

Wimbledon – the Place

Marcus Beale RIBA

1. Wimbledon's prosperity depends on three things:
London,
transport and
the commons.

London: a world city.

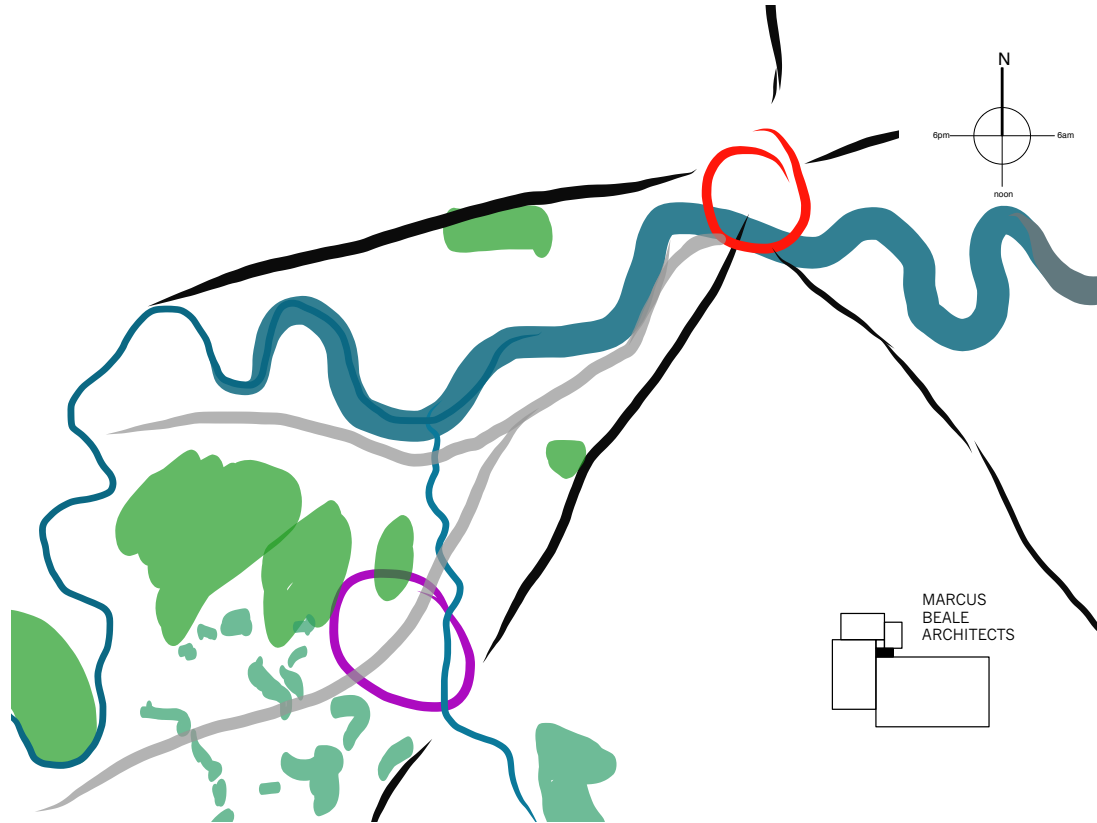
If you think about it, a prosperous city needs only two ingredients:

- water and
- good ideas.

If the ideas are good enough the people come and they will provide everything else.

Transport: links from Wimbledon to London and beyond. This will get even better with Crossrail 2.

Wimbledon Common: a pretty good garden for all of us. Over 1,000 acres of lightly managed wilderness, protected by Act of Parliament in 1871, a site of Europe-wide significance for conservation.



These three factors make possible
the perfect suburban dream
of living in the country or a village and a short hop
from town.



2. What is Wimbledon as a place?

2.1. In looking for the centre of a place you look for the public buildings, a concentricity of roads and so on. Here, instead, we have two places. The transport and the common are separated by about a mile, with the public buildings: town hall, library, clubs, churches and pubs strung out along the line of the main road.

Upper left, to the north west, **Wimbledon village**, tennis, common, High Street, Village Club, high end residential, boutique shops and the café culture.

Lower right, to the south east, **Wimbledon town** at the bottom of the hill, a more or less equal mix of business, retail and residential, a good balance.

Linked by a single road, called variously the High Street, Wimbledon Hill, and The Broadway, bisected by the railway line which further reinforces the linearity.

2.2. Town and the village are separate, different, and reinforce each other's value.



2.3. It hasn't been particularly planned.
Both centres have grown organically, based on topography, accessibility, economic opportunity, a series of local decisions.

The first development, 2 or 3 storey, nearly all in brick and slate: red brick, yellow brick, some Portland stone.

The second phase roughly doubling or trebling this height, six storeys or more.

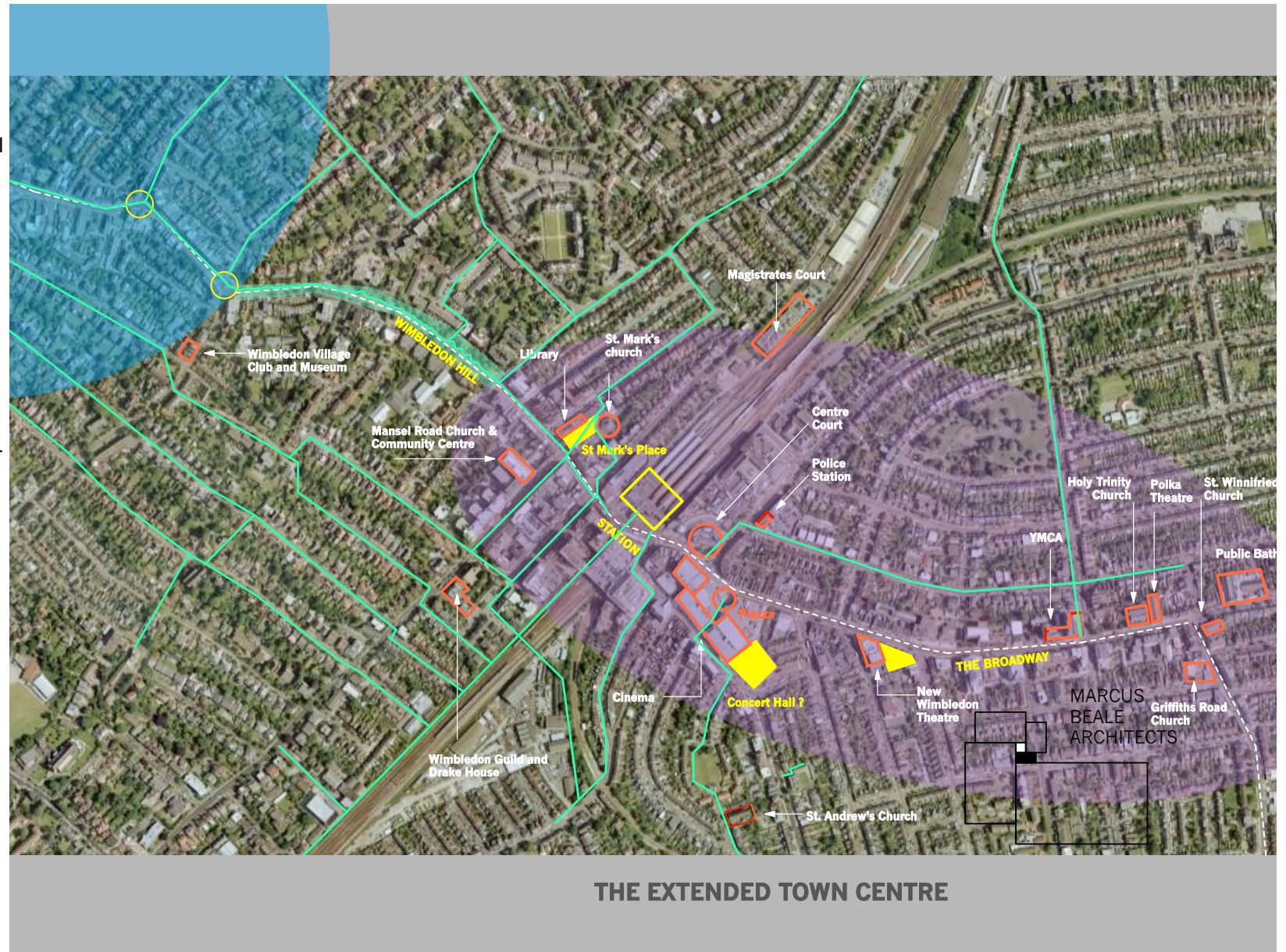


3. What will it take to make Wimbledon a vibrant town centre of the future?

3.1. First the software: the ideas that make this such a great place to live. Build social capital and engagement: festivals, the arts, social and community events and educational projects.

3.2. Then, the hardware: public realm, public spaces, places for people. Rigorously de-clutter, simplify, public space. Wimbledon Station is looking better, but the job isn't finished. Promote eye contact and civic engagement. Place making: for each place: Piazza, Town Hall, Station, St Mark's Place, the High Street, intensify each place in its own right, drawing out the individual character of each.

3.3. Then connect up the places. Improving the pedestrian experience developing secondary pedestrian routes across this part of the city away from cars.



4. Quality.

Everyone agrees we should promote good quality urban design and architecture. But how?

4.1. Development control cannot promote good architecture. After a quarter of a century sitting on committees and design review panels, I have learnt this. We can promote good architecture only by:

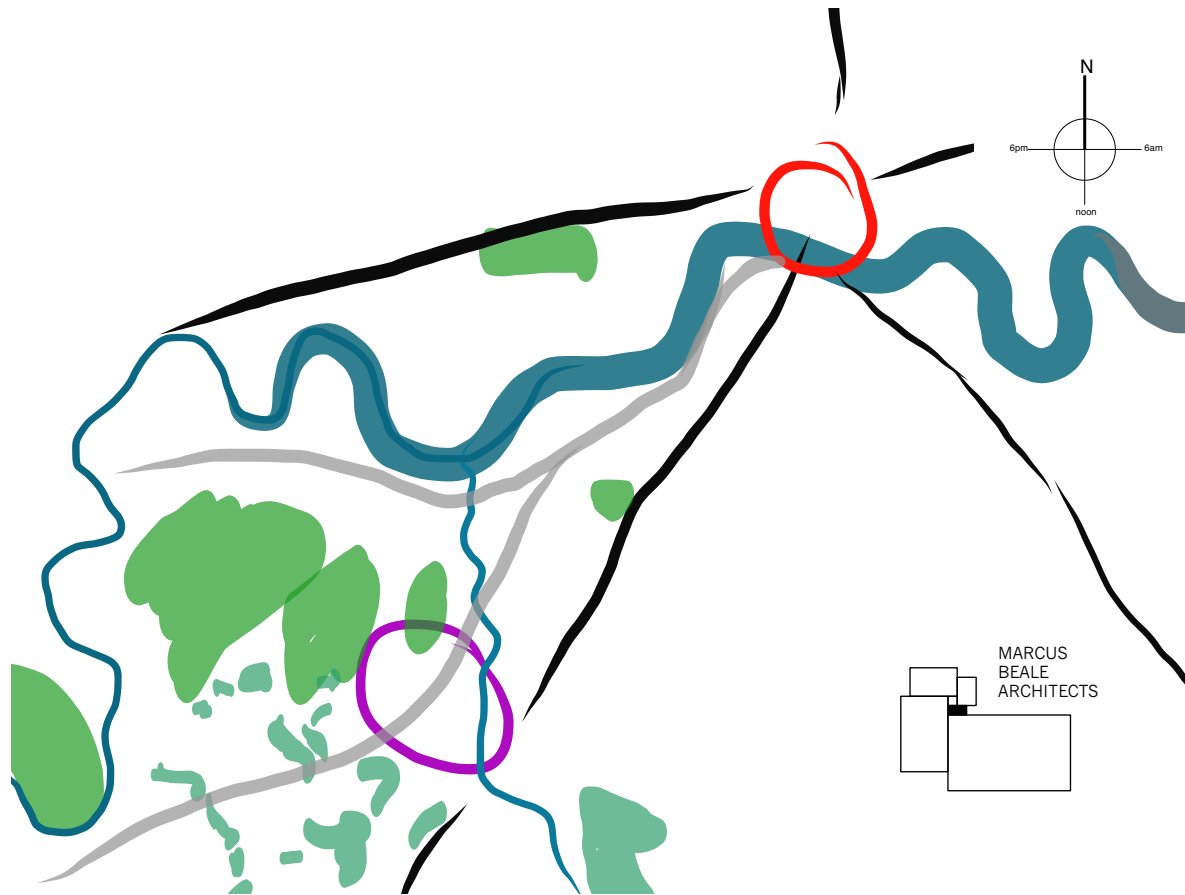
4.2. Setting an example in our public works and public buildings:

- Civic space should be of the highest quality.
- Buildings and sites communally owned by us should be managed and developed to an exemplary standard.

This much is under our control, as a community.

4.3. Private buildings.

The owner of the site set the standard of the architecture. We should engage with site owners and encourage them to aspire to quality.



Marcus Beale

MA Dip Arch RIBA FRSA.

Marcus Beale Architects Ltd

www.marcus-beale.com

t 020 8946 4141

The Old Post Office, 1 Compton Road, London SW19 7QA