

KENTISH TO KENWOOD

Ideas for a New Square and
a Chain of Open Spaces in Kentish Town

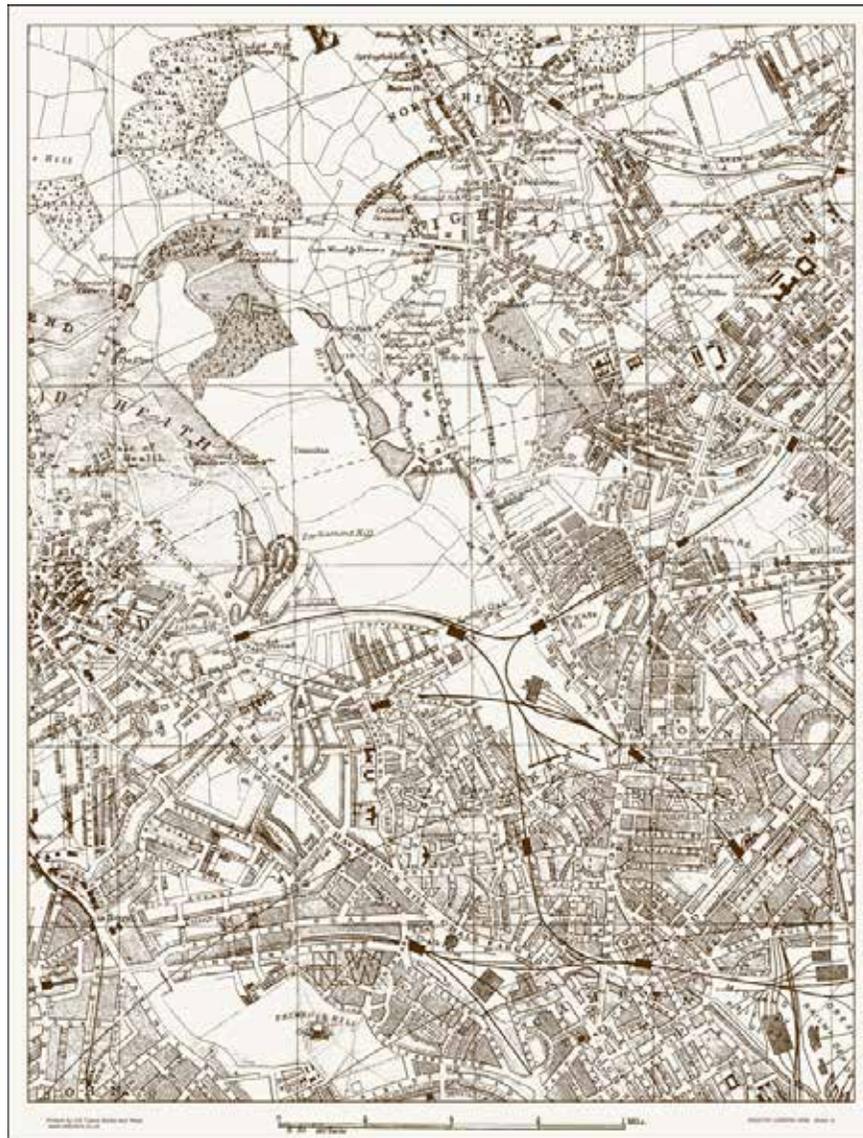


DRAFT

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Historic map from 1888, showing the continual landscape between Kentish Town Station and Hampstead Heath.

I.0 INTRODUCTION

This document explores ideas for a new public landscape in the heart of Kentish Town. Kentish Town is historically named after the combination of 'ken' (Celtic word for 'green') and ditch (referring to the River Fleet). We suggest to revive Kentish Town's roots to its natural topography through a new sequence of pedestrian and green spaces that starts from Kentish Town Station and extends towards Hampstead Heath.

Central to our proposal is the creation of a large Town Square in front of Kentish Town Station, extending over the railway and leading further to a chain of green routes and open spaces on both sides of the Regis Road and Murphy sites. The square will be a new heart, a viewing terrace, a meeting place and a destination.

Additional pedestrian and cyclist connections bridging over the railway lines will be introduced at appropriate junctions to connect the two sites. The two routes from both the Regis Road and Murphy sites will join naturally near Gospel Oak Station on Gordon House Road and then continue as paths to the Heath.

The proposed development focuses on quality of public space. It is exemplary in its approach to the environment and aims to enhance the area's distinct green character. It wants to delight and improve the wellbeing of residents and visitors alike.



Above: Satellite view of London at night and AY Architects' proposal 'Night Sky' (featured in *The Architects' Journal*, Volume 239, June 2014).

Next page: 'Night Sky' by AY Architects. Conceptual drawing showing (in orange) the proposed Kentish Town Square and a new pedestrian route, leading to the Heath, ascending to Kenwood House and looping back.

2.0 'Night Sky'

We live and work in the area. For years we have been thinking about its unique relation to Parliament Hill and the Heath. The idea of a public square hovering above the railway and looking towards the long green views and open sky is combined with our interest in public spaces that work equally well day and night. We promote quietly lit urban environments that harness as much as possible natural light and abundant urban lighting.

In 2014 we were invited by *The Architect's Journal* and iGuzzini to make a proposal for using lighting to enhance an area of our choice. We chose Kentish Town.

Our proposal 'Night Sky' connected Kentish Town with Kenwood House in Hampstead Heath via a dark green corridor that would use very low output lighting, dimming on and off according to weather and existing volume of light, as people would make their journey.

It would comply with Camden Policy DP26.



1 Kentish Town Station 2 New Town Square 3 Proposed pedestrian and cyclist route 4 Entrance to Parliament Hill 5 Kenwood House



View of evening sky on Parliament Hill.

Light pollution should be minimized. Mega-cities like London are so lit up that they prevent us from experiencing the sky, disconnecting us from the passage of day and night, the rhythm of the cosmos, moon phases and the stars. Energy consumption and light pollution have become extreme in the name of modern comfort and a distorted concept of safety.

Kentish Town can take a different stand and become known as a unique and exemplary urban area in London that promotes sustainable and calmer lighting at night. Our proposal aims to create a beautiful public space that can 'reclaim' the night sky by using the smallest amount of light where and when necessary.

Most lighting of the new development would be low output and powered by solar or kinetic energy (train or wind). Smart urban lighting gives the opportunity to sensor activity and surrounding light sources, adjusting luminosity levels to achieve darker night environments. Interactive smart systems would be applied where possible. On a clear full moon lit night, or next to heavy vehicle traffic, lights would dim down; where and when there is less light they would dim up.

3.0 HISTORY

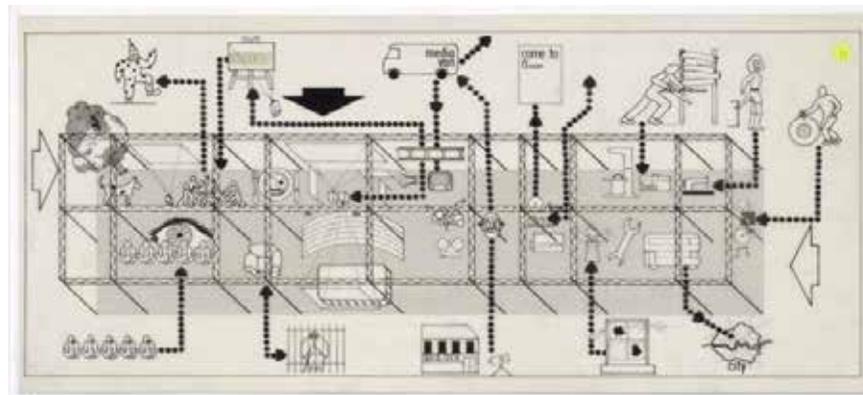


The history of Kentish Town has amazing examples of projects based on community initiative and creative participation.

For example, working with the Talacre Action Group, the local arts and community organisation Inter-Action ran festivals, play schemes and drama projects in an attempt to save the Talacre site as an open community space.

The Inter-action Centre built next to the railway in the 1970s was designed by progressive architect Cedric Price who fostered the ideas and needs of the residents. It was a generous, flexible and open building to be used by all.

We propose that any new development in the area should be realised in a similar spirit.



The Inter-action Centre built next to the Kentish Town West railway lines in the 1970s and a drawing by its architect Cedric Price showing a variety of community uses.



Another fascinating initiative in the urban history of the area was the creation of the Kentish Town City Farm, a beautiful place and the first City Farm in the UK.

The Farm was created by Inter-Action and a team of volunteers, youth and farm workers in 1972. Currently the Farm is poorly accessed. It is important that any new plan enhances it and better links it with other key places in the area.

In our proposal the Farm becomes a destination and a major attraction: an integral part of a continual pedestrian route that will connect the new Kentish Town Square with the green corridor on the Regis Road site, the Farm itself, expanded planted areas on the Murphy site, the area around Gospel Oak Station and Parliament Hill.



Kentish Town City Farm today and in the mid 1970s.

4.0 RATIONALE

Our proposal is for a public realm with a green corridor at its heart, capable of serving the residents in a sustainable and enjoyable way.

The area needs to be environmentally friendly to enrich life in Kentish Town for the long term.

This public landscape should also hold well together appropriate community facilities. We anticipate that extra facilities for culture, education, sports and community use will be needed in the redevelopment of the Kentish Town Industrial Area.

The aim should be to maintain and enhance employment space, increase housing and school provision, but also create a well-designed network of green spaces, playgrounds, squares and sites for open-air events and festivals.

This public realm should be fun, relevant and accessible for all ages.



Painting of Parliament Hill by Christopher Corr.



Long view to north west from the junction of Kentish Town Station.

We accept the future need for a mixed-use redevelopment of the Regis Road and Murphy sites but advocate for maintaining and enhancing the landscape character of the area on either sides of the railway.

We propose enlarging the site's green areas and creating a chain of much needed open-air routes and public places that will take people away from the traffic arteries and lead them gently in a calm pedestrian journey to the Heath.

The proposed chain of spaces will facilitate better connections between the Kentish Town Station junction, the Murphy and Regis Road sites, the Kentish Town City Farm, Gospel Oak and Parliament Hill. It will support many open-air leisure and cultural activities, events and markets for the neighborhood.



A local action group campaigning for Talacre's open air space in the 1970s and a street engagement event organised by the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum in 2012.

Our proposal follows Camden's relevant policies and studies about open spaces, play and informal recreation (for example CS10, CS15, DP15, DP31) and is relevant to its policies about high environmental standards (including CS1, CS3, CS5, Cs6, CPG2, CS13, DP26).

The project respects and enhances the broader planning aims of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum and particularly matches the policies of its Neighbourhood Plan, including:

- Policy SSP1 about the creation of a new Town Square
- Policy SSP2 about the carefully set criteria for the redevelopment of the Regis Road and Murphy sites
- Policy D1 about protecting the distant view to Parliament Hill
- Policy G03 about protecting and encouraging the biodiverse habitats of the area.

The scheme also agrees with Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum's recent community consultations and emerging policies on:

- supporting open air and community events spaces
- improving access and appearance of the Gospel Oak Station area.



Views of the railway: A new terraced square can extend above it and more bridges are necessary to connect either sites.

5.0 SITE STRATEGY

The project protects and celebrates the long views and much-loved scenes of sunsets to the north-west from the junction outside Kentish Town Station, linking 'Kentish' to 'Kenwood'. These views will be safely enjoyed from a new and exciting terraced square expanding above the railway lines.

The new Town Square will be the starting point of a coherent network of open-air paths and spaces (and community facilities as necessary) that will lead to Gospel Oak and Parliament Hill.

The historic Kentish Town City Farm will play an exciting part; the Forum will be finely integrated; and more green spaces, pedestrian routes and pocket squares will be incorporated.

This new public landscape will be well accessed from the surrounding main transport arteries to provide high quality pedestrian and open air space. Several new paths and open spaces will be skillfully interlinked and create pleasant east-west and south-north connections for pedestrians and cyclists.



Aerial view of the Kentish Town junction. The proposed square can extend over the railway.



Aerial view of the Kentish Town Industrial Area showing the extent of its potential for redevelopment.

Further propositions include:

- To create pedestrian and cycle routes from the Regis Road site next to the railway with the aim to lead to Kentish Town City Farm and from there to bridge over and continue to Gospel Oak and Parliament Hill.
- To maintain and expand the green areas of biodiversity and wildlife on the site, so that a continuous green corridor can extend from the Kentish Town Station junction to the Heath.
- On the Murphy site a wide and varied pedestrian route can be developed along public amenities and other links to Highgate Road while a new green corridor can be planted along the railway.
- The cyclist and pedestrian routes of Regis Road and Murphy sites naturally will merge in the area of the Kentish Town City Farm where two other railway lines intersect. On this location the topography can allow for a pedestrian platform/square linking smoothly the Regis Road and Murphy sites.
- Additional bridges can be created to better link the two sites.
- The area of the Gospel Oak Station and entrance to Parliament Hill should be redesigned and improved.

-  Area identified for redevelopment
-  Bus station
-  Railway station
-  Underground station
-  Green spaces

Existing site and transport

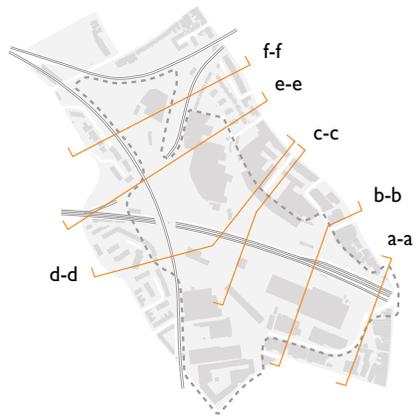
Scale 1:5000



-  Site boundary
-  Culture and leisure
-  Education
-  Shopping
-  Food and drink
-  Green spaces
-  Farm
-  Market

Existing site and use
 Scale 1:5000





Short sections of existing site

Scale 1:2500

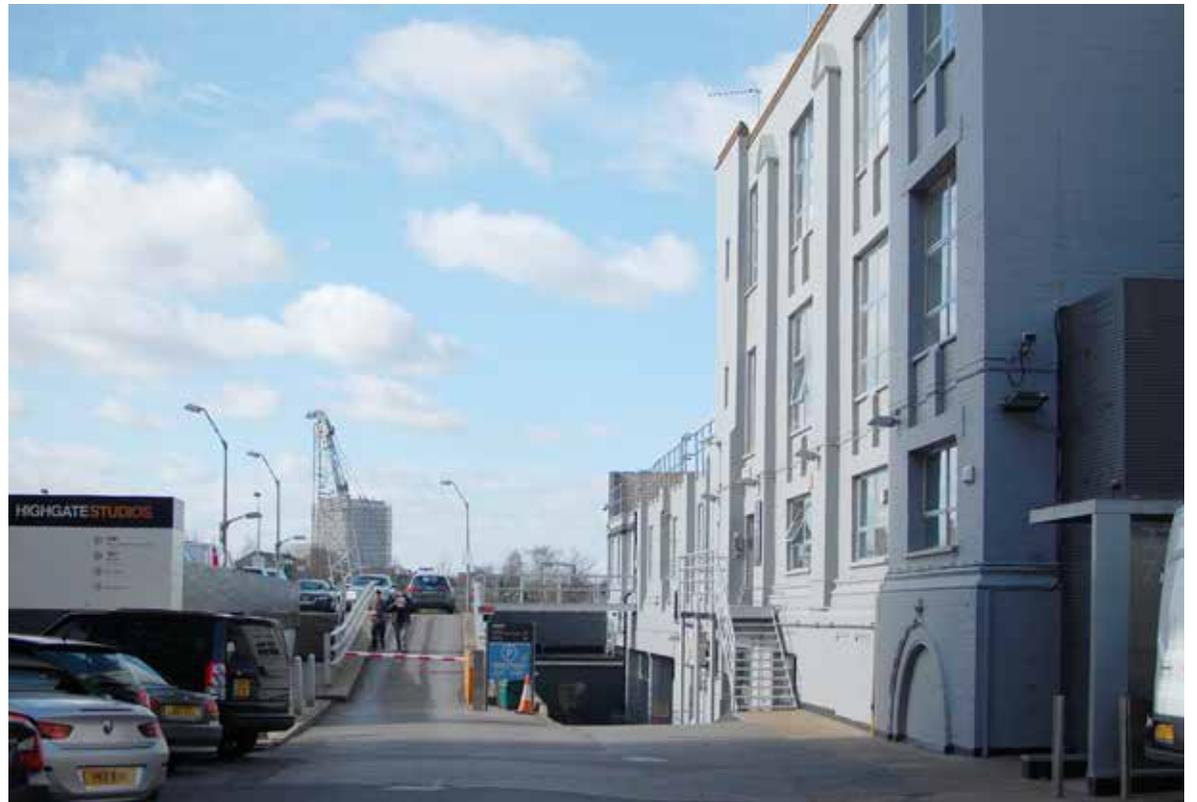
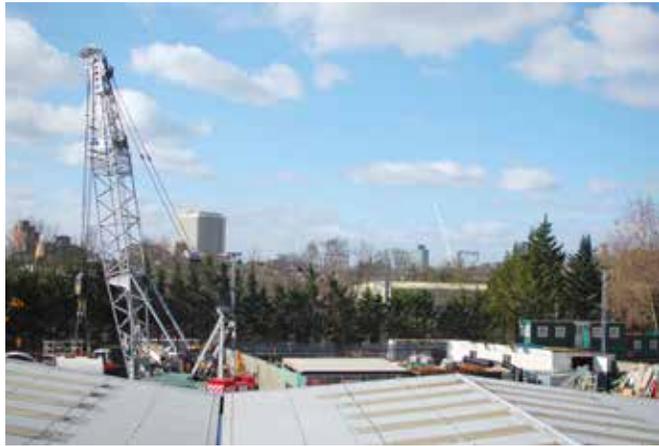


The scheme, situated largely on the Regis Road and Murphy sites, connects and enhances a number of exciting places that give Kentish Town its distinct identity.

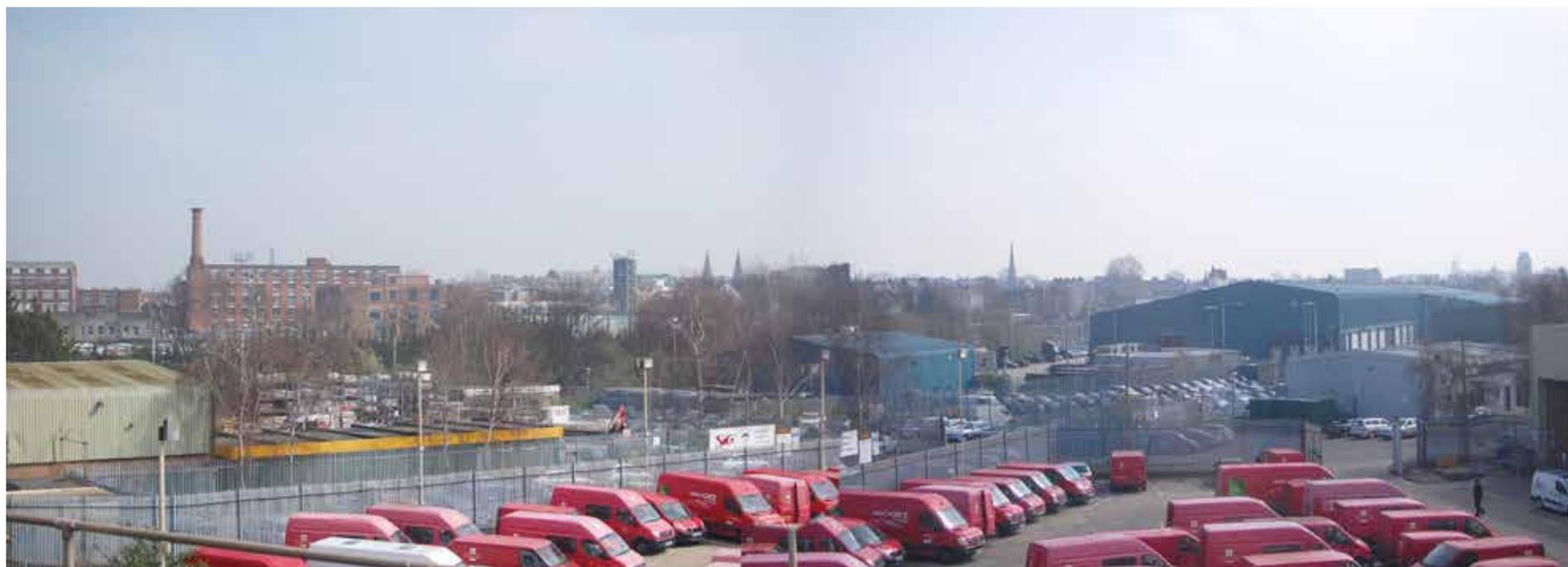
These include:

- the junction of Kentish Town Station, including the Victorian iron canopy, the Assembly House and the landscape bridging over the railway
- the green corridor of the Regis Road site, proposed to house new pedestrian and cyclist paths
- the Kentish Town City Farm, currently isolated
- the historic Forum venue, currently in need of upgrading
- the Christ Apostolic Church
- any new mixed-use redevelopment on the Murphy and Regis sites
- links to vibrant Queen's Crescent markets and festivals
- the area around Gospel Oak Station, including the entrance to the Lido
- and Parliament Hill itself.

Distinct landmarks of the area that need to be protected and integrated in any new redevelopment include the Forum, the Assembly House and the Parliament Hill Lido.



Dead ends from Highgate Studios and the Murphy site. We propose better links between the Murphy site and Highgate Road as well as new bridges connecting across with the Regis Road site on the opposite side.



Open views to the north-east from the Parcelforce site, looking towards the Murphy site. The green wildlife corridor in front of the railway lines needs to be protected and enlarged.



Views of the Murphy site, taken from filming in a train journey from Kentish Town Station to West Hampstead. We propose expanding and thickening the existing green area and planted trees.



Green spaces in Kentish Town City Farm and the Gospel Oak Station, that need better access and integration in a coherent public landscape.

6.0 Sketched Proposal

A new 'sun and moon viewing' square would span over the north-west railway side of the Kentish Town Station junction, where the River Fleet passes underground. The square is designed as a stepped terrace offering wonderful far-away views to Parliament Hill and an openness to the sky.

The square will bring quality of space in the heart of a busy transport interchange and attract pedestrians to leave the main roads and walk through calmer routes. It will be a viewing terrace, a meeting place and a destination. It will be a radical type of square, exemplary in terms of atmosphere, views and vibrance of urban space.

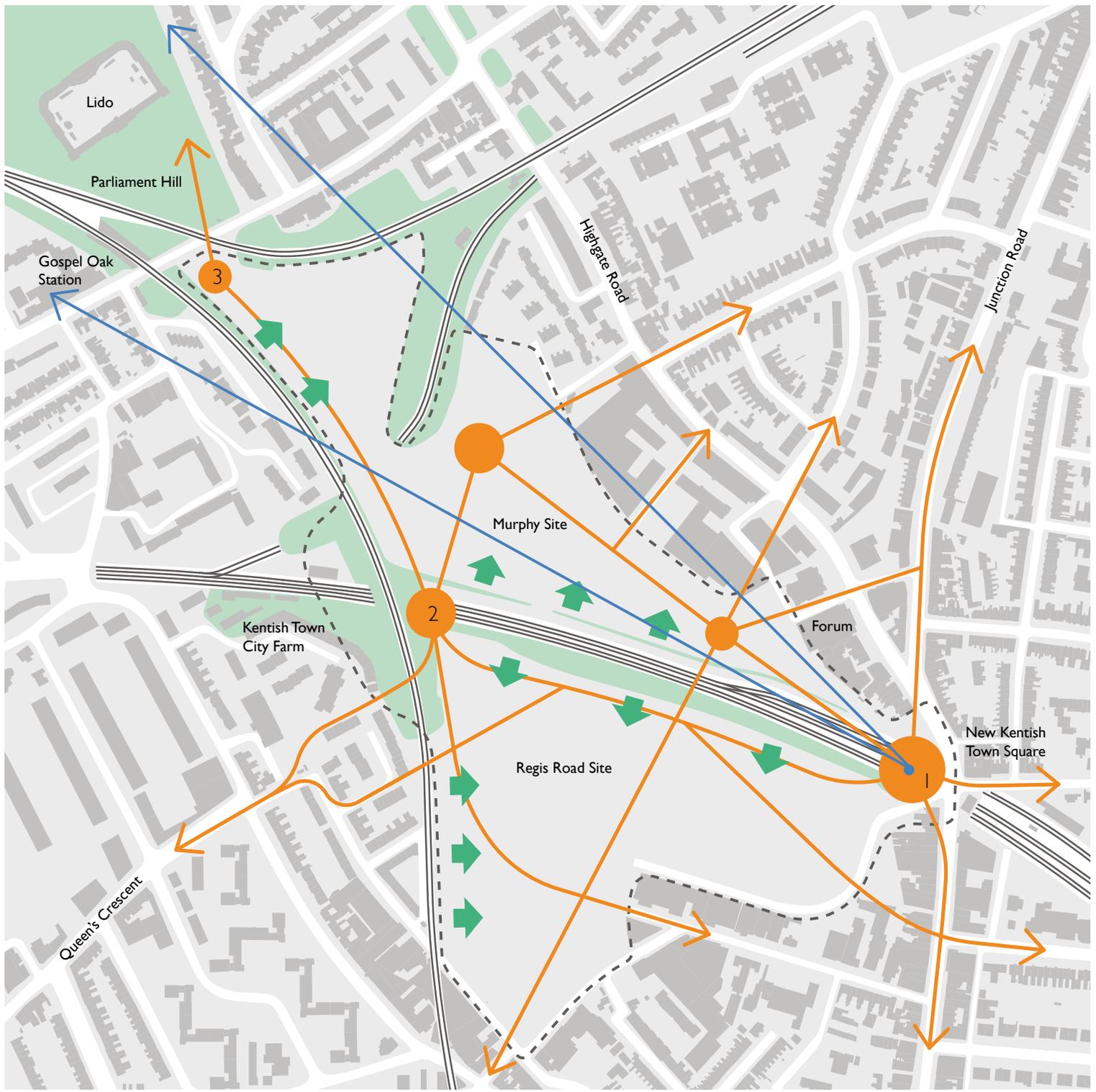
The Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum is committed to actively promote the creation of a new Town Square on this exact location by working with Network Rail, TfL and LB Camden. Our proposal fits this plan and has the same aim: to restore quality in the heart of the neighbourhood. It also aims to create unprecedented connections to the Heath.



The proposed square will have striking far-away views. It can be combined with a new public building on its boundary with Highgate Road.

- 1 New Kentish Town Square
- 2 City Farm Square
- 3 Gordon Road Square
- - Site boundary
- New pedestrian connections
- Protected view
- Existing green spaces
- Expansion of green spaces
- Squares and pocket squares
- Viewpoint on square

Potential links and green spaces
Scale 1:5000

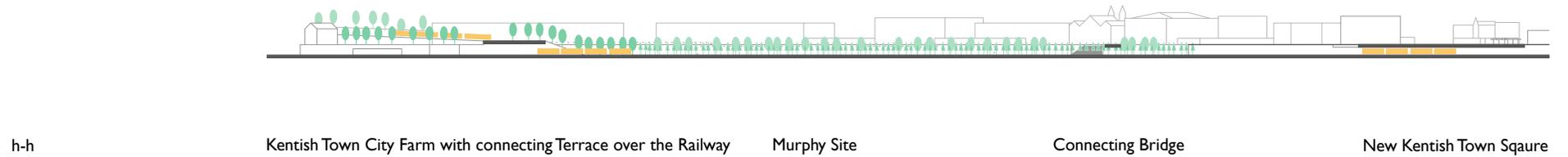
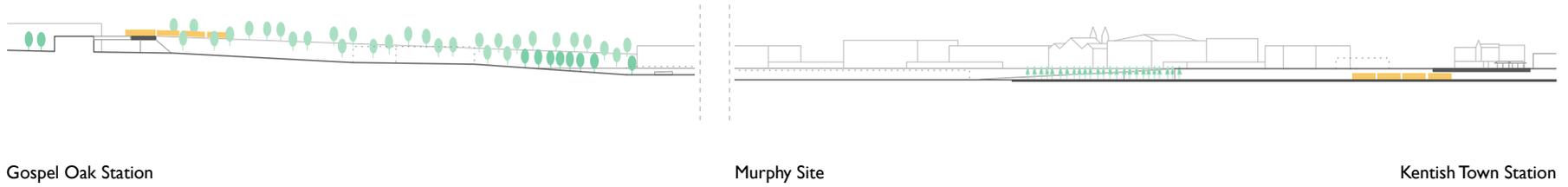
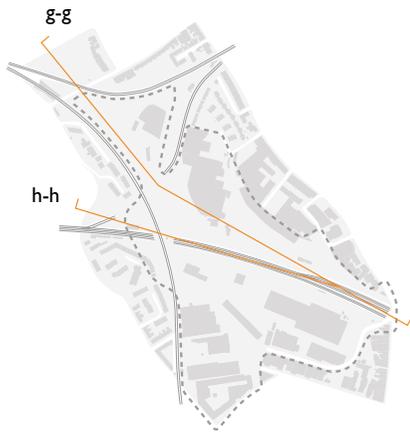


- Site boundary
- New pedestrian links
- Existing main roads
- New cycle path
- Existing green spaces
- New green spaces
- Farm
- Market
- Proposed housing and local businesses
- Proposed school and community
- Proposed shopping
- Proposed food and drink



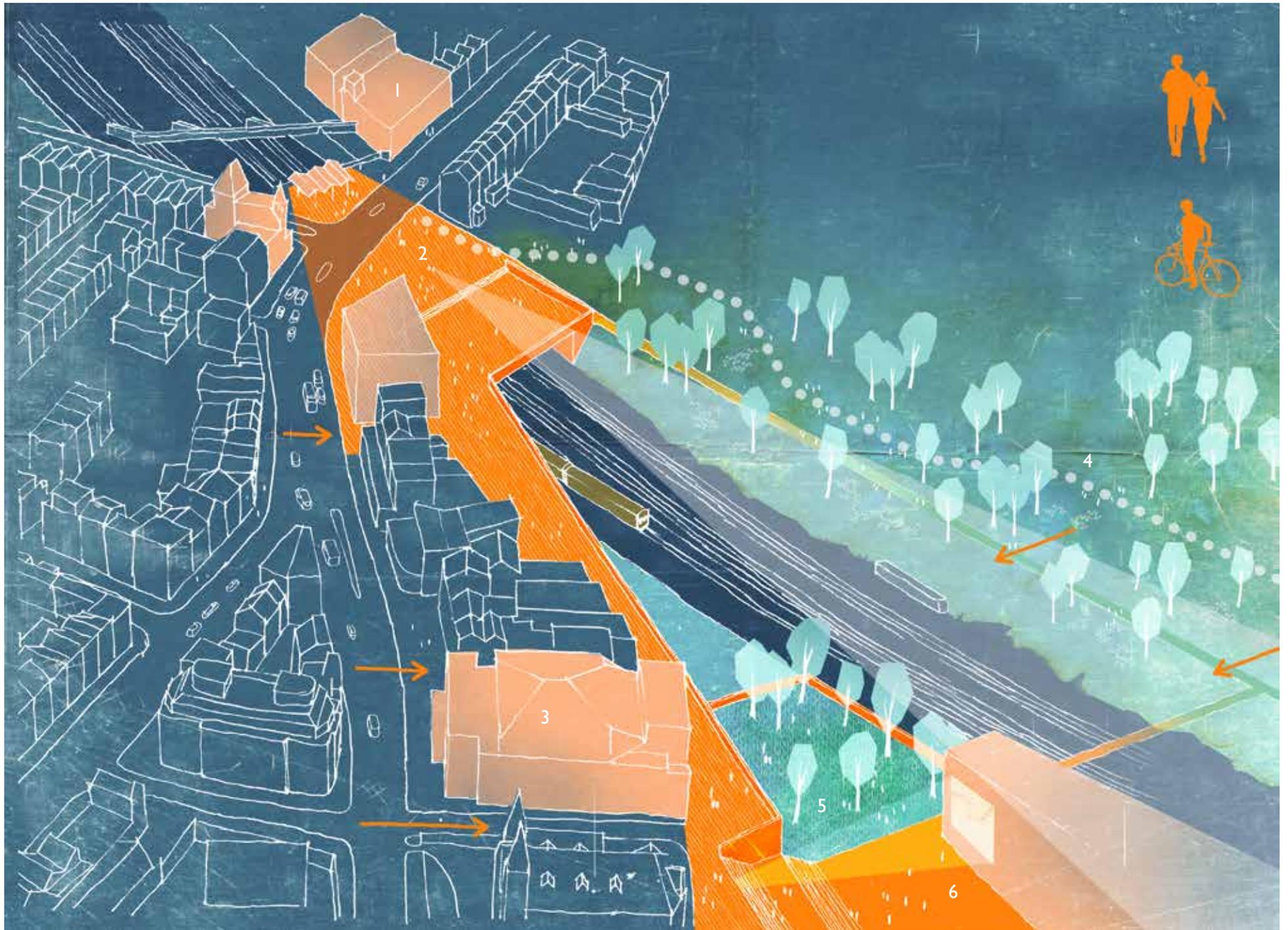
Site strategy

Scale 1:5000



Long section g-g of the existing site
 Long section h-h of the proposed scheme

Scale 1:3500



1 Kentish Town Station 2 New Town Square 3 The Forum 4 New pedestrian and cycle routes 5 Expansion of green space 6 Open air space for events



Sketched view of the new Town Square above the railway.



Recent projects by AY Architects include: House of Flags on Parliament Square, a public installation for the London Olympics; and Montpelier Community Nursery and Torriano Infants School Library, both in Kentish Town.

7.0 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The material in this document is based on a close study of the local area. It combines first-hand knowledge of Kentish Town and professional expertise in architecture and urban design. The suggestions are driven by a social and environmental approach to architecture, landscape and place making.

The content is researched and produced by the local studio AY Architects, directed by architects and Kentish Town residents Anthony Boulanger and Yeoryia Manolopoulou. AY Architects is an award-winning architectural practice, committed to localized architectural and urban projects that aim to improve neighbourhoods.

The practice has been involved in notable projects in Kentish Town. It initiated and delivered the new building for Montpelier Community Nursery (Stirling Prize Mid-list, Stephan Lawrence Prize Winner, RIBA National Award Winner, Camden Design High Commendation). It also advocated for the design improvements of Montpelier Gardens and Leighton Crescent and is currently involved in remodeling and extending buildings for Camden School for Girls and Torriano Juniors School.

8.0 CONTACT

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