

BLENHEIM TOWN CENTRE

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

FOR MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

JULY 2009

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FOR MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

This report is a comprehensive summary of the outcomes of a four day Inquiry By Design workshop. The projects identified within this report should be considered indicative only.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The outcomes of an urban design-led project aimed at revitalising the Blenheim Town Centre are summarised in this report.

The goal of this **Blenheim Town Centre, a Vision for the Future** project is to increase wellbeing in a social, environmental, cultural, and economic sense. More specifically, the project is envisaged to lead to growing community cohesion and local pride, increased business vitality and better environmental performance. The revitalisation of the town centre will in turn have a positive effect for the wider Blenheim settlement, with flow-on effects for the Marlborough District.

In order to achieve this, project objectives are set as follows:

- Review of existing policy and outcomes of previous projects pertaining to the town centre;
- Facilitation of community and stakeholder consultation;
- Facilitation of a four day intensive Inquiry-By-Design community workshop;
- Identification of issues and opportunities and analysis of possible development responses with detailed conceptual design ideas being progressed where applicable; and
- Provision of a summary of implementation actions including recommendations for District Plan changes and staging agendas.

This report summarises the preferred development recommendations which are intended to underpin future Council plans and create a mandate for Marlborough District Council projects. The interactive and integrated nature of the project is envisaged to lead to a strategy that has buy in from the Marlborough community as well as Council staff. All initiatives amount to a considerable investment over the next decades in physical works as well as business and organisational initiatives and stimuli. The earliest benefits resulting from these investments will be noticeable over the next few years.

Opportunities and critical issues requiring action are identified. A range of place-based initiatives - large and small - are recommended under ten 'Strategic Themes'. These underpin a long term vision for the Town Centre area with implementation commencing in the short term.

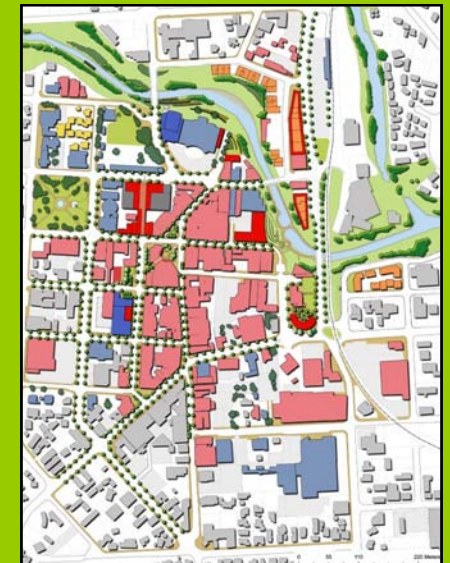
To be successful, the recommended investments aim to be both visionary and practical. Design and planning responses included within this report integrate a

broad range of interests, including the **vitality** of the town centre, **safety** and **accessibility**, **economic performance**, **tourism** and **employment** opportunities, town centre **vegetation**, connectivity with the **rivers**, streetscape **vibrancy**, attractiveness of **entrances** into the town, long term **transport efficiency** and **user amenity**, protection of **characteristic structures**, and improved **architectural quality**.

Blenheim's population growth is not expected to enable strong private sector driven growth. Besides, the process established that large structural changes to the town centre are not required. Instead many of the initiatives are aimed at better and more efficient utilisation of the parts of the town centre that are already present, such as the rivers, urban open spaces and key streets.

Some of the highlights include:

- A proposal for a new library and art gallery in Queen Street with direct connections to Market Street;
- Upgrade or redesign of several urban open spaces and the formation of new ones to achieve a greater variation in public open spaces in the town centre; this includes opportunities to capitalise on Blenheim's riverside setting;
- Identification of private sector opportunities that offer potential for improvement in the way the town centre presents itself to users of the State Highways;
- Streetscape upgrade, lighting and tree planting programmes to incrementally make conditions to shop, work and meet more attractive;
- Upgrades of parts of the street network aimed at improving traffic flows and increasing walkability; and
- Planning measures to celebrate Blenheim's characteristic structures and attract quality architectural development.



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introduction PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the project

Marlborough District Council has facilitated a new vision for the Blenheim Town Centre. It is the outcome of a place based Inquiry-By-Design (IBD) workshop and consultation process held between February and May 2009. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for the Council and the Blenheim community in their decision making for future investment to ensure the centre makes the greatest possible contribution to our wellbeing.

1.2 Project aims and deliverables

Overall project aim:

To develop an integrated long term vision for the Blenheim Town Centre with the ultimate aim to "create the environment for others to get on with their business" (Francis Pauwels, Strategic Planning Manager Marlborough District Council).

Urbanismplus Ltd has been engaged by the Council to directly manage the visioning process. It has been assisted by Prosperous Places Ltd, Pocock Design:Environment Ltd, Patrick Partners Ltd, TTM Consulting Ltd, a number of technical Council officers, and various interested parties including members of the design community and general public.

Specific aims relevant to this project include:

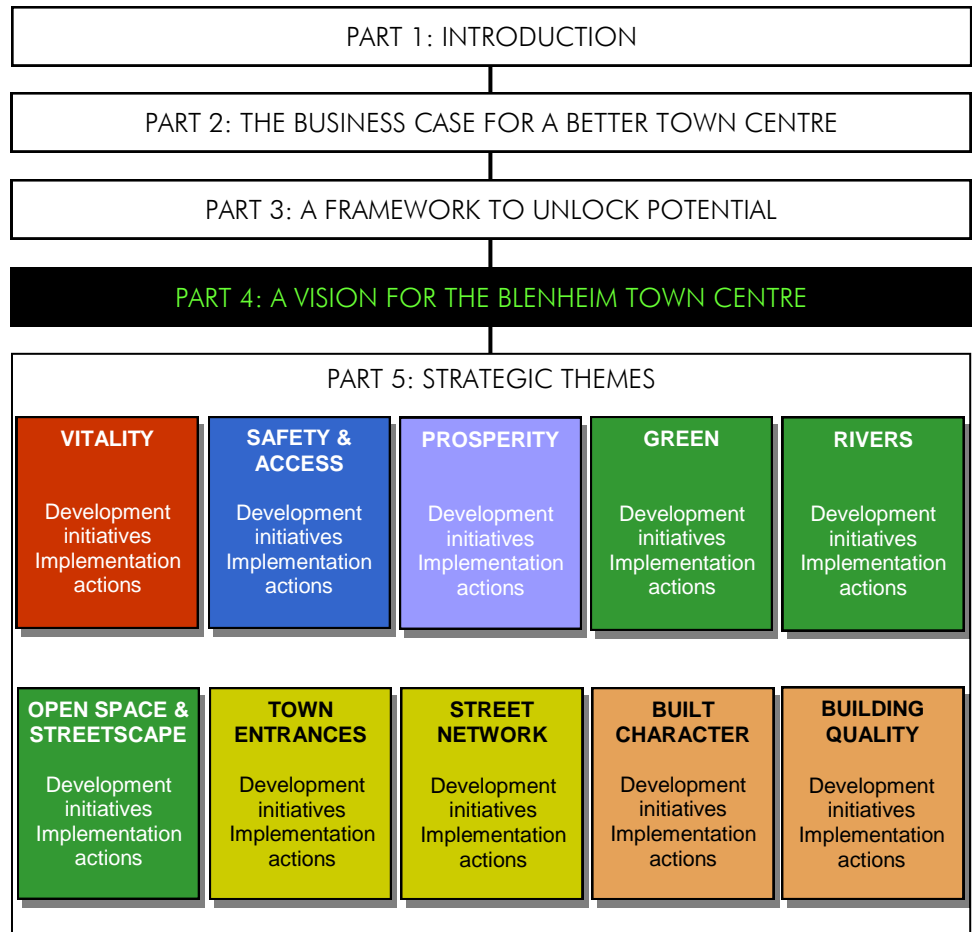
- Review existing policy and outcomes of previous projects pertaining to the town centre;
- Facilitate the pre-workshop community and stakeholder consultation;
- Facilitate a four day intensive Inquiry-By-Design community workshop;
- Identification of issues and opportunities and analysis of possible development responses with detailed conceptual design ideas being progressed where applicable; and
- Provide a summary of implementation actions including recommendations for District Plan changes and staging agendas.

The preferred development recommendations within this report are intended to:

- Underpin future Council plans;
- Create a strategy that everyone has bought into; and
- Create a mandate for Marlborough District Council projects.

1.3 Report structure

An integrated approach has been applied within the workshop and reporting process to ensure that investments and future development in the town centre occur in a holistic manner. The report is structured around 10 'Strategic Themes', principle-based strategies which translate into specific development initiatives. Collectively, these recommendations form the vision for the town centre, supported by a series of project based implementation actions.

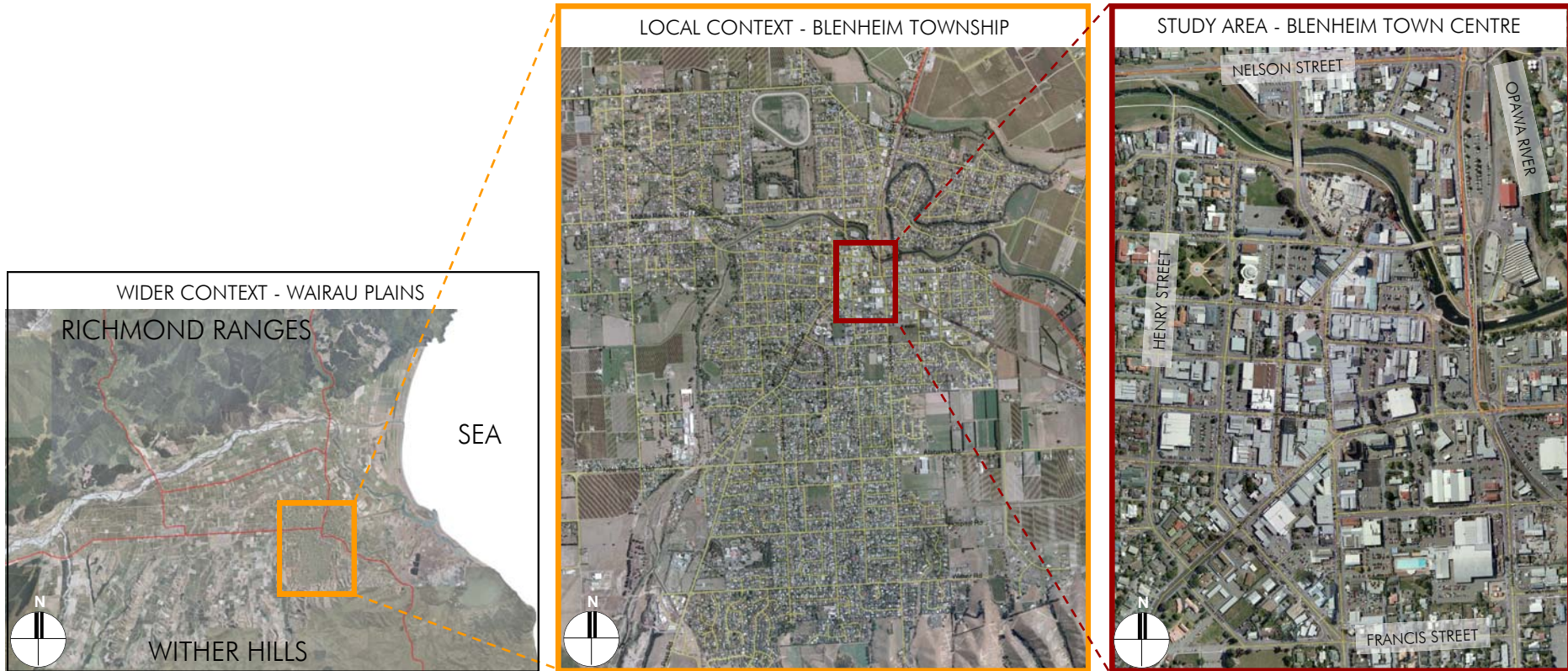


ABOVE FIG. 1-1: Structure of the report

1.4 Project context

The Blenheim town centre study area can be defined as the area which extends from Nelson Street in the north to Francis Street in the south and between Henry Street in the west and Opawa Street and the Opawa River in the east. The study area is the centre of the Blenheim township and is also referred to as the Central Business Zone (CBZ) within which the 'Primary Shopping Area' is located. Blenheim performs a role as the 'capital' and business centre of the Marlborough District. It is located on the Wairau Plains between two ranges, Richmond Range (Tuamarina Hills) to the north and the Wither Hills to the South.

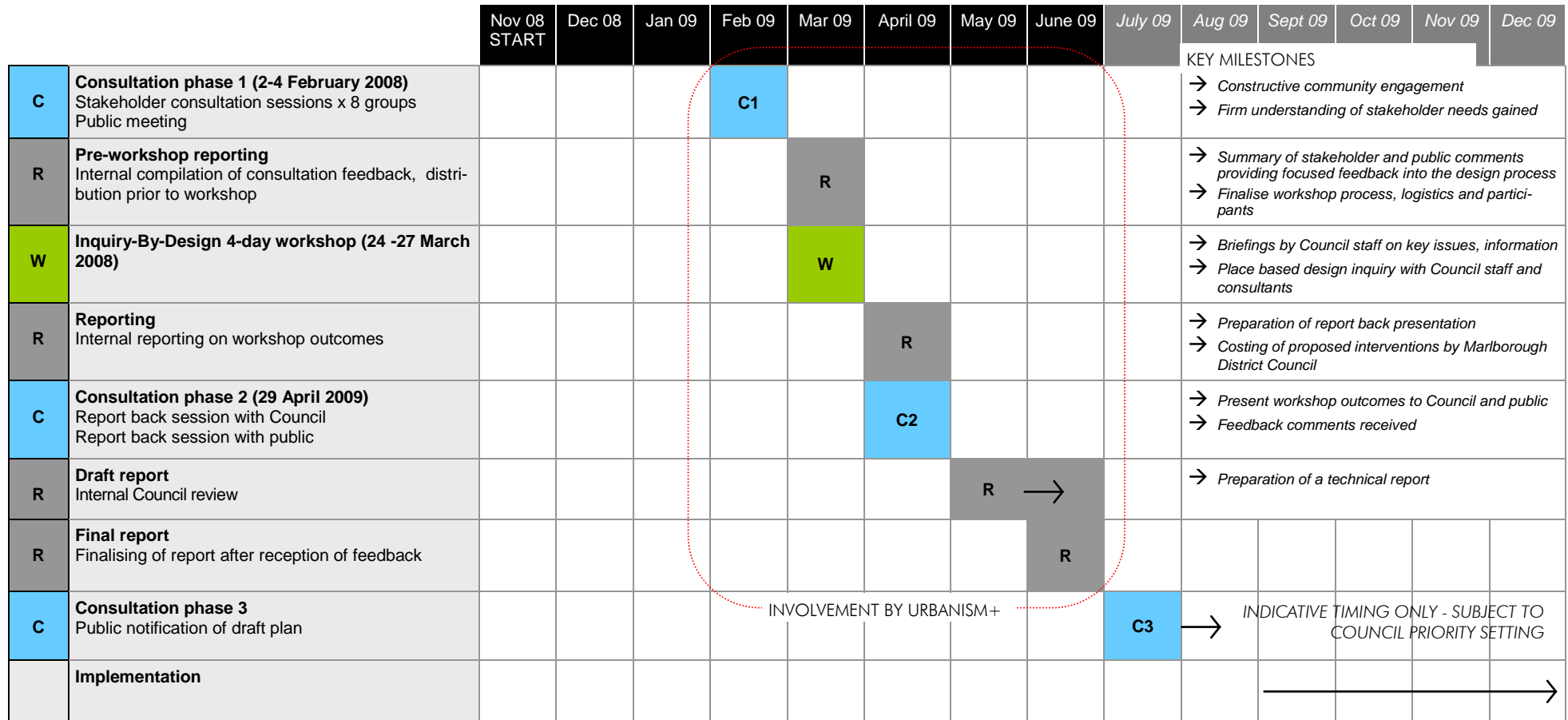
The project has looked beyond the confines of the study area boundaries to ensure that wider land use and transportation influences have been acknowledged and responded to. Community institutions such as Blenheim School, Marlborough Boys College and St Mary's School, as well as Stadium 2000, Wairau Hospital and Landsdowne Park, all of which lie just inside or immediately outside of the study area, are of critical importance to the development of the Blenheim Town Centre. The same applies to major transportation networks. SH1 between Picton and Christchurch and the intersection with SH6 to Nelson are of major importance to the town centre.



ABOVE FIG. 1-2: The wider context, the local context, and the Blenheim Town Centre study area

1.5 Project process - an indicative timeline

INDICATIVE TIMING ONLY - SUBJECT TO COUNCIL PRIORITY SETTING



LEGEND

- W Workshop stage
- C Consultation stage (in four phases)
- R Reporting stage
- P Plan / framework stage

ABOVE FIG. 1-3: Summary of the project process and area of involvement by Urbanism+

1.6 Project consultation

The project relied on interested members of the public and other stakeholders to be involved in the process. Focus group sessions and formal public meetings provided a key opportunity for this to occur. Key community representatives were also involved in a technical 4-day Inquiry By Design workshop. In addition to these formal consultative opportunities, several written or verbal comments or discussion points have contributed to a broader community input into the project.

WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED?

Two public meetings were organised for general community consultation.

- On 3 February, an interactive session took place attended by about 70 people. Ideas were developed and discussed in groups using large base maps, tracing paper and felt pens.
- On 29 April, the general public was invited to a report back session hosted by the Council in which the consultants presented the findings of the project so far. Approximately 130 people attended.

Eight Focus Group meetings have been held additionally to consult with selected stakeholders:

- Representatives of community organisations and institutions such as: Marlborough Boys College, Marlborough Girls College, Blenheim Borough School, Sport Marlborough, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Library, Marlborough 4 Fun, Art Gallery, Civic Theatre, Stadium 2000, Canterbury Community Trust, Sustainable Housing, Primary Health, Health Overview, Grey Power, Age Concern, Ministers' Association, NZ Police, Te Runanga a Rangitane O Wairau, Ngati Toarangatira, Maori Health, Access & Mobility, Safer Communities;
- Representatives of major Marlborough industries such as: NZ Winegrowers, Hunters, Safe Air NZ, Aviation Heritage, Marine Farming, Federated Farmers, Chateau Marlborough, Destination Marlborough, RNZAF Base, Marlborough Forest Industry Association, Marlborough Research Centre, Marlborough Regional Development Trust, Wine Marlborough;
- Representatives of local businesses and business owners: Chamber of Commerce, various retailers, various property owners, Radio, Combined Clubs;
- Marlborough District Council technical staff;
- Marlborough mayor, councillors, and executive staff;
- Major local developers and investors such as: Robinson Construction, Neil Charles-Jones, De Castro, Deluxe Group, Thompson & Devanny, First National, TH Barnes, Century 21; and
- Representatives of transport related organisations, such as: Marlborough Roads, Opus, HEB, Walking & Cycling, I-office, Access & Mobility, Road Safety.

PRE-WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Public meeting - 3 February 2009



Stakeholder focus group session - 2 February 2009

POST WORKSHOP COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Newspaper article inviting the general public to the public report back session. Source: Marlborough Express, 29-04-2009

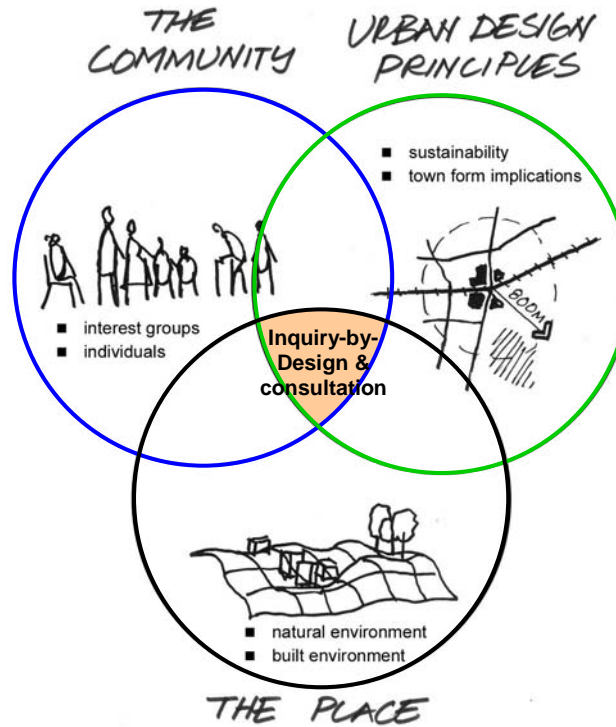
1.7 Inquiry-By-Design workshop process

The core of the Blenheim Town Centre project has focussed around an interactive, multi-disciplinary 'Inquiry by Design' (IBD) technical and community based workshop. The workshop took place in Blenheim over 4 days between 24 March and 27 March 2009. It involved a specialist project team in conjunction with relevant Council Officers, several representatives of the community (including local retailers) as well as of relevant institutions (such as library, art gallery, Destination Marlborough), and Consultants. Council participants included representatives of:

- Transport;
- City Planning and policy;
- Community planning;
- Parks and recreation;
- Infrastructure;
- Tourism; and
- Heritage.

The IBD approach enabled extensive understanding of the wide range of issues and complexities facing the town centre to be canvassed over a relatively short timeframe. The workshop pulled together technical specialists within many disciplines to identify and resolve the issues facing many different interests.

The participatory nature of IBD also enabled an inclusive and consultative planning and design process that people could take ownership of. The Mayor and District Councillors were invited to presentations.



ABOVE FIG. 1-4: Inquiry-By-Design brings together local knowledge and technical knowledge within an integrated, multi-disciplinary setting.

