

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

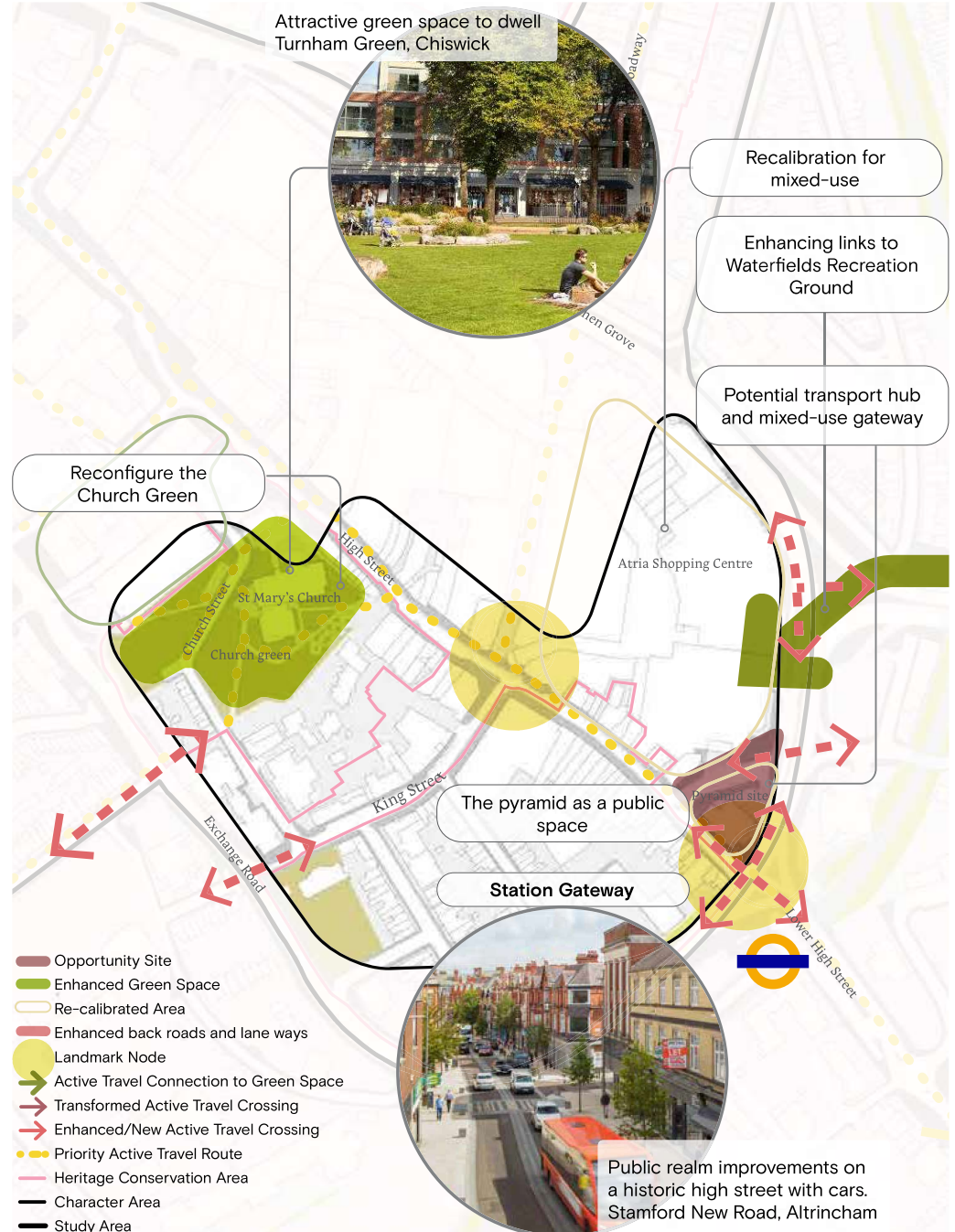
- Potential for redevelopment, intensification and introduction of a mix of uses to part of Atria Shopping Centre.
- Potential transport hub and/or a mixed-use gateway at the pyramid site.

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.