PREVIOUS STATE
Once hailed by Charles Dickens as “The finest piece of street architecture in the City”, by 2013 Holborn Circus was labelled by the Evening Standard newspaper as “Britain’s worst accident blackspot.” The steady growth in traffic, combined with changes to the built form surrounding the junction, meant that the junction had become a dangerous, disconnected network of busy roads, converging upon a long-neglected and under-appreciated Grade 2 Listed Statue of Albert, the Prince Consort. Consequently, St Andrew Holborn’s Gardens have been an unattractive space not well used by workers and visitors of the area. Besides the overgrown plantings, this public space featured accessibility constraints and antisocial behaviours that occurred particularly in the gardens.

AIM OF INTERVENTION
By 2013, the junction had become the most dangerous junction in the City of London, so the primary aim was to address the high accident rate. However, the scheme also aimed to make it easier for pedestrians to use the junction, and to create some much-needed public space in the area. A key aim of the project was to protect the Prince Consort Statue from traffic damage and to enable the City to perform regular maintenance upon the statue. The scheme was developed by the City of London in conjunction with the London Borough of Camden and Transport for London.

The aim of St Andrew Holborn Garden’s scheme was to enhance the church’s overall setting through landscape improvements and encouraging greater connectivity between the western open space and the church garden to the north. The scope of this project was to deliver an accessible and secure public garden for the local community and for the increasing number of office workers in an area of the City where few green spaces are available as well as provide further opportunities for seating at the junction.

EVALUATION
The Holborn Circus and St Andrew Holborn Church Garden enhancement scheme has been judged as a major success in that it has achieved all of its key objectives. Collisions at the junction have reduced by 60%; the Grade 2 Listed statue has been extensively restored, and relocated to a place where it can be fully appreciated by the public. All of this has been achieved without affecting vehicle journey times through the junction. Since the completion of the project, the Church gardens and the new public spaces around the junction are extremely well used by the local community not only from the City but from neighbouring boroughs. People enjoy using the new space created at the junction of St Andrews Street and Holborn Viaduct, where public seating is available. Other arms of the junction are equally well used during lunchtime hours and by pedestrians navigating the area. The improvements to the Church gardens have delivered a high quality public realm by allowing local residents and workers somewhere safe and pleasant to sit, in an area where public space is at a premium.