08. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure

08.01 Landscape

Landscape designations

The landscape character of Western Harbour has been shaped by the riparian habitats on the river's edge, the harbour and the 1960's elevated road network.

The area transitions from the naturalised habitats in Ashton Court, Ashton Meadows and along the riverbanks through to the urban environment. While Cumberland Piazza and the central area of Western Harbour currently lack formal designations, they contain mature trees and pockets of landscaping that contribute to the local character.

Key aims:

01) Protect and frame strategic views westward towards the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the Avon Gorge.

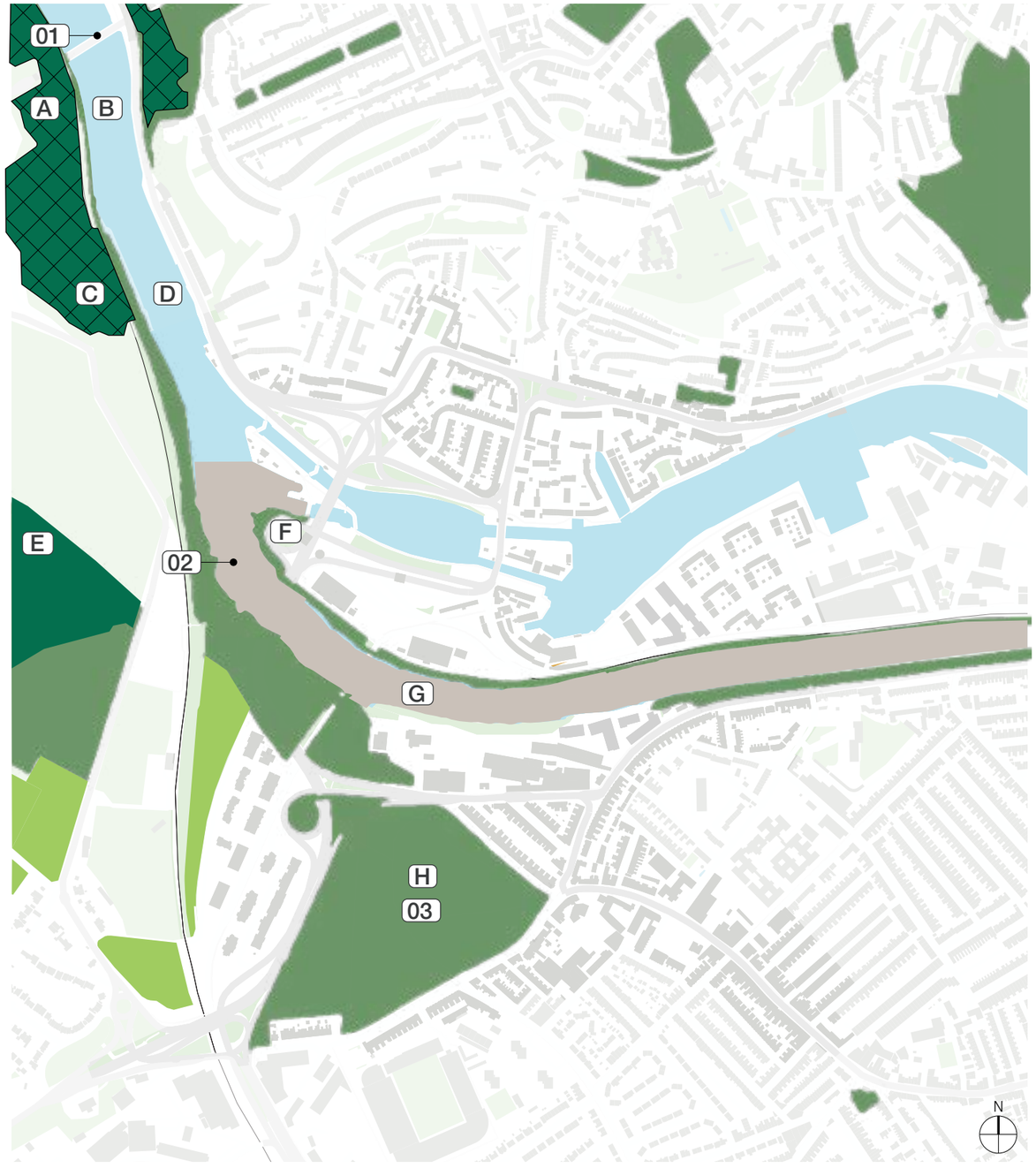
02) Recognise the Avon New Cut as a Local Nature Reserve supporting rich flora and fauna east of the harbour entrance.

03) Maintain and enhance the recreational and landscape value of Greville Smyth Park - designated as a Local Historic Park and Garden and Important Open Space.

04) Use landscape to celebrate the harbour's distinctive character.

05) Recognise Western Harbour's role as a transition point between the urban city centre and countryside landscapes.

06) Protect the setting of designated heritage and landscape assets to the west, including Ashton Court Estate and Leigh Woods.



Key

- Strategic boundary
- **A** Avon Gorge Woodlands (SAC)
- **B** Avon Gorge
- **C** Leigh Woods
- **D** River Avon
- **E** Ashton Court (Grade II* Park)
- **F** The Look-Out
- **G** Avon New Cut
- **H** Greville Smyth Park

- Special Area of Conservation
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserves
- Parks and Green Spaces (excluded City Docks Informal Green Space)
- Allotments

Figure 190: *Map of the landscape designations © OpenStreetMap (data available under the Open Database License)*

Green infrastructure

08.01 Landscape

Landscape principles

Western Harbour will celebrate and enhance its unique waterside setting, strengthening its role as a gateway between city and countryside. We will safeguard the nationally and locally designated landscapes that define its identity and environmental value.

Existing green spaces at Ashton Meadows will be enhanced to provide new play and leisure facilities. Landscaped streets will link the riverside and basin-side routes to create a connected green network.

Key outcomes:

01) Enhance the landscape and introduce play / leisure provision within Ashton Meadows.

02) Expand Butterfly Junction into a public park.

03) Provide soft landscaping and habitats along the AR2100 route.

04) Extend the waterside landscape into the streets - connecting the riverside to the basin-side.

05) Provide accessible and engaging waterside public spaces that enable people to connect with nature.

06) Provide soft landscaping and planting to soften higher-density development.

07) Use planting strategically to mitigate microclimatic conditions (including prevailing winds from Avon Gorge) and to enhance air quality.

08) Incorporate indigenous planting and habitat creation while strengthening ecological connections along the River Avon and Ashton Meadows.

...this is a unique waterside area with spectacular views of the Avon Gorge, Suspension Bridge, the terraces of both Clifton and Cliftonwood, and the expanse of water of the Floating Harbour.

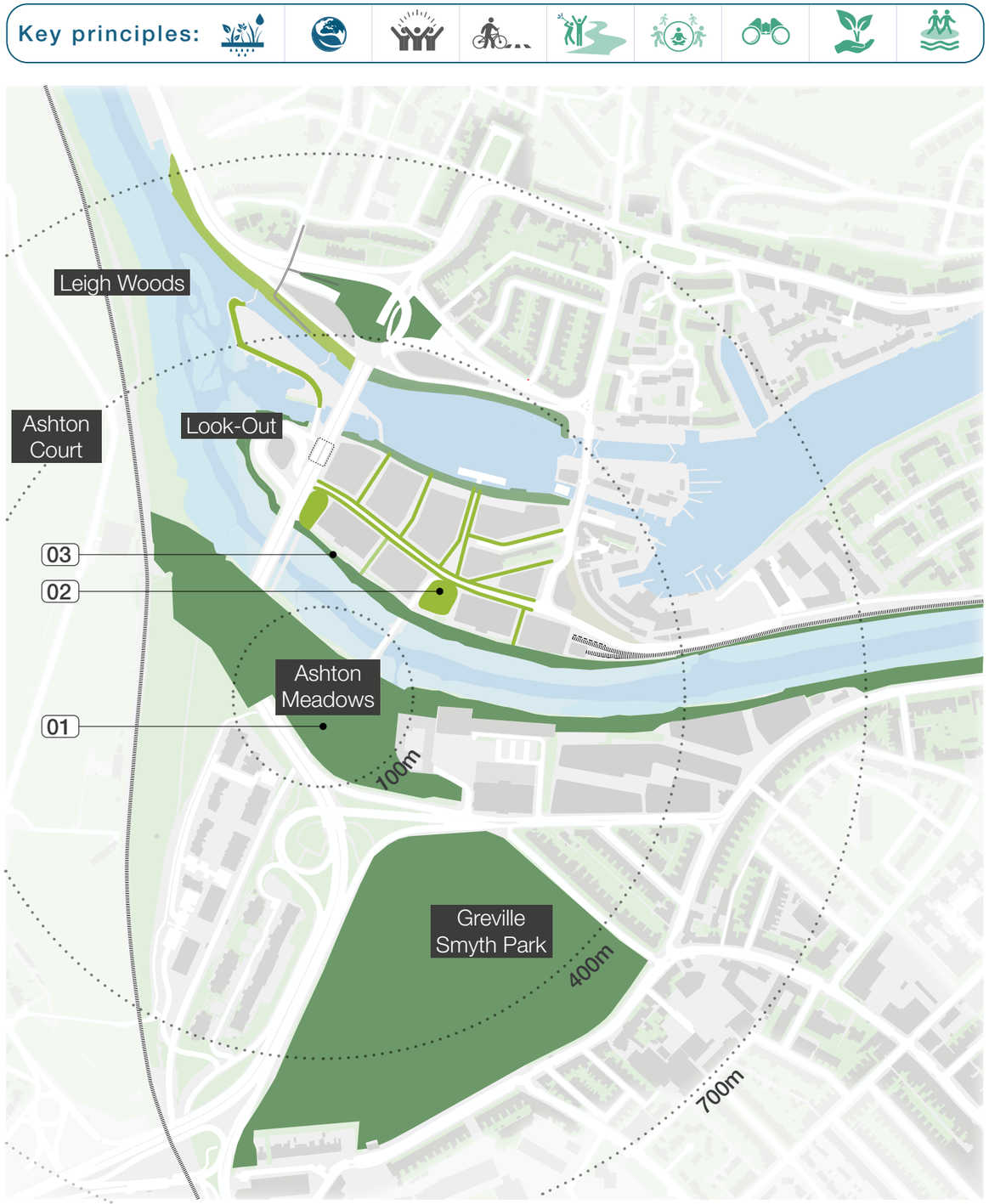


Figure 191: *Plan illustrating key landscape provisions and the key corridors between them*

Green infrastructure

08.02 Public realm and open spaces

Existing open spaces

Dame Sylvia Crowe's original 1964 vision for the Cumberland Basin was a pioneering strategy to integrate heavy-scale road infrastructure with high-quality public spaces.

Her approach sought to balance the flyovers with a landscape that felt connected to both the city and the natural beauty of the Avon Gorge. Much of the original design has since become fragmented and lost. Other important open spaces in proximity to the site are noted below.

Key open spaces:

01) Leigh Woods and Ashton Court: important green network connections providing substantial ecological value through a range of habitats.

02) Charles Place Play Area: small equipped play space for under 8s located within the Hotwells community.

03) Cumberland Piazza: an important community asset to the Hotwells residents; it is used for community events and home to "Art Under the Flyover".

04) Bristol Canoe Polo Pitch: outdoor polo pitch in the Cumberland Basin.

05) "The Look-Out": with seating at the western end of Brunel Lock, it provides iconic views along the Avon Gorge.

06) Butterfly Junction: containing wildlife habitats.

07) Brunel Way Pump Track & Curbside skate park: reclaimed space below Brunel Way.

08) Ashton Meadows: valuable open green space and link between Greville Smyth Park and the wider river landscape of Leigh Woods and Ashton Court.

09) Bedminster Cricket Club.

10) Greville Smyth Park: well-equipped formal play areas for ages 4-16 along with natural play opportunities and several sports facilities.

The area around Western Harbour is rich in wildlife: bees, toads, frogs, birds, otters, bats, many species of moths and butterflies, badgers and foxes all live alongside us.

Key

- Strategic boundary
- Woodland
- Parkland
- Common land and open space
- Sports facilities
- Play
- Allotment

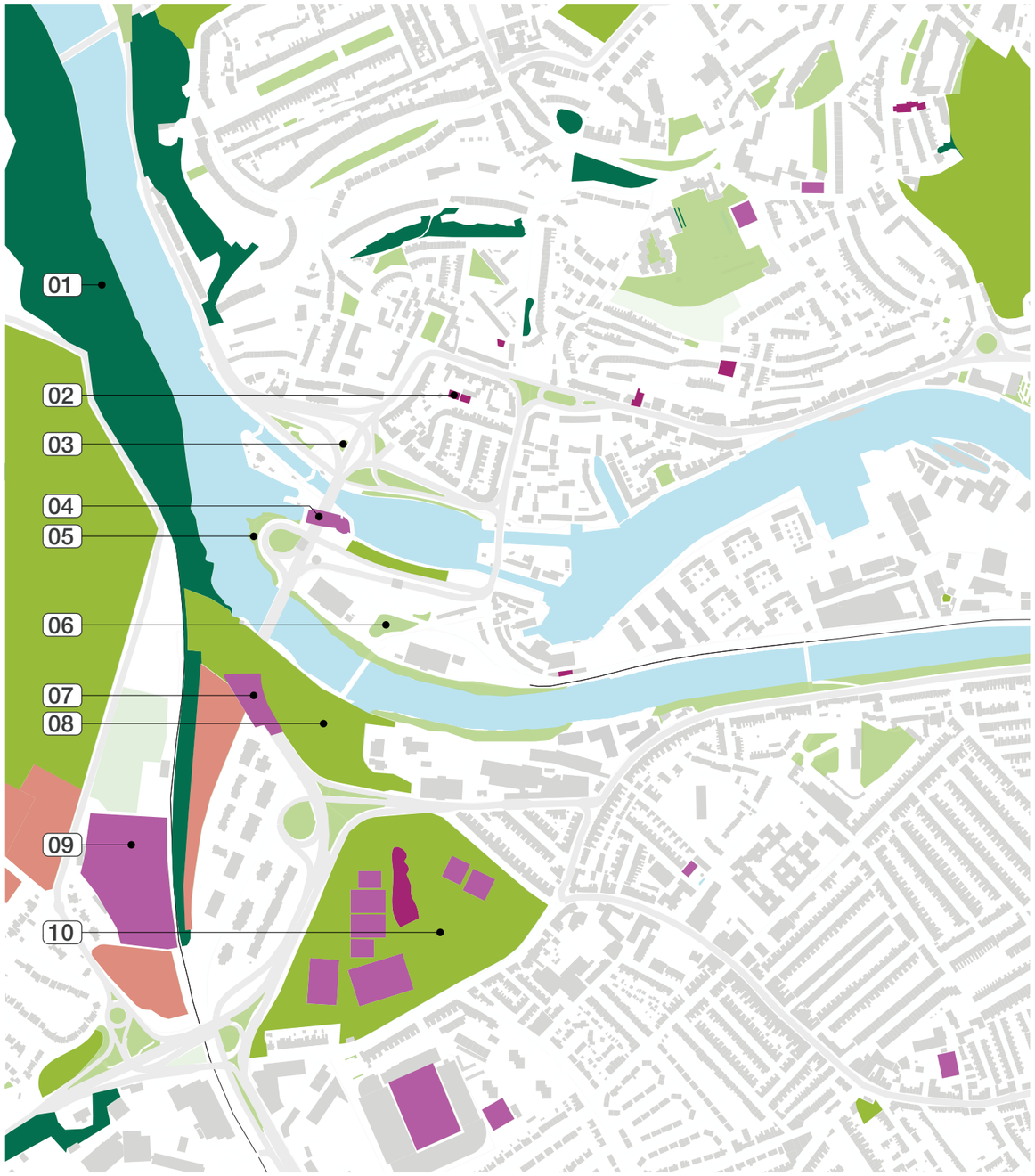


Figure 192: *Existing open spaces in proximity to Western Harbour © OpenStreetMap (data available under the Open Database License)*

Green infrastructure

08.02 Public realm and open spaces

Open space principles

Western Harbour will deliver a rich, inclusive and interconnected network of open spaces that supports biodiversity and varied habitats while celebrating its unique river and harbour setting.

The legacy of Dame Sylvia Crowe's landscape, particularly within Cumberland Piazza and The Look-Out, is to be integrated into future proposals.

Key outcomes:

01) Create a continuous ecological path along the river's edge.

02) Establish a new basin-edge promenade as a destination - supporting leisure, recreation and social activity.

03) Focus open spaces along the waterfront and the central space between Cumberland Basin and Butterfly Junction Park.

04) Holistic planning of open spaces as part of a connected public realm and green / blue infrastructure network.

05) Provide pocket parks and community play spaces that offer amenity to local residents.

06) Integrate multifunctional spaces, for example, combining biodiversity functions with amenity value and practical benefits like surface water runoff mitigation.

07) Diverse planting of tree species, suited to the local micro-climate, in mixed groups at irregular spacings to manage and encourage continued growth.

08) Provide a diverse range of inclusive open spaces that support active travel, play, recreation, biodiversity, heritage, art and performance within a cohesive public realm framework.

The public space for residents and visitors alike must retain its dock feel, which adds to the experience and sense of emotional connection with the site that we all deserve.

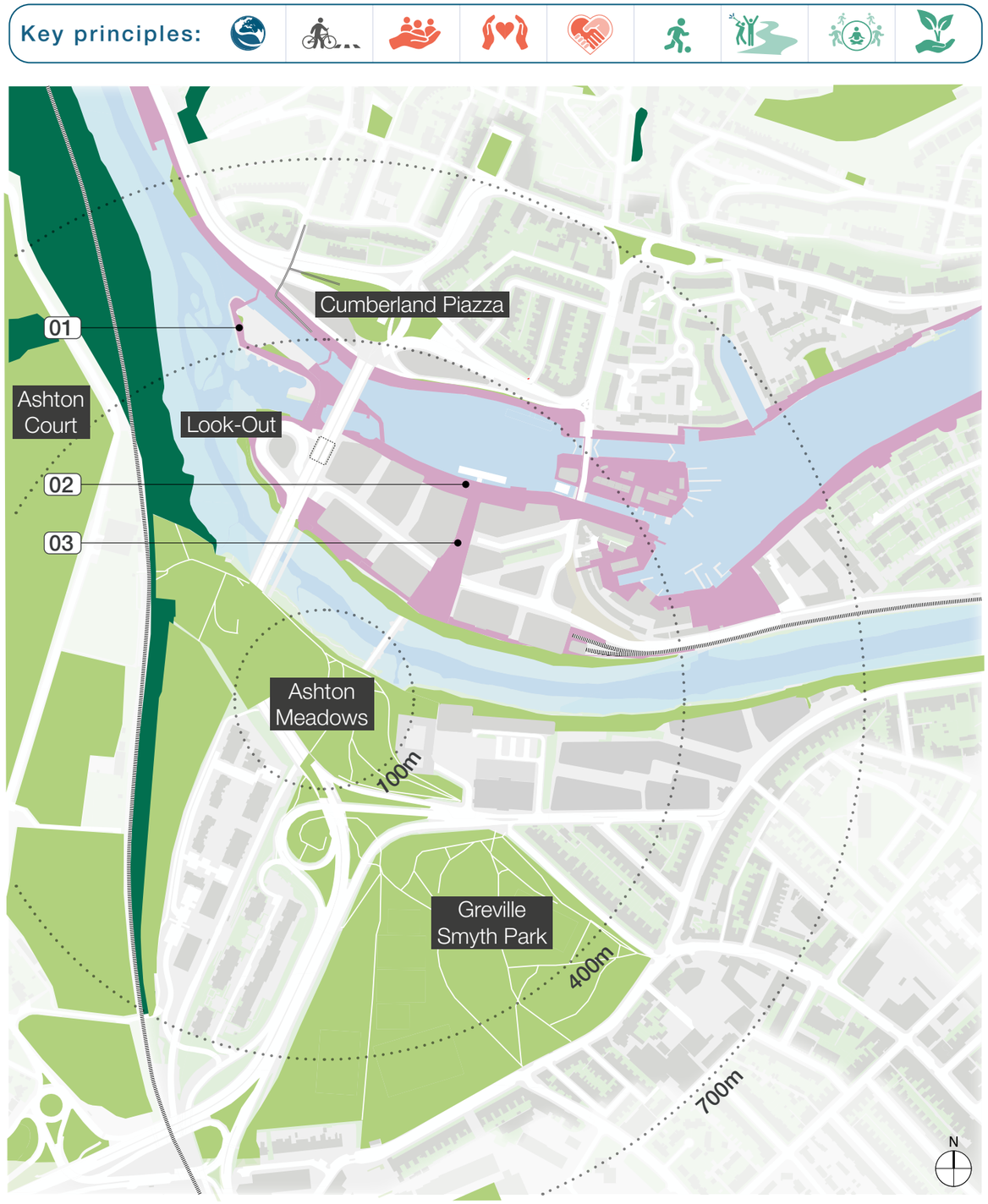


Figure 193: *Plan of the proposed open space network and the key pedestrian links between them*

Green infrastructure

08.03 Biodiversity and ecology

Key principles:

Improving Biodiversity

Achieving biodiversity net gain requires integrating nature recovery and ecological connectivity as fundamental principles of place-making. The biodiversity strategy should be expressed throughout the public realm, reinforcing Western Harbour's character as a waterside neighbourhood defined by its natural assets.

Key aims:

01) Champion Western Harbour's unique tree and landscape character by protecting the mature trees at Ashton Meadows.

02) Deliver a climate-resilient urban forest by planting approximately 1,000 new trees to reach a 20% canopy cover, using a mix of native and non-native species.

03) Protect and extend Priority Habitats, including intertidal mudflats and coastal saltmarsh, by carefully managing infrastructure works and strengthening wildlife corridors

04) Integrate nature-based solutions into the built environment through green and biodiverse roofs that support the SuDS strategy and align with Bristol's Species Action Plan to create new homes for local wildlife.

05) Support a "B-Line" network of pollinator-friendly corridors that respond to the 21 habitat types identified on-site, contributing to national wildflower-rich routes and increasing connectivity for birds, bats and invertebrates.

06) Foster community well-being through green place-making by providing safe, enclosed social spaces and community gardens that encourage residents to connect with nature and each other.

07) Make biodiversity a visible and legible part of the public realm, reinforcing Western Harbour's identity as a waterside neighbourhood defined by its natural assets and the Bristol One City Ecological Emergency Strategy.

08) Secure a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain across the Development Framework area.

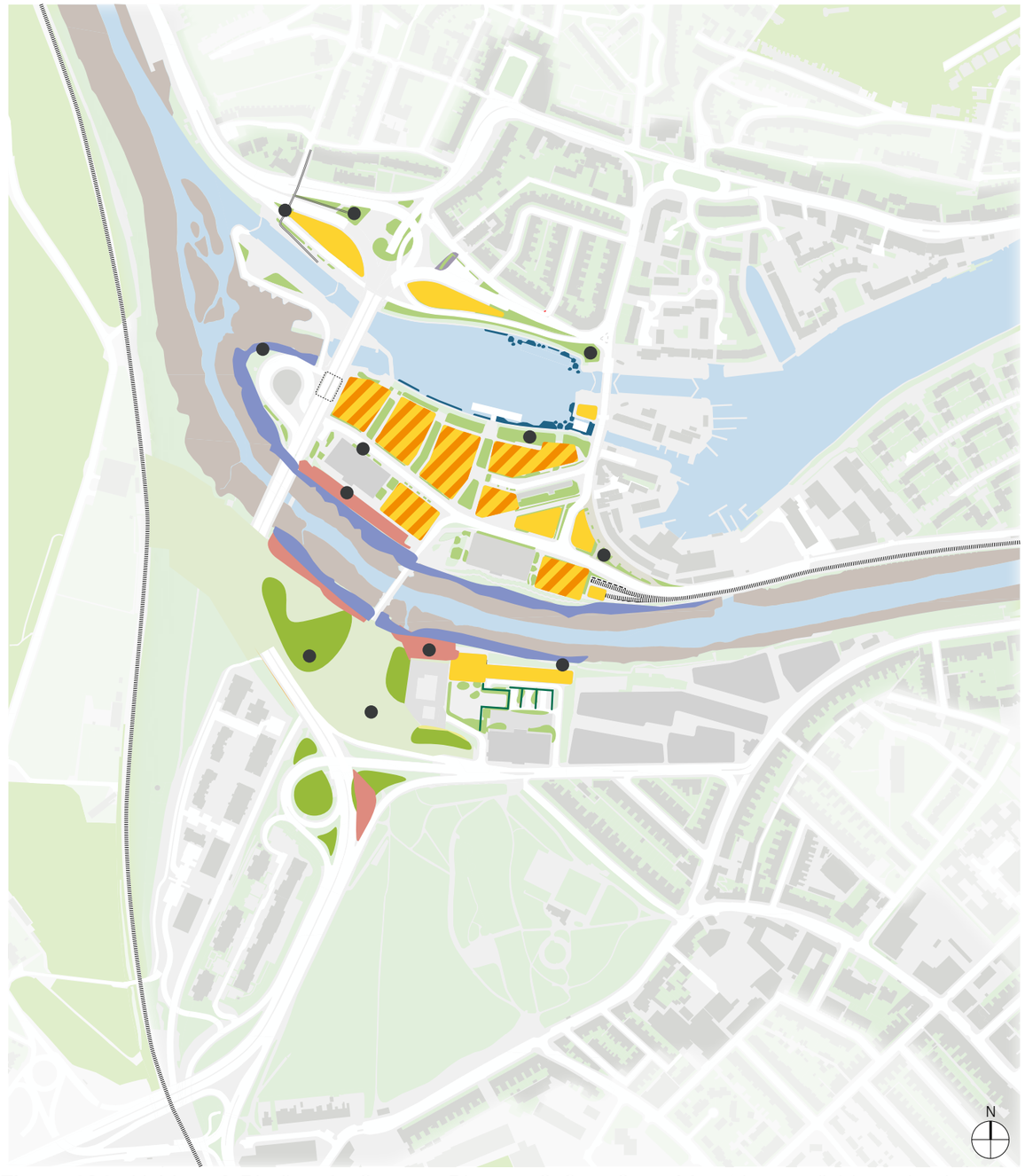


Figure 194: *Habitats & Biodiversity Strategy Diagram © OpenStreetMap (data available under the Open Database License)*

08.03 Biodiversity and ecology

Key principles:

Recreational spaces

The external realm is to be genuinely child-friendly and inclusive. The landscape as a whole has been conceived to be "playable," with opportunities for informal play integrated wherever possible to encourage movement and discovery.

Existing formal play and recreational spaces are located in the surrounding area, including playgrounds within a 15-minute walk. Local sports and play spaces include Greville Smyth Park, Greville Smyth Tennis Club and Charles Place Play Area.

Key outcomes:

- Provide formal and informal play and sports spaces in line with projected residential capacity and *Fields in Trust guidance (2024)*.
- Meet Bristol City Council proximity standards, allowing all residents to have convenient and equitable access to open space.
- Integrate "play on the way" opportunities along key movement routes, encouraging activity as part of everyday journeys.
- Enhance and formalise the active trail beneath Brunel Way, building on the urban sports that have grown organically, such as the Brunel Way Pump Track, Curbside skate park and creative spaces.
- Support existing sporting and creative communities, retaining and strengthening established user groups.
- Introduce new urban sports opportunities, such as basketball, urban swimming or beach volleyball to broaden participation and appeal.
- Provide supporting amenities including drop-off points, toilets, changing facilities, showers, storage and spectator areas.
- Enable opportunities for events and sports tourism, positioning Western Harbour as a destination for local and regional activities.
- Create a sequence of informal, nature-based play spaces between formal areas to encourage exploration, sensory engagement and creativity.
- Design play spaces sensitively, embedding themes of nature and wildlife to foster environmental awareness and connection.

"Look at all the great waterside cities and you will see lots of playgrounds where children can enjoy themselves whilst parents sit on benches and have a rest."



Figure 195: *Play on the way at South Gardens © Will Wiesner*



Figure 196: *Superkilen, 2012. Swings encouraging social interaction © Torben Eskerod*



Figure 197: *Pounds Park, Sheffield © Timberplay Ltd.*



Figure 198: *Cobham Manor, London © Andrew Beasley Photography*

Green infrastructure

08.04 Landscape opportunities

The New Cut provides a unique opportunity for wildlife by supporting a biodiverse ecological green corridor along its banks.

Key principles:

Butterfly Junction Park

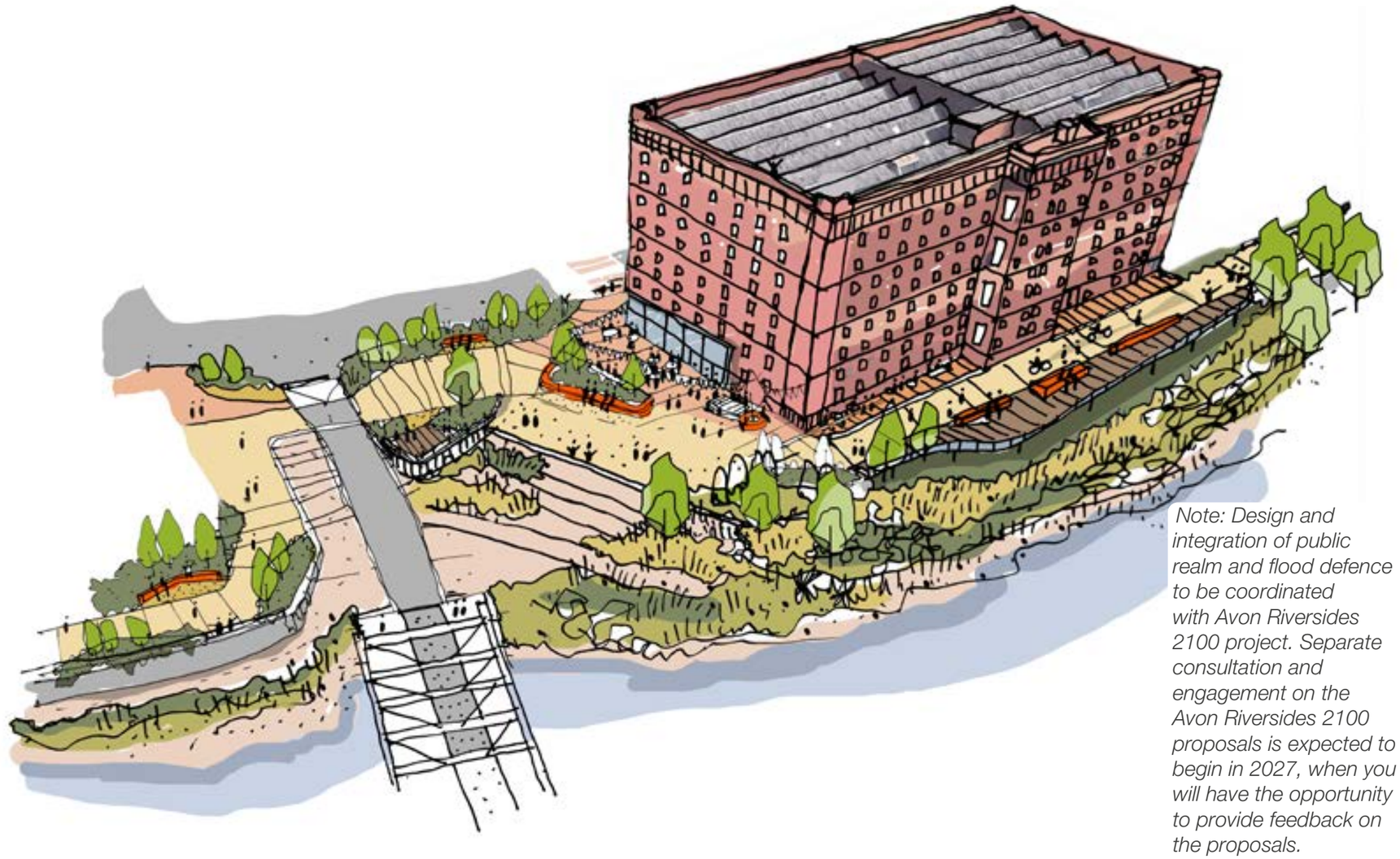
A vibrant ecological and civic destination at the southern edge of central Western Harbour designed to build upon the site's established ecological value and secure a long-term home for local flora and fauna.

The existing Butterfly Junction site currently consists of scrubland that has naturally evolved into a valuable and biodiverse habitat. Its relative isolation has allowed significant ecological value to establish over time, including the support of multiple butterfly species

While future development will inevitably cause disturbance, future proposals must guarantee no net loss of ecological value. To achieve this, a series of tiered terraces that carefully balance enhanced public access with ecological enhancement could create a flexible, and animated public square framed by the active frontage of the A Bond building.

An elevated walkway above the water is the historic jetty that would level access into the ground floor of A bond and provide opportunity for ground floor uses to spill out into the public realm. The MetroBus route must also be retained.

Of people asked, 86% wanted landscape features where they could sit and dwell, 78% also wanted native planting



Note: Design and integration of public realm and flood defence to be coordinated with Avon Riversides 2100 project. Separate consultation and engagement on the Avon Riversides 2100 proposals is expected to begin in 2027, when you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals.

Figure 199: *Illustrative sketch of how Butterfly Junction Park could be integrated within the AR2100 proposals*



Figure 200: *Existing Butterfly Junction in front of the CREATE Centre*

Green infrastructure

08.04 Landscape opportunities

Keep a mix of an ability to connect with the water and tides, have a picnic, feed the harbour birds, sip a coffee or eat lunch whilst the harbour traffic floats by all feel important. The view from the water needs to tell the story as much as the view to the water. It needs to feel 'as one'.

Key principles:

The Look-Out

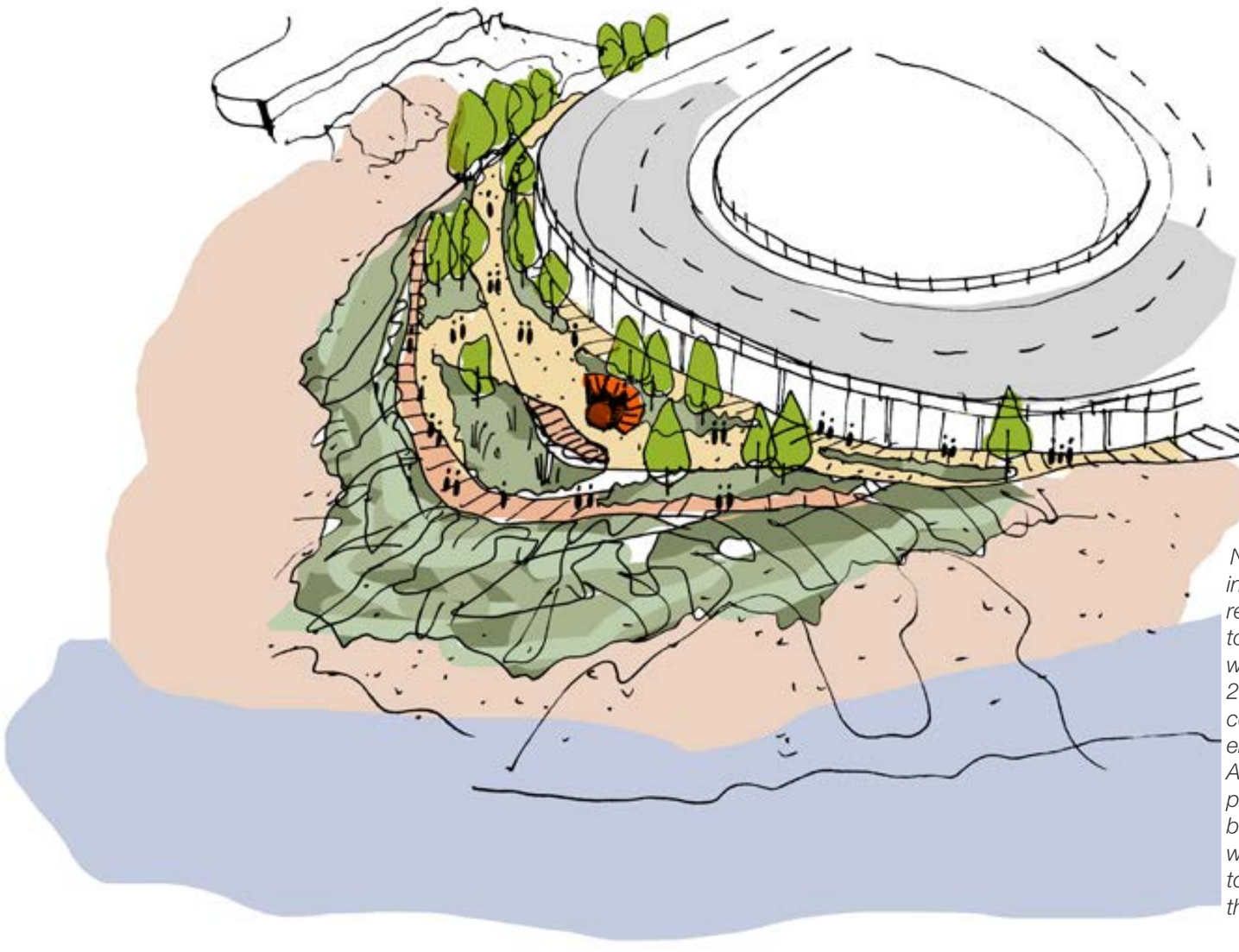
Reinterpreting Dame Sylvia Crowe's original design intent, the space will balance enhanced public access, flood protection and saltmarsh habitats with the potential for Bristol to celebrate its graffiti art culture along the ramp walls.

The Look-Out is to be refurbished and the Waterside Trail extended to benefit from the long views towards the Clifton Suspension Bridge, Avon Gorge and Ashton Court Estate.

Alongside works associated with the AR2100 project, resurfacing will provide an opportunity to introduce integrated seating and educational signage.

Design proposals should reinforce the significance of this vantage point, framing iconic views. Existing saltmarsh and bank-top vegetation can be strengthened, with planting selected for its resilience to riparian conditions and periodic inundation.

79% of people asked placed a high to very high importance on creating a landscape better connected to both the river and the harbour, taking advantage of the views



Note: Design and integration of public realm and flood defence to be coordinated with Avon Riversides 2100 project. Separate consultation and engagement on the Avon Riversides 2100 proposals is expected to begin in 2027, when you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals.

Figure 201: *Illustrative sketch of how The Look-Out could be integrated within the AR2100 proposals*

Figure 202: *Informal green space in front of The Look-Out © Rupert Martin*