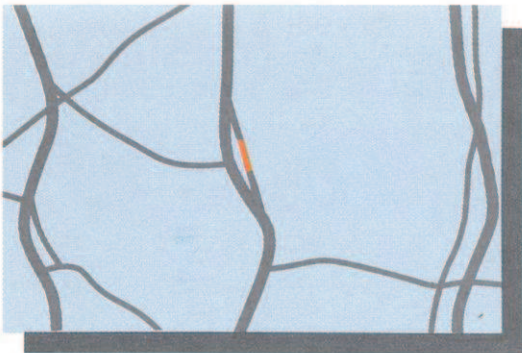


BUNTINGFORD - HIGH STREET



CONTEXT

Buntingford is a small Hertfordshire town about 50 km north of London. It was chosen for the County's first Town Centre Enhancement scheme because of the range of problems experienced in the High Street, and opportunities for their solution. Prior to the opening of a bypass in June 1987, Buntingford High Street carried the A10 trunk road traffic. This created particular

problems because the High Street is very narrow (11m - 14m between the buildings) and contains many historic buildings in commercial and residential use. The problems were further compounded by a high proportion of heavy goods vehicles, associated with a large distribution depot to the south of the town.

OBJECTIVES

The opening of the bypass created a number of opportunities and problems in the town centre. Traffic had been reduced but traffic speeds had significantly increased, while some through traffic still used the High Street. Years of being pounded by trunk road traffic had left the street in a state of environmental neglect. Pedestrians were faced with narrow and uneven footways, and the High Street did not offer a proper setting for its fine historic buildings. At the same time, traders feared that a loss of business would result from the removal of through traffic. The objective of the scheme was therefore to exploit the environmental and

65: Buntingford High Street before the opening of the bypass in 1987.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)

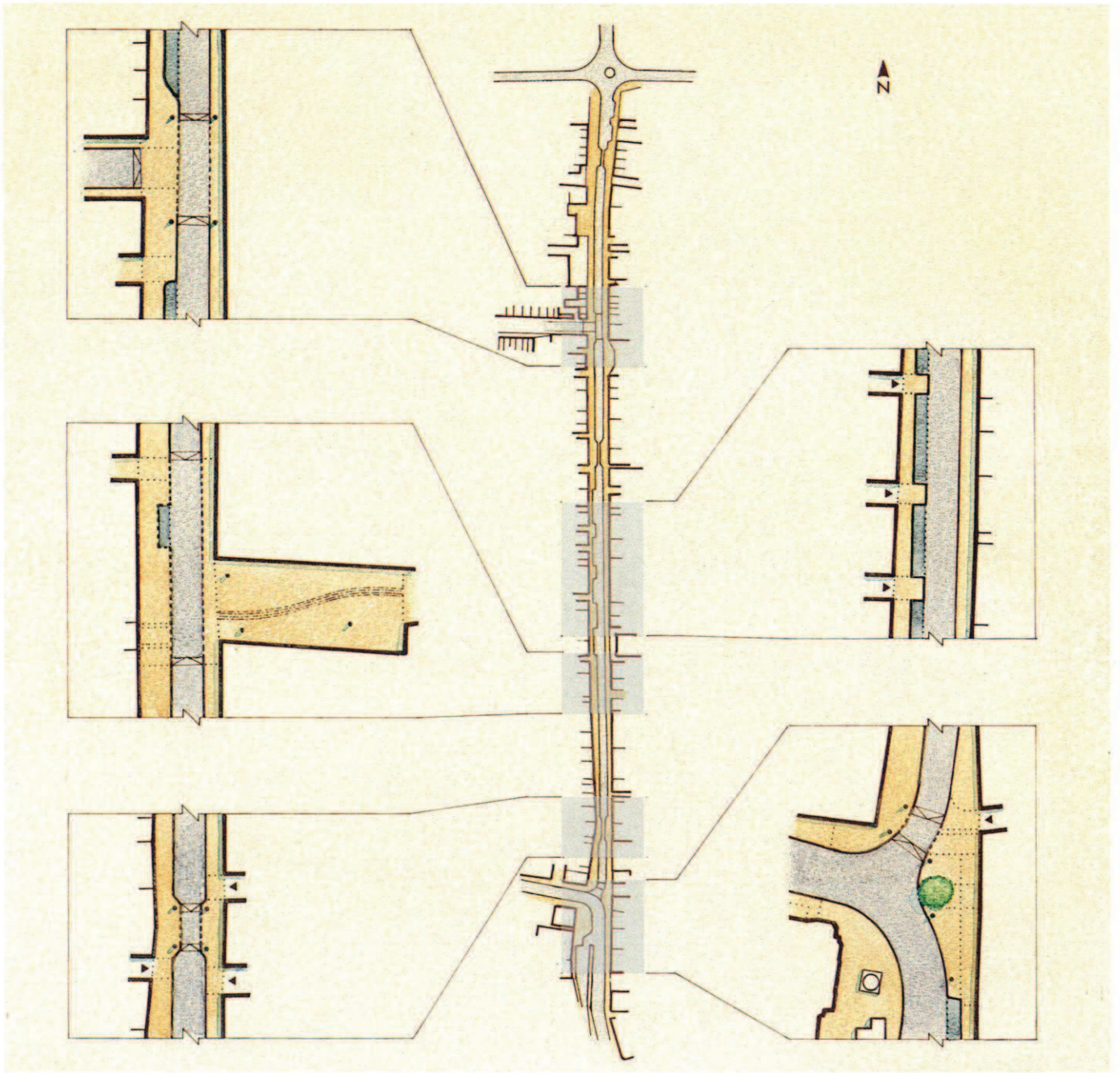
66: The traffic calmed High Street showing repaved and wider footways, and narrow section of carriageway at a flat top hump.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)



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commercial opportunities while solving the remaining traffic problems in the street.

DESCRIPTION

The design concept incorporated lessons learnt from a study tour to ten towns in The Netherlands and Germany during 1987, and emphasized measures to calm traffic without excluding it altogether, a comprehensive approach to design, and extensive public participation. It was recognised that the scheme should not just slow the speed of traffic, but should also introduce extensive environmental improvements.

To slow vehicle speeds the carriageway was reduced to 4.8m, a width which allows a car and a lorry to pass each other with care. To reduce the need for two lorries to pass in the street, a weight limit of 5 tonnes was imposed on south-bound vehicles. Additional speed controls were introduced using flat top humps (carriageway raised to footway height) and carriageway constrictions with a width of 3m. These



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devices were placed at intervals along the street and allow only single file traffic.

To slow vehicles entering the High Street the junctions were substantially altered. At the southern end priority was changed so that vehicles have to make a definite turn at a give-way junction. At the northern end a mini roundabout was introduced and the carriageway was narrowed and offset. These changes have also helped to close long views down the High Street.

Parking bays paved with blocks were provided and these are defined by kerbing and extensions to accessways (crossovers) at footway height. Footways have been widened by up to 1m on either side at the southern end of the street. The junction with Church Street is a focal point in the High Street where special environmental treatment was justified. A level wall-to-wall

67: "Before" situation at the south end of the High Street.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)

68: "After" situation at the south end of the High Street showing realignment and change of traffic priority, and enlarged pedestrian area outside public house with seating and planting.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)

69: "Before" arrangement at the north end of the High Street.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)



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70: North end of the High Street showing realignment and narrowing of the carriageway, flat top hump in brick, and new planted areas. (Original centre line markings are just visible).
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)



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71: Detail of a carriageway constriction in the High Street showing area raised to footway level and vertical definition provided by cast iron bollards and a litter bin.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)



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72: "Before" situation where Church Street joins the High Street.
(Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)

surface was built using high quality materials (York stone and granite), with the purpose of creating an attractive pedestrian environment.

The co-ordinated design and environmental enhancements include the removal of telegraph and lighting poles, new street lights attached to buildings, planting, and quality cast-iron bollards. Surfaces include coloured carriageway, textured concrete paving tiles and uncut small cobbles for edging details. Attempts were also made to reduce the number and prominence of traffic signs and markings.

The scheme involved joint working between officers from the County's Highways and Planning Departments. Under the leadership of a Group Engineer there was a design team of engineers skilled in construction, lighting and safety together with planners, architects and landscape architects. The purpose was to achieve a design with integrated traffic and environmental measures. The details of the design were developed at a scale of 1:20, and this enabled problems to be resolved on paper rather than during construction.

Public consultation was extensive. In addition to leaflets and public meetings, four public exhibitions were mounted and an Action Group was set up to provide the designers with feedback. The Action Group consists of representatives from the local community (Town Council, Civic Society, Chamber of Commerce, Police and District Council) and has met regularly since 1987. The availability of staff at a project office established in the High Street during construction also helped to achieve public acceptance of the scheme.



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COST

The cost of the main contract covering 600m of the High Street was about £400,000 excluding planning and design work. Planning began in 1987 and the main construction contract lasted 18 weeks from July to December 1989. Further surface improvements carried out during 1990 were financed by the District Council.

ASSESSMENT

“After” studies were not complete at the time of writing, but traffic speeds appear to have been reduced, and the street atmosphere has changed from a traffic corridor to a focal point for this small Hertfordshire town. Parking problems have been reduced, for example the extended footways have discouraged cars from obstructing accessways. Commercial faith in the High Street appears to have been increased, with many shopkeepers and residents improving their properties.



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73: Church Street after redesign as a pedestrian priority area, paved from wall to wall in York stone. The granite gully provides a guide for vehicles passing through. Part of the High Street block paving can be seen in the foreground. (Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)

74: Small cobbles provide a neat setting for cast iron bollards. (Photo: T. Pharoah)

75: Victorian-style wall-mounted lighting adds visual interest and reduces clutter in the street. (Photo: Hertfordshire County Council)