

1 Have your say on Western Harbour

Harbour
Hopes

We'd love to hear what you think about some ideas that will shape the masterplan next year.

Western Harbour is the name given to the regeneration project at the westernmost end of Bristol's floating harbour, which includes Cumberland Basin, Spike Island and the road network around Ashton Meadows.

As the city responds to a changing climate, ageing infrastructure, the increasing threat of flooding and shifts in how people live, work and travel, we have an opportunity to shape a place that tackles all these issues together, while valuing what makes this part of Bristol so special and unique.

The vision for Western Harbour was developed through extensive public engagement in 2021/22. We have now appointed Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands (LDS) to turn the vision for Western Harbour from broad principles into a tangible long-term masterplan setting out a big picture guide to future development.

We are excited to present what we know about the Western Harbour area so far and invite your feedback on our emerging ideas for the masterplan. As we conduct ongoing technical studies, we encourage you to consider a series of "What if?" questions designed to inspire discussion and bring you up to speed with our current thinking. Your insights are crucial in shaping the masterplan, scan the QR code below or go to the Harbour Hopes website to tell us what you think.



The vision for Western Harbour:

The vision for Western Harbour was created in 2022 from an extensive programme of public engagement held during 2021 and 2022. It will inspire and guide changes to the area in the future, including being a key influence on the masterplanning process.

We show on boards 4 to 9 how each of our emerging ideas for the masterplan links back to these aims in the vision.

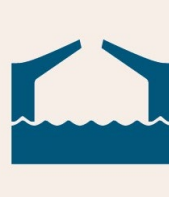
The key aims of the vision are to:



Build on its tradition of innovation



Embrace freedom and nature



Be a distinctive gateway to Bristol



Support a thriving community

What is a masterplan?

A masterplan is a recipe for how you bring together everything you know about a place with anything new that needs to be included, so that it all works together. For Western Harbour, it will set out where the new homes, community spaces, businesses and green spaces that Bristol needs could go, while also planning for modern transport and flooding infrastructure.

This project is an opportunity to rejuvenate the western gateway to Bristol. This involves making sure the infrastructure and Bristol's flood defences are fit for the 21st Century, addressing the urgent ecological and climate emergencies and also providing new homes that the city needs to address the housing crisis.

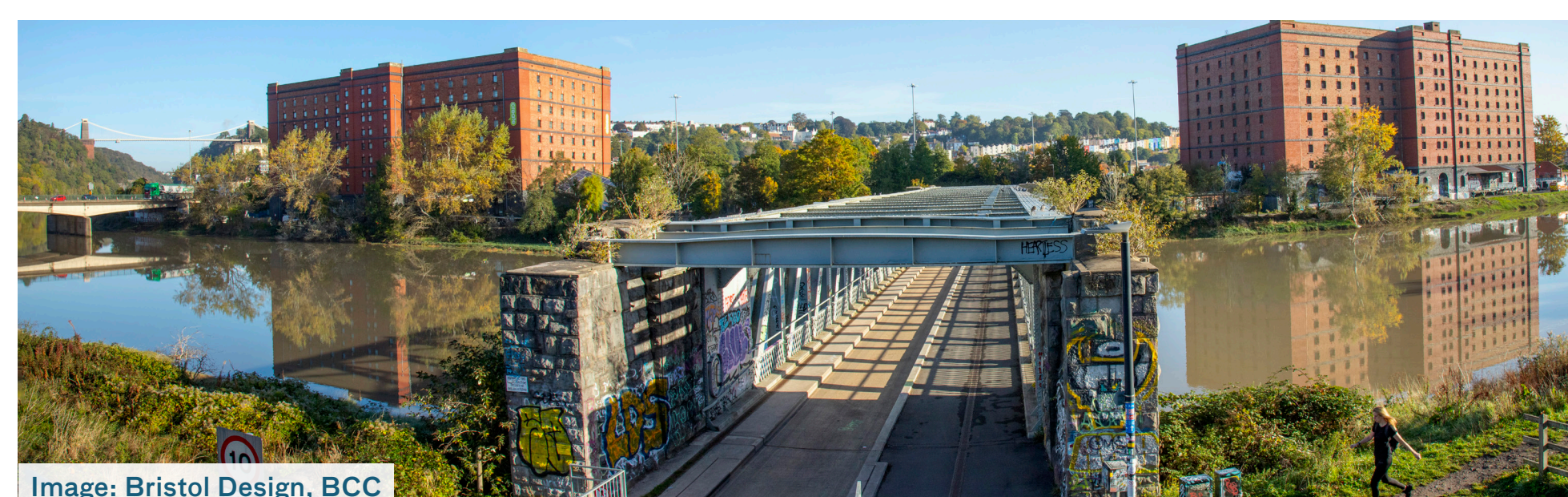


Image: Bristol Design, BCC

Join the conversation:
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#BristolWesternHarbour



Autumn Engagement 2024



2 What we know so far

The site is very complex and we are still learning about it. Through site research and technical surveys, we are understanding the traffic flows, flooding challenges, harbour operations, heritage constraints and the condition of the road infrastructure. The findings of these technical studies will be taken into account along with your feedback to inform the masterplan. These surveys are ongoing and more research will be conducted.

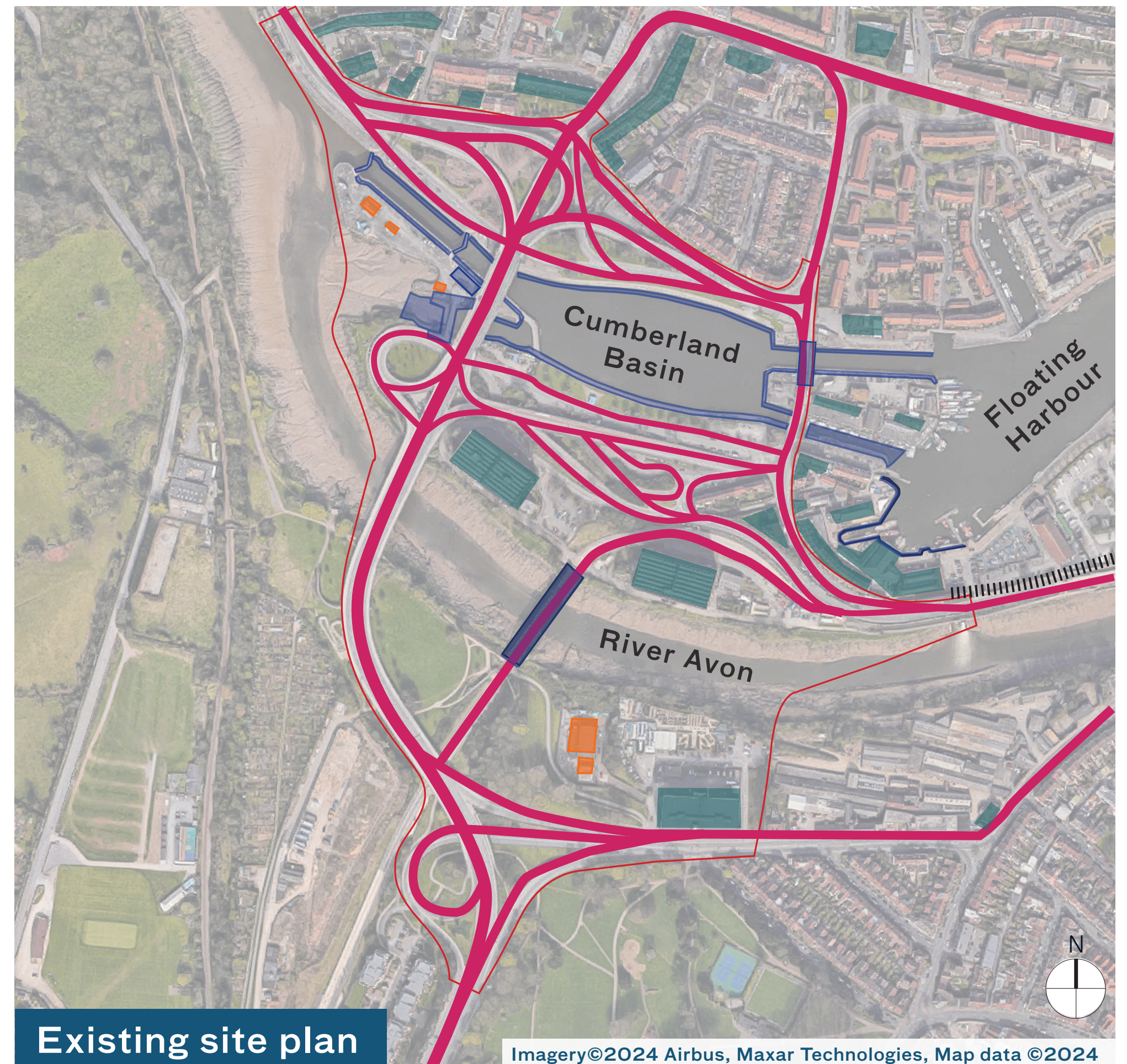
Infrastructure

In the 1960s a new road network was introduced, including the Plimsoll Swing Bridge, carrying traffic into the city centre - an average of 51,000 cars a day. This spaghetti of elevated roads includes diversion routes for road traffic when the bridge swings to allow boats into the harbour.

Plimsoll Swing Bridge actually does not swing very frequently. At peak season, during July when the Harbour Festival occurs, it swings roughly 53 times. However, it swings roughly three times in January. When it does swing, on average it takes 10-12 minutes to open and close.

The majority of the existing highway infrastructure is 60 years old, combined with harbour assets such as the Junction Lock Swing Bridge and the harbour structures themselves dating from the 1800s.

Not all of the roads are well used. Ongoing surveys will help determine the life expectancy of the existing structures and inform our decision making.



Key:

- Site boundary
- Listed buildings
- Listed structures
- Roads
- Utility buildings
- ||||| Harbour railway (currently not operational)



Existing view: aerial view of open Plimsoll Swing Bridge

Heritage: listed buildings and structures

The western end of the floating harbour has evolved over the centuries, seeing feats of engineering, the changing fortunes of dock workers, and becoming a key route in and out of Bristol.

The lock gates and harbour walls are listed along with the pedestrian swing bridge known as Brunel's Other Bridge.

The three bonded warehouses are Grade II listed, built in the early 20th Century and used to store tobacco. Now they house a mixture of uses including the Create Centre and a storage company. Some of the other listed elements include:

- Avon Crescent Substation
- Ashton Avenue Bridge
- South Entrance Lock



Existing view: B Bond, Bonded Warehouse (Image: Bristol Archives)



Existing view: Avon Crescent Substation



3 What we know so far

Ecology and landscape

The site contains landscape designed by the acclaimed landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe, including a lookout point with views towards the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

In the south of the site, Ashton Meadows provides the surrounding community with green space that has a self-built skate park and is surrounded by mature trees, adjacent to where the Riverside Garden Centre is located.

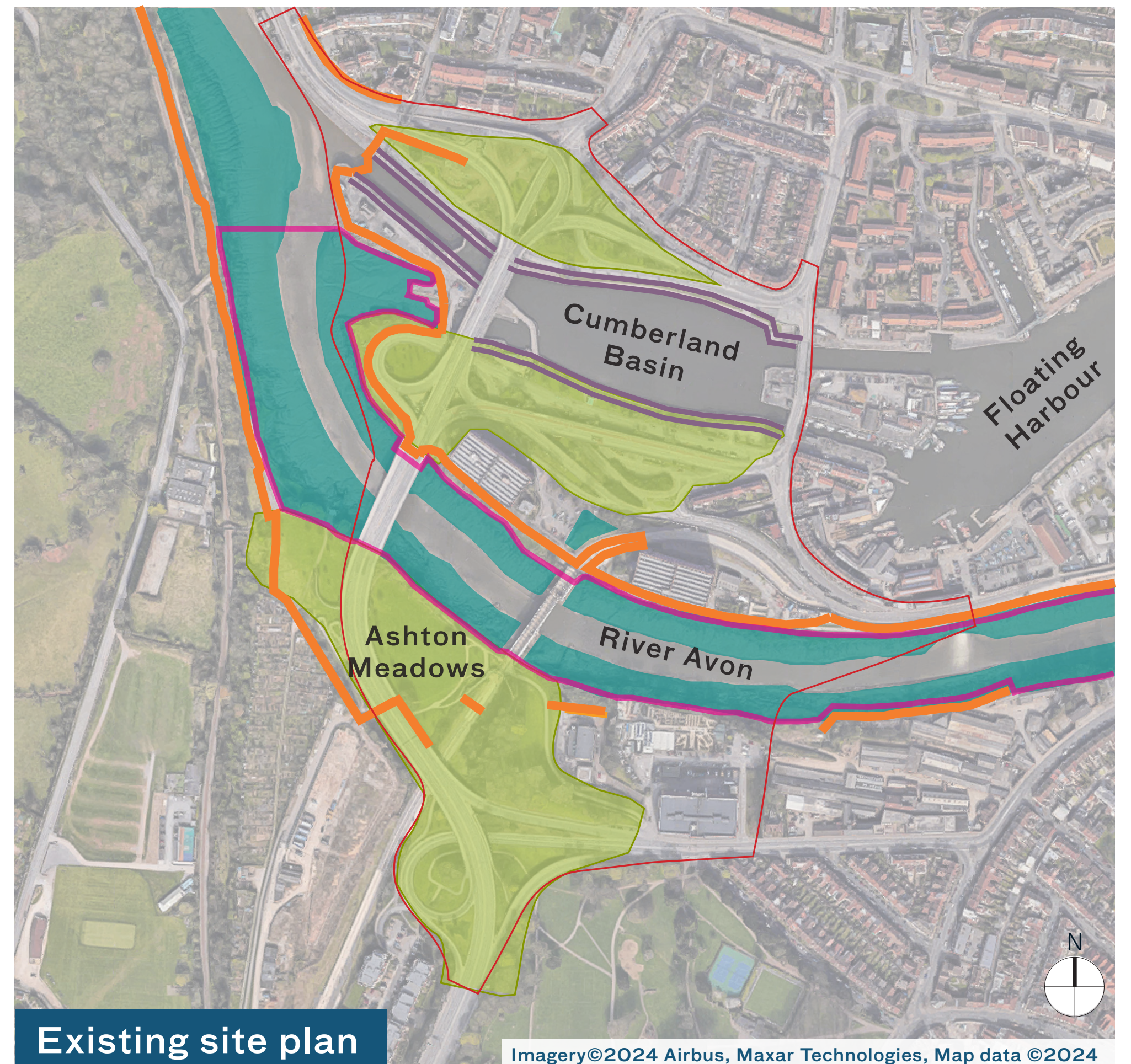
Ongoing studies include understanding the mudflats, surrounding ecology and considering the conditions of the existing trees.



Existing view: Mudflats at western end of the site



Existing view: Ashton Meadows



Existing site plan

Imagery©2024 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2024

Key:

- Site boundary
- Dame Sylvia Crowe landscaping
- 2m zone required for harbour operations at quay and lock walls
- Indicative alignment of Bristol Avon Flood Strategy flood defences
- Areas of ecological significance
- Local nature reserve

Water - a working harbour

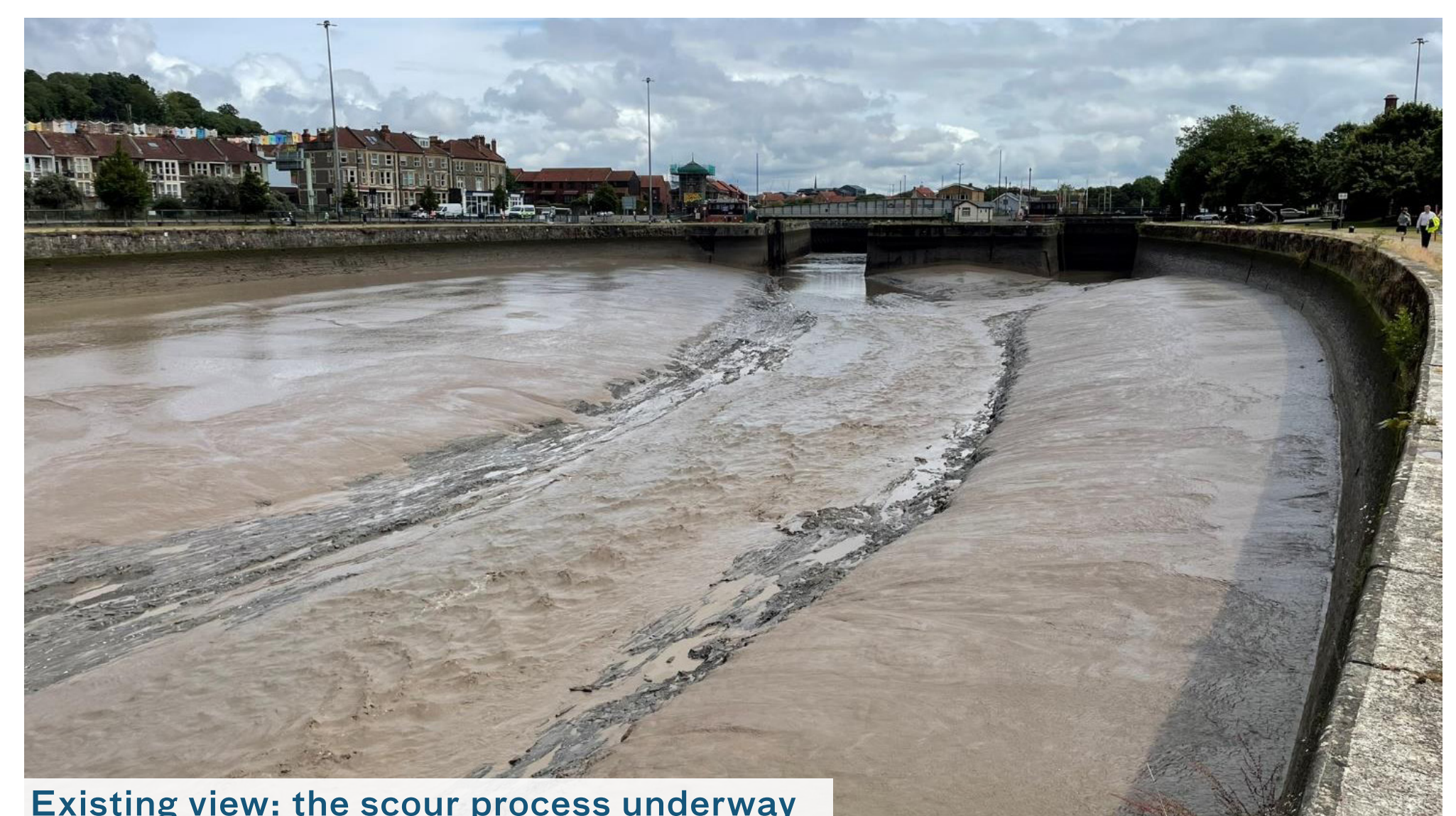
The majority of the area is situated within the Statutory Harbour Authority estate. There is a statutory right of navigation through the harbour. Waterborne craft enter/exit the harbour via Entrance Lock which sits adjacent to Plimsoll Swing Bridge. Space around the lock gates and quayside is required to allow the safe operation of the harbour.

Cumberland Basin is an important feature of the harbour. It provides space for vessels to be held when they are waiting for the lock gates and swing bridges to open. Crucially, it is also designed to be “scoured” (which happens around twice a month) to remove silt buildup in the basin and prevent it from obstructing navigation. Lock gates regularly control the levels of water within the floating harbour, as well as ensuring that there is enough water in Cumberland Basin to carry out the regular scouring process and remove silt.

At the eastern end of Cumberland Basin there are two pairs of lock gates, which form a barrier to high river water levels. However, due to climate change, these gates can become overwhelmed, risking flooding within the centre of Bristol. To safeguard lives and property in Western Harbour and beyond, it's imperative that we implement robust flood defences. These defences will not only shield the local area but also serve as a crucial line of defence for the entire city.



Existing view: lock gates at western end of the site



Existing view: the scour process underway



4 Road alignment

What if...?

...Brunel Way remains where it is and the spaghetti of diversion roads are reduced to make room for other uses such as new homes?

The Challenge:

The existing 1960s road network is aging. We are investigating whether we need to replace this infrastructure or if it can be repaired and simplified.

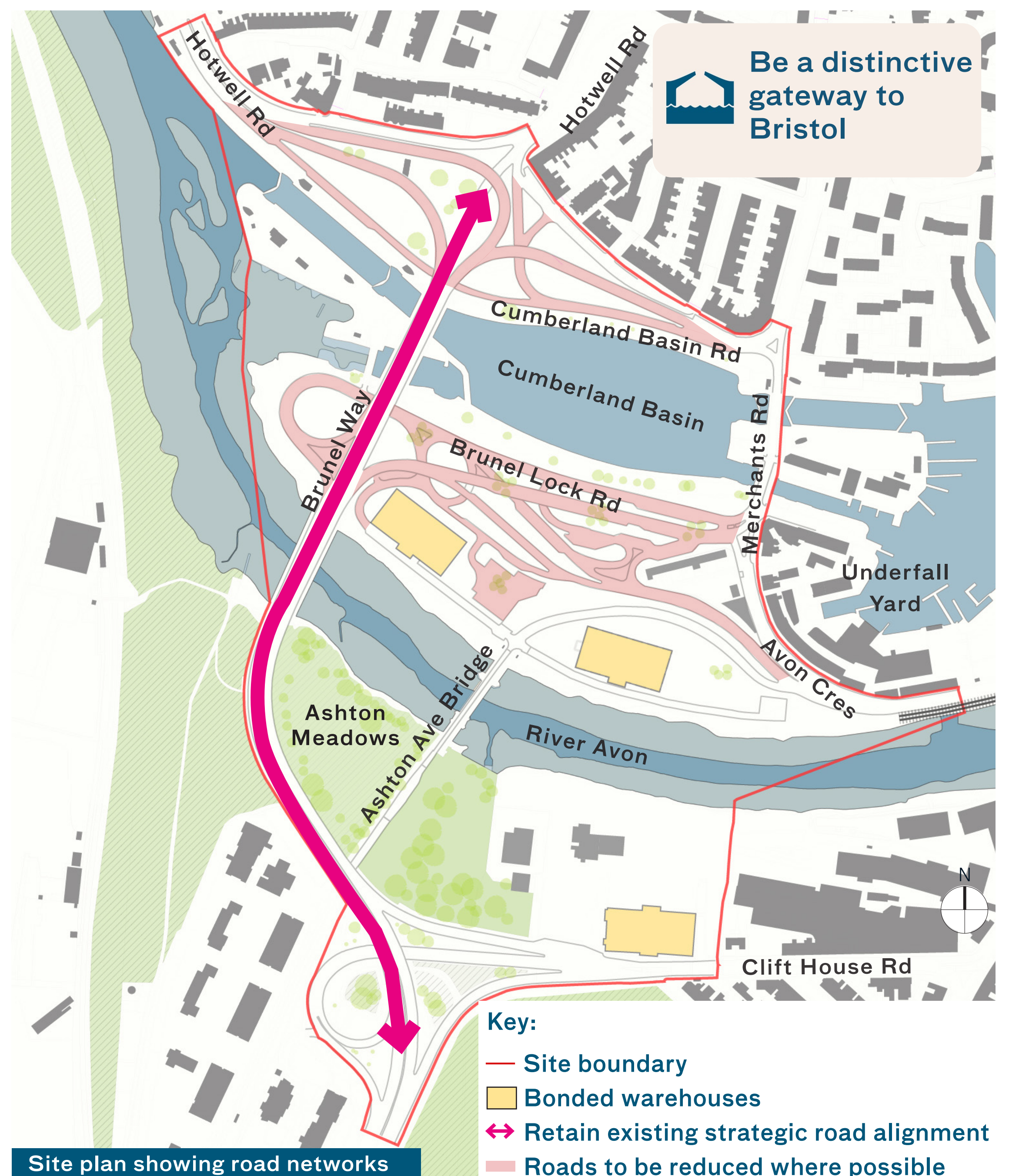
Rather than looking at new crossings, we are exploring keeping the main strategic route in its current location.

We believe retaining the current alignment should be explored as it will minimise disruption, cost and carbon emissions.

Surveys and research are currently taking place to understand how the roads are used by the public, logistics and public transport, as well as the current condition of the elevated roads and bridges.

For the masterplan we will need to:

- consider how much of the existing road spaghetti can be removed whilst maintaining a strategic route in and out of the city
- consider what happens to traffic when the Plimsoll Swing Bridge is open
- test traffic movement
- consider local access arrangements
- liaise with emergency services
- consider the outcome of structural surveys
- consider how to minimise disruption to traffic flows during construction



5 Flood defences

What if...?

...the flood defences were an opportunity to create new public realm for the city that is inclusive and offers beautiful spaces for people to enjoy the views?

The Challenge:

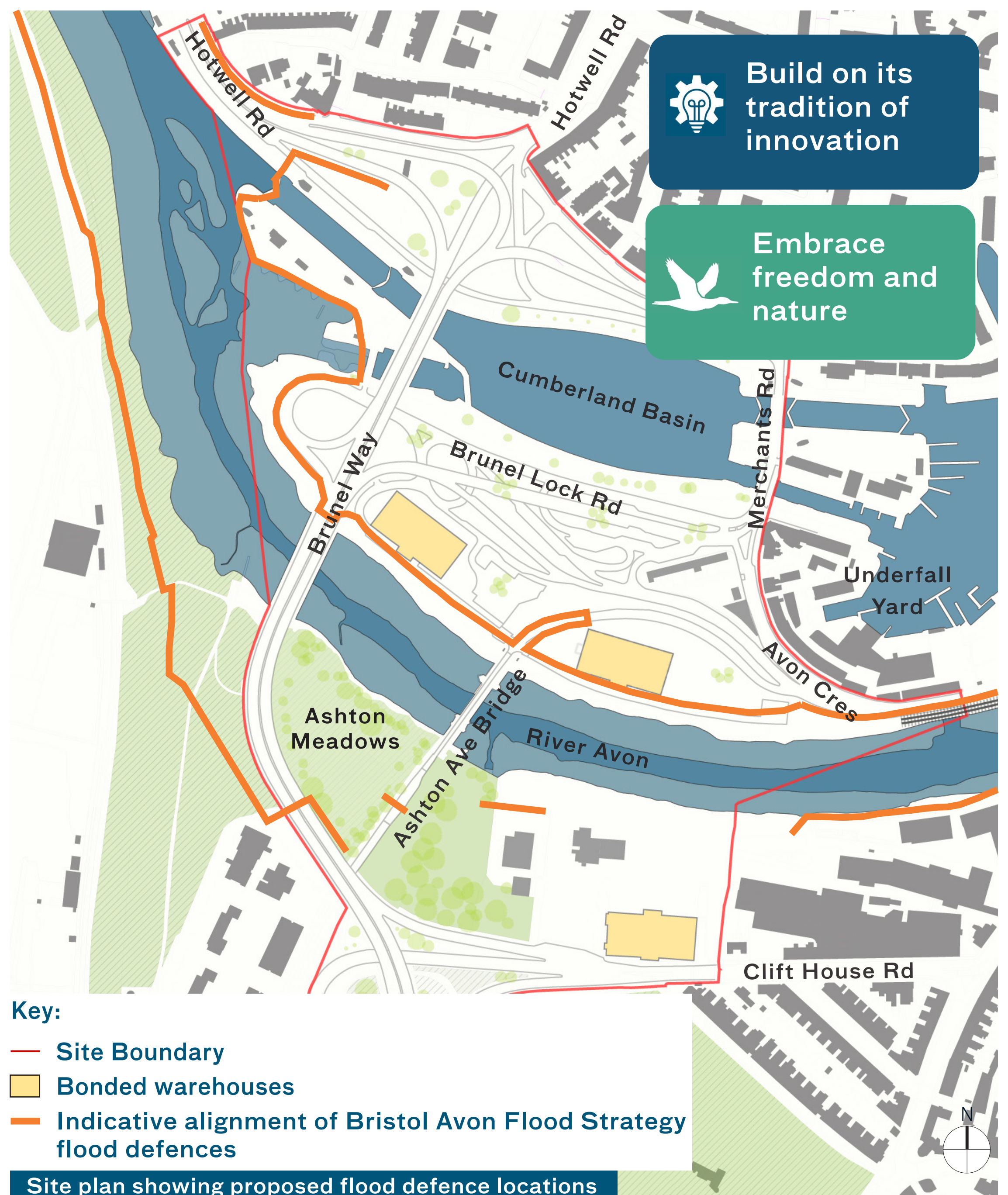
Bristol is at increasing risk of flooding as a result of climate change and rising sea levels. The Bristol Avon Flood Strategy (BAFS) requires us to provide new flood defences for long-term protection of existing homes, businesses, and infrastructure.

Proposed flood defences are illustrated in orange on the plan adjacent. We want to design flood defences which are not dependent on people, power, mechanical systems or advance warning to protect the city, but which instead are designed to contribute to nature and well-being as a linear park.

For the masterplan we will need to:

- review existing heights of the land
- consider how we integrate new flood defences whilst protecting heritage
- create opportunities for new public realm

If you would like more information about BAFS, please scan this QR code, or see background information board



Example: Hornsbergs Strandpark, Sweden. A linear park that addresses the waterfront and is a passive defence against flooding (Image: © Holger Ellgaard)



Example: BUGA Heilbronn, Germany. An example of creating public realm and landscape along the river side (Image: ©Nikolai Benner, SINAI)



Existing view: the flooded site earlier this year



6 Connectivity

What if...?

...we can make the site easier to access and get around without a car?

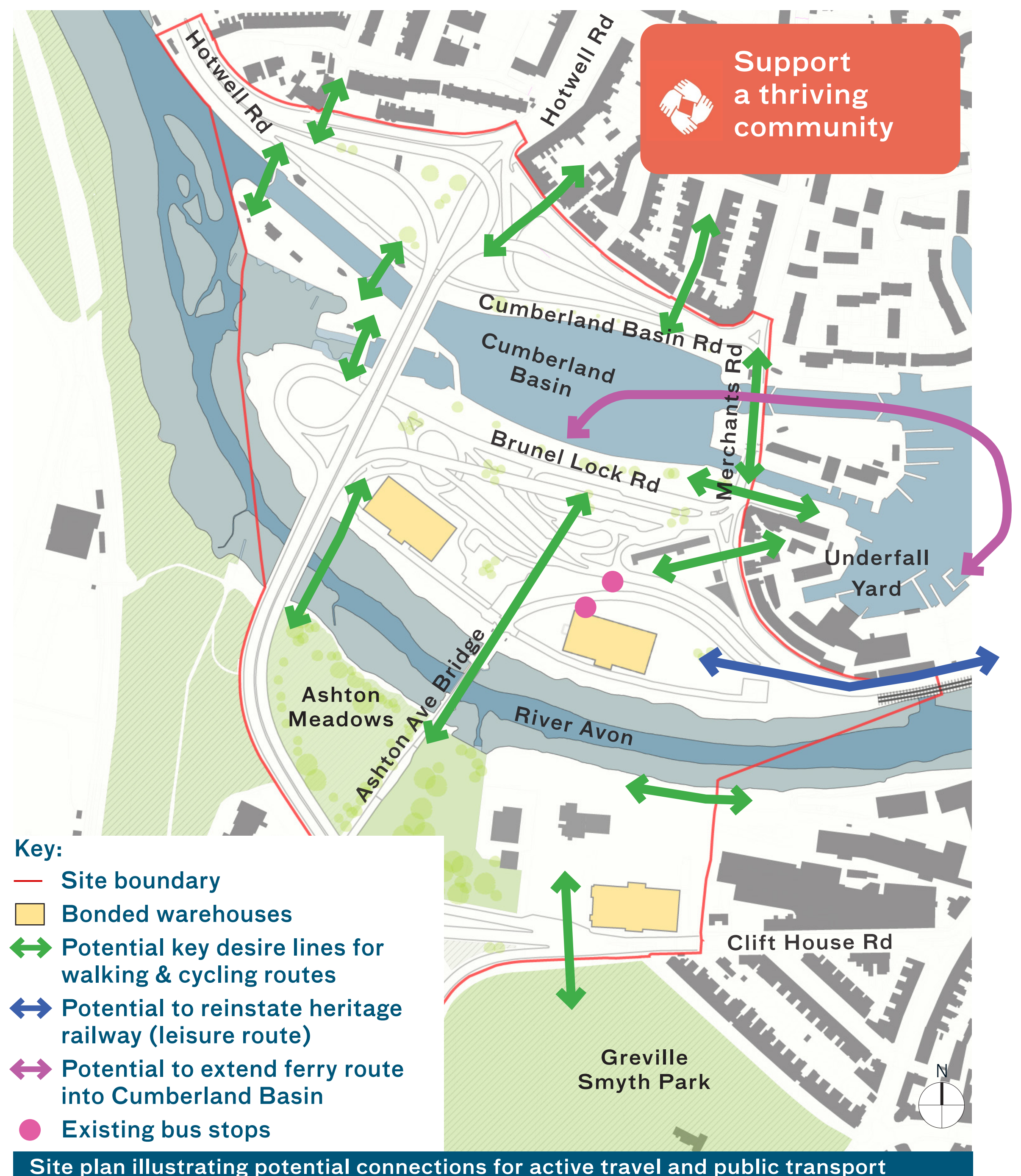
The Challenge:

The site is largely geared towards vehicle movement and harbour operations. This results in a poor experience for pedestrians and cyclists and makes the area difficult to navigate.

We're exploring how to better connect with the wider city to allow everyone to travel across the site easily.

For the masterplan we will need to:

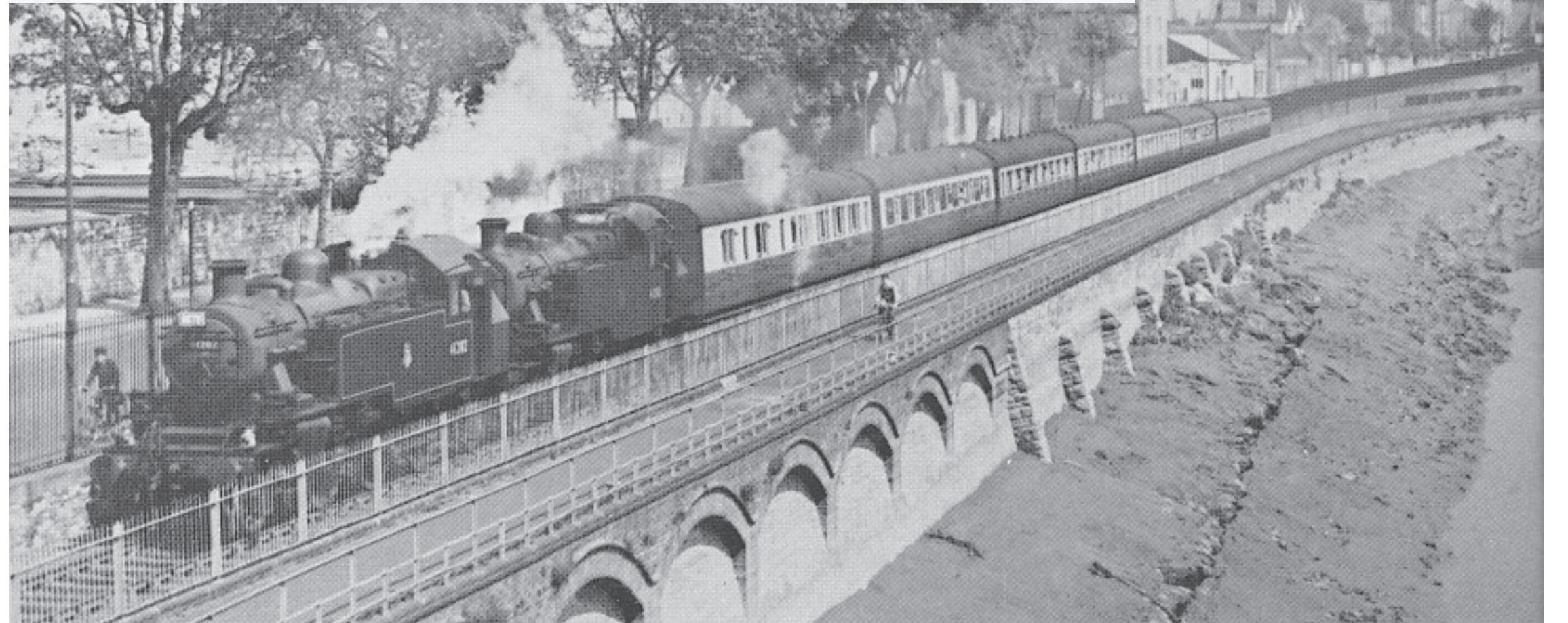
- review existing pedestrian routes and crossing points
- consider the relationship with harbour operations and traffic movement
- consider destinations and places of interest
- review how we connect new and existing communities to the north, south and east
- consider if we can reinstate the heritage railway, extending its route into the site
- consider the potential to extend the existing ferry route to Cumberland Basin



Example: space for walking, running and cycling



Historic view: the harbour railway in 1957 (Image: Bristol Harbour Railway)



Existing view: lack of pedestrian friendly routes



7 Green space

What if...?

...we could create landscape better connected to both the river and the harbour, taking advantage of the views, while also improving ecology?

The Challenge:

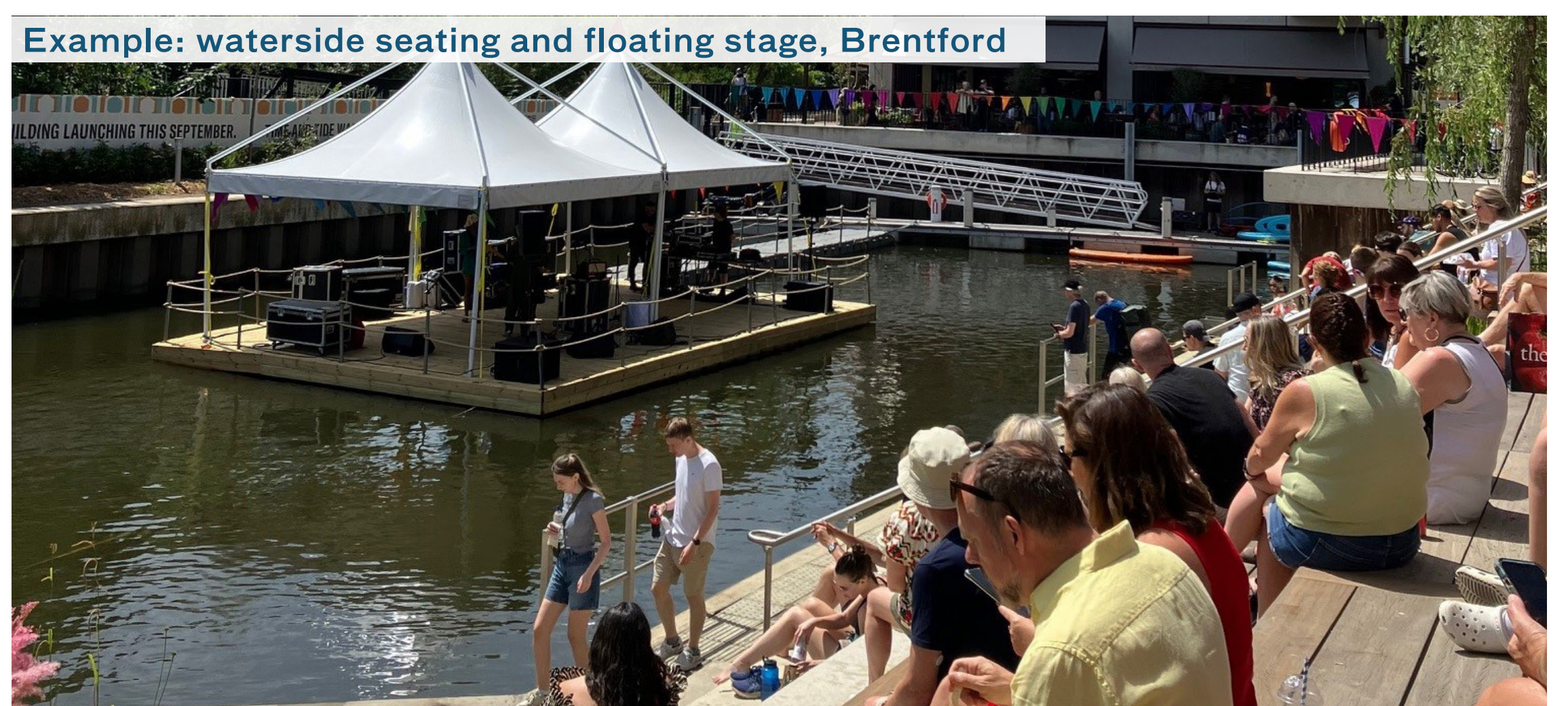
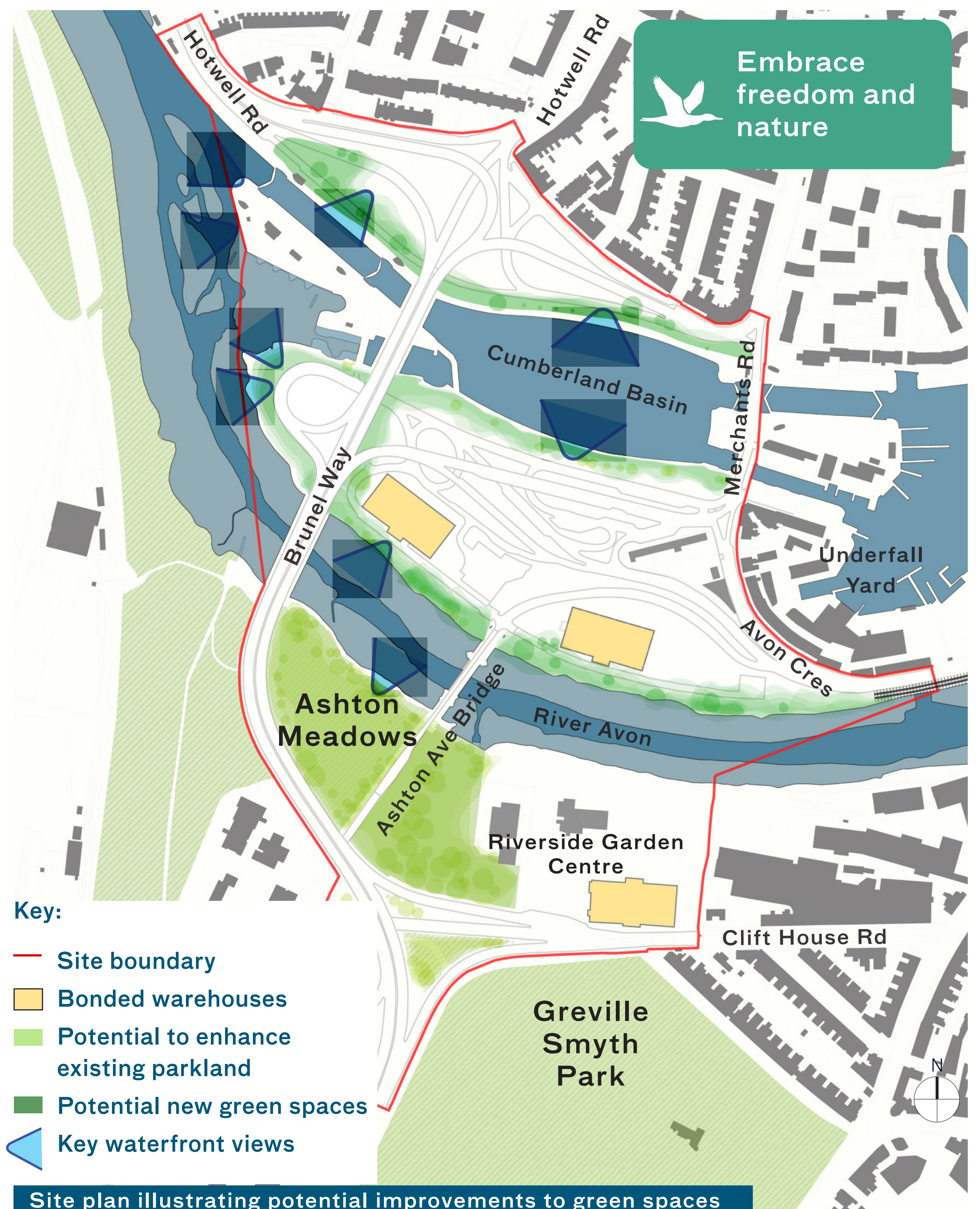
Western Harbour needs areas for new homes but must recognise the importance of green space to improve the quality of place and address the ecological emergency. The site has some great viewpoints, but they are difficult to access and not many people know they are there.

We will need to consider existing green spaces, including Ashton Meadows, while also creating new spaces for connection to nature and increased biodiversity. There is an opportunity to better connect to both the river and the harbour, taking advantage of the views.

For the masterplan we will need to:

- integrate the flood strategy requirements into the landscape to maintain access to the waterfront
- consider a potential increase of leisure uses within Cumberland Basin while maintaining harbour operations
- celebrate the maritime and historic features
- review existing spaces and how important they are to the city
- explore how to improve biodiversity across the whole site
- consider the wider green network

The images to the right illustrate how we might encourage biodiversity and make the waterfront more accessible.



8 New homes

What if...?

...we could create a variety of new, high quality homes that are appropriate in density and scale for the context and do not dominate the listed warehouses?

The Challenge:

We need to address the housing shortage in a historically sensitive area while creating a great place to live.

The vision has committed to 50% affordable homes that will support the community to grow over generations.

Any new buildings must relate to their surroundings in terms of form, scale and materials.

For the masterplan we will need to:

- consider how the listed bonded warehouses can offer an opportunity for conversion to homes
- ensure that the bonded warehouses are not dominated by the new development
- review how any new buildings knit into the surrounding neighbourhoods
- consider how new homes relate to green spaces and public realm
- review heritage assets and how the new buildings sit alongside them
- consider how services can respond to more people living in the area



What type of housing would you like to see?



Support
a thriving
community

Example: Kidbrooke Village, London. Safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists are provided along 'green fingers' which link to the surrounding neighbourhoods



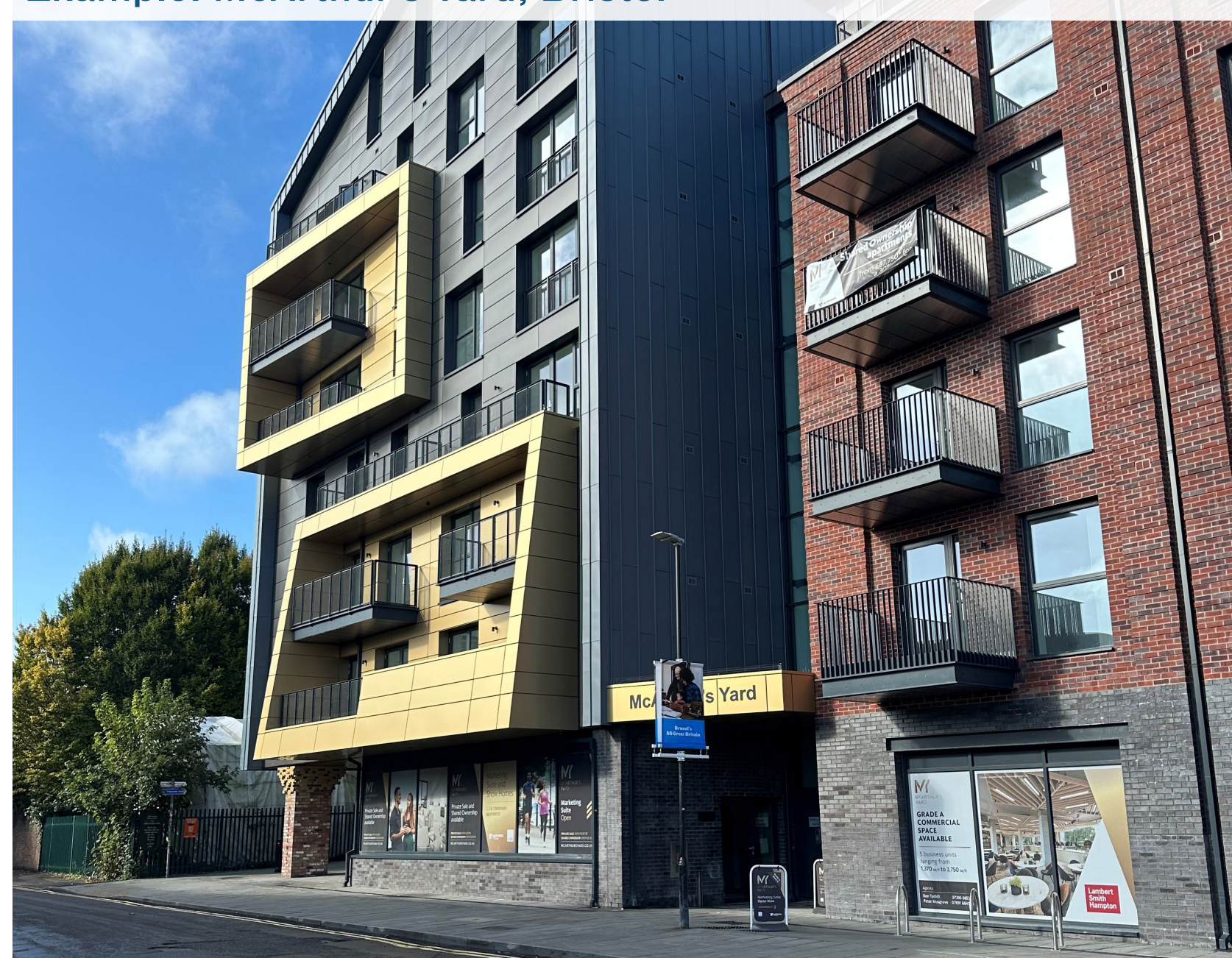
Example: Broadwall Housing, London. Affordable homes with family housing and smaller flats



Example: landscaped water gardens at Jacobs Island, London



Example: McArthur's Yard, Bristol



9 Vibrant mix of uses

What if...?

...there were many different uses in the area alongside homes, such as creative workshops, workspace, leisure uses and a cultural hub?

The Challenge:

A crucial part of making Western Harbour a great place will be identifying additional uses to support the new homes.

The area already benefits greatly from the Riverside Garden Centre and the skate park and we are exploring where they can be accommodated in the new masterplan.

In addition to this the proposals would include a cultural hub for the city, affordable workspace for businesses and social enterprises, food, drink, and leisure uses.

For the masterplan we will need to:

- review existing community and commercial spaces
- consider active ground floor uses
- consider overlapping and shared uses within buildings
- introduce meanwhile uses to bring the site to life now and during construction
- continue to work closely with the Riverside Garden Centre to understand their needs



Existing view: Riverside Garden Centre

What other uses do you think there should be? These images illustrate types of existing and proposed uses that could be located on the site.



Support
a thriving
community

Example: creative workshops



Example: meanwhile uses and pop-ups



Example: active ground floor uses at Hanover Square, London



Existing view: Brunel Way Pump Track (image: ©Sam Saunders)



Have your say...

From 21 October – 15 November 2024, we are asking you for your views through an online survey and drop-in events.

Your comments are important and will be carefully considered by the masterplan team as they draw up more detailed proposals.



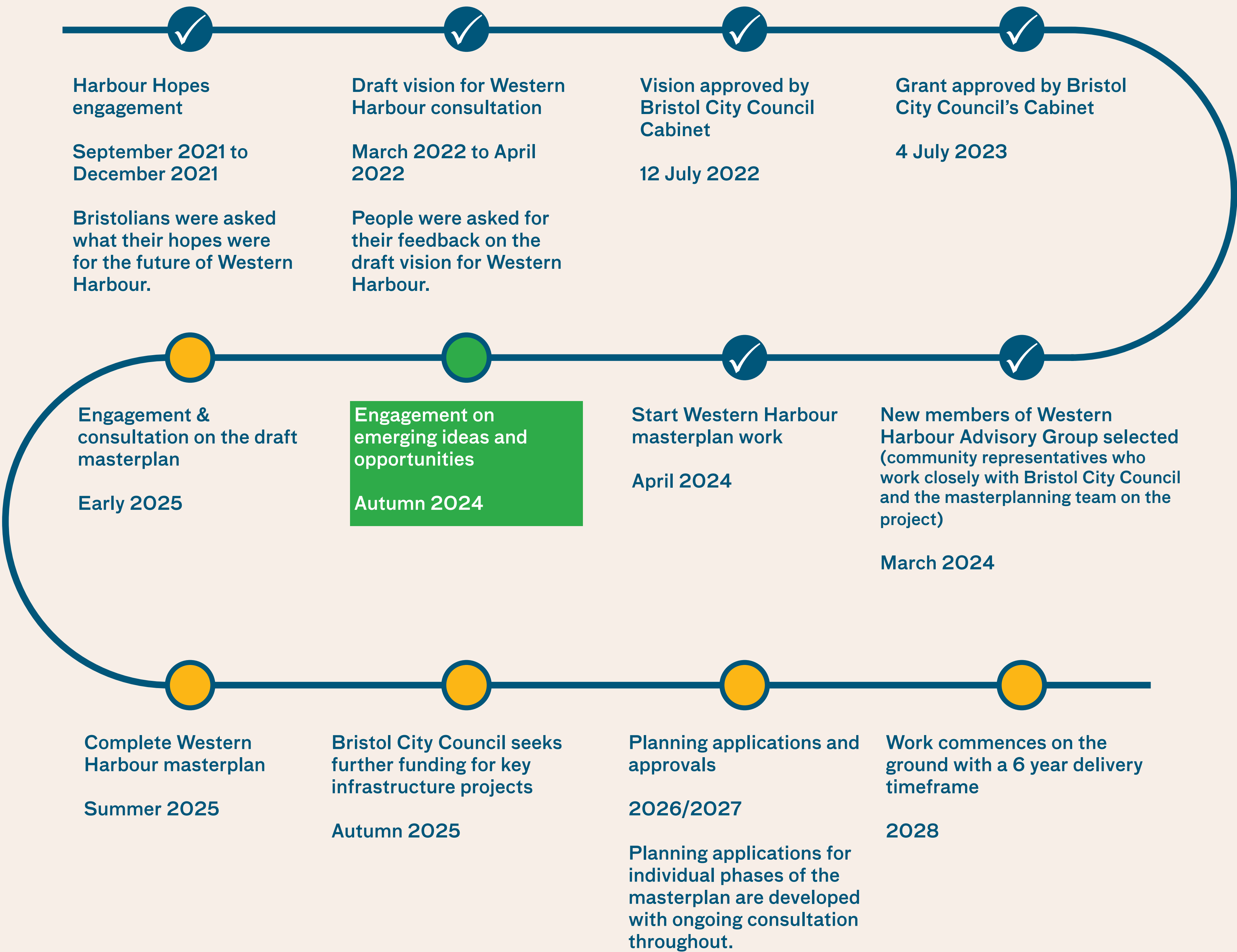
Follow this QR code link or go to HarbourHopes.co.uk to have your say by completing our online survey.

Next steps...

In early 2025 we will share the draft masterplan for Western Harbour and will be asking you what you think about the proposals.

Visit our website HarbourHopes.co.uk to sign up to our mailing list and keep up to date.

Project Timeline



11 Background Information

There are a range of city-wide strategies and policies in place to address challenges around flooding, the housing crisis, and Bristol's future transport and connectivity needs.

The text below explains key city issues that the Western Harbour project will need to respond to as part of a joined up approach to place-shaping. For further information, please refer to the links below.

Bristol Avon Flood Strategy (BAFS)

What is the flood strategy?

The Bristol Avon Flood Strategy will create new flood defences or raise the level of existing flood defences in phases along lengths of the River Avon from Swineford, through Bristol and downstream to Sea Mills and Shirehampton. The majority of the scheme is located along the north bank of the River Avon from where it meets Cumberland Basin, up to Netham Weir and beyond to St. Anne's Park.

The preferred approach is to build in phases. Bristol City Council will monitor and adapt the approach to respond to the threat of flooding. Defences will be constructed in a way to allow them to be raised in the future to respond to rising sea levels and climate change.

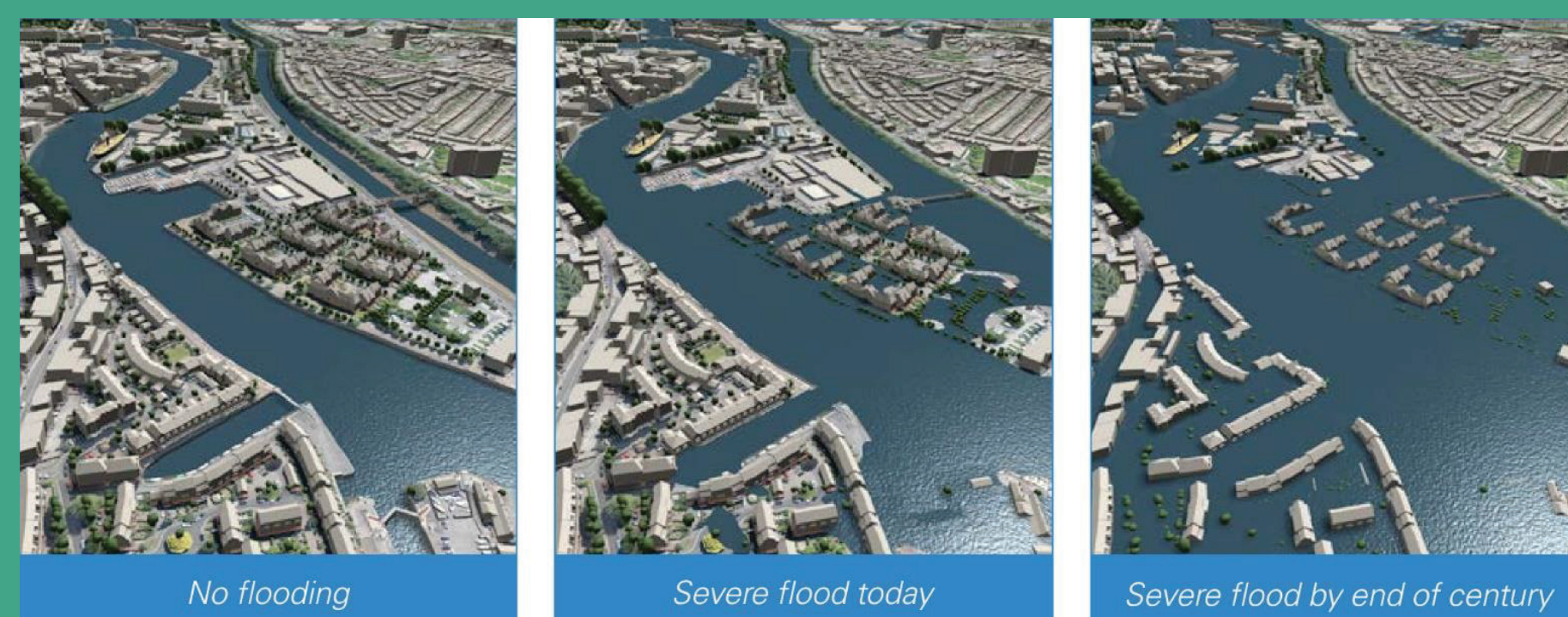
BCC's vision is to create flood defences that integrate with their surroundings and create high quality public spaces or support walking and cycling, so that these areas can be used and enjoyed during the vast majority of the time when there is no flooding.

Why is a strategy needed?

Without a strategy to reduce the risk of flooding across the city, existing homes and businesses remain at risk of widespread flooding from the River Avon. A severe tidal flood today would result in around 1,000 existing homes and businesses being flooded near the city centre and 400 in neighbouring communities. This would have an impact across the West of England because of Bristol's importance for jobs, transport, recreation, tourism, and the economy.

Climate change is increasing sea levels and high river-flows, all of which increase the risk of flooding. Without action, by the end of the century almost 3,100 existing properties could be at risk in severe floods.

We need a long-term strategic approach to flood risk management to future proof our city and neighbouring communities. Measures need to be joined up, so that better protecting some locations at flood risk does not increase the flood risk elsewhere.



A visualisation of flood risk predictions looking east – Hotwells and Junction Lock in foreground, SS Great Britain and Spike Island in background

How tall will the flood defences be?

The height of raised flood defences is determined based on the chance that flood water will reach a certain height in that location. Typically, flood defences will need to be about 1 - 1.5m high to begin with and require raising by approximately 0.5m (around 2070), as the impacts of climate change increase and are better understood.

Timeline and Next Steps:

We are now in the process of working up detailed proposals for the whole of the flood defence area, including plans for Western Harbour. Once this is done, further work will be required to obtain the necessary consents to start construction. There will be future opportunities for the public to comment on proposals. All of this is expected to take at least four to five years.

Find out more:

www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/bristol-avon-flood-strategy-consultation

If you would like to sign up to the flooding newsletter,
email: bristolavonflood@bristol.gov.uk



Transport

One City Climate Strategy around transport reduction

Bristol City Council declared a climate emergency in 2018 and in 2020 the One City Plan Bristol committed to becoming carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030.

The One City Climate Strategy found that a third of the city's direct emissions come from transport and that without further action, transport will still account for over a third of emissions by 2030. It outlines the necessary actions to reduce emissions including a 40% reduction in vehicle miles by 2030. To help towards achieving these goals significant new walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure, as well as charging infrastructure for electric vehicles will be needed.

Find out more:

www.bristolonecity.com



Housing

The housing crisis in Bristol

There is a clear need for new homes in Bristol: the population is rising; house prices are high; and waiting lists for affordable housing are growing, pushing a growing number of households towards homelessness and putting greater pressure on the availability of temporary accommodation in the city. We have around 21,600 households on our waiting list for social housing, along with over 1,600 households in temporary accommodation. The cost of privately renting property is high and there is also a lack of long-term security.

Bristol's affordable housing strategy

The Affordable Housing Delivery Plan outlines how the council will focus its land, time, money, and influence to improve the way affordable housing is delivered in Bristol. This is currently being refreshed and a new plan will be published shortly.

Definition of affordable housing

Affordable housing means homes to rent or buy that are put in reach of people that are unable to pay the market price for a house. The greatest need in Bristol is for social rented affordable homes (housing usually rented at a lower cost than market rents). Affordable home ownership also plays a role in meeting the city's housing need, including shared ownership.

