

## Bicester Town Centre Access Improvements

### Equality and Inclusion Assessment

The scheme proposals are not considered to have the potential to affect people differently according to their gender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. However, the conversion from signalised crossings to zebra crossings may have the potential to affect people differently according to their disability, in particular the blind and partially-sighted.

The blind and partially-sighted may have difficulties if the signalised crossings are changed to zebras as they rely on the audible sound or vibration mechanism to alert them when it is safe to cross. However, drivers approaching zebras approach with caution and have to stop if someone is waiting to cross – this is even more apparent if a visual aid is used such as assistance dogs or canes.

In the case of the Field Street pedestrian crossing, the proposal of a mini-roundabout and the removal of the right-turn ban from Bucknell Road necessitate the conversion to a zebra crossing as a zebra can be placed much closer to junctions and will therefore be more appropriate under the proposed junction changes. Zebras also have the advantage in that drivers have to slow down and look for pedestrians as they approach the crossing so they are less likely to hit someone who is crossing near the crossing but not on it.

Zebra crossings offer more pedestrian priority and will delay pedestrians less than a signalised crossing. There also is less delay to traffic as the 'dead' time is removed that is required for safety reasons at signalised crossings, as is the wasted call time when a pedestrian has managed to cross in gaps in the traffic without waiting for the green man. The number of pedestrians expected at these locations is not assessed to be heavy enough to cause significant delay if a zebra is installed. A safety audit has been carried out on the preliminary design, which did not highlight any inherent problems with converting signalised crossings to zebras.

The proposed closure of North Street necessitates the removal of the bus stop on North Street and moving it to Manorsfield Road where the new bus station will be located in the town centre redevelopment. Although the scheme will have the benefit of reducing bus journey times and distance, it will impact on bus patrons alighting on North Street due to an extended walk to reach their new stop.

However, the new bus stops in Manorsfield Road will be approximately 300 metres from the stop in North Street. The Department for Transport's guidance on providing inclusive transport infrastructure, *Inclusive Mobility*, recommends that "bus stops should be located ideally so that nobody in the neighbourhood is required to walk more than 400 metres". The new bus stops will have infrastructure (a full height kerb, a shelter with seating and lighting, and real time information etc.) that *Inclusive Mobility* recommends. In North Street it is not possible to provide any of these facilities.