

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

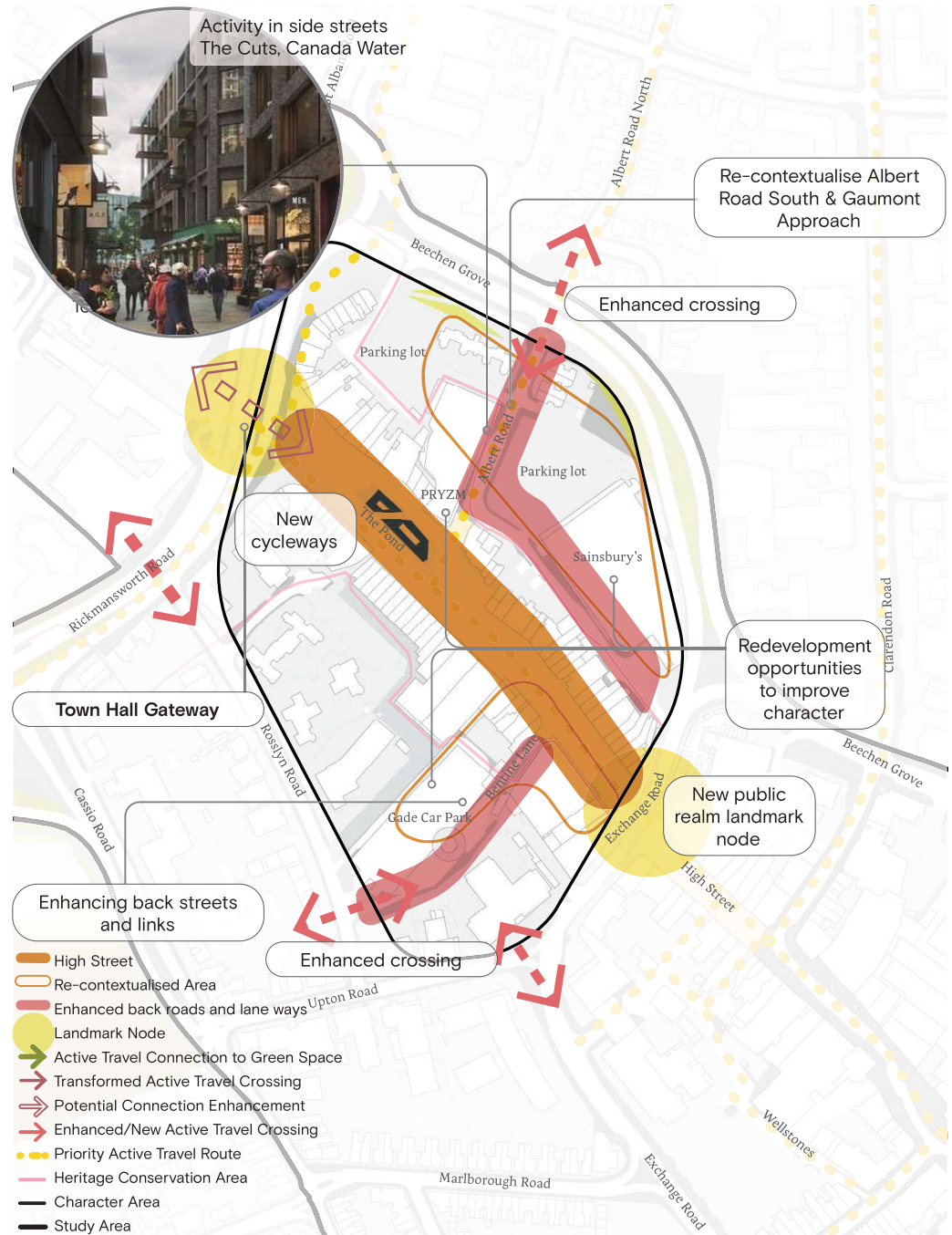
- Enhance the context and frontage along back streets/lane ways behind the High Street.
- Opportunity for mixed use redevelopment at Gade car park, Sainsbury's and PRYZM to enhance character, increase activity, and make more optimal use of land through stacking uses.

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.