

## Residential Transition Quarter

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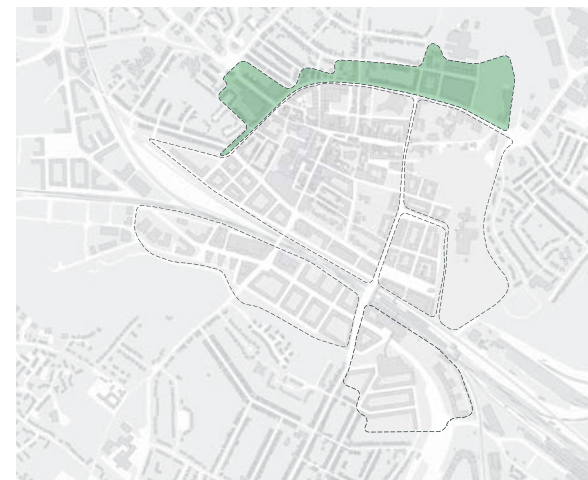
### Existing Character and Land Use

Dominated by the ring road, this area suffers from a poor quality pedestrian environment with weak connections across the road between the existing residential areas to the north and west and the town centre to the south and east. The construction of the former ring road in the early 1970s resulted in a severance of the historic urban grain and left a fragmented edge along the northern side of the road.

Residential streets to the north of the Somerset Road have a fine grained urban structure and consist of mainly terraced houses of 2 to 3 storeys in height. This fine grain structure has however been lost at the junction of New Street where one of the key gateways into the town centre is dominated by the highway itself and by adjacent large footprint retail development which is out of scale and character with the surrounding townscape context.

Recent restructuring of the former ring road along the length of Forge Lane and West Street has seen a reduction in the severance associated with this trafficked route. The introduction high quality carriageway and footway materials along with shared surface principles has created stronger connections between residential areas to the east and the town centre.

North Street provides a poor first impression of the town with the townscape environment again dominated by the former ring road and associated highway paraphernalia.



Location map

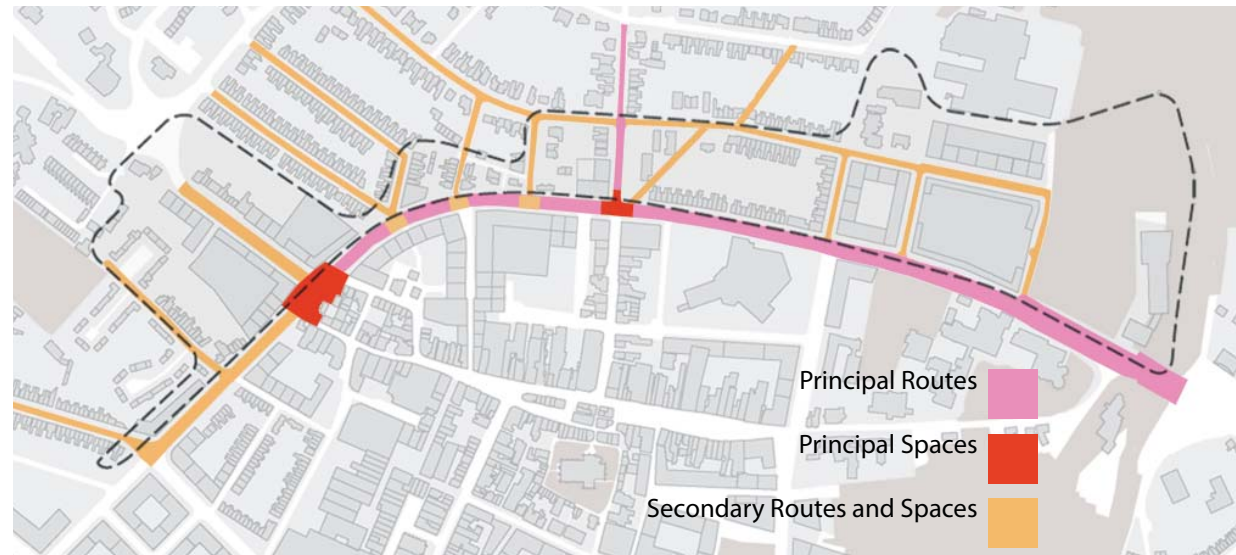
Important views to St Marys Church are possible from town centre approaches along New Street and North Street.

## Proposed Character and Land Use

The residential transition is a concept of improving the relationship between the town centre and established housing areas. The vision is to develop a quality urban edge along Sommerset Road, Forge Lane and West Street with strong building lines and active frontages.

New development on the north side of the street should comprise small scale infill development with contemporary housing and mixed-use typologies. Strategic multi-storey car parking proposed to the northeast of the Station Road junction and at the New Street junction would be wrapped in appropriate development along the street frontage to avoid negative facades.

To the south of Sommerset Road, redevelopment of the Park Mall site would present opportunities to establish a high quality mixed use scheme which would face onto the street, with residential and commercial uses located above retail units. Building heights should range from a minimum of 3 storeys to a maximum of 5 storeys, with the upper floor set back.



## Public Realm Vision

**Physical and Visual Connections:** The vision, and the key to the success of this quarter, is to overcome the physical and psychological barrier presented by the former ring road. To achieve this, the existing two way road will have improved, direct crossings which re-stitch the historic urban grain re-establishing connections between the Residential Transition Quarter and the Town Centre Core. The crossing points and junctions shall be designed in such a way as to create a hierarchy of spaces along the road to aid legibility and celebrate key gateways and approaches to the town centre. The approach at each of these spaces will be to facilitate equality of movement such that all vehicles and pedestrians share and negotiate the space free of constraints.

**Interpersonal Connections:** Continued transformation of this section of the former ring road will create 'a multi-use, multi-activity public space that operates not just as a corridor for vehicles but more as a conduit for cultural and social exchange; a dynamic and exciting new piece of public realm'

**Environmental Connections:** The layout of the road will create a wide central reservation as a 'Ramblas' style linear park running the length of the street. Conceived as an 'Arc of Space, Light and Energy' the street has the potential to generate all its energy need to support a wide range of facilities and activities. The incorporation of a strong tree avenue and other planting will transform the appearance and environmental quality of the street.

**Cultural Connections:** The Arc will offer an range of opportunities for cultural and artistic interventions from the incorporation of everyday useful facilities that provide amenity and recreational benefits to

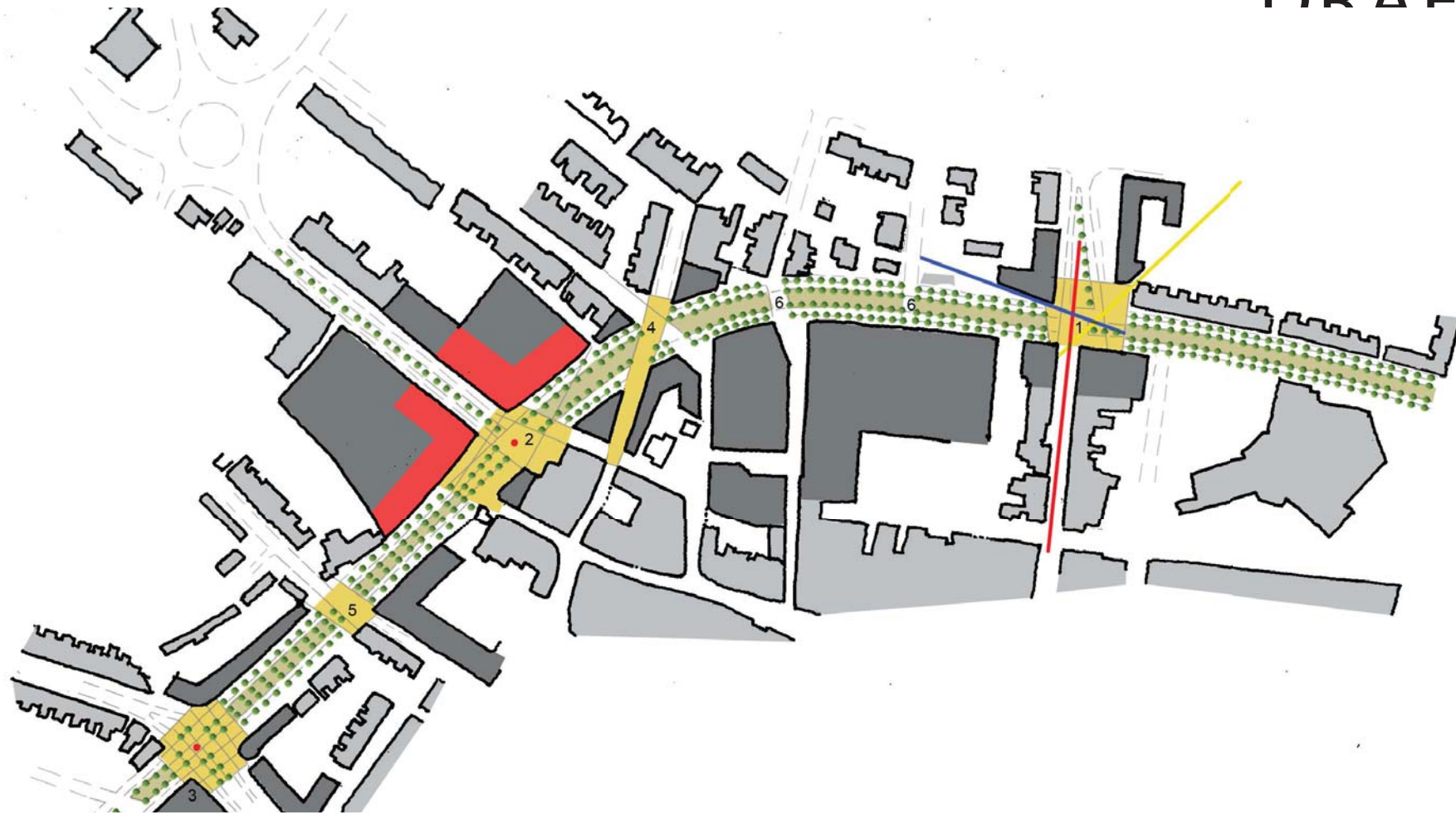
transitional short-term interventions which help to change people's perception of the ring road through to transformational, large scale and permanent installations a key locations.



Recent works have reduced the dominance of the highway



Central reserve as a conduit for social exchange



**PRINCIPAL ROUTES**

-  West Street Avenue / Somerset Road (The Ashford Arc)

**PRINCIPAL SPACES**

-  2 New Rents Square
-  1 North Square

**SECONDARY + SPACES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LINKS**

-  3 West Place
-  4 Storges Path
-  5 Regents Place

**MISCELLANEOUS**

-  New development
-  Existing buildings
-  6 Courtesy crossing points
-  Central reservation with avenue tree planting
-  Central features to guide traffic
-  Blue Line - Blue Line Lane
-  Red Line - North Street
-  Yellow Line - Hardinge Diagonal

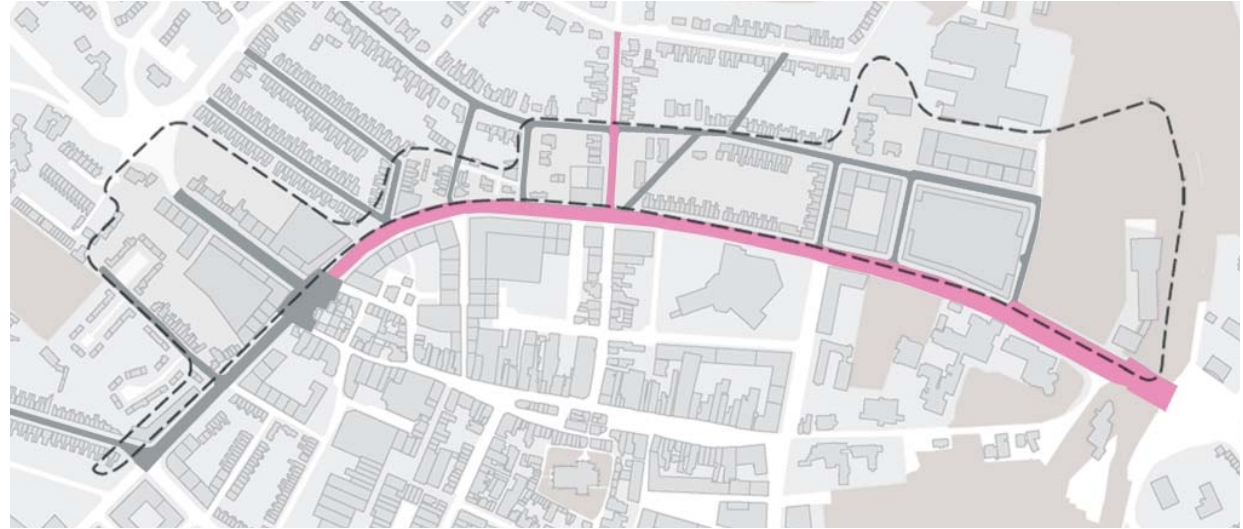
Design Principles

## Principal Routes

### West Street Avenue / Somerset Road (The Ashford Arc)

- The existing 12m wide four lane one way road shall be downgraded and transformed into a two way street either side of a substantial central reservation. A hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary spaces would be created along the route at key intersections and crossing points. Primary spaces are considered to be North Square and New Rents Square, secondary spaces would be West Place and Sturges Path, and tertiary spaces Regents Place. In addition, raised courtesy crossing points should be provided at Park Road (leading to Park Mall) and Hollington Place.
- Between North Street and New Street the highway shall comprise two 3 m wide lanes in both directions to facilitate the envisaged levels of traffic, and reduce to one 3m wide lane in both directions between New Street and Elwick Road.
- The envisaged arrangement of Somerset Road (between New Street and North Street), with its central linear space up to 10m wide, would help to psychologically reduce the perception of the existing barrier presented by the ring road and facilitate ease of pedestrian movement across the street. The central space would also function as a promenade with strong avenues of street trees defining the edges of the carriageways. The central public realm should be a useable space and act as a canvas for a wide variety of facilities and activities.

- To the east of North Street the central reservation would taper out and return to a 12m wide two way carriageway.



Strong tree lined edge



A wide central reserve as a conduit for social activity

## Principal Spaces

### New Rents Square

- New Rents Square acts as a Principle public space and a gateway along the historic western leg of the Medieval T and is a major crossing point with high volumes of pedestrian and vehicular movement.
- Redevelopment and recasting of the street frontages either side of New Street would provide better definition and greater activity along these edges to the space. In addition, the existing toilet block and fragmented built form along the edge of New Rents would benefit from new development fronting onto New Rents Square.
- Reinstatement of historic routes into New Rents will help define the edges of the square and establish the point at which vehicular traffic would enter into the space. The square itself should be raised, level with the surrounding pavements to create a shared space.
- Lines of movement could be expressed through the change of materials, reflectors, lights and street trees.
- Public art will play an important part in enhancing the distinctive identity of this square with opportunities for an iconic piece within the space.
- Any new development or features should respect and/or enhance important views



New Rents Square

across New Rents towards St Mary's Church.



Lines of movement expressed in the floorspace

## Other Routes and Spaces

### North Square

- North Square acts as a gateway along the historic northern leg of the Medieval T and is a major crossing point with high volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- The proposed square would be formed by existing and proposed development. Development to the south of the space should focus on improving the street frontage by removing the existing slip road. Development should also respect and enhance views into the historic core towards St Mary's Church. Redevelopment of the petrol station site as a mixed use development could provide an extension to the square along the geometry of Blue Line Lane.
- The square should be conceived as a raised platform, level with the surrounding pavements and as one legible shared space defined through surface materials. Direct desire lines could be picked out in the geometry of the floorplane to give a structuring grid to the space and highlight crossing routes/paths. The three primary movement lines could be defined in three primary colours: Blue Line Lane – Blue Line; North Street – Red Line; and Hardinge Diagonal – Yellow Line.
- Lighting and trees should reinforce the lines of movement across the space.



Strong geometry expressed through lighting and tree planting



Expression of principal desire lines



## Other Routes and Spaces

### Sturges Path

- A secondary space could be created at the junction of Somerset Road, Kent Street and Sturges Street. The form of the square would express the need to re-stitch the town across the current ring road using the alignment of Sturges Street and Kent Street.
- A change in material would help to define the key route between Sturges Street and New Rents and highlight this connecting pathway.



