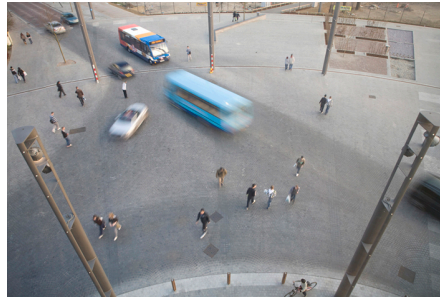


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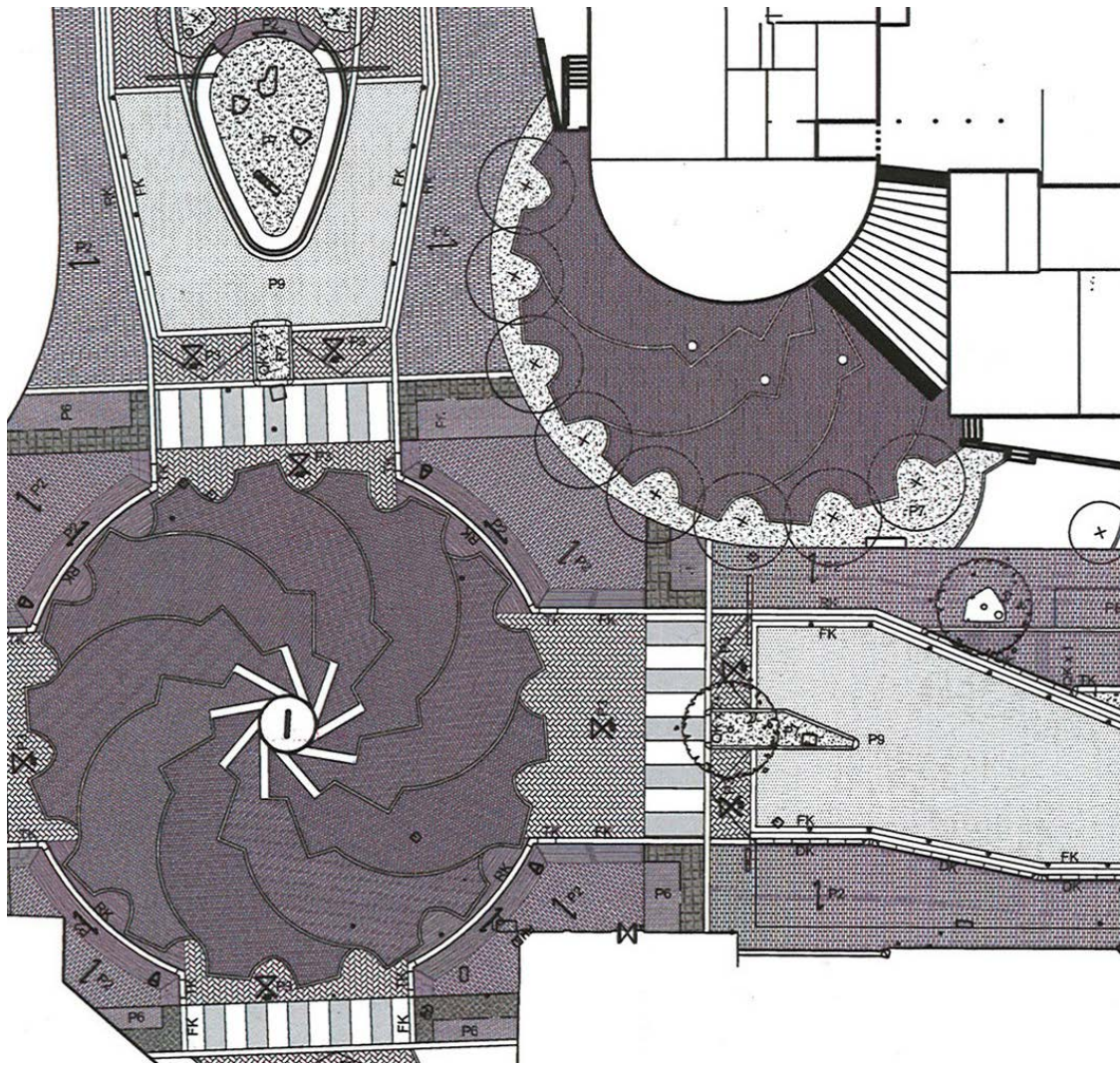
The Breaking Boundaries scheme in Ashford, Kent, is an innovative Highways-based project incorporating multi-disciplinary partners within the public realm and is a cutting edge exemplar of best practice within "shared space" schemes in Europe. The project came about via an invitation from Kent County Council for me to become Lead Artist for Breaking Boundaries early in 2006: the project ran until 2010, when it was formally unveiled.

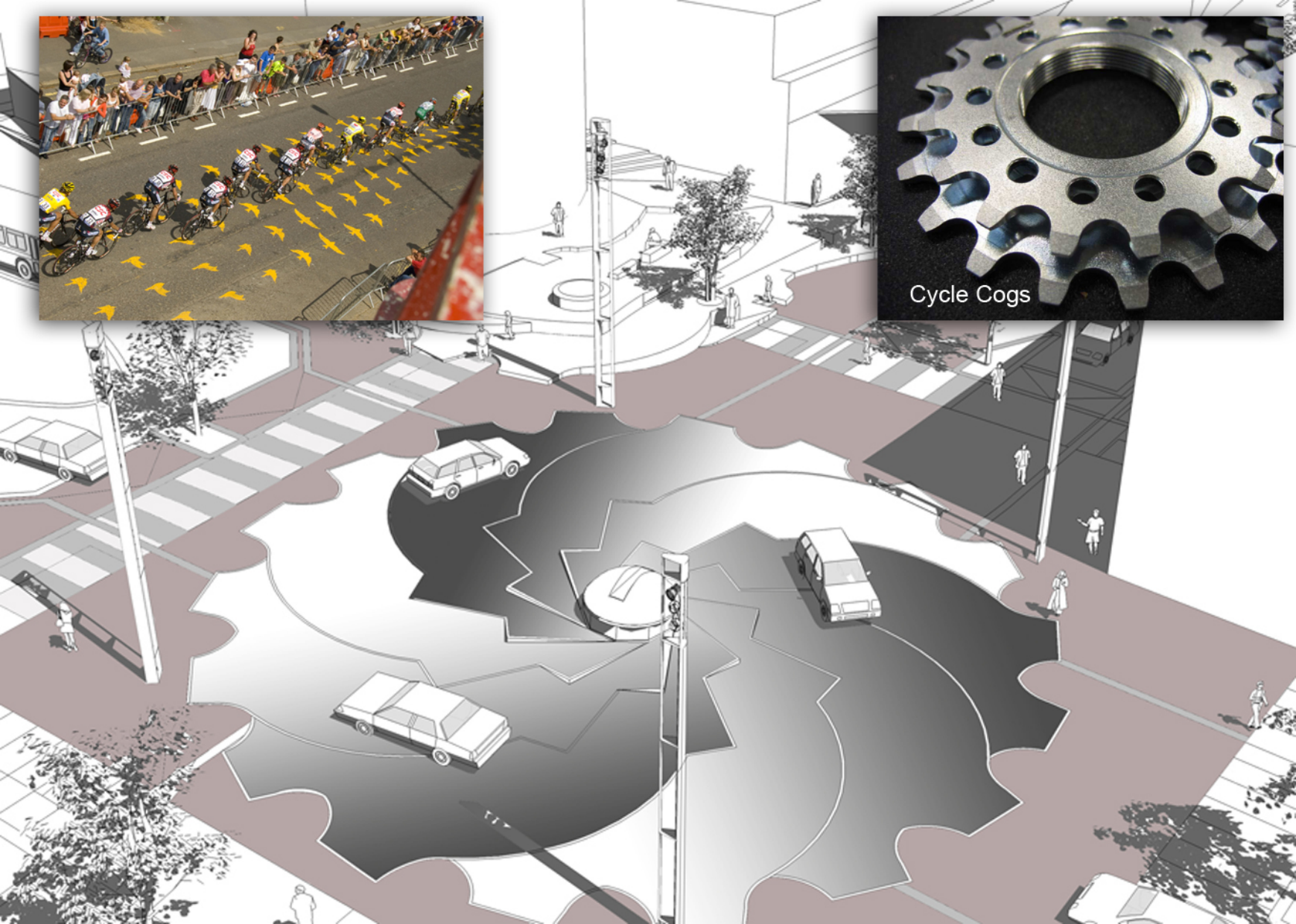
This is a groundbreaking Highways project, where the main aim has been to look at ways by which an Integrated Design Team (IDT) could work collaboratively on delivering a fresh urban footprint for Ashford, a town that had become cut-off from its heritage and heart, because of a legacy of poor urban design. The multi-faceted outcomes of this scheme involved community consultation to identify principal aims and objectives.

Community consultation with, local action groups, education groups, council members, disability groups, emergency services, was key to the success of the project, ultimately freeing the town from the tourniquet of the existing ring road and enabling growth to the south of the town. This was a major part of the working brief that all stakeholder partners, Landscape Architects, Highway Engineers, Champions Group members, were involved in successfully delivering.

The concept of shared space was integral to the vision for the project as a whole and was central to the thrust of the landscape design. The inclusion of 'stand-alone' sculptures was soon identified as not appropriate to the development, or the views as expressed by local action groups. However, the IDT wanted to look at innovative ways that the historic legacy of Ashford could be discreetly deployed within the concept of "street furniture" and "highway engineering". The aim of creating a public spaces, where people could meet and socialise, without feeling threatened by a traffic monopoly, was vital, as was determining ways that a variety of generations could use the newly designed spaces for social interaction. These goals included utilizing a variety of highway surfaces that at one and the same time underline aesthetic considerations as well as highway infrastructure. This was particularly relevant to certain disability groups where changes in surfaces and textures are integral to safety and navigation.

My own research focused on historic and contemporary histories of the Town. Its emphasis on the railways, cycle industry and tannery industry, formed the main thrust of my research activities and helped form the palette of shapes that are now reflected in a series of highway intervention designs, and street furniture. This research stimulated a series of innovative multi functional pieces of street furniture that relate closely to the vernacular of the space and are at the same time appropriate to a variety of users of different generations as well as disability groups.







Panoramic views of Elwick Road and West Street junction.