

Somer Valley Enterprise Zone

Projected to deliver:



1,700

direct jobs for the Somer Valley



54,000

square metres employment floorspace



£122m

annual economic value uplift to the area

The site will attract investors as it will offer access to superfast broadband, business rates discounts and a sustainable, attractive working environment.



The Enterprise Zone site, with Midsomer Norton beyond

Background

The Bath and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone was established in April 2017 to support the growth of local businesses and to attract new businesses to the area.

The 13.5 hectare Somer Valley Enterprise Zone is based at Old Mills. Much of the site was allocated for employment use in the Placemaking Plan, prior to the site's designation as an Enterprise Zone; however, the south east section of the Enterprise Zone is not currently allocated for employment use in the Placemaking Plan.

Much of the zone has been allocated for employment use for some years and there is demand for employment space, yet it has not been developed. Public sector intervention may be needed.

The proposed new transport infrastructure and the amendments to Placemaking Plan policy for Old Mills Industrial Estate (SSV9) could help to facilitate development of the site.

The Council is currently undertaking work which will allow it to come to an informed decision about the best way to support development of the site.

Completed ▶ In progress ▶ Next step

Transport review

Identified that transport infrastructure constraints are an issue. Solutions identified can be viewed on 'Potential transport improvements' boards.

Market and planning review

Determining an appropriate delivery strategy for the site

Need

The B&NES Core Strategy intends that 'the southern part of the District will become more self-reliant, facilitated by economic-led revitalisation'.

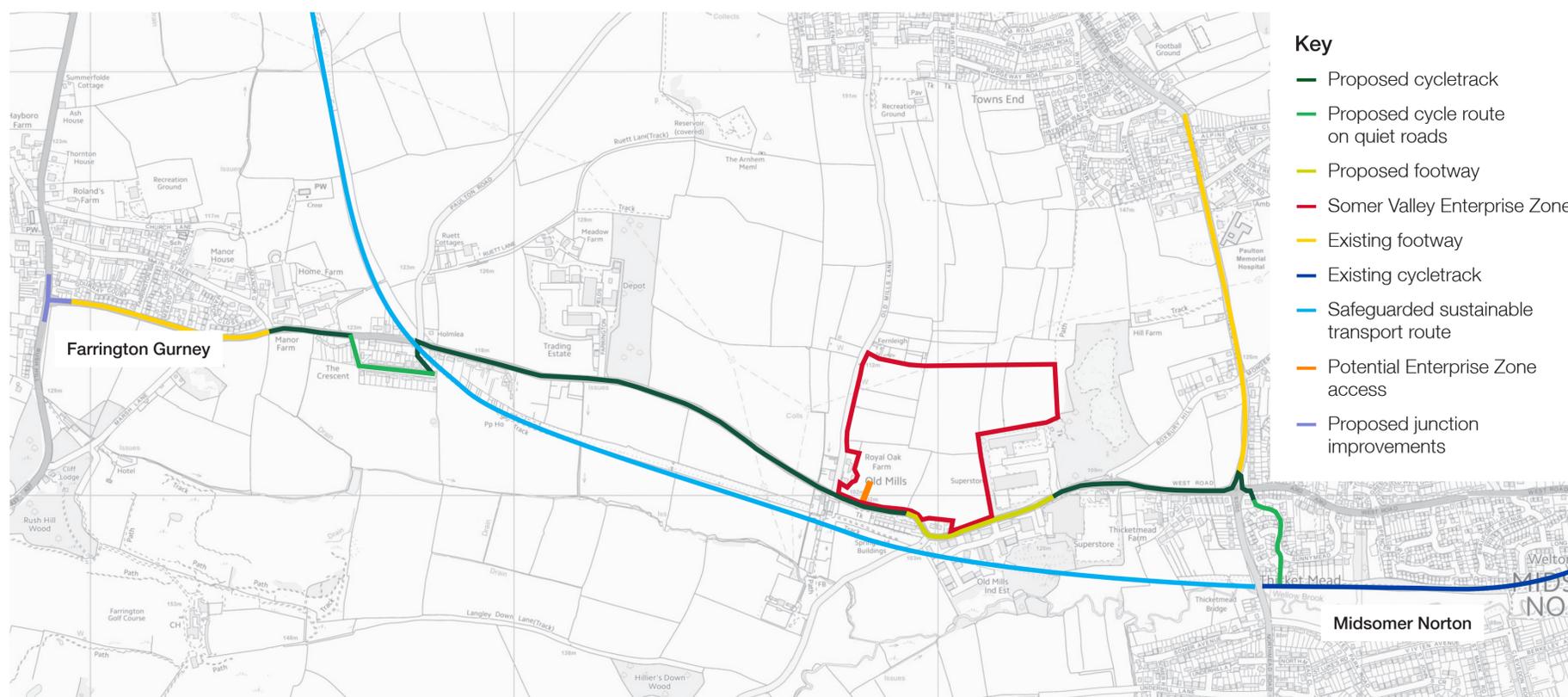
A number of challenges have had a negative effect on the economic vitality of the area and placed a strain on local infrastructure:

- Recent factory closures have contributed to a lack of local jobs.
- Increasing out-commuting – currently 60% of local residents travel out of the area for work.
- Vacancy rates for commercial property are at less than 1%, with little employment land available.

There is an urgent need to bring forward a new strategic employment location for the area, to meet the high demand for modern employment space locally and across B&NES.



Potential transport improvements



- Key**
- Proposed cycletrack
 - Proposed cycle route on quiet roads
 - Proposed footway
 - Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
 - Existing footway
 - Existing cycletrack
 - Safeguarded sustainable transport route
 - Potential Enterprise Zone access
 - Proposed junction improvements

Proposed new links to the Enterprise Zone and principal existing routes

The Enterprise Zone project provides an opportunity to improve transport links in the Somer Valley.

The Council has secured funding to develop options to improve transport connections and walking and cycling links to the Enterprise Zone. The interventions could also contribute to delivery of the Somer Valley Transport Strategy by creating better links between existing settlements.

Further detail about options being considered are set out below and on the following board. Funding for the building works has not yet been secured and a scheme design has not been finalised. The Council will consult on detailed proposals in 2019.

The package may include the following improvements:

Highway improvements

The Enterprise Zone will generate a significant number of new car journeys on roads that are already constrained and the following highway improvements are being considered:



A37/A362 junction as seen from the A362

- The A37/A362 junction at Farrington Gurney could be upgraded to create additional capacity on the A362 exit arm. Following this change, the signal phasing would be reviewed to better optimise traffic flows.
- The 'pinch point' on the A362 at Sunnyside to the east of Farrington Gurney, where the carriageway has effectively been reduced to one lane to provide safe resident parking, could be removed by moving the highway alignment to the north whilst retaining the parking provision. Increasing the highway width provides an opportunity to create a new cycletrack (a shared walking and cycling path).
- Addressing other pinch points caused by parking could also be considered.



Potential transport improvements



Illustrative example of the proposed cycletrack

Walking and cycling

The Council is currently looking at improvements to provision alongside the A362.

Work is being done to explore the opportunity for walkers and people cycling to be separated from motor traffic where possible. The sustainable transport routes could provide equal and shared use to people walking, cycling, using pushchairs, using scooters etc. Crossing of the A362 is likely to be by means of controlled crossings. Landscape enhancements would be considered alongside these interventions.

This work will not affect the designation of the former railway line (located to the south of the A362) as a 'Sustainable Transport Route'. This designation will be retained in the Placemaking Plan for possible future use.

Public transport

Opportunities to upgrade bus stops along the route will be taken where feasible in anticipation of the Enterprise Zone generating demand for such services, with an interchange facility at the proposed Enterprise Zone junction so that cycling and bus trips can be combined.



Artist's impression of proposed route improvements using Sunnyside on A362 as example location