

BATH ROAD



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Preface

This document has been produced by the Urban Design Team at Cheltenham Borough Council with the help of Cheltenham Connect and Bath Road Traders Association.

It presents a vision for Bath Road's future and has been produced to give the local community a basis for pursuing improvements to the street. It has been presented to Cheltenham Connect to use as they see fit in attempting to achieve their objectives for the area.

Gloucestershire County Council is the Highway Authority and is responsible for the management and maintenance of highways (including footpaths). Whilst officers of the County Council have been involved in discussions regarding the Bath Road project, which this document embodies, it has not been formally endorsed either by the County Council or the Borough Council.

Those involved in its production acknowledge that its proposals may not be acceptable to the County Council in part or whole and that the interventions suggested here are not currently in any programme of highway work or funding. The Borough Council has awarded Cheltenham Connect £5,000 towards the project through its Community Pride programme.

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September 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Cheltenham is very fortunate in that it is comprised of many distinctive shopping areas with character within easy walking distances of each other. The key locations are Montpelier, The Suffolks, Promenade and Bath Road.

The qualities of Bath Road are numerous but the key points are;

- Highly active local shopping area.
- It has many local and privately owned businesses providing a wide range of services for the local community.
- A variety of businesses including butchers, pubs, restaurants and hardware store which result in activity throughout the day along Bath Road.
- Mix of restaurants, crafts, businesses and residential areas.
- Attractive Regency architecture.
- Human scale building street dimensions.
- User groups from all ages creating a strong community feel.



Cheltenham Connect



Despite all of these positive qualities local groups have expressed concern regarding the quality of space, traffic, parking, seating and lack green infrastructure of Bath Road. They are concerned that these issues may have a negative impact on the economy of the area.

With this in mind, this document has been compiled with the objective of assessing and stabilising a basis for improving Bath Road for local businesses, residents and visitors to the area. It may crucially be used in applications for funding from a variety of funding bodies.

Two key local pro-active groups that have contributed to this document are Cheltenham Connect and Bath Road Traders Association. Both groups feel that improvements are necessary in order to improve the quality and experience of this distinctive shopping area.

In addition, Sustrans advised and greatly contributed to this document. It has uses SUSTRANS DIY Streets model as a basis for a potential changes to the street.

Location

Cheltenham is located in Gloucestershire some 8 miles east of Gloucester and 40 miles west of Oxford.

The eastern edge of the town borders on to the Cotswold scarp, part of the *Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. This landscape feature provides a distinctive backdrop to the north-east of the town and is visible from many viewpoints in and around Cheltenham.

In addition to the AONB, Cheltenham is surrounded by open countryside. Some to the north and west of the town is protected by the statutory Cheltenham/Gloucester Green Belt.

Location: Bath Road

Bath Road forms part of the main A 46 approach into Cheltenham from the south and is positioned to the south of the town centre.

The area forms part of a link of key character and commercial areas that include;

- Cheltenham town centre
- Montpelier
- The Suffolks

all of which are within the Central Conservation Area of Cheltenham.

Bath road forms part of an important local shopping hub of specialist shops, pubs, restaurants and small supermarkets. Many of the shops are privately owned. As a result Bath Road has a distinctive atmosphere of a bustling and active quality that continues throughout the day and into the evening.

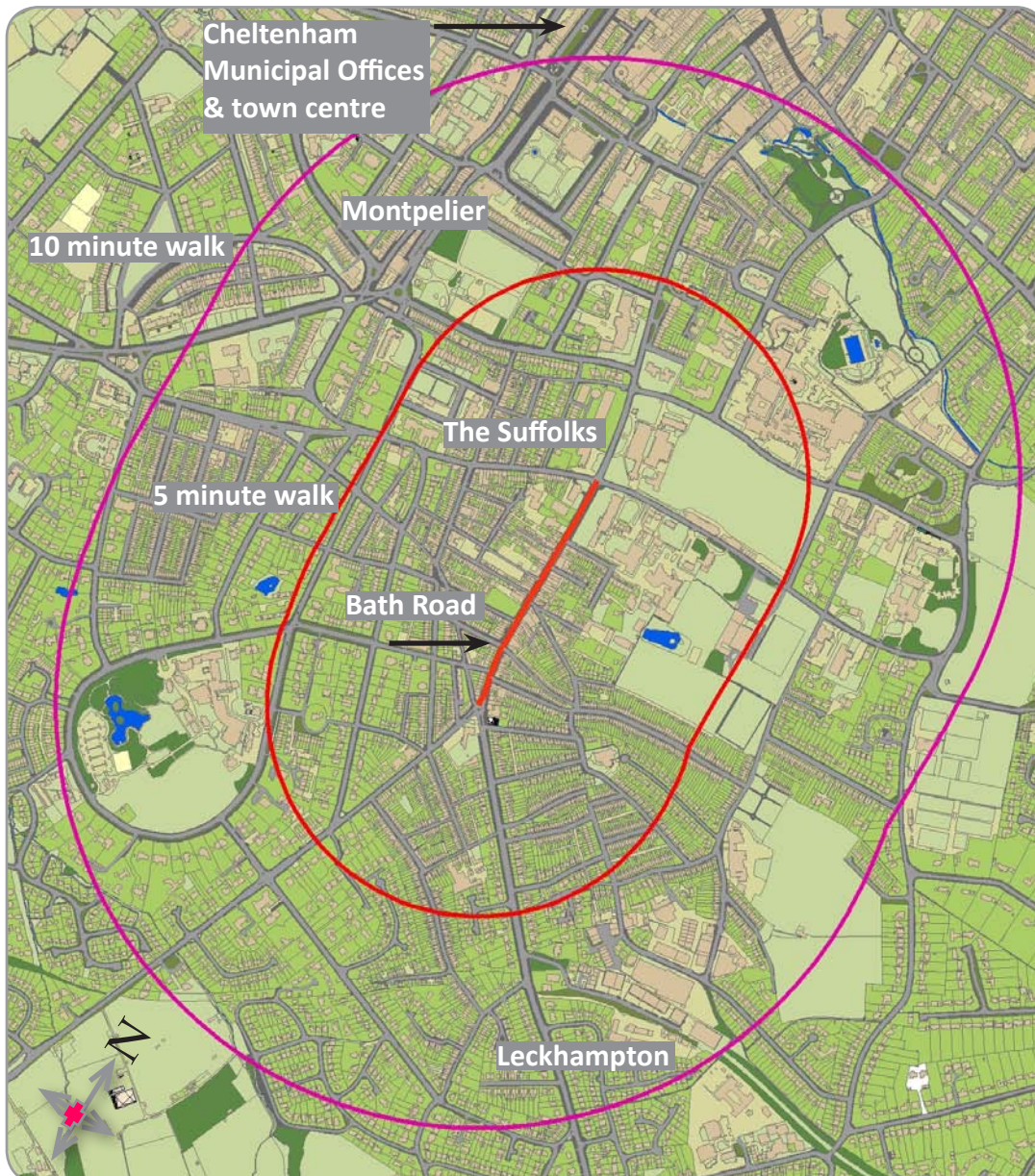
Context

Figure 1, demonstrates the importance of the hub that is Bath road in terms of providing a commercial heart to the area.

From the centre line of Bath road a 5 minute (400 metres) walk encompasses a dense urban grain of private dwellings that includes niche shopping area of The Suffolks. This easy walk encourages local shopping and creates a social atmosphere and identity to Bath road.

The 10 minute walk distance demonstrates the ease at which key commercial areas of Montpelier and the town centre are reached.

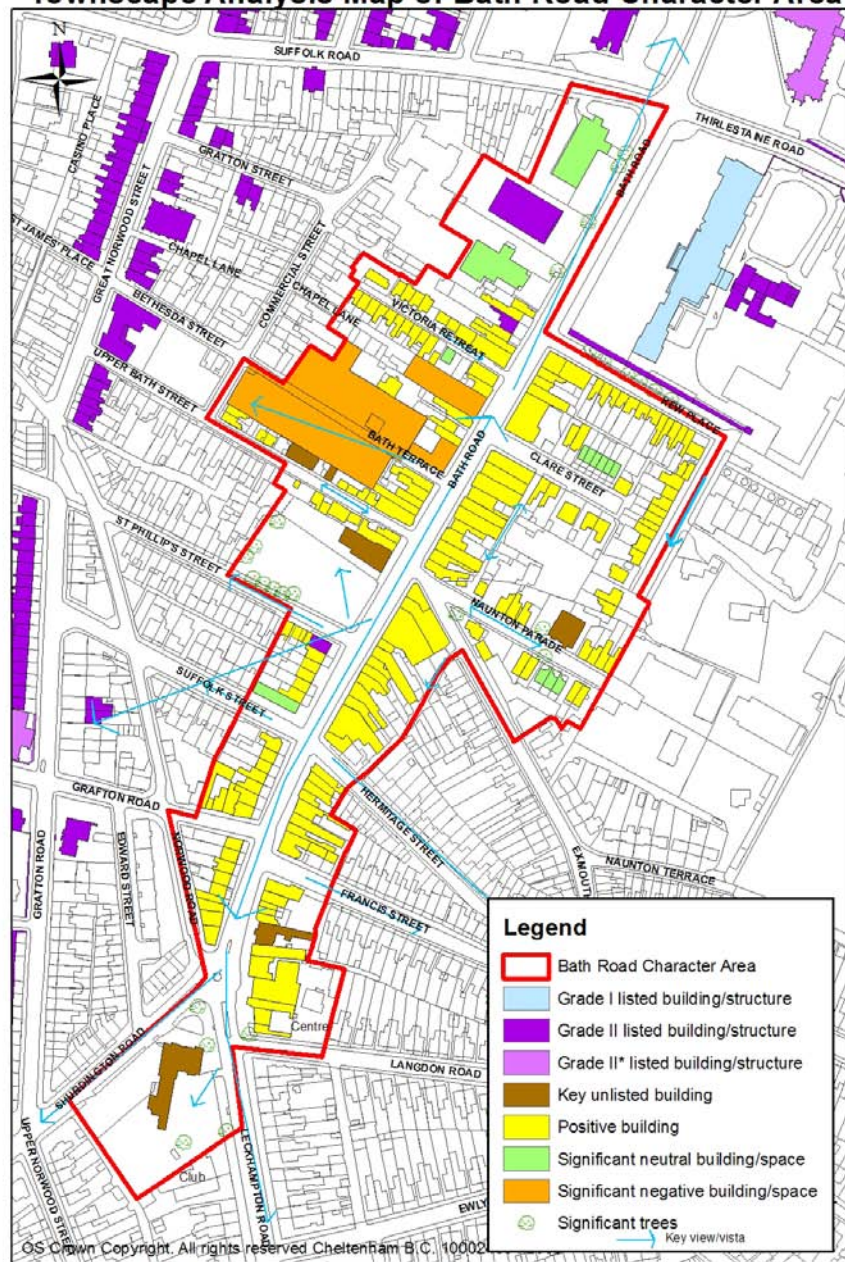
Overall the *figure 2* demonstrates the importance of Bath road as a commercial centre that provides many local services for the developed surrounding area.



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Figure1

Townscape Analysis Map of Bath Road Character Area



Central Conservation and Character Area: Bath Road

Cheltenham is known as the most complete Regency town in England and as a result conservation and management of its heritage plays a key role in any development and modernisation plans of the town.

Bath Road lies within the Central Conservation Area of Cheltenham that encompasses the whole of the town centre, some 600 hectares. It is one of 19 character areas and captures the heart of the commercial area of Bath Road.

It is a thriving historic neighbourhood that is well used with a distinctive, unique character. Key special interests are:

- Historical maps show that in 1813 the first part of Bath Road was opened and the completion of the project was reached in 1822.
- Specialist shops and public houses, many of which are historic.
- Terrace properties with traditional proportions and scale that create unity, form and rhythm.

- Many shop fronts with traditional features.
- Well used locally owned shops.
- Bath Road is particularly important as the whole area, known historically as South Town, grew around this road.

The area contains predominately Georgian and Victorian terraces; many of which along Bath road are in commercial use. The form of the road is strong, linear with vistas looking into Cheltenham to the north and to the south up to the historic Norwood Arms pub. Residential properties form a distinctive zone within Bath Road to the south-west making an important contribution to its mixed use character.

Source: Edited from Central Conservation Area 11. Bath Road Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2008



1



2



3



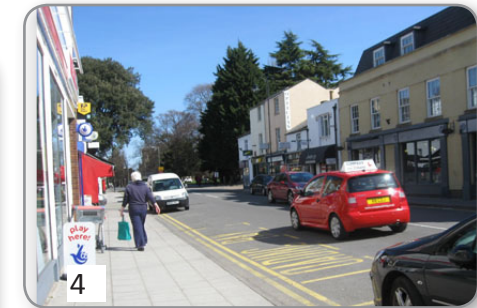
7



6



5



4

1. 19th century Norwood Arms pub
2. Historic terrace housing
3. 19th century Exmouth Arms pub
4. Mature trees providing attractive backdrop and entrance into Bath Road.
5. Clearly defined uses of buildings. Commercial buildings with accomadation above providing busy active two-storey Georgian frontage. In contrast, opposite are residential 19th century artisan terraces. Note uniformity of roof line and fine urban grain.
6. The Brown Jug pub.
7. Variety of building materials and mix of 19th century shop frontage. Active fro ntage with wide paving provides pedestrian friendly space.

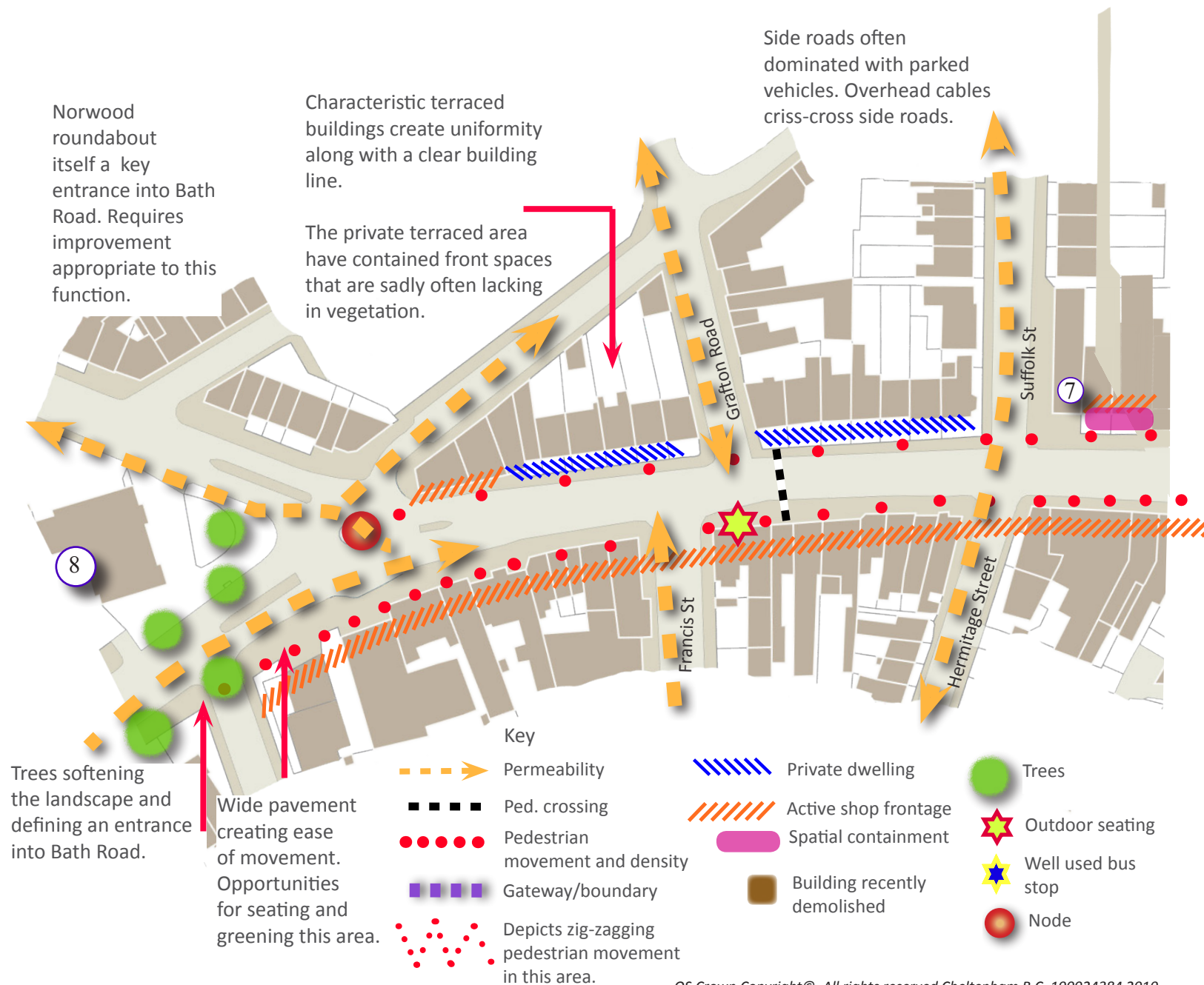
SITE ASSESSMENT

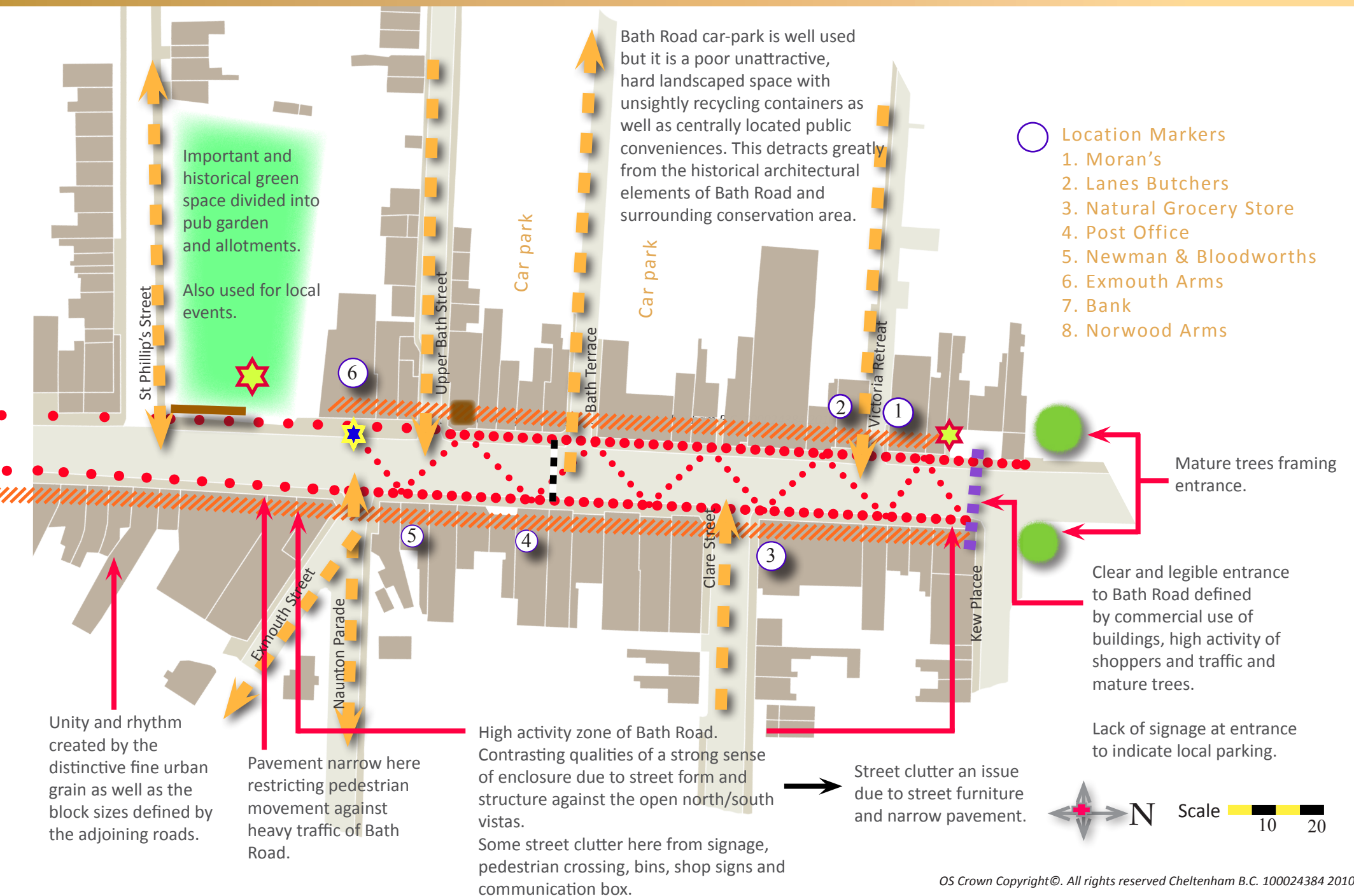
A site assessment was carried out over a number of visits to establish the key characteristics of Bath Road.

From this study it emerged that Bath Road has clear character types within its area.

These being;

- The highly active commercial zone at the northern end of Bath Road, with pedestrians zig-zagging across the road.
- Uninterrupted commercial frontage on a strong building line along the entire east side.
- Opposite, a similar frontage in the north becomes pleasingly varied and different in character south of the Exmouth Arms - with a pub garden, housing, varied building line and, south of Suffolk Street, a quiet residential frontage behind small front gardens.
- The area around Norwood roundabout - a key entrance and large space. The roundabout itself is a poor feature and requires attention.





VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Images Notes

1. View from the outdoor seating area of the Five Alls pub of St Phillips and St James church with attractive backdrop of trees along Grafton Road.

2. Key vista of Bath road, looking north, showing an open, clear linear path with characteristic Georgian private residence on the west leading up to the early Victorian Exmouth Arms pub. In the distance is the Eagle Tower block softened with mature trees acts as a natural boundary to the commercial area of Bath Road.

3. This image depicts the variety of building materials along with a selection of shop frontage at the entrance of Bath Road from the southern roundabout. This is an important entrance to Bath Road and the privately owned shops are a key local characteristic that must be retained. Wide pavement enhances pedestrian comfort and allows for shop personalisation and active frontages.

4. View looking north shows increased shopping activity. Note road becomes narrower creating a more intimate, human scale space. Traffic lights for pedestrian crossing, along with associated road markings, detract the view. Possibility of removing light controlled crossing with a courtesy crossing in order to reduce street clutter.

5. In contrast with previous image this presents a more open space of the south end of Bath Road. There are clearly defined zones of residential terrace housing opposite commercial properties with accommodation above. Also depicted is the fine urban grain of Bath Road.





The focal point and entrance building at the apex of Bath Road is the landmark Norwood Arms pub framed by attractive mature trees. The roundabout node is a hard landscaped structure that would benefit from a sculpture or other form of art work.

The distinctive 'zones' should be retained by retaining the no parking area and possibly defining the residential edge with columnar shaped trees set at wide intervals so as not to obstruct but to enhance the curved vista

viewed from the north as well as the south. This would also act as a green link along Bath Road.

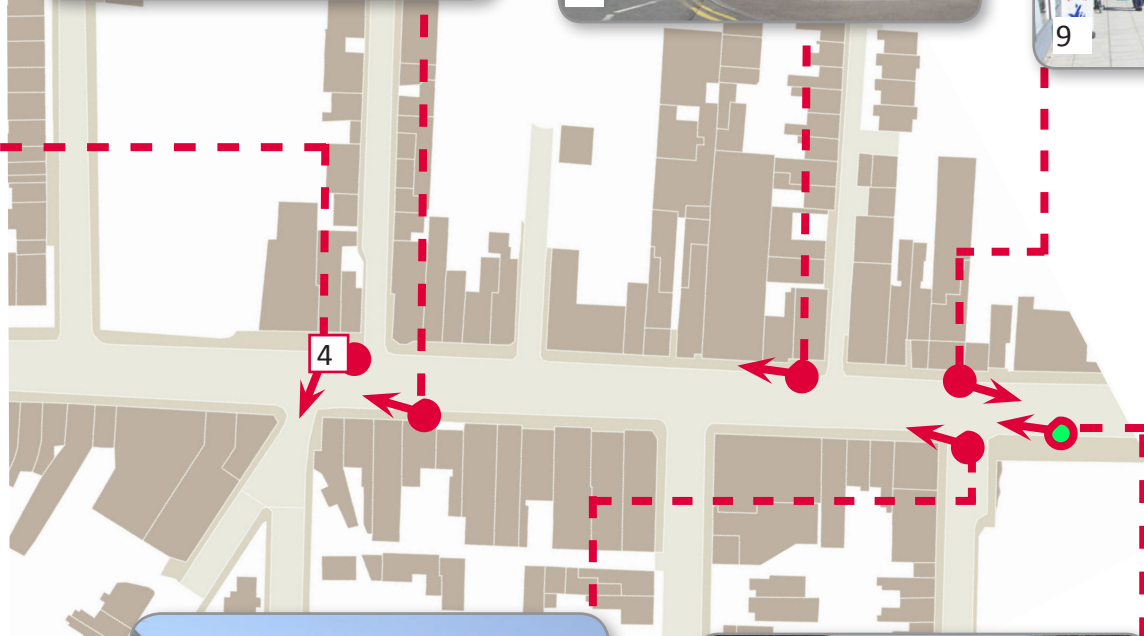
6. View out showing Exmouth Road with the backdrop of Leckhampton Hill in the distance.

7. Architectural interest of the Exmouth Arms and garden. This is the only green space on Bath Road. Street lamps appear out of scale with streetscape and interfere with building roofline.

8. The predominately two storey buildings adds uniformity to Bath Road. Street clutter an issue with telecom box, bins and cycle parking inhibiting pedestrian movement. Width of pavement a positive feature giving pedestrians the feeling of priority and space.

9. Yellow lines and road markings are a visual distraction to this attractive street scene of architecture with mature tree backdrop. Possibility of short term parking in this area to support local businesses.

10 & 11 Entrance and clear vista into Bath road viewed from the north. Entrance definition formed by mature trees and shops. Possibility of bespoke signage to highlight entrance into the distinctive character area that is Bath road.



LOCAL GROUPS



Cheltenham Connect is a local group with the aim of *'strengthening and empowering the residential and trading community of the area known as 'South Cheltenham'*. This is a local pro-active community group that have genuine interest in what happens to their local community and take an active role in improving their local environment.

Cheltenham Connect feels that the current look of the road does not reflect the vibrant community that lies around it. With ugly pavements, very little greenery and little encouragement for people to visit the area by bus, it relies on a poorly signed and badly designed commercial car park to attract shoppers. In addition the lack of promotion by the council is a concern as there is enormous potential to develop the area as one of particular character and interest.

Key points of concern for Cheltenham Connect are;

- Bath Road to be given a stronger sense of place that reflects local character.
- Shared space design concept
- Reduction of traffic lights where possible.
- De-clutter by reducing street all unnecessary street furniture.
- Create a 20mph traffic zone.
- Encouraging cyclists.
- Greening of the road.
- Artwork or sculpture reflecting the artistic local community.
- Short stay parking along Bath Road.
- Renovation of car-park, this to include signage directing visitors to car-park.
- Restriction of service lorries to early morning and/or evening.
- Improved paving and lighting.
- Make Bath Road the fringe festival hub of Cheltenham.



Cheltenham Connect



Bath Road Traders Association represents local businesses in the area and, like Cheltenham Connect, takes an active role in the local community and promotion of Bath Road.

The **BaRTa** would like to see the improvement of the area in keeping with its *'bohemian'* quality as well as promoting the area in terms of a local, distinctive shopping destination.

Key points of concern for BaRTa are;

- Signage into the Bath Road area.
- Renovation of Norwood roundabout.
- De-cluttering and widening of pathways.
- Improve quality of pavement.
- Greening of Norwood roundabout.
- More bins discreetly placed.
- Signage to inform visitors of car-park before entering Bath Road.
- Improve car park.
- Promotion of Bath Road by council and tourist information.
- Increase number of bus routes

Bath Road



Bath Road north; street clutter an issue due to signage, street lamps, traffic lights and projecting signs. Shop awning creates a restrictive, heavily shaded.



Bins, signage and poorly placed seating create a pedestrian obstacle course.

Tall street lamps detract from mature trees and skyline.



A definitive boundary, created by the commercial frontage, does exist and this could be further enhanced.



Norwood roundabout, at the southern end of Bath Road, is under utilised as a landmark entrance to Bath Road.

Transferable Design



Cowley Road Oxford; pavement build outs used for defining parking and narrowing the highway resulting in reduced traffic speed.



St John Street Perth
De-clutter by removing poorly positioned bins, unnecessary signage and projecting signs. Simple open space that is easily legible although a little hard due to lack of vegetation.

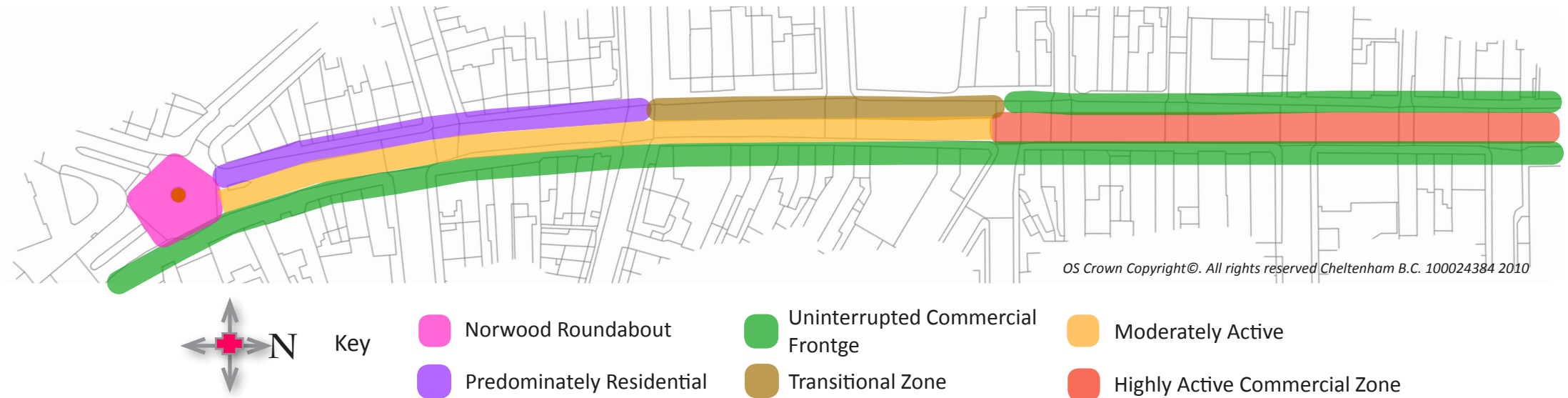


St John Street, Perth.
Identity and 'gateway' created by a decorated stone bollard at the entrances to St John Street.



Cowley Road, Oxford.
Wide pavement offers opportunities for greening, seating and cycle stands.

SUMMARY ZONE PLAN



Zone plan

As a result of this study a clear zone plan emerged that defined key character types within it. In order to retain the spirit of Bath Road this valuable information has been used as a foundation template from which to design.

After extensive research and consultation with Sustrans this template, along with the points raised by local groups, was used to develop three concept plans; The Promenade, Park & Plant and Fusion.

Brief Description of Concepts

Promenade

This concept places greater emphasis on the strong commercial line running the entire length of the east side of Bath Road. Here the pavement, where necessary, would be widened creating space for seating, cycle bays, planting and socialising. In order to reduce the dominance of vehicles and place greater emphasis on pedestrian comfort, no parking will be available along the eastern side of Bath Road.

Park & Plant

Park & Plant concept looks at maximising the parking opportunities along Bath Road whilst staying true to the character zone plan. The use of 'build-outs' between groups of parking bays create planting and pedestrian permeability opportunities. They also act to soften the urban landscape whilst creating rhythm and unity along Bath Road. The pedestrian crossing to the south of Bath Road has been removed and replaced with a courtesy crossing as part of the 'de-clutter' process.

Fusion

The fusion is a design development from the park & plant and promenade concepts. This design is more robust in that it strengthens and develops the key character zones within Bath Road. The parking opportunities in this design are less than in the park & plant concept, however, this leads to a greater variety of spaces with improved benefits for the pedestrian, such as more opportunities for 'greening' the Road and widening pavements.

CONCEPT: PROMENADE

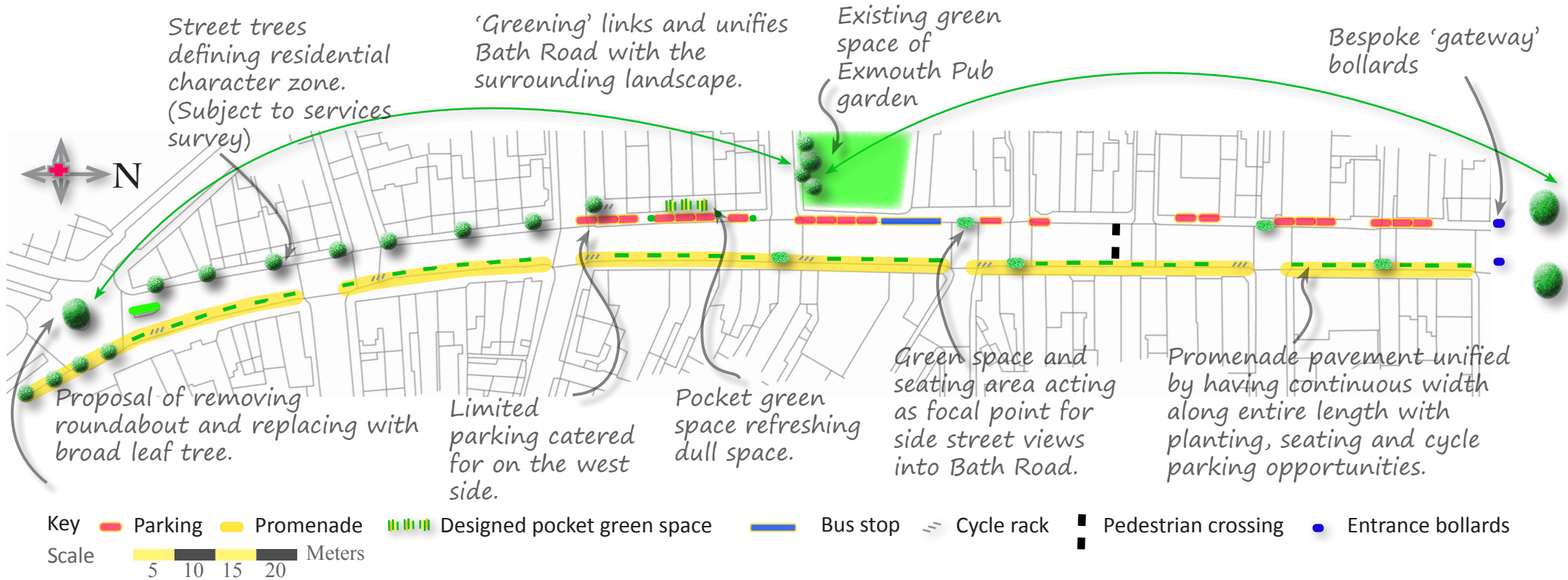


Image of tree-planting concept for Norwood Arms roundabout.



Idea for use of space for wide pavement area at the south end of Bath Road.

Source not known



Multi-functional seating space that includes bins and vegetation.

Architectus Hastings Australia



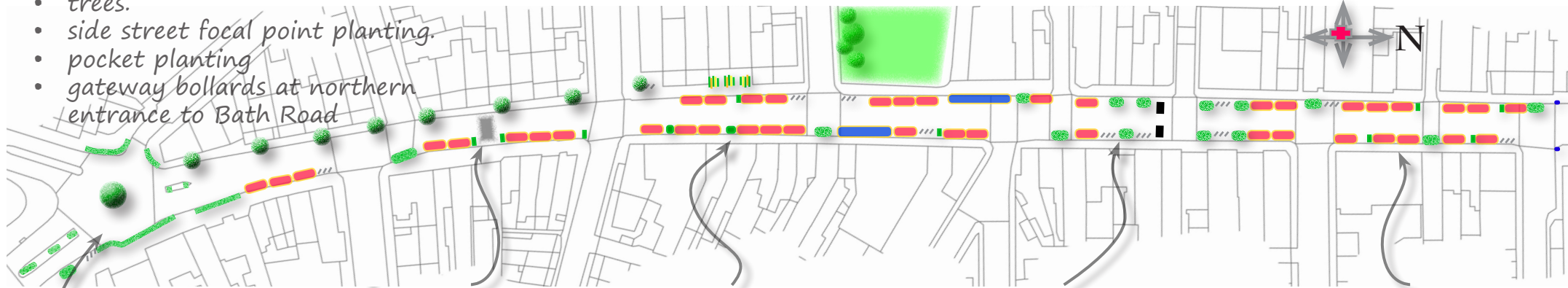
Street planting creating a visually stimulating and textured edge.

<http://greenwalks.wordpress.com/>

CONCEPT: PARK & PLANT

Key design elements retained from Promenade design:

- trees.
- side street focal point planting.
- pocket planting
- gateway bollards at northern entrance to Bath Road



Norwood roundabout edge defined by planting.

Pelican crossing removed and replaced by a courtesy crossing in order to reduce street clutter

Pocket green spaces between parking bays to soften hard landscape and create rhythm along Bath Road.

Pedestrian crossing area greened with planters. Cycle parking.

Parking on both sides of the northern end of Bath Road. This has several functions;

- to reduce traffic speed entering Bath Road.
- to allow shoppers to stop off for short shopping trips.
- creates legibility as a local urban hub.

Key █ Parking █ Planted edge ▤▤▤▤ Designed pocket green space ▬ Bus stop

Scale Meters
5 10 15 20



Graham Paul Smith: Urban Design

Planting creating an entrance into commercial area.



Build-out with courtesy crossing and planting



Graham Paul Smith: Urban Design

Parking softened with street planting.



Graham Paul Smith: Urban Design

Hennef, Germany street design showing parking, use of materials to define space and planting.



<http://greenwalks.wordpress.com/>

Example of street-planting.



Source not known

Surface treatment with build-out that defines parking bays.



Graham Paul Smith: Urban Design

Simple white line defining extended pavement space.



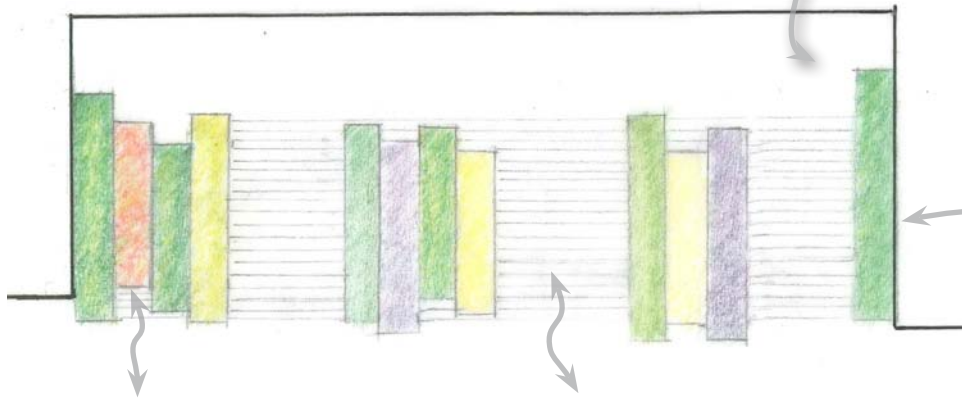
www.contemorist.com

Example of quality seating design.

DETAIL IDEAS



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Block colour planting.

Surface material
small setts or 100mm
widestone strips.



Elevation drawing showing planting. Mix
of textures, height and colour in order to
animate the space.

Plan drawing for planting design.
Concept: Design reflects the close
urban grain of Bath Road buildings.



Existing roundabout



Lamppost with banner. Colour and animation would enliven the space and give a festive feel.



Lamppost with artwork. Opportunity for personalisation of Bath Road by using local artists to design a sculpture for this space.



Replace roundabout with oak or sycamore tree. Acts as a strong entrance obscuring the Eagle tower building.