

Tesco Stores, Station Road, Tidworth

A Shared Space improvement scheme to integrate the new development of a Tesco store and six new shop units, with the existing Station Road shopping street comprising nineteen shop units.

Introduction

The Tesco development site occupies a car park and open space opposite an existing row of shops. The 2005 Planning Permission for the development included the widening of Station Road from 6m to 9m, as a fully engineered road incorporating turning lanes and ghost islands. Controlled crossings would be required, emphasising Station Road as a road primarily designed for vehicle movement. The resulting highway would have split the town into two halves; the existing shops and the new Tesco development. This concept was successfully challenged by considering retention of Station Road as a 6m Shared Space 'street' designed to unite the Town rather than as a divisive engineered 9m 'road'.

Rationale

With significant existing pedestrian/shopping activity and peak hour Friday evening flows of only 150 vehicles in each direction, it was apparent that an alternative concept incorporating the principles of Shared Space could be developed, that would be more appropriate and provide an improved shopping environment. With concern that the existing retail street was in decline, the development provided a golden opportunity to stimulate regeneration. Designing the street as a coherent whole would encourage those new shoppers attracted to the new development to cross Station Road to visit the existing complementary shops. And by designing the space primarily for people, rather than solely as a thoroughfare for traffic, this would provide the opportunity for the community to shop and socialise in a more civilised setting, and for the Town to develop its full potential.

The challenge in developing the in-principle scheme

In May 2006 the Highway Authority (HA) and their consultants were approached to test whether they could in-principle consider an alternative radical Shared Space scheme. When a positive response was received this scheme was then proposed to the client (Tesco). By demonstrating that a scheme could be developed that would not delay store opening and could be achieved within the original budget, client approval was obtained. In May 2006 Sir Terry Leahy the Tesco Chief Executive had delivered his ten-point plan 'Tesco in the community' speech. The Shared Space proposal supported Tesco's new initiative. However at this point the HA determined that the scheme would require a new Planning Application. The client could not consider this, as a new application would delay store opening. The HA advised that as an alternative they would accept successfully concluded full local consultation with local bodies, with written letters of support. A series of presentations and meetings with the local Chamber of Commerce

and Town Council were held that confirmed their support, subject to negotiating some minor agreed revisions to layout that did not compromise the Shared Space principle. (Appended street-scene photos of Warminster and Assens, and comparison drawing P0/10 sold the concept). The in-principle scheme developed was subsequently presented to the Residents Forum and was favourably received. This consultation process was vital to the successful progression of the detailed scheme.

One of the key components of the scheme was the retention of the existing carriageway. The existing construction was sound and suitable for a surface treatment. Reconstruction would not have been acceptable to the client on cost grounds. Also the limited available width would have required a road closure which would have been unacceptable to the Town. The HA was able to accept Prismo 'Imprint', which gives a cobbled sett appearance, once it had been confirmed that there were no major services within the carriageway and that spare cross ducts would be provided, to ensure any future reinstatement problems were minimised.

A Safety Assessment on the preliminary detailed layout was carried out by TMS to confirm that the scheme remained technically viable.

Detailed design

The detailed design was developed over a series of meetings involving the HA, their checking consultants, and TMS as Stage 2 Road Safety Auditors, and was concluded as a collaborative effort. The principal scheme features included are:

1. Imposing gateway features to symbolise the sharp change from engineered highway to the Shared Space 'street', using red brick to be sympathetic with the local built environment.
2. Successful application for a 20mph Traffic Order for the Shared Space zone.
3. Retention and extension of decorative street lighting.
4. Inclusion of a restricted parking zone to avoid unsightly yellow road markings within the Shared Space zone.
5. Bus facilities including real-time displays within the store and at the new bus shelter, developed and tested with the bus company.
6. Temporary parking area within the Shared Space zone for the bank ATM at the request of the Chamber of Commerce.
7. Street furniture and soft landscaping.
8. Selection of colour/type of concrete blocks and Imprint that would provide an acceptable finish within the client's cost constraints, and approved by local consultation.
9. Improved link to the Hampshire Cross traffic signals junction with the A338, and conversion of the signals to MOVA control.

Conclusions

Tidworth is a garrison town that in future may replace Aldershot as the principal town for the Army in the UK. It is not an obvious location to develop a Shared Space scheme, unlike the well-publicised schemes at High Street Kensington or New Road Brighton. Nevertheless it was possible to develop a cost-effective Shared Space scheme funded by a commercial client. Better quality materials would have been preferable in places but the additional cost involved would have rendered the scheme unviable. However a space has been created and bequeathed to the Town that provides a perfect opportunity to revitalise the town for the benefit of the whole community. The scheme was developed from inception to completion in 21 months. The scheme could not have been developed in such a short time without the effective partnership between the designers, HA and their consultants, the local consultation groups, the Safety Auditors, and a supportive client.

Appendix

Letters of support.

Drawing illustrating the schemes.

Photos