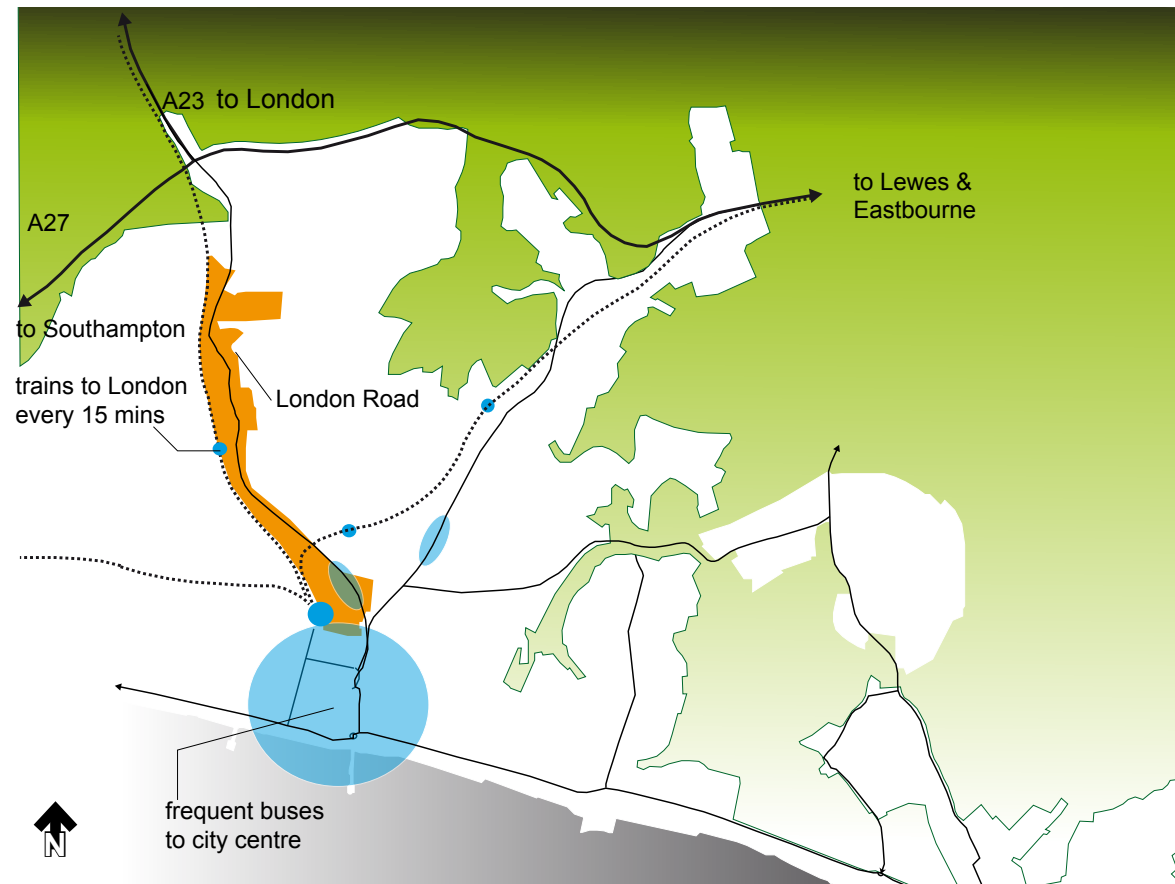


# 12 london road

## context



## key stages of historic development

The London Road is one of the main routes into central Brighton and one experienced by most first time visitors to the city. It is not a linear settlement that has grown up along the route but rather the route that passes through settlements that have grown over time to house Brighton's growing population.

The London Road established itself as the main coaching route between London and Brighton with the opening of the A23 from Bolney to Pyecombe in 1810. Following the arrival of the railway in the 1840s London Road slowly developed into a busy commercial centre as the front gardens were developed into shops, and the Baker Street area developed into a busy shopping street and outdoor market.

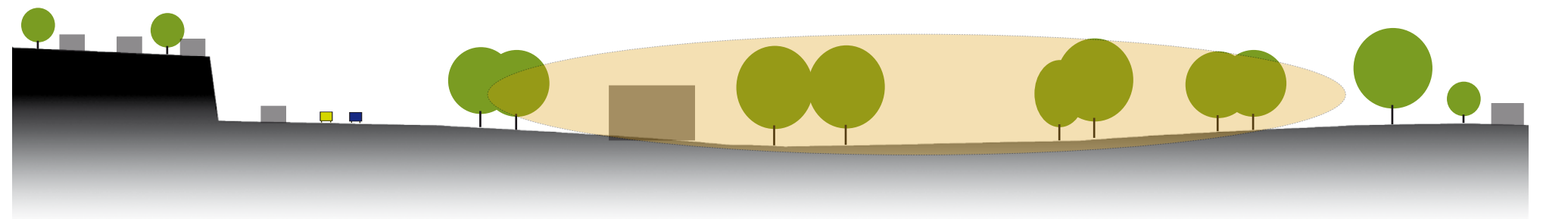
The railway also stimulated dense terraced development along its route, housing those who worked on the railways and in associated factories. Much of this was cleared in the 1960s to be replaced by blocks of flats. The old goods yard and the site of the locomotive works below the station have been replaced by the development of Trafalgar Place and the New England Quarter.

To the north of the central section of the London Road the route linked the estates and villages of Preston, Withdean and Patcham. Large villas established themselves along the route overlooking Preston Park and northwards, evidence of which can still be found in the form of mature ornamental tree planting and small lodges.

## topography & microclimate

The route runs along a now dry valley floor. It was once the route of the Wellesbourne Stream, that at times of prolonged rainfall, flowed towards the sea joined by other springs, collecting at Pool Valley, without soaking into the chalk bed below. The Wellesbourne contributed to the swampy nature of Valley Gardens and discouraged development. Since the construction of the Patcham Water Works, the water has been siphoned off and is now used for the irrigation of Brighton's parks and gardens.

The location of the route along the valley floor and the substantial mature tree planting creates a sheltered microclimate, shaded from the summer sun and sheltered from winter winds. Much of the development along the route is set back and bordered by trees. This helps to reduce any wind-tunnel effects, until the route reaches the central section where intense development and a lack of tree planting creates harsher conditions all year round.



## typology

The London Road may be classified as a major corridor into the city encompassing a mix of uses, scale and building form whose character changes as it passes from edge of downland, through suburban into urban development.

Refer to the introduction and summary for more information on landscape character types.

## 1865-75



# 12 london road

## key characteristics

- The route is predominately residential in use with small commercial centres that have developed to support the local residents of Preston and Patcham villages. Once the route enters the centre of Brighton it becomes predominately commercial in use with very little residential development. London Road shopping centre is designated as a 'Town Centre' in retail terms, which includes the open market. Other uses in this area include the City College 'Campus'. There is limited housing in this area, although this is changing with the development of the new urban quarter between Brighton station and New England Street.

- Building scale along the route varies from two storey detached homes to eight storey residential blocks and offices, and four storey shopping streets. The location at the bottom of a valley means that it is more able to accommodate tall buildings without impacting on the surrounding skyline. This, along with the changes in use, means that housing densities, built form and the nature of open space vary greatly along the route. The average gross density along the route is 33 dwellings per hectare.

- As one of the main routes in and out of the city, London Road carries a high amount of traffic and often has long queues in the evenings and at weekends. Inevitably this creates heavily trafficked junctions along the route and conflict between pedestrian and vehicular activity. There are frequent bus services along the route linking the outer suburbs to the city centre, although the majority of people living along the route chose to travel to work by car in 2001. A cycle lane recently installed should encourage a greater number of trips by bike. Many of the local population are within easy access of Brighton or Preston Park railway stations allowing a significant proportion of local residents to walk and then use the train to travel to work (see appendix 2).

- The route is lined with a series of large open green spaces from Withdean Park to the grounds of St. Peter's Church and The Level. This means that most local residents are within a 10 minute walk of open green space. The railway is heavily wooded on either side creating a strong green corridor into the centre of the city providing food and shelter for local wildlife, however this wild space is not accessible to local residents. The route is lined by mature trees of many species, creating a very green approach into the city centre.

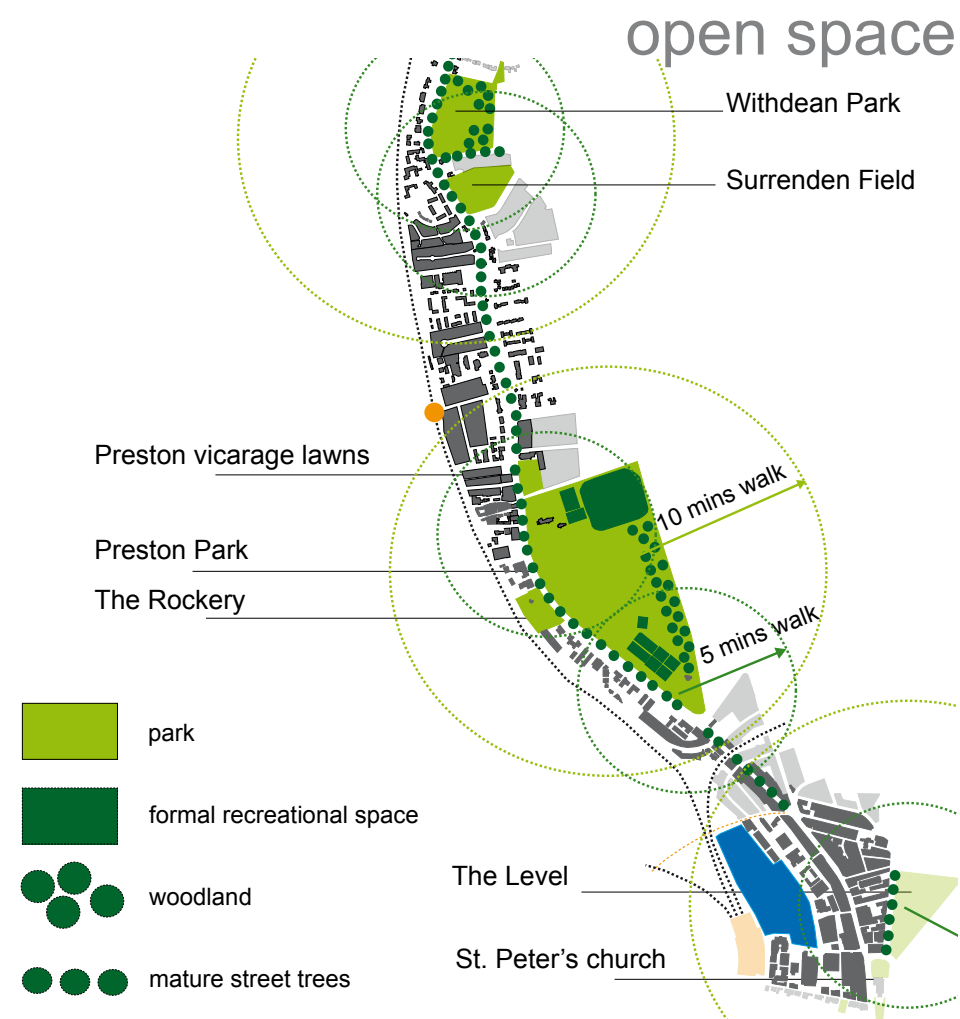
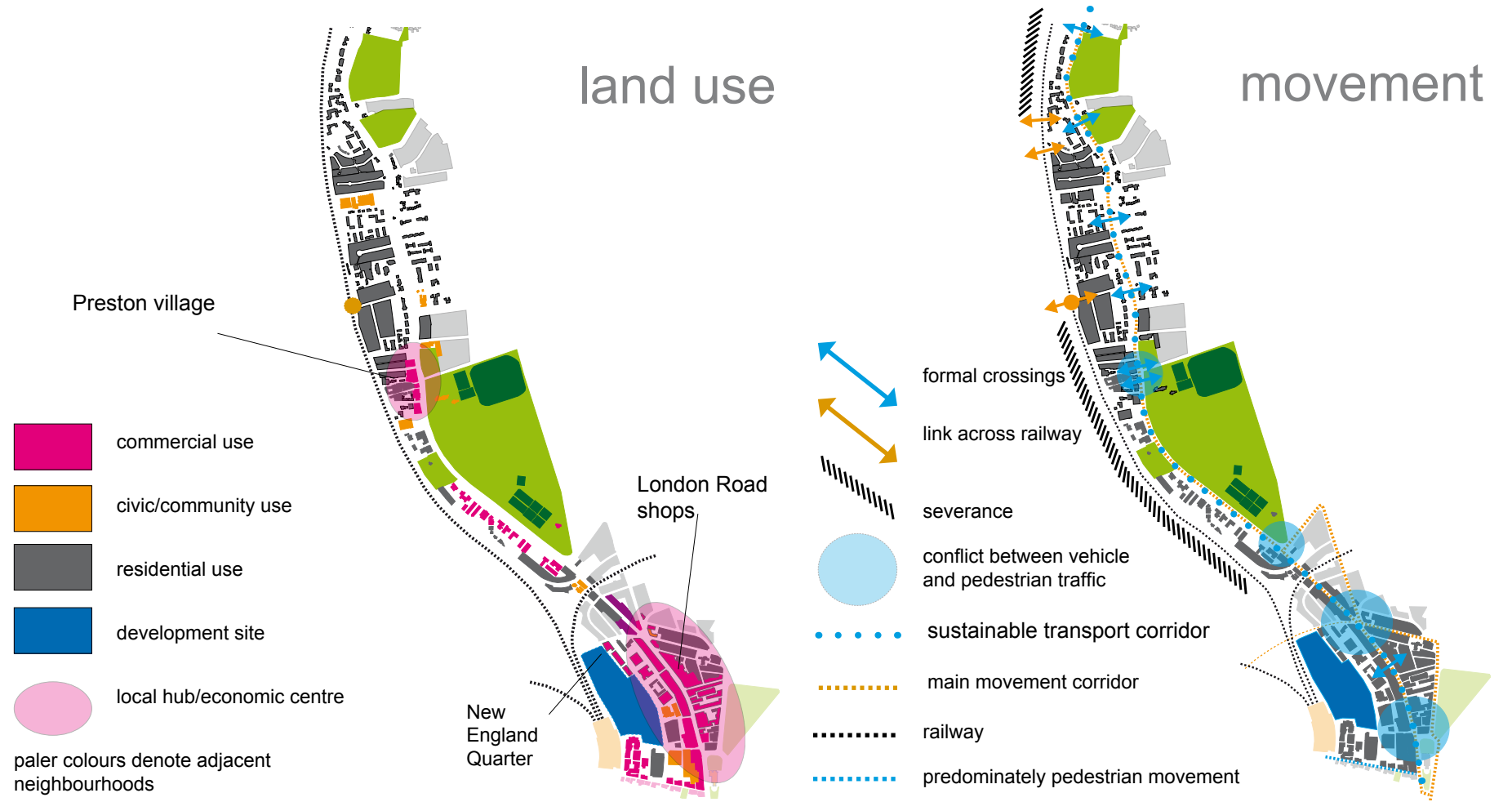
- The social and economic make-up changes along the route. A mainly young population is located close to the city centre, while an older population tend to live in the large purpose built flats located in 'The Park' section. Professionals with families predominate in the 'Suburban' section of the route.

- Although the route is experienced as a separate entity, it passes through four different neighbourhoods as recognised by this study. The railway and the associated topography form a definite boundary along the western edge. The route can be split into three clear 'sections':

- Suburban:** predominantly large scale, tall residential blocks set in attractive landscaped amenity space. Mainly private ownership and elderly occupants.

- The Park:** a mixed area of high rise office blocks grouped to the south and historic small scale residential development to the north, unified by the park setting and the mature street trees.

- Central:** a very mixed area in terms of architecture and uses. Predominantly retail in three and four storey buildings, generally Victorian but with some large 20th century retail developments. Interspersed with other commercial and residential development, some high rise.





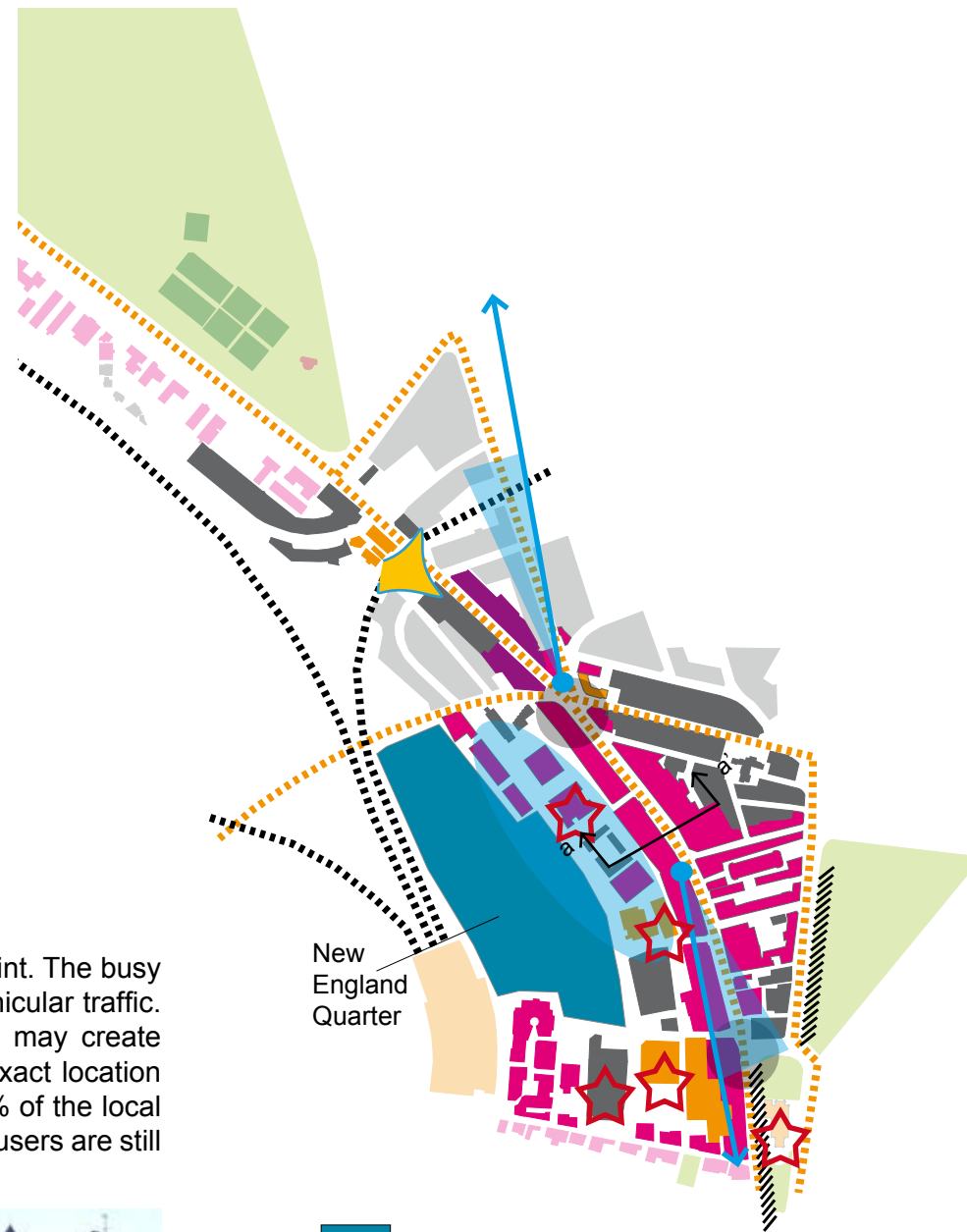
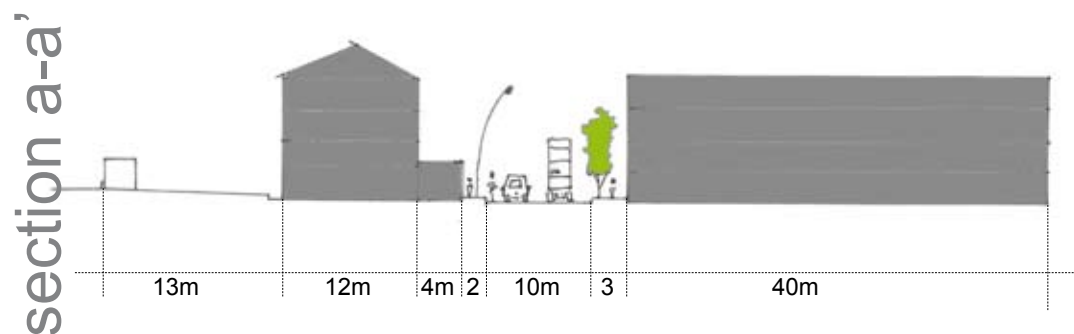
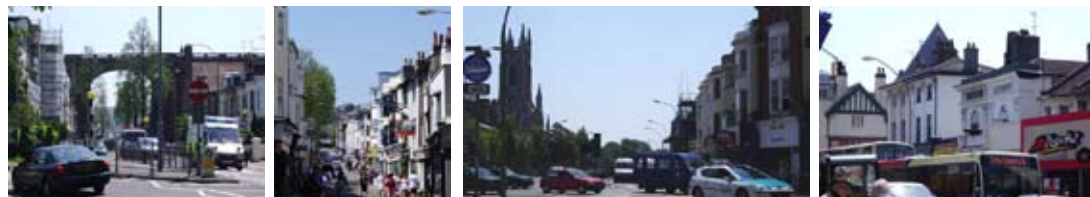
# 12 london road<sub>central</sub>

## key characteristics

- **Scale and density:** The central section of the London Road is predominately commercial in use interspersed with high rise residential and living above commercial properties. This means that, currently, gross density is low at only 18 dwellings per hectare. However this is about to change with the development of the derelict railway sites that have been vacant since the 1960s, and the demolition of the locomotive works. Building scale varies wildly across the area. The relatively low rise of London Road is over shadowed, in parts, by twentieth century high rise development along its western boundary. This includes the imposing St. Bartholomew's Church, built in 1872-4.



- **Movement:** London Road becomes a busy shopping street at this point. The busy junction of Preston Circus creates conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Traffic entering the city is diverted around a one-way system. This may create confusion for first time visitors arriving in Brighton and Hove on the exact location of this shopping district. Its proximity to the city centre means that 33% of the local population walk to work; more than those that use the car. Bus or cycle users are still comparatively low.



- **Open space:** From the leafy open space of 'The Park' section the appearance of the public realm changes greatly. There is no green open space within the character area itself and very little street tree planting. The Level and St. Peters Church nearby, nevertheless provide formal and informal recreation space and children's play space. This is, however, hard to access due to the high level of traffic around the parks and poor design of the public realm. The lack of tree planting, the confined nature of the street, and high traffic levels along London Road all mean that the area suffers from poor air quality. The shopping street also suffers from wind-tunnelling during the winter and there is a lack of shade in the area during the summer months.

- **Architecture:** Interesting Regency details still remain above the shop fronts along London Road. There are some good examples of 1930s architecture along the route including the former Co-operative building. There is some later infill development that has not been so sensitively designed, especially along New England Road and New England Street, where large blocks line the street and the tight grid pattern of the nineteenth century development begins to break up. St. Peter's Church and St. Bartholomew's Church are two imposing landmarks of city-wide importance that can be seen from other surrounding neighbourhoods. The railway viaduct also serves as a gateway into the city centre.



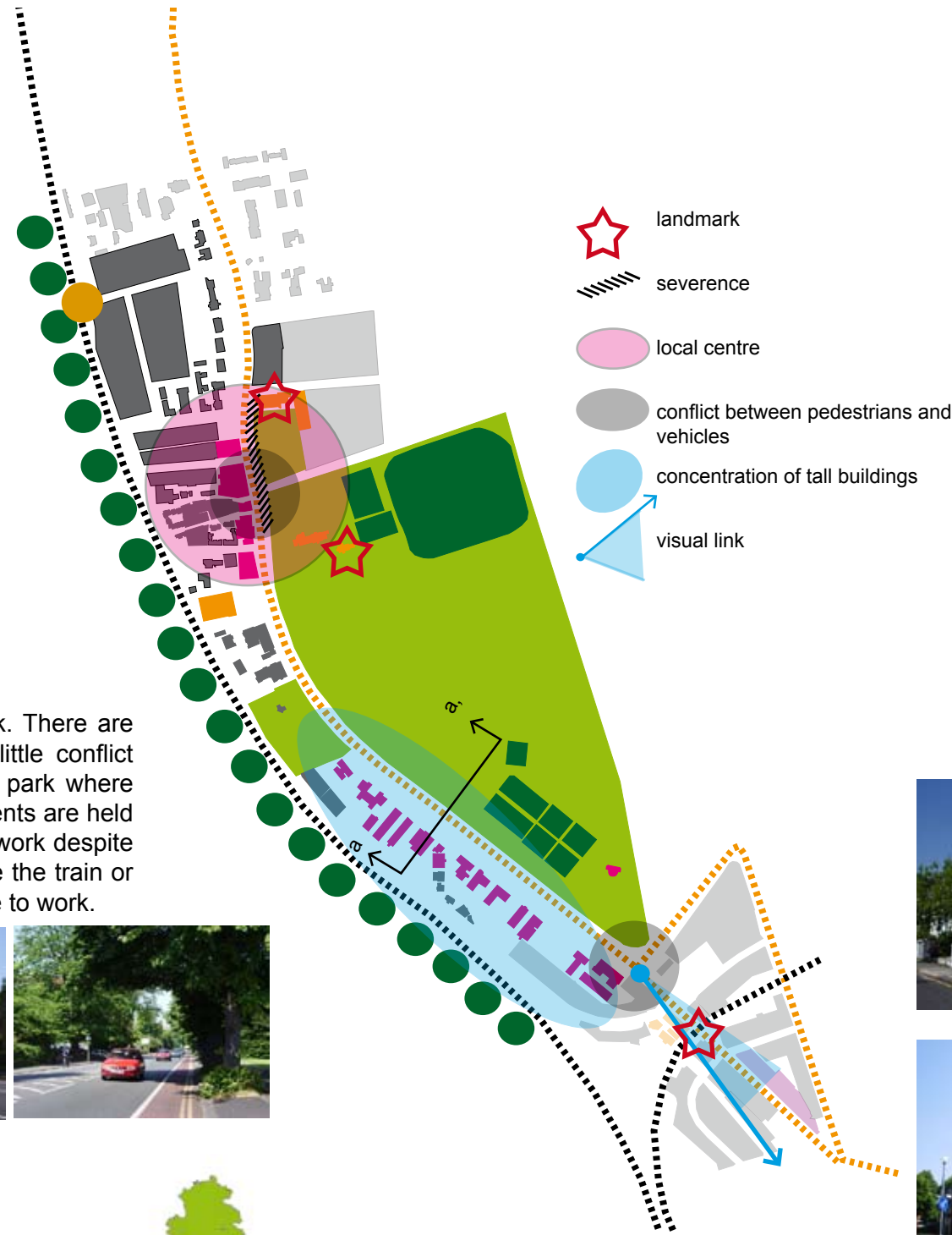
# 12 london road the park

## key characteristics

• **Scale and density:** Many of the plots that once accommodated large villas overlooking Preston Park now accommodate up to 12 storey office blocks set back from the road. They have little impact on the surrounding skyline due to their location in the valley bottom and the surrounding tree planting. Residential development is mainly centred around Preston Park station and village. Much of this is predominately two storey. The mix of uses and abundance of open space means that the gross density for this section of the route is relatively low for an inner suburban area at only 18 dwellings per hectare.



• **Movement:** Increased pedestrian traffic trying to access the park. There are more formal and informal crossings at this point. There appears little conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic until the south end of the park where pedestrians are forced through indirect crossings and when large events are held in Preston Park. 41% of the local population use the car to travel to work despite the area's proximity to the city centre but a significant proportion use the train or walk. However only 10% use the local bus service, and only 4% cycle to work.



• **Open space:** This section of the route is dominated by the formal gardens of Preston Park creating a grand entrance into the city of Brighton & Hove. The Park provides a range of spaces for formal and informal recreation for a range of age groups. There is also the open space in front of Preston Manor. The bowling greens of Vicarage Lawns, the formal gardens of The Rockery, and tennis courts and bowling greens of Preston Club mean that there is a high proportion of open space along this section. The mature tree planting within the plots as well as the heavily wooded railway and avenues of mature elms create a 'green and leafy' environment, as well as improving the local micro-climate and providing food and shelter for wildlife.



• **Architecture:** The small development of Victorian and Edwardian terraces around Preston Park station has a strong sense of identity. Two storey buildings set over a grid pattern with regular setbacks and centred around the station and local church. Similarly the more informally arranged buildings of the former Preston Village, that would have once served Preston Manor, have a clear identity. Two storey cottages and terraces are arranged along irregular streets. Some twentieth century infill. Opposite the Park the use and scale changes dramatically to modern office blocks and some housing.



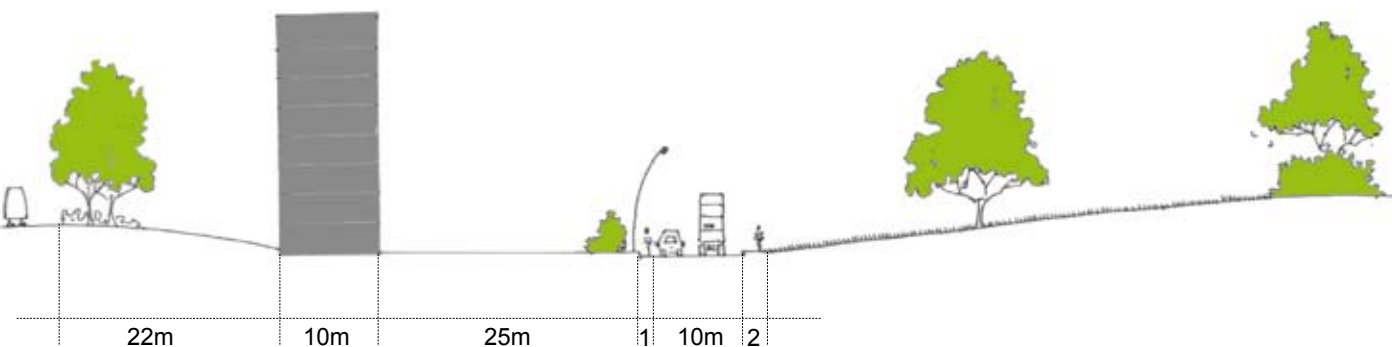
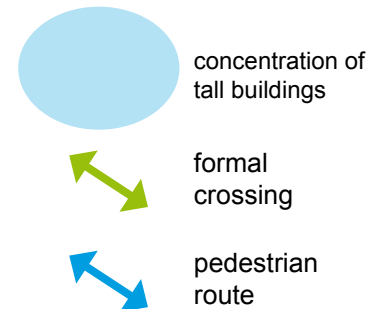
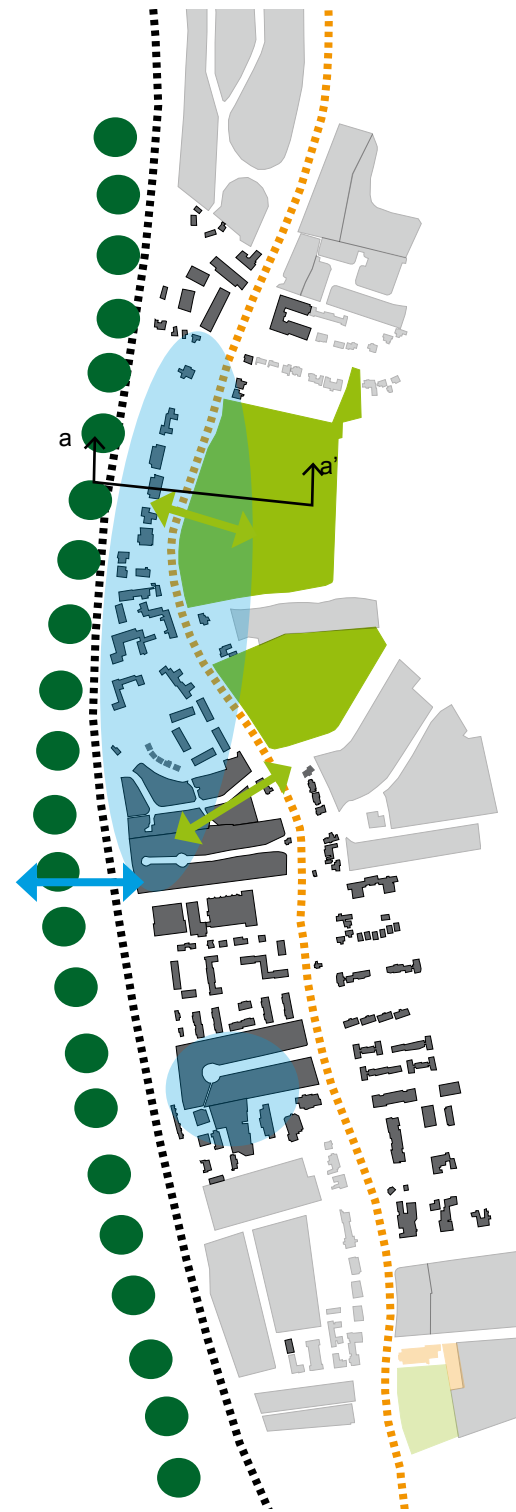
# 12 london road<sub>suburban</sub>

## key characteristics

- **Scale and density:** the route is flanked in places by eight to nine storey purpose-built flats in large gardens. The plots are the remnants of the large villas that once bordered the route. Part of a farmstead and some suburban housing lie within this section. This section of London Road has a moderately low density of 30 dwellings per hectare.



- **Movement:** Traffic begins to build up at the major junctions in the evenings and at weekends. There are formal crossings however pedestrian activity is most noticeable at bus stops. The main route is flanked by quite leafy cul-de-sacs that run up to the railway. There are few crossings over the railway defining a clear edge to this character area. Over 55% of the local population travel to work by car with only 10% using the bus service, and 3% using the bicycle.



- **Open space:** Withdean Park and Surrenden Field contribute to the 'green approach into the centre of the city'. They provide local residents with informal recreation but have no designated children's play. The high level of traffic makes it difficult for children to access these open green spaces.



- **Architecture:** Many of the large plots that once accommodated large villas have been developed for post war purpose built blocks of flats. Only three of the large villas remain. Tower House and Withdean Hall have been converted into flats while Grove Lodge dating from the 1860s is now St. Bernadette's Primary School. Many of the lodges to these grand houses remain. The large blocks are interspersed with flint cottages, remnants of the Withdean hamlet and farmstead that once straddled the route. Behind the tall apartment blocks are large two-storey detached homes, mostly built between the wars. Privately owned, these appear in good condition. Some of the apartment blocks are starting to look tired.

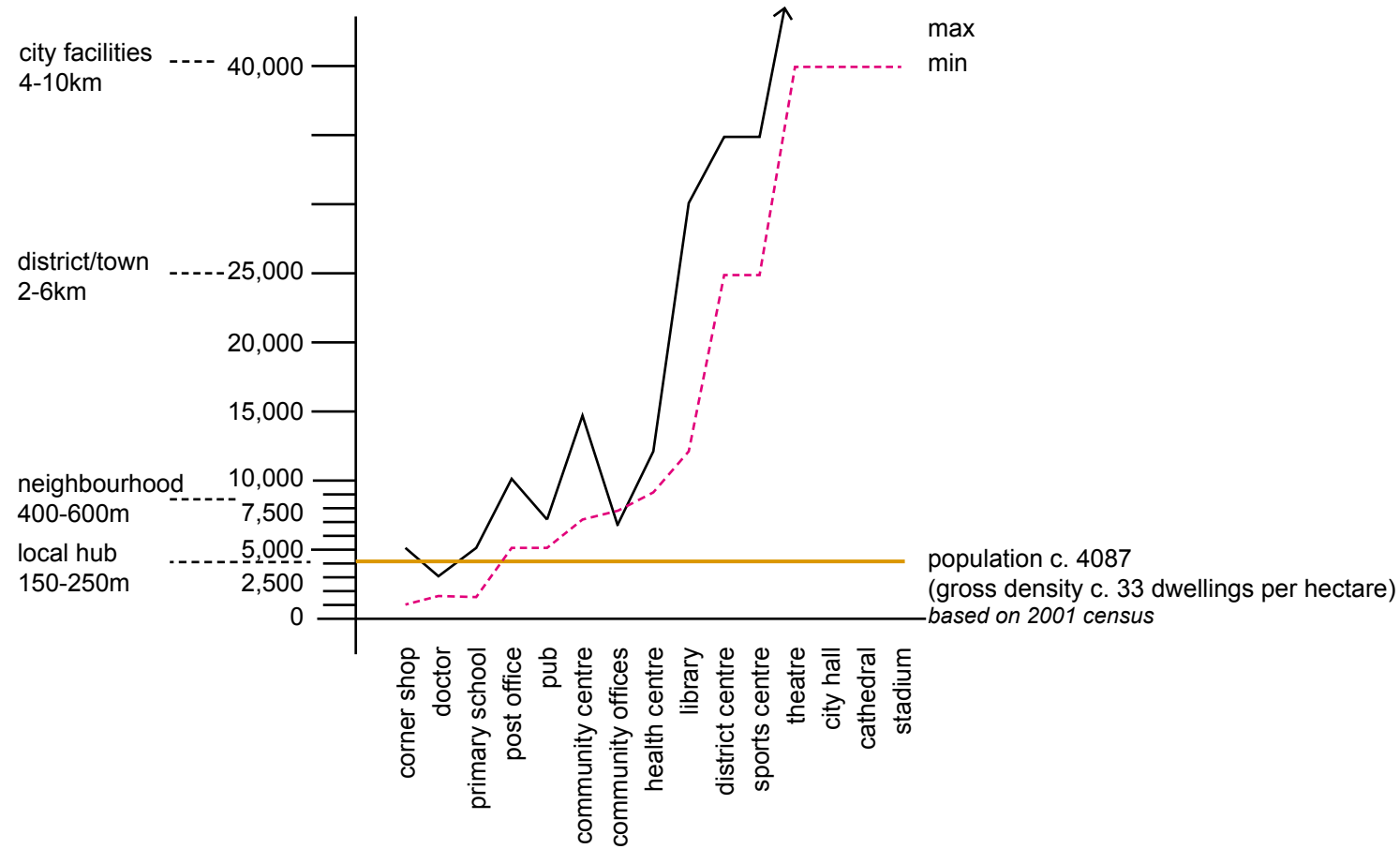


# 12 london road

## appendix 1: population & density

Population numbers able to support community facilities.

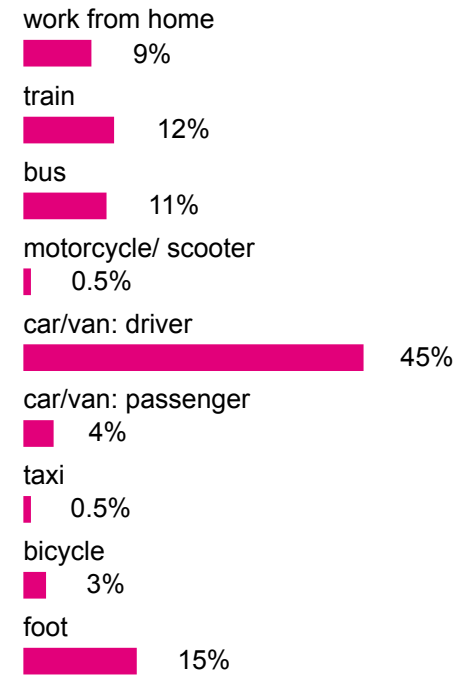
Source: Towards an Urban Renaissance, 2002



## appendix 2: travel to work

Statistics illustrating methods of travel to work.

Source: City Stats, Census 2001

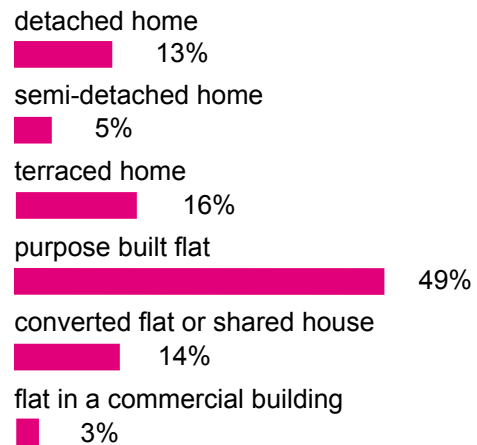


The information from the 2001 census and the Acorn profiles were based on the best fit of the smallest enumeration districts. This was obtained from Citystats website, which is now [www.bhlis.org](http://www.bhlis.org)

See pages 8 and 11 for city-wide comparisons and more information

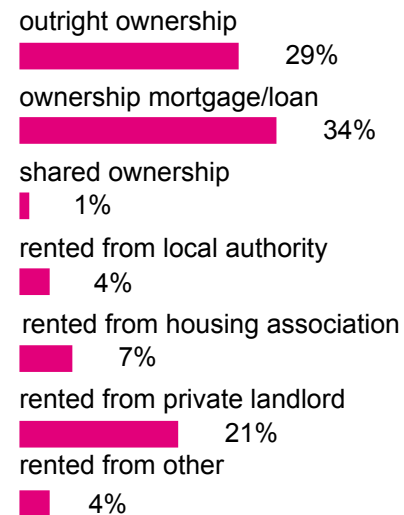
## appendix 3: social mix accommodation types

Source: City Stats, Census 2001



## tenure types

Source: City Stats, Census 2001



## demographic types

Source: City Stats, Acorn data

Clockwise, from the top:

- Well-Off Managers Larger Houses
- Old People Detached Homes
- Older Professionals in Suburban houses and Apartments
- Affluent Urban Professionals Flats
- Prosperous Young Professionals Flats
- Suburban Privately Renting Professionals
- Student Flats and Cosmopolitan Sharers
- White-Collar Singles and Sharers Terraces
- Elderly Singles Purpose Built Flats
- Single and Single Parents High-Rise Estates

