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introduction

This character apprasial report was completed by the Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with the technical support of Lathams. The aim is the report is to provide evidence regarding the character of Desborough as it is perceived by its people, and to explain how the results of this assessment process and the consultation programmes, informed the Neighbourhood Plan.

The following documents also informed the decision making process and should be read in conjuction with this Character Appraisal for a holistic picture of the evidence that supports the Neighbourhood Plan Policies:

- Public Realm Vision and Strategy for Station Road, 2015
- Desborough Character Appraisal, 2017
- Desborough Shopfront
 Design Guide- Urban Structure
 Study, 2013
- Kettering Public Realm Strategy
- Desborough Town Centre Health Check, 2010
- Desborough Conservation Area Appraisal, 2007
- Desborough Town Centre Urban Design Framework, 2004

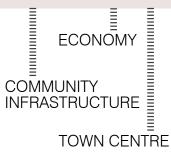
CORE ISSUES COVERED BY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

As emerged from initial community consultations

HOUSING

HOUSING

NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT



SURVEYS & AREA APPRAISALS

Using well tested and proven to work tools already broadly available



DESKTOP STUDY

Literature review on existing evidence and best practice guidance, and feasibility studies

BROADER EVIDENCE BASE

To inform the Neighbourhood Plan's policies and projects, including evidence regarding town character.

introduction

WHY WAS THIS DOCUMENT NECESSARY

During the Desborough Neighbourhood Plan process, a public consultation took place where the key priorities of the community were discussed and a vision for the future of the town was agreed.

The outcomes of this process formed the first version of the Neighbourhood Plan, a draft that was open to further consultation in 2016. Then, authorities, developers professionals and other stakeholders had an opportunity to give their views about the preliminary results. The main outcome of the exercise was the confirmation that there was a lack of evidence to support or justify the views of the community. Therefore, the Steering Group made a decision to recall the draft and take more time re-thinking the approach. A decision was made in December 2016 to focus on an evidence-base research on the topics raised by the community during the consultation, as these were the main areas of concern for the people of Desborough. The topics of research were:

- Town Centre
- Natural environment
- Housing
- Infrastructure

The research involved surveys, desktop studies and literature review, including other evidence documents previously comissioned and best design guidance.

The character and heritage of the town underpins and also conditions development in relation to all the areas of research and for that reason it was considered necessary to investigate character as a topic in more depth.

This Character Appraisal forms part of the broader research and highlights the key outcomes in relation to hericage and character, therefore it forms an integral part of the evidence that support the Neighbourhood Plan Policies. The results of the research in relation to this topic were consulted with the community in a series of events in the summer of 2017. This consultation aimed to corroborate whether the research outcomes coincided with people's general perception of their town. Where discrepancies arose, these were further investigated.

The combination of these two approaches for the appraisal of characher helped the Steering Group to arrive to conclusions that informed the revision of previous policies, giving shape to the final Neighbourhood Plan.

HERITAGE & LOCAL CHARACTER

Desborough character appraisal

Desborough conservation area appraisal



PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF PLACE

Community consultation with a focus on how people felt about

TOWN CHARACTER EVIDENCE
To inform the Neighbourhood Plan's
policies and projects



what is urban character

CHARACTER

"The particular combination of qualities in a person or place that makes them different from others."

(Cambridge dictionary, 2107)

"The distinctive nature of something. The quality of being individual in an interesting or unusual way."

(Oxford dictionary, 2107)

URBAN CHARACTER

CABE (2008) stated one of the objectives of urban design is to deliver character by "responding to and reinforcing locally distillative patterns of development, land-scape and culture."

COMPONENTS OF URBAN CHARACTER

- The natural landscape (including the rise and fall of the ground, distant views streams, rivers and lakes)
- Historic buildings and archaeology, and potential archaeological sites
- Landmarks, mecting places and other important features
- Traditions and acal history, inherited character important events, and associations with locally known or famous people
- Townscapr. the overall appearance of the place
- Views and vistas
- Public spaces; Public art and monuments
- Street patterns: blocks and plots
- Street types: from boulevards to courtyards, from civic squares to crossroads
- Field or plot sizes or shapes
- Types and uses of buildings
- Building scales, heights, massing and densities
- Roof shapes

- Special buildings (including architectural styles that are well-liked, historic, iconic or disliked)
- Building materials: texture, colour, pattern (including local stone or brick used in roads and walls)
- Craft traditions
- Building decoration
- Building fronts and façades, including shop fronts and window displays, or steel roller shutters and security grills
- Front gardens and trees; Boundary treatments: walls, hedges, fences and railings
- Street furniture and paving (including lampposts, benches and litter bins)
- Lighting and the appearance of the place after dark
- The life and vibrancy of how people use the place
- Good housekeeping: the overall quality of maintenance of roads and pavements, green space, hedges, gardens, buildings, and structures

how it was done

The SG volunteers decided to make better use of their resources by using well-known and tested methods designed for communities to self-appraise place character instead of comissioning the study. Back in February 2017, Lathams conducted a lecture where volunteers were taught about what character means, why it is relevant, how it can be appraised and how it can inform policy and design guides. Lathams provided the community with all the forms and guidance necessary for the team to perform the task.

Two main methods were used to conduct the Urban Character Appraisal, a generic appraisal for character zones and a place appraisal for special places.

MEASURING URBAN CHARACTER

The character appraisal tool (sed for this study are:

Oxford Character Assessing For Toolkit to appraise character for s such as the town centre, the see Valey, the north west, etc.

Placecheck to appraise special places such as Station Street, spots of architectural beauty, parks, etc.

Volunteers organised themselves into teams to cover the apprasial areas, which involved the whole Neighbourhood Plan area. They distributed the tasks and decided how the appraisal would be tackled, establishing a coherent criteria for all surveyors to follow.

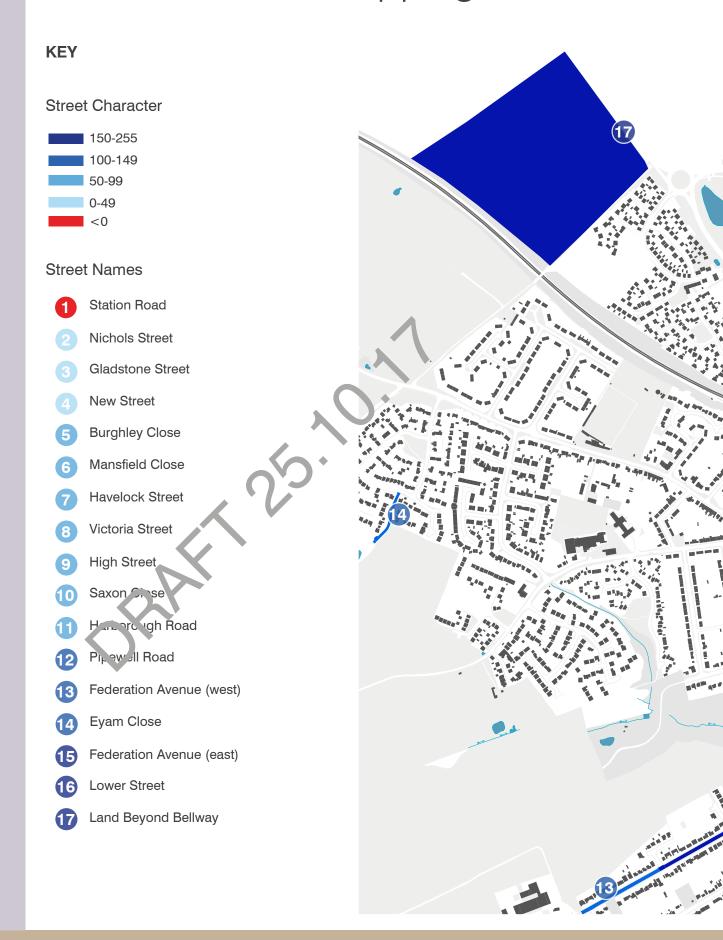
Before the appraisal visit, volunteers were instructed to:

- 1. Print off the questionnaire provided for completion during the appraisal visit.
- 2. Visit the library and look for any books about the history of the area or any maps showing how Desborough has changed over time. Find the historic editions of the Ordnance Survey maps, these are a useful santing point to see how an area has changed over the last 100 –150 years.
- 3. Print maps of the area to make notes during the visit. For example, to photocopy an A4 section of the local ordnance survey map in the local library –scales of 1:2500 1:1250 are very useful to note comments about individual streets and buildings.
- 4. Take a camera to the assessment task, to evidence any point made.

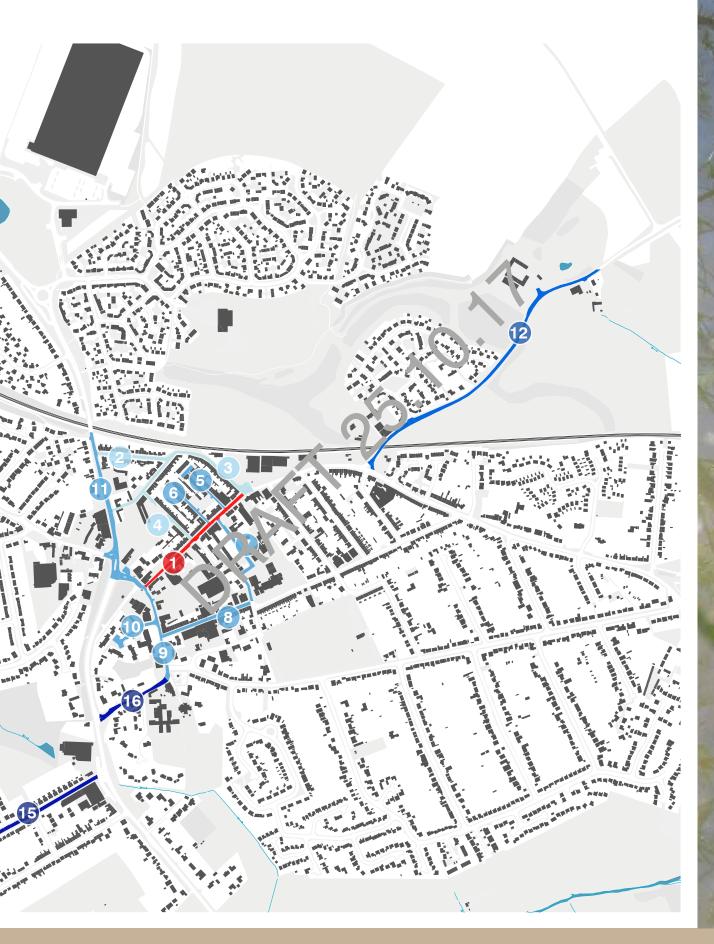
The team conducted the full appraisal splitting the research area in smaller parts, by street. They completed the forms and they took photos of key points. These were endorsed to the forms.

Places were scored between -5 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). Then, values were worked out as % of the maximum score achievable for each topic.

character areas mapping



character areas mapping



buildings





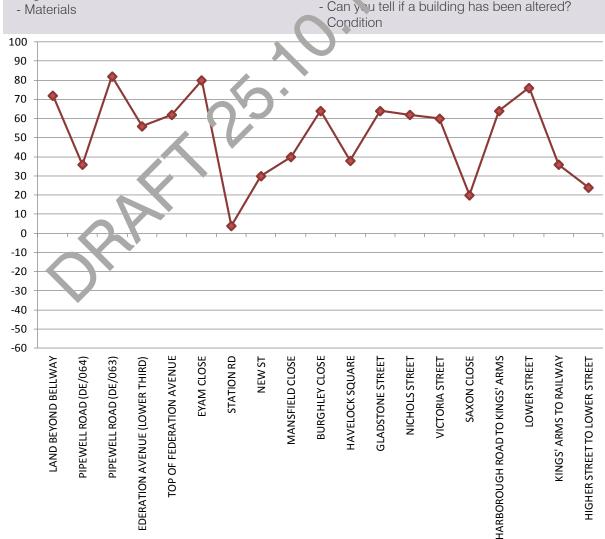
Pipewell Road

Station Road

appraisal criteria

- Contribution of buildings to the space
- Size/scale
- Age

- Windows
- Doors
- Roots / chimneys / gables
- Urus (past and present)
- Can y u tell if a building has been altered?



views





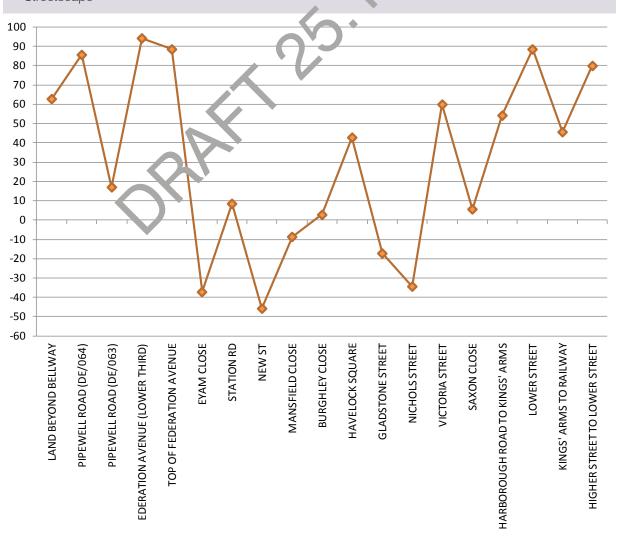
Federation Avenue (west)

appraisal criteria

- Historic / popular views
- Form of view: short or long, unfolding,
- Focal points
- Streetscape

New Street

- Roofscape
- Urban/rural views
- Views ut on the space



noise, smell & traffic



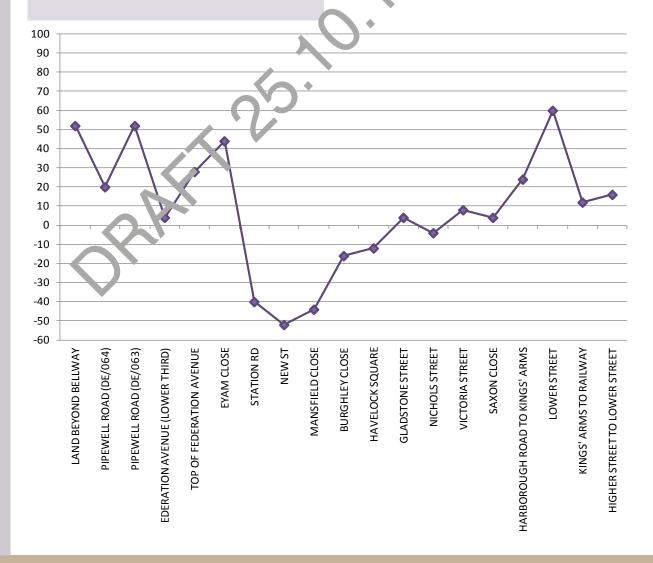
Lower Street

appraisal criteria

- Activities
- Level of activity
- Traffic
- Day and night
- Smells
- Noises



"When I was doing this appraisal I noticed something I hadn't noticed before: In the town centre i could not hear bird songs, as soon as I moved to the outskirts I did, and the sound became stronger and stronger. Volunteer, 2017.



greenery & landscape



Lower Street

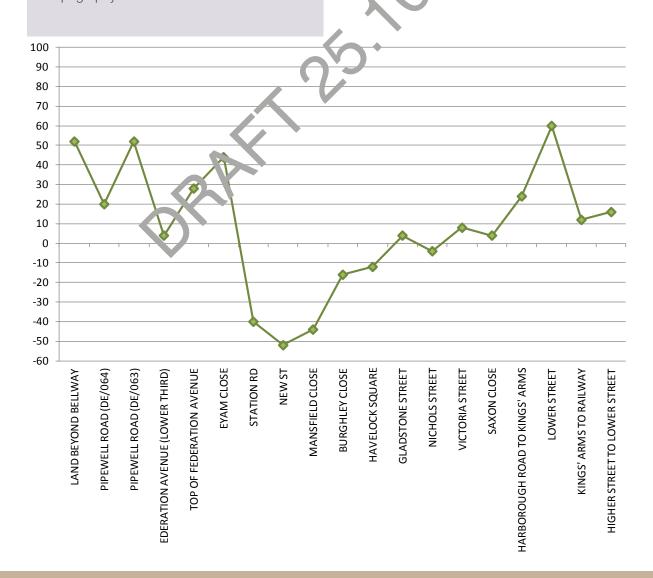
appraisal criteria

- Leafy and/or green image
- Hard urban landscape
- Public/private greenery
- Does water form a key feature of the area
- Topography



New Street

"Residents have I ad to look out onto a derelict site) with rais and debris from an empty factory for years. This needs a total refurbly how now." Volunteer, 2017.



spaces



Station Rd

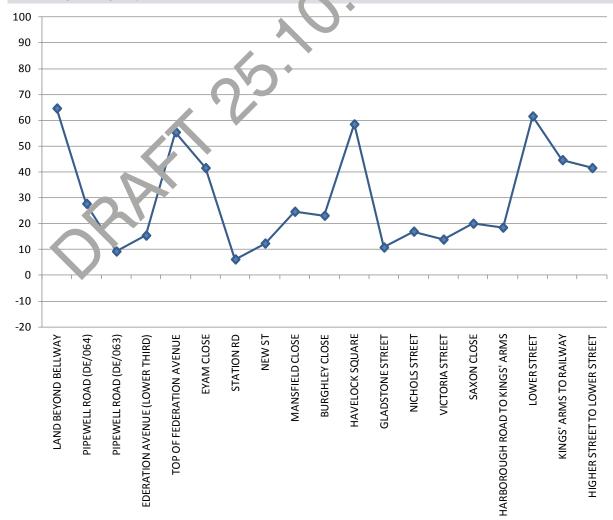


Land Beyond Bellway

appraisal criteria

- Formal / informal spaces
- Gaps between buildings
- Means of enclosure
- Building plots
- Wide/open spaces
- Narrow / enclosed spaces
- Winding / straight spaces

- Relationship of the space to buildings and structures
- Uses and activity
- Paving naterials
- Street furniture
- Ir pact of vehicles and traffic
- Usab lity and accessibility of the space



spirit of place

Spirit of place refers to the components that give a place a special feeling. It refers to how a place can make humans feel.

In this document, it is the sum of all the appraisal themes put together. The graphic below shows the scores for each area appraised.

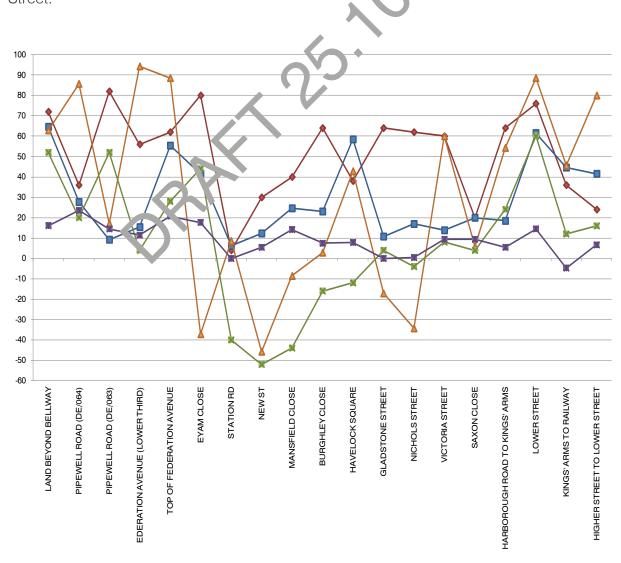
Visualising the results in one single graphic can help compare how different places might stand out in relation to others. For example, Lower Street peaks in all measures in relation to all the other areas appraised. Some areas show big disparities between measures, like New Street.

KEY

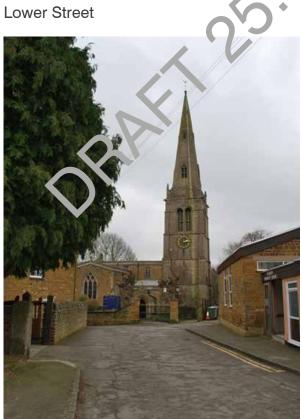
RED: Buildings ORANGE: Views

PURPLE: Noise, smell & traffic GREEN: Greenery & landscape

BLUE: Spaces







View towards St Giles Church



War Memorial and gardens

initial reaction vs overall score

initial reaction appraisal criteria

- Spaces
- Buildings
- Views
- Light/dark surfaces
- Greenery & landscape
- Uses and activity
- Noises and smells
- General comments

overall score appraisal criteria

This refers to the addition of the scores of all the criteria themes:

Buildings

Views

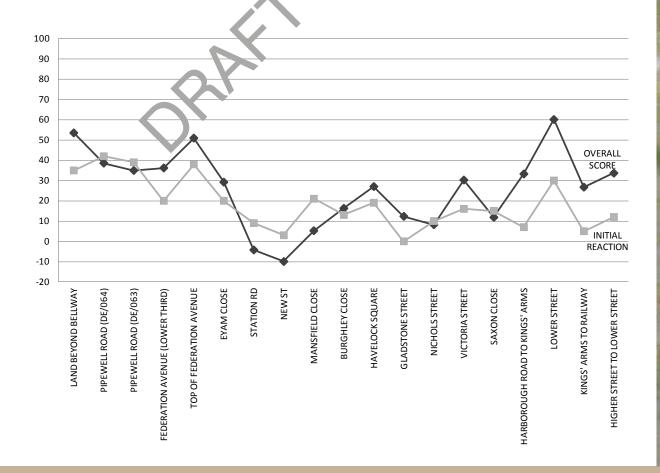
Noise, smell & traffic

Greenery & landscape

Spaces

Spirit of place

The graphic below shows how the initial reaction was roughly in line with the overall score. The largest variances were Lower Street, King's Arms to Railway and High Street to Lower Street, where the initial reactions were a lot wors than the actual scores. For Station Road, New Street and Mansfield Road, the pitial reactions were not as low as the overall scores. A number of measures often help change people's perception of place. The introduction of flowers and planters is known for having a positive impact on environmental responses amongst hum and animals. Dirt, lack of maintenance and darkness have the opposite effect.



The character of Desborough is partly attributed to historic assets such as buildings and landcape.

The map on the right shows Grade I and II listed buildings and the conservation area boundary.

KEY

Heritage Assets

Conservation Area Boundary

Grade I Listed

Grade II Listed

Buildings of significant character

E = 1 Known and predicted sites of archaeological significance (as shown in Desborough CA Area Appraisal)

Designated Heritage Assets

- 1 Kings Arm. P. 1
- 2 Mileste 1e
- 3 Sprvies Club
- 4 Desborough War Memorial
- 5 Church House
- 6 18-20 Lower Street
- 7 Anglican And Methodist Church Of St Giles
- 8 Chest Tomb
- 9 Monument
- Cheaney Shoes Factory and Shop







Kings Arms Public House, built in 1700s (Grade II Listed).



Desborough Milestone, built in 18th C (Grade II Listed).



Services Club, built 1 c 1920 (Grade II Listed).



Desborough War Memorial (Grade II Listed).



Church House, built in early 1700's (Grade II Listed).



18-20 Lower Street, built in late 17th C (Grade II Listed).



Anglican And Methodist Church Of St Giles, dates back to 13th C (Grade I Listed).



Chest Tomb, built in nid-18th C (Grade II Listed).



Monument, built in 1835 (Frade II Listed).



Joseph Cheaney And Sons, built in 1896 and 1930's (Grade II Listed).

the meaning of the local character

There are a number of environmental qualities that make places special and several tools have been designed by experts to help communities appraise their neighbourhood places. Volunteer residents of Desborough and members of the Steering Group conducted a character appraisal of their town centre in March 2017 using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit1 and doing a Placecheck² in special places within their town. These are two wellknown and tested tools to appraise place qualities and character. The methodology and instructions followed by the volunteers, and the detailed results of the character appraisal are included in the Neighbourhood Plan supporting document: Desborough Character Appraisal.

According to the appraisal, some areas of analysis scored higher than others. Overall the score that was consistently low was 'landscape features'. This correlates with the results of the land'scape survey that showed that land green places were the strength of the town as opposed to landscape feature with the exception of planters with flowers. For this reason, the people of Desharo green and streets of Desbarough of great importance and due of protection.

The results also showed that high quality views (especially long views) from the town centre are scarce, as the settlement is rather compact. The few existing views that visually connect the town with its settings are key to the charm and character of the town.

Oxford City Council Placecheck What is a Placecheck? Federation Ave **View from Federation Ave**

Station Road

1http://www.placecheck.info/what-is-a-placecheck/

the meaning of the local character



Station Road and New Street scored the lowest overall values by some margin (see Figure xxx below). The lowest scores were for noise, smell, traffic and lack of landscape features, followed by the low quality of buildings. Gladstone Street and Nichols Street also scored low values on the same criteria.



Lower Street, the top of Federation Avenue and the land beyond Bellway scored the highest marks across all criteria. These points are where the best views were found, along with Victoria Street.

The map on page xxx shows the character zones as at praised by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the overall score these areas achieved.

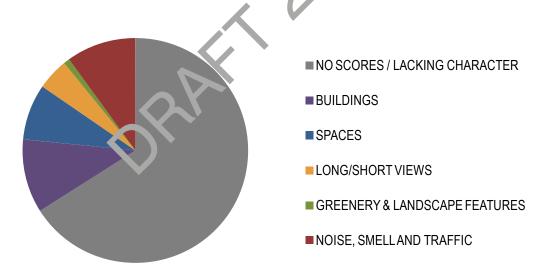


Figure 1: Character dimensions of place in the commercial streets of Desborough



DESBOROUGH CHARACTER APPRAISAL - 2017

informing the NP

Table 1: How the character apprasial informed the NP	
Key outcome	Addressed through
Station Road and New Street are the streets with poorer character due decay, to noise, smells and lack of lanscape.	Policy 2 and Policy 5.3
Lower Street, the top of Federation Avenue ad the land beyond Bellway scored the highest character values.	Policy 3 and Policy 4.2
Long views to the open countyside add hugely to te characte of Desborough	Policy 4.2
Green features are missing in the town centre	Consulted in 2017 and to be dealt with through projects in P5.3
Management of existing character and Heritage assets	Consulted in 2017 and to be dealt with through projects in P5.3

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the character of Desborough is given by two main assets:

- Heritage buildings and man-nade objects such as walls and monuments.
- Green areas that surroun, the town.

These two primary of a qualitites give identity to Desborough and its people, and must be considered of great value and worthy of protection and enhancement for the enjoyment of fu ure generations

This document accompanies Desborough Neighbourhood Plan. Additionally, the following documents are supplementary to the NP:

A. Community Consultation Report

C. Sustainability Appraisal

ACRONYMS

CABE: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

EU: European Union NP: Neighbourhood Plan

NNJCS: North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy NNJCU: North Northamptonshire Joint Core Unit

NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

SD: Supplementary Document

SG: Steering Group

SSPLDD: Site Specific Planning Local Development

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