



U P M I N S T E R T O W N
proposals for renewing public places

Tom Young Architects

Autumn 2001

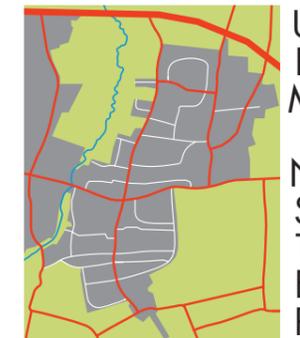


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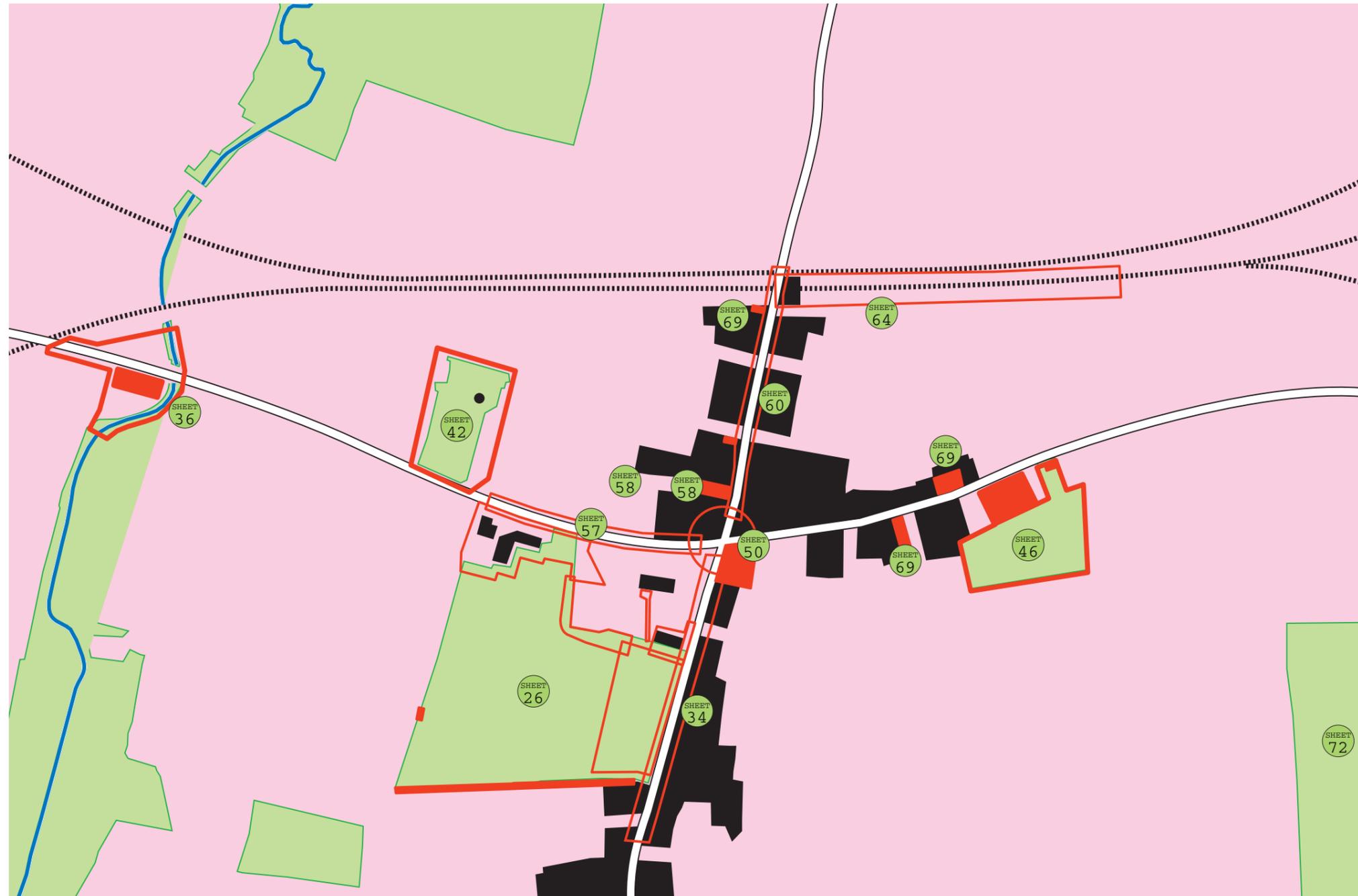
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UPMINSTER



-  project sheet reference
project proposals are shown on numbered sheets
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-  project area
-  park, garden, countryside
-  urban fabric forming the Town
-  proposed new buildings or special areas for new buildings

Figure 2.11 Upminster Town project areas

3 STUDY AREA



Area covered by the Greater London Authority



- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Barking and Dagenham | 12 Greenwich | 23 Lambeth |
| 2 Barnet | 13 Hackney | 24 Lewisham |
| 3 Bexley | 14 Hammersmith and Fulham | 25 Merton |
| 4 Brent | 15 Haringey | 26 Newham |
| 5 Bromley | 16 Harrow | 27 Redbridge |
| 6 Camden | 17 Havering | 28 Richmond upon Thames |
| 7 City of London | 18 Hillingdon | 29 Southwark |
| 8 City of Westminster | 19 Hounslow | 30 Sutton |
| 9 Croydon | 20 Islington | 31 Tower Hamlets |
| 10 Ealing | 21 Kensington and Chelsea | 32 Waltham Forest |
| 11 Enfield | 22 Kingston upon Thames | 33 Wandsworth |

Figure 3.1 Havering in context of London

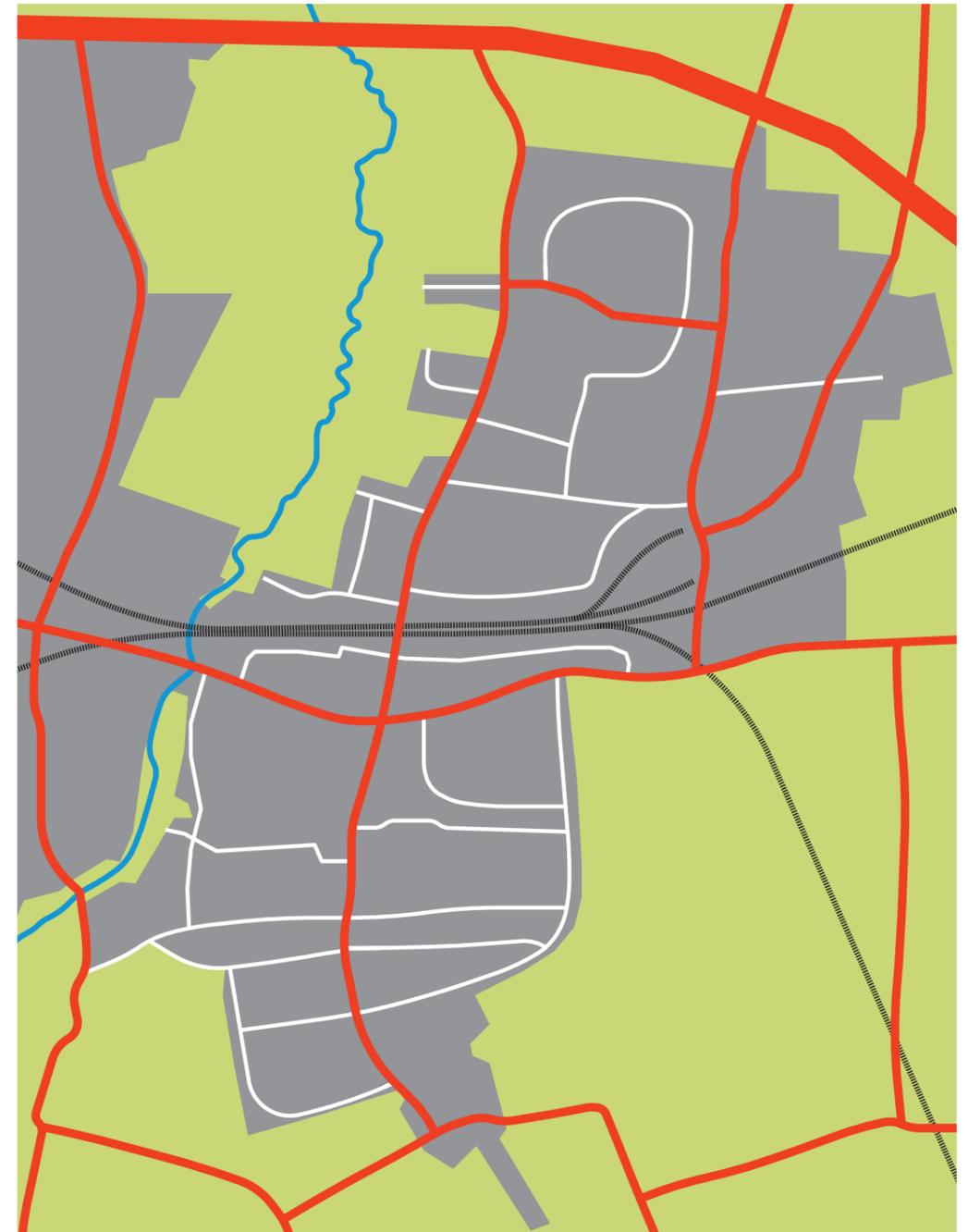
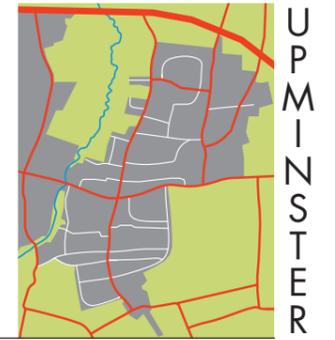


Figure 3.1 Upminster Town at edge of Havering and urban settlement

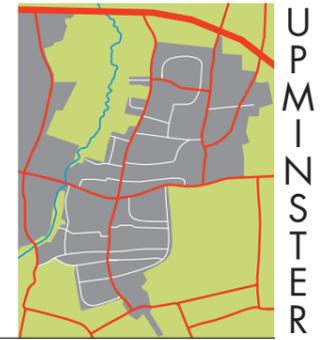
spaces
around Upminster

4 A-ROAD SPACE



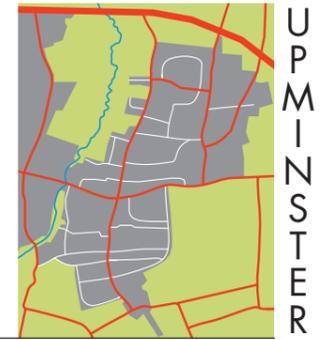
MOVERS LANE





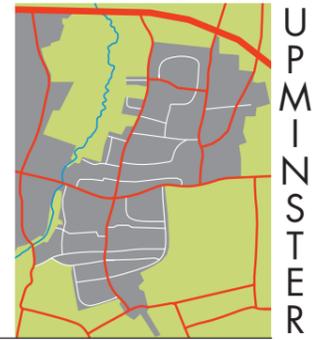
A13 CORRIDOR





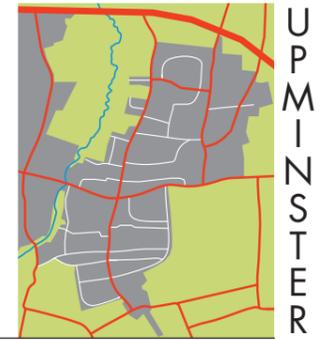
MARSH ROAD, RAINHAM





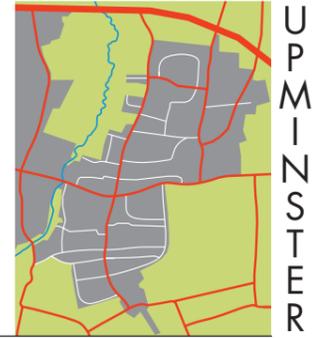
NORTH WOOLWICH





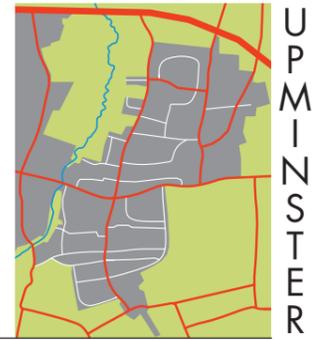
RAINHAM MARSHES





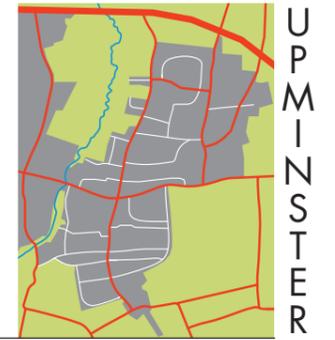
THE THAMES AT RAINHAM





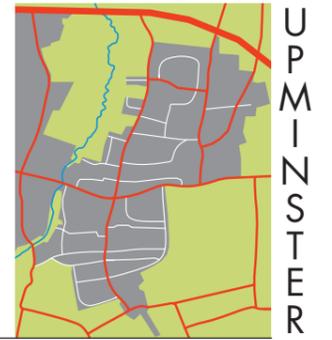
HACTON





CRANHAM GOLF-COURSE





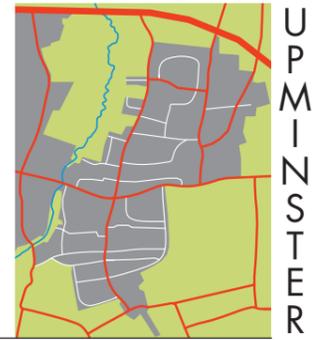
THAMES BARRIER PARK





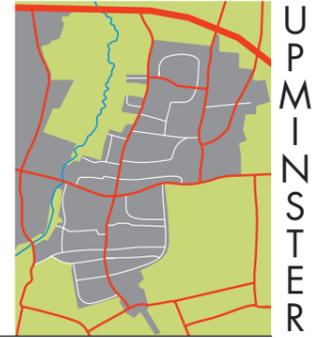
CITY AIRPORT & CANARY WHARF





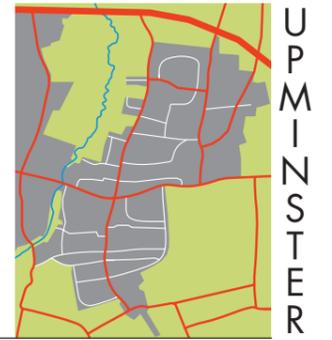
NORTH WOOLWICH





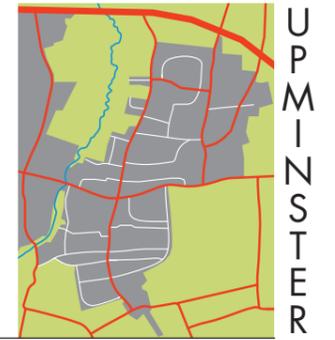
UPMINSTER BRIDGE





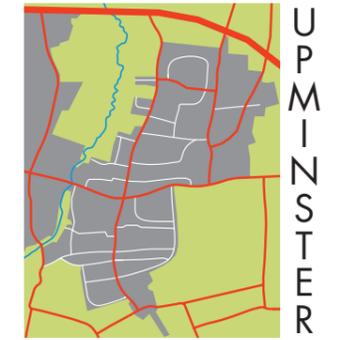
STRATFORD STATION





CORBETS TEY ROAD





UNCERTAIN FUTURE



figure 18.1 South Dagenham

What is the future of Upminster Town Centre? An objective of this report is to inform public conversation about what it may be.

One objective is to introduce ideas that hitherto may not have been considered. We do not propose, for instance, rehearsing arguments about parking because this issue displaces discussion of other issues and conceals unwillingness to attend to the conditions offered by the town centre. Parking also takes valuable space in the Town Centre, for example outside the Library or to the rear of it. Is seeking more parking opportunities actually sensible?

A key question for Upminster Town is whether its shops can look forward to a stable and steady future. The question of stability is a reminder how retail centres can be brought low by recessions or retail revolutions. Such changes could lead to the Town's retail economy going into a steep decline.

This depressing possibility is an outcome that haunts the retail community who already see signs of decay in the growth of A3 take-away uses. A3 uses are seen to unbalance the "retail offer", to diminish the wider public's capacity to identify with the town centre. "The shops" have traditionally been a source of pride and pleasure in countless centres across London.

Anyone driving amongst the little centres in and around Havering - North Woolwich, South Dagenham, Elm Park will have a sense

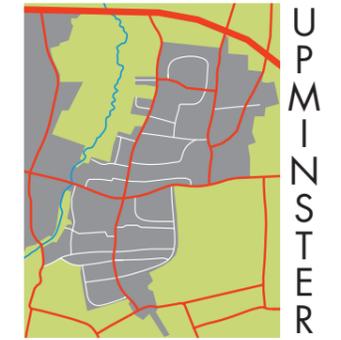
of the parlous lives of small centres, how once decent frontages become fly-blown, investment repelling failures. The hopeless quality of such frontages assailed by new retail parks close-by as in North Woolwich and Merri-lands is the nightmare that destroys faith and investment in the "traditional" fabric of streets and shops.

Making Town Centre space compelling is one aspect of strengthening Town Centres role in the life of any community.

Urban design can refashion a district centre such as Upminster in a way that can sharpen the public's understanding of the centre's strengths, and confirm that the town is a great deal more than a shopping facility.

The projects laid out in this report are aimed at strengthening Upminster Town's capacity to serve local people successfully as a town centre. They are aimed at enlivening the Town, at transferring the energy and success of suburban living into the Town.

Urban design is a way of thinking about the public places in the town and of recognizing how the town's different constituents are much more than various brands in a shopping mall but the essential components of a significant urban centre.



TOWN CENTRE SPACE



Figure 19.1 chatting on Corbets Tey Road

At the outset, it is appropriate to consider why policies which support town centres are worth pursuing.

In the Havering UDP Upminster is understood as important only insofar as it provides services. There are no references to other aspects of Town identity. What are the other aspects of Town Centre identity?

- 1 Town Centres provides an emphatic architectural statement of public space
- 2 Town Centres include many public interiors such as meeting rooms (halls), pubs, libraries, public offices, shops, churches & cultural spaces
- 3 A Town Centre is a place where people live and work so is neither just a "residential district" or "business district"
- 4 Cultural activities are complementary with the sense of place associated with Town Centres
- 5 Town Centres relate openly to the framework of transport and national interconnectivity particularly the road and rail systems
- 7 Town Centres are viewed widely as dynamic settings where change is expected
- 8 Town Centres are places where public history is acknowledged and monumentalised
- 9 Town Centres are expected to be interesting and are deemed inferior if they are not

The foregoing means that Town Centres provide a sort of heightening of public space, through architecture, monuments, public build-

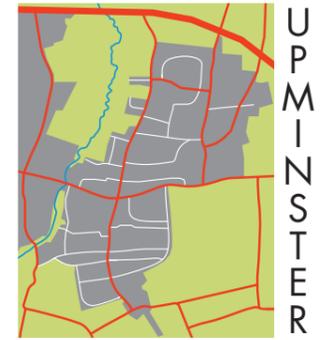
ings, cultural activity, change and novelty. Current UDP policy refers to town centre function but not space - a significant omission.

Upminster's explicit architectural statement of public space is clearly the special emphasis given to the streetspaces that intersect at Bell Corner. Upminster Town is a structure of two main street spaces. Their pre-eminent public qualities are the openness of the shops, and the fact that the building frontages form the edge of the public spaces - the buildings define the spaces directly. This direct space-defining function of town buildings makes for a very sharp contrast with the surrounding suburban fabric where buildings are withdrawn from the street behind garden walls and carports.

The location close by of such public institutions as churches and schools and very significantly the special landscapes of Upminster Park, Clockhouse Gardens and the old Windmill Site add to the status of the Town.

One role of the work undertaken in this report is to offer strategies for the heightening Town Centre space so its public character is developed and enlivened.

It seems equally worthwhile that planning policy should develop more explicit policy commitments that recognize town-centre space so as to avoid the architectural failures and missed opportunities represented by such buildings as Somerfields, the Times Tees Garage and Bell Corner itself.



PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE

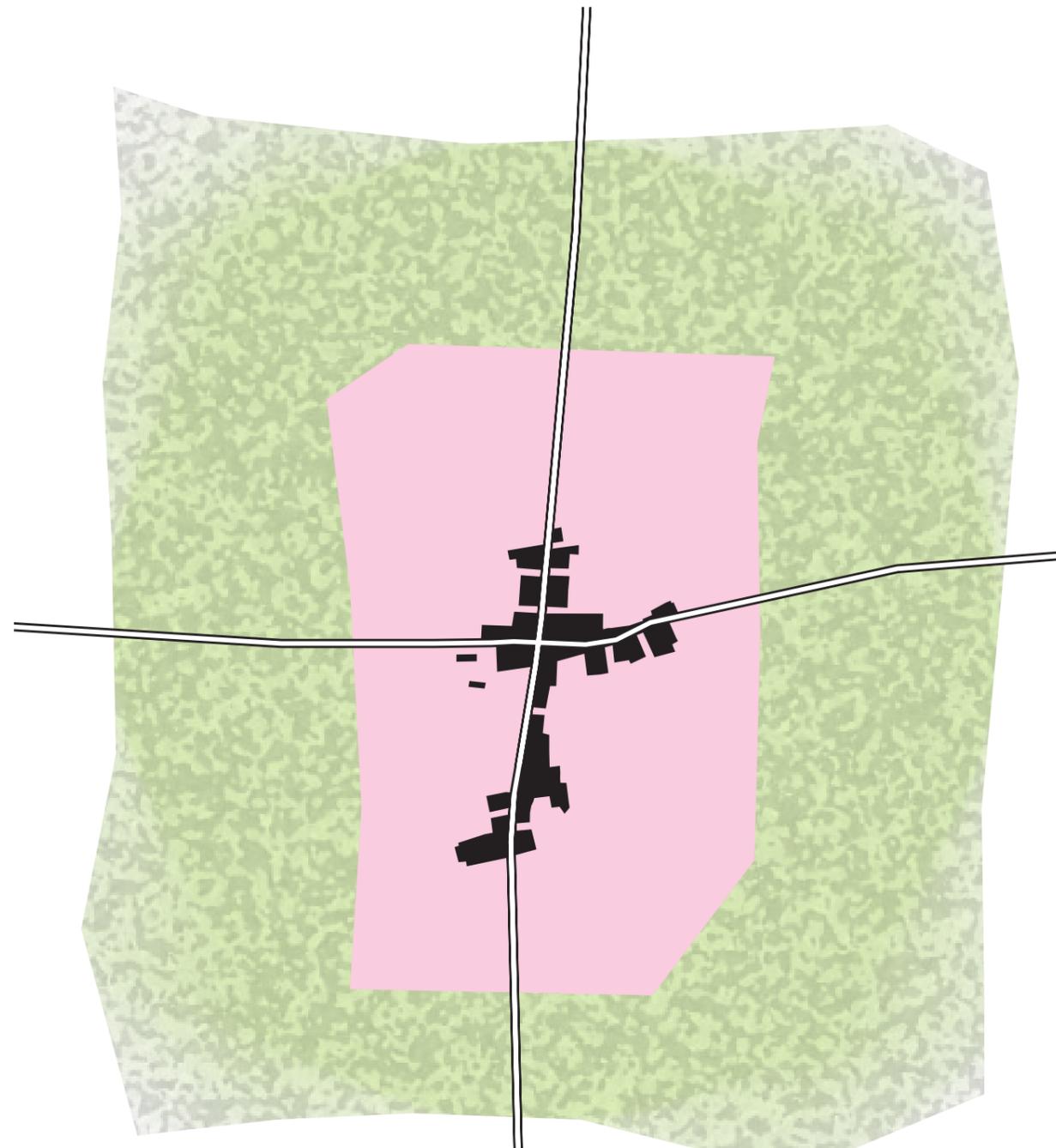


Figure 20.1 Concept diagram showing planning "zones" in a small "planned" town

Upminster is linked to landscape via planning policy. By strategic protection of open landscape around city fringe settlements planners have tried to protect the distinctness of towns like Upminster whose identities are threatened by "sprawl" and the abilities of developers to get hold of land. Upminster's identity is secured precisely in this way with the Ingrebourne Valley providing a gap between Upminster and the rest of Havering.

There is also a suburban preference for being close to the countryside. Rural themes are registered in many different ways in Upminster including the nostalgic iconography of detached houses, the old Windmill, the existence of a "country club" in the middle of the town and rural sounding house names.

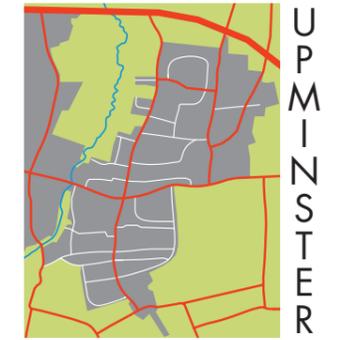
In "The English Terraced House", Stefan Muthesius notes how the detached or semi-detached house became "...the type of suburban dwelling of suburban settlements" mainly to distinguish the suburbs from cities which were identified with terracing at the end of the 19thC.

The actual relationship between the suburbs and land about is not resolved. The basic land-use plan is notably crude: the town centre is bounded by residential areas which are in turn bounded by open countryside. Little can be discerned on the ground to suggest careful qualification of this far from sophisticated land-use arrangement, whose chief characteristic is actually constraint and rigidity.

The town centre - constituted of large, three or four storey, mixed use blocks - is constrained by the residential building stock of two-storey detached houses around it, whilst the residential districts, as already mentioned, are held in check by the inviolability of the green belt. The overall sense of space in Upminster lacks a feeling of opportunity. As one Havering planner has said, the town centre is "all built out". Opportunities for significant residential development are largely reduced to so-called "windfall sites". Whether or not a town can exist without a sense of opportunity is debatable.

Upminster is marked by rigidity resulting from assiduous adherence to the organization of town centre, residential and green belt territories. The one space where these three territories combine are main roads where houses, businesses, shops and countryside are adjoined. Main road space is in fact a combined zone unexplored in any positive way by planning policy - a missed opportunity.

Upminster's identity derives in large part from policy, based on strict boundaries, that delivers security but not a subtle treatment of the conjunction of countryside, town and suburb. Within the town centre, parks, gardens and church-yards offer an opportunity to re-think the town's love affair with rural themes and green and open spaces. This report focuses on the edges of these spaces as settings for new projects.



URBAN AND RURAL



Figure 21.1 Allotments at Upminster Bridge

Someone living in Upminster and working at Ford might well drive to work past cemeteries at the town edges, suburbs, areas of new docklands housing, farmland, industrial strip development and have glimpses of The Thames and marshland along the way.

Local people cannot believe their town is set in unvariegated countryside though some enjoy the conceit that it's really an old Essex country town - in a kind of defiance of changes instigated to improve local authority effectiveness. Nonetheless Upminster's urbanized condition cannot be ignored.

Oscar Lewis defines the urbanized condition "as the availability of a wide range of services and alternatives in terms of types of work, housing, food, clothing, educational facilities, medical facilities, modes of travel, voluntary organizations, types of people..."

Whilst this definition does apply to Upminster and its people, groups like Essex ReMaDe and The Sustainable London Trust are rethinking the role of towns and countryside. SLT's 1997 report notes: "Links between consumers and growers in the surrounding rural belt should be encouraged to provide fresh, safe food for city dwellers." This points to the oddness of an agricultural economy like that around Upminster that contributes nothing to the town and the significance of looking, as it were, for solutions.

Essex ReMaDe focus on practical ways to work with urban waste: "The key environ-

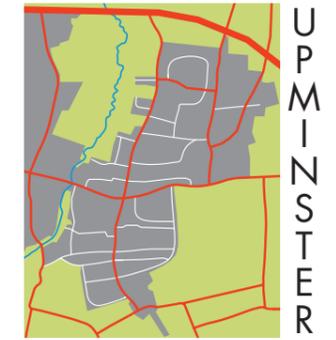
mental challenge facing Essex is to move from a landfill dominant waste management regime towards more intensive recycling. The main target is the creation of nearly 200,000 tonnes of additional markets for recycled materials by the year 2004..."

Fölke Gunter of Stockholm University argues "The current trend towards increasing agricultural specialisation combined with urbanisation should be replaced by a closer integration of farms and settlements. A name for such a strategy is ruralisation, as opposed to urbanisation."

Some, like the planning consultancy Chapter 7 based in Somerset, argue for "Low-impact" development to realize a vision of rural inhabitation as a "way out" of the current urban system. Their faith in rural life's continuity outside the "system" is challenging not least because it views planning policy as an obstacle to experience of the "simple life".

These new directions are practical but also aspirational with an energetic focus on achieving "real" countryside by renewing the basis of inhabitation. They demonstrate a widespread effort to rethink settlements via issues of sustainability and natural renewal.

The challenge is for towns like Upminster to find practical ways of responding to the energy invested in the spaces around them. Turning aside will be to ignore a major cultural change.



NEW CONNECTIONS



figure 22.1 House backs in the south-west corner of Upminster Park

Much of what is proposed in this report is about making connections. The proximity of places to each other can become a realized value through new and explicit relationships.

A central problem for the town centre is how buildings relate to the main open spaces such as the paddock where the old Windmill is located, Upminster Park or Clocktower Gardens. This relationship parallels directly and symbolically the wider issue of how the town and country are related. Better connections in both instances could create better spaces.

One way to explain the issue of connections is to see how buildings front onto the main town centre open spaces. Buildings overlook parkland but are not connected to it. In the case of Upminster Park this misses the opportunity for the Park to become a genuine “village green”, common ground strongly asserted by relationships with town buildings. The fact that some of Upminster Parks surrounding buildings are detached suburban houses whose status as “town buildings” is highly equivocal goes to the root of the issue.

But the main fact is not a single building fronts directly onto any of Upminster’s open spaces.

The standard arrangement in Upminster and the wider suburbs seems to be to provide a visual relationship to open space but to draw back from containing open ground with buildings, which is exactly how town centre space is defined and what makes it spatially distinctive along Corbets Tey Road,

Station Road and St Mary’s Lane. Definition, outside the Town, is always done with fencing, hedges or larger screens of shrubs and trees.

In real terms, this leads to an endless repetition of the spatial relationship shown in the adjacent photograph. Buildings peep over a barrier onto common ground, on the one hand, implying pleasure in the open vista, on the other, timidity about public space. The result is awkwardness or the habit of garden fencing writ large.

More self-evidently negative uses of planting to form screens between buildings and public spaces are found around the New Windmill Hall and the Upminster Community Health Building where Leylandia are used to separate and hide public buildings from public space. In these examples, the planting makes public space gloomy but not in a terribly interesting way. The screen of planting in front of the paddock in which the old windmill is situated is another town centre example where visibility of a key monument from the street is lost for the sake of a screen of greenery.

This report puts forward several proposals for breaking through the awkwardness about making connections and relationships between key town centre open spaces and buildings and spaces around them. Making these connections offers the chance to make much more of town centre space.

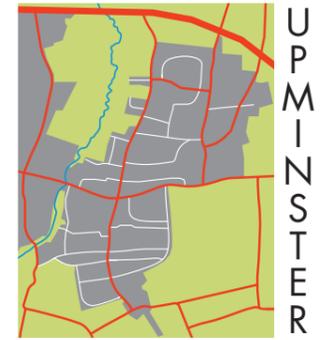


figure 23 . 1 Covered way leading to Tesco's supermarket from Rainham high street

SHAPE AND DEPTH

Amongst Upminster's significant strengths is its spatial clarity or simplicity. By itself, this quality is a pleasant contrast to the streets of other centres, most notably Romford where years of "fiddling" are evident in the town centre road system .

Upminster's organization remains broadly unaffected by the tensions introduced by the ever evolving tactics of traffic management although the road-widening at the Bell Corner crossroads has not been successful so far as town space is concerned. There are however no one-way systems, turning constraints or guard rails in the middle of streets to prevent pedestrians crossing anywhere but dedicated crossings.

Hornchurch and Romford are afflicted by various oddities of traffic management because their respective triangular and ovoid geometry lend themselves to highway engineers opportunistic interventions to seek more capacity from existing road networks in particular through one-way "systems". Upminster's simple cruciform resists such appropriation.

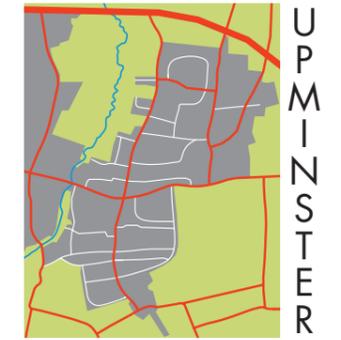
But what Upminster lacks is a strong feeling of centrality. Its urban space is an affair of shopping parades stretched out along streets which lead out of the town rather than symbolising circulation within it although the town's park spaces have obvious potential in this regard. Developing centrality is a significant part of improved urban design in Upminster.

Lending "depth" to Upminster's urban experience is one approach to developing a stronger sense of a centre. This might be construed as adding to the story which the town has to tell by deliberately creating sequences of spatial variety and incident and even drama.

It is impossible to make a new overarching urban organization for Upminster - a highly dubious objective in any case - but possible to develop the town centre "walkabout" in relation to a compelling inter-relation of town centre spaces. Too much of Upminster's current disposition of town centre elements seems only historical and not part of a modern awareness of meaning and qualities of different places that form the town centre.

Implementing change would be to emphasise pedestrian use of the town centre which is already strongly sign-posted by the wide north-south pavements and facilitated by the overall simplicity and ease-of-use mentioned before.

Deepening Upminster's narrative also suggests that "back" areas become integral to the town centre. Quiet spaces are needed, so are ones which deliberately provoke curiosity. The feeling of a hinterland approached through the main frontage becomes the device for creating depth.



TOWN STREETS AND MARKERS



Figure 24.1 Town Edge Marker: Cranham Church

Cranham, described by people as Upminster’s “sister town”, is linked to Upminster by cross-streets running between Hall Lane and Front Lane. The knitting together engenders a sense of complementary centres with a community poised between.

The organization and balance of Upminster and Cranham begs the question how a similar balance might be achieved south of St Mary’s Lane where the urban structure is not as satisfying. The question is how the south-eastern quadrant of the Upminster settlement can be better managed.

Some major gesture might be appropriate around Cranham church. The area is not without activity already with the small workshop complex next to the church, the work on the Nature Reserve and the Corbets Tey cemetery itself. There is also the significant complex of the Coopers School on St Mary’s Lane, the presence of Cranham Golf Course and a good network of footpaths.

A university campus has been mooted by Upminster residents in this area. Such a development would be appropriate in many ways, not least as a consolidation of Upminster’s identification with education.

Town limits and entry points are worth considering as significant urban design issues. In Upminster’s case there is an obvious distinction to be drawn between entries to the larger settlement and the town centre. Both are interesting. At the same time, it is important not

to see the marking of entry points or town limits as a matter of bolting-on signs. It’s much more usefully thought of as a way of working with existing places with particular qualities. With this precaution in mind, one may see that Upminster is fairly well “marked” already.

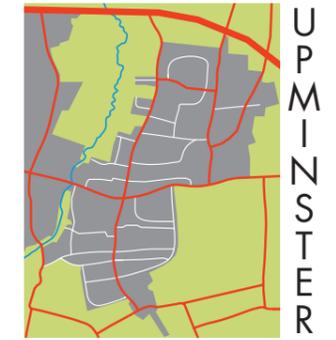
Corbets Tey is the southern edge to the overall Upminster settlement, a distinctive village structured around an east-west axis rather than the major north-south axis of Upminster Town Centre. The cemetery there is a strong town-edge marker.

To the north, where Hall Lane emerges into countryside around the old Strawberry Farm there’s a clear, if unelaborated town-edge.

Upminster’s west side is marked by the hill leading up from Upminster Bridge. This along with the river, Upminster Bridge tube station and Gaynes Parkway is a lot to work with.

The boundaries at the station and the southern end of Corbets Tey Road are already pretty clear with station itself being an explicit town-entry point and sign-post already, quite as effective as the Town’s wide pavements.

There is of course scope for intensification which means removing ambiguities and even occasionally an obscuring haze of greenery. It may also mean significant new development in appropriate places.



INHABITED INVESTMENTS



Upminster is dominated by the places where people live - the multitude of streets lined with detached houses forming the residential hinterland around the town centre. These houses are the main architectural characters of the area: they "inhabit" Upminster as much as their owners. Their expressive energy - by turns nostalgic, lurid, retiring, ostentatious, reassuring, brash and old-worldly - is much more lively than the dead, town-front facades of Upminster's main commercial street-space.

The town centre lacks a sense of inhabitation to match the exuberance and sheer dominance of the suburban background. It does not compete as a domestic location.

Most of the blocks which form the main frontage are mixed-use with flats over shops but the presence of these homes is hardly acknowledged architecturally. Byron House alone, with its balconies and amusing curved deco windows goes some way to celebrating town centre dwelling.

A significant way to alter the sense of Upminster Town centre is through good new, domestic architecture that energetically offers another vision of dwelling to the semi-detached building stock that forms such a tight-fitting belt around the town.

Opportunities for new development in the central area are not great in number. However, its potential impact in a centre of Upminster's scale could be very significant and lessen the sad feeling of the main frontage buildings.

This report explores other possibilities for creating town centre dwellings identifying "sites" that are not recognized in current planning policy. These sites are identified as opportunities to create marker structures that enliven and define town centre space. Suburban houses too are clear, often vivid markers.

Adding the element of habitation to a new urban marker is a way to pay for it. Habitation also makes the marker more effective, adding very substantially to its presence and strength as an urban figure.

With Upminster's signal lack of deprivation, funding urban design improvements will be tremendously difficult. Making new homes integral with urban design is at least one way to start to tackle this problem. In certain cases, it will pay for everything, in others it will constitute private investment making private match-funding easier to obtain.

All of the above is reliant on being unambiguous about the "idea of the town". All the projects in this report start with the conviction that Upminster is a town, not a shopping facility with residential districts nearby. This clarity makes more possible and provides a compelling pretext for new ways of living close to and within the town centre.

projects
for Upminster



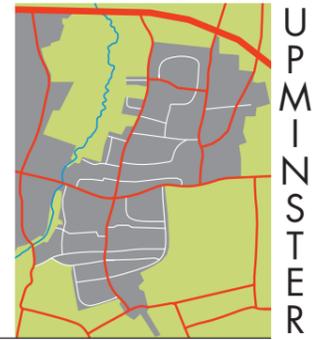


Figure 26.1 Summertime: Upminster Park looking west from Corbets Tey Road

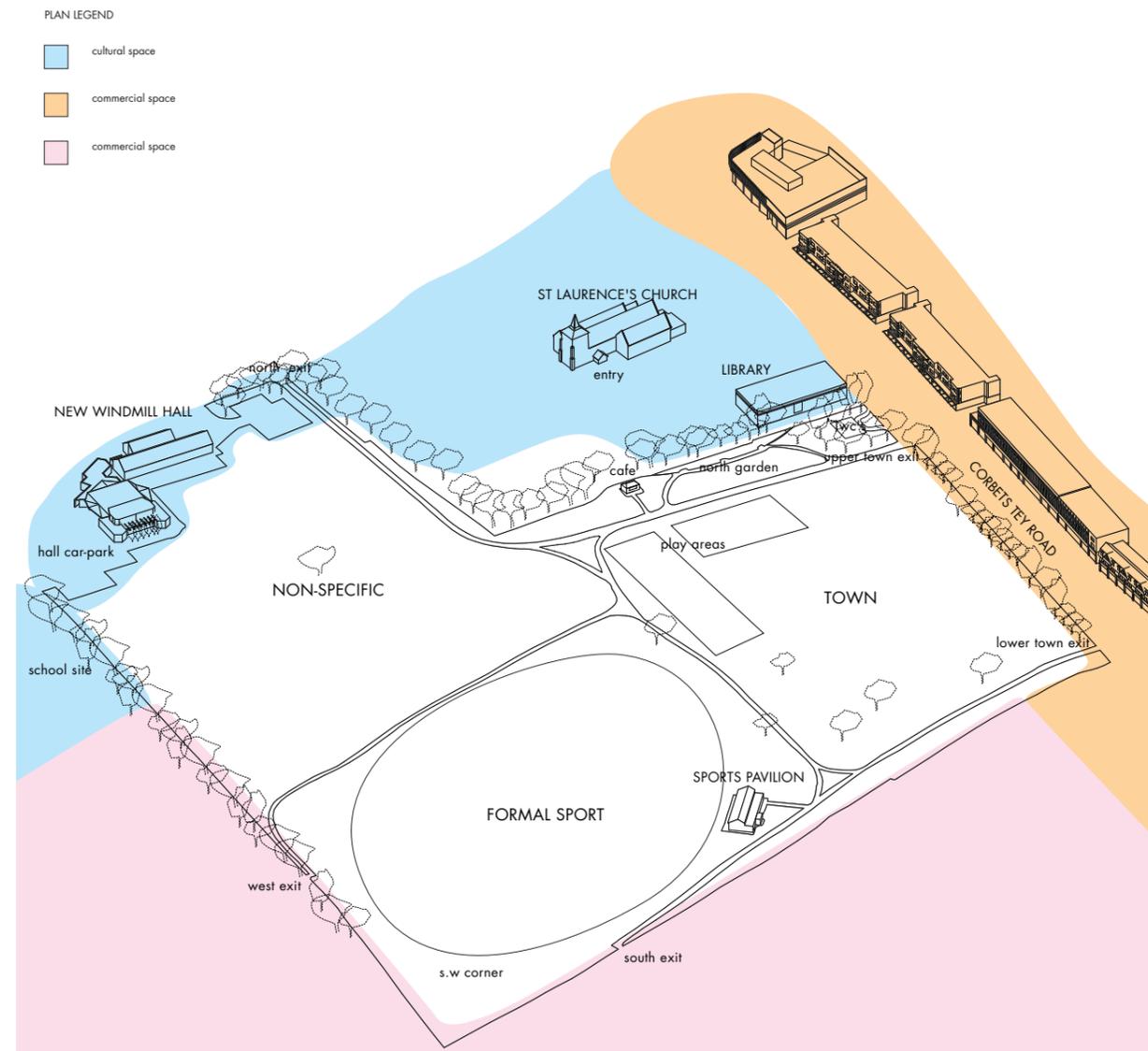
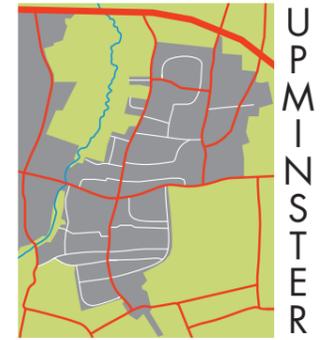


Figure 27.1 Park territories

ANALYSIS

Upminster Park engages many people in the life of the town via a simple, unaffected openness that makes no obstacles to use.

Whilst it is an uncomplicated open space - open parkland with very ordinary play facilities and footpaths - its situation within the town is complex. All its edges are different. A basic organization of territories can be discerned within the Park that is partly linked to the surroundings.

The two most obvious of these territories are the town field and the sports field (see Fig 26.1). The first is alongside Corbets Tey Road. The second is in the far corner up against the back-fences of the houses on Stewart Drive and Avondale Rise.

The area immediately south of the Windmill Hall is harder to define perhaps because the intended relation between the back of the Hall and the Park has been blocked by defensive planting.



Figure 27.2 The Park is the natural place to go when it's sunny

The Town space is arranged off the footpath that runs into Corbets Tey Road next to the public wc's. The footpath works around the Church block to an opening alongside the Windmill Hall where it connects with St Mary's Lane. It's an important link.

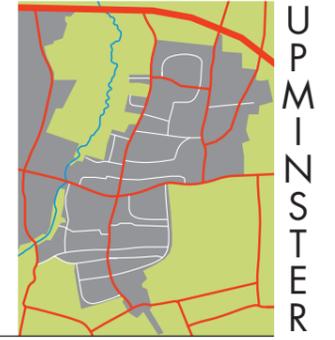
The sports space is obviously adrift from the town and set aside for formal sporting occasions. The west Park exit offers a serviceable link to Hornchurch Stadium.

The sports pavilion unfortunately turns its back on the town. The far corner too of the sports field is a left-over and undecided space. One can see how the sports area only goes some way to dealing with the unsatisfactory way that the Park finishes in the dull angle of garden fences (see fig 22.1).

The potential of the Park lies in heightening the sense of public space without in any way removing its open, friendly qualities, which make it so user-friendly.



Figure 27.3 Upminster Extreme Sports Day: August 2001



PLAN OF EXISTING



figure 28.1 showing

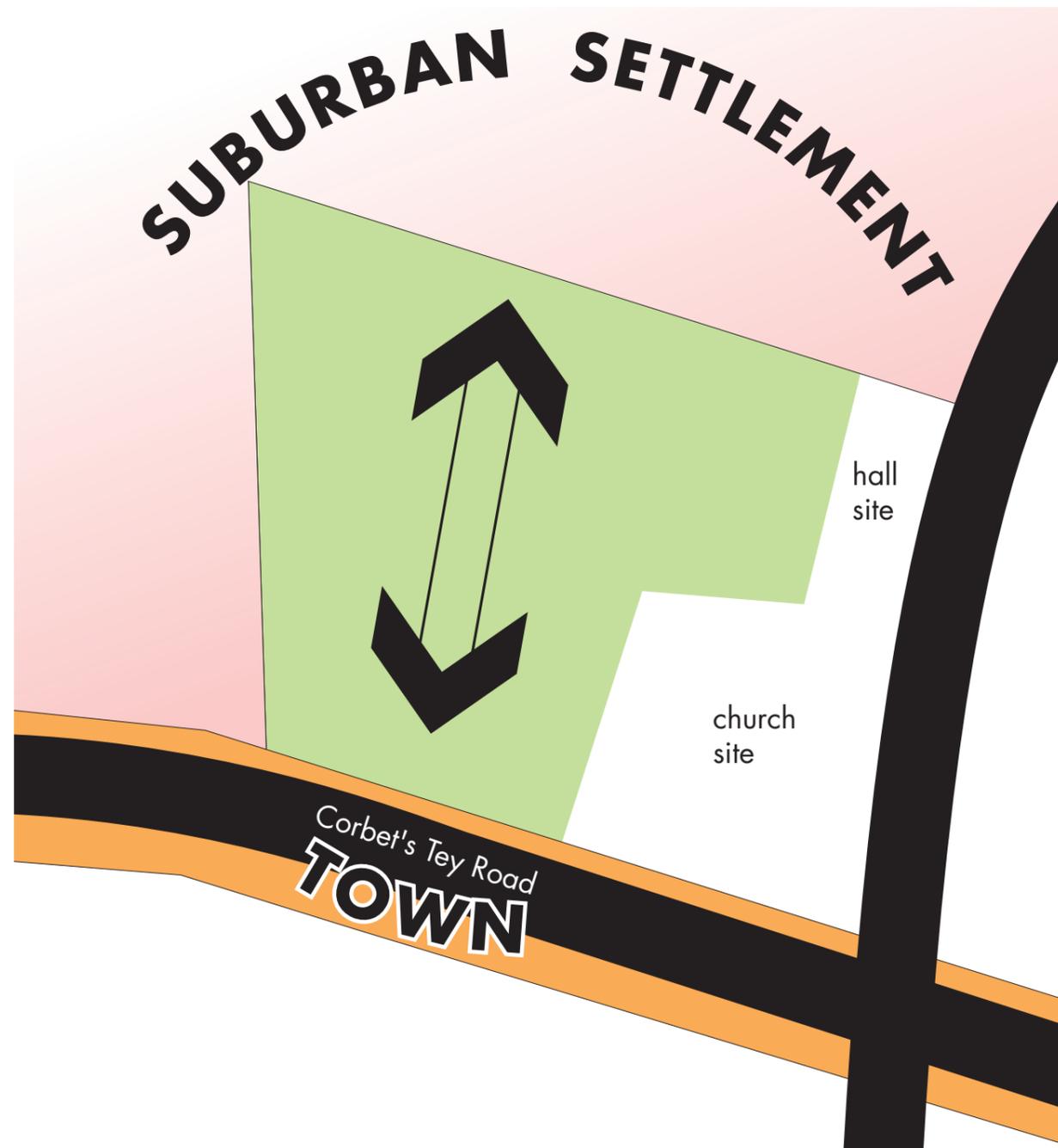
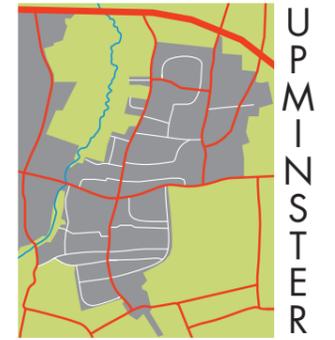


Figure 29.1 Concept diagram showing Park's relationship to residential areas

ANALYSIS

Whilst sometimes beautiful - by virtue of summer light or fullness of tree foliage - Upminster Park's general treatment is mediocre, suggesting a generic municipal parkland. Everything is ordinary, whether it's the café, the layout and treatment of footpaths, the play areas or the Park access points. This indifference to higher achievements is in stark contrast with the approach exemplified by the Thames Barrier Park, opened in 2001. Upminster Park's design may reflect conformity with a park stereotype whose chief value is predictability rather than anything more positive.

Upminster Park's surrounding cultural, commercial and residential uses compensate for the all-round ordinariness of its design. In other words, the Park's positive position with respect to things around it disguises a design failure that's quite as dismal as that of, for example, Castle Green in Dagenham.



Figure 29.2 Castle Green: generic municipal open space



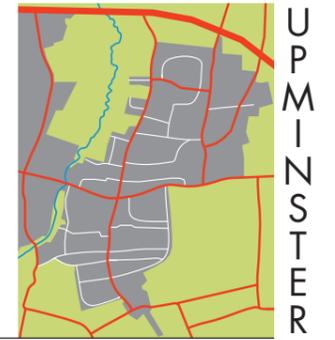
Figure 29.4 Park with town as backdrop

Upminster Park protrudes into the suburban hinterland (see fig 29.1) and links "The Town" to peoples' houses. The fact that the New Windmill Hall and St Laurence's Church sites also overlook it provides a unique opportunity to create a space where key Upminster identities are brought into unison - suburb, church, shopping street and arts venue. The potential of this mix can only be realized with a strategic approach to the Park's improvement.

Improvement needs to focus on elements most depleted by a lack of imaginative design: footpaths, perimeter treatment, lighting, play-spaces and the café. A new approach to these informed by a feeling for the Park as a town centre space where the area's identities are brought into some kind of resolution could transform the Park and add to the status and identity of the Town Centre.



Figure 29.3 Thames Barrier Park: ambitious park design



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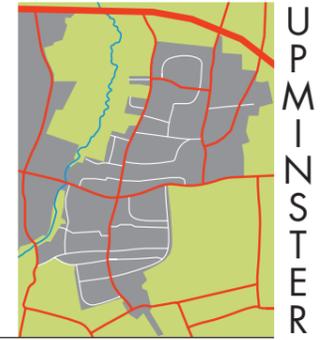
PLAN OF PROPOSED



PLAN LEGEND

-  new building
-  new special landscape areas/ formal gardens
-  new paths & paved areas
-  new vehicular grade paving (colour varies)
-  new public art
-  new space-forming wall or screen
-  new tree planting
-  new street surfacing (colour varies)
-  new water feature
-  new playground
-  new bridge structures
-  special new build areas
-  allotments (earth colours)

Figure 30.1



PROPOSALS FROM SOUTH-EAST

PLAN LEGEND

- close-cropped grass
- parkland grass
- wild meadow
- allotment

NEW BUILDINGS

- 1 café/function room
- 2 council offices & flats
- 3 domestic extensions facing park
- 4 new sports pavilion with flat above
- 5 Windmill Hall extn: arts rooms & flats
- 6 archway building with flat over



figure 31.1

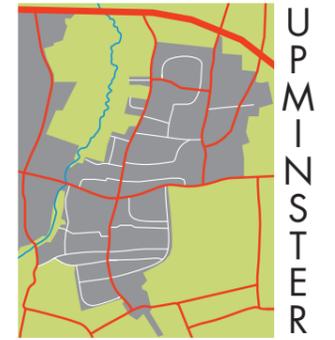


Figure 32.1 View of proposals to area adjacent to Corbets Tey Road development of library to form a new civic edge to Park related to new formal gardens and a new link to St Laurence's

- NEW BUILDINGS
- 1 café/function room
 - 2 council offices & flats
 - 3 domestic extensions facing park
 - 4 new sports pavilion with flat above
 - 5 Windmill Hall extn: arts rooms & flats
 - 6 archway building with flat over

STRATEGY

The projects opposite maximize opportunities. A new library extension houses a council "one-stop shop" and also a café, gallery, flats, wcs and library space.

New youth facilities are proposed including an internet café, seminar and rehearsal rooms in a new-build at the front of the New Windmill Hall, giving the complex "roadside presence". New flats-for-sale to offset costs are included.

The library extension is "bedded" in new landscaping arranged around a new path to St Laurence's Church. The church car-park becomes a linking space between the new café and church halls. The Windmill Hall is related to a new picturesque garden forming an approach from the south.

Civic intentions emerge from (a) a stronger relationship between open space and specific buildings effected through new gardens and



Figure 32.4 Clissold House house in the park

(b) more purposive treatment of the footpaths that symbolise movement around the Park. Paired footpaths are proposed as the main way-in from Corbets Tey Road. They link the street to the sports field. A formal garden is put between them - a counterpoint to the sports field, a place to view sports events from and a formal town approach.

The west path entry is marked by the new sports pavilion which addresses both the sports field and the town. It includes a first floor flat to add an active domiciliary theme. Another small, inhabited building is suggested for the north path entry point.

The Park's south-west corner - a left-over space - is treated as an orchard. New allotments trim the Park's southern edge. A new footpath runs past forming a definite edge to the sports field and completing the Park's pedestrian circuit.

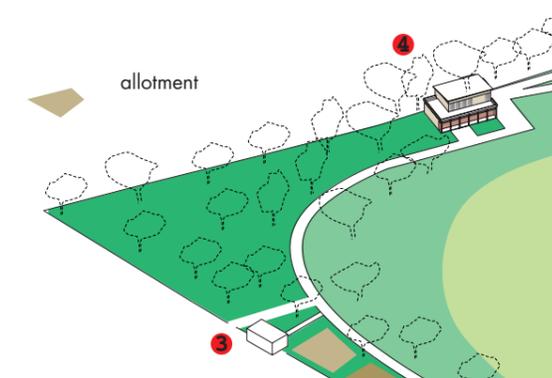


Figure 32.2 SW corner of Park showing new sports pavilion facing the town and marking out the way to Hornchurch stadium. Note new orchard in Park corner.



Figure 32.3 North edge of Park showing extension to Hall complex to provide new arts training and learning facilities or offices, with flats above

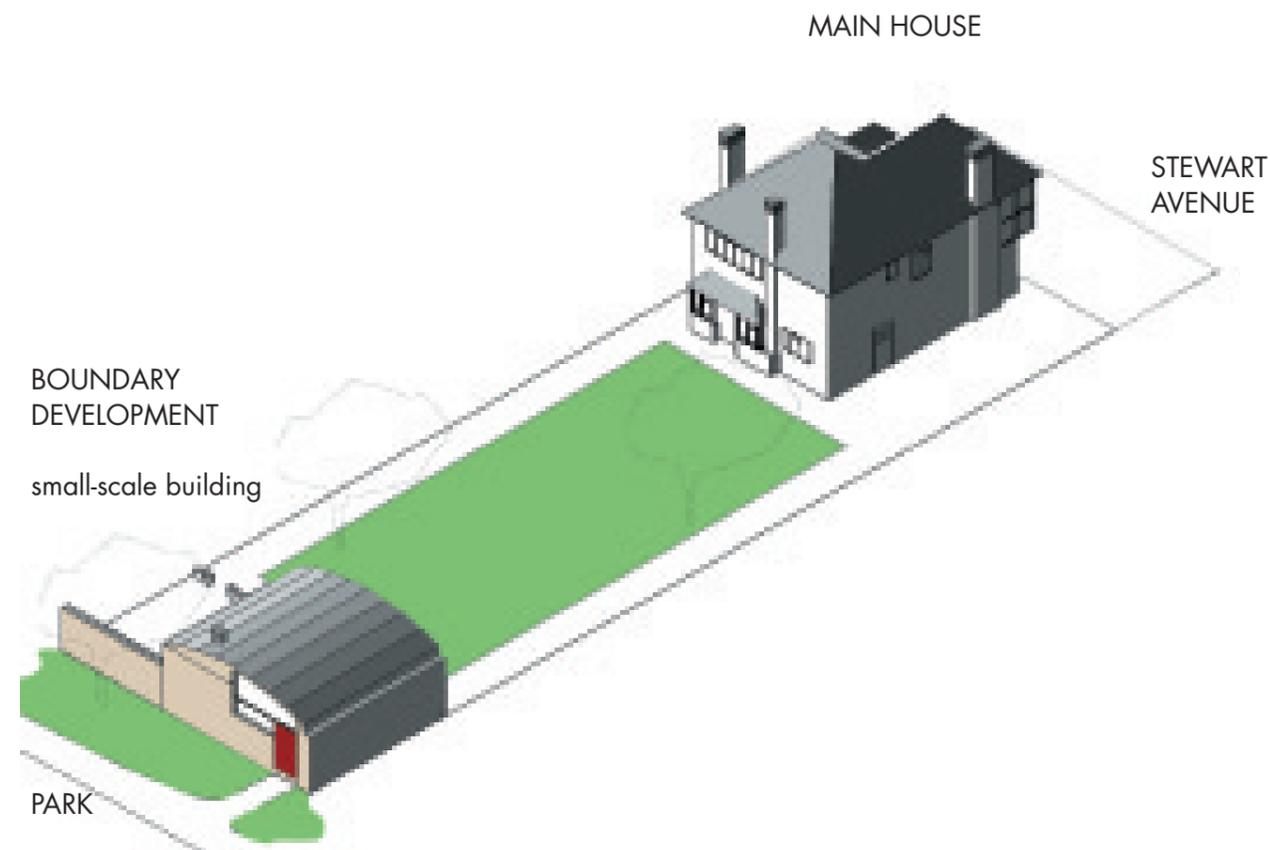


figure 33.1 Concept sketch showing boundary development

STRATEGY

The improvements outlined here turn in large part on new strategies for the Park's edges. The Park's great good fortune is to have such varied edges which are consistent with its status as the chief open space in the Town.

The Park edges formed by the back gardens of houses on Stewart Drive and Brookdale Close do not seem to have the same complementary potential. The conjunction of back gardens and park is a less-than-perfect arrangement perhaps that puts domestic space in a vulnerable position. This awareness means there is no willingness to think openly about the house-park relationship.

Rethinking the Park as a "village green" whose edges relate positively to common ground challenges the defensiveness of the park-house relationship. The potential to alter the latter may lie in the process of domestic enlargement covered in the Havering UDP appendix 1. Many millions are obviously spent on house extensions every year: it's a

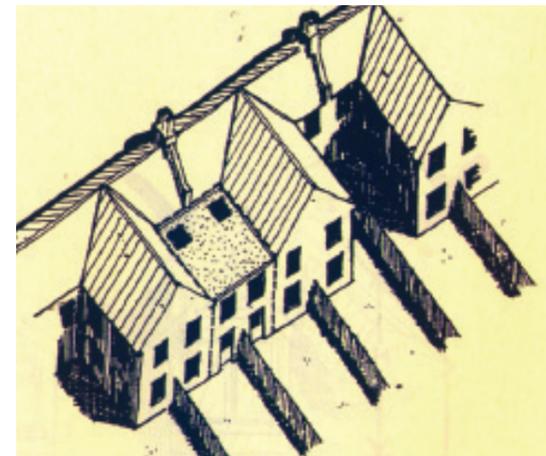


figure 33.2 Extract from Havering UDP

major area of building development albeit one done in very small increments.

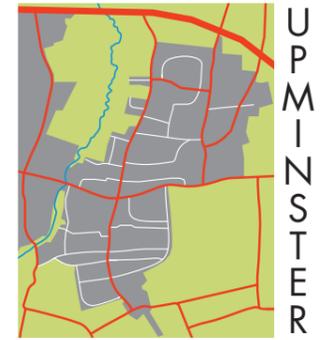
A notable omission from Havering UDP guidance is any reference to development on the boundary of detached-house plots. Such development - small buildings separated from the main house, integrated with the boundary of the plot - could benefit Upminster Park and give local householders with big gardens a chance to provide extra on-site family accommodation.

Boundary edge development could be a way for the Upminster Park's south edge in particular to be inhabited, to become a living edge.

A planning framework for such development is necessary. Carefully thought through boundary development could contribute to the definition of town edges (as well as Havering's parks) that is where back gardens abut open farmland.



figure 33.3 A village green in East Sussex (Rushlake Green, nr Heathfield)



ANALYSIS



Figure 34.1 View south along Corbets Tey Road

A major park edge is Corbets Tey Road. It is the strongest link between the Park and Town. Tree-planting along the pavement next to the Park creates a soft edge to the Park and preserves some of the linearity of the street. This planting is inoffensive but does slightly confuse the issue of the Park's relationship to the street by not offering a specific interpretation of the Park's openness to the Town.



streets it is questionable whether its presence is made the most of given what a tremendous spatial resource it is.

TREE-PLANTING
The tree-planting next to library suggests that trees can be used (albeit in this instance haphazardly) to create what

Effectively, there is no "grand entry" into the Park, which is perfectly appropriate given the general distaste that there would be for attempts to aggrandize the Park or its usage. Whilst the Park works very well as an easy-to-get-to space off one of the Town's main

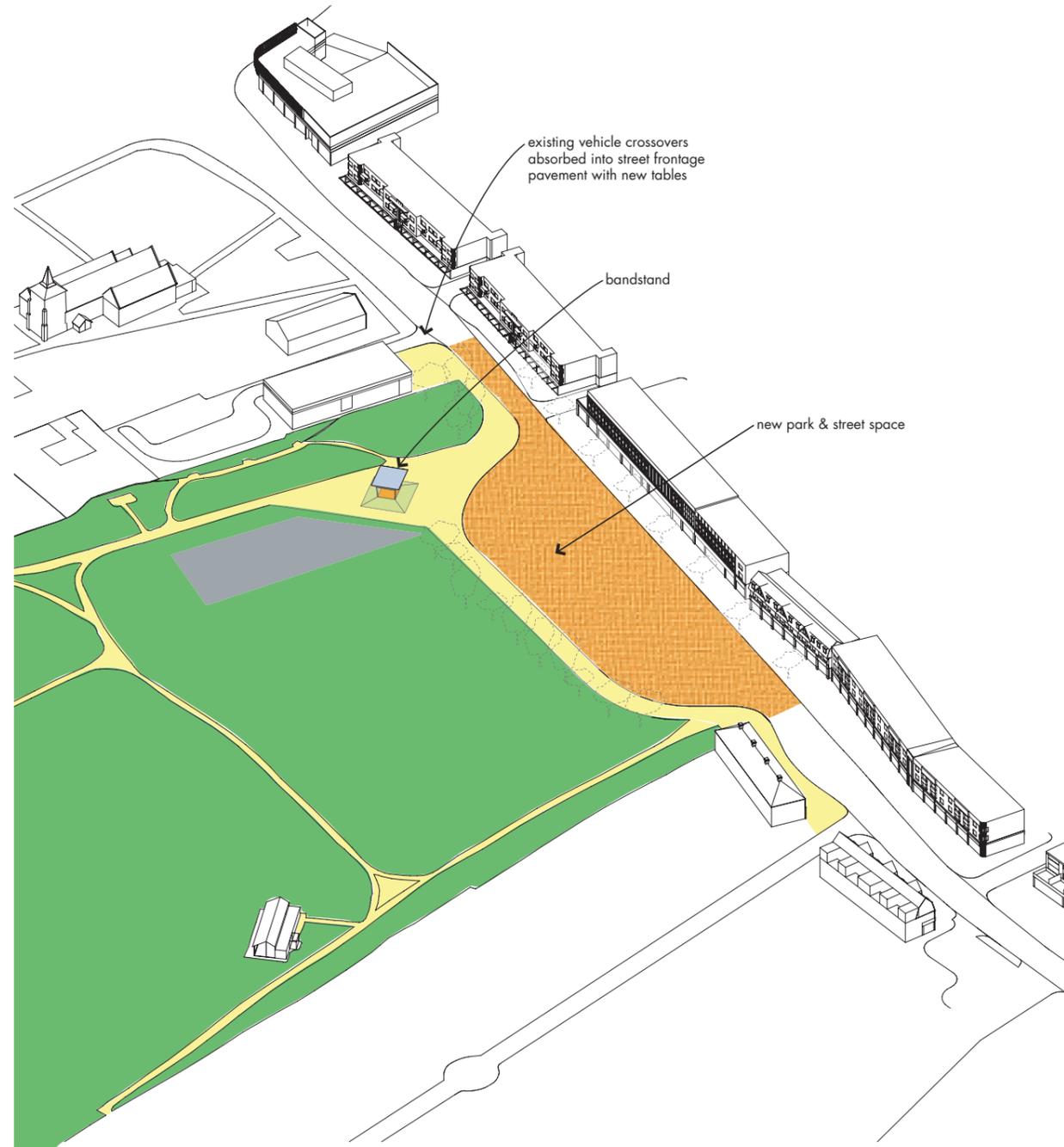
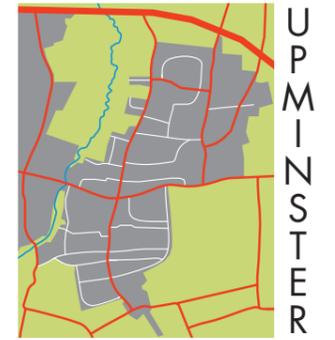
is a marker structure that announces the Park's presence. These trees form a definite "clump" and make a specific and therefore celebratory figure in the streetscape. Much of the other tree-planting seems to lack a clear idea of its role. It is treated as another form of street-stuff, like bins, advert furniture or railings, co-ordinated by ideas of amenity but not by an overarching idea of a space.



Figure 34.2 View along east edge of Upminster Park



Figure 34.3 Upminster Park: main town entry to Park is low-key



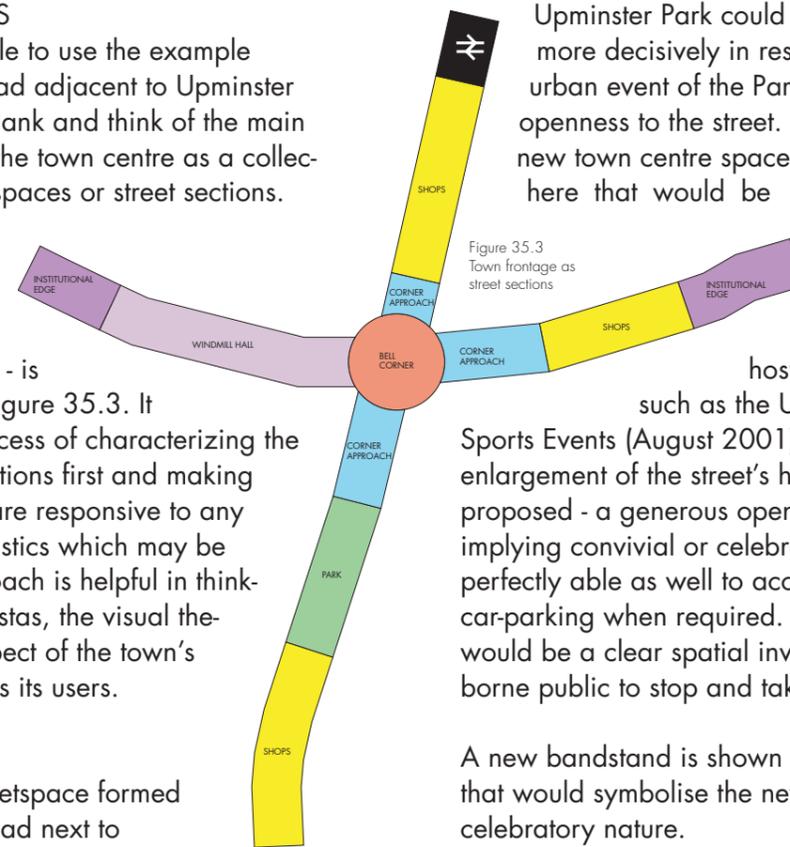
STRATEGY

STREET SECTIONS

It seems reasonable to use the example of Corbets Tey Road adjacent to Upminster Park's open east flank and think of the main street frontage in the town centre as a collection of particular spaces or street sections. This way of thinking about the town frontage - the surface area of the town centre - is sketched here in figure 35.3. It is based on a process of characterizing the different street sections first and making proposals which are responsive to any specific characteristics which may be espied. The approach is helpful in thinking about street vistas, the visual theatre that the prospect of the town's street spaces offers its users.

STREET EVENT

The particular streetspace formed by Corbets Tey Road next to



Upminster Park could be developed more decisively in response to the urban event of the Park's generous openness to the street. A very significant new town centre space is assayed here that would be multi-functional and particularly supportive of the Park's role in hosting special events such as the Upminster Extreme Sports Events (August 2001). A kind of enlargement of the street's hard-landscape is proposed - a generous opening of the street implying convivial or celebratory usage but perfectly able as well to accommodate extra car-parking when required. Indeed this space would be a clear spatial invitation to the carborne public to stop and take part.

A new bandstand is shown in Figure 35.1 that would symbolise the new space's active, celebratory nature.

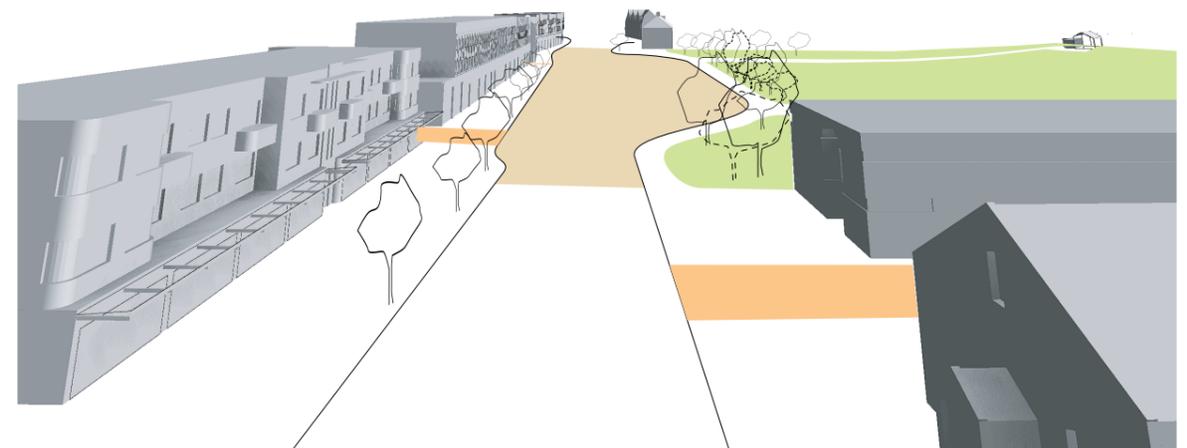


Figure 35.2 Looking into the new streetspace

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Figure 36.1 Upminster Bridge: "suzzy" street scene

37 UPMINSTER BRIDGE

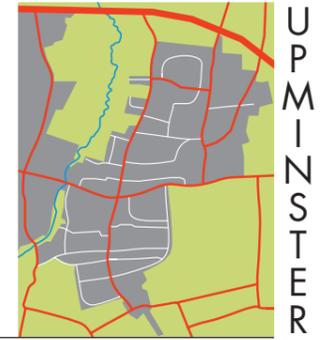


Figure 37.1 Looking east towards The Bridge House pub

38 UPMINSTER BRIDGE

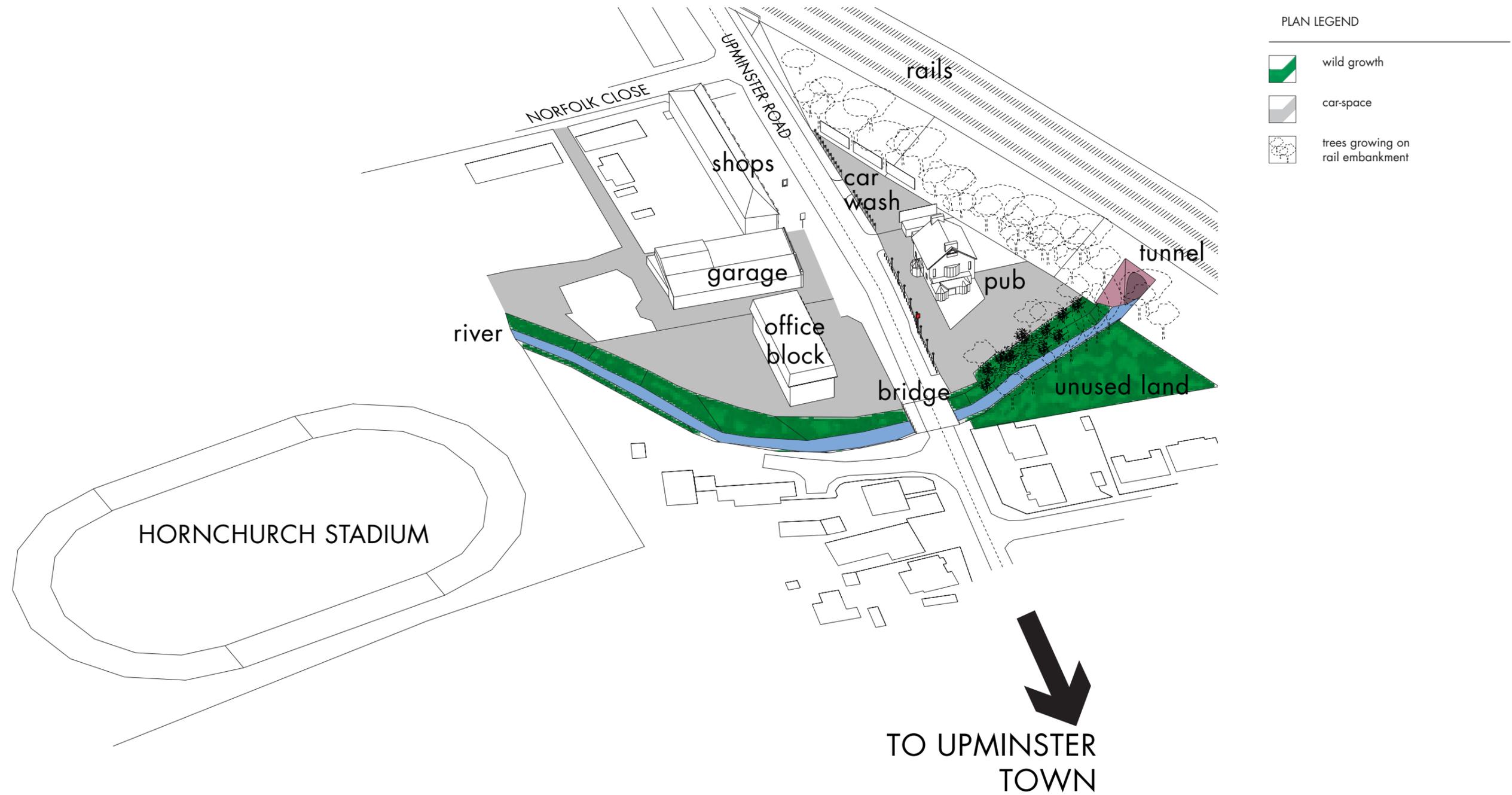
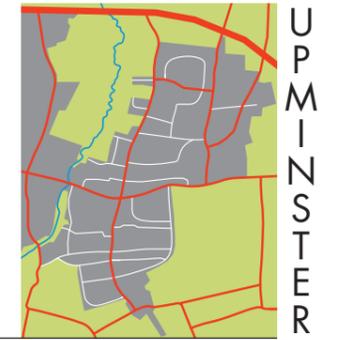
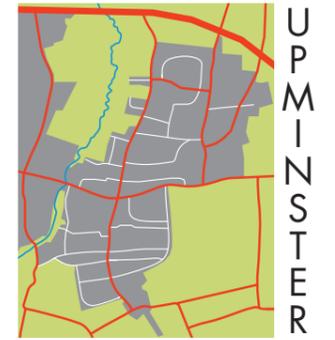


figure 38.1 Existing condition overview



ANALYSIS



figure 39.1 River Ingrebourne flowing underneath railway embankment

The scene around Upminster Bridge is organised around two main lines, that of the main A-road between Hornchurch and Upminster running east-west and the the River Ingrebourne running north-south. The river passes under the railway and the main road next to the Upminster Bridge House Inn.

The Bridge Inn sign refers to town entry with a romanticised image of an arched bridge over a river by a town. The actual bridge is a mean, near invisible structure which offers pedestrians and cyclists little amenity.

Opposite the pub on the rivers east bank appears to be an area of disused land. Close by is the considerable public space of the Hornchurch Stadium and beyond that Gaynes Parkway. Access to both is convoluted and uncelebrated.

The character of the area is rough-and-ready with much roadside commerce in evidence, including a second-car dealership operating

out of a dishevelled garage, a car-valetting yard surrounded by large poster hoardings, the pub itself, a parade of shops and a failed office block. There is a lot of informal street furniture, mainly commercial. These are mostly standards advertising the car-valetting but also include cheap-looking globe lights outside the pub, an array of bollards, large signs for the garage and council street advertising. The general standard of paving and asphalt work is very poor.

Large of amounts of space are given over to car-parking whether around the pub, garage or the failed office block.

The unity of area - a positive features - is helped by the enclosing curve of the railway embankment with its intense tree-growth and the abrupt start of domestic settlement on the east side of the river, as it were the explicit start of another, non-commercial zone.

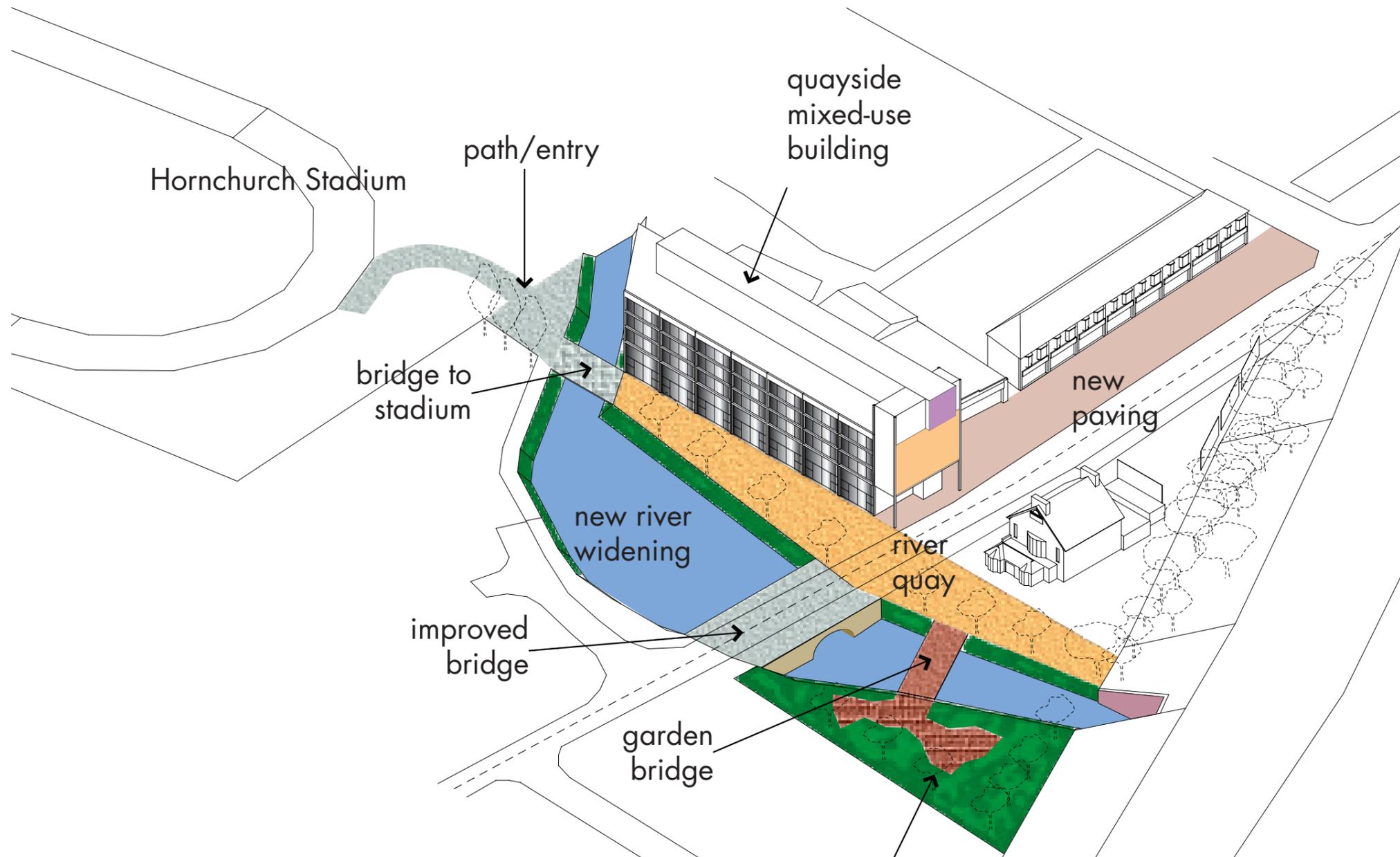
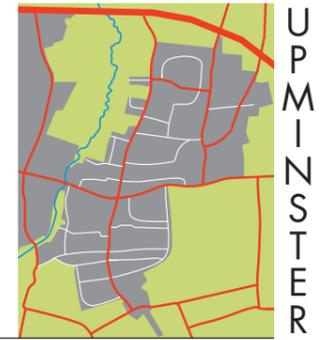


figure 39.2 Non-descript road-bridge over Ingrebourne



Figure 39.3 The Bridge House Inn roadside sign displaying a romantic idea of a town-entry point

40 UPMINSTER BRIDGE



PLAN LEGEND

-  new building
-  new special landscape areas/ formal gardens
-  new paths & paved areas
-  new vehicular grade paving (colour varies)
-  new public art
-  new space-forming wall or screen
-  new tree planting
-  new street surfacing (colour varies)
-  new water feature
-  new playground
-  new bridge structures
-  special new build areas
-  allotments (earth colours)

figure 40.1 showing

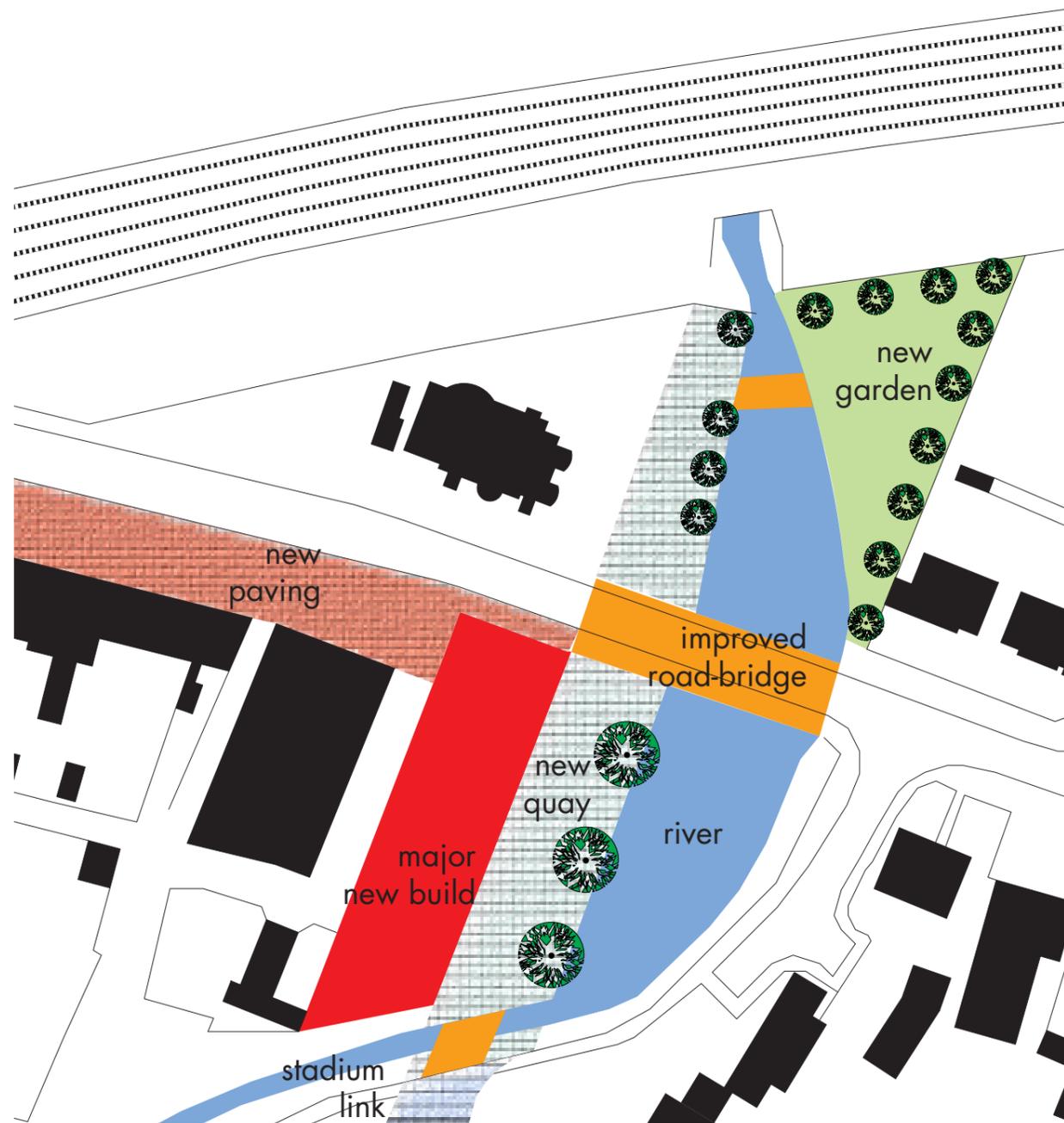
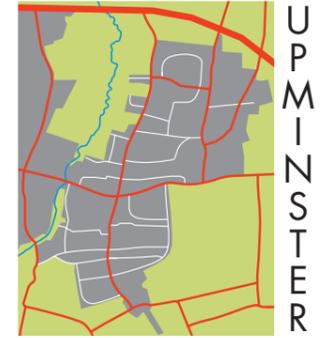


figure 41.1 Plan of proposed changes to Upminster Bridge area

STRATEGY

LOW EXPECTATIONS

Given that the River Ingrebourne valley is the key landscape figure that provides Upminster's distinctness the presence of so much low-grade business activity around the point where it crosses the main road entering the Town from the west is unexpected.

The question is whether higher grade urban figures besides car-valeting yards, second-hand garages, rough pubs and shopping parades can be added to this A-road scene.

The Allied Dunbar offices are a failed attempt to locate an office in the area. The real site value is probably in a residential change-of-use. The site must be a focus of developer interest. It is strongly recommended LBH gives a firm urban design framework for this site accounting for the presence of the river.

WATER SPACE

The proposals shown here aim to maximize the presence of the river. Doing so is the

premise for marking out entries to the Hornchurch Stadium and the river valley domain that the Thames Chase riverside walk work is designed to open up. Equally, a new amenity is given to The River House Inn. There seems to be an unused piece of land on the river's east bank next to the tunnel included here as public garden.

New bridges emphasise the theme of entry and crossover. Work to main road bridge should be kept to a minimum to avoid traffic delays.

NEW WORK

Creating a new river edge along an emphatic new water figure provides the urban design context for a new mixed-use block containing riverside workspaces and flats above. The block is orientated along the quay at right-angles to the existing Allied Dunbar building. It is a high quality new-build linked to the river, facing Upminster with its back to the existing low-grade economy of the area.



figure 41.2 Approach to Hornchurch Stadium via a private carpark: the access lacks a proper sense of "publicness"



figure 41.3 Riverside footpath: river is not visible and the footpath is overlooked by new residential buildings of overwhelming blandness

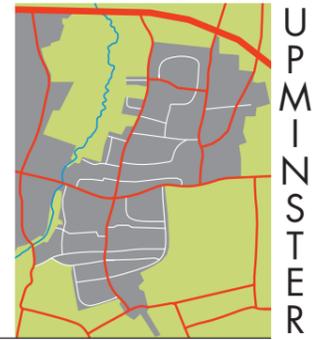


figure 42.1 showing

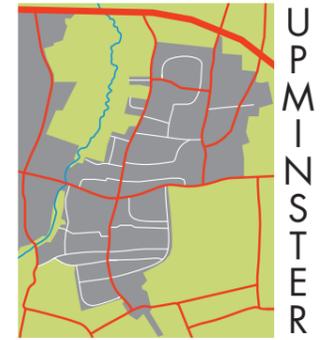
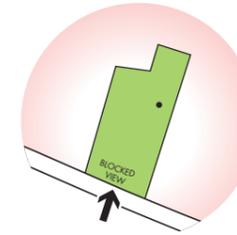


figure 43.1 Overview of Windmill site

ANALYSIS

SCREENING

Behind the screen of greenery alongside the stream of traffic in fig 43.2 below lies the most emblematic space in Upminster - the paddock in which stands the old Windmill.



The paddock is at the crest of the hill which rises up from Upminster Bridge. It's very easy to pass it. You get better views from the railway embankment that crosses over the road at Upminster Bridge and carries the trains into Upminster Station. It is peculiar that the most important symbol of the area is so well concealed.

HOUSES AND FIELD

The Windmill paddock is another open space which spans between a main road and the residential fabric. This pattern of development is linked to the unrefined building-out of residential zones - something referred to by one commentator on urbanism as the "...brutal

application of the planning scheme". In other words, the space allocated for housing has been filled up with housing without any interesting adaptation to specific neighbouring spaces such as the Windmill.

Effectively two kinds of space are pushed up against each other without any conspicuous sign of thoughtful negotiation of the boundary. Thus, the suburb remains undifferentiated by the proximity of a major town centre public space next to it.

PAST

The old windmill site concerns the past. It seems important to try and deal with this aspect of site identity through urban design improvements.

To deal simultaneously with the town location and contemporary themes would ensure a reworked space is more than simply nostalgic.



figure 43.2 Green screen to Windmill site

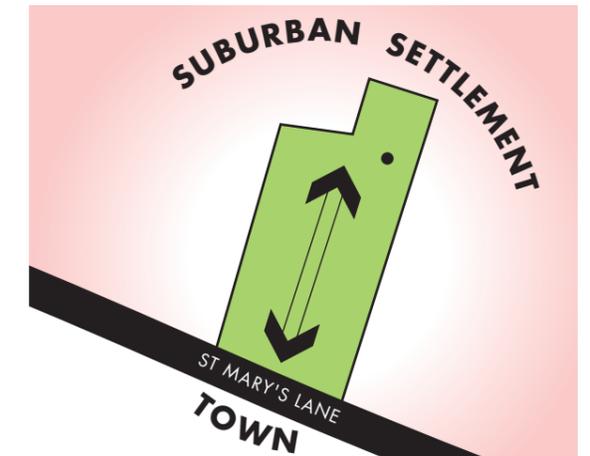
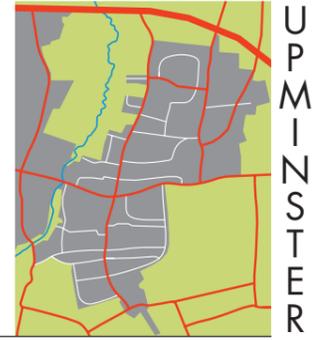


figure 43.3 Concept diagram showing how the Windmill site protrudes into surrounding domestic settlement from main road



PLAN LEGEND

-  new building
-  new special landscape areas/ formal gardens
-  new paths & paved areas
-  new vehicular grade paving (colour varies)
-  new public art
-  new space-forming wall or screen
-  new tree planting
-  new street surfacing (colour varies)
-  new water feature
-  new playground
-  new bridge structures
-  special new build areas
-  allotments (earth colours)

figure 44.1 Plan of proposed

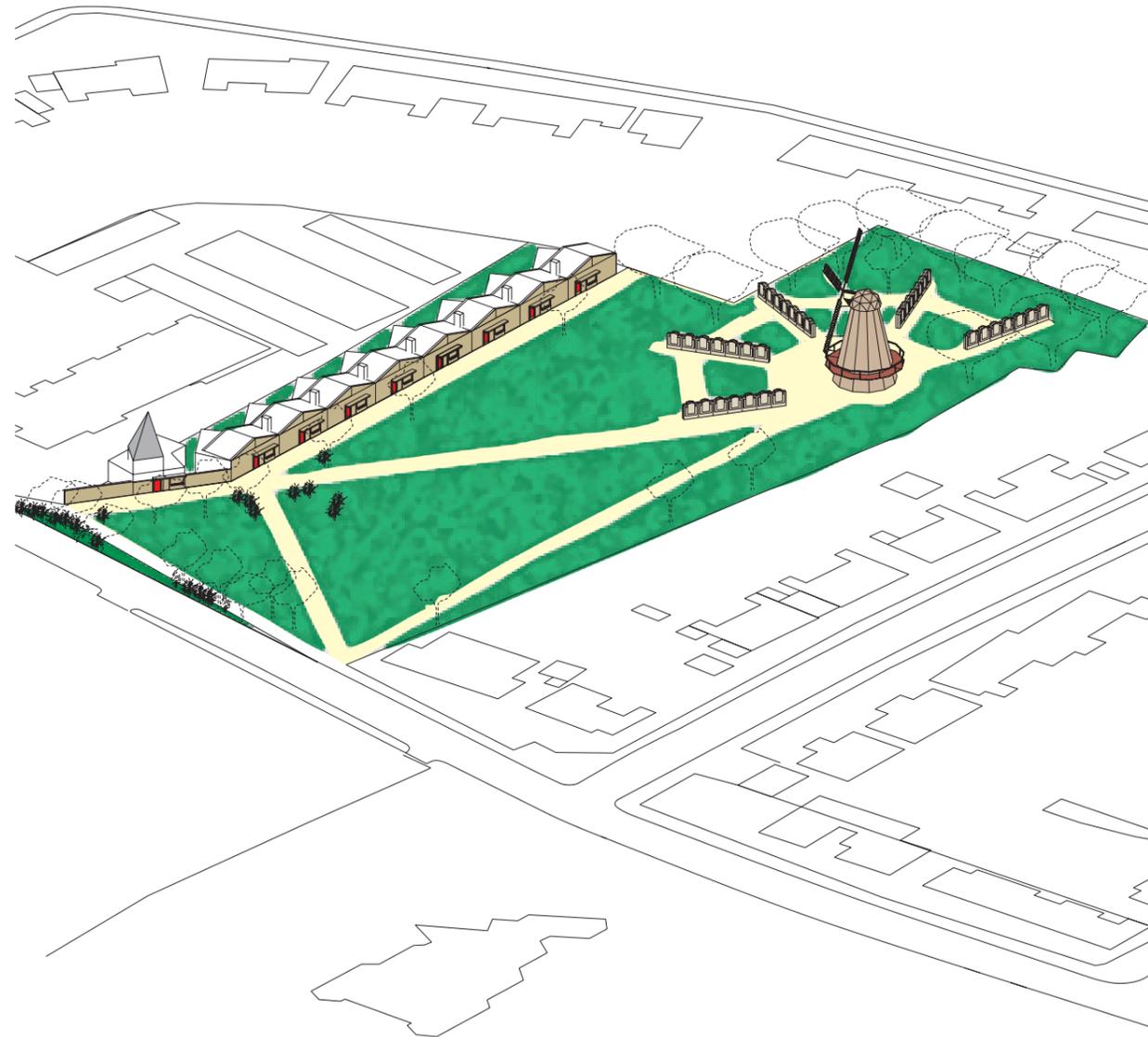
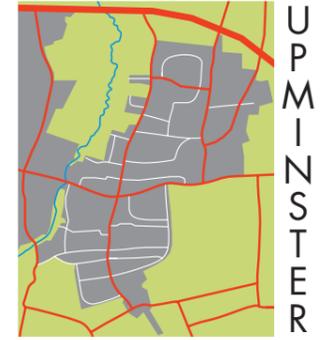


figure 45.1 Overview of proposals at Windmill site

STRATEGY

INHABITATION

The open space where the old windmill stands cannot be assumed some kind of untouchable space. After all, it is far from an ideal space. It is very wet underfoot in the autumn, a fact that repels ordinary usage. It's not even useful as a playing field for sports.



Figure 45.4 alms-houses

Is the windmill site town centre space? It is quite hard to make sense of it without treating it as such. It is not agricultural space, nor a playing field or a suburban close. The choice here is to pursue a treatment resembling the model of church and almshouses. This approach is reverential to the monument and practical, offering a low-impact form of development for retired people.

Alms houses are traditionally arranged around a common green area off a street, the green working a symbol of protective seclu-

sion. They are often delicately scaled and architecturally interesting. It is suggested then that a row of eight single-storey houses is created to form and inhabited edge along the east side of the windmill paddock. Building on the theme of passive energy-usage embodied by the windmill, the new housing ought to showcase domestic appliance of solar water heating, chp and pv technologies.

MEMORIAL

An interesting approach to memorials is found at Upminster Cemetery where memorial tablets are mounted on walls that form small garden enclosures. The walls have small pediments which refer directly to the horizon of domestic roofs and so the inhabitation of the area.

A memorial garden of such walls, this time radially organized around the mill, is shown opposite. The memorial need not be personal and may even be an open-air museum referring to shared history.



figure 45.2 Upminster Cemetery: small pediments atop the memorial tablets echo and rhyme with the skyline of suburban housing to the north



figure 45.3 Upminster Cemetery

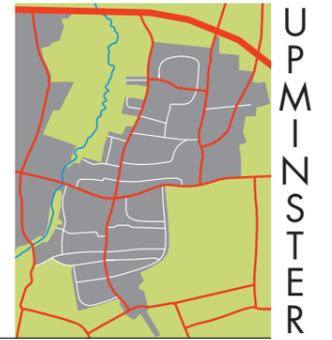
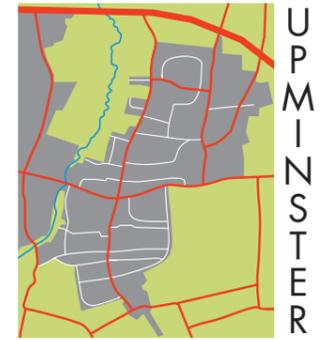


figure 46.1 The Moat at Clockhouse Gardens: the only "water feature" in Upminster



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ANALYSIS

Clocktower Gardens possesses a strong character. Its feeling of enclosure is deepened by the reveries of the dark water of the moat and neatness of the bowling green. Its concealed presence and special qualities provide a unique context - an opposite to Upminster Park.

Opportunities to develop the role of the gardens relate to the important public buildings that abut it. There is plainly a therapeutic aspect to the gardens complimented by the proximity of a doctors surgery, the local community health building and a nursing home.

The position of the Somerfield building next to the gardens has potential though it is depressing that the planning of two adjacent spaces as significant to the town centre as the Somerfield shop and Clockhouse Gardens has been treated as dismally as it has.

The proposals outlined here turn on the possibility of developing a combination of a thera-

peutic space complimentary to the adjacent medical buildings and the civic space already provided by the gardens. The public and therapeutic dimensions of the suggested space would be safeguarded by the strong sense of enclosure provided by the gardens backland position behind the houses and main road frontage.

The dispersal of single-hander GP practises around the Upminster area is contrary to central government preference for centralised provision and will change in the medium or long-term. A new building to house a multi-hander practise is thus inevitable and could be sited by the Clockhouse Gardens. Even if the new PCG building was located elsewhere for reasons of public access, the Clockhouse Gardens and the adjacent sites would serve perfectly for a Healthy Living Centre. Such a centre would certainly add a new dimension to the body-culture already evident in Upminster's array of tanning salons.



figure 47.1 The Bowling Green: an amenity with special appeal for older people and consonant with Clockhouse Gardens withdrawn status and the neighbouring nursing home



figure 47.2 Somersfield's building presenting a blank, impenetrable face to Clockhouse Gardens: a missed opportunity



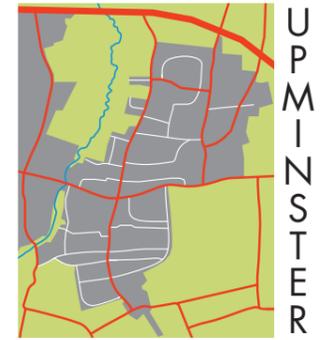
figure 47.3 Park promenade: tranquility



PLAN LEGEND

-  new building
-  new special landscape areas/ formal gardens
-  new paths & paved areas
-  new vehicular grade paving (colour varies)
-  new public art
-  new space-forming wall or screen
-  new tree planting
-  new street surfacing (colour varies)
-  new water feature
-  new playground
-  new bridge structures
-  special new build areas
-  allotments (earth colours)

fig 48.1 Plan of proposed



UPMINSTER

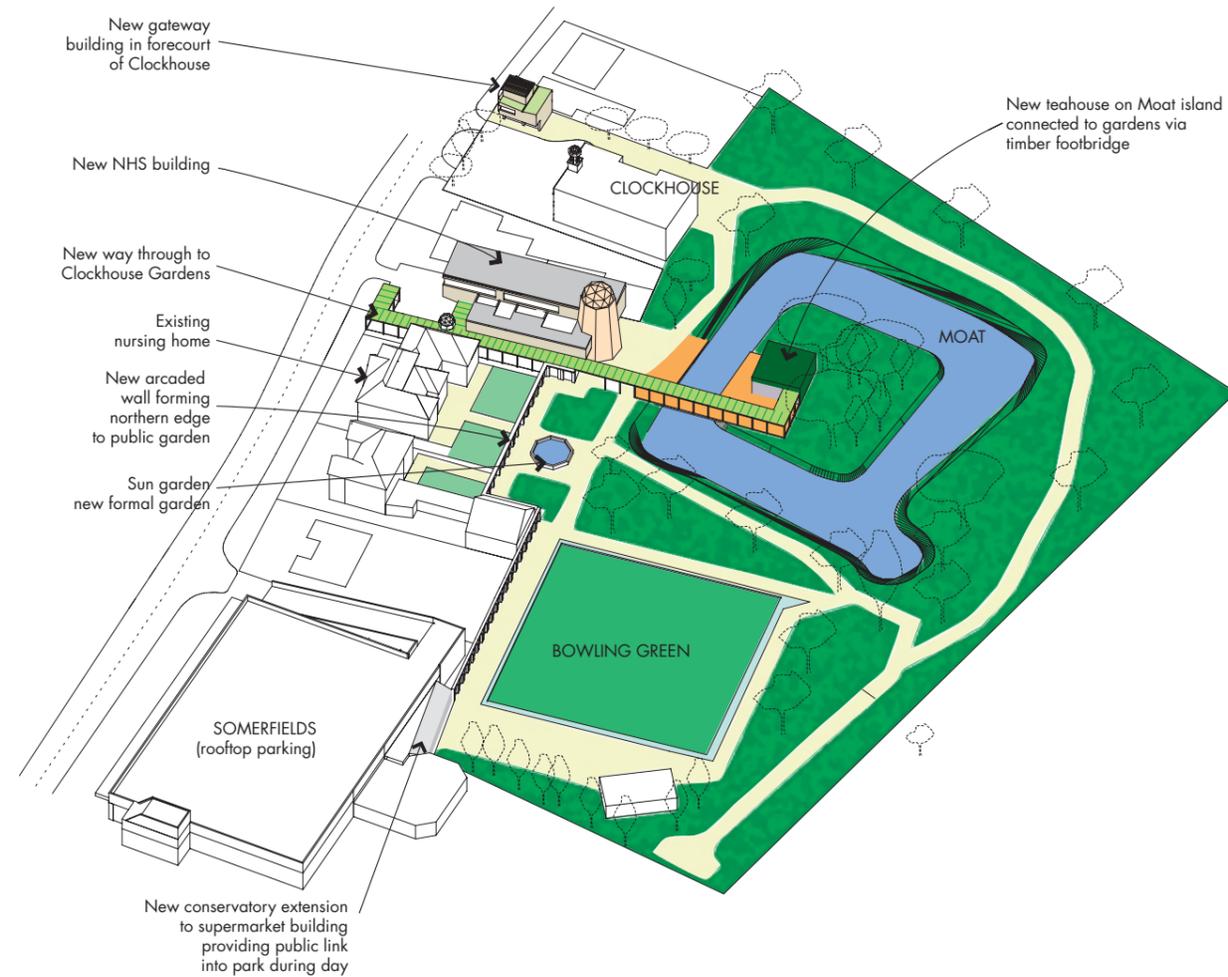


Figure 49.1 Overview of proposed

STRATEGY

The proposals for Clockhouse gardens relate to health and the health-giving qualities of gardens. The gardens can be developed as a special setting where health takes prominence.

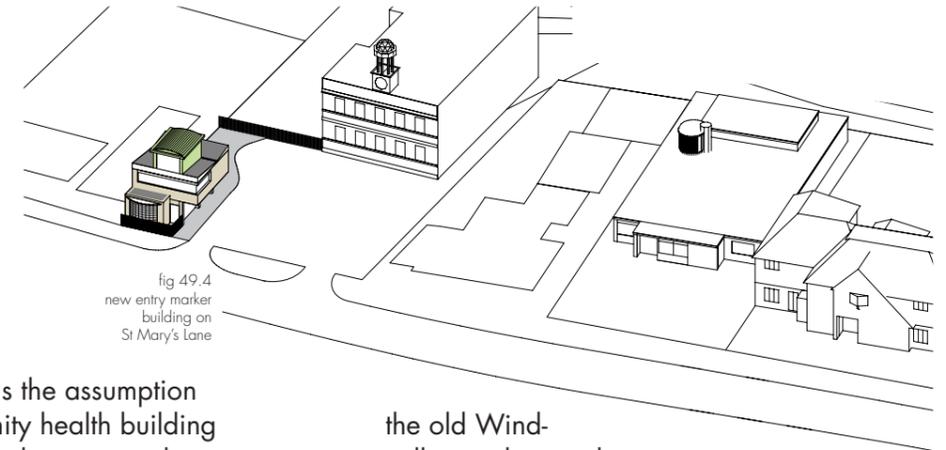


fig 49.4 new entry marker building on St Mary's Lane

The basis for proposals is the assumption that the existing community health building which backs onto the gardens cannot last much longer due to its low quality and obsolescence. It is virtually certain that it will be replaced and a new form of primary health care delivery introduced into Upminster. The proposals here are a contribution to debate about how health-care might modernised and integrated with town centre life. They show a new medical centre with another entrance into the gardens. An arcade from front to back leads to a tea-house on the Moat island. A landmark building at the rear resembling

the old Windmill provides wind-power to the whole complex.

Garden space is "borrowed" from the nursing home adjacent to the community health care building. The garden's north wall is integrated with the health buildings around it. A fountain basin is included to complement and balance the dark, reflective water of the Moat. Lastly, a new inhabited marker building is shown at the front of the clockhouse to help establish the town frontage presence of the gardens.



fig 49.2 The Clockhouse has a dishevelled forecourt and is weakly presented on the main thoroughfare



fig 49.3 The small rank of shops next to the Clockhouse makes a spirited attempt to make a roadside impact, quite different to the Clockhouse's weak street presence



figure 50.1 Pedestrian crossing at Bell Corner

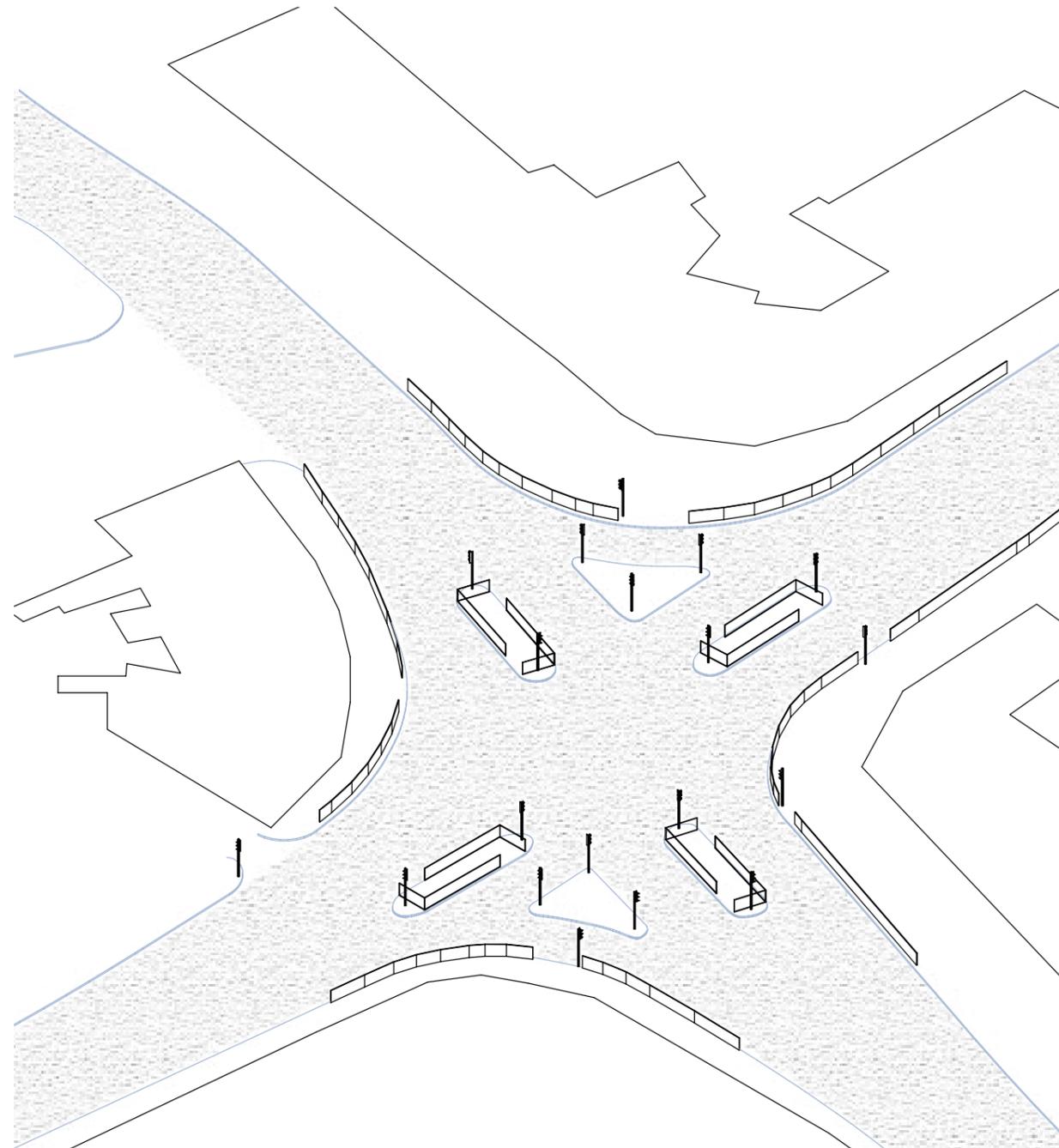
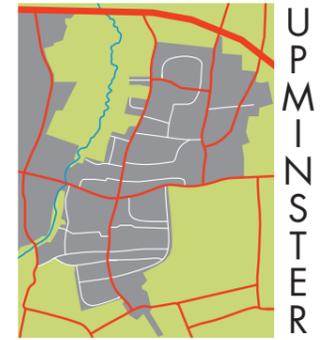


Figure 51.1 Concept sketch of Bell Corner crossroads

ANALYSIS

Bell Corner crossroad is the central point of Upminster Town, where one might expect a sense of being "in the middle of Upminster". Bell Corner is not organised to provide this quality and if it is emblematic of the town, it reflects major inadequacies.

It is weakly defined on the south-east and south-west corners. The latter is strengthened by strong tree growth but cannot be construed as an urban edge. The other two corners, providing the opening north to Station Road, are formed by mediocre inter-war buildings. These are serviceable urban structures but make a rather "sad" statement about the Town.

The "modern" building on the south-east corner of the crossroads is universally despised, deemed a lamentable substitute for the bar/hotel which used to exist on the site. Local youth use its roof-top car-park to skateboard and hang about.



figure 51.2 Youth provision in Bell Corner rooftop car-park: DIY skateboard "street-scape" made by local youth obviously seeking a little space of their own



fig 51.4 pedestrians crossing

ABRUPT TERMINATION

Looking west from the crossroads, one is struck by the sudden halting of town centre space. St Mary's Lane's west leg, beginning alongside the St Laurence's graveyard wall, marks a falling away of urban space-making and its replacement by the suburban habits of green screens, walls and fences. In short, the vista emphasises the Town's littleness.

COMPLICATION

The crossroads is also a key pedestrian crossing though the treatment is wholly prosaic. What is evident is the complexity of the pedestrian journeys with their various island staging posts, the forest of traffic light standards and awkward dog-legs enforced by railings. It all lacks directness, and a sense of amenity. The erosion of the north-east and south-west corners to make turning filters is the reason for the crossing's complication.



figure 51.3 West of Bell Corner the town centre stops suddenly: the end

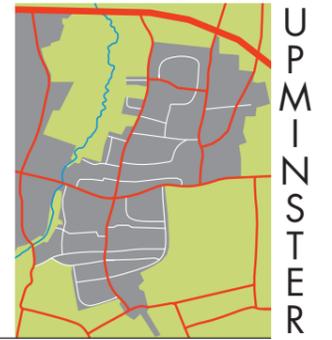


figure 52.1 Crosstown traffic at Bell Corner, Upminster

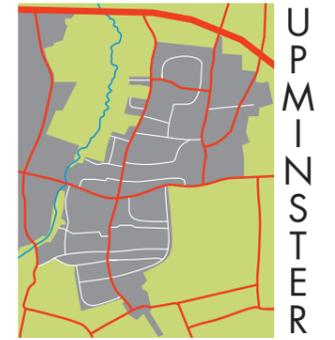


figure 53.1 An Uppminster Town crowd on a late summer's evening

STRATEGY

PEDESTRIAN AMENITY

It's obvious that pedestrian use of the crossroads should be improved. The filter mechanism now used to conduct pedestrians and vehicles through different parts of the crossing simultaneously gives rise to the confusing organization of traffic islands and a complex sequence of pedestrian movements. Removing the complexity of permitted movements and the array of traffic islands is a way to introduce simplicity. It means stopping simultaneous vehicle and pedestrian movements.

Pedestrians can enjoy direct crossings from pavement to pavement without being marooned if no vehicles share the crossing. There may well be problems with vehicle queuing and so-called junction capacity if such changes are made. But without them, the "clunky" quality of existing arrangements cannot be avoided.

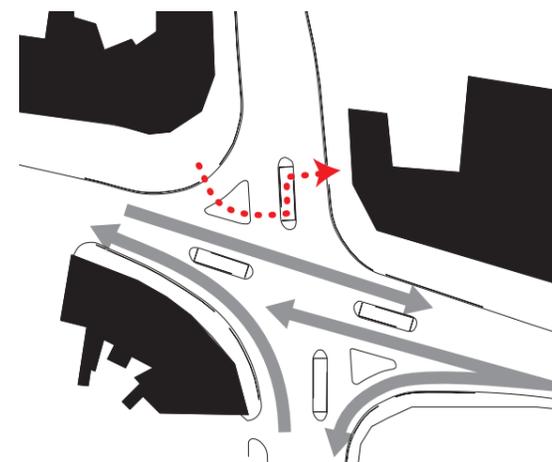


Figure 53.2 Existing arrangement: reduced pedestrian amenity

PEDESTRIAN SPECTACLE

It is important for the town centre that pedestrians are seen en masse. Crowds express confidence in public space more than scattered groups of individuals.



Figure 53.4 thick traffic on Corbets Tey Rd

The crossing arrangements at Bell Corner supplant people with cars. Cars form the predominant town centre crowd here. The pedestrian must work her way around cars which are entangled in the various exigencies of the junction mechanism.

Improvement to pedestrian use of the crossroads would allow pedestrians to cross simultaneously from all sides. The crossing would consist of larger people movements viewed by stationary traffic. At the centre of the town would be found a system for dealing with crowds rather than a device for moving small groups around a much larger mass of motor cars.

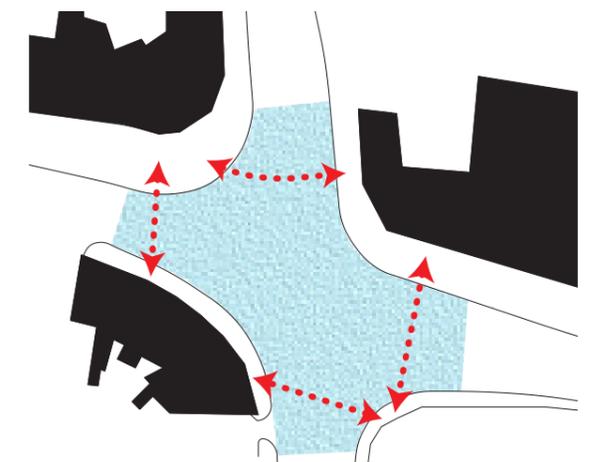
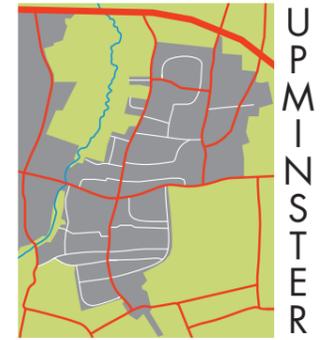


Figure 53.3 Proposal to increase pedestrian phases



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Figure 54.1 Bell Corner newbuild: view of proposed

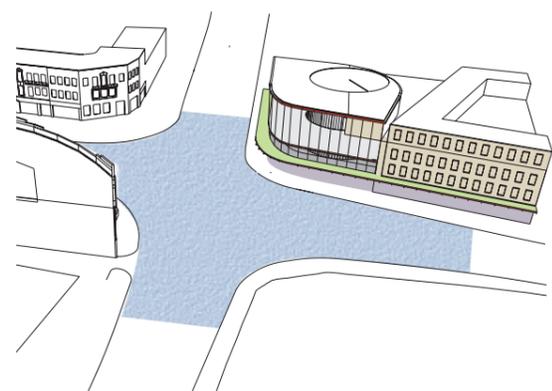
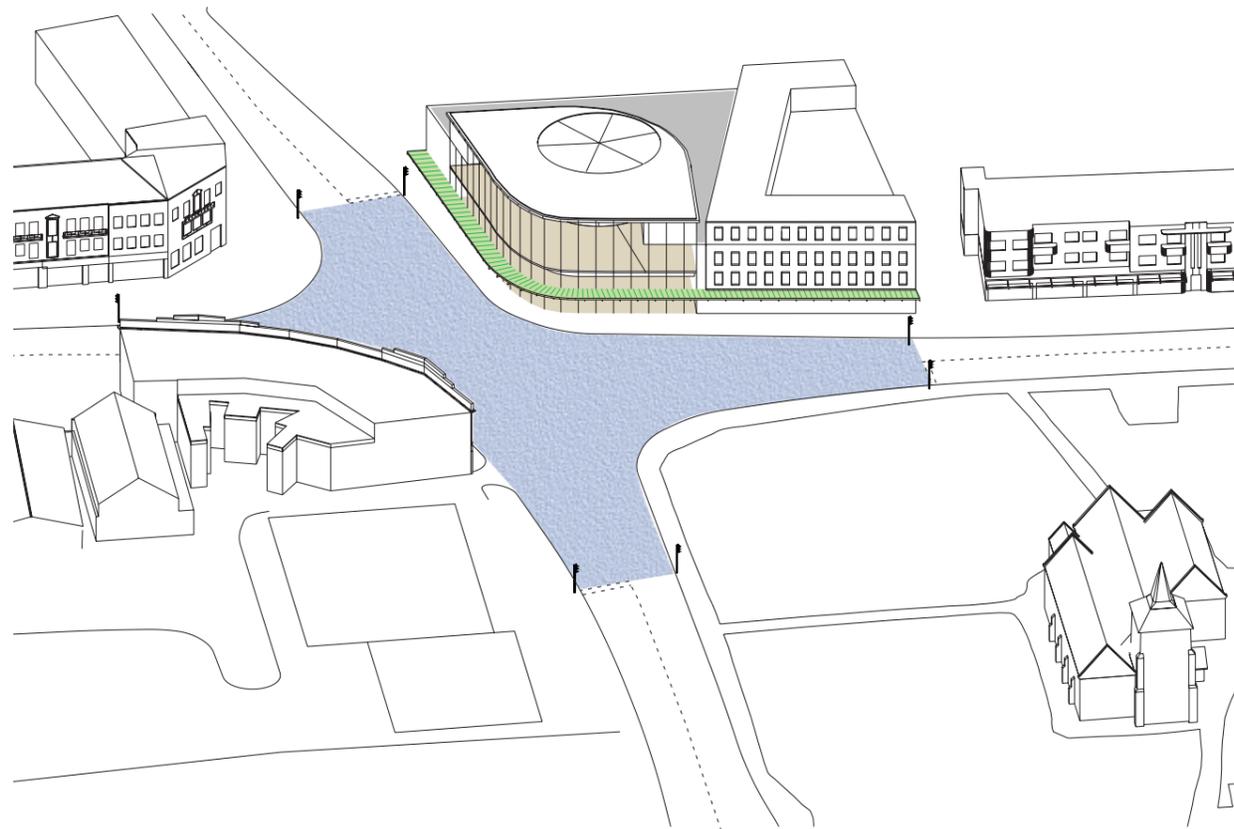


Figure 54.2 Bell Corner new build: perspective view of proposed work centre combining start-up workspace, apartment hotel and restaurant/bar



Figure 54.3 Small piazza: occupied by recycling bins, traffic machines and cars - much more positive inhabitation is needed to make it into a genuine "public room"

STRATEGY

The south-east portion of Bell Corner is a key development site in Upminster Town. The existing "modern" building on site is universally detested.

The site is suitable for a building that adds as much to the identity of Upminster as the old Windmill. Some have suggested a new public space ought to be created. In this regard, reference has been made to a new fountain as an urban marker set in a piazza.

Britain's vital urban traditions are linked to street-space rather than formal open space. It would probably be better to create a new public space that read as an elaboration of the ordinary street/pavement arrangement, like the wide pavements down the east-side of Upminster's main north-south axis do. Certainly, most hard-landscaped public open space in this part of London is actually used for car-parking: there is no evidence that the public "knows" how to use piazzas or squares.

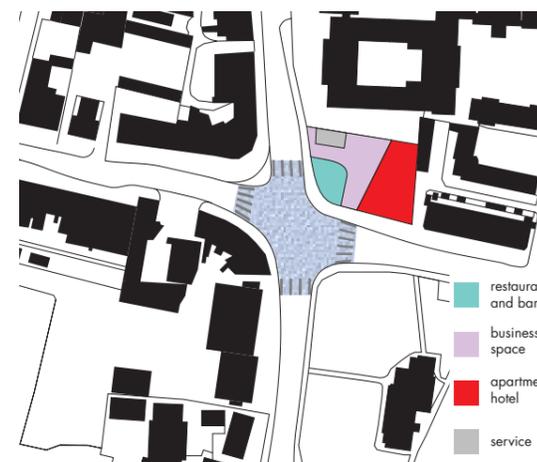


Figure 54.4 Bell Corner: plan of proposed

CRITICAL PUBLIC SYMBOL

The public's opinion of any new building located on the south-east corner is important. Such a building will fulfill a symbolic role as the centre of the Town. It may be a disastrous symbol of failure if a redevelopment proved unpopular or commercially unsuccessful.

The proposal shown here "builds-out" the site, combining shops at ground, a bar/restaurant, business units and an apartment hotel.

NEW LANTERN

The building is intended to be a bright lantern with large, open public interiors clearly visible from the street. These would accommodate the bar/restaurant at first floor - an obvious social space for business people and shoppers.

The apartment hotel would cater for business-travellers working in the City with a preference for staying in quiet town surroundings rather than the city centre.



Figure 54.5 Modern public space: in need of a clear and definite role

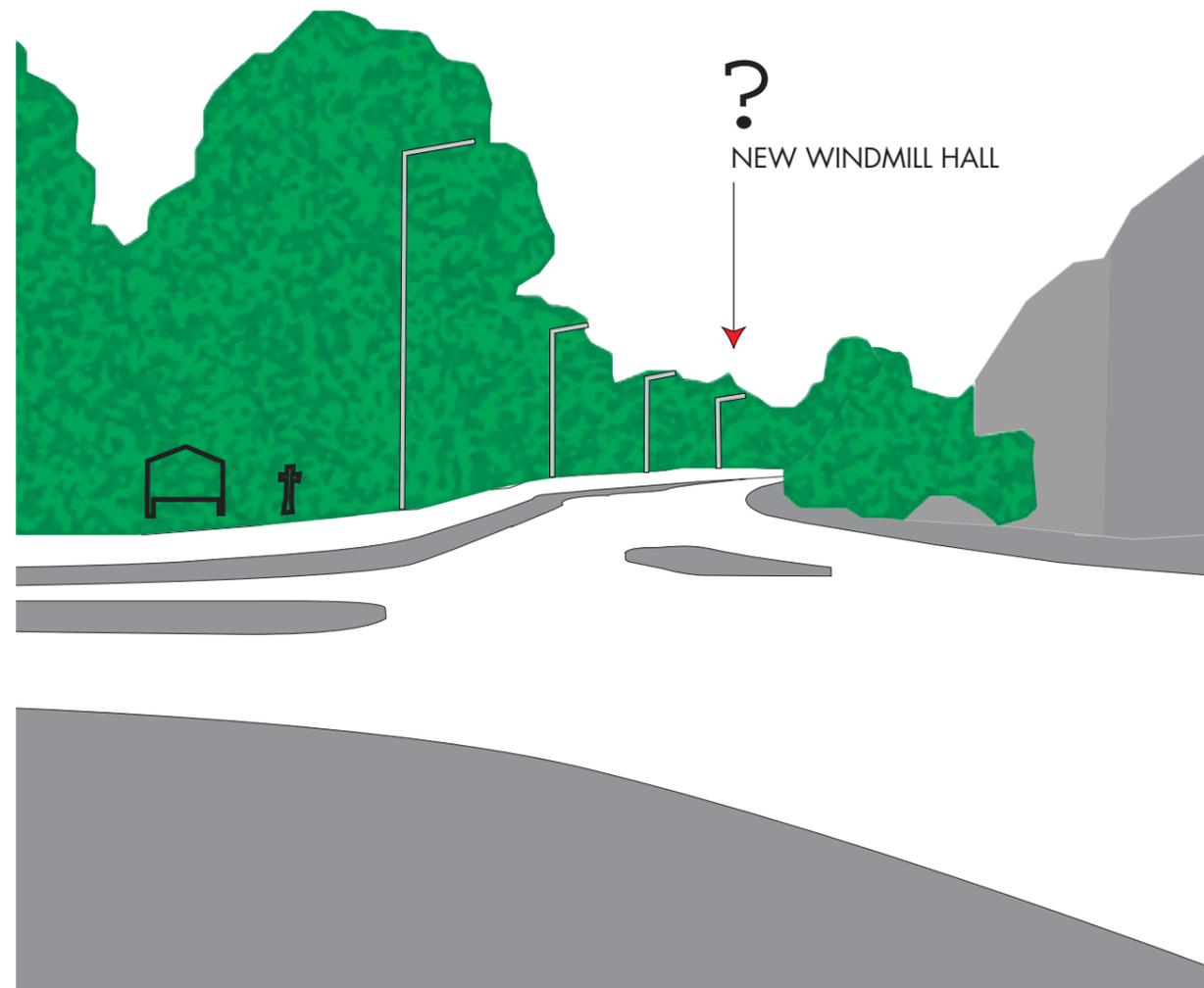
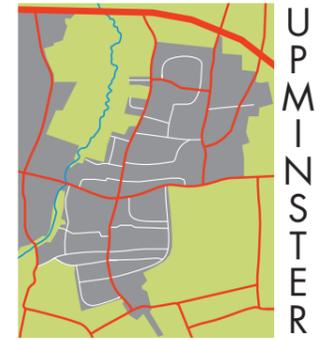


Figure 55.1 Graphic showing invisibility of New Windmill Hall from Bell Corner

ANALYSIS

INCONSEQUENCE

The stretch of St Mary's Lane running west from the Bell Corner crossroads provides the link between the Town's main junction to its main art venue, the New Windmill Hall. No visual or urban gesture makes this apparent on the street. The roadside is only notable for the continuous growth of trees all along it. The growth extends as far as the descent to Upminster Bridge and screens the Windmill Hall and Upminster Park completely.

Whilst the greenery is pleasant, not acknowledging either the hall or the Park on the street seems perverse. It would be the very thing to make an inconsequential section of street specifically part of the Town's arrangement. As it is, the western portion of St Mary's Lane seems to be where Upminster Town fizzles out inexplicably.



Figure 55.4 near-invisible entry to Park

POINTS OF VIEW

This problem can be thought of as weakness of the Bell Corner crossroads space which would certainly be enhanced by strengthening the appeal of its western issue. Or it can be viewed as a weakness of the Windmill Hall. The Windmill site feels disconnected from the places to which it should demonstrate a strong connection: Upminster Park and Upminster Town's main frontage.

The same section of St Mary's Lane leads to the Windmill, another key monument also hidden from view. The reliance on the softening and privatizing effects of "planting" is here antithetical to civic urban design.

There is a need to move beyond the agenda of "softening" to thinking about built interventions of a minor kind which are specific to places (unlike traffic signs) and responsive to themes of creativity and thinking about urban living.



Figure 55.2 Between Bell Corner and New Windmill Hall site



Figure 55.3 Street presence of New Windmill Hall

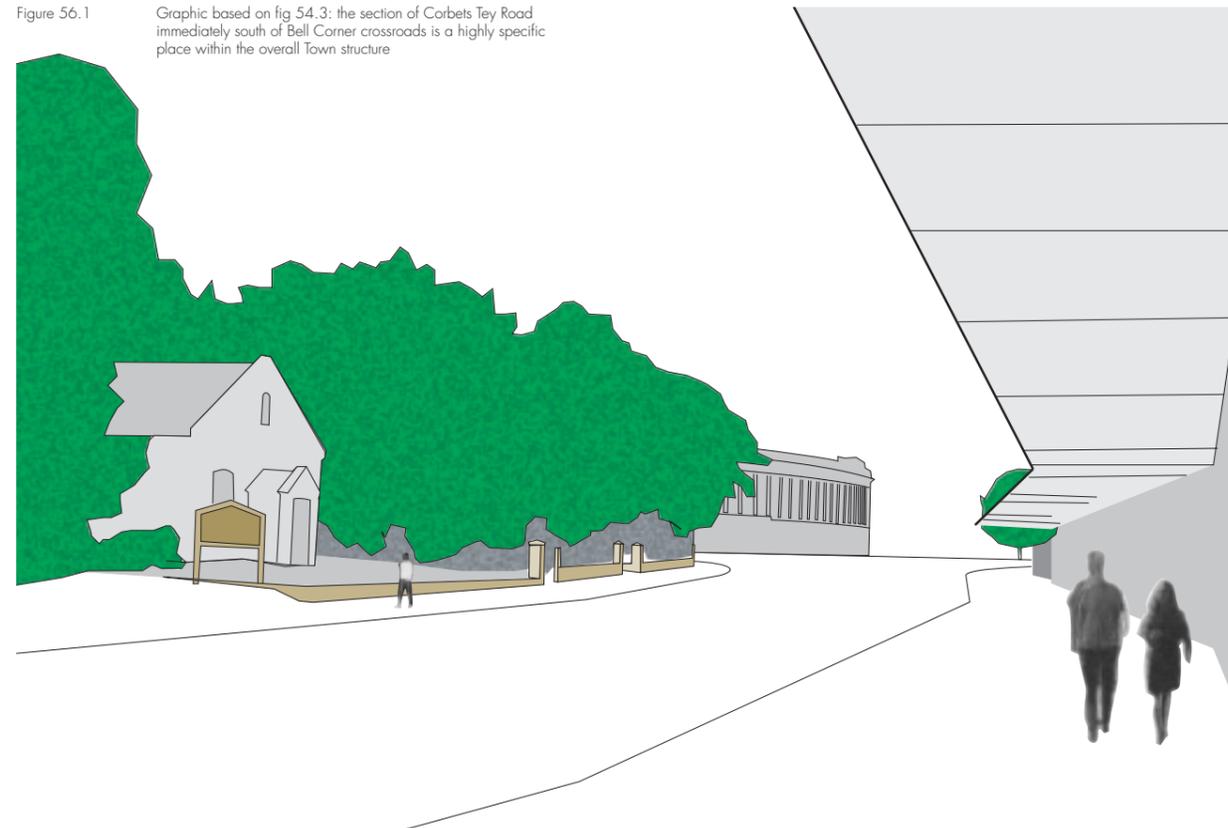


Figure 56.1 Graphic based on fig 54.3: the section of Corbets Tey Road immediately south of Bell Corner crossroads is a highly specific place within the overall Town structure

ANALYSIS

The southern approach to Bell Corner forms a distinct town centre space within the overall arrangement of public spaces in Upminster.

It is not symmetrical: it's constituted differently on each side, one side is taken up by major public places - church, church hall, war memorial, public library and Upminster Park, the other by shopping parades.

The shopping side's canopies make a protected promenade. There are other canopies in the town centre but none as extensive as these. The buildings off which the canopies are hung also offer properly defined and design-integrated (notwithstanding their dishevelment) on-street entries to the flats at first floor and above. These entries strengthen the street-scene and point to the general failure to celebrate town-dwellings in other parts of the town centre.

PEDESTRIAN EMPHASIS

Generally speaking this stretch of street encourages pedestrian usage with the sequence of entries to significant public spaces on one side and positively framed shopping on the other. The physical quality of spaces is satisfying in terms of scale and material: the church yew walk, the canopies, war memorial and the library entrance exemplify this. The sequence of entries to the library, church hall, church is a major episode in the town centre; awareness of this "institutional parade" could assist urban design thinking and clarify the disappointing spaces in front of the library and church hall (see fig 54.2).

The street itself might be treated to promote pedestrian movements across it. Doing so without cluttering the street scene with typical traffic management clutter is a challenge worth overcoming.



Figure 56.6 War monument: symbol of shared history positioned very appropriately



Figure 56.2 St Laurence's church hall and Upminster Library: neighbours on a key section of town centre street



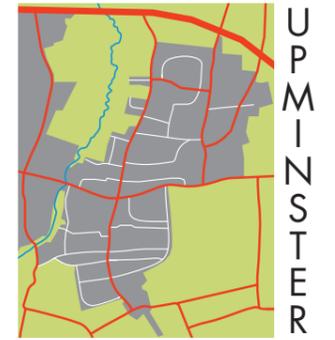
Figure 56.3 Pedestrian arcade on east side of Corbets Tey Road opposite St Laurence's church hall



Figure 56.4 Arcaded shopping parade: the material quality of this partially stone-faced building adds significantly to the street-scene



Figure 56.5 St Laurence's Church: yew walk



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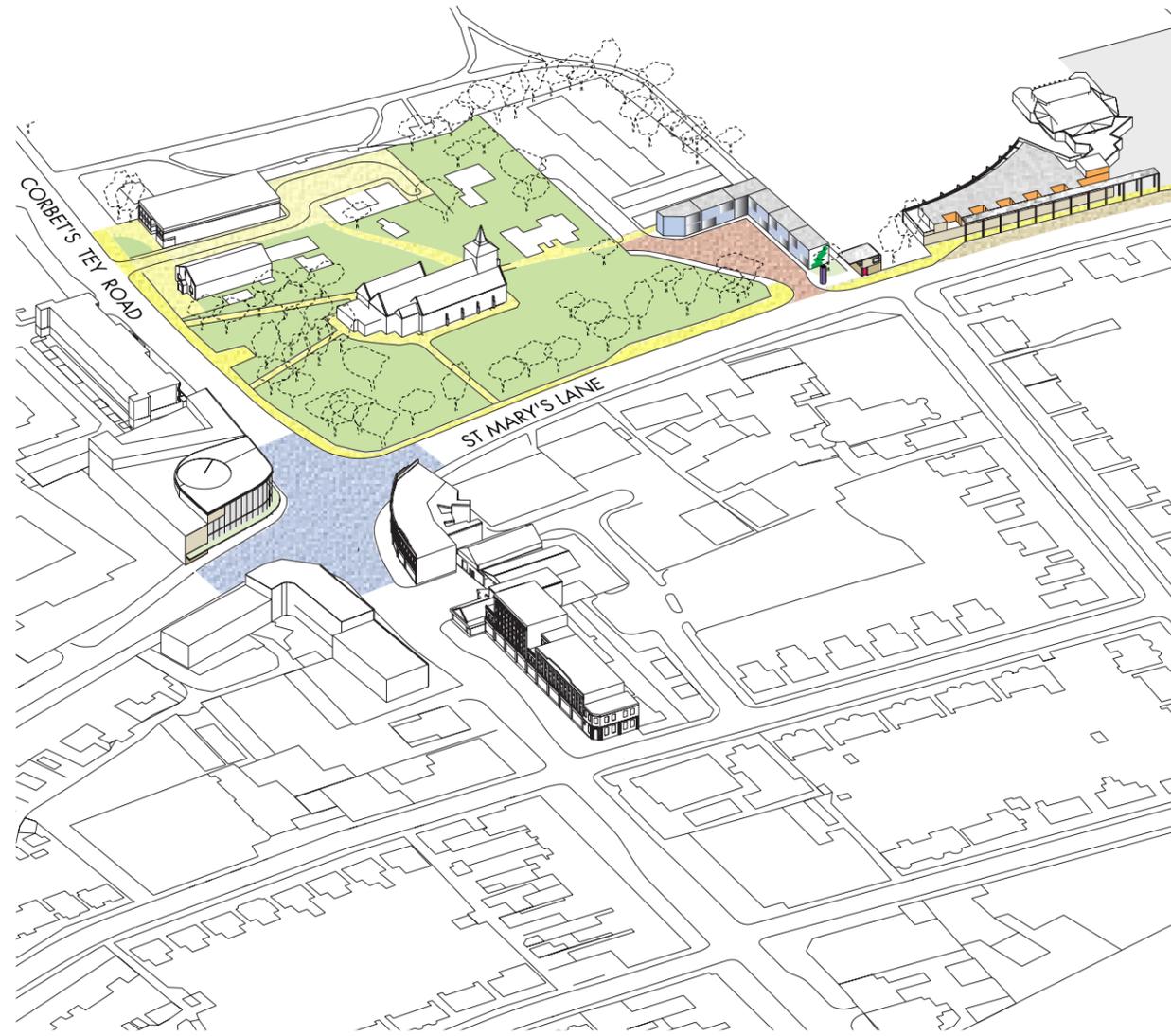


Figure 57.1 Overview of proposals

STRATEGY

The improvements envisaged here are based on strategies for making the New Windmill Hall site far more visible from the Bell Corner. This visibility will make the western leg of St Mary's Lane and the Hall far more easily understood as part of the Town. Doing so, as it were, extends the Town. Vistas provided by the Town's streets are very important; they present the visitor with a quick overview of the place, a short-hand by which she often judges the place.



Figure 57.4 Gridiron Place: pointless thicket

building faces a small corner site where a new artwork is proposed. Next door, on a plot of unused and overgrown land on Gridiron Place, a new-build of small business units is proposed, helping to make the Town into a genuine workplace.

The same semi-courtyard building could also contain a youth centre facing onto Upminster Park. The centre would straddle the worlds of play (park) and work (business units) and be located close to performing arts space

New Windmill Hall is shown with a major new arcade on its street front. This is built off a new-build on the car-park at the front of the Hall. This new-build should contain flats-for-sale to offset development costs. The street arcade is a street-presence which unambiguously announces a public building. Nearby a new gateway building is proposed to mark the entry to Upminster Park. The gateway

These proposals would be complemented by making St Laurence's churchyard a more obvious walk-through for pedestrians. With developments on Gridiron Place and the New Windmill Hall, pedestrian links across the churchyard between Corbet's Tey Road and St Mary's Lane could play an important part in the routine of the town centre.

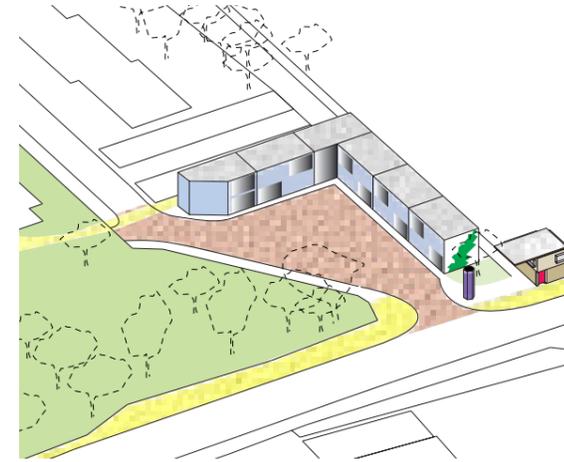


Figure 57.2 Gridiron Place: new startup business units incorporating a youth club: note "gateway" building forming Upminster Park entry with an artwork located opposite

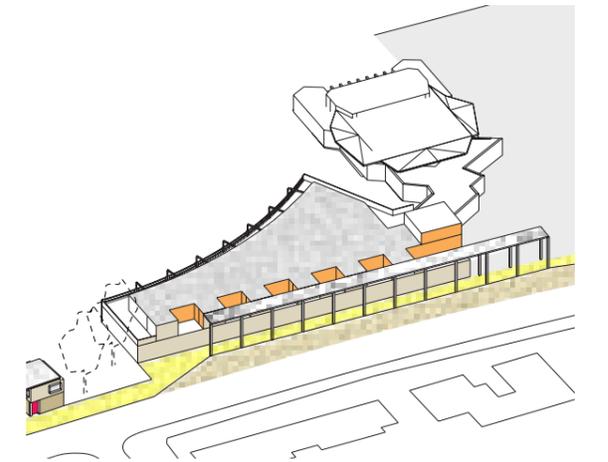
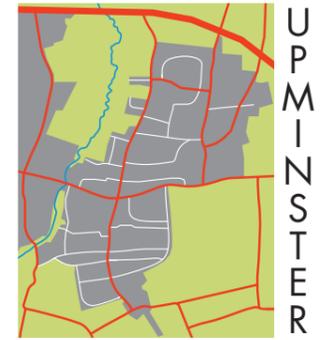


Figure 57.3 New Windmill Hall: new street arcade and lay-by for easy drop-offs and pick-ups: nearby busstop to be relocated here too



UPMINSTER

Figure 58.1 Concept sketch: potential bulk of new-build on garage site

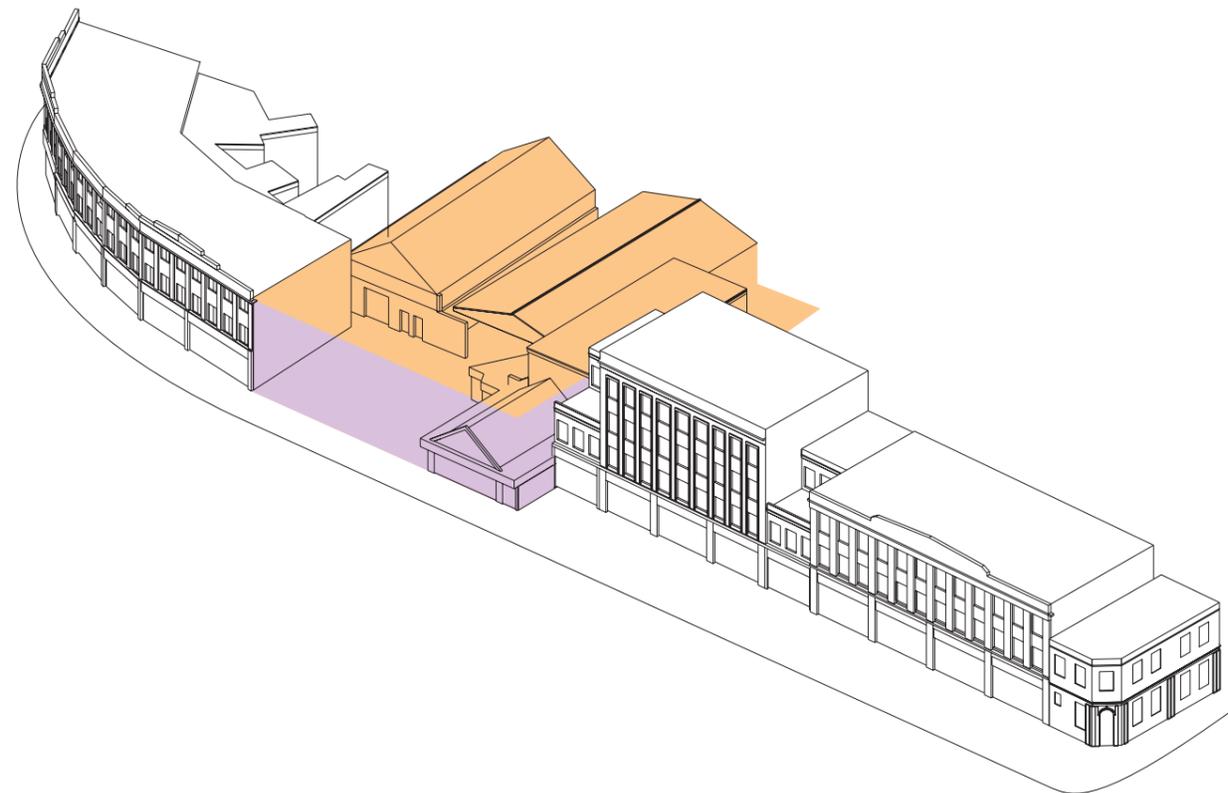


Figure 58.2 Access road at rear of garage



Figure 58.3 Garage site with adjacent buildings

ANALYSIS

Given the bulk and scale of adjacent buildings and the dearth of development opportunities in Upminster, the Time Tees Cars garage and showroom represents a profligate use of a key frontage plot.

The garage is not uninteresting spatially in that it hints at site depth given by its openness and the front-to-back access needed to bring cars to works spaces at the rear.

At the back of the garage is the town centre car-park reached by car via an access road off Gaynes Road. This access road also forms part of a pedestrian route through the whole block.

The town centre car-park is clearly a vital space for the working of town centre shopping. Simply linking to it via the garage site to the main frontage on Station Road would assist pedestrian movement. This simple



Figure 58.6 Depth of site

change cannot be envisaged however without a wholesale change on the garage site.

The town centre car-park is a somewhat disappointing space to “discover” at the rear of the main shopping frontage: if there was an alternative car-park location might not a richer, more enjoyable space be created here that properly negotiates the variety of building types and usages all around?

The garage site could be developed in a variety of ways which realize its role as linking space and the themes of pedestrian movement associated with the spaces all around it. The obvious building-type to do this with is the shopping arcade that’s so well utilized in Romford town centre. Historically, this type developed into the modern shopping mall with its emphasis on exploratory or comparative shopping.

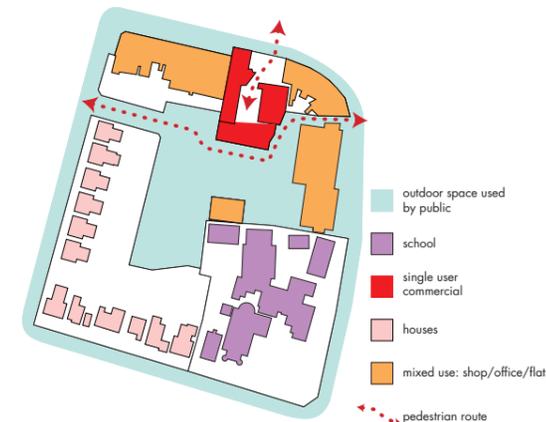


Figure 58.4 Plan of block containing garage (shown red): the block contains a great variety of building-types and uses and has interesting pedestrian access through it



Figure 58.5 Plan showing service/supply spaces at rear of town centre frontage: these spaces lie between the town frontage and the hinterland of domestic housing

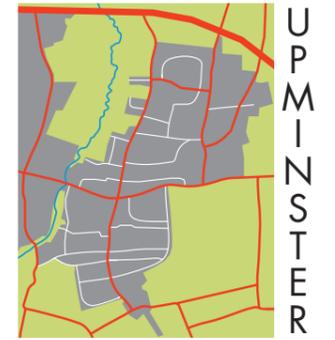


Figure 59.1 Plan of proposed

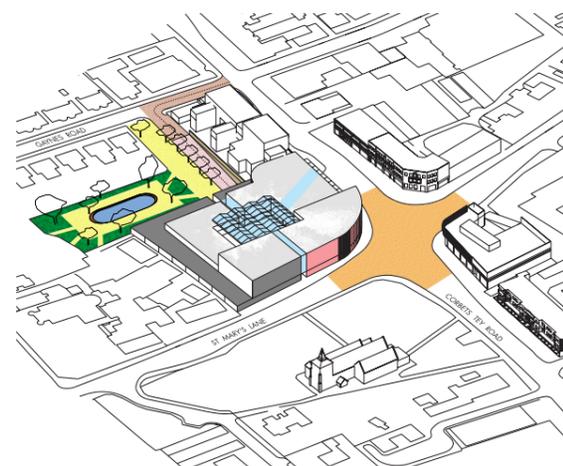


Figure 59.2 Sketch overview

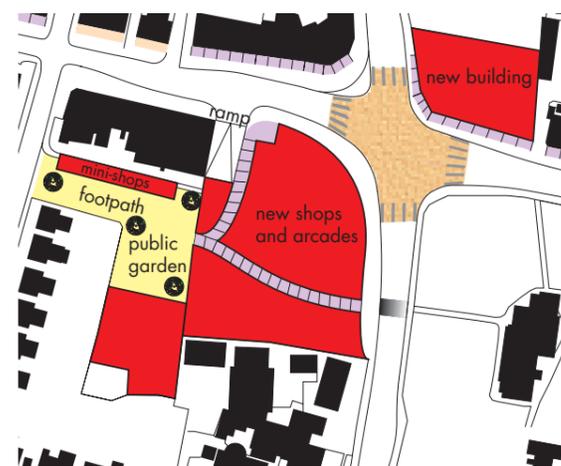


Figure 59.3 Alternative layout

STRATEGY

The proposals shown opposite outline a major town centre development that elaborates on pedestrian movement and the existing front-rear links that are associated with the north-west quadrant of the Bell Corner junction. The commercial and town-planning goal is to create an opportunity for large-scale private investment in the town centre - an investment which will not happen without specific encouragement.

Three bits of the existing town centre arrangement are subsumed in the proposal: the town centre car-park, the Times Tees site and the existing building on Bell Corner's north-west side shown in fig 59.4 below.

The scheme disposes of the town centre car-park underneath the new development which occupies the garage and Bell Corner sites. Access to the new underground car-park is via a ramp off Gaynes Road. The existing car-park site is thus freed for alternative uses more specifically appropriate to the

town centre, namely a new protected public garden onto which shops and surrounding houses can have access. The garden is encountered by pedestrians using the existing route from Bell Corner. All existing pedestrian accessibility is maintained by arcades cutting through the bulk of the main building proposed.

Pedestrian movement is rewarded by encounters with the new garden, new shops, the glazed interior court of the main building, and links to existing town centre routes such as the paths across St Laurence's churchyard.

Large-scale mixed use development on the north-west corner of Bell Corner is another opportunity to give Bell Corner the roadside presence which its position merits.



Figure 59.4 Poor quality town centre building: dull and melancholy



Figure 59.5 Poor quality architecture for town centre although containing an appropriate mix of shops, offices and homes

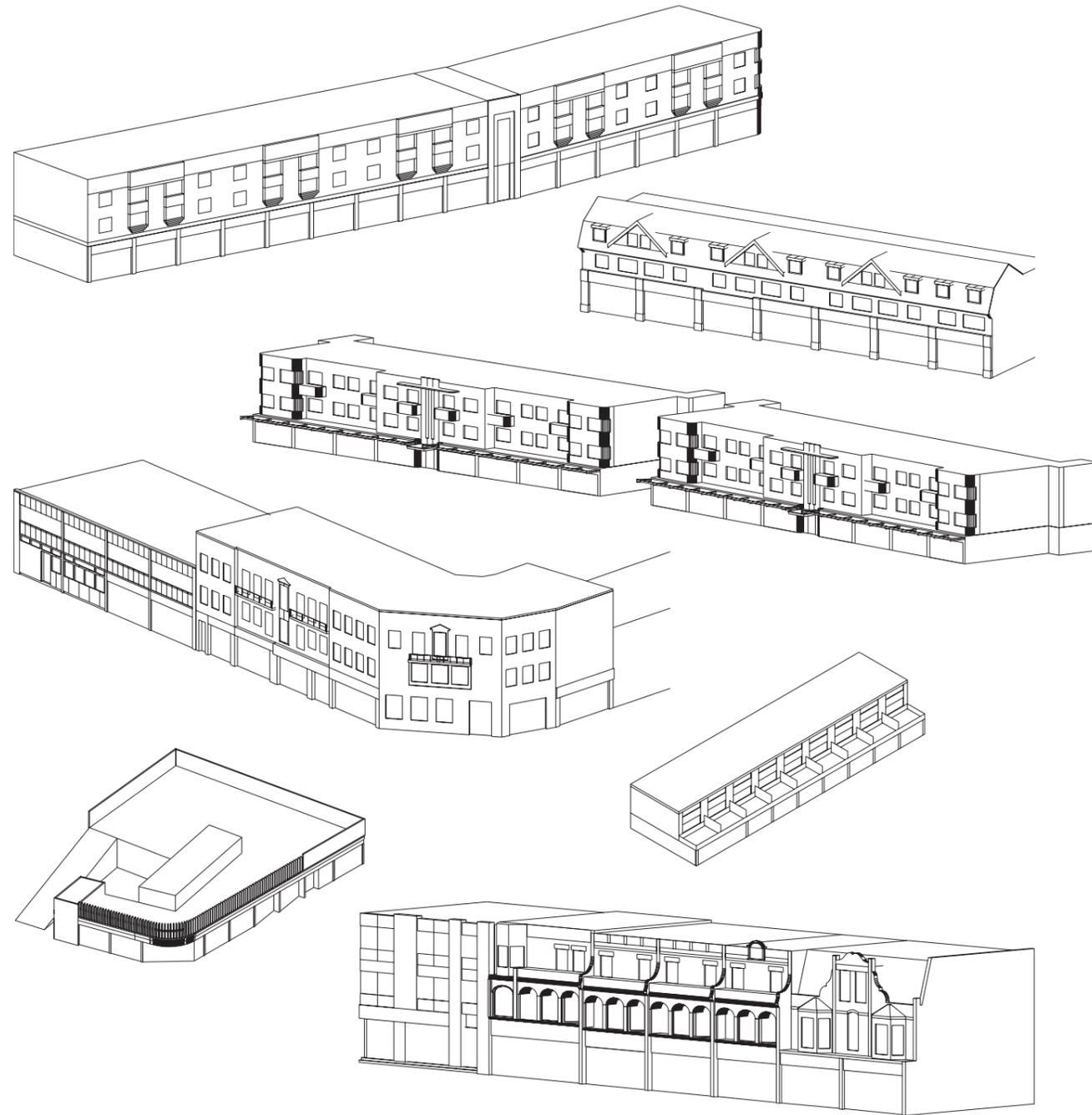
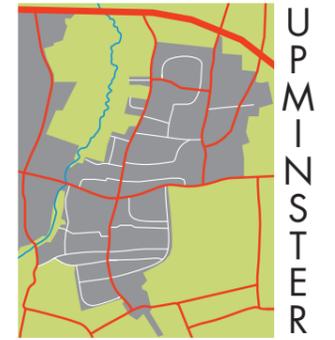


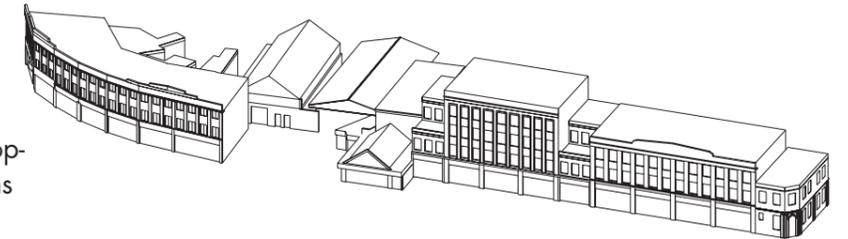
Figure 60.1 Shopping parade buildings

ANALYSIS

A central issue for many people who commented on Upminster Town in the lead-up to this report is the town centre's appeal to shoppers. There are great expectations that a town-centre "re-branding" exercise can be achieved through expedients such as Edwardian or Victorian style street railings and lamp standards. It was beyond the scope of this project to define exactly what is meant by "Victorian"; however, much of the of faith shown in street furniture may reflect inferences from Romford town centre where all kinds of street furniture is evident.

Street furniture is not necessarily the best method to "re-brand" an urban setting. It can only trumpet town centre rebranding if visually intrusive. Street furniture with a big impact is probably no good: it should be quiet, hardly conspicuous at all.

On the other hand, street furniture can be



changed by the local authority without it becoming embroiled in a public-private partnership the management of which is intensely difficult and often leads to the failure of private partners to honour commitments.

The attempt to change the appeal of Upminster town centre may be better thought of as a new way to work with the primary building blocks of the town - these are the mixed use blocks which span between the side streets running off Station Road and Corbets Tey Road. They are the urban units from which the streetspace is made and the Upminster "shopping experience" is based. The images opposite show examples of these building units which are absolutely integral to the organization of Upminster.



Figure 60.2 Romford



Figure 60.3 Street things forming an organized clutter

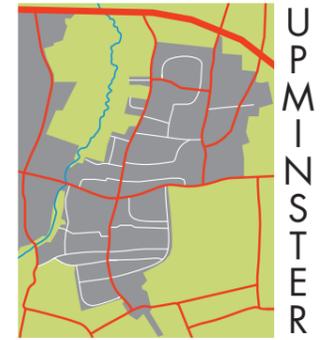


Figure 61.1 The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells

ANALYSIS

The sub-division of the main shopping frontage in Upminster into discrete buildings or sections of the shopping parade is also a way to break down the problem of how to strengthen Upminster's appeal. A way forward is needed that combines public and private commitment. A street furniture make-over gives the retail community ample opportunity to sit on the side lines without making any corresponding investment or commitment.

One development proposition which combines obvious manageability and the opportunity to achieve a near-term result is partially exemplified by the canopied shopping promenade spaces opposite St Laurence's (see fig 59.2 below). Other canopies exist already along the main frontage, outside Roomes' frontage buildings in particular.

The canopied street space creates a clear new shopping space which combines the benefits of shelter with openness: it deals directly with the problems faced by retail-business in

the area. At the same time, as the buildings shown in fig 59.2 show, canopies are definitely part of a building, not a piece of publically-owned street furniture.

A canopy can be individually tailored to a particular building, and indeed strengthen the building's overall identity - whilst being part of a whole integrated townscape design. The whole could end up being a completely canopied shopping frontage extending from Upminster Station down to the post-office sorting office at the south end of the Town. Such completeness composed from individually designed elements corresponding to the sub-division of the frontage would offer a genuine basis to rebrand the shopping experience in Upminster.

The strong identity of covered frontage spaces such as the Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells points to the branding potential that a programme of new canopy additions could promise for Upminster Town.



Figure 61.2 Canopied shopping space: Corbets Tey Road



Figure 61.3 Corner canopy; Roomes, Station Road

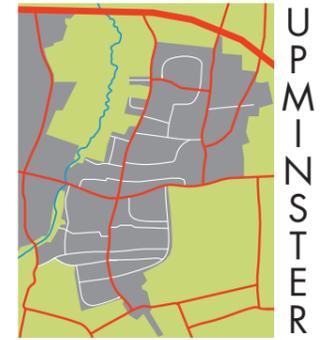


Figure 62.1 Proposal for canopy: Station Road, between Howard and St Lawrence Roads

STRATEGY

New canopies, specifically designed for each building will give each section of the retail parade the opportunity to define itself. Effectively, the new canopies will make a virtue of the sub-division of the town frontage creating a completely protected pedestrian shopping “experience”.

The canopies would be paid for by the building freeholders and shop businesses through a Business Investment District model with some public assistance. Costs can be divided according to benefit.

A planning framework could be drawn up to facilitate planning applications and their processing. One canopy achieved would encourage others to follow suit which suggests initial applications could be treated as templates. The Council could also help by providing contact information for freeholders and shop-

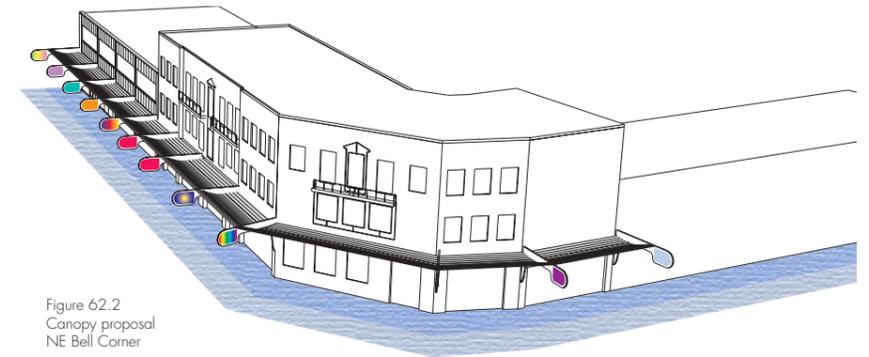


Figure 62.2 Canopy proposal NE Bell Corner

keepers. The canopies ought not to be overly expensive, particularly if simplicity of design and construction technique is observed. Manufacture can be done locally.

The canopies could be adapted to expand as required to form bus shelters. It would not be difficult to integrate public phones, street lighting, mature trees as well as the more obvious shop-signs and window lighting into the design of the canopies: in fact a variety of finesses could be made according to the wishes of each group of shops.

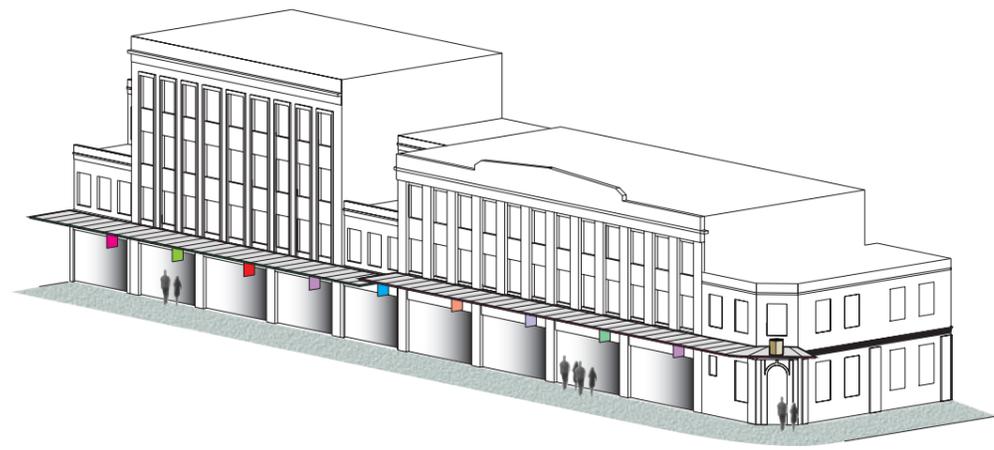


Figure 62.2 Canopy proposal: block adjacent to Time Tees showroom

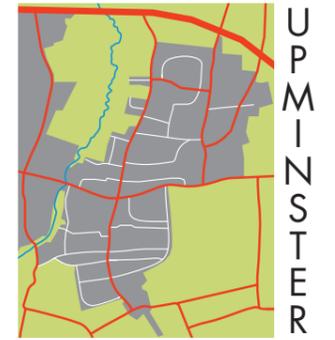


Figure 63.1 Concept sketch showing how a new canopy could be occasion for extending accommodation above

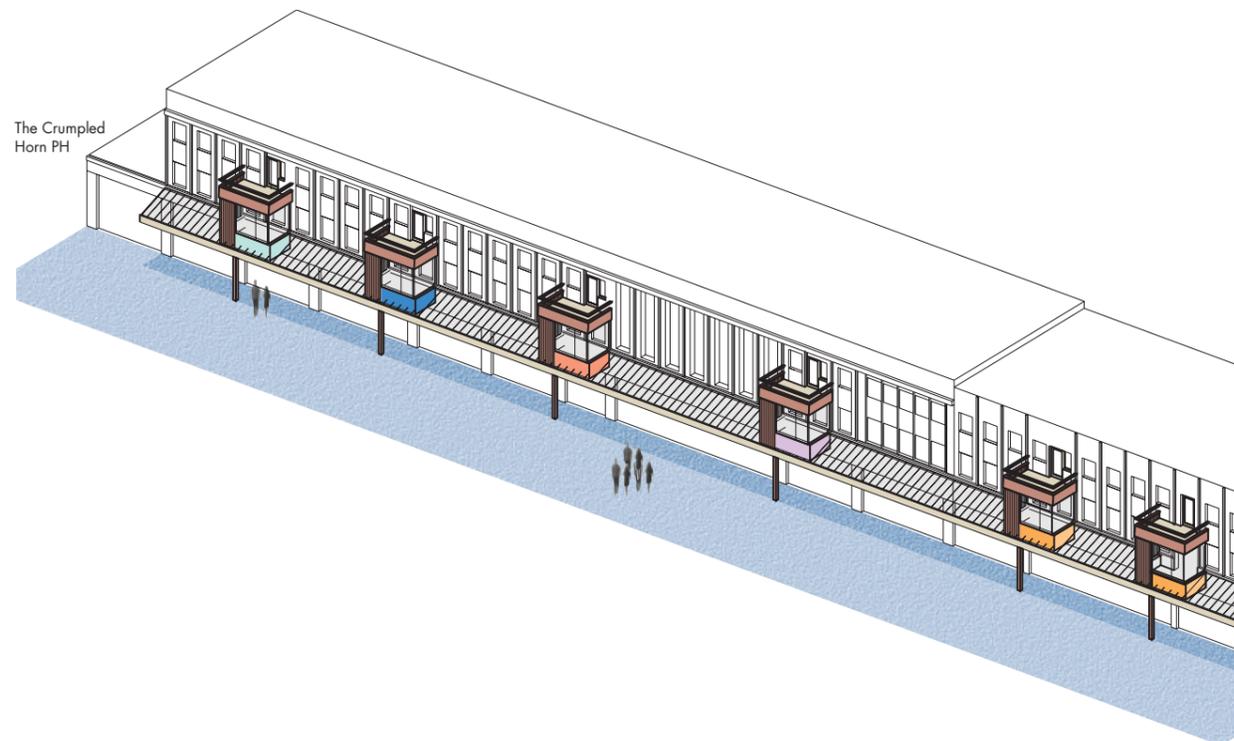


Figure 63.2 Tunbridge Wells Pantiles: street vista enlivened by build-outs over the arcade



Figure 63.3 Tunbridge Wells Pantiles: the build-outs show a distinct public character - that is transparency to allow the occupants clear view of what's going on down in the street

STRATEGY

The canopy project offers flexibility: it's an overarching town centre concept which does not preclude individual design of specific elements. In fact, it depends on design contributions that are individually tailored to different parades of shops and different buildings.

DOMESTIC ENLARGEMENT
The example of The Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells points to the scope for building out over canopies or arcades. The build-outs effectively extend the accommodation available in flats above the street-level shops.

The canopy project could thus become the framework for thinking about minor domestic extensions above the shops. Informally, one or two of these already exist within the town-centre; they are quite clearly unplanned. Improving domestic accommodation in-town in an



Figure 63.5 A few new balconies can offset the dullness of the building overlooking the Park

imaginative way would be entirely consonant with the goal of making the Town a better place to live.

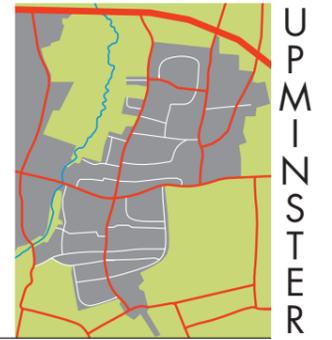
FACADE IMPROVEMENTS
Such "extensions" should be treated as facade improvements to Upminster's frontage buildings since some buildings present an unacceptably bland and dull aspect to the town.

A good example is the very large block which overlooks Upminster Park, which forms a continuous screen along the Park's eastern edge. This building plays a vital role in the architectural structuring of Upminster, but looks terrible.

The concept sketch (fig 61.1) opposite shows how a new canopy structure to the street-front could be integrated with new "pods" that provide light, airy living-room spaces for first floor flats.



Figure 63.4 Building facing Upminster Park on Corbets Tey Road forms a distinct background: its 50s design is indifferent, impervious to the spirit of the park which it overlooks; its size and clarity of line on the other hand are beneficial.



UPMINSTER STATION



Figure 64.1 View over platforms at Upminster Station: August 2001



ANALYSIS



Figure 65.1 Allotments seen from District Line train near to Upminster

Upminster station is a major gateway into the Town. People are concerned with its condition and the impression it gives. There are well-known problems with car-crime in the station car-park. For all this, the train services to and from Upminster are very good, used by thousands of commuters each day. The youth - always enthusiasts for communications - also use the rail network to hop between various towns, a usage suffused with excitement and irresponsibility, entirely different to commuter routine.

Upminster is affected by daily tides of commuters but does not benefit economically from these mass movements by all accounts. The inability to divert commuters must have a variety of causes - lack of disposable income,



Figure 65.4 1930s bench from Upminster Bridge

fatigue, force of habit etc. However, indifference to the Town as it's embodied in the station complex, must be a significant factor. Miniscule signs of business linked directly to the station show in the shack structures alongside the station car-park access road. Few other synergies between Town life and the station exist. The emphasis is much more morose, on how commuters clog up the roads and usurp parking spaces on residential streets.

DESIGN

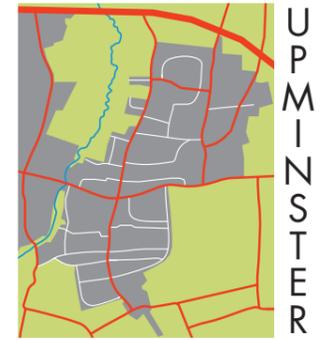
Thirties design is a feature of some stations near Upminster. It exemplifies an attitude to materials - at once tough and decorative - that suits the area. New design is less engaged with material and more with so-called corporate branding. The effects are less sustaining of place. Thirties design remains exemplary as a sign of the suburbs.



Figure 65.2 Small scale business spaces next to Upminster station



Figure 65.3 Typical Thirties corner window from the Town



ANALYSIS

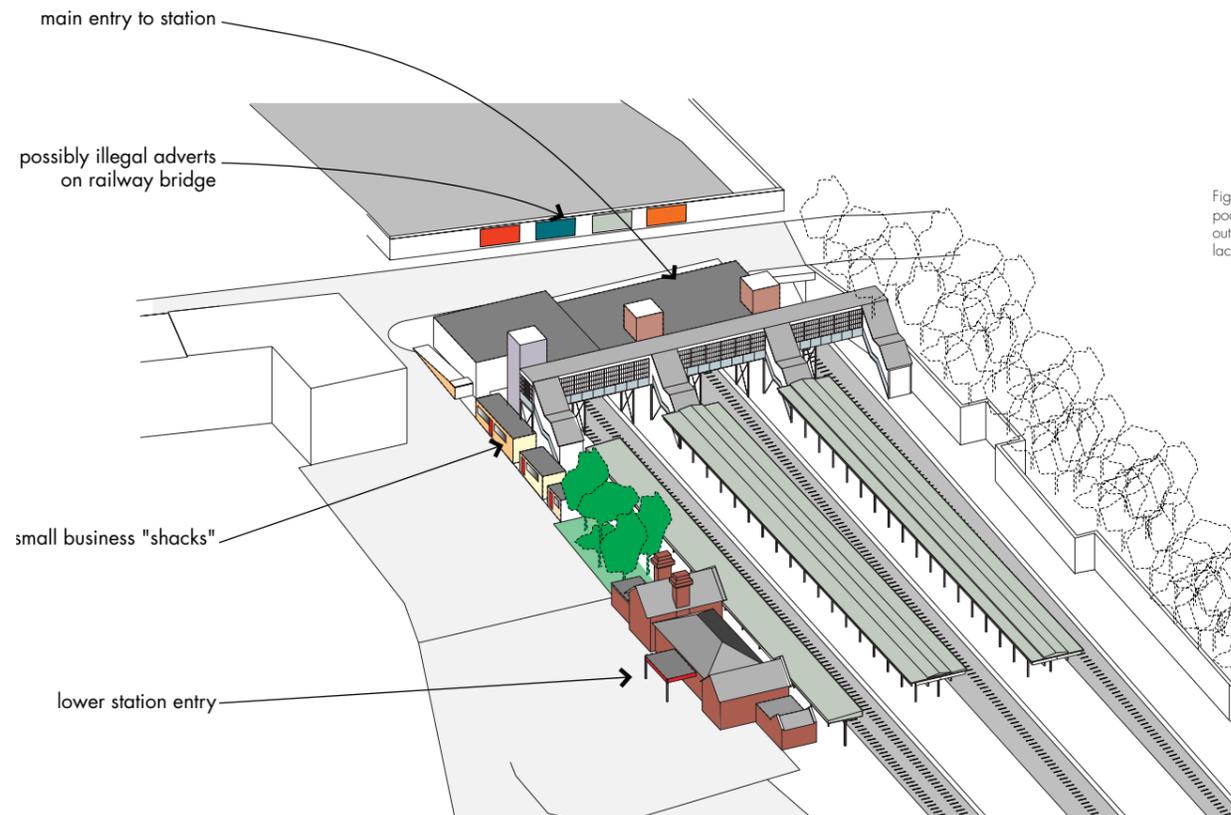


Figure 66.1 Sketch overview of station rear

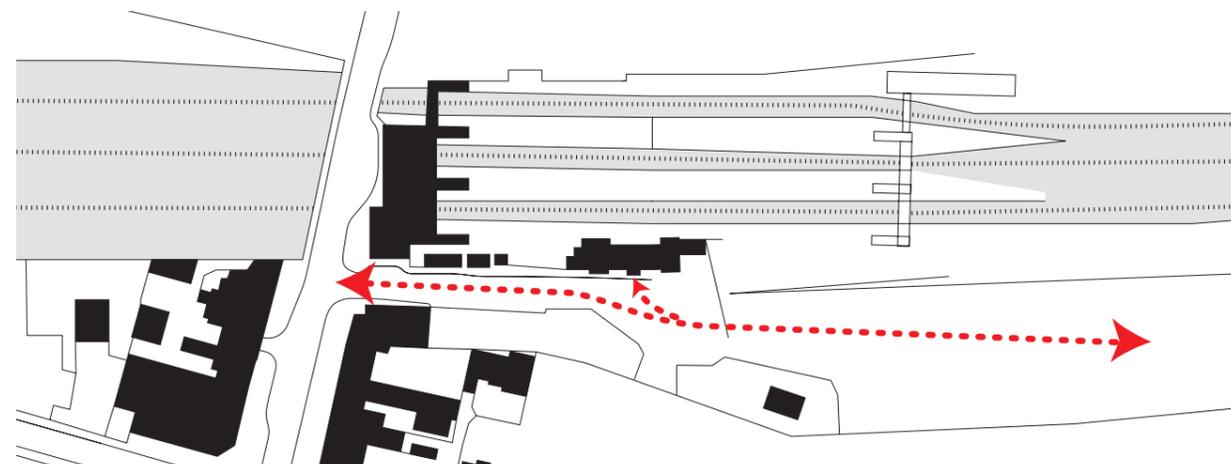


Figure 66.2 Existing station plan

Figure 66.5 poor quality rail sign outside Upminster Station: lack of design ambition



TOWN MARKER

The station stands at the head of the main shopping frontage in Upminster. It is the last Town building but only a weak marker structure along one side of the railway bridge.

The station has two distinct buildings - the single storey building on the bridge and the gabled brick affair on the north side of the station car-park access road. These buildings are connected only by a jumble of canopies, shack buildings and rough open space.

The railway bridge and the station car-park are significant episodes in the structure of public spaces in the Town which are closely linked through everyday usage to the station complex though not architecturally commanded by it.

What is missing is a station structure with the impact to unambiguously form part of the

main Town frontage and simultaneously connect the main car-park back to the Town. This means a building that "turns the corner", or connects the stations west and east flanks.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Upminster Station is a gateway to work: thousands of commuters use it to reach their workplaces in central London. This function reflects on Upminster to the degree that the Town is not a work destination itself. Real town status for Upminster must mean it offers a wider range of work prospects than shop-keeping and shop-assistance. With its good connections to the City and freedom from big city sleaze, Upminster is decent place to set up office and the station with its significant underdevelopment may be the place to create new workspace.

Figure 66.6 Hackney Clocktower

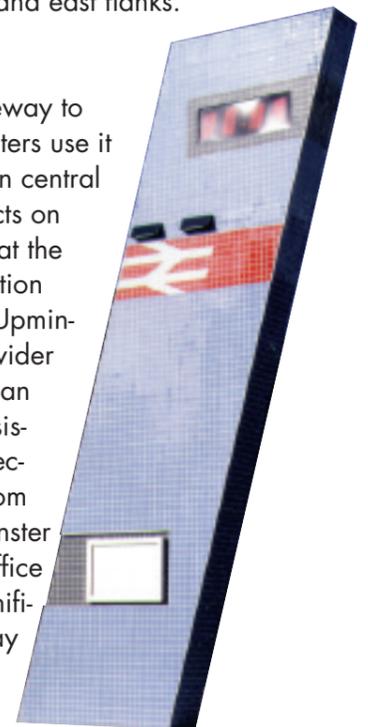
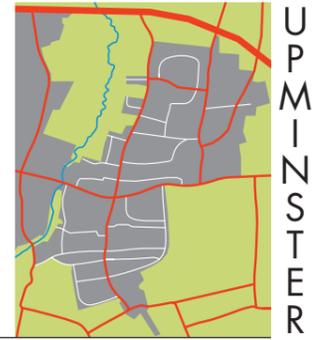


Figure 66.3 Station car-park



Figure 66.4 Access road to station car-park



NEW STATION OFFICES

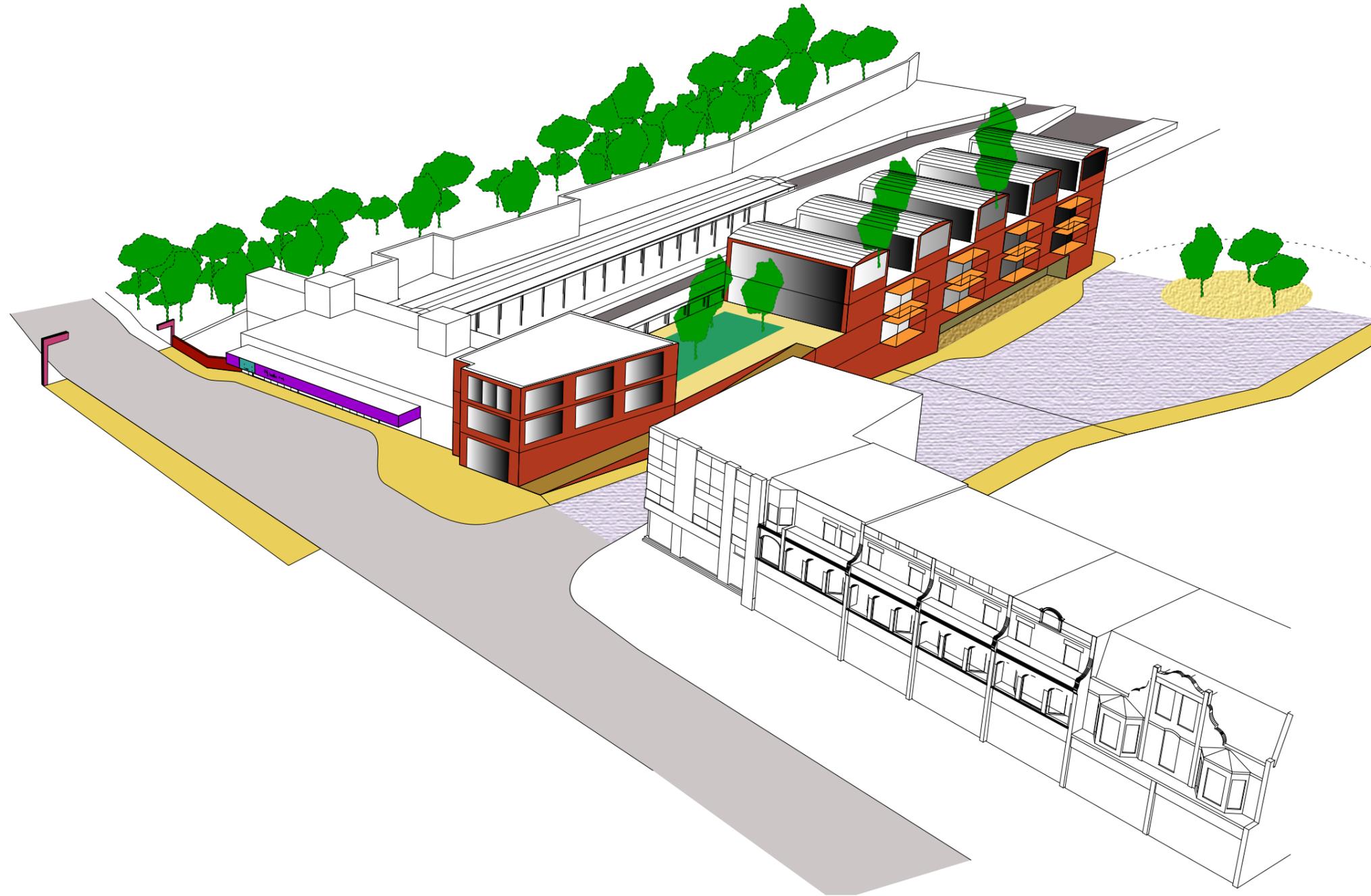
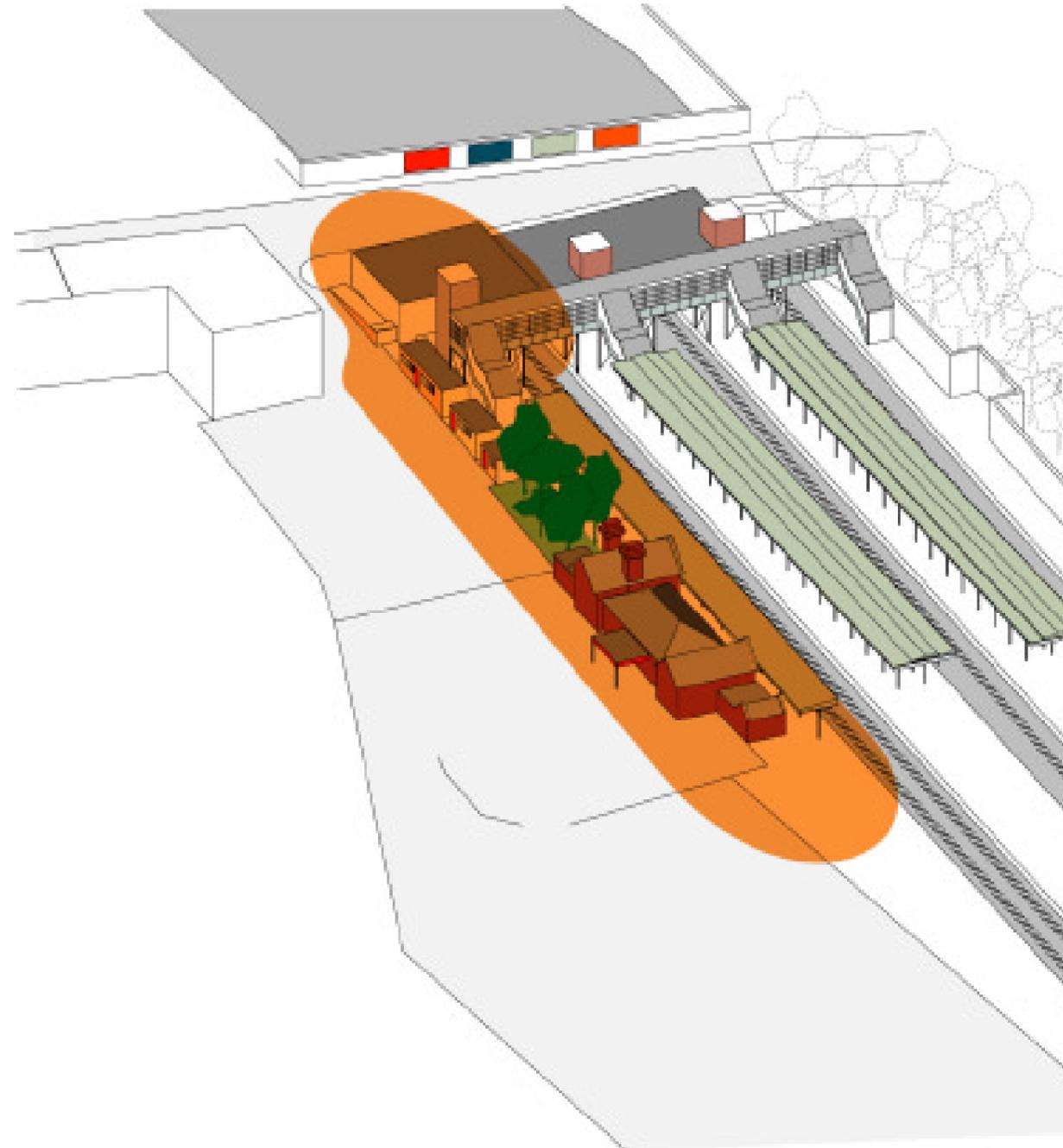
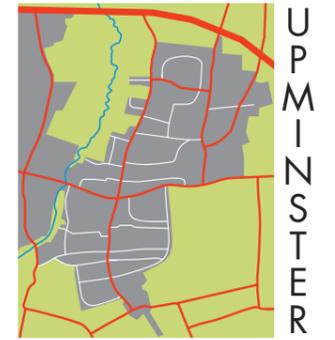


Figure 67.1



STRATEGY

The opportunity which exists at Upminster Station is to bring about a significant change in the role played by station site in town centre life. The method to achieve this which is outlined here derives from the proposition that new work opportunities can be framed around the station site and indeed that the station site is a highly appropriate location for workplaces.

Figure 65.1 shows a substantial new building incorporating station entry/bus station at ground floor with a range of offices/flats at upper levels. The adjacent figure 66.1 shows the location of the suggested development. Effectively, the proposal makes a new space off Station Road which is not a residential street (like the other cross-streets are) but a work-dedicated urban space.

Interestingly, the residential cross-streets lined with houses show a high-level of investment in buildings and homes which the station/car-park site fails to match.

There are obvious ways to expand the new workspace even further. The plan below outlines the idea that the whole car-park could be edged with a new work building. Such development is a complete rethink of the car-park/station spaces - one perhaps that is very overdue. Potential benefits from such development combining excellent public transport access and good quality workspace all close to where office staff may live are great, and include a major injection of daytime/weekday shoppers for the local retailers.

The core development on the site shown in red in figure 66.2 formalizes the junction of Station Road and the car-park access road.

A strong building on this corner provides a vigorous termination of the main town frontage and a clear relationship to the car-park. It will also command the car-park space, provide a clear, deliberate spatial and architectural arrangement of spaces currently bereft of such an ordering.

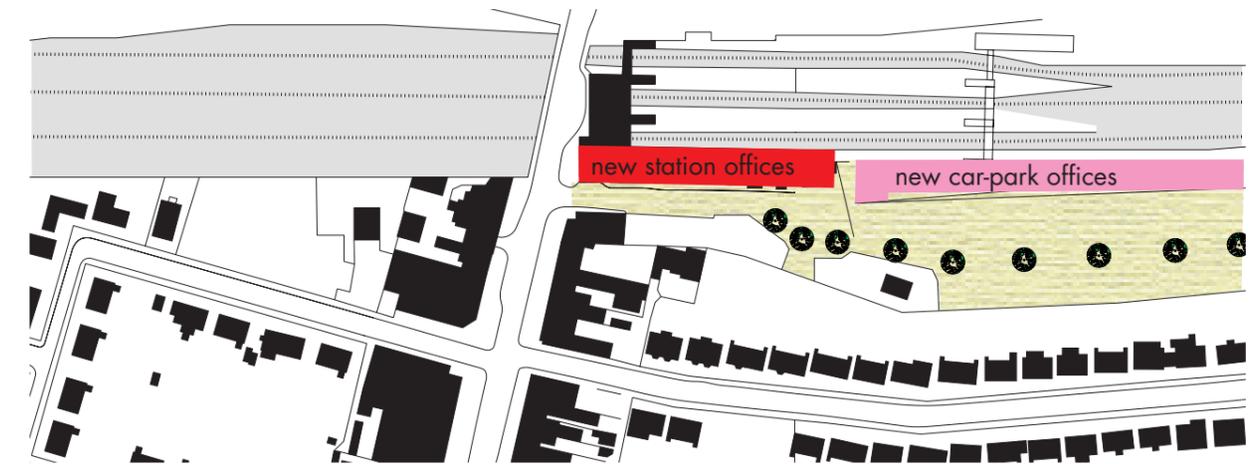


Figure 68.2 Plan of station area

69 NOTABLE UNDER-DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRE FRONTAGE

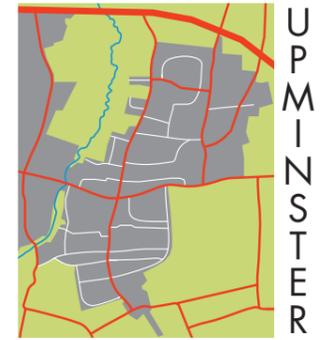


Figure 69.1
name Floral Affairs
description run-down shop, office & yard next to large railway embankment



Figure 69.2
name Barclays Bank
description bank, offices and ancillary space:



Figure 69.3
name Station car park
description low amenity car-park



Figure 69.4
name Police Station site
description open ground

Figure 69.5
name Bell Corner
description shops and car-park



Figure 69.6
name Time Tees Garage
description showroom, offices & workshop

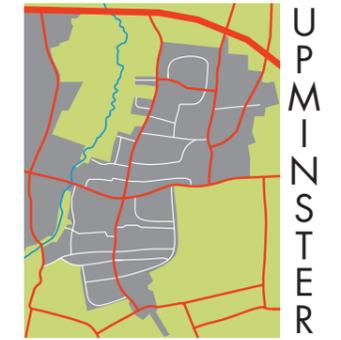


Figure 69.7
name Shell Garage
description petrol station & shop



Figure 69.8
name Kwik Fit Centre
description garage & offices





TOWNS AND SUBURBS

Urban design's role is simple: it is a discipline that facilitates thinking about existing places in order not to squander that which has grown up, become established and been invested.

The projects shown in this report emphasize the need to find opportunities to engage private and public investment in the Town. At the same time, the project outlines are meant to give strong indicators of possible design requirements to ensure high-quality outcomes which serve both private or institutional interest and the larger idea of the town.

Town Planning - not urban design - is associated with the layout of new communities or towns. In the context of Upminster town centre, one may see immediately that the era of Town Planning is finished though outside the town centre there may be scope for a Town Planning approach to engage with new ideas emerging about sustainable settlements.

Within the Town, it is important that significant new town centre projects are not



Figure 70.1 A quiet residential street



seen as public sector follies.

Work for example to Upminster Park must not disturb the Park's wonderful "democratic" quality. One does not want to make "visitors" out of existing park-users after all. However, this sensitivity ought not obscure the huge potential for improvement.

THE TOWN: IRRELEVANT?

Suburbia is highly differentiated from dense urban centres and it seems a town centre like Upminster's can only be ambiguously related to the quiet private streets which surround it in such depth.

But suburbia was not instituted as a replacement for city life but as a new model for it. Its founding fathers always recognized the role of the "neighbourhood" for example. Their vision embraced town centres, business, farming, industry as well as houses for people to live in.

Today suburbia is associated almost completely with houses - a degradation of the original ideas. Suburbia was originally a project to re-centre modern life in new, improved

"towns" with a new relationship to the countryside.

The obscurity of suburban housing is valued; it gives a feeling of being a long-way outside the mainstream, something experienced palpably in the repetitious, placeless organization of residential streets. This pleasure in anonymous hiddenness refers back to a life "outside the system", an independence from everything which exacts such a toll through the working routine. The notion that there are *places* beyond the reach of "the system" is a happy one and the home is evidently the main place to convincingly experience it.

Increasingly, the suburban dweller perspective has no need to refer to towns. The transport, telecommunications, media and service networks provide her wants on her terms.



REAL ALTERNATIVE

Though the Town has ceased to be central it has become a key alternative. The Town's main strength is

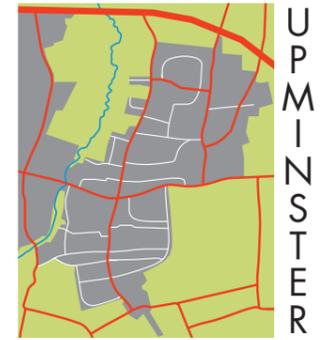
its unique relationship to the general run of activity which it hosts. Cultural activity in particular is simply invalidated in any other context.

The Town has this attribute of validating vital activities of all kinds, by putting them in a relationship to all the rest. It validates or supports the meaning of religious, memorial, political, theatrical, artistic, commercial and sporting activity.

Effectively it creates an open whole not owned outright by a single player in which various meanings can prosper in a way completely foreign to the closed, unreal worlds created in so-called shopping malls.



Figure 70.2 A game of football in the Town



NEW TOWN : SUBURBAN TRADITION

Figure 71.1 Southeast edge of Upminster facing Cranham Church: the town's perimeter is one long back garden fence



The role of Planning policy in managing a suburban environment is fascinating. Planning plays a vital role in popular political understanding in protecting the residential fabric from disturbance and over-development.

The need for development - a tenet that underpins all local authority development plans - is not widely accepted. Protection from development is more readily understood as the job of planning. That planning is there to develop and manage the environment and the attainment of competing goods such as access to job markets and freedom from over-trafficked streets is not widely recognized.



Figure 71.5 Ingrebourne Valley: saving it from development has been a notable achievement of planning policy

PLANNING CENTRE

Given the role of planning policy in the birth and life of Upminster, an Upminster Planning Centre with a national role is a plausible idea. A suitable location for it might be the north end of Hall Lane, a setting where the Ingrebourne Valley is visible and where the future of various dishevelled agricultural sites is undecided. The valley's protection is clear achievement of planning and the sight of it would provide an appropriate background to a new planning institution.

THE TOWN EDGE: JUST FENCES?

That so much of Upminster's boundary with the countryside is back garden fencing is

disappointing and reflects planning policy's inability to achieve quality at small scales. Garden fencing or ordinary houses are fine grain elements compared to the Ingrebourne Valley but repeated hundreds of times they take on the scale of the open land all around.

Town edges can be tackled by an additional UDP clause about fence quality or reviewed more openly as a question pertaining to the larger issue of the town/country relationship.

Folke Günter at Lund University argues that small towns by agricultural land can realize more energy efficient relationships with agriculture. He is concerned with agriculture's huge consumption of phosphates. This energy expenditure can be reduced to sustainable levels by recycling household phosphorus streams. Investment in sustainable housing linked appropriately to local food producers could be spread over 20 years.

"Ruralisation" of towns is achievable by replacing townhouses when their owners die with public gardens, and building up-to-date houses in new mini-settlements (see below).

Our own research has revealed how divorced Upminster has become from agriculture. Food producers say local people have no interest in working on the land preferring jobs in warm offices. They cite the supermarket-led transformation of food distribution in the 70s as the main reason for the disappearance of market gardens which supplied London markets. Farm shops are in decline too and sell mostly imported food brought in by the same distribution system that serves the supermarkets. Meanwhile Essex Remade report that local farmers do not take part in the market for local waste products. The NFU say disappointingly that they plan no initiatives to integrate agricultural and suburban economies.

NEW SETTLEMENTS

Planning promotes rural leisure business as the future of the town/country relationship locally. Whether this accounts for the burden of urbanization, distribution and agricultural production is doubtful. A significant step in the right direction would be to consider creating new settlements close to Upminster's town edges to meet the challenge of creating sustainable new settlements.

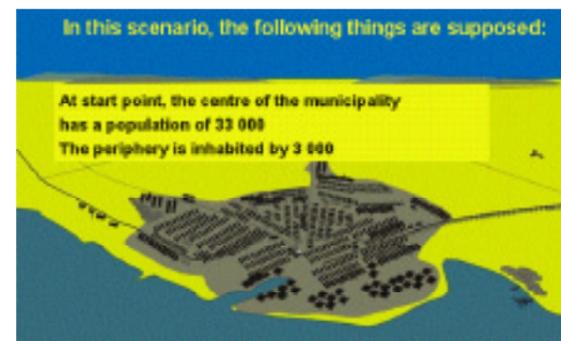


Figure 71.3 Ruralisation: stage 1 - the starting point

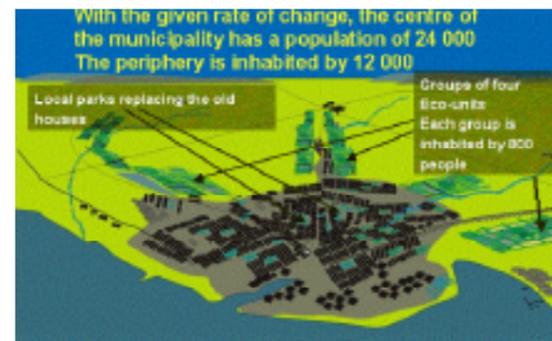


Figure 71.4 Ruralisation: stage 2 - replacement of houses by parks

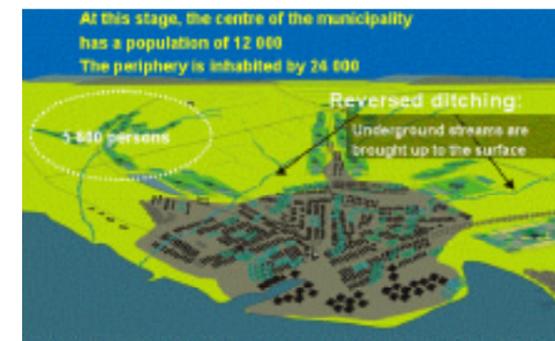


Figure 71.5 Ruralisation: stage 3 - population shift to more sustainable settlements is well-advanced

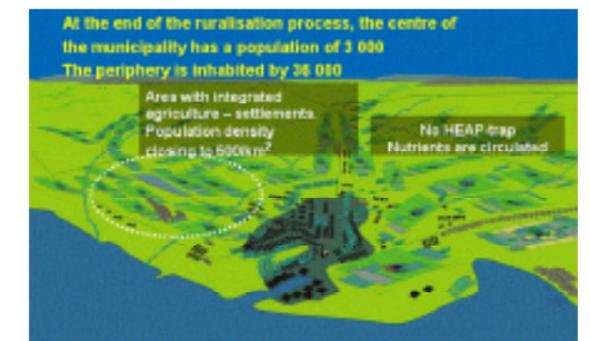
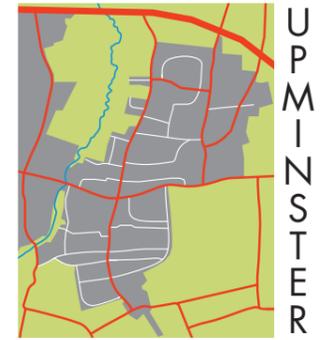


Figure 71.6 Ruralisation: stage 4 - the end point



RENEWING THE IDEA OF UPMINSTER



Figure 72.1
"First Step towards
Peace, a Haven
and Happiness":
out-of-town housing
from 1930s"

Folke Günter argues for transformation by "ruralisation" and a closer integration of agriculture and residential settlements... (to) minimize dependency on industrial energy, increase nutrient circulation (and) integration between agriculture and other social activities... The economic... benefits of such systems may well ... be considerable, especially given the anticipated (oil) price rises and vulnerability of modern industrial agriculture."

Figure 70.2 below shows an area of 130 hectares as required by Günter to house and support agriculturally around 650 people.

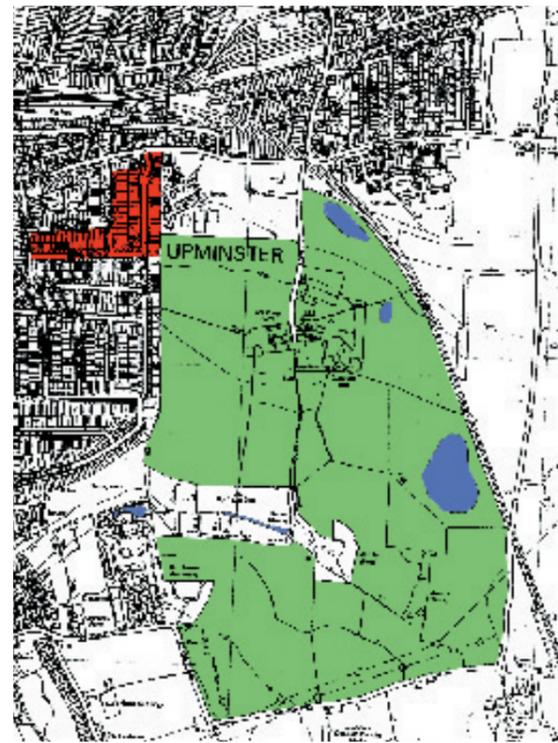


Figure 72.2 Approximately 130 hectares of land: enough to support 650 people sustainably

A new settlement built to return nutrients to the land could show-case a new kind of suburb renewing Upminster's tradition of creating communities of the future. Curiously, suburbs, once forward-thinking in their programme of giving access to "the good life", are now identified with rampant materialism.

PLANNING PERSPECTIVE
The red patch in figure 70.2 is a random section of Upminster housing that might be replaced by new housing in a sustainable settlement by Cranham church.

The significance of this to the long term future of Upminster would be immense not only because it provides a replacement strategy for out-of-date housing but because it outlines a long-term method to slowly dissolve limits to town centre growth.

Green Belt does not prohibit town development but protects farmland. When new settlement actually enhances agriculture (rather than just violating an abstract, planning concept such as Green Belt) then there is a case for change.

RENEWAL OF INNOCENCE
The relationship between town and country is part of Upminster's identity. Successful proximity to the land is not demonstrated by the "Upminster Town Wall" of back-garden fences or the failure to acknowledge natural figures



Figure 72.4
River Drive: street and woodland path in an open, public relationship

such as the Ingrebourne River at Upminster Bridge. More successful are the allotments that offer a public relationship with the land. These landscapes are more chaotic than modern farmland but may for all that be a landscape of the future. They exemplify public space in which the public takes part constructively.

The allotments, offering food and exercise though husbandry, refer back to the an self-help way of life called the Plotlands. It had an outcrop in Havering's Noah Hill and Havering Park. The Plotlanders were Londoners who bought cheap plots of agricultural land in the 30s and built bungalows on them. They explicitly sought access to peace and quiet and simplicity of living. Plotlands were decried as blight on landscape though they gave many the opportunity dwell

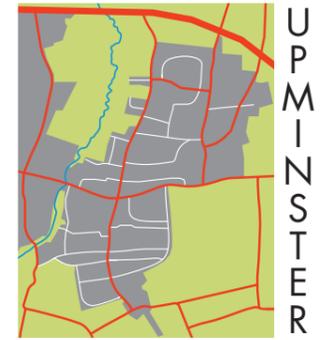
amongst greenery. Much of the impetus for the development of planning law came from the violent reaction to the Plotlands and the apparent disorder it represented.

The Plotlanders imposed costs on the environment and were resented by local authorities which were asked to provide them with services eventually. The Plotlanders, having become the targets of massive criticism for despoiling the countryside, were supplanted by "normal suburbia" and their project of some kind of simple life was lost.

Maintaining and renewing the link with the recurring cultural aspiration towards a simple life must be part of small town life. In all senses, this is about renewal. The whole of this work is about re-achieving the Town's innocence through a new sophistication about what a small town can offer its population. It is for this reason that allotments are suggested as part of the inhabitation of Upminster Park's edges.



Figure 72.3 Upminster Bridge allotments: presentiment of future, democratic landscapes?



INFORMATION BEFORE CONSULTATION

The scope of work outlined in this report is ambitious. What steps can be taken in the near term to develop the town centre?

The most important answer is obvious: create and *sustain* interest and eventually excitement about the future of Upminster town centre. This can be done intelligently or thoughtlessly. More particularly, it might easily generate more bad faith than anything else.

Putting the emphasis on consultation, although apparently credible, may be mistaken. It may be more constructive to create a mood of

renewed interest in the facts of the past - that is provide information about how the current situation evolved.

PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

We propose a series of exhibitions covering different aspects of the area. The topics must be genuinely informative and factual. Here's a possible list

- Why the town centre is laid out as it is and a history of its open spaces
- Work set out in this report
- The design of suburban houses

- Small Towns: how does Upminster compare
- The agricultural past
- The Plotlands movement and the role of Planning Policy
- The significance of Thames Gateway for Upminster
- Retail Industry: how big shopping centres work

The exhibitions are designed to create an atmosphere of intelligent interest. The interest is not solicited through "consultation" in order to satisfy a bureaucracy associated with a particular development: it's engaged by being genuinely interesting, that is by being revealing about the conditions in which people live.

It is hard to imagine a public more likely to respond intelligently to this approach than the one in Upminster.

STAGING

Exhibition staging and timing must be carefully thought through. Choosing appropriate town centre venues for the exhibitions is a matter of immense sensitivity. Unused or so-called "found spaces" such as disused shops brought to life for a show can provide an extraordinary atmosphere, a very special setting for social encounters which often turn on the material on display. The venue must be situated in the right part of the town centre at all costs.

The exhibitions must be managed by someone with a feel for the Town and its people.

This person is pivotal as a link between the Council and the people and must ensure the exhibitions offer a quiet, unhurried encounter with organized information and relevant local histories. The exhibition co-ordinator whilst not necessarily the exhibition curator must understand fully and be able to express to the public the serious and candid intentions of the exhibition programme.

A TOWN EVENT

It needs to be remembered how the objective of creating public interest in the future of a town centre like Upminster's is utterly different to creating public interest for commercial purposes.

The exhibitions can only be validated by a town setting. Exhibitions about the future of a shopping centre, by contrast, could only be construed as supporting a commercial interest.

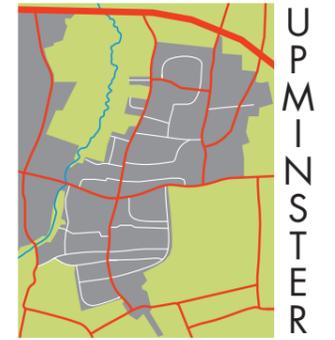
LOCAL AUTHORITY WORK

The exhibition programme is an opportunity for co-ordinated inter-departmental Council action. Arts would carry the burden of organizing the exhibitions but significant input would be required from various other departments.

The period of the exhibitions - 6 months maximum- would be time spent on key planning policy changes. Given the interest local people have in Planning, these policies would be presented at a final exhibition.



Figure 73 The ReNew Kentish Town Exhibition: high street location, disused shop venue: wonderful atmosphere!

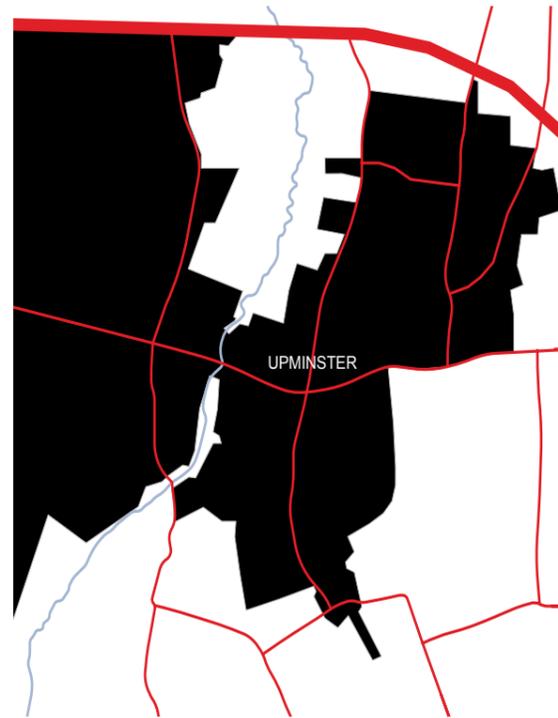


NEXT STEPS : NEW POLICIES FOR A TOWN

Whilst Upminster is represented as a significant district centre in the Havering Unitary Development Plan as if, somewhat curiously, it constituted just one part of a larger conurbation known as Havering, it is perhaps more appropriate to think about it as a small town. The language of the UDP is not clear or definite about Upminster's status: it does not say whether Upminster is a distinct town or just an outcrop of "town centre activities" within a continuous urban settlement.

DISTINCT TOWN

This report puts the distinctiveness of Upminster at the heart of new thinking about the town centre. This is consistent with planning principles which turn on the impor-



tance of maintaining identities e.g. town, and countryside. Martin Elson's recent report for the DoE about "strategic gaps and green wedges" notes how landscape features are used by planning authorities to prevent coalescence of communities by sprawl for the purpose of maintaining primarily definition of towns and villages, a policy which clearly sets high store by the separate identities of such settlements.

We believe the initiative of commissioning town centre studies would be complemented by a policy clearly identifying Upminster as a town in its own right. If this leads to debate about what a *town* as a opposed to a *town centre* is, it will be long overdue. By all this we mean to say that referring to Upminster as a *district centre* is to be mealy-mouthed, to rely on planning jargon rather the usage of ordinary people. Clearly, there is an issue of identity which arises from the predominant suburban settlement: common understanding looks on Upminster as a suburb of London, a periphery of the big city. I have argued that this is a misapprehension of turn-of-century suburbs such as Upminster.

Lastly, it needs to be recognized that small towns are perhaps the most interesting locations for the exploration of sustainable development. They offer a scale and possibility of integration, as well as fascinating social and cultural dimensions, which large metropolises present as totally intractable issues. Getting small towns right is the most interesting task facing planners and urban designers today.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

It would be incongruous if we did not suggest that a useful next step for Upminster town centre is for Havering Council to respond to this report.

The various proposals outlined here touch on economic development, housing, parks and open spaces as well as arts and culture. So it would be appropriate for various departments to offer thoughts on strategy described here.

Four large projects stand out initially:

- The library extension and café
- The New Windmill Hall extension
- The new health buildings
- The new station office building

Each project requires a strong planning framework and each requires an advocate - someone who is willing to carry out the groundwork needed to make even one of these projects happen.

The important thing is preparation: background work to clarify overall costs, net benefits and long-term town centre impact. For such significant town centre developments, it is worth it for the Council to initiate this work.

SPECIFIC PLANNING POLICY

We propose some amendments to the direction of planning policy.

- 1 New policy should be created to ensure disasters like the Bell Corner

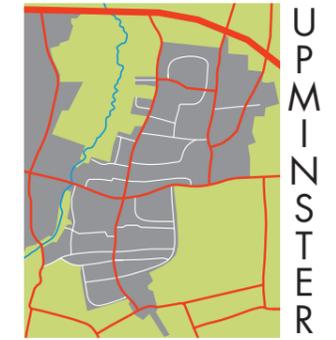
building or the Somerfield building are not repeated: intensive development of the concept of any new town centre building needs to be part of the development control approach.

- 2 A policy effort is needed to provide useful definitions of town-centre architecture.
- 3 New policy is needed to ensure edges or boundaries are treated as positively as possible. Edges should be understood as town/country and building/park boundaries.
- 4 New policy is needed to maximize the spatial opportunities represented by A-road space

DEVELOPMENT

More generally planning should work like a development corporation working with active developers and those groups with defined space needs such as the small business sector to form partnerships around project opportunities. The Council cannot make projects happen but it can provide a vital linking role.

- 5 Havering Council should compile as much information as possible about building owners in the Town centre and those seeking space in the area
- 6 Havering should actively seek opportunities for new communities of sustainable housing with a new emphasis on the domestic contribution to agricultural nutrient requirements



WORK TO GET STARTED WITH

SMALL SCALE INTERVENTIONS

- Create new station clocktower
- Remove illegal adverts on railway bridge and repave railway bridge
- Clarify all illegal signage in town centre: for instance adjacent to NHS Community Health Building on St Mary's Lane
- Create new custom-designed play facility in Upminster Park for infants
- Create new signage clearly stating who is responsible for a range of major public spaces e.g. street space, Upminster Park, the station car-park etc...the aim being to increase the transparency of responsibility and contactability
- Go ahead with internet café on New Windmill Site or as part of library extension
- Create mobile bandstand for storage at New Windmill Hall and provide alternative locations for siting this new town centre
- Create signs announcing Upminster at Upminster Bridge, the north end of Hall Lane, Corbets Tey and where Pike Lane comes into St Mary's Lane
- Seek a go-ahead for a temporary structure on top of the much despised building on south-east corner of Bell Corner to house either youth club, skate club or a small performance space paid for by new advert hoarding

REVIEW

- Review generally how to use private funding to pay for town centre improvements through project specification or planning briefs
- Review all the projects in this report
- Review Bell Corner traffic lights phasing
- Review traffic filters at Bell Corner
- Explore re-directing north-south traffic down Wingletye Lane
- Explore scope for major sustainable housing development near to Upminster which returns nutrients through dry-sewage methods to farmland
- Review A-road space as major connective spaces in borough and also mixed-use setting e.g. neither town centre, country or suburb but containing elements of each
- Review town-centre planting policy and look for unusual implementation of planting to heighten public awareness: for example, plant in deliberately widened cracks between paving stones creating decorative effects: plant native grasses around edge of Upminster Park etc...
- Assess number of start-up businesses in Havering and whether more could be located in Upminster
- Undertake immediately an urban design audit

- of planned highways and traffic spend in Upminster Town
- Evaluate scope for adding to appeal of south end of Corbets Tey Road shopping
- Evaluate the appeal of Upminster as a small, quiet town with a view to "selling" it to various businesses
- Evaluate apartment hotel type accommodation for visitors to the City in Upminster
- Clarify extent of parking in town including resources like school playgrounds and under-used car-parks such one on top of Bell Corner
- Explore scope for town centre residential accommodation strictly in the form of flats
- Explore small dwelling projects outlined in this report with housing provider partners
- CO-OPERATION**
- Work with Upminster Windmill Trust towards defining a future for the Windmill site
- Draw up list of all town centre building and land owners and clarify active contact details
- Work with local youth to define opportunities for a skate facility

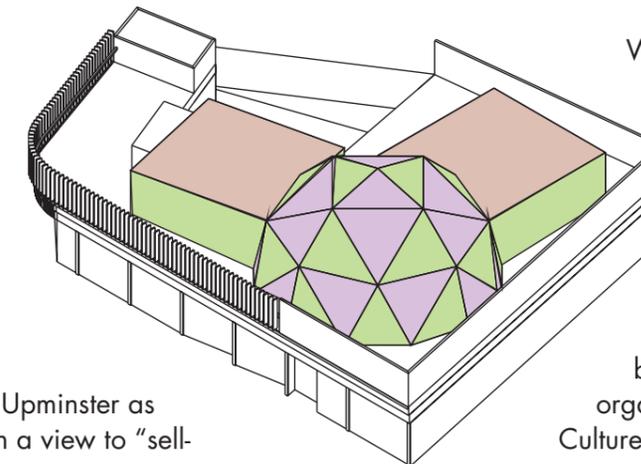
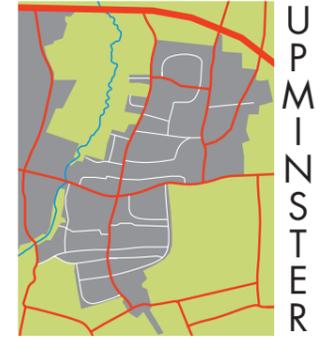


Figure 75.1
temporary structure
atop Bell Corner

- Work with local groups to formulate the exhibition programme (sheet 73) involving local schools in historical aspects
- Seek partnership between centre traders organizations and Arts & Culture Department
- Seek to re-establish relations with local traders on good faith basis

- Work with St Laurence's church to create a new town centre strategy for their churchyard
- Attempt to pull in big name café business to increase social appeal of town centre
- EVENTS**
- Create a programme of open-air film shows for the summer in Upminster Park
- Identify funding for the exhibition programme outlined on sheet 73 and do it this year
- Start work on programme to create interest in town centre through show-casing local artist work: set up exhibition in town centre location



CONVERSATIONS

PC Newton	Upminster Police Station
Chris Coles	LBH Arts
Brian Ford	LBH Arts
Greg Pavitt	CURE(P)
Peter Galloway	Upminster Residents Association
Wendy Shearn	local resident
Janet Coles	Havering PCG
Joyce Kelly	Cranham Art Society
Karen Williams	Havering Consort Orchestra
Andrew McTurk	local farmer
Nick Harris	NFU
Simon Fairlie	Chapter 7 planning consultancy
John Williams	LBH Countryside
Mr Gallagher	LBH Planner
Martin Elson	Oxford Brookes University
Essex Remade	
Nick Mann	Bentalls Shopping Centres
Doreen Hitchens	Upminster Librarian
Essex Council Archivist	
Robin Ducker	Roomes
Frank Harris	Harris Cycles
Folke Gunter	Lund University
John Joplin	Sustainable London Trust
Jenny Cheetham	resident
Tony Fox	resident
Liz Piper	health visitor
Mr Parish	Gates & Parrish

READING

Havering UDP	LB Havering
The Thames Chase Plan	Thames Chase
Heroic Change	Thames Gateway Partnership
Chapter 7 News, summer 2001	Chapter 7: Simon Fairlie
Strategic Gaps & Green Wedge	
Policies in Structure Plans	Martin Elson
Town & Country	Edited by Antony Barnett & Roger Scruton
FEASTA	
economics of sustainability	Edited by John Jopling & Richard Douthwaite
Green Urbanism	
learning from European Cities	Timothy Beatley
The English Terraced House	Stefan Muthesius
Urban Anthropology	Edited Aidan Southall
Formes urbaines de l'îlot à la barre	Philippe Panerai
The English Town	Mark Girouard



Figure 77 Clissold Park: park centre