing would provide better conditions for existing trees.

See the typical cross section sketch on page 11.

- 1 The Leisure Loop path should leave the Circular Road on the line of the existing footpath, the exact line of the path carefully avoiding disturbance to grassland here.



Cross section G: Follow the line of existing path at south end of Ladies Mile

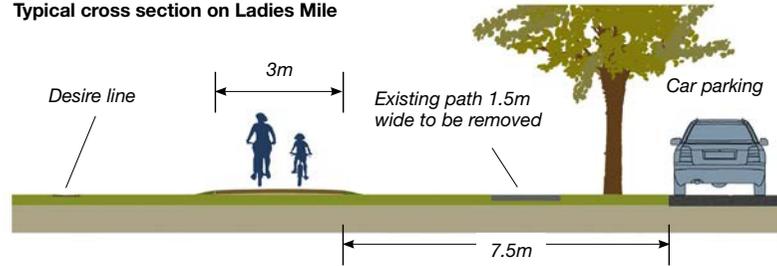


### The Ladies Mile Section

- 2 This first section runs along the line of the existing footpath, between the line of trees and the roadway.



Typical cross section on Ladies Mile



Over the section adjacent to parked cars, the proposed path will generally be new built beside the existing, which will then be carefully removed and turfed over. The exact position of the path to be decided on site depending on whether it would be better to be beyond the root zone or not.

- 3 For the next section, alongside the parked cars, the Leisure Loop should be generally set to the west of the existing path. On occasion it will need to veer towards the road and pick up the existing path to take account of standing trees.



- 4 An open section where the Leisure Loop can move away from the existing path. It would be interesting to mark the line of Clifton Down Tunnel below in some way.



### The Ladies Mile Section

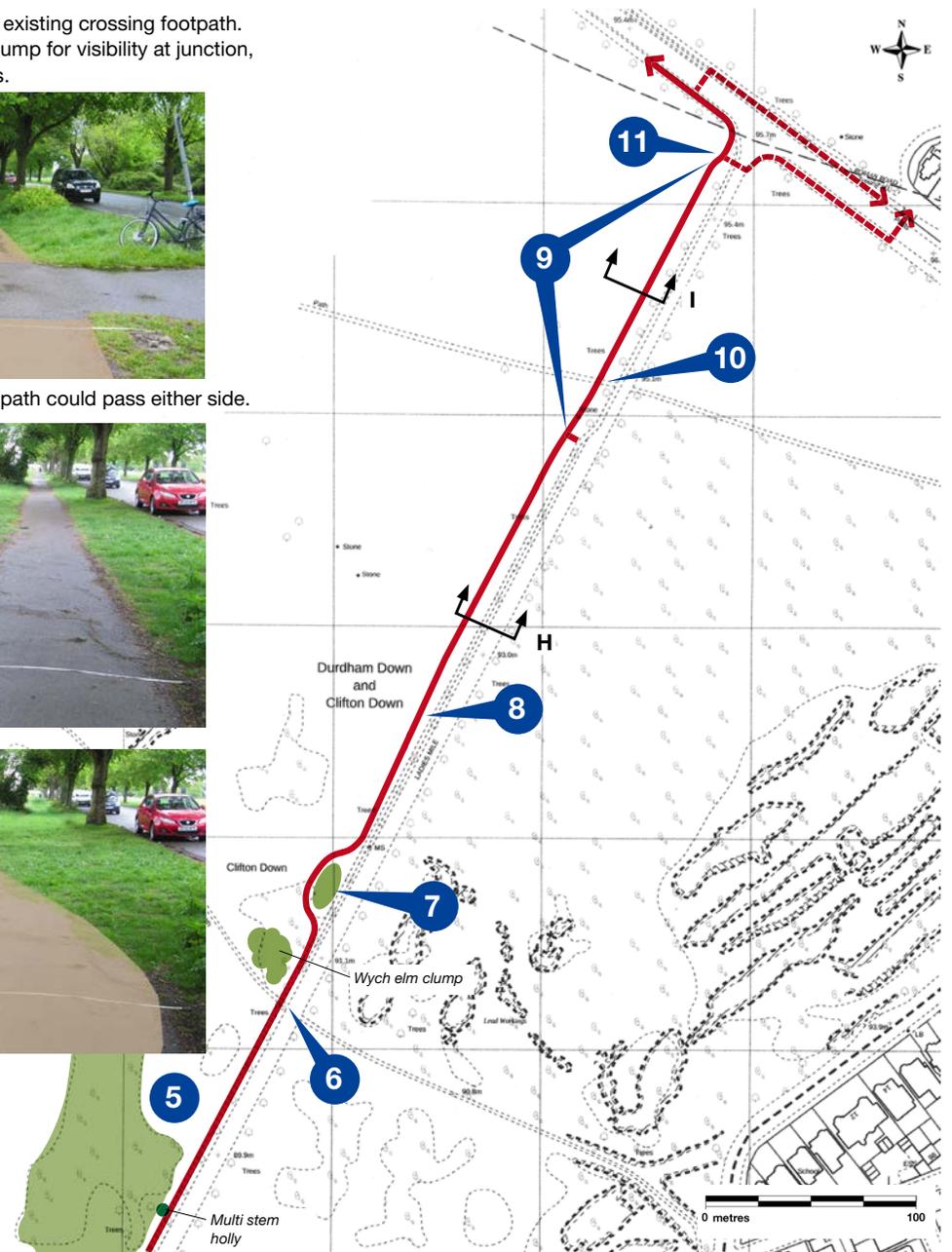
- 5 Here the path passes between the road and this large wooded copse: one multistemmed holly is to be cleared to allow good space.



- 6 Make a careful junction with this existing crossing footpath. Trim undergrowth of wych elm clump for visibility at junction, and add pedestrian priority signs.



- 7 Elm/sycamore/hawthorn clump; path could pass either side.

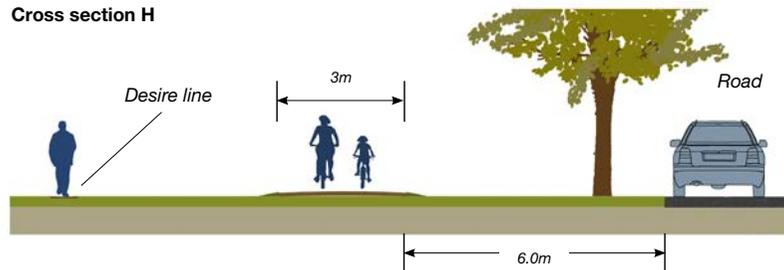


### The Ladies Mile Section

- 8 Again move the path away from the tree roots and restore the ground occupied by the present path.



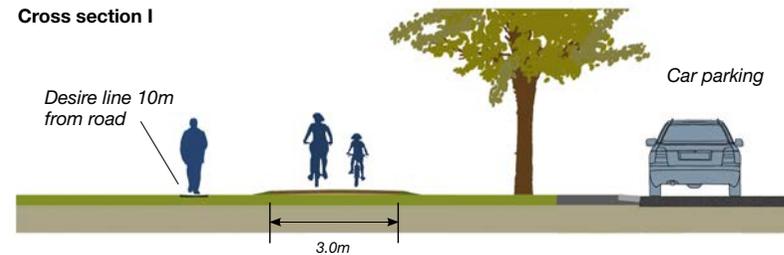
Cross section H



- 9 Over this last section the parking stops and the existing narrow footway returns right beside the road. We propose to retain this section of footway, making a short link from its southern end to connect with a new Leisure Loop path running just beyond the tree canopy, inside the general desire line.



Cross section I



- 10 Make a careful junction with the existing crossing footpath, and add pedestrian priority signs.
- 11 Join to the Stoke Road path and to a crossing of Ladies Mile towards the Café.



## Possible amend to route of Downs Leisure Loop

January 2020

Following discussions with members of the Place and Movement sub-group, we have considered an amend to the route as follows: Crossing just after Ivywell and following the line of the narrow tarmac path that currently leads to the toilet block. This has the benefit of keeping the path route away from the pinch point on the corner with football pitches and the perimeter of the Downs Festival site.

A crossing point (with pedestrian and cycle priority) would be needed just past Ivywell Road. A further crossing point would also be required at the Sea Walls to bring those on bikes over to join Circular Road heading towards the junction with Ladies Mile.

