

**Sharing Our Streets**

# ***CAVERSHAM VILLAGE***

**Achieving the Vision**

November 2014





# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>SIDE ROAD ENTRY-TREATMENTS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>WIDENED FOOTWAYS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PUBLIC MEETING</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>REMOVAL OF BUS BAYS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CAVERSHAM – OUR VISION</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENTS FOR CYCLISTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CONTEXT</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>IMPROVED SURFACING MATERIALS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>THE GROWTH OF SETTLEMENTS</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>REMOVAL OF TRAFFIC SIGNALS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>‘TRADITIONAL’ TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CONTEMPORARY APPROACH</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>TACKLING THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>‘PSYCHOLOGICAL’ TRAFFIC CALMING</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>DO NOTHING</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>IMPROVING THE PUBLIC REALM</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>BARE MINIMUM</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>CAVERSHAM TODAY</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>TRANSITIONAL</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>ACHIEVEMENTS ELSEWHERE</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>COMPREHENSIVE</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>CAVERSHAM’S TRAFFIC PROBLEMS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>FUNDING</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>SCRUFFY APPEARANCE</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>SAVINGS</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>RE-CONNECTING THE VILLAGE</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>NO PLAN = NO FUNDING</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>20MPH SPEED LIMIT</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>POSSIBLE SOURCES</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>MINIMALIST ROAD MARKINGS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>MINIMALIST SIGNS AND STREET FURNITURE</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>SHARING OUR STREETS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>ONLY THREE QUESTIONS REMAIN</b>	<b>39</b>





## Bridge Street Caversham - Then & Now

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) and Caversham Traders Association (CTA) members met Reading Borough Council (RBC) officers on the 8 June 2013 to discuss highway changes in the centre of Caversham. Transport Officers suggested that an explanation of CADRA's and CTA's Vision, for improvements for all users of the streets of Caversham, would be helpful in determining future changes and enhancements.

### Public Meeting

On the evening of 12 November 2013 CADRA and CTA held a joint meeting at Thameside School Hall. The primary purpose of the meeting was to seek the views of people who have an interest in Caversham Centre and consider if a 'Vision' for traffic measures in the centre of Caversham is needed.

Over 100 people attended the meeting including five local Councillors.

Simon Beasley, Network Manager for Reading Borough Council explained the Council's duties and constraints, as the local Highway Authority, and how improvements are funded

Mr Beasley outlined current proposals for Caversham and urged Caversham to look to the future and work with Councillors to develop a 'Vision for Caversham', in order to seize funding opportunities.

Paul Matthews, a member of the CADRA committee, gave some examples of what has been achieved elsewhere to make roads more 'friendly' to non motorists.

Those present at the meeting were asked to record their views on whether a 'Vision' is needed for Caversham, the current problems and possible solutions. The summary of these views can be found on the CADRA web site.

Caversham is a large settlement within the Borough of Reading and the numbers of responses received represents a small proportion of the local population. However, the questionnaire responses were from people who use Caversham Centre, have thought carefully

about its problems and provided detailed written views on the issues confronting the 'Village'.

EVERYONE who responded would like improvements to Caversham centre and helped us to gain a better understanding of how the village is perceived and how it could be improved.

### Caversham – Our VISION

Following the positive response from residents and traders we considered that we had received the necessary endorsement for producing a Vision for Caversham Centre.

We believe that the 'Vision' should be 'aspirational' but not 'pie in the sky' and that without a 'Vision' it is unlikely that funding sources for improvements could be identified.

Other nearby settlements, with Thames crossings, have learnt to live with traffic and have adapted their centres to be people 'friendly' places. We believe that a similar transformation is vital for Caversham. Change will not be easy and can be expensive but we believe that improvements are necessary and possible.



The constant process of development and change can either add to or detract from the existing character of the village and will ultimately determine its social, environmental and economic sustainability. We have tried to understand and influence these changes to achieve a better quality village for all.

Caversham must continue to encourage and accommodate the needs of all activities into the future. Clear design ideas are needed to reinforce and support the physical structure of the village centre. We hope to build upon its strengths, as a historic Thames crossing, whilst recognising its weaknesses and identifying opportunities for improvement.

The purpose of this document is to outline how the Vision can be realised and explore how the centre of Caversham could be enhanced to make local shops, services and facilities more accessible, to residents and visitors, by producing a better balance between traffic, services and people.

The Vision has been circulated to members of CADRA and CTA and has now been accepted by them.

## *The VISION*

*'To enhance Caversham centre as a high quality place for shopping, working, living and leisure and to promote an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable village centre for the 21st Century'*

## CONTEXT

### The Growth of Settlements

In the centuries before the arrival of motorised transport it was an advantage for settlements to be located on trade routes. Crossroads or river crossings were especially favoured for their good communications and access to passing trade.

For most of its length the river Thames has routes that run parallel to the river valley. Crossing points, firstly fords and then bridges, were constructed where there was a particular need and Caversham is one of these places. The first record of a bridge at Caversham was in the 12th Century and there may have been an earlier bridge or ford.

By the time that motor vehicles arrived Caversham was a thriving settlement about a mile by road, from the fast expanding centre of Reading. In 1911 Caversham was absorbed into the Borough of Reading.

In the 'horse drawn' era small populations and slow moving vehicles intermingled reasonably well. The main barriers to movement were the, sometimes muddy, unpaved roads.

When private car usage exploded, in the 1950s and 60s, local highway authorities struggled to cope and old highways were quickly adapted to handle the extra traffic.

### 'Traditional' Traffic Management

'Traditional' traffic management has been remarkably successful. It has influenced the design of major highways and urban roads and there are now unprecedented flows of people, goods and services throughout the country. Road safety has also improved to the point where British roads are some of the safest in the developed world.

Unfortunately, many of the traffic engineering techniques, that have been developed since the 1960s, have reinforced the dominance of motor traffic in towns and villages. Streets have been 'tram lined' with edge of carriageway and centre line road markings. Traffic signals have largely removed the need for drivers to think about their interaction with other vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. A green signal means 'GO' or 'speed up and get through the junction quickly before the lights change'.

The results we can see today: pedestrians are shoved to the sides, corralled behind railings and

encouraged to cross only at specific points such as: signalled junctions, refuges and zebra, pelican or puffin crossings. Motor vehicles now dominate the street scene; drivers have assumed priority over pedestrians and expect to travel near to (or sometimes over) the speed limit.

### Contemporary Approach

All is not lost, however. In recent years there has been a revolutionary move away from the vehicle-focused practice that was born of many years of traffic growth and road user segregation. In contrast, the new approach has turned around earlier established practice and placed pedestrians at the top of the pecking order rather than vehicles.

The paraphernalia and clutter used to manage motorised traffic, the plethora of road signs, road markings and other redundant equipment is swept away. Traffic engineers and designers are now encouraged to review the street scene and adopt minimalist methods by removing unnecessary and superfluous signs, road markings, street furniture and guardrailling.

Many of the desired outcomes of: lower traffic speed, better access for pedestrians and cyclists, and an improved street scene, can be achieved



by careful application of 'traditional' techniques. The most effective contemporary methods use more subtle ways to influence driver behaviour. However, a complete redesign of the street scene or public realm is usually required.

### **'Psychological' Traffic Calming**

'Psychological' traffic calming is a term used to describe techniques used to influence driver behaviour and vehicle speeds without the use of speed humps or chicanes.

The objective is to change the driving environment and introduce a greater degree of uncertainty. This places the full responsibility on drivers so that they adapt their conduct, naturally, to suit the environment. Integration of vehicles and pedestrians is encouraged. A well designed scheme will automatically bring out the best from drivers who then behave in a calmer more courteous manner.

'Psychological' systems usually involve a softening of the street scene and the erosion of the boundaries between pedestrians and vehicles. Most of the vehicle orientated street equipment is removed or pared back to the bare essentials. Techniques that have proved successful include:

- the continuous 'black top' strip of carriageway is eliminated;
- carriageways and footways are surfaced in complementary coloured and textured materials;
- low kerbs or level surfaces are used;
- trees and planters soften the streetscape and give the impression of a narrower vehicle path;
- sightlines and forward visibility is reduced;
- use of traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings is eliminated or minimised;
- essential traffic management equipment is hidden or disguised;
- shared use of carriageway between traffic and pedestrians; and
- the road layout is redesigned with narrower carriageways, tighter kerb radii at junctions, conversion of one-way streets to two-way and greater use of mini-roundabouts.

These techniques were pioneered in the Netherlands by the engineer Hans Monderman. Drachen town centre is renowned as a highly successful application of a 'psychological'

approach where few indicators of who has the 'right-of-way' remain. There are now many examples of such schemes throughout Britain.

### **Improving the Public Realm**

Every city, town, village or street is different to every other. However, there are many common features or techniques that can be utilised to solve similar problems. Two reasonably well know types of scheme are 'Shared Space' and 'Naked Streets'. High-quality design has been proven to bring out the inherent good manners of most drivers.

#### *Shared Space*

In Shared Space schemes the street is redesigned to discourage drivers from assuming that they have exclusive use of the road. Pedestrians feel secure and able to exercise priority over vehicles when and where necessary. Sometimes kerb lines or level differences are removed but usually there are areas that cannot be accessed by vehicles. These areas may be restricted by carefully placed street furniture, trees and planters.

Some good examples of such schemes are:



**Ashford Ring Road** - originally a heavily trafficked, one-way traditional road. Traffic flow remains high but vehicles travel, two-way, at reduced speeds and pedestrians are not intimidated.

**New Road, Brighton** – a typical town centre road with shops and restaurants. There are no kerbs and a fully level surface with public seating and restaurant outdoor seating areas. Traffic flows have reduced and motor vehicles really do take second place to other street users and activities.

**Poynton** - a small former colliery town in north east Cheshire recently changed its heavily trafficked main signalled junction to traffic circles. The whole area of the junction was repaved in carefully chosen coloured granite slabs. Traffic continues to negotiate the centre, traffic queues have reduced and the whole area has become more pedestrian friendly.

**Improving the Public Realm**



**Naked Streets**

Naked Streets schemes share many of the features of a shared space scheme with minimal use of traffic signs and road markings and almost complete removal of the usual street clutter. The balance, of vehicle and pedestrian use, is changed by narrowing roadways to the minimum required to allow the passage of necessary traffic flows. The most notable example of a naked street is **Kensington High Street**, a heavily trafficked London street and bus route. Pedestrian guardrailing was removed, road markings were minimalised and signs and signals were carefully integrated with lamp columns and other street equipment.





## CAVERSHAM TODAY

Though technically a suburb of Reading, Caversham is considered, by its residents, to be a town or village.

With a population of around 32,000 it is significantly larger than many nearby towns and villages with road crossings over the Thames.

The village shopping centre is smaller than both Henley and Marlow because of the size and variety of shops in the nearby centre of Reading.

Riverside places	Population
Sonning	1,500
Pangbourne	3,800
Goring & Streatley	4,200
Wallingford	7,000
Henley-on-Thames	11,000
Marlow	14,000
<b>Caversham</b>	<b>32,000</b>
Reading Borough <b>(Including Caversham)</b>	156,000

As with other nearby settlements, Caversham originally developed around an important crossing point over the Thames and both Caversham and Reading bridges still have a major impact upon the village.

**Caversham is the largest Thames town or village locally and is over 20% of Reading Borough**

### Achievements elsewhere

#### *Reading Town Centre*

Most local people are familiar with the centre of Reading. Many people who have lived in the area for some time can remember how bad the experience of shopping in Reading town centre used to be. The closure of Broad Street to through traffic and reduction in traffic in Friar Street has dramatically improved the shopping and leisure environment. It is likely that the town centre improvements have attracted developments such as The Oracle.

These improvements have helped to make Reading one of the largest retail centres in the

UK, but Reading's success may have had a negative impact upon local centres such as Caversham.

#### *Henley-on-Thames*

Henley is more analogous to Caversham in that, despite the reduction in through traffic caused by the Marlow by-pass in the 1970's, it is still a major crossing point over the river and a major crossroads for Thames Valley traffic. With one exception (Hart Street) Henley has narrower streets than Caversham. However, significant improvements to the shopping experience and the balance between vehicles and people have been possible. Some Caversham people now travel to Henley because of the ease of parking and the better shopping experience.

#### *Marlow*

Marlow's iconic suspension bridge dates from the 1830's and has never been able to carry modern heavy vehicles. However, the town is an important crossroads for Thames Valley traffic and, with the improvements in the town and the construction of the by-pass, in the latter half of the 20th century, it has ceased to be the poor relation of Henley.



Other towns have learnt to live with traffic and have adapted their roads to be more 'friendly' to non-motorised users. The key elements have resulted in:

- Reduced vehicle speeds;
- Reduced congestion;
- Reduced pollution;
- Fewer barriers to movement caused by traffic;
- Increased pedestrian space;
- Improved accessibility for vulnerable road users;
- An improved street scene;
- Retained and enhanced character.

These changes have not been easy and many have been expensive. Many improvements have been initiated by local residents and traders and are examples worth emulating.

### Caversham's Traffic Problems

Central Caversham caters for many, often conflicting, road uses. Through traffic competes and, ultimately, dominates the local 'village'

centre which also has local traffic and parking demands. The centre includes a variety of shops, small businesses, restaurants and take-always and amenities such as the library and health providers.

Some of Caversham's traffic problems would be solved if through traffic (ie traffic with no business or destination in the village) could be removed. However, by-passing of the village centre may be one of those 'pie in the sky' aspirations. Proposals for a third Reading Road Bridge have been around for over 60 years but they have always been thwarted by neighbouring Councils whose residents use Caversham to access facilities south of the Thames and Reading town centre.

New initiatives for a third road bridge, by local politicians, may help to break this 'log jam'. If a third Reading bridge is built there will still be a significant flow of traffic, through Caversham from South Oxfordshire to Reading and beyond. Whatever happens, the problem of the imbalance between motorised traffic and people will remain.

As it is unlikely that a significant reduction in through traffic will be possible in the near future, a pragmatic acceptance of traffic and congestion during peak periods may be necessary. People will still need to go about their daily lives in the village.

A better balance between the needs of ALL users is required, whether they travel through in buses,



Pedestrians taking second place



cars and lorries, deliver goods to premises, carry out essential services, ride bicycles, walk or drive. People with disabilities, the elderly, the very young and those using wheel chairs and pushchairs also need special consideration.

For people using the village centre facilities, motorised traffic creates a barrier between the two sides of both Church Street and Prospect Street. In peak periods the continuous flow of slow moving vehicles discourages pedestrian flow across the streets. In off peak periods the lower traffic flows encourage vehicles to speed up and this, also, produces a barrier.

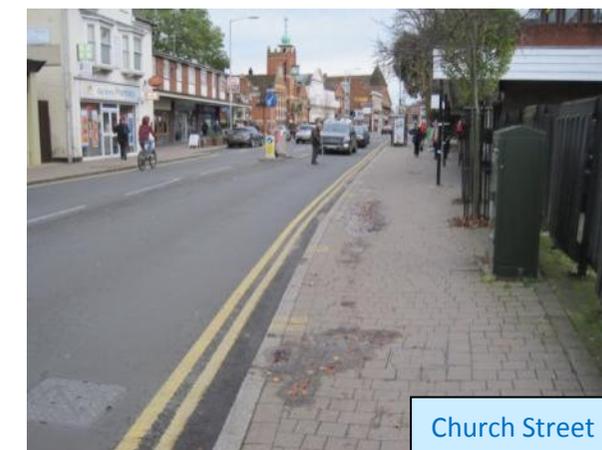
Motorists with no interest in stopping in Caversham, understandably wish to pass through to their destinations as quickly and smoothly as possible. Unfortunately the street design has produced the appearance of a traffic thoroughfare, with pedestrians corralled behind barriers, limited crossing points and a major signalled road junction without dedicated pedestrian or cycle facilities.

At almost every point along the main shopping streets, pedestrians are forced to bow to the pre-eminence of the motor vehicle and this includes the crossings of side roads and private entrances such as the Esso/Tesco site on Church Street.

The current hierarchy of street users with motor traffic at the top and pedestrians and other vulnerable road users at the bottom has resulted in a poor village centre environment and clear road safety issues for vulnerable road users.

### Scruffy Appearance

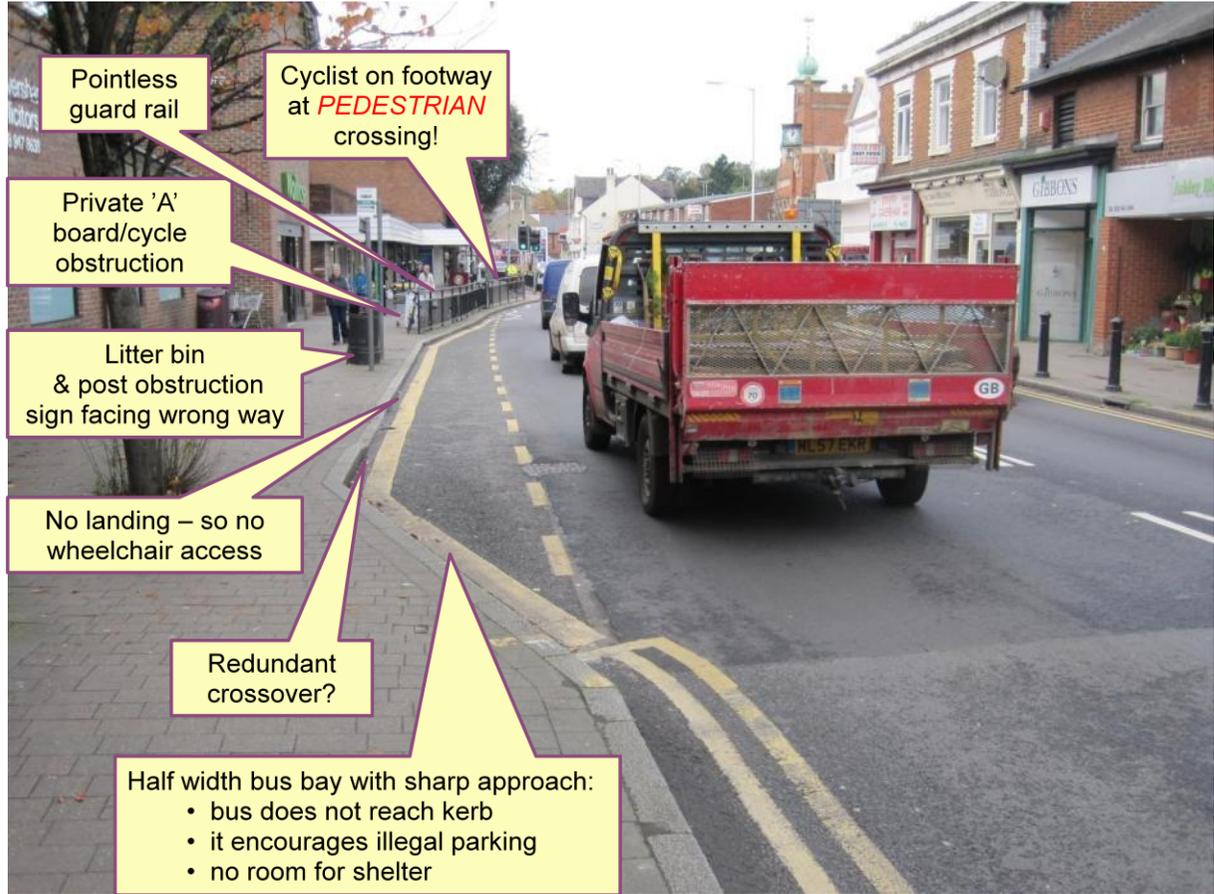
Central Caversham has a generally scruffy appearance which is the result of many small deficiencies or shortcomings. Individual defects might not be very noticeable but, cumulatively, the effect is a scruffy and unkempt village centre. The problems stem from: poor design, poor workmanship and poor maintenance. Damage to pavement surfaces has been caused by vehicles driving on the footway particularly where traffic islands cause vehicles loading or off-loading to obstruct the traffic. The scruffy appearance can engender a 'don't care' attitude in both visitors and local people and engenders a lack of enthusiasm for the village and its facilities.



**Pedestrians take second place  
Time to correct the imbalance**



Abnormal load in Church Street/Prospect Street



Church Street – problems?

## RE-CONNECTING THE VILLAGE

It is not possible, or even desirable, to return the village to its appearance before the invention of motor vehicles. The motor car is here to stay, in some form or other, for the foreseeable future. The benefits that cars bring, in terms of personal mobility and convenience, is enjoyed by most people. For the elderly, the disabled and people with small children the car has become an essential part of their everyday lives.

However, in the village centre, the almost total dominance of motor traffic needs to be corrected; the car needs to be 'put in its place'.

We need to improve the pedestrian environment by reconnecting both sides of Church Street and Prospect Street which have been isolated by heavy or fast flows of motor traffic.

We have shown that in other places, and elsewhere in Reading, many of the problems experienced in Caversham have been solved. Some of the methods and techniques used are described here.

## 20mph speed limit

Lower vehicle speeds have many advantages and, in town and village centres, very few disadvantages.

### Advantages

- Reduction in the numbers and severity of accidents. Many fatal or serious injuries become slight injuries and many accidents do not occur as road users have more time to react to potential collisions.
- Easier and safer for pedestrians crossing the road.
- Encourages on-road cycling and therefore discourages illegal encroachment of pedal cycles into pedestrian spaces.
- Constant lower speeds reduce vehicle noise and pollution.

### Disadvantages

- Without physical measures a 20mph speed limit would be difficult to enforce.
- Increased journey time

If a vehicle was able to travel at a constant speed, from the Prince of Wales pub to Caversham Bridge, a reduction in speed from

30mph to 20mph would take an extra 25 seconds. In practice this journey could not be done at a constant speed so the actual time difference would be much less. However, a 20mph speed limit could reduce anti-social speeding.

## Minimalist road markings

Road markings are essential to guide drivers onto the safe path, to indicate priorities at junctions and to indicate the presence of traffic regulations. They are very cheap to install and, unfortunately, this has often led to an unnecessary proliferation. Excessive use of road markings produces an over urbanised appearance, reinforces the impression of traffic domination and is often quite ugly. 'Cones' of road markings at traffic islands are ubiquitous but unnecessary and, wherever possible, they should be replaced with simple inclined warning lines (Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 5, Paragraph 4.23 and Figure 4.4). The two photographs of Chiswick show minimalist but effective road markings.





The Avenue, Chiswick



Acton Lane, Chiswick

It is possible to install narrow waiting restriction double and single yellow lines (ie 50 mm width in place of 100 mm wide lines). These are perfectly clear to drivers and have been installed in some new Reading schemes (eg Vastern Road).

### Advantages

- Reduced initial cost and maintenance
- Improved appearance
- Clear simple message to drivers

### Disadvantages

- Great care is needed to ensure that guidance is clear to drivers

### Minimalist signs and street furniture

All unnecessary street signs and other street furniture is removed. Over the years signs and street furniture have been installed and, quite often, the original purpose has disappeared. Ad hoc installation has occurred without careful consideration of the whole street. The result is often disjointed, although each item may not be particularly noticeable, the overall effect is untidy.

### Advantages

- Fewer obstructions in pedestrians areas
- Fewer confusing messages to drivers
- Reduced maintenance

- Improved appearance.

### Disadvantages

- Care needed to ensure that essential guidance is given to road users

### Improved pedestrian crossings

There are national guidelines for the installation of formal pedestrians crossings (zebra, pelican, puffin, etc). Many Highway Authorities (including Reading Borough Council) use pre 1995 guidelines on the numbers of vehicles and pedestrians (PV<sup>2</sup>) to justify the installation of a crossing. This is no longer a Department of Transport requirement (except in Northern Ireland) so formal crossings can be installed as considered necessary by the highway authority.



London - raised informal crossing

Many places have successfully installed informal crossing points where the road is raised to footway level. Formal crossings can be placed on raised tables too.



Raised zebra crossing, A329 Pangbourne

### Advantages

- Reduced walking distances.
- Reduced vehicle speeds in the vicinity of the crossings.
- Trip hazards eliminated - especially helpful for elderly, very young and mobility impaired pedestrians.
- Easier movement for wheelchair and pushchair users.

### Disadvantages

- Vertical movement for vehicles and, unless carefully designed, this can affect buses.
- They can look like continuous footway and need a careful choice of materials, textures and colours.

### Side road entry-treatments

These can take many forms but usually include raising the entrance of the side road to footway level with a ramp on each side for vehicles. They have been used extensively throughout the country. To be effective a careful choice of materials, textures and colours is essential.



Wokingham Road, Reading

### Advantages

- Reduced accidents

- Reduced walking distances and delays.



Oxford Road, Reading

- Reduction in vehicle turning speeds.
- No trip hazards especially for elderly, very young and mobility impaired pedestrians.
- Easier movement for wheelchair and pushchair users.



Vastern Road Reading

### *Disadvantages*

- They can look like continuous footway unless carefully designed.

### **Widened footways**

Wherever possible, carriageways can be narrowed but due consideration should be given to providing loading and servicing space for shops and other premises.



### *Advantages*

- Increases the space available for pedestrians
- Reduces the area of 'black top' carriageway
- Encourages drivers to travel more slowly

- Reduces the appearance of traffic domination.

### *Disadvantages*

- Space must be set aside for deliveries

### **Removal of bus bays**

Bus bays were originally installed to prevent obstruction of heavily trafficked routes by stopped buses. They have now fallen out of favour with the biggest bus operators (eg Transport for London, Buses) as they produce little or no benefit for either bus operators or users.

### *Advantages*

- Space produced for new bus shelters
- Extra waiting space clear of the normal pedestrian routes
- Buses able to stop smoothly in a straight line close to the new kerb line
- Passengers able to wait close to the kerb. Easier boarding and alighting for all users but especially for the elderly, small children and wheelchair and pushchair users.
- Quicker boarding and alighting

- Buses able to re-enter general traffic flow smoothly and quickly.

### *Disadvantages*

- Buses will stop in the carriageway and obstruct following vehicles.
- General traffic delayed but for a significantly shorter period than existing bus delays.

### **Improvements for cyclists**

Cycling has an important role to play in personal transport. It has a minimal impact on traffic flow produces no pollution and can improve the health of riders.

Unfortunately, cycling has a poor reputation amongst pedestrians due to its increasing encroachment into pedestrians areas. Many cyclists appear to be unaware of the laws that were enacted well before the invention of the pedal bicycle and the motor car (see box on next page). Cyclists often approach quickly and almost silently; many cyclists are unaware of the distress and very real danger that illegal cycling can cause to pedestrians, especially the elderly and very young.

The approach outlined in this document would reduce traffic speeds and produce a safer environment for cyclists. Hopefully, this would encourage 'on road' cycling and would reduce the conflicts between cycling and walking. Secure cycle parking and other facilities are clearly needed in the Village and will be essential if the street furniture and sign posts, that provide ad hoc cycle parking, are removed.

*The Highway Act 1835 specified as offences for which the driver of a carriage on the public highway might be punished by a fine, in addition to any civil action that might be brought against him.*

*Section 72 provides:  
"If any person shall **wilfully ride upon any footpath or causeway by the side of any road made or set apart for the use or accommodation of foot passengers**; or shall wilfully lead or drive any horse, ass, sheep, mule, swine, or cattle **or carriage of any description**, or any truck or sledge, upon any such footpath or causeway; or shall tether any horse, ass, mule, swine, or cattle, on any highway, so as to suffer or permit the tethered animal to be thereon."*

### Advantages

- Increased use of cycles
- Reduction in car usage
- Improved cycle security in the right places

- Fewer conflicts with pedestrians
- Safer cycling

### Disadvantages

- Some pedestrian space used for cycle parking
- Some new street furniture



Sheffield Cycle Stands



### Improved surfacing materials

Use of materials with contrasting colour and texture 'breaks-up' the monotonous black tarmac which reinforces the appearance of vehicle priority. Careful choice of materials is vital to ensure durability of both appearance and structure.

### Advantages

- The road loses its appearance of a primarily traffic route
- Vehicles slow down
- Safer places to cross are highlighted
- Softened appearance enhances street scene



Northumberland Avenue, Reading

### *Disadvantages*

- Can be costly to install
- Skidding resistance can be a problem with some surfaces
- Durability
- Maintenance can be more expensive
- Poorly repaired utility trenches spoil appearance

### **Removal of traffic signals**

Traffic signals have two main purposes, the most important being road safety. Where road junctions have particularly difficult layouts, with poor sight lines, signals can regulate traffic flow so that vehicles can traverse the junction safely. Drivers can be fairly sure that there will be no conflicting vehicles and that remaining vehicle priorities will be understandable. Secondly, traffic signals can increase the traffic handling capacity of certain types of junction. Pedestrian, cycle and equestrian priorities can also be incorporated.

Over the past 40 years or so, traffic signals have been seen as a panacea for all road junction problems despite the remarkable success of

other junction types such as small and mini roundabouts.

When located in the right place and well designed, mini roundabouts have been proven to reduce accidents and, in the case of three-armed junctions, they can have a significantly higher traffic capacity than traffic signals. The reasons for this are complex but, essentially they do not suffer the same levels of 'lost time' between 'stages' and work on a lower effective 'cycle time' than signals. Drivers are forced to take responsibility for their actions, behave more carefully and drive more slowly. In off peak periods, delays are much lower than with traffic signals.

The Shinfield Road/Elm Road mini roundabout was replaced by traffic signals and it resulted in excessive queuing, congestion and a deterioration in the local environment. Even careful optimisation of the signals, under the guidance of the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), could not reverse the situation and traffic has now diverted onto other less capable routes.

Ironically the mini roundabout was invented by one of the TRLs most famous researchers, the late Mr Frank Blackmore.

There are many examples where three arm signals have been replaced with roundabouts (eg Fulham Road/Fulham Palace Road, London and Goldhawk Road/Askew Road/Paddenswick Road, London). The best recent example is, Poynton, Cheshire where the roundabouts have been called traffic circles.

### *Advantages*

- Can have higher capacity
- Better driver behaviour
- Lower traffic speeds
- Simpler layouts
- Less street furniture
- Less susceptible to failed electricity supply
- Lower capital costs
- Lower maintenance costs

### *Disadvantages*

- Centralised area traffic control lost
- Some pedestrians prefer signalled crossings





## Summary

Sensitively applied, these techniques can reduce the appearance of a traffic thoroughfare. In Caversham, the current street scene empowers some drivers to disregard the fundamental rights of freedom of movement by other road users. This is not a consciously selfish attitude; it derives from the subliminal messages that drivers receive from the appearance of the streets through which they travel.

The central Caversham shopping area needs to be improved to provide a better balance between the needs of pedestrians and traffic.

This should include improved pedestrian routes and road crossings, whilst at the same time, slowing but maintaining the necessary flow of traffic.

The enhancements could help to deliver cultural, physical, economic and social improvements and produce a family friendly village centre. We believe that it is possible to improve the vibrant, diverse and distinctive area that is Caversham Village Centre and it could act as a stimulating focal point for culture and heritage within the Borough.

Elsewhere we have seen that there has been an emphasis on a holistic approach to designing streets. These ideas would set both a benchmark and a target for improving the quality of the public realm within the centre of Caversham.

**These techniques can reduce the appearance of a traffic thoroughfare**



## TACKLING THE PROBLEM

It is clear that Caversham Village centre has fallen far behind similar towns and villages both locally and nationally and there is local agreement that **'something must be done'**. If opportunities for funding are to be pursued, the continued interest of residents and traders, demonstrated by their support for the Vision, needs to be matched by support from Councillors and Council Officers.

Experience elsewhere has shown that any changes **MUST** be made with the highest quality design, materials and workmanship to maximise the benefits of the schemes. Furthermore, whatever is installed must be maintainable and properly maintained or its effectiveness will be eroded.

Outlined here are three levels of intervention that might be achievable, depending on the levels of support.

It is important to emphasise that the possible interventions are **ideas NOT proposals**.

Food for thought

## Do Nothing

Of course, there may be people who do not agree with any or all of the possible changes and are happy with the status quo.

Do nothing

## Bare Minimum

This option relies upon improving the appearance of the centre by rationalising street furniture, traffic signing and road markings. There are numerous examples of ineffective road markings that do little to assist motorists but add to the urbanised appearance of the streets.

The **right turn markings** at Hemdean road are too narrow for most vehicles and the numbers making this turn do not justify their provision.

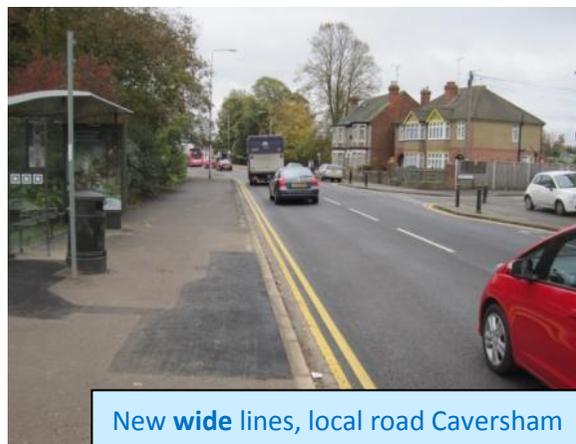
Waiting restriction markings (**yellow lines**), currently these are marked 100mm wide but could be replaced with lines 50mm wide. Narrow lines have been used on the Reading IDR in Vastern Road, a major route, yet the newly installed lines in Gosbrook Road, a less important



road, are 100mm wide! Some consistency from the Borough Council would be welcome.

Many **traffic signs** are of limited use. An example of a redundant sign is the advanced sign for Short Street which also holds a loading restriction plate. Short Street has a (poorly sited and aligned) 'no through road' sign on each side of the road. Under the new 2015 Regulations, the loading restriction plate will become unnecessary provided the kerb markings are visible.

**Pedestrian guardrailing;** over the past few years there has been a significant move away from indiscriminate use of these ugly barriers. They are of limited benefit as some people are forced to walk in the carriageway if they have not been observant when starting to cross the road. These

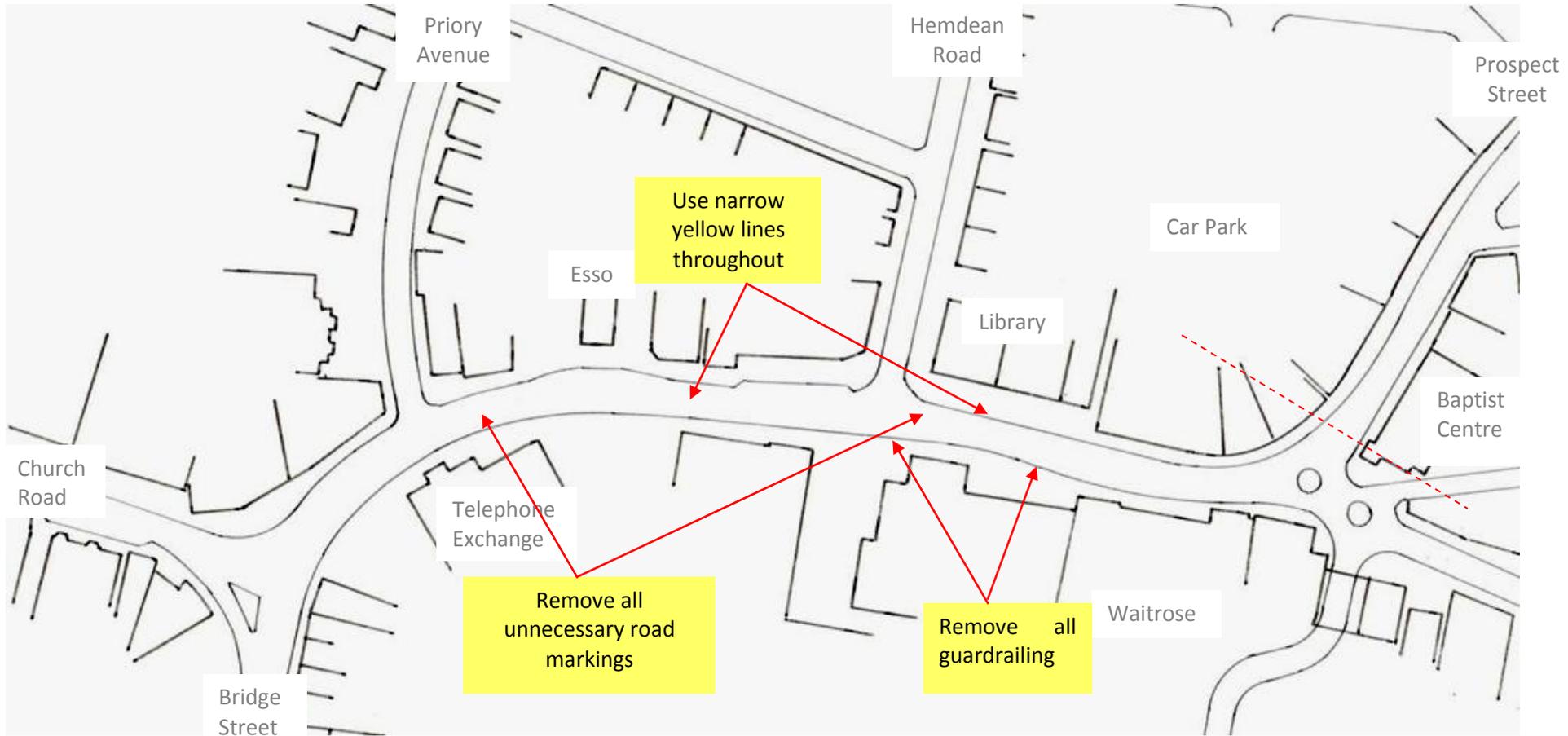


barriers were not designed to protect pedestrians from out-of-control vehicles and have become a site for illegal signs, obstructive cycle parking and general detritus. Incidentally, more conveniently located and properly designed cycle stands are needed.

We have to convince the Council that the proliferation of heavyweight signing and lining schemes: encourage poor driver behaviour; are unsightly and ineffective; expensive and confusing to road users.

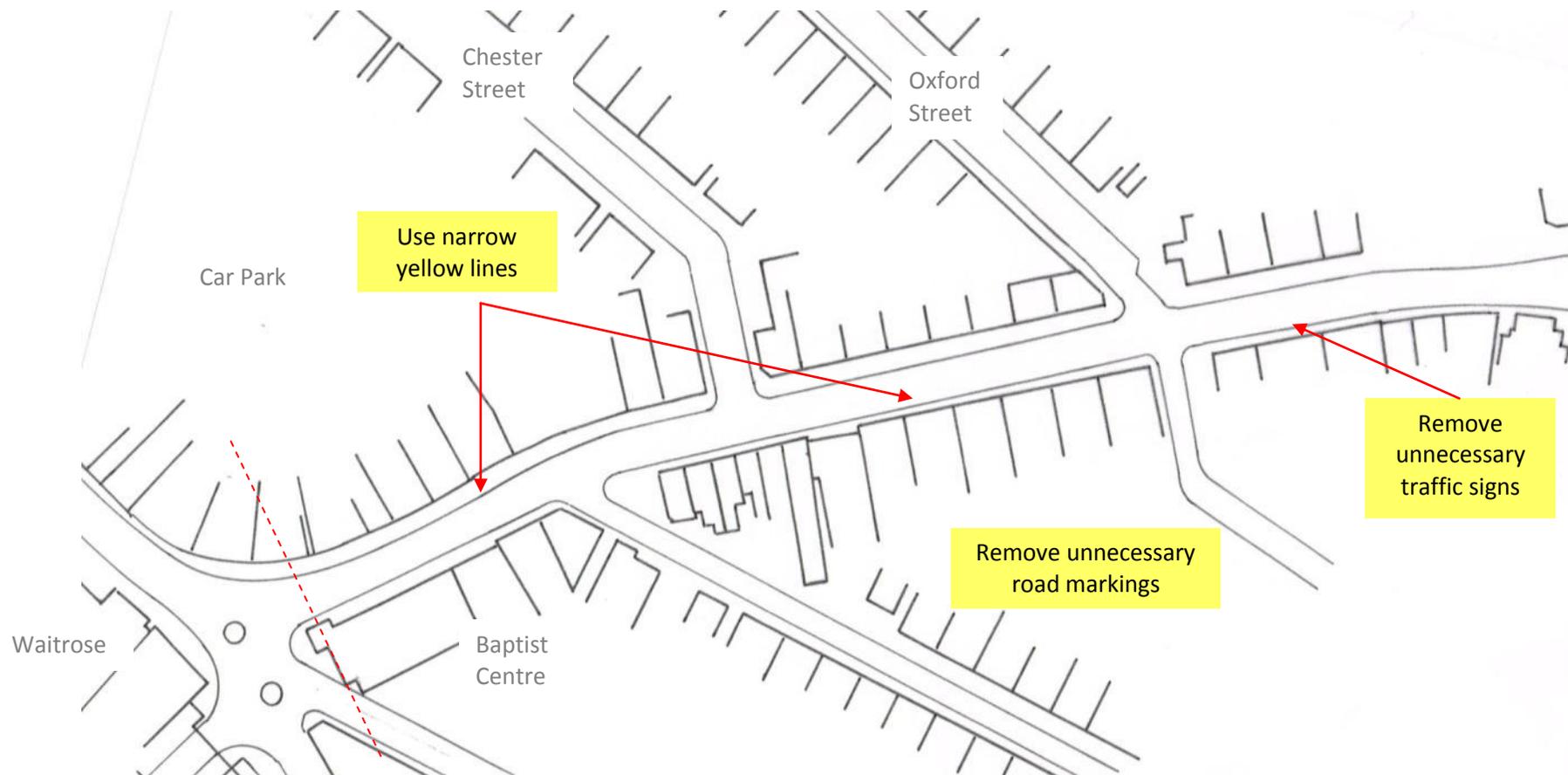
The following diagrams indicate the minimum that could be done in Church Street and Prospect Street.

**Bare Minimum**



## Church Street Caversham – Bare Minimum

**Bare Minimum**



## Prospect Street Caversham – Bare Minimum

**Bare Minimum**



## Transitional

The Bare Minimum alterations would be a start for improving the centre but, though 'cleaned up', it would remain much the same as it is now.

The implementation of a transitional level of changes could produce a more comfortable and safer pedestrian environment. In addition to the minor alterations the following ideas are suggested.

**Raised pedestrian crossings.** The two signalled crossings in Church Street and the zebra crossing in Prospect Street would be raised to footway level and paved in a contrasting coloured and textured material. Ramps for vehicles on each



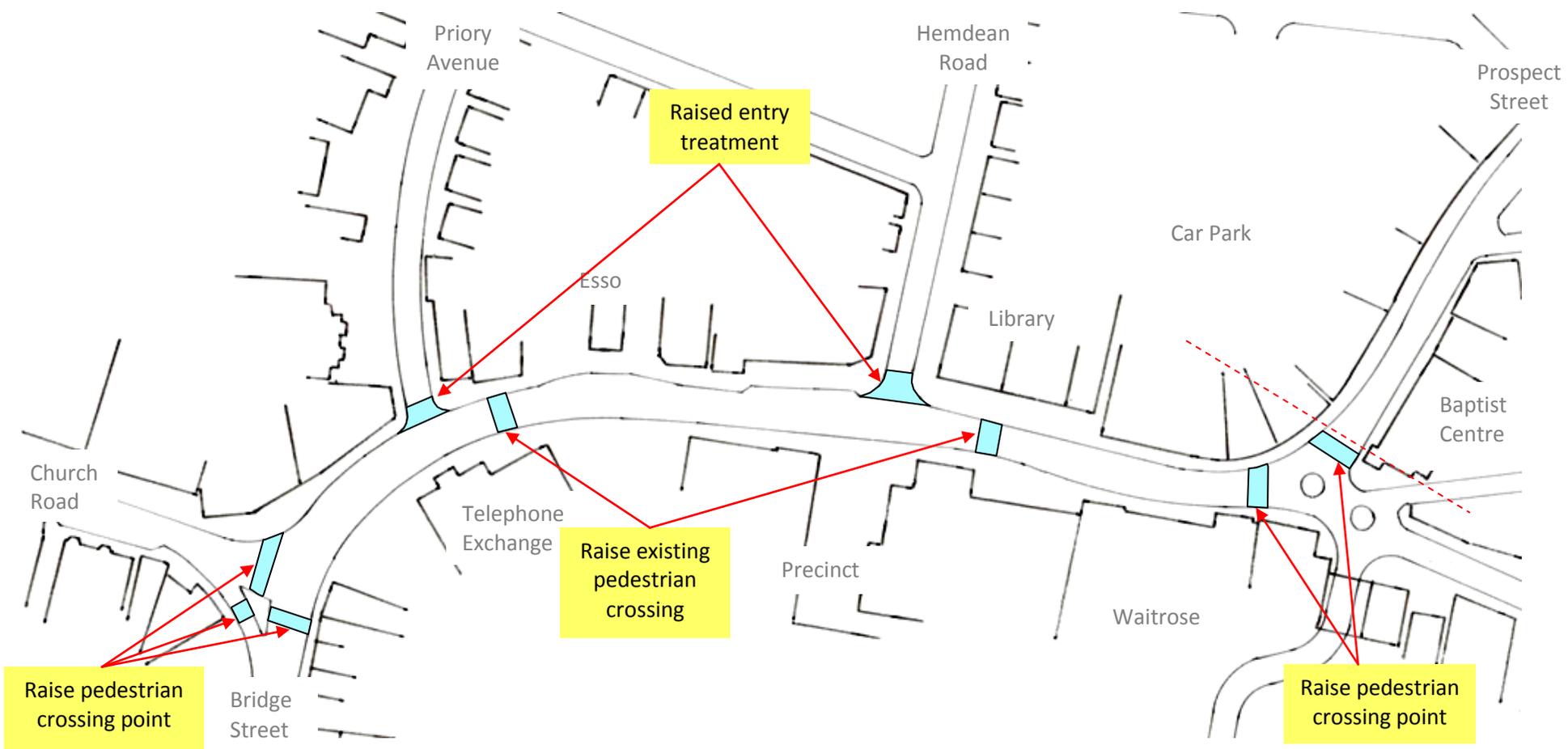
side of the crossing would have a gradient suitable for the passage of buses (typically 1:15 as used for London buses). This would have the effect of slowing traffic and producing a more comfortable crossing for all users, but especially for wheelchair and pushchair users and people with walking difficulties.

Crossing points at the Church Road signals and at the Gosbrook Road/Prospect Street mini-roundabouts could be treated similarly.

## Transitional

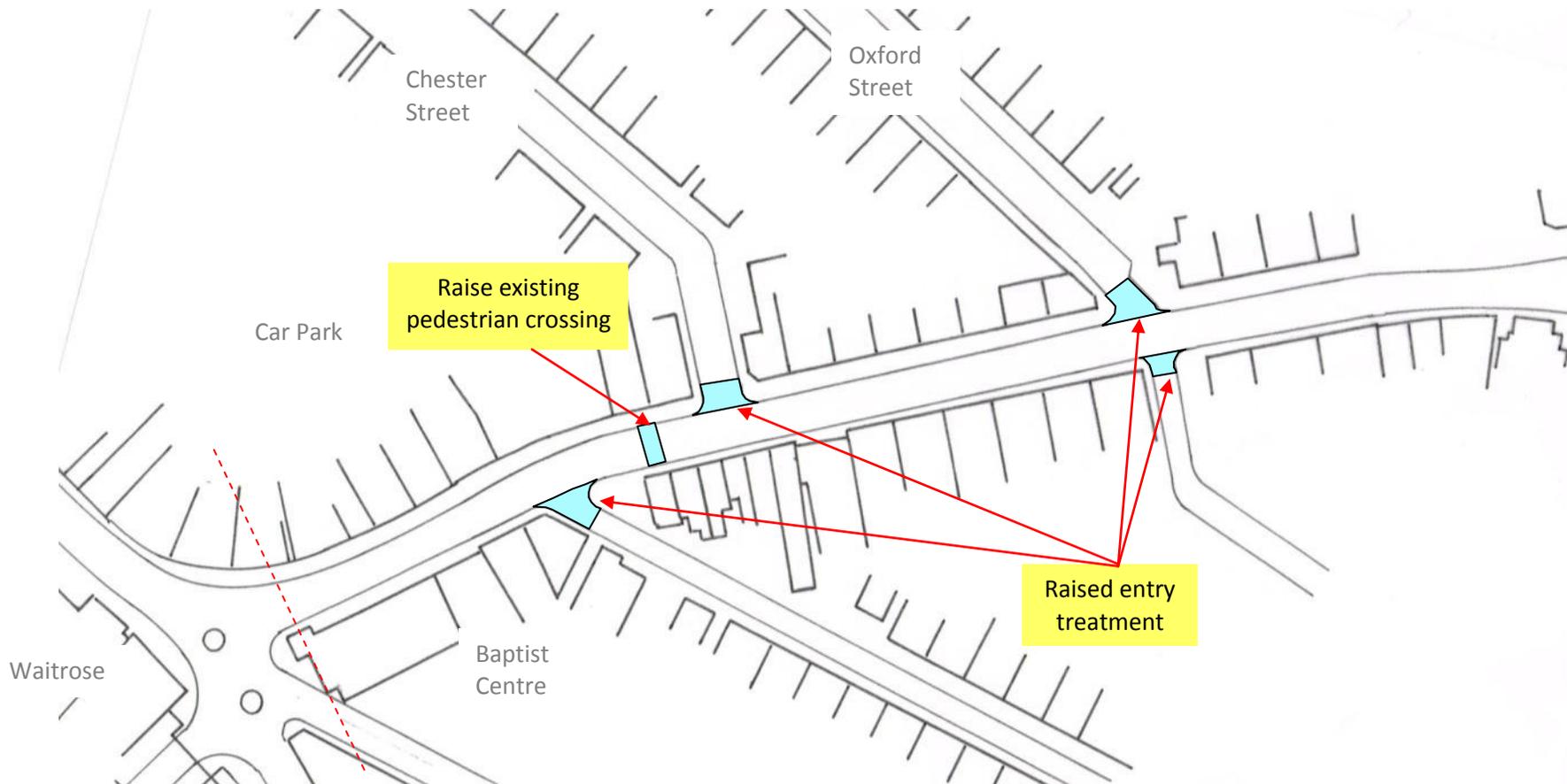
Raised side road **entry treatments** have been used extensively in Reading. The carriageway at the junctions is raised to footway level in contrasting coloured and textured materials with ramps for vehicles on each side. Drivers are forced to travel slowly within the junctions and tend to give way to pedestrians. All footway users can travel over a level surface.





## Church Street Caversham – Transitional (additions to ‘Bare Minimum’)

**Transitional**



## Prospect Street Caversham – Transitional (additions to 'Bare Minimum')

Transitional



## Comprehensive

Once again, the alterations suggested for the bare minimum and transitional level changes would be implemented but with some more radical changes.

All **traffic signals** would be removed from the village centre. The Church Street/Bridge Street/Church Road signals would be replaced with a 'Poynton style' traffic circle.

The Bridge Street signals are not pedestrian friendly and drivers, seeing green signals, accelerate through the junction. Many drivers, travelling south towards Caversham Bridge, ignore the red signals. Traffic circles (or roundabouts) would introduce uncertainty which would encourage drivers to be more cautious. The current signalled layout discourages the right turn from Church Street towards Church Road and St Peter's Hill and many people prefer to travel through Hemdean Road, Oxford Street, Priest Hill and Kidmore Road to reach their destinations in Caversham Heights and Woodcote Road. The traffic circle would

facilitate the right turns and would reduce the amount of traffic in residential areas. The two adjacent drawings show a successful conversion of a junction in West London from signals to a roundabout. The ugly forest of signal poles and islands was swept away and traffic ceased 'rat running' through residential streets. Pollution, congestion, delays and accidents were reduced. The traffic flows are very similar to those at the Bridge Street signals.

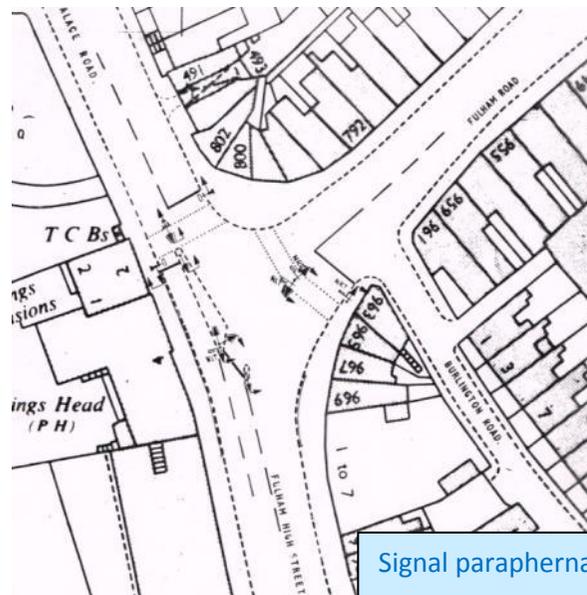
Prospect Street/Gosbrook Road **mini-roundabouts**; these would, also, be converted to 'Poynton style' traffic circles.

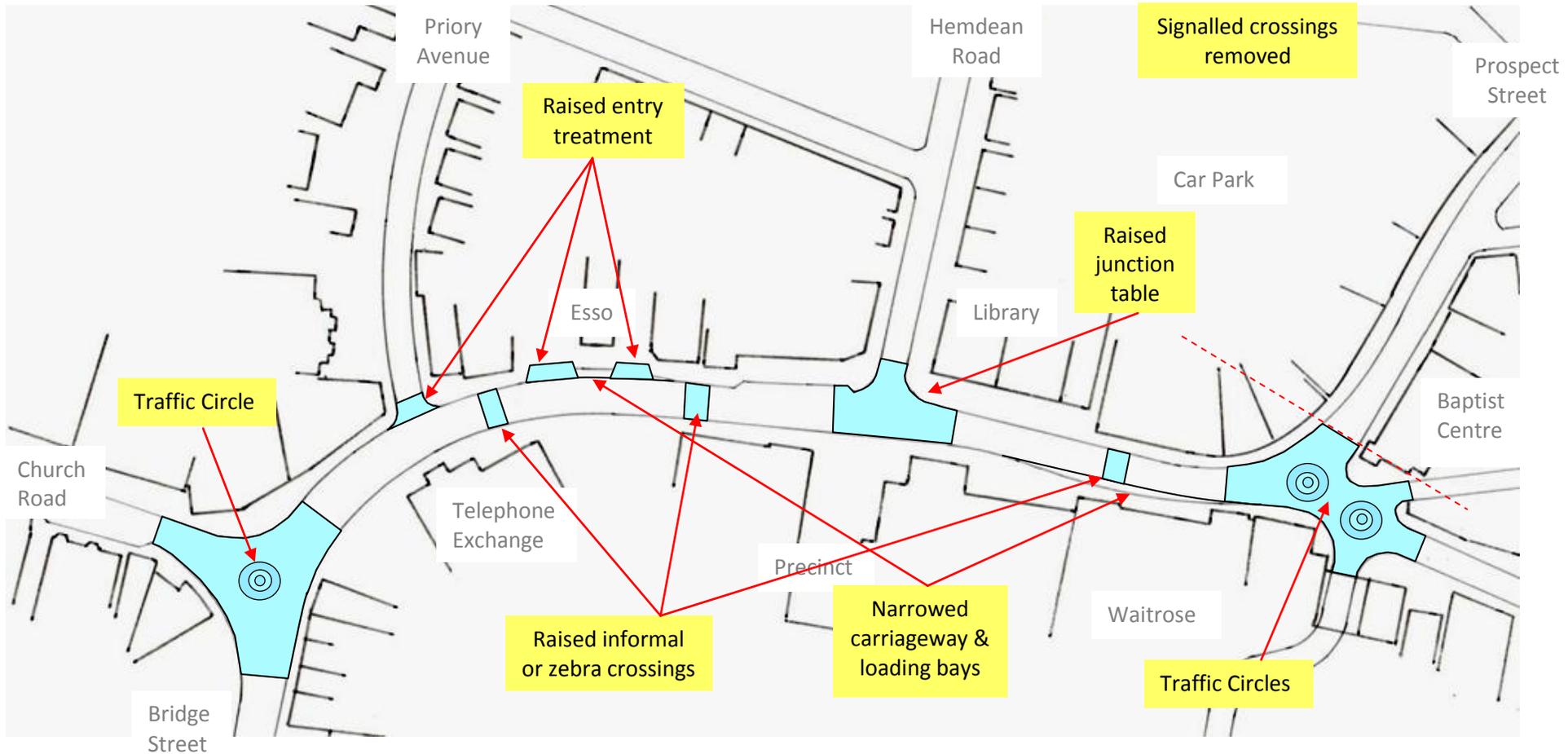
Closely spaced **raised zebra or informal crossings** would replace the existing crossings.

The **carriageway** of Church Street would be **narrowed** to 8.0 metres in width. All traffic islands would be removed. Where rear servicing to shops is not available, slightly raised loading bays could be provided.

The entrances to the **Eso petrol station** would be given entry treatments similar to side roads.

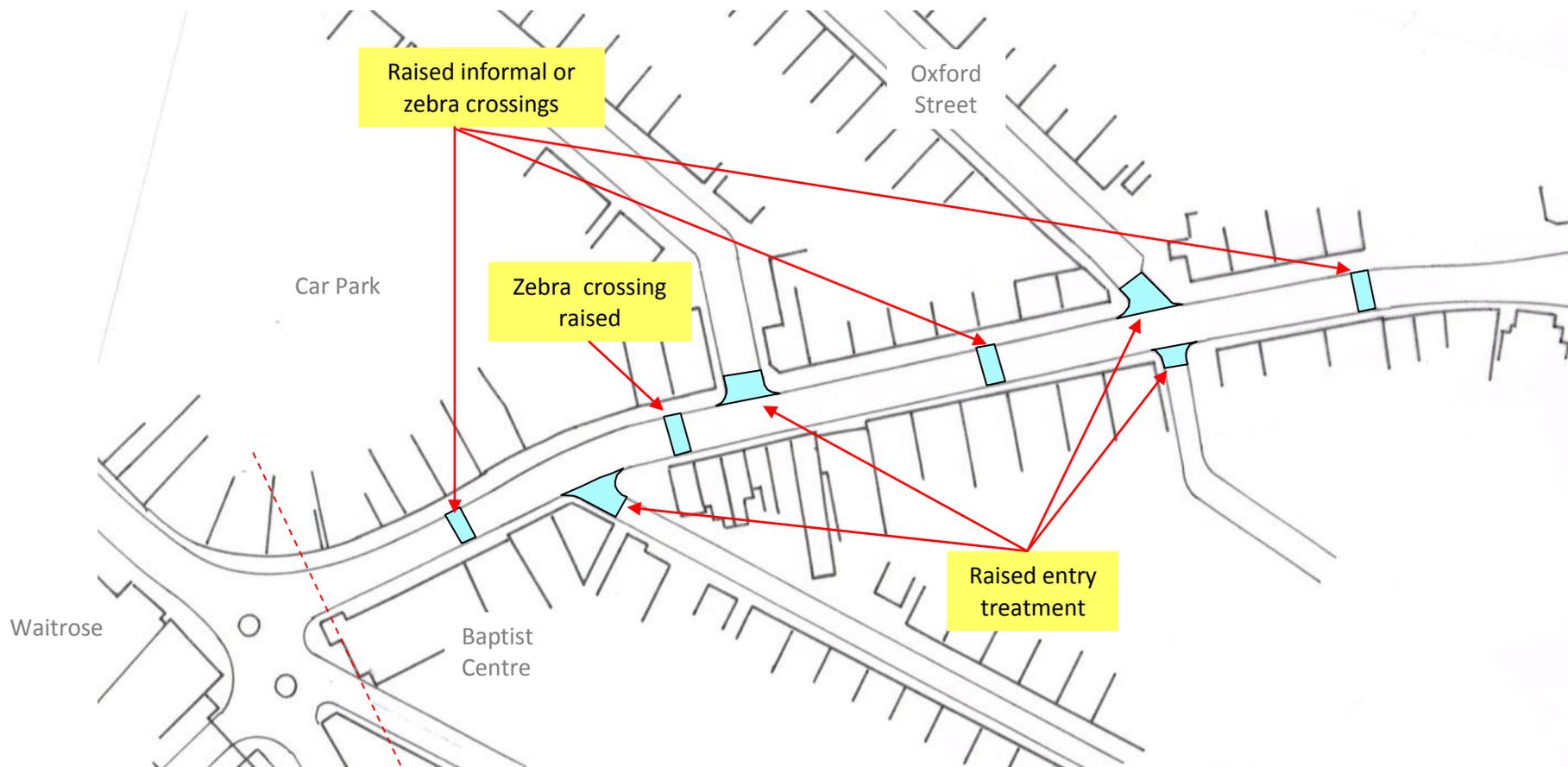
Comprehensive





## Church Street Caversham – Comprehensive (additions to Transitional)

**Comprehensive**



**Prospect Street Caversham – Comprehensive  
(additions to Transitional)**

**Comprehensive**



## FUNDING

It is evident that changes have been implemented throughout the country, locally and within the Borough of Reading. With almost no exception, the changes have cost money to implement and, more importantly, financial support has been secured. Caversham deserves similar consideration.

### Savings

In some cases, such as the removal of traffic signals, money used for annual maintenance would be saved each and every year. In others, improvements could be achieved through a different approach to regular maintenance (eg road markings).

### No Plan = No Funding

A small number of improvements could be made, at minimal cost, when general maintenance work is being carried out on road surfaces and traffic signs. The major changes, that we hope will be prompted by this initiative, will need an **agreed plan**.

Funding for major schemes lies outside regular Council budgets. However, there are opportunities to bid for funding where a clear plan is in place. Without a defined plan, these opportunities are lost.

### Possible sources

Funds may be available through the Government's Local Sustainable Transport grants, the Community Infrastructure Levy and contributions by developers (Section 106).

Funding has been secured  
for other places

**Why not Caversham?**



## CONCLUSIONS

### Sharing Our Streets

After long periods of discussion, hesitation, decision and, ultimately success other places in Britain have changed their communities for the better. Sceptics have graciously admitted that the schemes work and have embraced the benefits of a radical re-balancing of the use of road space.

We have to learn to live with the motor car or our Village Centre will wither. We have already been overtaken by Henley, Marlow, Wallingford and Reading Town Centre. We have much work to do to catch up.

Clearly Caversham would not be the first place to implement an innovative remodelling of its centre. We do not want to continue falling behind nor be the last place to change.

Caversham is part of a much larger administrative area and Reading has many local centres. If this idea works, and there are plenty of examples of where it has, it could become a model for other communities within the Borough.

The potential benefits are enormous and could lead to a more pleasant local environment, **less need to travel elsewhere for services** and, ultimately, a reduction in the use of natural resources.

### Only Three Questions Remain

**Are the People of Caversham brave enough to adopt a radical re-modelling of the roads in Caversham Centre?**

**Are Reading Council Officers brave enough to adopt a radical re-modelling of the roads in Caversham Centre?**

**Are Reading Council Members brave enough to adopt a radical re-modelling of the roads in Caversham Centre?**

**Are we brave enough for radical solutions?**



Grateful thanks to

Peter Rixon

Herald Graphics Printers

0118 931 1488

