

# 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



#### 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.