

MACCREANOR LAVINGTON

with New Practice and Avison Young

WATFORD TOWN CENTRE Strategic Framework

February 2023



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HOW TO READ THIS FRAMEWORK

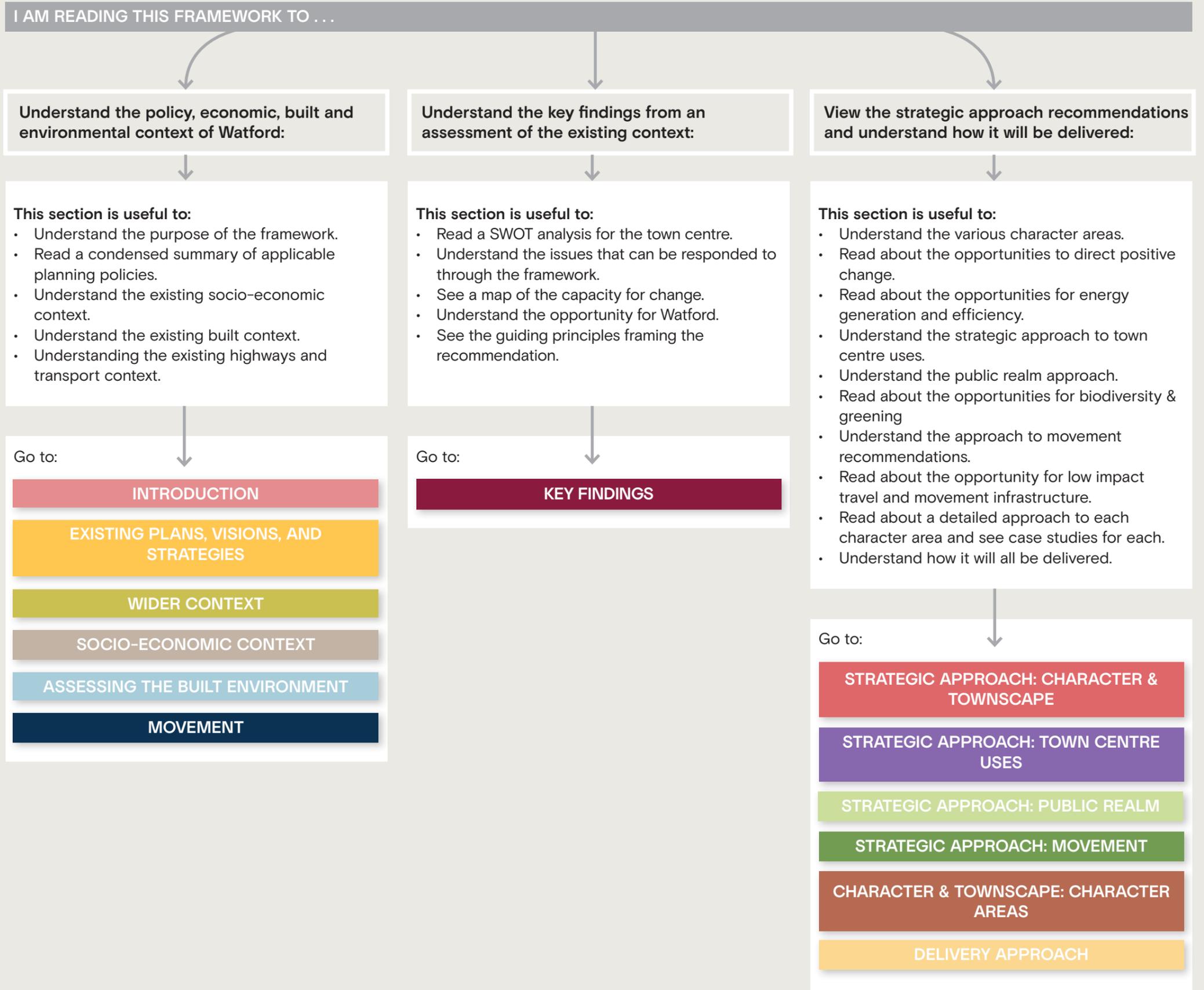
The Watford Town Centre Strategic framework can be consulted in different ways, depending on the purpose and outcome. The flow chart alongside summarizes the content and purpose of the framework:

The flow chart on this page summarises the three sections:

- **CONTEXT: Baseline Findings.**
- **KEY FINDINGS: Assessments.**
- **STRATEGIC APPROACH: Recommendations.**

This document includes and summaries a separate engagement process and economic evidence base and recommendation.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS FINDINGS:



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Set out here is a draft of the Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework, currently being developed by Maccreanor Lavington, New Practice & Avison Young alongside WBC. The Framework sets out principles and design parameters for development, including application of low carbon/ circular economy principles, to deliver:

- New mixed-use residential-led development in and around the town centre
- Retail, commercial and other uses, with flexibility to respond to changing economic and other circumstances
- Accessibility improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and better legibility of the town centre as a whole
- Improved public spaces and green infrastructure, linking the town centre to strategic green assets such as Cassiobury Park and the Colne River.



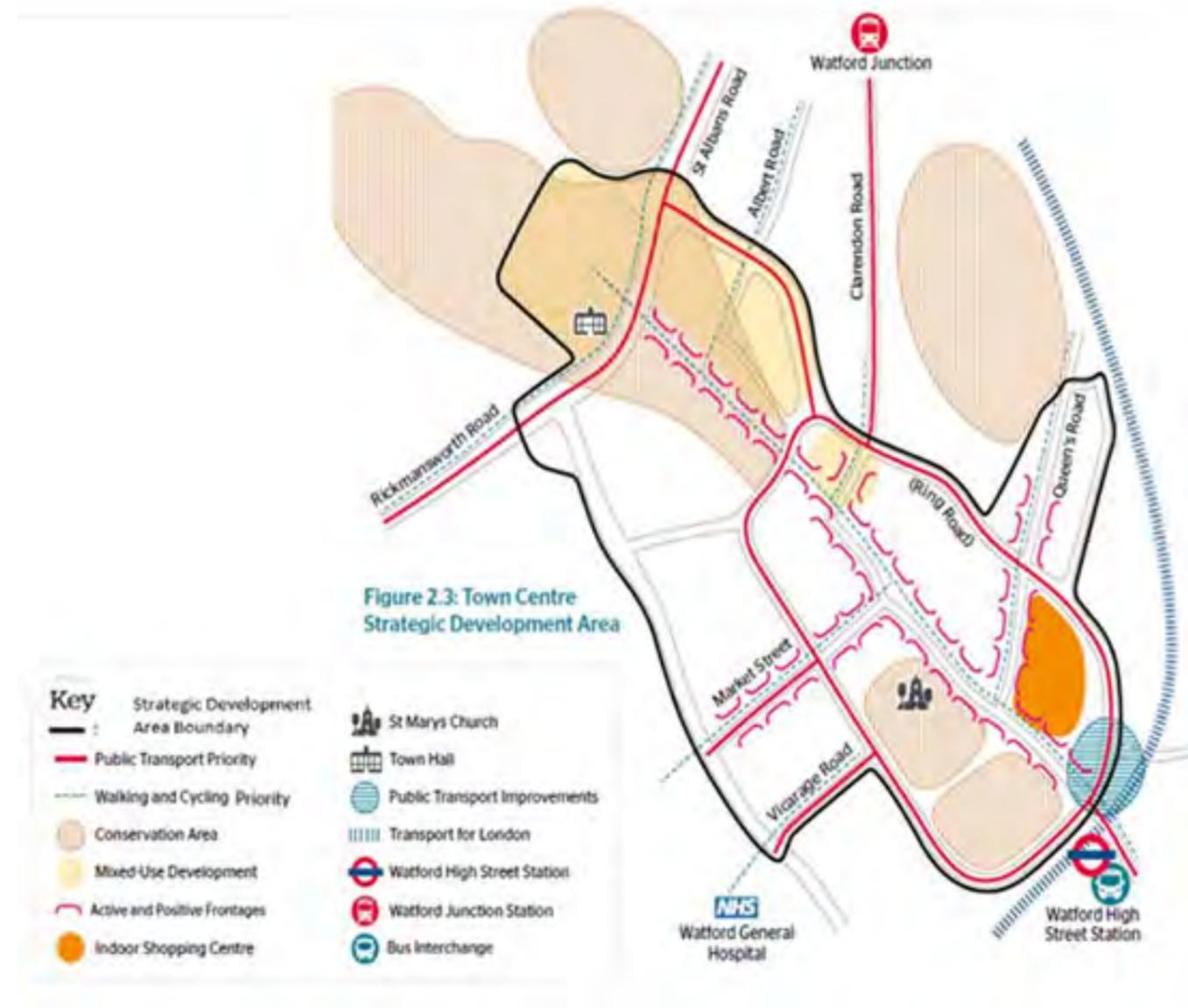
EXISTING PLANS, VISIONS, AND STRATEGIES

A compendium of work

Much work has been done to date on Watford Town Centre, with more ongoing, and a collective review of the latest and most relevant material is provided here.

CONTEXT FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The Council has prepared a final draft of a new Local Plan, which sets out a vision and strategy for Watford up to 2036. Watford Town Centre is one of three Strategic Development Areas, where significant revitalisation and transformative change are expected to bring new investment into the town. This framework brings principles across a series of themes that elaborate on the Strategic Policy for the Town Centre Strategic Development Area.



Watford town centre strategic development area

WATFORD DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

“Strategic Policy CDA2.2: Town Centre Strategic Development Area” supports development proposals where good design contributes positively towards creating a vibrant town centre, focused on people, healthy lifestyles and quality of life. It encourages sensitively located residential development and active frontages on the ground floor, such as flexible workspace. Proposals should demonstrate how they will reduce the dominance of vehicles, create green links and incorporate innovative approaches to waste management.



Watford Local Plan extents

COUNCIL PLAN 2020-2024

The Council will champion bold approaches, innovative thinking and collaborative working.

It will encourage people to make greener travel choices, promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity, and work with communities and business to reach net carbon neutral, and reduce waste.

The Council will position Watford as a town where start-ups and business innovation can thrive, with quality and affordable homes, and supported by the right mix of facilities, services and transport links.

It will continue to invest in outstanding parks and open spaces, celebrate the town's rich and diverse culture and creativity and support improved health and wellbeing across the town.

COUNCIL PLAN ON A PAGE 2020-24

Watford Together

OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE

We are ambitious for our town, our residents and our businesses, and we want to see them flourish, now more than ever. Our Council Plan gives us the chance to look at our commitments to the town and our community for the next four years. It links our long-term goals and what we know is important to Watford now, given everyone's experiences of COVID-19. As our future roadmap, it informs our budget setting, is an essential tool for the planning and delivery of services, and helps our staff understand how the work they do makes a real difference to the people of Watford.

Our corporate themes

- 1 A council that serves our residents**
We are a different kind of council - pioneering and always searching for better answers, a bold council that gets things done, focuses on opportunity and challenges old-fashioned thinking. We work as 'one team' and everything we do is to make our town successful and improve the lives of our residents.
- 2 A thriving, diverse and creative town**
We want Watford to be an outstanding place for everyone: residents, business owners and visitors alike. Our plans have created a thriving and attractive town, but we know we cannot stand still. We must always look to the future and be ambitious for Watford, to guarantee our continued success and prosperity. This has never been more important as we look to thrive post COVID-19.
- 3 A healthy and happy town**
Our community are the strength and the heart of Watford. We know they have great civic pride and enjoy getting involved in the life of the town. We have seen them care for each other like never before and we want this great spirit to be the launchpad for something very special for Watford in the years to come. Our diverse town inspires us every day and we want its community to really feel a part of our joint future.

Our commitments

- Make sure our council is a caring and collaborative organisation that puts what matters to people at the heart of everything we do.
- Deliver high-quality, sustainable services.
- Empower leaders at all levels in our council to inspire our organisation and our communities.
- Focus our budget to deliver on our commitments and secure investment to work for Watford.
- Welcome innovation, technology and new ways of working to continuously improve.

Our commitments

- Promote Watford as an enterprising town where businesses can invest, grow and succeed.
- Create thriving and affordable neighbourhoods and the right environment for businesses to flourish.
- Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, well-designed new communities.
- Make sure we have quality homes to meet the needs of residents, including housing that is affordable through ownership, private rental and social housing.
- Build on our new, greener ways to travel in and around Watford and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Our commitments

- Celebrate our diversity, heritage and culture, to make Watford a place for people to succeed from childhood to old age.
- Enable our cultural and creative sectors to flourish.
- Ensure we have quality events, recreational opportunities and outdoor spaces for people to get together, feel part of the town and boost their health and wellbeing.
- Work even more closely with the voluntary and community sector, to build a resilient community where people support each other.
- Work with partners to end rough sleeping and help people enjoy better lives.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN HOW WE DELIVER ON OUR THEMES AND COMMITMENTS

Excellence Work with partners to deliver excellent outcomes for our customers and communities.
Promotion Promote Watford widely to maximise our town's potential.
Impact Use our resources wisely to maximise financial, social and environmental impact.
Enterprise Challenge ourselves to be ambitious and entrepreneurial.
Leadership Bring people who care about the town together to get things done.
Caring Respond thoughtfully to show our readiness to help others.

www.watford.gov.uk

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

WATFORD NORTH HIGH STREET CULTURAL HUB MASTERPLAN, 2019

A masterplan for the area around the northern part of the High Street. The objectives from this masterplan are based on careful analysis of the specific area, and provide a useful context for the analysis of the wider town centre.

The key objectives for the Watford High Street (North) and Cultural Hub are to increase footfall, develop a stronger retail, daytime and evening economy whilst enhancing the heritage assets in the area to complement the southern part of the High Street.

Proposals from the masterplan include:

- A network of new public open spaces in the Town Hall Quarter and the High St North area, including public art, tree planting, cycle parking and cycle

hire stands. It recommends developing a better mix of uses in the north part of The Parade, and bringing vacant buildings and upper floors into productive use.

- New, high quality, landmark buildings are needed on development sites, that reflect and enhance the Conservation Area. It also proposes enhancing existing views of key buildings and improving movement corridors for pedestrians and cyclists.
- In the longer term, strategic transport improvements, which could involve a pedestrian crossing across Rickmansworth Rd, introduction of bus priority routes and wider pavements.

On the whole the objectives and proposals align well with aspirations anticipated for the Framework.

WATFORD ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY, 2021-2025

The Watford Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025) identifies opportunities to grow the employment base in the Creative, Cultural & Digital and Health industries. It includes an aspiration to establish Watford as the gateway to the UK's Film and Television sector and as a centre for culture and entertainment. This is mainly because of the growing creative and cultural industry in and around the borough.

Watford's economy was hit hard by the 2008-2010 recession, but bounced back strongly. The town as a whole is now home to over 5,000 businesses which generate billions for the economy each year. The town centre is a key part of this and has evolved in line with macro-economic shifts to the retail and leisure markets.

A clear vision for economic growth is set out in the new Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025), which recognises the range of pressures facing the local economy (i.e. COVID-19, Brexit and Climate Change). The vision is for Watford "to be known as a successful, diverse and premier location for business, acting as the vibrant centre for the South West Hertfordshire economy, attracting forward-looking businesses and entrepreneurs who recognise its super-connectivity, outstanding skill base and flair for innovation".

One of the five priorities set out for economic growth is to create a new economic future for the town centre. This is to be achieved by making the TC accessible for all, as well as investing in infrastructure and regeneration projects. It will offer a diverse mix of national and independent retail and leisure offers, combined with a new residential community.

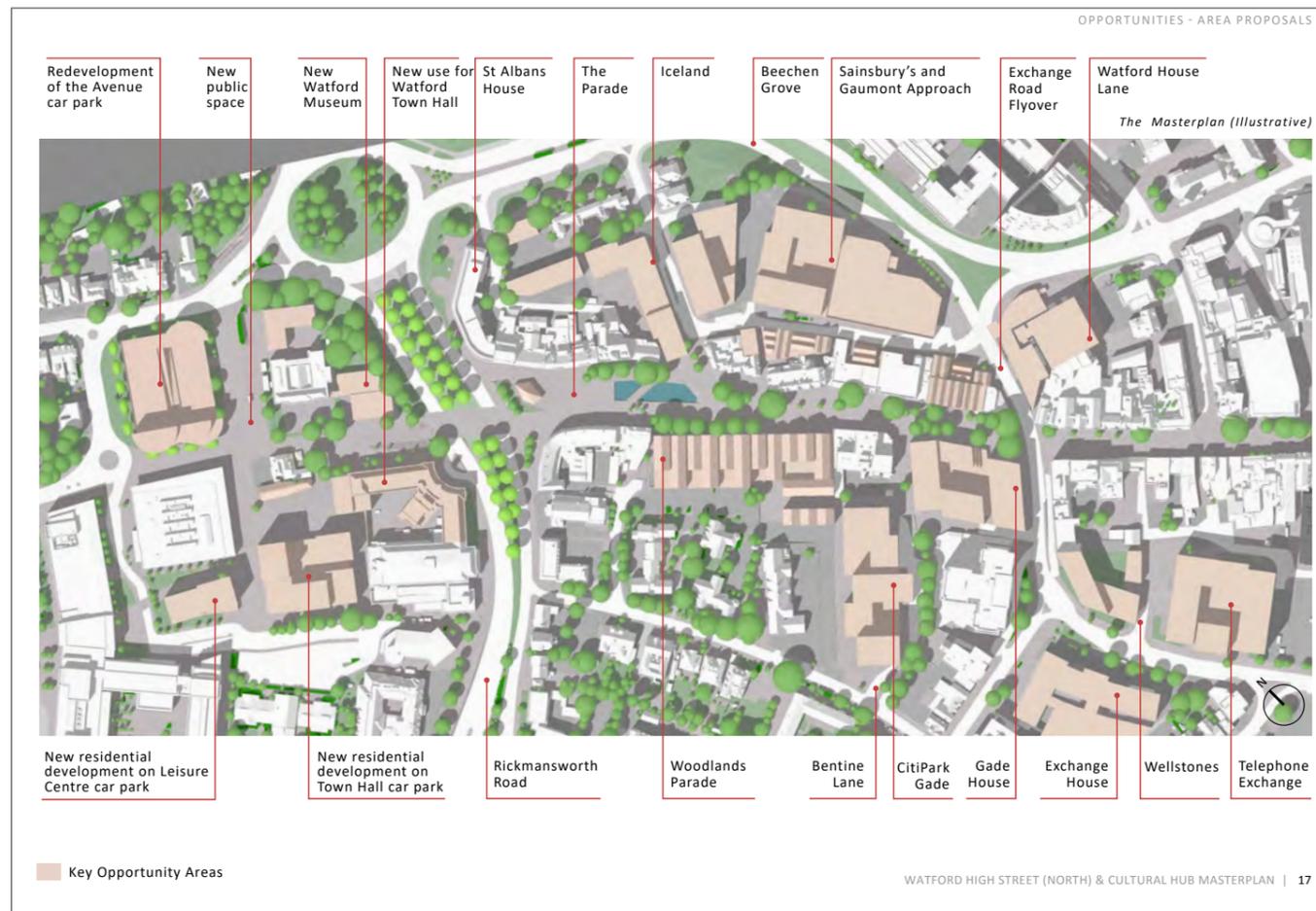
Key messages from the economic growth strategy:

- Watford has a strong, diverse business base and enterprise culture, a young, well-educated population, a strong supply of jobs, with a high number of knowledge-intensive jobs, and a strong track record of attracting private-sector investment. It has the right foundations in place to build and develop a new economic future for the town centre, benefit from the growth of cultural, creative and digital businesses in the area and grow its healthcare sector.
- Watford is home to 5,400 businesses (as at 2020), with the number of new businesses growing at a faster rate than Hertfordshire or England as a whole over the preceding five years.
- Watford Borough generally has low levels of deprivation, reflected in relatively high income and employment levels. However, there are pockets of deprivation around the town centre affected by crime, living environment deprivation, health and disability, and education, skills and training deprivation in particular.

Watford has a range of sectors that are important to the economy but the following four sectors have been identified as priorities for Watford:

- Professional services
- Creative, cultural, digital, media and film, including IT
- Healthcare (medical services, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals)
- Retail, hospitality and leisure

Note: the findings from the economic evidence base that add to these messages should be separately listed.



Watford North High street Cultural Hub Masterplan

TRANSFORMING TRAVEL IN WATFORD, 2021-2041

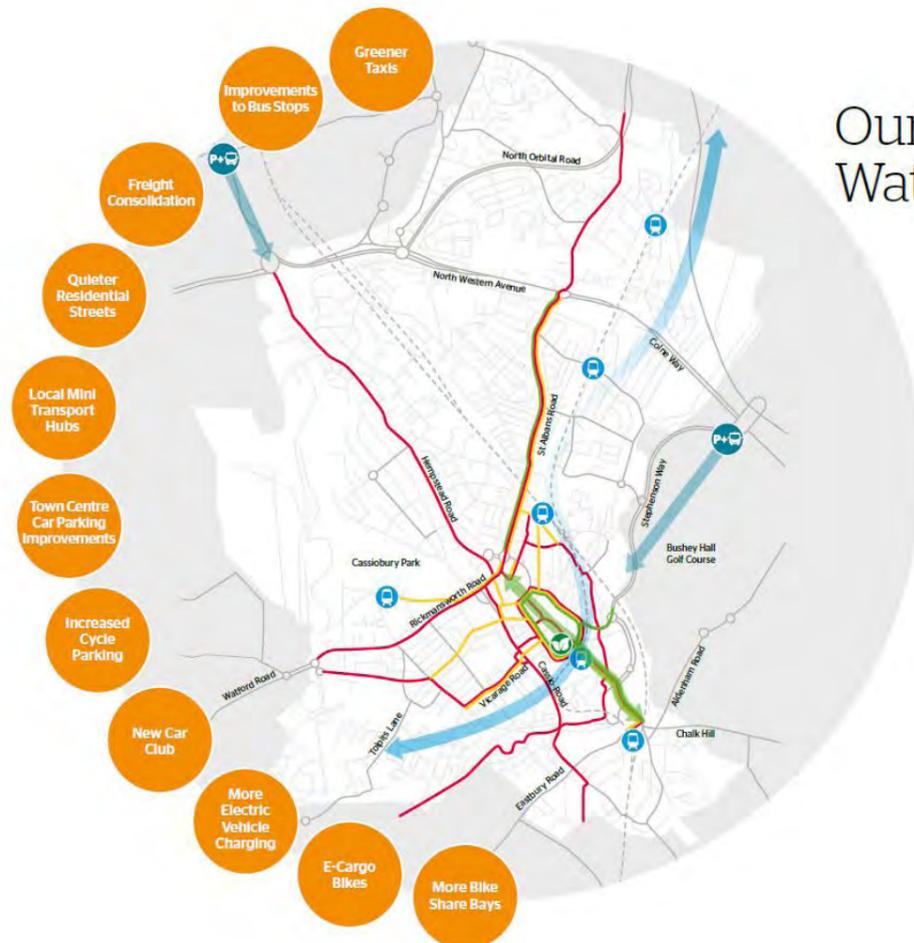
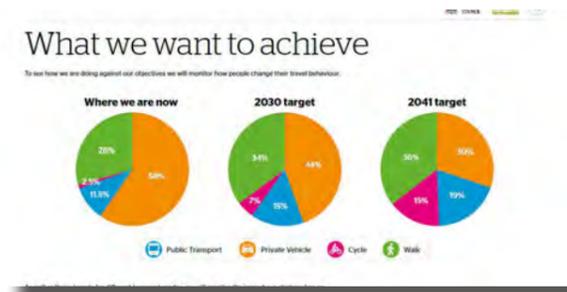
This vision for travel sets out how WBC propose to make it easier for people to get around Watford, particularly by walking, cycling and using public transport.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Cut congestion by reducing the number of car journeys and making cycling, walking or public transport the natural first choice for local trips.
- Invest in efficient and green ways to travel .
- Boost health and wellbeing by encouraging healthier travel choices that improve physical and mental health, improve air quality, and make our streets safer.
- Ensure all our community benefits by offering equality of access to transport for all.

- Provide green and environmentally friendly travel solutions.
- Promote high quality, easy-to-use travel options.

A survey carried out as part of the strategy found that 80% of respondents agree that changes to the transport network are necessary to tackle climate change.



Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy Diagram

Our plans for Watford at a glance

- ↔ New Public Transport Link
- ↔ Sustainable Transport Corridor
- Improved Bus Route
- Improved Cycle Route
- Improved Pedestrian Route
- 🌿 Town Centre Sustainable Transport Hub
- 🚉 Enhanced Rail Stations
- 🚗 Park and Ride

People tended to agree that more road space should be allocated to sustainable transport modes such as cycling and public transport, and that Watford would be more liveable with fewer cars.

Respondents felt that improving public transport, as well as cycling and walking infrastructure, would have the biggest impact on their travel habits.

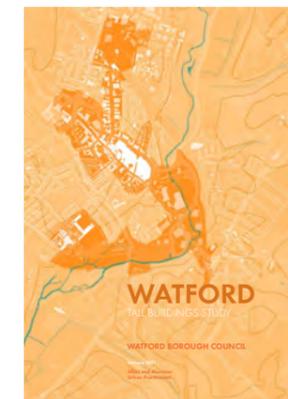
FURTHER REPORTS

1. A cultural hub report for the town hall campus is also currently underway, with investigations informing this framework.



WATFORD CULTURAL HUB DESIGN REPORT
Prepared by PBC Architecture & Planning Ltd
September 2020 PBC Ref: 20203

2. A Tall Buildings Study from 2021 recommended building heights in the Town Centre of five storeys on the High St, stepping up to eight storeys to the rear. Proposals for building exceeding these base building heights would need to demonstrate both exceptional design quality and significant public benefits. These recommendations have been included as policy in the new Local Plan.



3. The Sustainability Strategy 2020-2023 outlines the challenges faced by climate change and responses from the Watford Borough Council on ways in which to mitigate this through policy change and project implementation. A new iteration of this strategy is currently being created.

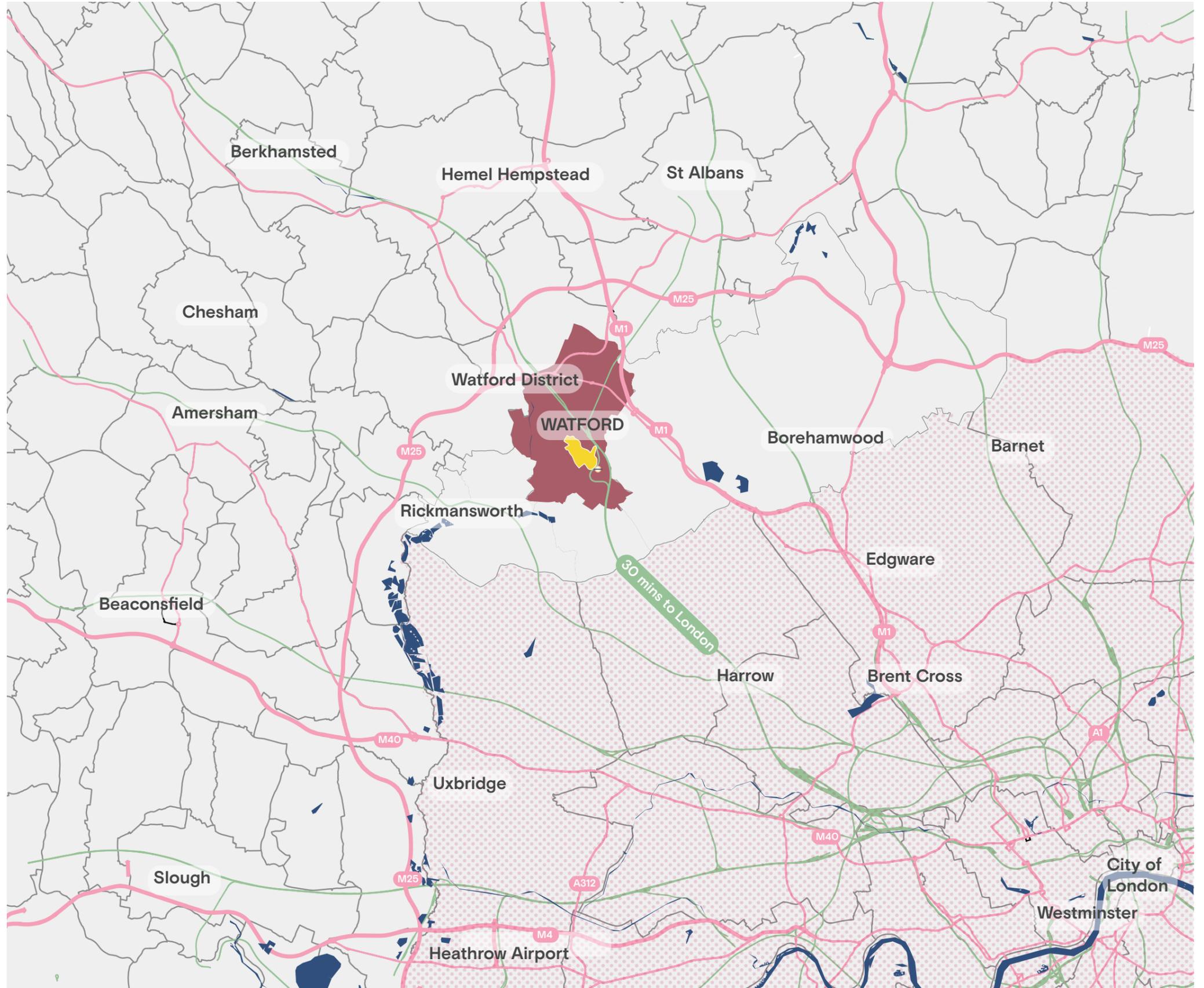


WIDER CONTEXT

Watford and its hinterland

Watford is a town and borough in south-west Hertfordshire. It is well connected with London and Birmingham by both rail and road, as well as with other towns nearby and the rural Chiltern countryside beyond.

Excellent public transport links connect the centre of Watford to London, the Midlands and the North, as do convenient road connections via the M1, M25 and A41. A market town, originally known for traditional industries including printing, Watford has successfully diversified into an attractive and popular regional shopping and business centre and a focus for culture and recreation.



Watford in the larger metropolitan area.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Overview

Watford has a successful and well-used Town Centre with low retail vacancy rates and strong footfall, but the quality of retail stock is relatively poor compared to similar town centres.

Watford's Town Centre is successful and has a strong offer with specialisms in clothing, footwear, health, beauty, cafés and fast-food. It benefits from several footfall-generating anchor stores including M&S, Next Home, Boots and Flannels. The Town Centre also has healthy churn and vacancy rates with the Watford Business Improvement District (BID) noting that they receive a high number of enquiries from a range of different types of businesses.

The retail stock is, however, generally (although not universally) comparatively poor quality with c.90% of units classified as 2-3 stars ("poor to average") by Co-Star . The quality of retail stock is lower than in comparator town centres such as Aylesbury, Uxbridge, Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Bromley. This is reportedly acting as a barrier to smaller, independent businesses entering the market particularly when combined with a lack of diversity within the retail stock.

The Town Centre is dominated by at-risk chain retailers leaving it highly vulnerable to macro-economic shifts...

Watford Town Centre has, like many centres, been impacted by macro-economic factors and retail market restructuring. Within the Town Centre this is demonstrated by the loss of national multiples such as Debenhams and John Lewis in recent years. The Town Centre is highly vulnerable to these shifts as it is dominated by national chain comparison retailers, which account for c46% of units according to Experian GOAD , which is much higher than in comparable locations such as St Albans and Aylesbury.

Engagement undertaken as part of the process indicates that there are several gaps in the offer that present opportunities to diversify the Town Centre and attract investment and footfall. These include noted potential to establish an artisan offer (e.g. delis, wine shops, independent boutiques), inclusive businesses that cater to the town's catchment, and more places to experience or participate in formal and informal leisure and cultural activities (e.g. art galleries, independent cinemas, artisan theatre houses, comedy clubs and intimate music venues).

The Institute for Place Management suggest that to ensure Watford Town Centre remains vibrant and diverse, and to reduce its vulnerability, interventions should seek to increase the prominence of the leisure, cultural, non-retail and independent uses.

Focus On: The Future of Town Centres

The performance, resilience and importance of town centres and high streets continue to feature prominently in the news. The closure of major retailers such as Debenhams, House of Fraser and British Home Stores, alongside ongoing impacts of COVID-19 trading restrictions, have fuelled headlines related to the 'death of the high street'.

While this narrative has strengthened in recent years, it has been pervasive over the last decade driven by a steady decline in bricks and mortar retail following the last global recession and surge in online retailing. This coverage and these numbers do not, however, tell the full story as many high streets are performing well. Places like Manchester, Watford, Cambridge, Brentwood, Kingston-upon-Thames, and Bury St Edmunds have centres that are lively, benefit from high footfall and have relatively low retail vacancy rates.

There are also big shifts and opportunities emerging within the retail, hospitality and leisure sector that are expanding into the market space previously occupied by comparison chain retail. These reflect changing consumer demand. Key trends observed over the last five years that are relevant to Watford include:

- Increasing expenditure on 'self': Over the last decade consumer habits have shifted from buying products to spending money on personal services and activities;
- Rising demand for leisure activities: The past five years has seen a significant growth in the leisure sector which now accounts for over 14% of consumer spending . One of the most prominent opportunity sectors is competitive socialising which is characterised by games and activities for adults;
- Increasing consumer conscientiousness: Consumers are increasingly reporting that they want to buy local products and that they care about the sustainability and ethical credentials of businesses they buy their goods from; and,
- Higher demand for independents: Many chain retailers have been retreating from high streets at pace. The space being vacated by chain retailers is, however, being filled by independent businesses which appear to be in higher demand.

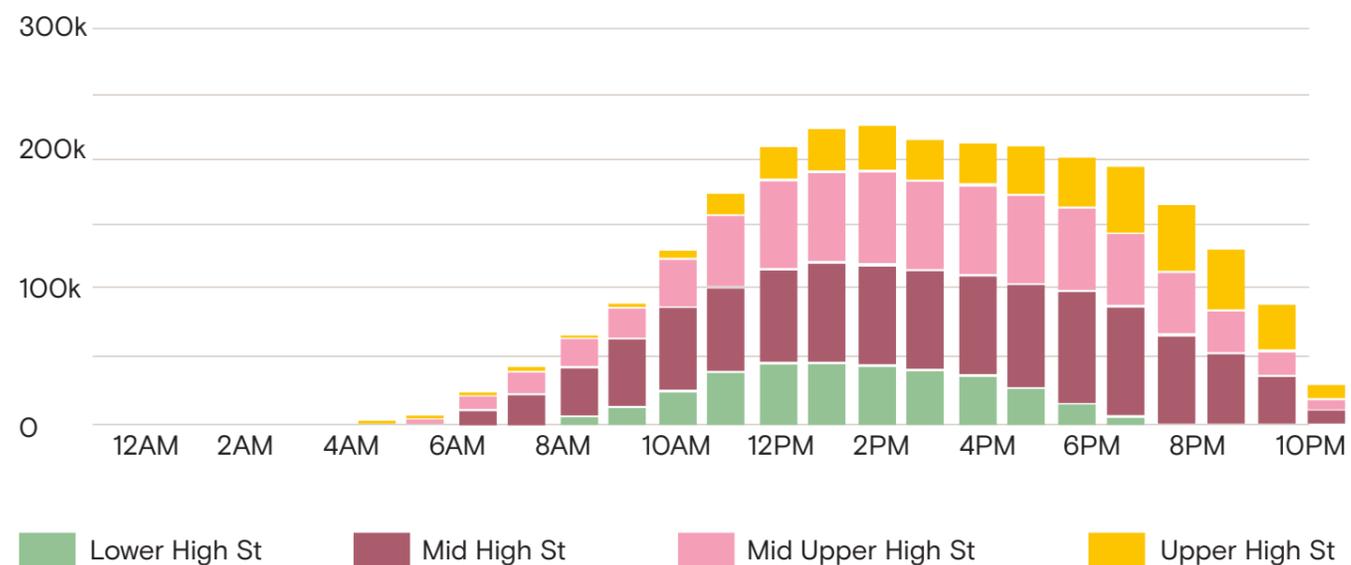
If Watford can marry its already diverse, footfall-generating town centre mix with emerging uses that respond to emerging consumer trends it will be well equipped to remain more resilient into the future.

Commercial Activity

People use the Town Centre for daytime commercial activities with footfall highest on Fridays and Saturdays, but there is a shrinking evening and night time economy...

Visitors to Watford Town Centre tend to use it for commercial activities such as specialist shopping, running errands and participating in leisure, community and cultural activities. Engagement suggests that users value having places to visit, meet, experience and fulfil their daily needs.

Recent data shows that footfall is highest during the day between 12 and 5pm, with peaks on Fridays and Saturdays. There is a dramatic decline in footfall after 9pm across all days reflecting qualitative reports of a shrinking evening and night time economy. This is likely to link to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of major night time venues such as Hydeout. In general, Town Centre footfall has recovered relatively strongly following the COVID-19 pandemic, but still remains below pre-pandemic levels.



Footfall in Watford Town Centre by Time (April 2021-January 2022). Source: Countwise / Watford BID

The Town Centre plays an important role in the borough's economy, but its contribution is shrinking...

Watford Town Centre, incorporating Clarendon Road, is home to c.1500 business and approximately 29,000 employees. These enterprises underpin the borough's economy which generates around £5.4 billion in Gross Value Added each year.

Beyond traditional town centre amenity sectors (e.g. Retail and Food & Accommodation), the Town Centre has strong and unique economic specialisms in higher-value Professional, Technical & Scientific Activities and Information & Communication Services. There are 3.1x more employees in the Professional, Scientific and Technical sector than in the national economy and 1.7x more businesses in the Information & Communication sector versus the national economy.

Over the last five years of available data, however, employee numbers in the Town Centre have declined by -24% despite an increase in the business base. While most comparator town centres considered have not fared well on this measure, Watford Town Centre has performed particularly weakly.

This shift has mainly been driven by a reduction in Professional, Scientific & Technical employment which is thought to reflect the high levels of office re-development currently underway on Clarendon Road (e.g. former Edward Hyde House, Gresham House, Regus, Magistrates Court and Hannay House) and the loss of office space above retail units in the core of the Town Centre.

While economic performance may recover once re-development has completed and businesses occupy space created, these trends illustrate the vulnerability of the local economy and its dependence on the provision of high-quality employment space. There is also a risk that some businesses will not return, particularly given the uncertain trading conditions currently facing some sectors.

BUSINESS CHANGE		EMPLOYMENT CHANGE	
Uxbridge TC	18%	England	2%
WATFORD TC	13%	Maidstone	1%
Aylesbury TC	12%	Uxbridge	1%
Maidstone TC	10%	Wycombe	-1%
England	8%	Bromley	-1%
Bromley	8%	Aylesbury TC	-1%
Wycombe	4%	Woking TC	-11%
Kingston TC	4%	Kingston TC	-18%
Woking TC	-3%	WATFORD TC	-24%

Business and Employment Change by Town Centre (2016-2020) Source: BRES / UK Business Count, 2020

The Local Economy

The borough's future economy is expected to be underpinned by a range of sectors, including higher-value office-based industries...

Experian projections indicate that Watford's future economy will be driven by a diverse range of industries, most notably higher-value office-based sectors such as Professional Services, Real Estate, Finance and IT. These represent key sectors that can be prioritised to help grow Watford Town Centre's future economy and increase its productivity.

Other industries projected to drive the borough's future economic growth include typical town centre sectors (e.g. Retail, Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services), public services (e.g. Health, Social Work and Education) and industrial type activities (e.g. Wholesale and Transport & Storage).



Watford Borough Employment Projections (2017 – 2041)
Source: Experian, 2021

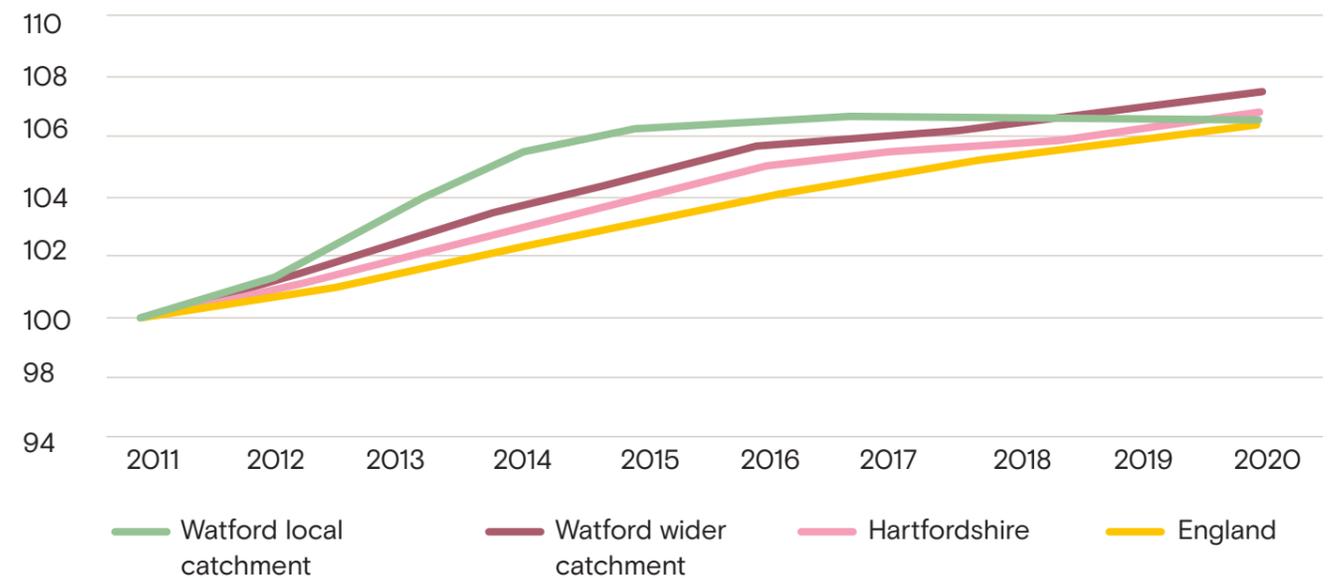
The local economy is not as innovative or entrepreneurial as it could be...

Despite its strong local economy, dominated by micro-businesses (c.90% of total businesses), Watford is not as entrepreneurial as it could be and generates fewer start-up businesses than comparative areas. In 2019, for example, 1,105 businesses started up in Watford versus 4,180 in Woking, 2,940 in Bromley, 2,940 in Kingston-Upon-Thames and 2,545 in Wycombe.

Discussions with local commercial agents indicate that this may link to the fact that the borough and Town Centre have few facilities that provide low-cost business space with wraparound business support for entrepreneurs, and there are few facilities to cater for the rise in freelancers and hybrid workers. The Junction and Citibase on Clarendon Road are two of the co-working spaces offered in the Town Centre, and the only local innovation centre is Watford Innovation Park which sits outside the borough boundary.

The Town Centre's local catchment is home to nearly 100,000 people and the wider catchment has c.550,000 people...

Watford Town Centre's local catchment has around 100,000 people which is +7% higher than in 2011. The wider catchment, which includes people living within a 20-minute drive of the Town Centre, has a population of c.550,000 which is +8% higher than in 2011. The growth in the local catchment was most significant between 2011 and 2015 with a plateau between 2015 and 2020.



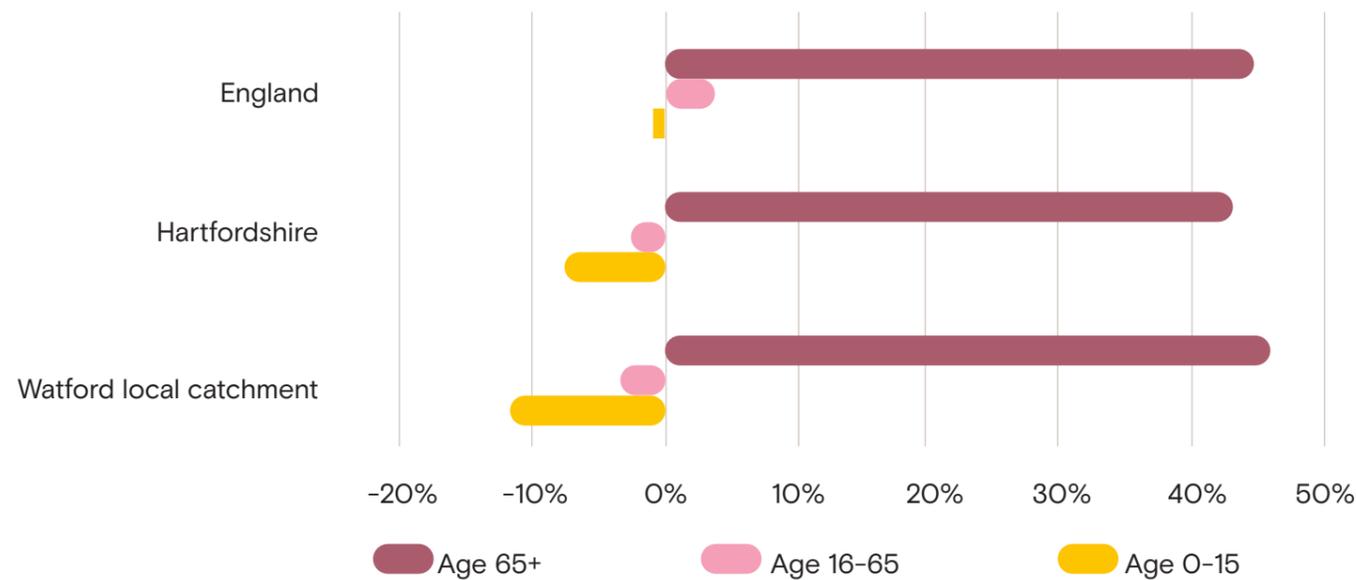
Population Change by Catchment (2011 – 2020)
Source: ONS Mid Year Population Estimates, 2020

Watford's Catchment

The local catchment is dominated by working age people, but population growth is expected to be highest among people aged 65+ over the next two decades...

The population profile of the Town Centre's local catchment is primarily characterised working age people between the ages of 30 and 50, as well as school-aged children. Unlike the wider catchment, which mirrors the national average, the local catchment has a high proportion of families but a much lower proportion of people aged 20-30 and over 65 versus the national average.

Over the next two decades the Office for National Statistics project that the local catchment will grow by +8% versus 2011, with growth expected to be largest among the over 65s. It is projected that younger population groups (Aged 16-64) will decline which is a concern for the local economy given the importance of this age group to the labour market. This could compound the current underrepresentation of people aged 20-30 which is already a risk to the local economy.



Watford Projected Population Growth by Age Group (2018 – 2043)
Source: ONS Population Projections, 2020

The Town Centre's local and wider catchments are relatively affluent although there are pockets of high deprivation close to the centre...

Watford Town Centre's local catchment has a broad occupational profile that is similar to the national profile, with around 30% of the working population in Professional and Managerial positions and c.33% of the population in lower skilled occupations .

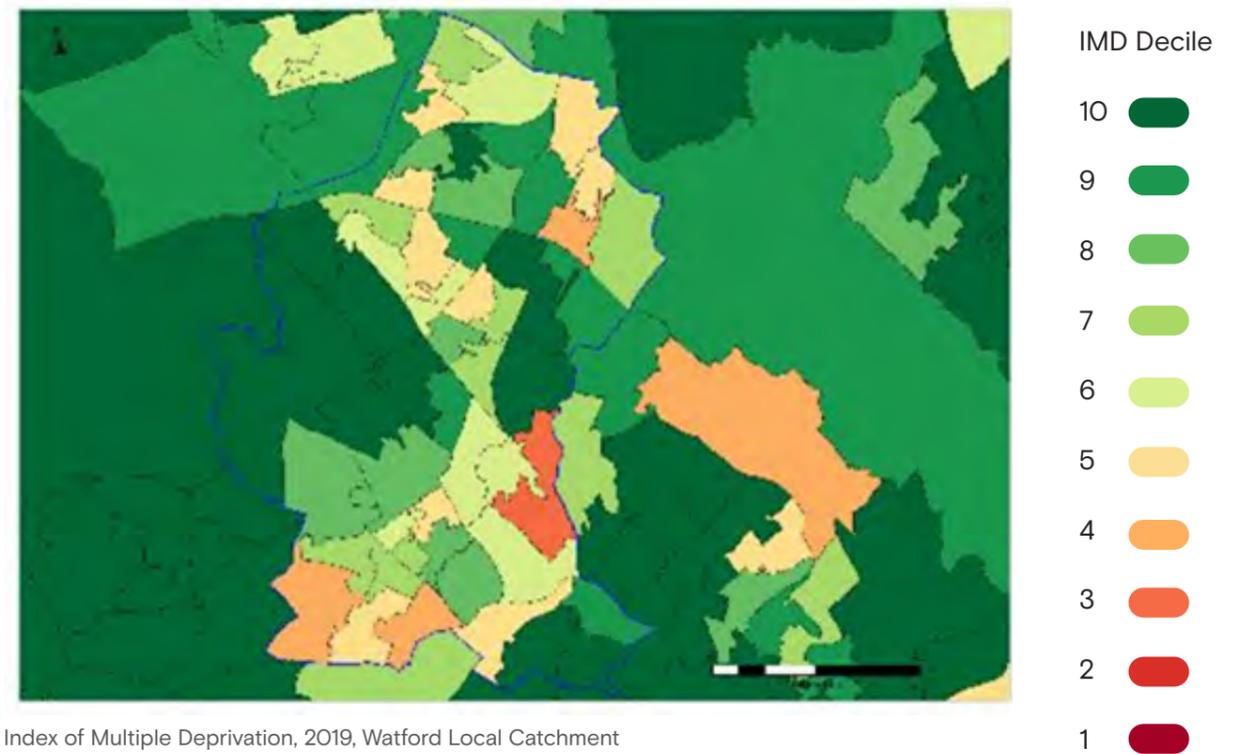
The local and wider catchments are relatively affluent and dominated by people classified by Experian as:

- 'Rental Hubs' – educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods;
- 'Urban Cohesion' – residents of settled multi-cultural urban communities; and,
- 'Domestic Success' – high earning families bringing up children and following careers in sought after residential areas.

In the wider catchment area there is also a high proportion of people classified as 'Prestige Positions', which are established families with financial security living upmarket lifestyles. Stakeholders believe that

Watford Town Centre's current offer does not reflect the affluence of its local and wider catchment .

Despite this, there are also pockets of deprivation within the local catchment and especially close to the Town Centre. The main drivers of deprivation around the Town Centre include barriers to housing and services (the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services), the quality of the local living environment (the quality of housing, air quality and road traffic accidents) and the level of crime (risk of personal and material victimisation).



Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, Watford Local Catchment
Source: English Indices of Deprivation, MHCLG 2019

Housing Stock

The Town Centre's housing stock is dominated by flats, and the residential market is growing with a number of schemes coming forward...

Watford's Town Centre has a mix of flats and houses to accommodate its local population, but the former dominate representing around 56% of units . Most other homes are terraced houses (26%) with few semi-detached or detached houses in and around the centre. The residential market in the centre is growing rapidly with several housing schemes coming forward. Across these schemes there is a skew to the provision of flats within mixed-use developments.

Interestingly the Town Centre has a higher proportion of one person households (42%) relative to Hertfordshire (28%) and England (30%). Most other homes are occupied by single families .

Linked to this, there is a strong incidence of private renting in the Town Centre (33%) which is considerably higher than national and Hertfordshire averages (17% and 13% respectively) . This likely reflects the cost of buying homes in Watford which are higher than the national and regional averages. About half of households in the Town Centre own their properties.

	Watford TC	Hertfordshire	England
Owned	50%	69%	65%
Shared ownership (part of owned and part rented)	1%	1%	1%
Social rented	14%	17%	16%
Private rented	33%	13%	17%
Living rent free	1%	1%	1%

Housing Tenures in Watford Town Centre
Source: NOMIS, 2011



Watford High Street

ASSESSING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Character of Watford

Watford town centre comprises a series of characters, with activity focused around its High Street. These characters are not yet formalised but offer a starting point for the creation of character areas across the town centre.

High Street

A retail core sits at the heart of the High Street, with commercial activity continuing along its length, and with three distinct characters along its length. The southern part of the High Street sits alongside the Atria shopping centre, and extends to Watford High Street station, though its connection is severed by Exchange Road. In the centre between Exchange Road flyover and Market Street sits a pedestrianised area with a different offer to that north of Exchange Road which is filled with a greater concentration of dining and bars. This stretches to Rickmansworth Road, where it links to the Town Hall via an underpass.

Conservation Areas

A number of conservation areas sit in and around the town centre, each with their own unique characteristics that support the identity of Watford's built environment. These reflect a low-rise, yet compact urban form, that is predominantly residential. At the heart of the town centre sits the Grade I listed St Mary's church.

Town Hall Campus

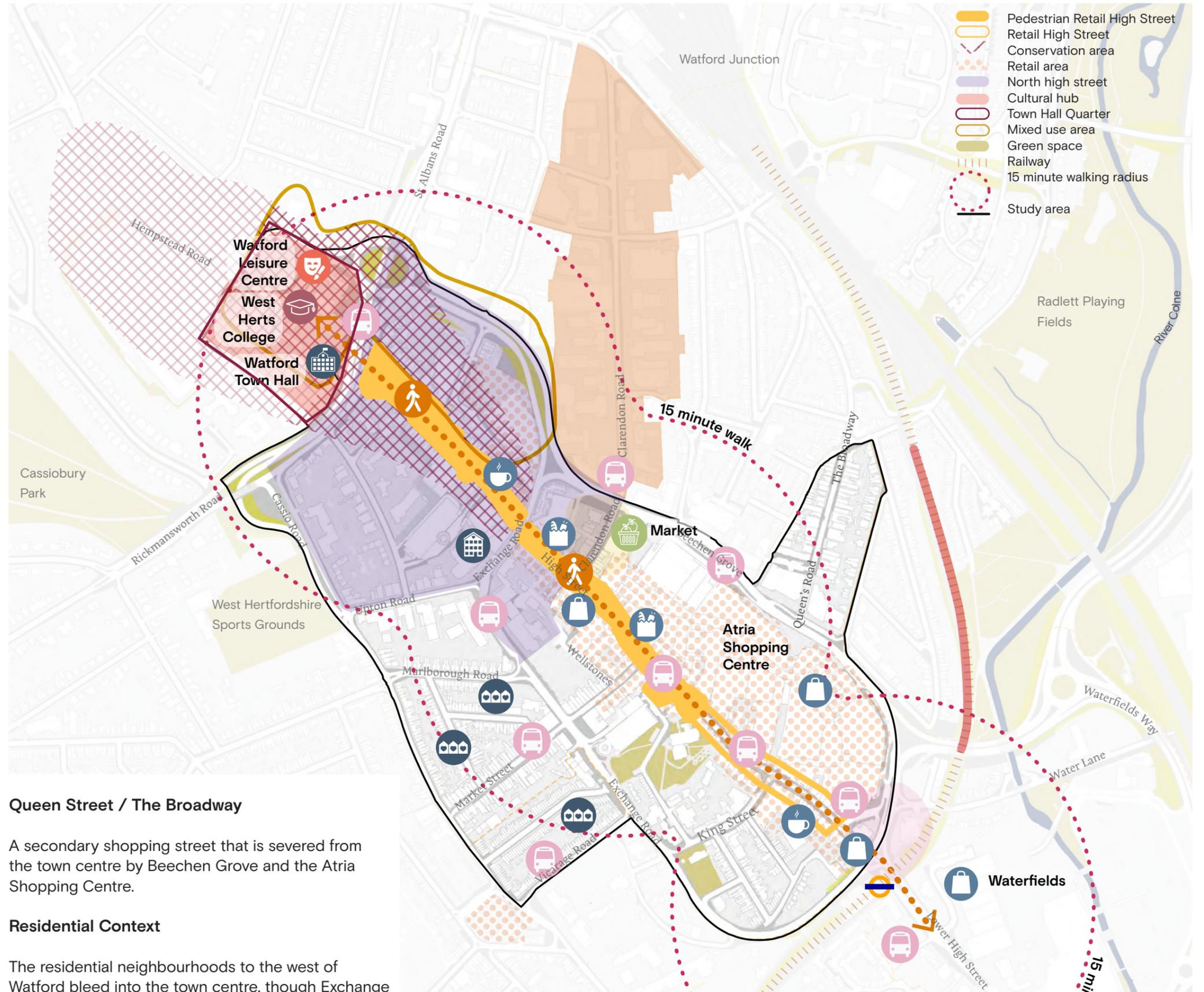
North of Rickmansworth Road sits the Town Hall, West Herts College, Watford Leisure Centre, and Watford Library. This area performs as a separate campus and is severed from the rest of the town centre by Rickmansworth Road.

Market Street

A shopping street perpendicular to the High Street with a subsidiary provision for the town centre along a historic connection.

Clarendon Road

Though not in the town centre itself, Clarendon Road provides an important context, dominated by office uses and providing the main connection to Watford Junction station, 'primary office location' for the sub-region.



Queen Street / The Broadway

A secondary shopping street that is severed from the town centre by Beechen Grove and the Atria Shopping Centre.

Residential Context

The residential neighbourhoods to the west of Watford bleed into the town centre, though Exchange Road provides a severance. Vicarage Road Stadium sits close by.

The character of Watford.

Historic Town Centre Growth

Watford has been well established as an important town since its rapid expansion after the arrival of the Grand Junction Canal in 1798 and the London and Birmingham Railway in 1837.

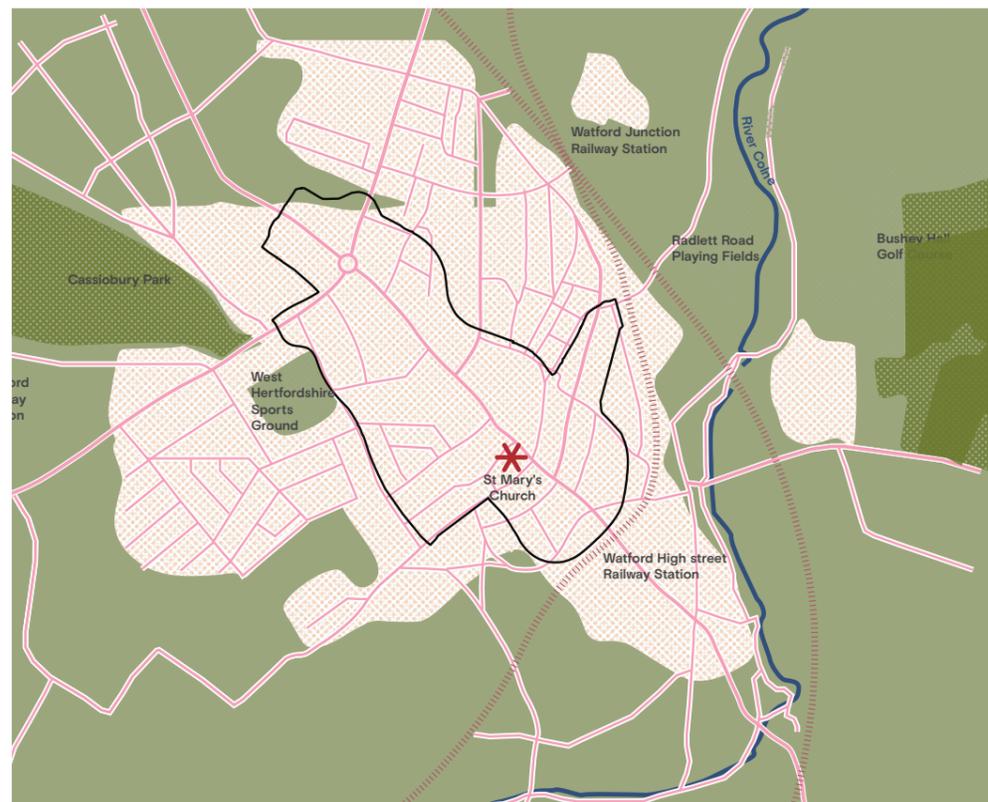
The High Street has long been an established spine running through the town centre, providing the focus of local activity, with the Market Place at its heart.

As rail and road connections improved the town continued to expand. By 1925 the Metropolitan Railway (now London Underground) had been extended to Watford and its connectivity with London was further bolstered, with Watford sitting at the fringes of 'Metroland'. The houses from this era define much of the local landscape.

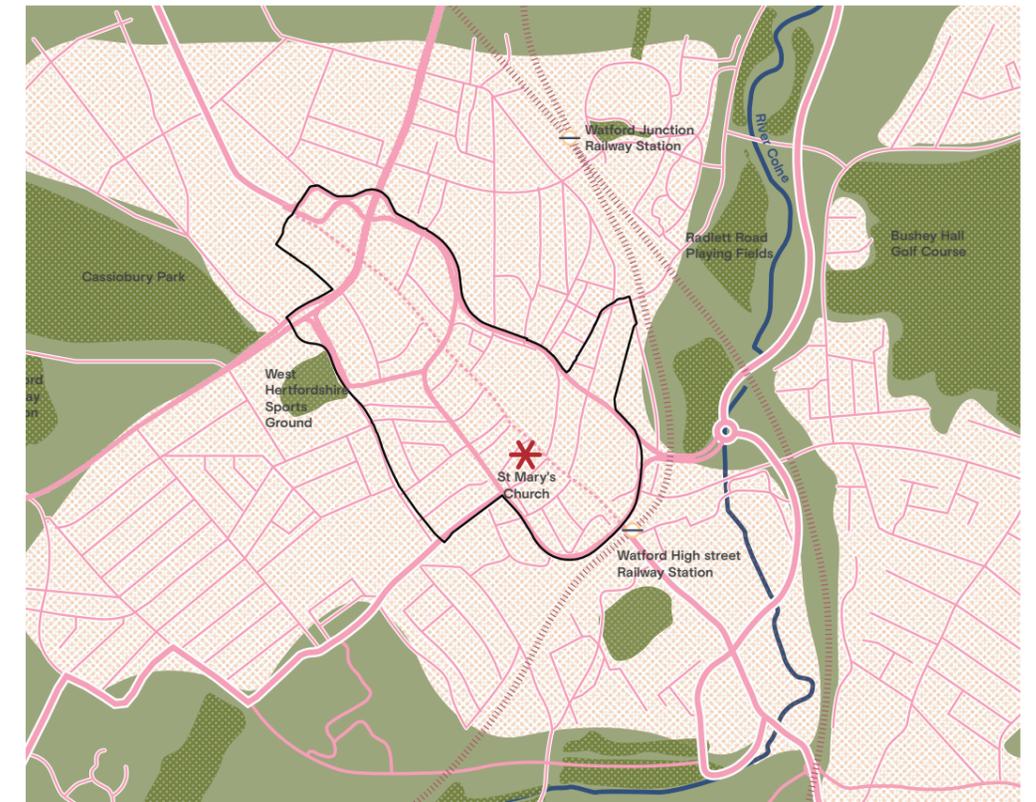
In 1959 the first section of the M1 opened close to Watford, and furthered this connectivity. The M25 opening in the 1980s set a further context of regional road connectivity to support its continued growth. The arrival of regional road infrastructure along Exchange Road and Beechen Grove provided further connectivity to the motorways, though severed the town centre from its immediate context.



1900



1960



2020

-  Urban Area
-  Park
-  Green and farmland
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Study area

Building Quality

The built environment of the town centre has been assessed from three perspectives:

- Building quality, outlining the current state and nature of the built stock in the town centre. This specifically speaks to the maintained quality of the building, with no specific assessment of the architectural aesthetic.
- Public realm quality, outlining the current usability and attractiveness of public spaces in the town centre
- Urban realm quality, outlining the nature and quality of urban realm definition and frontage in the town centre

Shown here is a map of the general commentary on the building quality in the town centre.

The overall condition of buildings along the High Street is positive, particularly at ground floor level thanks to their commercial frontage. However, some buildings are in poor condition, particularly noticeable on upper levels. Some locally listed buildings are also in poor condition, notably so at the southern end of the High Street.



Urban Quality

Shown here is a map of frontages and plot definition, showing how well spaces are defined and fronted by the buildings that define them.

The High Street creates a strong urban condition, well defined by buildings on both sides, and positively fronted for the most part. Streets to the southwest of the High Street are also well defined, with a clearly defined urban grain, though around Exchange Road and Rosslyn Road the street definition deteriorates.

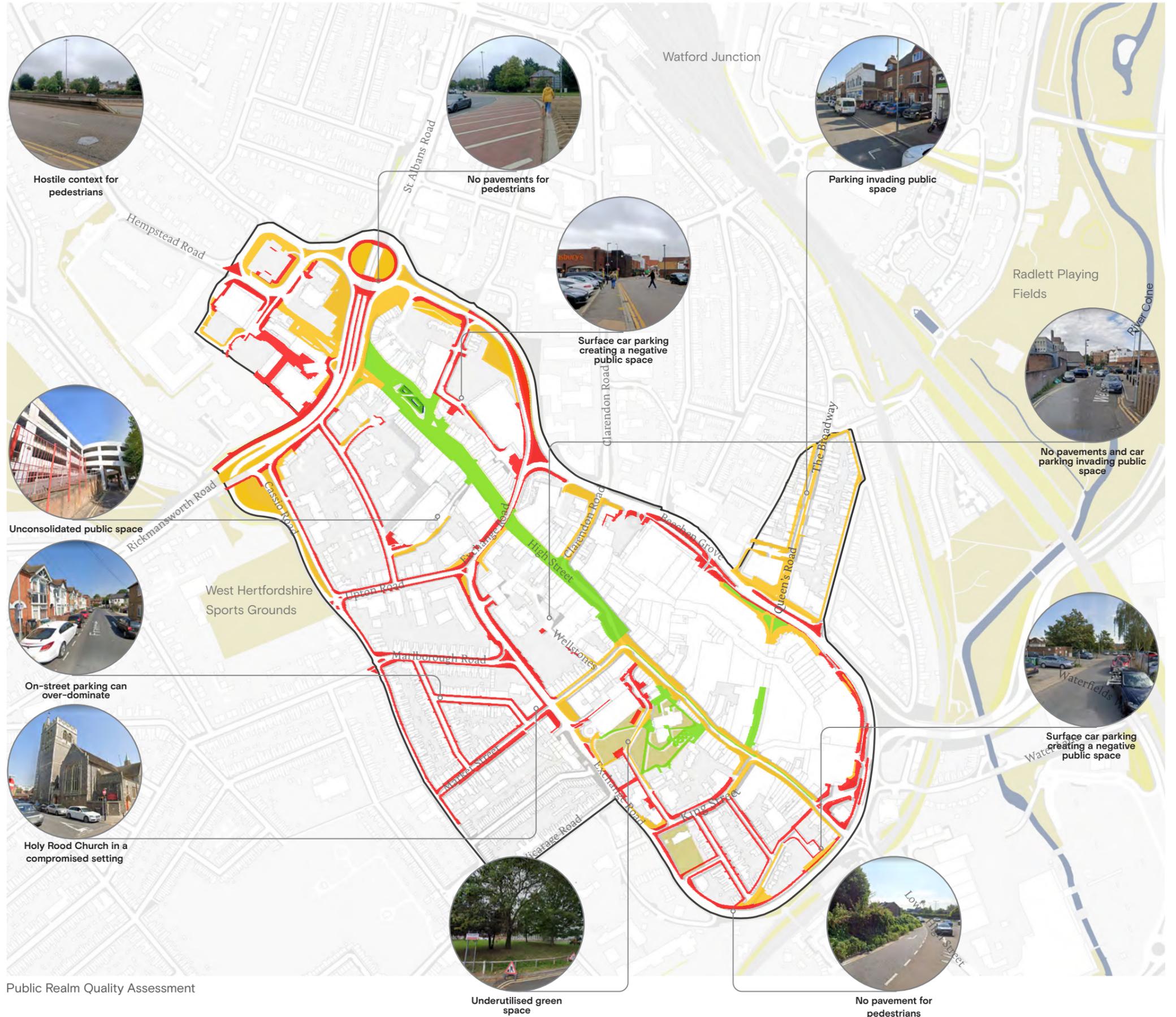
Beechen Grove and Exchange Road both create hostile environments for buildings to engage with, and as such are backed onto in most cases, with the Atria Shopping Centre providing an extensive blank frontage along Beechen Grove.



Public Realm Quality

Various types of public spaces make up the town centre, including dedicated spaces, green spaces, and also pavements and routes. The quality and nature of these is assessed in the map.

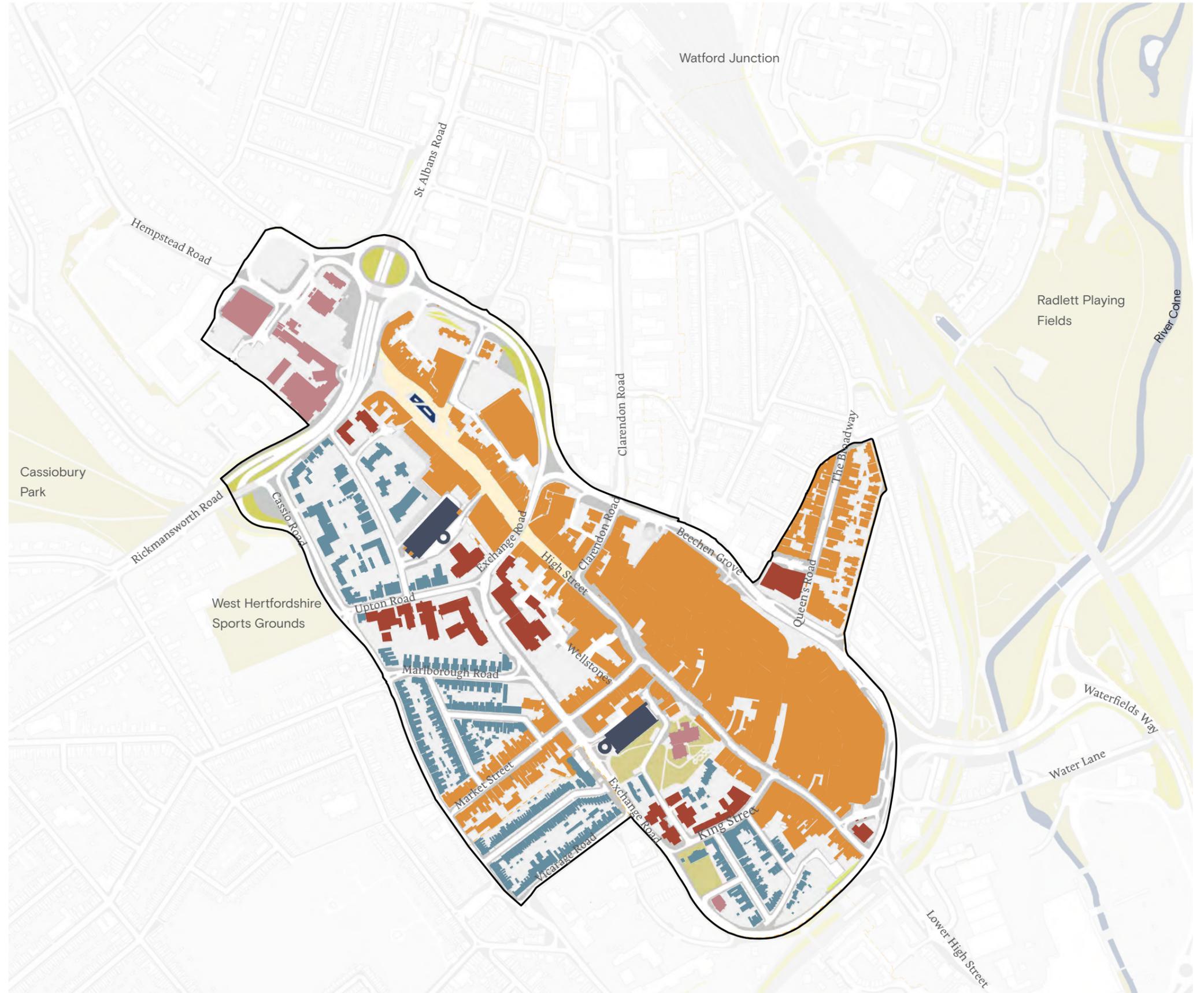
The High Street is an attractive, continuous public space at the heart of the town centre. Public space elsewhere in the town centre is somewhat compromised thanks to narrow pavements, car dominated streets, and a limited provision of green space. On the whole, it is the car-borne infrastructure which dominates, and aside from the High Street itself, little provision is offered for pedestrians either for walking through the town centre, or dwelling within it.



Ground floor uses

Various types of ground floor uses make up the town centre, including commercial, residential, retail, civic and parking.

Retail and related commercial activities dominate at the heart of the town centre, focused predominantly along the High Street, but also along Market Street and The Broadway. The town hall campus to the north is a collection of civic and community buildings, whilst to the west predominantly residential uses blend into the neighbourhoods beyond.



Ground Floor Uses

- Residential
- Employment
- Commercial
- Civic
- Parking garage
- Study Area

Surface assessment

In addition to the assessment of public spaces and buildings, a review of the surfaces and built form has been undertaken.

Highway infrastructure dominates the town centre and takes a large proportion of its footprint. The darker colours represent the highways that are least passable by foot.

By contrast, the built form and morphology of the town centre represents a tight fabric with intimate streets and spaces.



Public surfaces



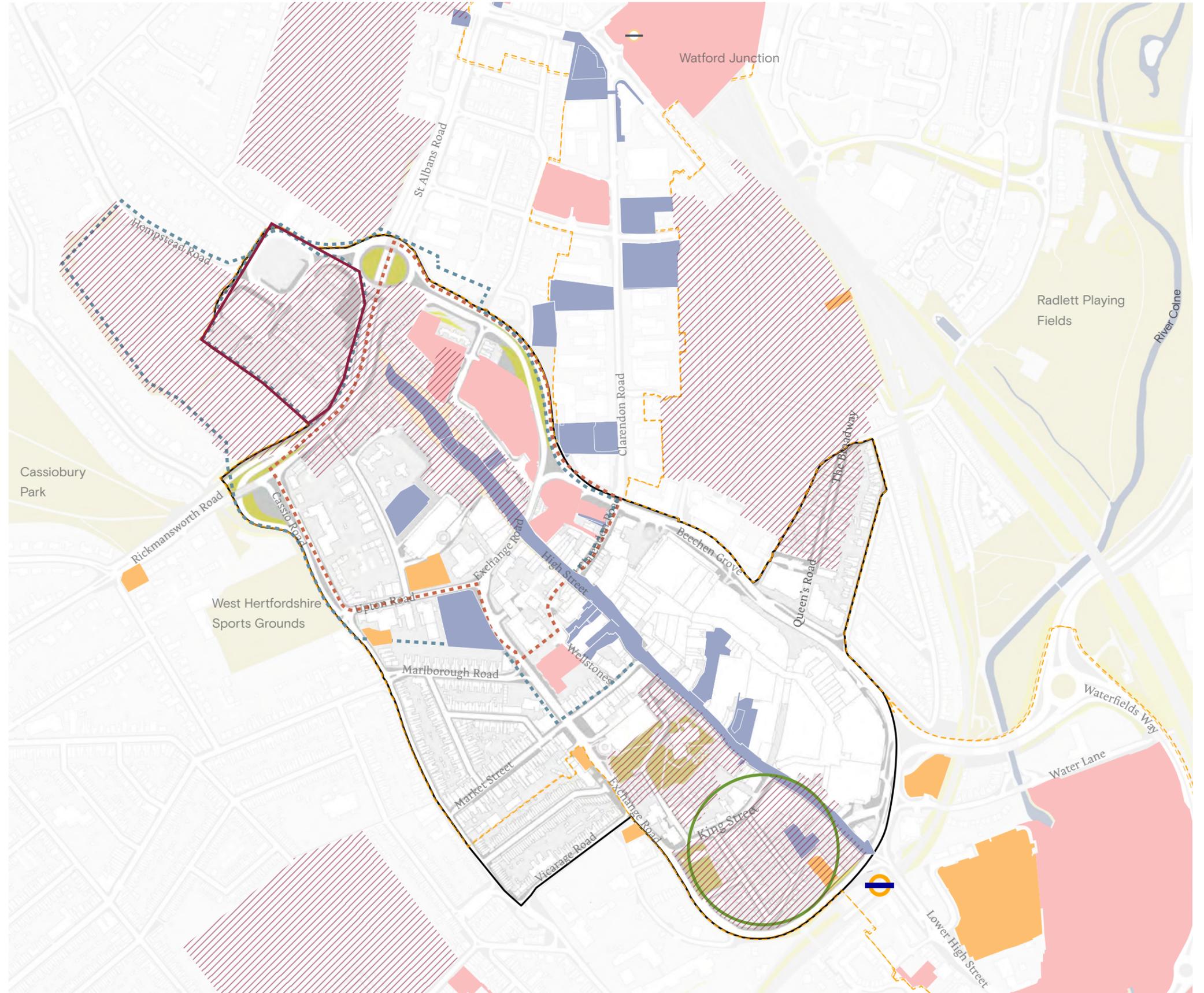
Buildings and privately owned space

- Pedestrian
- Pavement
- Road verge
- Vehicular road surface
- Highway road surface
- Accessible green space
- Buildings
- Private outdoor surface
- Study Area

Emerging context

Watford is currently seeing developments coming forwards in and around the town centre. A few key points in response to this:

- Site allocations reflect interest in redevelopment, and further sites have also suggested interest in redevelopment
- The Market site is considered a potential redevelopment asset, potentially in coordination with the rest of the block
- Proposals along Exchange Road have struggled with how to engage positively with the road, particularly at ground level.
- Town Hall campus masterplan is currently being progressed
- Sainsbury's site has development potential
- PRYZM site is actively being considered for redevelopment



Emerging Context

- Planning Applications
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Housing
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Mixed
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Employment
- Town Hall Quarter
- North high Street Masterplan
- Cultural Hub Masterplan
- Town Centre Sustainable Transport Hub
- ▨ Conservation Areas
- Heritage Park/Garden
- Green Space
- Core Strategic Development Area
- Study Area

Sustainable Watford

CONTEXT

Wider Context

Climate change is the biggest challenge we face and it is happening here and now. It has already resulted in increased frequency of heatwaves in most world regions and heavy precipitation events, which contribute to flooding. The predicted future impact of increased frequency and magnitude of events as well as the multiplicity of such events having a cascading and compounding effect is a significant challenge for future sustainable development.

- According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2021 report, the world will probably reach or exceed 1.5 °C of warming within just the next two decades.
- The World Economic Forum 2020 (WEF) identified Climate Action Failure and Extreme Weather as one of the greatest global risks.
- The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 requires member states to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. The goal includes targets like strengthening resilience and adaptive capacities, integrating climate change measures into policies and improving education, awareness and human institutional capacity on climate change.
- Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, as reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES) in its global assessment on the state of the world’s biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The UK passed the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 which commits the UK to reducing emissions to net zero by 2050.

Watford Context

As set out in the Watford Sustainability Strategy 2020-2023, there are key considerations directly relevant to the Framework:

- The Borough’s emissions are categorised into three distinct sectors: those emitted by domestic, by commercial and by transport. When comparing emissions of carbon dioxide per capita by Local Authority (tonnes CO2 per capita), Watford is in the lowest category. Due to the urban nature of the borough, its good public transport links, a lack of major industry and high population density the boroughs emissions are comparatively low. (Data source: UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory 2017).
- Public Health England estimates that in Hertfordshire 514 people prematurely die each year as a result of ultra-fine particulate matter alone. The main pollutants of interest in the Borough continue to be NO2 and PM10 particulates. These are mainly associated with road traffic.
- Watford has a total of 18.2% tree canopy cover. (Data source: urbantreecover.org).
- Watford has 30 well used parks and green spaces, 12 of which have been awarded the national green flag for excellence and Cassiobury Park has been voted one of the top ten parks in the UK. The only publically accessible green space within the town centre is the St Mary’s Church green space.
- The River Colne runs through Watford and Water Lane, Lower High Street and Waterfields Way has had several incidents of flooding during heavy rainfall.



Flooding on Lower High Street, Watford forced multi-day street closure. 2014

THREE ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Climate resilience and sustainability is a global challenge that encompasses economic and social considerations in addition to traditional environmental concerns. The onset of climate change is already having significant impacts upon our society and economy and without effective mitigation and adaptation action, climate change will continue to have far-reaching negative social and economic consequences.

In order to create a truly sustainable and resilient development it is essential that these three aspects are addressed.



The three aspects of sustainability: Environment, society and economy and how they interact.

OPPORTUNITY

The Watford Strategic Framework provides a valuable opportunity to outline the systemic interventions and strategies that could be used to meet wider sustainability goals. In particular it provides the opportunity to:

- Have an **impact** in meeting the Climate Action Plan targets in relation to a reduction of carbon emissions in the town centre.
- Deliver **systemic changes** that will provide multiple benefits and which encapsulate environmental, economic and social themes.
- Create an **equitable society** which offers greater opportunity to more organisations and people.
- Surpass sustainability and create a **regenerative model** in which processes restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials.

MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT

Public transport, highways and active travel

Watford is currently well connected by regional highways, rail, Overground, Underground and buses. An extent of key local connectivity is outlined here.

Public transport

Watford Junction is the principal railway station, with direct connections to London and Birmingham, with infrequent services to St Albans.

Watford sits at the edge of the London Transport network with direct links to central London on the Metropolitan Line and London Overground.

Railway connections are primarily northwest-southeast, with limited connections southwest-northeast (orbitally around London).

Local bus routes pick up connections to nearby town centres, with many routes congregating at Watford Junction station.

Highways

Watford sits near to both the M25 and M1 motorways, and has direct highway connectivity to the M1 via the A4008.

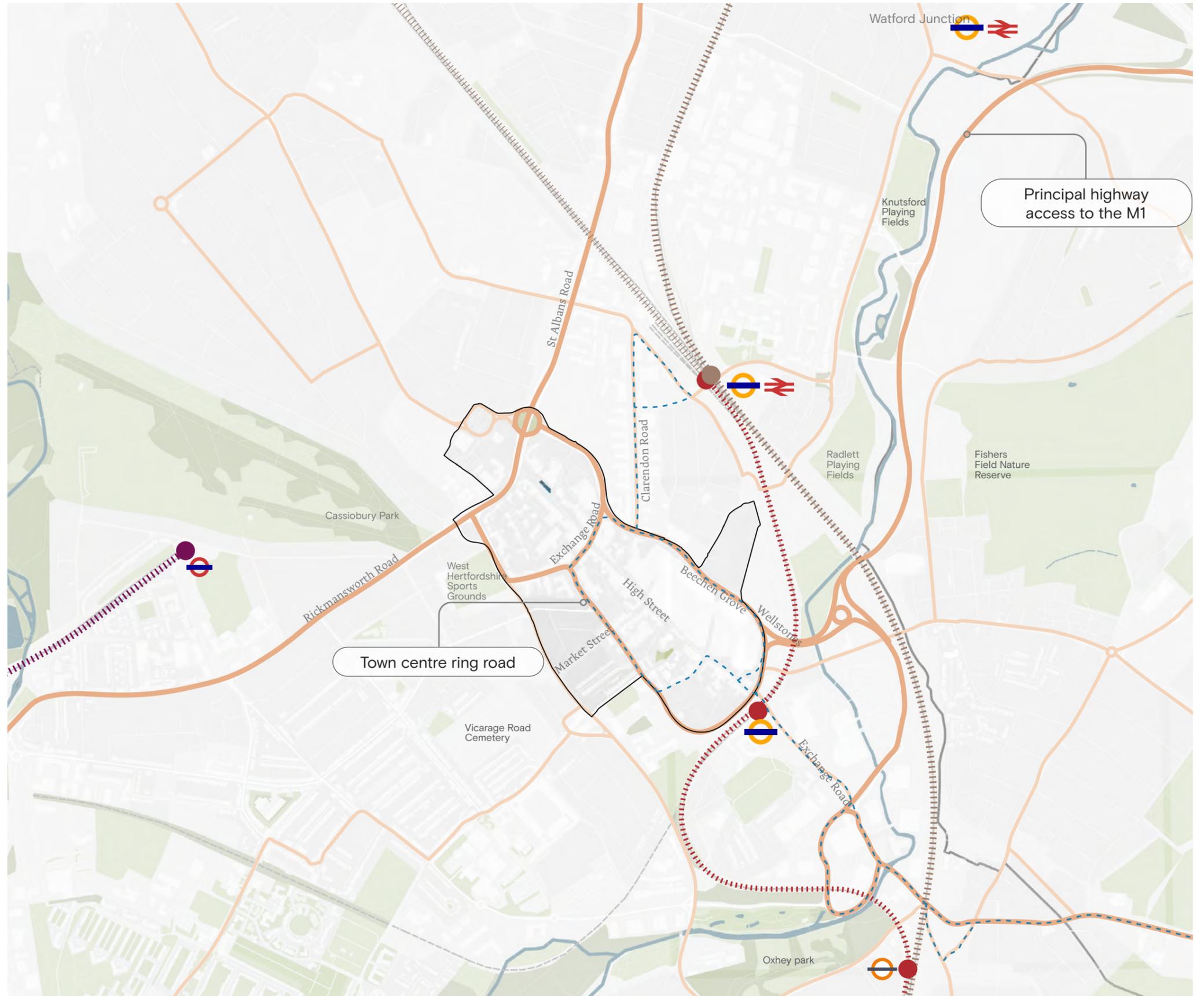
A one-way ring road exists around the town centre.

Active travel

Walking and cycling access to the town centre is compromised by the dominance of highway infrastructure, particularly the ring road. The High Street is partially pedestrianised and provides the most attractive walking route. Walking connections to nearby parks from the town centre are also compromised by highway infrastructure.

Plans are underway within WBC to improve walking and cycling routes, and the Framework draws on this as a starting point for further enhancement.

- Major road
- Secondary road
- Bus Route
- Railway - Metropolitan Line
- Railway - London Overground
- Railway - National Rail
- Study Area



Public transport, highways and active travel

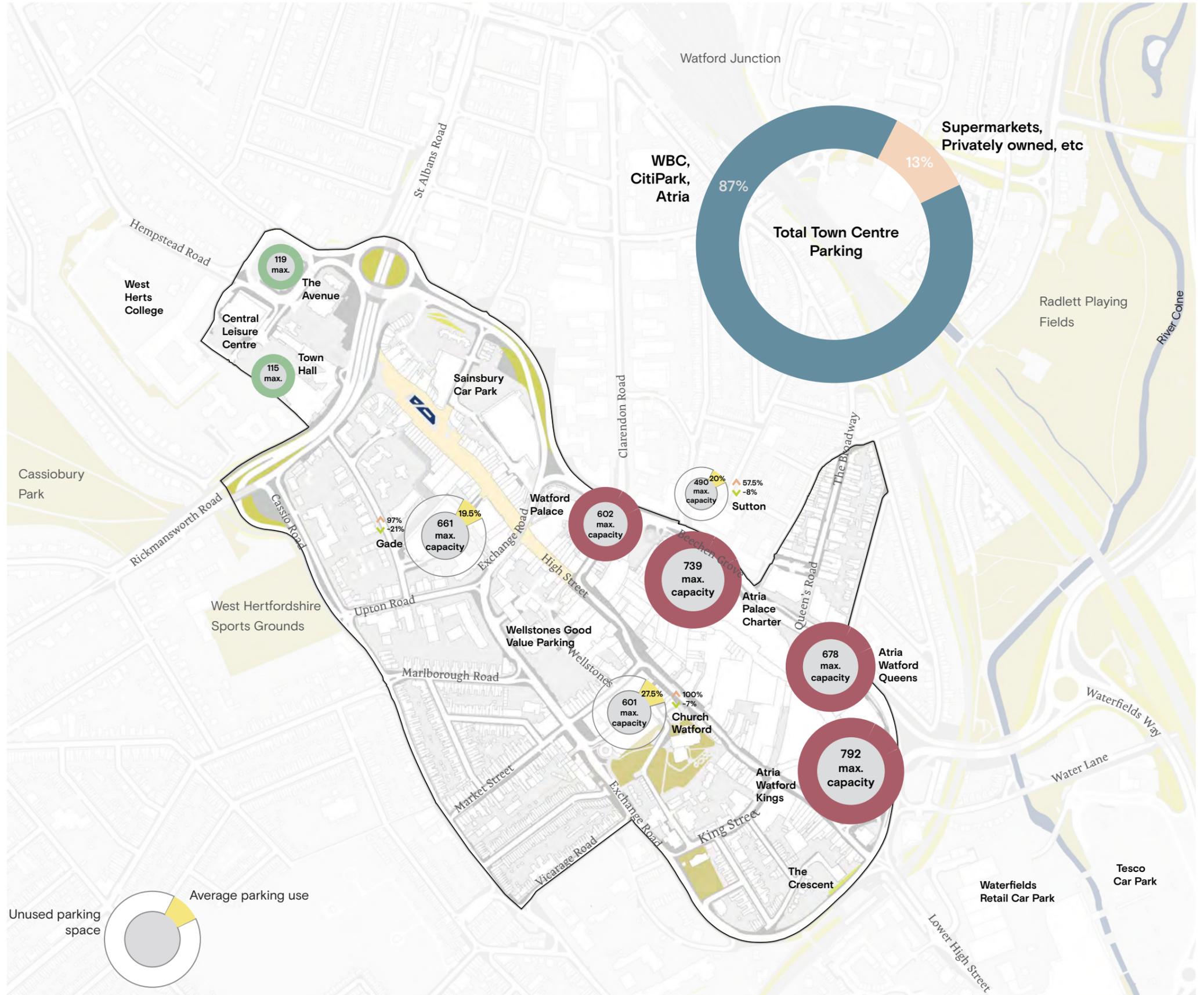
Parking

Set out here are the known usage statistics from car parks across the town centre. Overall, car parking is split between private and public car parks and the statistics shown illustrate only a portion of this total parking. Below is a summary of the findings:

- Average use statistics for Gade and Church Street car parks suggest there is excess capacity.
- No official usage data for Atria car parks, though anecdotally Kings and Queens car parks are better used than the others, and there is potentially excess capacity.
- There generally appears to be an over-provision of town centre car parking, evidenced by the fact that the Gade, Church and Sutton parking lots all have an average use of approximately 22,3%.
- Access to Gade car park is convoluted thanks to the one way system.
- Access to car parks is predominantly via the ring road. The ring road acts as a roundabout and thus generates traffic comprising users searching for parking.
- Atria car parks facilitate direct access to the shopping centre without needing to engage with the rest of the town centre or High Street.

Recommendation

- A town centre car parking strategy is required to assess the total current need for car parking, in relation to the sustainable transport strategy.

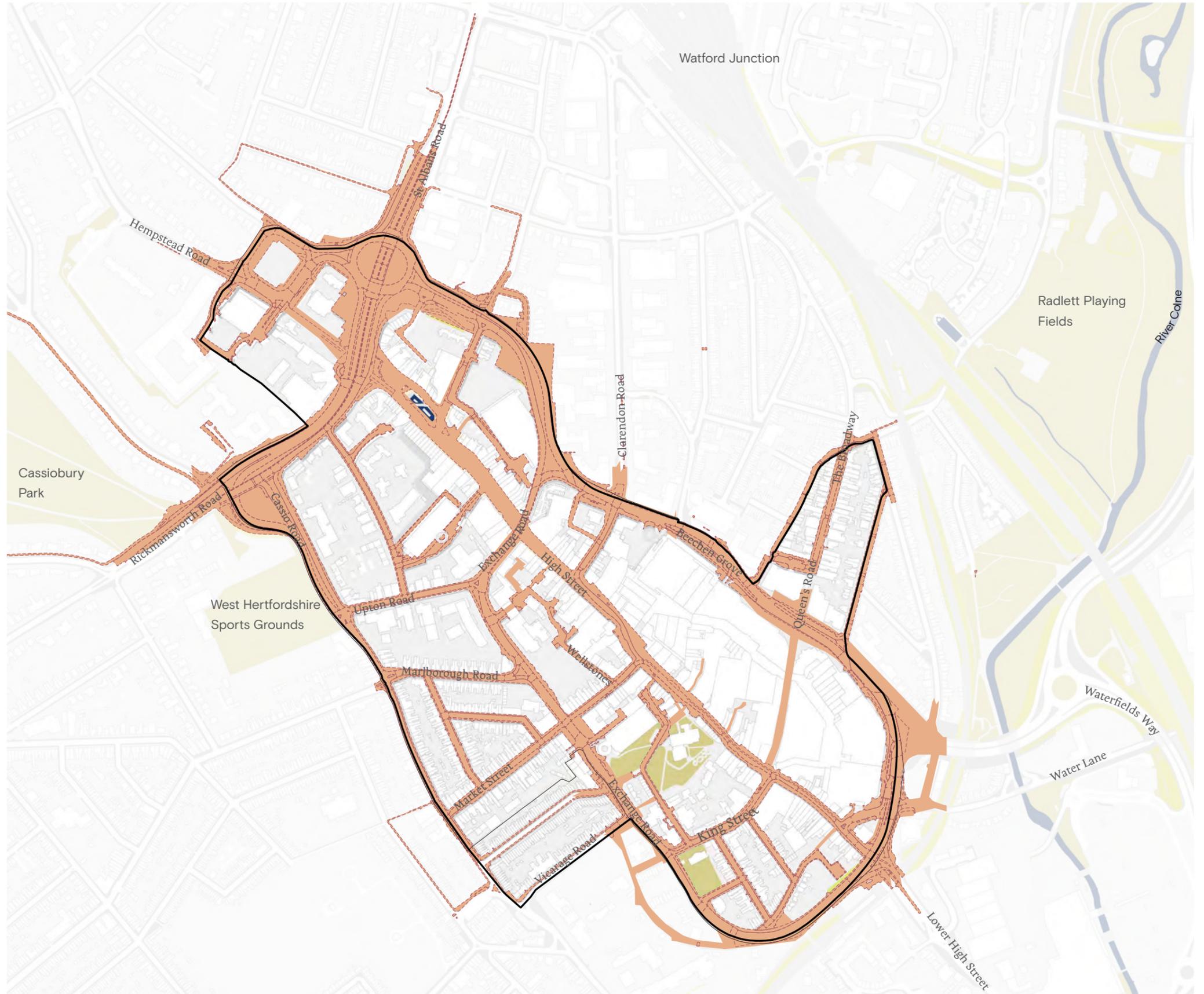


Parking. Source: Town Centre Car Parks - Operational Reports

Town Centre Highways

A large proportion of Watford Town Centre is designated as highway land, shown here in this Hertfordshire County Council highway boundary map.

In particular cases, such as along Rickmansworth Road, at Rickmansworth roundabout, and along parts of Beechen Grove, there is a noticeably generous proportion of land associated with the highway, which could be considered for recalibration, resulting in the release of developable land. Preliminary investigations indicate that approximately 1ha of space could be made available for redevelopment around Rickmansworth roundabout.



Town Centre Highways. Source: Hertfordshire County Council

— Dedicated highways land
 Study Area

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Strong sense of characters along the High Street bringing a recognisable identity to the town centre
- Strong, direct and rapid public transport connections with central London and other important economic hubs (e.g. Birmingham, Northampton, Rugby and Milton Keynes)
- Diverse and varied town centre mix underpinned by strong retail anchors that continue to drive footfall (e.g. Apple store, Next, Clarks, Flannels, M&S, Primark Apple Store)
- Buoyant retail market with high levels of enquiries, low vacancy rates and strong rental rates
- Important economy, home to c.1,500 business and 29,000 employees, which underpins the wider borough economy
- Strong and unique specialisms in higher-value sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services
- Important office location which is evolving through new schemes, additional floorspace and high-profile re-development/renovations
- Large local and wider catchment dominated by working age people and families with above average household incomes
- Significant number of housing-led mixed-use schemes coming forward which will address the need for more housing in and around the town centre
- The Atria Shopping Centre is a major attractor for the town/Watford

WEAKNESSES

- Town centre mix has gaps, particularly around independent retail, high-end retail, fresh produce (e.g. bakers, butchers, cheesemongers, delis) and experiences
- Many town centre units have large floorplates and high rents, deterring some independent businesses from opening. Some are also low quality and require significant investment to activate
- Visitor experience could be improved by enhancing accessibility, pedestrian movement, streetscape, public seating, biodiversity and the diversity and frequency of events
- Lack of high quality office stock is limiting inward investment and employment has declined over the last five years
- Local economy is not as entrepreneurial as it could be, which may link to a lack of low-cost incubator-type workspace for start-ups and entrepreneurs. The town is also well-connected to London which has a wide range of commercial premises for occupiers to choose from
- Clarendon Road, the main office 'district', lacks a brand, identity, amenities and attractive business environment
- Most major employers (e.g. Watford Borough Council, PwC, KMPG, Ralph Lauren, Watford General Hospital) are around rather than within the centre, and are severed from the core by the ring road and poor pedestrian accessibility
- Persistently high levels of deprivation in pockets of the centre that have not been addressed despite significant local investment in recent decades
- Ring road is a barrier to active travel movement and exacerbates traffic
- 'Back' conditions along streets behind the high street, such as Wellstones, create an awkward public realm
- The Atria shopping centre creates a negative urban condition along Beechen Grove

OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to re-characterise the main roads to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians and for new development
- Opportunity to support the ambitions of the sustainable transport strategy with public realm enhancements and improved links
- Opportunity to diversify the retail-dominated core by introducing other uses (e.g. housing, workspace, leisure etc) to meet demand and build resilience
- Offer can be diversified to better meet the needs of high earning and financially secure families ('Domestic Success' and 'Prestige Positions') in the local and wider catchment
- Wide range of sites and assets that could be re-developed or adapted to provide high-quality uses that meet demand, diversify the town centre and improve the centre's appearance and function
- Can build on, celebrate and exploit Watford's history and assets through complementary experiences and events (e.g. Harry Potter Studio Tour, Watford Football Club and the town's history in paper making)
- High proportion of young educated renters ('Rental Hubs') in the local and wider catchment presents a market niche that the housing market can build on
- Significant population growth expected among people aged over 65+ presents opportunities to provide alternative accommodation types to meet their needs and free up family homes for working-age people
- Shift in demand from inner-city housing and workspace to well-connected, affordable and liveable suburbs presents opportunities for Watford's residential and commercial markets
- Opportunity and need to tackle deprivation challenges (e.g. related to housing and crime) as part of future redevelopment and regeneration schemes in the centre
- Car parks are underutilised and there is potential to consolidate and redevelop

THREATS

- Town centre mix dominated by at-risk chain retailers over in-demand independents leaving it vulnerable to the macro-economic shifts
- Significant investment will be required to Atria to help it adapt to ever-changing consumer demand given its size and scale
- Much of Atria is undercover, which is becoming less popular with consumers particularly in a post-pandemic world and as
- Decline in the Professional, Scientific & Technical and Information & Communication sectors is a major threat to the local economy and town centre vitality
- Opening of HS2 and Crossrail may increase the attractiveness of other office locations versus Watford, particularly if the quality and diversity of office stock remains poor
- Expected growth in people aged 65+ will impact the number of working-age people living locally (and therefore the labour market and economy) if appropriate alternative accommodation is not provided
- High take up of the Government's furlough scheme illustrates the vulnerability of the local economy to fluctuations and changes. This may link to the high proportion of roles in Watford's retail, hospitality and leisure sectors – all of which were hit hard by the pandemic
- The changing nature of work may lead some major employers, particularly on Clarendon Road to reduce office floorspace leased (there are two major lease breaks coming forward in the next five years)
- The nature of highways in the town centre, such as Exchange Road are threatening opportunities for development as they are hostile environments at ground level

Positives & Negatives

A shortlist of photographs to demonstrate some of the key findings from around Watford – both positive and negative.

Urban definition



Well-defined and activated street scene
High Street

Public spaces



Central, positive space lined with trees
High Street

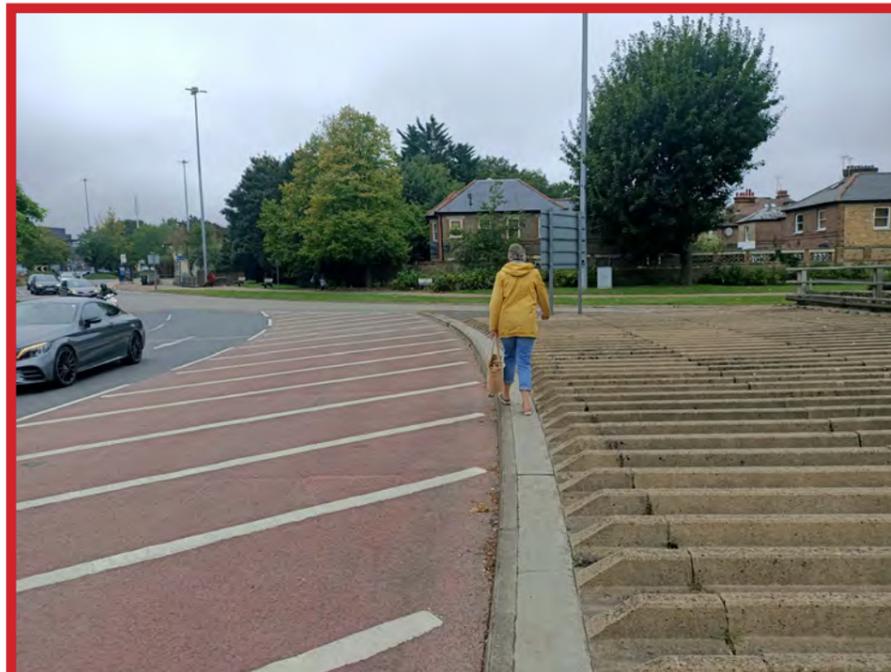
Buildings



Heritage assets throughout the town centre
St Mary's Church



The town centre's compromised relationship with the context
Beechen Grove entrance to Watford Market



Highways as a barrier to the town centre
Rickmansworth Road



Compromised back conditions behind the High Street
Wellstones

Issues with Watford Town Centre that can be responded to through the framework

ISSUE 1: VULNERABILITY TO CHANGE

The town centre is functioning relatively well but needs to improve resilience in relations to macro-economic changes

A key vulnerability is the over-representation of chain retail at expense of independents of chain retail versus independents, services and leisure uses. Positively, this has started to shift over the last year with the introduction of some new leisure activities in the town centre

Strategic & policy context

Policy implications of structural changes in retail industry are to encourage diversity of uses, with less reliance on chain retail.

National policy allows more flexibility in change of use.

The new Local Plan supports increased leisure, and food and beverage provision.

Engagement results

On average, people feel that the Town Centre serves them fairly well (3.3/5). They are generally satisfied with the range of commercial, retail, leisure and food and beverage options available, but more independent shops would increase the attractiveness of the Town Centre.

The current location of the Market is not ideal, but the food stalls are popular. People felt that the Market could be enlivened by providing a greater variety of stalls, and more events, with opportunities to showcase local talent.

ISSUE 2: BUILDING FORM AND CHARACTER

The domestic scale of the High Street is part of Watford's character and is worth protecting – Watford Place Shaping Panel

Heritage assets sit in compromised settings and could be made more visible Many assets are in need of attention or repair to fully reach their potential.

Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan contains relevant policies for the Town Centre:

- Sensitively located and designed residential development
- Active frontages on the ground floor
- Base building height of five storeys; justification to be provided for higher buildings
- Protection of heritage assets

Engagement results

There were a number of comments from the social media survey regarding the loss of the town's heritage and replacement of historic/character buildings with modern high rise. Comments also included requests for the town's historic character to be recognised.

ISSUE 3: MOVEMENT

Ring road is a barrier. Watford is dominated by cars and vehicles and their infrastructure, compromising the use of other modes and creating hostile & unattractive environments. There is an under provision of active travel infrastructure, discouraging its use, with poor connectivity of cycling infrastructure

Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan encourages development proposals that will reduce the dominance of vehicles on the ring road, provide active frontages to the road, and encourage active travel.

The 'Transforming Travel in Watford' strategy proposes:

- Making it easier to get across the ring road by improving existing pedestrian and cycle crossings, and creating new ones
- proving provision for buses and cycling on the ring road
- exploring the creation of a sustainable transport hub in the Town Centre, which will make it easier to switch between bus, cycling and pedestrian travel.

The Local Walking and Cycling Improvement Plan (LCWIP) includes a number of proposals to extend and improve walking and cycling routes around and to, the town centre.

Engagement results

More than 80% of respondents to Watford's Transforming Travel in Watford survey believed it was important that we change our transport network to help combat climate change.

Many people commented negatively on the ring road, and noted challenges for pedestrians and cyclists at existing crossing points, e.g. at Albert Street, Beechen Grove, St Albans Rd and Rickmansworth Road. Disability groups find crossing the ring road particularly challenging.

Landowners/investors see it as a barrier to access for pedestrians.

Respondents to the social media survey felt that the Town Centre is too 'traffic heavy' with a real feeling of lack of appropriate accessible and reliable alternative means of transport to access the town centre.

One respondent commented that the traffic lights at the blue pyramid building are dangerous for pedestrians.

Improved public transport links was the third highest priority for improvement that Commonplace respondents said would encourage them to use the town centre more.

'Getting around' was the fifth highest priority for social media survey respondents. Comments included requests to improve cycling and walking access.

ISSUE 4: PUBLIC SPACES

Poor quality spaces and perceptions of spaces that could better relate to adjacent buildings. Limited spaces to dwell and for public arts and events. Pedestrian space and route legibility is compromised, such as along pavements and back streets at Wellstones and Gaumont. There is a lack of greening in the town centre, and a lack of usable and attractive green space, such as around Church Street

Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan encourages development proposals that will improve the public realm, contribute to clear and co-ordinated way finding, and enhance linkages to key green spaces such as Cassiobury Park and the proposed Colne River linear park.

The Green Infrastructure Plan proposes the following projects for the Town Centre:

- Improve green access links from Town Centre to key assets, such as Oxhey Park, Cassiobury Park and the Colne River Valley
- Enhance functionality and adaptation to climate change of incidental green spaces such as St Mary's Churchyard and Watford Fields
- Additional tree planting to create a green spine, linking to Cassiobury Park and the Colne River Valley
- Ensure green links to major development sites such as Watford Junction
- Create small scale community-led green space initiatives
- Local play provision – natural play

Engagement results

Along the High Street, Commonplace respondents were broadly complimentary about the public realm amenity, although public space in the north of the High Street was in need of a greater number and range of public events to help enliven these spaces. Public realm at the south end of the high street is of poorer quality due to lack of investment.

The Church of St. Marys Square received a number of comments that, while generally negative, were focussed on perceptions of use of this space for antisocial behaviour, and there was an identification of this space as an asset to the Town Centre that would benefit from improvement as a peaceful contrast to the adjacent High Street.

Comments from social media survey:

“The town centre should be a place to meet with family/friends in a clean, pleasant environment with a spot of shopping with maybe a coffee and cake”

“Making Watford a green, safe, comfortable place to be with good access, places to sit, places to meet with friends”

All groups interviewed suggested more places to sit and dwell, perhaps with some covered areas, and more activities. Young people, in particular, were keen to see the Market and the Colosseum as venues to showcase local art and performance talent

ISSUE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL

Noisy and aggressive conditions along busy roads. Watford is not yet zero-carbon. The town centre does not yet fully capitalise on the potential of biodiversity enhancement and SuDS

Strategic & policy context

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, with a commitment to become a net carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The Local Plan encourages development that:

- contributes to achieving the net zero target
- is energy and water efficient
- uses sustainable construction and low carbon/renewable energy technologies
- achieves relevant BREEAM standards (non-residential development)
- requires less car parking and provides EV and cycle infrastructure
- achieves a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain
- incorporates Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Note: SUDS can help to achieve the 10% biodiversity net gain requirement

Engagement results

This was not included as a specific question in the Commonplace survey, but some respondents commented, e.g.

“Reducing traffic in Watford would be an important contribution to combating climate change”

“Watford needs to contribute to being greener and sustainability”

“Nature connection is fundamental to our wellbeing”

“Community makes Watford special, it would be wonderful for the residents and the planet if it was more green/eco”

“The most important thing is to make us more sustainable”

Suggestions from face to face engagement included:

- incorporation of sustainable features, such as solar panels and wind turbines.
- a community garden to increase biodiversity
- places for re-wilding

A suggestion from the business stakeholder workshop was to consider the introduction of a low emission zone.

ISSUE 6: SOCIAL

There is an underrepresentation of people aged 20–30 living in Watford Town Centre and its surrounds, limiting the vibrancy of the town centre and labour market. Pockets of high deprivation, driven by barriers to housing/services, liveability and crime. Safety concerns for pedestrians in areas lacking in passive surveillance, such as underpasses. No consensus on future of night-time economy.

Strategic & policy context

The Council Plan aims to achieve 'prosperity with purpose'.

The National Planning Policy Framework includes a social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be providedwith accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.

Engagement results

Comment from social media survey:

- “Town centre is for younger people, 50 plus not catered for”
- There were some comments on community and diversity, such as:
- “we need to unite our diverse, vibrant community more than ever to represent modern Watford”
- “The town centre is important not only financially but as a centre of community”
- “Watford belongs to all of us, it needs to be inclusive”
- “There’s not much to do beyond eating and clubbing so need options for all ages”

Feedback from face to face meetings suggested that Watford needs to embrace its culture more, with a greater variety of small festivals

ISSUE 7: ECONOMY

Watford town centre plays an important role in the borough’s economy and has strong and unique specialisms in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communications Services. Employment in the town centre has, however, fallen in the last five years which is thought to reflect the high levels of re-development on Clarendon Road and the loss of above retail office space in the core town centre – this demonstrates the dependence of the local economy on its business space. There are also relatively low levels of entrepreneurialism which may link to a general lack of dedicated workspace for entrepreneurs and start up businesses.

The retail, hospitality and leisure sectors also play an important role in the town centre economy. All of these are under threat from changing macro-economic trends across the three markets, as well as the cost of living crisis which is hitting these sectors hard due to rising energy and staffing costs.

Strategic & policy context

Watford’s Cultural Strategy (2019) highlights the need to improve the range of facilities for creative industries, which could strengthen Watford’s cultural offer. This could include the provision of exhibition or studio space on the ground floor of new developments or in stand-alone spaces.

The Local Plan recognises Clarendon Rd as the primary office location and also seeks to protect employment uses in the Town Centre.

Appendix 4 to the Local Plan sets out the marketing requirements for change of use.

Engagement results

The Local Plan consultation identified the need for provision of more flexible workspace in the Borough. This was echoed by the comments from face to face engagement:

- physical space for exchange and learning for start-ups, including digital start-ups, would be an important attractor for young, innovative businesses.
- there is a lack of affordable creative space
- business stakeholders agreed there is a need for an artisan offer, and to encourage more independents and creatives, with a greater availability of start-up space.

Landowners and investors felt that there should be a clear brand and identity for Clarendon Rd, but there should also be an opportunity to diversify the offer to include some residential and smaller office floor plates.

Numerous comments from the Framework engagement about the lack of visibility of the Market but many positive suggestions to improve it, with more events and opportunities to showcase local artists and performers.

Capacity for Change

In assessing the situation across the town centre, an assessment of potential areas of change has been undertaken. These have potential for positive change, reflecting on current development interest and likelihood for change. This map identifies potential opportunities associated with future development or refurbishment. It does not define specific development proposals.

Potential sites for intervention:

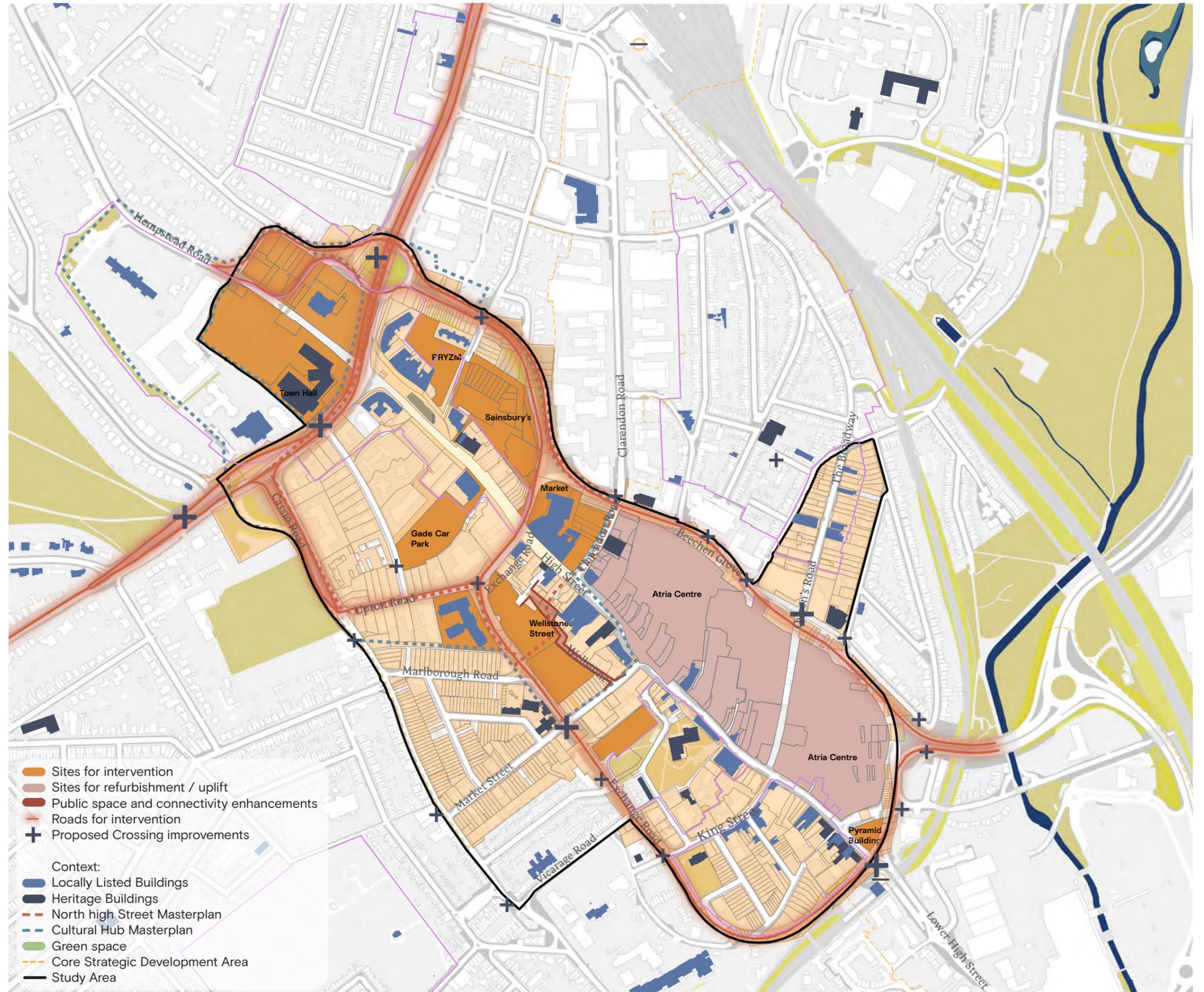
- Market / Clarendon Road / High Street (complete block with some retained frontage on High Street)
- Council-owned car parks
- Town Hall campus (currently under consideration by WBC)
- Plots around Exchange Road (Exchange building, Exchange House)
- PRYZM
- Sainsburys
- Pyramid

Potential sites for refurbishment / uplift:

- Locally listed buildings, and those in disrepair
- Atria Centre

Potential for public space and connectivity enhancements:

- Main road crossings (various)
- Recharacterisation of main roads
- Recharacterisation of back streets such as Wellstones
- Active travel enhancements (beyond current WBC investigations)
- Enhanced connections to nearby green spaces
- Church Street (town centre access from the west and enhanced green space)
- Car park strategy (all car parks considered collectively)
- Watford High Street station / Exchange Road crossing
- Potential land release from highways and roundabouts to include reallocation for other forms of transport or consider as developable land.



Capacity for change

The opportunity

KEY MESSAGES

The key messages that define the Framework and set its trajectory, responding to the analysis, but also the emerging town centre vision:

WATFORD TOWN CENTRE WILL BE...

- At the centre of Watford's ambition to be the economic and cultural heart of the sub-region
- A place where there is something for everyone, truly accessible and inclusive to all, celebrating a diversity of uses and activities
- A leader in sustainable and high quality development that is green, clean and safe
- A place to live, work and invest in
- A desirable destination for visitors
- Have first-class active travel and low-carbon infrastructure

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Elaborating on the key messages, a series of guiding principles set out what the strategies within the framework will need to respond to:

Future proofing the town centre

Future proofing the town centre: encouraging a balanced national and independent retail offer, and a mix of retail, commercial and leisure uses

Boosting enterprise and innovation

Ensuring appropriate and affordable space is available for start-ups, small independents and creative businesses

An interconnected town centre neighbourhood

Integrating the different character areas of the town centre with a range of uses and more opportunities for active travel

Enabling multi-generational living

Harnessing the opportunities that a growing and ageing population provides and retaining a mixed community.

Enhancing the user experience

Investing in an attractive, green, safe and welcoming public realm to encourage people to dwell and socialise in the town centre

A town centre for all

Addressing the drivers of deprivation and increasing inclusion, wellbeing and social cohesion

STRATEGIC APPROACH: CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE

STRATEGIC APPROACH: CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE

Character areas

The map here propositions the subdivision of the town centre into 7 parts, including acknowledgement of Clarendon Road to the north of the town centre.

The role of the character areas

These character areas will help to direct area-specific enhancements, outlining a different offer for each, and responding to their unique characteristics to optimise their potential. Formalising their extents offers an opportunity to prescribe specific aspirations for each.

Introducing the character areas

The High Street is the dominant feature of the town centre, and is split into 3 parts defined by changes in character. These characters are already recognisable set out by mature trees and planting at the nodes between them. The ring road defines much of the edge of these, and the future character of the ring road is an important factor in the future condition for these areas.

Queens Road forms a separate, but interrelated, appendage to High Street South, bringing more independent, local retail in comparison to the High Street's mainstream retail focus.

Market Street brings its own character into the town centre, bridging Exchange Road and forming a primary link to the south-west. In a similar way to Queens Road, this brings more independent retail, though is busier and has a more prominent relationship with the High Street.

The Town Hall Quarter sits north of Rickmansworth Road, stretching just beyond the town centre boundary. This reflects the collection of civic buildings and functions that make up the quarter, and responds to emerging plans for the regeneration of the area to bring more creative spaces and employment such as for start-ups.

Clarendon Road is an office district, playing an important role as a direct link between Watford Junction station and the town centre, and acting as an important location for jobs.

*These character areas are expanded upon further in the character & Townscape: Character areas chapter.



Character Areas

Opportunities to direct positive change

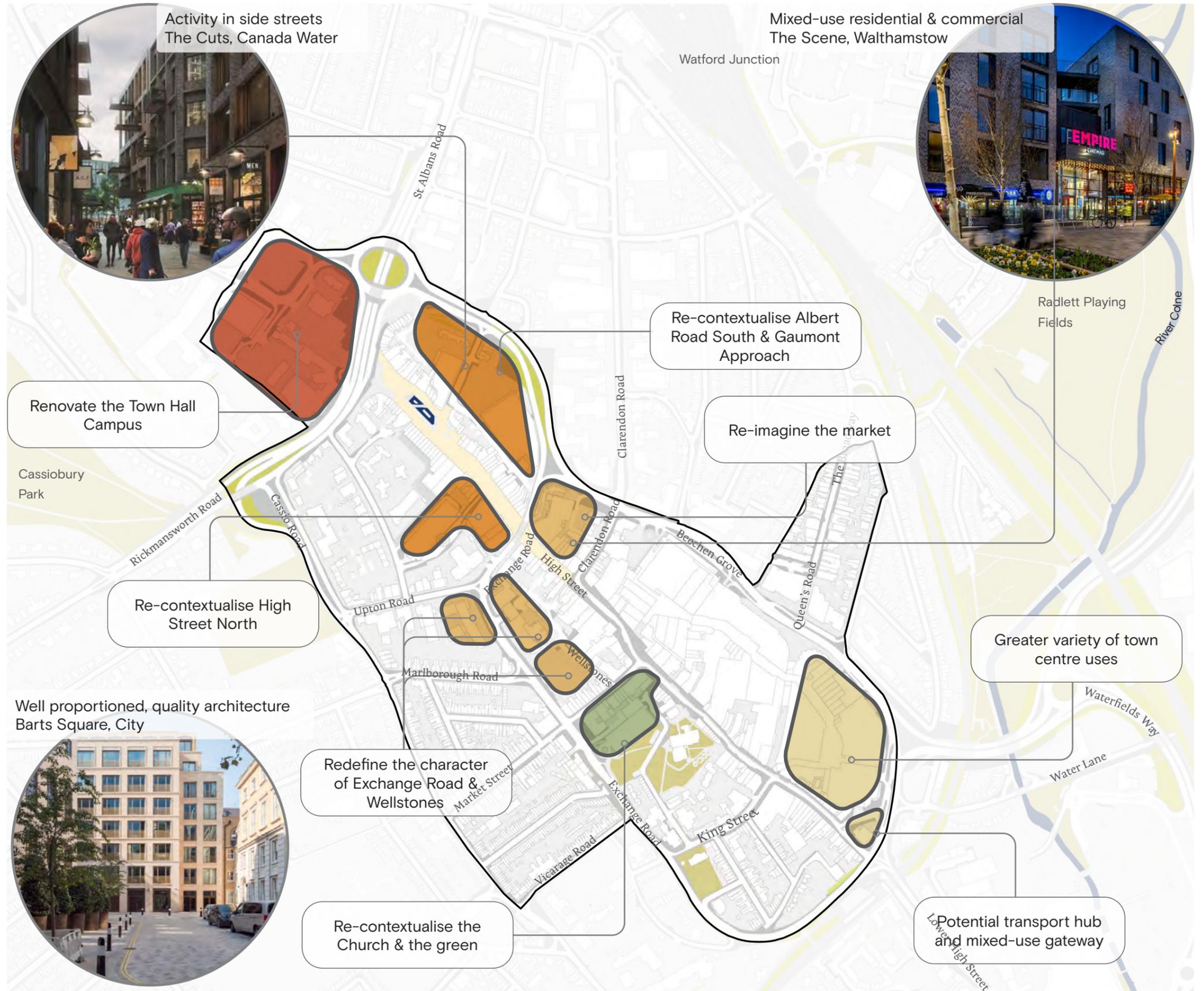
These plots represent an opportunity to positively sculpt the characters of Watford. Some are under consideration already, whilst others may be more complex though equally impactful.

High quality architecture

The Framework is outlining how high quality architecture and buildings can come forward, optimising the potential of opportunity sites and of improved street characters, and responding positively to heritage and other assets.

Supporting diversity

A key premise of the built character for Watford is to support diversity and inclusivity through design. This means allowing for a range of building typologies and supporting a diverse mix, supporting Watford as an age-friendly town and attracting people of all ages thanks to a mix of resources and high standards of liveability.



Opportunities to direct positive change

- Renovate the Town Hall Campus
- Re-contextualise High Street North
- Redefine High Street
- Redefine the character of Exchange Road & Wellstones
- Re-contextualise the Church & the green
- Dedicated highways land
- Study Area

Sustainable Watford: opportunities for energy generation and efficiency

Buildings generate a significant proportion of carbon emissions both in construction and in use. There is opportunity across existing and proposed buildings to respond to broader sustainability strategies for the area. As such this covers both retrofitting as well as the directing of new building development. The responses include recommendations for Watford-specific strategies, and suggestions of how these may manifest.

Recommended strategies to implement sustainable buildings cover four categories:

- Reduce Carbon
- Self-Sustaining buildings
- Reduce Reliance on Energy
- Retrofit Existing Buildings

SELF-SUSTAINING BUILDINGS

Energy generation as part of all buildings

- Potential for PV arrays on roofs and surfaces
- Potential for heat pumps
- Potential to minimise energy requirements and to provide energy on site to help decentralise from the National Grid
- Potential to coordinate waste heat recovery from buildings / uses / sewer network

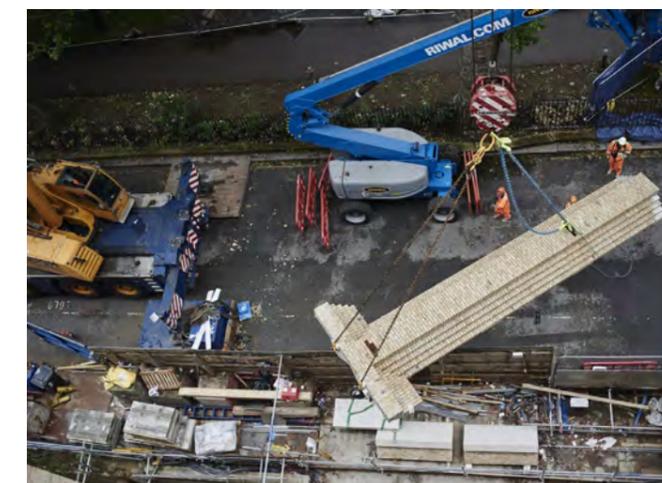
Natural ventilation and climate control

- Maximise dual aspect buildings and dwellings to allow for natural through-ventilation
- Orientate buildings to respond to micro-climate to take account of over-shadowing, solar shading, and passive cooling from building form

RETROFIT EXISTING BUILDINGS

Make use of existing buildings & structure

- Potential to use existing roofscapes and structures to accommodate PV arrays, heat pumps and amenity gardens, even if only temporarily or semi-permanently



Modular facade components being positioned on site



Modular facade components



CLT components being assembled on site

REDUCE CARBON

Reduce carbon in construction

- Utilise modular construction to optimise efficiencies
- Optimise efficient compact urban form, bringing a balance of density that allows for proximity to resources, without relying on height and subsequently additional structural material
- Utilise CLT construction where possible, in support of compact urban form of around 5-8 storeys

Circular approach

- Coordinate building and material waste

REDUCE RELIANCE ON ENERGY

Optimise buildings in use

- Potential for all buildings to achieve Passivhaus standards to produce ultra-low running cost dwellings and produce healthier internal environments
- Opportunity to target BREEAM Excellent for non-residential elements. For shell-and-core outputs a risk rating system could be employed to ensure no loss in rating occurs later in the design process.
- Façade-first approach: high levels of insulation and glazing areas that achieve an optimal balance between heat loss, heat gain and natural daylighting.
- Energy efficient plant and systems, including Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) for areas where noise may be an issue.



Modular construction
Cartwright Gardens, student accommodation
Maccreeanor Lavington



First Quality Approved Passivhaus town houses in Zone 1.
South Gardens, Elephant Park, Southwark
Maccreeanor Lavington

STRATEGIC APPROACH: TOWN CENTRE USES

STRATEGIC APPROACH: TOWN CENTRE USES

Overview

This Town Centre Land Use Strategy links closely with the Town Centre Character and Townscape Strategy as the Character Areas set out in the latter define and frame locations for future uses across the Town Centre.

At a high level, this strategy focuses on maintaining High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South as the retail and leisure heart of the town, but supporting them to adapt to rapidly changing consumer and macro-economic trends. This will be achieved by better catering to and encouraging the presence of independent businesses (e.g. via smaller units, incubator units and meanwhile uses) and supporting a more varied leisure, culture and food and beverage (F&B) offer throughout. Atria has a key role to play in this as it offers opportunities to meet demand for 'new leisure' activities (e.g. Virtual Reality, Gaming, Urban Mini Golf and Escape Rooms).

Employment and business space will continue to be focused along Clarendon Road which will cater for established and growing businesses, primarily in future growth sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services. It is important that Clarendon Road is maintained as area of important economic activity, even as new investment and development is delivered. The commercial space offer will adapt to meet changing occupier expectations in a post-COVID world (e.g. related to flexibility, quality and amenities) and it will become a more attractive and cohesive business cluster.

The introduction of business space into the core Town Centre (e.g. High Street North and High Street Centre) will also be encouraged to help diversify the offer, break down siloed land use patterns and increase vibrancy in the core. This space will focus on smaller and start-up businesses to help boost innovation and entrepreneurialism locally. As these businesses grow, scale and diversify suitable growth on space will be available on a strengthened and diversified Clarendon Road.

New residential development will also be encouraged across the centre to provide much-needed accommodation and to create a new hyper-local catchment to increase spending power. Much of

this will be on the edge of the centre, but there are large-scale opportunity sites in the Town Hall Quarter, High Street North and around Market Street. A diverse range of housing will be provided to cater for the growing number of people aged 65+; the high concentration of young, educated renters; the strong private rental market; working age families that underpin the local labour market and economy; and, deprived people currently living in and around the centre. This will ensure a diverse mix of residential types and products are available for different groups.

Key moves underpinning this strategy are:

- Focus retail, leisure, F&B and cultural uses in the core Town Centre (i.e. High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South);

- Diversify the Town Centre offer by catering to independents and growing the leisure, culture and F&B offer;
- Consider re-purposing, re-developing or re-configuring Atria to better meet changing patterns of demand (e.g. related to 'New Leisure' and other town centre uses);
- Target F&B investment in High Street North, Watford Market and around Market Street given their potential for al fresco activity and existing strengths;
- Maintain Clarendon Road as a prominent business district by protecting commercial floorspace and adapting it to meet changing occupier expectations;

- Provide new ground floor and residential uses on Clarendon Road to increase its vibrancy and attractiveness to future occupiers;
- Introduce workspace into the core Town Centre (i.e. High Street North and High Street Centre) catering to small and new business;
- Encourage new residential uses in the core and periphery of the Town Centre to build a new hyper-local catchment and ensure that the residential mix is sufficiently varied to support a sustainable housing market and community, with new developments that will both complement and boost other town centre uses; and,
- Tackle barriers to housing and community services by increasing provision in accessible areas of the Town Centre.



Core town centre activity
High Street North

Retail & Leisure

Watford has a successful and well-used Town Centre. It is, however, highly vulnerable as it is dominated by comparison chain retailers. There is therefore a need to diversify the offer to reduce the town's reliance on these businesses and to capitalise on changing consumer trends (e.g. increasing expenditure on personal services/experiences, rising demand for leisure activities, increasing consumer conscientiousness and higher demand for independents).

Moving forward it will be important to attract and support independents to the core of the Town Centre (i.e. High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South) to take advantage of growing consumer demand, and to enhance and diversify the leisure, culture and F&B offer. This should improve resilience and attract a broader and more varied demographic to visit the town centre.

The proposed strategy for retail and leisure is to:

- Provide smaller and more flexible units that appeal to independents and more resilient local chains and/or where possible break up/subdivide existing units to meet this market opportunity;
- Introduce low-cost retail incubator units that allow independent entrepreneurs to test and scale new high street concepts (e.g. within Council assets or new developments), either as formal developments or within meanwhile/temporary space;
- Activate meanwhile opportunities (including sites awaiting redevelopment) that allow independent businesses to test market demand for different products and services;
- Support innovative business models that are more sustainable for local independents (e.g. co-location of different businesses in one unit);
- Cluster F&B opportunities around High Street North, Watford Market and Market Street to take advantage of opportunities for al fresco activity and to build on existing strengths;
- Encourage independent F&B to complement the strong chain offer (e.g. with the existing offer including Nando's, Bills, Tortilla, Pizza Express, The Florist etc);
- Support re-purposing and/or re-configuration of Atria to become a major 'new leisure' destination for the sub-region;
- Consider re-purposing, re-developing or reconfiguring Atria, an important town centre anchor, to better meet changing patterns of demand (e.g. related to 'New Leisure' and other town centre uses) and to support the vitality of the centre;
- Explore opportunities to create a food incubator with local colleges to help develop the restaurateurs of tomorrow, and 'seed and feed' meanwhile and start-up space;
- Nurture existing cultural facilities and provide space for them to expand in the Town Centre; and,
- Introduce new cultural facilities throughout the core Town Centre to vary the mix and encourage linked trips (current gaps include art galleries, independent cinemas, artisan theatre houses, comedy clubs, intimate music venues).

There are also opportunities to introduce non-physical interventions to support the Town Centre evolve. Examples that could be explored include:

- **Place branding and marketing** – Following the introduction of new types of town centre businesses and uses, use the Visit Watford platform to develop and launch a place branding and marketing campaign to attract different types of people to visit the revitalised Town Centre;
- **Retail innovation grants/loans** – Provide small capital grants and loans to support independent retailers looking to evolve their business model to better meet consumer needs (e.g. by physically adapting their units and purchasing any necessary equipment/technology);

- **Retail entrepreneur grants/loans** – Provide small capital grants and loans to support retail entrepreneurs with innovative ideas that will enhance the Town Centre offer to activate and upgrade retail units to meet their requirements;
- **Retail business support programme** – Procure a retail expert to provide intensive 1-1 support for independent high street businesses to help them adapt their offering and increase revenue, particularly those that are important to the Town Centre's diversity; and,
- **Public sector asset strategy** – Use public sector assets to test new concepts and ideas to support the Town Centre's evolution (e.g. enhance the F&B offer in Watford Market).



Small, flexible independent business spaces within a historic character setting Pavilion Road, Chelsea

Economy & Business Space

Watford Town Centre, incorporating Clarendon Road, plays an important role in the borough's economy and has strong and unique sector specialisms in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services.

Employment has, however, fallen over the last five years which is thought to reflect the high levels of office re-development on Clarendon Road and the loss of office space above retail units in the core. While economic performance is expected to recover once re-development has finished, these trends demonstrate the vulnerability of the local economy and its dependence on the provision of high-quality employment space.

The borough's economy is also not as entrepreneurial as it could be which may link to the fact there are few facilities that provide low-cost space and wraparound business support for entrepreneurs. Office rental rates are also increasing and becoming more unaffordable for new businesses and entrepreneurs.

Moving forward it will therefore be important to (a) protect existing business space and (b) diversify the commercial offer to suit businesses of different sizes and types. The future offer will need to cater for businesses in the borough's growth sectors, which are projected to be in higher-value office-based industries (particularly Professional Services), public services (particularly Health) and the Creative, Cultural and Digital industries.

It is also important to recognise that the nature of demand for business space is shifting towards flexible space that enables collaboration, supports wellbeing and fosters learning between employees that are increasingly adopting hybrid working patterns. A 'race for quality' has also begun with most occupiers looking for higher quality space that better caters for the needs of hybrid workers that will be in the office less regularly.

The proposed strategy for business space is to:

- Maintain Clarendon Road as a prominent business district by protecting commercial floorspace for established businesses and ensuring re-provision within development projects addressing old/outdated or not fit-for-purpose space;
- Ensure Clarendon Road has a diverse mix of business space to attract a range of future occupiers (e.g. serviced office, flexible workspace, co-working space etc), including potential for re-use/reconfiguration of existing space;
- Encourage a more diverse amenity offer on Clarendon Road to make it more varied and attractive to occupiers and employees, without undermining the core of the Town Centre (e.g. cafés, restaurants, homes etc);
- Enhance the branding, public realm, appearance and infrastructure on Clarendon Road to create a more attractive and cohesive business cluster;
- Encourage and support asset owners on Clarendon Road to upgrade and enhance their facilities so they remain attractive to occupiers;
- Introduce flexible workspace and co-working space that caters to micro and small businesses in the core Town Centre (i.e High Street North and High Street Centre) to diversify the offer, generate daytime footfall and increase vibrancy;
- Identify opportunities to provide dedicated incubator/accelerator space with wraparound business support in the core Town Centre to support entrepreneurs to start and scale businesses (including within the Town Hall Quarter); and,
- Work with cultural anchors to identify demand and need for studio, rehearsal and/or maker space to support their operations.

An important component of the land use strategy is to support the delivery of more business space in the town centre to vary the offer, support growth and help build resilience. To break down the current separation and zoning between Clarendon Road and the Town Centre the provision of flexible workspace, co-working space and/or incubator/accelerator space on the south side of the A411 will be important to encourage occupiers into the Town Centre. A major development incorporating business space in this location can act as a gateway into a new diversified Town Centre and act as the 'glue' connecting Watford Junction and Clarendon Road with the core Town Centre.

There are also opportunities to introduce non-physical interventions to support the Town Centre's economy. Many of these are addressed in the Watford Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025), but other interventions that could be explored include:

- **Inward investment campaign:** Use the Visit Watford brand to launch a concerted inward investment campaign to encourage businesses to take up new space coming forward on Clarendon Road;
- **Clarendon Road BID:** Explore opportunities and appetite for partnerships between business and property owners focused on Clarendon Road;
- **Business accelerator programme:** Create or commission an accelerator programme to support promising businesses in new workspaces to rapidly scale-up, grow and create new employment opportunities for local people;
- **Business bootstrap programme:** Create or commission a programme to help entrepreneurs to set up new businesses and identify local workspace to support their needs; and,
- **Business support programme:** Create or commission a programme to help existing small and medium sized enterprises grow and become more efficient, particularly in sectors that the Town Centre needs retain (e.g. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities).

Residential Space

There is high demand for and limited supply of residential accommodation across Watford and its Town Centre. This is reflected in the new Watford Local Plan (2020–2036) which identifies a need to provide almost 15,000 new homes over the plan period. The Town Centre, captured within the borough's 'Core Development Area' within the Local Plan, is identified as a priority area for higher density development:

“Within the Core Development Area higher density development of at least 95 dwellings per hectare is expected. Higher-density development will be particularly supported in areas where there is good access to Mass Rapid Transport, such as at Watford Junction” (Policy HO3.2, Pg 43).

This is significant because the Town Centre currently has comparatively little residential accommodation as the borough's current 'zoning' of uses means most housing is located outside of the ring road.

Moving forward it will be important to provide homes in the Town Centre that cater for the current and future population. This will help to create new vibrant and hyper-local catchment to support the Town Centre during daytimes and evenings. Key groups identified through research include:

- **The growing number of people aged 65+:** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) project that future population growth is going to be highest among people aged 65+;
- **The high concentration of young, educated renters:** Experian Mosaic data shows that the local and wider catchment has a strong representation of people classified as 'Rental Hubs' (educated young renters);
- **The strong private rental market:** Around a third of homes in the Town Centre are rented which is well above national and county-level averages;
- **Working age families that underpin the local labour market and economy:** Watford's local catchment is currently dominated by working age people; and,
- **Deprived people currently living in and around the centre:** There are pockets of deprivation to the south and east of the centre.

Given the diversity of these groups, a wide range of dwelling types (i.e. flats and houses), typologies (i.e. build to rent, private sale, extra care, residential care, co-living etc) and tenures (i.e. social rent, market rent, affordable sale, market sale etc) will be need to be provided across the Town Centre to meet demand. This is reflected in the new Local Plan which has specific policies for Affordable Housing (Policy HO3.3), Built to Rent Homes (Policy HO3.4), Specialist Housing and Care Homes (Policy HO3.5) and Student, Co-Living and Non-Self-Contained Accommodation (Policy HO3.6).

The principles guiding that should guide residential development proposals in the Town Centre are:

- The domestic scale of the High Street is part of Watford's character. Consideration should be given to creating places with different scales and levels of intricacy, to reflect the urban grain of buildings, streets and open spaces.
- New development should create frontages that engage with the ring road, to improve both character and connectivity.
- The nature and scale of heritage assets, and their social history, should inform the development of character areas, and new developments within them.
- The relationship of new buildings to surrounding open spaces should be considered in new developments, so that the public realm can support different uses, assist with legibility and contribute to defining character areas.

From a location perspective, the strategy for residential uses is:

- To create a new diverse neighbourhood around Market Street and to the west of High Street Central that caters to different types/ages of people. The downgrading of Exchange Road and Upton Road, alongside development sites such as Church Car Park, Exchange House, BT Building, Gade House and Gade Car Park, provide a major opportunity to do this;
- To use opportunity sites to around High Street North to also provide a wide range of housing types and tenures given their strategic Town Centre location and proximity to amenities;
- To provide housing catering to young professionals on Clarendon Road and around the ring road given their proximity to major employers, as well as Watford Junction and the connectivity this provides to Central London and other major cities; and,
- To introduce some housing suitable to older people to developments within the Town Hall Quarter given the local services on offer (i.e. Town Hall, Leisure Centre, Library etc), quieter environment and the proximity of the area to the core Town Centre offer.

Housing affordability is a major concern in Watford and its Town Centre as both rent and sale values are above the national average. New accommodation will need to help address this challenge and actively provide affordable options to help tackle drivers of deprivation. In line with the new Local Plan policy:

“Residential developments, including residential institutions of ten homes or more will be supported where they provide at least 35% affordable housing (by habitable room). Proposals will be required to provide a mix of affordable housing tenures, including a minimum of 60% of new affordable homes as homes for social rent. The homes for social rent should seek to prioritise family-sized (three+ bedrooms) accommodation and reflect the most up-to-date housing strategy” (Policy HO3.3, Pg 44).

Other Uses

There are pockets of deprivation in and around the Town Centre. Evidence illustrates that this is primarily driven by barriers to housing and local community services. Development proposals that can help address these issues will be supported. Local people suggest that, beyond affordable housing, gaps in the local offer include spaces for young people, child friendly spaces and education/health facilities.

BEST PRACTICE Plus X, Brighton

A high quality new build innovation hub in Brighton that offers physical and digital maker facilities (including a hardware workshop, podcast studio and photography suite) and a range of supporting business growth and innovation services.



International House, Brixton

A 50,000 sq ft affordable workspace in a former London Borough of Lambeth office, which provides market rate office and co-working space for established businesses which, in turn, cross-subsidises free space for community organisations and social enterprises.



Kingland, Poole

Ten vacant retail units that have been let at no charge by Legal & General to a carefully curated group of independent retailers to help transform Poole Town Centre and drive local footfall and spend.



Gravity, Wandsworth

Former Debenhams store that has been transformed into a three floor, 100,000 sq ft 'new leisure' destination featuring e-karting, bowling, urban golf, e-sports, digital darts and more.



Central Parade, Walthamstow

A unique retail incubator that offers two high street units and several concession spaces that are available to public-facing start-ups to test and trail new ideas in the heart of the Walthamstow Town Centre.



The Collective, Old Oak

High quality co-living accommodation in Old Oak that also offers a gym, co-working, bar, cinema, events and cultural programme.



Modular Housing, Anerley

Modular low-cost housing that was built within six months on a Council-owned site for homeless families on the London Borough of Bromley's housing waiting list.



Snoozebox, Olympic Park

Innovative adults only accommodation in a modular shipping container design that provides 78 en suite rooms for guests, who also have access to a social lounge with 24 hour food and beverage facilities, free WiFi, TV's and rest rooms.



Skip Garden, Kings Cross

A movable vegetable garden that was funded and managed by Argent as a meanwhile project on vacant sites as the Kings Cross regeneration scheme came forward.



Anerley Business Centre

A neighbourhood workspace in the London Borough of Bromley's former Anerley Town Hall that provides managed workspace for small businesses and local charities, where all profit is used by the Crystal Palace Community Trust to run community activities and services targeted at older and younger people.



STRATEGIC APPROACH: PUBLIC REALM

Characters & Nodes

The primary foci of the town centre are highlighted, each of which respond directly to the character areas, and each of which can perform a unique function for the town centre.

The role of public realm characters & nodes

By defining each primary public realm character, and their associated nodes at points of transition, a series of bespoke responses can be directed. Each has their own unique requirements, and have their own setting, requiring different approaches to optimise their potential.

Introducing the characters

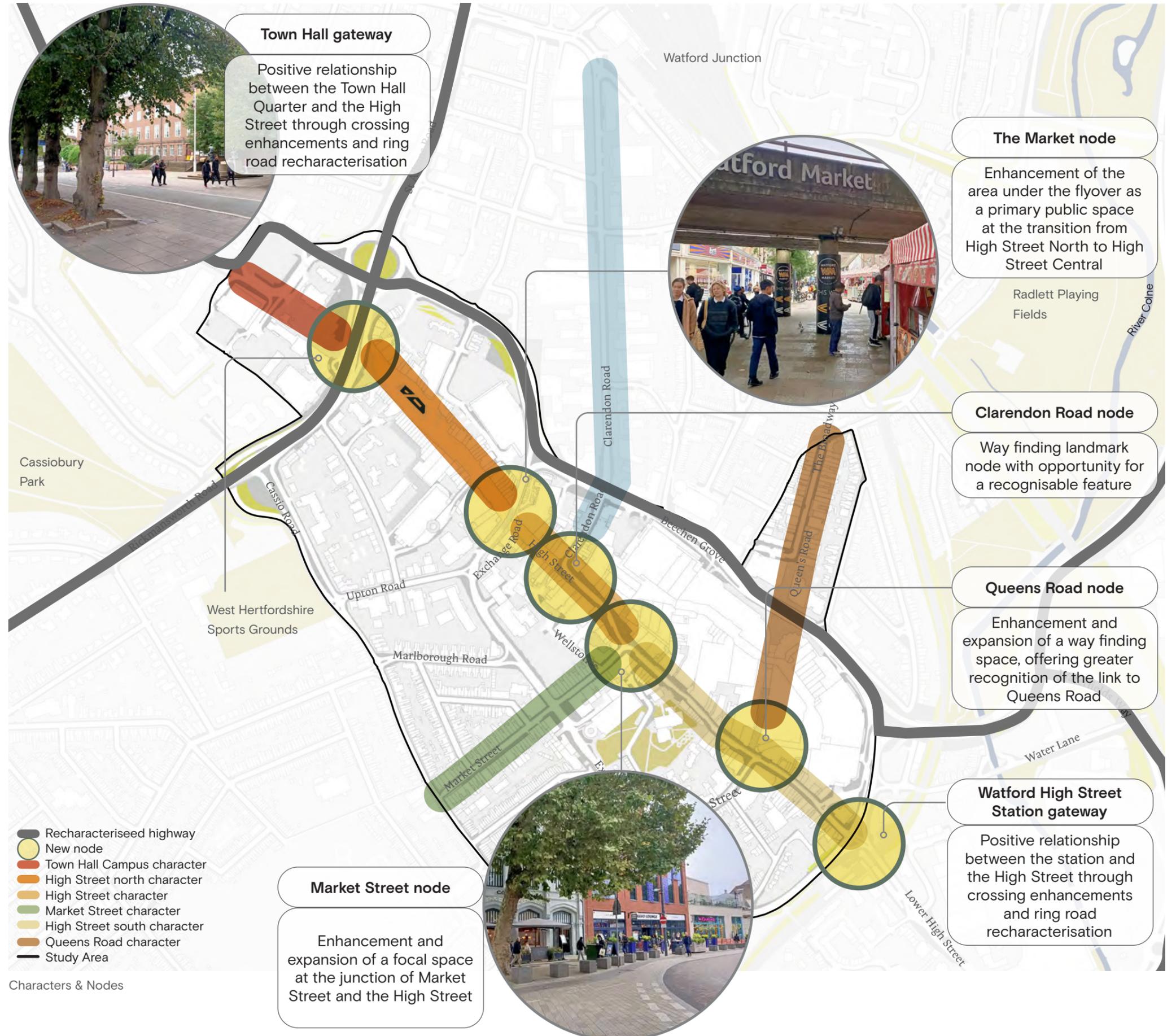
The High Street is presented as a series of characters, with the key arteries at its edges feeding the town centre - the THQ, Queens Road, Market Street, and Clarendon Road. These can each be characterised by key uses that can differ between them, supporting the town centre in different ways.

- Town Hall Quarter: civic and cultural focus
- High Street North: events space
- High Street Central: relationship to the market
- High Street South: intimate high street
- Market Street: new focus on public space beyond vehicular movement
- Queens Road: re-characterised as a core component of the town centre, not a peripheral space
- Clarendon Road: linear space connecting the town centre to the station

Introducing the nodes

A series of nodes connect the string of characters along the High Street and key connecting routes. At every juncture, a special point of interest can be created. Many of these are already punctuated by a mature tree, and the theme of greening can be the primary method to create landmarks with way finding elements, further enhancing these nodes as positive spaces.

Photos of how these spaces currently manifest are included on the map, with notes on how they could be enhanced.



Characters & Nodes

Spatial Framework

Gateways

Opportunity to create a special arrival point onto the High Street from the Town Hall and from Watford High Street station.

Green link flyover

Potential to re-purpose the flyover as an interim green space, and later as a cycling and walking connection, potentially forming part of a re-imagined market taking advantage of a green outdoor elevated terrace.

Back streets and links

Redefine these with new buildings, and create shared streets with greater space for pedestrians. These can take advantage of lane ways, through the lane ways strategy, as secondary connections to the High Street.

SuDS and street greening

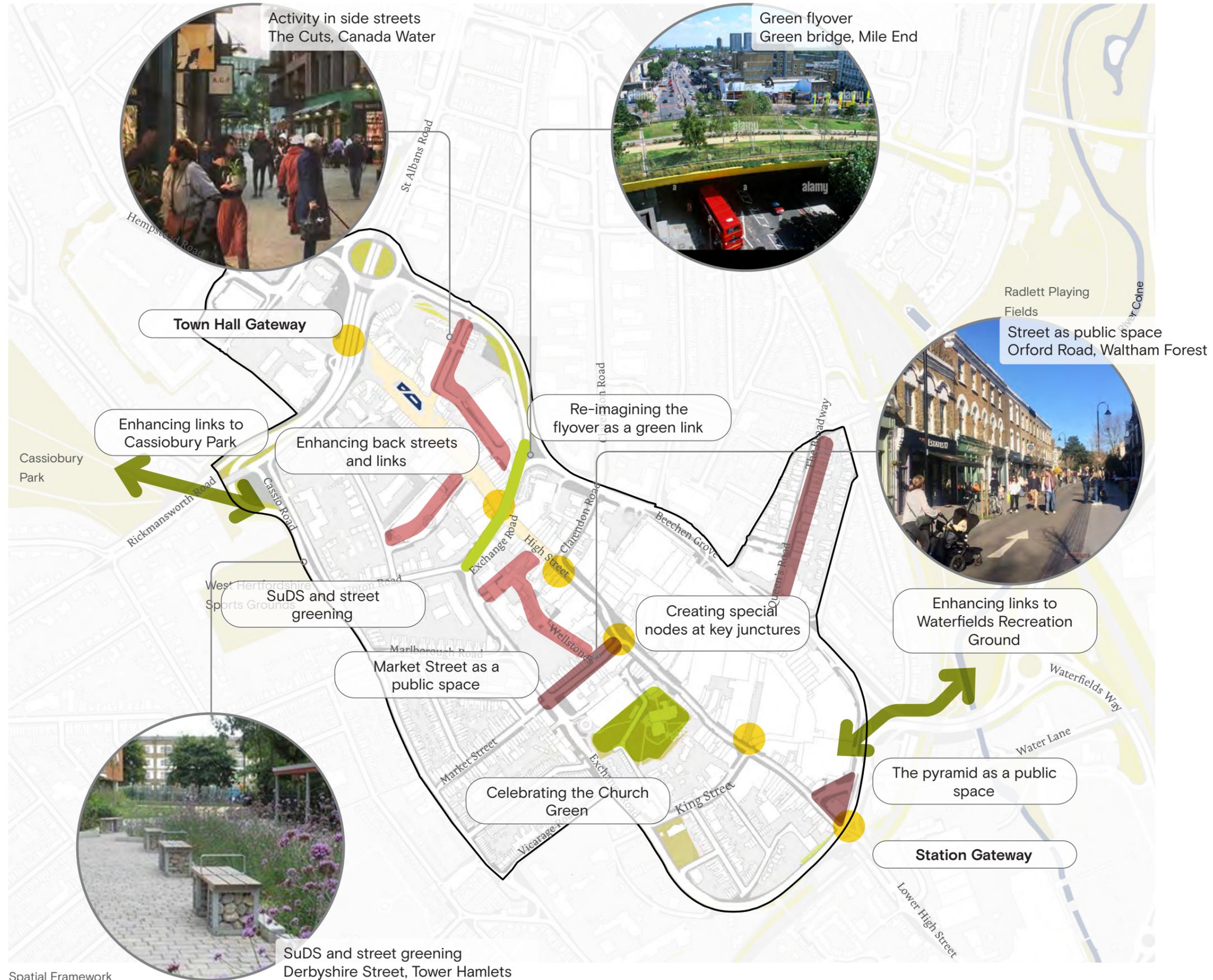
Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

Market Street

Re-imagine Market Street as a public space rather than a vehicular highway.

Church Green

Re-characterise the space to create an attractive dwelling space.



- New node
- ➔ Enhanced green links
- Re-characterised lane ways
- New green space
- Re-imagined street/site
- Study Area

Spatial Framework

SuDS and street greening
Derbyshire Street, Tower Hamlets

Sustainable Watford: Opportunities for biodiversity & greening

Protecting and enhancing green space is important as it provides a habitat for wildlife, provides access to green space for residents and helps mitigate the effect of climate change.

There are opportunities to enhance green corridors, create new green infrastructure, make use of the potential to improve street greening and encourage green space within private development as the town grows.

A key consideration is the mutual needs of humans and the rest of the natural world: at times these can cause conflict particularly in hunting for space, and a symbiotic relationship should be sought in resolving this.

Recommended actions to implement this include:

- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Rooftop Strategy
- SuDS Strategy
- Amenity & Biodiversity Strategy

BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

Optimise biodiversity enhancement in buildings

- Tall buildings can coordinate biodiversity enhancement through collective amenity and green spaces, considered in a wider context and potentially across a number of plots

Optimise biodiversity enhancement in spaces

- Potential for hard and soft spaces to collectively deliver biodiversity enhancement independently of building plot provision



Coordinated rooftop space for greening and PVs London



SuDS as part of public space Queen Caroline Estate London

ROOFTOP STRATEGY

Coordinate rooftop space

- Potential for a strategy to coordinate green roof space, PV arrays, heat pumps, plant space, and amenity gardens

AMENITY & BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Coordinate human amenity with flora and fauna requirements symbiotically

- Consider the requirements for human amenity space (communal and shared recreational space) and biodiversity enhancement and space for nature, through a coordinated approach such as including wild planting and considering light levels within green space

Support the Green Infrastructure network

- New development and interventions should support the network through consideration of their wider impact and of how they plug into the broader network

SUDS STRATEGY

Coordinate a network of SuDS

- Potential to provide SuDS and tree planting within a network across streets and spaces throughout the town centre



Rooftop amenity Pancras Square, Kings Cross



Mixture of dwelling space and informal public playspace alongside active uses Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London

STRATEGIC APPROACH: MOVEMENT

STRATEGIC APPROACH: MOVEMENT

Active travel & shorter term interventions

The map here highlights where active travel enhancements can be made, often in the shorter term, to improve pedestrian and cycling access into and through the town centre.

Crossings

Particularly in relation to the ring road, there are significant opportunities to improve active travel access into the town centre. In some cases these involve an upgrade to existing crossings, and in others there are opportunities for new surface crossings such as to the Watford Colosseum and Cassiobury Park. In the longer-term there is potential for more wholesale change through replacing grade-separated crossings with surface crossings.

Active travel routes

In support of the work already underway, the Framework highlights how the upgrades to the active travel network can coordinate with upgraded crossings and street characteristics.

Public realm nodes as arrival points

The aforementioned public realm nodes have the opportunity to become attractive arrival points for active travel into the town centre, helping also with way finding. Switching the focus of points like this towards active travel will also help support the modal shift away from local car journeys.

Safety and resolving conflicts

A key premise of the enhancement to active travel infrastructure is to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, both from the perspective of road safety and also social safety, to help in striving for White Ribbon Accreditation. One component of this is resolving conflicts between modes, for instance on tight streets with vehicles. Another is in creating more attractive environments that have better passive surveillance and are better used generally.

-  Convert to surface crossing (longer-term)
-  Enhance crossing/new surface crossing
-  Potential connection enhancement
-  Cycle and walking network
-  Priority active travel routes
-  Study Area



Active travel & shorter term interventions

Strategic enhancements over the longer term

The map here represents the longer term ambitions of the Transforming Travel in Watford strategic enhancements that would re-characterise the highway network around the town centre. The premise is for an enhanced environment, with a two-way network, and a reinterpretation of street hierarchy (map below), taking opportunity to remove grade separation. This would create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians to walk along and cross, and for buildings to face and interact with.

An emphasis is placed on modal share, with opportunity to incorporate cycling infrastructure and respond to the Highway Code prioritisation for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in this town centre environment. This can be supported through the recharacterisation of roads to focus on active travel rather than primarily vehicles, creating a more positive setting for buildings and public spaces as well.

Cycling infrastructure is being considered further within WBC, and this strategic approach is designed to accommodate and support the forthcoming short term cycling infrastructure upgrades.

-  Reallocate portion of highway & create developable plots
-  Urban boulevard: re-characterise highway as a primary route but with narrower carriageways, becoming 2-way, incorporating street trees and crossings
-  Urban street: re-characterise as a secondary route and incorporate street greening and regular crossings
-  Remove grade-separation and create an urban boulevard with regular crossings

The strategic proposed primary route network below highlights the potential to reconfigure the ring road with two-way connections. These must also be re-characterised and must accommodate other modes.



Strategic enhancements over the longer term

Sustainable Watford: Low impact travel and movement infrastructure

Lifestyle carbon emissions are in a large part related to travel and air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. Road transport is the biggest source of nitrogen dioxide in the UK and utilises large amounts of land.

Through these approaches, the Framework promotes the commitment to a modal shift away from private car use towards active travel. This can be supported by a shift toward electric vehicles, better public transport access and promoting active forms of town centre travel including for delivery.

Recommended strategies to implement this include:

- Supporting cycling culture
- Promoting electric vehicles
- Promoting modal shift
- Low impact deliveries

PROMOTING ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Electric vehicle charging

- Potential to promote EV charging for car sharing schemes and taxis, discouraging increased private car use

Bi-directional charging

- Potential to harness EVs as a battery store for excess renewable energy

Electric buses & heavy vehicles

- Potential for a hydrogen energy solution for buses and heavy vehicles, avoiding reliance on batteries and charging times



Cargo bike delivery
London



Attractive bike infrastructure
The Netherlands

SUPPORTING A CYCLING CULTURE

Cargo bike facilities

- Streetscape provision for formal drop-off and pick-up space for cargo bikes

Private bike storage

- Bike storage should be attractive and easily accessible

Public bike storage

- The streetscape should accommodate formal generous temporary bike storage

PROMOTING MODAL SHIFT

Car sharing

- Provide spaces for car sharing initiatives and discourage private car ownership

Cycle infrastructure

- Accommodate safe cycling infrastructure across the town

Attractive walking environment

- Public realm enhancements and street enhancements to focus on improving the environment for pedestrians

LOW IMPACT TOWN CENTRE DELIVERIES

Cargo bikes for last mile delivery

- Support shift from reliance on heavy vehicles for town centre delivery with supporting facilities

Coordinated timing for heavy deliveries

- Increase the safety and attractiveness of streets in the town centre at busy times, by only allowing heavy vehicles into the town centre at specific times



Cycle parking infrastructure
Edmonton Green, London

CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE: CHARACTER AREAS

CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE: CHARACTER AREAS

Town Hall Quarter: civic and cultural focus

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Town Hall Quarter is characterised by a cluster of institutional buildings on public sector owned land. The area, except the Avenue Car Park, is part of the Civic Core Conservation Area and consists of many heritage buildings such as the Town Hall, Watford Library and the Colosseum. The historical setting for many of these buildings is diminished by surrounding car parks and wide roads.

Access to this area from the rest of the town centre and the High Street is limited and challenging for active travellers across the Rickmansworth Road underpass.

CHALLENGES

- The area is severed from the town centre by Rickmansworth Road.
- The overly wide highways occupy much needed developable land.
- Limited active travel crossings across highways.
- Large swathes of car parking reduces the quality of the public space and setting of the historic buildings.
- The buildings are also isolated from one another by vehicular infrastructure, reducing the cohesiveness of the campus.
- The nature of Rickmansworth Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The area has the potential to contribute to a thriving new town centre, with a stronger civic identity, new homes, employment and public space, underpinned by a revitalised creative, cultural and heritage offer. The transformation of the area can also enhance existing heritage assets and improve their context.

In the longer term, there is opportunity to re-characterise the surrounding highways and roads, to reallocate for other forms of transport or consider as developable land, connecting the campus more successfully to the High Street across Rickmansworth Road, creating a more positive edge and outlook, and gaining further area for development and spaces such as around the roundabout. This will also

improve the public environment and help increase active travel mobility.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

- Renovate heritage assets.
- Enhance the setting of the historic buildings public space upgrades.
- Potential to develop and intensify site area regained from highway land, coordinating with town hall campus masterplan redevelopments.
- Create a multi-use public space outside the Library providing opportunity for outside space to dwell.
- Potential to develop & intensify site area regained from highway land, coordinating with town hall campus masterplan redevelopments

Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Town Hall Quarter crossing between the High Street and the Town Hall Quarter to facilitate surface level active travel movement between the two areas.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.
- Create a crossing to Cassiobury Park across Rickmansworth Road

Movement

- Create active travel network across the campus
- Create new at-grade connections across surrounding highways
- Reconfigure highways to remove grade separation and reduce width in order to improve the setting of the campus, gain developable land, and encourage active travel.



Case Studies

BONN SQUARE, OXFORD BY GRAEME MASSIE ARCHITECTS



© Graeme Massie

Public spaces for dwelling around the town hall.

The public space provides an open space for the students and staff, the city centre with limited public space. In retaining that which is essential and of historic value, and by folding a taut sandstone surface over its currently fragmented extent, the resultant space achieves a spatial clarity and a dialogue with the material fabric of Oxford, while multiple surface textures allows for a subtle patterning and articulation of both anticipated usage and historic land ownership boundaries.

ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER TOWN HALL BY PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE AND OFFICE FOR CRAFTED ARCHITECTURE



© Monika Lukasik

Public spaces for cultural events and festivals.

Albert Square provides a public space that is an enhanced 'destination' and setting for the Town Hall, celebrating the heritage architecture of the building. It provides a high quality public space, that is inclusive and accessible. Access to the square is through walking, cycling and use of public transport, Green space to enhances the experience of the space and achieves carbon reduction objectives whilst framing focal points and key views.

WALTHAM FOREST TOWN HALL MASTERPLAN MACCREANOR LAVINGTON ARCHITECTS + GORT SCOTT



© Gort Scott

Town Hall recharacterisation

The masterplan aims to transform the existing Town Hall campus into a mixed use place orientated around biodiverse green space, culture, civic society and workspace, alongside a significant number of new homes. The area encompasses the Civic buildings, workspace and Assembly Hall, including the re-imagination and reconfiguration of the Grade II Listed existing Town Hall.

High Street North: retail heart

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The northern part of Watford High Street is currently characterised by a retail core with some leisure and night time activity. The High Street runs through the centre of the area and contains a quality public route, with seating, trees and landscaping and a water feature (The Pond).

The buildings flanking the High Street are a mix of 2-3 storey historic and contemporary buildings, with a retail ground floor and residential or commercial above. The areas beyond the High Street consist of a mix of commercial and residential uses. Gade Car Park and the Sainsbury's are significant buildings that utilise large parcels of land with a single use.

The character area is bound by Rickmansworth Road to the north, Rosslyn Road to the west, Exchange Road to the south and Beechen Grove to the east.

CHALLENGES

- The area is severed from the Town Hall Campus by Rickmansworth Road and from the northeast by Beechen Grove.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Rickmansworth Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook.
- Vehicular infrastructure dominates around Albert Road with large areas given to surface parking.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The northern gateway has the potential to enhance the existing qualities of the character area through mixed use development, including residential, retail and commercial uses, but also to bolster its role as an evening and night-time focus of the town centre.

Streets behind the High Street such as Albert Road have opportunity to be positively re-characterised with active uses.

There is potential to connect more positively to Clarendon Road across Beechen Grove, and towards the Town Hall Quarter to the north.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

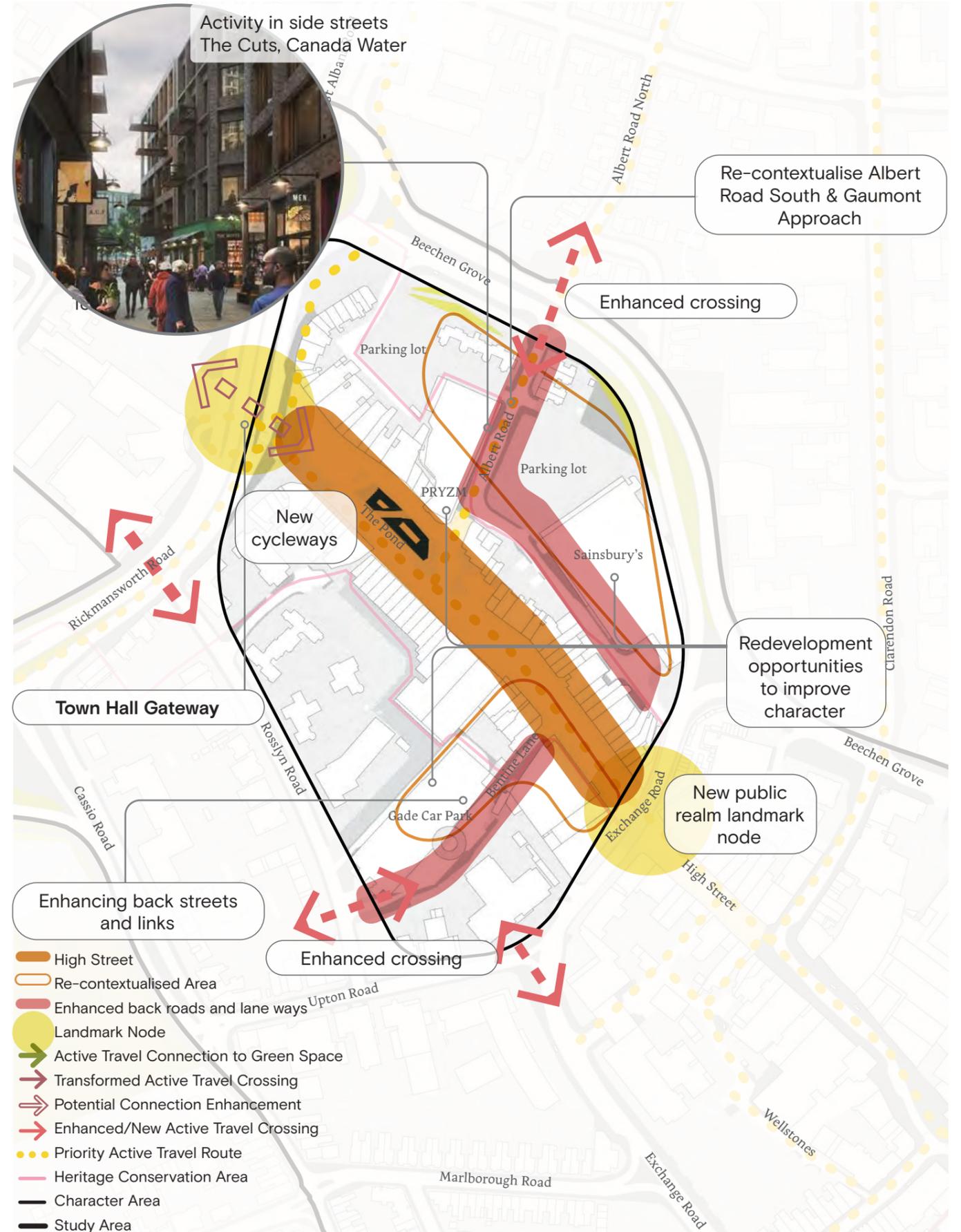
- Enhance the context and frontage along back streets/lane ways behind the High Street.
- Opportunity for mixed use redevelopment at Gade car park, Sainsbury's and PRYZM to enhance character, increase activity, and make more optimal use of land through stacking uses.

Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Town Hall Gateway crossing between the High Street and the Town Hall Quarter to facilitate active travel movement between the two areas.
- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to the High Street Central character area.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.
- Re-characterise back streets and lane ways along Bentine Lane and Albert Road with new surfaces and treatments to promote active travel.

Movement

- Enhanced Beechen Grove active travel crossing to Albert Road North.
- Create new cycleways across the area such as along the High Street, and integrate with the emerging wider active travel network
- Enhance pedestrian way finding across the area.



Case Studies

THE CUTS, CANADA WATER BY ALLIES AND MORRISON



© Allies and Morrison

Activity in side streets

An intricate network of narrow lanes located between Canada Water and Greenland Dock that support walking and cycling access as an alternative to main roads.

The narrow scale of the street supports a pedestrian oriented active ground floor with residential above.

GEORGE HOUSE, SLOANE STREET AND PAVILION STREET STIFF + TREVILLION



© Google maps

Active ground floor within historic character.

The historic character of the urban block between Sloane Street, Symons Street and Pavilion Street is complemented by the recent addition of a new retail and office building on Sloane Street and a two-storey terrace of shops on Pavilion Road. The massing and material are chosen to help the new addition blend in with the context without directly referencing the architectural style.

THE BEESTENMARKT DELFT, THE NETHERLANDS



Cafe space spilling out into the square

Food and beverage spilling out into a public square, well defined by being bordered by a pedestrian walkway along its edges. The 2-3 storey historic buildings interface a well-proportioned square that is covered by trees, creating shade and pleasant space to inhabit.

Ground floor retail and cafés activate the square and attract people to the space.

High Street Central: relationship to the market

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

Watford High Street is a central spine running through the town centre and consists of a mix of retail and food & beverage options. The northern end of the high street is pedestrianised but the High Street is shared by vehicles south of Clarendon Road, reducing the quality of the public space.

The Watford Market is an important part of the town centre, running since the 12th century, and adapting over the years. It currently occupies a space adjacent to the Exchange Road flyover. The Atria shopping Centre occupies a large portion of the northern side of the High Street and provides a mix of retail options internally, and with individual shops interfacing the High Street. Quality paving with seating, trees, greening and cafés spill out into the street and occupy the pavement outside the shopping centre.

CHALLENGES

- A portion of the High Street is shared with vehicles, reducing its quality.
- The Exchange Road flyover reduces the quality of the High Street underneath it.
- The public space on Wellstones is compromised by service entrances and car parks.
- Connections over Beechen Grove are heavily compromised.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Exchange Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

There is potential to reinvigorate and increase the prominence of the Watford Market by improving its visibility and prominence. Way finding from the town centre towards the market should be enhanced. There is opportunity to improve the character of Wellstones by enhancing the public environment. A significant way to improve the street is through the redevelopment of the Wellstones car park. The dominance of Exchange Road should be reduced by transforming the nature of the street to be more active travel oriented, alongside vehicle use.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

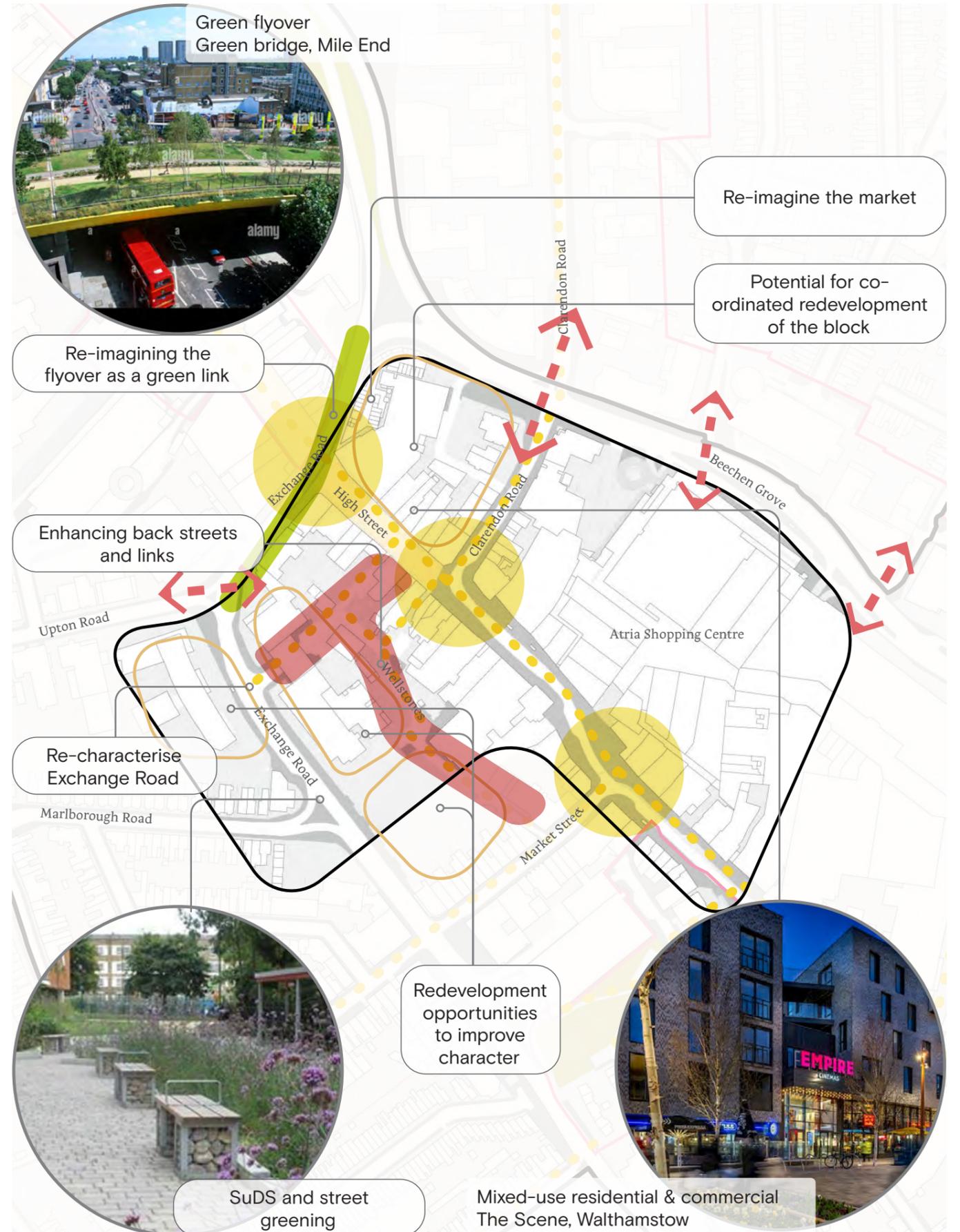
- The urban block around the market has the potential to be redeveloped and intensified, with the appropriate preservation of the historic buildings along the High Street. The Watford Market should be fit for purpose, high quality and meet the current and future market demands. It has the potential to be re-provided within this redevelopment and re-imagined with an improved setting, prominence and visibility within the town centre. Access into the block / the market from Beechen Grove should be more visible and less car dominated.
- Redefine the character of Wellstones with active uses.

Public Realm

- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to the High Street North character area and with Market Street.
- Transform the flyover on Exchange Road across the High Street into a green bridge and active travel connection, potentially forming part of a re-imagined market.
- Re-characterise Wellstones with new surfaces and treatments to promote active travel.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

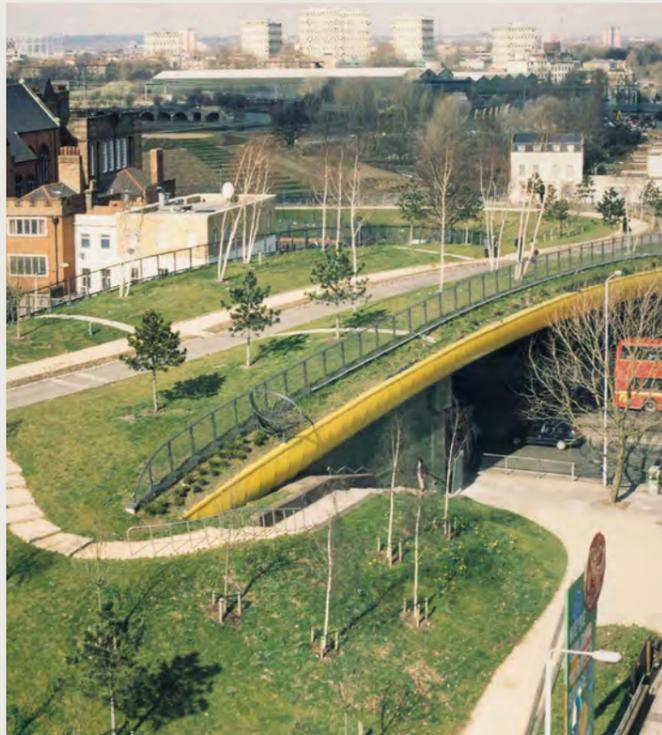
Movement

- Enhance active travel crossing between High Street and Clarendon Road to support the transition in character and use.
- Enhance pedestrian way finding across the area, especially in relation to showcasing the market.
- Create new cycleways across the area such as along the High Street, and integrate with the emerging wider active travel network



Case Studies

GREEN BRIDGE, MILE END BY CZWG



© CZWG

Green flyover

The Green Bridge was invented by us to overcome the conflict between Mile End Park and the traffic of the Mile End Road. Our idea of joining the two halves of Mile End Park with a piece of landscape is the major gesture in the redevelopment as a whole, highlighting the presence of the park at a major access point and establishing it as a true linear park.

The neighbouring fragmented façades are reunited by the establishment of the new retail frontages, which help to contain and revitalise the intensity of a major road intersection previously lost in the under-used open spaces on either side.

HEYGATE STREET, ELEPHANT & CASTLE, LONDON MACCREANOR LAVINGTON



© Maccreanor Lavington

SuDS and street greening

Walworth Road is an existing road located on the edge of the Heygate Estate and formed part of the masterplan for the wider regeneration of the estate. A section of the foot way to one side of the existing road has been remodelled to include wide areas of planting under retained mature trees, incorporating SuDS requirements. The section through the street integrates wide foot ways with planting, seating, cycle parking and informal play elements to improve the environment for pedestrians. The road is a key transport route and the foot way layout includes bus infrastructure elements.

TURING WAY & EDDINGTON AVENUE, NORTHWEST CAMBRIDGE



© Maccreanor Lavington

Cycling along major roads

Turing Way and Eddington Avenue form the primary street structure through the Northwest Cambridge development area. The streets are designed to accommodate bus routes, cycle paths and wide pedestrian foot ways alongside areas for car parking, street trees and SuDS elements. Segregated cycle paths are provided to each side of the street and are clearly marked to give priority to pedestrian movement. The streetscape design integrates seating at key locations, cycle parking and raised tables at key junctions.

HARPER ROAD, LONDON HAWORTH TOMPKINS ARCHITECTS



© Fred Howarth, Grant Frazer

New residential within historic character

Located on a side street in a formerly industrial part of London, the design creates a series of differing buildings facing the street. With a rich visual variety and mixed grain, the buildings contribute to defining an attractive street of commercial and residential ground floors and a diverse townscape of differing heights and material treatments.

High Street South: intimate High Street

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The southern part of Watford High Street is currently characterised by a mix of retail including the Atria Shopping Centre, the church and churchyard green space, residential homes to the south and the pyramid building on the intersection of Beechen Grove and the High Street.

The central spine is shared by vehicles, diminishing the pedestrian character of this portion of the High Street. The buildings on either side of the High Street are approximately 3-4 stories in height. They consist of a mix of historic and contemporary buildings. The Atria Shopping Centre dominates the area behind shops on the north side of the High Street.

The church and churchyard provides a unique respite within the town centre. It is the only green space in the centre and provides an active travel route between the High Street and Exchange Road. The church building is of historic significance.

The pyramid building at the south end of the High Street is a landmark building and is located at a significant junction between the High Street connecting to Watford High Street Station. Currently, active travel access across the intersection is poor.

CHALLENGES

- Reduced quality of the High Street environment due to narrow and inconsistent pavements and the street being shared by vehicles.
- No street greening.
- Poor and limited active travel crossings between the High Street and Watford High Street Station, due to the Exchange Road severance.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Exchange Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook, with large blank façades of the Atria Shopping Centre responding to this.
- Anti-social behaviour is occurring at the sensory garden at St. Mary's Church.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The area has the potential to enhance the High Street setting, upgrading the quality of the public

space along the High Street with additional street greening, seating, and reduced vehicle access, creating a more pedestrian oriented environment. This will enhance the historic setting within the conservation area.

The churchyard green space offers a unique public space within the town centre and has the potential to become a more significant public space by enhancing the orientation and programme of the green space. Orienting the northern portion of the green space towards the High Street and including more formal landscaping with seating space; and enhancing the southern end of the green space to be more organic and park-like. The dominance of Church Street and the perpendicular parking should be reduced to integrate the eastern and western sides of the green, creating a larger green public space.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

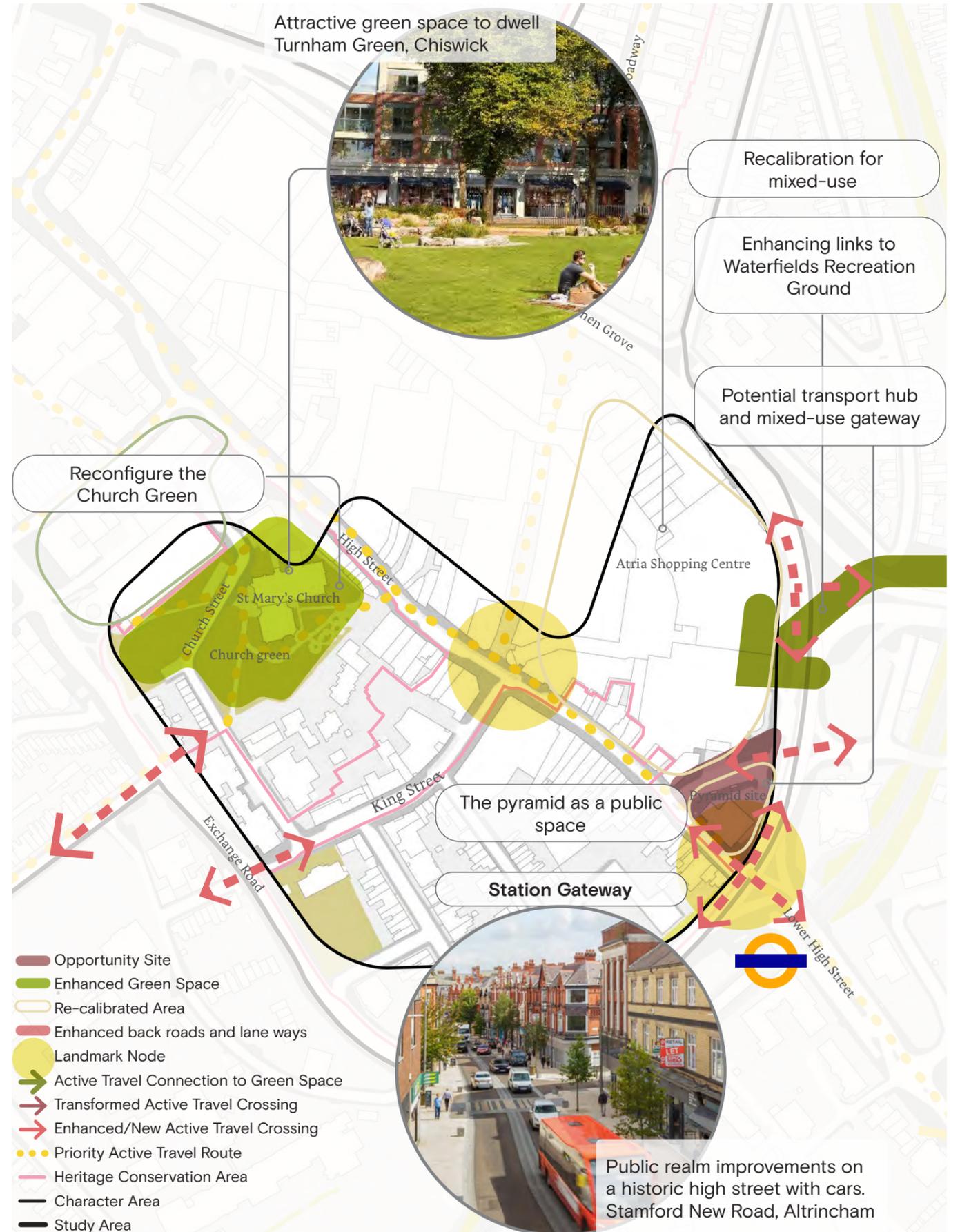
- Potential for redevelopment, intensification and introduction of a mix of uses to part of Atria Shopping Centre.
- Potential transport hub and/or a mixed-use gateway at the pyramid site.

Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Church Green: orient the northern portion towards the High Street with additional landscaping and seating; and integrate the separate green spaces at the back of the church green to create a small shaded park
- Improve High Street with additional greening and enhanced pedestrian space.
- Opportunity to create a special arrival point onto the High Street from Watford High Street station.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

Movement

- Improve the active travel crossing between High Street and Watford High Street station
- Enhance active travel links to Waterfields Recreation Ground.



Case Studies

XANTEN GARDEN, BY PLANERGRUPPE OBERHAUSEN

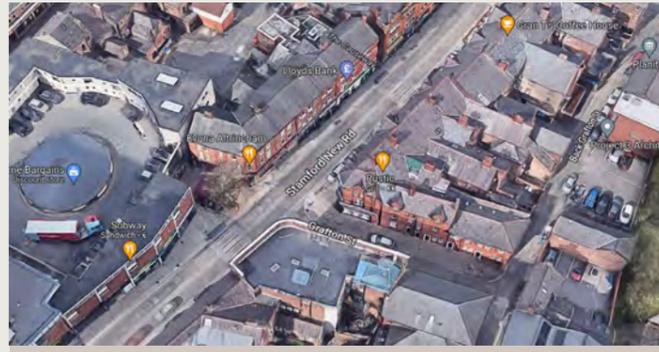


© Claudia Dreyße

Attractive green space to dwell with heritage building

An existing green area and upgraded to become contemporary with an emphasis on the historical structures. The green space offers expand a classic spa garden and a “Park of Encounter” that is barrier-free. The park is characterized by generous grass and meadow areas planted with groups of trees, single trees and shrubs. The green areas are traversed by a hierarchical path system, which we partially re-arranged and adapted in the course of the re-design and accommodate cycling and walking. The planting of perennials accentuate the access to the park, from which the main path can always be reached.

STAMFORD NEW ROAD, ALTRINCHAM



© Alex Upton Photography

Public realm improvements on a historic high street with cars.

Altrincham, winner of the 2018 Great British High Street ‘town centre’ award, has also invested in the public realm—with landscaping, street furniture and planting and enhanced pedestrian prioritised streets within a heritage street setting. This investment in the public realm has significantly contributed to the success and regeneration of the high street.

THE SCENE, WALTHAMSTOW BY POLLARD THOMAS EDWARDS



© Pollard Thomas Edwards

Mixed-use residential & commercial

The project creates a mixed use, mixed tenure development, near to public transport, enhancing the whole quality of the street and bringing life to the area.

CENTRAL STATION, ROTTERDAM



Walking and cycling crossing over road at the entrance to a station

The crossing between the city and Rotterdam Central station is located at the intersection of a main road thoroughfare through the city. At the junction, pedestrian and cyclists are prioritised by extending the material of the station square across the road, narrowing the road and slowing down cars.

The hierarchy of pedestrian, cyclists and then vehicles is clear through the design of the space utilising orientation and materials.

Market Street: new focus on public space beyond vehicular movement

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

Market Street is a local high street within the town centre and consists of a mix of historic buildings with a retail ground floor and 1-2 stories of residential above. The independent stores within narrow buildings are flanked by pavements that are often occupied by bins and spill out from shops, limiting pedestrian movement.

The car dominated narrow street is a single, one way lane with a lane of parking on either side. The street lacks trees or greening within the public environment.

Active travel access across Exchange Road is poor due to narrow pavements and a three lane road. The Holy Road Catholic Church marks the gateway to the town centre, though it is surrounded by some poorly maintained contemporary buildings framing the intersection.

CHALLENGES

- The active travel crossing across Exchange Road is extremely poor and severs Market Street into two parts.
- The eastern part of Market Street has a dedicated bike lane but this does not continue across the Exchange Road to the western part of market Street and beyond the town centre.
- Poor public realm lacking active travel routes, clear and quality paving and street greening.
- Car dominated environment.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Market Street has the potential to improve its character, strengthen its identity as a local high street and further support the town centre. There is opportunity to transform the currently car dominated space to become a more public and active travel focussed street. This will improve the setting of the historic buildings on the street, make it easier to access on foot and enhance the setting for the commercial activity, with more dedicated space for them to spill put into the public space. The two parts of Market Street can become one continuous space.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

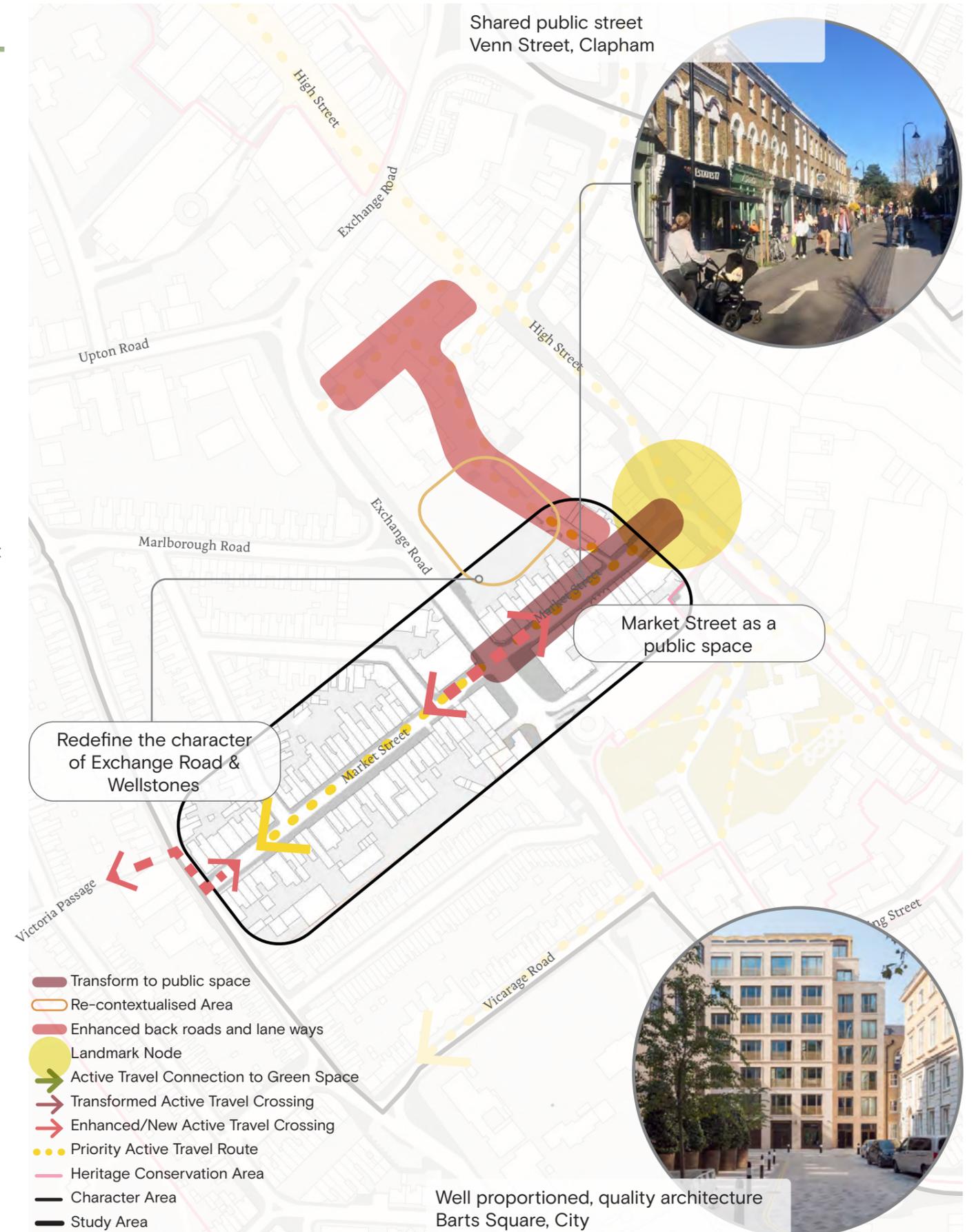
- Transform Market Street into a public space

Public Realm

- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to Market Street.
- Re-imagine Market Street as a public space rather than a vehicular highway by reducing car dominance, widening pavements and introducing landscaping with seating.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

Movement

- Enhance active travel connections from the High Street, across Exchange Road along Market Street and out towards Victoria Passage.



Case Studies

VENN STREET, CLAPHAM BY URBAN MOVEMENT



© Macaulay Walk

Shared public street

Typical of many streets, they are dominated by kerbside parking on both sides of the carriageway. The outdoor seating for the street's cafés and restaurants were restricted to narrow strips adjacent to the building frontage, limiting the streets commercial potential and forcing pedestrians into single file due to narrow foot ways. Resident and business parking bays were relocated to both ends of the street freeing up space in the middle. A single flush 'shared' surface was created to accommodate tables and chairs, trees, seats, cycle stands and whilst maintaining through traffic. A weekend road closure now allows the market to operate weekly.

EXHIBITION ROAD, SOUTH KENSINGTON



© Twitter: @stefanosutter

Shared public street

Priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists for crossing throughout the entire length of the street. The surface of the street is flush surface and accommodates a multi-modal carriageway. An attractive environment is created for cafés and restaurants to spill out into and create active edges to the street.

WALALA PARADE, LEYTON HIGH STREET ABSOLUTELY STUDIO



Facade upgrades on buildings

Leyton High Road, home to the vibrant community in Leytonstone, East London, has been transformed with a colourful and innovative design, with the efforts of local residents and artists.

The addition to Leyton High Road has re-energised the urban landscape with an explosion of creativeness, colour and joy above the shops and cafés.

HIGH STREET, WALTHAMSTOW



Shared street surface

Priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists with continuous paving across the carriageway. The street is flanked by active uses at ground floor. The street is multi modal carriageway but prioritises active travel with flush surfaces across the carriageway and pavements.

Queen's Road: an extension to the town centre

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Queen's Road character consists of a local high street at its heart with a mix of retail use on the ground floor and residential above. The narrow, one way street is flanked by commercial activity on either side, interspersed with some residential ground floors. The pavement is narrow, limiting active travel movement, which is further impeded by disorganised bins filling the public space.

The historic buildings are a consistent ground floor plus 2 stories above, with majority brick façades. There is no planting or trees on the street, and vehicles and parking dominate the narrow street. The active travel connection between the town centre and Queen's Road is via an underpass that moves through the Atria Shopping Centre on the south side of Beechen Grove. The Broadway is therefore separated from the rest of the town centre.

CHALLENGES

- Car dominated street environment.
- Narrow pavement that is often occupied and limited by other uses such as bins or open car doors.
- No street greening.
- The underpass does not currently allow cycling access.
- Discontinuous character from the Queen's Road to the Broadway.
- Poor gateway visibility from the town centre towards The Broadway beyond.
- Lacks a clear identity.
- Mixed ownership of retail units, and poor quality of some of the units.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Create a strong identity for the area and integrate it with the town centre more positively. The area should be seen as a seamless and natural extension to the town centre with a diverse offer of complimentary retail and commercial activity.

Connect the area more closely to the town centre across Beechen Grove as a natural extension to the town centre with clear way finding between the two

areas. This connection should prioritise all forms of active travel.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

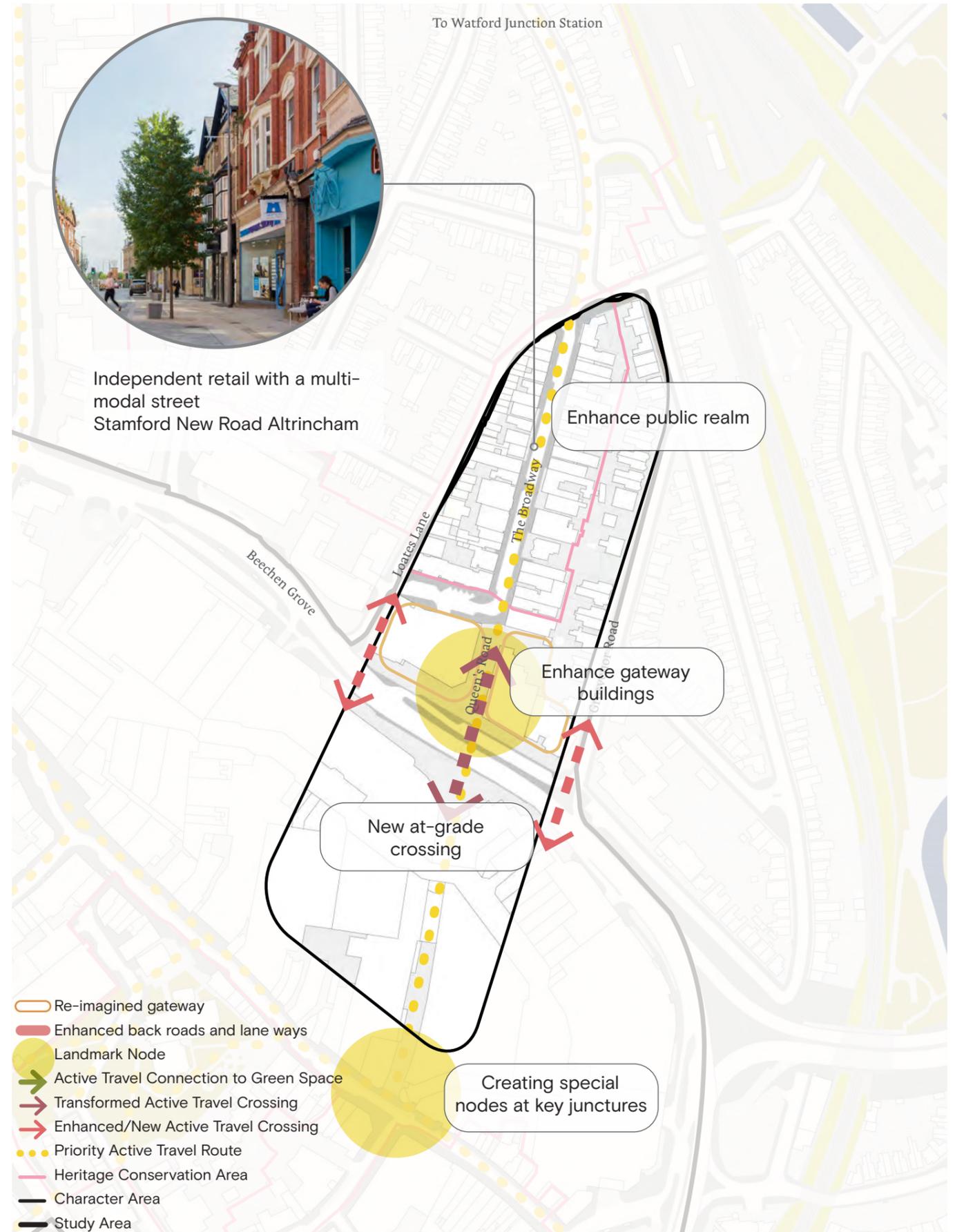
- Enhance the buildings at the junction of Queens Road and Beechen Grove to create a more positive gateway.

Public Realm

- Improve the quality of the public space within Queen Street and the Broadway by reducing car dominance and improving paving, introducing street greening and seating.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

Movement

- Improve active travel connection at the intersections of Queen's Road, Grosvenor Road and Loates Lane with Beechen Grove.
- Create an at-grade active travel crossing over Beechen Grove to connect Queen's Road to the town centre.



Clarendon Road: linear space connecting the town centre to the station

EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Clarendon Road character area is characterised by employment uses along its length with recently renovated quality paving and planting within the public realm.

The buildings consists of a mix of historic and contemporary buildings of approximately 4-6 stories. The buildings are also set back from the street to allow for a small parking or planting area at the interface of the building with the public realm.

The junction between Clarendon Road and the Town Centre at Beechen Grove is marked by the Beechen Grove Baptist Church, a historic building in the town. The crossing at this intersection has improved to include wider pavements and planting within the public realm.

CHALLENGES

- Haphazard parking in front of some buildings.
- Reduction in Professional, Scientific & Technical employment.
- High concentration of a mostly homogeneous commercial use.
- The connection to the town centre is severed by Beechen Grove.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Bolster the identity of Clarendon Road as a cohesive and mixed business district that has a clear character. The area has the potential to diversity its commercial offer to include smaller workspaces, such as co-working spaces, to accommodate independent businesses.

The active travel link between the area and the town centre and Watford Junction Station can be improved by reducing the impact of the severance caused by Beechen Grove. There is potential to diversify the mix of uses in the area.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Character & Townscape

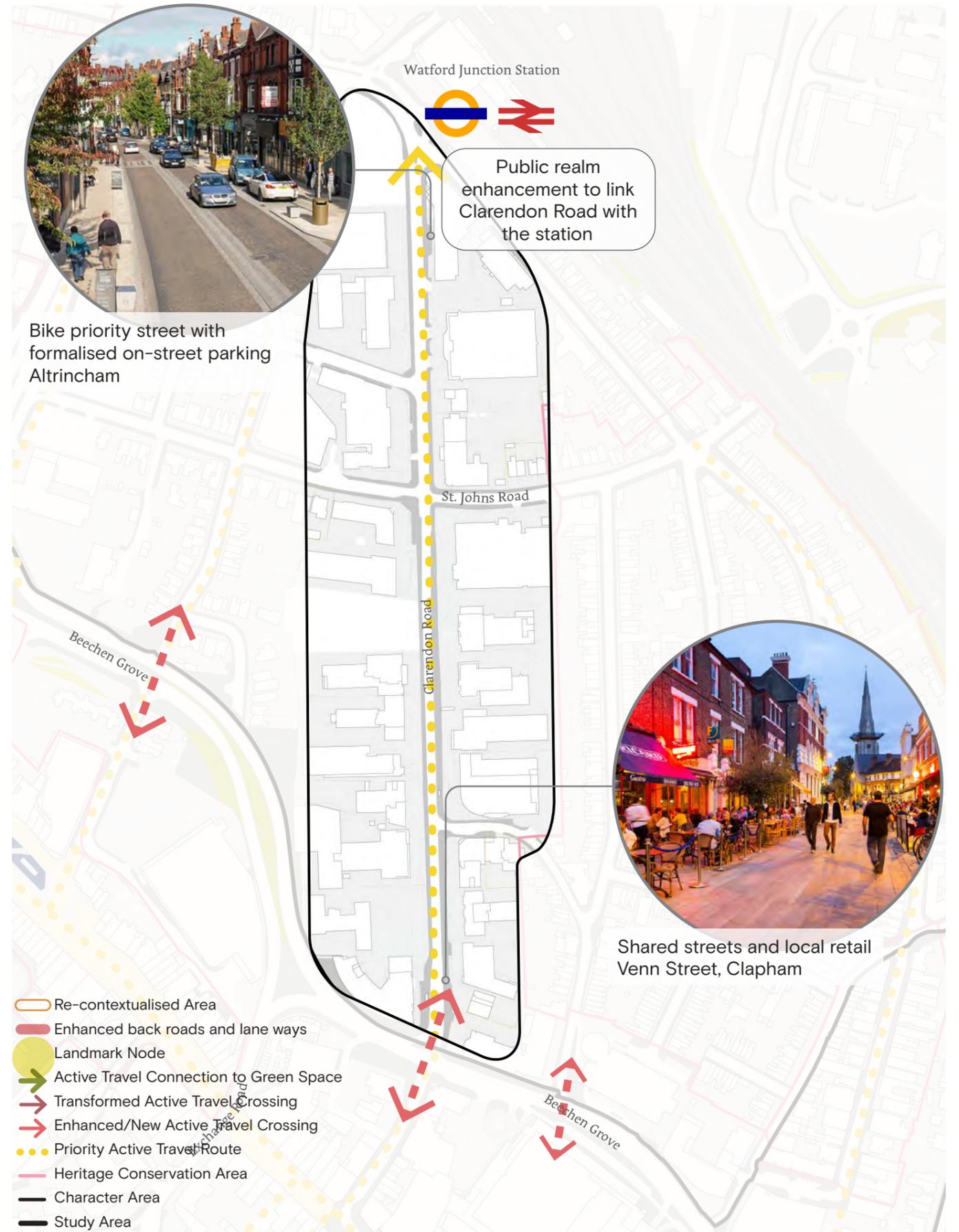
- Expand the offer of employment typologies.

Public Realm

- Improve the crossing across Beechen Grove with pedestrian and cycling priority.
- Create a more positive public space to link Clarendon Road with the station.

Movement

- Enhance active travel connection across Beechen Grove, connecting the two parts of Clarendon Road more closely and prioritising active travel.
- Create a continuous active travel route from the High Street, along Clarendon Road and towards Watford Junction Station.



Case Studies

STAMFORD NEW ROAD, ALTRINCHAM



<https://visitaltrincham.com>

Independent retail with a multi-modal street

This project aims to transform the vehicle-dominated streets and spaces of the town centre into pedestrian-friendly environments that encourage footfall, engagement, dwell time and interaction.

A key goal is to enhance pedestrianised areas in order to slow down pedestrian movement. Another will reduce vehicle movement through the town centre in order to transform vehicular dominated streets into pedestrian and cycle friendly streets.

Bike priority street with formalised on-street parking

Works to Altrincham's historic high street 'Stamford New Road' were undertaken as part of a range of public realm improvements intended to improve the economic vitality of the town centre. Located in a conservation area the works included introducing narrowed carriageways and courtesy crossings to slow traffic speeds and improve movement for pedestrians and cyclists. Wider foot ways include tree planting and street furniture and provide opportunities for retail frontages to utilise the space for café seating and tables making an active and lively street.

DELIVERY APPROACH

Principles of delivery

This Town Centre Framework marks a step change for Watford and its delivery will require partners to work closely together to secure tangible change. The Framework provides a clear roadmap that stakeholders can get behind and progress at pace.

It does, however, come at a challenging time. The public sector has fewer resources than ever before and COVID-19, Brexit and other macro-economic factors are having fundamental impacts on public sector capacity, on local businesses and on residents. Partners therefore will need to be innovative in their approach to delivery, where possible drawing on the principles set out below.

Watford Town Centre Framework delivery principles:

Collaboration and Partnership: Making the most of opportunities to work collaboratively to share resources and accelerate, positively shape, secure 'marriage value' and refine delivery;

Positivity and Problem Solving: Approaching delivery positively and having a 'can do attitude' to solving problems and overcoming barriers;

Commitment and Focus: A shared long-term commitment to responding to the challenges and opportunities identified and driving forward delivery;

Innovation and Creativity: Experimenting with innovative project ideas and exploring innovative approaches to leverage funding; and,

Agility and Pace: Working rapidly together to deliver change and continuously reviewing projects to ensure they respond to changing needs.

Focus of delivery

A mix of short-term, medium-term and long-term proposed physical interventions are identified as a high-level action plan. Alongside these physical interventions, the Framework has identified non-physical actions that need to be progressed, in many cases to enable physical change to manifest.

The approach to consider change on a phased basis has been designed intentionally to ensure that positive outcomes can be secured incrementally over time. It is intended those early interventions will catalyse wider investment from businesses, residents, developers, and investors as other projects come forward.

The next step for each intervention will be to progress them towards becoming fully 'shovel ready' so that all the information and arrangements are in place for delivery. This will involve undertaking further feasibility work where required.

A summary of all the physical interventions is broken down by theme (i.e. Development Sites, Public Space and Movement).

These will be supported by a range of non-physical interventions, and projects specifically focused on diversifying and improving the resilience of the town centre and boosting the local economy. These are summarised in the bullets below. It is important to note that these non-physical actions are, at this stage, suggested areas for exploration. Many of these do not yet have identified sources of funding and will require further planning and investigation into feasibility before they can be formalised and progressed – the status of each is highlighted below.

- **D1 – PLACE BRANDING AND MARKETING:** Following the introduction of new types of town centre businesses and uses, use consumer messaging platforms to launch Watford's newly-developed place brand to attract different types of people to visit a revitalised Town Centre (Continue).
- **D2 – RETAIL INNOVATION GRANTS/LOANS:** Work with Hertfordshire Growth Hub to explore the potential role of small grants and loans to support independent retailers looking to evolve their business model to better meet consumer

needs (e.g. by physically adapting their units and purchasing any necessary equipment/technology) and to support retail entrepreneurs with innovative ideas that will enhance the Town Centre offer (Explore).

- **D3 – RETAIL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME:** Work with Hertfordshire Growth Hub to secure funding for a retail expert to provide intensive 1-1 support for independent high street businesses to help them adapt their offering to better meet consumer expectations and increase revenue (e.g. related to digital engagement, marketing, customer service, nudge tactics etc). Link this up with the University of Hertfordshire's Young Entrepreneur Project to support young people to set up and scale town centre businesses (Explore).
 - **D4 – INWARD INVESTMENT CAMPAIGN:** Use consumer messaging platforms to launch a concerted inward investment campaign to encourage businesses to take up new space coming forward on Clarendon Road (Action).
 - **D5 – CLARENDON ROAD BID OR OTHER PARTNERSHIP:** Explore opportunities and appetite to expand the Business Improvement District to support business and property owners focused on the promotion of Clarendon Road as a key employment location (Action).
 - **D6 – BUSINESS BOOTSTRAP/ ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME:** Work with WENTA, Hertfordshire Growth Hub and other partners to secure funding to set up or commission an accelerator/ bootstrap programme to support entrepreneurs and promising businesses in new workspaces (e.g. Innovation Hub) to rapidly scale-up, grow and create new employment opportunities for local people (Explore).
 - **D7 – BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME:** Work with the Hertfordshire Growth Hub to secure funding to set up or commission a programme to help existing small and medium sized enterprises grow and become more efficient, particularly in sectors that the Town Centre needs to retain (e.g. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities) (Explore).
 - **D8 – CAR PARKING STUDY:** Council to undertake review of car parking capacity against demand.
- This will help identify locations that are suitable for release for re-development, and should be undertaken alongside the findings of this Framework including consideration of sites that have specific development potential / wider non-parking contribution to explore (Continue).
- **E1 – INCUBATOR UNITS:** Undertake feasibility and business case analysis to further understand the potential to deliver low-cost retail incubator units that allow independent entrepreneurs to test and scale new high street concepts (e.g. within Council assets or new developments), either as formal developments or within meanwhile/ temporary space (Explore).
 - **E2 – MEANWHILE USES:** Devise a meanwhile strategy to run throughout the Framework implementation period to identify meanwhile opportunities (including sites awaiting redevelopment) that allow independent businesses to test market demand for different products and services. Strategy to consider funding, delivery and monitoring / evaluation to inform year on year programme evolution. Key opportunity sites include the multi-storey car park and retail units that become vacant (Explore).
 - **E3 – FOOD INCUBATOR:** Work with West Herts College to undertake feasibility and business case analysis to explore opportunities to create a food incubator with local colleges to help develop the restaurateurs of tomorrow, and 'seed and feed' meanwhile and start-up space (Explore).

Phasing of delivery

	YEARS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Development Sites										
Public Space Interventions										
Movement Interventions										
Non-Physical Interventions										
High Street Diversification Projects										

Delivery Timescales

Note: Years 1-2 (green) indicate short term interventions, 3-5 (yellow) indicate medium term interventions and 6-10 (red) indicate longer term interventions.

The programme of delivery across the interventions identified assumes a circa 10-year delivery programme. This is summarised within the table above which provides high-level assumptions on timings for each intervention by type. The reality is that, in some cases, individual interventions will come forward more quickly or slowly than shown below but this provides a broad understanding of how delivery could be realised. More detail on each category is provided below and in Appendix A.

Development Sites

Factors such as scheme design, feasibility, viability, vacant possession and progression through the planning process all impact the speed at which development sites across the Town Centre can be delivered. Given this, development site interventions are spread across both the medium-term and the long-term.

Some of the most progressed developments and therefore more immediate interventions are likely to be the Town Hall Quarter (Site A1), the Sainsbury's and PRYZM sites (Site A2), Exchange House (Site A5), Wellstones Car Park (Site A6), and Queens Road (Sites A9/A10). These sites are all considered to be medium-term interventions with no extant consents in place to support delivery in the next 1-2 years.

Longer-term interventions are less progressed or more complex schemes. These include but are not limited to, Gade Car Park (Site A3) and the Church Car Park (Site A8) which are subject to an ongoing review of car parking requirements across the Town Centre, Atria (Site A11) which is subject to an ongoing

review of the future of the shopping centre, and the Pyramid Site (A12) which will require ongoing feasibility and preferred options testing.

Public Space Interventions

Most public space interventions are expected to be tied to delivery of the development sites as many sit within their boundaries. These interventions are therefore likely to come forward as part of development schemes so are expected to be delivered over the medium- and long-term.

Other public space interventions that sit outside development plots are likely to be funded, at least in part, by Section 106 (S106) contributions and other public sector funding pots. Some of these can be delivered relatively quickly where funding can be secured early, but others will take longer to come forward where additional funding and developer contributions are required.

Movement Interventions

A key project which could deliver earlier impact is the Town Hall Quarter site which has already undergone extensive feasibility testing, masterplanning and transport analysis. Currently, Rickmansworth Road isolates the area from the wider Town Centre, and therefore interventions C1, C2, C3 and C4 will be essential to the delivery of a successful scheme providing much-needed linkages between the new development and the core of the Town Centre. These are therefore likely to be delivered as part of the scheme and are likely to be seen as early 'enablers' to wider development and change across the

northern part of the centre.

Wider movement interventions across the Town Centre will also be important to improve the centre environment and enhance accessibility to people living outside of the ring road. However, at this stage, it is challenging to address phasing as no technical highways analysis or capacity modelling has been undertaken. Further studies and analysis will therefore be required to understand the deliverability and preferred options for bringing the schemes set out in the Framework forward.

Given the sustainable town centre location, it is unlikely that movement interventions will need to precede developments for capacity purposes. However, identifying some strategic early movement interventions has the potential to improve town centre perception, and optimise results from subsequent developments. Following more detailed highways input, we would recommend identifying priority movement interventions and creating an action plan.

Whilst it is challenging to outline funding for these without any detail on the nature of interventions, there may be scope to fund early 'enablers' via public sector funding and recover monies at a later date via S106 contributions.

High Street Diversification Projects and Non-Physical Interventions

It is fundamental that as part of the implementation of the Framework, that the 'quality' or perception of quality of the place in the Town Centre is improved. This is a focus for public intervention as it will encourage visitors, attract new businesses and raise property values catalysing development and investment.

In delivery terms there is a need to build market interest and confidence in the Town Centre over time, co-ordinating existing investment, events programmes and other interventions to create a stronger overall 'brand' for the Town Centre. This will encourage greater usage and, in turn, improve the viability position for future development.

High street diversification projects and non-physical interventions are therefore expected to be prioritised

in the short-term, subject to securing funding, to ensure that there is an offer within the Town Centre that attracts new residents, activities and businesses. Those focused on place branding (D1 Place Branding and Marketing) and diversifying the Town Centre offer (e.g. D2, D3, E1, E2, E3) should be prioritised for delivery over the short term.

These will be supported by targeted events, pop-up activities and meanwhile uses led by the BID to help 'new' residents and businesses as well as existing communities find new opportunities to engage with the Town Centre.

A range of other non-physical interventions are also important to ensure that the economic benefits of physical interventions focused on supporting economic growth are maximised. These need to come forward alongside or ahead of physical interventions to deliver the greatest economic benefits possible. Examples include business support programmes (e.g. D6-D7) and inward investment campaigns (D4).

As previously noted these non-physical actions are, at this stage, suggested areas for exploration. Some are already being undertaken by the Council but some are longer-term options that are aspirational. These will require additional sources of funding to be secured as well as further planning and investigation into feasibility before they can be formalised and progressed. Section 4 of the appended table details the status of the Council's current involvement relative to each intervention to aid this process.

Catalytic Projects

There is also an opportunity for the Council to prioritise and put resource behind potential catalytic projects that will have major economic and social benefits for the Town Centre, and have the potential to kickstart major development elsewhere in the centre. The Town Hall Quarter development (Site A1), envisaged as a medium-term intervention, clearly sits within this bracket. Other opportunities where the Council can exercise some agency could also be accelerated to drive forward wider delivery. Following the completion of the car parking review, Gade Car Park (Site A3) and Church Car Park (Site A8) may present good opportunities to do this.

Nature of delivery

There are a number of actions the Council can take to support the delivery of the Framework's objectives and ensure a comprehensive approach to regeneration. The actions available to the Council are largely dependent on the specific circumstances surrounding each intervention. These have been split out and considered in more detail in the text below:

Development Sites in Council Ownership

There are several potential development sites across the Town Centre currently in Council ownership. Examples include the Gade and Church Car Park sites (A3, A8) and the Pyramid Site (A12). Whilst some of the Market Site (A4) sits within Council ownership, if there is aspiration to pursue a more comprehensive development here and demonstration of marriage value by doing so, this would require some third party land assembly. The same is true of site A3, with Gade House, the adjacent plot in private ownership.

These sites present a significant opportunity to directly deliver on the Framework's vision and objectives. There are a number of delivery routes which could be pursued that offer a range of risk and reward profiles. These include:

- **Self-delivery:** Where all of the construction and sales risks are borne by a single party. This does have the benefit that all the returns also flow back to that same party, however, presents an additional degree of risk. This is suitable for sites that are wholly within the Council's control and are unlikely to involve integrating adjacent sites (e.g. A8 Church Car Park)
- **Joint Venture:** These are typical for larger more complex sites as they can be costly and lengthy to establish. Under a joint venture agreement both parties tend to operate on a 50/50 basis to bring forward a scheme with costs and returns shared amongst partners. This structure can be quite common between the public and private sector, as has been demonstrated through the procurement of a private sector development partner at the Town Hall Quarter (Site A1).
- **Development Agreement:** This is a land sale where there are obligations around performance such as planning consent and programme timing placed by the landowner on the developer. In the event that these conditions are not satisfactorily met, there are remedies for breach which can

include step in rights or an option to take the land back. This can work in circumstances where the Council would like to see more comprehensive development, but retain some level of control (e.g. A3 Gade Car Park and Gade House).

- **Land Sale:** This can be on the basis of 'Subject to Planning' or 'Unconditional', where a parcel of land is typically sold to a developer in return for an upfront sum of money. There are very few conditions attached to the sale so if the scheme does not progress there is little the former landowner can do to drive delivery.
- **Strategic Master Developer:** This is where a developer takes an oversight role in achieving a planning consent (often hybrid) for a large/complex site. The delivery of these sites can then either be taken forward by the developer, or often, plots of land are sold to individual parties to deliver in accordance with the planning obtained. This approach is often taken with large and complex sites where the strategic developer wants to mitigate their risk position.

Development Sites in Private Ownership

There are also a range of important development sites in private ownership, including the Sainsbury's and PRYZM sites (A2), Gade House (A3), parts of the wider Watford Market site (A4), Exchange House (A5), Wellstones (A6, A7), Queens Road (A9, A10) and the Atria (A11). While the Council does not have direct control over these sites, there are options for the Council to take a 'hands-on' or non-hands-on role as appropriate.

In the case of Gade House (A3) and the wider Watford Market site (A4), where the Council owns plots adjacent to privately owned development sites, there is an opportunity to deliver more comprehensive schemes that could better align to the Framework's vision and objectives. Given Gade House (A3) is in single ownership, subject to the outcome of the car park review, a Development Agreement on the car park site may be a prudent approach to ensure delivery of a more comprehensive scheme.

Conversely, the complex ownership dynamics in the plots surrounding the market at Site A4 lends itself to a land assembly process. This is best undertaken when a site (or sites) in third party ownership are

not coming forward for development due to their complexity. The Council may require a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in order to achieve the comprehensive approach to delivery that it requires. A more detailed masterplan and feasibility exercise for this site would however be required before any action is taken.

For the remaining sites, which sit solely in private ownership, positive development management is the best means of ensuring positive outcomes in line with the Framework's objectives. The Council can take a positive approach to development management by:

- Capturing and steering emerging proposals through pro-active pre-application discussions.
- Continuing to produce and evolve planning policies and frameworks that reflect the Town Centre's changing context including production of Area Action Plan(s) and Supplementary Planning Document(s) as appropriate.
- Using the Place Shaping Panel to review and improve emerging schemes.
- Shaping proposals and securing high quality details/specification through the effective use of planning conditions and obligations, and potential adoption of a Design Code for the Town Centre.
- Using planning conditions to minimise disruption during construction.
- Using planning obligations to secure on-site and off-site infrastructure (including social infrastructure) delivery, mitigation measures and financial contributions for local training/job brokerage and use of local services/businesses.

Public Realm Interventions

The Council's role in the delivery of public realm will largely be defined by ownership dynamics. Public space interventions that sit within privately owned development sites will be delivered and likely funded by the developer as part of the scheme. As set out above, under development sites in private ownership, the Council has the ability to shape the nature of space coming forward through the planning process.

For sites in public sector ownership, the responsibility will sit with the Council to deliver these interventions through active discussion with Hertfordshire County Council. As discussed,

these may be funded, or part funded through S106 contributions. The ongoing responsibility for management of these spaces following their development will need to be considered by the Council. The long-term management and stewardship of any public realm delivered will be an important consideration for the Council.

The Framework is a long-term ambition and therefore it is absolutely crucial that long-term stewardship and management strategies are in place and implemented across any new and retained built environment. These strategies will ensure the quality of the built environment remains high – and that the experience of the place is optimised. This includes consideration of public realm which crosses both public and private sector ownership and potentially management.

The Council does not have a pre-determined view of how management arrangements are established and does not require the establishment of management companies as part of future development but will require evidence of place management supporting new development, public realm and landscaping as part of the planning application process – and to support decision making regarding scheme design and materials used.

Non-Physical Interventions

Where funding is available, non-physical interventions will be important short-term enhancements to attract new visitors and businesses and create the optimal environment for subsequent physical interventions over the medium-longer term. The Council may seek assistance from partners such as consultants, the Business Improvement District, the Chamber of Commerce, and business support providers as necessary to progress non-physical interventions. Where appropriate it will also work with the private sector.

High Street Diversification Projects

Similarly, town centre interventions present a short-term opportunity for the Council to drive positive change across the Town Centre. The introduction of incubator units (E1 and E3) and meanwhile uses (E2) may require delivery support from private landowners, operators and other partners.

Management of delivery

The Council has acknowledged its responsibility for supporting the delivery of change in Watford Town Centre by leading on the commissioning of this work. However, given no project is within the sole gift of one delivery partner, it is clear that successful delivery will require partnership working.

The Council will therefore continue to work collaboratively with partners to support a comprehensive approach to regeneration across the Town Centre. This will include:

- Progression of the establishment of a joint venture partnership with private sector partners to deliver the proposed regeneration of the Town Hall Quarter (A1) and consider opportunities to deliver additional catalytic sites at relevant points to support regeneration aims and objectives defined within the framework.
- Use this Framework to bid for public sector funding pots that are targeted towards local authorities.
- Work collaboratively with landowners and developers to shape new development via the planning process.
- Direct deliver non-physical and high street diversification projects with partners.
- Work with the Watford Business District (BID) and Chamber of Commerce to realise shared objectives for the Town Centre.
- Engage with the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England and others over strategically important historic and nature conservation issues and share intelligence as appropriate with the private sector to enable positive accommodation within project designs.
- Support private sector engagement with Homes England to maximise funding to deliver affordable housing.
- Work closely with Hertfordshire County Council to bring forward movement and active travel interventions.
- Establish strong working relationships with Hertfordshire County Council to delivery high quality public space schemes.

- Use planning policy to ensure optimum uses are maintained across the town centre.

To help deliver on the above, the Council may consider establishing an officer level Delivery Board, led by the Group Head of Place Shaping, but including local delivery partners. The Board will be responsible for overseeing day-to-day work on:

- Co-ordinating and driving forward the delivery of the Framework's vision and objectives.
- Commissioning further studies and strategies.
- On-going engagement with local people and businesses (including the Watford BID and Chamber of Commerce).
- On-going liaison with infrastructure providers and developers to co-ordinate works.
- Liaison with other Boards (including the Place Shaping Panel).
- Monitoring overall progress against identified milestones.
- Assessing the economic and social impact of development over time.

FUNDING OF DELIVERY

A wide range of public and private funding sources will be needed to deliver the interventions set out in this Framework. Where possible funding will be secured from private sector developers, both via direct delivery on development sites and through S106 agreements and CIL monies. However, in some circumstances public sector funding will be needed to optimise outcomes. Some example sources of funding that could be considered are set out below:

- The UK Shared prosperity fund (prioritising investment in community and place, supporting local businesses and people and skills).
- Levelling up Fund (Supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects and cultural and heritage assets).
- Brownfield Land Release Fund (Targeting Council-owned small sites that have been previously developed, and where viability issues have prevented their development. Additionally, funding available for Homes England to deploy

on non-Council owned sites to enable brownfield delivery).

- Homes England Brownfield Infrastructure Land Fund (Nature of programme and scale of funding available to be confirmed in Autumn 2022).
- Community Ownership Fund (To support community groups to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost).
- Affordable Homes Programme (Grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale).
- Council general fund reserves/borrowing.

The Council will also consider its own borrowing potential and risk profile to understand the role it could take in direct delivery.

It will be important for the Council to continuously review funding the sources available to support the delivery of Framework objectives as the options available will change over the medium-term. Some competitor councils have appointed dedicated officers to track, monitor and oversee funding opportunities which may be an option for Watford Borough Council.

The Framework can also be used to engage with and lobby Government departments to secure funding over the medium and longer term. Important Government departments to place focus on as delivery on the Framework evolves include, but are not limited to:

- Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities – Focus on development sites, public realm, movement, non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions.
- Department for Transport – Focus on movement.
- Department for Business Energy Industrial and Strategy – Focus on movement.
- Department for Education – Focus on education.
- Homes England – Focus on development sites, public realm, movement, non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions, plus affordable homes delivery.

- Historic England – Focus on development sites and protection of town centre heritage.
- Natural England – Focus on public space.
- National Lottery – Focus on non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions.

It would be prudent for the Council to develop an engagement and awareness raising programme with these departments to ensure the borough is in the best place possible to secure future funding.

