

BRISTOL HARBOUR PLACE SHAPING STRATEGY

PLACE PLAN: WAPPING WHARF

February 2025





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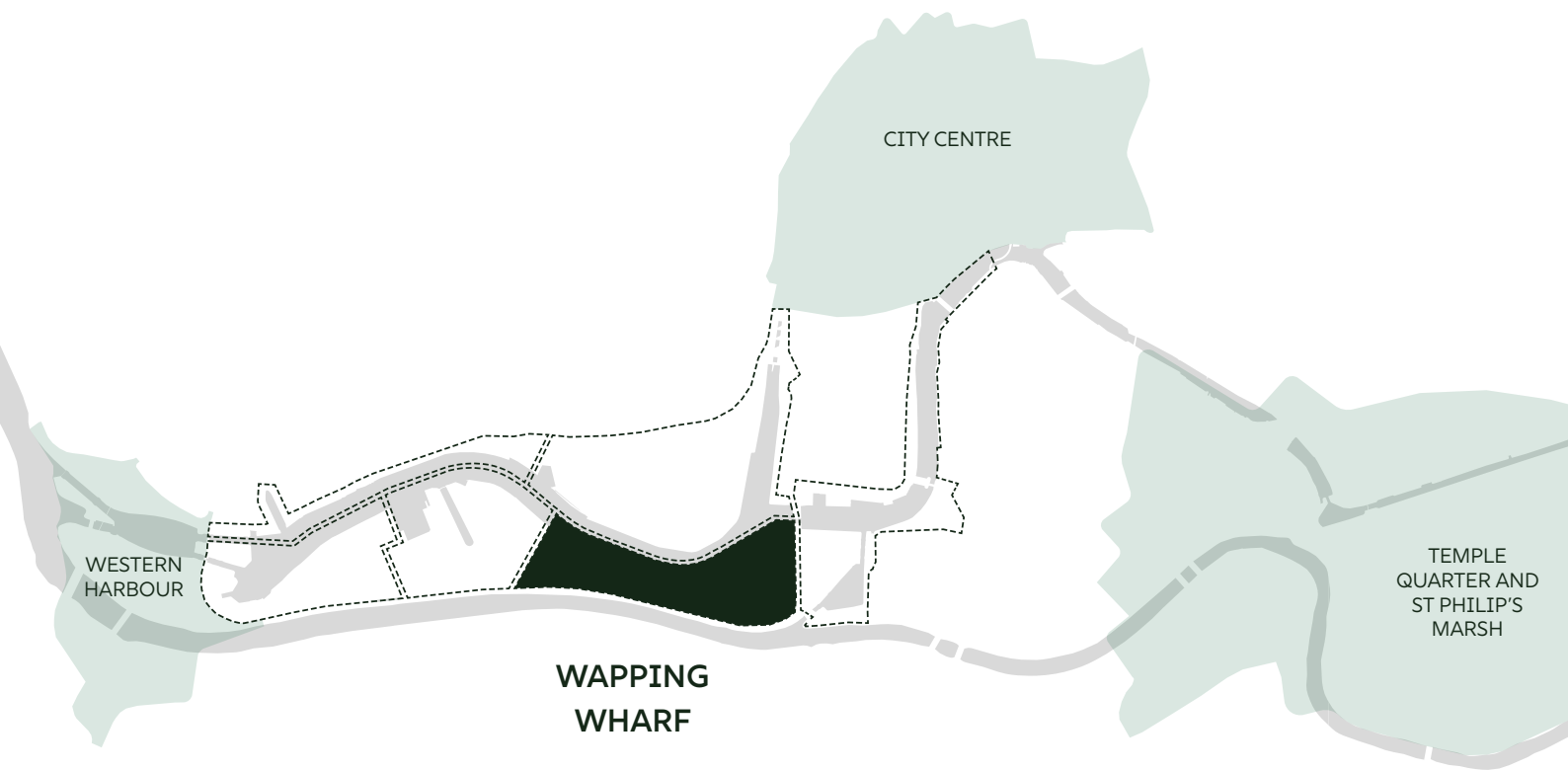
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WAPPING WHARF TODAY

Wapping Wharf, long home to M Shed (formerly Bristol Industrial Museum) and its related 'working exhibits' - trains, cranes, boats - is increasingly a destination for food and leisure uses and a point of access to the wider harbour. This has been achieved by the development of Wapping Wharf itself which, alongside new homes and work space, brings together a community of Bristol independent businesses - bars, restaurants, shops and services - clustered along Gaol Ferry Steps and temporary cargo containers.



Photographs of Wapping Wharf today (Source: DK-CM)



SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

Well-loved by locals for its diverse offer of independent eateries, Wapping Wharf is recognised as a social hub to visit and engage in the food and drink culture. The quayside was highlighted as a popular leisure destination due to open views of the harbour, houseboats and historic remnants of cranes and railway tracks. Key opportunities were raised around activating the public realm through event programming in Museum Square and improving signage between attractions such as M-Shed, CARGO, and historic moorings. People also felt the Wapping Wharf area could better celebrate its historic infrastructure and attractions whilst providing an accessible and welcoming public realm for pedestrians and cyclists.

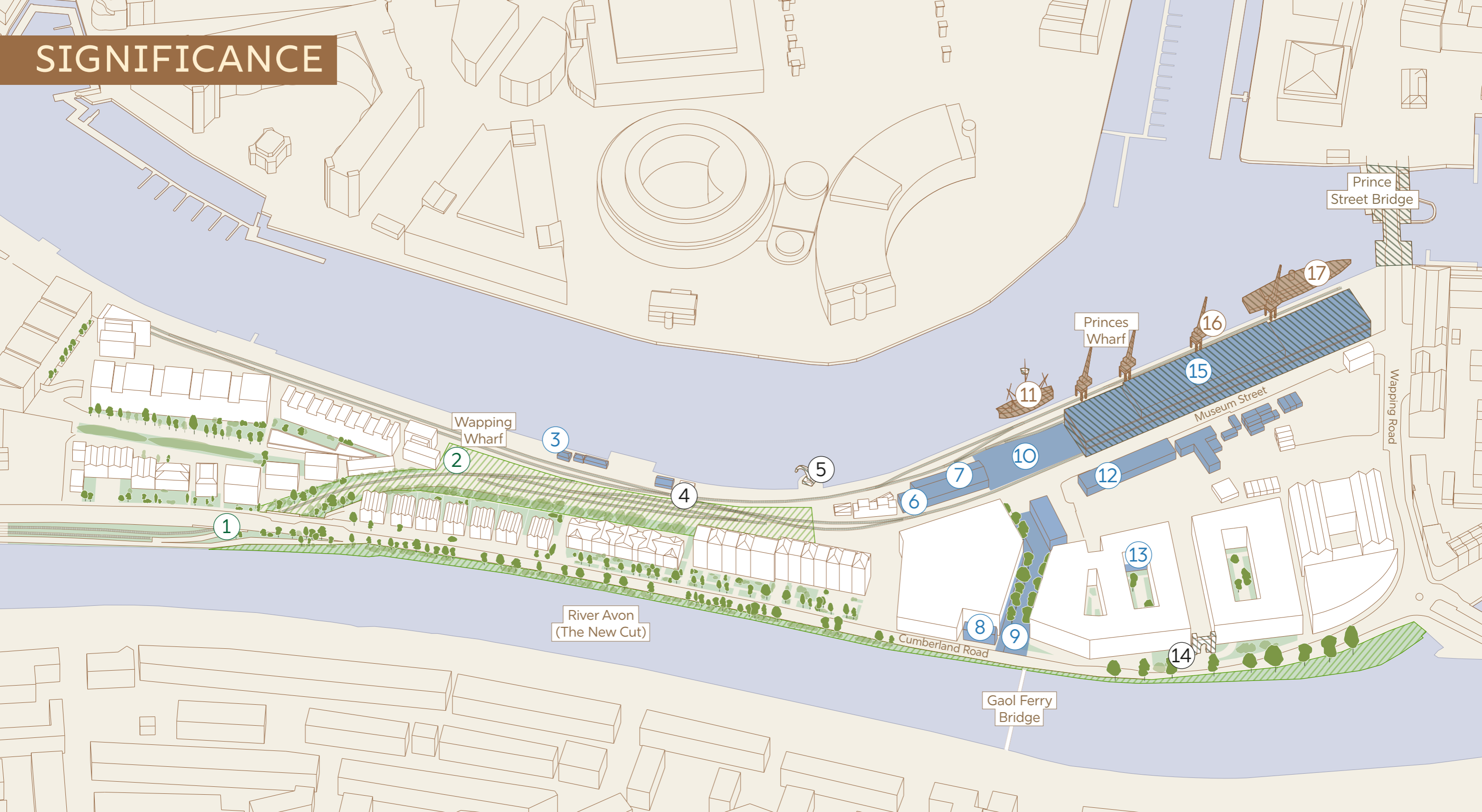
ITS GREAT
TO SEE HOW MANY
PEOPLE CYCLE
AROUND THE
HARBOUR

more family
friendly from
m-shed down
westward!





'I love Wapping Wharf because it's full of really innovative, independent, creative pop-up shops that are locally run and it's a safe place for people to hang out at night-time'

Harbour
walkway hard
to navigate on
bike

SIGNIFICANCE



Key

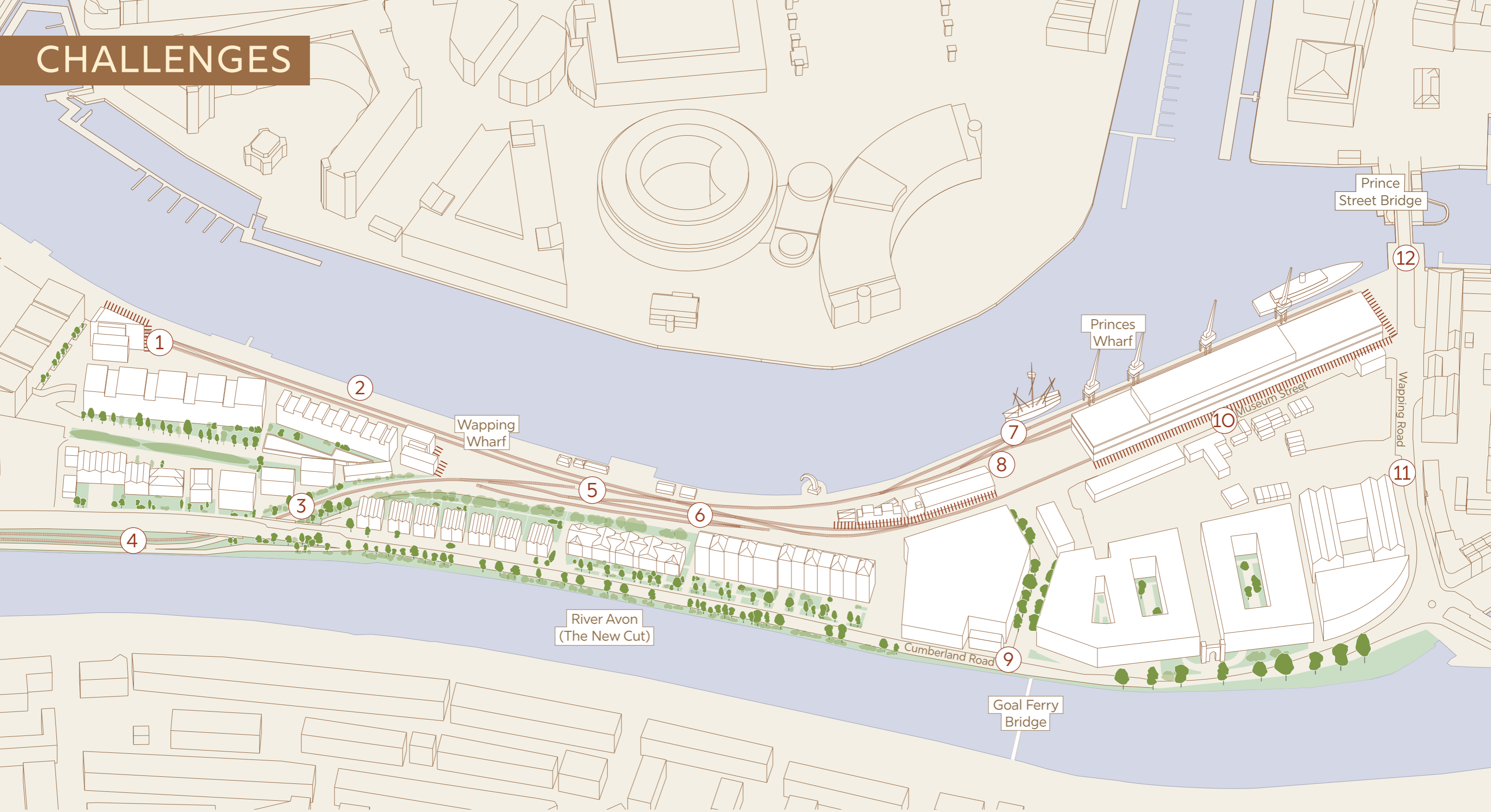
-  Heritage significance
-  Maritime significance
-  Social / cultural significance
-  Ecological significance

- ① Chocolate Path
- ② Site of outstanding biodiversity interest
- ③ Brunel's Buttery
- ④ Bristol's Old Harbour Railway
- ⑤ Fairbairn Steam Crane
- ⑥ The Olive Shed
- ⑦ The Art Warehouse

- ⑧ Bertha's Pizza
- ⑨ Gaol Ferry Steps
- ⑩ Museum Square
- ⑪ The Matthew of Bristol
- ⑫ CARGO Eateries
- ⑬ Bookhaus Bookshop
- ⑭ The Gateway

- ⑮ M Shed
- ⑯ Historic Cargo Cranes
- ⑰ MV Balmoral

CHALLENGES



Key

||||| Inactive frontages

- ① Narrow path with blind corners leading to Maritime car park
- ② Harbourside parking restricts pedestrian routes along Quayside walkway
- ③ Isolated / unwelcoming path joining Chocolate Path
- ④ Currently the railway link to A Bond is not in operation - pending the reinstatement of the track
- ⑤ Railway tracks can potentially be a hazard for pedestrians, cyclists and those with visual or physical impairments
- ⑥ Pedestrian environment undermined by vehicles either accessing quayside parking or using this space as an informal turning circle
- ⑦ Operating the Bristol Harbour Railway, whilst maintaining accessibility along the quayside in a busy part of the harbour
- ⑧ Competing needs in Museum Square inhibits public accessibility
- ⑨ Limited evening and Sunday bus services along Cumberland Road
- ⑩ Museum Street lacks activation and sufficient safe pedestrian space and visibility
- ⑪ Coach drop-off and turning conflicts with pedestrian and cycle movements
- ⑫ Bottleneck of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians

SIGNIFICANCE

HERITAGE / MARITIME

Wapping Wharf has a strong association with ship building dating back to the 18th century, as the location of a dry dock and the most important shipyard in the city. Historic remnants can be found all around the area including old Bristol Harbour Railway lines and the gaol gatehouse, now a ruin following its closure in 1883. Original industrial structures such as Fairbairn steam crane and Prince Street hydraulic swing bridge have also been retained and are in working order. Wapping Wharf is also home to the M-Shed museum, a Bristol City Council-run space housing Bristol focused exhibits in a 1950s dockside transit shed. Historic moorings can be found on the harbourside including MV Balmoral and a reconstruction of a 15th century caravel, the Matthew of Bristol.

BIODIVERSITY

Some of the most species rich areas across in the harbour area are along the harbour railway, including the sidings and embankment at Wapping Wharf and extending along the Chocolate Path.

SOCIAL / CULTURAL

Largely as a result of recent developments, Wapping Wharf has evolved to become an increasingly popular destination for food and leisure. It is a hub of thriving independent businesses and is especially loved for its mix of independent restaurants along Gaol Ferry Steps and in CARGO, a meanwhile-site used during wider development to provide space for independent eateries, shops and bars in converted shipping containers. Due to its favourable location by the harbourside and growing new neighbourhoods, Wapping Wharf offers a vibrant community to live, work and dwell in with locally cherished institutions holding the fort as a cultural mainstay.

CHALLENGES

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm throughout Wapping Wharf is well-used but challenging in places. A combination of railway tracks, safety fencing, parking and vehicle access can undermine the pedestrian experience and create obstacles to accessibility. The Wapping Wharf car park occupies a key waterfront location and restricts pedestrian access, creating a narrow path with blind corners. The area's principle space, Museum Square, suffers from competing and often conflicting requirements such as the Bristol Harbour Railway; and east-west vehicular movement to access Wapping Wharf Car Park which inhibits public accessibility and pedestrian permeability. There is a lack of seating, shelter and shade. Opportunities for incidental play could be enhanced.

SAFETY

The route connecting Museum Street to the Chocolate Path is isolated and unwelcoming with poor lighting and surveillance. The quayside in front of M-Shed requires a permanent edge protection treatment to replace the temporary barriers that are currently being used.

TRANSPORT

As a popular destination, trip generation to the area is significant whether its commuters passing through on foot or bike via Gaol Ferry Bridge and Prince Street Bridge; visitors arriving by coach or taxis; or take-away delivery drivers on moped. Finding space for these different users is challenging in a tight urban environment like this, and can create conflict and undermine the visitor experience. Wapping Wharf's central location makes it a relatively accessible part of the harbour to access by public transport, although it too suffers from a lack of evening and Sunday services along Cumberland Road.

WAPPING WHARF TOMORROW

Vision

Wapping Wharf will become a family-friendly, uniquely Bristol destination, a go-to place for culture, play and hanging-out. Museum Square will be rejuvenated as the area's principle meeting space, where working exhibits and heritage vessels sit comfortably alongside outdoor film screenings and picnicking school parties. The areas reputation for good quality food will grow with a more permanent offer increasingly capable of drawing customers from across the city and beyond. Thanks to its central location, its offer, and venues like M Shed, the Wapping Wharf area will be reinforced as the gateway to the wider harbour, whilst remaining a great place to live and work.

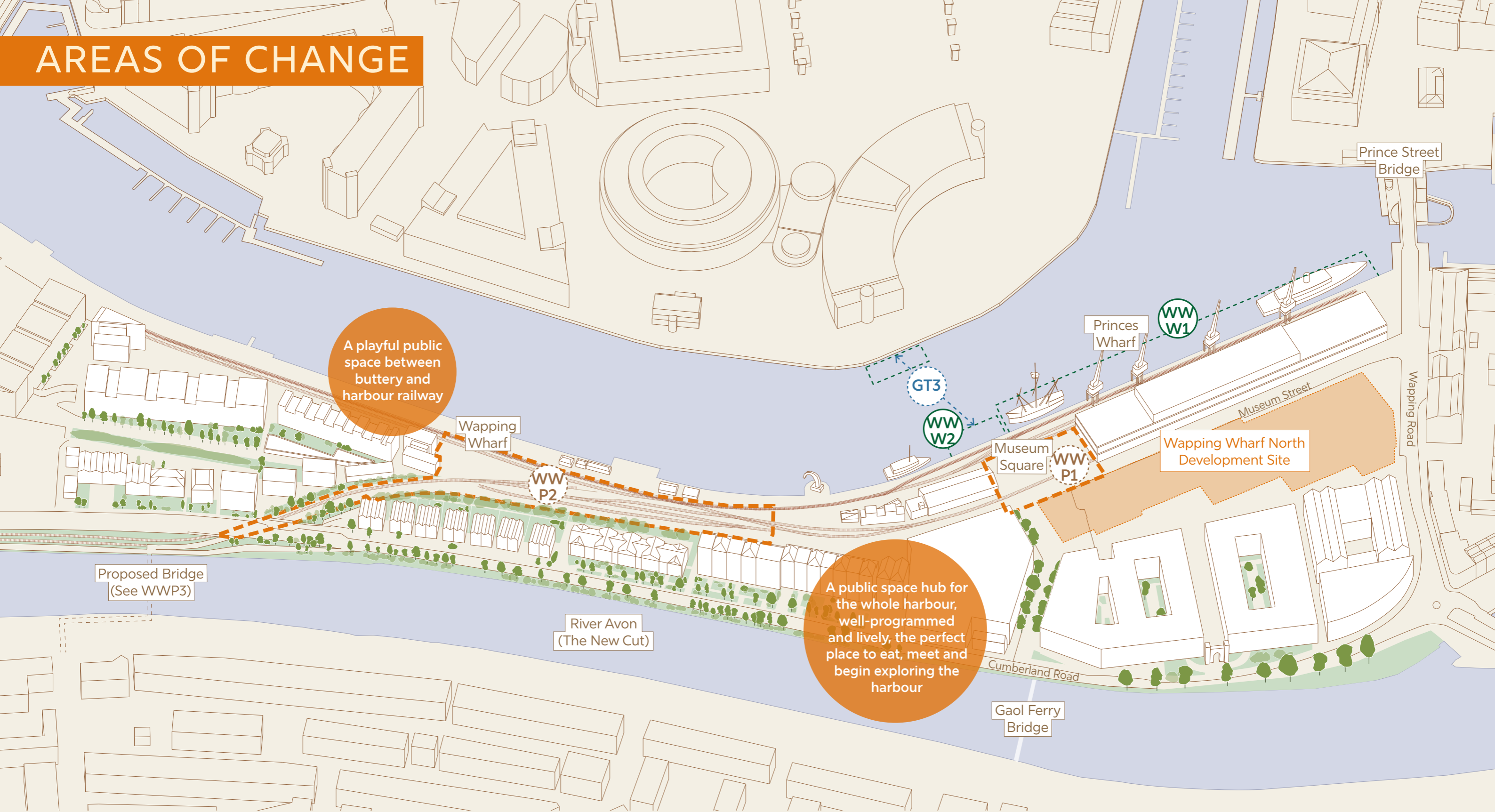


Photographs of Princes Wharf and Museum Street Walkway (Source: DK-CM)




Key Moves

- Delivery of final phases of Wapping Wharf development to ensure ongoing provision of high-quality independent businesses, especially but not limited to food & drink uses.
- Potential closure of Prince Street Bridge to all motor traffic subject to further feasibility work to understand wider impacts on the highway network.
- Public realm enhancements focussed on Museum Square and a redesigned space next to the Buttery.
- New cross harbour ferry connection from Museum Square to the Amphitheatre.



AREAS OF CHANGE





Key

-  Area for potential change
-  Site allocated to future development (Bristol Local Plan)
-  Waterspace change (refer to Waterspace Plan)


Waterspace Interventions (refer to Waterspace Plan)

-  WWW1: Princes Wharf Heritage Moorings
-  WWW2: Museum Square Ferry Landing

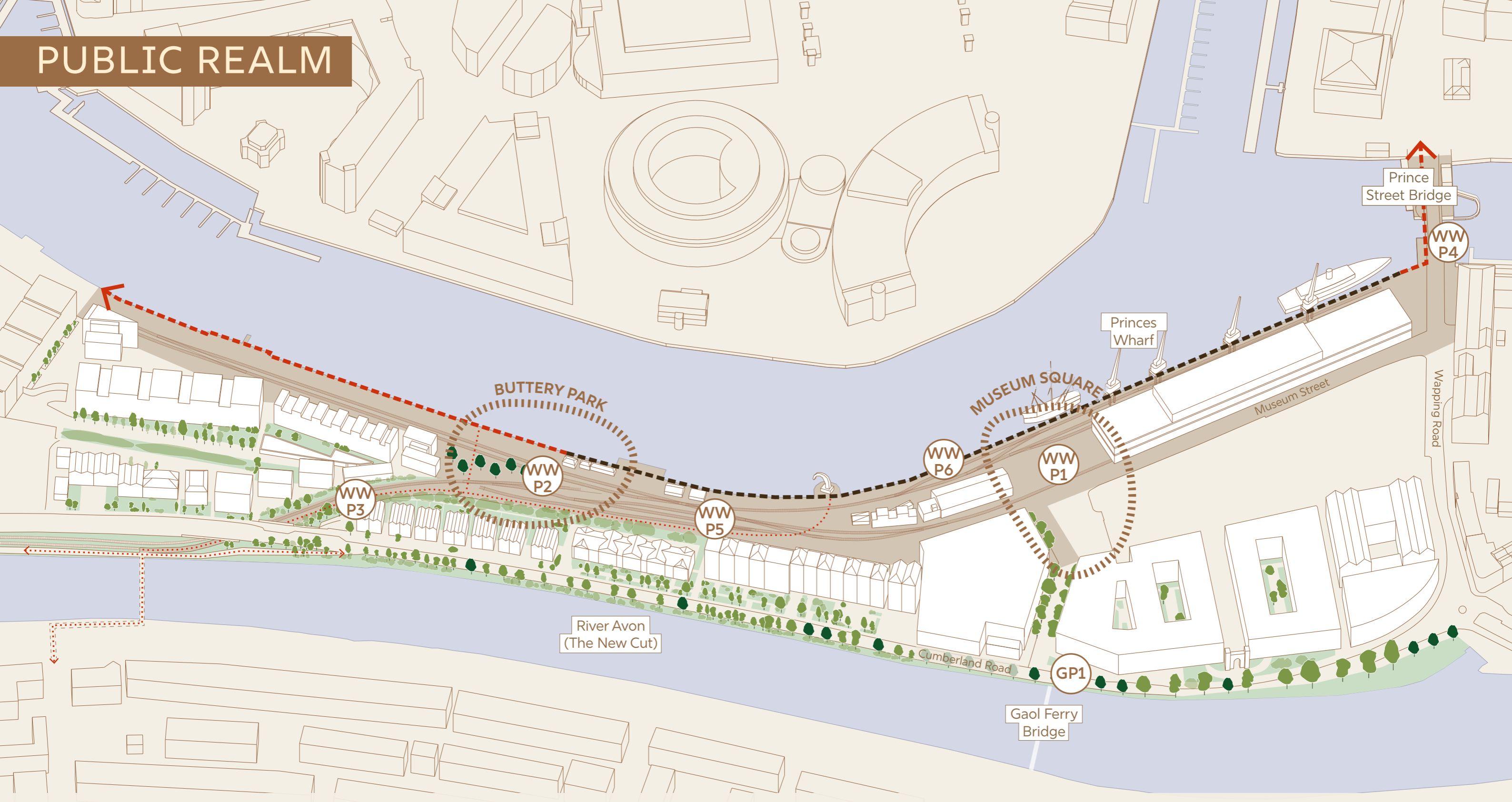
Related Public Realm projects

-  WWP1: Museum Square
-  WWP2: Buttery Park

Related Transport Projects

-  GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

PUBLIC REALM



Key

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

Place Specific Interventions

- WW
P1 WWP1: Museum Square
- WW
P2 WWP2: Buttery Park
- WW
P3 WWP3: Chocolate Path Connection
- WW
P4 WWP4: Prince Street Bridge Entry
- WW
P5 WWP5: Railway Tracks
- WW
P6 WWP6: Safety Measures

Overarching Interventions

- GP1 GP1: Cumberland Road Tree Planting

Public Realm Interventions

Museum Square will be refocused as the public heart of the area, and as a host for cultural and culinary events. Buttery Park - an established space with a new focus on play and leisure - will humanise a key part of the Quayside Walkway. And the vital north/south connection through to the Chocolate Path will be reimagined as a safe, accessible public route. The historic character of the public realm will be properly respected but modified appropriately to boost safety and accessibility.

Could Museum Square be reimagined as an activated public realm for cultural activities? What would it mean for the harbour's economy to take advantage of adjacent and nearby independent retailers?





WWP1: Darling Square, Sydney - informal seating and greening in support of a space intended for public activity. (Source: Darling Harbour)



WWP1: Långbordet public dining tables, designed by White Arkitekter (Source: Nola Industrier)

WWP1: Museum Square

Museum Square was originally intended to serve as an outdoor event space programmed by M Shed adjacent. The promise of this idea should be realised but in a way that acknowledges the wider diversity of actors and agents that now have a stake in the space, not least the wide array of independent businesses immediately adjacent, the heritage railway and the local creatives who would love a chance to boost their audience. Public realm transformations should involve creating greater visual harmony in the ground plane whilst respecting historic in-ground elements like

the tracks; increased greening and shelter to respond to a general lack of places to rest, pause and eat in the area; a reduction in clutter whilst preserving safety and operational requirements; and lastly a proactive approach to expanding the programmes of local organisations into the space, including but not limited to M Shed. A more 'open' and lively M-Shed presence along Museum Street would help further enliven the area as would opening up Northpoint House on the opposite side of Museum Square to make a more positive and active frontage.

WWP2: Buttery Park

Enhanced public realm in the vicinity of The Buttery, creating opportunities for incidental play for all ages, public seating and urban greening. Sensitive integration of the reopened railway line into a new public realm space which celebrates the railway and sidings that give the area so much character. The Buttery is an acknowledged local institution and could play a stronger placemaking role here, with expanded under-cover dining areas. There will need to be consideration of the statutory clearances and sighting distances required to retain and support the current operation of the Harbour Railway. This is a complex space with lots of competing uses and that a detailed landscape and public realm plan will be required to resolve some of these tensions.

WWP3: Chocolate Path Connection

Improved path, lighting and wayfinding between Museum Street and the Chocolate Path to create a more generous, well-lit and navigable route for pedestrians and cyclists. Integration with wider ambitions to improve north-south connections over The New Cut.



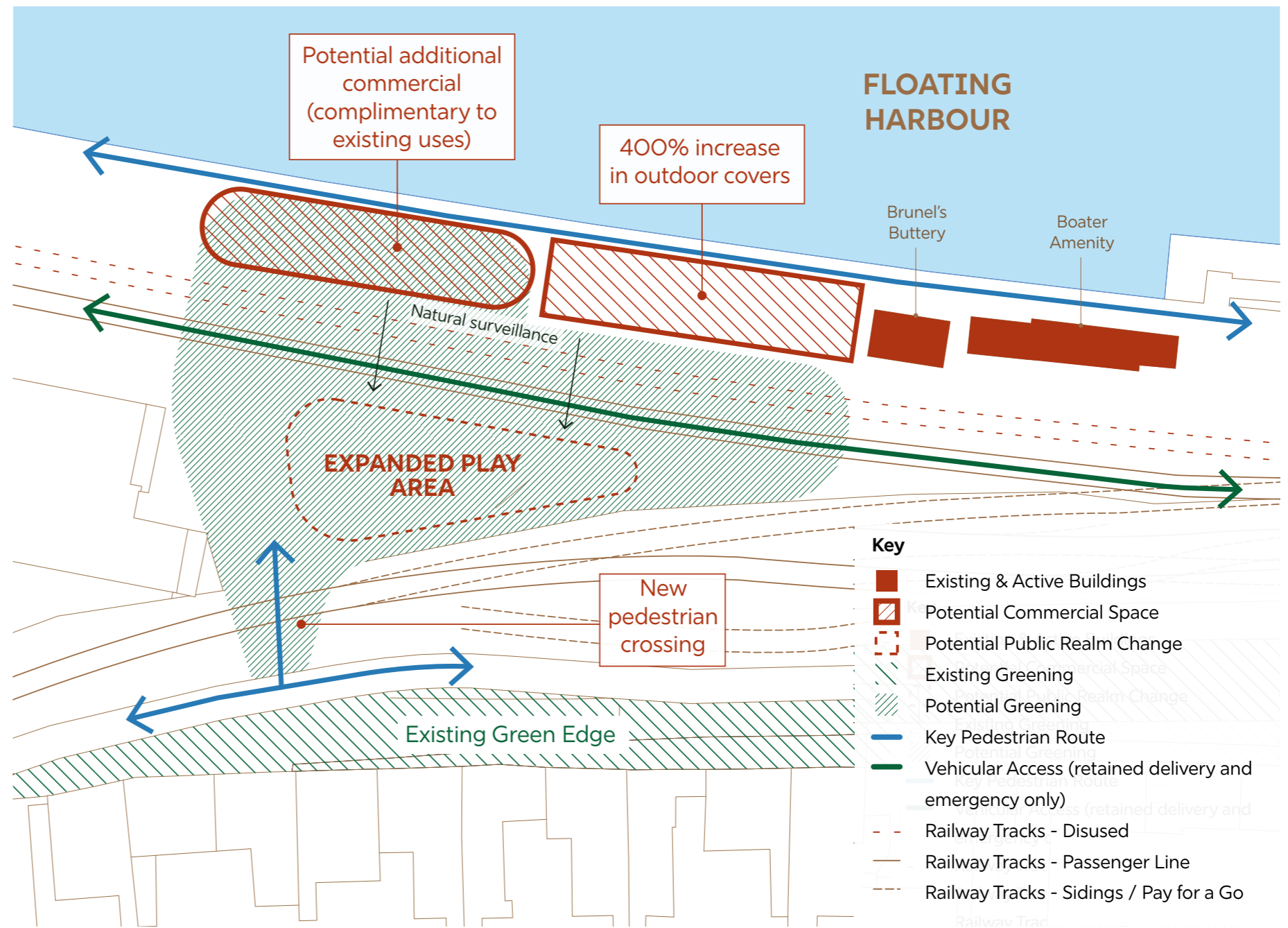
WWP2: A public realm that promotes clarity but also which provokes play and engagement whilst not preventing more formal uses taking place. (Source: Europa)

Opposite Left: WWP2: Durable but flexible play and dwell equipment set in a landscape. (Source: Sasaki Associates)
Opposite Right: WWP2: Covered dining and social space. (Source: Jesse Lecavalier)



WWP2: Buttery Park (cont.)

Opening up the spaces around Brunel's Buttery to create a delightful play space away from the water, directly surveilled by outdoor dining and newly-connected to the Chocolate Path via a level crossing.



WWP4: Prince Street Bridge Entry

Depending upon the closure of Prince Street Bridge for motor traffic (subject to further feasibility work to understand wider impacts on the highway network) the junction between Merchant's Quay, Wapping Road and Princes Wharf is to be improved as a legible public realm space with accessible surfacing, segregated cycle routes, clear pedestrian crossing points, soft landscaping, and wayfinding.

WWP5: Railway Tracks

Improve the public realm and integrate the reopened railway lines to create level surfaces to improve accessibility and safety whilst retaining the industrial and gritty character.

WWP6: Safety Measures

Introduce a new permanent edge protection treatment to replace the temporary barriers that are currently being used along the waterside outside of the M-Shed. New quayside railings will need to incorporate removable sections to facilitate dockside operations. Review other existing safety measures in place in the vicinity of M-Shed, with a view to better integrate into a robust, attractive and accessible public realm whilst retaining the functionality of the railway.

OVERARCHING INTERVENTIONS

GP1: Cumberland Road Tree 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.

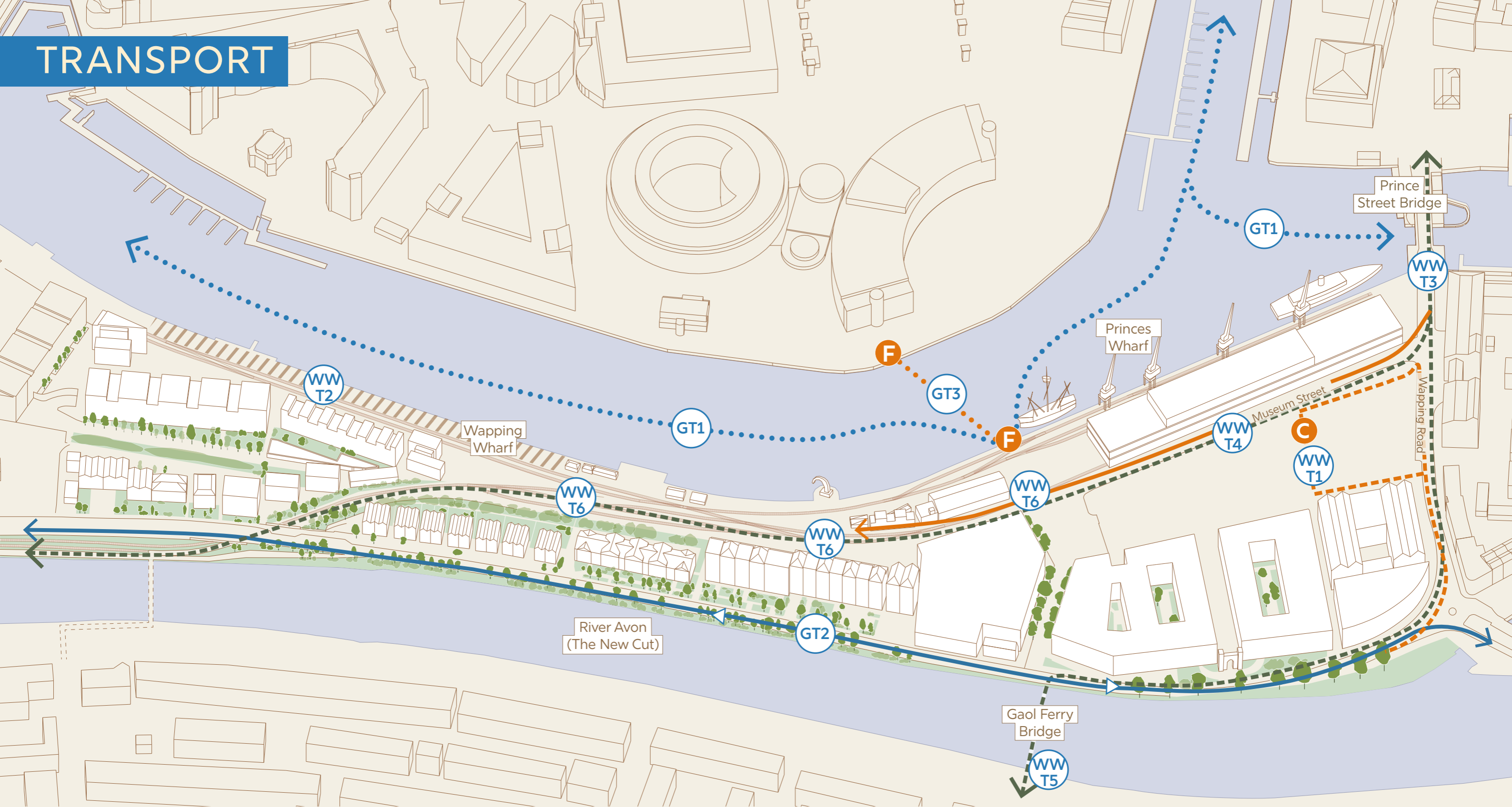


WWP3 / WWP5: Metro do Porto has achieved careful integration of rails with hard and soft landscaping. (Source: Rodrigo Parreira Coelho)

Prince Street Bridge, the entry point to Wapping Wharf from the city (Source: BCC)



TRANSPORT



Key

- Existing Bus stop
- Existing Ferry landing
- Improved Bus service
- Improved Ferry service

- Cycle route
- Opportunity for more efficient land use
- Coach drop-off
- Coach drop-off route
- New/Reinstated Ferry landing
- New Ferry service
- Restricted Vehicle Access

Place Specific Interventions

- WWT1: Coach Provision
- WWT2: Wapping Wharf Harbourside Car Park
- WWT3: Prince Street Bridge
- WWT4: Museum Street Reimagined
- WWT5: Gaul Ferry Bridge
- WWT6: Bristol Harbour Railway

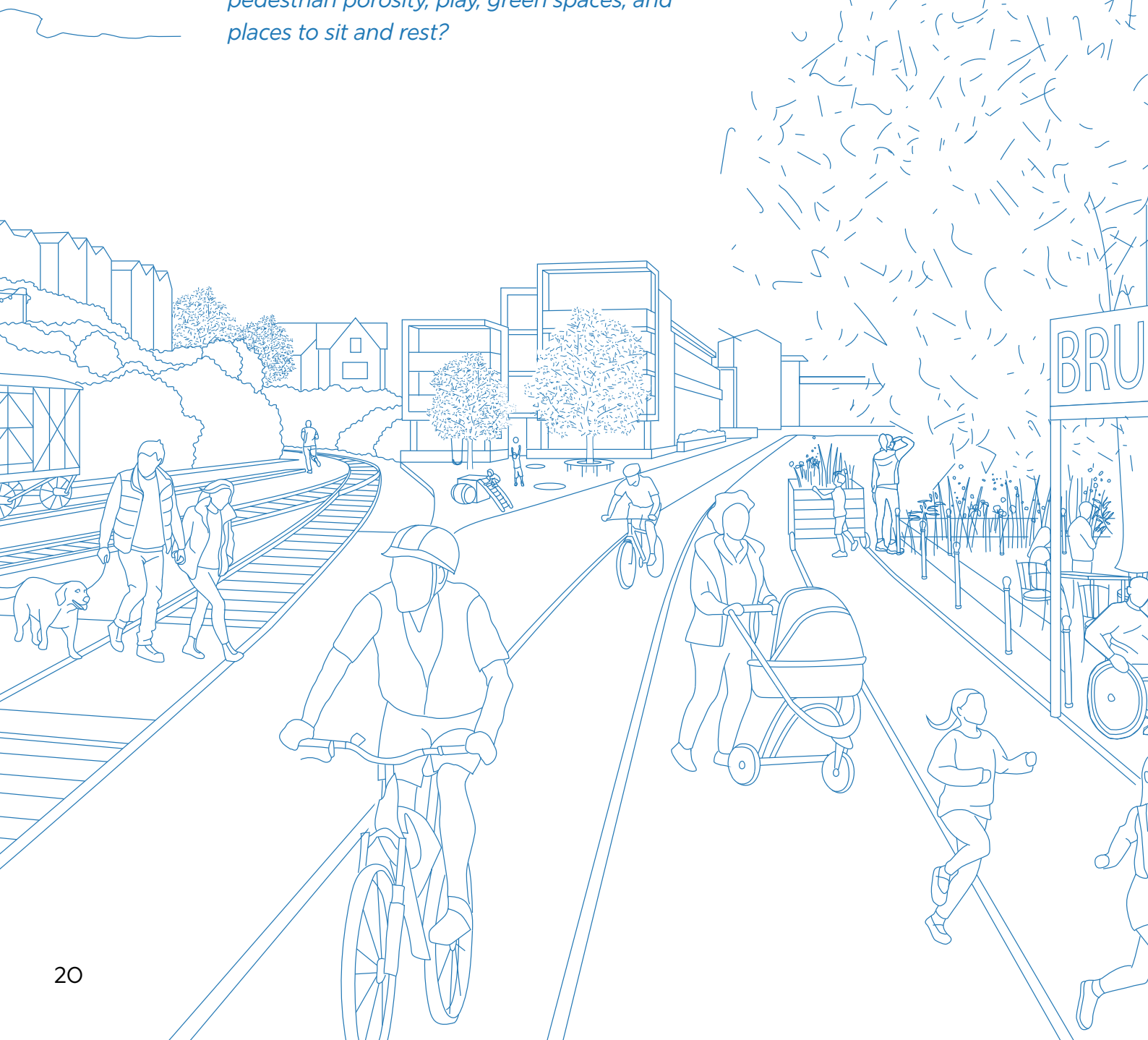
Overarching Interventions

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

Transport Interventions

In transport terms, work is needed to rationalise, rebalance and clarify a set of public spaces in order to achieve a truly safe, legible and accessible public realm. Work in this direction, given Wapping Wharf's centrality to the Harbour, will have huge impacts on the accessibility of the Harbour as whole.

Could the spaces alongside Brunel's Buttery be enhanced to promote biodiversity, pedestrian porosity, play, green spaces, and places to sit and rest?



PLACE SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

WWT1: Coach Provision

Identify a suitable location for coach drop-off within reasonable walking distance of M-Shed, ensuring that sufficient space is created on the kerb to safely accommodate passengers. Opportunity to integrate within Wapping Wharf North development.

WWT2: Wapping Wharf Harbourside Car Park

Explore the long-term reduction/removal of parking along the quayside at Wapping Wharf, thus providing more public realm and enhancing the visitor experience along Wapping Wharf as a vibrant and engaging thoroughfare. In the short term, explore opportunities for temporarily suspending parking during busy periods on the harbour such as the Harbour Festival.

WWT3: Prince Street Bridge

Potential closure of Prince Street Bridge to all motor traffic to allow more space for pedestrians and micro mobility users on the bridge, subject to further feasibility work to understand wider impacts on the highway network. The Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) outlines the benefits of segregated infrastructure along Wapping Road towards Gaol Ferry Bridge which could then connect to segregated facilities on Prince Street Bridge. Benefits could also be realised on The Grove regarding road reallocation.

WWT4: Museum Street Restrictions

Significant improvements to Museum Street (behind M-Shed) to create a fully segregated and accessible pedestrian route, with effective speed reduction measures, disabled parking, accessibility provision, and cycle accessibility. Introduce an effective programme of measures to manage servicing / taxis / food delivery drivers.

WWT5: Gaol Ferry Bridge

Explore opportunities for improvements to capacity for active travel at river crossing.

WWT6: Bristol Harbour Railway

Reinstatement of the Harbour Railway spur that runs along the Chocolate Path / River Avon to A-Bond and B-Bond buildings.

OVERARCHING INTERVENTIONS

GT1: Enhanced Ferry Service

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.

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 Wapping Wharf towards this

GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

New ferry connection between Museum Square and the Amphitheatre, primarily serving tourists, with a view to increasing visitors to the Amphitheatre. 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