



Economic Strategy

2025–2035

**Bristol's Economy of Tomorrow:
Our Delivery Themes and Priorities**

Curate Thriving Places



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Our goal is to create vibrant spaces that promote health, wellbeing, and thriving local economies connected to employment hubs and economic opportunity. The city’s ongoing regeneration offers opportunities for residents and businesses, fostering creativity, social cohesion, and sustainable growth. We must improve connectivity to all parts of the city, as well as more local employment opportunities, and preserve green spaces by integrating the built and natural environments.

Bristol is a dynamic, 24-hour city of unique neighbourhoods at the centre of which is our city centre and 47 designated local high streets.¹⁰¹ The city centre is pivotal to our economy. It is home to 30,940 residents (an increase of 49% in the decade to 2021) and serves as a vibrant hub for retail, leisure, culture and the region’s visitor economy.¹⁰²

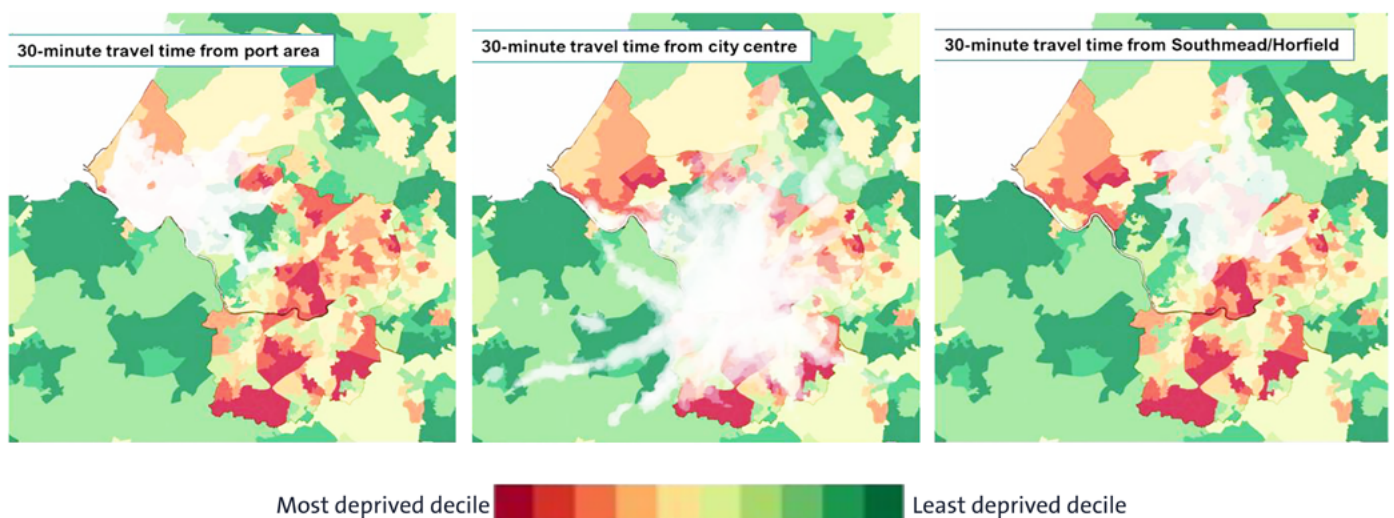
With 47% of Bristol’s jobs located here, the city centre supports 143,300 employees across a diverse range of sectors within 4,945 business units.¹⁰³ Avonmouth and Southmead are our other standout employment centres, which alongside central Bristol, account for 53% of local employment opportunities.

Engagement with private, public and third sector employers highlights the scale of the challenge for Bristol and the need for collective action. Potential hires are deterred from relocating to the city because of the high commuting costs

and competition to access the housing ladder or rental market. Some of our residents, who perform essential roles in the local economy, report feeling priced out of Bristol, taking their valuable technical skills to other areas.

Some communities, especially those in the southern part of the city and around Avonmouth, are potentially cut off from job opportunities because they cannot reach these employment centres within 30 minutes using public transport or walking.¹⁰⁴ Residents in Hartcliffe and Withywood (59%), Hengrove and Whitchurch Park (59%), and Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston (55%) are the most reliant on private car usage to travel to work.¹⁰⁵ This results in many residents being trapped in car dependent lifestyles with the costs of buying and maintaining a car adding to the cost of living for households.

Figure 12. Areas accessible in 30 minutes by public transport from our core employment centres



101 Bristol City Council, Local Plan 2040 (2023)- Bristol’s new Local Plan will identify 68 high streets when published in 2025.

102 ONS, Census Data (2021).

103 ONS, Annual Population Survey (2023).

104 ONS, UK Travel Area Isochrones (Nov/Dec) by Public Transport and Walking (2023).

105 ONS, Census (2021).

Evidence¹⁰⁶ shows that investment in active travel in particular can bring wider economic benefits. Residents walking and cycling visit high streets more frequently, increasing local spend and supporting local economies. These transport modes are more inclusive ways to travel which can help residents access employment opportunities, promote healthier lifestyles and improve quality of life which in turn supports a more productive workforce, talent retention and business growth.

Promoting more space efficient and sustainable modes of transport will also reduce the impacts of congestion which will only worsen if no action is taken.

Working with regional and national government to improve the range, affordability and sustainability of local transport options is crucial to creating a fairer, greener and more prosperous economy by opening up supply chains, creating new jobs, and connecting our residents to high quality employment opportunities. We are making a historic investment in our transport network through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement which seeks to improve the end-to-end user experience, delivering more bus, walking and cycling provision and focussing on better interchange and integration between modes of transport.

Improved transport infrastructure is only one part of realising our ambition for a thriving Bristol. Improved digital infrastructure (notably around the Port) and the provision of safe and affordable homes are ensuring the city is seen as an attractive place to live, work and invest.

Bristol's economy suffers from high house prices, with the average price of a home reaching £337,600 in 2023¹⁰⁷, and an unmet demand for homes that continues to grow. Our local plan has identified housing need of over 3,000 new homes per year.¹⁰⁸

Supporting the infrastructure needs of our residents and workforce is vital for a successful city economy and this includes delivery of a mix of housing types and tenures. Over recent years housing supply has been impacted by significant build cost inflation and higher levels of business failure in the construction sector impacting on supply chains and leading to viability challenges and slow growth. There is a clear need to focus on

place-based investment, community building and working in regeneration areas to develop robust strategies for delivering a diversity of housing types and tenures to meet the city's housing needs. Bristol City Council's Affordable Housing Delivery Plan outlines our vision and strategy for delivering affordable housing in Bristol. This will include investing in a greener and more sustainable construction sector and workforce.

Growing our housing stock places renewed emphasis on ensuring our neighbourhoods include a range of locally accessible amenities and services.

A time of change in the retail sector has seen the take up of high street units by new commercial and community uses as well as independent businesses. This has led to a varied service, leisure, evening and night time economy offer in many centres. To maintain the ongoing success of our high streets and local centres, the local plan proposes to recognise and support their role, enabling them to diversify in a way which keeps them at the heart of their local communities.

Our high streets are vital local hubs, yet resident satisfaction varies across neighbourhoods. While 74% of respondents in the Central ward reported satisfaction with their local area in the Bristol Quality of Life Survey 2023, this figure drops to 68% in Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston, 62% in Southmead, and 52% in Lawrence Hill.¹⁰⁹ Although overall our local high streets are generally well-utilised, our more deprived communities are less likely to visit their local shopping streets weekly. We should aim to close these satisfaction gaps by diversifying the uses of our local centres, ensuring that Bristol's high streets remain vibrant, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of their communities. This includes working to bring vacant properties back into use and ensuring a diverse retail mix; providing access to community services and facilities and enhancing the culture and leisure offer; public realm improvements and increasing the green infrastructure.

Our plans should be informed by ongoing engagement with local communities and businesses and build on the characteristics of the city's distinctive and diverse neighbourhoods. They should consider improving access to local high streets to and from adjacent neighbourhoods through improved pedestrian, cycle and public transport infrastructure.

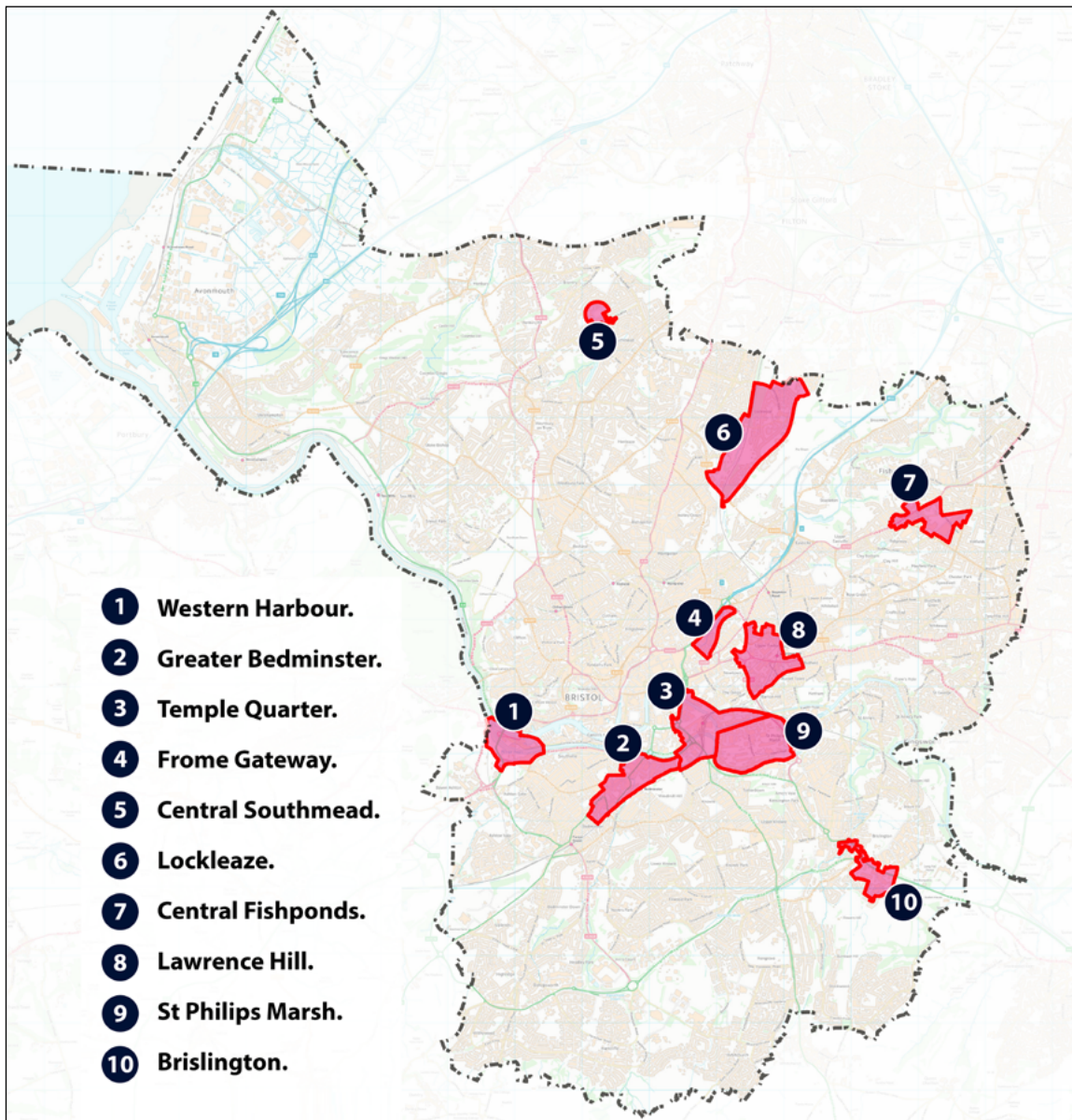
106 Walking and cycling: the economic benefits

107 ONS, House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales (2021).

108 Bristol City Council, Local Plan 2040 (2023).

109 Bristol City Council, Bristol Quality of Life survey 2023/24 (2024).

Figure 13. Designated areas of growth and regeneration



As our city’s economic geography evolves, we will work with communities to uphold a strong sense of place. Our strategy for protecting and enhancing the city centre economy through regeneration and transformation is articulated in the City Centre Development and Delivery Plan (DDP) but our commitment to supporting business and community cohesion is citywide as part of our blueprint for sustainability and inclusive regeneration.¹¹⁰ This includes meeting the high demand for employment space. To accommodate the projected addition of 31,000 to 53,000 jobs in our local economy by 2043, an estimated 164,000sqm of office and research

and development space, along with 164,000sqm of industrial and warehousing space, will be required.¹¹¹ We will promote cross-agency working to not only advocate for the appropriate blend of employment spaces, but also tackle auxiliary employment land challenges such as grid capacity and ensuring sufficient electrical supply. We will explore the potential to use Bristol City Council property assets to respond to challenges, including the need to deliver industrial spaces in the urban core of the city more intensively at greater footprint to site densities, and provide employment spaces in new developments that improve access to job opportunities for our workforce.

¹¹⁰ Bristol City Council, Bristol City Centre Development and Delivery Plan (2023).

¹¹¹ Bristol City Council, Bristol Employment Land Review (2023).

Our priorities to deliver a Fair Bristol include:

- Support the diversification of high streets (retail, leisure, cultural and community uses) to ensure their vitality and future viability, building on the success of our high streets renewal work and positioning Bristol for future investment.
- Work with our city's cultural ecology to facilitate and embed community voice into master planning for regeneration areas.
- Strengthen the link between economic growth and housing delivery to address the broad range of housing need, including delivering genuinely affordable housing, which will support our workforce, attracting and retaining the skills and talent required for the city's economy.

Our priorities to deliver a Green Bristol include:

- Prioritise investment in active and public transport to improve affordable and sustainable connectivity to and between all parts of the city; ensuring access to employment centres and job opportunities, local centres and high streets, for our workforce, residents, businesses and visitors.
- Deliver the Liveable Neighbourhood and Net Zero Neighbourhood programmes ensuring communities and places are supported to reach Net Zero.
- Embed city greening as a key aspect of public realm improvements across regeneration programmes, city centre development and high streets renewal.
- Facilitate the sustainable growth of Bristol and its businesses by planning for and enabling the provision of energy and flood defence infrastructure that the city will need for the future.

Our priorities to deliver a Thriving Bristol include:

- Encourage and enable the development and provision of workspaces to meet the requirements of key growth sectors such as health and life sciences, low carbon and creative and digital.
- Develop a locally targeted economic plan for South Bristol which weaves together existing assets and programmes to maximise their impact and identifies new opportunities including improving connectivity, to enable business development and jobs growth.
- Protect and enhance the City Centre economy through transformation and regeneration in Broadmead, Temple Quarter, Western Harbour and Frome Gateway, future proofing the retail and leisure core and ensuring Bristol remains a dynamic destination for businesses, residents and visitors.
- Develop an ambitious cultural strategy for Bristol that drives growth in new and existing subsectors and supports the creation, activation, and preservation of cultural space and heritage assets citywide.