

Old Hatfield

Post Charrette Paper

December 2008



As many of you will know, at the beginning of October the Old Hatfield Charrette took place in the Riding School at Hatfield. The Charrette's purpose was to give the residents of Old Hatfield the opportunity to discuss the problems which the town faces, such as lack of parking, poor quality shopping, open spaces which are neither alluring nor effective, and to consider ways in which the problems could be solved, or at least reduced, and the town might be rejuvenated. People responded very enthusiastically to the opportunity and a series of lively and positive debates took place during the week. I am delighted to present the conclusions of our deliberations.

World-renowned urban planner Andrés Duany led the event, assisted by a specially selected team of highly experienced designers whose areas of expertise were relevant to Old Hatfield's particular circumstances. Local residents attended general meetings; and smaller groups comprising business owners, planners, Councillors and environment and transport officials came together to discuss specific aspects of the plans. Working at a great pace throughout the week in response to the ideas and concerns raised during the meetings, the team produced an impressive array of work, including several dozen master plans, diagrams and illustrations, eventually distilling it all into the final conclusions.

Residents showed great enthusiasm for the process and meetings during the week were very well-attended. The design team was presented with comprehensive verbal and written feedback, information on Old Hatfield's history and letters in which people expressed their vision for the Old Town's regeneration. This was all extremely helpful to the design team as they strove to turn these ideas into a workable Charrette Proposal.

This paper sets out the work the team undertook during the Charrette, and puts it into the context of Old Hatfield's history. It presents the design team's site analyses and draft ideas, together with the final Charrette Proposals, all of which the public saw and approved at the final Charrette presentation on 6th October.

The proposals include plans for the Railway Station, Broadway Market and Salisbury Square, Marychurch Yard, Fore Street Square and St Audrey's Gate and Coach Park, and, happily, can be introduced either as separate projects over time, or more rapidly and together.

The Charrette also gave people the chance to think about less concrete ways to improve the way we live in the Old Town. One such idea was the formation of an Old Hatfield Steering Group which, amongst other things, could help to maintain the momentum for change started by the Charrette and so enthusiastically and energetically taken up by you all.

I have been delighted by the reaction which the Charrette has provoked and immensely encouraged by the degree to which the residents of Old Hatfield and others who attended have engaged in the process. I very much hope that you will continue to take part, as we move on to the next stages.

Lord Salisbury

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The Old Hatfield Charrette

Residents and those who work in Old Hatfield played a significant role in the Charrette process, attending specialised meetings throughout the week and expressing their views on the proposals.

The meetings included gatherings specifically for:

- Local residents
- Local landowners and business owners
- Local planners
- Community leaders and community development professionals
- Transportation officials, including officials from Hertfordshire County Council
- Environmentalists

There was also a session for Year Six pupils from the De Havilland Primary School, during which the children presented their own designs for the redevelopment of Salisbury Square.



The schedule for the week:

Sun 28th Sept

The design team began their work by familiarising themselves with Old Hatfield and the surrounding area – on foot.

Mon 29th Sept

The Opening Presentation and Public Meeting marked the official start of the Charrette. Attended by residents and those who work in Old Hatfield, this first gathering set the tone for the week and explained the general aims of the process.

Tue 30th Sept

The first full day of design featured two key stakeholders' meetings, one for local landowners and business owners and an evening meeting for local residents. The De Havilland Primary School Year Six pupils also visited the Riding School and took their chance to present their own ideas for how Salisbury Square should look.





Wed 1st Oct

The morning's meeting was for representatives from local authorities, including planners, to discuss the planning process and precedents in the area. Local community leaders and community development professionals joined together for the afternoon session.

Thurs 2nd Oct

Transport was the theme of the third day, with a discussion on thoroughfares in the morning, followed in the afternoon by a session on the railway and associated infrastructure.

Fri 3rd Oct

The subject of discussion in the morning was environmental strategy. The rest of the day was spent by the design team in completing their preliminary proposals which were presented in the evening to residents and the general public.

Mon 6th Oct

Over the weekend, the comments on and reactions to the preliminary proposals were incorporated into the plans before the concluding public meeting held on Monday evening. Over 200 local residents and participants in the Charrette process attended for the presentation of the Charrette Proposals.



Old Hatfield: The Residents' Perspective

Much discussion during the Charrette centred on the state of Old Hatfield's built environment and options for improving it.

Residents and people who work in Old Hatfield explained what they saw as the current problems and then considered ways to solve them.

Subjects of particular concern included:

- lack of attractive shopping;
- unattractive and inflexible public spaces;
- failure to exploit the opportunities for tourism;
- frustrations of the unsatisfactory parking arrangements;
- the chaos resulting from the inadequate access to the Railway Station.

1. Parks and Public Spaces

The public spaces, although plentiful, are ill-managed, unfriendly and consequently underused. The centre of Salisbury Square, for example, is impractical for a number of uses because it is raised and surrounded by brick walls. Residents repeatedly stressed the importance of providing a safe, welcoming environment and one that did not encourage loitering. In response, the Charrette Proposal provides for the creation of new public spaces, suitable for a variety of uses, such as the Broadway Market.



2. Shopping

Residents are disappointed with the number and quality of shops in Old Hatfield. Shop windows are uninteresting, the retail experience poor. In particular, local people wanted:

- more convenience shopping
- some small restaurants
- a tea shop.

The layout of the shopping areas, especially Salisbury Square, needs to be improved, an efficient car parking strategy introduced and the area reopened to traffic. These steps would improve the trading environment and retailers and small businesses would be drawn to Old Hatfield as a viable and attractive proposition.





3. Attracting Tourists

In the view of residents, there is currently not much incentive to tourists to visit Old Hatfield. Each year, more than 100,000 visitors come to Hatfield House, but the majority do not find themselves drawn into the Old Town so an important economic opportunity is lost. The Charrette Proposal provides, for example, for modifications to the approach to Hatfield House Gatehouse in Fore Street (pictured) which will enhance the link between the House and the Old Town and encourage freedom of movement and trade between them.



4. Parking

The current parking arrangements are seen by the residents and business people of Old Hatfield as one of the most important problems to solve. Commuters are using the free car parks and the streets, rather than the Station car park where they have to pay. This leaves no space for residents and people working in the Old Town to park their cars. The Station was seen as a valuable asset, but the forecourt and the car park were felt to be ill-designed and inefficient. The creation of a new, comprehensive car parking plan was seen as crucial, to include the introduction of permit parking, restrictions on commuter parking in the Old Town car parks and the improvement of the layout of the Station car park.



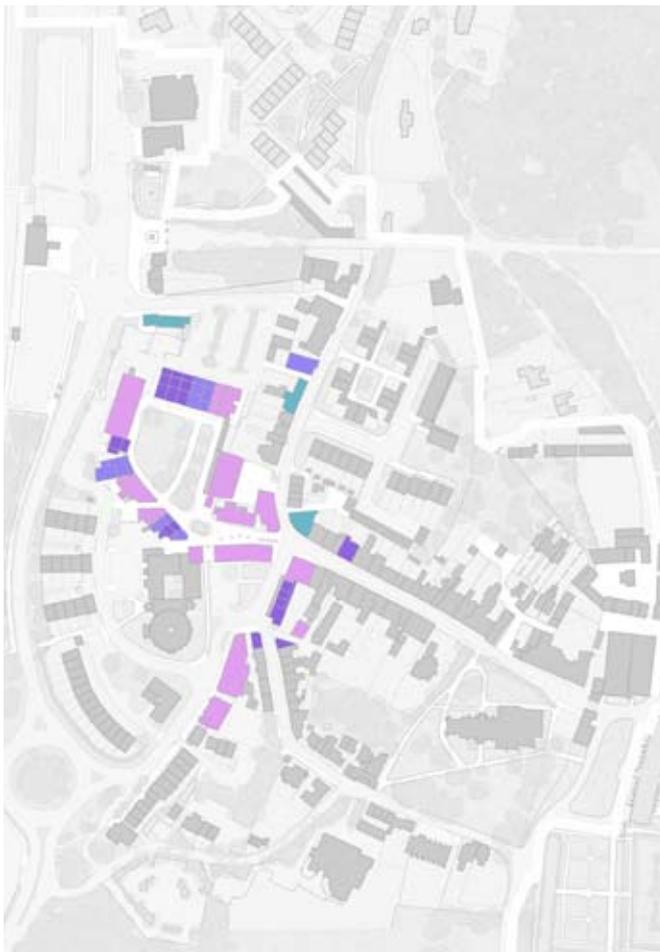
5. Railway Station

The railway is considered to be a great plus for Old Hatfield but the station building is underexploited, with poor links to the Old Town. In particular, the building (pictured) is unwelcoming with few amenities for those using it and the path through the tunnel under the Great North Road (pictured) is unpleasant and hostile. The Station entrance is chaotic, with pedestrians, cars, buses, taxis and cycles all using the same access.

Site Analysis

At the beginning of the process, the design team researched Old Hatfield's architectural history and analysed its current condition, then used this knowledge in the development of the Charrette Proposals.

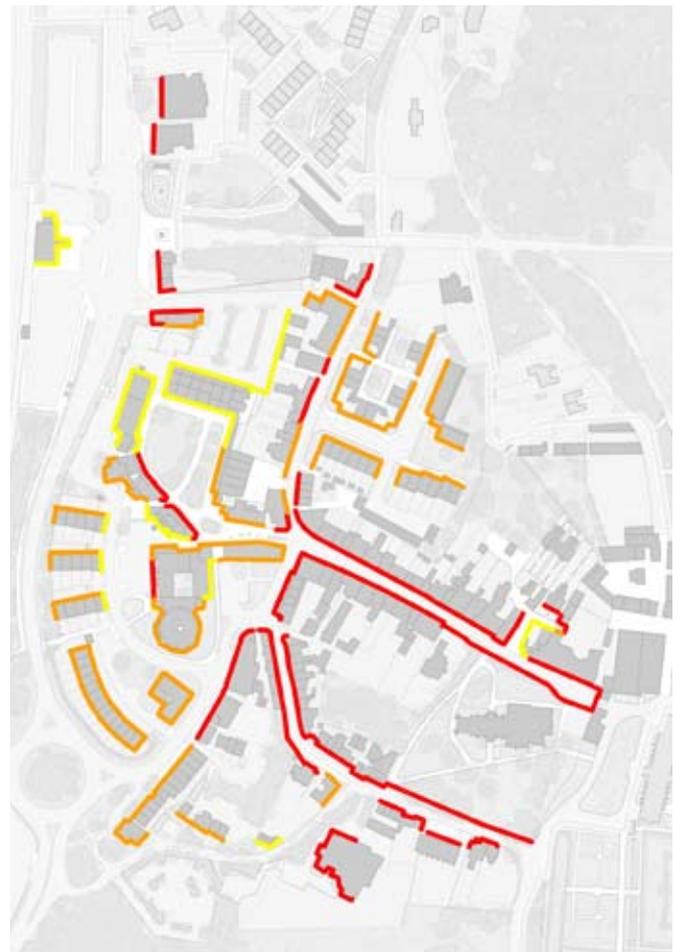
Building Use Study



■ Pub ■ Food ■ Retail ■ Office

A building usage study illustrates the diversity of building types within Old Hatfield and the ways in which the buildings are now used by their inhabitants. Most of the Old Town is comprised of residential properties, including individual houses, terraced houses and flats. Offices and shops are primarily concentrated in Salisbury Square, Park Street and the Broadway, and there are three pubs.

Frontage Study



— Good — Middling — Poor

A frontage study assesses the outward appearance of properties throughout Old Hatfield, with each building being rated as good, middling or poor. At present, only Fore Street and Church Street present a good appearance, while the majority of buildings in Salisbury Square and facing the A1000 are considered middling or poor in terms either of architectural quality or relationship to the street.

The Charrette team began their studies of the site by detailing the historic development of Old Hatfield. The following slides illustrate the dramatic changes which have occurred over the years, particularly with regard to the routing of the A1000 and the introduction of the railway line.



Old Hatfield began as a small settlement catering for visitors to Hatfield House and travellers along the Great North Road. Traffic came through the heart of Old Hatfield, past the gates of Hatfield House and down Fore Street which became a major thoroughfare.



In the late 19th Century, the town continued to develop, with additional residential and commercial streets radiating from Fore Street and the Hatfield House gates. Although the primary route of the A1000 no longer included Fore Street, regional travellers still passed through the heart of the village. The introduction of a railway station brought more visitors.



In the early 20th Century, more buildings were built on Hatfield's existing streets, increasing density but keeping the Town within its historic boundaries. With its active local population, the presence of the A1000 and the railway line which was extended to the north, Hatfield was a thriving market town.



Although Fore Street, the historic centre, remains, Old Hatfield functions today in a completely different way. The A1000 now bypasses the heart of the town, acting as a high-speed thoroughfare parallel to the railway line. A significant portion of historic building stock has been demolished and replaced with car parks and new complexes which have little connection with, or reference to, the original settlement.

The Charrette Proposals

The Old Hatfield Charrette Proposals include both big and small schemes to rejuvenate the Old Town, which can be implemented either all together or gradually. The individual proposals are described on the following pages.



CURRENT

(at left)

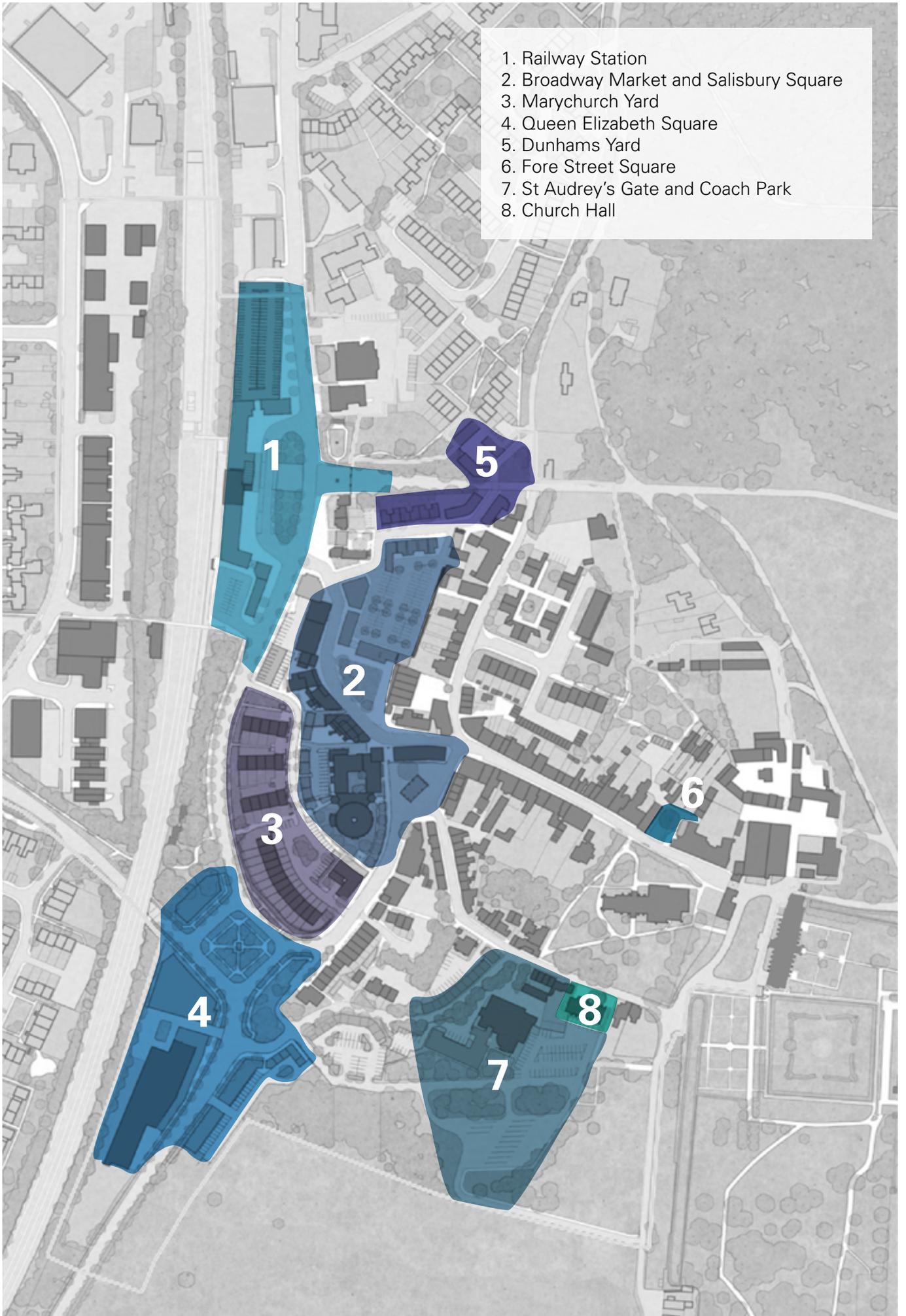
A plan of the town today shows its current urban fabric, with Fore Street and the A1000 acting as its primary axes.

PROPOSED

(at right)

A plan for the possible future regeneration of Old Hatfield, showing individual proposals.

1. Railway Station
2. Broadway Market and Salisbury Square
3. Marychurch Yard
4. Queen Elizabeth Square
5. Dunhams Yard
6. Fore Street Square
7. St Audrey's Gate and Coach Park
8. Church Hall



Railway Station



The Great North Road and Hatfield Railway Station are major factors in the Charrette's considerations. The Station is well-used and offers a fast connection to London, but the building is unwelcoming, contains virtually no amenities and does not relate in any way to the Old Town's architecture. Access to the Old Town is across the busy A1000 or via an unappealing and hostile underpass. The Station entrance is used not only by cars, but also by taxis, buses, cycles and pedestrians, causing chaos and confusion particularly at peak times.

The Charette Proposals for the Station aim to alleviate the traffic problems, improve parking provision and enhance the link with the Old Town, taking into account the conflicting demands of pedestrian and vehicular use.

CURRENT

The Station building is uninspiring and is separated from Old Hatfield by the Great North Road, with its several lanes of high-speed traffic. There is little landscaping to improve the look of the road or to draw visitors into the Old Town.

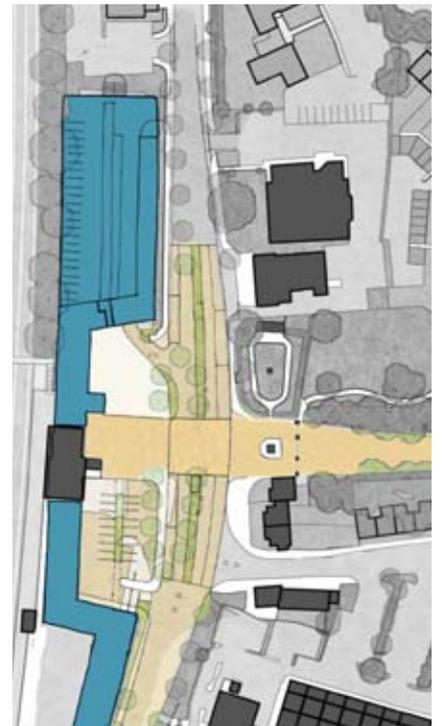


The existing railway station

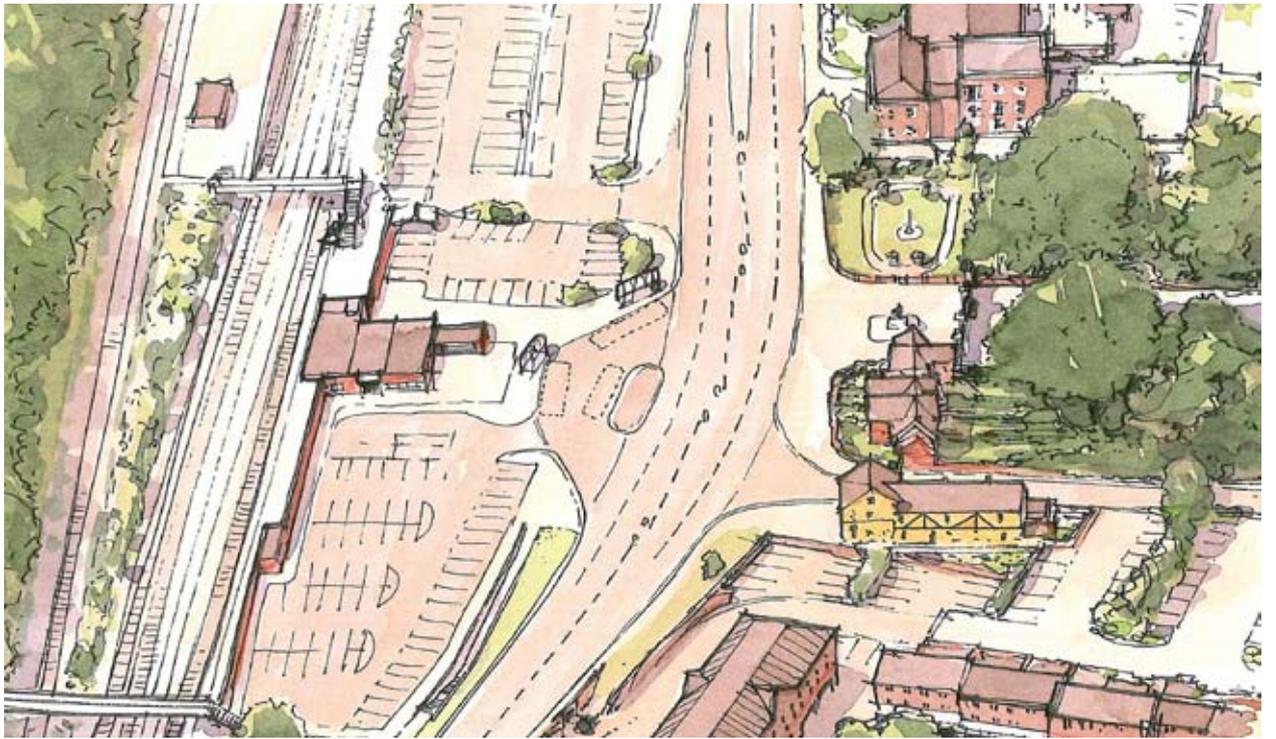
PROPOSED

A new entrance to the Station and an expansion to the Station building are included in the Charrette Proposal. Some other features are:

- Landscaping and the construction of a median between the carriageways of the A1000 slow traffic and make it easier for pedestrians to cross safely without using the underpass.
- Both sides of the street are connected by a wide strip of paving across the road going towards the historic gates of Hatfield House. The paving looks different from the road surface and gives the impression of a crossing.
- Separate access for taxis, a bus stop and bus lanes are provided to simplify the traffic movements at the Station entrance.
- Improved parking provision is made by adding an extra deck to the current car park, thereby doubling available spaces.



The proposed railway station



Existing railway station (looking north)



Proposed railway station (looking south)

Broadway Market and Salisbury Square



Salisbury Square lies at the heart of the Old Town and close to the Station. It should, by rights, create an appealing first impression, but it is dull and lacking in interesting shops. The layout of the open space, with its raised area surrounded by brick walls, is unwelcoming and inflexible in terms of how it can be used and, being pedestrianised, the Square seems enclosed and isolated from its neighbouring streets.

The reintroduction of traffic would reconnect the Square with its surroundings and create a sense of bustle and busyness which would attract visitor and retailer alike.

CURRENT

The plan shows the Broadway and Salisbury Square as it is today.



The existing Salisbury Square and the Broadway

PROPOSED

The plan illustrates:

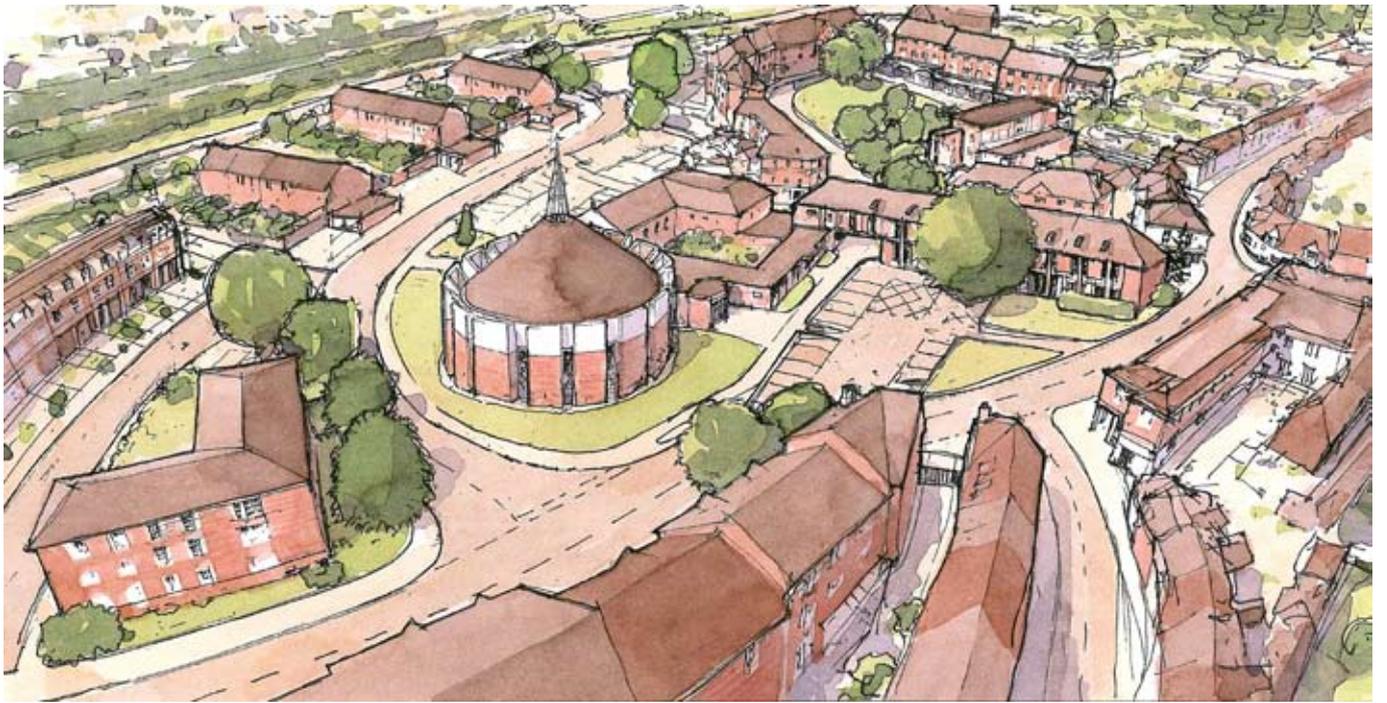
- Salisbury Square opened up by reintroducing traffic and replacing the current large but inflexible public space with a small green
- A new car park is situated behind the Square and screened by buildings
- The Broadway car park becomes a flexible space incorporating a new market building, giving opportunities for events such as Christmas Fairs or Farmers' Markets, or providing additional parking for specific town events.



The proposed Broadway Market

The present buildings in Salisbury Square can be made more visually interesting by small architectural interventions (pictured right), such as replacing skylights in the rooves with dormers and enlarging and enhancing the shop windows with traditional details and improved signage.





The existing Salisbury Square and the Broadway site



The proposed Broadway Market



Marychurch Yard



This part of Hatfield is physically somewhat isolated from the rest of Hatfield and rather exposed to the A1000. The houses have limited access to open space and many look out over the car park and the backs of the buildings which enclose Salisbury Square.

The construction of a row of terraced houses would shield the car park from view and a new square to the south of the church would provide a space for community gatherings.

CURRENT

The plan shows the rather isolated and exposed nature of this part of Old Hatfield.



The existing Batterdale Street site

PROPOSED

The new terrace of houses and the provision of a small square, together with further landscaping along both Batterdale and the A1000, improve the general aspect of this area, creating a more traditional streetscape which integrates the existing houses with the rest of Old Hatfield, whilst providing more pleasing views to the occupants.



The proposed Batterdale Street and Marychurch Yard



Existing Batterdale Street



Proposed Marychurch Yard

Queen Elizabeth Square



The gateway to Old Hatfield is currently marked only by a roundabout on the A1000, giving no real indication of having arrived anywhere and with little landscaping and few safe areas for pedestrians. It presents the opportunity to make an impression and draw visitors into the Old Town, perhaps by the creation of a new, tree-lined Square, named in honour of Queen Elizabeth I, with some additional buildings providing definition to the area and, possibly, a monument.

CURRENT

The plan shows the bare area surrounding the roundabout which contains few features of interest.



The existing roundabout

PROPOSED

The plan suggests the introduction of Queen Elizabeth Square, an open space surrounded by trees and some newly constructed buildings architecturally in tune with their neighbours and providing opportunity for new business.



Proposed Queen Elizabeth Square



The existing roundabout



The proposed Square

Charrette Proposal 5

Dunhams Yard



Existing Dunhams Yard site

The proposed redevelopment of Dunhams Courtyard and the garages under the viaduct, adjacent to Park Street and Park Meadow, already has planning consent. The scheme comprises new houses and office buildings in traditional style and forms the first phase of development prior to the restructuring of Salisbury Square. It reinstates the former streetscape from the Great North Road which currently suffers from dereliction in part, and from poor quality warehouse-type accommodation in the remainder.



Proposed Dunhams Yard site

Charrette Proposal 6

Fore Street Square



Fore Street is delightful and well-preserved. It forms a direct link from the centre of the Old Town past St Etheldreda's Church to Hatfield House and, as a result, is well-trodden by visitors. The aim is to protect the current buildings and the character of the area, while introducing additional open space, more parking for residents and improving the views of several historic houses.

CURRENT

The plan shows the densely inhabited, traditional layout of the Street.



PROPOSED

The opportunity exists to introduce a new square opposite the main gates of St Etheldreda's Church. The Square provides a new open space and improves pedestrian access by linking Fore Street to Park Close.

Existing Fore Street site, and entry to the Gatehouse



Studies for the proposed Fore Street Square

Charrette Proposal 7

St Audrey's Gate and Coach Park



Frequent damage to the main gates of Hatfield House in recent years has shown beyond doubt that they are not suitable for use by modern coaches.

As well as protecting the main gates, there are other clear benefits from the relocation of the access for coaches to the new coach park to be constructed to the rear of St Audrey's Nursing Home and accessed from Church Lane. They include:

- easing traffic congestion opposite the Station, both at peak times and generally
- the traffic in the evening to and from the Estate will be directed via St Audrey's Gate rather than through Church Street
- protecting the viaduct from the eventual effects of prolonged battering by heavy traffic
- reducing visitor traffic through Old Hatfield, particularly in Park Street
- the choice of site – currently a field which is part of Hatfield Park land – represents an improvement for the majority of Old Hatfield residents
- the opportunity to draw visitors who arrive by coach through the centre of Old Hatfield as they embark on a loop-shaped pedestrian tour.

CURRENT

The plan shows the St Audrey's Gate area and the field which has been identified as the site of the Coach Park.



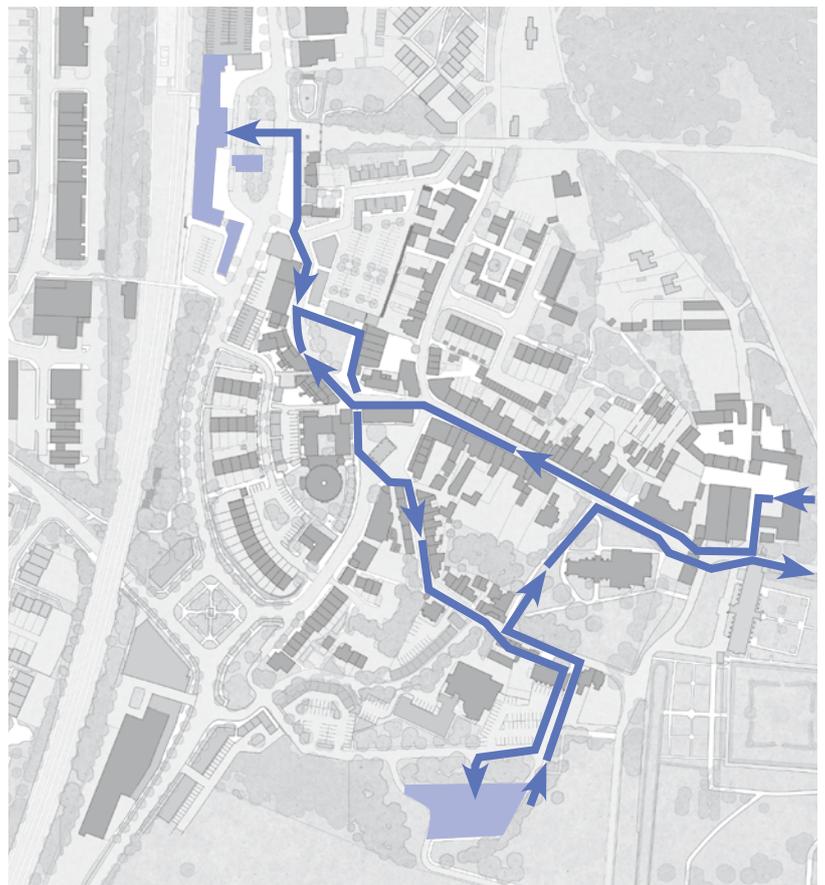
PROPOSED

The plan shows the situation of the Coach Park which is shielded from immediate view by existing buildings along Church Lane and a band of trees. Additional hedges and woodland areas will be planted as part of the scheme.



Arrows denote the possible walking route from St Audrey's Coach Park to Hatfield House, with an additional link to the railway station.

The proposed route of a pedestrian tour for visitors begins at the Coach Park and brings visitors north, past St Etheldreda's Church to the top of Fore Street and the entrance to Hatfield House and the Old Palace (approximately five minutes' walk). The return route from the House to the Coach Park passes down Fore Street and into the rejuvenated Salisbury Square, at which point visitors can get easily to the Station. It then passes south across Broadway Market and down Church Street. The route, which would be clearly signposted and publicised in Hatfield House guidebooks and literature, provides an introduction to Old Hatfield and all it has to offer.

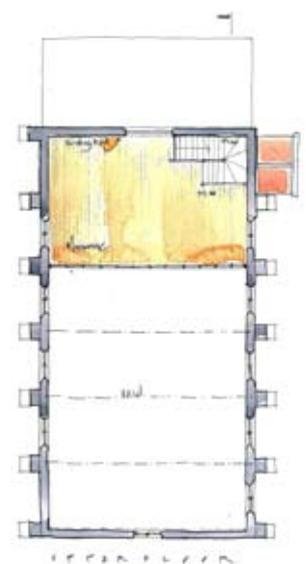
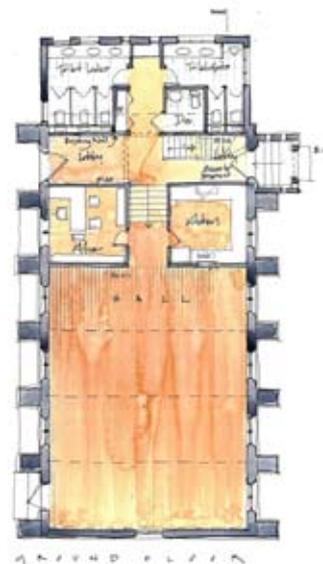


Charrette Proposal 8

Church Hall



There was great enthusiasm throughout the Charrette for a community hall which could act as a central meeting place for local activity groups. Rather than construct a new building, it was felt that the existing Church Hall might be refurbished and made more widely available for local residents and businesses to hire. It was agreed that the Church and Estate would explore this idea.



Charrette Proposal 9

Old Hatfield Steering Group

The Old Hatfield regeneration process will inevitably take time, but it stands the greatest chance of being able to move forward promptly and efficiently if residents continue this active involvement.

An Old Hatfield Steering Group would provide the vehicle for local residents and business people to continue their involvement not only as the project proceeds, but for the foreseeable future on such questions as the marketing of the Old Town and how it should continue to evolve.



Top: A market in Olney

Above: Hanging baskets in Woodstock

Right: A bollard decorated with a County crest in Olney

Below: Coordinated and sponsored plantings in Olney





What Next?

This paper has been produced in time for the public meeting arranged for 3rd December for those who took part so enthusiastically in the Charrette to review its outcome and consider the next steps.

The Estate will organise further public meetings over the next few months as the projects take shape. The dates of these meetings will be publicised extensively but, in the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Hatfield House Estate Office.

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