

Soham station 1879 – 1965

Located in the district of East Cambridgeshire, the town of Soham is situated between Ely and Newmarket just off the A142. Historically, the town had a railway station, built in 1879 on the Ely to Newmarket line that served the town until it was permanently closed on 13 September 1965. The railway line continues to remain in use, with a passenger service operating between Ipswich and Peterborough every two hours.



Images of Soham station courtesy of the Ely Standard

How to reconnect Soham to the railway

Interest in support for a new station in Soham has been gaining momentum in recent years. East Cambridgeshire District Council developed a Masterplan Vision for Soham to improve connectivity and strengthen the town centre through the reopening of the railway station, which was strongly backed by residents and businesses at each stage of consultation.

Network Rail was commissioned to investigate the feasibility of building a new station by assessing whether the current line could support the additional stop at Soham.

The study concluded that building a new station on the existing infrastructure with the existing service is feasible.

Funding has been obtained from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council to progress the next stage of design work with Network Rail. The work will develop the design for a one platform station and allow for a second platform in the future should the line to Ely get a second track.

Developing a design

Work began on looking at the options for a new station in March 2016 (based on previous feasibility work). The options have been modelled against their impact on existing services and infrastructure and then designed to meet requirements including current design standards, operational requirements and local aesthetics have been taken into consideration as part of the design process.

Minimising land take

To minimise the complexity of the project, the station has been sited entirely within the boundary of Network Rail land. This constraint means that there is much less risk to deliver a new station as there are no requirements to purchase land from third parties.

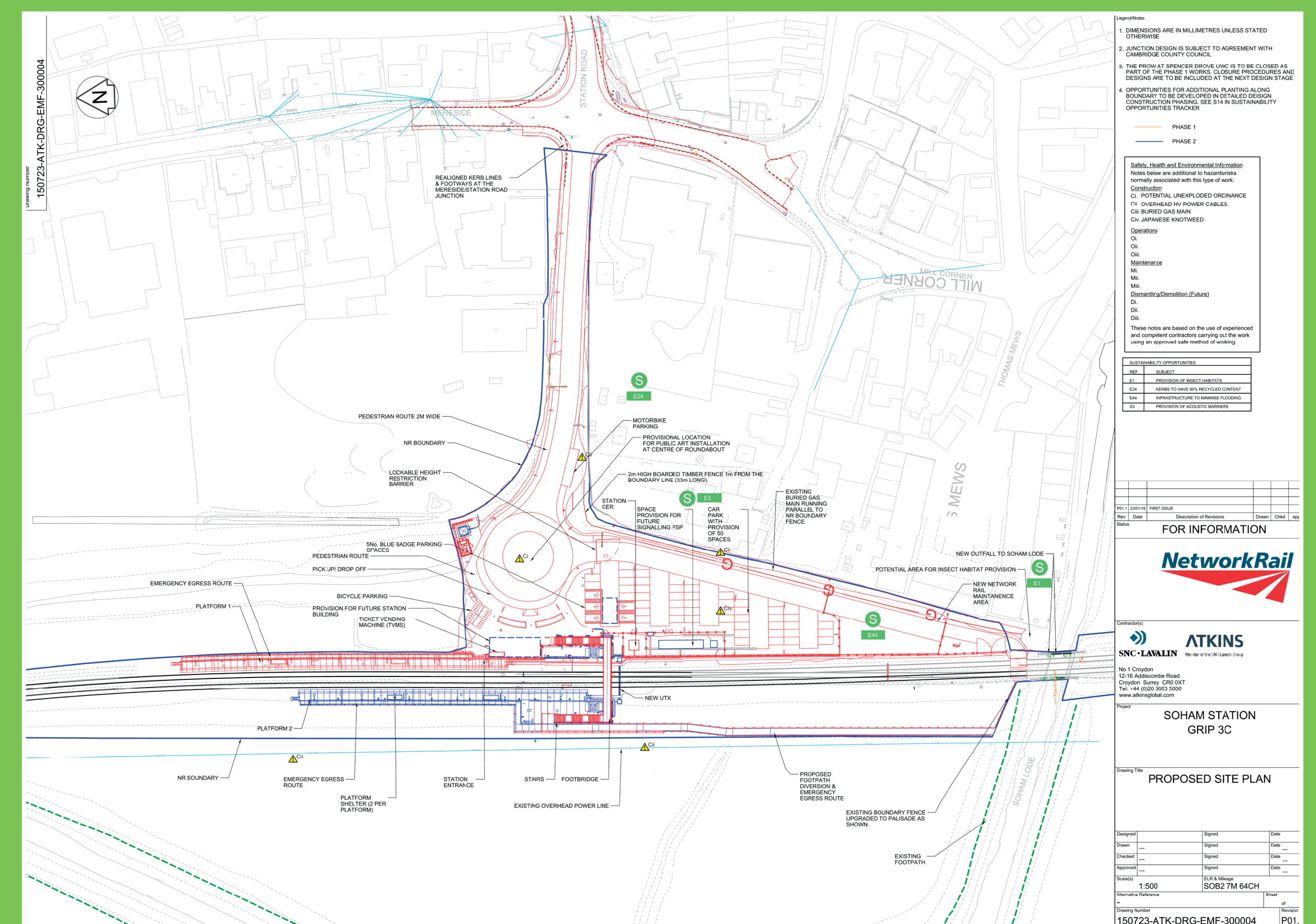
Future proofing

It is important to deliver a station that meets the current requirements for Soham. It should also accommodate potential growth on the network, including increasing demand for container traffic to and from the Port of Felixstowe as well as any possible increases in passenger trains using the line.

To ensure that we plan for this potential future growth, the station design has provision for a second platform, lifts for the footbridge and changes to the signalling systems. These provisions would allow for a second track to be laid between Soham and Ely, increasing the capacity on the line to support more trains. This is called track doubling.

The options we considered included:

- Building a short second track extension for the purpose of the station and two platforms at the same time; this was discarded as it didn't provide any additional benefit to the existing timetable.
- Delivering a two platform station at the same time as any proposed scheme to lay a second track, this was not feasible as a doubling scheme is not currently being progressed.
- Waiting for a scheme to deliver a second track and then delivering a two platform scheme as a stand-alone project; this was discarded as an option due to the uncertainty of timing of any doubling scheme and would mean a long delay to deliver Soham station.
- Building a single platform station and footbridge ahead of any proposed scheme to lay a second track; this is the option we are taking forward.



Chosen design option

Following a review of all the possibilities, the option selected to be taken forward is to build a single platform station and footbridge ahead of any proposed track doubling scheme. Based on all of the requirements, the station proposal includes the provision of the following facilities:

Single platform

The station design includes a single platform to the east side of the railway track. The platform is proposed to be 102 metres long to accommodate four-car trains expected to call at the station. The platform will include waiting shelters, lighting, information screens and a public-address system to inform customers when the next service is due.

Stepped footbridge

The stepped footbridge allows safe public access across the railway and is proposed to connect up to an existing public right of way via a diverted footpath. The footbridge has been designed to provide provision for lifts to be installed at a later date if a second platform is required as part of any future doubling scheme to build a second track between Soham and Ely.

Car park and station forecourt

The entrance to the proposed car park would be via the existing junction with Mere Side, opposite Station road, ending in a turning circle and drop off point next to the station forecourt. The car park has been designed to accommodate 50 vehicles (including five for blue badge holders) and includes lighting masts to provide illumination for the safety of passengers and car park users.

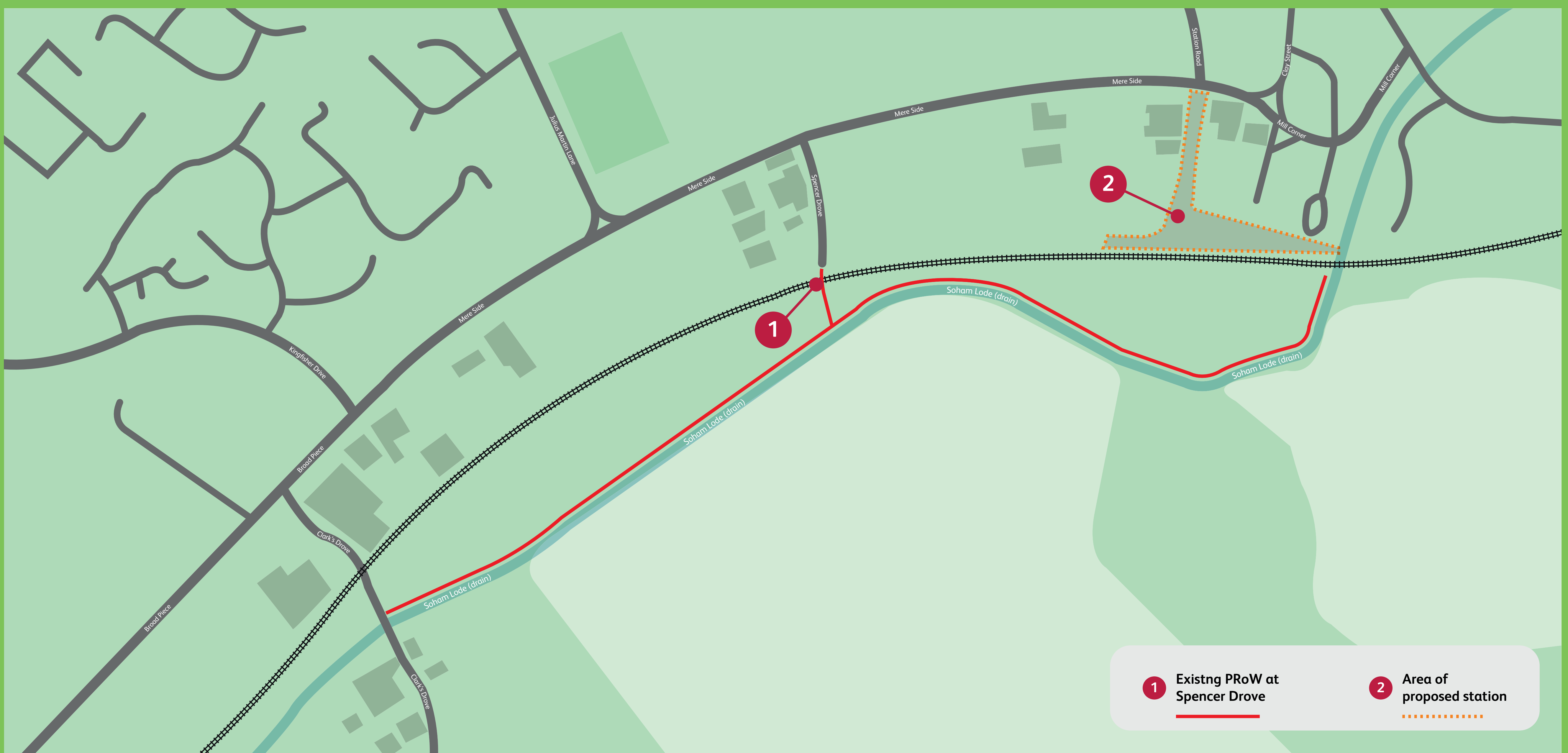
Ticket vending machines will be installed to provide ticketing facilities for all passengers while cycle parking will also be provided on the forecourt for cyclists.



Visualisation of the proposed Soham station looking east

Footpath diversion

The site of the proposed station is close to a level crossing at Spencer Drive which provides access to a public right of way (PRoW). For safety reasons, Network Rail is proposing to permanently close this level crossing and divert the public footpath to a new stepped footbridge across the railway as part of the station proposals. This bridge will be designed to allow lifts to be installed in the future, in the event that a second platform is constructed.



Existing route



Proposed new route over the railway

Chosen design option

The station will be operated and managed by Greater Anglia and a two-hourly train service will serve the station in each direction on the Ipswich to Peterborough route.



Soham station forecourt with ticket machines



Soham station platform and waiting shelter



Visualisation of the Soham station car park facility