



## Station car park could see 100 new apartments built



Up to a hundred new homes could be built on the present East car park at Harpenden Station. The plan, costing around £30 million, has been put forward by Solum, a development company that boasts its particular experience in developing town centre 'brownfield' sites. It is 50:50 owned by Network Rail and the Kier construction group (the main contractor on the Katherine Warington School development).

post-Covid and are not projected to rise in the foreseeable future.

The likelihood of car-borne Harpenden commuter numbers increasing in the medium to long term, especially if major new housing developments, like that proposed by L&G to the north of Bloomfield Road are given the go-ahead, did not figure in Solum's formal project presentations. However, there could clearly be a conflicting factor (also not mentioned by Solum) that is a financial deterrent to future station car park usage, should Network Rail strive to recoup its investment in the project through a stiff increase in parking charges.

Residential development, in the form of two separate apartment blocks, would occupy a further approximately 45% of the site, but with a comparatively spacious and hopefully attractive area, dubbed a 'Station Plaza', between them, adjacent to the rail passenger entrance to platform 1. It would engender, in Solum's words, 'a sense of arrival', also

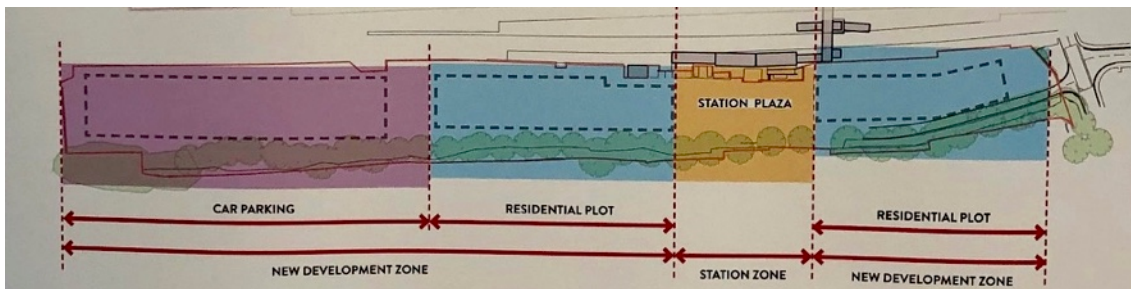
accommodating cycle racks and ticket machines and where possibly station staff assistance would be positioned.

Current controversy about Network Rail's cost-saving

intention - later

rescinded - to close all station ticket offices, makes it likely that ticket enquiries would continue to be dealt with only at the main entrance on the West side of the station.

Each of the two residential blocks would comprise up to about fifty apartments, mainly single- and two-bedroom flats, on as many as four floors, above a ground floor 'undercroft' for residents' parking, waste bin storage and so on. Additional reserved resident's parking is envisaged immediately adjacent to the apartment blocks. Inevitably controversial is the suggested provision of only 70 parking spaces for the residents of up to a hundred apartments currently planned.



It is proposed that the long and relatively narrow site, of around 6 acres in area, which currently provides some 450 car park spaces - used mainly by commuters - would be effectively divided into four adjacent sections. A two-level commuter/public car park would occupy the southernmost 40% of the total area, furthest from Station Road, ie closest to Aysgarth Close.

Its parking capacity would be about 360 spaces, an implied reduction of some 20% from the current level. Solum argues such a reduction is justified on the basis of several surveys it has undertaken, into not just recent parking usage but also longer-term Harpenden commuter numbers through the working week, which the company maintains have declined