

# **Bath and North East Somerset Council**

# **Midsomer Norton Town Centre Plan**

# Midsomer Norton Town Centre Plan - Access and Movement Inputs

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Midsomer Norton Town Centre Plan

Bath and North East Somerset Council



#### I Introduction

- 1.1.1 PJA are appointed as part of a wider masterplanning team, led by Allies & Morrison LLP, to provide advice in relation to the development of a Town Centre Plan for Midsomer Norton. The Town Centre plan consists of a Regeneration Action Plan and the Old Brewery Quarter Masterplan.
- 1.1.2 The Regeneration Action Plan will explore opportunities to deliver improvements across the whole town centre in the short to medium term. The study area encompasses an area including the length of the High Street, the surrounding residential and commercial areas and the Town Park.
- 1.1.3 The Old Brewery Quarter Masterplan considers long-term development opportunities focused on the Old Brewery buildings at the lower end of the town centre.
- 1.1.4 This note sets out a summary of the baseline review undertaken to inform the development of the masterplan, and a range of potential interventions which are aligned with masterplan opportunities and wider interventions which could enhance sustainable travel use and enhance pedestrian and cycle amenity in the town.











#### 2 Midsomer Norton Town Centre

#### 2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 Midsomer Norton is a market town located at the southern edge of the Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) area, approximately 10 miles south-west of Bath, close to the Somerset border.
- 2.1.2 The town has a population of around 13,000 people and sits adjacent to the town of Radstock with a population of around 9,000 people. The town offers a wide range of services and facilities including a vibrant town centre, supermarkets, schools, healthcare facilities, leisure and sports facilities and a range of commercial and employment land uses.
- 2.1.3 Midsomer Norton sits along the River Somer, on both sides of a valley north and south of the river, which is partially culverted through the town.

#### 2.2 Planning Policy Review

#### **Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan**

- 2.2.1 The B&NES Council Local Plan 2011-2029 comprises two separate Development Plan Documents: the Core Strategy (adopted July 2014) and the Placemaking Plan (adopted July 2017).
- 2.2.2 The Core Strategy puts in place a strategic planning framework to guide change and development in the District over the next 20 years and beyond.
- 2.2.3 The Placemaking Plan aims to create better places by delivering high quality, sustainable and well-located development, as well as the infrastructure needed to deliver it. It supports the strategic framework in the Core Strategy, providing the detailed principles for development and design for the identified and allocated development sites, and includes policies on development management and protection of valued assets across B&NES.

- 2.2.4 The Local Plan was partially updated in 2023. The policies of the Core Strategy (2014), Placemaking Plan (2017) and Local Plan Partial Update (2023) have been combined into a single set of documents (Composite Plans) published in January 2023, forming the Development Plan.
- 2.2.5 The spatial vision and strategic objectives of 'Volume 1 Districtwide composite plan' make reference to Midsomer Norton Town Centre, including its role to provide key employment, services and leisure facilities, being a principle centre within the Somer Valley with improved public realm related to the new integrated town park.
- 2.2.6 Core Strategy Policy SV2 of 'Volume 4 Somer Valley composite plan' sets out the Strategic Policy for Midsomer Norton Town Centre. This includes identifying 1. Key Opportunities/Priorities (development of vacant/underused buildings such as former Palladium cinema/brewery, focusing on new retail at southern end of High Street), 2. Scope and Scale of Change (provision for larger retail units in core of High Street) and 3. Placemaking Principles (reducing traffic in the retail core of the High Street and improving the pedestrian environment).
- 2.2.7 The full list of key development site allocations within Midsomer Norton Town Centre are specified in 'Volume 4 Somer Valley composite plan'.

#### **Bath and North East Somerset Emerging Local Plan**

- 2.2.8 In light of national planning policy changes and the publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, B&NES Council reset their approach to the Emerging Local Plan in February 2025, including greater emphasis on addressing the shortage of housing, redefining the Green Belt and stimulating economic growth.
- 2.2.9 The emerging Local Plan will establish the planning framework for B&NES up to 2042. It sets out the policies, vision and strategy which will determine how the district develops and how planning decisions are made.

#### Midsomer Norton Proposed Neighbourhood Plan

2.2.10 Midsomer Norton was designated a Neighbourhood Area in November 2013. There currently isn't a published Neighbourhood Plan for the town of Midsomer Norton, however Midsomer Norton Town Council had previously forwarded proposals for a plan bordered by the town boundary, bringing together the interests of locally elected Councils, residents, businesses and community groups.

# Midsomer Norton and Welton Conservation Area Character Appraisal

2.2.11 The Midsomer Norton and Welton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004 is a material consideration in planning decisions affecting Midsomer Norton and Welton. The appraisal is used to summarise the architectural and historic interest of Midsomer Norton and Welton. It recognises and seeks to preserve the area's heritage assets for the enjoyment of future generations.

# West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

- 2.2.12 The West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2020-2036 is a detailed plan identifying that over £400m of investment is needed for walking and cycling infrastructure and will be sought and channelled through the West of England Combined Authority.
- 2.2.13 Of particular relevance to Midsomer Norton are walking routes 'W05 Somer Valley 1' and 'W06 Somer Valley 2'.

  Several improvements are proposed along these routes which include widening footways, improving pedestrian crossing facilities and installing lighting and CCTV.

#### Joint Rights of Way Improvement Plan

2.2.14 Midsomer Norton falls within the Joint Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2019-2026 (ROWIP) for B&NES, along with Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council.



## 3 Walking & Wheeling

- 3.1.1 Midsomer Norton is a walkable place, with almost all parts of the town accessible within a 30-minute walk of The Hollies. However, the town sits across a river valley meaning that journeys to the north and south of the town centre involve relatively steep gradients.
- 3.1.2 Routes east-west along the High Street are generally level across the whole the town centre but the ground climbs quickly to the north and slightly less quickly to the south.
- 3.1.3 Most roads in the town centre benefit from kerb separated footways along both sides of the carriageway. Along the High Street there are dropped kerbs and tactile paving provided at most junctions. Away from the High Street provision is less consistent and there are a number of locations where neither are provided on logical desire lines.
- 3.1.4 There is a very limited provision of formal pedestrian crossings. Pedestrian crossing phases are provided as part of the signal-controlled junction of B3355 Silver Street and High Street, and as part of the signals controlling the exit from the Sainsbury's site north of High Street. There are no other signal controlled or zebra crossings in or around the town centre.
- 3.1.5 As part of the Mobility Hub works in the town a new signal controlled crossing is planned on High Street west of the service access to Sainsbury's, and a zebra crossing is planned on South Road between the car park and the alleyway running along the western boundary of the Old Brewery.
- 3.1.6 Seating is provided at a number of locations along High Street, but not more widely across the town except at bus stops. Consideration should be given to introducing more ad hoc seating on routes to and from the High Street to improve inclusivity of access. Consideration could also be given to the introduction of hand-rails on some steeper sections of the on- and off-street path network.











# 4 Cycling

- 4.1.1 Midsomer Norton and the surrounding settlements of Paulton, Radstock, Chilcompton and Stratton on the Fosse are situated within a 30-minute cycle of the High Street. Local topography and the lack of safe cycle infrastructure for journeys within Midsomer Norton and to neighbouring settlements may discourage people from choosing to undertake these journeys by bike.
- 4.1.2 Midsomer Norton is connected to Radstock by the Norton Radstock Greenway which follows a former railway line to the north of the town. The Five Arches Greenway runs through the Town Park and connects to the Norton Radstock Greenway. The greenways provide a connection to National Cycle Route (NCR) 24 which links Bath, Radstock and Frome along a mix of quiet roads and off-road routes along former railway lines.
- 4.1.3 There is an aspiration for these local cycle routes to be extended to Shepton Mallet as part of the Somerset Circle. This would form a 76 mile, mostly traffic free circuit linking Bristol, Bath, the Mendip Hills, the Somerset Levels and the coast. Around 50 miles of this loop is already completed with a section between Midsomer Norton and Shepton Mallet being a key next step in completing this route.
- 4.1.4 Along the High Street there are limited places where bikes can be locked safely. There are a small number of spaces adjacent to The Hollies (4 stands) and to the rear of Sainsbury's (5 stands). Additionally, there are a small number of stands (3) near the entrances to the Town Park. These are all provided as Sheffield Stands and are not covered.
- 4.1.5 It is understood that some improved cycle parking is proposed to be delivered as part of the recently installed mobility hubs project in the High Street. This will include 3 new Sheffield stands and 6 cycle lockers near the junction of High Street and Excelsior Terrace.





# 5 Public Transport

5.1.1 Midsomer Norton is served by a range of bus services providing connections across Bath and North East Somerset and into neighbouring authority areas. Almost all services in the town pass along High Street, utilising the recently improved bus stops opposite The Hollies.

**Table 5-1: Midsomer Norton Bus Services** 

Service No.	Route	Days
2V	Radstock – MSN – Paulton – Timsbury – Tunley - Odd Down P&R	Mon- Sat
171	Paulton – MSN – Radstock – Bath	Mon - Sun
172	Paulton – Farrington Gurney – MSN – Radstock-Bath	Mon - Sun
173	Wells – Gurney Slade – MSN – Radstock - Bath	Mon- Sat
174	Wells – Shepton Mallet – MSN – Radstock - Bath	Mon - Sun
184	MSN – Stratton on the Fosse - Frome	Mon - Fri
376a	Bristol – Whitchurch – Paulton – MSN – Chewton Mendip - Wells	Mon - Sat
414	Frome College – Westfield – MSN (Term time)	Mon- Sat
424	Frome – Radstock - MSN	Mon-Sat
522	Bristol – Keynsham – Farmborough – Paulton – MSN – Radstock - Bath	Mon - Sun

5.1.2 Recent changes to the High Street have included improvements to bus stop facilities on High Street as part of a mobility hub scheme.









## 6 Highways

6.1.1 The local highway network within the town includes High Street, South Road, Excelsior Terrace, Silver Street and The Island.

#### **High Street**

- 6.1.2 High Street is a one-way street linking between the A362 Radstock Road in the east and the B3355 High Street in the west. Traffic counts completed in November 2022 records 12-hour flows of just under 6,000 vehicles arriving at the signal controlled junction with Silver Street. Around a third of this traffic turns south to Silver Street with the remaining traffic turning north to the B3355. This level of traffic is above the level where most people would feel comfortable cycling in mixed traffic.
- 6.1.3 High Street is subject to a 20mph limit along its length, and TomTom data provided by B&NES Council suggests that this is broadly adhered to by vehicles passing through the town.
- 6.1.4 High Street is a wide one-way street. In many places the carriageway is wide enough to accommodate on-street parking and loading bays while still allowing width for two lanes of traffic. At the western end of High Street the two lane arrangement is formalised on the approach to the Silver Street junction.
- 6.1.5 Much of the southern kerb line of High Street is taken up with on-street parking bays. Between Excelsior Terrace and Silver Street there is parking for nine vehicles (limited to 1 hour stay) and a disabled parking bay. It is likely that four of these spaces will be lost with the introduction of a new signal-controlled crossing. There are also two bus stop cages which have recently been installed as part of the mobility hub.
- 6.1.6 Over the past five years there have been three personal injury accidents along High Street, all of which resulted in slight injury. Two of these involved a car and one involved a pedestrian. At the Silver Street junction one accident resulted in serious injury of a pedestrian.

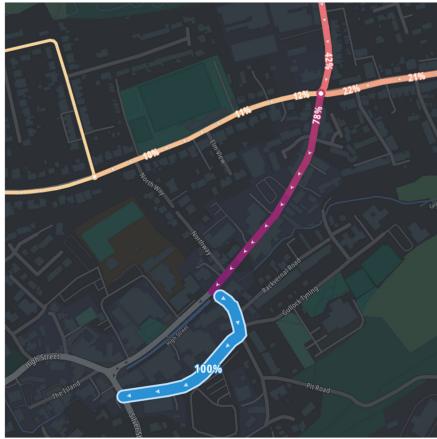


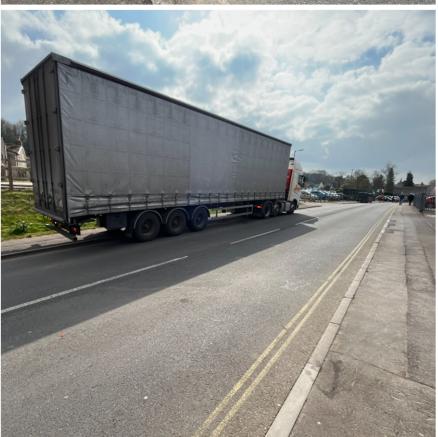


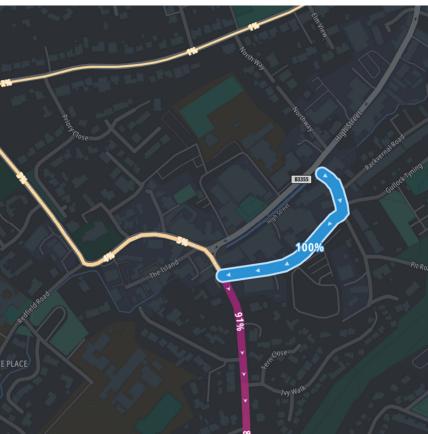
#### **South Road**

- 6.1.7 South Road is a more modern road constructed to the south of High Street in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The road connects Silver Street with High Street via Excelsior Terrace.
- 6.1.8 No traffic counts are available for South Road, however TomTom data provides a useful indication of the pattern of movement into and out of South Road. This shows that the vast majority westbound traffic turns left to Silver Road with a very small proportion of traffic turning right. Due to the one-way operation of High Street all traffic on South Road originates to the north east.
- 6.1.9 For Eastbound traffic along South Road around 70% of trips approach from the south along Silver Street. All traffic departing South Road must turn left on to High Street. The TomTom data suggests that around 40% of the eastbound traffic along South Road turns into the Sainsbury's service entrance, suggesting that the access prohibitions here are widely ignored.
- 6.1.10 South Road provides access to the towns main car park with around 258 spaces. It also provides frontage access to a number of commercial properties, predominantly to the north of the road.
- 6.1.11 Parking is prohibited along the north side of South Road at all times and between Monday and Saturday between 8am and 6pm.







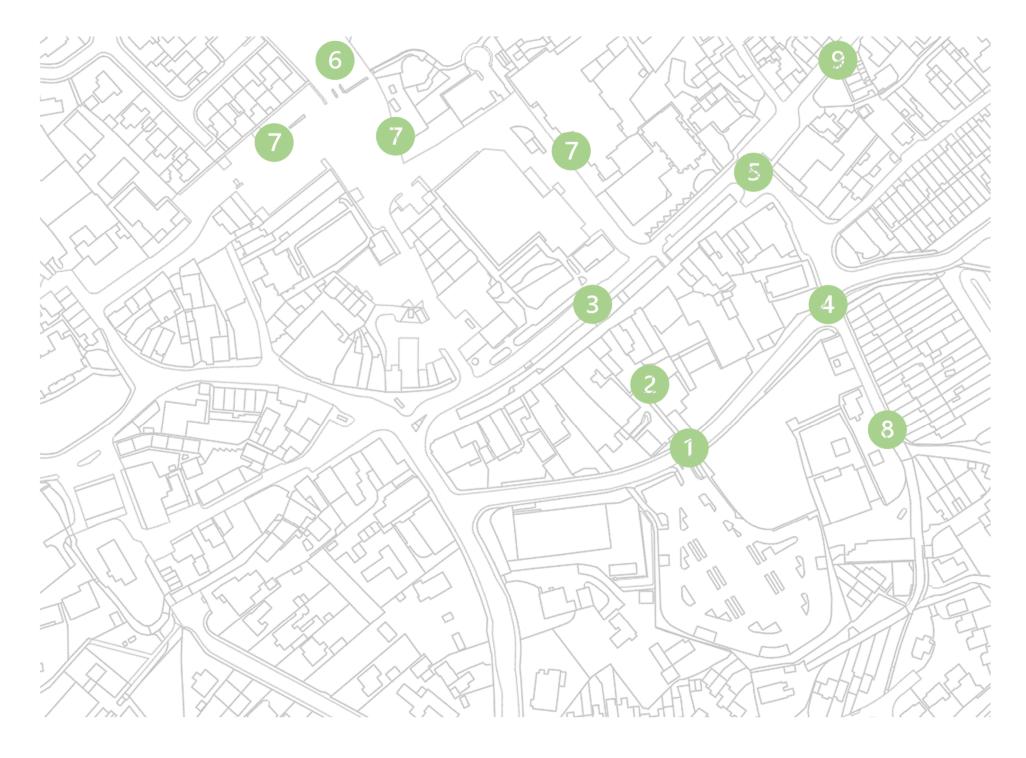




## 7 Masterplan opportunities

- 1 Improve pedestrian crossing provision over South Road between South Road Car Park and pedestrian link through to Town Centre.
- 2 Incorporate improved, inclusive access route through the Old Brewery Quarter site between South Road and High Street
- 3 Remove the requirement for vehicle access to the Old Brewery Quarter site from High Street to enhance opportunities for new crossing on High Street. Remove wall adjacent to the Hollies opposite existing access to enable introduction of new crossing.
- 4 Realign junction of South Road with Excelsior Terrace to better accommodate existing large vehicle movements including bus. Likely to require 3<sup>rd</sup> party land
- 5 Rationalise junction of High Street and Excelsior Terrace to reduce space given over to vehicle movements, enhancing pedestrian amenity and increasing opportunities for development of sites close to the junction
- 6 Redevelopment of B&NES Staff parking area with vehicle access taken from Priory Close
- 7 Introduce new routes for pedestrians and cyclists to move through the Sainsbury's site between Priory Close, High Street and Pows Orchard.
- 8 Widen southern section of Excelsior Terrace and Primrose Lane to facilitate access to the southern development site, including provision for cyclists to access Pit Road
- 9 Narrow High Street and provide wider footways along one or both sides of the street.

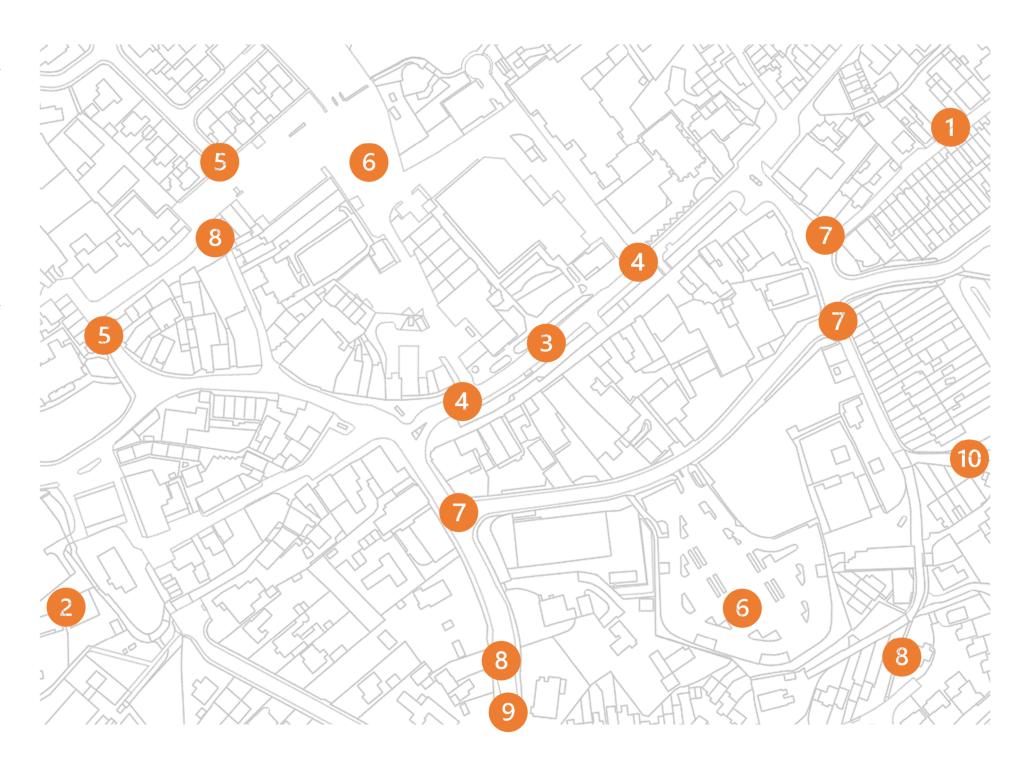
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## **8** Wider Opportunities

- 1 Active Travel Connection between Town Park and High Street via Rackvernal Road with the removal of discriminatory barriers, and connection via Excelsion Terrace.
- 2 Improve the active travel link beside Somervale School. Providing a connection to The Island if width allows.
- 3 High Street overly wide. Narrow footways at eastern end and no provision for cycles. Cycle lane or perhaps bus gate to remove through traffic. South Road likely to have sufficient capacity to accommodate diverted flows.
- 4 Sainsbury's access / exit on High Street. Results in a complicated junction arrangement. Widespread abuse of prohibition of access (should be deliveries and staff only). Consider implications of reversing access and egress arrangements.
- 5 Consider alternative exit route from Sainsbury's car park either via Church Square or Priory Close Two-way working along Church Square challenging due to blind bend. Will require signal controlled shuttle working, need to design to confirm. Priory Close to the north may make a better exit, although level difference to over come.
- 6 Limited EV charging in town identify opportunities to increase
- 7 Pedestrian improvements dropped kerbs tactile paving at various locations
- 8 Inclusivity improvements Benches and handrails to assist with movement up and down the hills.
- 9 Crossing on Silver Street near school bus stops.
- 10 Closure of Pit Road to motor vehicles to make this route more attractive for walking and cycling.





## 9 Intervention Testing

- 9.1.1 A series of concept designs have been developed which explore and test some of the interventions set out above.
- 9.1.2 These can be seen in Drawings 08795-TR-001 to 08795-TR-007
- 9.1.3 A summary of the proposals illustrated is set out below.

# 9.2 08795-TR-001 – Alternative access to Sainsbury's Car Park

The sketch shows the type of intervention which might be required to enable two-way working between Church Square and Pow's Orchard. Although this would provide an alternative exit route from the car park, and help to minimise traffic flow on High Street, the intervention is likely to require the introduction of signal control. The arrangement is likely to interfere with essential vehicle access to the Church and the signal junction infrastructure will look out of place on a quiet back lane in the town. This option is unlikely to be viable.

# 9.3 08795-TR-003 - Alternative access to Sainsbury's Car Park and pedestrian and cycle improvements

- 9.3.1 The sketch shown how a new exit from the Sainsbury's car park could enable vehicles to exit via Priory Close which provides direct access on to North Road. This would enable the removal of the ramp between the upper and lower parking area within the Sainsbury's site.
- 9.3.2 The plan shows how the car park could be reconfigured to broadly retain the same level of parking provision, while introducing an enhanced pedestrian and cycle link around the car park, in addition to space for landscaping, SuDs and tree planting.

#### 9.4 08795-TR-005 - Sainsbury's Service Access

- 9.4.1 Wider opportunities to enhance the High Street could be unlocked by reversing the direction of travel using the one-way loop around the Sainsbury's site.
- 9.4.2 This plan demonstrated that large articulated vehicles would still be able to serve the supermarket without significant changes to the service yard layout.
- 9.4.3 The plan also shows the introduction of a footway along the eastern boundary of the site.

#### 9.5 08795-TR-002 - High Street East

- 9.5.1 The concept sketch shows a revised junction arrangement between High Street and Silver Street which could be introduced following a reversal of the access arrangements for Sainsbury's.
- 9.5.2 There is an opportunity to reduce the High Street approach to a single lane, and remove the secondary signals at the current exit from the Sainsbury's site.
- 9.5.3 This would enable a more simple arrangement for pedestrian crossing facilities across the two arms of the junction without any significant impact on the changes made at The Island.
- 9.5.4 Additionally, the changes would allow increases in the public realm in the area of the junction, improving the appearance of the High Street to passing traffic.
- 9.5.5 The arrangement assumes that the mobility hub is unchanged.

#### 9.6 08795-TR-004 - Bus Gating High Street

9.6.1 The concept sketch shows a significant change in the flow of traffic along the High Street. Again this sketch incorporates a reversal of the Sainsbury's site access.

- 9.6.2 High Street would only provide access to the Sainsbury's site with the majority of through traffic tuning from High Street to Excelsior Terrace and South Road.
- 9.6.3 A bus gate would be introduced at the western end of High Street, with only buses able to proceed towards the junction with the B3355.
- 9.6.4 This arrangement would require a section of High Street to become two-way between the new Sainsbury's site exit and Excelsior Terrace to provide a route out of the town centre for general traffic.
- 9.6.5 This approach would limit the opportunities for improvements to pedestrian amenity at the junction of High Street and Excelsior Terrace.

#### 9.7 08795-TR-006 - High Street East

- 9.7.1 As an alternative to the arrangement shown in drawing TR-004 this sketch assumes that one-way working is retained along High Street towards the B3355, but the direction of travel within the Sainsbury's site is still reversed.
- 9.7.2 The sketch shows significant enhancement to pedestrian facilities on High Street and on Excelsior Terrace. On High Street a new pedestrian priority crossing linking the Old Brewery Quarter site to the Hollies gardens. This would require closure of the vehicle access to the OBQ site, and changes to the boundary wall and landscaping within the Hollies Gardens.
- 9.7.3 The sketch also shows improvements along Excelsior Terrace. This includes the introduction of continuous footway crossovers (Copenhagen crossings) over the lower traffic side roads along Excelsior Terrace.
- 9.7.4 Additionally a large raise table is proposed at the junction between Excelsior Terrace and High Street linking two enlarged and improved area of public realm adjacent to two potential development sites.



- 9.7.5 As part of the masterplan delivery, opportunities to improve the alignment of South Road at its junction with Excelsior Terrace should be examined. This would make the route more comfortable for pedestrians, and would better accommodate the movement of buses and other large vehicles to and from the High Street.
- 9.7.6 The concept also includes a parallel crossing facility. It is suggested that shared path is provided on either side of Excelsior Terrace connecting an improved route for cyclists along Rackvernal Road to the town centre.

# 9.8 08795-TR-007 - Improvements to Excelsior Terrace and South Road

- 9.8.1 This final sketch shows how the changes within the previous drawing accommodate the movement of larger vehicles.
- 9.8.2 At the corner between South Road and Excelsior Terrace the revised alignment offers improved intervisibility between larger vehicles and a wide footway on the inside of the bend.



Appendix A Concept Sketches

