



prepared by  
Tom Young  
Architects

for  
Groundwork  
Hackney

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# HACKNEY CENTRAL

**proposals for renewing public places**





figure 0.1  
Gibbons storefront on Amhurst Road with derelict accommodation over

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## PROJECTS

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# 1. THE STUDY AREA



Area covered by the Greater London Authority



figure 1.1  
STUDY AREA in context of London

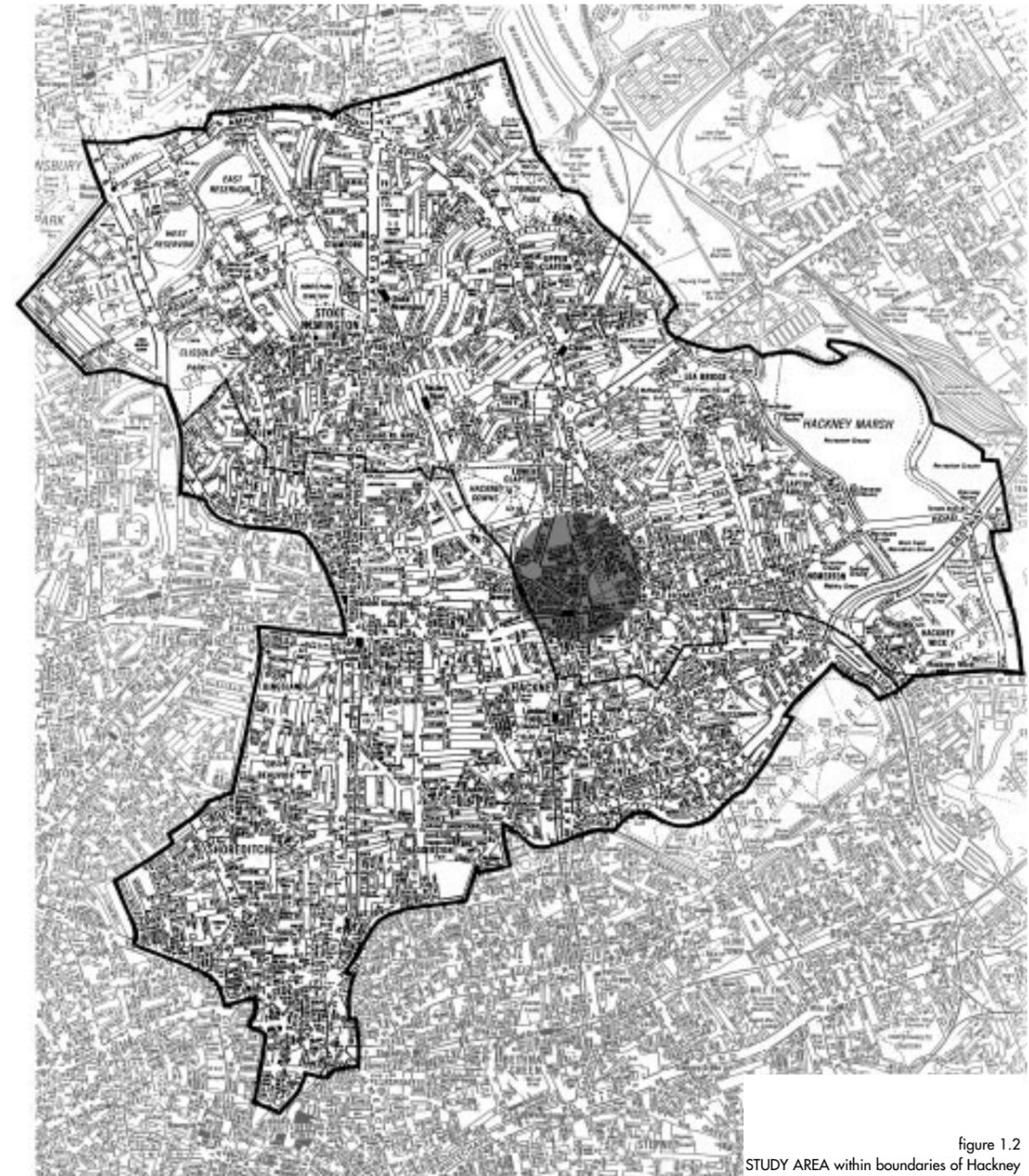
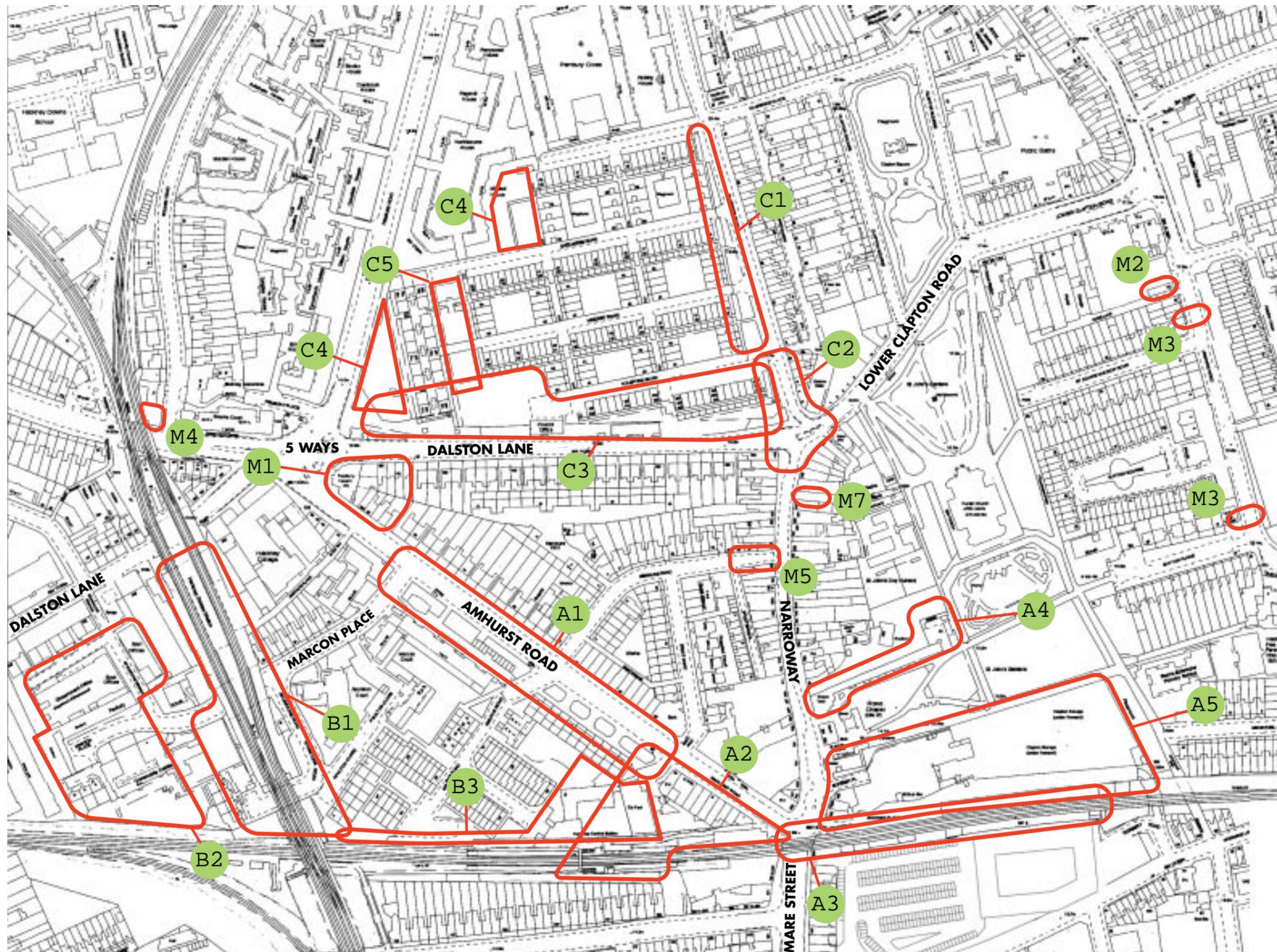


figure 1.2  
STUDY AREA within boundaries of Hackney

# 2. PROJECT LOCATIONS



## LOCATIONS

- A1 Aspland Estate/Amhurst Road
- A2 Hackney Central Station approaches
- A3 Tescos approaches
- A4 Church gardens
- A5 Bus-station site
  
- B1 Viaduct spaces & related roads
- B2 Marcon Place & nearby vacant buildings
- B3 Town centre car park enlargement
  
- C1 New Pembury Estate front onto Clarence Road
- C2 Clarence Road/Narroway
- C3 New Pembury Estate front onto Dalston Lane
- C4 Estate open spaces
- C5 Estate OAP club
  
- M1 Pembury Tavern corner
- M2 Derelict public convenience
- M3 Street crossings
- M4 Derelict workshops
- M5 Kenmure Road off-street space
- M6 Narroway hoarding

figure 2.1

# 3. PROJECT PLANS

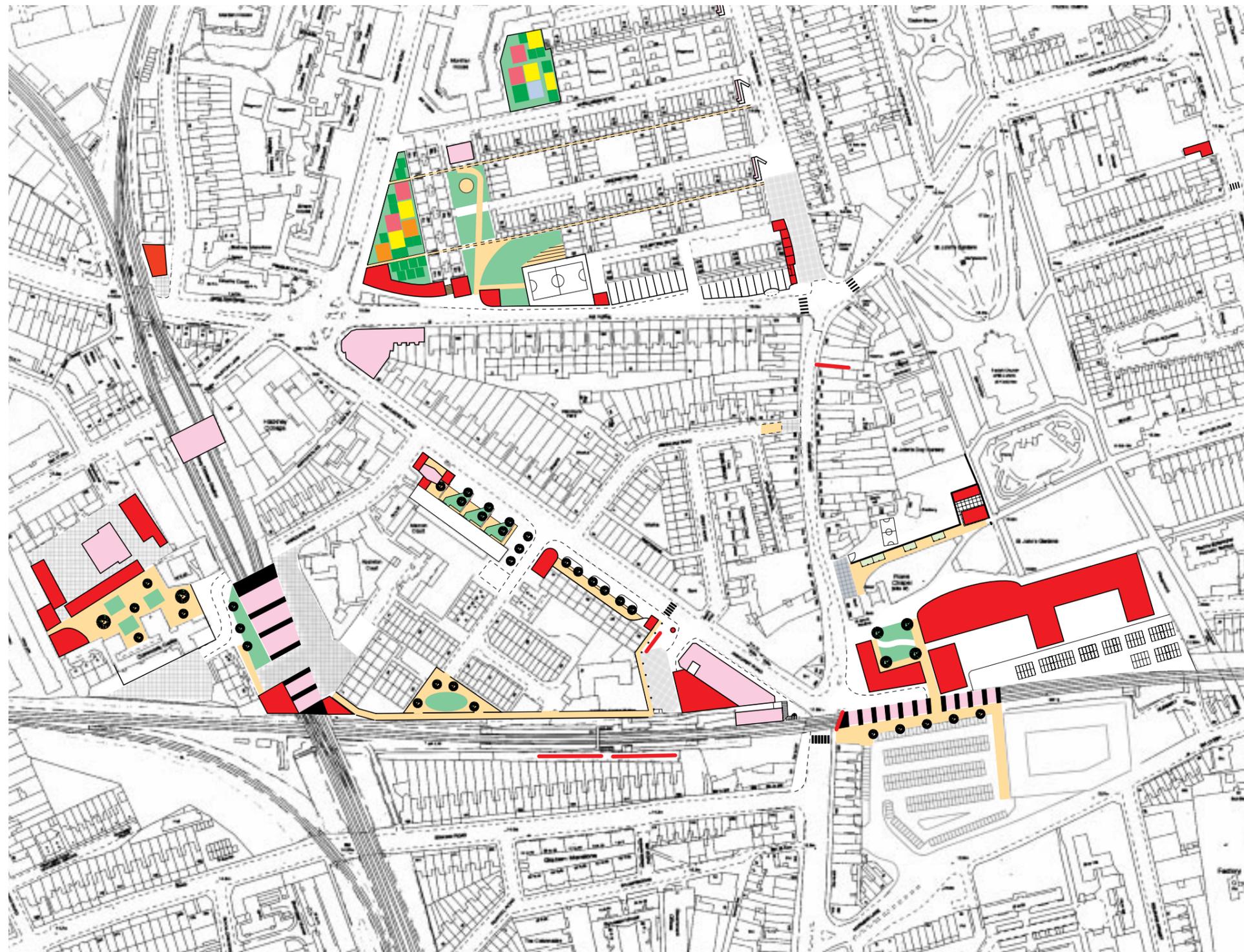


figure 3.1: plan of proposed

## COLOUR CODE

- new build
- refurb of derelict or vacant buildings
- new or enhanced gardens
- new tree planting
- new paving for pedestrians and vehicles
- new paving for pedestrians
- new art installations/public art

figure 3.2: plan of proposed project layout for enlarged town centre car park



# 4. INTRODUCTION



## EXISTING PLACES



figure 4.1  
looking north towards Pembury Estate OAP club across  
Hindrey Road which is set into a cutting isolating the club  
from the southern portion of the main estate garden

The work presented here is intended to inform inter-agency partnerships working on improving public spaces in Hackney Central town centre. The aim is to stimulate discussion by putting forward specific projects which realise thinking about public places in the study area. Groundwork Hackney are keen that the rationale behind individual projects is recognised by the other agencies involved in regeneration. One aim of this brochure is to promote urban design thinking as part of an overall regeneration strategy.

Projects have not been conceived as a "total vision" for the whole area. Rather places encountered have been considered in terms of their urban potential which is explained in terms of existing urban structure. "Structure" here means the durable and dominant features of a place.

Clarification of what is present and useful already in various parts of the study area is then part of the process of renewing public places and through it one hopes to give the strength of well-realised architectural ideas to public places.

Improvements to public places are often projects which can be carried off with minimum fuss. The general preference is

for "furniture" or street paraphernalia which can be inserted into the urban scene with the least bureaucratic overhead. These simple insertions are often not well-co-ordinated and sometimes seem made for the sake of spending budgets. Curiously, such "improvements" - such commonplaces as Victorian pastiche lamp standards, bins or benches, finger signs, hanging baskets, tree-planting etc - come to signify the very thing which they are positively meant to deny, namely contempt for the urban environment and that generalised disregard for the idea of living together in cities with some degree of pleasure and sophistication. The result is less improvement than trivialisation of the urban environment.

Improvements should be real and lasting. Perhaps, the best hope of this is through projects that reinforce the best and most durable aspects of existing places whilst dealing effectively with inherent difficulties and obstacles to better use.

# 5. INTRODUCTION



## STIMULATION



figure 5.1

an interesting work milieu off Dalston Lane providing a public route to Hackney Downs: the setting benefits from cobble paving and the clear crescent shape of the space

The “stimulation” of Hackney Central’s urban environment is a main objective of this work. Several different approaches to “stimulation” are adopted here.

### ART

Art installations are a simple, valid response to urban design problems, and given Hackney’s wealth of artistic activity, there is every reason to seek out opportunities for such projects.

### ROUTES

Improving pedestrian accessibility is a well understood principle of urban design. Better used routes are better public places.

### LANDMARKS

The 19th C practice of positioning glamorous pub buildings on corners is an example of the role of landmark buildings in ordinary residential settlements. Distinctive architecture in a background of bland buildings invigorates the idea of the city.

### ROOTING

Improving areas between buildings so the buildings and public places seem to cohere more strongly helps “root” existing buildings and define a more compelling idea of place.

### WORK

Work can stimulate public places. New work buildings to support and enhance public places are proposed here. Such projects are consistent with the prevailing politics of work and welfare. What is important now, as Gordon Brown has said, is “...what the state can enable you to do for yourself.” This does not mean that making work happen in particular places is easily done by the state. If the preference is for real work, then great sensitivity is needed to match existing work cultures with new work buildings funded by public agencies. HABITAT’s 1996 report on human settlements (“An Urbanizing World”) argues similarly:

**“Planners...need to learn how informal employment is generated and sustained and how to reduce negative land-use controls to the minimum required for maintenance of public health and environmental safeguarding...”**

The proposals here are for very small scale work spaces positioned to make business easier, and to make places for doing business with the public into well-defined and convincing urban settings.



## CENTRES



figure 6.1: Lower Clapton Road  
informal trading next to an 18th C building  
containing many different uses

The proposals for “stimulating” the urban environment in Hackney Central which are laid out here can be summarised simply as ways of getting more activity in the area. In a basic sense, the goal is to make more happen. This is very apparent when dealing with the deadened spaces to be found around housing estates and areas affected by acute decay and dereliction.

Richard Sennett, professor of sociology at New York University and writer on urbanism, speaks about the *need* for an experience of “disorder” in cities, of urban centres as the assumed setting for this stimulus or experience of the real. The centre gives a sense of being part of something alive. The residential periphery, in contrast, isolates and defines a condition of exclusion. This can be understood just by imagining the terrific difference between Hindrey Road on the New Pembury Estate and Narroway. The former affords an experience of dullness and unease, the latter of sociability, the human crush, of local society and business.

Sennett writes; “**urban places...have the capacity to help people to grow out of themselves into a more impersonal citizenship, and so to relieve themselves of their own subjective burdens. The relief**

**of self found in dense streets, mixed pubs, playgrounds, and markets affects how people think of themselves as citizens...sensing one’s “right to the city” helps people feel entitled to other rights, rights not based on personal injury or victimhood...”**

Strengthening the centre so it remains central to people’s experience is an objective of this work.

Quite obviously too, the centre must be *interesting*. Less formal uses of public space - ones perhaps associated with “disorder” - afford interest, perhaps because informality and opportunism are expressions of life’s improvised nature. In these terms urban design and public spaces created through it can be thought of as a process of accommodating informality successfully. Certainly, without such usage, public spaces seem uninteresting.

Interest, informality, opportunism are signs of an urban environment which supports the life expected of a centre. One clear aim of this work is to encourage more activity in public places.

# 7. INTRODUCTION



## URBAN FINISHES



figure 7.1  
view of "urban finish" on corner of Graham Road and Mare Street

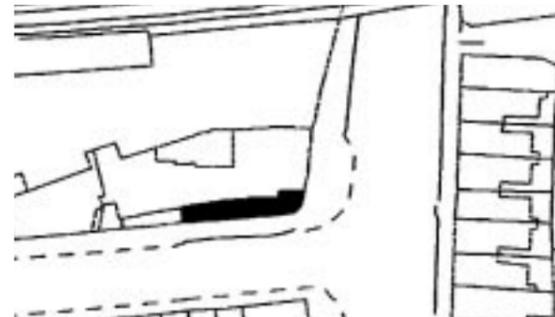


figure 7.1.1  
OS extract



figure 7.2  
view of "urban finish" on flank of Hackney Institute buildings

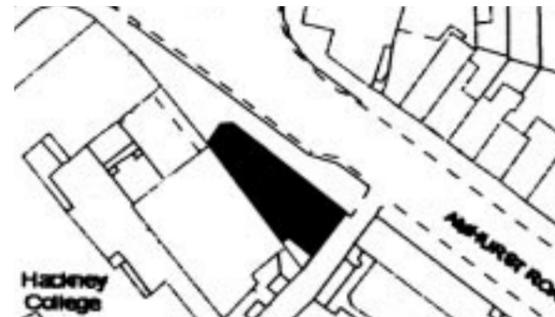


figure 7.2.1  
OS extract



figure 7.3  
view of "urban finish" on Clarence Road



figure 7.3.1  
OS extract

Because the role of workspace as a stimulus to public places is important but nevertheless fraught with scrupulous anxiety about engaging with a real work culture (creating "real jobs"), the following remarks about small scale urban development are included. What may be useful about this discussion is the idea of highly responsive or opportunistic commercial buildings.

The building shown here in figure 7.1 on the corner of Graham Road and Mare Street is extraordinary, but unlikely to figure in discussions urban design in Hackney Central although it is a good example of constructive opportunism.

It is tiny - in width, less than 4m. It houses around ten separate businesses, all of which get a good frontage location; this type of building is all about *frontage* and can hardly be said to have a back at all.

The accommodation offered is only marginally more sophisticated than lock-up storage. But this reduced specification keeps costs down so encouraging occupation and use. These are very important "urban design" benefits that the small buildings shown here greatly facilitate. These buildings cannot have been



figure 7.4: railway viaduct at Hackney Downs station  
small shops built off the viaduct which inhabit the area under the bridge space and establish a public space

expensive to erect so for a modest outlay, new business space is made which makes a virtue out of difficult sites, or indeed, realises a site that would otherwise be ignored by the public. These sites are "unconsidered trifles" which can be turned to advantage by small business.

The term "urban finishes" seems a good way to describe these buildings. Built off the raw flanks of larger buildings, they provide an inhabited veneer which capitalises on the frontage location and provides small business opportunities.

Small scale sliver development is liberating: it gives an urban benefit disproportionate to its size. New small buildings should thus become a natural part of urban improvement work.

# 8. INTRODUCTION



## DIVERSITY



figures 8.1-3  
"pure residential" stock

figures 8.4-6  
mixed use frontage stock

figures 8.7-9  
commercial stock

One of Hackney Central's strengths is the diversity of its building stock. The rich residential stock is well known. The frontage stock is less celebrated but is another essential component. The very idea of a traditional shopping street as neighbourhood centre depends on a mixed use frontage stock, with homes, offices, workshops and shops. This sort of urban building achieves a high degree romanticism at the north end of Mare Street. That the new Tescos does not touch at all on this tradition of mixed use frontage buildings is a loss: Tescos is a standard monofunctional supermarket "box".

Hackney Central is a mixed urban environment but one where the residential fabric and residential idea dominate. One senses the importance given to residential values in the different ways the urban fabric absorbs work buildings within the explicitly residential stock.

A key characteristic of many of the work buildings is either their domestic character, scale or location. Work seems part of a domestic or residential sphere of activity. The way work buildings are positioned in a street frontage (figure 8.8) suggests work and home uses can form and share the same public space.

Small workspaces are also organised in the middle of blocks in hidden lanes or courtyards: Rowe Lane, Clarence Mews and Albion Works (by Hackney Downs station) are good examples (see also figures 9.2-9.6) where the accommodation of work in a largely residential context leads to the formation of a rich backland or layering of the fabric. This semi-public space is another, more private sharing of space by residential and work uses and depends on similarities of scale between the workplace and home.

Where "backlands" are converted to residential use - Kenmure Yard or Mother Square are examples (figures 9.2 & 9.6) - the qualities afforded by these "enclaves" are readily felt. It would be wrong nevertheless to ignore the value of such settings as a way of making apparent affinities of scale and privacy between work and home, so healing the breach between the active and contemplative sides of life.

A diverse stock of buildings helps accommodate variety of use. *Maintaining* diversity in the building stock and avoiding homogenisation is important. Working backlands should be reconsidered as a possible germ of a new urban idea about mixed city development.

# 9. INTRODUCTION



## USE DISTRIBUTION



- single user commercial space
- light industrial
- residential housing estate
- mixed: shops, workshops, flats, offices
- "traditional" terraced housing
- institutional e.g school, health centre
- public open space

figure 9.1  
basic use distribution in study area

The specific ways in which a diverse stock of buildings might be assembled is very important. Because the work shown here includes proposals for new small structures it is useful to consider the tradition of block organisation found in the study area. Certainly, adjacency of different uses should be understood as being "about" more than separation and isolation of nuisance. It is also about making relationships, one aspect of which may be mutual enrichment. Through these relationships, we can add qualities to public space and semi-public space such as estate gardens and access roads.

One result of comparing the area as a whole (figure 9.1) and blocks within it

(figures 9.2-9.6), is the realisation that the area as a whole resembles a block. In a way, the urban block is a miniature version of the area. This mutuality between constituent blocks and the study area is broken where the excesses of modern zoning are apparent i.e the undifferentiated residential blocks created by the Aspland and Pembury estates.

One part of this work is to suggest that new uses are seen in this tradition whereby the mixture of uses in any particular place is complementary to the city's organisation as a whole. Creating city blocks as diverse as the examples below should be one urban design objective.

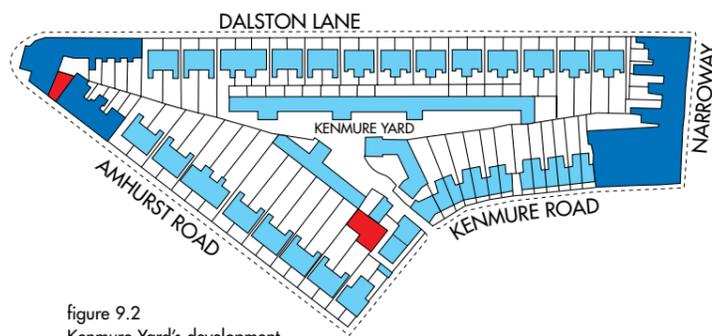


figure 9.2  
Kenmure Yard's development as residential has radically reduced the work content of this block

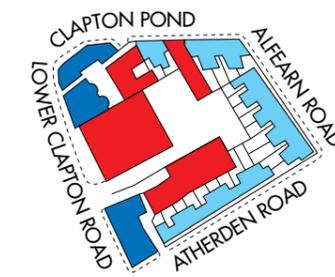


figure 9.3



figure 9.4

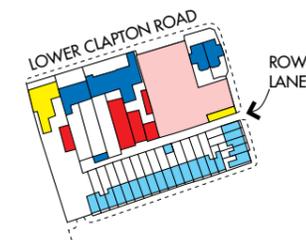


figure 9.5

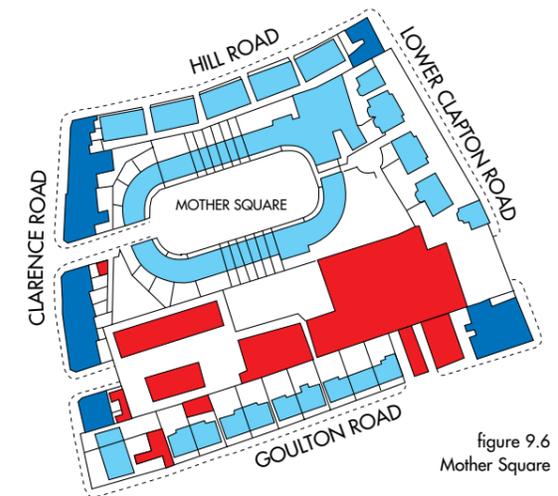
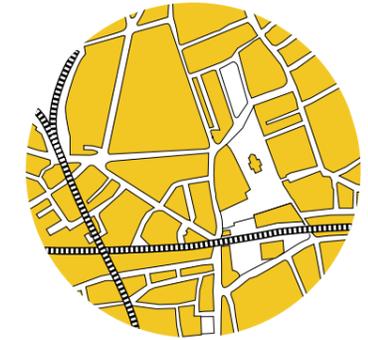


figure 9.6  
Mother Square

# 10. INTRODUCTION



## DECAY



figures 10.1  
Gibbons Buildings rear depot buildings next to Hackney Central station



figures 10.2  
commercial units in the viaduct along  
Spurstowe Road arranged behind high fencing

The remarks about workspace, diversity of buildings and their formation into urban blocks, should not disguise the problem of decay which is particularly acute in some of the working parts of the study area. The idea of doing improvements in areas absolutely blighted by decay and dereliction is one that makes sense up to a point. However, it is fundamentally misguided to ignore dereliction in the long term.

In the approaches to and from Hackney Central Station, there are glaring examples of long-standing dereliction. The Gibbons depot is falling apart as is the old station building at the foot of the ramp up to the new station. Improvements here will always be compromised by the decay of these large structures. Parts of the North London viaduct and the viaduct at Hackney Downs station are in a similar condition. The Pembury Tavern is also derelict: its renewal is the *sine qua non* for improving 5-Ways.

Partnership is often required to reverse extreme decay. It is achievable, although not necessarily easily, and compared to putting in street furniture, it is demanding.

Very decayed workspaces in the public environment project a poor image of work

in a largely residential part of London (afflicted by normal cynicism about work prospects). It leads to a deep divorce between the idea of home and workplace - a complete separation between residential and work values.

Extreme decay threatens public space because it cannot be negotiated with, only concealed as far as possible - hence the walls around viaduct spaces shown in figures 10.2 or 58.2. This runs counter to a main strand of urban design which is creating relationships between the constituents of the urban scene. Without relationships, the proximity of things to each other is seen as merely functional - due to lack of space - or historical. This is not a positive idea of the city because no value emerges from the city's intrinsic density.

Scenes of bland inertness contribute as much to the idea of urban failure as rank decay. Public space relies on positive relationships between living identities. Where these are dead or decomposing, public space is threatened. Inevitably, therefore, this work assumes the possibility of reviving moribund parts of the study area. It is certainly not enough just to put what is dying behind high walls.

# 11. INTRODUCTION



## STUDY AREA

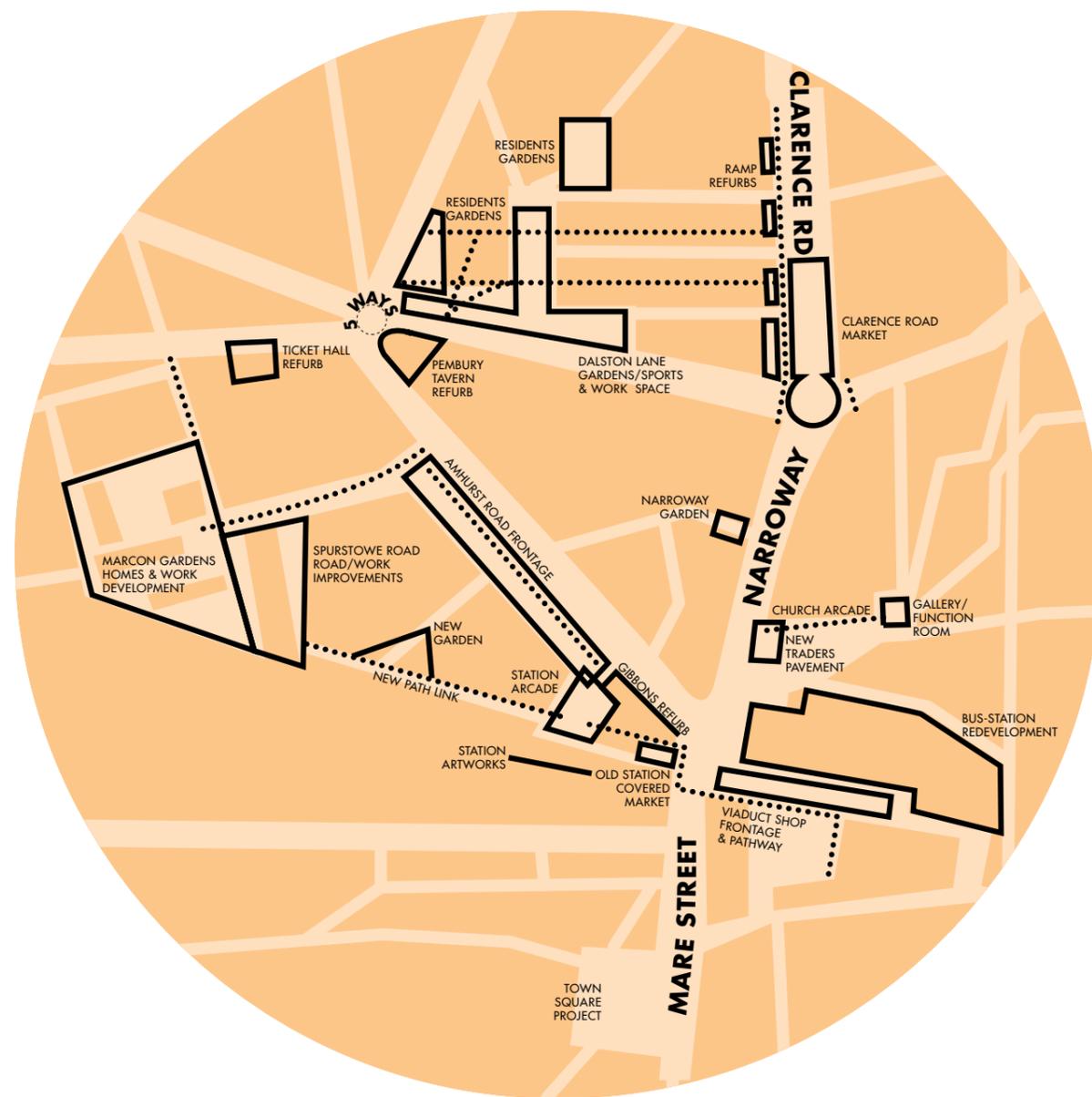


figure 11.1  
schematic of study area with distribution of projects

The study area is focused around the Narrowway. In the middle, there is the figure subtended by the Narrowway, Amhurst Road and Dalston Lane. This triangle may be likened to a kind of gathering point at the head of Mare Street, which leads onto the main spaces in the area i.e the Narrowway, the Town Square and Mare Street.

One aim of the projects is to strengthen the places adjacent to this triangular figure formed by the main street spaces. This, it is hoped, will consolidate and reinforce the importance of the main Narrowway/Mare Street axis.

The new projects serve as spaces that lead directly to and from the main central "rooms" of the area. This approach to organising new work can be thought of as increasing the "surface area" of the centre - a way of engaging more of the immediately surrounding area in the idea of the centre.

The new spaces laid out in this brochure are important not just in terms of local improvement but to the extent that they contribute to the urban idea and reconcile people to an urban life.

It is then quite clear that these projects add to the centre. Geared to the life of the street, and the ordinary functionality offered by public places, they favour neither the rich nor the poor - the same even-handedness which public space has always offered.

Sustainability is built on functioning, confident city areas. Local centres are basic to a sustainable future. The projects shown here focus on the life of a key local centre in Hackney and aim to sustain it well into the next century.

P R O J E C T S



# 12. ASPLAND ESTATE / AMHURST ROAD FRONTAGE

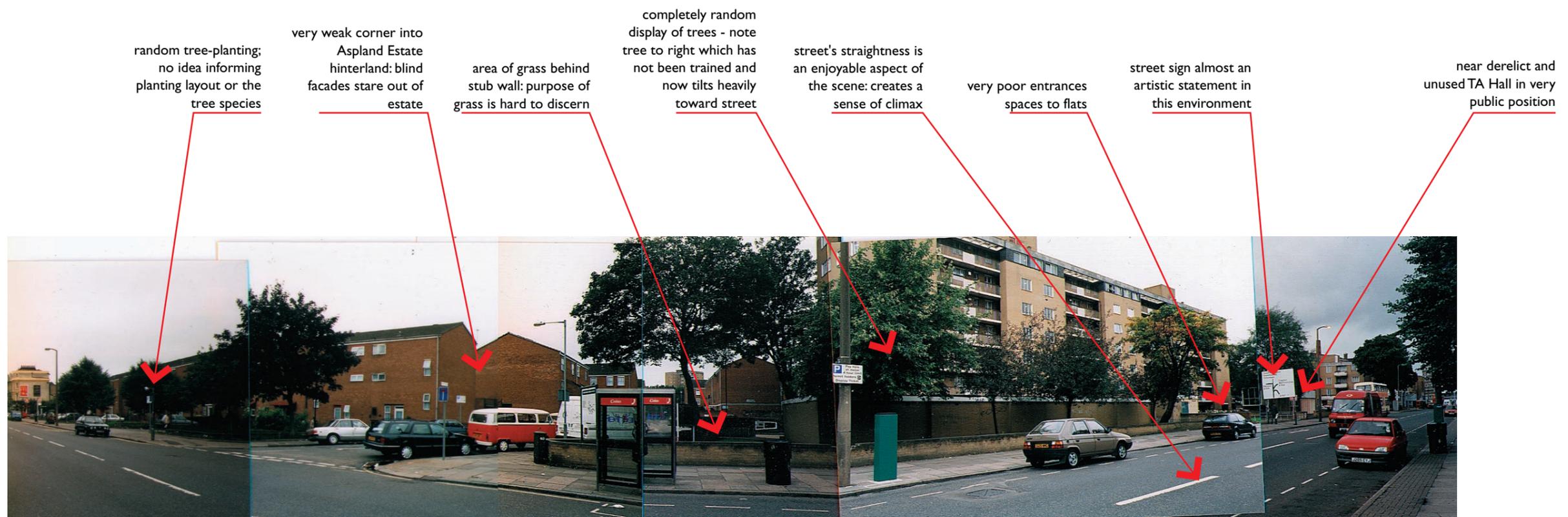
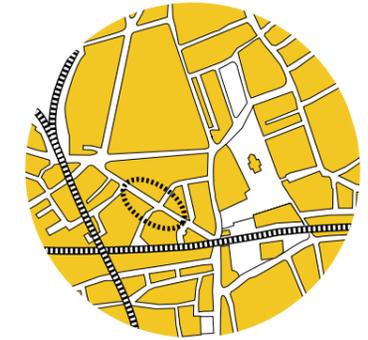


figure 12.1

# 13. ASPLAND ESTATE / AMHURST ROAD FRONTAGE



## ANALYSIS

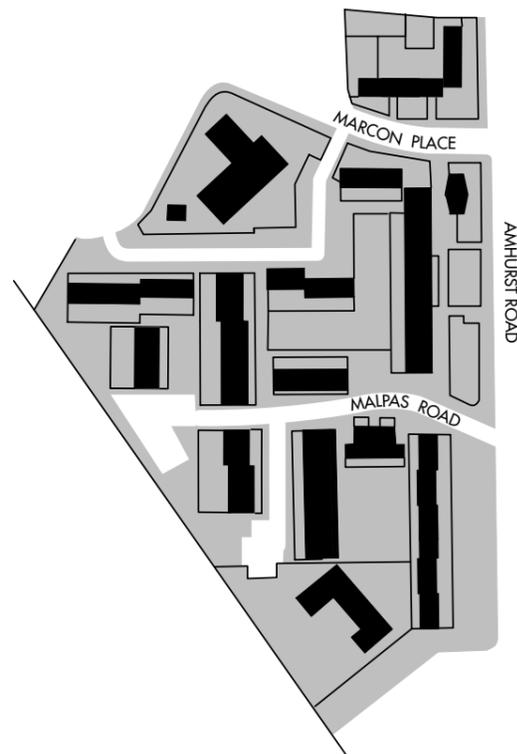


figure 13 : plan of existing  
Aspland Estate: garden walls around stand alone blocks



figure 13.2  
space to front of Marcon Court: very wide with many minor spaces



figure 13.3  
one of Marcon Court's front doors: not a celebration of entrance

The long, spacious public frontage between the old Hackney Institute and The Earl Amhurst pub forms the public front to the Aspland Estate.

The Aspland Estate's frontage buildings consist of two parts. The more imposing building is Marcon Court lying on the west side of Amhurst Road between Malpas Road and Marcon Place. Between Malpas Road and The Earl Amhurst pub, there is long terrace (no.s 21-41) which is typical of the rest of the estate with front and back gardens, giving a bland, blank impression. These frontage buildings are set back 15-20 metres from the kerb line - considerable space to do something in. One gesture has been locating the estate Community Hall in this thick margin of possibly public space as a kind of sculptural figure - a gesture that promises a strong link between the public and estate residents.

A mass of small walls, garages, soft landscape areas, indeterminate tree arrangements all conspire to confuse this situation as curious figures in an even more confusing subdivision of minor spaces at the front of Marcon Court and no.s 21-41. In short, there is nothing particularly useable or attractive about the frontage space,

although it is broad and given over to garden-like land. No strong formal idea is revealed by the vaguely horticultural gesturing which is particularly disappointing given there is enough room to make a kind of linear park - a confident urban public place.

The obsessive prominence of garden walls in the estate hinterland makes for a mood of primness and anti-publicness which spills out onto the main frontage. The whole estate seems about garden walls and parking space and "social hygiene". Reconciling the assertive privacy of the estate's architecture to the public frontage on Amhurst Road is one part of the problem. The Amhurst Road frontage buildings do not celebrate the area; they are not rooted in the place which they form a part of.

Real improvements must construct a relationship between the frontage buildings and the public space in front of them. This is a strategy to make these buildings feel like a positive part of the city - to "root" them convincingly in the public space of the street.

# 14. ASPLAND ESTATE / AMHURST ROAD FRONTAGE



## PROJECTS

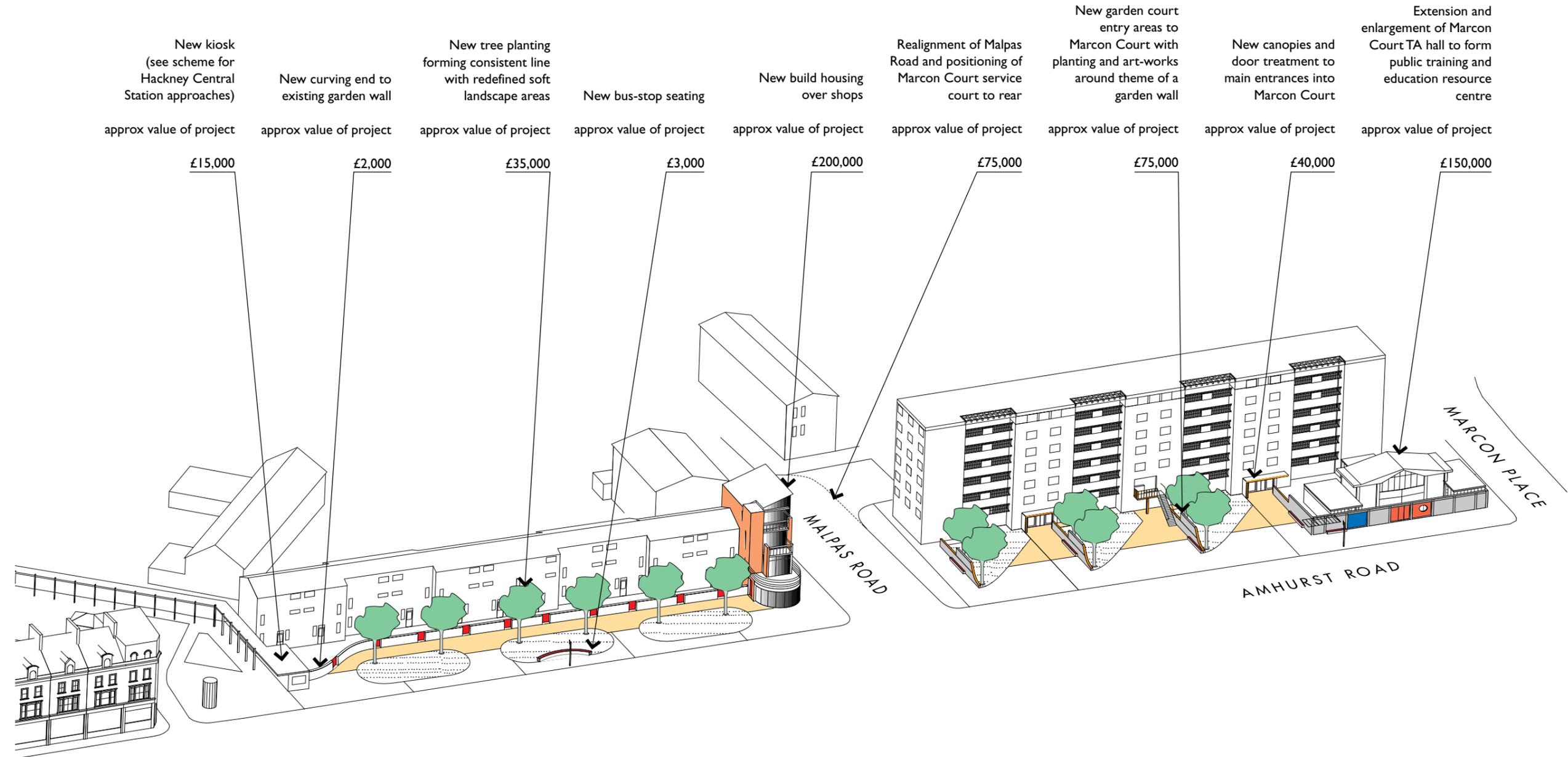


figure 14.1

# 15. ASPLAND ESTATE / AMHURST ROAD FRONTAGE



## STRATEGY

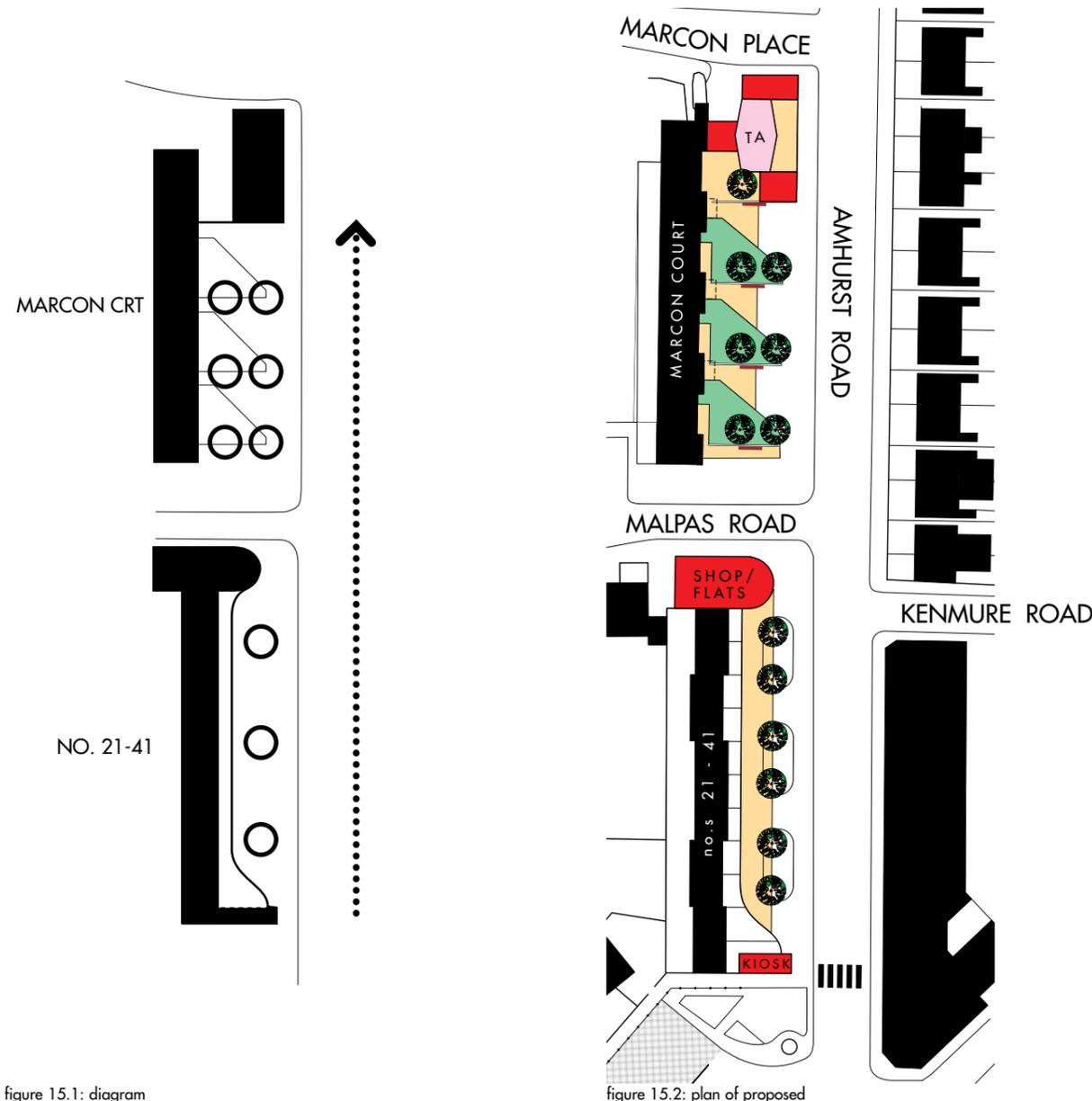


figure 15.1: diagram  
the arrow indicates the spatial dynamic or sense of movement towards the isolated figure of the TA hall building; trees in front of Marcon Court are used to indicate entrances & to suggest a screen or layering of the approaches to the TA hall

figure 15.2: plan of proposed

The projects put forward are based the following ideas -

1. highlight and celebrate entry points into the Marcon Court block of flats
2. highlight the TA hall as one of the main figures along the frontage
3. shield no. 21-41 from public footway

The projects are seen as events encountered along the street. The frontage space is thought of as layered "up the street". This is in place of the existing obsessive and confused layering of walls, gardens, trees, garages, railings and paths between the street and the front doors of Marcon Court and no. 21-41.

In front of 21-41, tree-planting is part of a strategy to strengthen the privacy of the house fronts. Laid out along a particular line, the trees close off the "[ " figure made by the modified front garden wall. New paving also marks this area off.

In front of Marcon Court, trees are planted along a line at 90° to the street. The aim is to expand the sense of public space by opening up the frontage space to the imposing bulk of Marcon Court in a series

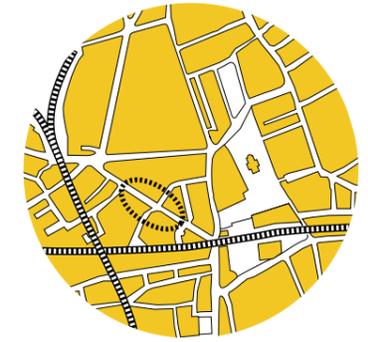
of garden courts - a series of specific formal spatial events. The entrances to the building are the focus of these courts. New canopies and doorways, plus the sweep of triangular figures of grass add to new positive status of the entrances.

Free-standing screen walls which could be developed as "vertical gardens" i.e walls with purpose-made crevices and ledges for colonisation by plants define the edges of the garden courts. See the sketch drawing on the next page.

The screen walls layer the frontage space in the direction of the Hall - reinforcing the effect of the trees - and develop spatial dynamism or tension. Through the presence of the Hall, strengthened by the layering of space towards it, the street space is charged with deliberate and clear intentions. The Hall's *public* position is consolidated by extensions to accommodate a new role as a learning resource centre.

The realignment of Malpas Road creates space for the development of "landmark" building, replacing the existing blank vista of dull estate buildings, and also providing revenue for improvements.

# 16. ASPLAND ESTATE / AMHURST ROAD FRONTAGE



## GARDEN WALL SCREENS



figure 16.1



# 17. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES

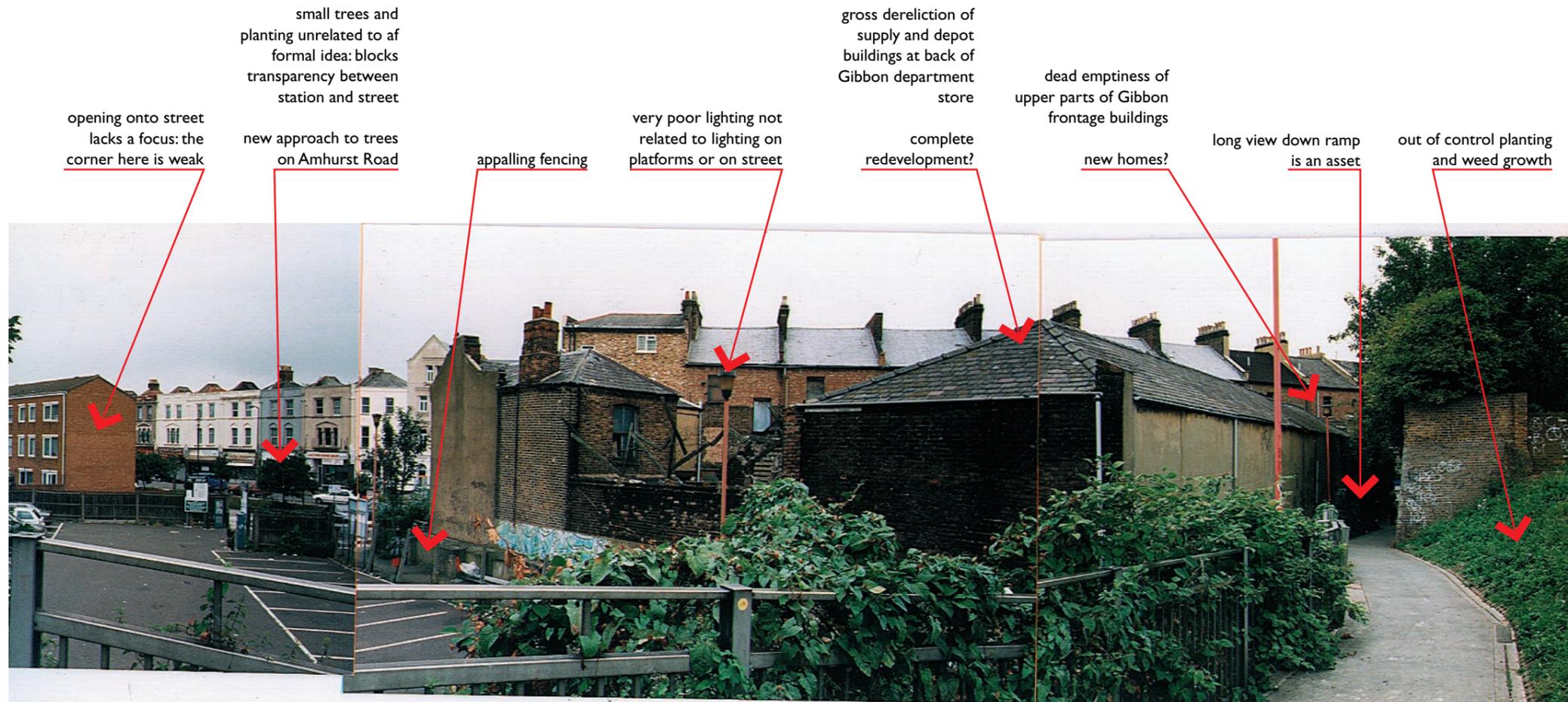


figure 17.1

# 18. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES

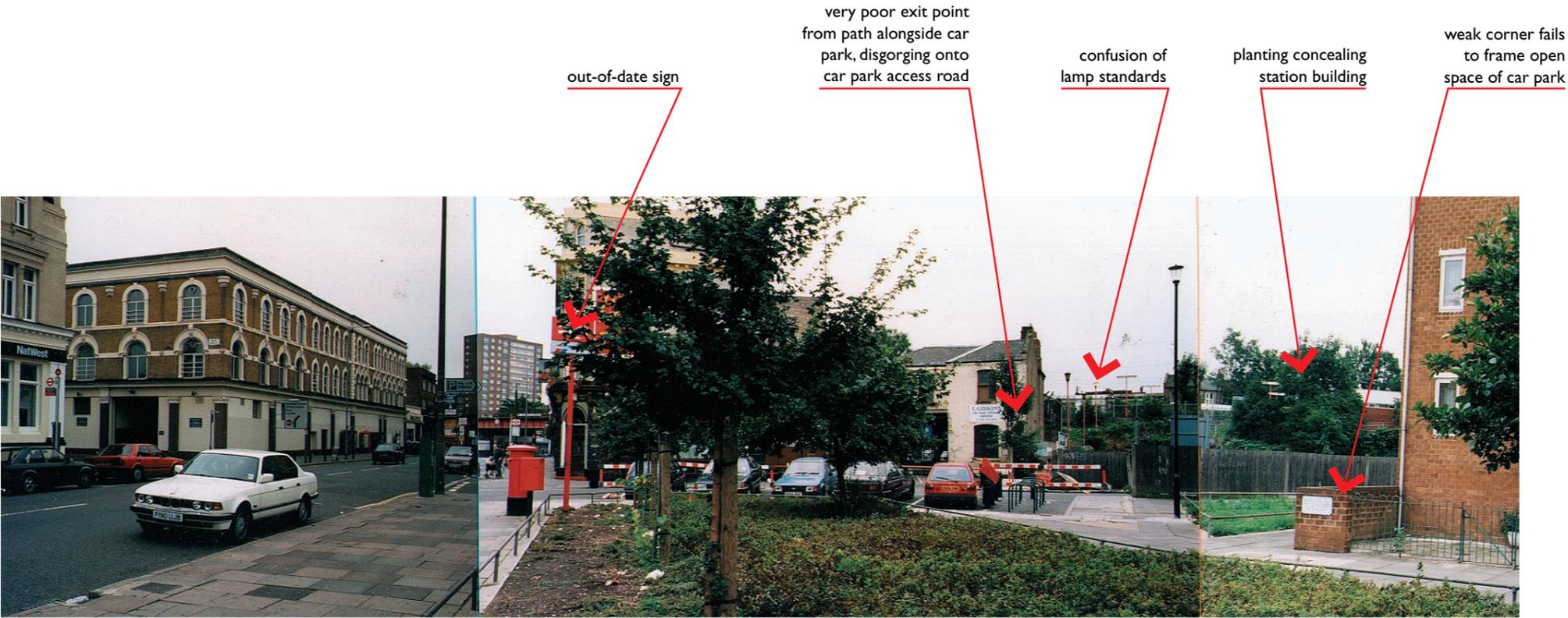


figure 18.1

# 19. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## ANALYSIS

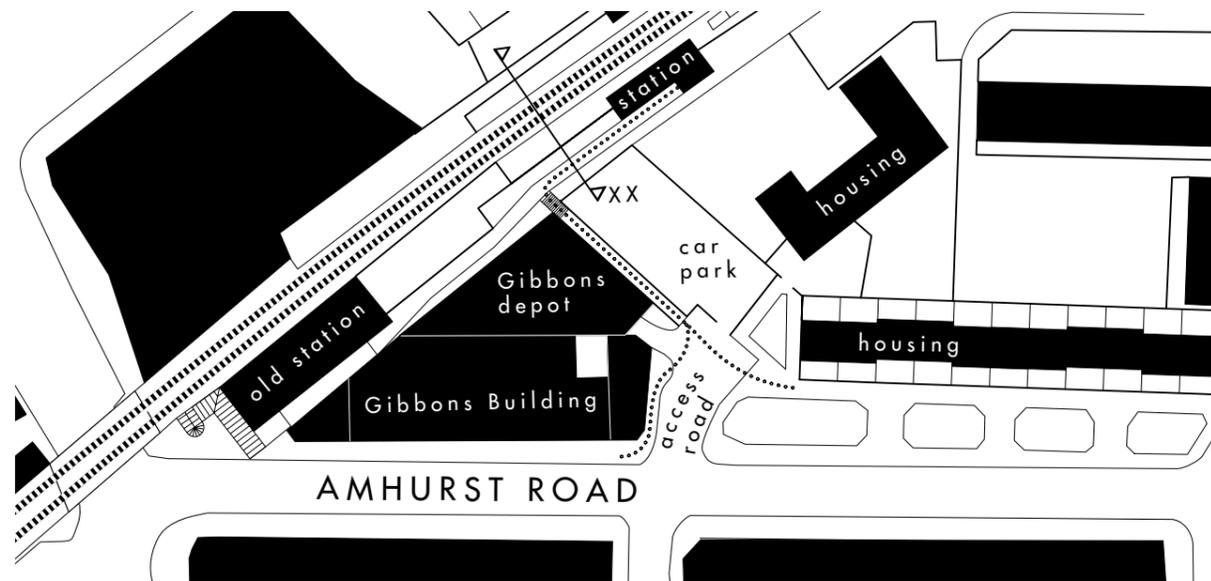


figure 19.1: plan of existing

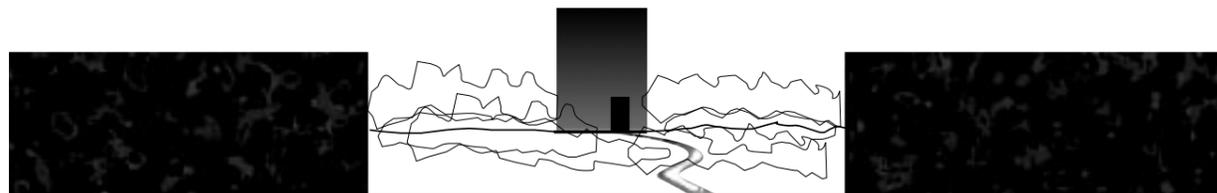


figure 19.2: diagram station's position behind street frontage and seen across car park space

There are two public approaches to Hackney Central Station. The one discussed here is the pedestrian route from Amhurst Road across the so-called "town centre car park" owned by LBH.

This car park forms a significant space off Amhurst Road. It links together three distinct areas of urban development: the railway viaduct/embankment, the Aspland Estate and the conventional 19th Century street development on Amhurst Road.

One very important aspect of this space from a design point of view is that it maintains a direct visual link between the station platform area and Amhurst Road. It works like a window that reveals a hinterland behind the street frontage - see figure 19.2.

Everything about the station's current condition suggests that nobody takes the space seriously as public space notwithstanding its credentials as a "town centre car park". This is very mistaken given how public a space it actually is and how clearly visible it is from Amhurst Road.

Simple urban design issues can be worked out for the car park space. These are to do with the car parks very public



figure 19.3: view towards station on embankment

position and importance as a linking space. Visual clarity around the station is an important attribute. Equally vital is pedestrian movement through the car park space.

Both design issues are related. Good handling of pedestrian movement is partly dependent on the visual ordering of the car park space. Clear sight lines and an overall sense of a constructed set of views will add considerably to the experience of moving through the car park space as a pedestrian.

# 20. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## ANALYSIS



figure 20.1: obvious disorder from street station itself sits on a hump of completely overgrown and untrained planting

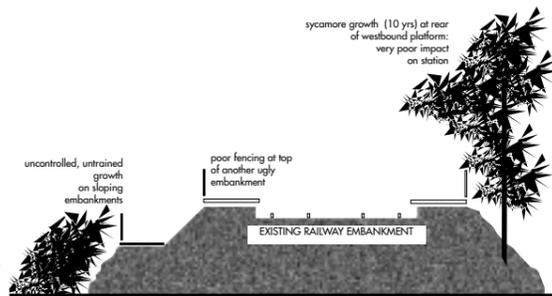


figure 20.2: section XX existing railway embankment section

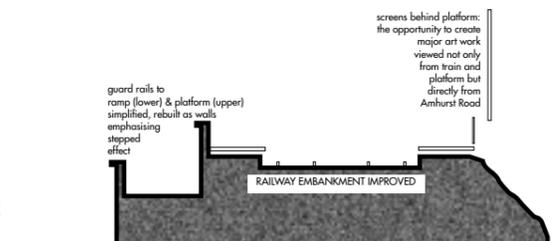


figure 20.3: section XX proposed railway embankment section

The link between Amhurst Road and Hackney Central Station is confused and degraded by disorder all around the car park.

The handling of the embankment on which the station is mounted has been allowed to become a mass of vegetation. Both the weed-like sycamores trees growing behind the westbound platform and the bindweed growing unabated in front of the ticket office present a picture of pointless, random decay. The embankment which serves as a way of emphasising the station within the “window” provided by the car park space thus degrades the appearance of the station.

A problem of maintenance is built into the embankment which is made up of turf and earth banks. A solution to this problem is to replace the soft sloping sides of the embankment with retaining walls (figure 20.3).

The appalling condition of the fencing all around the car park compounds the visual confusion produced by the vegetation. There are several different kinds of fence, some falling down, some recently put up. No useful rationale can be worked out for this. It is only a picture of mismanage-

ment, and the lack of an overall urban idea of the space. The fences define important edges to the car park so clearer, more positive thinking about their function would constitute a notable and practicable improvement .

The intentions of the landowners involved in the car park site are as follows. LBH who own the car park are awaiting a decision about a land disposal before firming up plans for extending the car park from around 20 spaces to 80. Local traders and certain key players in town centre regeneration are very keen on this project which is viewed as necessary to counterbalance the impact of Tesco's. There is no commitment to do anything about the existing car park if the plan to extend is dropped.

Rail Track have no commitment to do anything to Hackney Central station until 1999 when it will “review ...backlog maintenance”.

Meanwhile the rear of the Gibbon building is virtually derelict and a near enough a public health hazard (falling tiles/actual collapse). Gibbons have no current plans for improvement according to LBH planning.

# 21. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## OPTION 1

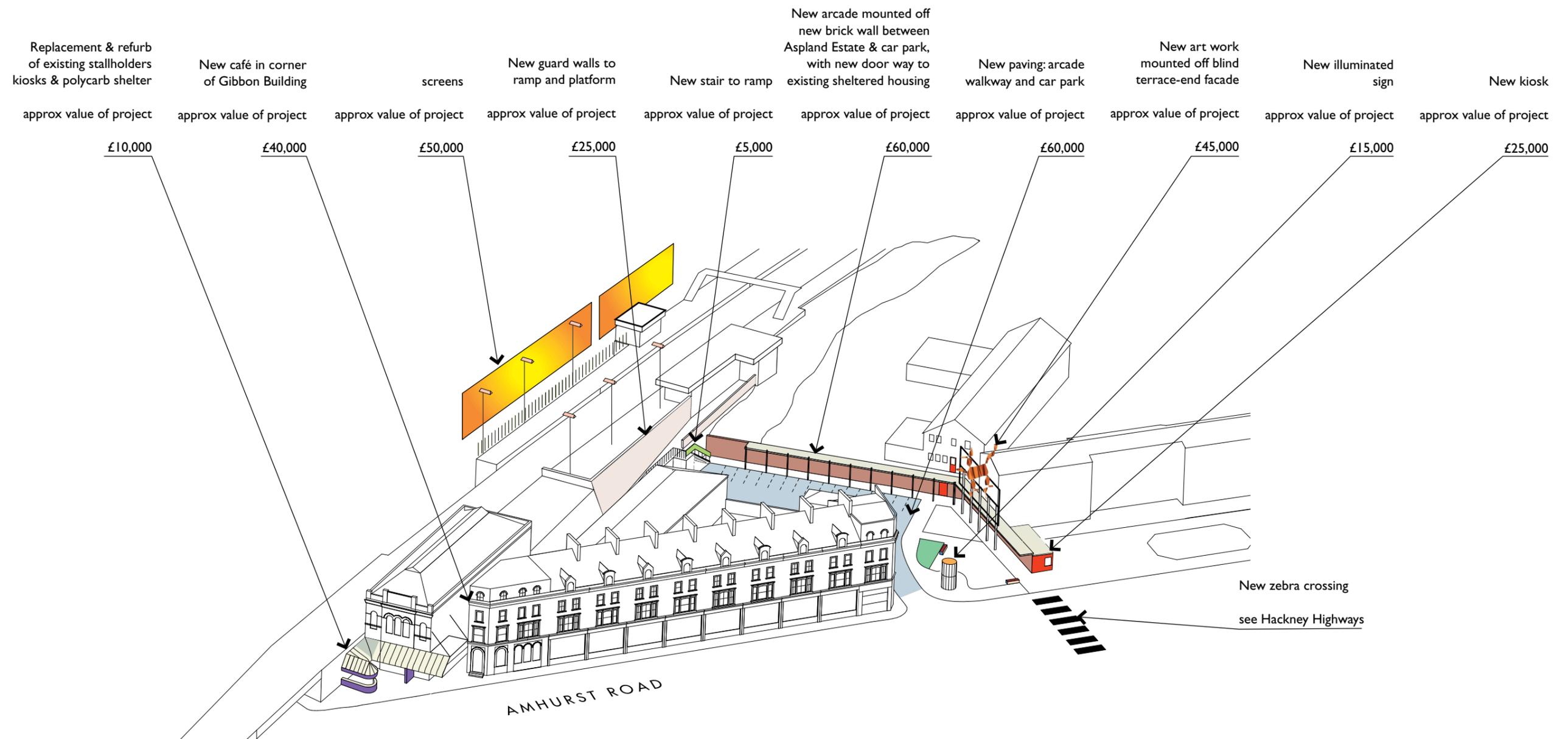


figure 21.1

# 22. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## OPTION 2

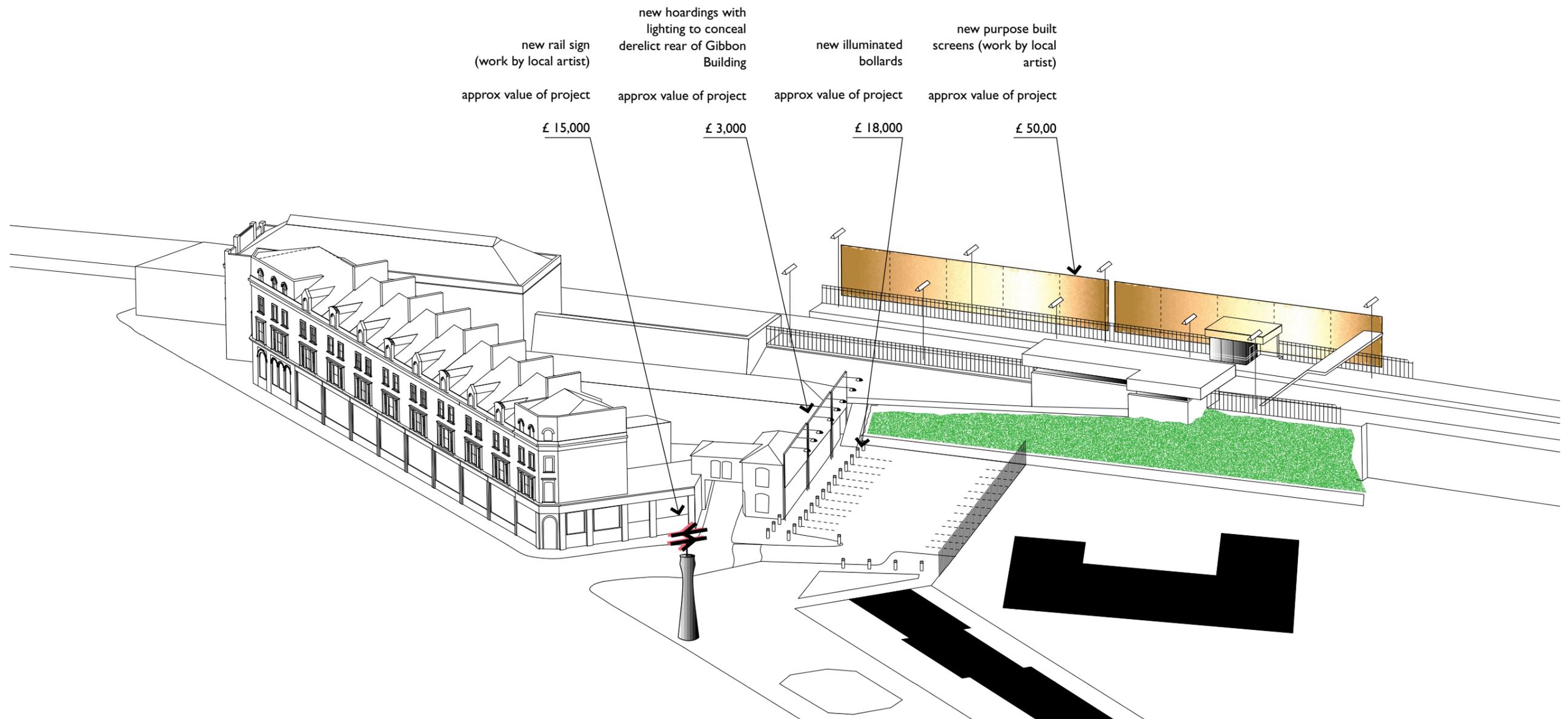


figure 22.1

# 23. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## STRATEGY

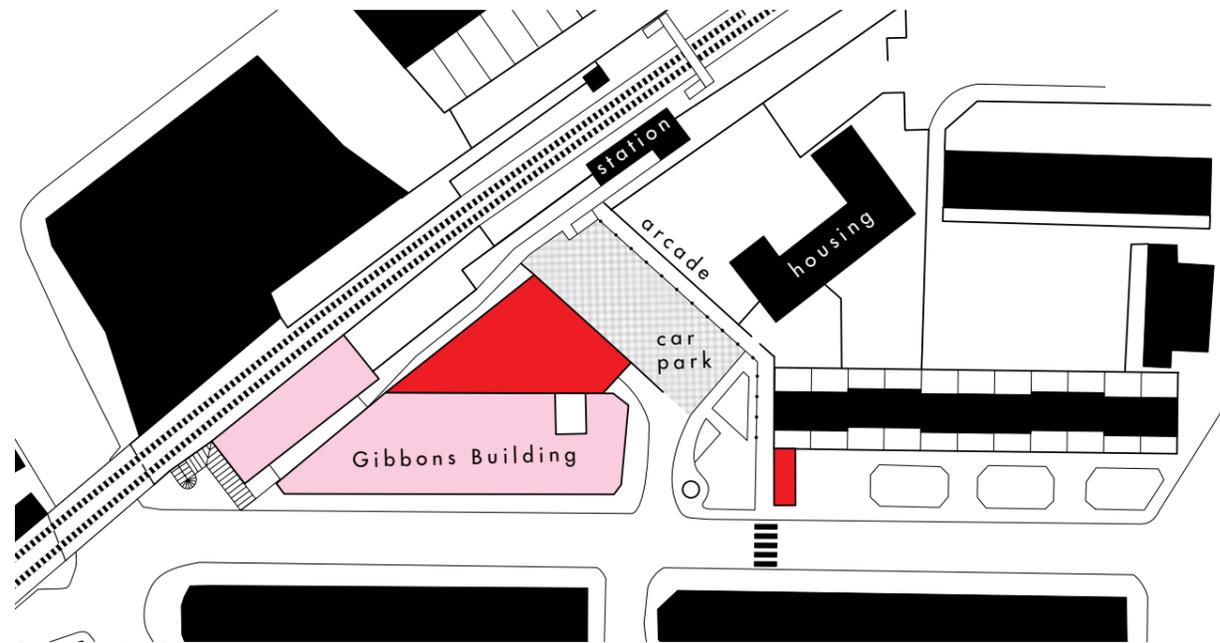


figure 23.1: plan of option 1  
red shows new build  
pink shows refurb

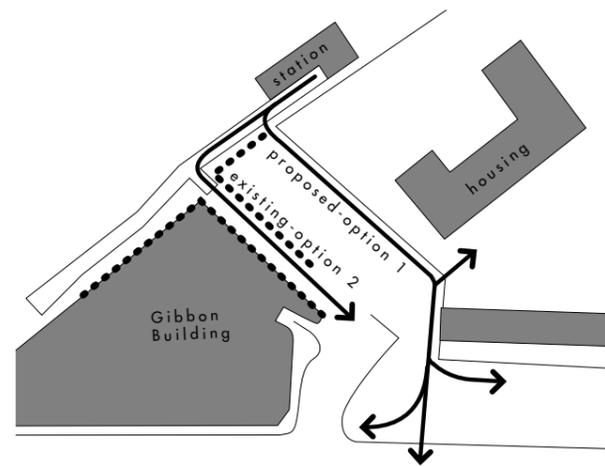


figure 23.2: diagram  
broken line shows derelict edges  
arrowheaded line shows pedestrian route

### Option 1

Option 1 develops the idea of an arcade as a way of moving through the car park space. The arcade not only brings travellers to the station but also provides an entry court to the housing. This combination of residential and traveller access helps integrate the arcade as a new urban figure into the existing urban framework.

The arcade is accessed from the existing ramp leading down from the station via a new stair. The stair's top landing gives the traveller good views over spaces through which she has to pass to reach the street and helps personal security.

The arcade disgorges onto Amhurst Road in such a way that the pedestrians are not forced across the access road to the supply depot at the back of the Gibbons Building. Pedestrians are brought directly to the nearest street which can be seen. A small retail kiosk marks the end of the arcade on the street side, and is set in a small area of existing greenery. An information sign is suggested for this garden. A new zebra crossing here would make sense, helping travellers get on their way.

The arcade effectively makes a space out of the car park - that is, gives it a dignity

which currently perhaps it is hard to imagine. The car park should be repaved to consolidate this improvement. As such, it has potential as a setting for such events such as fêtes, car-boot markets or outdoor parties. Its position by a main public street, close to a pub, next to housing and a working London overland rail service are strengths which make such a community role readily imaginable.

The plan opposite shows as well new build at the back of the Gibbons Building. New build here is more a less a certainty at some point given the existing rotten condition.

### Option 2

This shows a range of minor improvements. The screens project is difficult to implement because it is on Rail Track land. The other projects should be much easier to do.

The bollard scheme recognises that there is no need to replacing the derelict fencing with new fences. Illuminated bollards would provide a simpler, less cluttered solution.

# 24. HACKNEY CENTRAL STATION APPROACHES



## NEW URBAN SPACE ON SITE OF OLD STATION



figure 24.1  
new covered public space

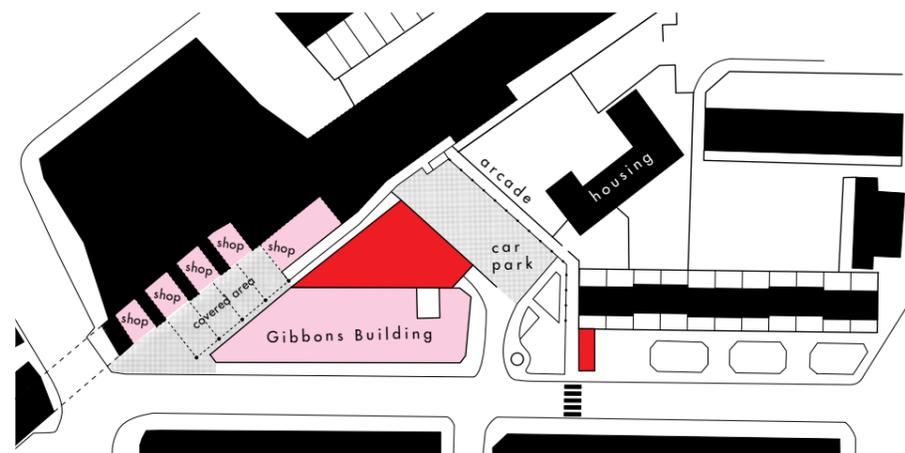


figure 24.2: plan of proposed shops arranged off new public area formed by demolition of old station

Over three years ago, there was an attempt to recommission the old station building. Hackney Business Link & Self-Help Enterprises with some support from Heart of Hackney explored a scheme for developing the station as small business units.

Costs were obtained. These were considerable and had some bearing on the project not going ahead. There is every reason to think the building would be very expensive to recommission. This is partly due to its direct proximity to railway track. Railway engineering requirements are always going to make maintenance of the building expensive.

Demolition would create a new public space at the approach to Hackney Central from Mare Street. The view opposite and the sketch above suggests how this could be done. Demolition creates the opportunity to make a new public place - in this case sheltered by a high level glass roof - where shops and stall traders could do business with the passing public. Removing the old station serves also to clarify the nature of the freehold in the area: RailTrack's interests would be simplified to arches or spaces within the viaduct structure, the kind of spaces which



figure 24.3: sketch view

RailTrack are developing a keen commercial strategy for. This contrasts with the relative apathy and lack of interest which the long standing problem of getting commercial or other value from the old station has demonstrated. Viaduct spaces giving onto a new public space would clearly have a strong and marketable commercial appeal to retailers. In other words, the existing station building which makes small, bitty public places around it, actually stands in the way of the commercial potential of viaduct spaces which it conceals.

# 25. ENLARGED TOWN CENTRE CAR PARK



## PROJECTS

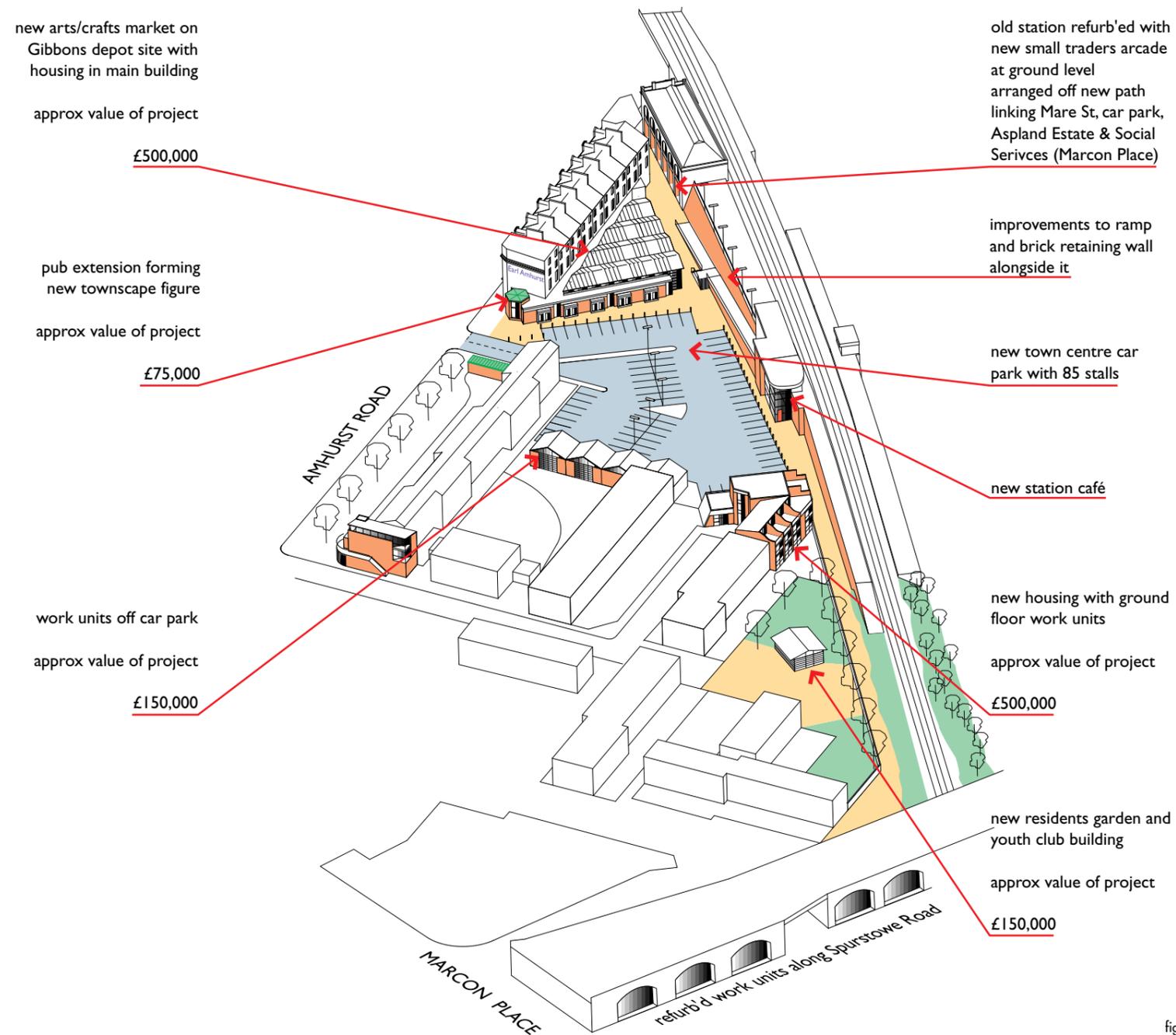


figure 25.1

# 26. ENLARGED TOWN CENTRE CAR PARK



## STRATEGY

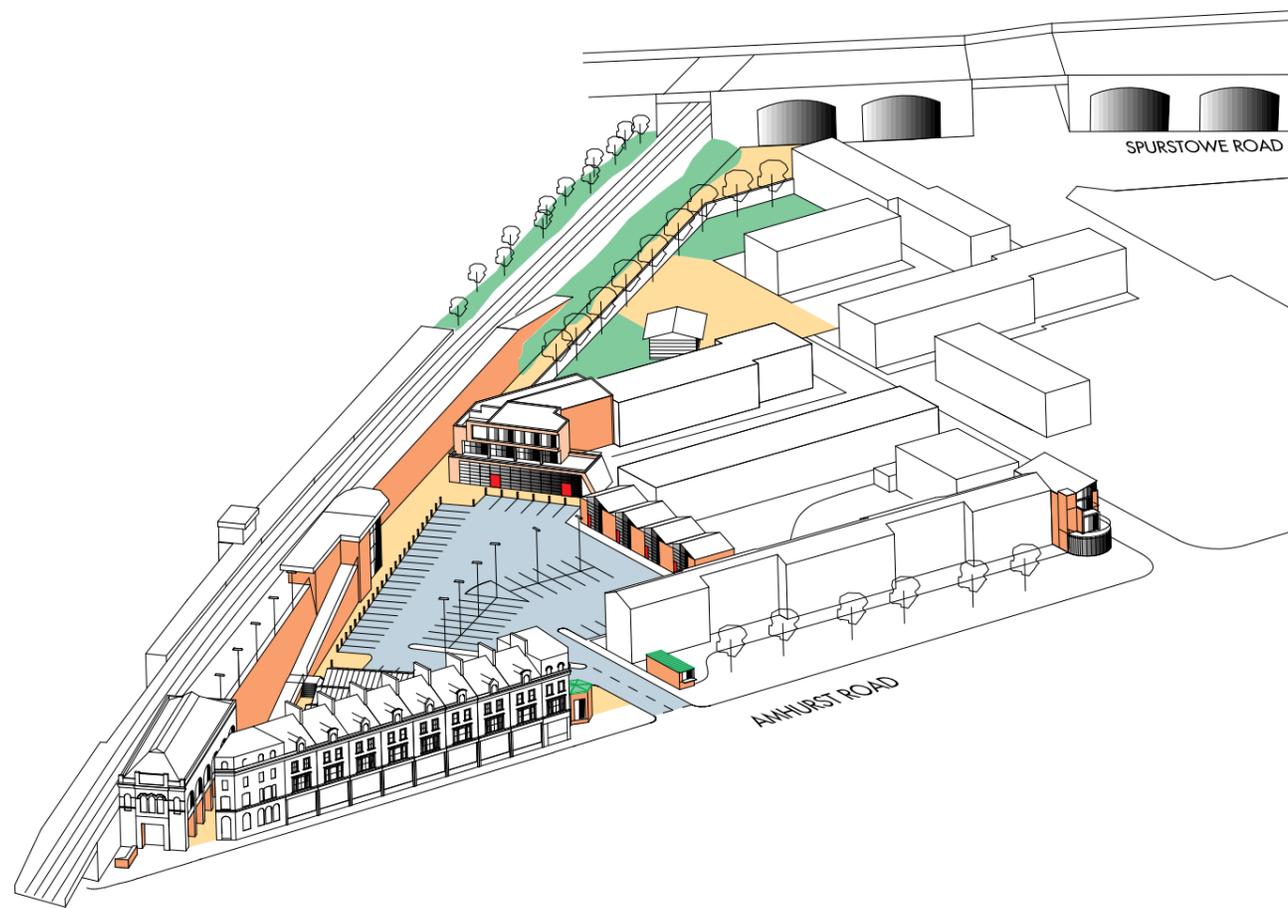


figure 26.1: new car park  
new buildings shown working off car park space - car park as significant urban space

The urban design thinking keyed to the opportunity presented by the plan to enlarge the town centre car park from around 20 spaces to approximately 80 is focused on the need to take the new car park seriously as an urban space.

What it is necessary to avoid is a space which neighbouring buildings turn their backs on. In other words, the new car park is very much part of the functioning of the city centre and given its importance, deserves its own frontage or buildings which indicate importance by fronting onto it.

The proposals shown here therefore include new buildings - new buildings which mark out and make use of the car park as a space. The new buildings are work related. They will be a part of the car park's newness and the whole aura of major change and improvement which it brings to the town centre.

The new arts and crafts market shown on the site of the Gibbons depot building (figure 25.1) will benefit from pedestrian busyness to and from the car park.

The car park site will also be strengthened by the proposal shown to extend a new

public footpath towards the Spurstowe Road/Marcon Place area. The footpath helps integrate the area by providing a new shortcut.

The footpath would be strengthened by any improvements to the ground floor of the old station; an arcade of shops is shown here. Such an improvement would complement the arts & crafts market which would also have a frontage onto the footpath.

The work units shown would enrich the monotonous residential stock of the Aspland Estate in such a way that the estates residential values were not threatened. Mixed use blocks could help make a new positive, relationship between work and dwelling.

The new housing opportunities shown here could help fund some of the improvements through partnerships with housing agencies. Equally partnerships are implied here with the owners of the Gibbons building and the Earl Amhurst pub - see proposal to extend the pub with a new landmark corner building at the entrance to the new car park.

# 27. CLARENCE ROAD / NARROWAY

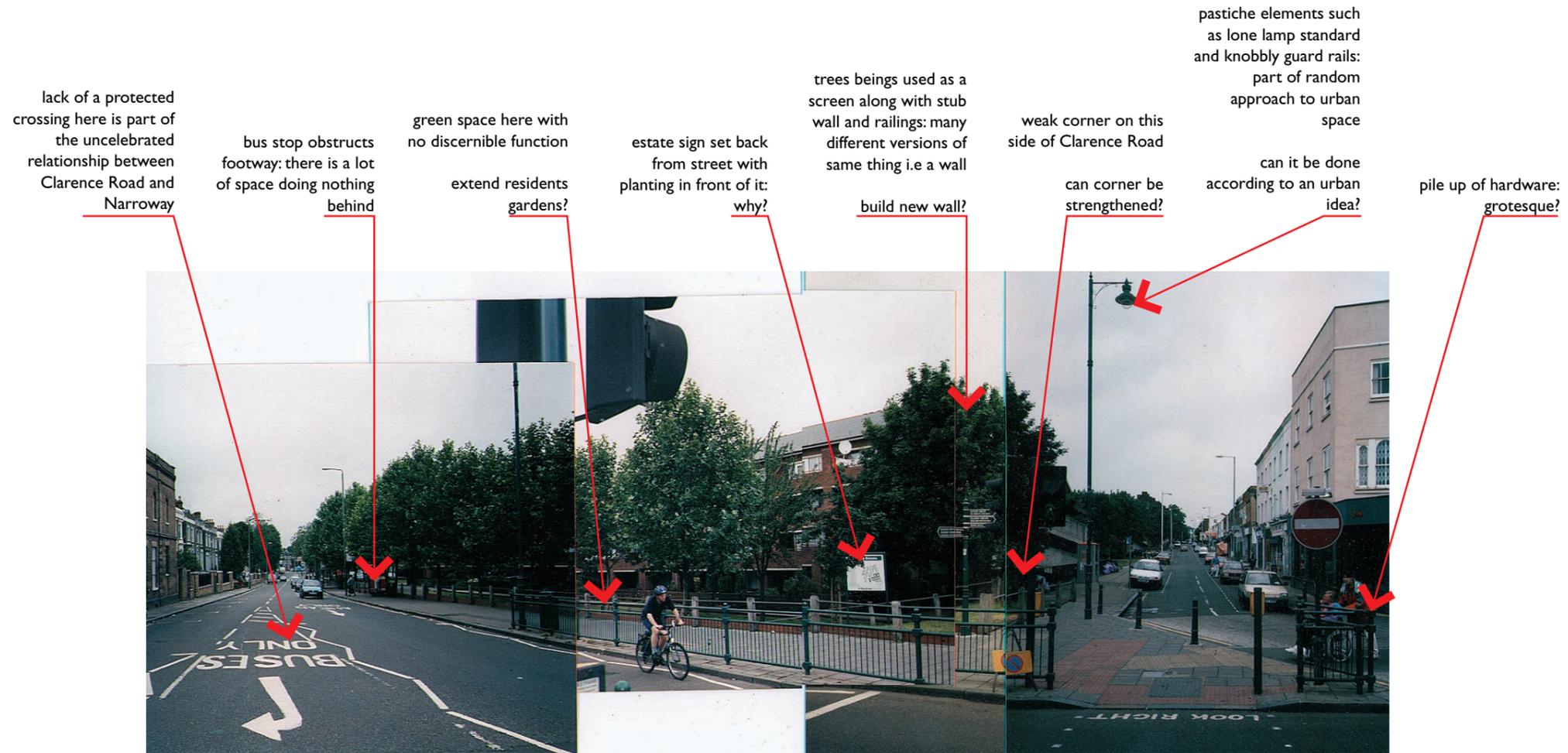


figure 27.1

# 28. CLARENCE ROAD

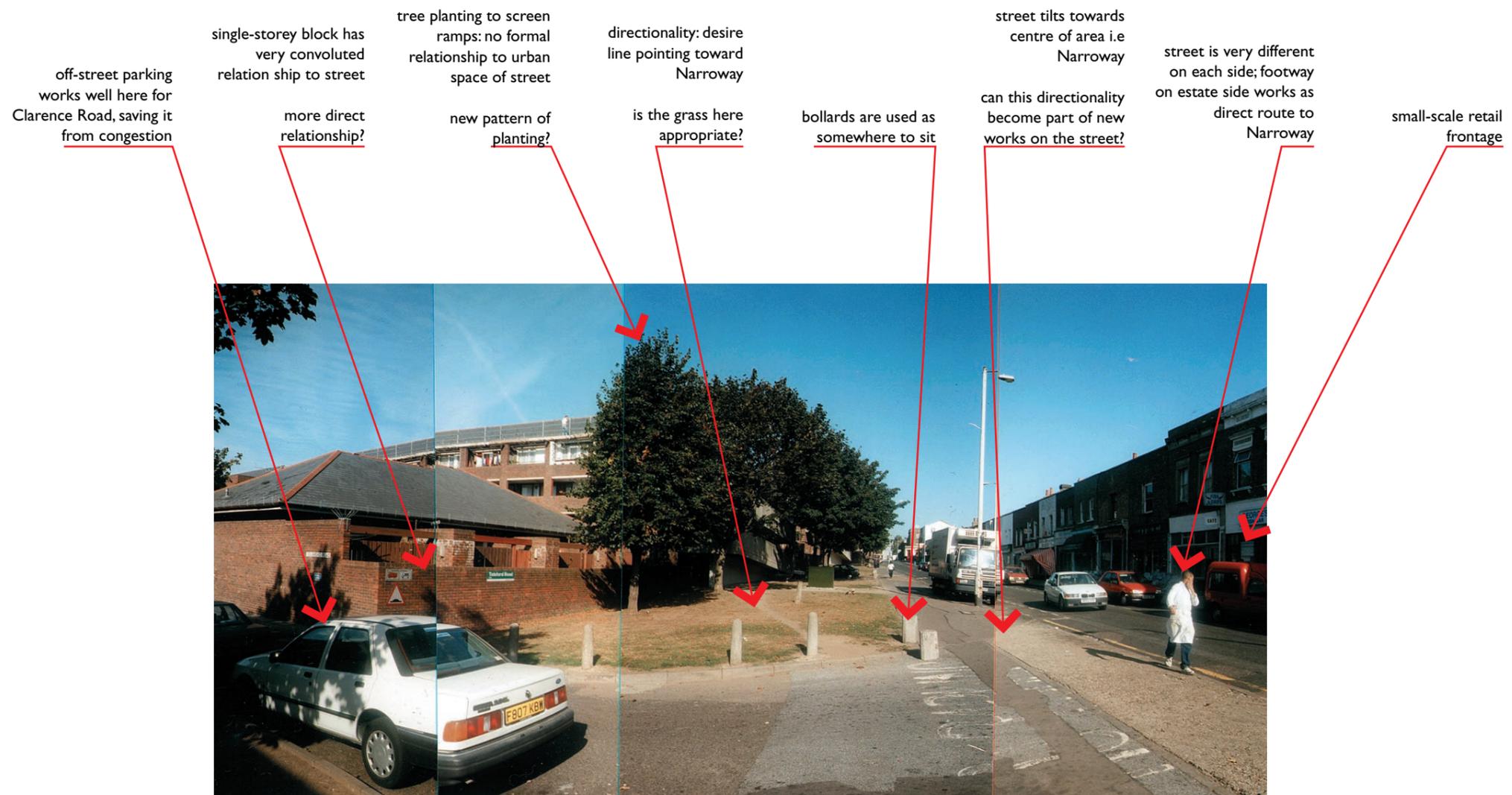
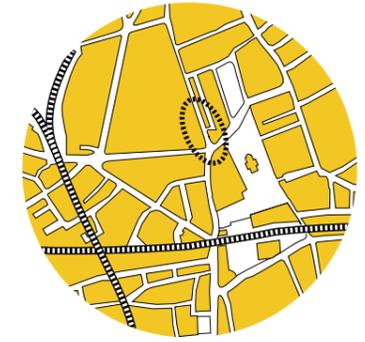


figure 28.1

# 29. CLARENCE ROAD / NARROWWAY



## ANALYSIS

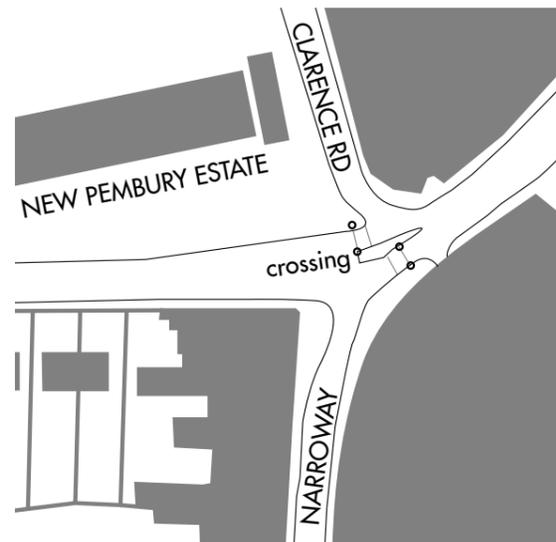


figure 29.1: plan  
Clarence Road/Narrowway junction with just one crossing



figure 29.2: diagram  
New Pembury Estate arranged off Clarence Road



figure 29.3  
over to Clarence Road - a lot of ironmongery for one crossing

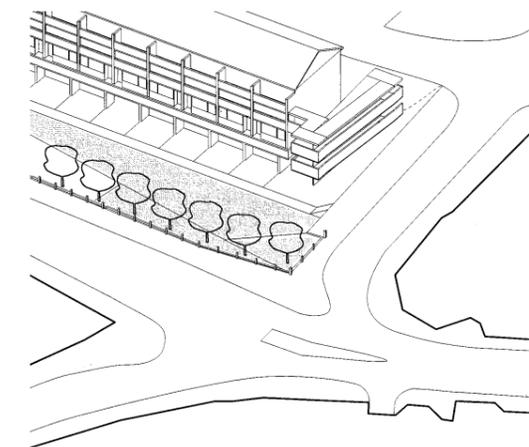


figure 29.4: south east corner of estate  
set back from junction space: weak corner

The relationships between the New Pembury Estate and the Narrowway and Clarence Road are poor.

The new Pembury Estate lies centrally in the northern part of the study area. It is arranged off Clarence Road. All the "streets" in the estate are cul-de-sacs accessed from Clarence Road.

The southern part of Clarence Road is dominated by the Pembury Estate. One whole side of it is formed by the estate. The retail frontage on the other side, between Lower Clapton Road and Clarence place relies on customers from the estate.

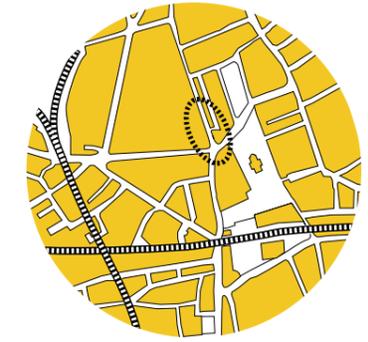
Clarence Road is a key public place for the estate. Part of its obvious function is as link between the estate and the Narrowway. The relationship between the two streets is poor because of the very heavy-handed layout of traffic management paraphernalia at their junction. Figure 29.3 gives an impression of this. Only one protected crossing is provided with all the ironmongery which has been used.

Spatially, the fact that the corner of the New Pembury is set back from the junction space (figure 29.4) creates great weak-

ness. As a result, Clarence Road is not asserted as a significant space on a significant corner. Obviously, it is visible, but not presented with any conviction.

In summary, the spatial weakness of this corner is its most serious structural fault. Its functional weakness is the relative meanness of the crossing and indifferent feel of using that crossing. This last is also related to the predictable mass of confusing standing figures - i.e trees, signs, railings, lamp standards etc.

# 30. CLARENCE ROAD



## ANALYSIS



figure 30.1  
ramp structures out of scale with street



figure 30.2  
ramps constructed off blind end wall of dwelling blocks



figure 30.3  
desire line



figure 30.4  
dark ramp space

The dominant architectural figures on Clarence Road's southern section toward Narroway are the large concrete ramps which serve the upper maisonette units in the dwelling blocks.

The ramps function, sheer bulk and on-street position as a kind of "urban finish" (figure 30.2) mean they are strong symbols of connectivity between the estate and Clarence Road. They summarise this relationship in negatively. When using the ramps, one is quite separate from both the street and the estate, in a dark, smelly, hard, claustrophobic enclosure (figure 30.4). From the street, the ramps are simply gross - that is quite out of scale with the street (figure 30.1).

The scale of the old parts of Clarence Road varies along its length. The southern section by the New Pembury is in two parts. A small part by Narroway is around three storeys high i.e bigger by the important corner. The rest is two storeys and quite petite in scale. Curiously, the plot size of the two storey parade is very close to that of the individual estate flats i.e there seems to be a typological correspondence between the dwellings and the shops serving them. This much adds to the idea of a great divide

between the worlds of Clarence Road and that of Clapton Square, which is the neighbouring north-south urban space. Houses round the square are considerably larger.

Another difference between the Square and Clarence Road is the kind of public life suggested by each place. The Square garden, protected by railings all around, is an effective symbol of the public life intended. By contrast, the public life of Clarence Road is about loitering and "liming" along the frontage, taking an interest in the sporadic events which occur - a young mother shouting abuse at her drug-user boyfriend.

It is certainly a strength of the study area that such differing ideas of city space as Clapton Square and Clarence Road are so close to each other. The differences are interesting. And the premise for taking the world of Clarence Road seriously.

# 31. CLARENCE ROAD / NARROWWAY



## PROJECTS

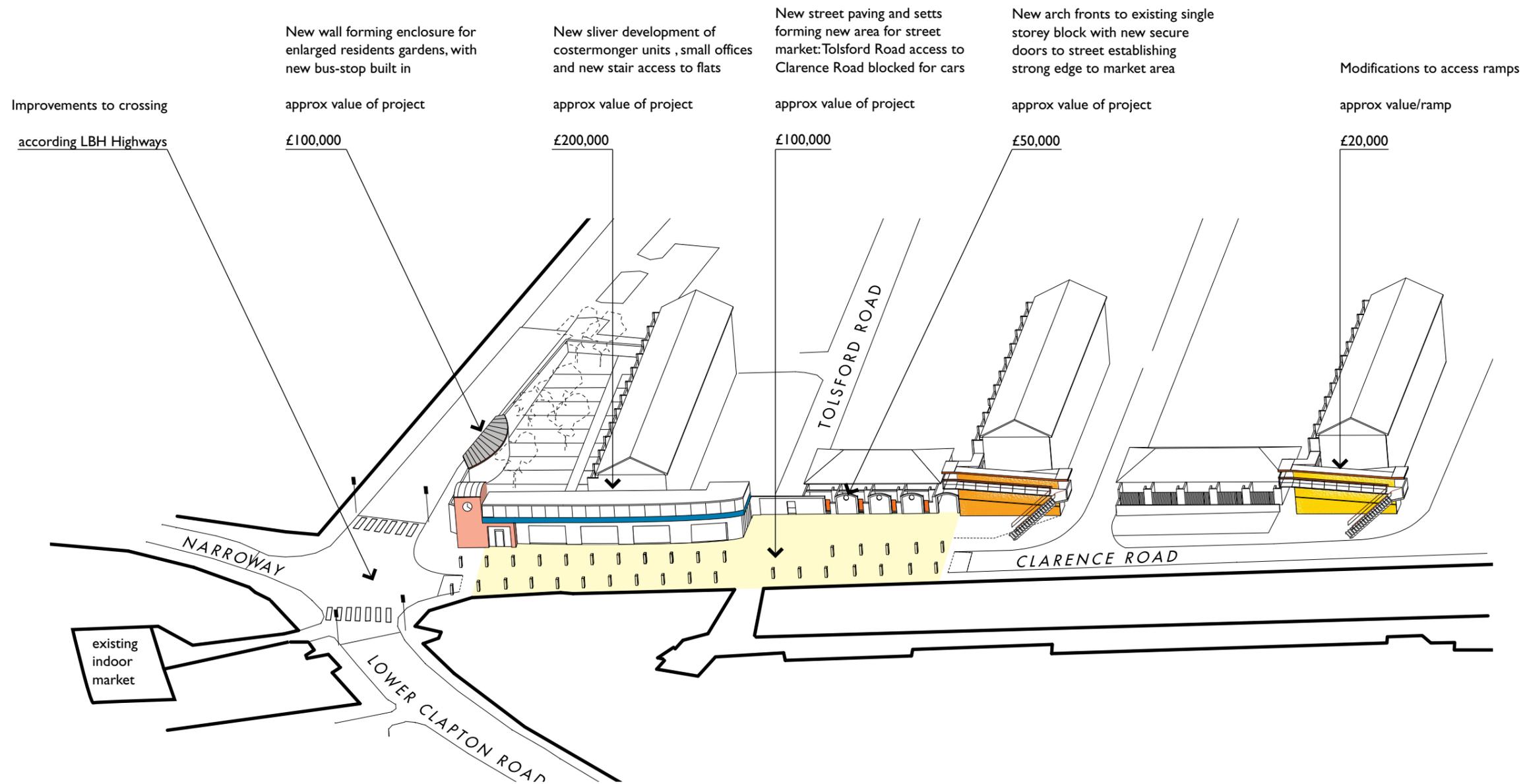


figure 31.1

# 32. CLARENCE ROAD / NARROWWAY



## STRATEGY

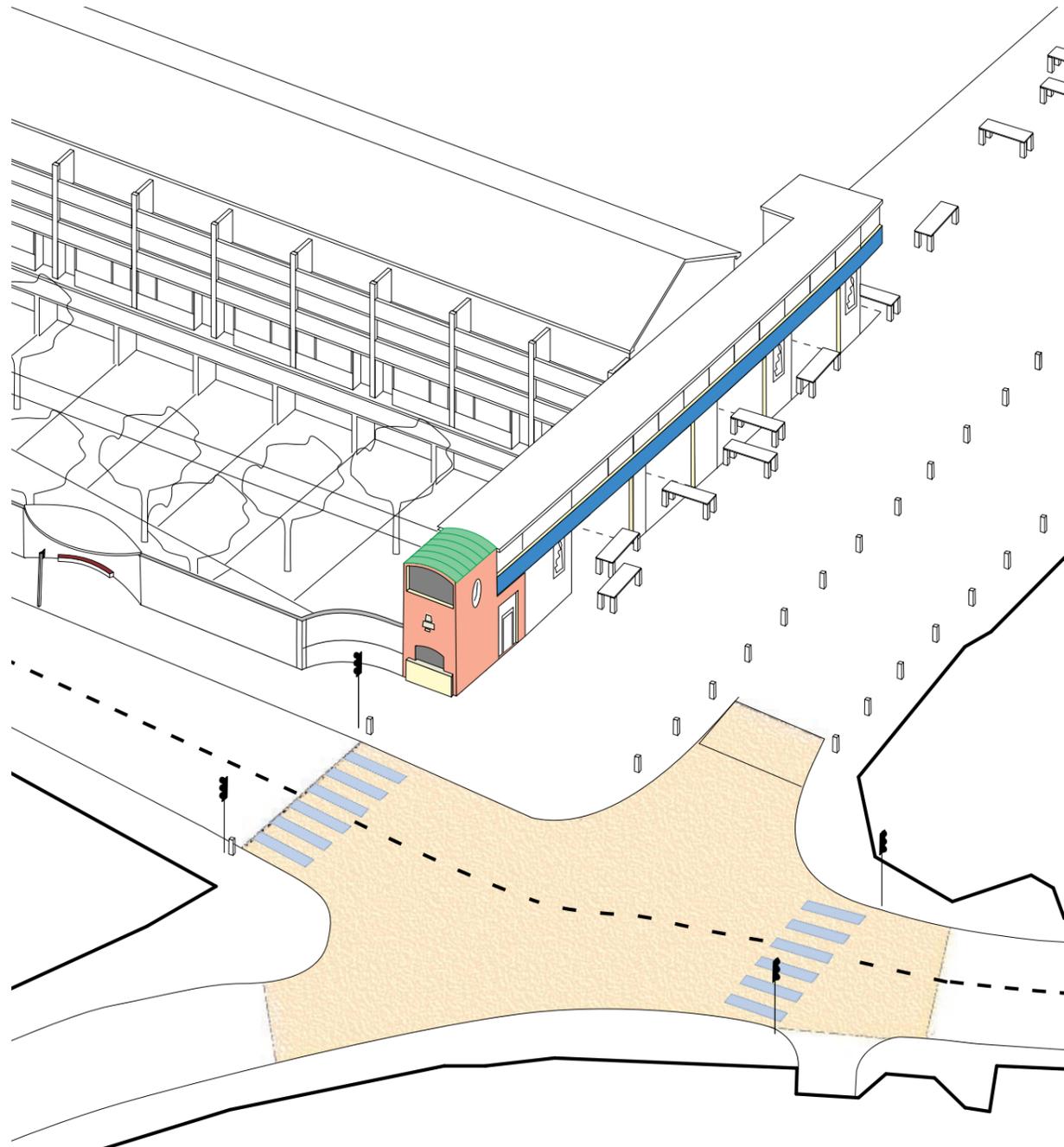


figure 32.1  
improved Narrowway/Clarence Road junction space

The aim of the new work on this junction is to establish Clarence Road much more strongly than present arrangements allow. A new space between the Narrowway and Clarence Road is proposed which corresponds to the three storey section of the retail frontage.

The diagram (figure 32.2) describes the principle of this new space as a "room" clearly linked to the junction space where the pedestrian crossing is located. The room could not be made without asserting the south east corner of Clarence Road more firmly. To do this, a new "urban finish" is proposed built off the blind end facade of the dwelling block in space released by the demolition of one of the ramps.

The "urban finish" protrudes out of Clarence Road towards Narrowway (figure 34.1). Its short end elevation, facing toward Narrowway, can be read as belonging to a traditional type of urban monument like the Crouch End clock tower. Oblique views reveal the flank of this structure which incorporates costermongers storage at street level and above small offices for disparate bureau-type businesses. The costermonger stores reflect existing demand in this corner of the study

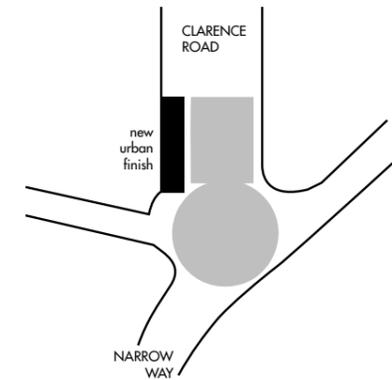


figure 32.2: diagram  
idea of linked "rooms" - one round, one rectangular

area and an attempt to encourage more street trading. It is proposed that part of Clarence Road is repaved to establish a trading area.

The existing crossing arrangement is mean. A new one with parallel zebra crossings is suggested. Instead of pedestrian movement being funnelled into a single protected crossing - a funnel of railings, a traffic island and traffic light standards, the idea is to make a wide zone of safety through which pedestrians move.

# 33. CLARENCE ROAD



## STRATEGY

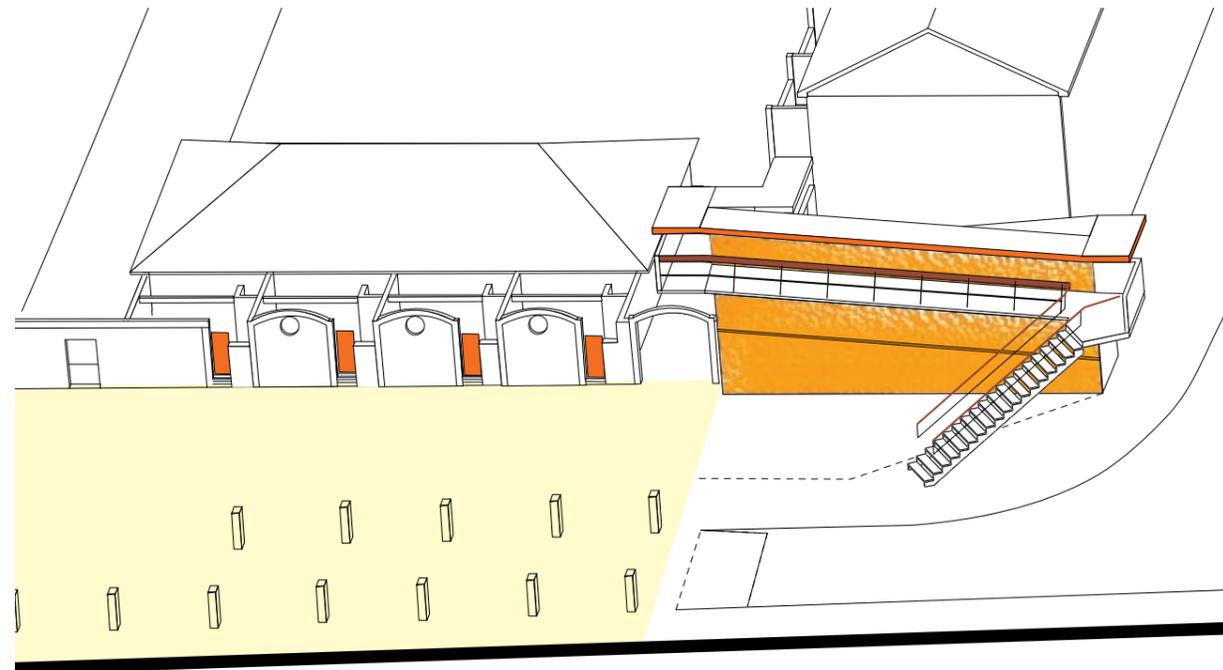


figure 33.1: Tolsford Road ramp improvements

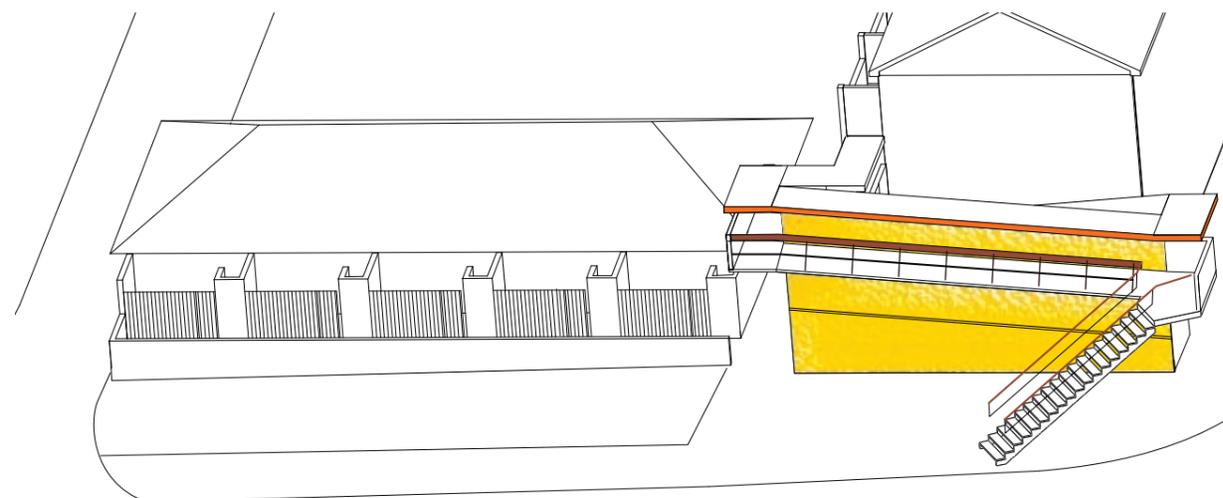


figure 33.2: Hindrey Road ramp improvements

The ramps are identified as architectural symbols of how the estate relates to the public world of Clarence Road. Work to refine or replace them ought to be considered.

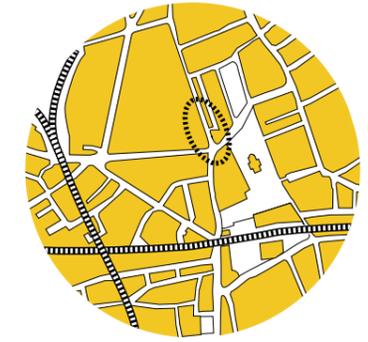
The modifications envisaged relate to the “weighting” of Clarence Road. The ramps consist of three runs. The changes proposed require the demolition of only one - the bottom one - and the bricking up of another one. The high concrete guard rail on the top run would be demolished and replaced by new open railings. This top run would be terminated by a new open tread stair leading directly down to the street. The stair would face down Clarence Road.

Clarence Road tilts, as it were, towards the focal point of the area which is Narrowway. The whole physical experience of leaving the estate’s ugly mechanistic spaces behind and making one’s way to the close social space of the Narrowway is an essential part of life in the area. Narrowway’s particular quality of closeness, its *narrowness* is remarkable. It gives a physical quality to the history of the area; indeed, Narrowway marks the top end of the old village of Hackney. In a sense, entering Narrowway is entering Hackney.

The feeling of coming into town, into the centre, is part of the urban quality of Narrowway today, and part of the excitement of Clarence Road and its position in the network of streets making up the Hackney Central area. The ramp modifications suggested here refer to the Narrowway and the direction of centrality. The ramps are made into dynamic figures, which celebrate movement down and towards the centre.

Clarence Road’s asymmetry is one of its distinctive features. The estate side is very different to the old shop side. The changes to the ramps will not only make them more pleasant to use, but powerfully emblematic of Clarence Road’s sidedness and orientation towards Narrowway.

## 34. CLARENCE ROAD / NARROWAY



### SKETCH VIEW



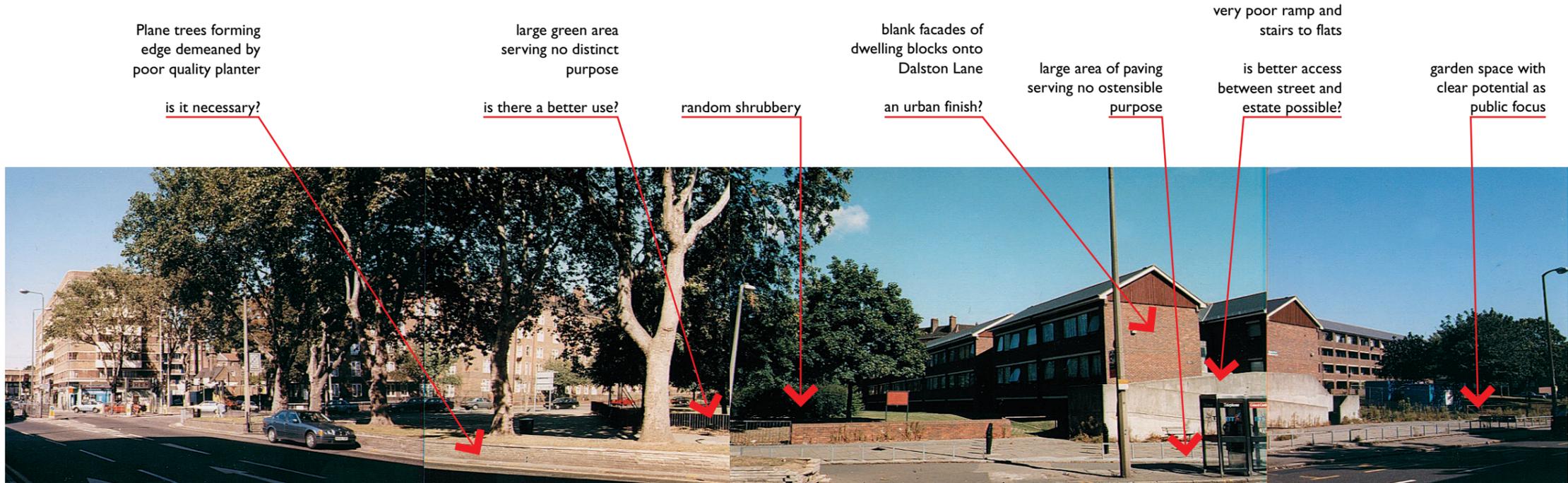
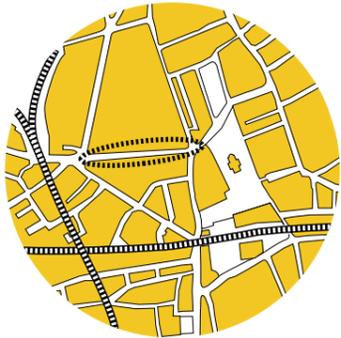
figure 34.1: sketch view  
Narroway/Clarence Road junction

This view shows how the “urban finish” proposed to strengthen the corner of Clarence Road might appear from Narroway. The impression given is of some form of minor urban monument which is clearly and perhaps unusually inhabited.

The mouth of Clarence Road is asserted unambiguously by the new “urban finish”.

The new crossings further emphasise the link between the two spaces. Moving up Narroway, Clarence Road is revealed as a positive urban setting.

# 35. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)



figures 35.1

random tree planting, paving, railings with odd figures such as car parks and the single storey office building seen on left



figures 35.2

# 36. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)



Five-Ways end  
of New Pembury's  
Dalston Lane frontage

middle section  
of New Pembury's  
Dalston Lane frontage

Clarence Road  
of New Pembury's  
Dalston Lane frontage



figure 36.1

# 37. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)

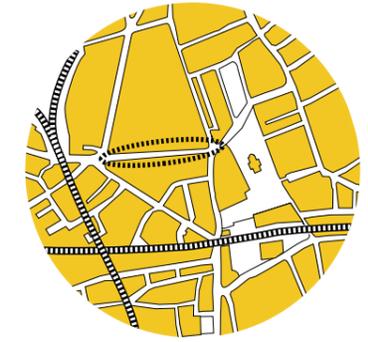


## EXISTING



figure 37.1

# 38. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)



## ANALYSIS



figure 38.1: New Pembury Estate garden off Tolsford Road showing pathway running in front of dwellings

Until one has become accustomed to the New Pembury Estate, its frontage onto Dalston Lane seems incomprehensible. Its public edge onto Dalston Lane is as bad, and presents the problem of a puzzlingly disorganised mass of bitty, small public places.

A good part of the problem is not due to the estate but a barrier-like row of detached Victorian villas lying opposite across the street, which are being refurb'ed by housing associations after a long period of decay and even dereliction. Where the Pembury's boundary edge is very permeable with many vaguely public spaces, these villas constitute a long impenetrable barrier, giving a certain coldness and boredom to the street.

More people are going to live in the villas. They will go to Dalston Lane's two corners - to Five Ways and Narrowway where something happens and services can be found, and the pavement outside their front doors will take them to both places directly. The estate frontage can have no attractions for them in its current condition.

Westward movement out of New Pembury is badly served. One impediment is the

residents garden at the end of Tolsford Road that slopes down to Dalston Lane, without a pathway over the turf. There is no gate in the railings at the bottom either. The long east-west paths at the front of the estate dwelling blocks die inconclusively at the western extremities making public places lying west of the estate less than accessible.

This failure of accessibility is a critical one, and produces an popular idea of an environment without utility and assistance for ordinary life.

The residents garden at the end of Tolsford Road which slopes down to Dalston Lane is nevertheless a major resource. It is pleasant, well-aspected, connected to all the main east-west routes across the estate and clearly seen from the Dalston Lane. The OAP club forms its *hortus conclusus* off Shelness Road. Not making more of this garden is wasteful.

The garden is capable of becoming more explicitly public in its functioning - a way of bringing life and public confidence onto the estate, breaking up its monolithic quality, and a way of welcoming the new inhabitants on Dalston Lane.

# 39. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)

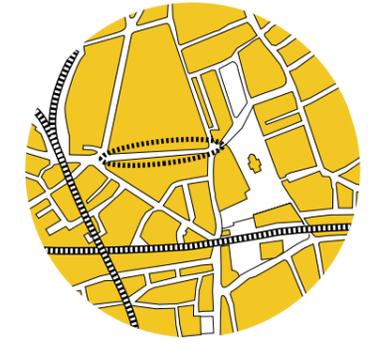


## PROJECTS



figure 39.1

# 40. DALSTON LANE FRONTAGE (NEW PEMBURY SIDE)



## STRATEGY

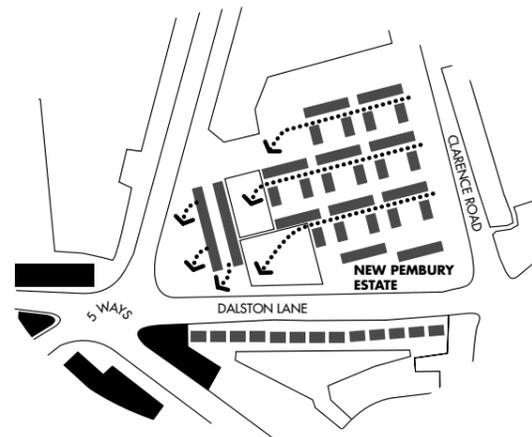


figure 40.1: diagram potential westward movement out of estate

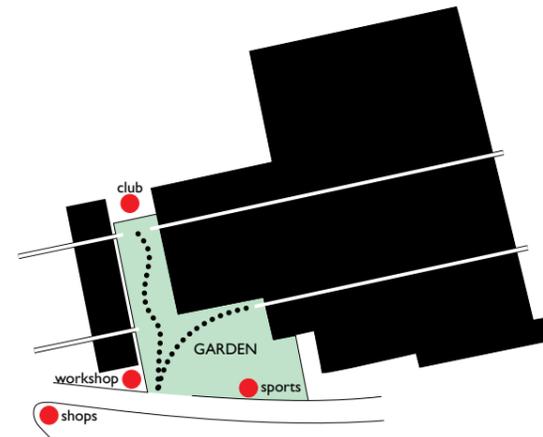


figure 40.2: Tolsford Road garden high quality garden - breaking up mass of estate - with public amenities around it

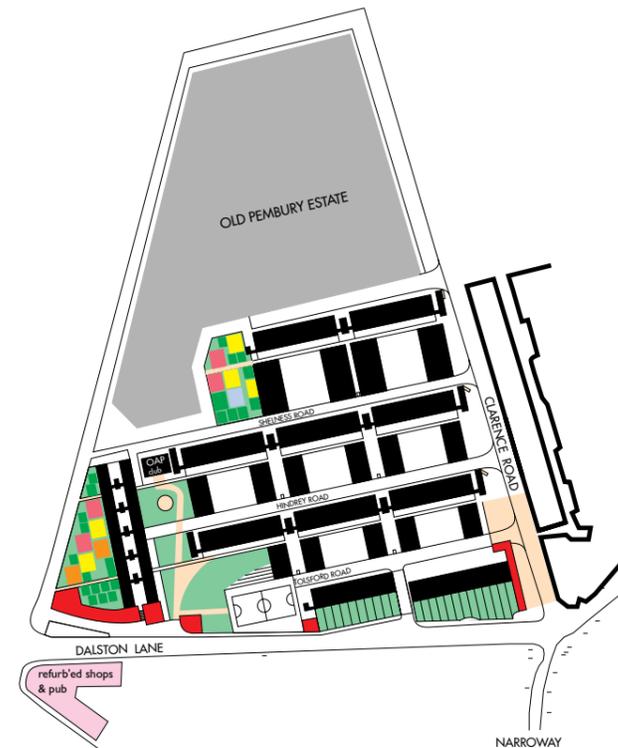


figure 40.3: plan of proposed

By facilitating the movement of estate residents through Tolsford Road garden, movement towards amenities on Five Ways and beyond will be easier from the estate. A new, comfortable footway leading down the sloping garden at the end of Tolsford Road onto Dalston Lane is the key improvement project in this regard.

The footway should be extended up to the OAP club that overlooks Tolsford garden's north section. A cutting in this part of the garden which contains a parking ramp (figure 4.1) makes the OAP club very hard to reach from the south. Overcoming this impediment makes sense of the adjacent amenities of club and garden.

A new sports facility is proposed here on Tolsford garden's Dalston Lane edge serving the inhabitants of refurb'ed HA accommodation on Dalston Lane, and children from the estate, creating new links between communities. The current dedicated "kickabout" area is located "in the middle of the estate" - an unattractive place to most people. It is proposed that this existing facility should be turned into residents gardens.

Putting amenities on estate edges makes them useful to people outside the some-

what artificial community formed by a large estate (somewhere which is easily thought of as a "community of misfortune"). Along with the sports facility, new housing and a workshop is proposed on the Dalston Lane frontage. The housing development would provide revenue. Its occupants would also find use in the gardens and sports facilities. The workshop building would be an immensely useful resource for the growing number of estate activities such as the bike repair workshop and computer night school. There is no reason why these activities should not interest people from outside the estate so an edge location is appropriate.

Contacts with Tara Garnett from City Harvest - which promotes food growing in cities - have led to the proposal to give over some of the large open spaces around the estate to individualised residents gardens some of which could be used to grow food. These allotment type areas would add to the sense of a living layer of activity around the estate adding greatly to the quality of adjacent public places.

# 41. CHURCH GARDENS

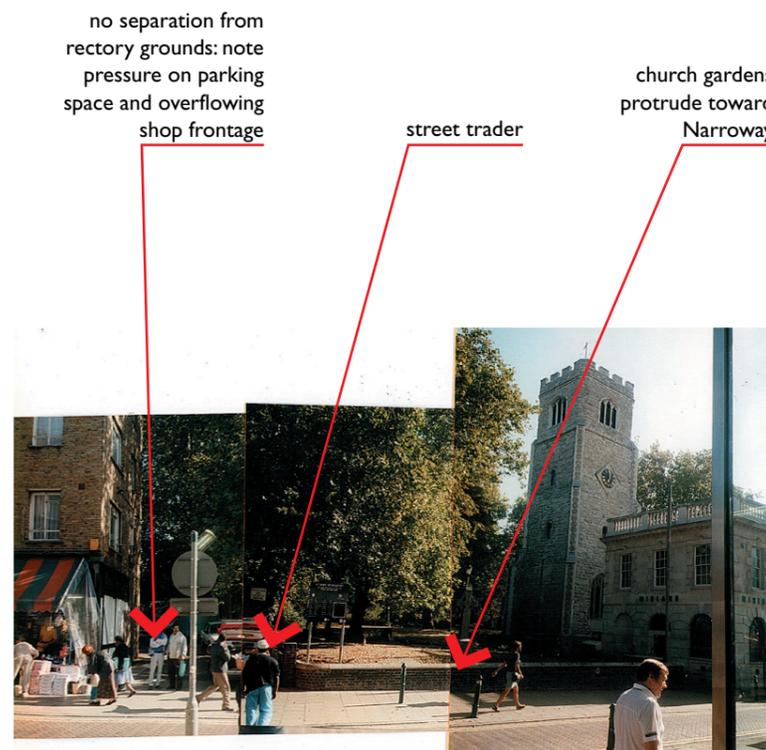


figure 41.1

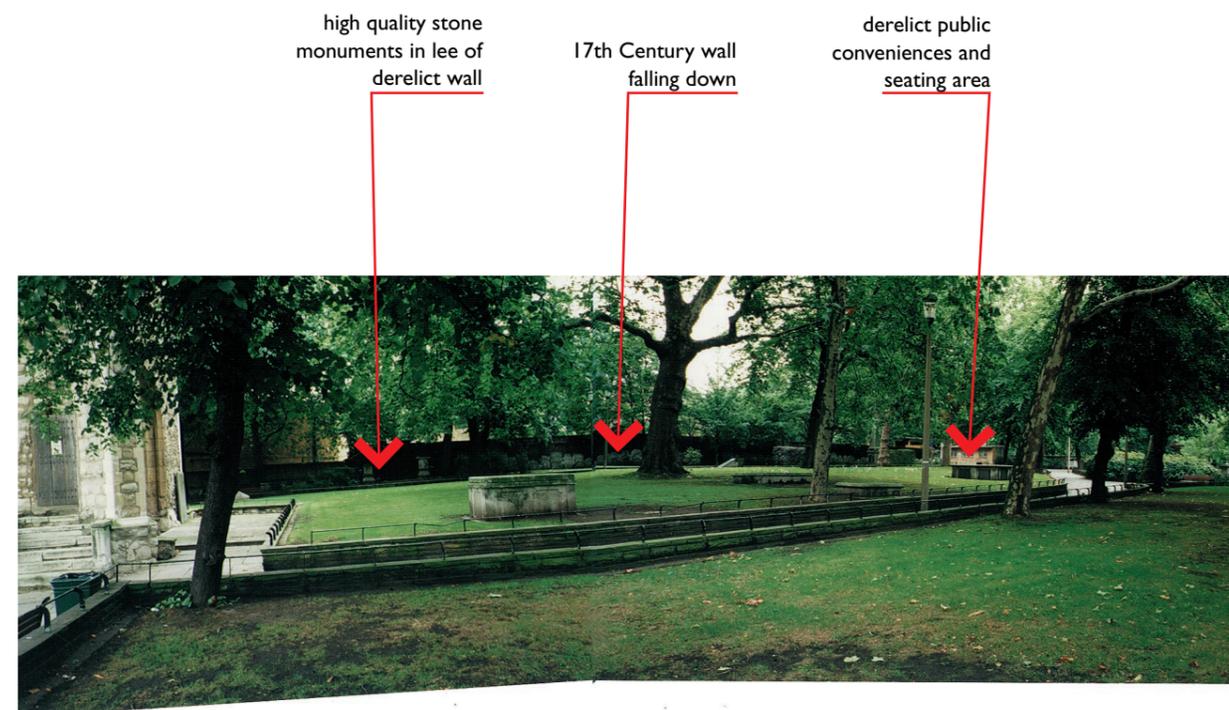


figure 41.2

# 42. CHURCH GARDENS



## ANALYSIS



figure 42.1

The 17th Century wall separating St Johns at Hackney rectory from the church gardens in which St Johns itself is set, is falling down. Its condition concerns the incumbent at St Johns although responsibility for upkeep falls to LBH.

Heart of Hackney will not be reinstating the derelict public toilets and seating area which lie at the eastern corner of this wall. The assumption is that toilets should be located on Narrowway.

It is likely that the church gardens toilets and seating area will continue to decay. Given the location of these amenities in the middle of the gardens, where different paths intersect, their dereliction seems strategically placed to do most harm.

Along the existing rectory wall, old grave-stones are stacked up together like so many bargain books in a shop window. The adjacent images gives an idea of this. This cannot possibly be the best way to display these artifacts which have an inef-fable quality unique to old, carved stone - that adds to the church gardens remarkable sense of authenticity and continuity with the past.

The diagram below shows how movement into the church gardens runs past the derelict rectory wall (thick broken line). The L-shaped building above the rectory shows the position of the public toilets at the point where the gardens expands northwards and the first view of the apse end of St Johns is given.

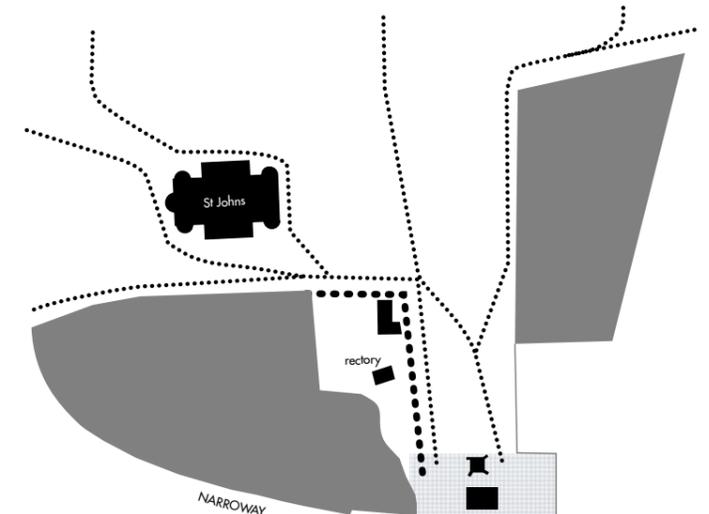


figure 42.2: paths focusing on Narrowway  
thick broken line shows derelict wall  
L-shape above the rectory shows derelict public conveniences

# 43. CHURCH GARDENS



## PROJECTS

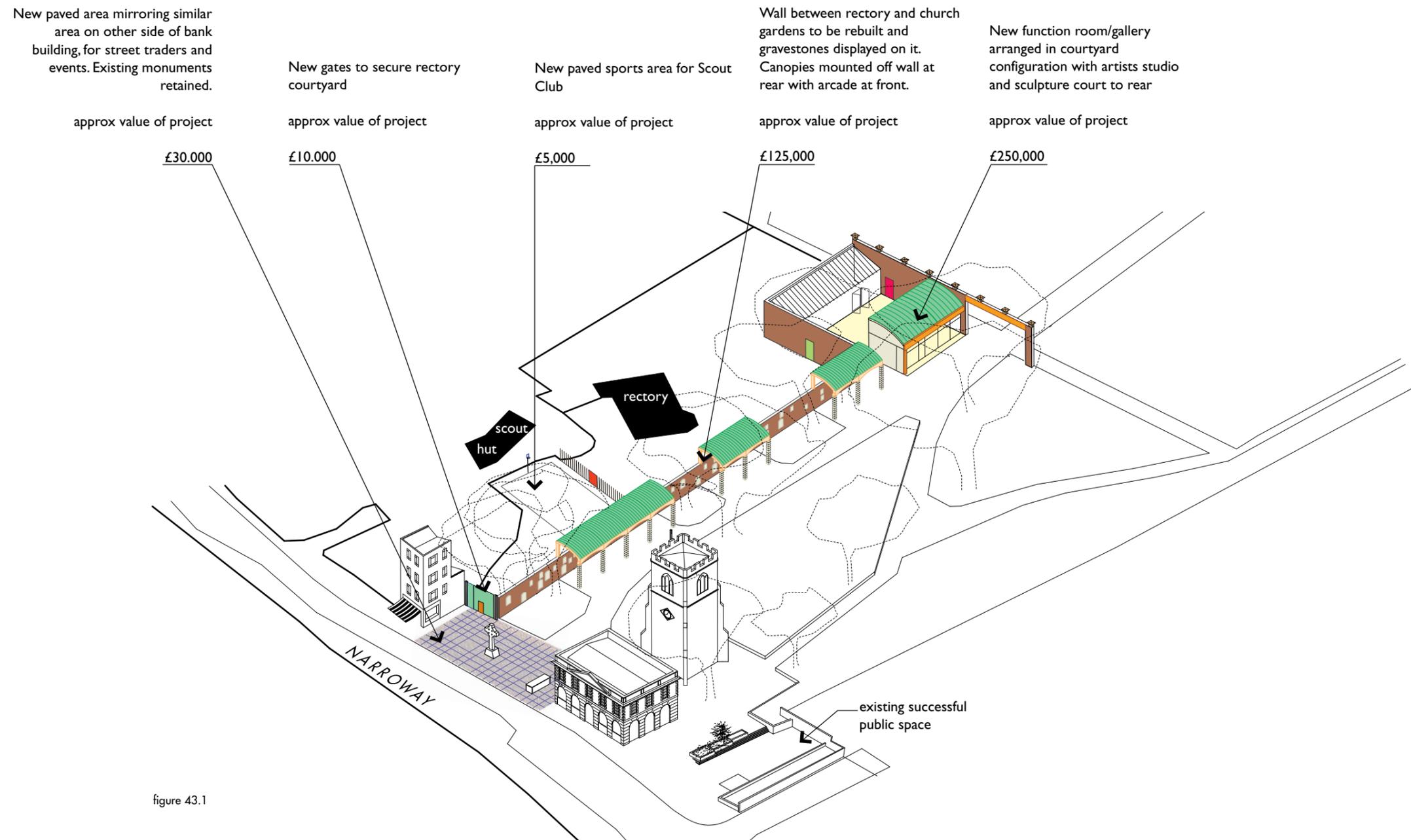


figure 43.1

# 44. CHURCH GARDENS



## STRATEGY

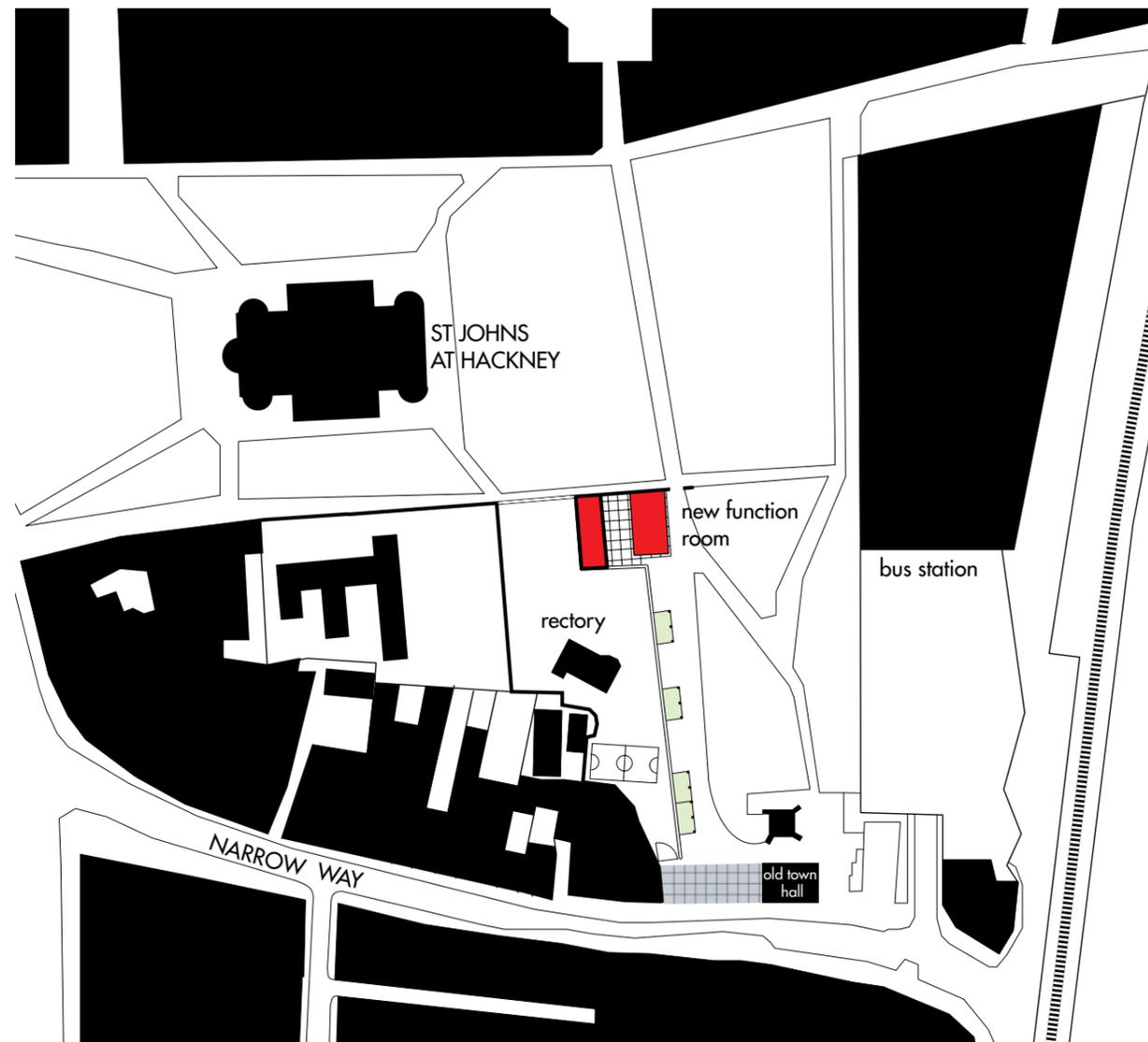


figure 44.1: plan of proposed

The church gardens provides strong continuity of space between the down-to-earth, robust world of the Narrowway shop fronts and St Johns at Hackney. This is a terrific bonus for the area. Most neighbourhood centres are fortunate if they have a mean car park behind the shops or a business park.

The public places renewal proposal here has two main themes

- 1) Narrowway's relation to the gardens
- 2) the rectory wall as a linking element to the middle of the gardens

The proposal is for a new stone-flagged area made immediately to north side of the old town hall matching the flagged area on the other side, part of which is used by street traders. The new area would be for specifically for licensed street traders, allowing them to take advantage of the crowd close to the bank, main bus-stop and the shops.

The renewal of the wall would be as a partial colonnade off this new street traders space. The wall would respond to the idea of mediating between the commercial traders space and St Johns. The



figure 44.2  
existing street space on south side of old Town Hall

effect of moving away into the gardens would be heightened by the wall's treatment as a display surface for the old gravestones.

The colonnade would be somewhere to sit and rest. It would be concluded by a new public gallery where an artist/artisan would be able to live and work - a lived-in house in the gardens. The occupant would manage and curate the gallery.

The gallery would be built off a wall through which pedestrians would pass to enter the other part of the gardens where St Johns becomes visible. It would thus mark a significant spatial connection between the part of gardens in which the church is set and the other part directly off Narrowway.

# 45. BUS STATION AREA



## PROJECTS

New large scale mixed use development with parking, containing business units, conference facilities and apartments

approx value of project

£9,000,000

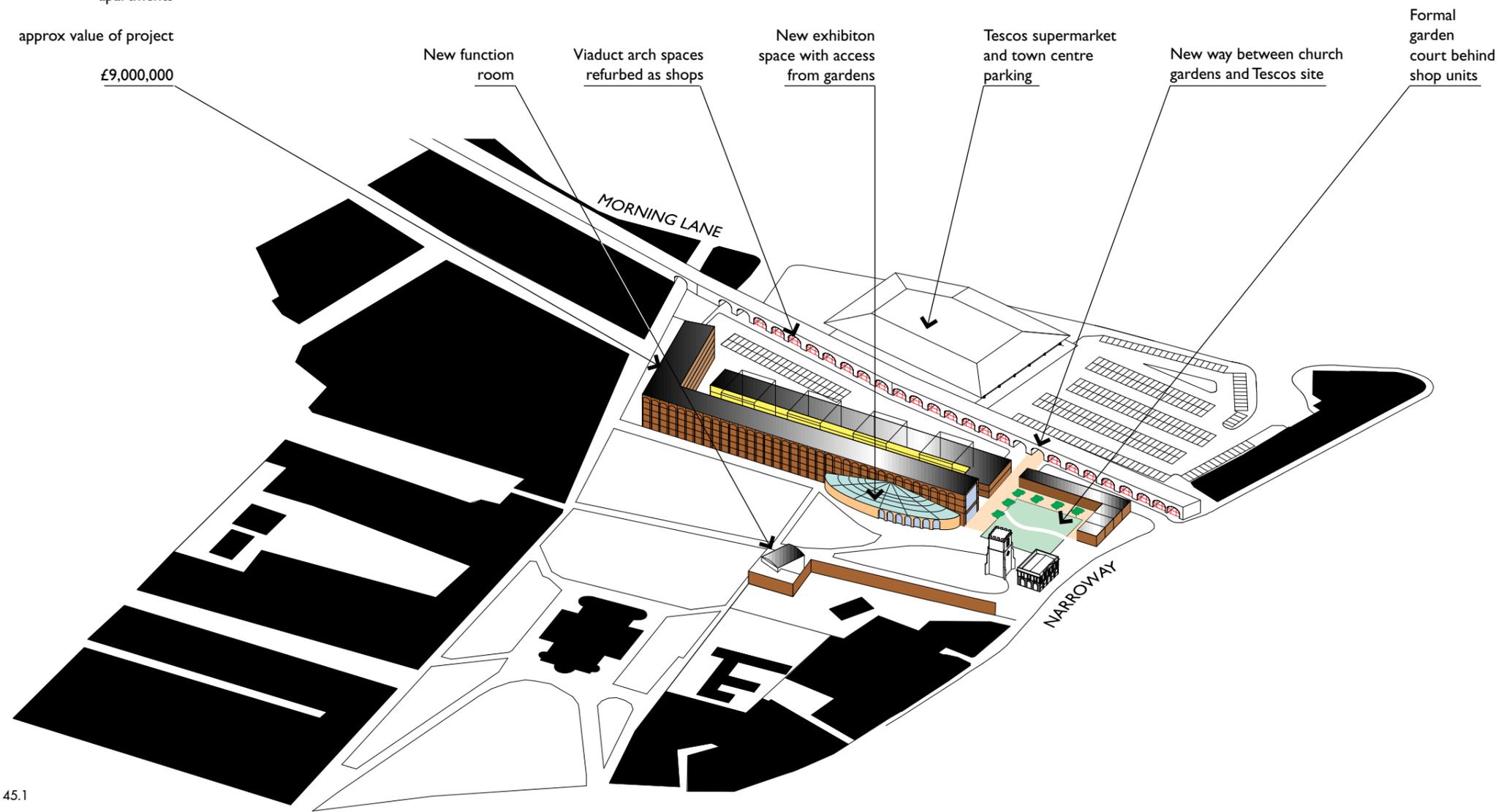


figure 45.1

# 46. BUS GARAGE



## STRATEGY

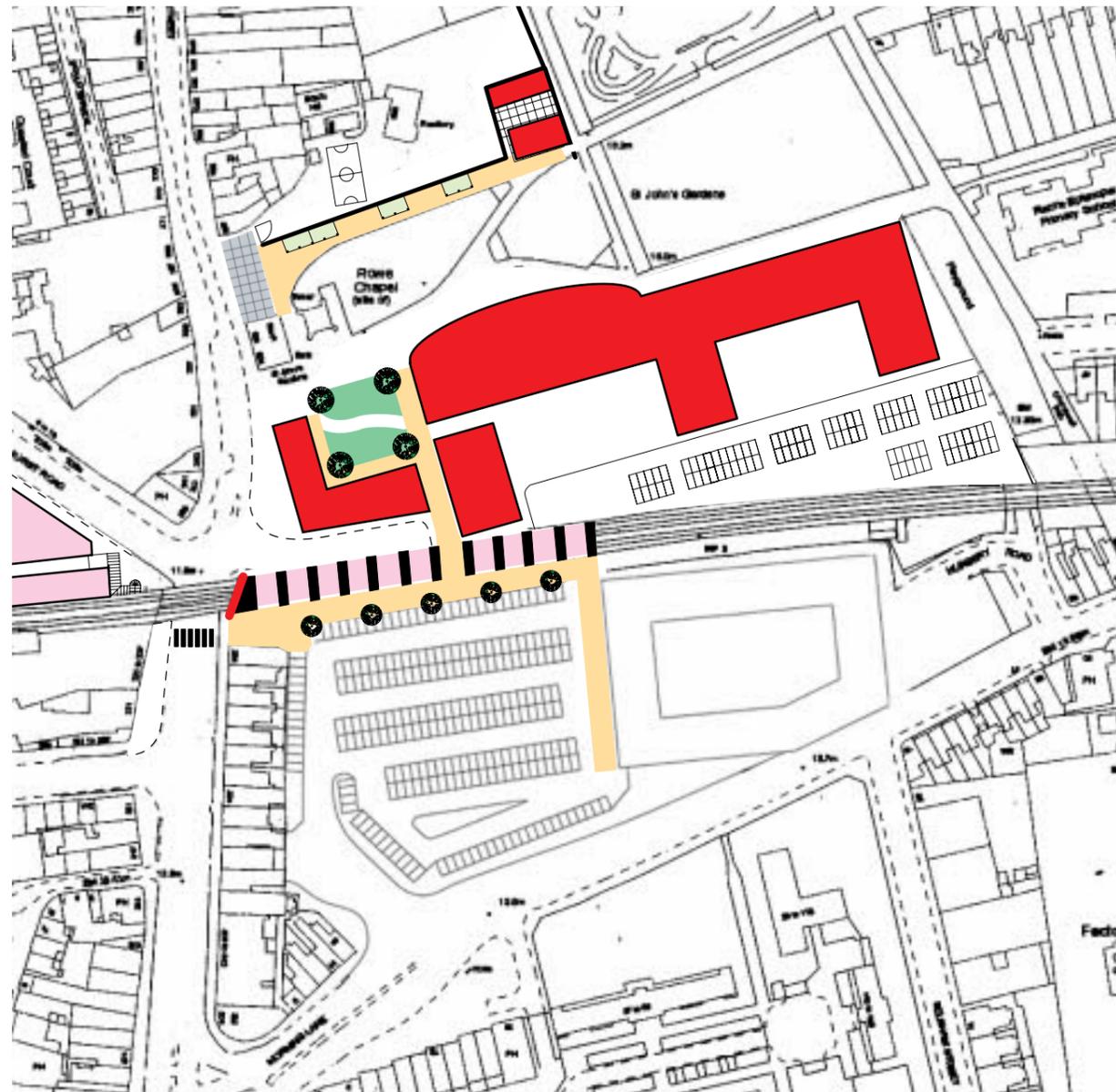


figure 46.1: plan of proposed

The bus garage site is clearly a huge development question for Hackney Central. Although LBH have approached the bus companies about their operations from the Narrowway garage and attempted to find alternative locations for the garage, there is apparently very little near-term prospect of the garage moving.

However, the site is so vast and has such potential, that its future needs to be discussed.

The proposal put forward here simply draws attention to the fact that a very large development is indeed possible. It is also important to recognise that such a development could do much to transform the nature of work space in the study area. Given that so much workspace is low-grade - some nothing more than "work-slums" - there is need for workspace which increases range of commercial enterprises that would consider locating in the area. At the moment, steady dilapidation and decline in the area's workspaces severely limits the opportunities for change and renewal of the working culture. Even now, the largest employers in the borough are LBH itself, health trusts and Central Government. Nevertheless, the borough does rely on small business and self-

reliance for most of its employment. This small business sector needs renewal particularly in Hackney Central which to remain truly diverse cannot be allowed to develop into a merely retail/residential centre. This would be a negative evolution antithetical to the goal of diversified and sustainable local economy and social life. The comments about backlands in the introduction also refer to this issue.

The redevelopment of the bus garage site could provide a whole new tranche of high-quality workspace close to a new Tube connection which will be sited at Hackney Central station. The new building should also contain apartments not only to offset development costs but to introduce new living space right at the centre of the area. This, of course, is very much what sustainability is about.

# 47. NORTH LONDON RAILWAY VIADUCT

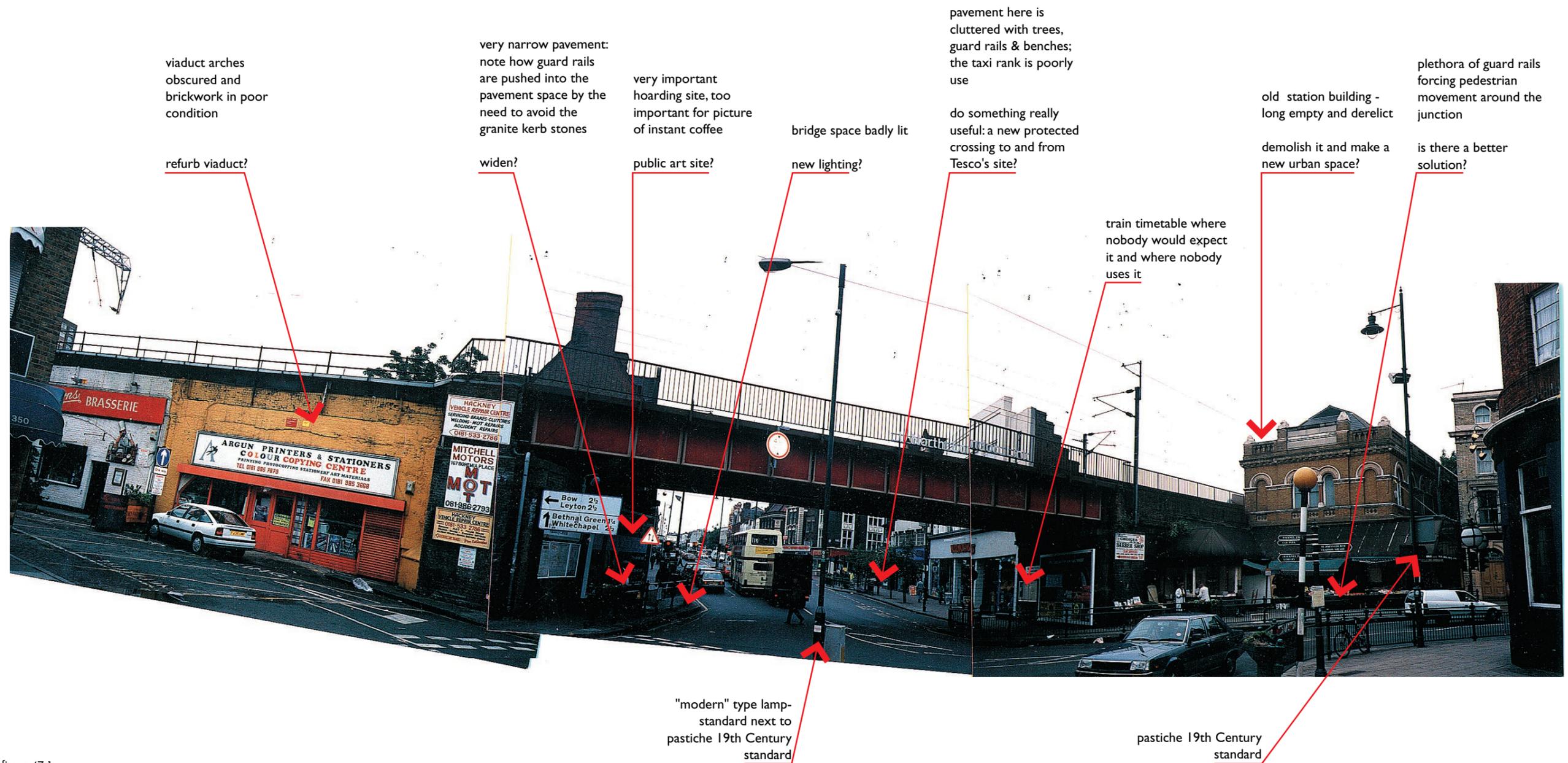


figure 47.1

# 48. NORTH LONDON RAILWAY VIADUCT



## ANALYSIS

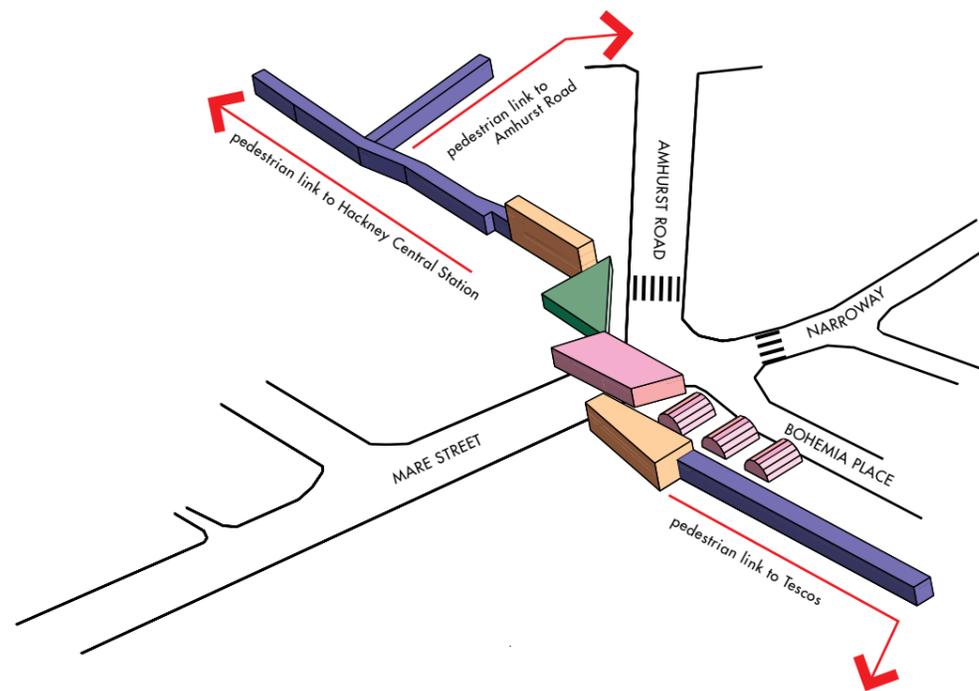


figure 48.1: "rooms"  
linked pedestrian spaces connecting  
Tesco site and station area with symme-  
try around Mare Street

There is a series of linked spaces running alongside the North London railway viaduct which cuts across the study area. The diagrams on this sheet show links on both sides of the viaduct - one running between the station area and Bohemia Place, the other between the station area and the Tescos site.

An integrated treatment of these linked spaces is not apparent on the ground. Very little, if anything, suggests that the urban design potential of these links has been addressed.

The adjacent figure suggests how the spaces between Bohemia Place and the station could, for example, benefit from a coherent approach to small scale architectural elements such as railings, light stands, canopies, the metal frieze to the

station building itself, shop windows and other small scale elements.

Another idea of coherence is suggested in figure which shows how a symmetry or family of spaces can be seen connecting the Tescos site and station. The point here is the similarity of scale, proportion and function of the spaces. For instance, the orange boxes are both kinds of vestibule spaces - one to the Tesco footway, the other to the station ramp.

These ideas about coherent groups of spaces afford a framework for thinking about minor improvements. Although the small scale nature of these spaces invites a bitty approach to improvement work, the fact of continuities or links between spaces suggests an overall view should be adopted.

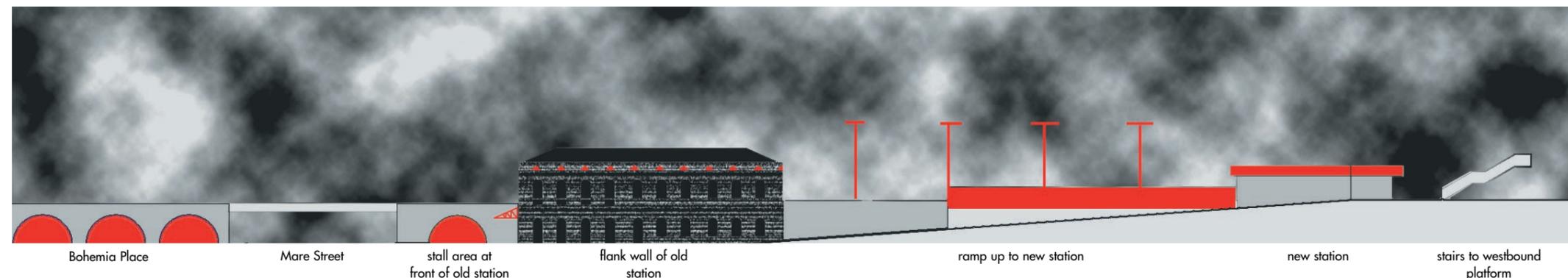
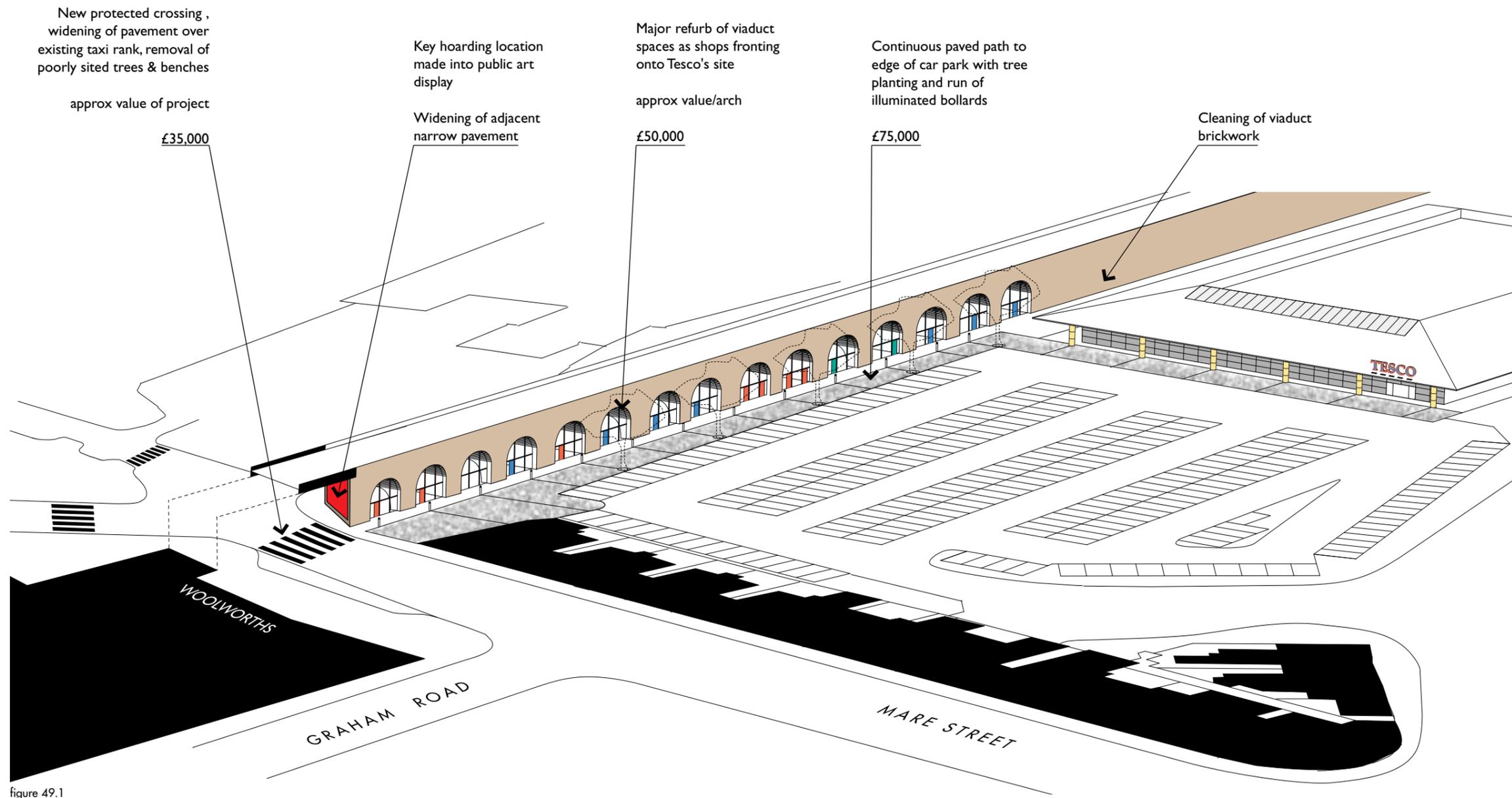


figure: 48.2: ramp section  
orange elements, such as light  
standards, railings, canopies &  
shop windows are components  
which could all be subject to a  
coherent design approach



## PROJECTS





## STRATEGY

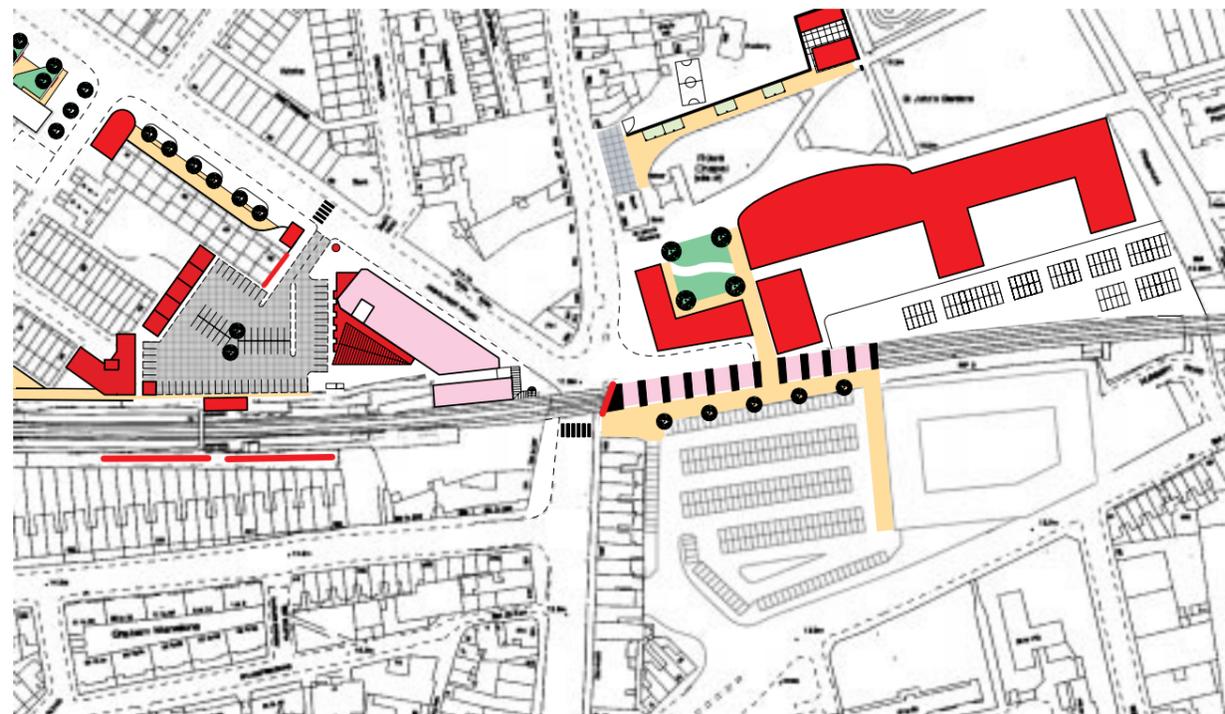


figure 50.1  
plan showing refurb'ed viaduct spaces next to Tesco site

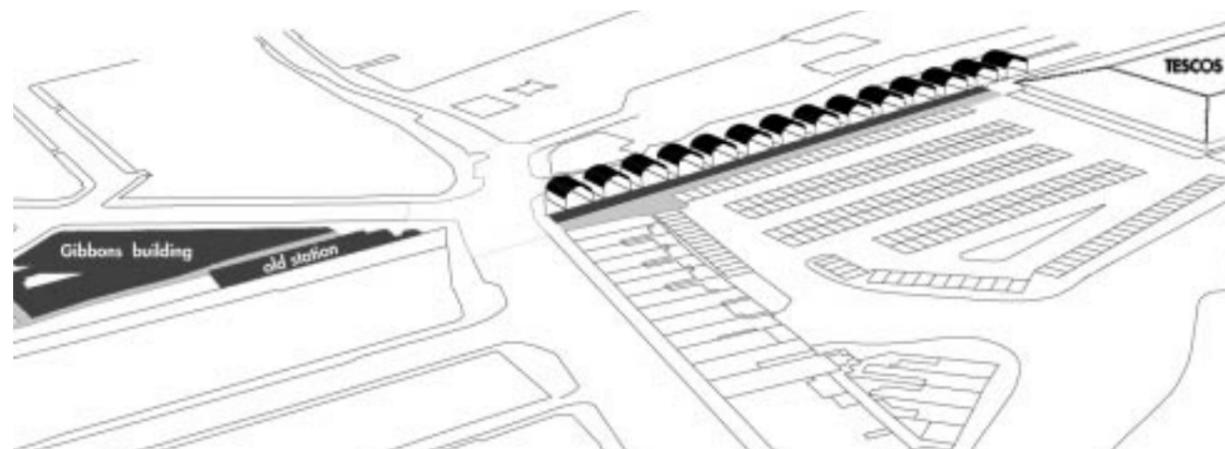


figure 50.2  
the dark tone shows dereliction:  
light tone shows paths

The work proposed revolves around improving pedestrian access to and from the Tesco site. A key element is dealing with the presence of dereliction and decay along the viaduct edge which overlooks the Tesco car park. The viaduct contains commercial spaces whose backs face towards the supermarket. These backs are in many cases shambles i.e. rough brick extensions to the actual viaduct arch space. The new path link to the front of Tesco will currently run alongside these decaying back structures with a separation in the form of a new, standard timber fence (although this is being discussed currently by LBH planning).

The adjacent diagram shows how two important pathways - the Tesco one and the pedestrian approaches to Hackney Central are shadowed by derelict structures.

It is important that what opportunities there are for integrating the new Tesco building with the surrounding city are taken. It is sad, for instance, that the Tesco building is not mixed use. There are now exciting and up-to-date precedents in London of supermarket development (by Tesco, in fact) being combined with housing and other uses.

In the case of the Tesco site, the proposal here calls for the demolition of the shambles and the refurb'ing of the arches as shop units fronting onto the supermarket site. This new frontage would represent the high street frontage within the Tesco site. Instead of the supermarket's customers being divorced totally from the high street in every part of the Tesco site, the car park at least would seem like a positive part of the city.

It may be that supermarket customers treat their shopping very functionally and may perhaps be uninterested in any diversion from their set task. Nevertheless, Rail Tracks property surveyors are interested in the concept of renewing their arches to take advantage of the new supermarket. London Workspace - partly responsible for the Kingsland viaduct refurb - believe the arches by Tesco are a "business opportunity".

# 51. MARCON PLACE

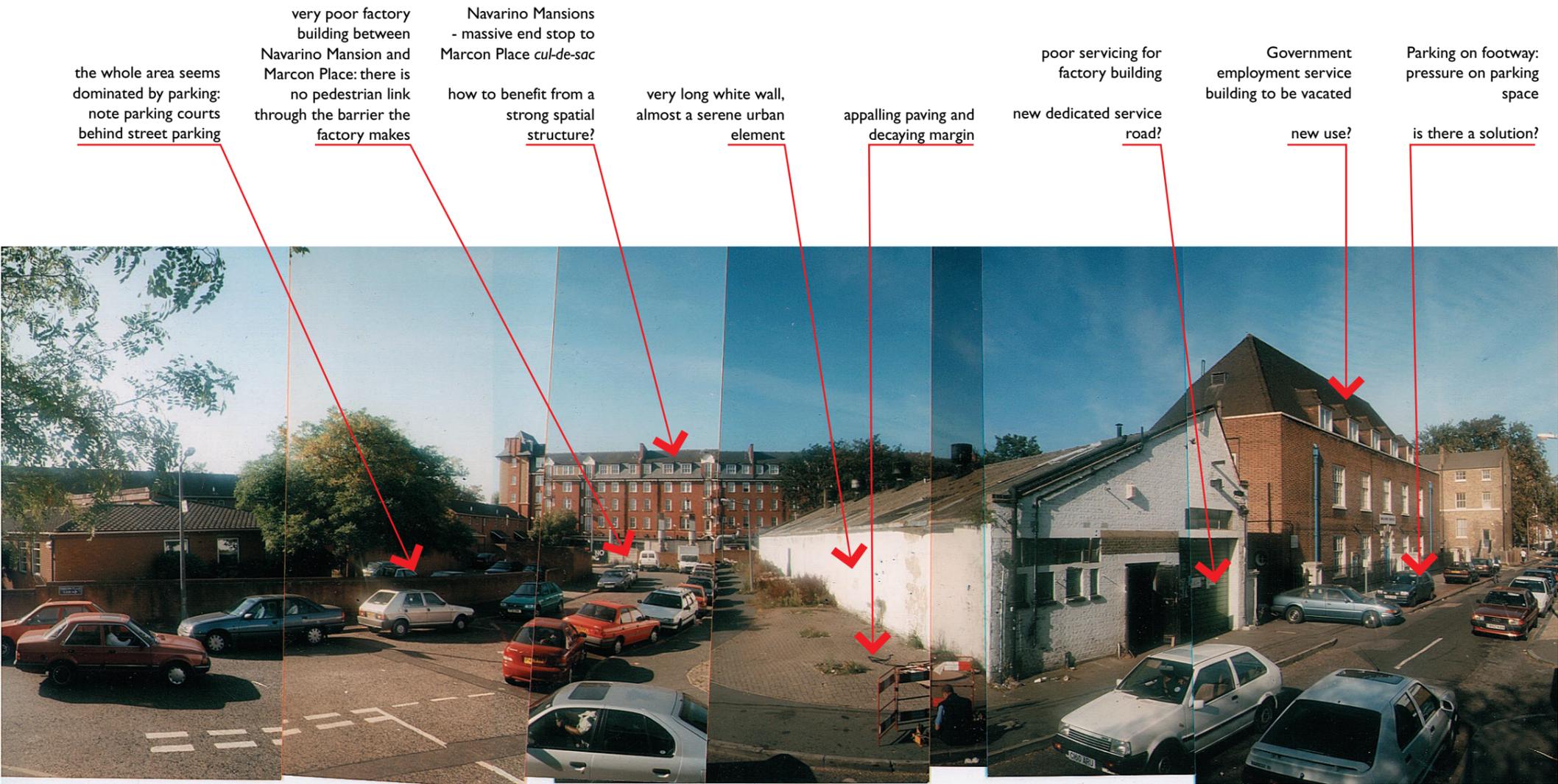


figure 51.1

# 52. MARCON PLACE

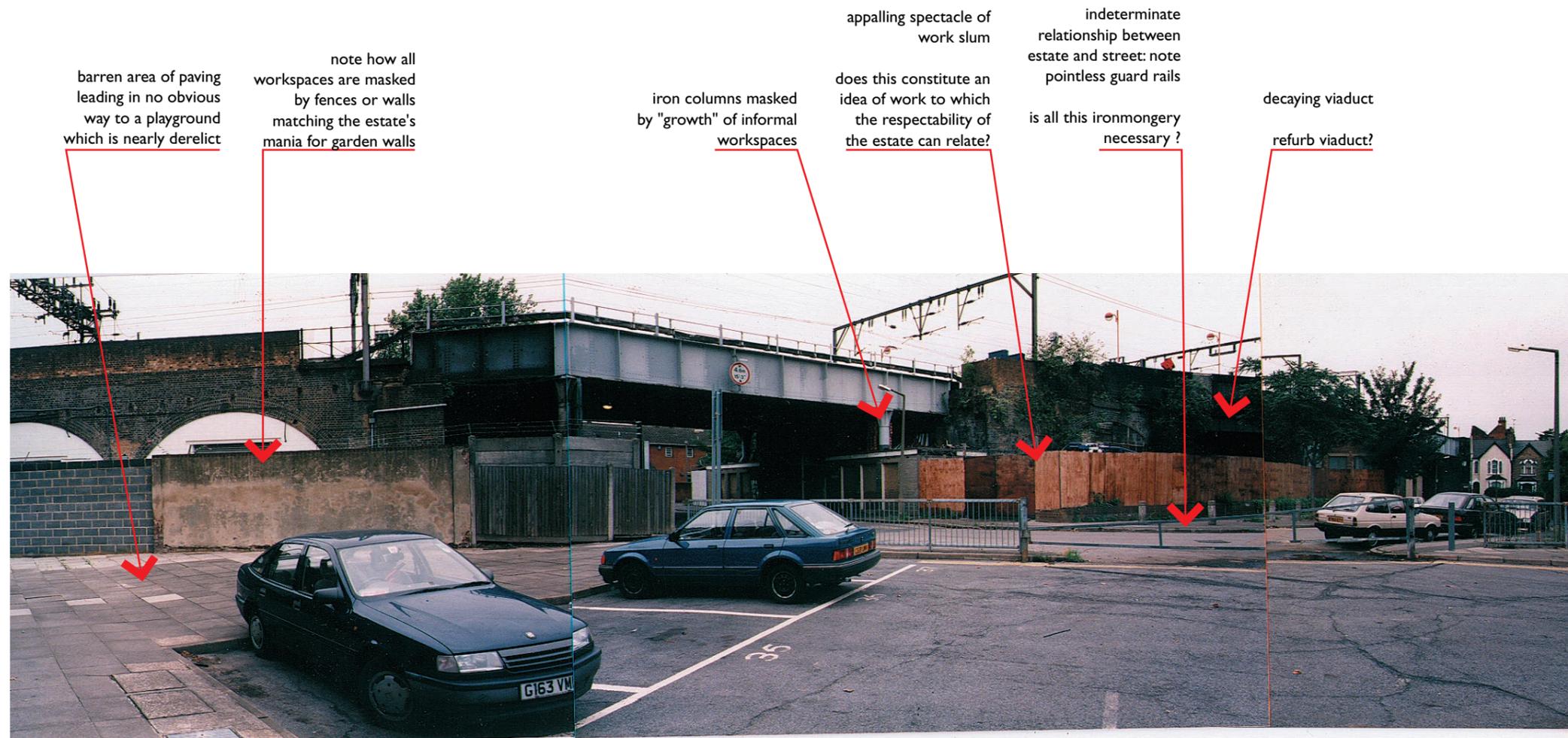


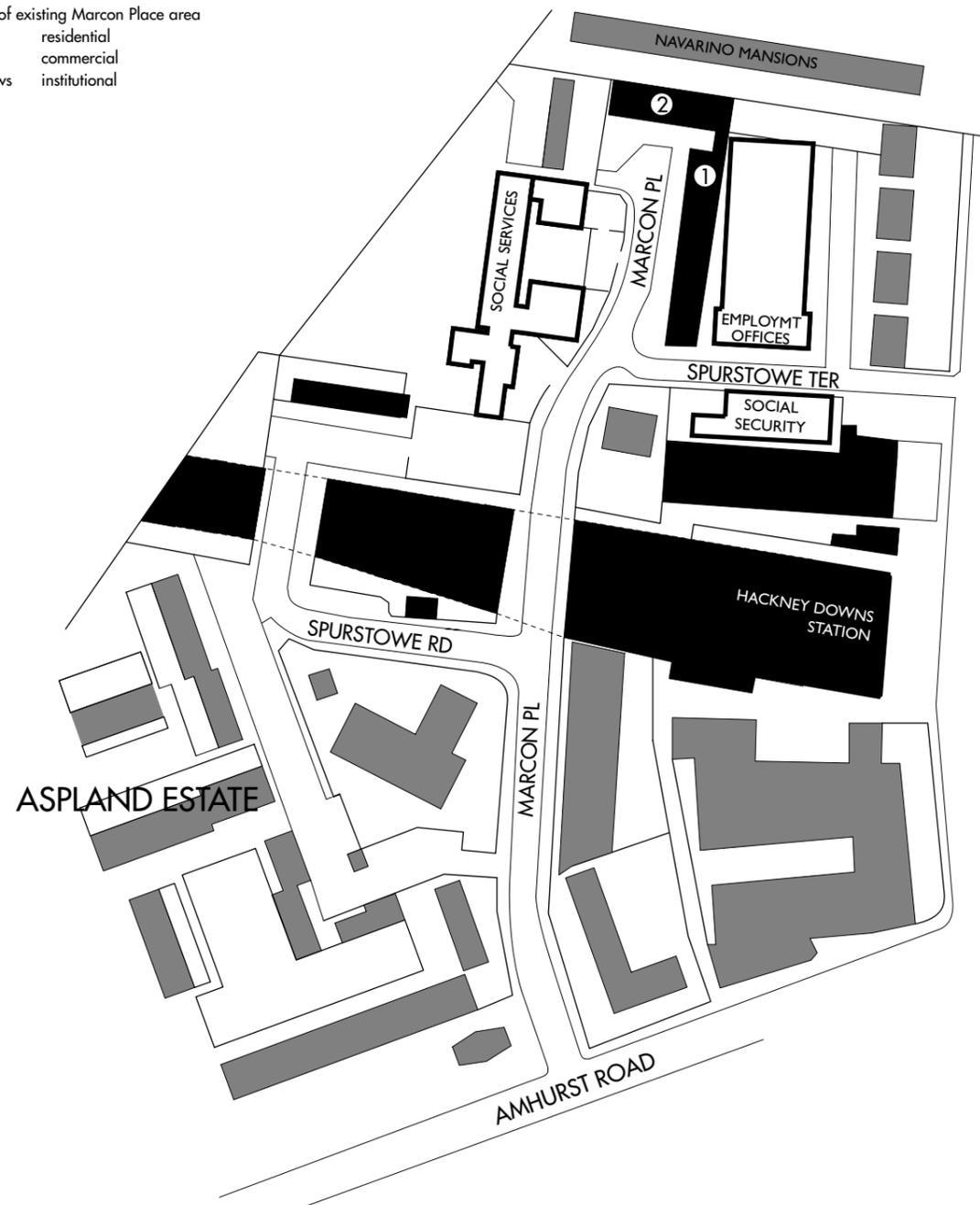
figure 52.1

# 53. MARCON PLACE



## ANALYSIS

figure 53.1: plan of existing Marcon Place area  
 gray shows residential  
 black shows commercial  
 heavy outline shows institutional



Marcon Place and the streets forms a distinct quarter in the study area. Part of it is formed by the Aspland Estate. The Hackney Downs Station viaduct runs through it and contains large commercial spaces at street level. These front onto Spurstowe Road, one of four *cul-de-sacs* off the Marcon Road/Spurstowe Terrace through route. As indicated before, the viaduct spaces are in appalling condition notwithstanding their concealment behind fences of the poorest quality.

On the Marcon Place *cul-de-sac* a sawmill (no.1) and polishing shop (no.2) are arranged at right angles to each other. These businesses work with each other rather like the auto-repair businesses and scrap dealer in the viaduct work do.

Across the road from the sawmill is Hackney Social Services - a very significant centre which is going to stay in the area according to Social Service property manager. Social Services deal with Youth Justice, Hearing Disability, Learning Disability and Occupational Therapy.

The Services Building seems remarkably gifted with attached open spaces. One is a very large garden at the rear, running up to the North London Line embankment.

The garden does not appear well used.

Social Services employs considerable numbers of workers who depend on their cars partly because of the area's confused and slightly threatening feel. Car-use is a critical part of the area and obviously what the viaduct businesses rely on. There is great pressure on street parking.

Looking down on all this, is the huge turn-of-the-century dwelling block called Navarino Mansions. This forms a remarkable spatial end-stop to the Marcon place *cul-de-sac*.

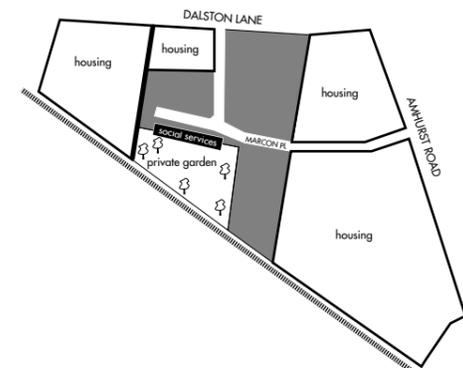


figure 53.2: concept diagram of existing situation  
 housing backing onto low quality space in which social service building is embedded with its own private garden to the rear (grey areas show low quality or underused space)

# 54. MARCON PLACE



## ANALYSIS

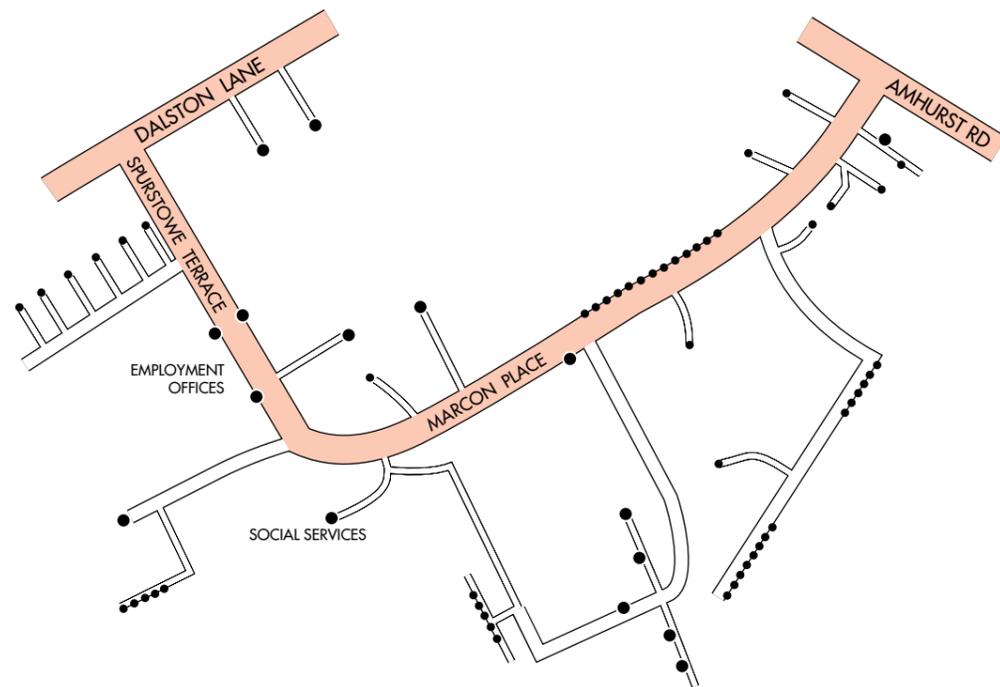


figure 54.1: diagram concentration of remote entrances to buildings around Marcon Place

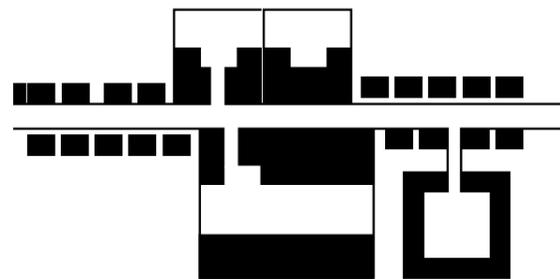


figure 54.2: street buildings they form the street and create a street room linking public and private space directly and as part of life of the street

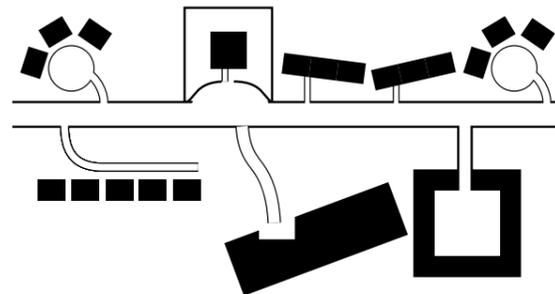


figure 54.3: anti-street buildings buildings which do not form or give functional support to the street - the street is left to chance unsustained by the involvement of habitations or workplaces

The paucity of building entrances which work directly off the street is certainly one factor which makes the Marcon Place /Spurstowe Terrace route unsatisfying as a public space.

Intermediate spaces in the form of walled paths, parking forecourts and front gardens are inserted as links between the main public space which is street and buildings themselves. Many of these intermediate links are actually arranged off the four *cul-de-sacs* that run off the main through-route (the Marcon Place/ Spurstowe Terrace continuity) so removing buildings even farther from the most public place in the area. The main public space therefore lacks the simple compelling logic of a street onto which buildings open directly.

There is a sense of buildings and spaces not quite in view and involved in public space. The entrances to the blocks of flats and the Social Services building are obscure from the street. Reaching the spaces in the viaduct is also far from obvious.

With so many entrances distanced in the way described, the street is no longer a place where a value is born out of the

process of everyone accessing their home or workplace from the same space. The opposite is true. The little access “funnels” linking the buildings to the street make accessing buildings into a private activity. A simple “fellowship” of street-use is thus lost.

Clearly, there is a minimum degree of proximity needed for rich, developed relationships between urban figures such as houses or workplaces to be sustained. The remoteness of the buildings along Marcon Place from the street indicates a perverse willingness to avoid fulfilling this minimum requirement for positive urban design.

There is a need to be decisive in this area, to redress the inconsequence of the streetspace that is the result of distancing so many buildings from Marcon Place’s frontage. The street’s primacy needs to be reestablished.

# 55. MARCON PLACE



## PROJECTS

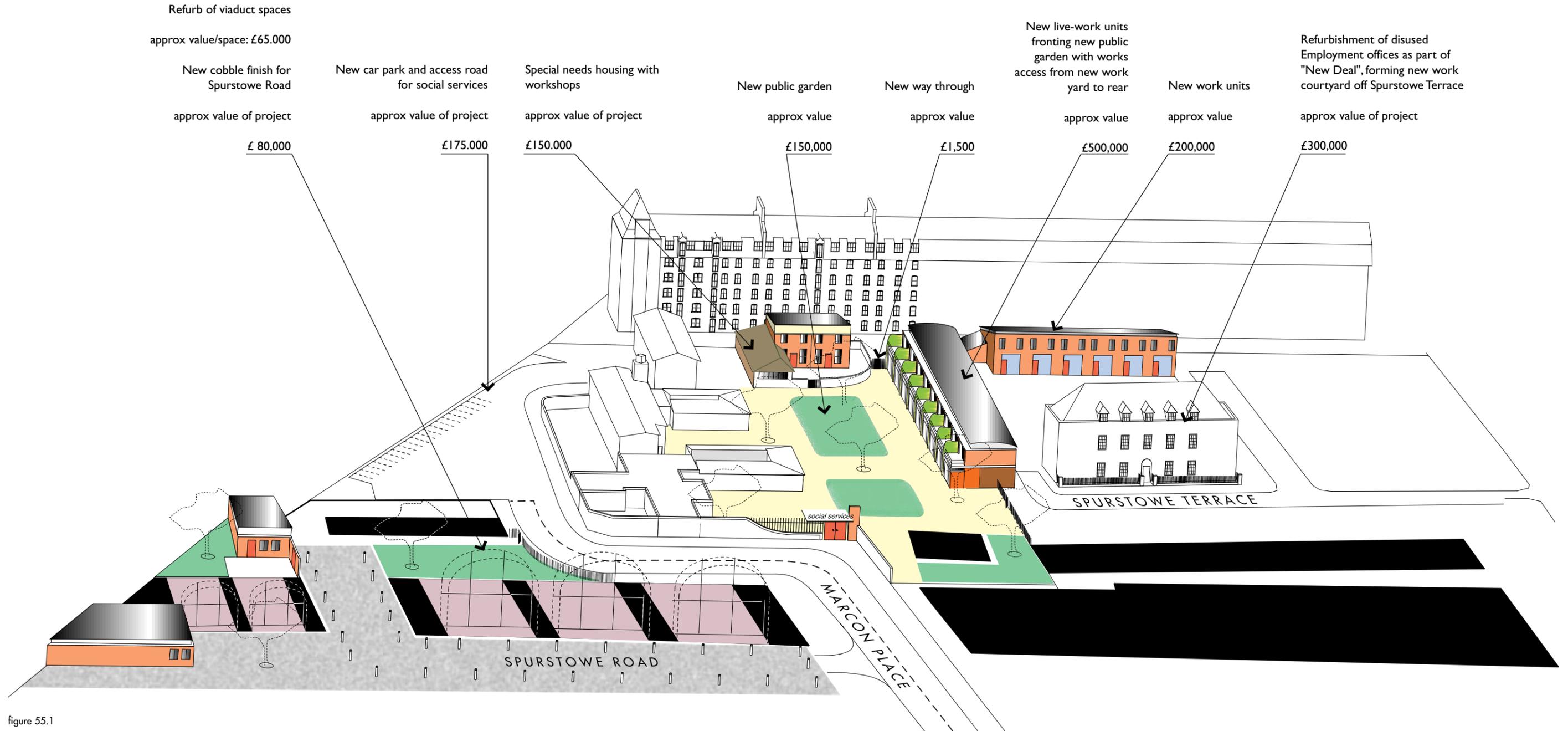
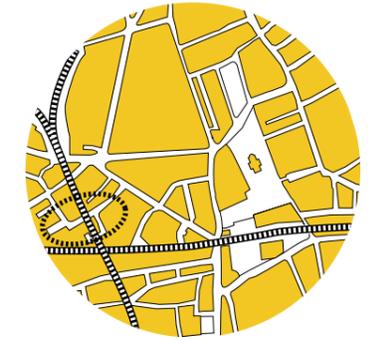


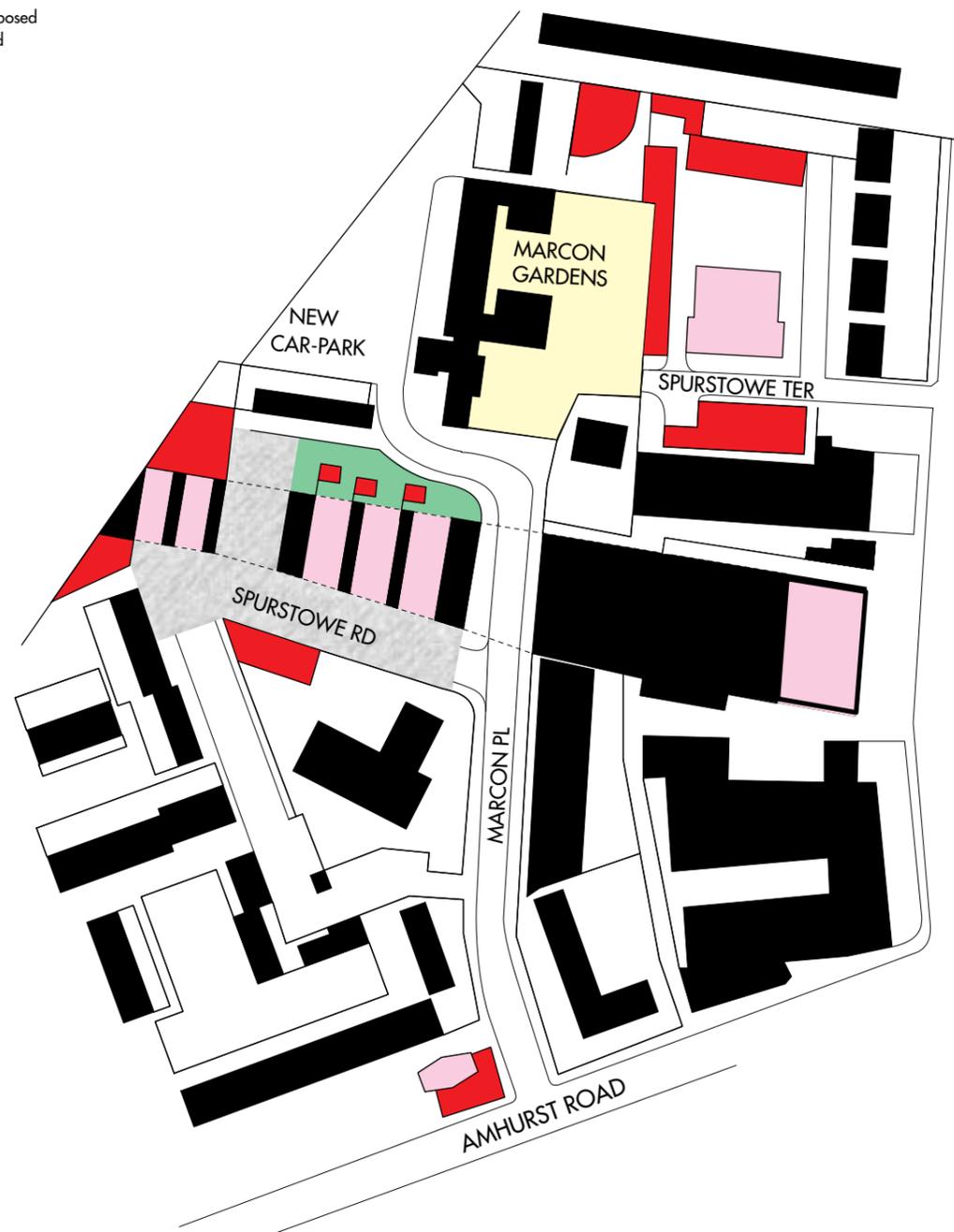
figure 55.1

# 56. MARCON PLACE



## STRATEGY

figures 56.1: plan of proposed  
 red shows new build  
 pink shows refurb



The *cul-de-sac* space held by the imposing mass of Navarino Mansions at the end of Marcon Place is the spatial climax of the area. It was not intended but does suggest that a strong spatial structure can be teased from the existing mess of inconsequential spaces.

The proposal is to create a new central space in Marcon Place. Access to Social Services - the main building in the area - would be from this new space which would be a new garden. Effectively, the space establishes a sense of order by making a significant new public space in the middle of the area giving a strong hierarchy. Marcon Place becomes the entry sequence to this space.

The new garden would be formed by flipping the large garden at the rear of the Social Services building to the front. A new car park would be made for Social Services at the rear where the main garden is now. This would relieve pressure on street space. That the new garden would stop off the back street link between Dalston Lane and Amhurst Road would also help traffic management without hindering pedestrian or cycle movement.

Other aspects of the proposal include the

refurbishment of vacant space (see the pink tone) and possible new build of live work accommodation and workspace. The 3-D view shows new live-work accommodation on the sawmill site. It would also be possible to keep the sawmill and polishing shop - both local employment uses - and still go ahead with Marcon Gardens by maintaining works access via the new car park.

The proposal calls for the refurb of the viaduct spaces that are currently in such a poor condition on Spurstowe Road. This is work done in partnership with Rail Track and promises the possibility of a more dignified work culture taking root in the area close to the Aspland Estate.

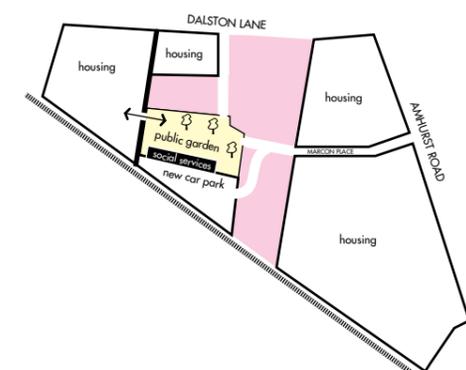
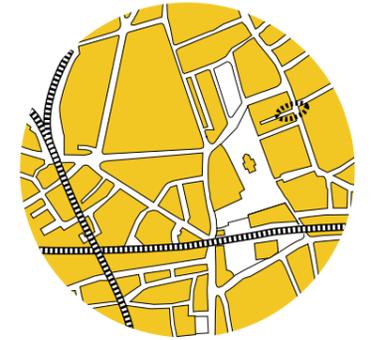


figure 56.2: concept diagram of proposed new high quality space in middle of Marcon Place area (pink areas show general refurb work)



## STRATEGY



figure 57.1: montage  
new live-work building forming archway to Rowe Lane



figure 57.2: archway on Narrowway

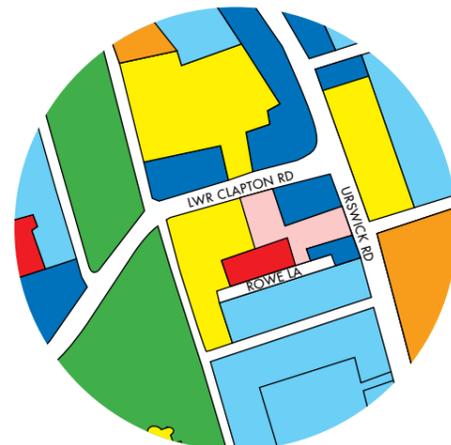


figure 57.3: use plan  
Rowe Lane / Urswick Road junction marked by new mixed development - see also figure 9.5

The proposal for Rowe Lane is for a new archway building spanning the lane's opening onto Urswick Road. Part of the building would be built on a derelict public convenience.

Rowe Lane is a back lane where a few small manufacturing businesses are based. These are in buildings built in the back gardens of large early 19th C houses that front Lower Clapton Road. This pattern of development is highly opportunistic, "organic" and suggestive of an active urban work culture.

A brief might be developed for a new live work building. This combination would complement the existing small business culture of Rowe Lane, and build on the tradition of this small street. The combination of home and work activities in this setting, where work buildings face onto the backgardens of terraced houses, can also be seen as fulfilling one theme of this report - namely establishing a positive relationship between the values of the workplace and the values of the home.

Working backlands are a threatened urban habitat although one with great potential to develop positive and productive relationships between the world of the

home and world of work. Mother Square, Kenmure Yard and Sutton Square are all recent, large residential developments on backlands in the study area. The tendency is for backlands to turn into residential "enclaves" or havens. These are places where separation from working life is idealised, where residential values are purified of work associations. Hackney's dependence on small business and productive individuals in the community suggests that more thought ought to be given to the role of work in residential areas.

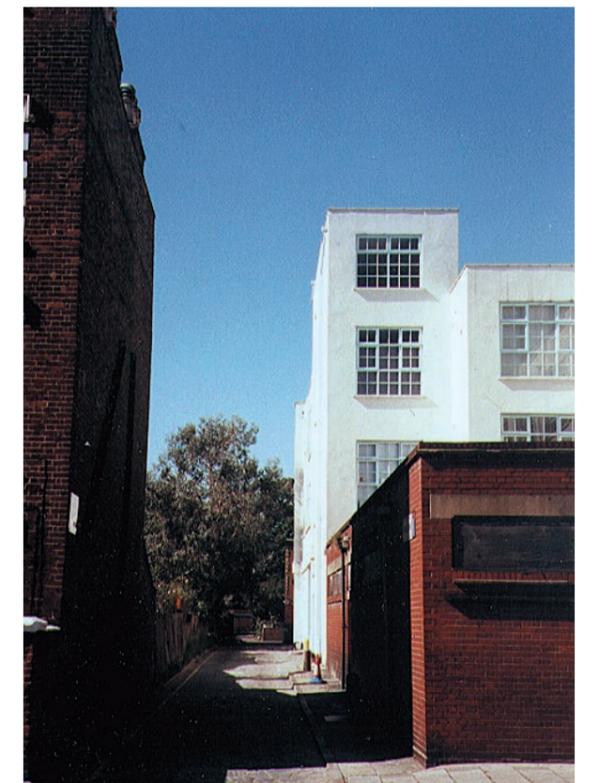


figure 57.4: the site - view down Rowe Lane  
on left - blind side elevation of Urswick Road terrace  
on right - derelict single storey public convenience

# 58. BODNEY ROAD/AMHURST ROAD CORNER



## STRATEGY

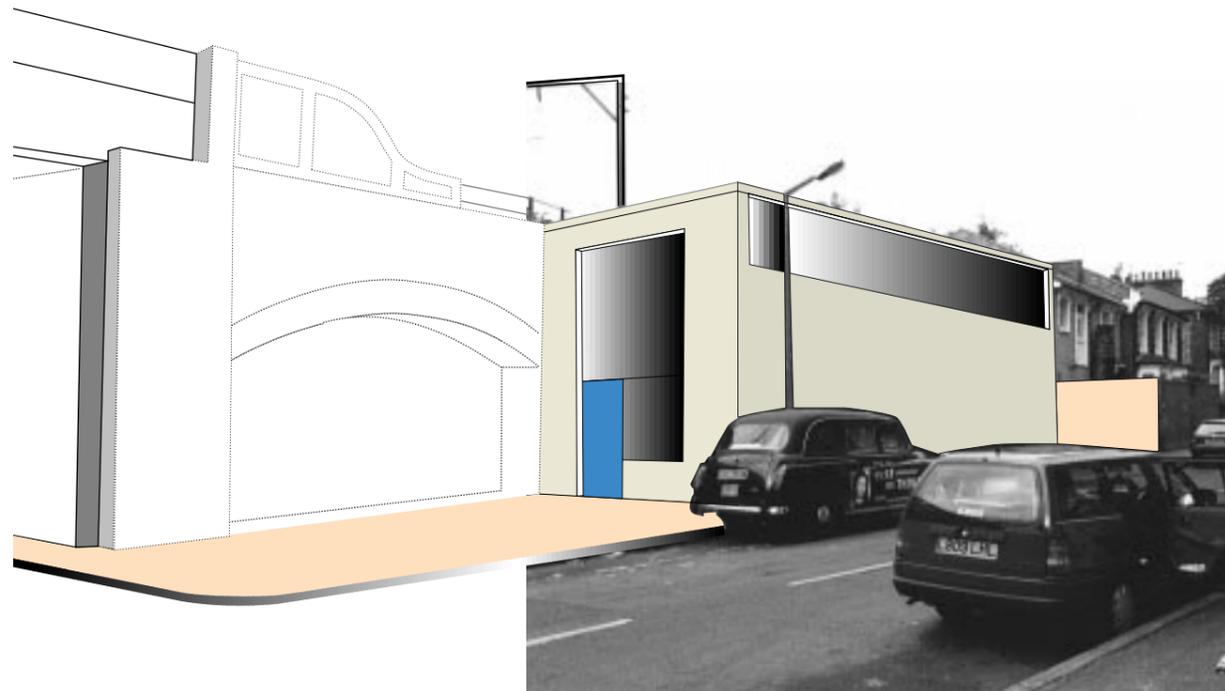


figure 58.1: montage  
new workspace on corner Bodney Road / Amhurst Road  
forming small public space



figure 58.2: existing condition

Bodney Road is an interesting street which leads off from Amhurst Road up towards Hackney Downs. On one side, it is lined by the "old" Pembury Estate. On the other, by a row of detached Italianate villas dating from the last century.

The villas back onto railway track. As Bodney Road rises towards Hackney Downs, the track becomes buried underground and disappears completely by the end of the street. Beyond the railway track lies the large precinct of Hackney Downs School which is now closed.

Bodney Road carries the mark of varied and interesting development, including at its southern junction with Amhurst Road, Downs Court, a remarkable block of flats whose bulk and distinctive design contribute greatly to the urban scene.

Opposite the west wall of Downs Court, backing onto the railway, is the near-derelict workshop shown here. The building is in use, notwithstanding its craggy condition. All its functions are carried on behind a high fence to shield the public street from the chaos within. To an extent Hackney benefits from the presence of ramshackle small businesses such as these. But there is no reason why this work slum

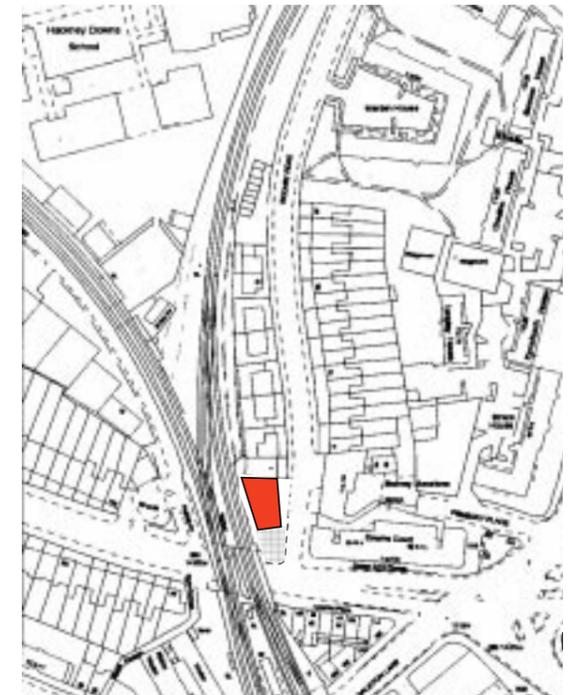


figure 58.3: location plan

- if it was a home, its condition would cause outrage - should be sited on such an important corner to such a fine street.

The proposal here shows how the site might be redeveloped as a new work building. A new public corner is made by the new building and a refurb'ed viaduct arch that is concealed by the existing decrepit building.



## STRATEGY

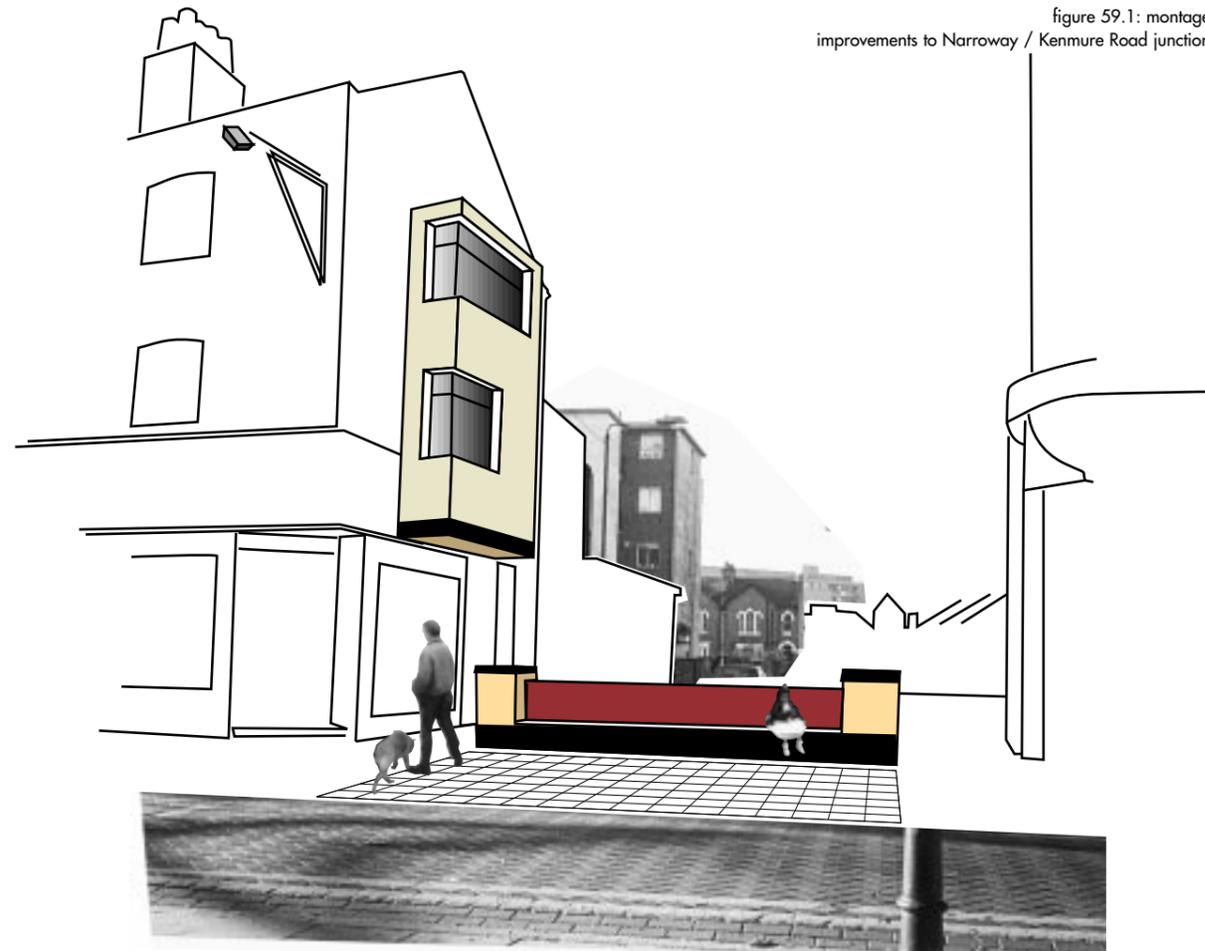


figure 59.1: montage improvements to Narrowway / Kenmure Road junction

The two projects shown here deal with Narrowway itself - the very centre of Hackney Central area. Narrowway looks after itself really - its importance does not need to be asserted because it's so well known. The projects in this report thus deal with areas which lie beyond this most focal of spaces but which contribute to the idea of the central area.

The first project here is simply an "art opportunity" involving updating an old wall sign. The flank wall shown adjacent (figure 59.2) might be painted by a Hackney artist. The southern end of Clarence Road frames a view of this wall. It is therefore an important surface and deserves thought.

The other project shown is for the junction between Narrowway and Kenmure Road - an opening which introduces light and the idea of a public place along Narrowway's busy confines.

This space has already received a lot of attention. The view of the existing space (figure 59.3) shows bollards, benches, a bin, bike stands and the large stand supporting the CCTV camera. It is noticeable that all these elements are distinct. Each is, as it were, introduced as an independent

element of street furniture. The proposal here asks whether or not a more integrated approach to these items could be made i.e whether a single unit containing bench, cycle stands and bins could be made. Such a unit could be more integrated with the ground increasing its affinity with building rather than furniture by using materials such as stone or concrete.

The bay window shown (figure 59.1) is a modification to an overlooking building to help "inhabit" the space (and improve a dwelling). It is suggested that the CCTV stand is replaced by a less intrusive way of suspending the CCTV camera over the street - a bracket fixed off a building facade as shown.



figure 59.2: montage - view from New Pembury Estate Narrowway flank wall as "art opportunity"



figure 59.3: existing condition Narrowway / Kenmure Road junction space

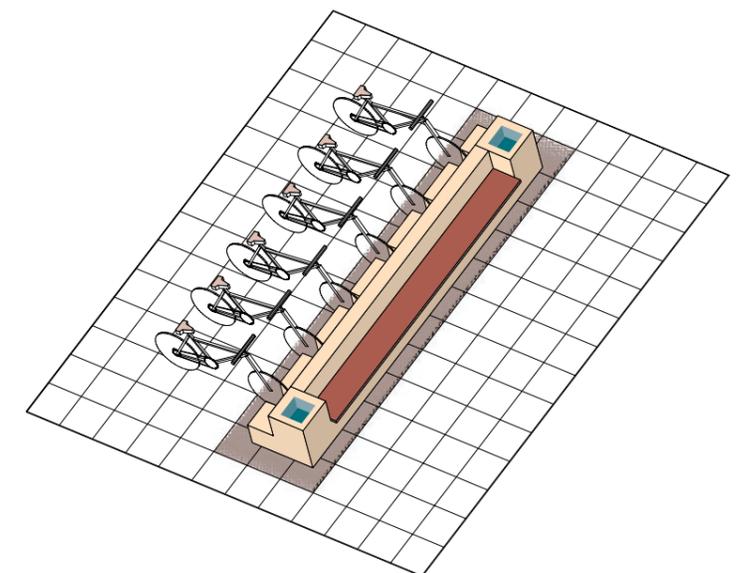


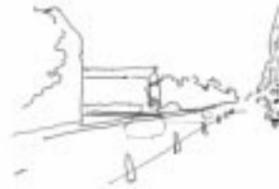
figure 59.4: new street furniture concept of integrated furniture



## for Groundwork Hackney June 1997

### Clarence Road

.....hard treatment to small grassed areas abutting Clarence St forming ends to Pembury Estate blocks - urban treatment to complement street vigour of Clarence St, accommodating market stalls, informal selling, play, parking etc



### Dalston Lane PEMBURY ESTATE

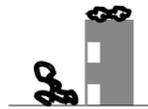
.....photo-voltaic canopy to housing training centre > free power experiment over summer/autumn



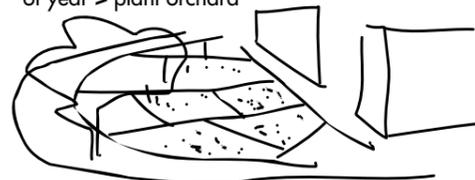
.....consider other money-saving, environmentally aware technologies whose capital costs are prohibitive



.....front gardens/roof gardens experiment on chosen double-maisonette houses > provide existing ground floor homes with larger front gardens taken out of redundant common areas > upper maisonnettes to get roof garden



.....use of Dalston Lane grassed areas for cultivation of green and root vegetables over summer and autumn > produce to be distributed by housing dept amongst needy estate tenants > old and young to be involved in cultivation for limited period eg rest of year > plant orchard



.....establish sidewalk as a causeway, elaborated and protected pathway between major junctions > heighten difference between estate and roadside



.....move DHSS offices to Pembury Circus in new build



### Amhurst Road

#### MARCON COURT

.....recommission existing run down community building > work experience > complement Dalston Youth Project > clarify identity of building as a public facility relating street to the estate



.....bring estate playground to Amhurst St side > play as public activity close to main street, though established clearly within its own space

.....rework fragmented front garden spaces into stronger whole > new, higher wall to street to create a sense of a walled garden > protecting entry to flats > accentuating community building > rebuild off-street entrance canopy to work as strong beacon in street



#### 21-41 AMHURST ROAD

.....rationalise planting at front of properties > clarify purpose of front space > consider uses which serve existing tenants specifically



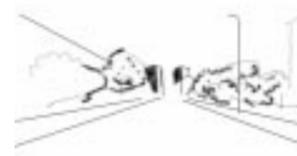
#### STATION APPROACHES

.....rationalise planting around station > get rid of all sycamore trees growing out of verges > enhance appearance of station from Amhurst St > embed approach to station in explicitly public garden



#### TOWER BLOCKS

.....consider tower blocks as major urban decoration > discuss lighting/decoration of tower blocks with artist



### Hackney Central Station

.....create new platform screens as welcome to Hackney Central in place of low quality planting provided by uncontrolled growth of sycamores

.....consider demolition of old Hackney Central station building > consider replacement by covered market > market based around access to station and access to Woolworths > potential to extend arch/market idea across the road to the viaduct next to Tesco > re-establish prominence of arches in viaduct



### Mare Street

.....widen pavement in front of Woolworths > reduce to single lane width > consider scope for far more emphatic pedestrian crossing directly under railway bridge > assess arbitrary appearance of tree-planting



.....summer entertainments in hard garden adjacent to St Augustines



#### project symbols

- experimental ?
- architectural
- artistic
- gardens

# 60. MEETING LIST



	<b>DATE</b>	<b>ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>
1	28/5/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney	T.Young / T.Chapple
2	5/6/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning	T.Young / T.Chapple / D.Morrissey
3	10/6/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning	T.Young / T.Chapple / D.Morrissey
4	10/6/97	TYA / Hackney Arts & Leisure	T.Young / L.Goode & C.Jenkinson
5	13/6/76	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning	T.Young / T.Chapple / D.Morrissey
6	20/6/76	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning & Highways	T.Young / T.Chapple & G.McNeill / D.Morrissey & Steve Walker
7	19/6/97	TYA / Hackney Safer Cities / Police	T.Young / J.Kimber / PC Cooper
8	24/6/97	TYA / Snug & Outdoor Dept	T.Young / C.Meade
9	25/6/97	TYA / Pembury Estate Safety Project	T.Young / L.Sullivan
10	2/7/97	TYA / Lambeth Safer Cities	T.Young / G.Wright
11	2/7/97	TYA / Pembury Estate OAP club	T.Young / club members
12	9/7/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney	T.Young / T.Chapple & G.McNeill
13	16/7/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning	T.Young / T.Chapple & G.McNeill / D.Morrissey
14	30/7/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney	T.Young / T.Chapple
15	5/8/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Heart of Hackney	T.Young / T.Chapple / J.Hodson
16	14/8/97	TYA / WAGN Rail	T.Young / P.Dunghinson & J.Conneelly
17	14/8/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / North London Railways (Silverlink)	T.Young / T.Chapple / D.Rowell & M.Conroy
18	14/8/97	TYA / Pembury Estate Safety Project / URBAN Initiative	T.Young / L.Sullivan & F.Brooks / B.Islam
19	15/8/97	TYA / London Workspace Group	T.Young / H.Platt
20	19/8/97	TYA / URBAN Initiative	T.Young / B.Islam
21	29/8/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Hackney Planning	T.Young / T.Chapple / D.Morrissey
22	3/9/97	TYA / Hackney Arts & Leisure	T.Young / L.Goode
23	18/9/97	TYA / Hackney Arts & Leisure	T.Young / C.Jenkinson
24	16/10/97	TYA / Groundwork Hackney / Pembury Safety Project / City Harvest	T.Young / T.Chapple / L.Sullivan/ T.Garnett