

***Public Realm Vision  
and Strategy for  
Station Road,  
Desborough***

***Stage 1 & 2 Report  
Draft 1***



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# ***INTRODUCTION***

# 01

## INTRODUCTION

AECOM is one of the preferred partners working with Locality to provide Neighbourhood Planning consultancy to different organisations within the current round of funding grants. In this context AECOM is working with the Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and other stakeholders to develop a Public Realm Vision and Strategy for Station Road in Desborough (see Fig 1.)

At inception, The AECOM urban designers fronted by Luis Juarez and Jessica Sammut, engaged in initial conversations via telephone and email to listen and understand the needs of the group, to define the project scope and the deliverables. Once these were agreed, the date for a group site visit and workshop was set for 6th of August, 2015 at The Desborough Heritage Centre.

This document is a record of the work carried out during the workshop and following steps to this work. Appendix 1, shows the original correspondence stating the stages, scope of work and deliverables.



**1. Area of Study: Station Road in Desborough.**

# *WORKSHOP*



# 02

## WORKSHOP 1

This section deals with the activities, discussion and elements produced during the site visit and workshop held on August 6<sup>th</sup> at The Desborough Heritage Centre.

### Introduction and background

The day initiated with a general introduction and the purpose of the day. The following attendees were present for the workshop and site visit along Station Road:

- Allan Matthews (Desborough Town Council; Northants County Council)
- David Jones (Desborough Town Council)
- Mike Tebbutt (Chairman – Desborough Town Council)
- Terry James (Local shop owner; Desborough Town Centre Partnership)
- Alex Turigez (Local shop owner)
- Ruth Broon (New Street and local resident)
- Belinda Humphrey (Desborough Civic Society)
- Luis Juarez (AECOM)
- Jessica Sammut (AECOM)

The workshop followed the agenda below:

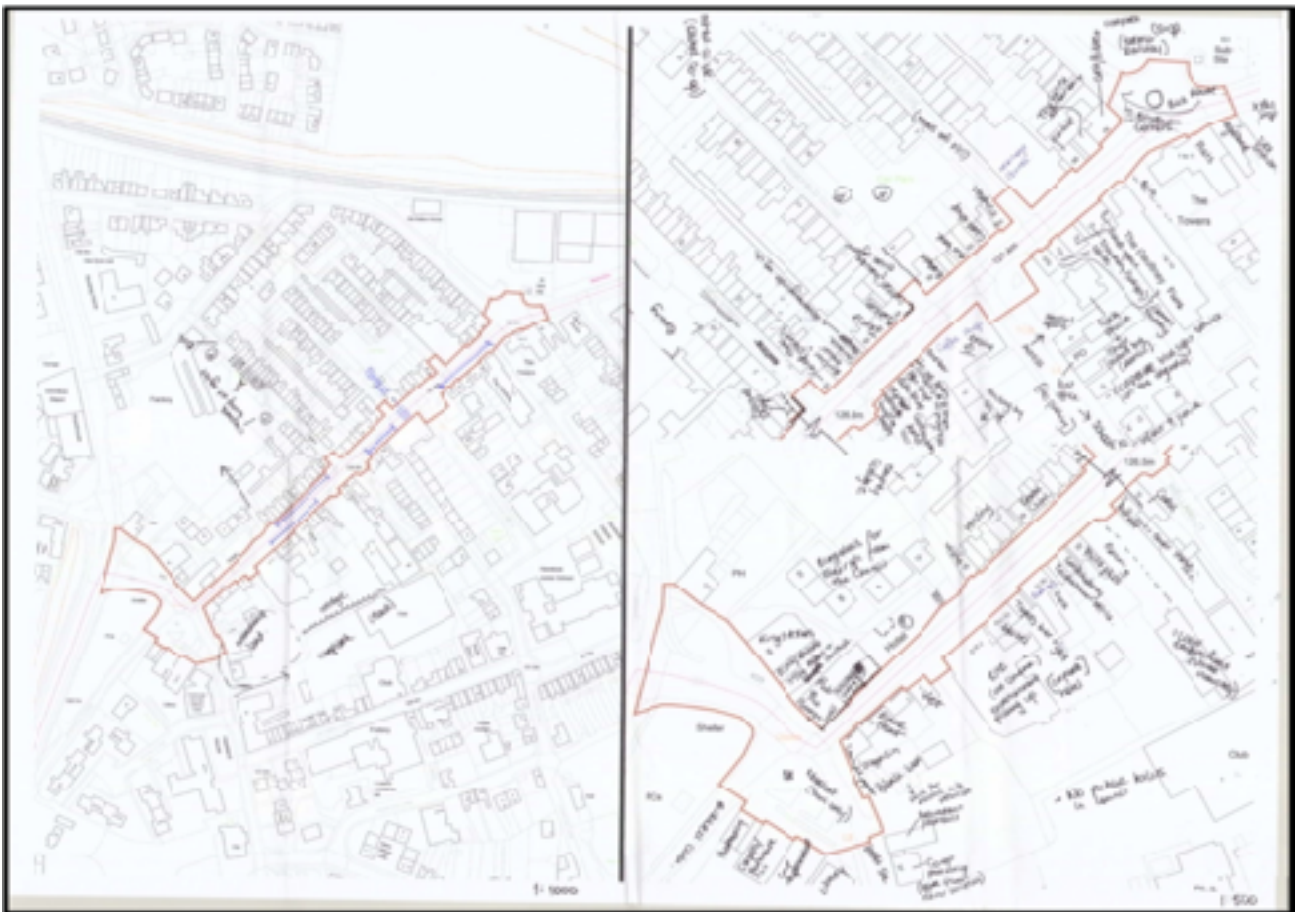
TIME	ACTIVITIES
10:00-10:15	Meet and Greet.
10:15-10:30	Intros, background and explain aims of the day
10:30-11:30	Site visit and walkabout
11:30-11:45	Workshop: Explain aims and tasks of workshop
11:45-13:00	Workshop: Developing the Vision
13:00-13:45	<b>Lunch</b>
13:45-14:45	Workshop: Developing outline solutions (Group work)
14:45-15:45	Workshop: Show and tell + feedback from teams
15:45-16:30	Wrap up: Agreement on Vision Statement, consensus towards a preferred option built from feedback and next steps.

## Site Visit

The first activity was a group site visit along Station Road and adjacent areas. During the visit, attendees pointed out existing deficiencies/problems, as well as desires to improve this street. The site visit entailed a walk on either side of Station Road and its environs with all the people present for the workshop. This helped to inform AECOM on the issue of the individual buildings and sites along the road and also highlight important aspects which can be identified as opportunity areas which could be improved.



**2. Walking with Attendees along Station Road**



**3. Map with annotations made during the site visit**

## General Discussion

Once the site walk concluded, the following activity was to summarise comments and issues raised by the attendees as background information. The following are the most relevant points made during the site visit.

- The Barclays bank is the only bank along Station Road. The group reported that there are plans to close it and be replaced by an ATM machine. This will take away an important service for the community and could result in negative implications on the daily social interaction aspect, and therefore a lower quality of life along Station Road. A petition to keep it open is being carried out at present.
- The priority for the neighbourhood plan in respect to Station Road, is to bring more people along Station Road and therefore increase footfall.
- The vision is set to be delivered in layers for the next 20-30 years.
- The retention of the heritage aspect is of high importance. The role of the Heritage Centre for the local community is to be valued and enhanced.
- The High Street adjacent to Station Road was widened during the 1970's and during this reconstruction a number of old buildings were demolished. The residents feel that an aspect of the historic part of the town was lost.
- The old high street spanned from St Giles Church to the cross monument (now demolished)
- Important industrial history to local economy – from silk production to shoes. In 1914 there was a population of about 4,000 people and there were 3-4 factories.
- The co-operative was set up in 1863 and bought a vast amount of land for factories and houses.



#### **4. There is a strong community desire to keep the Barclays Bank Branch open**





## 5. Desborough Heritage Centre

### Part 1: Developing The Vision

Following the general discussion, the group moved to into discussing and generating a vision for Station Road. With this in mind, two groups were formed and each was given a sheet with vision statements. The vision statements related to two fundamental aspects of a road: the road as movement function and the as a place of community encounter. The two groups task was to establish the importance of each statement for Station road, using the following ranking:

- 1.= high importance (highest priority)**
- 2.= not as important (medium importance)**
- 3.= less relevant (low importance)**

### Outcomes

Group 1. From the rankings made by this group, it was clear that the road had to fulfil a community function, bringing people in and creating a sense of public space along Station Road. They even suggested the idea or removing parking spaces altogether. Speed control and reduction was another important aspect discussed.

Group 2. Instead, for this group, it was clear that the road had to fulfil more of a through road function, facilitating reaching this street by car, given that there is limited public transport. They also contested the notion of a public space function, saying, instead, that different spaces should be demarcated; e.g. carriageway, footway, parking spaces. Nonetheless this group also created a 2<sup>nd</sup> vision where the community aspect was at the centre of it.

The image in Fig. 6. Shows the statements and the different rankings made by participants.



STATION ROAD NEEDS TO FULFILL A <u>MAIN ROAD FUNCTION</u> i.e. GIVE PRIORITY TO CIRCULATION OF VEHICLES	STATION ROAD NEEDS TO FULFILL A <u>PLACE COMMUNITY FUNCTION</u> i.e. MAY WANT TO REDUCE SPEED AND CIRCULATION + Cars passing + stopping
CARS SHOULD HAVE PRIORITY FOR CIRCULATION NO MAX SPEED OR LIMITED 30 MPH	SPACE FOR CARS CAN BE REDUCED IN FUTURE + PRIORITY FOR STREET CIRCULATION + VEHICLE SPEEDS SHOULD BE LIMITED TO 20 MPH
THE STREET SPACE AND FUNCTION SHOULD BE CLEARLY DEMARCATED TO SHOW PRIORITY FOR CARS	THE STREET SPACE AND FUNCTION SHOULD BE CLEARLY DEMARCATED TO SHOW PRIORITY FOR CARS
WOULD LIKE BUT LATER SHOP FRONT STREET SPACE SHOULD BE CLEAR	SHOP FRONT STREET SPACE SHOULD BE CLEAR
IT'S DIFFICULT. BUT IF POSSIBLE LET'S DO IT PROVISION OF CYCLE PARKING IS OPTIONAL	PROVISION OF CYCLE PARKING IS OPTIONAL
PROVISION OF PUBLIC SPACE SEATING IS OPTIONAL	PROVISION OF PUBLIC SPACE SEATING IS OPTIONAL
THE STREET SHOULD BE WARMING UP AT ALL TIMES FOR VEHICLES CIRCULATION	THE STREET COULD BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FOR A SHORT PERIOD
ENVIRONMENT ON THIS ROAD IS ESSENTIAL	ENVIRONMENT ON THIS ROAD IS ESSENTIAL
FOOTWAY TO BE KEPT CLEAR FOR CIRCULATION AT ALL TIMES	SIGNS COULD EXIST WITH CONTRASTING COLOURS TO THE STREET

Make it  
The environment for people to live in  
Rushborough.

7. Sheet annotated whilst constructing the Joint Vision



8. Ashford in Kent was mentioned as an example of a successful shared space



9. The public realm intervention in Poynton, Lancashire was also mentioned as an example to learn from

## Part 2: Exploring the Issues

The second part of the workshop was a discussion to help the group foster ideas about what they would like to see and what they would not want to have in Station Road. Here aspects of the road were listed according to the following questions:



**1. WHAT IS THERE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP?**

- Heritage Centre
- Barclays bank
- On-street car parking (however taking a more pedestrian friendly approach) maybe timed parking but it was argued that 30 minutes may not be enough to encourage people to get to Station Road. Sites like in Buckwell Close, old co-op housing estate and Lawrence site were mentioned as possible sites for surface car parking.
- Local shops and the desire to increase shops to increase footfall. However balance between housing and retail provision.

**2. WHAT IS THERE THAT CAN GO? (WOULDN'T LIKE TO KEEP)**

- Residential cottages made into shops
- Large supermarkets
- Rubbish bins on the street (domestic bins)
- Weeds on the sides of the footpath (therefore more maintenance)
- No scruffy painting (buildings facades)
- Heavy lorry traffic

**3. WHAT IS NOT THERE, BUT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE?**

- Big retail (M&S or Primark) although this was not the common perception, therefore there was no general agreement.
- No traffic bumps as a traffic calming measure (other options were welcome)

**4. WHAT IS NOT THERE AND YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE?**

- The important conclusion on this aspect was that they want to attract even people from neighbouring towns.

From this exercise the ideas formed during the Joint Vision part of the workshop were further expanded. It was concluded that:

1. People and cars should coexist on Station Road.
2. Pedestrians should have priority as a road user.
3. A general agreement was reached on having shared space; however this must be clearly demarcated by means of different materials or road textures.
4. Clean brick façades should be incentivised to give the road a more attractive uplift. This also calls for frequent maintenance.
5. At present there is a lack of cycling infrastructure and facilities. In fact, people have a general perception that it is not safe to cycle in Desborough. It was suggested that first there needs to be a de-cluttering of the redundant elements featuring along Station Road to accommodate space for cyclists and therefore encourage people to cycle more when travelling in town.
6. Another general consensus was that for more public pocket spaces with benches which can also be combined with landscaping features.
7. Parking should be organised by combining on-street parking and surface parking lots. Again the issue about timed-parking arose.
8. The possibility of closing Station Road for special seasonal events is to be kept as is already being done.

When discussing what type of improvements can be done to the northern roundabout, at the junction between Station Road and Gladstone Street, another case study came up. The example of Hemel Hempstead was hereby mentioned where a system of small roundabouts were constructed to facilitate traffic flow around a major roundabout junction. It was however dismissed because the existing space wouldn't allow developing such a solution. Again, Poynton was suggested as a more appropriate example

### **Part 3: Developing Solutions**

The group was again split into two teams for this part of the workshop. Here the ideas suggested during the vision part of the workshop were to be put onto paper to try and solve or improve the issues identified and any constraints observed during the site visit.

The first group suggested a bottleneck solution to calm down traffic running along Station Road. These 'bottlenecks' were to be placed at either end of the road and they would help narrowing down the width of the road giving priority to vehicle moving in only one direction at each end. By narrowing down the width of the carriageway, more space would be freed up to serve as footpath in which was suggested to include benches combined with landscaping features.

An important crossing was also identified in front of the dental clinic where the use of a different type of road material can be used to indicate pedestrian priority.

This would also help to free more space along both sides of the road for on-street carpark which itself would serve as a traffic calming measure.

The northern junction is currently an important bus route and therefore priority was given to the bus although the roundabout is to be retained and constructed (not just painted) so that vehicle do not drive over it. The new built roundabout can also include a space for advertisement to generate some income. It was also proposed to narrow down the width of the footpaths along Gladstone Street so as to introduce formal onstreet car park.



**10. Hand drawn plan of proposals made by group 1 during the workshop**

Here, pedestrian crossings were kept as the usual zebra crossing type since it is a more vehicle-oriented junction.

The southern junction between Station Road and the High Street was proposed to become a shared space and maybe provide the opportunity to increase the space for the market stalls, which currently occurs every Thursday morning.

The road space between the designated shared space and the Rothwell Road (B576) is to serve as a transitional space to start making drivers aware that this junction is now a gateway to a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

The green space which at present serves as a buffer space between Rothwell Road (B576) and Buckwell Close was identified as an opportunity site to propose a car park, petrol station and public facilities.

The second group also earmarked the southern junction as an important gateway for the area and should be constructed as a shared space. The buffer zone between Rothwell Road (B576) and Buckwell Close was also proposed to become a car park embellished by low-lying landscaping not to obstruct the old facades which remain intact from the older High Street.



A number of locations for pedestrian crossings were identified along Station Road and one major pedestrian link is proposed to connect the current derelict shoe factory site (Lawrence site) to Station Road.

The present public open space at Havelock Square is to be enhanced and stretched out to create a community space where the 'Revive' café, also a community run cafeteria, can spill out and result in a higher quality public realm. This is to be achieved by changing the geometry of the junction with Havelock Street to provide the necessary space.

This space is also important to be uplifted due to the presence of the Heritage Centre, the 'Revive' café and the Post Office around it which contribute to the footfall in Station Road.

For the northern roundabout junction the second group suggested a vertical flower bed to make drivers more aware of

the junction. The road material is also to be changed to ease traffic flow.

### Final remarks

Hand-drawn plan of proposals made by Group 2 workshop



Some similar suggestions were common in both proposals such as the treatment of the market space and the green space between Rothwell Road (B576) and Buckwell Close as an opportunity site for car parking. Furthermore, the inclusion of pedestrian crossings along Station Road was another consideration to make the site more pedestrian-oriented without removing the use of the car. Other issues were the need to introduce cycling facilities and provisions for deliveries to service shops along in Station Road.

### Worked-up Diagrams

As part of the work carried out by AECOM, a high level site analysis was carried out showing the land uses framing Station road as well as the key issues identified during the site visit. Similarly, the above proposals made by the two groups, were summarised in a couple of diagrams outlining the ideas discussed during the design part of the workshop. The resulting diagrams are shown in the following pages.







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This plan shows a version with a shared street focus, with



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## ***NEXT STEPS***

# 03

## ***NEXT STEPS***

Following from the issue of this report, the Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will reflect on its contents and provide feedback to refine it and make amendments. It may be that they wish to only include one of the options or name a preferred version.

Once AECOM receives feedback it will revise the contents of this report and include a policy review section re highways design with reference to the ideas developed so far.

Once this is finalised the final report will be issued for the group to use it the way it suits their interests in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.



# *APPENDICES*

# 04

## Appendix 1.

### DESBOROUGH PUBLIC REALM VISION AND MASTERPLAN - STAGES, SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

26 June 2015

#### Inception.

Actions: Initial contact with the group and review of material provided by them. Listen and understand their needs. Scoping further work.

Deliverables: Timetable and Scope of Work. Provide possible dates for site visit and workshop. Define Area of Study.

#### Stage 1. Site Visit and Analysis + Workshop

**Actions/Method**: Meeting with group on (date TBC) to explain aims of the day. Carry out a site visit to understand what are the conditions, issues and desires for the public realm related to Station Road between the High Street and Gladstone Street. See Area of Study Plan below.

After the site visit carry out a workshop with members of the group to:

- a) Analyse the issues seen during the site visit, including the physical constraints of road spacing and uses associated with it.
- b) Explore the group's needs and desires for the area of study (i.e. the road), and understand the possible and potential relationships with the regeneration of the Lawrence Factory Site.
- c) Discuss and develop a Vision for Station Road Public Realm
- d) Sketch some ideas to show what the potential public realm improvements are.
- e) Outline a strategy of what to do with the outcome of the workshops.
- f) Suggested dates for site visit and workshop in July: Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup>, Monday 6<sup>th</sup>, Monday 13<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 16.

#### Deliverables:

- a) A list of statements spelling the vision for the public realm.
- b) Sketches showing the potential public realm improvements

#### Stage 2.

**Actions/Method**: Using the outcomes from the site visit and workshop with the group, the AECOM team will refine the work produced. We will send the worked up plans and text to the Group for comments.

#### Deliverables:

Draft Vision Statement for comment. Text and precedent images

Draft refined sketches for comment.

### **Stage 3.**

**Actions/Method:** From comments made to draft deliverables in stage 2, the AECOM team will finalise the work produced.

**Deliverables:**

Powerpoint Slides/Document with text and precedent images that the group can use these in promotion activities or to influence planning decisions. Slides will include the refined sketches as well as an outline of what could be the next steps and work required.

Policy advice on proposals developed so far.







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