Existing Policy Context for Desborough

Policy CS4.1 in the Core Strategy identifies Desborough as one of three Key Areas of Change within High Wycombe. This means that we anticipate that there will be high levels of change and activity in this area in the future. The area is currently diverse culturally, and mixes local shops with residential, industrial and other employment areas. It is this mix that gives the area its own distinct character. However there are also issues of deprivation in relation to crime and the environment which need to be addressed.

Policy CS4.1 identifies the following objectives that any development in the Desborough area should aim to achieve:

- **Sense of Place**
  - Making sure that individual developments contribute to a coherent & recognisable sense of place for Desborough

- **Integration**
  - Ensuring that there are good links between Desborough and the town centre, including improved east-west pedestrian and cycle links

- **Economic & social regeneration**
  - Regenerating employment areas while ensuring the protection of the area’s industrial heritage and providing community benefits

- **Open Space**
  - Providing new open space in eastern area of Desborough where there is currently not enough

- **The Wye**
  - Opening up of the River Wye to allow improved public access to it and improve its environmental value

- **Vista**
  - Enhancing the environmental quality of the formal vista of the West Wycombe Road

What's changed since the February 2007 Preferred Options Consultation?

Following the independent examination of our Core Strategy, the Planning Inspector found Desborough to be ‘lacking overall identity or coherence’. The Inspector looked to address this through the creation of a place-making and urban design framework to ensure individual developments contributed to a coherent and recognisable sense of place for Desborough.

We have been working on developing this framework and this is set out in board 5.

Tell us what you think...

The key issues for Desborough are discussed on the following panels. We would like your views on these issues, and in particular we would like your views on the specific consultation questions highlighted in the green boxes.

To feedback your views please fill in a response form (available at this exhibition) or submit your comments on-line at www.wycombe.gov.uk/planningconsultations.

Delivery & Site Allocations Update Consultation – June 2009
A Vision for Desborough

Desborough is a place in its own right, with a clear identity, but it is still very much part of the wider town. Our recent work has concentrated on developing a vision and delivery framework which seeks to secure the future of Desborough as a vibrant and diverse part of High Wycombe. This is set out below.

**Street Network**
* The grid of streets is a key part of the area’s character. Around Green Street this becomes more complicated so we need to work on making it easier to move around this area, with better walking & cycling links.

**New developments**
* New developments should use traditional materials, reflecting the mixture of industrial and residential buildings throughout the area.

**On-street parking**
* We know that there are issues with on-street parking in this area and new developments must not make this worse. Parking provision must be carefully designed and in character with the area.

**Residential development**
* New development should reflect the traditional character of Desborough, such as Victorian terrace family houses. The provision of housing should also reflect the needs of the local community.

**Landmark historic buildings**
* These should be conserved and enhanced, including for different uses such as housing, start-up units and small-scale retail. The Leigh Street Furniture Heritage Conservation Area also needs to be protected.

**Improving connections**
* Improved links need to be made to the town centre and green spaces so that people can access them easily.

Delivery & Site Allocations Update Consultation – June 20
Links with the town centre

Desborough's proximity to the town centre means that it is affected by major changes which take place there, such as the opening of the Eden shopping centre and proposed future changes to the road network. Despite this relationship the linkages between the two areas are poor in places.

Town Centre Masterplan

An important issue for the area is the proposed changes to the town centre road network and its potential wider implications, including in the Desborough Road area.

The masterplan requires the provision of new road infrastructure and traffic management measures to provide an alternative routing for traffic currently using Abbey Way Flyover. An alternative route for the A40 would see traffic directed through a new link between West Wycombe Road and Westbourne Street and along a section of Desborough Road – this would require some road widening along Desborough Road between Westbourne Street and the new gas works link road. The map to the right shows the potential new route for traffic.

Desborough's Retail Role

The Desborough Road shopping area performs an important role in providing local shopping provision for local residents and also specialist goods that may not be found within the main shopping centre.

To acknowledge the important role the Desborough Road plays in retail terms within the town centre, we are proposing to extend the town centre boundary west up to Desborough Avenue. Town centre boundaries set out the general extent of the town centre where there should be mainly town centre uses, such as retail, services such as banks and building societies and cafes and restaurants.

The Desborough Road shopping areas falls into the Secondary Shopping Frontage zone. The Council is proposing not to allow any development which results in any loss of frontages in Class A use (shops, banks, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments) except for the provision of community facilities. An active frontage must also be maintained.

Improving connections between Desborough and the town centre

Desborough is located close to the town centre and there may be scope to improve connectivity and footfall between the two. This could also encourage those walking into town from the west. These improvements might entail environmental improvements, such as tree planting, improved pedestrian signage and encouraging Eden retailers to make more of the opportunities for active frontage along Desborough Road.

Key Questions
What do you think of our proposals for the changes to the town centre road network?
What do you think of our approach to retail issues within the Desborough area?
Do you think that the Council should aim to secure improvements to the connectivity between Desborough and the town centre?
Open Space Provision

Work undertaken by the Council has identified the Desborough area as an area of open space deficiency. The term open space refers to outdoor spaces of public value which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation or act as visual amenity, including parks, children's play areas, playing fields and semi-natural spaces. The area of deficiency is most severe at the eastern end of Desborough where there are currently limited opportunities for open space due to the existing residential and industrial uses. This board sets out how we aim to address these deficiencies.

* Provision of new changing rooms at the Desborough recreation ground.
* In the long-term we will look to create an east-west traffic-free route which links Desborough area to the recreation ground.

* Provision for a dedicated "kickabout" type facility which can be used for a variety of uses, alongside the river corridor.

Provision of a new open space

We have identified three possible sites for the provision of a new open space within Desborough:

1. The timber yard west of Oakridge Road
2. The business site east of Oakridge Road
3. The Riverside Business Centre, Victoria Street

We anticipate that one of these sites will be developed for a mixed use residential and open space development. The other two sites will remain as business areas.

Key Consultation Questions

Q.31 Do you agree with the approach to the provision of new open space in the Desborough areas?
Q.32 Do you agree with the three opportunity sites that have been identified? Which do you think offers the best opportunity for providing open space?
Q.33 Do you agree that only one of the these sites should be provided for open space or should there be more than one?

Delivery & Site Allocations Update Consultation – June 2009
Existing Problems

The Green Street area of Desborough has been identified by the Council as an area of deprivation, particularly in relation to crime and disorder and the environment. The eastern part of the area is also a critical area of open space deficiency. The Council is therefore looking at opportunities to secure development in this area which will contribute to overcoming the problems identified.

Potential Opportunities – Green Street School

The Green Street school site offers an opportunity for a mixed use development to address the problems identified above. The preferred approach is that this site be allocated for mixed use development consisting of open space, a community facility and a small amount of residential development.

Provision of a multi-use games area and informal open space at this site will help address the existing open space deficiency.

Provision of a community facility in this central location will provide an accessible focus for the local community and help to increase community cohesion.

Small scale residential development (up to 8 units) on this site will assist in the provision of open space and community uses.

Policy MU3 Green Street

The preferred approach is that this site be allocated for mixed use development consisting of open space, a community facility and a small amount of residential.

The development should provide the following:

- Contribute towards delivering the objectives and actions identified in the Desborough Delivery Framework
- Provision of a multi-use games area and informal open space
- On-site provision for community uses within the existing Edwardian school building
- Small-scale provision of residential to facilitate redevelopment of the site, of up to 8 dwellings
- Development should be sensitive to the Leigh Street Furniture Heritage Conservation Area which the site falls within

Consultation Questions

What do you think about our proposals for the Green Street site? Are there any other uses or facilities that you think are appropriate and that you would like to see here?
5 Leigh Street (MU4)

Existing Problems

The Leigh Street site is adjacent to Desborough Road which forms the focus for the local community and shopping in the area. The Leigh Street site has a varied environmental quality, with an overall neglected, rundown feel to it. The site also suffers from poor pedestrian and vehicle access which isolates the site from the wider Desborough area and contributes to the potential for crime in the area.

Potential Opportunities – Leigh Street site

The Council has identified the Leigh Street site as an area that can contribute towards the creation of a coherent and positive Desborough identity. The Council has developed the Leigh Street Quarter Development Brief which provides more detail and further guidance on future development in this area.

The site is within the Leigh Street Furniture Heritage Conservation area and significant environmental improvements to the area could be secured through redevelopment. This includes the preservation of key buildings and characteristics which relate to the area’s industrial heritage, such as Birch and Albany House. The landmark historic buildings within the area should be enhanced and should allow for a range of uses and flexibility in how they are used.

New pedestrian and cycle connections can be made to connect the area with the surrounding streets, providing views into the site whilst being safe and attractive. This will create a clearer network of connections to and within the site which will reduce isolation and crime.

Provision of additional community facilities in the area will help foster the growing creative arts culture in the area.

Policy MU4 Leigh Street*

The preferred approach is that this site be allocated for mixed use development consisting of business, live/work units, residential and community uses.

Development must reflect the Leigh Street Quarter Development Brief which underpins and provides more detail on these aims and further guidance regarding heights and structure of new development, and preferred routes of new connections.

The development should provide the following:

- Increase connectivity with the town centre through more legible and safer pedestrian and cycle routes
- Significant environmental improvements to protect and enhance the Leigh Street Furniture Heritage Conservation Area
- Retention of buildings with heritage value with key heritage buildings to be retained and restored
- Creation of a new direct pedestrian connection between Leigh Street and Desborough Road
- At least 1ha. of the site to be retained as business use, to incorporate small business and start-up accommodation
- Reprovision of existing community facilities on site e.g. Skidz Project, High Wycombe Amateur Boxing Club and Commercial Square Studios, and provision of further facilities
- Majority of public open space should be provided off-site but with high quality pedestrian focused urban squares provided on site and integrated into the development
- Realise opportunities to provide efficient parking solutions for the proposed uses and visitors and facilitate the use of alternative modes of transport

* Short version of policy – for full policy wording please see the consultation document

Delivery & Site Allocations Update Consultation – June 2009