

BRISTOL HARBOUR PLACE SHAPING STRATEGY

PLACE PLAN: SPIKE ISLAND

February 2025





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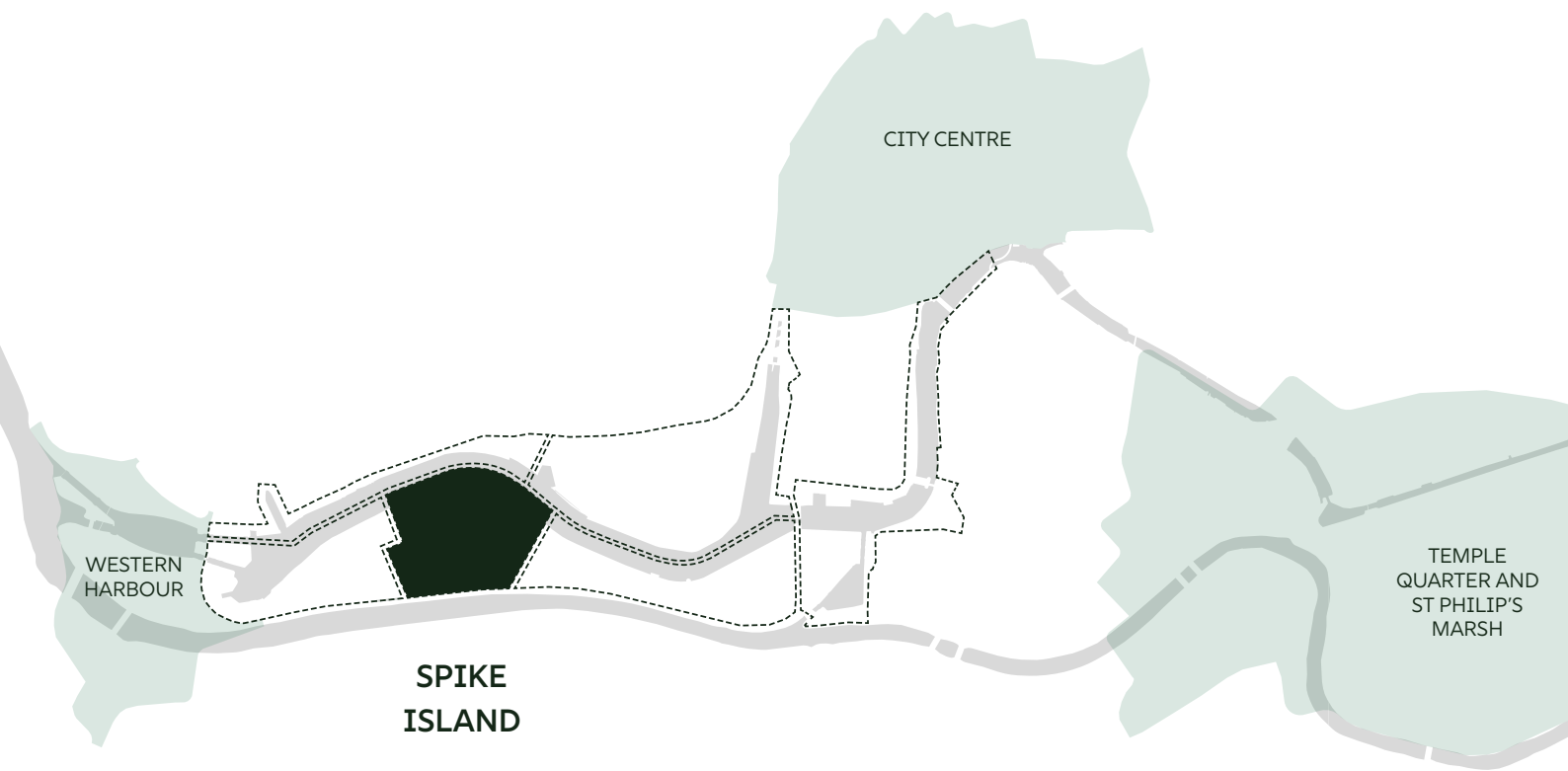
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SPIKE ISLAND TODAY

Spike Island is home to cultural institutions large and small, among them the SS Great Britain, Aardman Animations, Spike Island, Puppet Place and the Bristol Old Vic Scenic Workshop, as well as a small but long-standing residential community, Albion Dock and Bristol Marina. The Albion Industrial Estate accommodates a number of light industrial and maritime businesses amongst which are coffee trucks and world-famous street art. Direct public access to the water is less here than in neighbouring places, however the marina slipway is well used by the City of Bristol Rowing Club and Bristol Gig club. The SS Great Britain ferry landing is a node for ferry services and also for the dedicated cross-harbour ferry to Hannover Quay.



Photographs of Spike Island today (Source: DK-CM)



SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the different stages of engagement, the Spike Island area has been praised for its attractions, and diverse mix of uses. The attractions raised most commonly were the SS Great Britain and Spike Island due to their unique offering in Bristol and their support for heritage, maritime and creative culture. People enjoy the mix of uses and activities within Spike Island, highlighting the maritime and creative businesses alongside the residential moorings in the marina as a key unique quality of this place.

Whilst the layering of different uses that has evolved over time is loved, the lack of coherent public realm, routes through and visitor facilities between them was noted as very poor. Outside of the tourist attractions people highlighted a lack of signage, toilets, information and legible/safe walkways for visitors. A key pedestrian route is the Quayside Walkway which in this area is diverted inland around the SS Great Britain. People describe this particular section of the walkway as unclear and uninviting. The majority of open space is used to support maritime activities such as car parks and Albion dockyard, leaving little open or green public space to enjoy.





'I want the Harbour to pique my curiosity'

'The marina by Spike Island feels particularly homely as there are lots of nice benches and trees'

SIGNIFICANCE



Key

-  Heritage significance
-  Maritime significance
-  Social / cultural significance
-  Ecological significance

- ① City of Bristol Rowing Club - Boathouse
- ② Bristol Gig Rowing Club
- ③ Bristol Marina
- ④ Studio Upstairs
- ⑤ Spike Island Gallery & Artist Studios
- ⑥ Dockyard Creative Studios
- ⑦ Coffee Club
- ⑧ Retained historic railway tracks
- ⑨ Dockside Studios & Banksy's Girl with the Pearl Earring

- ⑩ The Orchard Inn
- ⑪ Site of High Biodiversity Interest - The New Cut
- ⑫ Puppet Place
- ⑬ Rolts Boat Yard
- ⑭ JAGs Props
- ⑮ Old Vic Theatre Set Builders
- ⑯ Bristol Sails
- ⑰ Albion Dock Company

- ⑱ Site of High Biodiversity Interest - Albion Dock
- ⑲ SS Great Britain
- ⑳ Greenshank - Cafe & Event Space
- ㉑ Aardman Animation
- ㉒ Marina Services - Toilets / Showers
- ㉓ Marina Boat Yard and Lifting Dock
- ㉔ Marina Slipway

CHALLENGES



Key

||||| Inactive frontages

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>① Space is inefficiently laid out across two separate car parks (marina and industrial estate) with two separate service roads</p> <p>② Pedestrian route through Hanover Place undermined by on-street parking.</p> <p>③ Potential pedestrian vehicular conflicts at key pinch point</p> <p>④ Poor, uneven surfaces and routes throughout</p> <p>⑤ Passers-by have very little awareness of the cluster of creative and maritime businesses located here</p> | <p>⑥ Limited evening and Sunday bus services along Cumberland Road</p> <p>⑦ Labyrinthine nature of routes through / blind corners / unclear journey for pedestrians and cyclists</p> <p>⑧ Uneven, narrow pavements along Gas Ferry Road with numerous level changes.</p> <p>⑨ Aardman building presents inactive frontages to Gas Ferry Road</p> <p>⑩ Future coach drop-off and parking in this location is challenging should the car park be redeveloped</p> | <p>⑪ No public connection to the dock edge</p> <p>⑫ Entrance to the SSGB visitor centre interrupts Quayside Walkway, leaving visitors unfamiliar with the harbour unaware that they can continue their onwards journey around the harbour via Gas Ferry Road</p> <p>⑬ Cross-harbour ferry is much-loved but operating hours are a restriction</p> <p>⑭ Brunel Square has become tired and dated, and doesn't provide a welcoming place to dwell or clear wayfinding to ferry or the Quayside Walkway'</p> | <p>⑮ The public realm is narrow and unwelcoming next to the marina</p> <p>⑯ Historical rail tracks, although an important heritage feature, can exacerbate public realm accessibility issues</p> <p>⑰ Dated street furniture which is neither comfortable, or particularly well-located, and insufficient for the large numbers of visitors the area receives.</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

SIGNIFICANCE

HERITAGE / MARITIME

Maritime activity in Spike Island evolved to support the historically industrial harbour. Whilst other areas of the harbour have lost their maritime uses, Spike Island has managed to retain a number of them and has become an industrial maritime hub. Pioneering new technologies and craft are being carried out between historical dry docks, railway lines and museums. This is a thriving and unique part of the harbour which represents part of Bristol's history and should be supported and enhanced for the future. Whilst there are some areas that function as public space, the majority of the site is a layered patchwork of activity, buildings, art and culture which people enjoy.

BIODIVERSITY

Whilst not visually obvious, Spike Island has two sites of biodiversity interest, Albion Dockyard, and the River Avon banks respectively. Elsewhere there are limited mature trees and green spaces.

SOCIAL / CULTURAL

The industrial uses and activities that have been lost over the years have been replaced with creative businesses and organisations which work across animation, prop making, puppetry and more. The arts are reinforced by Spike Island, an contemporary art centre which hosts exhibitions and studio space. Water-based organisations such as Bristol Marina, the City of Bristol Rowing Club and the Bristol Gig Rowing Club have also made Spike Island their home. Food & drink options are limited, however The Orchard, Coffee Club, and gallery cafe are loved and well-used by people that live and work in the area.

CHALLENGES

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm throughout Spike Island is illegible with poor surfaces (including railway tracks), narrow pinch points, and areas of potential pedestrian/vehicle collision. Key places of interest aren't clearly navigable including the Quayside Walkway which is diverted inland around Albion Dock and the SSGB.

PARKING & ACCESS

Car parking currently dominates much of the area. Alongside the area's two large car parks (Maritime Car Park primarily serving the visitors to the SSGB and the Marina Car Park serving water users), there is a proliferation of informal or on-street parking. While serving a significant need in the short term – more than 70% of leisure visitors to the Harbour currently arrive by car – this is likely to erode over time as other improvements to public transport and active travel routes reinforce a long term trend toward more sustainable travel choices. Relatively narrow streets also need to provide access to large vehicles accessing the industrial estate or boat yards, as well as providing coach access to the SSGB. In combination, this creates an environment that can be quite challenging for pedestrians, leaving them feeling not as welcome as in other parts of the harbour.

TRANSPORT

Spike Island suffers from a lack of evening and Sunday bus services along Cumberland Road. In recent years, its accessibility has been further undermined by a temporary closure of Cumberland Road (inbound) as a result of an embankment collapse, and temporary closure of Vauxhall Bridge for repairs. Whilst the cross-harbour ferry provides commuters and visitors alike with a useful way to cross the harbour at its midpoint, the service does not run in the evenings and at busy periods lacks capacity.

SPIKE ISLAND TOMORROW

Vision

Spike Island will continue to be a vital hub for cultural and making institutions, and wherever possible these institutions will be more accessible, visible and celebrated. These institutions will thrive whilst the harbour develops for the future. The Albion Dockyard will be transformed into a world-class maritime attraction inside a thriving working shipyard. For all Bristolians, walking through the area will be an easy and rewarding experience that connects you with the best of what Bristol makes and creates, as well as with its rich maritime history.

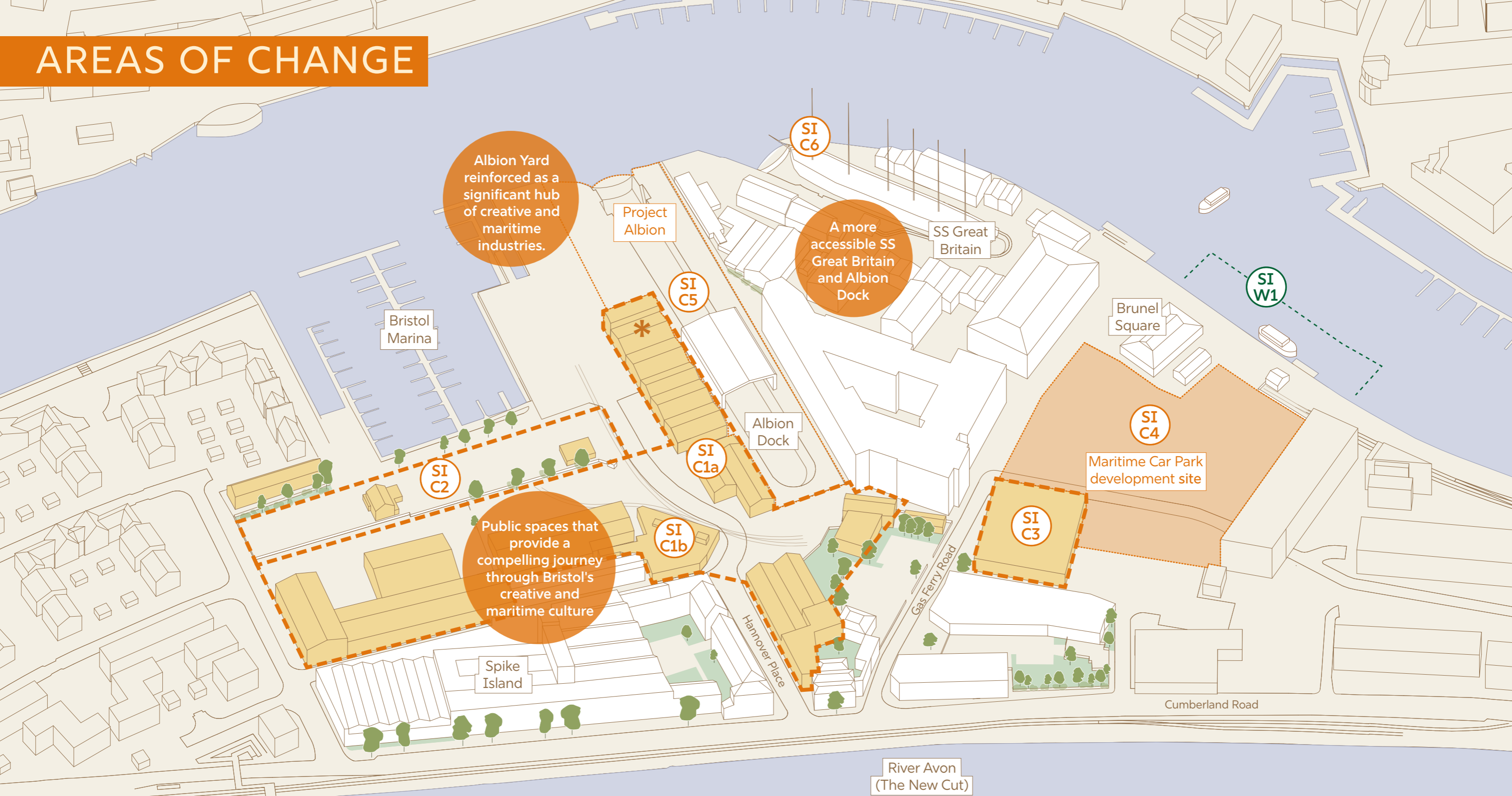
*Photographs of Bristol Marina and Spike
(Source: DK-CM)*



Key Moves

- Better transport connections, including metrobus, coach drop-off, pedestrian legibility and ferry connections, are all vital to creating a better Spike Island.
- Coherent approach to public realm in order to ensure that the spaces and places of Spike Island are easily and naturally accessible to all, using development to boost coherence.
- Greater permeability north/south across the waterspace.
- An innovative, long-term approach to leases and tenants in order to ensure that a healthy ecosystem of creative and maritime businesses remains and thrives.
- A greater public role for SS Great Britain and the Albion Dockyard.

AREAS OF CHANGE



Key

- Building for potential change
- Area for potential change
- Site allocated to future development (Bristol Local Plan)
- * Potential energy centre site
- Waterspace change (refer to Waterspace Plan)

Place Specific Interventions

- SI C1a SIC1a: Albion Yard - Creative Intensification
- SI C1b SIC1b: Unit 15 Albion Dockside
- SI C2 SIC2: Marina Quayside
- SI C3 SIC3: Aardman Warehouse (Gas Ferry Road)
- SI C4 SIC4: Maritime Car Park
- SI C5 SIC5: Project Albion
- SI C6 SIC6: SSSGB Quayside Walkway

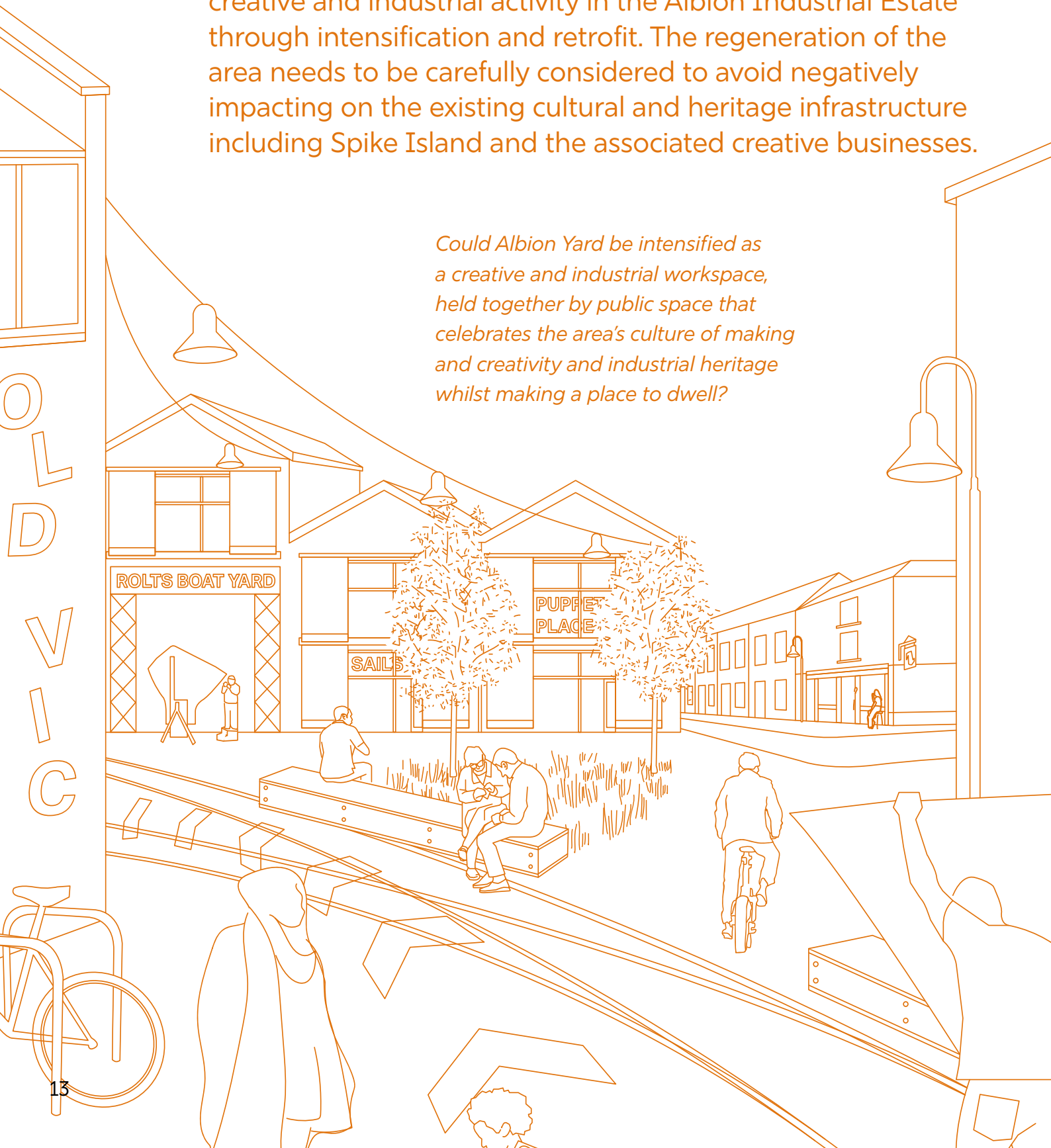
Waterspace Interventions (refer to Waterspace Plan)

- SI W1 SIW1: Brunel Square Commercial Moorings

Areas of Change Interventions

Project Albion will provide significant investment into the SS Great Britain and the Albion Dock area. Adjacent to this, a number of housing-led developments are being delivered along Gas Ferry Road. There is an opportunity to enhance the creative and industrial activity in the Albion Industrial Estate through intensification and retrofit. The regeneration of the area needs to be carefully considered to avoid negatively impacting on the existing cultural and heritage infrastructure including Spike Island and the associated creative businesses.

Could Albion Yard be intensified as a creative and industrial workspace, held together by public space that celebrates the area's culture of making and creativity and industrial heritage whilst making a place to dwell?





SIC1a/b: Lockwood Way has boosted the social, public and economic potential of an existing industrial estate. (Source: We Made That)



SIC1a/b: The Silver Building gives new life to redundant industrial space, diversifying the economy of the Royal Docks. (Source: Projekt)

SIC1a: Albion Yard - Creative Intensification

The unique character of Spike Island – defined by the characterful mixture of arts and cultural makers, sat alongside ongoing maritime industry, and digital creative companies – should be retained and grown. This requires thoughtful curation of the estate – and the phased intensification of industrial work space, improving both the quantity and quality of space available. Alongside this, opportunities could be explored to provide public space to showcase the work that originates in Spike Island, making it more prominent and visible.

Short term opportunities for initiating this approach include refurbishment and re-use of Unit 15, Albion Industrial Estate (see SIC1b) building, as well as the potential redevelopment of the Puppet Place site. Longer term this could potentially include other parts of the industrial estate/Maritime Industry Area.

There is an ambition to:

- Create a lively public heart for Spike Island to encourage interaction between businesses, residents, visitors and students.
- Reduce on-street parking, creating space for safer, more pedestrian-friendly movement.
- Retain railway lines and industrial character of the space.
- Provide glimpses of maker activity through active frontages and spill out space making this a place to be rather than to just pass through.
- Enhance pedestrian experience along Hannover Place to ensure positive relationship to wider transport connections, and pedestrian connections over Vauxhall Bridge.

SIC1b: Unit 15 Albion Dockside

Renovation of vacant building to provide shell and core opportunity for new tenant. Focus on creative, maritime and industrial uses/curation of uses.

SIC2: Marina Quayside

Potential for development (including meanwhile use) along the edges of the car park to provide a better relationship with the Quayside Walkway and improved walkway that will benefit the quality of the Marina setting. Opportunity to deliver industrial maritime and cultural activity, including upgrading boater and social facilities, marina offices, and watersports facilities.

SIC3: Aardman Warehouse (Gas Ferry Road)

The current building provides blank elevations at a key location and could be intensified to re-provide and expand existing facilities whilst increasing presence on the street. Opportunity for creative workspace intensification to support Albion Yard.

SIC4: Maritime Car Park

Bristol City Council is looking at the future of this site, which currently generates income for the harbour and provides car parking for visitors of the SSGB.

The site is designated for new homes as part of a residential-led mixed-use development in Bristol City Council's Local Plan and is currently on Goram Homes' development pipeline (Goram Homes is the council's housing company).

BCC will work with Goram Homes to ensure any future proposals for the site can replace parking income, to continue to support the harbour. Both parties will also work closely to ensure SSGB aspirations are supported. Improvements to public transport and active travel routes may also benefit future development opportunities, reinforcing a long-term trend toward more sustainable travel choices. The site also offers potential for some commercial development to provide ground level animation and enhance Spike Island as a maritime and creative industries hub.

Opportunities for temporary measures would be welcomed (e.g. 'meanwhile' uses) to test what is possible and improve the sense of place. Any new development should provide active ground floor uses to Brunel Square, the waterfront and Gas Ferry Road, and incorporate a coach drop-off. Development should be set back from the water's edge to ensure that the quayside is not in shadow.



SIC4: Poplar Works by The Trampery & Adams and Sutherland. (Source: Poplar Works)



SIC4: Constellations Bar in Liverpool - lightweight structures adding public programme to an existing context. (Source: H. Miller Bro)



SIC5: Visualisation of Project Albion showing rejuvenated Albion Dock. (Source: SS Great Britain Trust)

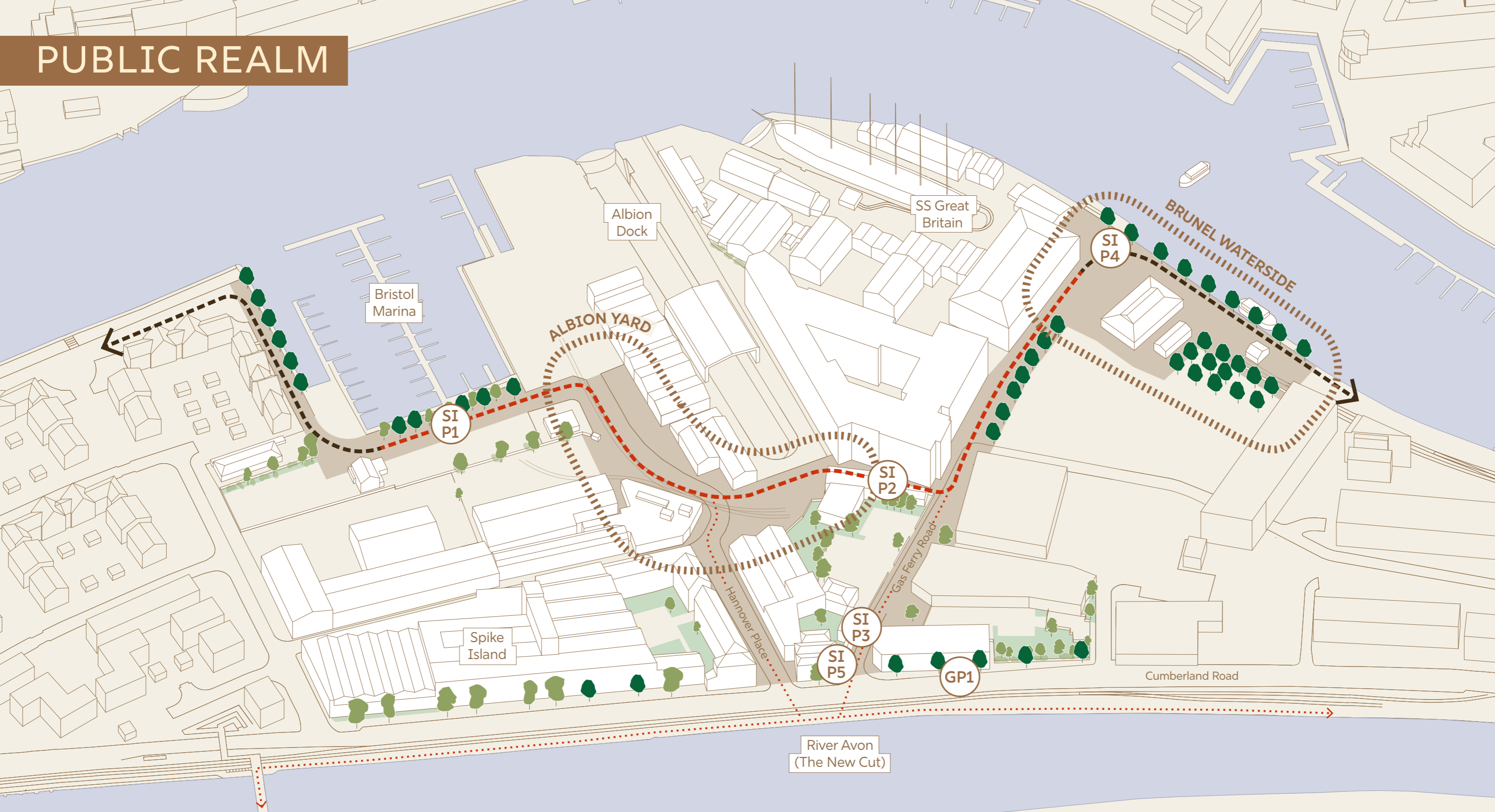
SIC5: Project Albion

Project Albion is set to protect and enhance Bristol's unique harbour heritage and ecology while transforming the Albion Dockyard into a world-class maritime attraction inside a thriving working shipyard. The Grade II listed dry dock will become an engineering learning environment for families, schools and the SS Great Britain Trust's pioneering Future Brunels programme. The centrepiece for the Albion Dockyard will be the recreation of a full-size version of Brunel's first ship, the paddle steamer Great Western, to create a striking visual presence evoking the city's role in pioneering global ocean travel - connecting historic stories with contemporary experiences. Expectation that this project would deliver improvements to Brunel Square, Hannover Quay and pedestrian routes back to the Metro Bus stops on Cumberland Road.

SIC6: SSGB Quayside Walkway

Working with the SSGB, the potential to create a new walkway along the front of the SS Great Britain Museum will be explored.

PUBLIC REALM



Key

- Priority for public realm improvement
- Existing greening
- Enhanced greening
- Existing Quayside Walkway
- Existing Quayside Walkway (priority for improvement)
- Improved Secondary routes
- Key public spaces

Place Specific Interventions

- SI P1 SIP1: Marina Quayside
- SI P2 SIP2: Hanover Passage
- SI P3 SIP3: Gas Ferry Road
- SI P4 SIP4: Brunel Waterside
- SI P5 SIP5: Chocolate Path /Gas Ferry Road

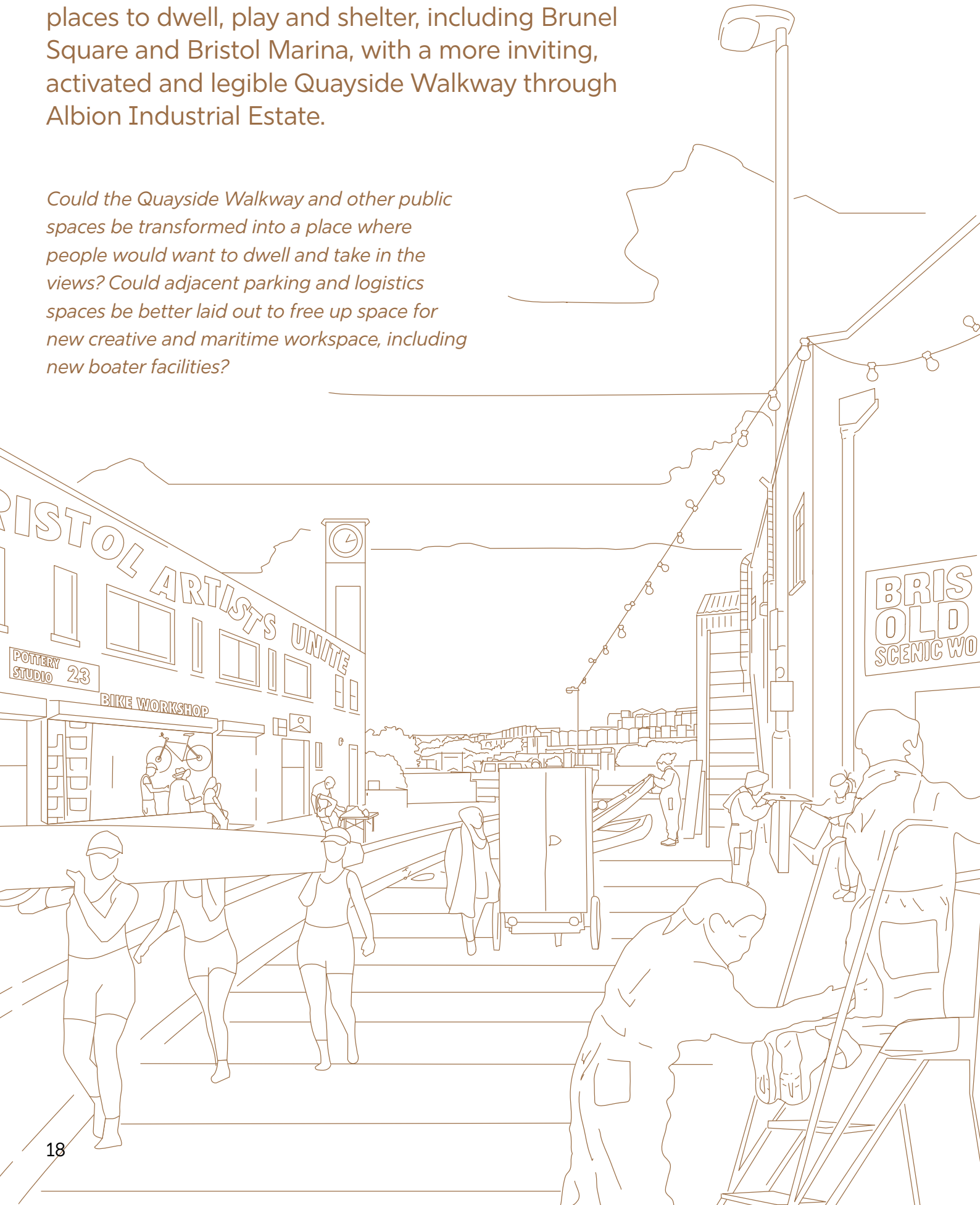
Overarching Interventions

- GP1 GP1: Cumberland Road Tree Planting

Public Realm Interventions

Key waterside public realm areas improved as places to dwell, play and shelter, including Brunel Square and Bristol Marina, with a more inviting, activated and legible Quayside Walkway through Albion Industrial Estate.

Could the Quayside Walkway and other public spaces be transformed into a place where people would want to dwell and take in the views? Could adjacent parking and logistics spaces be better laid out to free up space for new creative and maritime workspace, including new boater facilities?



PLACE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

SIP1: Marina Quayside

Widen the Quayside Walkway to the south of the Marina and provide opportunities for enhanced landscaping, way-finding, seating and lighting.

SIP2: Hanover Passage

Improved legibility, way-finding, lighting and pathway at this key pedestrian connection.

SIP3: Gas Ferry Road

Create a distinctive and attractive pedestrian gateway. Reduce the width of the road, creating space for safer, more pedestrian friendly movement and tree planting. Create wider raised continuous pavement across the service entrances into the SSGB and McArthur's Yard.

SIP4: Brunel Waterside

Make the focal space of Brunel Square more interesting and welcoming through improved lighting, surfacing, greening, children's play and picnic area. Enhanced sightlines and wayfinding to help onward movement and active travel around the harbour via Gas Ferry Road or the cross harbour ferry. Explore more 'public-facing' uses for SSGB pavilion building and measures to enhance the public-facing nature of the SSGB. Heritage Rail Terminus improved by removing brick wall, refacing platform edge, and upgrading benches, paving and lighting. Integrate the railway lines to create level surfaces in places to improve accessibility and safety whilst retaining the industrial and gritty character.

SIP5: Chocolate Path/Gas Ferry Road

Explore new opportunities to access the Chocolate Path close to where Gas Ferry Road joins Cumberland Road. It is proposed this is explored further through work on the Bristol Avon Flood Strategy.



SIP1: The Harbour Promenade in Oslo provides green, multifunctional waterside public space. (Source: Visit Norway)

OVERARCHING INTERVENTIONS

GP1: Cumberland Road Tree Planting

Planting Avenue tree planting along the length of Cumberland Road where possible to deliver biodiversity net gain and provide shade along key pedestrian routes. This needs to be considered as part of future work developing the Bristol Avon Flood Strategy.

TRANSPORT



Key

- Existing Bus stop
- Existing Ferry landing
- Improved Bus service
- Improved Ferry service
- Opportunity to replan car parking providing a single vehicular entrance
- Cycle route
- Coach drop-off
- New Coach drop-off route
- New Ferry service
- Vehicle Access

Place Specific Interventions

- SIT1: Parking (Bristol Marina / Albion Industrial Estate)
- SIT2: Coach Provision
- SIT3: Maritime Mobility Hub

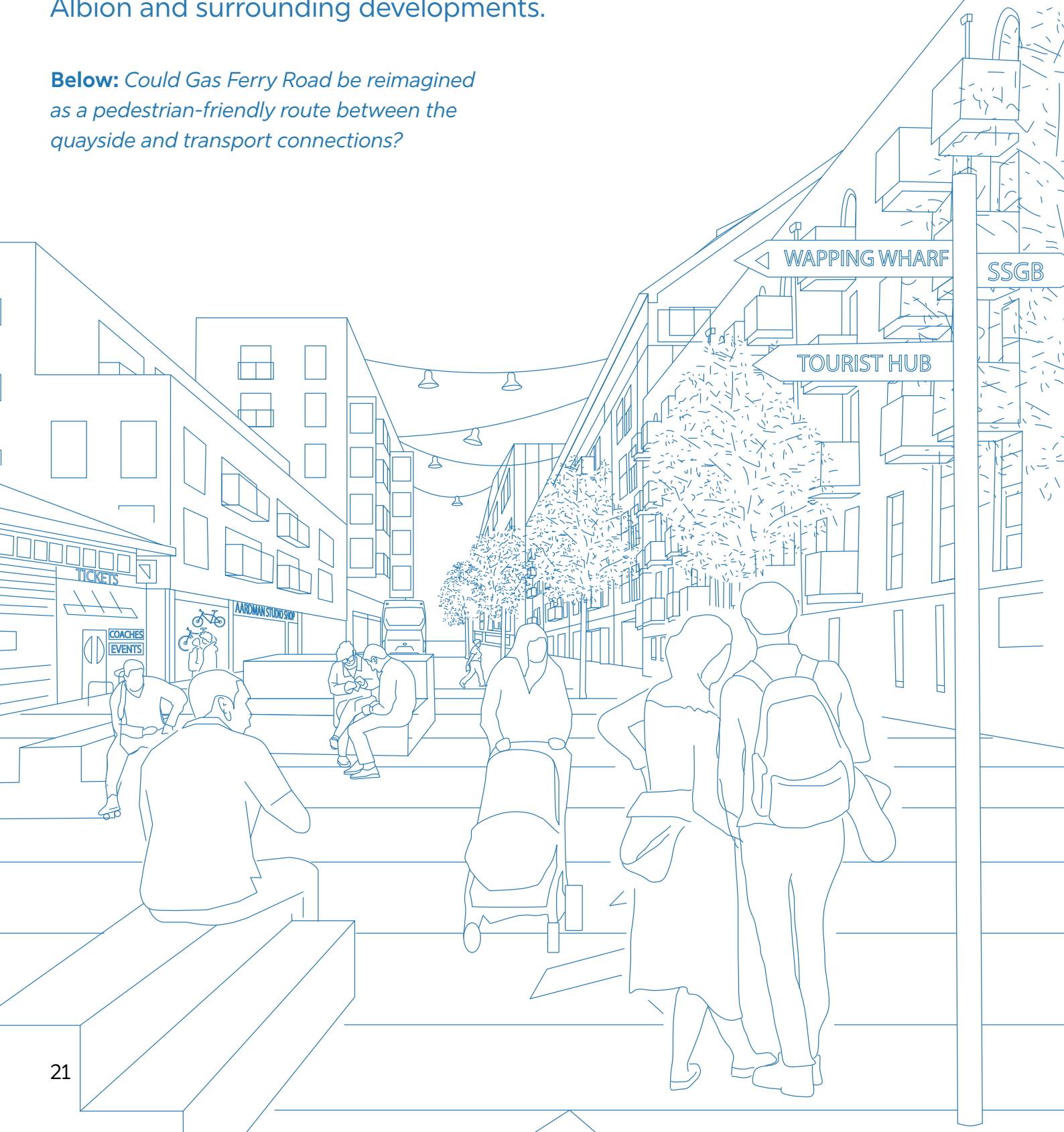
Overarching Interventions

- GT1: Enhanced Ferry Provision
- GT2: Enhanced Metrobus Provision
- GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

Transport Interventions

The key strategic move required in Spike Island is improved accessibility. This includes upgrades to Metrobus services along Cumberland Road, increased cross ferry services, and improved coach parking / drop-off to support Project Albion and surrounding developments.

Below: *Could Gas Ferry Road be reimagined as a pedestrian-friendly route between the quayside and transport connections?*



PLACE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

SIT1: Parking (Bristol Marina / Albion Industrial Estate)

Adoption of a more efficient car parking layout to provide consolidated parking within a single, well-planned parking area with one vehicular access point set back from the water's edge to create an enhanced Quayside Walkway.

SIT2: Coach Provision

Should the Maritime Car Park be redeveloped, a new coach drop-off will need to be created close to the SSGB entrance. Adequate provision for pick-up and waiting space avoiding interruptions to the Quayside Walkway. Expanded coach parking at the Western end of Cumberland Road.

SIT3: Maritime Mobility Hub

Creation of a new Mobility Hub providing cycle, e-bike, scooter hire, RTI connection for Metrobus and car club with EV charging. Wayfinding to Metrobus, ferry, micromobility, and car club services.



SIT1: Shared space with pedestrian priority and characterful surfacing at Distillery District (Source: Distillery District)



GT1 / GT3: Ferry stops as places to dwell in Chicago. (Source: Ross Barney Architects)

OVERARCHING INTERVENTIONS

GT1: Enhanced Ferry Provision

An enhanced and consolidated ferry service with additional capacity and extended services being provided. Route to zig zag along harbour to better connect north and south. Improvements to ferry landing locations including accessibility, seating, signage and safety. Opportunity to extend ferry services beyond the floating harbour to serve the Western Harbour and the Feeder Canal. Longer term opportunity to provide commuter service to landing stage at the SSGB.

GT2: Enhanced Metrobus Provision

Enhanced Metrobus service along Cumberland Road with service expanded to Sundays and evenings. s106 contributions will be sought from any developments coming forward in Spike Island towards this

GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

Enhanced connections between the SS Great Britain and Harbour Inlet. Further feasibility required to determine frequency of service, hours of operation, improvements required to ferry landings, best connection e.g. chain link crossing, skippered / automatic ferry. Consideration required to avoid impacting on harbour operations and water leisure.

This document is part of the Harbour Place Shaping Strategy (HPSS) prepared by DK-CM for Bristol City Council, 2023-24.

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For further information, please email harbourplaceshaping@bristol.gov.uk