

A5

Towcester traffic calming

Preferred scheme announcement



June 2023

Introduction



At National Highways we strive to improve our major roads and motorways - engineering the future to keep people moving today and moving better tomorrow.



We want to make sure all our major roads are dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe.

We've been investigating options to improve Towcester town centre, to follow on from the construction of the new link road south of the town between the A5 and A43. The primary objective of this scheme is to enhance the A5 through Towcester to improve the lives of those who live, work and visit here.

This brochure summarises the results from the public consultation held in August and September 2022 and outlines the preferred scheme for the A5 through Towcester which will be taken forward to the next stage of design.

Need for the scheme

Towcester has longstanding issues with the high levels of traffic passing through its historic town centre, causing environmental, safety and accessibility concerns to residents and businesses.

Due to the new link road being built between the A5 and A43, National Highways is now able to investigate options for improving Towcester town centre.

This scheme aims to encourage through traffic, particularly goods vehicles, to use the new link road and the A43 as an alternative to the A5.

This will alleviate some of the more disruptive traffic from the town centre, improving accessibility and quality of life in Towcester.

Our improvements will:

Improve road safety and accessibility

- The reduction in traffic volumes through the town, enhanced pedestrian and cycle provision and crossing facilities will encourage more walking and cycling.

Improve air quality and reduce noise impact

- The scheme will improve air quality and noise levels by reducing traffic through the town, in particular heavy goods vehicles.

Support economic growth

- The scheme aims to encourage more footfall and increased trade by making the high street through Towcester a more attractive place to visit.

Preserve the history and identity of Towcester

- The reduction in traffic volumes through the town will help to preserve the historic buildings as well as, encourage and support tourism in the area.

Public consultation

We held a public consultation on three options from Monday 15 August 2022 to Sunday 11 September 2022. The purpose of the consultation was to provide the local community and stakeholders with the opportunity to have their say on our proposals and share their ideas, concerns and local knowledge with us.

Five public events were held, two of which were online presentations. One of the three in-person events was held at the Sawpits Centre and the other two were carried out in our engagement van at the Waitrose and Aldi car parks. In addition, we held an engagement session with some pupils from the Sponne School to understand their perspective of the issues and challenges.

As part of the consultation, we used various methods to notify the community and stakeholders, including an information postcard sent to approximately 8600 addresses in the local area, press releases, social media, webpage updates and posters. We also worked with partners such as local authorities to share information through existing channels where relevant.

A full report on the consultation event including analysis of the responses received is available online at: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/uidbivqv/a5-towcester-consultation-report-2022.pdf>

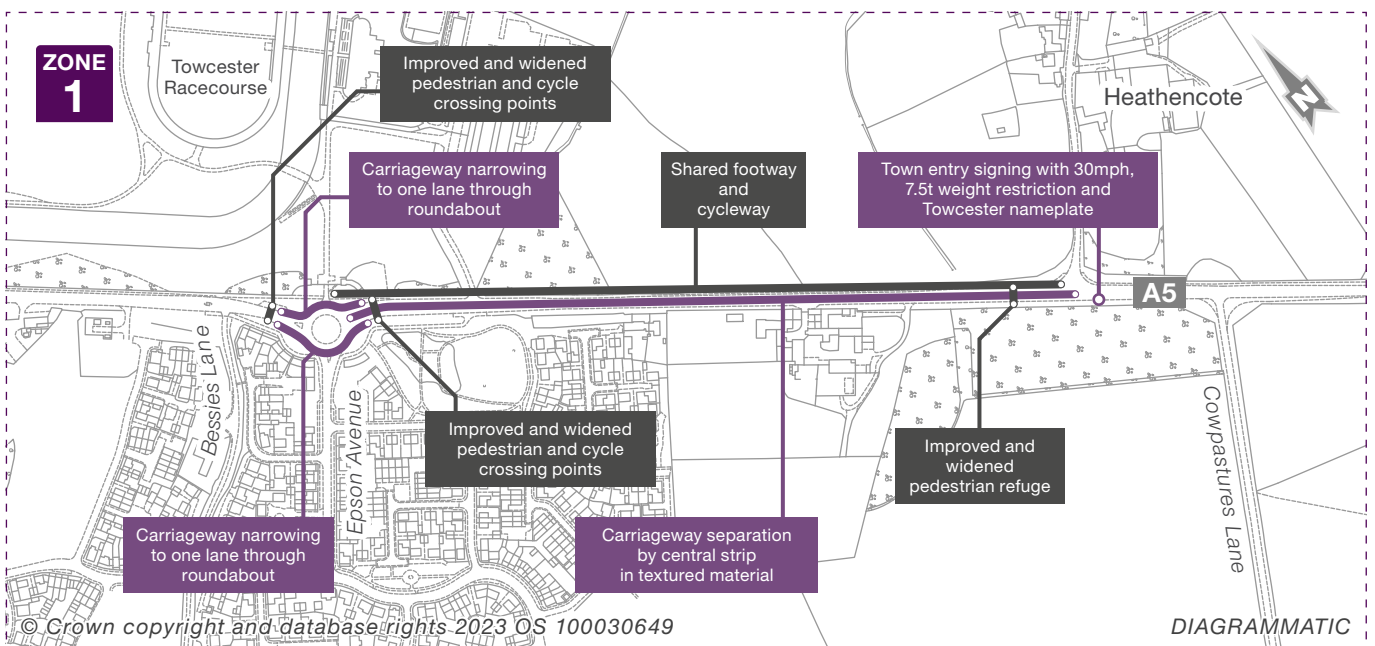
The preferred scheme

The feedback received during the consultation showed support for the principles of traffic calming improvements on the A5 through Towcester. As **Option A** was the preferred proposal we're taking an updated version to the next stage of design development, with the changes reflecting feedback we received during the consultation.

The preferred option will provide:

- Gateway signing into the town
- Updated signing to direct through traffic via the link road and A43 rather than through Towcester
- A 7.5t environmental weight restriction between the new link road and Old Tiffield Road/Old Green's Norton Road junction
- Reduced speed limits of 30mph on the approaches to the town and 20mph through the town centre
- Provision of off carriageway cycle facilities between the new link road and Vernon Road and between the Police Station and Old Tiffield Road/Old Green's Norton Road junction
- New benches and a raised carriageway with changes to its appearance, on Silverstone Brook Bridge to create a town centre gateway and improve pedestrian safety
- Reduction in car parking in the Market Square to provide an attractive open public space in the centre of the town. This will include introducing changes in colour and texture in keeping with the conservation area, adding in benches, planting and artwork. We'll maintain disabled parking provision here
- Town centre enhancements with visually narrowed and textured carriageway and uncontrolled crossing points
- Enhanced bus stops and providing designated loading area within the town centre
- Upgraded signalised pedestrian crossings with new equipment
- Signalling the Old Tiffield Road junction to provide safe crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists and improve the safety and movement of traffic through the junction

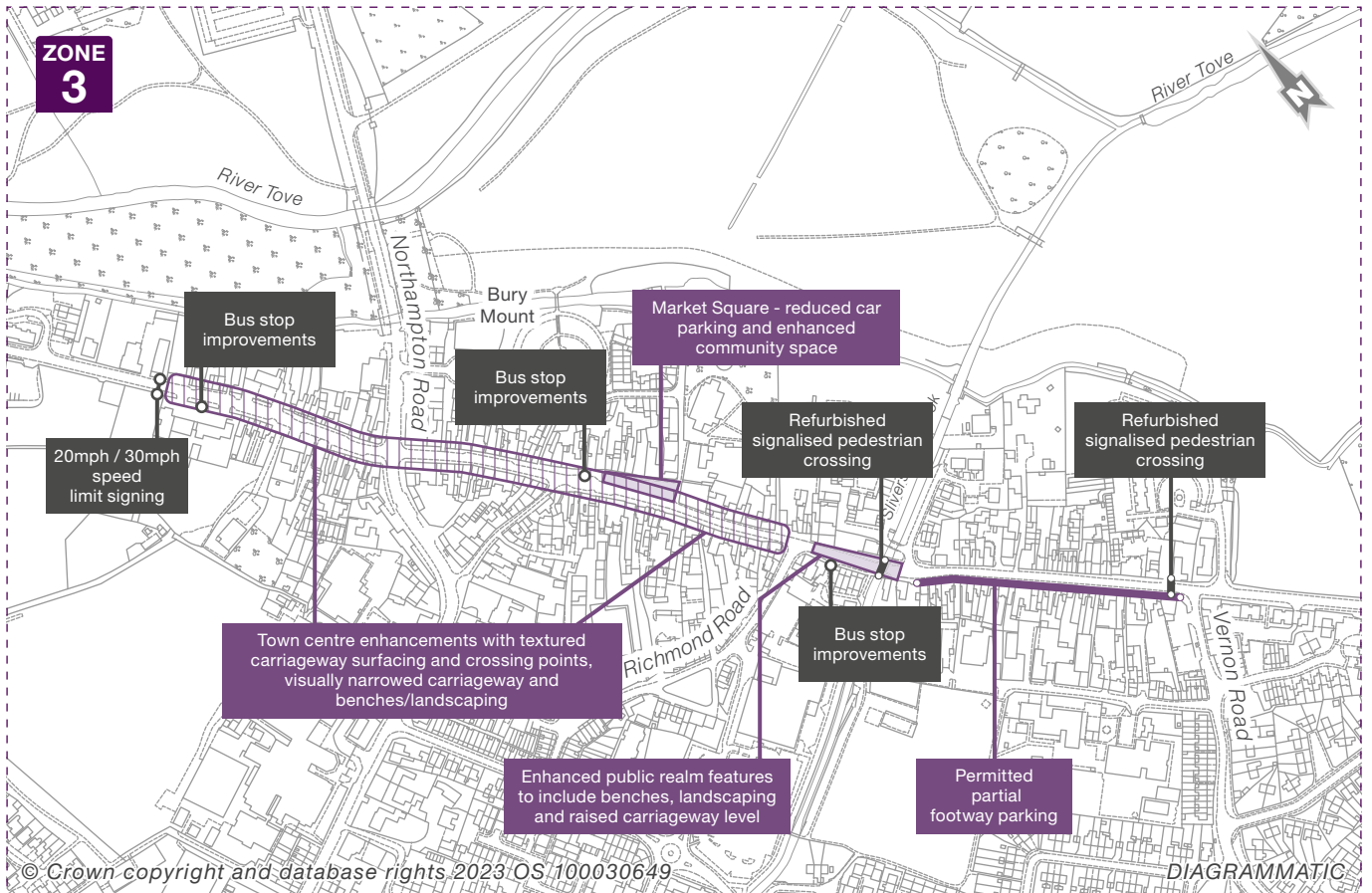
Zone 1



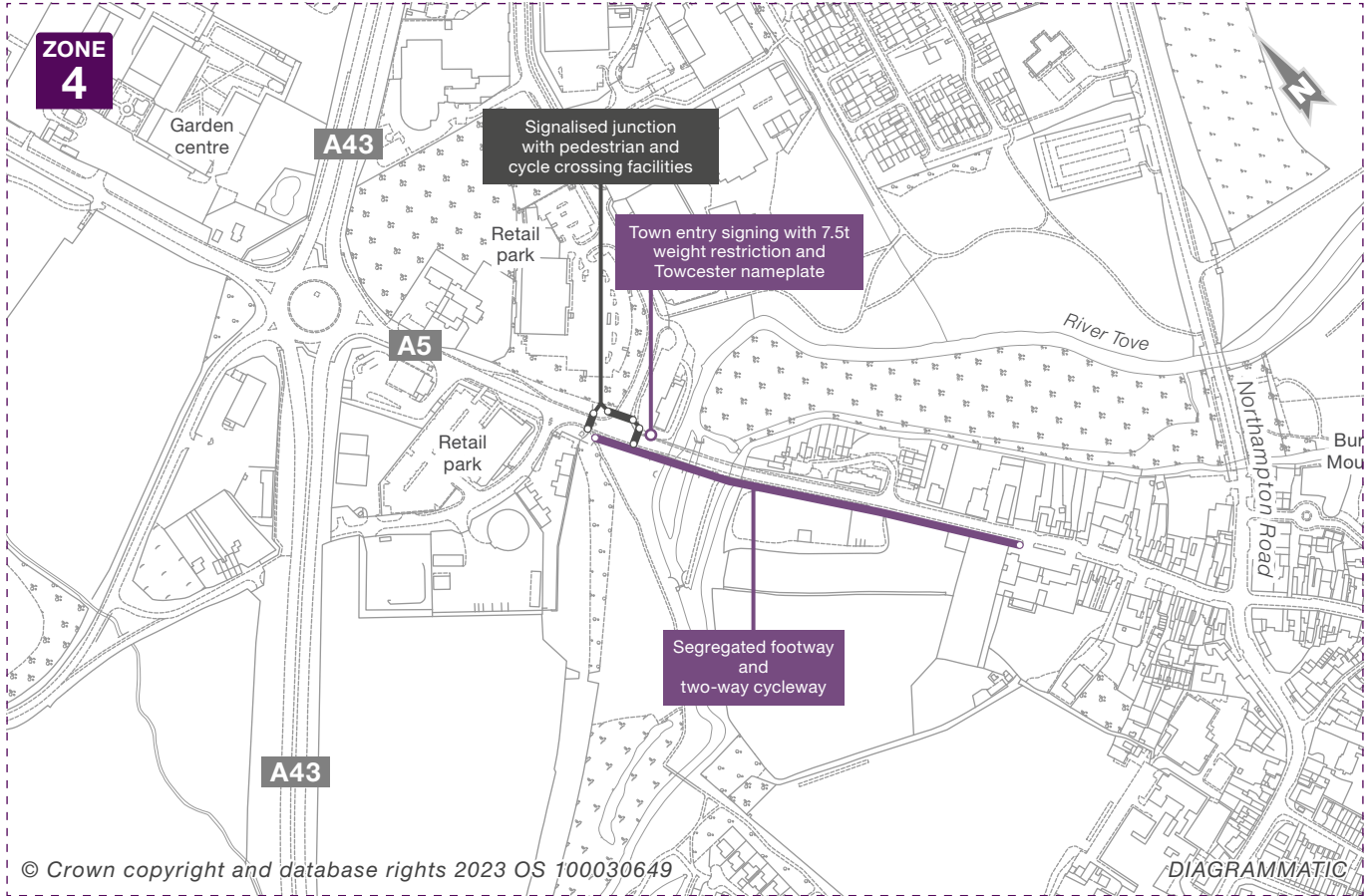
Zone 2



Zone 3



Zone 4



Your feedback



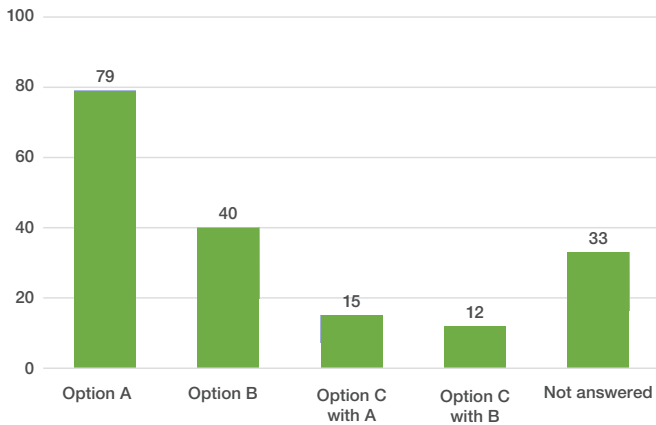
We received 185 responses to the consultation. The feedback was extremely useful in helping us understand how the local community currently uses the town centre and the A5 through Towcester. We also gained further insight into what people thought about our proposals, and measures outlined in the options.

There were 53% of the respondents who supported the principle of Option A with some specific feedback received during the consultation that has helped identify where and how improvements should be focused.

Quantative findings

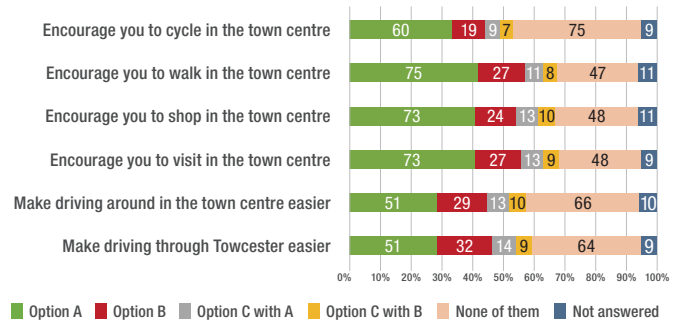
Respondents' views on which option would benefit Towcester most

Which option do you feel would benefit Towcester most? n=179



Respondents' views on how each proposed option would impact their travel decisions and driving opportunities

Which option do think would n=179



Many of the comments we received during the consultations identified specific concerns with the proposals or alternative options. We've reviewed this feedback and made changes to the preferred solution as summarised below.



You said	We did
"Making a Roman Road less straight is ridiculous."	Our proposed solution no longer includes any elements that will create a change to the alignment of Watling Street and instead will focus on other features to visually narrow the road down and create a reduced speed environment.
"There is no point in proposing a cycleway on the north side of the A5 from Epsom Avenue to Vernon Road as all the houses are on the south side."	We've updated our proposals to include a new 5m wide facility on the south side comprising of 3m for cyclists and 2m for pedestrians.
"The proposals will create conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on footpaths."	Wherever space allows we've updated our proposals to include segregated cycleway and footway facilities with a total width of 5m.
"Any ban on 7.5 tonne vehicles must be extended to Northampton Road. This is a traffic calmed residential road which has become a rat-run for HGVs."	We're discussing the potential wider extents of weight restrictions with West Northamptonshire Council.



<i>You said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>“The weight restrictions may benefit Towcester through reducing the number of lorries in the town centre but what about all the vans and cars going north? Why would they use the new link road, only to sit in a 10-minute traffic jam between the Abthorpe and Tove roundabouts?”</p>	<p>As part of the scheme development we’ve completed traffic modelling to understand the performance impact on these junctions which shows that re-routing traffic from the A5 will not worsen the performance of the Tove Roundabout. We’re also including some minor changes to the roundabout to support the changes in traffic flows anticipated and will continue to monitor the impact of the scheme once completed.</p> <p>A wider issue about the capacity of the Tove Roundabout has also been recognised and National Highways are undertaking preliminary assessment work into the potential for improvement works at the Tove junction in future funding cycles.</p>
<p>“The scheme might create a knock-on impact on the surrounding roads as traffic tries to divert around proposed restrictions, especially in view of the planning applications already in progress.”</p>	<p>While initial traffic modelling has not shown any risk of re-routing through surrounding villages, we’ll continue to review this as we refine our assessments. We’re also continuing to discuss the scheme proposals with West Northamptonshire Council including any potential consequential impacts on local roads.</p>
<p>“An additional crossing of Watling Street by the Town Hall would be appreciated by many people. Pedestrians have met with accidents at this spot.”</p>	<p>The narrow carriageway and footway here make it difficult to add a zebra or signal controlled crossing as there is not adequate space for pedestrians to wait and for equipment to be installed. We’ve updated our design to include some informal crossing locations in the vicinity of the Town Hall and the Market Square which will be highlighted with different coloured surfacing to alert drivers to this being a crossing location. This combined with the proposed 20mph speed limit and weight restrictions will make it much easier and safer to cross the road here.</p>



<i>You said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>“Removing kerbs to separate carriageway from footway in the town will create accidents and make it less accessible for some users.”</p>	<p>We recognise the concerns raised and are committing to retaining a kerb height throughout the scheme of at least 50mm.</p> <p>We’ve also reviewed the carriageway treatment in the town centre and will introduce changes in colour and texture to show drivers that the environment is changing to a more pedestrian focussed area and highlight informal crossing points.</p>
<p>“The Town Centre Conservation Area covers approximately 50% of the proposed scheme and includes heritage features that have been carefully maintained such as the stone pavements, heritage signage and street furniture. There is concern that the proposals will negatively affect the character of the area and the setting of listed buildings.”</p>	<p>Existing stone pavements will not be removed from within the town centre. We’re working with the Town Council and West Northamptonshire Council to ensure that the existing heritage features are preserved and, where possible, enhanced.</p>
<p>“Removing parking in the Market Square will harm local businesses by driving trade elsewhere. The local shops depend on easily accessible parking.”</p>	<p>We’ve reviewed the impact of the parking loss and, based on other similar schemes, believe that this will benefit and not harm local businesses. Creation of a more attractive setting will encourage increased trips to the town and longer stays.</p> <p>Removal of the car park will also reduce congestion and the resultant vehicle emissions in the Market Square further improving conditions for residents and businesses.</p> <p>We’ll retain disabled parking provision for those who need it.</p> <p>70% of respondents to our consultation stated that the proposals are likely or very likely to encourage them to shop in Towcester and 53% selected Option A (which proposed the car park removal) or Option A with C as the option most likely to benefit Towcester.</p>



<i>You said</i>	<i>We did</i>
<p>“We don’t want to see lanes taken away from the Brackley Road crossroads as it would mean more delay to essential journeys in and around the town.”</p>	<p>Having reviewed feedback from the consultation we’ll be keeping the lane arrangements at the Brackley Road crossroads as existing to maintain current operation of the junction.</p>
<p>“As the A5 is so busy it is difficult to turn out of Old Tiffield Road next to Tesco, instead of just adding pedestrian crossings you should signalise the whole junction.”</p>	<p>We’ve carried out additional traffic counts at this junction and have undertaken traffic modelling to confirm the junction can be suitably converted to signal operation.</p> <p>By converting to signals we’ll improve access to the various retail outlets nearby, improve pedestrian and cycling facilities and create a new gateway feature for the centre of Towcester.</p>
<p>“Towcester is too small and doesn’t have enough demand to support a park and ride facility.”</p>	<p>Following feedback during the consultation we’re no longer progressing any options that include park and ride proposals.</p>
<p>“A (medium sized) electric (preferably) bus service circulating around the housing estates and connecting with the town centre and the medical centre would be preferable to a park and ride service.”</p>	<p>National Highways is unable to provide such services however, we’ve shared this feedback with West Northamptonshire Council and will work with them to explore where National Highways may be able to provide supporting infrastructure for public transport services.</p>

What happens next

Now we've announced our preferred scheme, we'll undertake the next stage of design development, which involves adding more detail to the overall design. During this stage we'll continue to work closely with West Northamptonshire Council to ensure that our proposals complement the historic setting and integrate with the connecting road, walking and cycling networks.

Contact us

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us via one of the options below:

By email:

a5towcester@jacobs.com

By telephone (24 hours):

0300 123 5000 – our Customer Contact Centre will pass on a message to the project team

Webpage:

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/east-midlands/towcester-improvements/>

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