

# Musselburgh High Street

Streetscape Scoping



Quality information

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# **Musselburgh High Street Streetscape Scoping**

**The purpose of this design scoping report is to begin the process of re-imagining Musselburgh High Street. It is intended to generate discussion, and to provide suggestions of how to take the formative steps in design and idea generation.**



Contents

01 Purpose: The Start of the Visioning Process.....6

02 Recent Studies..... 7

03 The Focus: People and Public Life .....8

04 Musselburgh High Street: Towards a Complete Street.....9

05 Thinking Strategically and for the Long Term.....10

06 High Street: What If? .....12

07 Suggested Next Steps.....14

# 01. Purpose: Start of the Visioning Process

## The Purpose of the Streetscape Design Scoping Document

This Streetscape Design Scoping document is intended to provoke discussion. It takes a snapshot of the town, and specifically the High Street, and asks the question “What if?”. This is the start of the ‘Visioning’ process.

This is not a detailed analysis of the town, nor is it a blueprint for design. As such, it important to approach it with a sense of idealism and aspiration; the challenge ahead will be to achieve meaningful change through pragmatic solutions and design through positive collaboration.

### A Unique Opportunity

This report has been generated following work undertaken on the ‘Musselburgh Masterplan’; a network of new active travel routes proposed throughout the town and its hinterland, connecting people with key destinations and settlements.

The High Street streetscape project could form part of this wider aspiration: to re-imagine how we use our streets, to improve public life, walking and cycling, encourage economic growth and businesses, and enhance the built environment.

Taking this into account, it is important that some of the key drivers for change in relation to the High Street include:

- **PROMOTING PEOPLE WALKING AND CYCLING TO THE TOWN CENTRE**
- **CREATING A VIBRANT AND PROSPEROUS PEOPLE-FOCUSED CENTRE THAT ACTS AS A DESTINATION; AND**
- **COLLABORATIVE DESIGN WHICH SUPPORTS BUSINESSES**

“

It takes a snapshot of the town, specifically the High Street, and asks the question “What if?”.

”



**Musselburgh High Street**  
The issues observed are common of many town centres - above: the dominance of vehicles over all else.

## 02. Recent Studies

### Musselburgh High Street: Recent Studies

As part of this commission AECOM has undertaken an initial desk based search and of contemporary studies of Musselburgh High Street. The following documents each look at aspects of the future ‘Vision’ for Musselburgh:

- East Lothian Council (2018) Musselburgh Active Travel Proposed Masterplan.
- East Lothian Council (2013) Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy.
- Musselburgh Conservation Society (2016) Musselburgh Vision.

### Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy (2013)

Key amongst these documents is the Town Centre Strategy. Prepared in conjunction with the Local Area Forum, as part of the Town Centre Task Group the Strategy was a forward-looking statement which developed the following ‘Vision’ statement for how Musselburgh Town Centre would develop up to 2018:

*“In 2018 Musselburgh town centre will be a clean and pleasant environment that attracts people to the town for shopping, business and leisure. Musselburgh’s central streets will be attractive and well maintained and people will enjoy using the town’s public spaces. The town’s extensive history and heritage will be able to be better understood by its visitors and Musselburgh will be marketed as a destination with easy to find parking, a good range of*

*cafes, pubs and restaurants, places to visit and be a pleasant place to visit and in which to spend time.”*

Supporting the Vision were the following four aims:

- To keep Musselburgh town centre busy and vibrant whilst taking actions that promote additional business in Musselburgh town centre.
- To encourage improvements to support existing businesses and town centre users and encourage investment into the town centre.
- To enhance the setting of the local town centre, which is the unique selling point of the town.
- To build on the unique identity of Musselburgh by explaining more of its history and heritage

The Strategy period was intended to run until 2018. It will therefore be important to critically review the success of the Strategy. This should also be considered against social, economic and environmental changes over that period.

Looking ahead, the coordination of a new Strategy could be an opportunity to engage the public and stakeholders about a future streetscape project for Musselburgh High Street.

### Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy: High Street

The 2013 Town Centre Strategy covers the area designated as the town centre in the East Lothian Local Plan 2008. This Scoping document has been prepared for the High Street, and therefore not all parts of the Strategy are directly relevant.

‘Key Issues’ and ‘Proposed Actions’ in the Strategy look at the built environment and public spaces within town centre generally, and also apply to the High Street section, these include :

1. Public perception of the condition and appearance of the town centre, specifically that the town centre requires a ‘makeover’;
2. Making the most of the town centre’s assets, in particular historic buildings, and riverside setting;
3. Street clutter surveys, and removal of redundant, broken or temporary elements;
4. The dominance of vehicles and buses and marginalisation of pedestrians;
5. Congestion of footpaths, particularly at bus stops;
6. A desire to create a pedestrian-friendly environment;
7. The lack of a high quality civic space, and other key areas of public realm, suitable for holding events;
8. Creating a vibrant town centre for public life to occur, for example through a cafe culture, with the aim of encouraging footfall;
9. How parking provision is considered;
10. Coordination of street furniture;





# 03. The Focus: People and Public Life

The focus should be on creating an environment for people and public life to flourish. To achieve this the streetscape project should aim to create public spaces that encourage interaction, are engaging, safe and secure, accessible for all, and adaptable to future change.

## Supporting Interaction

Indicators of streets, spaces and places that are considered successful, or vibrant, are those where people can meet, stay and interact. Creating the right conditions for these exchanges to happen increases both the social and economic potential of a space.

## Providing Adaptable and Inclusive Space

The street should act as the fulcrum to the wide variety of people, complex interactions and uses within our town centre environments. Almost inevitably these will change over time. It is therefore important that the street is inviting, is programmed for a variety of functions that can occur throughout the day and year, and can adapt to change; whether social, environmental or economic

Equally, the street must be designed as inclusive, safe environments for all to ensure that adaptability is enduring and enjoyed by everyone.

## Encouraging Healthy, Resilient Streets

Street environments should positively contribute to our health in physical terms by being permeable, well-connected and efficient spaces to move through, encouraging an enjoyable and comfortable space for people cycling and walking, to improving air quality, micro-climate and providing shelter.

Streets should also benefit our mental health by providing a safe, stimulating, attractive, and interactive environments.

The twin benefit will be enhancement of the natural environment - creating places that provide biodiversity and habitat potential - as well as dealing with issues such as current and future climate conditions.

## Sense of Place and Character

It is important to recognise what is unique about Musselburgh, its history and community, and to celebrate this through sensitive design that responds to its context.

Key considerations will be to ensure design choices are elegant and timeless, seamlessly work throughout different spaces, enhance legibility, are adaptable, durable and easy to maintain.



**Musselburgh High Street**  
Interaction between buildings and the street is a positive quality in certain parts of High Street. But how inclusive is this situation for the partially sighted? Through design it is important to enhance what is 'good' into something great for everyone.

Streets are one of the most enduring aspects of the urban form. This emphasises the importance of getting things right, overcoming challenges, and making the most of opportunities.



## 04. Musselburgh High Street: Towards a Complete Street

### Adaptable Space

Places for people to interact, and public life to occur. Diversity - spaces that 'compete' with one another - can enhance the number and variety of users in the town. Celebrate distinctive spaces through sensitive design that responds to context. As town centre uses change, it is important that space can change too and should be designed to be adaptable.

### Creating Quality and Variety of Space

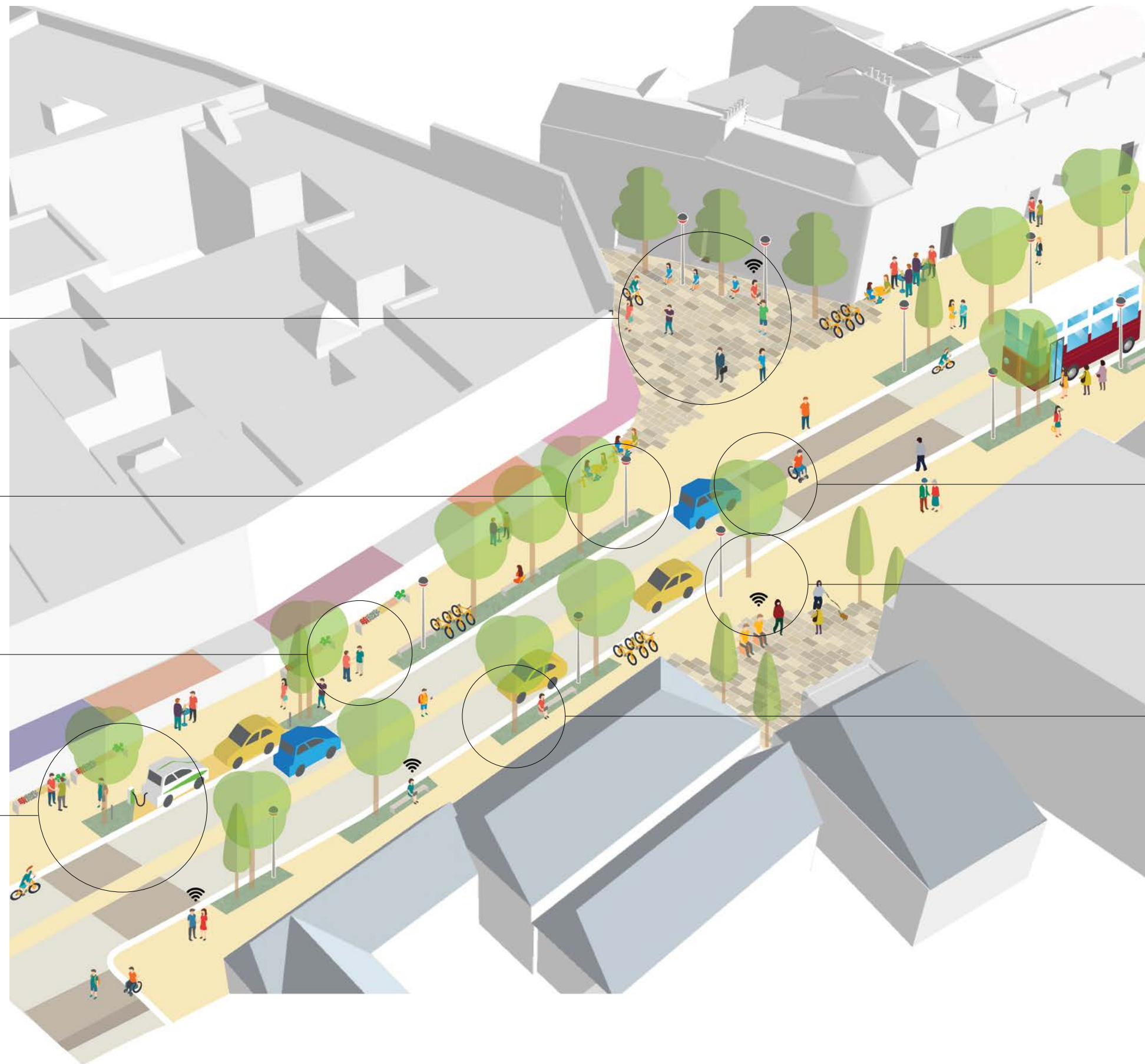
High quality materials and street furniture should be consistent to create a distinctive character and sense of place; take every opportunity to create great spaces for people at each step.

### Reclaiming space

A wide, dignified pedestrian space that is accessible for all. Footways can be decluttered and rationalised into 'zones' to maximise efficient use of space. Allow areas that could, for example, be occupied as spill-out areas for commercial units, but ensure that this is planned carefully. Opportunities to co-locate street furniture (e.g. wayfinding on lampposts) should be taken to reduce costs and clutter.

### Modal Change and Future Resilience

Electric vehicle charging stations, and environments that support cycling, walking and the use of public transport.



### Rebalancing Priorities

Reducing the space available for vehicles and slowing traffic speeds, while increasing pedestrian permeability and accessibility; for example, physically narrowing the carriageway, using materials to visually narrow the perception of vehicle spaces, pedestrian median strips, pedestrian priority crossings, and discrete parking / service bays integrated into the footway, slow-speed kerb radii and shallow kerbs etc.

### Integrating Technology

As technology becomes more embedded in daily life it is important that the vision for our streets looks to capture the benefits of this change, for example through public wi-fi, smart tags, mobile technology and interactive wayfinding. Services / utilities should be rationalised to minimise maintenance and access requirements.

### Sustainable drainage and High Quality Environment

Streets should function to deal with rainwater in a sustainable, integrated way that adds quality to the pedestrian environment e.g. rain gardens, street trees and landscape areas, or permeable surfaces. Green infrastructure can help to clean our air, and reduce other environmental issues such as noise from vehicles.

# 05. Thinking Strategically and for the Long Term

## Snapshot

Although the focus is on Musselburgh High Street, it is important to consider the bigger picture, and to guide future proposals in a way that contributes positively to a ‘Vision’ and strategy.

We believe that all public space should deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. We have identified these themes separately as part of this high-level snapshot.

This is not an exhaustive list. Many themes are closely linked, and would work within different scales of ambition, budget and timescale.

### Indicative Social Themes

- Town centre uses are changing. Attracting people to urban centres for social activity, and inviting them to stay is a key goal for a resilient High Street;
- Create safe, attractive routes to the High Street from the surrounding neighbourhoods to maximise the potential the town already has;
- Streets prioritise walking and active travel - make Musselburgh a cycling town with connections to the City;
- Create a legible High Street, with a clear hierarchy of high quality public spaces and connecting streets that gives a rich experience and ‘sense of place’;
- Programme spaces to offer activity throughout the day; for example, performance areas that build on Musselburgh’s identity and associations with theatre, pavement cafes and pop-up events / spaces, and feature lighting to make spaces attractive in the evening and nighttime;
- Engage and activate the community to help programme their own spaces to make High Street a ‘liveable’ centre;
- Encouraging community placemaking and ownership;
- Deliver spaces that are high quality, inclusive, and adaptable - to be attractive to as many users as possible;
- Balance needs on the High Street: create a low-speed environment that reduces vehicle dominance and improves traffic flow for the benefit of pedestrians and those using active travel;


### Indicative Economic Themes

- Town centres do not often function in isolation. Understand in detail Musselburgh’s social, economic and environmental role in the wider regional context / settlement hierarchy. Conserve, strengthen and celebrate what makes it unique - why go elsewhere?;
- Extend the character and quality of the eastern High Street to the west as part of a streetscape development framework - guide development in a way that (over time) contributes positively to the vision, and promote high-quality design.
- Make the streetscape development framework flexible enough to expand to other parts of the town in future;
- Define the town centre gateways - where is the High Street, and where does it start and end. Allow passing trade and visitors to recognise they are at their destination;
- Enhance the setting of, and journeys between, landmark buildings, places of interest and development opportunity sites to increase their economic potential;
- Enhance the setting and space around key active frontages along the High Street to enhance economic potential;
- Design inclusively. Encourage the widest variety of people to visit, and stay in the High Street for longer periods;
- Encourage use of public transport through conveniently placed stops that are integrated into a well-organised and attractive public realm;
- Introduce consistent high quality streetscape materials and furniture that enhance the character of the town, and more durable, adaptable, and reduce long-term maintenance costs;
- Plan for change and future-proof - how will electric vehicles be incorporated into High Street; charging points / battery stations?


### Indicative Environmental Themes

- ‘Green’ the High Street - capitalise on the town’s unique setting around river, harbour, and sea;
- Create links through the street network to key green and blue infrastructure, such as the River Esk and Firth of Forth, to improve biodiversity, habitat potential and the quality of the pedestrian environment;
- Integrate features into all parts of the built environment to enhance the resilience of the town to climatic change, such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), green walls and roofs, and trees / plants that can help reduce run-off rates, improve air quality, and improve the acoustic quality of the environment
- Conserve and enhance the character of the built environment, in particular the Musselburgh Conservation Area;


### LEGEND




High Street




Identify and enhance the ‘Heart’ of High Street




Strong High Street Character and Form




Opportunity to Improve weak High Street Character and Form




Key Green Asset




Key Blue Asset




Enhance a dense network pedestrian routes to the High Street




Conserve / enhance Conservation Area




Enhance places of interest



Identify and enhance gateways



Enhance active frontages



Create green infrastructure links throughout the street network

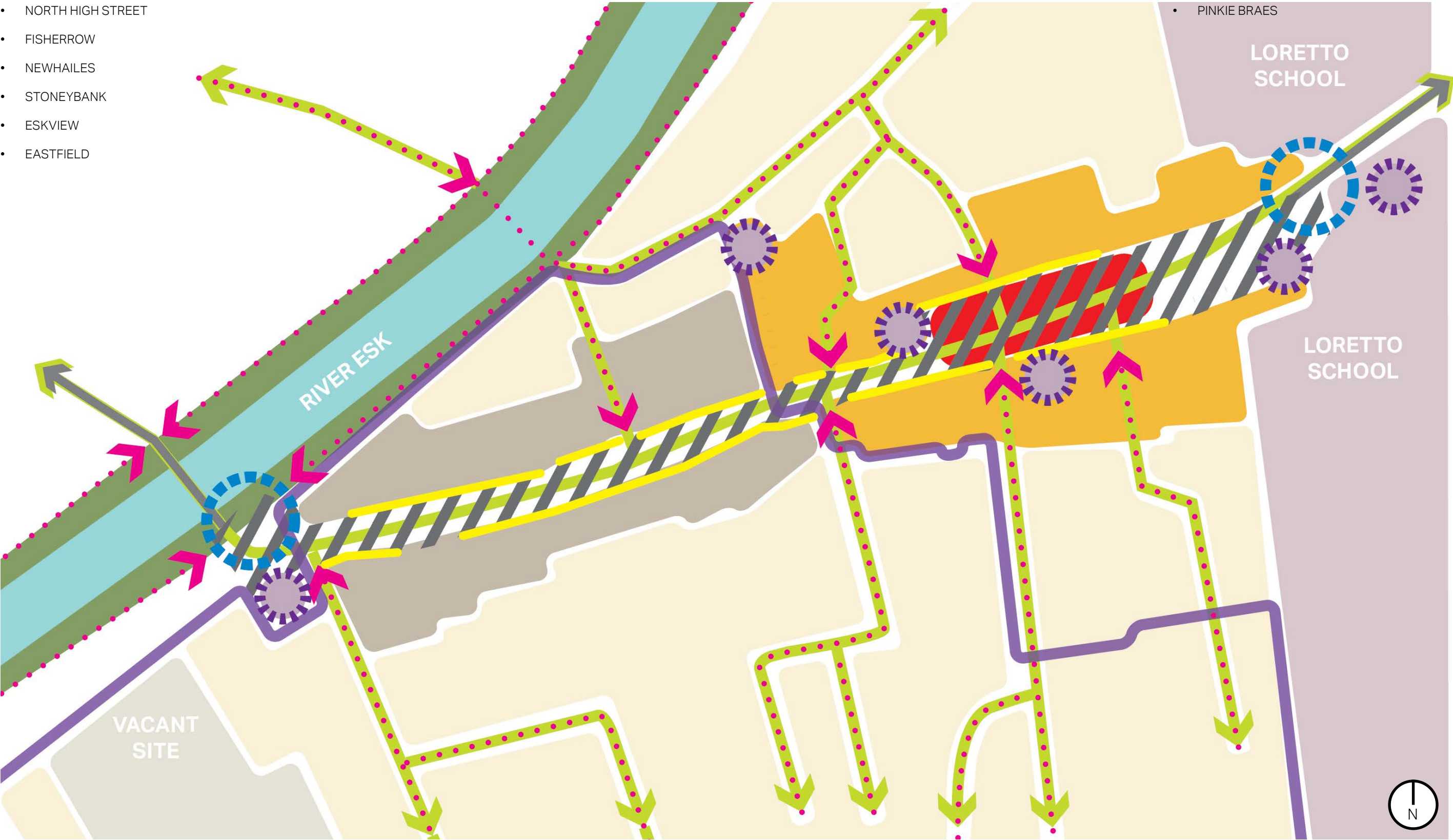


ENHANCE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBOURHOODS

- NORTH HIGH STREET
- FISHERROW
- NEWHAILES
- STONEYBANK
- ESKVIEW
- EASTFIELD

ENHANCE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBOURHOODS

- PINKIE BRAES
- LEVENHALL
- WALLYFORD



ENHANCE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBOURHOODS

- INVERESK

- MONKTONHALL
- WHITECRAIG
- CARBERRY



## 06. High Street: What if?

### Musselburgh High Street:

Re-imagining the streetscape should consider a range of social, environmental and economic interventions; all with the aspiration of creating great places for people and the distinctive community of Musselburgh. This is not a 'what goes where' plan, but rather an exploration of initial precedent ideas for key areas within the streetscape: parking space, street space, and residual space.

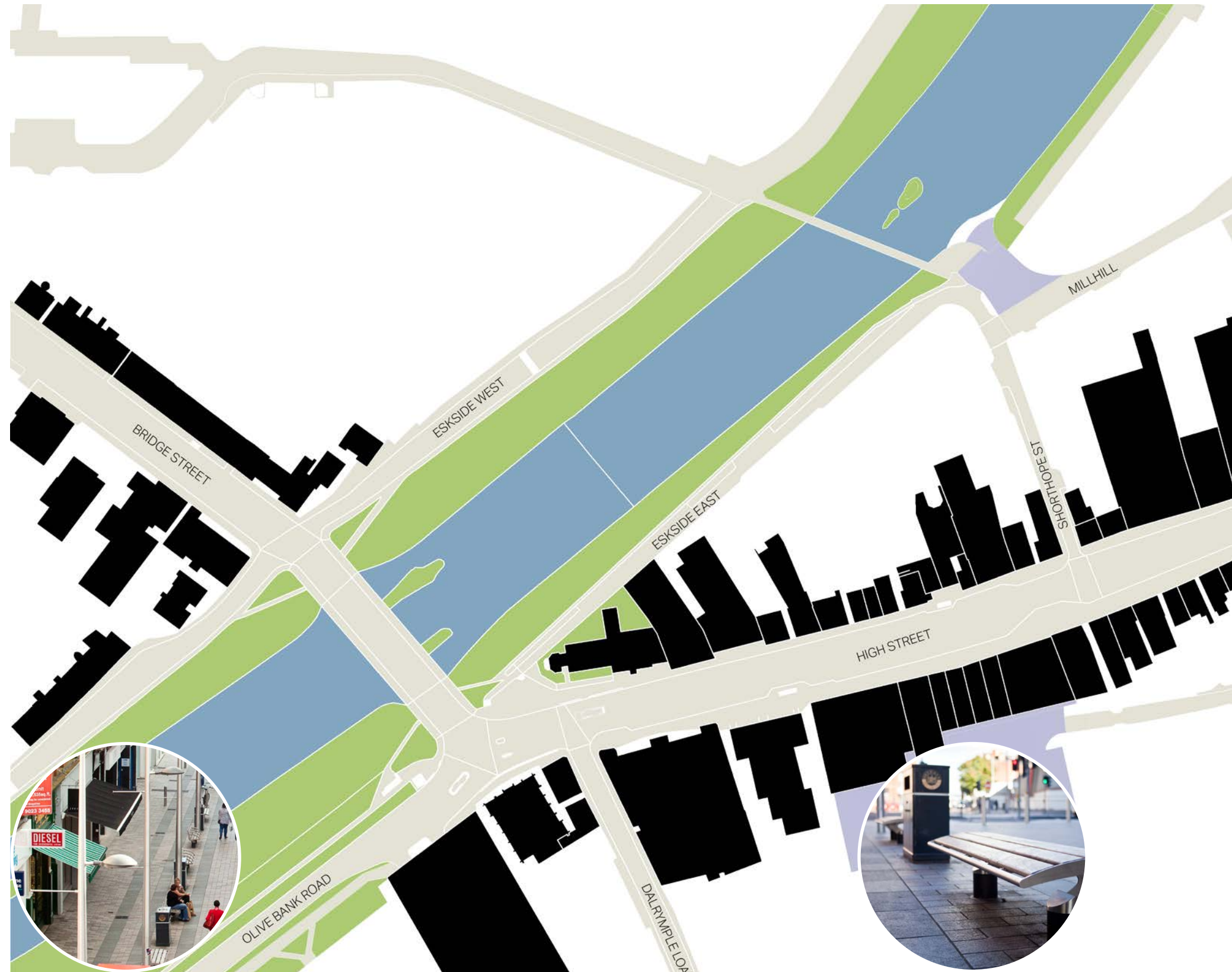
A place with many high quality public spaces of all scales, to meet, stay and interact, and which are accessible and inclusive to all



An evolving, adaptable and flexible place; for example with temporary parklets as spill out space for businesses as a place to meet, or a space to perform



A place with a coordinated, legible wayfinding strategy and elements that unify the town centre and key destinations and provide a 'welcome' to visitors



A place with high quality, efficient footways for a dignified pedestrian experience and potential spill-out for business

A legible place with consistent, high quality street furniture and materials



A place which employs ambitious and creative thinking to reprioritise the town centre environment and put people first, but one that continues to accommodate movement in all forms

A place which is connected to the wider town through vibrant side streets, lanes, and wynds.

A place where everyday spaces (such as bus shelters) are attractive and offer multiple functions e.g. ecological / habitat benefits, sustainable drainage, seating and shelter.

A place with high quality, flexible civic spaces that highlight key buildings, that can be used for community events, markets and other public commercial events

A place with which encourages and provides the necessary space for active travel, and provides varied spaces that are programmed to cater for users of all ages e.g. street parks / play areas

A place that recognises the value of nature to contribute to a high quality pedestrian environment, to define space, and to deal with current and future climatic change

A place which prioritises people, and uses ambitious, attractive design to reduce vehicular dominance, and create high quality spaces



A place which offers variety and opportunity; a place for people, and public life as part of the streetscape

A place where residual spaces are used to enhance the public realm and improve the pedestrian environment

A place where heritage and character is celebrated, and complemented and enhanced through public realm materials and ambitious urban design



## 07. Suggested Next Steps

### Musselburgh High Street: Where Next?

From our experience of similar to projects we suggest the following steps as part of the initial 'Visioning' exercise.

These steps do not commit the Council to the project in its entirety, but they do three important things:

1. Done well, it initiates early buy-in to the idea of change, or to appraise the desired degree of change / what to change, in the short / medium / long term
2. It kick starts the design and idea generation process; building the community, a sense of empowerment, and of democratic credibility
3. It is one way to help make efficient use of future resources, identify possible options / issues early in the process, and to maximise the potential benefits of other planned / committed pipeline schemes

We would be pleased to assist you with these steps using our local knowledge and experience, and expertise in place-making, community engagement, and sustainability within the urban environment.

### Step 1

**Think aspirationally and with boldness. Employ blue sky / green thinking. Review projects already in the Council's pipeline, or future plans, for possible enhancement or synergies with a streetscape project e.g. flood prevention, opportunity sites, or other major development.**

### Step 2

**Define and agree the High Street 'Vision' and 'Objectives' through collaboration with the public, working groups, key stakeholders and access groups.**





**AECOM**

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