06. BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Figure 135: *Sketch of Western Harbour today, from above, looking towards Hotwells and beyond*

Figure 136: *Sketch of the illustrative masterplan, from above, looking towards Hotwells and beyond*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas

Hotwells Reach

At the Hotwells end of the leisure corridor, the former park area beneath the existing flyovers will be revived as a space for leisure and recreation. Framed by the active frontages of two eyebrow shaped development plots, with archways or gaps to promote overlooked public passage from Hotwells to the waterside and:

- Improved pedestrian environment: reduced width and calming to Cumberland Basin Road.
- Improved surfaces and landscape: tree cover and architectural rather than purely functional road lighting.
- Better landscaping: Planted areas that support and extend the existing communities growing spaces.
- Outdoor gym: Fitness equipment and spaces for Tai Chai / pilates.

The eyebrow developments are apartments above independent shop(s) and/or café, plus potential community spaces such as a nursery. These ground level amenities will overlook the piazza and create activity within it. The apartments would be best utilised with deck access along their southern perimeter to give homes sunny, but shaded, views over the landscape. The northern flanks should have limited (sealed) openings against the motorway ramps and elevations that are acoustically absorbent to reduce road noise in the area. The western plot will also accommodate new flood defences as part of the Avon Riversides 2100 scheme.

Key

- Strategic boundary
- Character Area
- Buildings within Character Area
- Wider area influencing the character area



Figure 137: *Photo of the historic Cumberland Piazza with pavilion in the foreground*
© Know Your Place

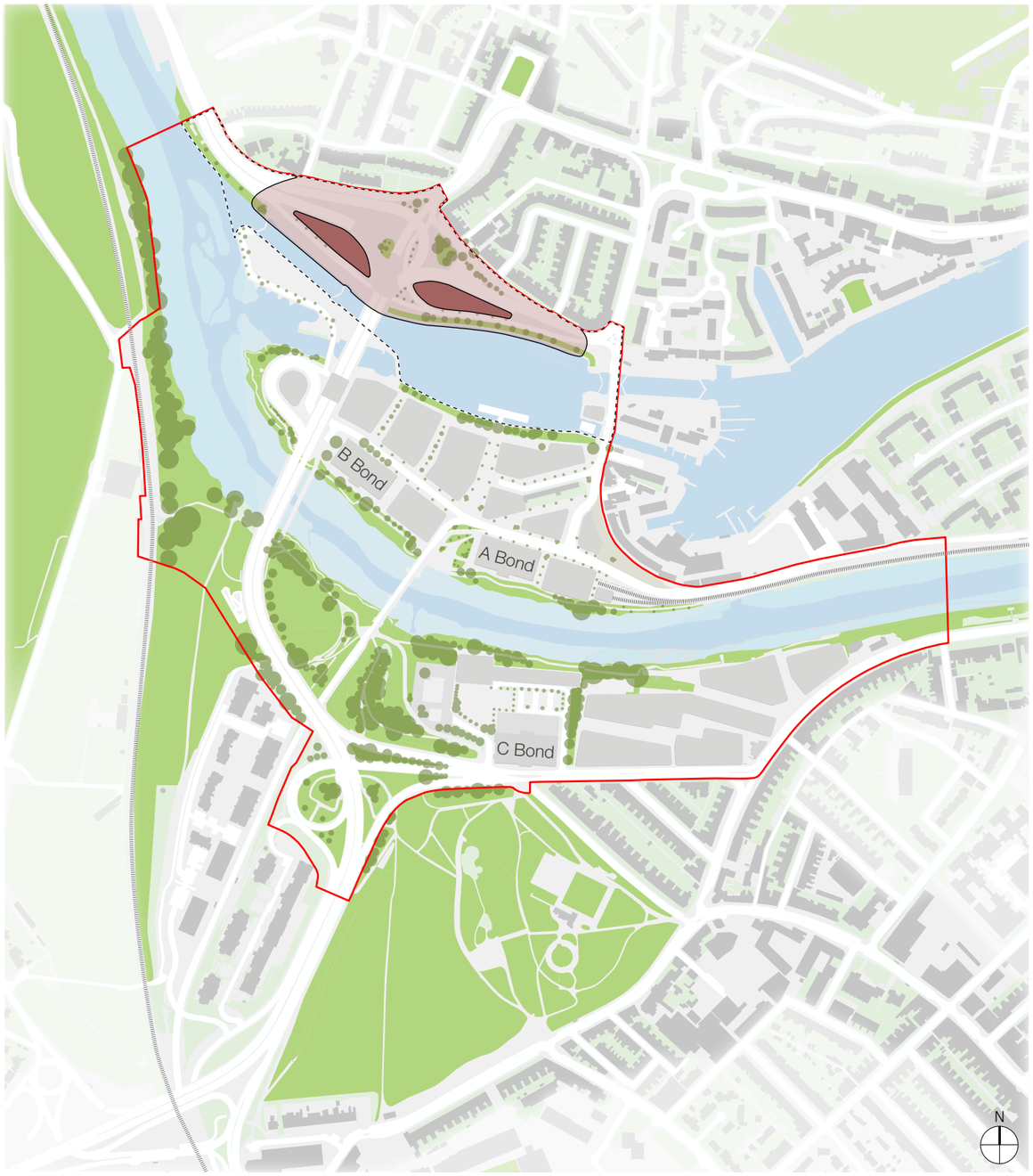


Figure 138: *Plan identifying the Hotwells Reach character area*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas



01 Underfall Yard 02 Increased water activity 03 Traffic calming to Cumberland Basin Road 04 Waterside theatre 05 Cumberland Basin 06 Ferry stop

Figure 139: *View from Hotwells looking across Cumberland Basin from a café under the new apartment buildings towards the revitalised waterfront with Underfall Yard in the distance*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas

Cumberland Wharf West

The central, lively, new place in Western harbour created by the demolition of obsolete roads and ramps connecting to Brunel Way.

Accommodating the bulk of new homes in apartment blocks arranged sympathetically against the B Bond Warehouse. This orientation would create light-filled, residential streets leading directly to an esplanade along Cumberland Basin. A wide central avenue connects Cumberland Basin to a new public square in front of A Bond, marking the transition from Cumberland Wharf West to Cumberland Wharf East. Key aspects of this contemporary, city-centre harbourside include:

- Active and flexible ground floors: independent shops and cafés, plus community facilities and workspaces/workshops.
- Calmed streets: multi-use public spaces including play-on-the-way features.
- Minimal vehicular footprint: discreet motor vehicle access and limited parking, with safe, well-overlooked bike parking.
- Expressive balconies: outdoor spaces to enjoy views, light and survey the streets below.
- Landmark structure: A landmark at the gateway to Bristol with architecture of world class quality that speaks of Bristol and the unique history of the gorge and floating harbour.

Key

- Strategic boundary
- Character Area
- Buildings within Character Area
- Wider area influencing the character area



Figure 140: *Photo of the western tip of the Floating Harbour illustrating the potential view from the landmark structure*

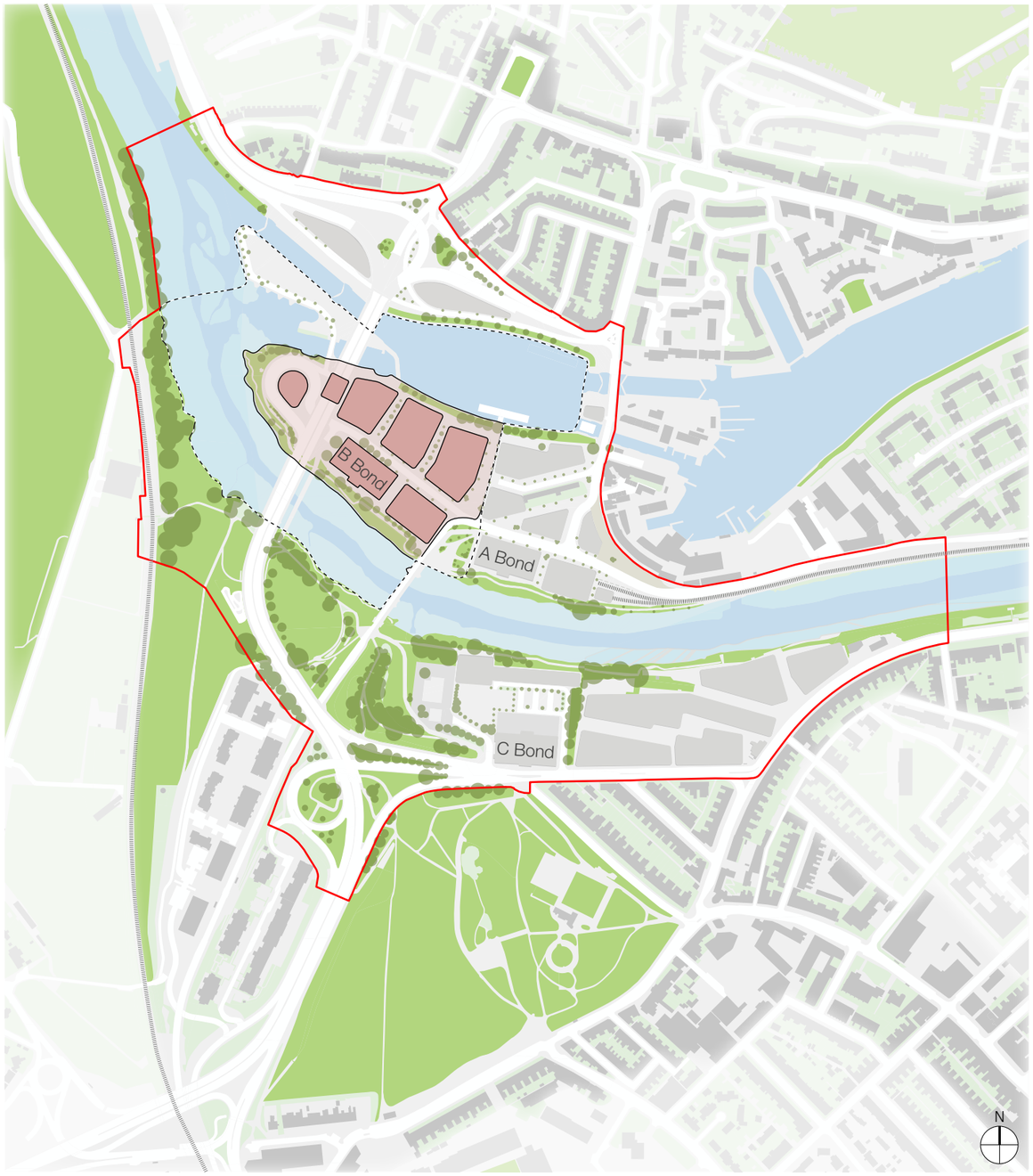


Figure 141: *Plan identifying the Cumberland Wharf West character area*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas



01 Active ground floor uses with apartments above 02 Brunel Bridge & Sluice Gate 03 Plimsoll Swing Bridge 04 Clifton Suspension Bridge 05 Generous quayside walkways

Figure 142: *View looking across Cumberland Basin towards Hotwells showing apartments above community spaces, workshops and workspaces; foreground shows a revitalised waterside of Cumberland Basin with apartments above active frontages and a wide waterfront*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas

Cumberland Wharf East

Transitioning from Cumberland Wharf West into a calmer, heritage-led location, Cumberland Wharf East blends rich maritime history with modern living to create a character-rich environment.

Shaped by its context, new development should sensitively celebrate rather than compete with the area's industrial character. By weaving the rich history of the floating harbour (and assets like A Bond, Avon Substation, Underfall Yard, and Avon Crescent) into the fabric of a contemporary community, Cumberland Wharf East establishes itself as a calm, heritage-rich maritime neighbourhood with:

- Calmed streets: that encourage exploratory walking, connecting residents directly to the working heritage of the waterways.
- Improved pedestrian accessibility: addressing changes in level and physical barriers to create more accessible and attractive pedestrian routes.
- Extended heritage railway: restoring and extending the historic heritage railway for both a cultural attraction and a unique local transport link.
- Traditional materiality: a materials palette that resonates with the industrial character.
- Butterfly Junction Park : A habitat-rich, flexible waterfront destination for events that bring people directly to the water's edge.

Key

- Strategic boundary
- Character Area
- Buildings within Character Area
- Wider area influencing the character area



Figure 143: *Photo of Underfall Yard along the Floating Harbours edge © Derek Harper*

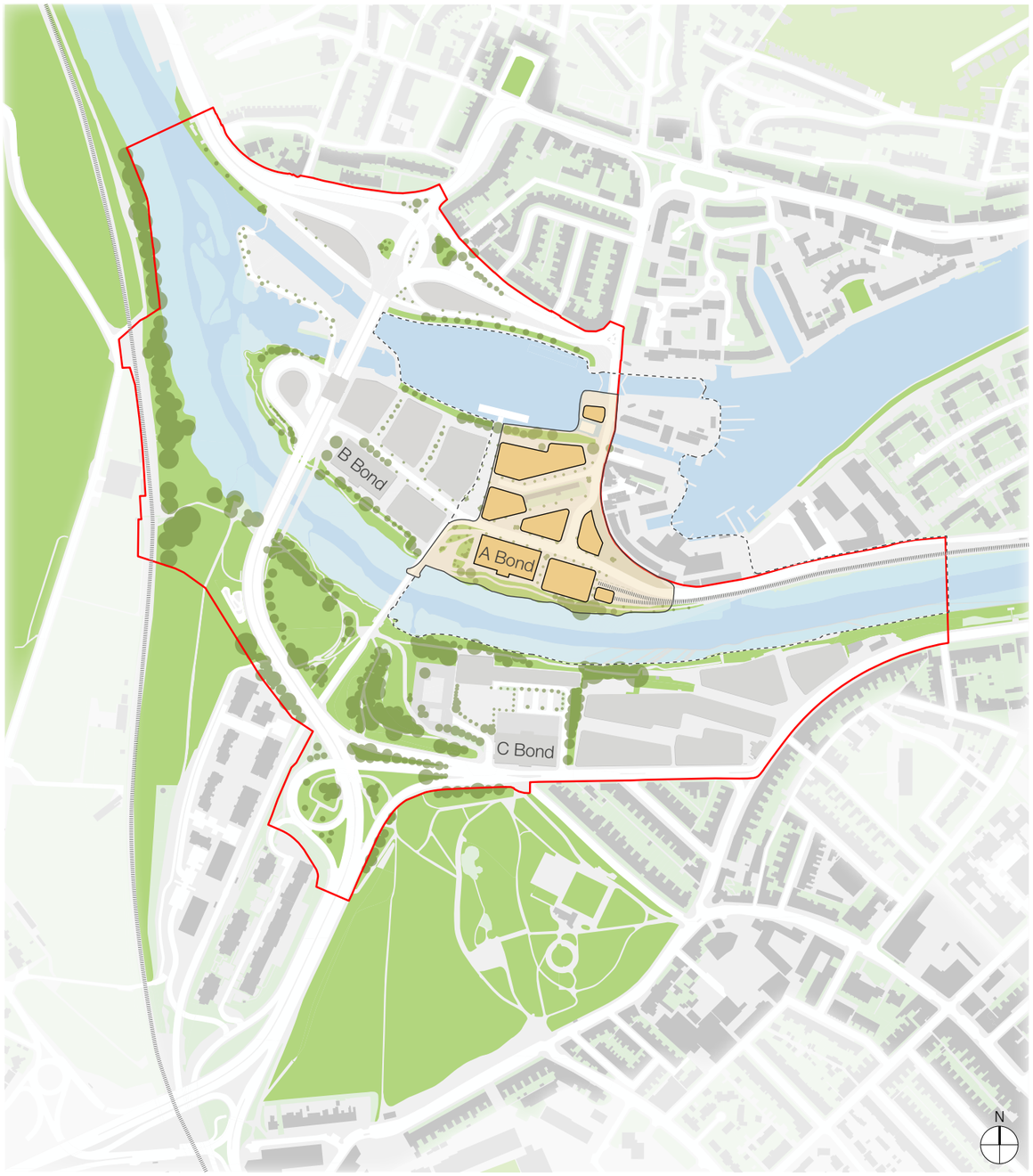


Figure 144: *Plan identifying the Cumberland Wharf East character area*

Building communities

06.01 Character Areas

Ashton Riverside

A riverwalk and apartment buildings line the New Cut. The garden centre reprovided and continuing to benefit from the riverside location.

The Riverside Garden Centre is a much-loved business and community amenity who value their riverside location. The Development Framework envisions an exciting opportunity to support its continued evolution and establish a direct connection with the water's edge, something the site currently lacks.

A ribbon of homes is envisioned above active ground floor amenities along the New Cut, fronted by a new riverside walk connecting Coronation Road, through Paynes Shipyard to Leigh Woods. The new garden centre and café is re-provided under the most western apartment buildings with a wonderful outlook over the water. The garden centre extends externally to the south where it will enjoy better sunlight than at present due to the overshadowing by both its own café and C Bond.

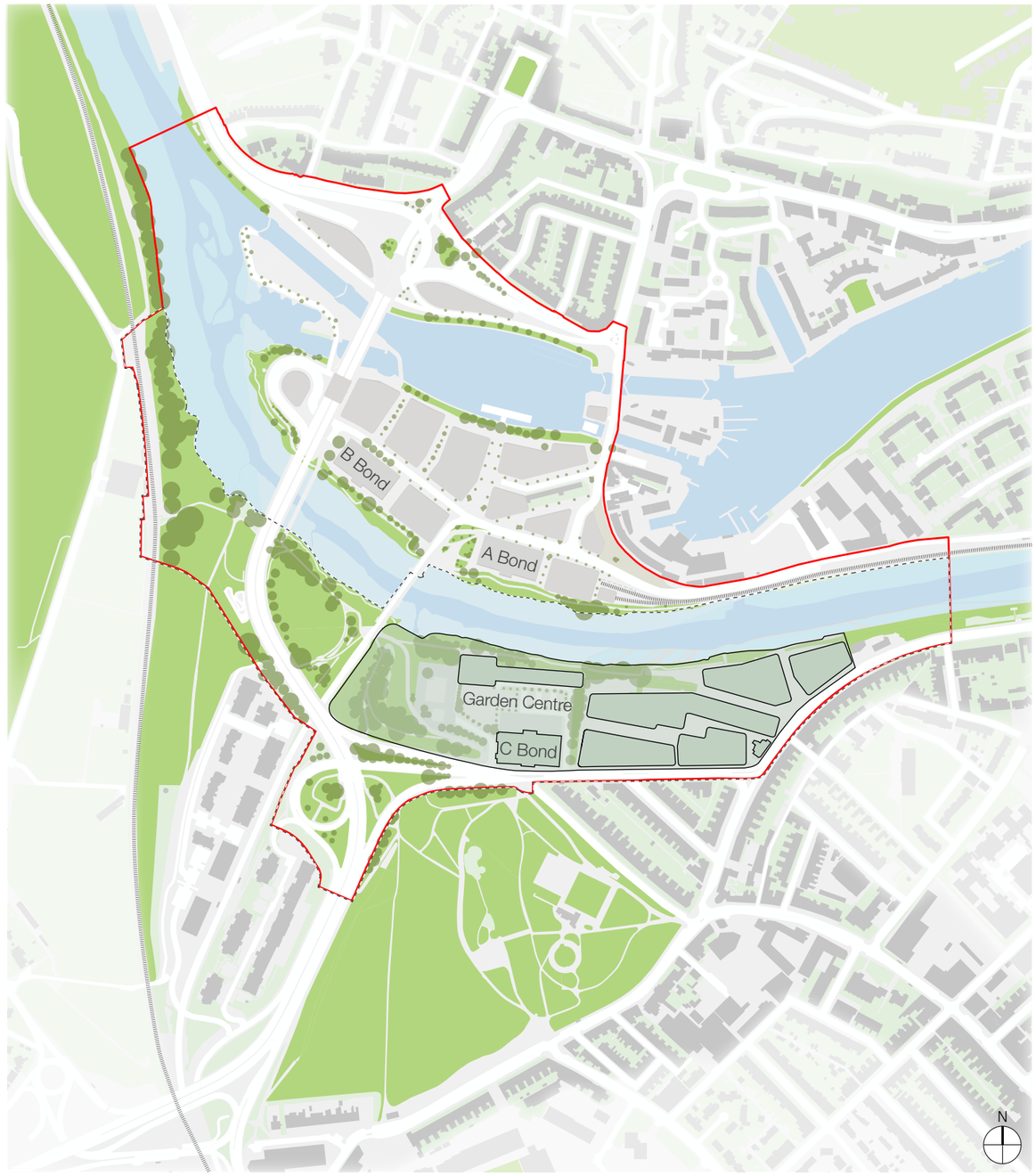


Figure 146: *Plan identifying the Ashton Riverside character area*

Key

- Strategic boundary
- Character Area
- Buildings within Character Area
- Wider area influencing the character area



Figure 145: *Photo from the river bank adjacent the existing Riverside Gardens looking back towards A Bond*

Building communities

06.02 Indicative land use

Ground floor uses

Western Harbour will be animated by active and adaptable ground-floor uses that support daily life, local enterprise, and community well-being. A carefully distributed mix of commercial, cultural, and community spaces should reinforce key routes, respond to movement patterns, and sustain long-term social and economic vitality.

Key aims:

01) Support social and economic sustainability by providing flexible commercial, cultural, and community spaces that can evolve over time.

02) Create a diverse mix of ground-floor uses, within buildings and associated public spaces, to support a successful and inclusive neighbourhood.

03) Meet everyday needs of residents and support independent businesses.

04) Concentrate ground-floor activity along key routes and high-footfall areas to reinforce street vitality, animation, and natural surveillance.

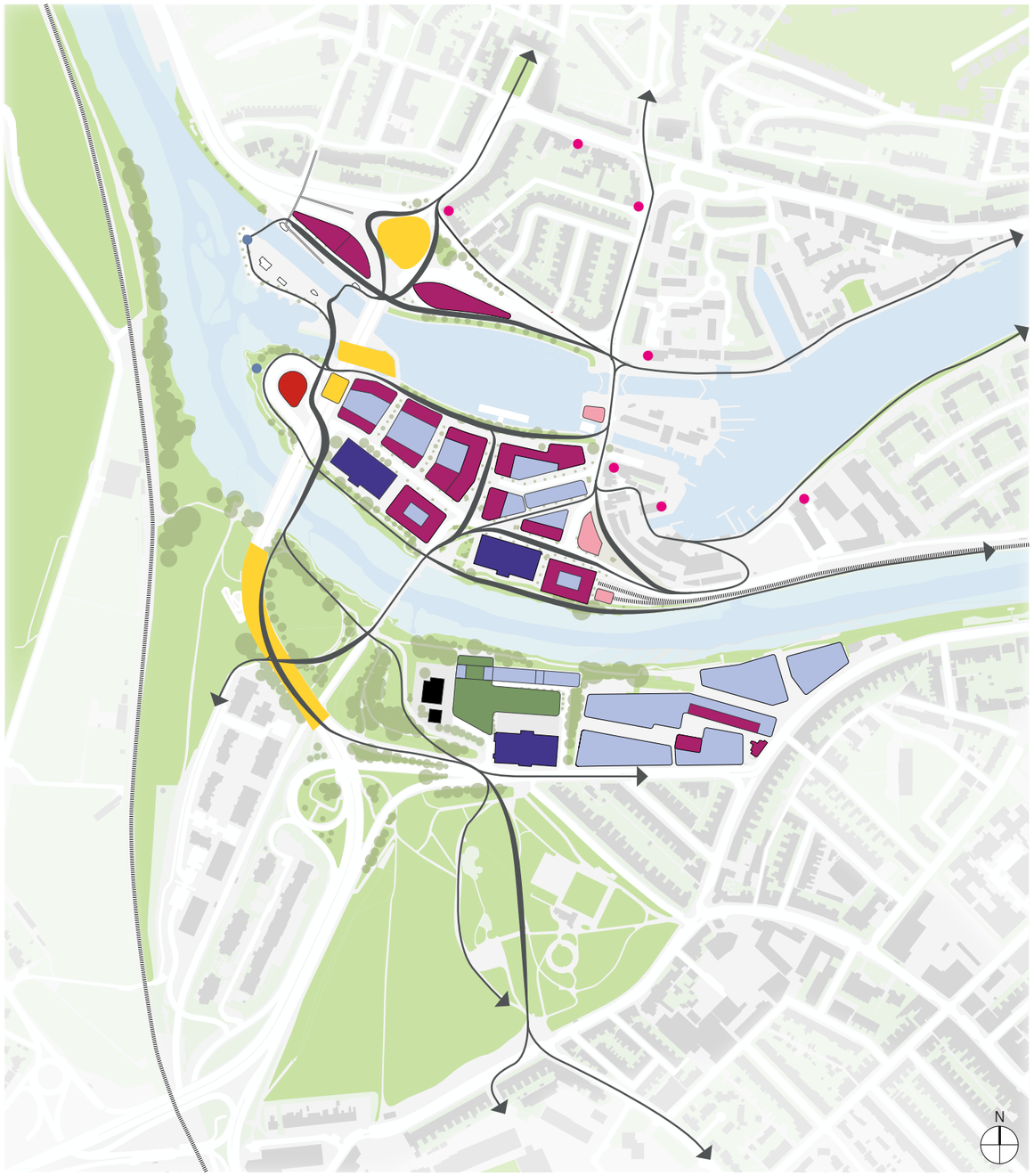
05) Design ground-floor spaces with long-term flexibility, enabling adaptation in response to changing demand as communities grow. This may include healthcare, childcare facilities, and other locally focused services.

06) Link uses to the movement trail principles set out in sections *04.02 - 04.05*.

07) Explore expanding the Bristol Heat Network by constructing an energy centre within the regeneration area to provide low-carbon heat to the community.

Note: Vattenfall is working in partnership with Bristol City Council and Bristol City Leap to deliver a coherent city-wide low-carbon heat network as part of Bristol City Council's plans for the city to be carbon neutral by 2030 and delivering a future-proofed local energy system. There is an aspiration to deliver an energy centre in the vicinity of Western Harbour, serving both the new development and the wider area, subject to a suitable site being identified. Western Harbour offers the potential for utilising local–level water source heat pumps to extract zero-carbon energy from the harbour.

Key principles:



Key

- Range of commercial and leisure space
- Cultural / heritage hubs
- Residential / residential amenity
- Garden centre
- Landmark public / cultural building
- Sports / leisure
- Utility
- Mixed use with active lower floors
- Key movement pattern
- Predicted high footfall routes
- Nearby public house / café
- Key viewing point

Note: *Movement patterns indicated are not exhaustive. Additional survey and analysis would be required to confirm footfall.*

Figure 147: *Plan identifying the key movement patterns through Western Harbour with suggested ground floor uses*

Building communities

06.02 Indicative land use

Above ground floor uses

Upper levels will deliver high-quality, tenure-diverse homes that respond to Bristol's housing needs while achieving sustainable densities and strong residential amenity. Building typologies should be carefully adapted to site constraints and provide high environmental performance and contextual responsiveness.

Key aims:

01) The bonded warehouses have the potential to be converted to apartments, hotel, commercial or public exhibition space.

02) Create a landmark structure at the western tip of Western Harbour.

03) Provide a cultural hub - potentially within the Avon Crescent Substation.

04) Utilise the underpass spaces for leisure, sport, and recreation.

05) Deliver a residential-led neighbourhood that provides an optimal housing density in line with the *Urban Living SPD: Making Successful Places at Higher Densities.*

06) Create a variety of housing typologies in suitable locations.

07) Design homes that protect residents from the environmental noise and pollution of the elevated highways.

08) Provide a mix of tenures that addresses identified housing needs.

09) Optimise density through efficient layouts, including the use of central dual-loaded corridors where appropriate, while maintaining high standards of amenity.

10) Maximise the proportion of dual-aspect homes to guarantee high levels of daylight, thermal comfort, and natural ventilation.

Key principles:



Figure 148: *Plan showing the suggested upper floor uses and apartment access*

Key

- Cultural / heritage hubs
- Residential
- Mixed use with active lower floors
- Range of commercial and leisure space
- Landmark public / cultural building
- Sports hub

Building communities

06.03 Examples of non-residential uses

Public archive / museum storage

A public archive could be created to display Bristol's history.

The public archives, which hold a rich history of the city, are currently located in A Bond and B Bond Warehouses. However, much of the collection is inaccessible and stored in crates.

This history could be celebrated by displaying these fantastic city collections and creating a publicly accessible archive.

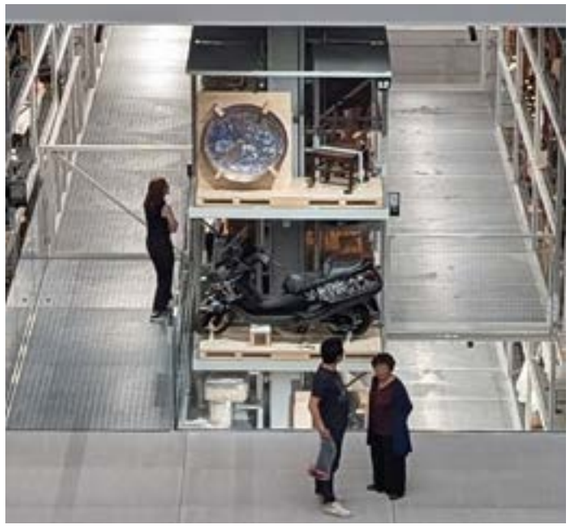


Figure 149: *V&A East Storehouse*

Bristol Legacy Foundation - Storyhouse

Operating under the ethos "A place for stories, a place for doing", Storyhouse will be a world-class cultural venue for the City of Bristol and beyond.

It will engage with African Heritage Community stories, activities, histories, and futures. As a dynamic local and international cultural hub, Storyhouse will connect people through art, education, events, food, music, and outdoor community spaces.



Figure 150: *Art gallery space at The Africa Centre © Taran Wilkhu Photography*

Independent shops

The framework encourages town centre uses, promoting local independent shops, cafés, and restaurants to support local businesses.

These will be strategically located along primary movement routes to drive footfall towards the waterfront. We can best support independent enterprise by providing smaller ground-floor retail units that are well-suited for start-ups and local traders.

Providing a range of unit sizes enables different types of businesses to establish, expand and evolve alongside the local community.



Figure 151: *Independent coffee shop*

Creative workspace and workshops

Providing dedicated studio spaces will help Bristol's renowned creative scene to flourish.

The integration of creative workspaces alongside more traditional employment and commercial uses will strengthen the city's economic resilience and diversity.

We can support the growth of these industries by developing flexible units of varying sizes. Co-locating these units with shared facilities will allow a supportive, and organically formed, creative hub to develop.



Figure 152: *Creative space at JW3 © Nina Sologubenko*

Building communities

06.03 Examples of non-residential uses

> *Keep a mix of useful retail units that provide services for local people, useful shops as well as cafés, restaurants and more creative businesses or office space.*

Garden Centre

The framework proposes extending the success of the existing garden centre with a new building that overlooks the river front.

More than just a garden centre, this will serve as a focal point for the community, complete with a café and children's play area.



Figure 153: *Riverside Garden Centre*

Activity centre

We can provide new life for the areas under the flyovers and ramps by introducing sports and leisure uses.

Reclaiming these currently inhospitable spaces beneath the remaining raised road network will transform them into lively and active destinations. A dedicated activity centre could support these activities with public toilets, changing rooms, and short-stay parking for events.



Figure 154: *Platform Park © Stephen Schauer*

Waterside restaurants and cafés

Located along the primary routes through Western Harbour, these venues will provide spaces to take a break and enjoy the setting.

Cafés and restaurants with views across the Cumberland Basin will cater to both residents and visitors.

These spaces must be designed to capitalise on the iconic waterfront vistas that are completely unique to Western Harbour.



Figure 155: Oxo Tower Wharf riverside restaurant © Chris Gascoigne

Community spaces

Western Harbour must provide spaces shared by the whole community.

Flexible community spaces should be considered and may take a variety of forms, including dedicated facilities for children's nurseries, GP or dentist surgeries, a re-imagined Create Centre, or pop-up spaces within the public realm where community groups can meet.

The adaptability of such spaces will allow them to respond to changing needs over time, providing accessible, long-term venues for local services.



Figure 156: Rag-rug making workshop during arts and crafts fair at Oxo Tower Wharf © *Tim Mitchell*

Building communities

06.04 Meanwhile uses

Key principles:

Aspiration

The scale and phased delivery of Western Harbour offers a prime opportunity for creative and innovative meanwhile uses. These temporary initiatives will enrich local character, draw people to the waterfront and build Western Harbour's collective presence within the city. By activating vacant spaces, meanwhile uses will play a proactive and valued role in reinforcing the local identity and fostering early community life while actively preventing urban blight such as vandalism or fly-tipping.

Delivered collaboratively, these temporary initiatives can generate lasting social and economic value, they can inform or transition into permanent elements of the Development Framework across six themes (listed on the following page).

Key aims:

- Develop meanwhile initiatives collaboratively with local communities, businesses, and stakeholders.
- Encourage stewardship and foster a sense of ownership that supports active participation in shaping the area's future.
- Respond positively to the character and identity of Western Harbour, building on existing strengths and Bristol's distinct cultural profile.
- Build Western Harbour's collective presence within Bristol's City Centre.
- Align with community values and priorities so that interim uses accurately reflect local aspirations.
- Employ sustainable and regenerative practices in the design, construction, and operation of interim uses.
- Facilitate the relocation of established meanwhile uses into permanent ground-floor spaces as development plots come forward, retaining social value, and community networks.
- Support businesses and community groups in identifying suitable long-term premises.
- Maintain flexibility to allow successful initiatives to grow, adapt, and respond to changes in demand.
- Generate sustainable income streams for the Harbour'



Figure 157: *Cabot Circus Skate Spot © CANVAS*

Building communities

06.04 Meanwhile uses

A thriving, inclusive meanwhile use, that changes the perception of the area and that the people.

Grow

Provide spaces for the community to come together to grow food, plants, and trees.

Building on the success of the Riverside Garden Centre and the community growing spaces within Cumberland Piazza, vacant land can be used for urban farming, temporary allotments, or even a tree nursery.



Figure 158: *Urban Farming © LettUs Grow, Bristol*



Figure 159: *Story Garden, Kings Cross*

Create

Support the creative arts with affordable workshops and spaces for grassroots businesses and artists.

Providing premises for workshops and creative studios will support small enterprises. Materials salvaged from the demolition of redundant structures can be made available to these groups for re-purposing.



Figure 160: *Weaving at the Oxo Tower Wharf workshops © Dan Weill*

Move

Bring together sports and fitness communities to activate the future Leisure Corridor.

By working collaboratively with skating, water sports, fitness, running, bike polo, football, basketball, netball, urban beach volleyball and BMX groups we can enhance opportunities for recreation.



Figure 161: *Sailing lesson on the Floating Harbour © All-Aboard Watersports*

Build

Use circular economy principles to construct temporary community infrastructure.

By reusing demolition materials we can sustainably build new community assets. Temporary parks can incorporate play areas and spaces for passive recreation such as spectator sports along the Leisure Corridor.



Figure 162: *Temporary neighbourhood © Better Block*

Exhibit & interact

Exhibit the best of Bristol's past, present, and future.

This could include exhibitions featuring artefacts from the Bristol Museums collection within a temporary structure, or, for example, a venue for Aardman's travelling 'Art of Aardman' exhibition.



Figure 163: *Aardman's interactive exhibition © Aardman*

Celebrate

Create spaces for live performances and festivals that bring life and vibrancy to the area.

This could take the form of an extension to the Bristol Harbour Festival, new outdoor live music venues on the waterfront, or cultural festivals that celebrate the diversity and richness of the city.



Figure 164: *Performance on the Amara Zee © Caravan Stage Company*

Building communities

06.05 Strategies for inclusivity

Inclusive design aim

Western Harbour will champion a universal design approach that places inclusivity at its core to create welcoming public realm that empowers people of all ages and abilities. Inclusivity will not be treated as an add-on or compliance exercise, but as a fundamental design principle shaping streets, spaces, buildings, and movement networks from the outset. This is to align with Bristol Local Plan Review emerging Policy DPM1 (Delivering well-designed, inclusive places). It also actively supports the equality and health targets set out within Bristol's One City Plan, creating neighbourhoods that are genuinely welcoming to all demographics.

To promote genuine inclusivity, the public realm should be consciously designed with children and older people in mind. By designing for these life stages, which often encompass reduced mobility, evolving cognitive ability, sensory sensitivities and increased vulnerability, the scheme can respond more effectively to the widest range of needs. Designing for these extremities helps create an environment that supports independence and everyday dignity, rather than defining zones for individual medical diagnosis or designing to minimum regulatory standards.

Through this approach, Western Harbour's public realm will foster a sense of belonging and shared ownership. It will enable all users to move comfortably, participate fully in public life and experience the waterfront as a place of opportunity, connection and well-being.

Summary:

- Design streets and spaces with children and older people in mind to address mobility, cognitive and sensory needs.
- Apply universal design principles from the outset rather than retrofitting solutions.
- Engage access groups and under-represented communities to inform design decisions.
- Respond pro-actively to demographic data to reflect local needs.
- Promote thoughtful social inclusion that supports independence, safety and participation in public life.

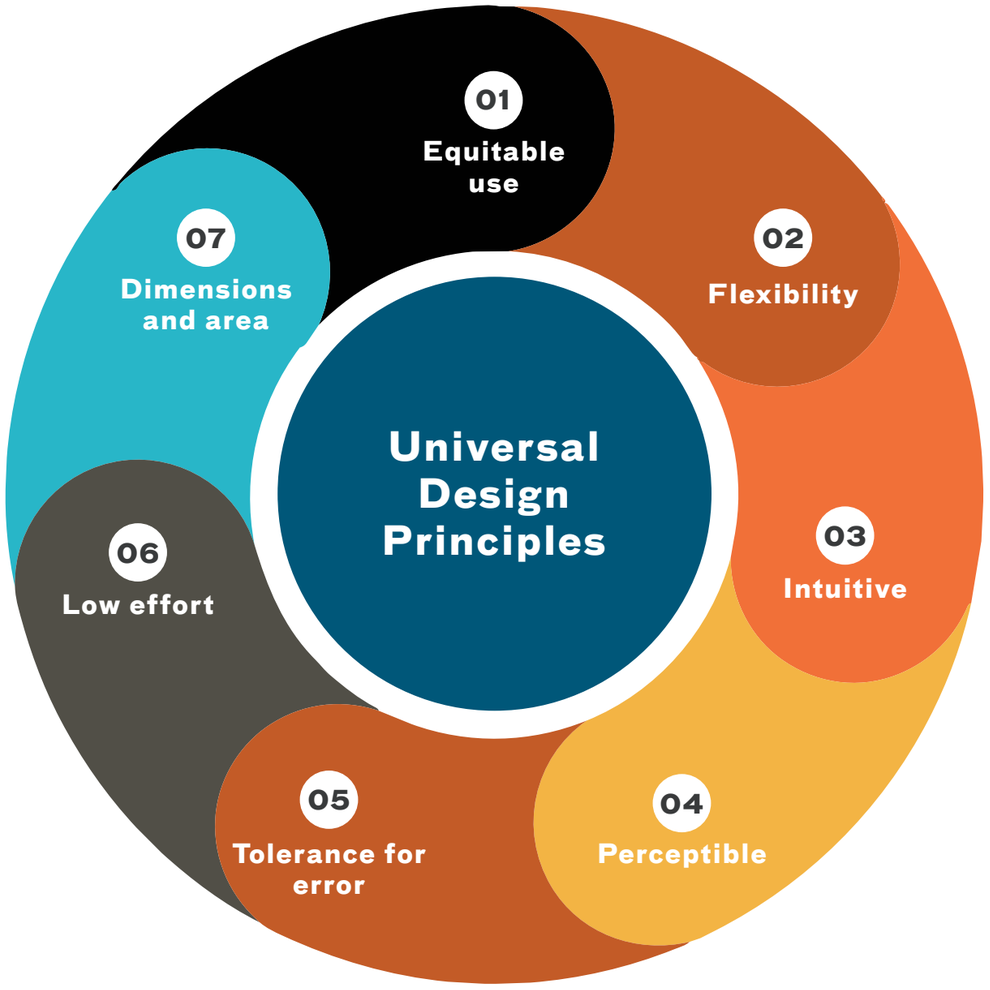


Figure 165: *Principles of Universal Design defined by Centre for Excellence in Universal Design*



Figure 166: *Precedent of an inclusive skate park, Lemvig, Denmark © EFFEKT*