



# VICTORIA COACH STATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS INITIAL ASSESSMENT

R·E·P·L·A·N

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## 1.00 INTRODUCTION

VICTORIA COACH STATION was never meant or designed to take the vehicles or the passengers it now has to accommodate.

It is to its advantage that the user rate is falling by approximately 10-15% per annum, as BRITISH RAIL improve both their marketing and service.

At its peak 5 years ago it must have been impossible. At that time National Bus Company, having control over vehicles as well as the Station, probably operated the restricted space more efficiently whereas currently they simply provide a boarding and alighting point and do their best to control the newly privatised bus companies.

It is important to examine in detail the factors regarding usage.



## 2.00 THE FACTS

### 1988

11.7 million passenger trips (two way) per annum on 450,000 coach trips - average passenger load per coach is 26.

Ratio of meeters and greeters is assessed at 1:4.

Total flow through VCS therefore equals approximately 14.5 million pa.

### Daily Variations

Friday pm Saturday am and Sunday pm are peaks. Low traffic on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

### Seasonal Variations

Summer months approximately 20% busier than winter.

### Volume Trends

1985/86 was about 16% busier than 1988. 1989 expected to be a further 8% down on 1988. Believed to be caused by:

- improved BR ticket marketing.
- bad London traffic deters operators, causes timetable difficulties and enhances M25 as an option for avoiding London.
- commuter traffic unloading less at VCS and more on street level.
- National Bus Company becoming increasingly cautious in scheduling coaches in order to maintain high loading ratios (and therefore high profit per passenger).

### Average Waiting Time

The length of time passengers arrive before their coach leaves is considered to be determined by age of passenger: older passengers will arrive about an hour before departure, younger about 10 minutes.

75% of arrivals are off loaded at the annex on the other side of Elizabeth Street.

### Age Profile of VCS passengers

	VCS	UK	Index
16 - 24	39%	19%	205
25 - 34	20%	18%	111
35 - 44	10%	17%	59
45 - 54	9%	13%	69
55 - 64	10%	13%	77
65+	13%	19%	68

While there is a much younger age profile than the national average, nearly a quarter of passengers are aged over 55.

### Sex

Male	42%	49%	85
Female	58%	51%	114

### Socio Economic Group

AB	8%	16%	50
C1	40%	25%	160
C2	23%	25%	92
DE	30%	34%	88

The profile is weighted towards middle income groups. It should be noted that 17% of all passengers are students (these have been excluded from the above figures).

### Journey Purpose

Visting Friends and Relatives	58%	18%	305
Holiday	20%	9%	222
Business	2%	22%	9
Commuting	9%	32%	28
Other	7%	.)r	



### 3.00 THE USERS

The users fall into three main categories:

#### (a) COMMUTERS

This market is in decline as operators drop more passengers throughout London and find a place to park for the day without incurring charges.

The commuting passenger is interested in arriving and leaving Victoria as quickly as possible.

#### (b) LONGER JOURNEYS

The majority of passengers in this category came from the lower income socio economic groups. They are mostly the young or the elderly. Each of these groups has limited incomes but very different requirements.

##### The Young

- Arrive with little time to spare.
- Happy to sit on the pavement.
- Will purchase food and drink from a vending machine.
- Have little luggage usually carried in sports bags if any at all.

##### - The Elderly

- Arrive Early.
- Need somewhere to sit and wait.
- Happy to queue in order to get a "good" seat.
- Like a Cafe atmosphere.
- Have Luggage.

Often elderly people travel on their own, visiting relatives etc and due to the lack of clear information will ask anyone in uniform, perhaps two or three times in their waiting period what time is their coach or are they in the right queue.

Having queued to get a seat near the driver for up to an hour they find that when the bus arrives they have to take their luggage to the boot. Those who have just arrived, and travelling light, move to the head of the queue and take the front seats much to the elderly passengers annoyance.

#### (c) THE VAGRANT

The Station appears to be a haven for vagrants who obviously find the environment to their liking.

#### 4.00 THE ENVIRONMENT

TO SAY THAT THE ENVIRONMENT IS HOSTILE AGGRESSIVE AND UNPLEASANT IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT.

Passengers have extremely limited waiting space on a pavement area which surrounds the marshalling yard. At peak times passengers spill onto the roadway simply due to lack of space and have to cross in the path of incoming buses to reach their stand.

No queuing facilities are available.

The reason why according to the operators are:-

- The relevant bus may not arrive on time and the space is used by others.
- Lack of space.
- Loading of Luggage.
- The operators.

For example a bus company running a service to Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham will at peak times have a bus leaving for each of these destinations. The more usual situation however is that the Liverpool passengers will be boarded first, empty seats will then be filled by Manchester passengers, and if there are still empty seats by Birmingham passengers. This allows the company to save bus journeys.

The manoeuvring area is limited and cannot cope with the number of coaches using the space and leads to double and triple parking and a major build up of exhaust fumes in an area surrounded by tall buildings.

#### - CUSTOMER FACILITIES

All the facilities are user-unfriendly.

##### (a) Ticket Sales

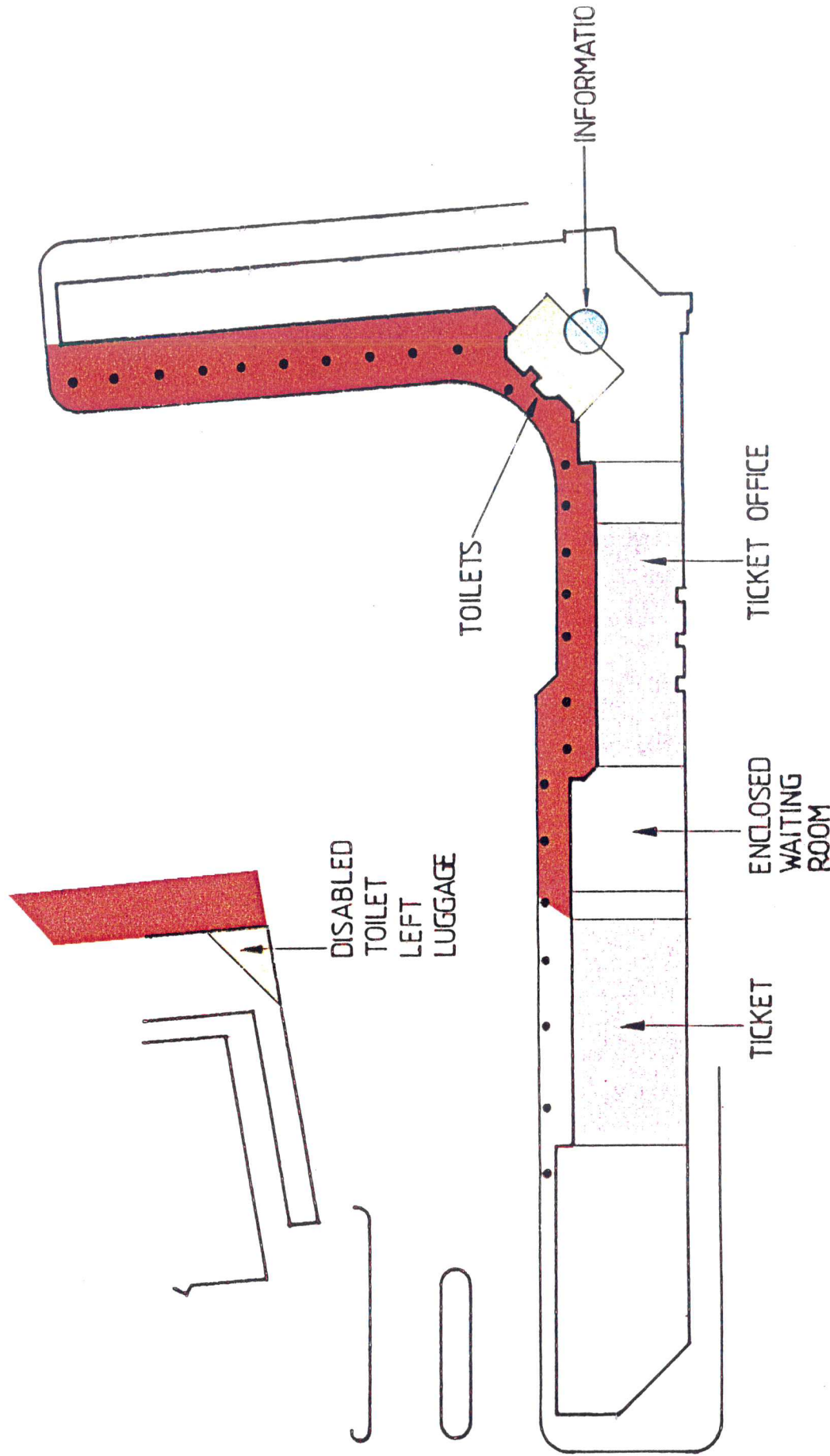
These are sold in two enormous ticket halls a considerable distance apart.

##### (b) Waiting Area

There is only one "No Smoking" waiting area well away from the main loading areas with very hard finishes and no information service as to when coaches have arrived.

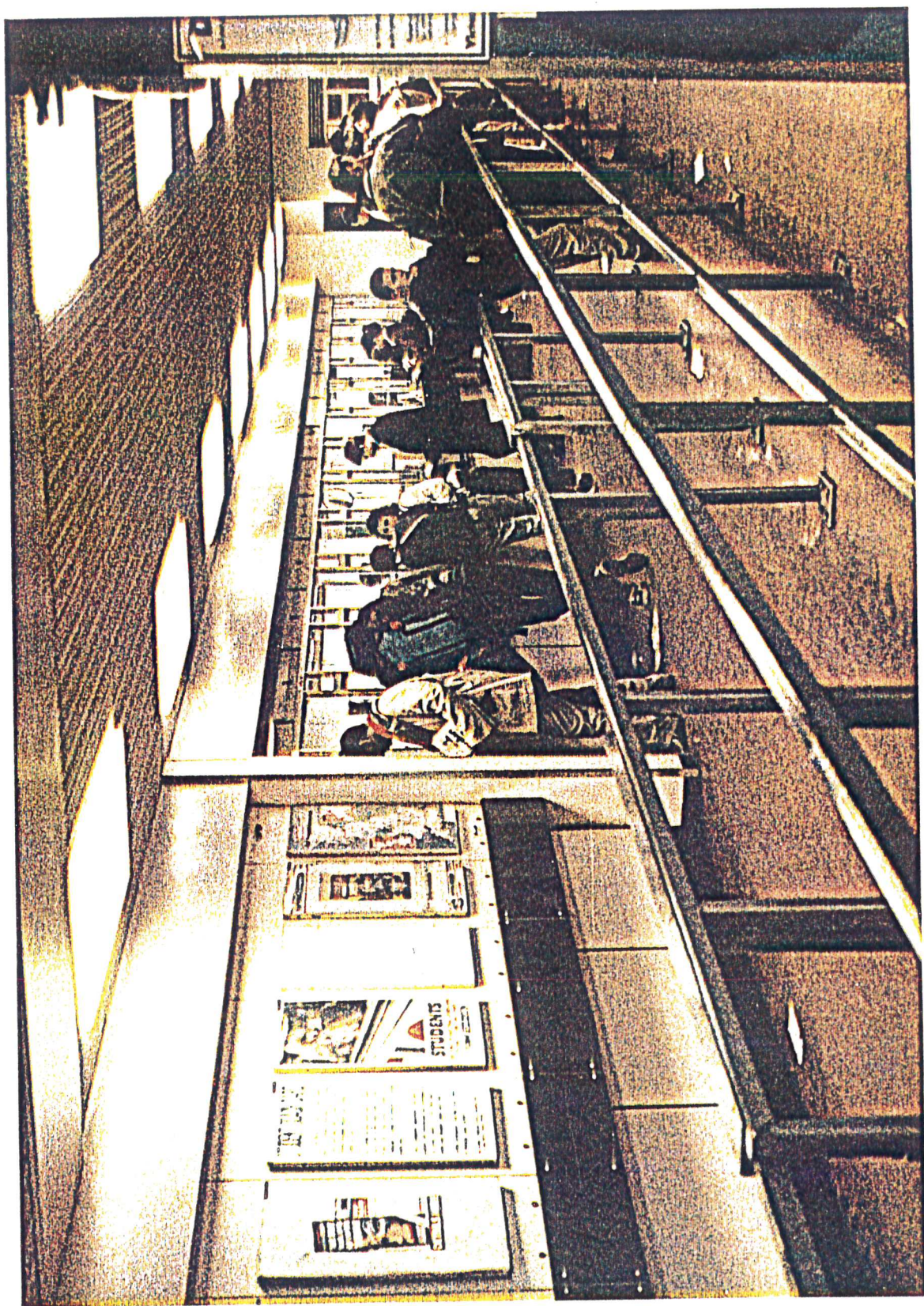


QUEUING AREAS

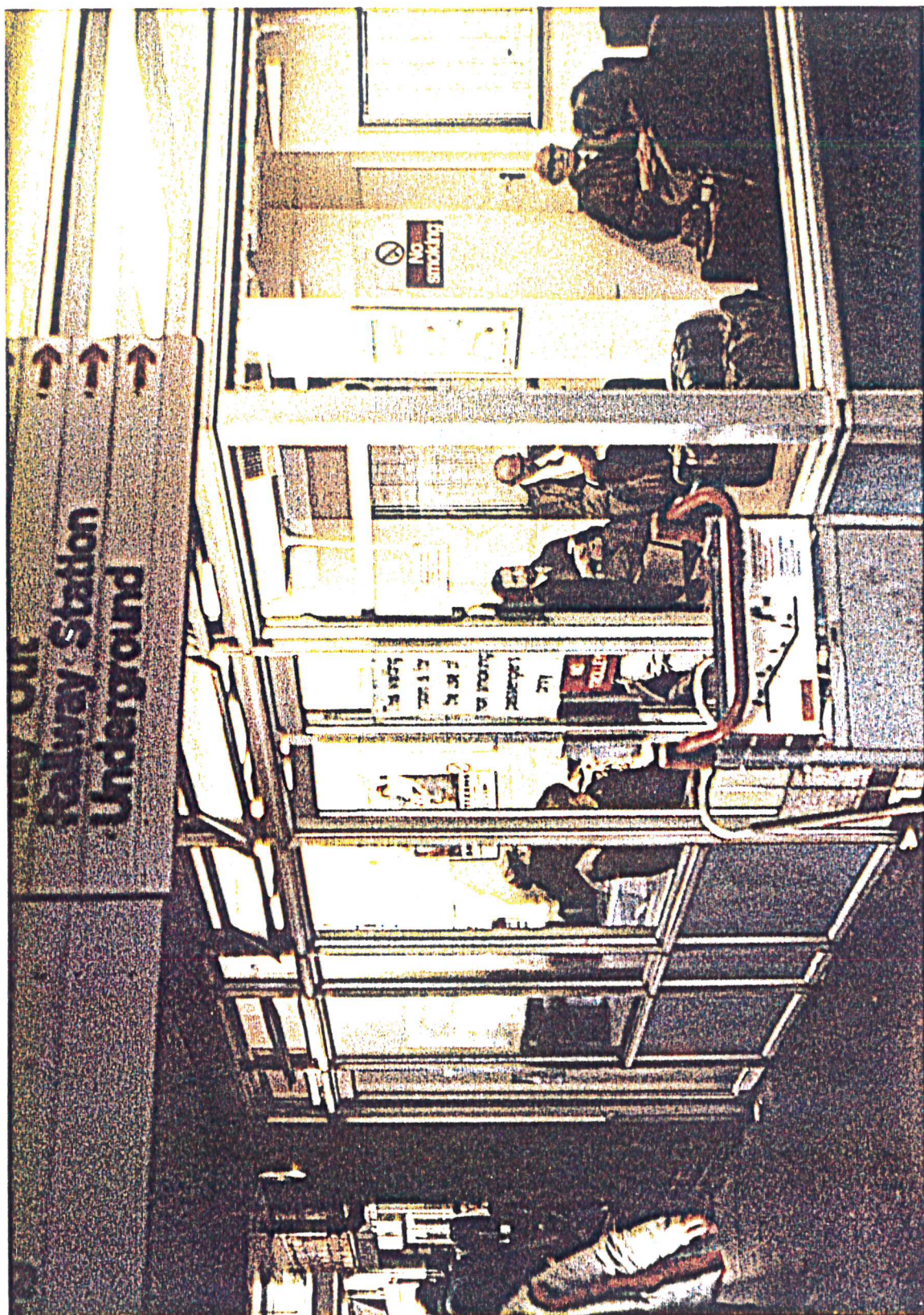


# PASSENGER FACILITIES











(c) Toilet Facilities

These are barely adequate, some located at basement level making access difficult for the elderly and impossible for the disabled.

Disabled people arriving in the main building have to cross the yard for toilet facilities.

(d) Catering

Vending machines are provided around the edges of the waiting area and, although probably adequate they project into valuable waiting space.

Cafeteria Service is provided from an old fashioned self service. The seating area is not up to today's standards where far better facilities are offered by fast food operations.

(e) Retail

A small tidy C.T.N. is located in the main entrance hall.

A newsstand occupies space in the pavement is probably located in the most congested area.

A limited range of food is sold from a unit adjacent to the cafeteria and a stall by the bus exit.

(f) Information

Probably the most important facility in the current arrangement is also the least friendly.

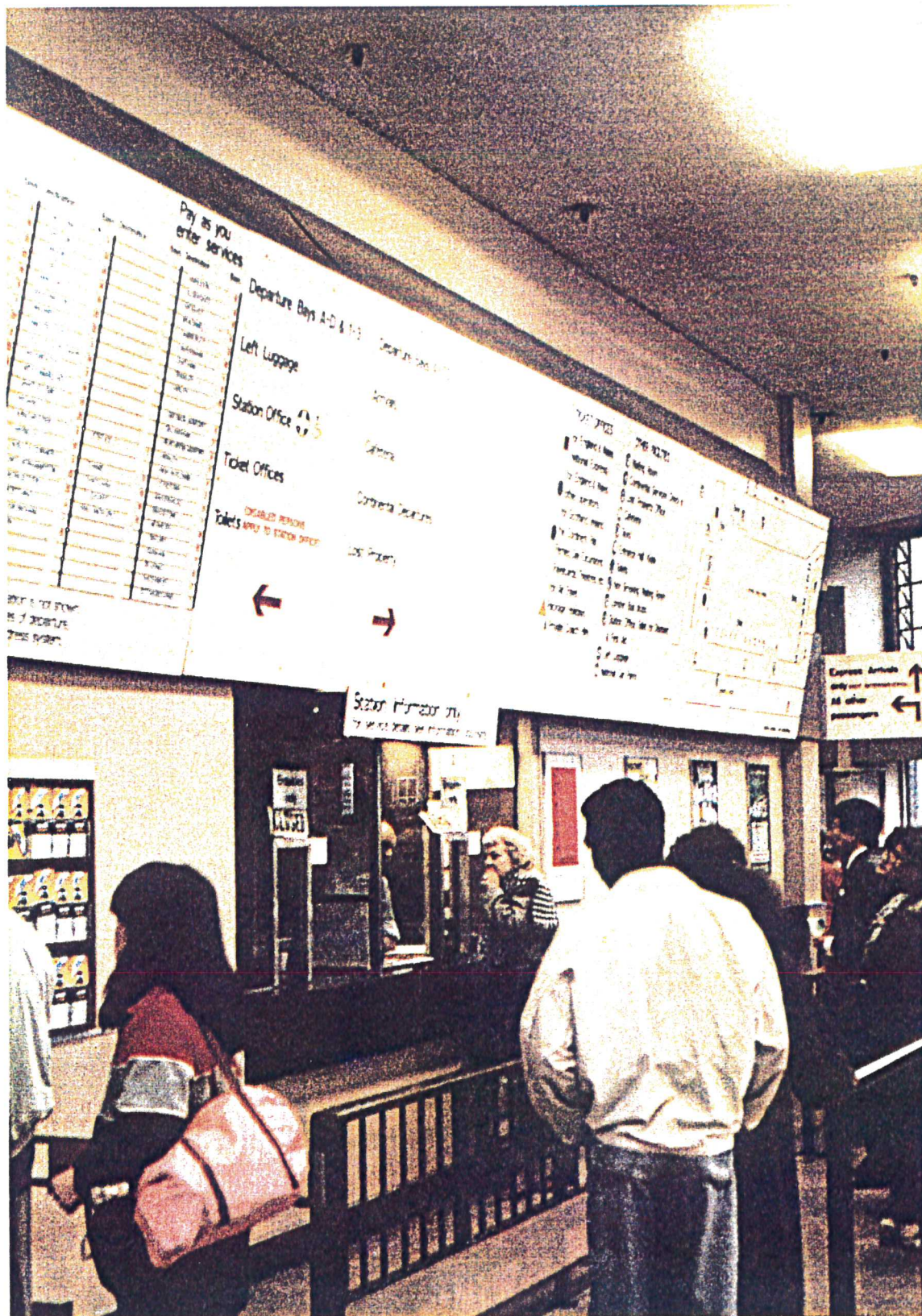
(g) Telephones

A great number of telephones are provided.

(h) The Finishes

With a total lack of colour and cheerfulness, the greyness of the walls ceilings and floors combined with very poor lighting add to the hard, hostile and aggressive atmosphere.



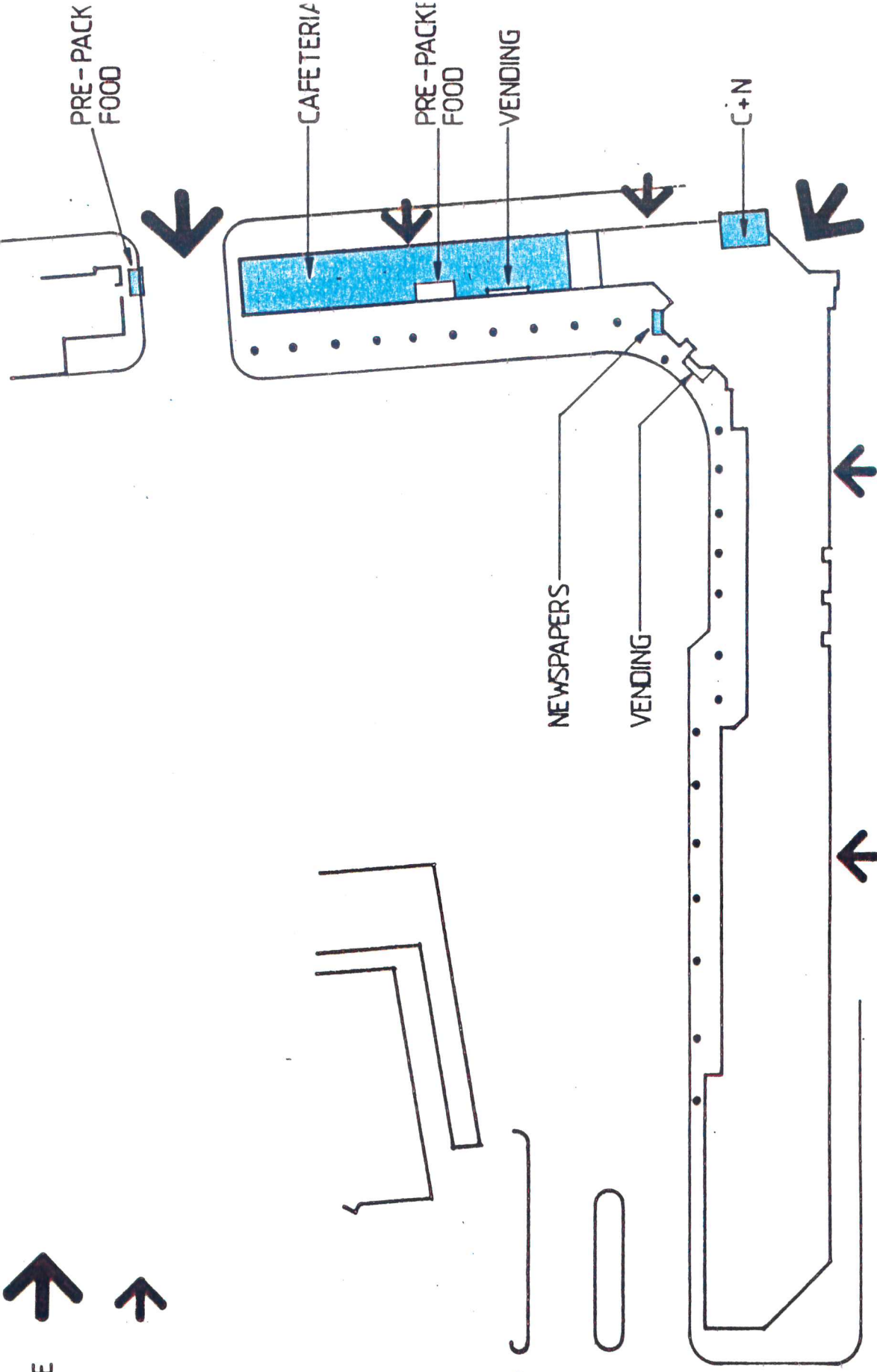




MAJOR ENTRANCE



MINOR ENTRANCE



EXISTING RETAILING

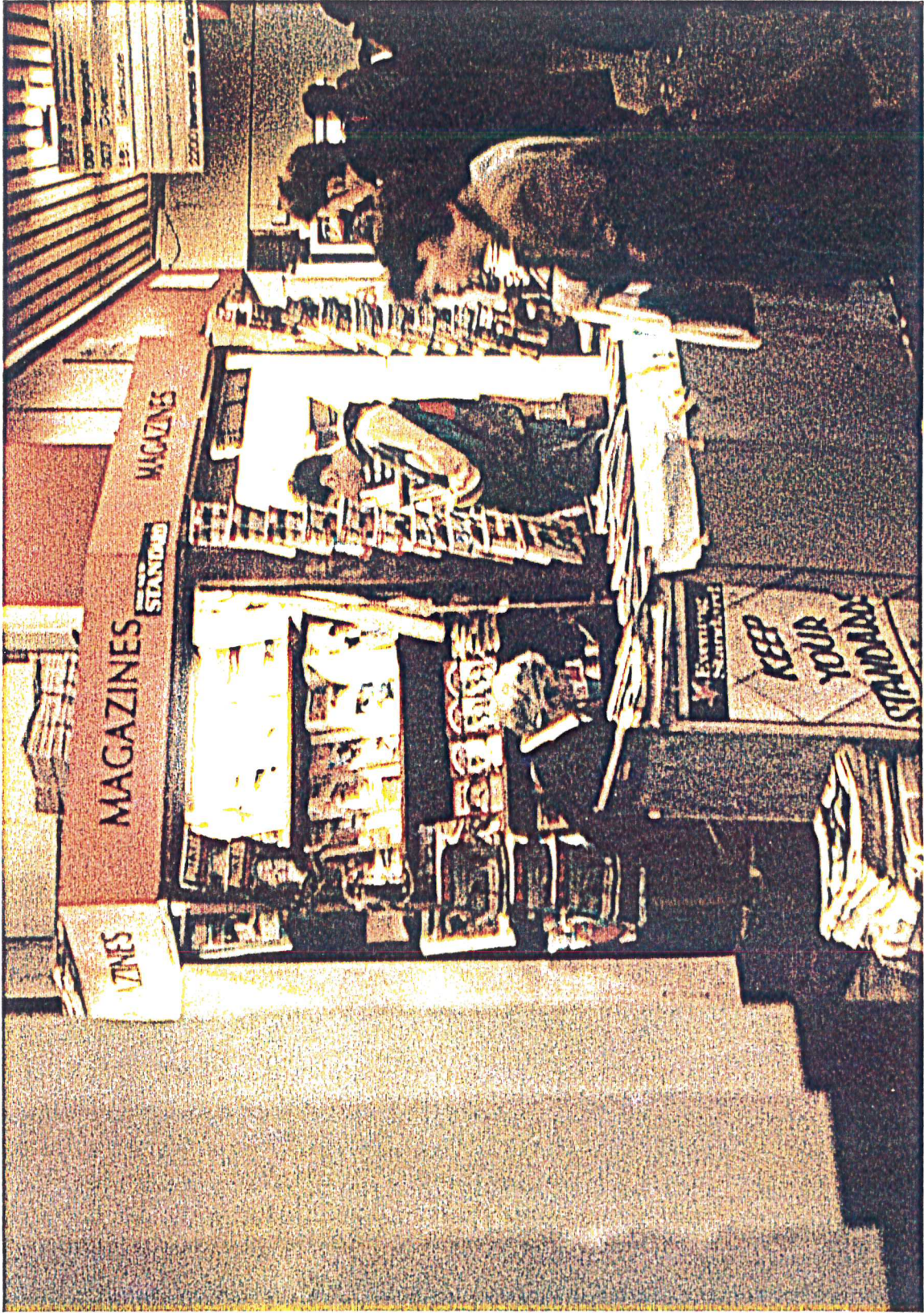
















↑  
TICKET BUREAU for  
all other tickets except  
AIR & HOLIDAY CENTRE

← Ticket Office

National Express Ticket  
Office. Services for  
England and Wales

Toilets  
Departure Bays  
Other facilities

↑

←

for England and Wales  
(National Express)

for England and Wales  
(other operators)

for Scotland, Ireland, Continent  
Rail and Ferries

for Air travel and packaged  
holidays

→

↑

for England and Wales  
(National Express)

for England and Wales  
(other operators)

for Scotland, Ireland, Continent  
Rail and Ferries

for Air travel and packaged  
holidays







(i) The Signing

The current signing systems are inadequate and impossible to understand, hence the popularity of the information centre.

Unlike Railway Station and Airports signs are static and simply get the passenger to a point where his coach may leave from without any other information.

For the elderly they are a nightmare.

(j) Access

Coaches

All coaches coming into the yard come in through an entrance in Semeley Place and leave either via Elizabeth Street or by Ebury Street.

Passengers

These are numerous. The two most used are the main corner entrance and the bus exit on Elizabeth Street.

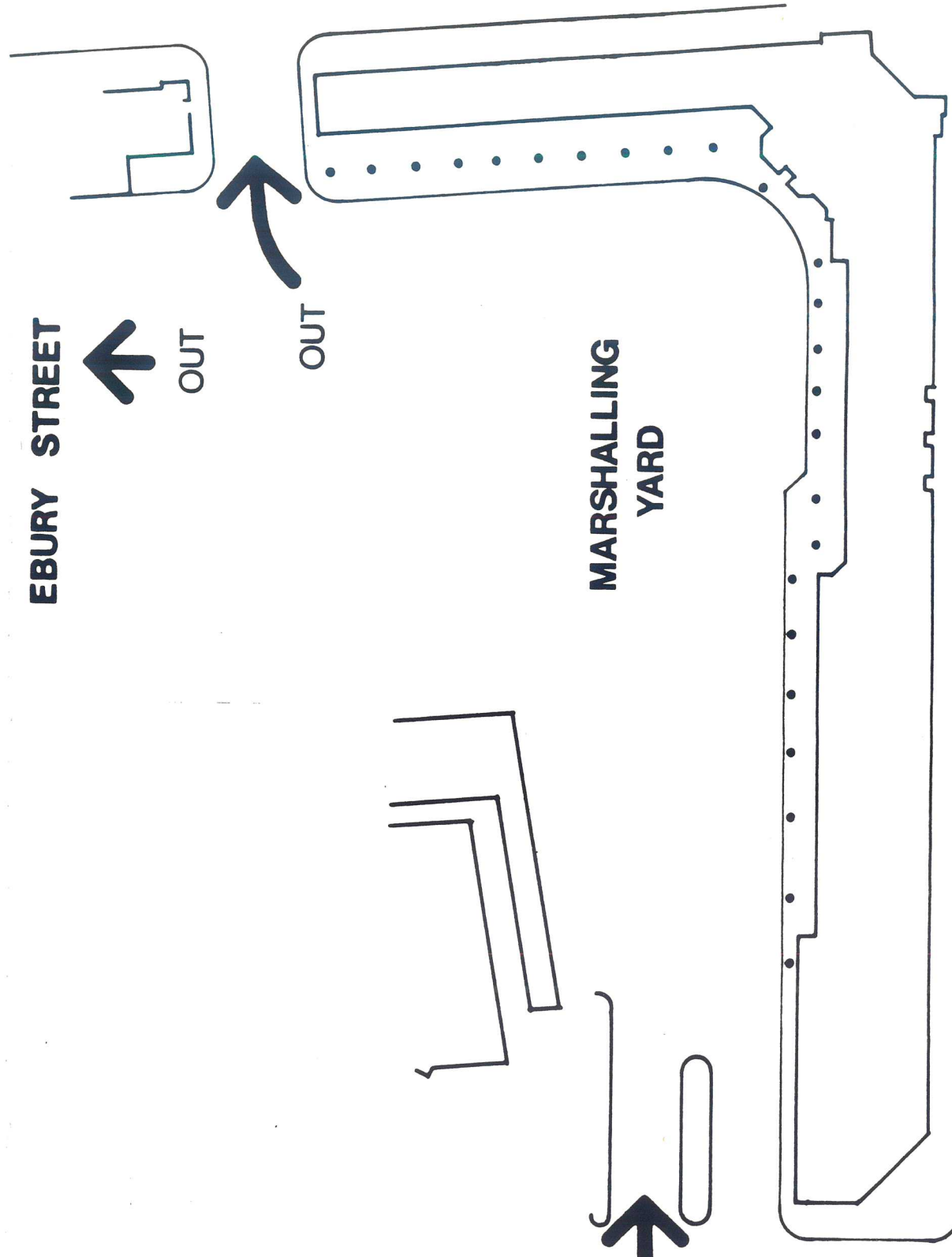
(k) Operations

It is difficult to be critical about the way the Station is operated but REPLAN believes that the management who have survived the long years of privatisation with little or no capital expenditure and increase in customer demand need a major change in attitude.

Simply because the coach services have been privatised is not a reason to allow the new operators to behave in any manner they wish within the station, neither is it acceptable to leave the public to fend for themselves in such an unpleasant and unfriendly environment.



ELIZABETH STREET



EBURY STREET



OUT

OUT

MARSHALLING  
YARD

SEMELY PLACE

N

BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD

# COACH ACCESS





MAJOR PEDESTRIAN  
ROUTE

MINOR PEDESTRIAN  
ROUTE

EBURY STREET

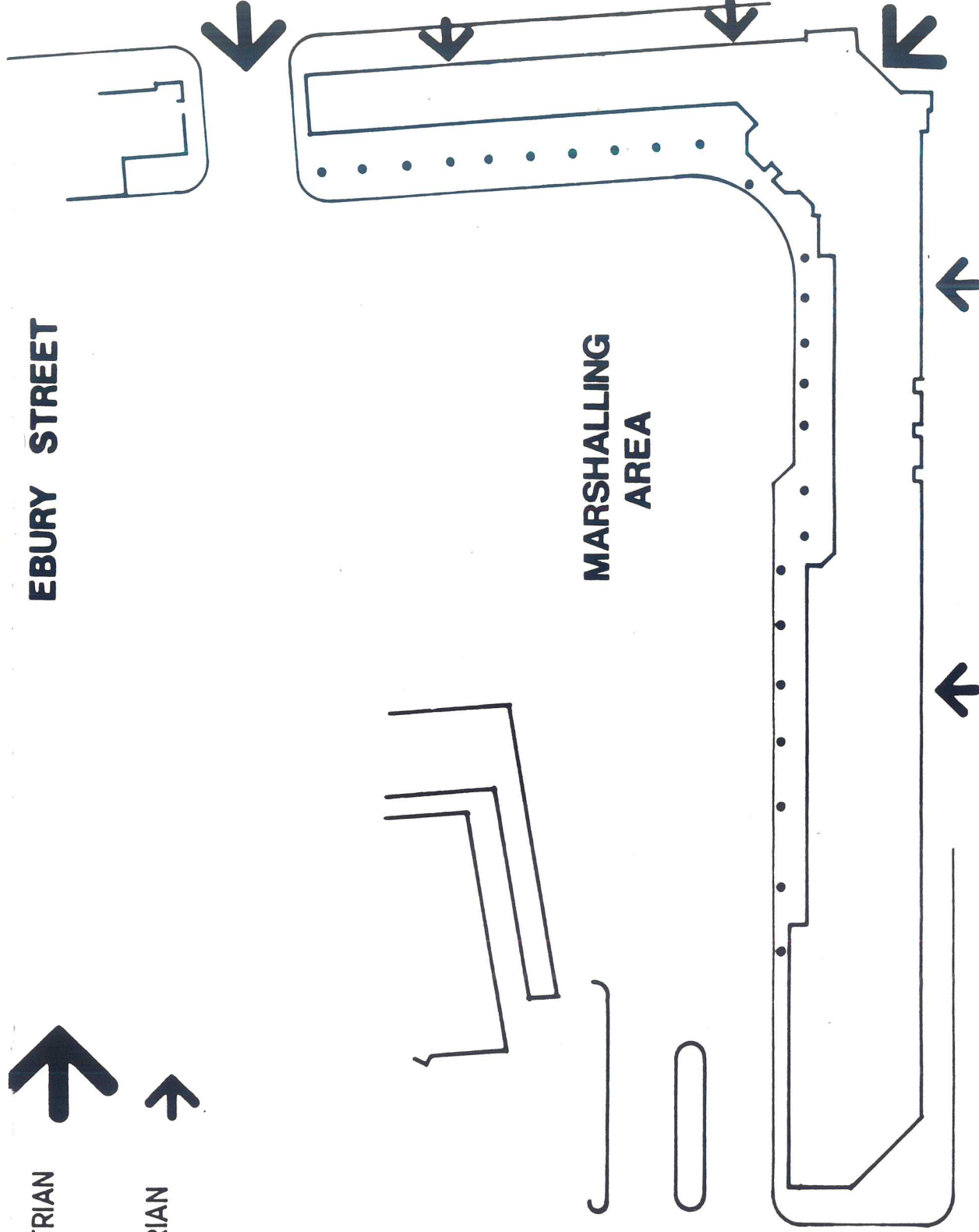
ELIZABETH STREET

SEMELY PLACE

MARSHALLING  
AREA

BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD

# PASSENGER ENTRANCES









5.00 WHAT CAN BE DONE

From discussions held by REPLAN within LRT the future of the current site as a coach station is unclear.

(1) Grosvenor Estate

Part of the site is leased from the Grosvenor Estate and this lease has to be renewed in the near future. Grosvenor have stated publicly in the past that they do not wish to allow this site to continue as a coach station.

(2) REPLAN understand that LRT Property Department have a redevelopment scheme for the site which includes the provision of a new up to date coach station.

(3) It has been widely reported in the press that the Coach Station will move to another site.

ALL OF THESE PROPOSALS ARE UNLIKELY TO COME TO FRUITION BEFORE 1995 AND THEREFORE THE QUESITON TO BE ADDRESSED IS WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERMS TO MAKE IT USER FRIENDLY.

## IMMEDIATE AND COSMETIC

### Passenger Waiting Areas

Consideration should be given to widening the current pavement/waiting space along its length around the old building by at least 1 metre and if possible 2.

The newspaper vendor should be relocated. REPLAN'S information is that this may be difficult in that the operator is "a tenant at will".

All passenger areas should be redecorated including walls, floors and ceilings in bright, cheerful, hard wearing colours and finishes, including toilets.

### Signing Systems

A new positive, inexpensive and direct signing system should be introduced.

Simple, effective and linking from when the passenger arrives through to the boarding point of the coach using coloured bands or possibly bands of light.

The current information system needs to be rationalised possibly dividing the country into regions at the point of passenger entry. Locating all the coaches leaving for example to the West Country in a given area and once the passenger arrives in the West Country zone further information about the town or city of their destination is available.

This is not to be taken as the solution to the problem which is to implement a sophisticated computerised sign system as in airports but simply a short term improvement.

### Information

The current "hole in the wall" operation surrounded by crowd rails is totally unacceptable and was probably designed as a ticket office.

In REPLAN's opinion this is a key element in improving the passengers' perception of the station. It would be preferential to increase staff costs, i.e. 4 receptionists at peak times and 2 during the remainder than to invest in a sophisticated electronic signing system which, until such time as both coach and passenger movements are better organised, will simply add to the confusion.

In view of the current use of the Station by the local vagrant population it may be necessary to enclose it with glass so as to retain a feeling of openness.



### Lighting

The passenger waiting areas around the marshalling area need a much higher level of illumination than is currently provided by the haphazard use of fluorescents.

A unit similar to that used by BR will not only improve illumination levels but also produce a warm light.

### MEDIUM TERM

The medium term objectives have to major on a new *modus operandi* for the Coach Station taking into account all aspects of the current arrangements and the likely changes within a 5 year period, which may well see a steady decline in coach traffic and to some degree ease the pressure on the current facilities.

### Operations

There has to be a more positive approach to the management of the coach station. The passengers can not be simply left to the whims and fancies of the coach operators.

The management should take responsibility for the passenger until they are seated on their coach.

A strategy must be produced for organising everything from ticket sales through to luggage handling.

Stricter policing is necessary to remove the vagrants.

### Vehicle Access

It is REPLAN'S opinion that there should be a single entrance and exit.

This means the closure of the access on to Elizabeth Street freeing space for passenger accommodation.

The way in which the vehicles are loaded and parked within the marshalling yard has to be carefully studied in order that passengers can move to their coach instead of walking across vehicle routes. A method has to be found to deal with passengers luggage possibly at a collection point which can then be taken to the coach and loaded. This would resolve the problems of elderly people carrying suitcases in coach turning areas or the queue jumping which currently takes place.

## PASSENGER ACCESS

REPLAN believes that the number of passenger access points should be reduced to two:

- the main corner entrance
- the closed coach exit on Elizabeth Street.

All other exits should be closed off and, if required for escape purposes, be fitted with escape doors.

## Entrance Concourse

Just as in railway stations it is necessary to create a major space, enclosed from exhaust fumes, where people can wait prior to boarding.

This space will be found by combining the current cafeteria space, coach exit and the original entrance hall into one area.

The area adjacent to the coach parking bays should be extended by at least 2 m. and by more if the rearrangement of the coach parking bays stops the necessity for an access road between passenger and coach.

## Information

A main information desk will be the central feature within the concourse.

## Design

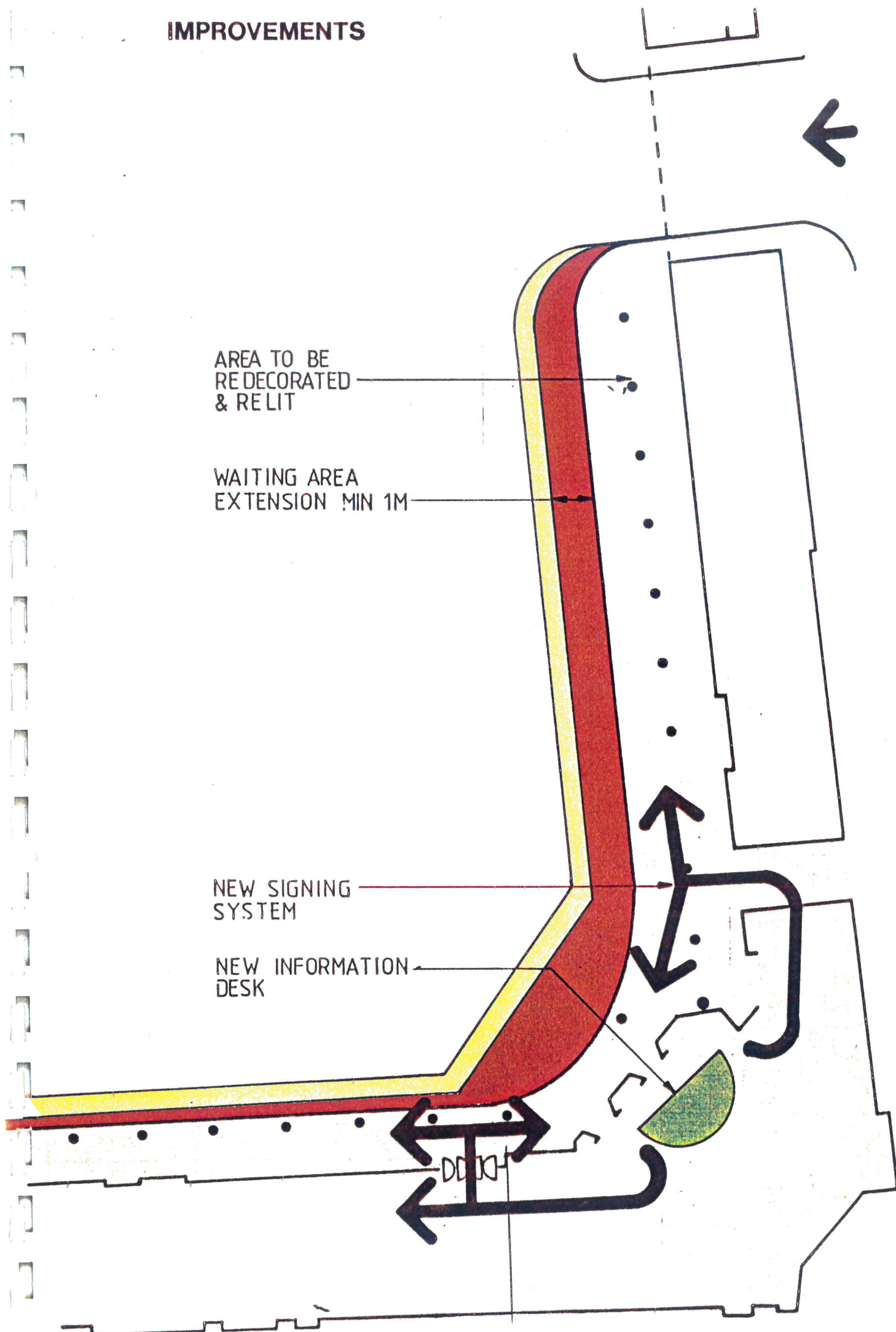
The interior will be finished in hard wearing but bright materials, a terrazzo floor which reflects the light, controlled use of colour, fully glazed wall to concourse with 'zone doors' which provide access out to the loading islands. Heating to be provided in winter and modern lighting to create a sparkling atmosphere.

## Seating

Adequate modern comfortable easily cleanable seating to be provided in the concourse possibly in primary colours and in blocks to match 'Regional Zones.'



# IMPROVEMENTS

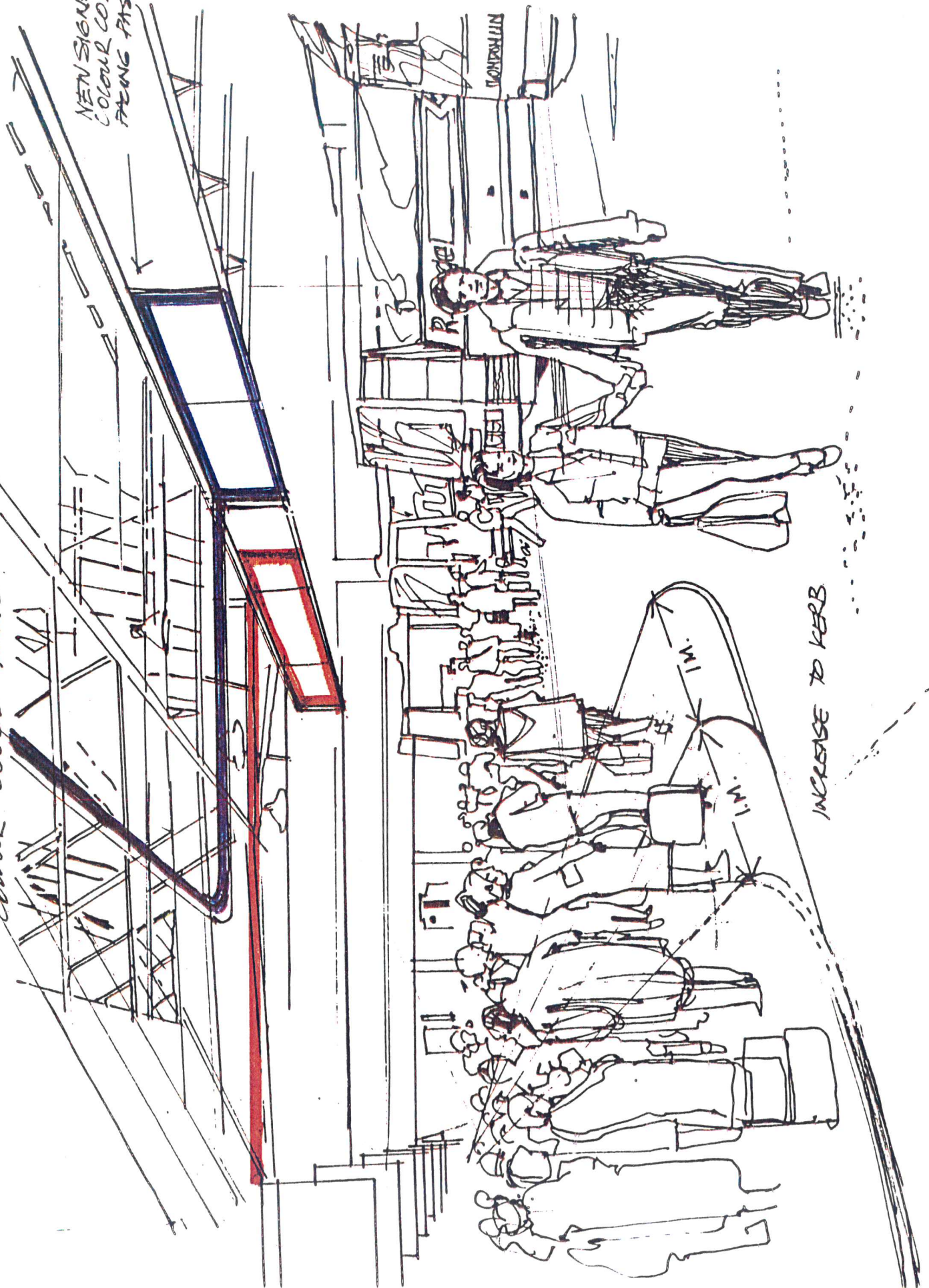






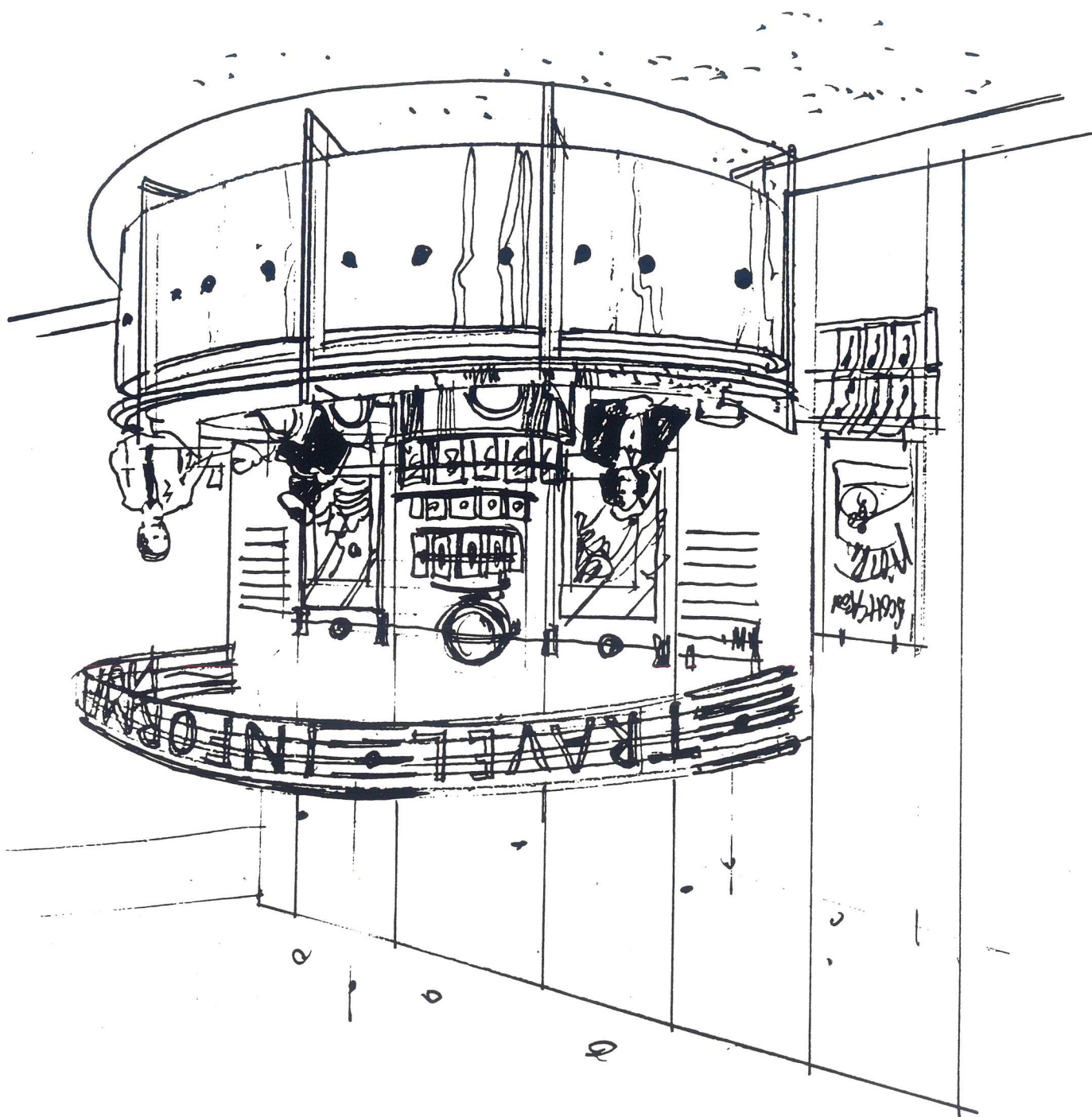
COLOR CODED BAND

NEW SIGNS  
COLOR CODED  
TRAIN PASSENGERS



INCREASE TO KERB





## RETAILING

There could be a tremendous opportunity for retailing but there is insufficient space.

There is also the question of the leases currently held by the cafeteria owners which REPLAN is advised are virtually impossible to get out of without shutting the facilities down.

REPLAN's experience shows that there is no longer a demand for traditional cafeteria service with hot food. There are a number of units in Elizabeth Street which will provide this service.

All that is required is a coffee shop selling beverages, drinks and hand held snacks such as sandwiches and pastries. The operator of such a unit would be responsible for table clearing in his designated area.

Initially a bank of vending machines would suffice if only to maximise space for passengers and remove any onerous threats from previous tenants.

The only other retail outlet would be a CTN store of up to 50 sq metres.

Telephones would be located within a designated area.

## TICKET SALES

The total operation of ticket sales needs to be the subject of a separate study.

REPLAN experience in sales at major railway station leads to a belief that the two current enormous ticket offices could be combined into a single and user friendly unit located adjacent to the entrance concourse.

Whether seats are allocated at the time of ticket purchase, a solution which would overcome the more elderly passengers problem, has to be considered in the total operation of the station and not in isolation.



INFORMATION  
CENTRE



NEW TICKET OFFICE

2 MAJOR ENTRANCES  
ALL OTHER PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCES  
CLOSED

NEW ENCLOSED  
CONCOURSE

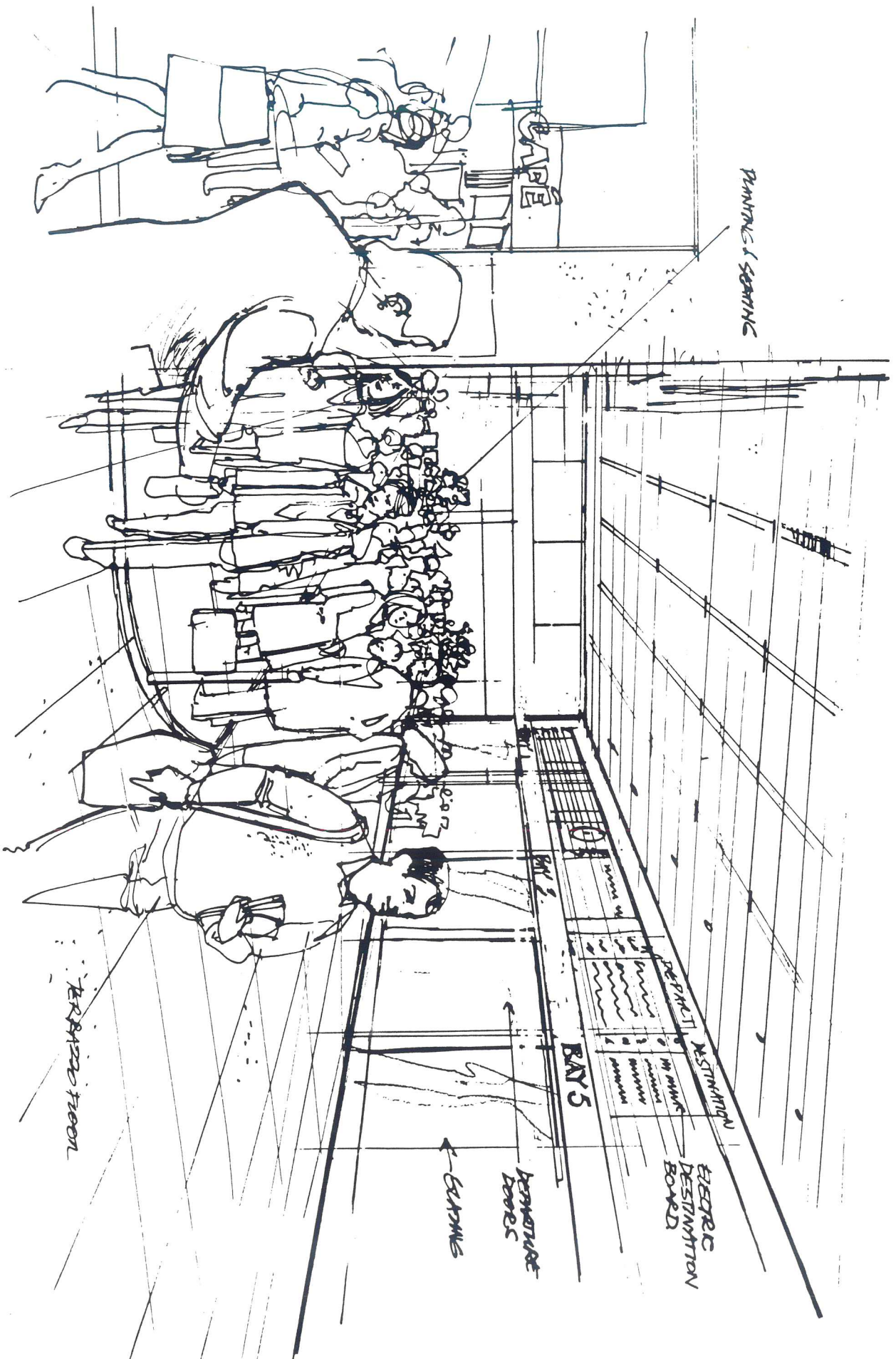
WALLS REMOVED

SPACE  
INFILLED

ENTRAN









## Passenger Information Services

From its research REPLAN has discovered that the station management do not have an accurate assessment of when a coach will arrive for loading. When the National Bus Company operated the coaches radios were being installed in the cabs so that the driver had a direct link to the station operations room. This is no longer the case and REPLAN believes that without such contact up to the minute passenger information is impossible.

Within its rules for coach operators using the station there is the need to have a radio/telephone link so that accurate times of arrival can be communicated to the passengers.

This information would be passed to passengers via a main destination board and TV monitors around the ticket and concourse areas.

The board would record departure times, stand numbers and destinations and whether boarding was taking place.

The existing PA system is only used in emergency however with the enclosed waiting areas coach departures would be called.

### PASSENGER TO COACH

If a system of regional colour coding were to be used and sectors were allocated within the waiting concourse by the use of coloured furniture for example, then passengers waiting to leave for a destination would pass through their zone exit into the marshalling yard led by an escort or courier, who would be responsible for collection of luggage at the gate and the arrangements for loading the passengers.

Preferably passengers would only approach coaches on 3 sides of the yard and there would not be any loading of coaches on the islands adjoining the car park.

Some coach companies already provide escorts REPLAN believes that there are sound reasons for this to be a service provided by the Station itself and covered in the charge made to the coach companies.

## LONG TERM

IF THE COACH TRAVELLER IS TO BE TREATED IN THE SAME WAY AS BRITISH RAIL MARKETS ITS PASSENGER CARE THEN THE ONLY OPTION IS FOR A TOTALLY NEW COACH STATION EITHER REBUILT IN VICTORIA OR ELSEWHERE IN LONDON.

### 6.00 ARRIVALS BUILDING

This report concerns itself totally with the departures building. The arrivals building is totally inadequate in every respect and REPLAN's advice is simply to improve the informational signing for passengers wishing to go to BR or LRT stations as well as to Taxis and Buses and move them out as quickly as possible.

WITH DIFFICULT TRAFFIC ACCESS AND LIMITED SPACE THIS BUILDING IS UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE AND IS A MAJOR REASON FOR LONG TERM RELOCATION.