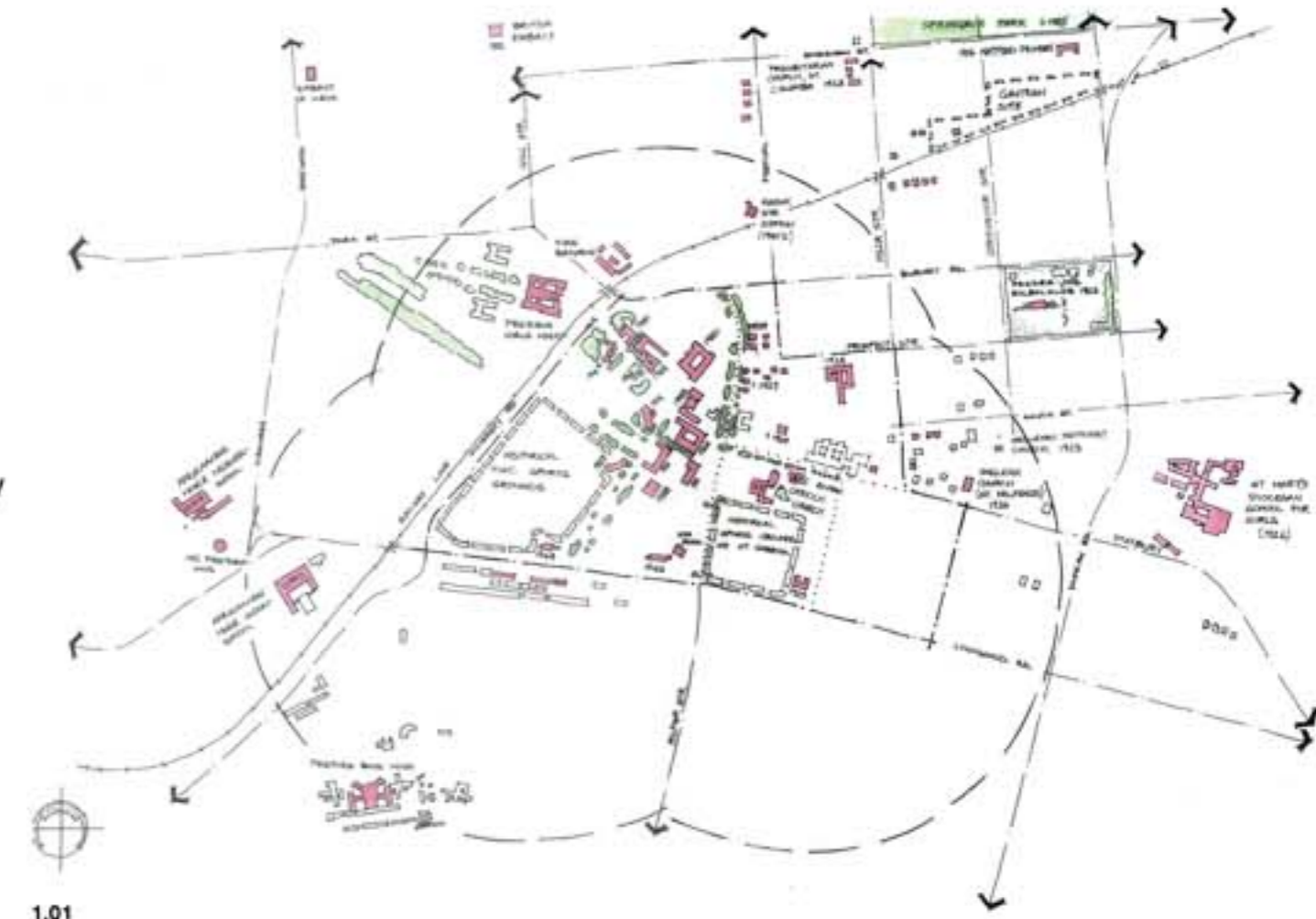


### Introduction

The proposed project aims to transform the selected site and buildings to new uses, along with the restoration and reuse of historical buildings. In effect, this amounts to a recycling and improved use of existing resources. For this reason, the contextual precinct was given serious consideration in the design process. Together they are indicative of the extent to which the proposed project and its conceptualisation of urban design, public space, and the built environment, reflect the values put forward by the design philosophy.

The study was initiated by a matrix investigation of historical sites around Hatfield (fig. 1.01), analysing their constraints and opportunities.



1.01

- 1.01 Overview of historical sites around Hatfield within a 500 meter radius around the University of Pretoria
- 1.02 Old Fire Station opposite Pretoria Girls' High School along Park Street
- 1.03 Old Post Office building along Festival Street. The building dates back to 1923
- 1.04 Old Art Building of the University of Pretoria. This building dates back to 1911 (UP Archive, University of Pretoria)
- 1.05 Old Agriculture building of the University of Pretoria, dating back to 1920 (UP Archive, University of Pretoria)
- 1.06 The first Roman Catholic Church in Hatfield. The church building dates back to 1923. Today it falls within the University of Pretoria's grounds and is home to the Student Council's offices.





## Background

The phenomenon of urbanisation in South Africa is a fairly recent occurrence, and has mainly occurred over the past 50 years (Dewar 2000:209). Urbanisation among the black population is even more recent. It is estimated that around 54% of the country's population is urbanised (Republic of South Africa 1996). This number is quickly growing as more people relocate to the cities.

Dewar (2000:209) argues that the unsustainable nature of our cities is clearly demonstrated by the social and environmental consequences that stem from it. One way of bettering the condition is through a process of urban densification. It should be said that densification in itself is not a sufficient condition for improving the urban context. It has to be used in conjunction with other positive structural changes.

A combination of forces has resulted in the three spatial characteristics of low density, fragmentation and separation which characterise South African cities. The result is an urban context where separation of land-use, urban elements, and racial and class groups leads to mono-functionality rather than a mix of uses. Traffic congestion is increasingly becoming a daily occurrence. Poverty and inequality are exaggerated even more since it is the poor who are most affected. Life is both inconvenient and expensive for the many who cannot afford to own a car. Public transport is inefficient and often non-existing, and many households are effectively trapped in remote and isolated settings.

Despite large numbers of people spending most of their time in public spaces, the quality of these spaces are almost collectively poor. Curran (1983:22) has described this well when he said that "the overwhelming impression is that when you get there, there's no there, there". Building structures in general fail to define,

protect or give scale to the public spatial environment.

- 1.07 Scene along Station Place Street, Hatfield. The buildings are fenced off and do not respond to the street
- 1.08 Mozambique Café (to the left) responds to the street, while the rest of the buildings do not. The result is a lack of place and identity with no scale given to the site
- 1.09 This urban scene in Europe is in stark contrast to those presented in Fig. 1.07 and 1.08. Here, the buildings help define the street while giving scale and a sense of place



## Research questions

The following research question is posed:

What can be done to improve the urban experience and historical reference at the selected site?

In addition, a number of sub-questions are posed:

- How can Rissik Station, which is centrally located in terms of the Hatfield CBD, the Gautrain station, University of Pretoria and office and diplomatic services in the area, be rehabilitated into a truly responsive public amenity?
- In what way can the negative image of the site, when measured against the character of the area, be overcome so it positively contributes to the Hatfield area as a whole?
- How can the memory of Rissik Station be preserved?

## Assumptions and delimitations

- It is assumed that the area will in future serve a broader user group with multi-cultural properties;
- It is assumed that the proposals put forward by the Hatfield Development Framework are applicable;
- This thesis does not attempt to address urban regeneration in its entirety;
- Establishing the nature and degree of the significance of intangible heritage at the Rissik Station proved to be difficult;
- Available information resources were limited to interviews and old photographs;
- The existing plans of Rissik Station could not be located by many researchers.

## Structure of the study

This thesis is structured around a number of chapters. Chapter Two investigates the Macro context of Pretoria.

Hatfield as study area was chosen for both its potential and its inadequacies. Its physical attributes, historical importance and its critical role in the urban context are discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four investigates the selected site on a micro context level. The functioning of rail transport locally and internationally is investigated in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six deals with the design philosophy and approach to creating a successful public space, while precedents are critically analysed and alternatives are explored in Chapter Seven. This helps to set up requirements and guidelines for the design intervention. The conclusions drawn from these chapters serve as generators for the functional design process.

In Chapter Eight, design strategies are defined and consequently employed. The progression of the design from the general concept to specific end product is visually illustrated. The study concludes with the technical investigation contained in Chapter Nine.

## Research design

A combination of research designs was employed within the scope of the thesis. Field studies undertaken in the study area took the form of site assessment surveys; by taking photographs and gathering other data to get an idea of the site's physical condition.

A number of undertaken case studies took the form of personal interviews with the site users and related authorities to gain an understanding of the functioning, constraints and opportunities of the site. The mechanism of case studies also encompassed an investigation onto precedents which in turn informed the design process and thinking.

The above mentioned research designs culminated with the proposed building and urban development presented in this document.

## Data analysis

Within the scope of this thesis, quantitative data analysis relates to information such as statistics on rainfall, user numbers and the like. This helps inform the study in a number of ways when the building accommodation schedule and functions are determined. Qualitative data analysis in this thesis relates to the personal interviews that were conducted.