

## Victoria Way Vision Scheme – Technical Note

The role of the initial phase is to provide a transport connection, help drive development on the adjacent land and deliver an urban, vibrant street. Development can not occur along the length of the scheme until the transport connection has been made, and an urban and vibrant street cannot be achieved until adjacent developments are built.

So the phased approach is required and will occur over a number of years depending on the rate at which development schemes come forward...

The final vision street will not be built in full until the adjacent development is also built, which means that:

- sacrificial work is limited as the street corridor simply widens rather than being upgraded or replaced
- the extended public realm design can be flexible to respond to the future context of the development and street
- the street can evolve over time as it responds to each new development, allowing it to grow its own character or a range of characters

### Phasing Constraints

While the project phasing has benefits during the timescale of the project implementation, there are some constraints which particularly apply to the initial phase.

- The vision of a 'lively, urban avenue' can not be achieved in full in the initial phase.
- There will be a lack of active frontages along the street in the initial phase, the street will not be as lively or urban as anticipated in the vision. While this vision will be achieved over time, it will not be realised for a number of years.
- The only built frontages along the street in the initial phase will be the existing buildings, these buildings and their uses are very different to those anticipated in the final vision.
- The aspiration for the creation of a 'traditional avenue', symmetrical trees on either side of the street, can not be achieved in full as the final vision kerb alignment cannot be provided.

### Phasing Opportunities

The phased approach provides benefits and constraints in achieving the final vision. The following design opportunities, which capitalise on the benefits and address the constraints, ensure the final vision is achieved.

- As the final vision kerb alignment can not be achieved on both sides along the length of the scheme, it is important to at least achieve it on one side. The northern kerb alignment installed in the initial phase will be that of the final vision, which means any future change to the street width will only need to occur to the southern edge.
- A planted tree spine that runs along the final vision northern kerb alignment (implemented in the initial phase) provides a consistent tree solution during the life of the street, where a traditional avenue (i.e. a row of trees on both sides of the street) could not be achieved without the final vision southern edge.
- As the southern edge is not planted within the initial phase, future planting can respond to and address new development, creating green small spaces, rather than a linear line of street trees.

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- Good streets have good edges. However within the initial phase, Victoria Way has limited built edges. The initial phase will have an interesting vertical edge, either temporary around development sites or permanent where development has occurred.
- An intelligent lighting scheme will address the needs of the initial phase but be adaptable to meet the needs of the final vision. Feature lighting at strategic places will create interest, while street and footway lighting will ensure a safe night streetscape.
- A visual language based on Ashford's history, through integrated art and design, creates a sense of interest and a layer of culture into the evolving streetscape.

### **Sustainable Scheme**

The Victoria Way Project is conceived with the idea of creating a sustainable context at its heart. As a full integrated and essential component of Ashford's Sustainable Communities Plan the new transport link will act as a key catalyst in the southern expansion of the Town Centre. Key aspects of the proposed scheme which address sustainable context are as follows:

- The new transport link and the majority of future development will take place on brownfield or recycled land rather than on Greenfield sites.
- The vision for the southern expansion of the town centre is for the creation of a vibrant mixed-use urban quarter.
- The design and layout of the new street aims to respond to and respect the existing context, while being flexible enough to allow for future development and a changing streetscape context to evolve over an extended period of time.
- Victoria Way is part of a wider movement strategy which aims to minimise the reliance on the private car while advocating alternative methods of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. Key features of the Victoria Way scheme include.
- The facilitation of new mixed use development close to the railway station, helping to reduce the need for car-based commuting.
- Accommodation of high quality bus routes along the new street.

### **Sustainable Design**

- Improved cycling facilities with future provision for a two way dedicated cycle lane along the length of the new street.
- An overall design ethos which seeks to provide a better balance between the various users of the street rather than designing solely for the motor vehicle.
- Improvements to existing pedestrian/ cyclist routes (Jemmetts Path) linking the scheme with its wider townscape context.
- These include specific features and/ or processes which can be employed in the design and construction of the public realm which will contribute to local and global sustainability such as; the use of renewable energy, water management, the use of resources and associated recycling strategies, the specification of materials, and the long term management and maintenance Features of the Victoria Way project will include:

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### **Design Approach - Final Vision**

The design approach has always taken into account the final vision for the length of the Victoria Way scheme first, then worked backwards to understand which parts of the final vision can be applied initially, and where interim steps are required.

A full detail plan for the final vision can not be produced at this stage as the final vision will need to respond to its, as yet, unknown future context in terms of future development frontages. However, broad level principles for the final vision have been established to help guide the initial phase design.

The section of street between Beaver Road and Gasworks Lane is seen as the high quality, vibrant, retail street in the final vision, and as such final vision materials have been used where possible.

The section between Gasworks Lane and the existing Leacon Road is seen as a more green and 'suburban' in the final vision and as such these qualities are to be implemented where possible.

Only the northern kerb alignment of the final vision alignment can be delivered in the initial stage, on the Victoria Road section, so all the final vision street elements are to be placed along this northern spine, such as street planting, street lighting and street furniture. On this northern side, which is also to be promoted as the main pedestrian thoroughfare as it is on the sunnier side, the final vision footway can be implemented along the full length.

On the southern side, when the final street width is achieved, cycle facilities can be introduced between Beaver Road and Gasworks Lane. Street elements such as tree planting and street furniture do not need to be linear along the street as they are on the north side, but instead will respond to the immediate context and character.

### **Design Approach - Initial Phase**

The initial phase design aims to achieve the final vision design and material where possible and appropriate. The final vision northern kerb edge has been achieved along the majority of the scheme, where as the southern edge could not due to the constrained nature of the existing Victoria Road. Street tree planting is located on the northern edge, creating a northern 'spine', which is consistent over the life of the scheme. Similarly, the street lighting is also largely located within this 'spine'.

Due to the nature of this changing street, all materials have been chosen for their durability, accessibility, maintainability and robustness, as well as their aesthetic value. This approach is to ensure that the street can be easily maintained as construction work occurs adjacent to as well as on the streetscape as the final vision is slowly implemented over the next 15 years.

A consistent carriageway design approach has been applied across the varying character areas of the scheme. The contrast paved median changes in width and function along the road to address the different road needs. Within the 20mph zone the contrast paving moves to the channels to create a design that slows motorists down.

Victoria Square is the focus of the scheme, where the main design features are located. The carriageway bends around the edge of Victoria Square to create the boundary of the public space and make a unique place making feature.

A modular boundary treatment runs along the northern boundary of the scheme, creating a facade like edge where needed.

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### **Layout Design**

The vision for Victoria Way is as a lively urban avenue, a new street. Development of the highway layout design for the Initial Phase has therefore sought to detail ways in which the character and layout of this new street can be introduced, setting the bench mark for future extended public realm phases.

The actual layout of the highway involves a single trafficked 'running' lane in each direction, generally 3.25m wide, and where possible, added carriageway width to provide flexibility in the design to accommodate either, or a combination of, protected right turn lanes, on street parking, loading/unloading bays and bus lane and stop provisions as may be required both now and in future phases.

### **Victoria Road Design**

#### **Victoria Way Corridor Alignment**

The alignment for the Victoria Way corridor between Beaver Road and the Learning Link (Jemmetts Path) is largely dictated by existing physical constraints and the corridor that has been secured by developments that have planning consent which can be summarised as follows:

- At the western end of this section, the corridor alignment is fixed by the recent junction improvements and the adjacent Learning Campus and Bellways Homes development proposals.
- The Victoria Road Primary School is required to be maintained as viable to continue operation as a school in the foreseeable future. The ATCAAP also indicates that the school buildings should be retained and incorporated within future development proposals. No land is therefore shown to be taken from the school site.
- At the eastern end of this section, the corridor alignment is fixed by the Zed Homes development.

#### **Beaver Road Junction Design**

This junction will serve as the east gateway to Victoria Way and recently underwent major improvement works to convert what was previously a roundabout to a fully signal controlled junction.

Completed and opened to traffic in July 2008, it included realignment of the eastern end of Victoria Road between George Street and Beaver Road to create and secure a 24m wide gateway corridor for the new Victoria Way. The adjacent plots of land have planning consent for a learning campus to the north of Victoria Road and a housing development to the south and the final vision Victoria Way corridor is secured between Beaver Road and George Street.

The aim of the scheme is to achieve the final vision design where possible and appropriate, this aim can be fully achieved at the Beaver Road gateway. This is because the full street width has been acquired and the two adjacent development sites have a possibility of being completed in a similar timeframe as the initial phase, allowing a vision for the final streetscape as you enter the scheme.

The northern kerb has been kept as straight as possible, allowing consistent footway and planting. This proved particularly difficult to achieve opposite the George Street junction, as the turning circles were tight. However it was deemed a consistent northern pedestrian footway in front of the future Learning Campus was a priority, resulting in a slightly constrained, yet workable traffic solution.

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A cycle path on the southern verge will link with the Stour Valley cycle network via George Street and the proposed improvements to this link proposed by Bellway Homes. In the final vision, this cycle path is proposed to continue along length of the scheme.

The paved median includes an informal crossing, a turning lane for the proposed new Bellway Homes development, gateway tree planting, traffic lights and a formalised crossing. The versatility of this aesthetic paved median strip reduces white traffic control lines and bituminous surfacing.

### **Beaver Road Junction to Victoria Square (Initial Phase)**

Victoria Road will be utilised, and widened in part on the north side, to maintain and provide safe access to existing workshop yards, businesses and side roads.

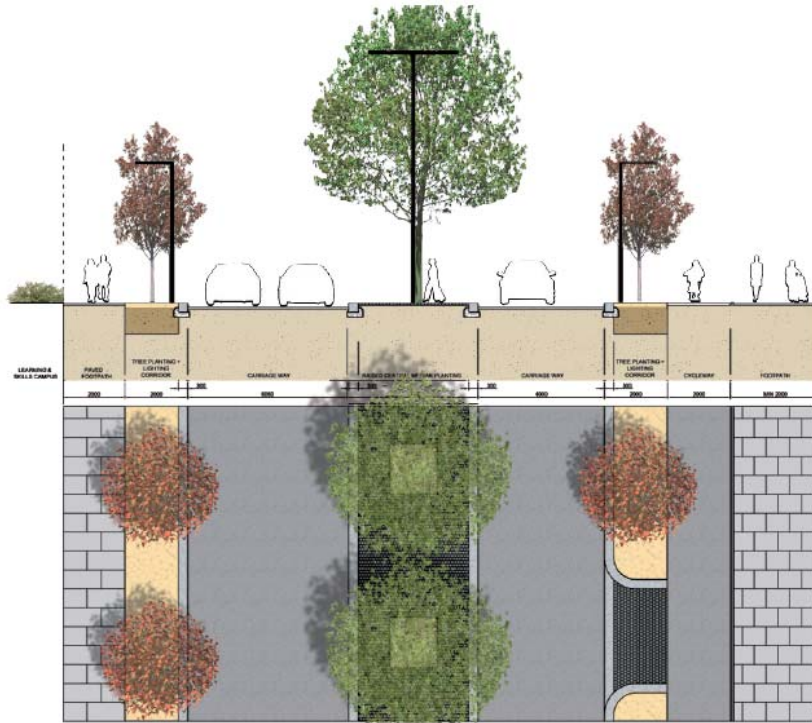
Between Beaver Road junction and George Street a high quality streetscape across the full 24m corridor width is proposed. This includes a contrasting paved central median 2.5m (min) in width to accommodate gateway tree planting, an area for traffic waiting to turn right into the proposed Bellway Homes development, and a small island refuge as part of an informal pedestrian crossing point immediately east of the junction with George Street.

The overall road layout has been dictated by the desire to fix the northern kerbline as far as possible to align with the future final vision scheme proposals. This has been achieved up to a point 50m east of Victoria Crescent where, due to land constraints, the route continues westwards solely within the existing highway boundary.

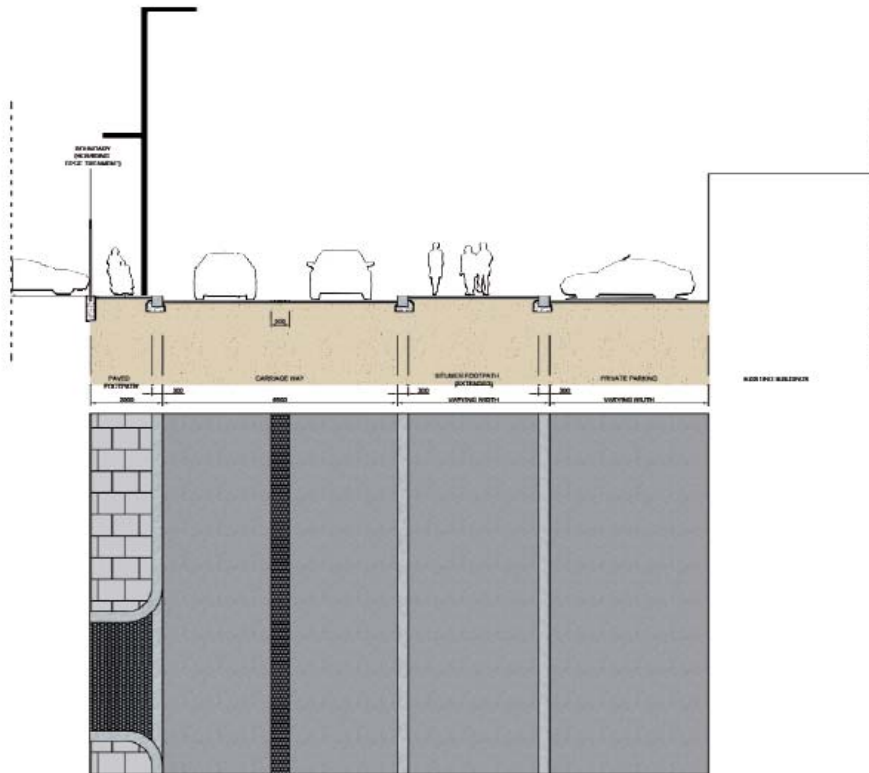
To the west of the junction with George Street, the highway has a total width of 6.5m including a 0.5m paved, overrunable, central median designed to improve street aesthetics by reducing the need for road markings.

A segregated cycleway is proposed on the southern footway between George Street and the junction with Beaver Road where new signalized pedestrian/cycle facilities have been installed. This cycle route will connect to a proposed pedestrian/cycle route to be provided by developers in George Street and bridged across the River Great Stour to link to Victoria Park.

# Victoria Way Vision Scheme – Technical Note



Beaver Road Gateway Section - Initial Phase



Victoria Road Section - Initial Phase

## Victoria Way Vision Scheme – Technical Note

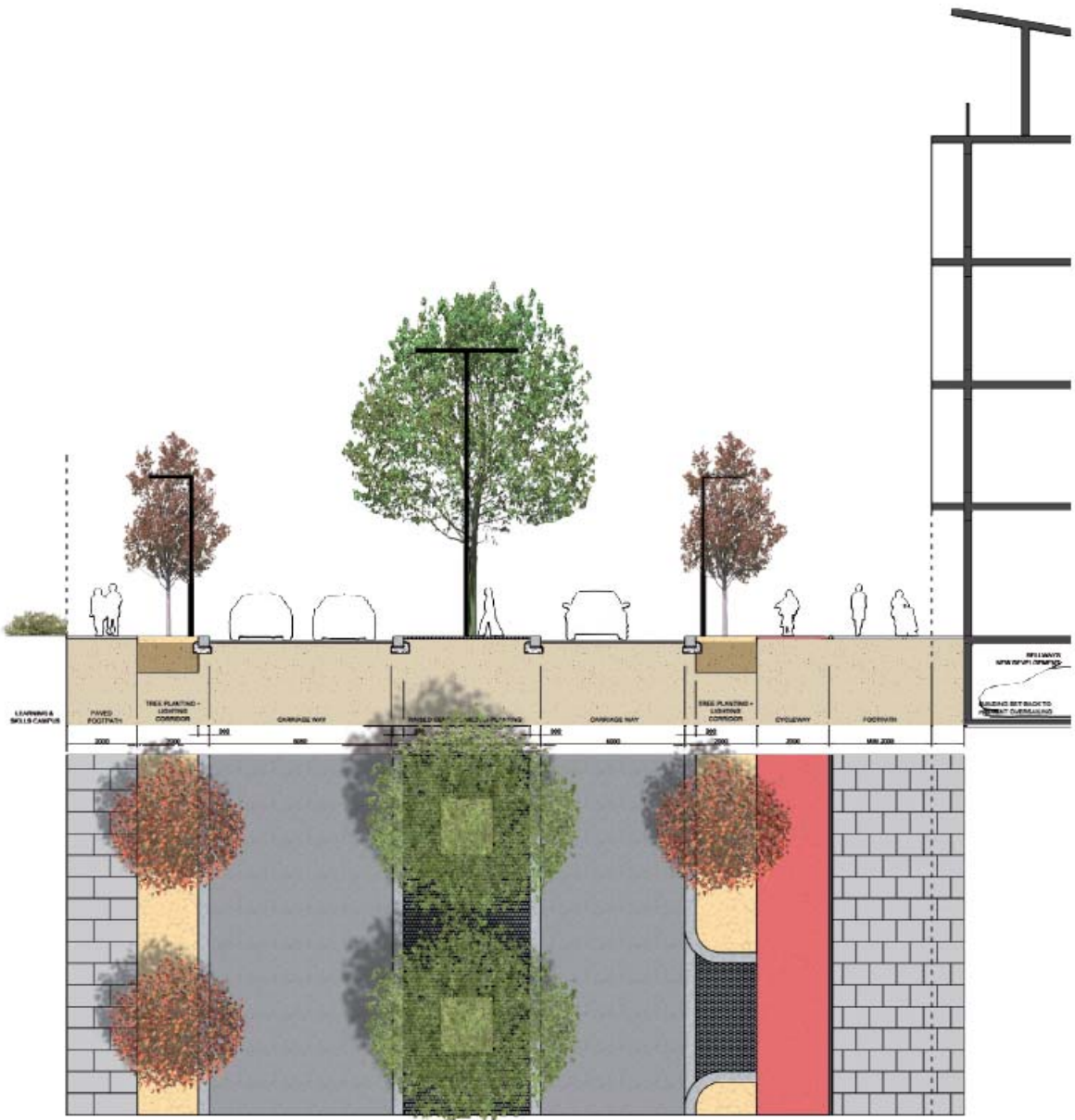
### Beaver Road Junction to Victoria Square (Final Vision)

The overarching principles for the scheme have been detailed above and these have been assessed to produce a final vision scheme for the Victoria Road section. A corridor width of 24 metres has been identified in the VWCDs and this has been adopted by the developments that have received planning consent along the Victoria way route. The assessment has produced the following assumptions for the future requirements for this section of the scheme and how they can be incorporated into the available corridor:

- A single 'running' lane will be required in each direction. Each lane will be 3m wide with a 0.5m median strip in contrasting paving.
- Victoria Way is seen as a key public transport corridor and with SMARTLINK planned to use Victoria Way a bus lane will be required on the approach to the Beaver Road junction to bypass the anticipated queues (250m to 350m in 2031) and provide the priority required of a bus rapid transit system. Bus lane to be minimum 3.0m wide.
- The vision for Victoria Way is for a high quality urban avenue with active frontages. In order to assist in creating the activity it is desirable to provide on-street parking that will encourage people to stop and use the new street. An additional lane is therefore proposed to offer flexibility in the future design and implementation. This lane could be used for parking, loading bays or bus lane and bus stop areas. Additional lane width of 3.0m allowed for total flexibility
- The north side kerb line of Victoria Way will be fixed in the initial phase to avoid abortive works and help in the provision of a sustainable scheme. A 2.0m wide footway and 2.0m wide tree lined median will be implemented in the initial phase and this will remain unaltered. In areas where there is insufficient width to fit the tree line and footway, they will be provided within the final vision
- The vision for Victoria Way is as an urban avenue. This traditionally would mean a tree lined street. It is only possible to provide the tree spine on the north side in the initial phase and allowance is made in the final vision for a further 2.0m wide median, to mirror the north side, which can be planted in the future.
- A cycle route is required along the Victoria Way scheme. As the vision for Victoria Way is as a busy vibrant street, the cycle route should ideally be segregated from pedestrians. It is planned to position the cycle route on the south side of the street as this is the shady side and lends itself better to activity. The minimum recommended width by Sustrans is 2.0m with 3.0m preferred.
- A wide footway is then required to allow for the anticipated activity that will occur along Victoria Way. The aim is to create a new 'great street' for Ashford and sufficient space should therefore be afforded to pedestrians so that they can comfortably walk, browse at any retail developments and stop and talk to friends. Street activity should be encouraged and space must be provided for the activity. Inevitably street furniture will be required such as sign posts and litter bins. It is desirable for these to be positioned to allow a minimum clear width of 2.0m for pedestrians. A minimum width of 3.0 metres has been provided.

The above represents good use of the available 24m, offering the flexibility for potential change as developments progress along the Victoria Way corridor and the future context becomes clearer.

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Beaver Road Gateway Section - Final Vision

