

IMAGINE MIDSOMER NORTON

Town Centre Masterplan

Public consultation draft
October 2025



With thanks to the West of England Mayoral
Combined Authority for grant funding this project.

Project team



PJA



Introduction

Introduction

The Midsomer Norton Town Centre Masterplan has been prepared to set out a vision and identify opportunities and future improvements to the town centre. It develops ideas that have been generated by the community and builds on the work of the Historic England funded High Street Heritage Action Zone programme (2020-2024), setting a bold vision for Midsomer Norton's future High Street.

This project has been undertaken by a team including Allies and Morrison, PJA and Avison Young covering a range of disciplines. It has been commissioned by Bath & North East Somerset Council in partnership with Midsomer Norton Town Council and has involved engagement with the key landowners, local businesses and the community.

The masterplan is centred around the former Midsomer Norton Brewery buildings, located within the central High Street, and the surrounding core retail area. The masterplan also encompasses the two main car parks for the town located on South Road and to the rear of Sainsbury's supermarket.

What is a masterplan?

A masterplan like this covers many different sites owned by a range of individuals and companies as well as the Council. It sets out a direction of travel for the area and shows how a coordinated approach between different sites could have more impact than isolated schemes.

The masterplan can encourage and enable good change, and is a key first step for the Council in terms of the sites and public spaces which it owns. For sites in other ownerships, it is intended to guide and stimulate the appetite for change, but can't force projects to happen. The ideas in this report could take time to deliver and may not all happen in the precise way that these examples illustrate.





Midsomer Norton is a market town situated in north east Somerset, approximately 17km south west of Bath and 25km south of Bristol. It is the principal town centre which also serves the adjoining Radstock and surrounding towns and villages within B&NES district and beyond, serving approximately 40,000 people in the Somer Valley catchment.

MIDSOMER NORTON

Bristol

Bath

Portishead

Bradley Stoke

Yate

Nailsea

BRISTOL AIRPORT

CHEW VALLEY LAKE

BLAGDON LAKE

MENDIP HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Cheddar

Weston-super-Mare

Burnham-on-Sea

Wells

Shepton Mallet

Frome

Westbury

IMBER RANGE

Warminster

LONGLEAT FOREST

Midsomer Norton Town Centre

Midsomer Norton is a medieval market town which later became an important coal-mining community in the 19th century. The town is compact, arranged around a linear High Street with larger developments and back accesses to the rear. It is distinctive as one of the few High Streets in the UK which features a river along its length.

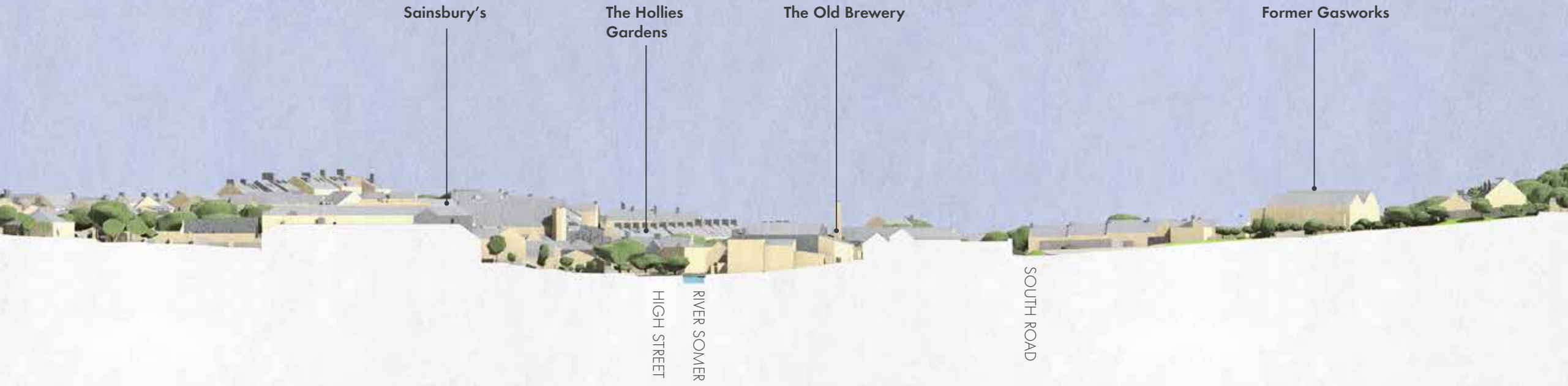
Beyond the historic core of the High Street and the western area including the Parish Church there are areas of Victorian terraces and larger homes, which then blend into 20th century suburbs rising up the valley sides and stretching along the valley bottom towards nearby Radstock.

The coal-mining history remains a visible presence in the landscape including the distinctive shape of the Batch to the south east. The former spoil heaps are now open space and form part of the Town Park offering expansive views back across the town.



Midsomer Norton Town Centre

This section through the town centre emphasises the valley nature of the place. This has a number of key impacts on how we see the town, including the way in which views are established to key landmarks by their elevation. The views from surrounding hills including the Batch also emphasise the importance of the scale and massing of buildings and the modelling of roofscape in establishing local character.





Introducing the Town Centre

MIDSOMER NORTON THROUGH TIME

1200

Midsomer Norton began to take shape in the **1200s**, partially thanks to Hugh de Vivonia, a Norman knight and royal servant under King Henry III. Vivonia held lordship over the town and surrounding estates. Midsomer Norton's farming community grew, with new clearances of land, strengthening its role as a rural market village.



The Church of the Holy Ghost is the second oldest building in Midsomer Norton. The church is housed in a converted tithe barn which was built by monks in **1400s**.



The inside of the Holy Ghost Church

1700

Like many English towns, Midsomer Norton began as a small farming community. The parish church of St John the Baptist would have been a key religious and social hub.



The Midsomer Norton Knight

The discovery of coal at Welton in the **1700s** led to a significant expansion of the town, with the construction of mines and associated infrastructure. The coal mining industry shaped the town's landscape and economy for centuries.



Clutton Gayfield Colliery

The Hollies dates from the mid to late **18th century**.



1800



The town has a long history of mining, with past collieries dotted around the area. Mining employed many within the town and has helped to shape the environment and identity of Midsomer Norton. Norton Hill Colliery (Old Pit) was the first real colliery and opened in **1839**.



1900



The railway station in Midsomer Norton was opened in **1874**, connecting the town from Evercreech to Bath.



In April **1908** a coal dust explosion at Norton Hill Colliery killed 10 men and boys. The incident helped shape local attitudes towards mine safety and is still referenced in local coalfield history.

The last operating coal mine in town, Norton Hill Colliery, ceased operations in **1966**.

A map of Midsomer Norton from 1956



Today Midsomer Norton has a vibrant, busy centre. The town hall is being refurbished, public spaces are being improved and there are plans to improve the centre through thoughtful masterplanning and community engagement.

TODAY



The station was closed in **1966** due to the decline in coalfield production and passenger numbers. Today, the station building is restored and houses museums, a café and book shop.



A flooded town centre in 1979

Conservation area

The central area of Midsomer Norton is designated as a conservation area. The principal spatial feature of the Conservation Area is the linear north-east to south-west alignment of High Street which terminates to the west at the junction with Silver Street and to the north at the Stone Cross.

The coal mining industry shaped the town's landscape and economy for centuries and created the prosperity which led to the construction of buildings like the Hollies and the Town Hall.

Its heritage status is currently defined by historic England as 'at risk'. This is due to some unsympathetic modern developments, such as new large format retail units and car parks, which have over time detracted from the areas historic character. The poor condition of some historic buildings, vacancies or poor utilisation of existing buildings and the low quality of the public realm are also significant issues which could be addressed to restore the quality of the conservation area. It is noted that there are a good many 'loved but not listed' buildings along the High Street including the Old Brewery.



Character

Midsomer Norton is rich in character and its local centre is a welcoming space for activity and interaction. The River Somer runs through the High Street and adds great value to the public environment and for the community and local wildlife.

The architecture of Midsomer Norton and its High Street reflects the identity of the town. The mix of architectural styles, materials and periods in the centre add to its interesting townscape and reflect the towns history and changing needs. From the greenway, looking down over the town, the roofscape reveals a variety of roof types, church spires, chimneys, and the recognizable Old Brewery chimney.

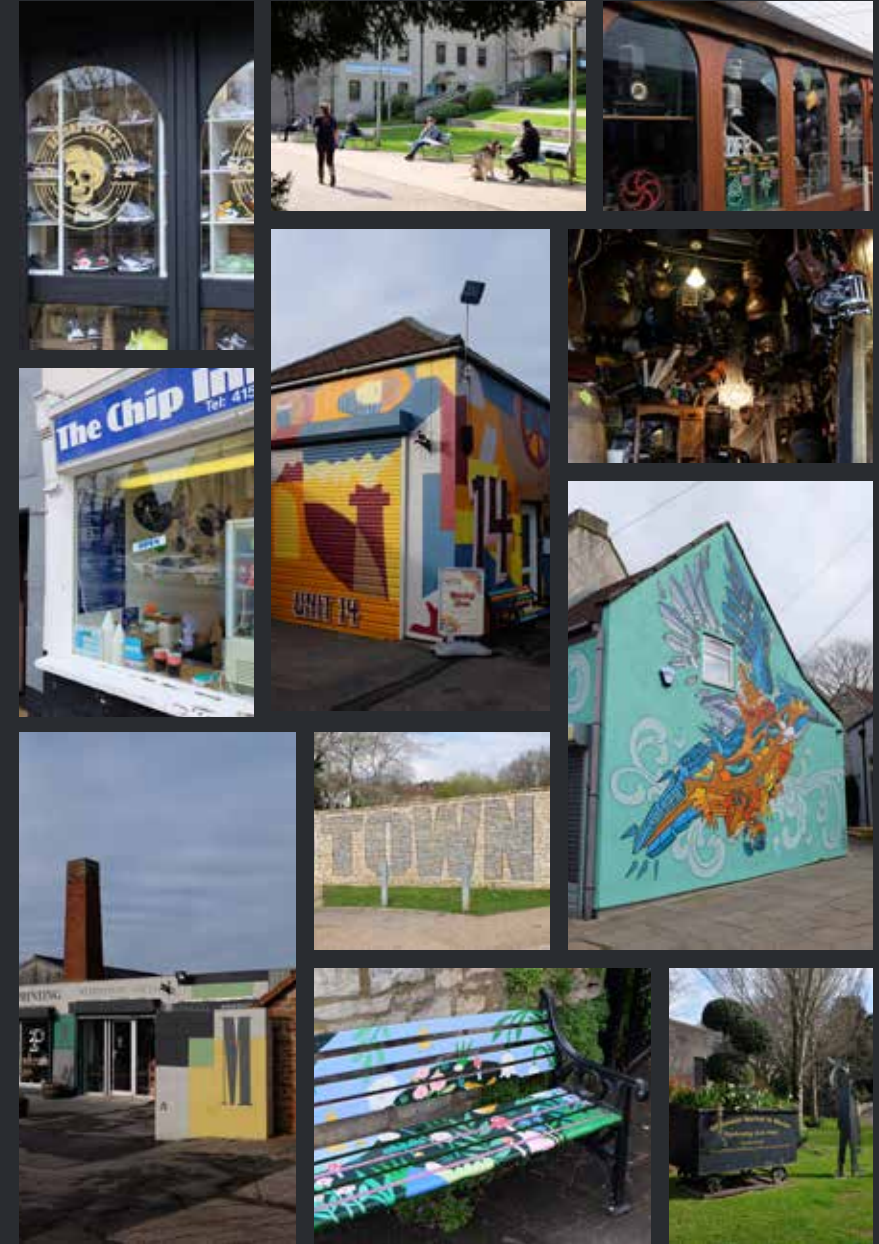
"Midsomer Norton had always been a small, creative and independent town full of quirks and individuality. I hope that the new generations create the same safe spaces for art, music and creative thinking."

Constructed from local stone, Midsomer Norton's attractive civic buildings display a variety of architectural styles. The Hollies is a

"When I come back down here, it feels like home!"



Character and identity in Midsomer Norton!



Climate and Nature

As part of any changes to buildings and spaces we have the opportunity to build in features which help to tackle climate change whilst also mitigating its impact through measures which address flooding, biodiversity and increasing extremes of temperature. Key measures include:

Improved walking and cycling provision to reduce dependancy on cars for short local trips.

Introducing areas of rain-garden planting in streets and car parks to reduce the extent of hard surfacing and better manage water run-off.

Planting more trees in streets and car parks to provide shade and extend ecological corridors.

Adding photovoltaic solar panels to roofs, and exploring options to add them over public car parks.

Daylight a further section of river on the High Street, benefitting from the recent flood resilience upgrades.



5 SITE BRIEFS

Transforming streets

The Highway Code and the highway design standards have both been updated in recent years to give clearer priority to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly at points where they are most vulnerable such as side turnings. There are already good practice examples existing which show how these rules could be applied in Midsomer Norton to improve walking and cycling.

At the same time, these changes go hand in hand with opportunities to soften the public realm with the inclusion of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) planting areas, sometimes also called rain gardens. Along with more tree planting these have an important role to play in improving liveability and mitigating the impact of climate change in multiple ways.



An example of a wide bell-mouth at a junction built to dated high way design standards with a very long pedestrian crossing



The same junction as shown above after being modified to narrow the carriageway and create a safer pedestrian place



SUDS planting can be incorporated into a run of parking bays



An example of the side street junction treatment which reinforces the priority for pedestrians could be applied to locations such as Gullock Tynning and Rackvernal Road

Adapting car parks

The existing Sainsbury's and South Road car parks are two of the biggest opportunities to improve the public realm (see pages 68 and 84).

Both spaces have significant capacity to contribute to urban greening, provide shade in the summer and deliver SUDS planting which can help to attenuate water run-off.

Planting beds at the low points have a key role to play, whilst tree planting of native deciduous species should be interspersed with the car parking to provide a green canopy.

In the case of the Sainsbury's car park, planting should also play a role in helping to create a safer zone outside the school entrance, with an element of separation from the car park.

Either car park is also worth exploring as an opportunity for the addition of solar panels which would both generate energy and provide shade to reduce over-heating.



Public car park incorporating tree planting and SUDS



To be updated with
a car park image

Include charging points for electric vehicles



Accessible and direct pedestrian connections



SUDS planting used to create a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles outside a primary school

Movement Baseline

As with many similar towns, transport and movement is a prominent aspect of the way that the centre works and the various ways in which people experience it. The following pages provide an overview of the key issues which have helped to inform the masterplan, reflecting the importance of sustainable and active travel, and the need for disabled parking in key central locations.





A range of positive walking and wheeling routes across the town, to be enjoyed in all weathers! The Five Arches Greenway and St Chad's Well walk.



Many walking routes through the town are in poor condition, disjointed and particularly unsafe for less abled walkers and wheelers.



Walking and wheeling

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 centre is located in a river valley meaning that journeys to the north and south of the town centre can be quite steep.

- Routes east-west along the High Street are generally level across the whole of the town centre but the ground climbs quickly to the north and slightly less quickly to the south.
- Most roads in the town centre benefit from kerb separated footways along both sides of the carriageway.
- There is a very limited provision of formal pedestrian crossings.
- Seating is provided at a number of locations along High Street, but not more widely across the town except at bus stops.



The masterplan has been developed in coordination with the B&NES Active Travel Masterplan and delivers some of the key projects.

Cycling

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.

- Midsomer Norton is connected to Radstock by the Norton Radstock Greenway which follows a former railway line to the north of the town.
- There is an aspiration for these local cycle routes to be extended 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.
- Along the High Street there are limited places where bikes can be locked safely.



The adjacent images show various approaches to cycle parking - stacked parking and parking simple bike racks integrated into the public realm using landscaping



Cycleways in the local area



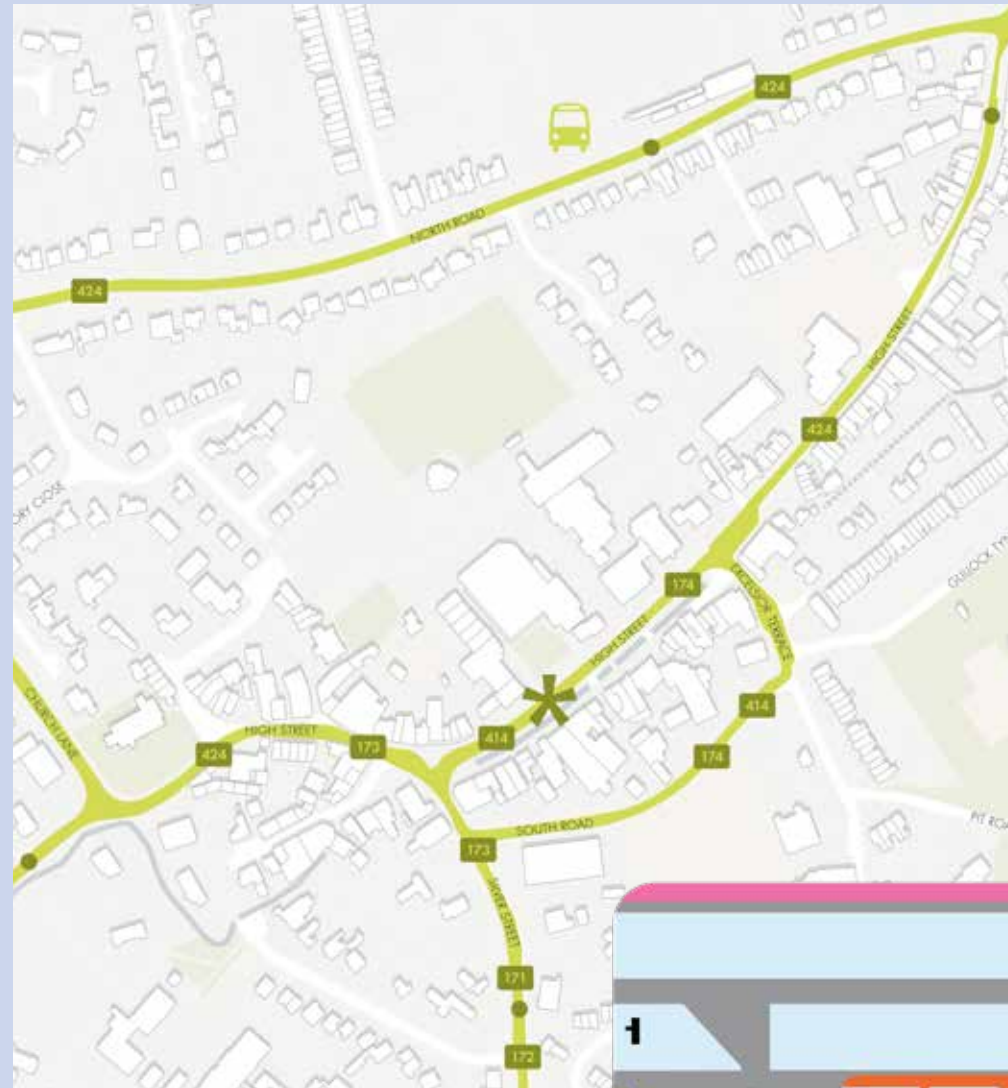
Left: Current cycle parking in the town is mainly located in the car parks or is informal - showing the need for more parking in better locations



Right: Similar approaches could be used in Midsomer Norton Town Centre to improve the cycle parking offer.

Top: The new mobility hub on the High Street completed in 2025.

Bottom: Car-dominated junctions make pedestrian and cycle movement awkward.



Current bus routes in the town centre

Public Transport

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 the High Street, utilising the recently improved bus stops opposite The Hollies.

Recent changes to the High Street have included improvements to bus stop facilities on the High Street as part of a mobility hub scheme completed in 2025.



Highways

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

- The high street level of traffic is above the level where most people would feel comfortable cycling in mixed traffic.
- Much of the southern kerb line of High Street is taken up with on-street parking bays.
- 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. Parking is prohibited along the north side of South Road at all times and between Monday and Saturday between 8am and 6pm.

High Street



South Road



Excelsior Terrace



Silver Street



The Island



A map of Midsomer Norton centre from 1883





Movement opportunities

- 1 Improve pedestrian crossing provision over South Road from the South Road Car Park, improving the pedestrian link through to the Town Centre.
- 2 Improve the connections between South Road and High Street, with upgrades to the existing pedestrian lane and a new route through the Old Brewery site.
- 3 Add a new pedestrian crossing on the High Street creating a safe route from the South Road Car Park and the Brewery site to the Hollies Gardens and onward to the school.
- 4 Realign junction of South Road with Excelsior Terrace to better accommodate existing large vehicle movements including buses.
- 5 Rationalise the junction of the High Street and Excelsior Terrace to reduce space given over to vehicle movements, enhancing pedestrian connections towards the Town Park and the Five Arches walking and wheeling path which links to Radstock and Westfield
- 6 Redevelop the B&NES Staff parking area with vehicle access and opportunity for pedestrian connection through from Priory Close
- 7 Introduce improved walking routes through the Sainsbury's site between Priory Close, High Street and Pows Orchard.
- 8 Widen the existing High Street footway and explore options to add a footway on the north side of the street.

Economic Context

The ideas in this masterplan document are intended to achieve the best possible viability so that they are as deliverable as possible, and also to complement the existing town centre and boost the local economy. To support this we have undertaken a review of the town and the wider context to understand the land ownerships, the local economy, the demographics and needs of the town and the existing property market across a range of sectors.

The following pages include a summary of the key points which can be explored in more detail in the technical appendix.



Economic Profile



Business growth has been happening on the periphery of Midsomer Norton.



Jobs in the top local sectors have increased or stayed the same

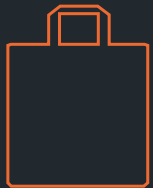
There are specialised industrial sectors



Midsomer Norton has a strong economic profile with 5000 jobs and 600 businesses.



High streets have generally diminished over the past five years...



Midsomer Norton's economy is led by micro businesses

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation are under performing but the evening economy is growing



The retail offer does not reflect the local spending power



Office rents are low

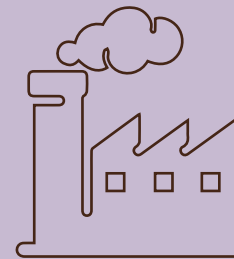
There is no co-working or flexible work space



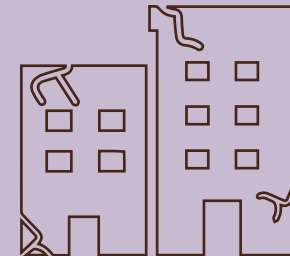
Midsomer Norton has a high proportion of comparison shopping beyond food and drink



Retail rent is low in Midsomer Norton



Midsomer Norton has a large and well occupied industrial base



Most of the retail and office stock is dated and in average condition

Demographic Profile

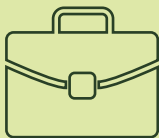


Midsomer Norton has a growing population...

There is a large proportion of older residents



There are some pockets of deprivation....



The town has low unemployment and high economic activity



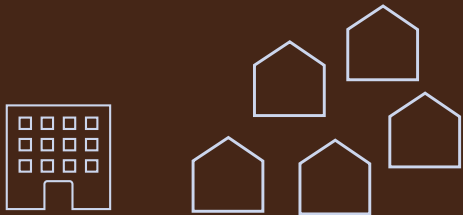
People have medium to higher skilled qualification jobs...

There is a high proportion of high earning families



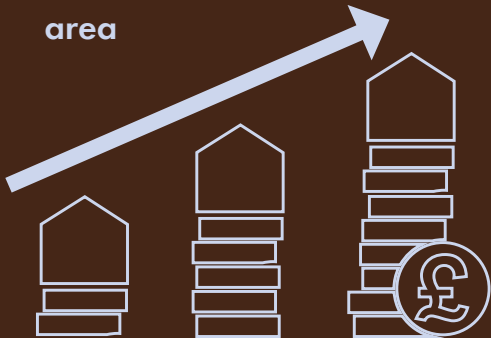
The majority of homes in Midsomer Norton are owned

Residential Market

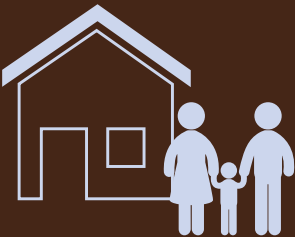
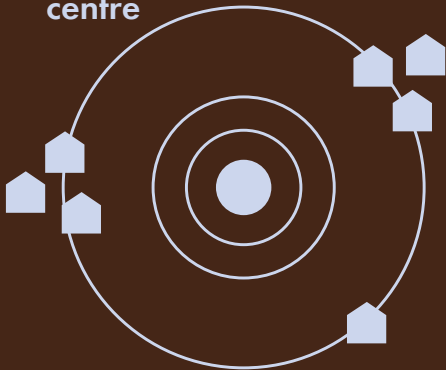


Flats make up a small part of the local housing typology

House prices and rents are rising but remain similar to the wider area



Developments in the pipeline are located in the periphery of the town centre



Single family households make the majority of the housing stock

Local economy - key messages

- Midsomer Norton has a strong local character and community identity. Mosaic profiles confirm that the local residents are affluent, well established and highly skilled workers. This helps underpin demand for high-quality services, homes and amenities. The High Street is largely made up of value-led comparison retail such as charity shops and there is limited provision of higher end cafes, restaurants and cultural venues. The retail, leisure and commercial offer lacks variety and vibrancy to meet their needs.
- Core sectors such as Education, Construction and Professional Services remain resilient and present a foundation for growth. However, High Street sectors such as Retail, Food and Accommodation and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have declined. This indicates a need for economic diversification to ensure that the High Street remains resilient.
- Midsomer Norton's commercial market is functional but there has been limited business activity, particularly in the office market. Approximately 65% of Midsomer Norton's retail premises are rated 3 stars and the majority of office buildings are older stock. This presents opportunities to provide different types of commercial uses, particularly in the town centre.
- Similarly, Midsomer Norton has a history of industrial sectors and some large clusters of industrial estates which are very well occupied. There is an opportunity to support and provide smaller, light industrial uses.
- Midsomer Norton's business profile is made up of micro businesses meaning that 88% of local businesses have fewer than 10 employees. There is a market for smaller, flexible commercial units that service local entrepreneurs, creatives and service providers.
- There are four medium to large residential developments in the pipeline but these are primarily on the periphery of the town. The town needs a broader housing mix as there is a shortage of smaller homes and flatted stock in the town centre.



What does this mean for future economic opportunities?

- Proposals should focus on locally-rooted sectors that are the most specialized such as manufacturing, education and construction. The town could benefit from programmes that support local businesses and improve access to higher-paying jobs.
- In response, strategic interventions should focus on creating new typologies of workspace such as coworking hubs, creative studios, workspace and makerspaces that offer more modern, affordable and collaborative space for freelancers and entrepreneurs.
- There may also be demand for high quality childcare and education to attract and retain professional families.
- There is a clear opportunity to increase housing choice through the delivery of flatted, affordable and centrally located residential development. This will help to activate the town centre by increasing footfall, supporting local businesses and respond to the needs of young professionals, people working from home, key workers and downsizers.
- Developments should include affordable housing options. In addition, there is an opportunity to provide assisted living facilities and accessible healthcare centres, particularly in the town centre.
- Some households are likely to have disposable income and expect high quality services and amenities. The town centre must transition into a more mixed-use, experience led environment that includes retail, hospitality, community, workspace and cultural uses to ensure resilience.

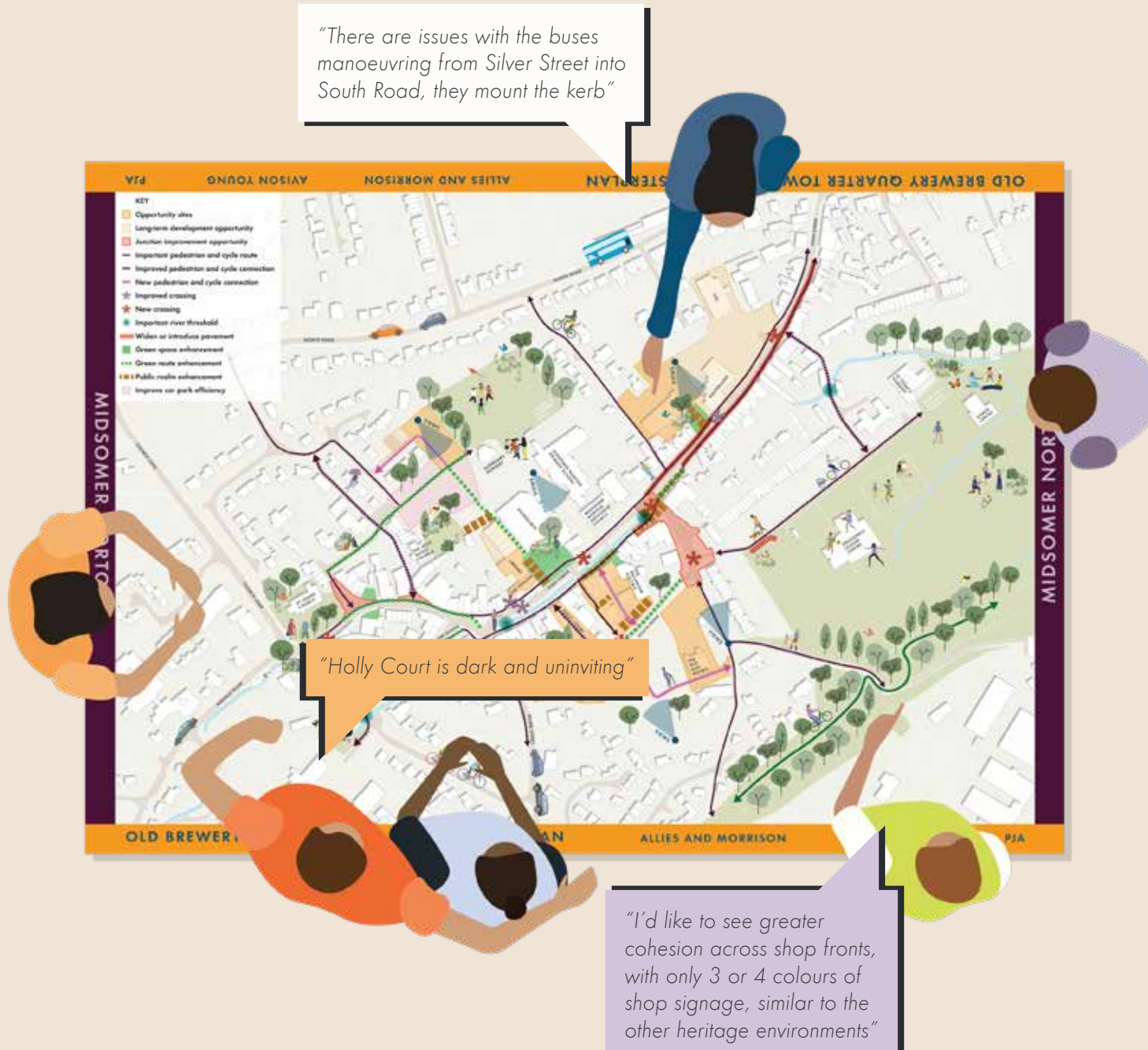


Local Engagement

Open, accessible and transparent engagement is an integral part of the process of agreeing and finalising the Imagine Midsomer Norton: Town Centre Masterplan. The preparation and endorsement of the masterplan presents local residents and businesses with the opportunity to give their opinions on the future of the town centre.

With workshop sessions, exhibitions and online surveys all used to help influence and inform the masterplan, this short section provides an overview of the feedback received so far. The list of engagement methods is listed as follows:

- A website platform set up to give project information and event listings as well as a link to the online survey.
- Posts and advertisement on various media outlets.
- Business visits
- An Open Studio exhibition event
- Pop-up displays within the centre
- Community and artist workshops
- Briefings with local stakeholders such as landowners, the town council and ward councillors as well as local steering and working groups.



LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

Draft Framework Plan

This plan outlines key ideas and opportunities in the town centre as part of the development of the plan. The elements range from improvements to the movement network to public space enhancement and the identification of development sites.

The draft framework plan was presented to the general public of Midsomer Norton through a period of engagement in May 2025 led by the Council. The responses received through this engagement have helped to inform the more detailed work of the masterplan.

- Opportunity Sites

Long-term development opportunity

Junction improvement opportunity

Improved pedestrian and cycle connection

New pedestrian and cycle connection

*

Improved crossing

*

New crossing

Important river threshold
- Widen or introduce pavement

Green space enhancement

Green route enhancement

Public realm enhancement

Improve car park efficiency

Listed buildings

*

Local landmarks



"It would be great to add outdoor seating to encourage more to stay longer on the High Street, especially with small children"

"Improve connections and visibility of the Town Park from the High Street!"

"Focus on small interventions first, such as the condition of buildings given the high level of dilapidation and lack of maintenance."

"There are significant barriers for less able visitors, improve accessibility!"

"Retailers surrounding the Hollies garden benefit from music and events in the space and I would support more of this"

Bath and North East Somerset Council ran the 'Develop' phase of engagement from May to July 2025. The aim during the 'Develop' phase was to take ideas from the previous 'Discover' engagement phase (September to December 2024) and present them for additional feedback and input. This was primarily carried out through the Open Studio event, a three-day exhibition held at the Hollies Chamber in central Midsomer Norton. Attendees were able to come and see the work and discuss their thoughts and considerations. In total, 155 attended the event. This number will have also contributed to the online survey result as attendees were encouraged to complete this.

An online survey was created and accessed via the Imagine Midsomer Norton web page. Questions similarly aimed to gather opinions on the town centre and various sites and spaces. In total, 128 completed the survey.



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The 'Develop' phase also aimed to involve specific community groups to gather more detail. A series of focus groups were arranged with those from a range of backgrounds to guide planning decisions through gathering public perspective. Four artists-in-residence were also appointed to produce creative responses to the project, in collaboration with around 500 local people. This culminated in a free exhibition of artworks along the high street.

Lastly, regular meetings have been held between the design team, the town council and local steering and working groups to bring those through the framework process and ensure all are well informed. Local landowners have also been kept up to date and been involved in online and in-person meetings.



Comments from the engagement have framed the priorities and draft designs included in the masterplan.



Place Vision

Following the 'Discover' phase of engagement, a draft Place Vision and five Place Priorities for Midsomer Norton were created:

1. A Pedestrian-Friendly Town Centre
2. Heritage Led Redevelopment
3. Thriving Community Spaces
4. Retail and Recreation for Everyone
5. Natural Spaces for Well-Being

The most popular by some margin was 'Retail and Recreation for Everyone' – suggesting local people particularly want to see an enhanced mix of shops and services, including evening economy, café culture, and an improved leisure hub.

The Old Brewery

There was strong support for the Old Brewery as an important heritage landmark in the town (82% agree or strongly agree). In terms of uses, residents were keen to see opportunities for cultural uses and cafes and restaurants here.



The Hollies

Questions were asked to gauge how local people currently use the Hollies area, including both the buildings and gardens. The most popular reason for visiting is shopping (40% of responses) and visit frequency is relatively low. This suggests that there is room for more inviting and varied offer in this area including making the gardens more inviting.



The Gasworks

Whilst more neutral than the Old Brewery overall, most respondents (57%) still agree or strongly agree that the Gasworks are an important landmark locally. Whilst cafes and restaurants remain a popular proposal, there is support for more radical change than with the Old Brewery, including the addition of affordable workspace.



"Create options of
for the Lower High
Street for events
and to improve
the atmosphere"



"A more diverse retail offering
is needed, especially on new
sites like the Brewery and Gas
Works sites"



"Better signage is needed throughout the High Street, the
current signage isn't great and detracts from the aesthetic"





Issues and opportunities

Buildings



There are significant historic buildings which are underused and which could benefit the wider town through being re-activated



There is a opportunity to improve the mix of workspace, shops and homes in the town centre with new development that is sympathetic to the town's character



There are sites where development could help to boost the activity in the town centre, and also provide the active frontage which makes streets and spaces more attractive.

Issues and opportunities

Routes and links

There is a strong desire to make the town centre better for walking and cycling, encouraging active travel and reducing car dependency in a number of ways:

- Improved links along the High Street, particularly to tackle narrow pavements and the division created by the Excelsior Terrace junction;
- Improved links cross the town centre, particularly from the South Road car park to the primary school;
- Improved links from outlying areas into the town centre, such as from Priory Close; and
- Improved links from the town centre out into green space, and particularly the Town Park.



3

Vision

VISION FOR MIDSOMER NORTON TOWN CENTRE

Midsomer Norton will become the go-to place for people living in, working in and visiting the Somer Valley. The town centre will be known as a welcoming gateway to Somerset's natural beauty, and for its quirky and eco-friendly shopping. Its calendar of unique community-led events - such as wassailing, the town fayre and the illuminated carnival - will strengthen its individual character and its connections to historic seasonal rural activity.

The town centre will be recognised and celebrated for its local history, still visible in distinctive heritage buildings like the Italianate Town Hall, medieval tithe barn, high street almshouses, and rows of miners' cottages. Mixed-use town centre development will focus on the lower end of the high street and centres on the Old Brewery buildings, also known as the former Bob's Palais or Savoy Rooms.

Town centre development sites will blend sustainability with heritage conservation, showcasing the town's rich architectural history while offering much-needed affordable housing, flexible space for businesses, leisure facilities and a more diverse job market. Thoughtful transport planning will ensure accessibility, with pedestrian-friendly streets, safe cycling routes, and well integrated public transport options reducing car dependency and enhancing connectivity.

The River Somer will remain a special asset for the high street, acting as an important, wildlife-rich habitat that improves community well-being, biodiversity and urban cooling. Connections to Midsomer Norton Town Park, and other local natural spaces will be improved, and public spaces on the high street will be further enhanced and greened to give visitors more opportunities to enjoy nature on their doorstep, whilst also adapting to our changing climate and allowing wildlife to thrive.





Midsomer Norton
Primary School

Sainsbury's

The Hollies

The Old
Brewery

Dragonfly Leisure

South Road
Car Park

Place Priorities

Throughout winter 2024, local people were asked to share one thing they love about Midsomer Norton, and one thing they imagine for its future. From the hundreds of comments received, we've identified five place priorities:

- 1 A pedestrian friendly town centre
- 2 Heritage led redevelopment
- 3 Thriving community
- 4 Retail and recreation for everyone
- 5 Natural spaces for well-being

A PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY TOWN CENTRE

Creating a more liveable environment by designing inviting outdoor spaces that are accessible for everyone and pedestrian friendly.



HERITAGE LED DEVELOPMENT

Showcasing the town's unique character through heritage-led interventions, from small shop front improvements through to major re-imagining of historic buildings.



2

THRIVING COMMUNITY

Facilitating community growth and cohesion through the provision of flexible spaces and local events, created with and for community organisations, groups and especially young people



3

RETAIL AND RECREATION FOR EVERYONE

Supporting a vibrant town centre that offers an enhanced mix of shops and services, including evening economy, café culture, and an improved leisure hub centred on the Town Park.



4

NATURAL SPACES FOR WELL-BEING

Enhancing health and well-being by providing better access to green and blue spaces.



5

4

Masterplan

4 MASTERPLAN

Midsomer Norton Town Centre

Illustrative masterplan

The draft masterplan for the town centre identifies a series of potential development, public realm and improvement projects in the heart of Midsomer Norton. The ideas respond to the priorities identified through the community engagement, and seek to address the key challenges in practical and deliverable ways.

These ideas should be seen in the wider context of the town centre Regeneration Action Plan which will be delivered in parallel. The Regeneration Action Plan will include a range of improvements such as shop front improvements, public realm works and High Street events and animation.

- Town Centre buildings
- Rejuvenated buildings
- Proposed new buildings



4 MASTERPLAN

Town Centre Masterplan

Illustrative masterplan

The project ideas developed through this masterplan have been grouped into four opportunity areas, each of which includes potential developments, improvement projects and public realm works.

High Street North covering the Sainsbury's car park and the Hollies Gardens as well as proposals for infill development on the B&NES car park;

High Street South including the Old Brewery, the former Gasworks and the South Road car park;

Excelsior Terrace, including public realm proposals to improve links along the High Street and towards the Town Park, as well as development opportunities on three sites; and

High Street East showing coordinated proposals for the former Argos Site, the Poundland site and the Lidl site.



5

**Opportunity
Areas**

High Street South

The area to the south of the High Street includes several key sites and public realm opportunities. The South Road car park is a significant point of arrival for the town centre, and the Old Brewery site and Gasworks site are both key historic parts of the town which have strong potential for future uses.

South Road is a post-war addition to the town and lacks the active street frontage which would help to make it feel like a safe and pedestrian-friendly street.

The area includes the potential to rejuvenate existing historic buildings and add new development as well as to improve the car park and public realm with trees and rain-garden planting.

-  Town Centre buildings
-  Rejuvenated buildings
-  Proposed new buildings





OLD BREWERY SITE

5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery Site

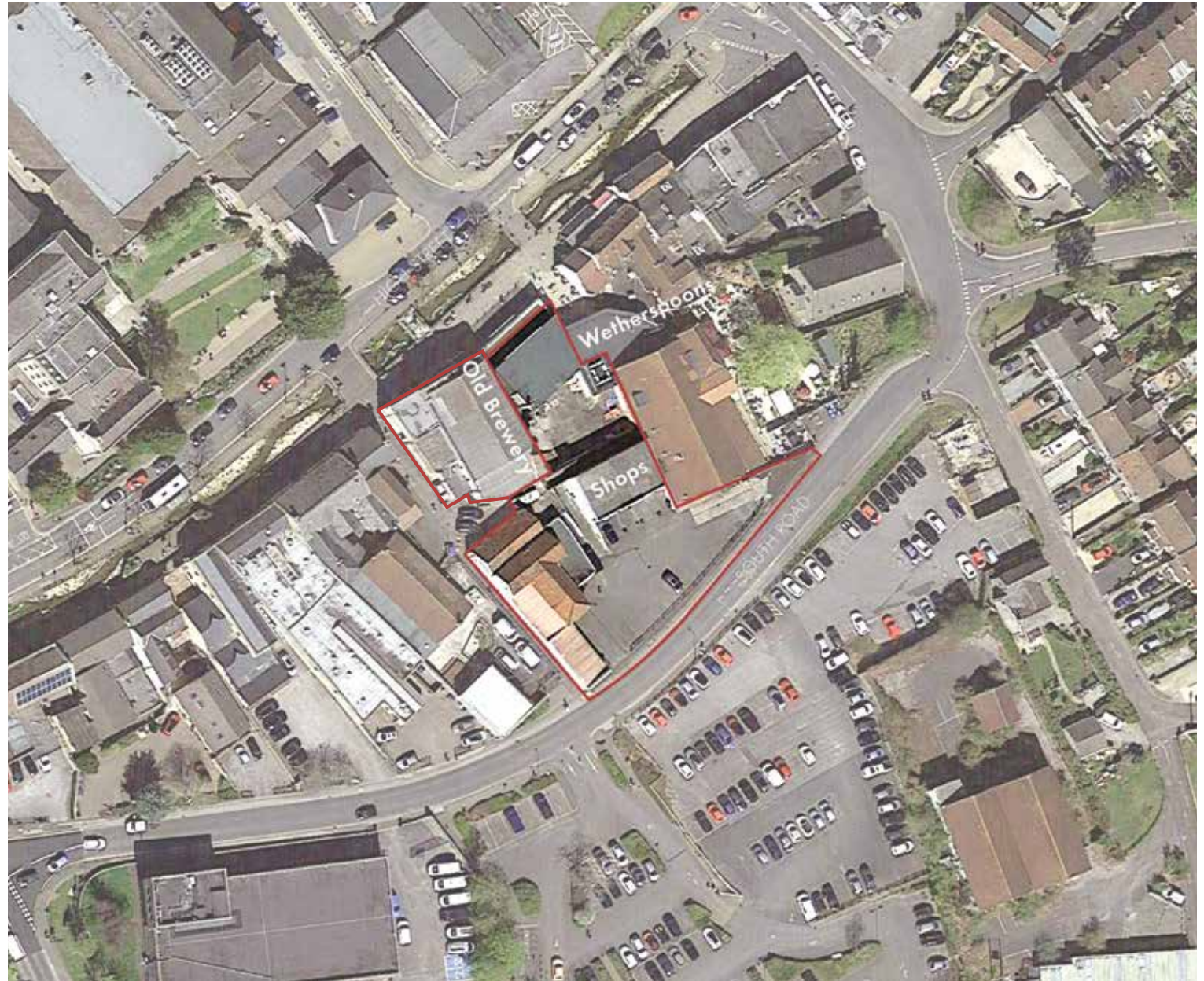
Existing context

The existing buildings within the site span through the depth of the urban block between the High Street and South Road, including a series of layered spaces and a significant change in level approximating to a full storey height.

A feature of the change in levels is that the small central building has both an upper level opening onto the top yard space and a lower level opening into the lower courtyard, accessed via a steep ramp.

Two large roof structures are dominant features - that of the Old Brewery building itself, and the adjoining roof of the Palladium - now occupied by Wetherspoons. The prevailing grain is perpendicular to the High Street.

The upper yard space supports workspace in the site in allowing deliveries, but tends to default to car parking, which detracts from the potential of the site for intensification and the creation of frontage onto South Road.



Old Brewery site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery Site

Existing context



5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery Site

Emerging context

This site is allocated, within the Local Plan, for a sensitive mixed use redevelopment under Policy SSV1 and has been identified as an area where connections could be made by a strong pedestrian route through the site. This would establish a north/south connection from Sainsbury's car park through towards the Gasworks site and the South Road car park.

The Old Brewery historic buildings are another key opportunity to restore prominence and significance. It may be possible to bring it back into use as an entertainment venue above shops, but it may also be appropriate to re-work the building to reflect its earlier silhouette and deliver town centre housing.

-  Town Centre buildings
-  Rejuvenated buildings
-  Proposed new buildings



Illustrative masterplan showing the site in its proposed context

5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery Site

Opportunities

Establish a legible route through the site with a public route through the middle of the site connecting north to the high street and south to South Road and the Gasworks. The existing accessible route to the west of the site will remain and be improved.

Improve the setting of the historic buildings by removing unattractive modern infill and allowing the historic buildings the space to regain their character.

Deliver workspace which can animate the site and the wider town centre, working with the existing occupiers.

Deliver yard space to support a practical working environment for studios and small business including a loading bay. Allow for food and drink uses in the yard space.

Seek out creative uses with the potential of activating and utilising the yard space.

Explore town centre housing opportunities within newly created upper floors.



New buildings provide
frontage to main route
through the site

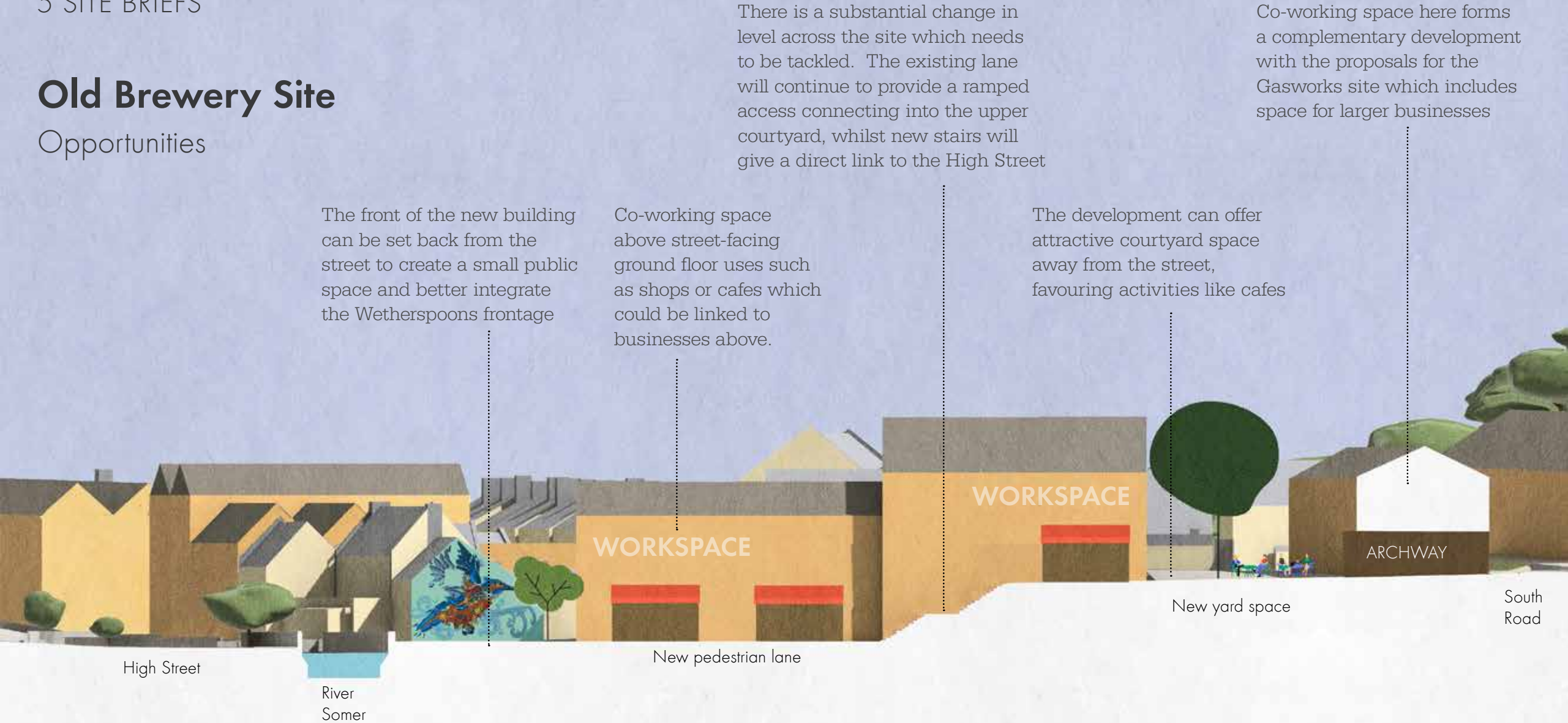
Main public route

Existing ramp to remain for
accessible access

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site

Old Brewery Site

Opportunities



The front of the new building can be set back from the street to create a small public space and better integrate the Wetherspoons frontage

Co-working space above street-facing ground floor uses such as shops or cafes which could be linked to businesses above.

There is a substantial change in level across the site which needs to be tackled. The existing lane will continue to provide a ramped access connecting into the upper courtyard, whilst new stairs will give a direct link to the High Street

The development can offer attractive courtyard space away from the street, favouring activities like cafes

Co-working space here forms a complementary development with the proposals for the Gasworks site which includes space for larger businesses

High Street

River
Somer

New pedestrian lane

WORKSPACE

WORKSPACE

New yard space

ARCHWAY

South
Road

5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery - main building

Existing context

The main building within the Old Brewery group has had numerous names and uses. The core of the building dates from 1860s as the Midsomer Norton Brewery, but it has subsequently been used as a boot factory, a Memorial Hall and then passed into entertainment use under the names of Bob's Palais and the Savoy Rooms with a wide range of different entertainment.

The remaining building has been significantly altered from its original form, with some upper parts lost, and a steady accretion of additions. The building sits within the same Local Plan designation as the wider site, under Policy SSV1, for a sensitive mixed use redevelopment.



The existing building today - comparison with the historic photo demonstrates the extent of changes including to the roof



An historic photo showing the queue for an event and capturing the building's long history as a community venue



The building viewed across the Hollies Gardens



In addition to being an important historic community building in its own right it also forms the key backdrop to the war memorial

5 SITE BRIEFS

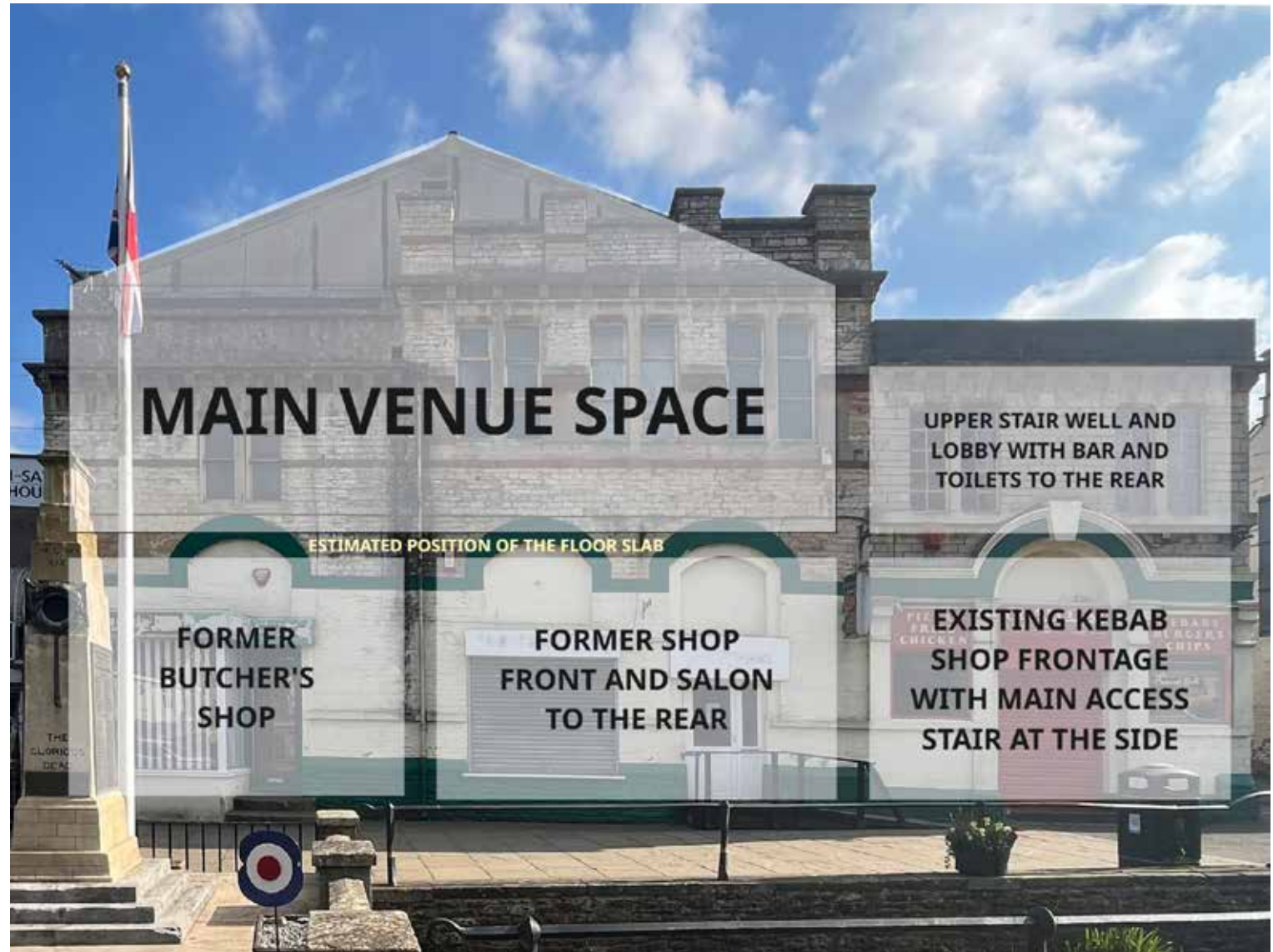
Old Brewery - main building

Understanding the building

The ground floor is presently formed of three commercial units with shop frontages to the High Street. These extend back into the slope of the hill, most of the way under the footprint of the buildings. These have variously housed a butchers, hair salon and other uses over recent years, but today only the kebab shop remains in business.

The upper part of the building which was until recently a nightclub is accessed from the side lane. It is formed as a large volume that has been subdivided to create separate bar and club spaces. This upper roof and space design is not original, but represents a relatively early change in the building's history.

The building is in separate ownership to the rest of the Old Brewery site and operates independently, and so the use of the building and how it is delivered could be treated as a stand-alone project.



5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery - main building

Existing condition

This report has been prepared without the benefit of a detailed survey on the condition of the building. However, from the limited access given to the team it is clear that significant investment would be required to deliver a structurally sound and commercially attractive set of premises. The Old Brewery building is part of a series of buildings and spaces that do not connect laterally across floors due to changes in levels and accesses

The building has been frequently modified and added to over the decades, to the point where its original character and qualities are under-appreciated. In its current state the building also represents a long list of unknown challenges hidden by false ceilings and partitions.



Layers of accretions which could usefully be removed to establish a sound basis for refurbishment



The front of the building also features layers of Twentieth Century changes and additions which should be stripped back



The interior of the upper space which has a long history as a dance hall and entertainment space



The interior of the existing central shop unit facing towards the shop window onto the street

5 SITE BRIEFS

Old Brewery - main building

Opportunities - a new venue

Ensure that the building fabric is sound and provides a robust basis for remodelling and new uses. A detailed structural survey is required to inform this.

Remove the layers of accretions such as twentieth century shop fronts and side extension to reveal as much of the original fabric as possible and develop designs which respond to the historic character.

Establish the top floor as a public arts / community venue, establishing a new High Street entrance via the existing kebab shop unit.

Re-open the remaining ground floor units as shops.

Restore the chimney stack to its full height as a key heritage feature with the possibility to include a place name.

Increase in commercial floorspace and frontage

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site



Restore the chimney stack as a local landmark

Re-open the two shop units

Establish a strong presence on the street for the upper venue

5 SITE BRIEFS

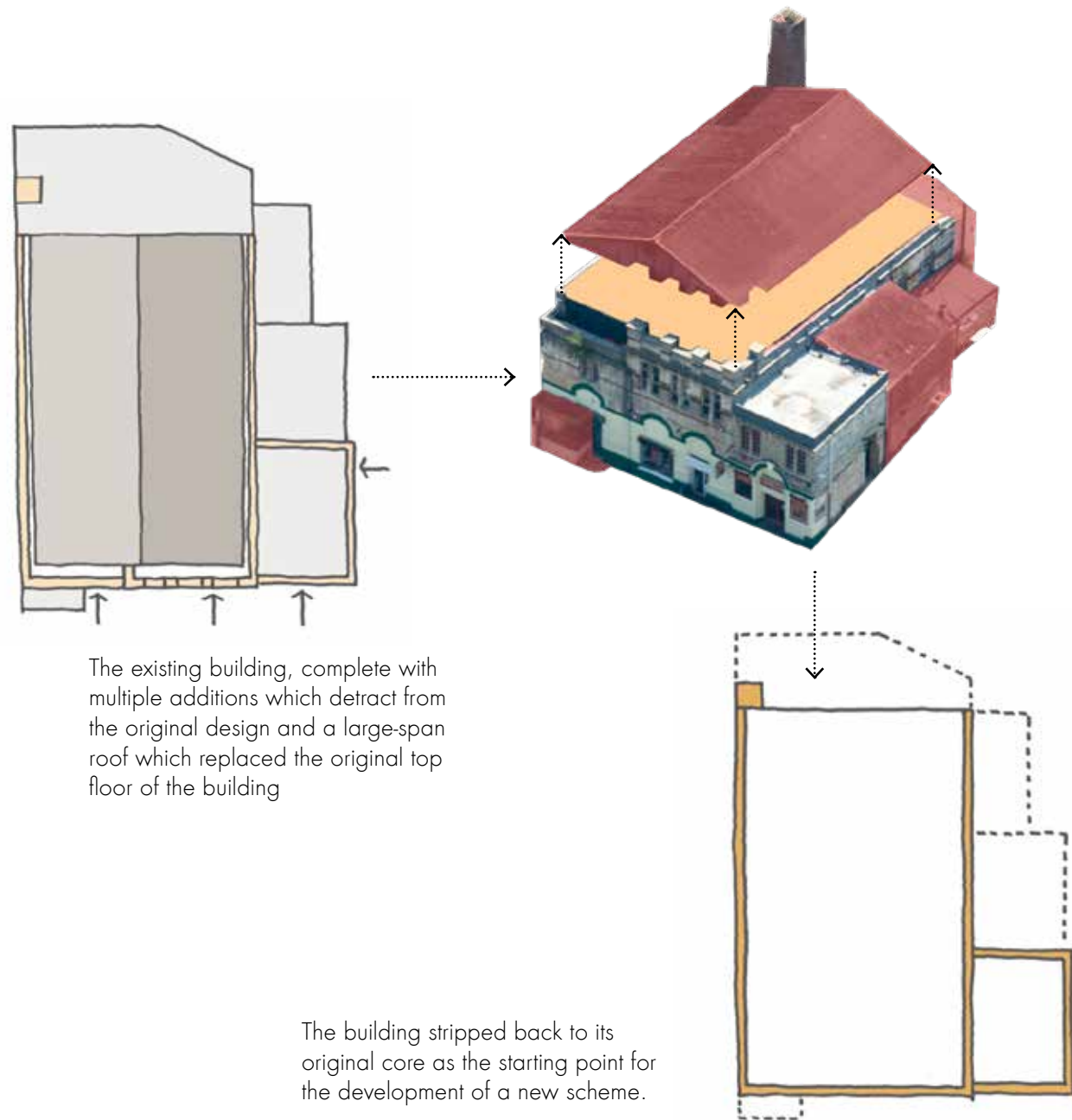
Old Brewery - main building

Opportunities

Given the context of the recently re-juvenated Town Hall which provides a very attractive community venue, it may also be appropriate to look at alternative uses for this building, including residential uses above ground floor commercial space.

The significant loss of the original upper storeys and the more recent additions means that more significant re-working of the existing building is required. However, the aims of working with the existing fabric where practical and re-establishing a form which evokes the original silhouette of the building should be taken as important guiding principles.

A further important factor for the future plans for this building will be the potential context of a new lane to the east, which opens up opportunities for active frontage on a further flank wall and makes practical spaces for residential accommodation much more likely. In any scheme it is hoped that the chimney will be restored as a key local landmark.



Old Brewery - main building

Opportunities



Parallel images to highlight the difference between the lighter touch approach that restores the upper floor venue within the existing buildings, or the more comprehensive approach which reflects the historic form of the building and delivers new town centre homes.

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site



- Restore the chimney stack as a local landmark
- Re-open the three ground floor shops units
- Reflect the silhouette of the original building whilst also providing residential amenity space in the form of terraces



An artists illustration showing the potential ideas for the Old Brewery which reference the original form of the building as shown in the historic photo above



GASWORKS SITE

5 SITE BRIEFS

Gasworks site

Existing context

The gasworks site is a sloping area of land with a large un-occupied industrial building in it - the last remaining element of the function that gives the site its name. Midsomer Norton's history as a coal-mining town means that the site was involved in the manufacture of town gas - a process which has left the site relatively highly contaminated, and so not ideal for residential use, particularly with garden space.

The site has a long border on the west to the town centre car park and is adjoined on the east by a single house plot, which was formerly part of the works, but now occupies a long strip of land that separates the site from Excelsior Terrace.

At the southern end, a secondary former industrial building occupies the land adjacent to a residential boundary, and is the location of a consented scheme for two houses and a flat above garages. However, this has not yet been delivered.



Old Gasworks site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

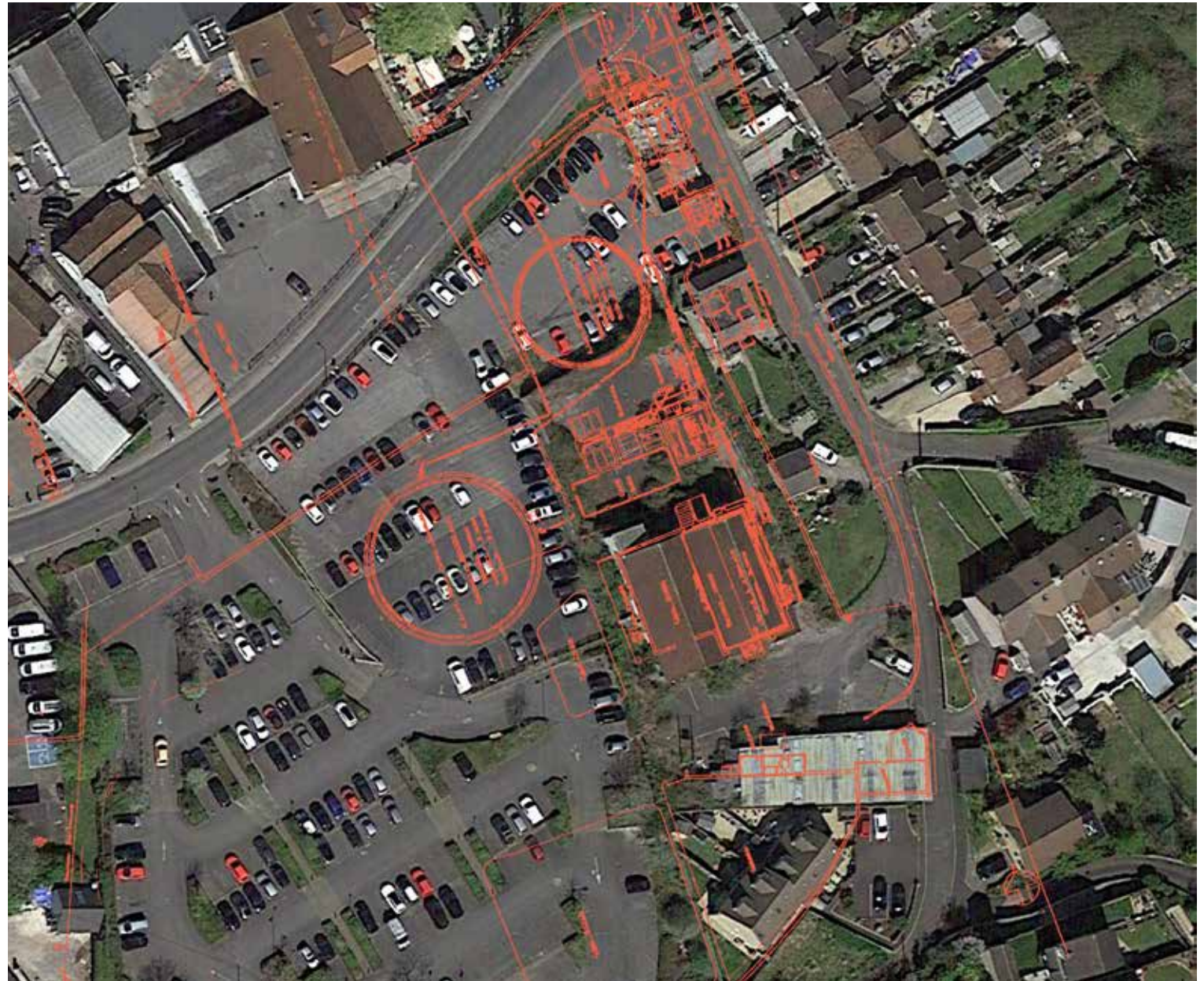
Gasworks site

Historic Context

The history of the site as a manufacturing plant for Town Gas from coal plays an important part in how suitable it may be for future uses.

A technical study has been undertaken to assess the impact of the historic industrial uses. As can be seen in this image which overlays the historic plan on today's aerial photograph there was a large concentration of activity in the northern part of the site include a gas holder which has left a legacy of significant ground contamination. This limits what can be done with the site unless very expensive remediation is carried out.

Whilst it would not be suited to homes with garden space, it is suitable for uses such as workspace. Combined with the accessible location, existing retained industrial building and the link to the existing and proposed workspace in the Brewery Site this represents a positive way to add to the town's vitality.



Historic plan of the gasworks overlaid on today's aerial photo

5 SITE BRIEFS

Gasworks site

Terrain and Landscape

The predominant character of the site is the significant slope down towards the bottom of the valley. This has a number of impacts on the site and the wider town centre.

The main existing building is widely visible in views across the valley. This indicates that new buildings will also be very visible and hence the scale, massing and particularly the roof form will be important to consider.

The lower part of the site is formed by an area which was previously car park. This is raised up above the road and so doesn't present the opportunity for street level entrances. However, the buildings can overlook the street with windows, and the appearance of the northernmost elevation on to South Road needs to be considered.



View east of existing Gasworks building



View east of existing Gasworks building with terraced housing behind



The Gasworks building viewed from Excelsior Terrace



View west along Priory Close from the car park

5 SITE BRIEFS

Gasworks site

Emerging context

The redevelopment of the Gasworks site for workspace exists in the wider context of the redevelopment of the Brewery site and the re-refurbishment of the South Road car park. The Gasworks and Brewery sites taken together represent complementary elements of workspace, ranging from public-facing shop front / food drink spaces, to co-working and start-up space, to onward expansion into creative maker space supported by yards to allow for van access.

The core Gasworks building could provide an attractive home for a use such as a micro-brewery with a taproom yard.

Housing may be included in the southern part of the site, reflecting the existing planning consent. In the event that funding can be secured to address the contamination issues there could be opportunities for wider housing options as part of a mixed use development.

The proposals for the re-planning of the car park are covered in the following section.



Emerging illustrative masterplan showing the site in its proposed context

5 SITE BRIEFS

Gasworks site

Opportunities

Give a new lease of life to the former gasworks building as a key remnant of Midsomer Norton's industrial heritage. The aim should be to re-establish it as a working building, providing a characterful centrepiece for a wider community of makers and businesses.

Develop a series of simple new workspace buildings which can be sub-divided on a modular basis to establish a flexible approach. The buildings should be a two storey volume, allowing for double-height space, mezzanine or first floor to be incorporated as needed.

Seek out creative uses with the potential for a micro-brewery which could particularly make use of the yard space and be a characterful occupant to the main building.

Deliver yard space which provides access, parking and servicing to each part of the buildings. These are expected to be accessed from a slightly reconfigured public car park.



Two storey workspace buildings supported by yard space

Historic Gasworks building given a new lease of life

Remodelled South Road car park

5 SITE BRIEFS

Gasworks site

Typology

Both the heritage and the anticipated future use of the site is workspace rather than housing. Buildings can therefore be expected to have a simpler, more robust character which is cost effective to deliver and flexible in use.

Given the slope of the site as noted previously, it is likely that a series of simple linear buildings which run parallel to the contour will provide the simplest response and engage best with yard space along their length to maximise flexibility.

Historically, workspace buildings would be built in stone. However it is realistic to expect that new workspace buildings are most likely to be delivered as system built, probably metal clad. Simple buildings of this nature can be very effective with good care given to details and the public realm as well as judicious use of colour.





SOUTH ROAD CAR PARK

5 SITE BRIEFS

South Road car park

Site location

The South Road car park is the main town centre facility. Whilst it benefits from some areas of planting and some elements of safe pedestrian routes the space is hampered by the legacy of earlier subdivisions and feels dated and inefficient.

In parallel with the proposals to deliver workspace on the former gasworks site the space has the potential to be re-worked to establish a high quality facility.



South Road car park site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

South Road car park

Opportunities

Establish a new car park layout which unifies the space and also provides access to the proposed workspace on the former Gasworks site.

Include SUDS planting to help manage water run-off and support urban greening and biodiversity.

Provide native species deciduous tree planting for shade to help reduce the urban heat island effect of large areas of tarmac.

Incorporate charging points for electric vehicles to support the switch away from fossil fuels.

Provide improved pedestrian links with a new controlled crossing on South Road (location to be agreed) and improved links to the High Street via the Old Brewery scheme.

Explore options for photovoltaic panels above parking spaces to shade the car park and generate electricity.



South Road car park illustrative framework plan delivering over 200 spaces



SOUTH ROAD FRONTAGES

6 FURTHER IDEAS

South Road frontage infill

Existing Site

The sites are presently used as parking and yard space for buildings which front onto the High Street, and they provide an opportunity for elements of infill development which could help to repair this exposed edge.

In the particular case of the Holly Court Arcade, development on the rear of the site should also be usefully linked with improvements within the buildings, tackling the poor access to deliver a clearer and more usable route that connects the car park with the High Street and helps to drive footfall through the building.



The existing entrance to Holly Court Arcade and the adjoining site. The Arcade lacks a clear and legible entrance or the public



The junction with Silver Street - a significant infill opportunity



The view along South Road, noting the lack of active frontage on either side

6 FURTHER IDEAS

South Road frontage infill

Opportunities

Establish active frontage onto South Road with small infill developments taking advantage of the vacant yard space.

Create a small commercial development onto the back of Holly Court Arcade providing active frontage and supporting improved links through to the High Street.

Establish one to two storey developments. This could take the form of flats over garages or undercroft parking. These would be delivered by the individual owners with guidance and support from the council.

Include planting and greenery as much as possible along the street.



Potential for a strong corner infill development at the junction with Silver Street

Small opportunities should be taken to retain existing and introduce new planting, especially trees

Opportunity to enhance the entrance to Holly Court Arcade, making it a more obvious route through to the High Street

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site

5 SITE BRIEFS

South Road frontage infill

Building typology

Development on these sites is likely to be limited in scale, and potentially will be a balancing act between unlocking a commercially attractive scheme and also retaining the parking which serves the existing uses on the High Street frontage. On this basis, buildings which incorporate parking at ground level, either as garages or undercroft parking may be well suited to these sites.

In the event that this approach is used, facing the parking or garages into the yard space will be preferred whilst also striking a balance with maintaining activity and interest at street level. New buildings are unlikely to benefit from any garden amenity in which case balconies or terraces overlooking the street will add welcome outdoor space.



Examples of flats above garages or parking including external terraces and balconies

High Street North

The proposals for the area on the north side of the High Street are primarily about public realm, with the particular aim of improving the connections through and to the Sainsbury's car park and ensuring that there is a clear and direct link to the school gate.

The existing routes are currently compromised by narrow and dated ramps and a lack of safe pavements in key locations which these ideas aim to address.

-  Town Centre buildings
-  Rejuvenated buildings
-  Proposed new buildings





THE HOLLIES GARDENS

5 SITE BRIEFS

Hollies Gardens

Site location

The Hollies Gardens is a welcoming and much appreciated area of green space at the heart of the High Street. It has its origins as the gardens to the original house, and the historic maps from the Victorian era appear to show a glasshouse on the gable end of the listed building which would have presumably given on to the space.

Today the area has several roles as both the intersection of several pedestrian routes and also as a static space with seating and as a space used for markets and other events.

The space faces south east and benefits from good year-round light and it has a significant change in levels from the High Street leading up towards Sainsbury's.

Furthermore, whilst it has some elements of active frontage including the library entrance, several elements such as those from the commercial units on the eastern side are quite substantially screened off from the space and so aren't able to contribute to the animation of the place.



Hollies Garden site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Hollies Gardens

Existing condition

As well as being a key connecting route from the High Street to Sainsbury's and the car park beyond the gardens provide a valuable static space for events including the farmers' market and plenty of seating both as benches and a low retaining wall.

A key limitation of the space in its role for events is the subdivided nature, with a series of split levels and the intermediate ramp which crosses diagonally across the route.

The inclusion of significant areas of planting makes a strong contribution to the town centre character, whilst two mature yew trees in the south eastern corner have a high value in both heritage and ecological terms.

A further consideration to the east of the space is that the wide pavement is commonly used as a loading area, both for the market, and also informally by other drivers, despite the lack of formal designation.



A view south east across the gardens from the arcade at the edge of the Sainsbury's building



The shop units on the north eastern side of the space are closed off by raised planters



A view into the space from the High Street, looking towards the library



The pedestrian route parallel to the High Street

5 SITE BRIEFS

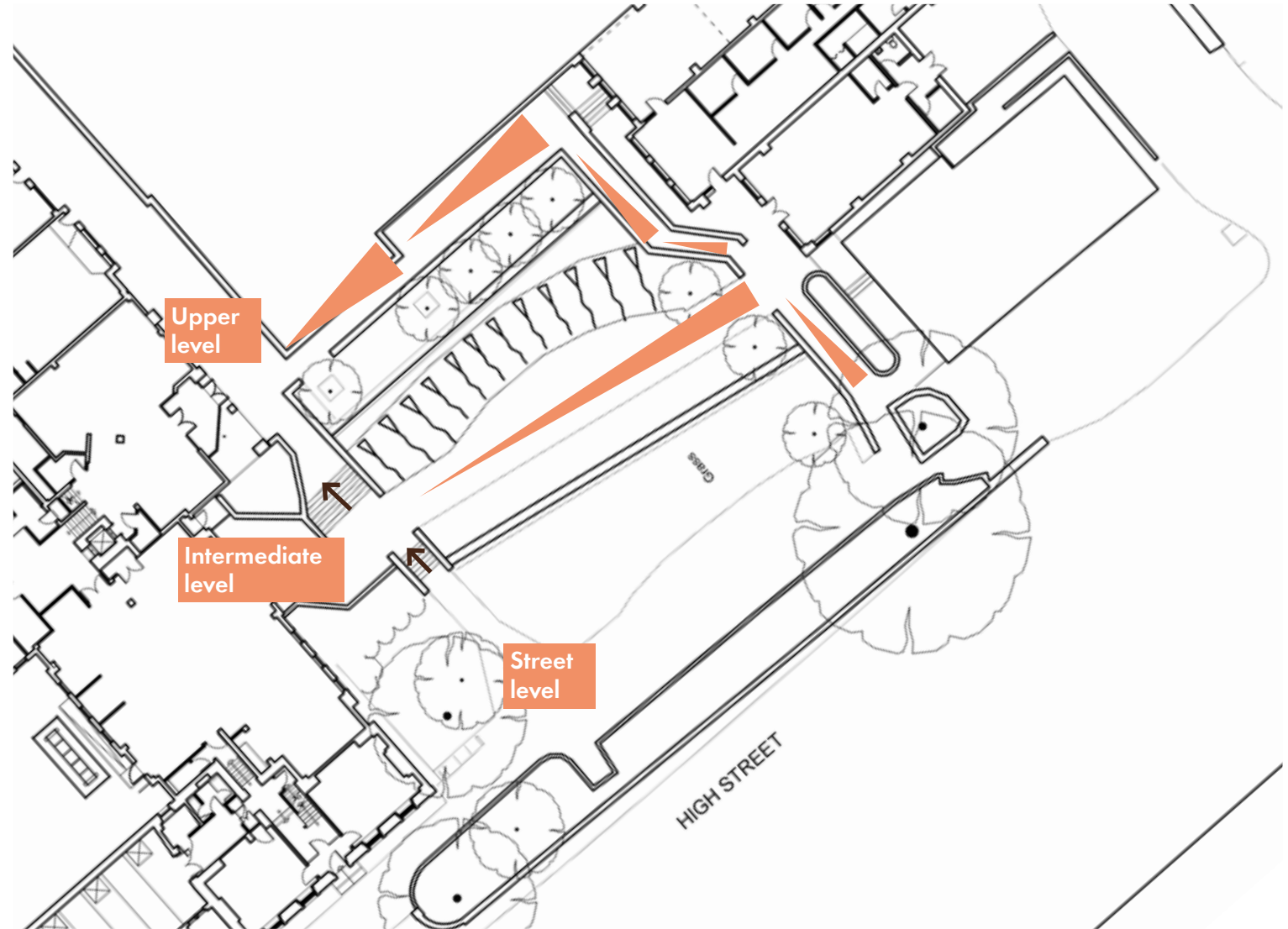
Hollies Gardens

Stairs and ramps

This plan indicates the arrangement of the stairs and ramps in the gardens, including the intermediate level which is the access into the Library.

A significant feature of the ramp arrangement is that anyone accessing the library from the direction of Sainsbury's and the large area of parking beyond is forced to descend the ramp almost all the way down to High Street level before climbing back up to the intermediate library level. This replaces a direct route of a few paces and eight steps with a distance of over 85m.

As previously noted, both the ramps and the stairs are very narrow in parts (see photographs on the following page). It is also worth observing that neither the stepped route or the ramped route actually connect well into the High Street.



A plan of the gardens showing the location of stairs and ramps

Hollies Gardens

Stairs and ramps

Stairs and ramps are a key feature of the gardens, illustrated in further detail on the previous page.

The chain of photos on the right hand side of this page illustrates the sequence of views up the ramps from the south east corner of the space to the upper exit in the north west corner towards Sainsbury's.

Quite long sections of the lower ramp are reasonably open and attractive. However, the middle third is tightly constrained by stone walls and not really wide enough to allow buggies, chairs, or people walking with a companion for assistance to pass easily. The top section of the ramp is beneath a part solid/part pergola structure along the edge of the Sainsbury's building.



The library entrance, set at an intermediate level between the High Street and Sainsbury's



The ramp which crosses the space diagonally towards the library entrance



A sequence of photos showing the experience of following the ramp from the High Street to Sainsbury's

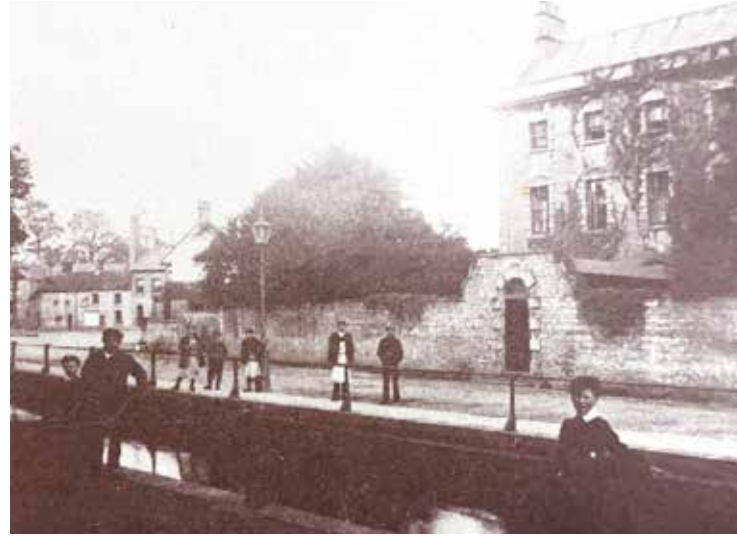
5 SITE BRIEFS

Hollies Gardens

Historic context

The historic house was shielded from the street and privacy given to the garden by a high stone wall. Whilst the original wall has now gone, a memory of it remains in the short stretch of taller wall around the gateway and in the low stretches of wall that enclose the gardens from the street. Fragments of historic tufa wall remain in the south east corner of the space and are noted as a listed structure.

The retained walls create a notable pedestrian pinch point. However, this can be at least partially addressed by addressing the dense ivy and some potential crown lifting of the yew to support its long term health. This would substantially improve sight lines into the space without impacting on the listed structure.



Photograph from 1910 showing the boundary wall which provided the house with privacy from the street



Present day photograph showing a view over the gardens and the modern remnants of the wall as the base for a low planting bed



An element of the original boundary character is retained as a gateway to the historic front door



A fragment of historic grotto wall exists in the south east corner of the gardens, but is a barrier to movement and legibility

5 SITE BRIEFS

The Hollies

Improving access

The original house is a Grade II* listed building, and a key landmark in the town centre. It was sold to North Radstock Urban District Council in 1937 and has been used as council offices in various capacities ever since. With the large expansion of the building to the rear, including the library, in the 1980s the historic frontage has gradually faded in public significance. This is at least in part due to the steps up to the front door which mean that the building doesn't meet modern accessibility standards for a public venue.

Sensitive adaptation of the street in front of the old house to introduce a ramped access could be delivered as part of the wider public realm improvements. This should be carefully developed to reflect the symmetry of the building, but would open up the potential for much greater activation of the ground floor frontage to public uses including the Registry Office in particular.



The existing condition of the front door, showing the paving design which dates from the 1980s.



Any consideration of the access will also need to preserve pedestrian continuity along the street.



A case study showing Water House, the childhood home of William Morris. The house was adapted in 2012 as a local museum and gallery, including sensitive changes to the space in front of the building to deliver ramps.

5 SITE BRIEFS

Hollies Gardens

Opportunities

A clear and legible route through the space featuring a wider pair of staircases and a simple ramp arrangement which also opens up the existing shop frontages to the space.

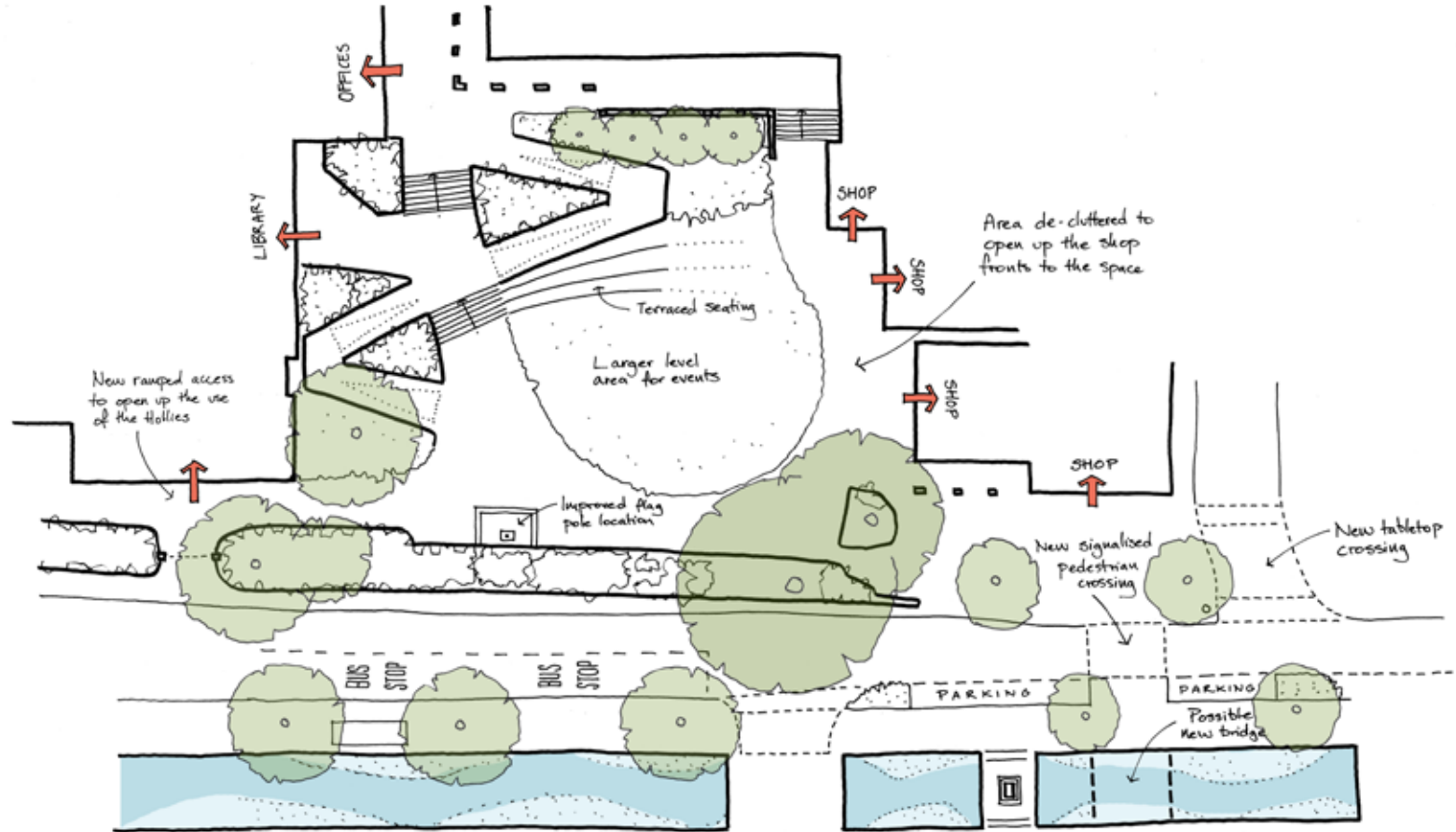
A larger level space framed by integrated terrace seating for events including the market.

Play-on-the-way elements encouraging children to be more active and engage with their surroundings.

A new controlled pedestrian crossing on the High Street contributing to safe routes to the primary school, the library and Sainsbury's.

An accessible entrance to the front of the Hollies in place of the existing steps, opening up potential for more public-facing uses.

Opportunities for planting which supports biodiversity.



An initial concept for the Hollies Gardens including short, direct ramps and a new crossing connecting to the other side of the High Street



SAINSBURY'S CAR PARK

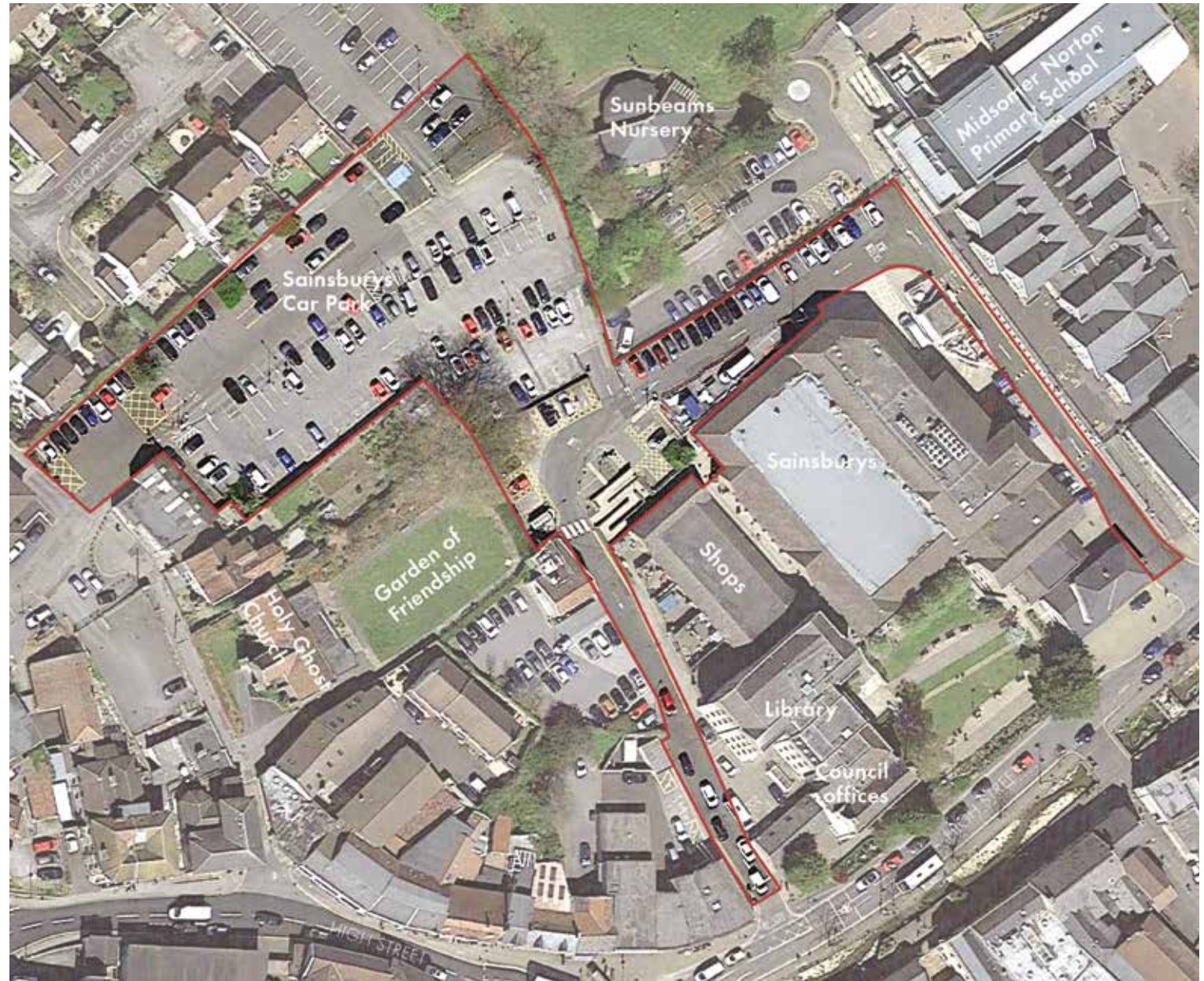
5 SITE BRIEFS

Sainsbury's car park

Site location

The area known as the Sainsbury's car park is formed by a series of connected elements including relatively complex patterns of access. These elements include:

- A main service route which wraps around three sides of the Sainsbury's store and the Hollies, providing access to the service area and staff parking, as well as an exit from the other areas of car park.
- The main upper car park which is accessed from Church Square, with an exit connecting to the main service route.
- A staff car park on the service route, which signage indicates is not for public use as a route or a car park, but which appears to be in general use.
- Accessible bays at the top of the ramps up from the store.
- A secondary lower car park south of the Garden of Friendship.



Sainsbury's car park site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Sainsbury's car park

Pedestrian links

Although the Sainsbury's car park is leased for the use of the store, it also provides a number of important pedestrian connections to and from the High Street, as well as the access to a key entrance to the school.

The design of the pedestrian environment across the area is very dated, including narrow routes, lack of accessible thresholds and in some cases no pedestrian facilities at all. It does not meet modern standards, and does not support safe access to the school in particular.

The school has a further issue in that the service route access is also commonly used by people walking into the school. This is despite the lack of pavement, and the vehicles both accessing parking and also delivering to the store.



Existing pedestrian connection from Priory Close which fails to provide a safe or accessible route



The existing school entrance which is accessed from the car park on the north east side



The main connecting ramp between the car park is for vehicle use only, but is on the key desire line for pedestrians

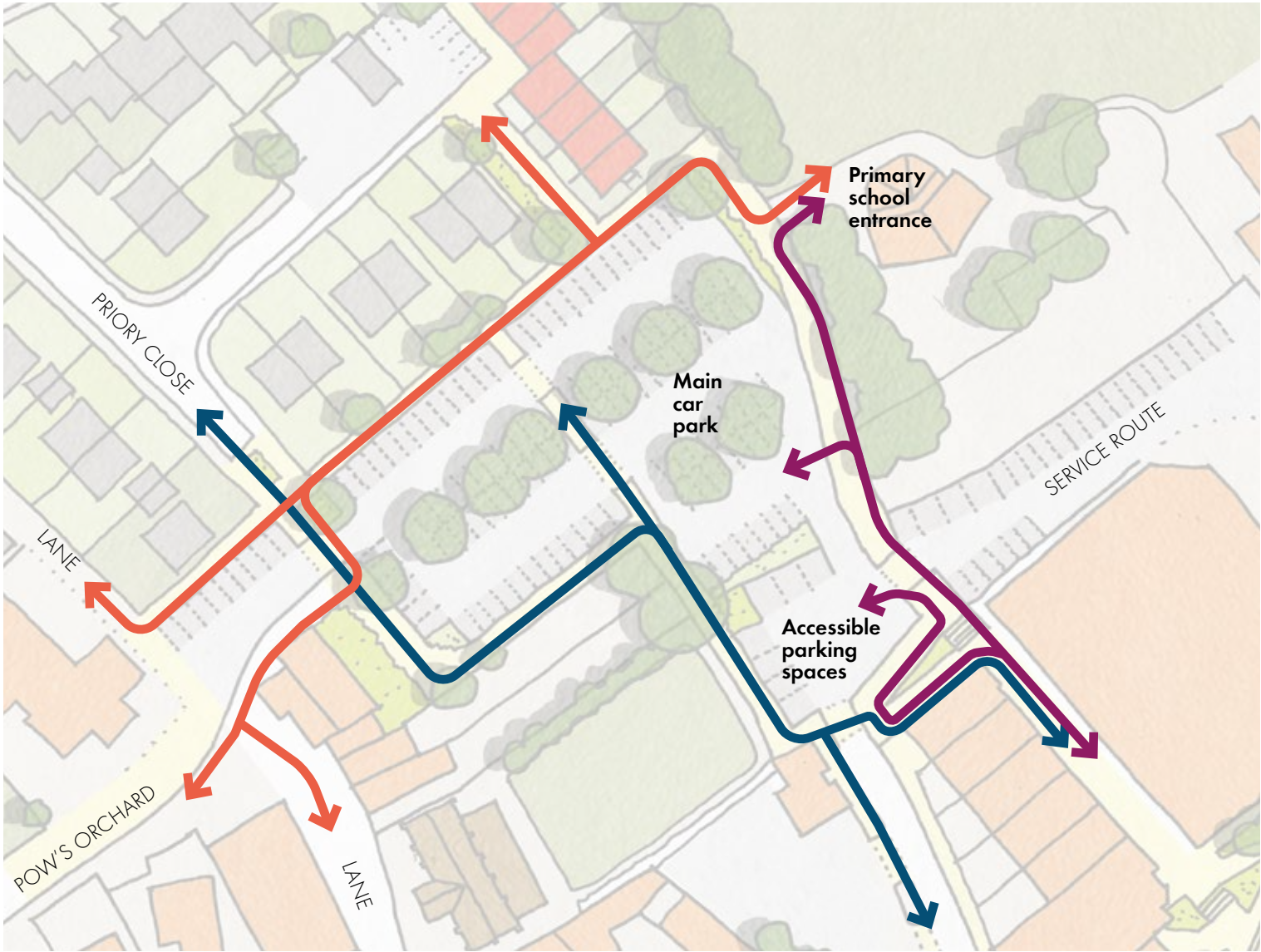


The pedestrian ramps from the Sainsbury's store to the car park are narrow and unnecessarily complicated

Sainsbury's car park

Pedestrian links

This diagram illustrates several of the possible combinations of pedestrian routes through and across the space that a scheme should support. This includes connecting to the school and into the wider network of residential streets, but also has the potential to significantly improve the access from the Sainsbury's store to the car parking for their customers.



5 SITE BRIEFS

Sainsbury's car park

Town centre approach

A particular element of the pedestrian provision is the arrangement of ramps and stairs at the end of the lane outside Sainsbury's. This represent a key opportunity for improved legibility and access.

The existing ramps are narrow, with a complicated arrangement that extends distances. Relocating a limited number of accessible parking spaces would enable the ramp to be doubled in width, shortened in length and augmented by a clear and direct staircase which responds to the desire line.

This approach could significantly improve the attractiveness and usability of the car park for Sainsbury's and enhance their customer experience, whilst also delivering much better pedestrian connections to the primary school.



The existing approach to the car park and connecting routes from the lane outside Sainsbury's



The view from the car park showing one of the main pedestrian access points to Sainsbury's, the Hollies and the town centre



The existing ramp and stairs arrangement is convoluted and unattractive.



A proposed ramp and stairs arrangement should provide clear and simple access towards the store, minimising distances

5 SITE BRIEFS

Sainsbury's car park

Opportunities

Establish safe pedestrian routes through and around the car park including to the school gate.

Improve the ramps and stairs that provide the pedestrian connection from the car park areas to the store and the wider town centre.

Introduce planting for shade and SUDS to reduce the impact of the large area of hard surfacing.

Introduce electric vehicle charging.

Explore options for changes to vehicle movements around the service loop in conjunction with wider changes to the High Street.

Provision of a pavement along the existing car park vehicle exit to create a safe route along an existing desire line.



Sainsbury's car park illustrative framework plan



BANES STAFF CAR PARK SITE

5 SITE BRIEFS

Council staff car park

Existing context

The site is presently a car park for use of the Council Staff working in Midsomer Norton. It forms an extension of the Sainsbury's car park and is accessed from it. However, it also has the potential to be accessed from the west via Priory Close - an adopted road which terminates at the boundary of the site.

The site is bounded to the north and west by existing homes, whilst to the east shares a boundary with the adjoining primary school playing fields which is characterised by mature trees.



Council staff car park site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Council staff car park

Existing context

The Sainsbury's car park has a number of pedestrian routes which pass through it, including a key pedestrian entrance to the primary school. The Council is presently developing options to improve access and safety and this opportunity site has a role to play in delivering this.

The site has a pronounced change in level across it, falling approximately 3m from north to south.



View south across the car park, showing the strong line of trees on the school boundary



The existing school entrance which is accessed from the car park
The aim is to improve pedestrian safety through this scheme



View west across the car park towards Priory Close



View west along Priory Close from the car park

Council staff car park

Emerging context

The emerging proposals for the improvements to the Sainsbury's car park establish some key parameters for the development of the staff car park. Delivering clear and safe pedestrian routes and improved access to the school requires a rationalisation of the Sainsbury's car park and addition of pavements. This then creates the opportunity for different housing options to be explored.

Options for the design of the housing also need to be informed by engagement with the Priory Close residents.



Initial site development options sketches



Emerging illustrative masterplan showing the site in its proposed context

5 SITE BRIEFS

Council staff car park

Opportunities

Establish a pedestrian access from Priory Close with a lane connecting down to the Sainsbury's car park. This access is also likely to provide access to on-site car parking at the northern end of the site.

Create frontage facing onto the lane to help support this as a pedestrian connection towards the school and the town centre from the north.

Present a strong frontage onto the Sainsbury's car park, helping to transform the sense of public routes through the space and change perceptions of public spaces, supporting the school access.

Establish two to three storey residential development in a dense town centre configuration. This could take the form of an apartment building, but is more likely to be successful as a terraced row of cottages.

Create a rear boundary condition to the school which respects the existing trees.



Parking provided at one space per home

Homes should establish active frontage onto the new lane, with the end-of-terrace unit fronting onto the car park

School entrance served by proper pavement to establish safe walking routes

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site

5 SITE BRIEFS

Council staff car park

Opportunities for improved integration

Whilst the core option demonstrates how a scheme may be achieved working solely within the core site area, there are further opportunities for refinement and integration with Priory Close which have potential placemaking benefits.

The arrangement of the existing turning head and stand-alone garages at the end of the cul-de-sac could be revised to create a more unified space, either with the re-provision of the garages, or without them altogether. This space could include trees and planting.

In any of the options developed the function of the turning head will need to be retained with the geometry of a new layout. However, this can be accommodated within a space rather than as a kerb-delineated roadway.



Variation two shows how the existing garages could be re-provided and parking laid out in a way which creates a more cohesive approach



Variation three illustrates how removal of the garages and integration of the parking could enable the creation of a simpler and more effective scheme

5 SITE BRIEFS

Council staff car park

Building typology

The site is limited in size, but given its very central location presents a good opportunity to build at town densities. Whilst this might be suited to flats the sloping nature of the site would lend itself to a compact terrace of houses stepping down the slope. This in turn animates the roofline of any buildings which is a key characteristic of Midsomer Norton in views from the surrounding hills.

The terrace has the advantages of presenting stronger active frontage to the lane and the Sainsbury's car park with multiple front doors. It also can be designed to step naturally down the slope, responding to the terrain and reflecting a built typology which is common in the town's historic fabric.

The images on the near right show local examples of terraced homes whilst the images on the far right show modern examples of high quality design. Modern methods of construction (MMC) could be used to deliver homes quickly and efficiently whilst still retaining flexibility on the external appearance.



Rackvernal Road



Church Square



South View Place



Terraced houses with small front areas



Terraced houses with gables



Flat fronted terrace with stone detailing

Excelsior Terrace

The junction of Excelsior terrace with the High Street and the series of secondary streets which also connect into it forms an important node in the Town Centre. The proposals set out in the following section are aimed at improving the connectivity between the two parts of the High Street and enhancing the links out towards the Leisure Centre and Town Park.

Three development opportunities are also identified, including the two post-war corner sites on the High Street and an infill opportunity creating frontage onto Gullock Tynning and the Leisure Centre.

-  Town Centre buildings
-  Rejuvenated buildings
-  Proposed new buildings





EXCELSIOR TERRACE SITES

5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace Sites

Existing context

The site is presently charity shops with Dorothy House located on the west side of Excelsior Terrace Junction and The British Heart Foundation and is in need of significant remediation prior to redevelopment.

The site faces onto the High Street with Midsomer Norton Methodist Church across the road and a variety of other domestic scale buildings in the immediate context. Both sites have parking provided to the rear.

It has been noted that both of these buildings make a poor contribution to the town centre in terms of their design, and the Dorothy House building is also only a single storey structure so represents untapped town centre capacity. The sites have the potential to be redeveloped to make a stronger contribution to the High Street.

The sites are in separate ownership and operate independently, so could be delivered separately.



Excelsior Terrace site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace Gateway

Existing context



5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace Sites

Emerging context

This part of the town centre has significant potential to improve both the attractiveness and vitality of the area, but also to enhance the connection between the town parts of the High Street and to improve links to the Leisure centre, Somer Centre and Town Park. Ideas for the public realm are presented in the following section of this report.

Significantly, the eastern building (British Heart Foundation) can be redeveloped within its existing plot, with the building line set back very marginally on the Excelsior Terrace frontage to establish a wider pavement.

The more substantial changes to the public realm would deliver an advantage for the Dorothy House building west of the junction. Here, the building frontage can be brought forward to the historic building line and the Excelsior Terrace frontage aligned with the Street to improve sight lines and access.



Illustrative masterplan showing the site in its proposed context

5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace Sites

Opportunities

Replace the existing 1960s buildings with new development which makes a more positive contribution to the character of the town with a more appropriate scale.

Provide shops at street level bringing continuity to the High Street and helping to unite the two parts either side of the junction.

Bring the Dorothy House building frontage forward to continue the historic building line, creating a better street frontage.

Step the side elevation of the British Heart Foundation building back to create a slightly wider pavement.

Provide new town centre homes above the shops supported by residents parking at the rear.



Parking for residents
and service access for
the shops to the rear

New building
reinforcing the historic
building line

Flats above shops
fronting the High Street

Parking for residents
and service access for
the shops to the rear

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site



EXCELSIOR TERRACE JUNCTION

5 SITE BRIEFS

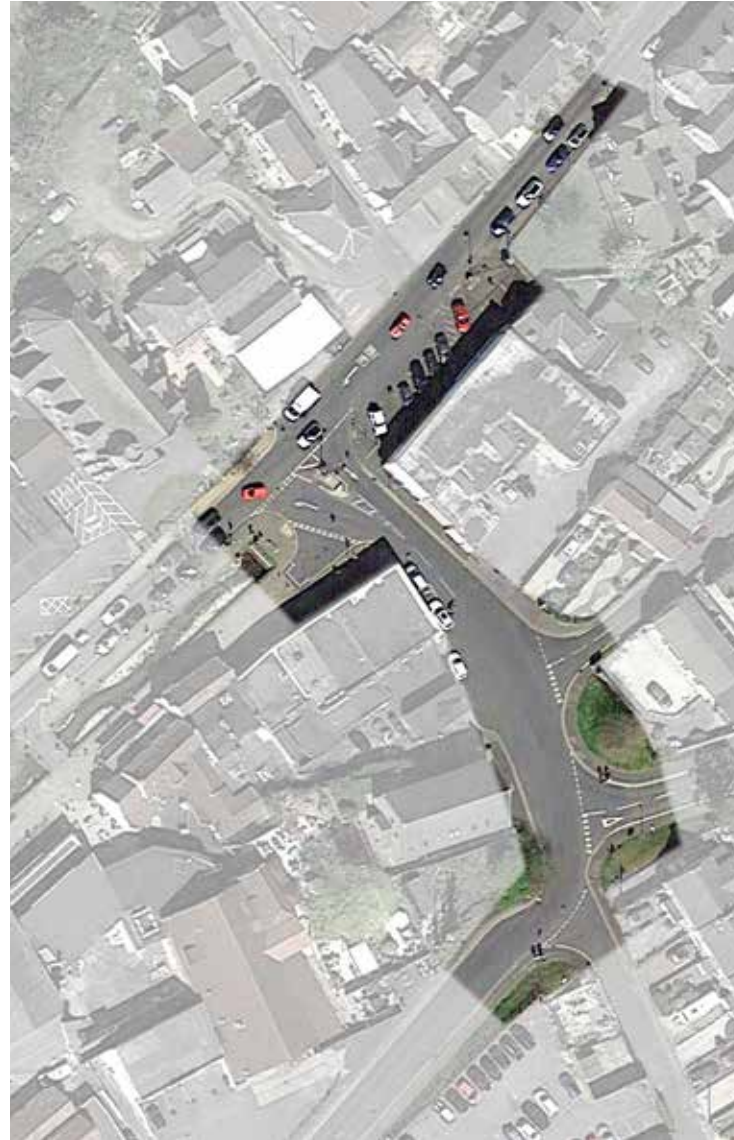
Excelsior Terrace junction

Site location

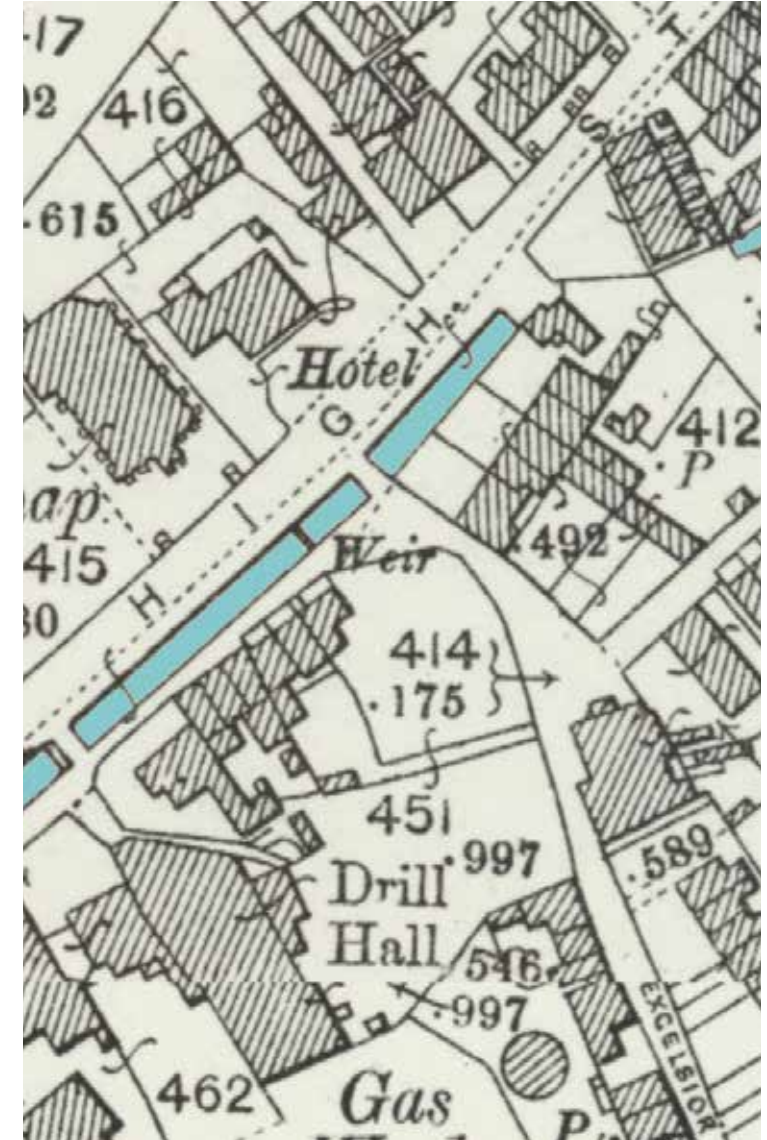
The area covered by this concept refers to the sequence of spaces between the High Street and South Road / Excelsior Terrace, including the junctions with Rackvernal Road and Gullock Tynning.

This area is unusual in that South Road and Gullock Tynning are post-war roads which were delivered in the 1960s to try to address some of the challenges presented by a narrow historic High Street. As such, they don't necessarily reflect the historic street character of the wider town, and prioritise vehicle movements over pedestrians as was the prevailing trend at the time.

The existing arrangement serves to divide the two halves of the High Street and to weaken links to the leisure centre and Town Park. This can be addressed through the application of modern design standards and placemaking principles.



Area covered by the Excelsior Terrace junction concept



Map from 1902 showing the area before the modern highway changes and particularly the development of South Road

5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace junction

Existing condition

The existing junction with the High Street dates from the post-war period when the design standards were structured to prioritise the ease of vehicle movements. This led to gentle curves and wide open junctions which favour vehicles, but hinder pedestrians.

The modern transport hierarchy requires designers to consider the pedestrian facilities first - improving accessibility and supporting walking and cycling for short trips. Big vehicles will still have the room they need to manoeuvre safely, but they will need to slow down.

The area also presents further challenges in terms of the pavement widths past the car parking space in front of the shops and then continuing past the almshouses, where the pavement is not wide enough to pass - particularly for someone with a buggy, in a wheelchair or mobility scooter, or walking with assistance.



The existing junction viewed from the north side of the High Street



The pavement adjacent to the almshouses is too narrow to allow any passing, particularly for buggies or wheelchairs



The view south west across the junction. The pedestrian route includes multiple deviations



View of the chevron parking outside the shops which frequently results in the narrow pavements

5 SITE BRIEFS

Excelsior Terrace junction

Opportunities

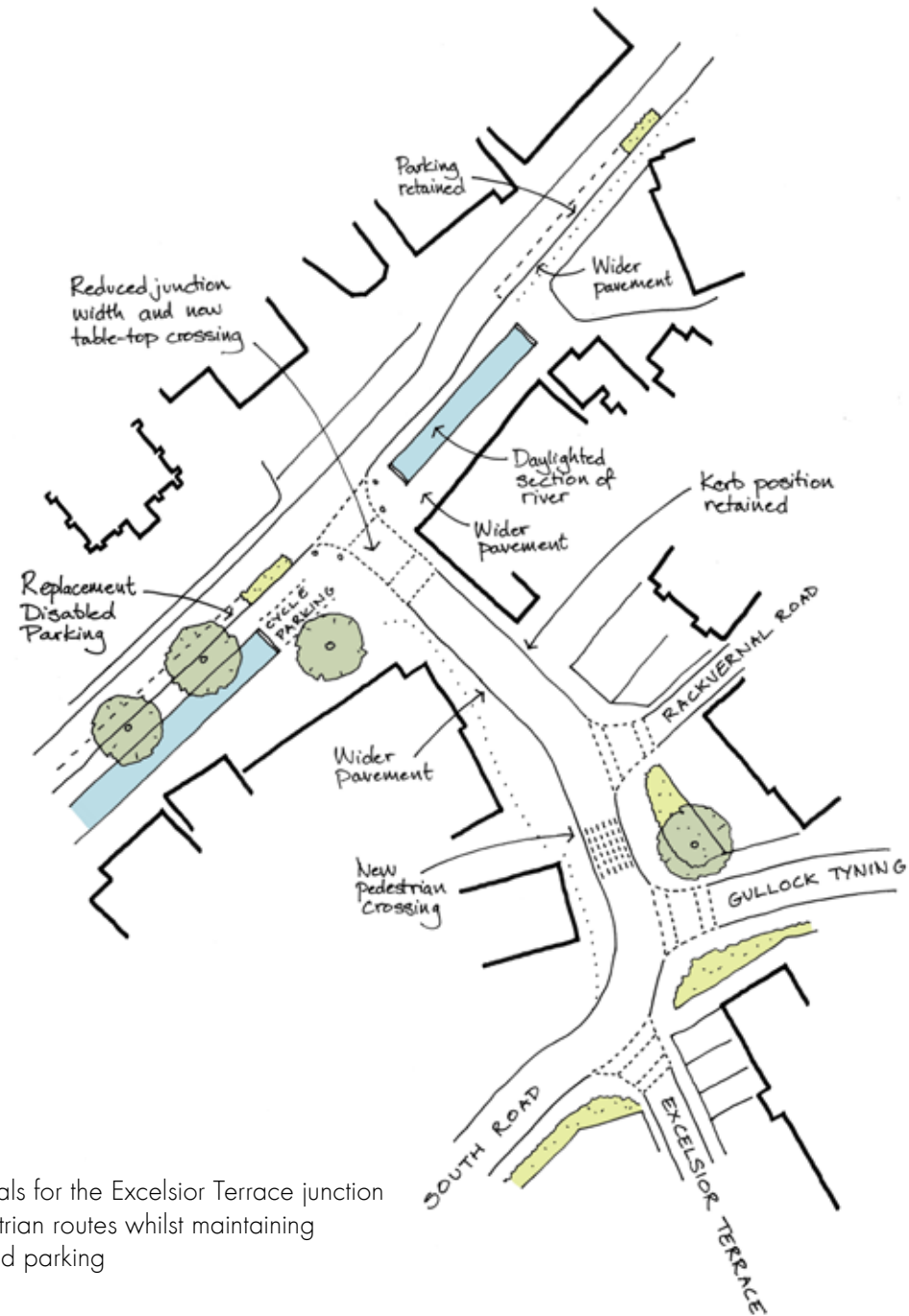
Establish a better main crossing for pedestrians which provides a shorter and safer connection between the two parts of the High Street.

Provide parking for disabled users on the High Street in the most accessible location, removing the potential barrier to buses from the existing arrangement.

Reduce the overall carriageway space with tighter junction corners whilst allowing for safe vehicle movements including buses.

Provide wider pavements and safer crossing points which deliver the aims of the Active Travel Masterplan including improved connections to the Leisure Centre, the Town Park and the Five Arches route.

Explore options to daylight (de-culvert) the river for an additional stretch along the High Street.



Illustrative proposals for the Excelsior Terrace junction to improve pedestrian routes whilst maintaining vehicle access and parking

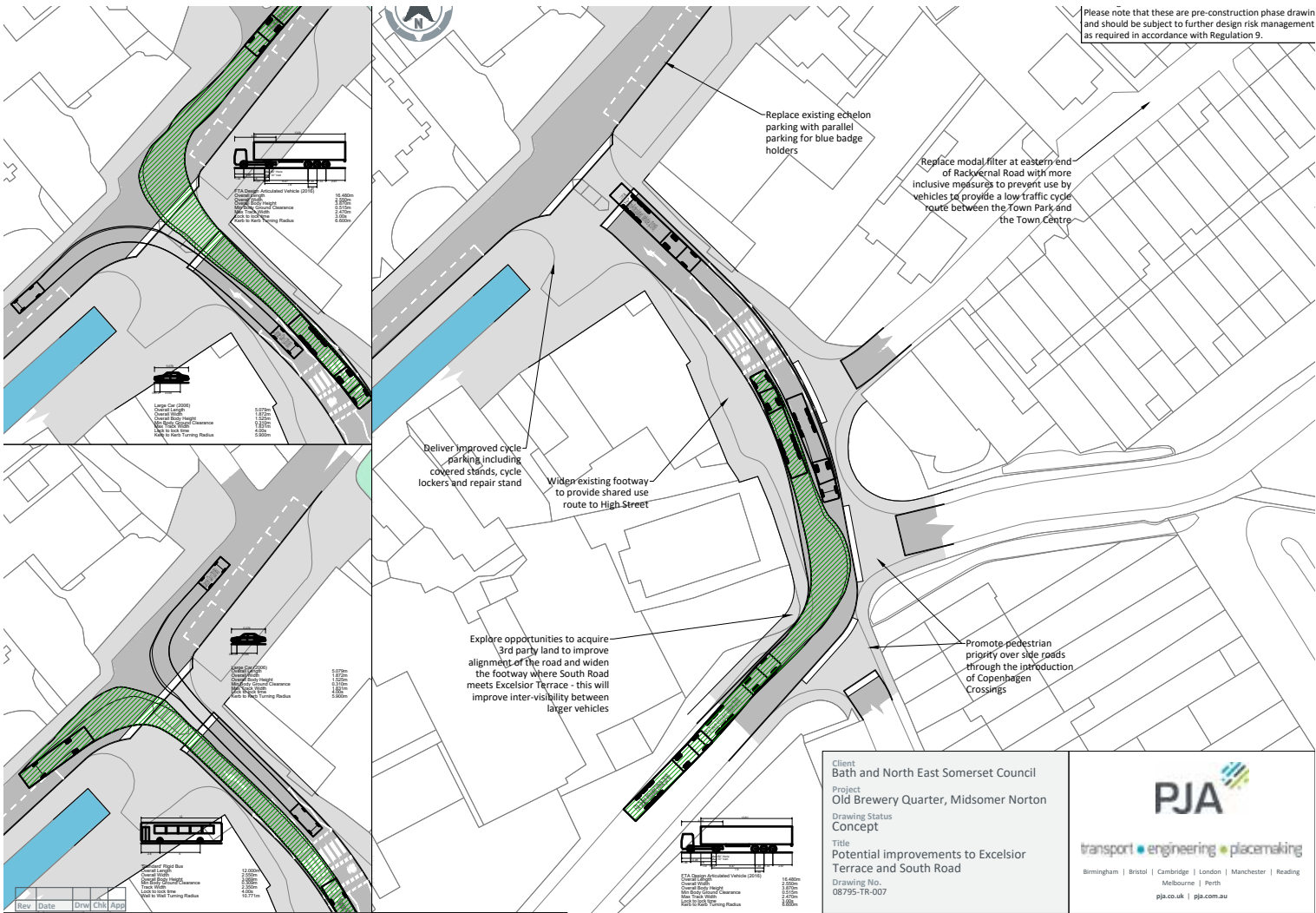
Excelsior Terrace junction

Technical testing

It is important to note that whilst the junction will be considerably reduced in scale, the approach is consistent with modern design standards and current best practice.

In support of the concept design development a detailed test has been undertaken to validate the approach and to confirm that the largest vehicles including buses and articulated lorries will be able to manoeuvre safely.

Further details of this work can be found in the supporting transport and movement appendix.



Examples of the technical testing undertaken to support the design work and make sure the ideas are realistic



LEISURE CENTRE INFILL SITE

5 SITE BRIEFS

Leisure Centre infill site

Site location

The open land to the west of the leisure centre includes an area of green open space. However, this overlooks a car park and is laid out as mown grass, so has a relatively low amenity value or practical existing use.

To support improved links from the town centre to the leisure centre and beyond, as well as maximising the potential of public land, this could make a good site for a small residential development that would deliver new frontage and a better street environment.

In developing this site there would be a loss of existing trees which can be reprovided in the local vicinity e.g along South Road or Gullock Tynning.



Leisure Centre infill site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

Leisure Centre infill site

Opportunities

Deliver a new residential scheme with frontages to Gullock Tynning and the leisure centre.

Retain the large planted zone to the rear of the Excelsior Terrace gardens, but note that the large tree in the centre of the green space has recently been removed.

Improve walking and cycling route towards the leisure centre including safer crossings on the route from the High Street.



New residential
development

Substantial planting
belt retained

Improved pedestrian
access to the leisure
centre

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site



HIGH STREET EAST

High Street East

The High Street East group comprises three sites which may present opportunities in the future including a combination of town centre homes and an improved High Street frontage with active town centre uses where it is currently lacking. At this stage, we are not progressing any development; rather, we are working to ensure that if proposals do come forward, they deliver the best possible outcomes for the High Street and support its long-term vitality.

Although the sites are in separate ownership and may come forward at different times, it's important to establish a coordinated framework that ensures any future development is well-integrated — both with each other and with the wider town centre. This approach helps protect the interests of existing businesses and residents while setting a clear vision for high-quality outcomes should change occur.

-  Town Centre buildings
-  Rejuvenated buildings
-  Proposed new buildings



5 SITE BRIEFS

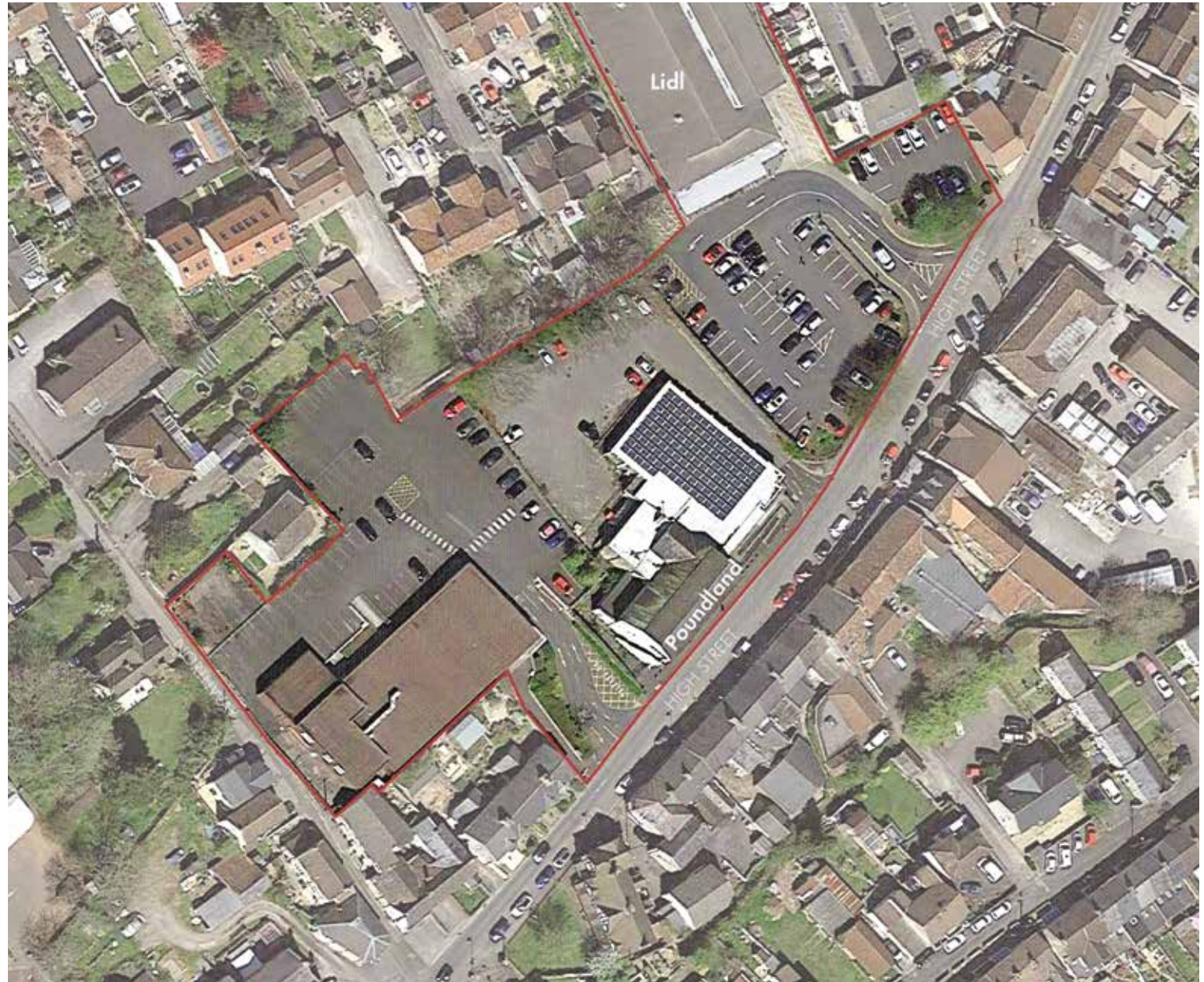
High Street East

Site location

The Argos site is presently vacant but has a limited frontage to the High Street beyond the vehicle access. It does currently back onto Northway.

The Poundland building presents a strong historic frontage, but has been decorated in colours not suited to the Conservation Area character. At the time of writing the future of individual Poundland stores within the chain is not certain.

The Lidl building is set back from the High Street and fails to engage or provide frontage.



High Street East site location plan

5 SITE BRIEFS

High Street East

Existing sites

The three sites have been in various uses over the years, including homes set back from the street, and in the case of the Argos site a shoe factory.

All the sites have their own car park and access from the street, and unusually for the UK feature arrangements where drivers drive on the right hand side of the access road, responding to the direction of the traffic on the High Street which is one-way.

The sites all slope up and away from the High Street and engage with the back fences of older residential development to the rear, with the exception of the Lidl site where recently built new homes are to the north east on the site of a former factory.



Pedestrian access into the former Argos site



The historic Poundland frontage, noting the strong branding and poor treatment of the upper storeys



Northway, showing the rear of the Argos building and the arrangement of parking onto this historic lane



The existing Lidl store, set back from the High Street behind a car park

5 SITE BRIEFS

High Street East

Opportunities

Establish a framework for development which allows for coordinated but independent development across the three sites.

Retain and refurbish the historic building on the street frontage of the Poundland site.

Establish new High Street frontage with active town centre uses on the Lidl and Poundland sites including the option to explore a range of building scales.

Develop a range of houses and flats on land to the rear of the High Street.

Deliver an east-west walking and cycling connection between Northway and the High Street, linking on towards the existing pedestrian lane connecting to Somer Court.



Connected housing
development, each with
independent access

Retained and refurbished
building on the Poundland
street frontage

New street frontage
with town centre uses

Massing model illustrating the key urban design principles for the site

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