

## Commercial Quarter

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### Existing Character and Land Use

Historically this area of Ashford was relatively open and contained a mix of light industrial and leisure uses. However, the buildings are now mostly vacant and the area is characterised by an air of neglect with many vacant and boarded up structures, and open space consisting of mainly waste ground or car parking.

The area around the station provides a poor first impression of Ashford for those arriving by train. The space is incoherent, dominated by buses, taxis, car parking and associated paraphernalia and does not provide either a sense of arrival or clear, legible links between the station and the wider Town Centre environment.

Station Road currently forms the eastern leg of the former one-way ring road. It's recent conversion to two way traffic flow and removal of much of the highway paraphernalia associated with the former ring road has helped improve the pedestrian environment and reduce speeds. However the street suffers from predominantly low value, post-war architecture which fails to positively address the street.



Location map

Positive existing features are limited to two listed buildings (Whist House and Kudos Nightclub), and a number of unlisted industrial buildings of historic significance along Dover Place.

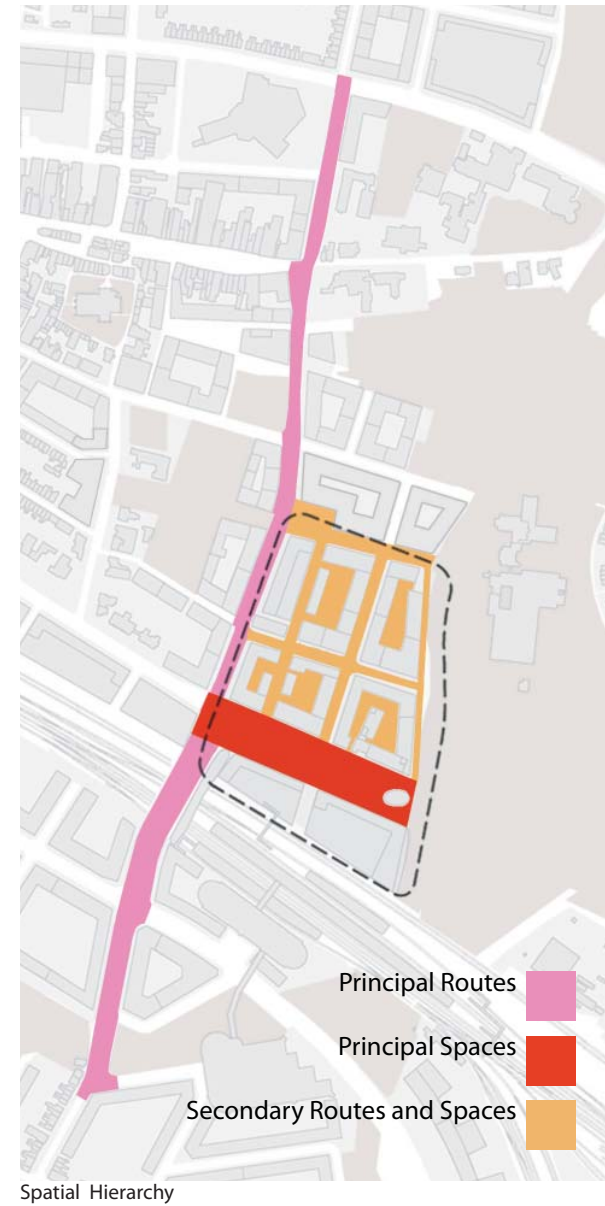
The River Stour provides an attractive eastern boundary to the quarter. However the relationship between the River and the quarter itself is poorly defined with development turning its back to, and sitting hard up against the rivers edge.

## Proposed Character and Land Use

The ATCDF proposal for the Commercial Quarter is to create a thriving business-led mixed-use development. The area will serve as the gateway to the town centre and is defined by a strong orthogonal grid with medium to large-scale flexible floor plates. The buildings will predominantly serve as contemporary office spaces with strategic active ground floor uses such as retail frontages or cafes, bars and restaurants. This quarter shall have a higher density than elsewhere in the town centre with 4-7 storey buildings, and the potential for taller buildings on key sites.

Redevelopment of the domestic station would allow existing surface car parking to be accommodated in new multi-storey structures with active ground floor frontages facing onto a major new arrivals space and transport interchange (Station Square). A new structure across Beaver Bridge linking the domestic and international stations, and the realignment of the junction between Station Road and Elwick Road would greatly improve the legibility of routes between the station entrance and Town Centre.

Station Road will be transformed into a vibrant '21st Century High Street' with larger scale development forming a key node around the junction of Station Road and Elwick Road. Uses will be focused on commercial and small scale retail at ground floor, with residential above. The scale of the built form will provide a sense of enclosure along the street with ground floor active frontages generating pedestrian activity.



## Public Realm Vision

**Physical and Visual Connections:** A 21st century smart and connected place which is flexible and sociable. An important and strategic nodal point within Ashford, with Station Square functioning as a major gateway / arrival space and integrated transport interchange. The design of this key space will create clearly legible routes connecting to the wider Town Centre. Streetscape improvements to Station Road, the introduction of new development with positive street frontages on both sides of the road, and improved crossing points at key nodal points which create logically connections between the town centre and the commercial quarter.

**Interpersonal Connections:** An animated, contemporary, pedestrian dominated quarter. A chance to maximise the lunchtime and early evening economy, alive in the daytime and early evening, quieter at night. Create informal meeting areas to encourage social interaction.

**Environmental Connections:** Physically and visually connected with the natural environment of the river corridor (Emerald Necklace). New development shall face onto the river with residential accommodation overlooking the natural environment. Low energy new build reinforces the vision for greater Ashford.

**Cultural Connections:** The quarter's two listed buildings will be rejuvenated and adopted to suitable uses within the masterplan with consideration given to the retention and redevelopment of other historic buildings along Dover Place. The scale of Station Square and its function as a gateway space offers opportunities for large scale, permanent artwork. Another strategy might consider artwork as a wayfaring devise which helps with navigation and establishes strong connections between the river, the station and the town centre core.



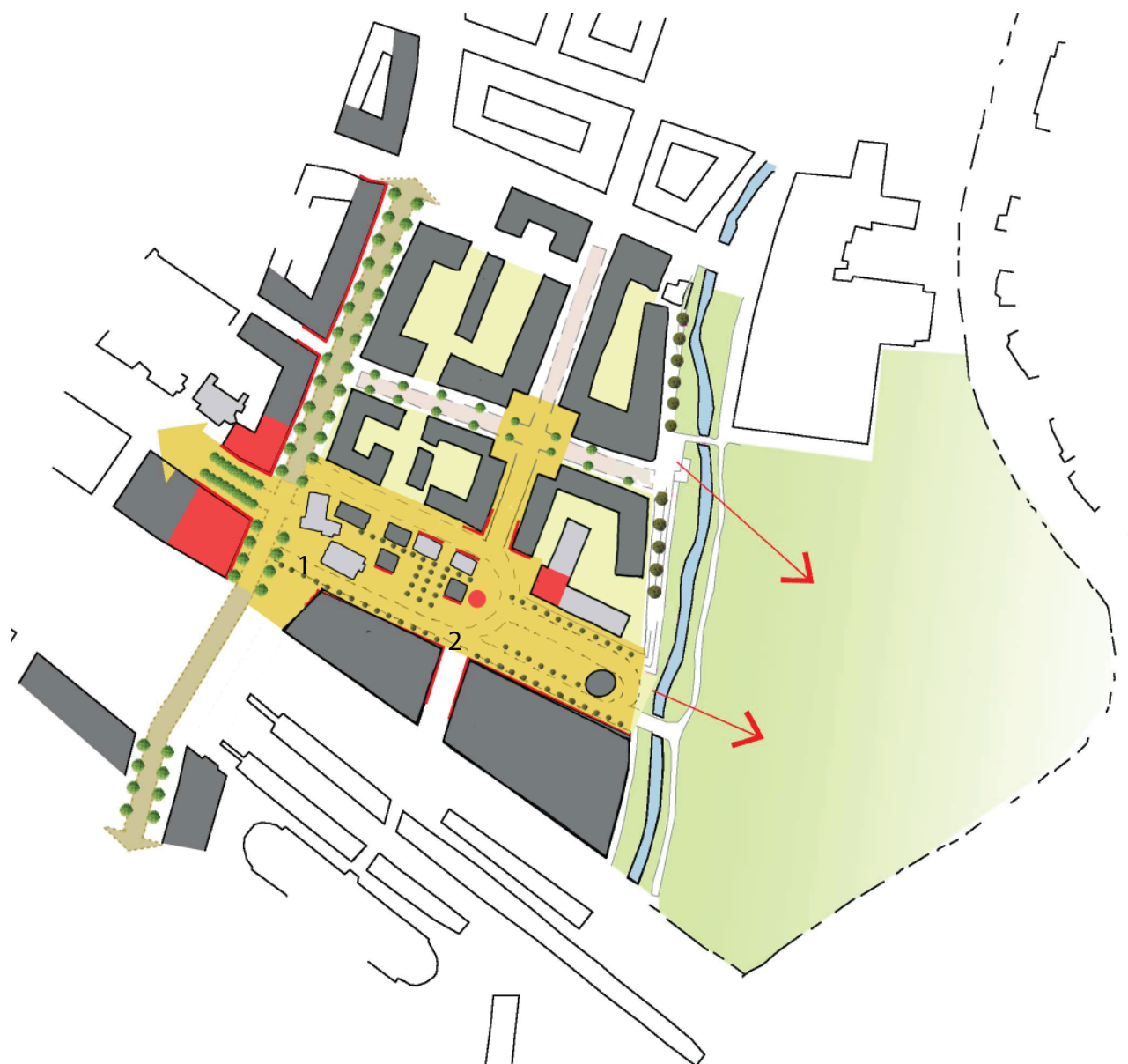
A place to do business



A place to meet



Public space dominated by people



**PRINCIPAL ROUTES**

Station Road - 21st Century High Street

**PRINCIPAL SPACES**

Station Square - one continuous shared surface with unified ground plane

**SECONDARY ROUTES + SPACES**

Main vehicular routes across the square

Minor roads and small street trees

Mews space

Improvements to the Emerald Necklace

**MISCELLANEOUS**

New development

Existing buildings

Key active frontages

1 Station arrival/departure point

2 Transport interchange

Formal tree planting to strengthen spatial development

Possible location for major artwork

Views to 'Emerald Necklace'

Key Buildings

Design Principles

## Principal Routes

### Station Road – 21st Century High Street

- With the recent transformation from a one way ring road to a two way high street, a consistent and coordinated approach to the organisation of the street edge and the features within it will now be paramount.
- Footway widening will provide a 1.5m zone along the built frontage to allow for café style tables and chairs to colonise the street where appropriate; with an additional 3.75m footway space to allow substantial volumes of pedestrian movement along the street. Street furniture will be kept to a minimum and shall be located at the transition zone between the carriageway and the pavement.
- Regularly spaced street trees and lighting columns will form a distinctive avenue along both sides of the road and enhance the perception of the street as a major structuring route within the town centre.
- Subject to detailed investigation of predicted traffic volumes, the junction of Elwick Road and Station Road should function as an unprioritised shared space where the link between Station Square and Elwick Road takes visual precedence over Station Road and functions as a raised table, level with the surrounding pavements.



A visually strong coherent streetscape



Consistent and coordinated street edge

## Principal Spaces

### Station Square

- An opportunity to create a major transport arrivals and interchange point incorporating the domestic and international station in the long term.
- Integration of pedestrian, cycle and vehicular movements. A predominantly hard space with a continuous shared surface material treatment breaking across Station Road to link with Elwick Road.
- Principal arrival / departure point established around the junction of Elwick Road and Station Road with the refurbished Kudos nightclub incorporating outdoor seating areas providing a focus and lively ambience.
- The central portion of the square will accommodate the transport interchange for buses with taxis and 'kiss and ride' facilities provided at the eastern end. Active ground floor uses will encourage animated day and nighttime uses to the edges of the square.
- Major artwork commissioned as a gateway marker within the square. Potential to extend the in ground artwork (Flume) from Elwick Road through Station Square to terminate at the river.



Place Kleber, Strasbourg



First impressions



A legible gateway space

## Secondary Routes and Spaces

### Minor roads

- Shared surfaces with contrasting materials to define carriageways and pavements.
- Simple uncluttered streets.
- Small trees located along east-west aligned streets only, to define 'green-links' down to the river corridor.



Simple uncluttered streets



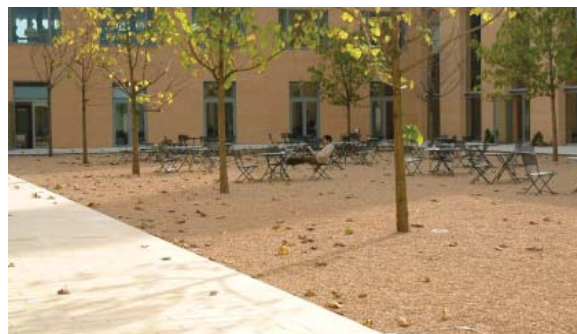
Contrasting materials between footways and carriageways

### Internal courtyards

- Limited vehicular access.
- More intimate, enclosed 'pedestrian' spaces.
- Clear definition of public / private spaces with potential for tree planting, internal courtyards and garden spaces.
- Opportunities for rainwater harvesting within internal spaces



Potential tree planting



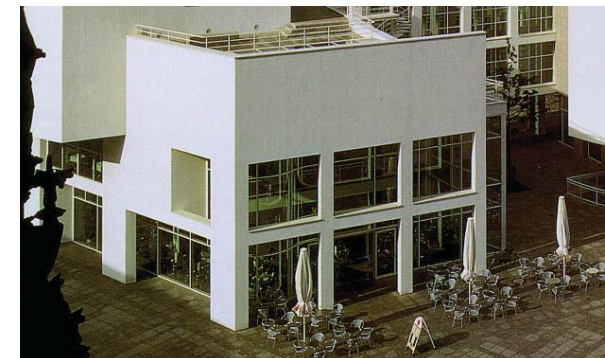
Intimate enclosed pedestrian spaces

### Mews spaces

- Limited vehicular access
- No definition between carriageway and footway
- Simple uncluttered ground plain
- Opportunities for animated edges relating to adjoining properties



Animated edges relating to adjoining properties



Limited vehicular access