



Hounslow Community Streets

Vision Report July 2010

Thornton & Mayfield Avenue






sustrans
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Head Office
Sustrans
2 Cathedral Square
College Green
Bristol
BS1 5DD
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Purpose of report

This vision report has been prepared by Sustrans on behalf of the London Borough of Hounslow as part of the Community Streets project. The project aims to work with five communities to re-design their streets.

This report is focussed on Thornton Avenue and Mayfield Avenue in the Chiswick area of Hounslow.

Its main purpose is to develop design principles to inform the design proposals for the next phase of work.

It introduces the study area and outlines an initial appraisal of the study area. It summarises relevant baseline information and highlights the outcomes of a community consultation event held in the street. It draws this information together to develop the design principles.

The study area

The study area comprises two streets Thornton Avenue and Mayfield Avenue. The area is located between two busy streets, Chiswick High Road and Turnham Green Terrace (B491) which contain numerous shops and restaurants. The junctions with these main roads provide a natural boundary to the study area.

Located just to the north of the area is Turnham Green Tube Station and also Chiswick (back) common and Acton Green Common and many commuters and park users cut through the study area to access them. Previously, there was vehicle access from Thornton Avenue to Turnham Green Terrace but this has since been cut off to through traffic and the area is now a cul-de-sac for vehicles (see photo A and plan over which show viewpoint). Subsequently, the street has relatively low traffic volume.

The streets are primarily residential but interface with shops and restaurants at the junctions. The houses are laid out in terraces of Edwardian townhouses. The exception to this is the inter-war and post-war flats at the junction of Thornton Avenue and Mayfield Avenue and also at the northern corner of Thornton Avenue.

The area is heavily parked and subject to a controlled parking zone. A number of residents have converted front gardens into parking driveways accessed via 'crossovers'. The streets also characterised by avenues of mature trees (London planes) (see B).



Figure 1. The study area



Accident data

An assessment was undertaken into recorded accidents in the last five years. There were no recorded accidents within the study area.

There were a small number of minor vehicle only accidents on the opposite side of Chiswick High Road.

However, feedback from the community (covered in more detail below) suggested there were a number of potential safety issues which should be addressed.

Volume and speed counts

No speed or volume counts have been provided.

However, it was observed that traffic speeds were greatest at the mid point of the long straight sections of Thornton Avenue and Mayfield Avenue.

Parking assessment

The streets accommodate both residents' parking, business parking and parking for local shops and services.

The area is subject to a Controlled Parking Zone which provides permits for residents, businesses and long-term visitors.

There are also a number of combined pay and display and permit holder areas close to Chiswick High Road and at the end of Thornton Avenue close to Turnham Green Terrace. It is likely that these parking spaces are the attractors for non-resident cars to the study area.

There are no official 'goods loading' areas in the study area however unloading was reported at the end of Thornton Avenue at the closed junction with Turnham Green Terrace.

A number of 'crossovers' (i.e. access points) to private dwellings were identified along Mayfield Avenue and Thornton Avenue which need to be considered in any potential design.

Figure 2. Baseline



BASELINE

Scale: NTS ①

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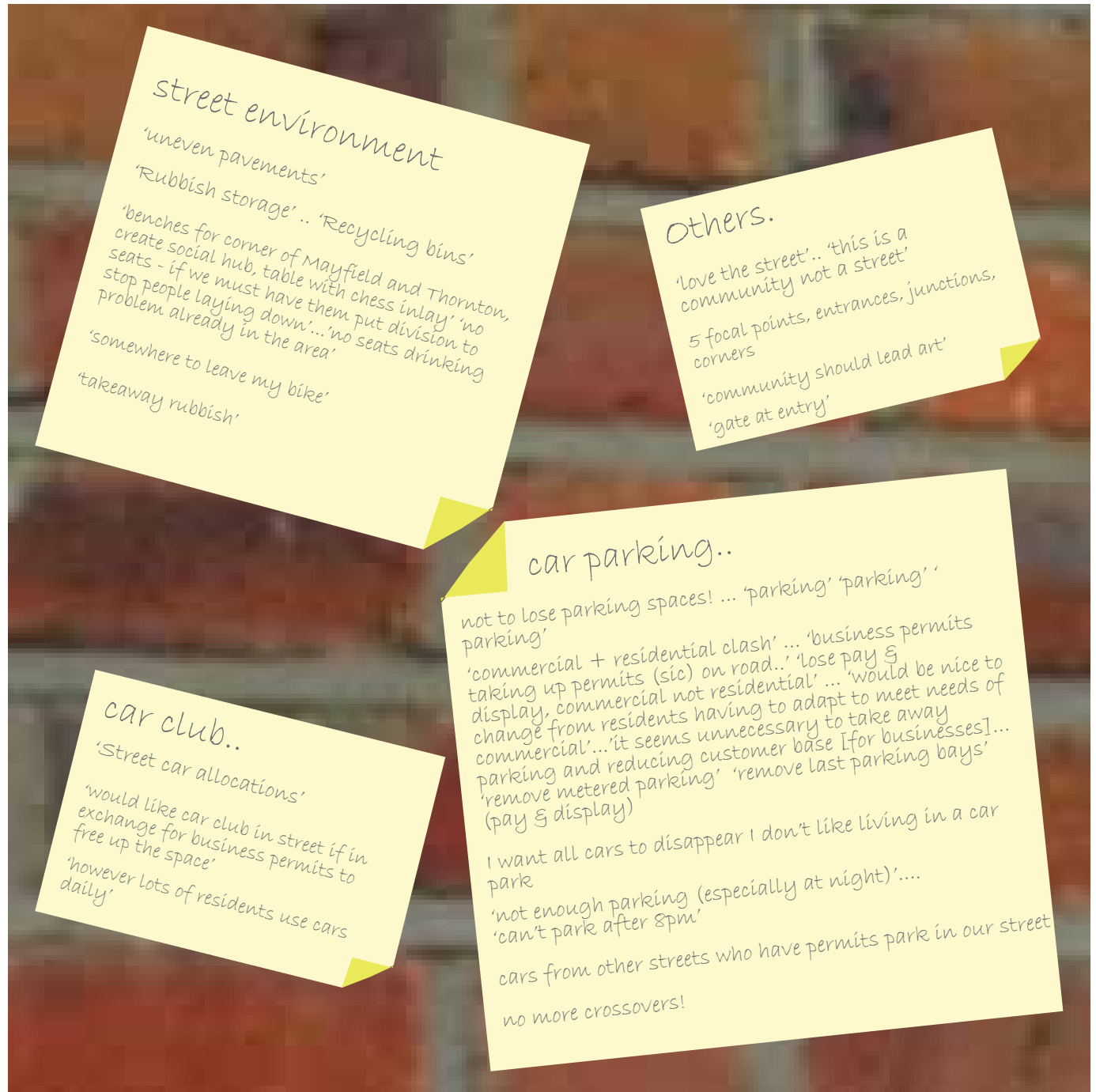
Results of community consultation

The study area was nominated by the local residents association. They reported issues with parking and traffic speed. Also a specific issue at the interface with the High Street at the end of Mayfield Avenue where there are a limited number of metered parking spaces. This is a cause for cars to turn into the street from the High Road looking to see if any of the spaces are available. When they discover there is not they then make a U-turn back into the high road. This has created problems at that end of the street including causing a dividing brick wall between street and back area of shops to be constantly knocked over and pavements being cracked.

The association were keen for residents to get to know each other better, to develop opportunities for children's play, to create more community spaces, to introduce planting and to make more of the trees (for example through hanging baskets). They also suggested that there was some logic to having a focus on the junction between Thornton and Mayfield Avenue as this provided a natural 'centre' to the community.

An on-street consultation event was held on the 21st June. Residents and people who were passing through but regularly use the street were asked to input their views. They were asked to identify what they liked and disliked about the streets and what they would like to change. They were asked to write post-its and to pin on a large scale map of the streets to identify any specific features of interest. Photos of a number of different streets were pinned to wall to give people ideas of different types of street design and to expand minds about what a street could be used for. This helped to generate lively discussion and interest in the project and provided an opportunity for the designers to discuss different approaches to design. Additional notes were made from these discussions. Opposite are a summary of some of the key themes that came through the discussion, a comprehensive list of comments is provided in the appendix.

Respondents seemed to mainly attend from Mayfield Avenue and it wasn't clear that local residents from both streets identified themselves as a 'neighbourhood'.



Environment, Trees + Planting

likes & dislikes..

'Take out trees which destroy drains'... 'leaves in gutters'.. 'trees too big cut out light'.. 'Like the trees. leaves are cleared issues with water table were removed'

suggestions...

'flower beds around trees'... 'guerilla gardening and planting'... 'community planters'

hanging baskets.. something hanging from trees'... plants on trees - sure residents would help maintain them'

'Tree where road blocked off'

Play

issues...

'nowhere for kids to play'... 'no space big enough for kids to play'

suggestions..

'kids to play in street'... 'playground / park space for kids to play - netball post'... 'more space for children'

traffic..

'sometimes cars go very fast'... 'traffic drives too fast'

'no speed bumps'..

'maybe 20mph zone'... 'reduce speed limit to 20 mph 'children at play

'uneven surfaces'... 'different surfaces'.. 'texture on roads to slow cars'

'uneven surfaces - painting on road

lack of awareness at Thornton / Mayfield junction



Opportunities

The study area has a number of opportunities from which to draw inspiration;

1. Trees and Nature. The streets are lined with mature trees and Chiswick Common is in close proximity. There is potential to celebrate the trees and the closeness to nature through a green connection to Chiswick Common.
2. Focal Points. There are a number of locations which would work well as focal points. In particular, the intersection between Mayfield and Thornton Avenue which is centrally located, marks the meeting of routes and unites the two streets. Several larger buildings front onto the space which re-enforce its importance with the streetscape.
3. Edges and Gateways. There is a clear change in character from the busy streets around the study area and the residential streets within. There is scope to mark this transition in some way.



Potential green link to the Common
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Figure 3. Opportunities



Scale: NTS ①

Constraints

There are a number of constraints relating to the study area:

1. Mature Trees. Whilst these have sculptural and natural quality, they will have a large root structure which are likely to need careful consideration in the construction phase.
2. Crossovers/Private Access. There are a number of these on both streets. This causes limitations to any potential changes to parking layout and line of carriageway (e.g. echelon parking/chicanes)
3. There are multiple utilities in the vicinity including mains gas, water/sewerage and electric. Approximate locations are shown for illustration purposes only - a comprehensive survey will be undertaken in later phases of work.



Typical 'crossover'

Figure 4. Constraints



Design Approach

Drawing on the feedback from residents and an appraisal of the study area the following design principles are proposed:

1. **Create gateways** to define entrances to the neighbourhood, signal arrival into a 'special' residential area and encourage responsible behaviour by drivers.
2. **Break-up linearity** to reduce inappropriate traffic speed on straight stretches of road.
3. **A community focal point** for both streets in the neighbourhood. This will be the natural choice for holding street parties, for disseminating information and impromptu community activity.
4. **Provide informal play opportunities** in the street to encourage independence.
5. **Celebrate trees and nature** as important elements in the character of the street. Introduce sustainable planting where possible.

Underpinning the design principles is an approach which aims to unify and define the neighbourhood. Residents felt there were some competing pressures with the commercial character of the busy streets which border their community. This is manifested in competition for car parking spaces but also in terms of deliveries, the impact of the evening economy and behaviour of some drivers visiting the area.

It is our view that design interventions need to occur across both streets in order to create further definition to the neighbourhood. Regular interventions will help to slow vehicle speed. It will also help to articulate a 'special area' where drivers should expect to behave in a way responsive to pedestrians.

Whilst there is a strong sense of community with active members, it was also felt that not all residents viewed the two streets as one community. The design process should be sensitive to opportunities which could help bring the community further together.

It is accepted that design cannot meet all the needs and aspirations of the local community. Therefore it is also recommended that a review of parking arrangements (management and layout) is undertaken as part of the project.

Design Concept

A. A new 'green' gateway is proposed which will provide a visual and physical connection with the parklands beyond. It is also proposed that existing bin storage is addressed as part of the design proposal.

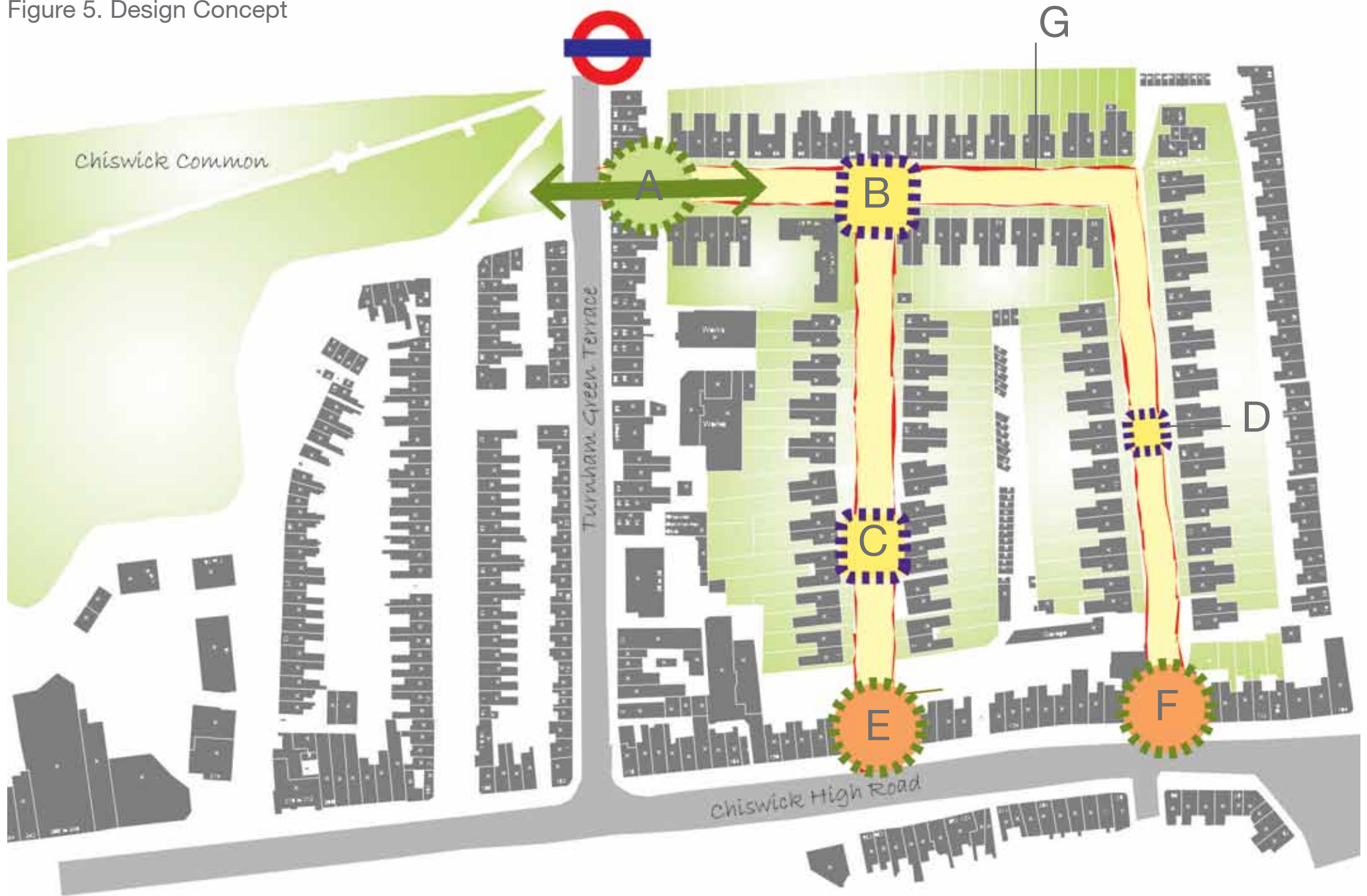
B. A new community focal point is proposed in this location. It might include a change in surface treatment, a community notice board, informal play opportunities, planting or other features.

C/D. Two 'break' points will be introduced to slow vehicles on straight sections of road. This could comprise a change of surface materials or features which create 'pinch points'.

E/F. Two new gateway features are proposed here which will mark the arrival to a 'special' area 'owned' by the local community. It will include features which are inspired by the local community to maximise the message that this a community space.

G. Trees will be celebrated through the inclusion of public art (e.g community designed/made bird boxes) and if feasible new planting around the base.

Figure 5. Design Concept



DESIGN PRINCIPLES