

# BRISTOL HARBOUR PLACE SHAPING STRATEGY

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## PLACE PLAN: CANON'S MARSH

February 2025





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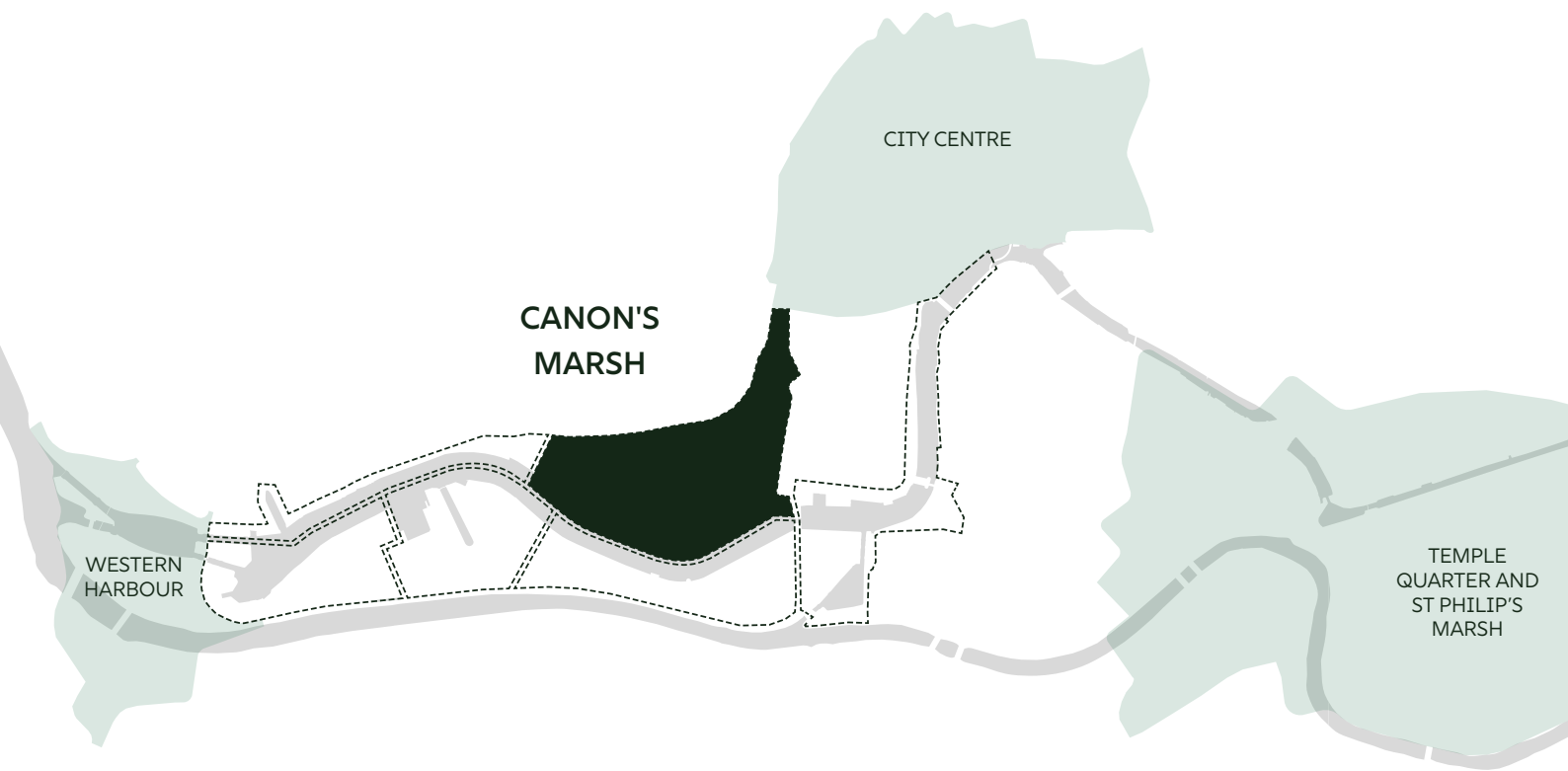
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# CANON'S MARSH TODAY

Once dominated by railway and gas works, parts of Canon's Marsh were redeveloped using Millennium funding. The area includes significant public spaces such as Millennium Square, Cascade Steps, Anchor Square and the Amphitheatre, as well as cultural institutions We The Curious and the Bristol Aquarium. The place also includes St. Augustine's Reach, the mouth of the river Frome, where the harbour reaches into the heart of the city and its transport connections, and where waterside night-life, hospitality and outdoor events take place.



*Photographs of Canon's Marsh today (Source: DK-CM)*



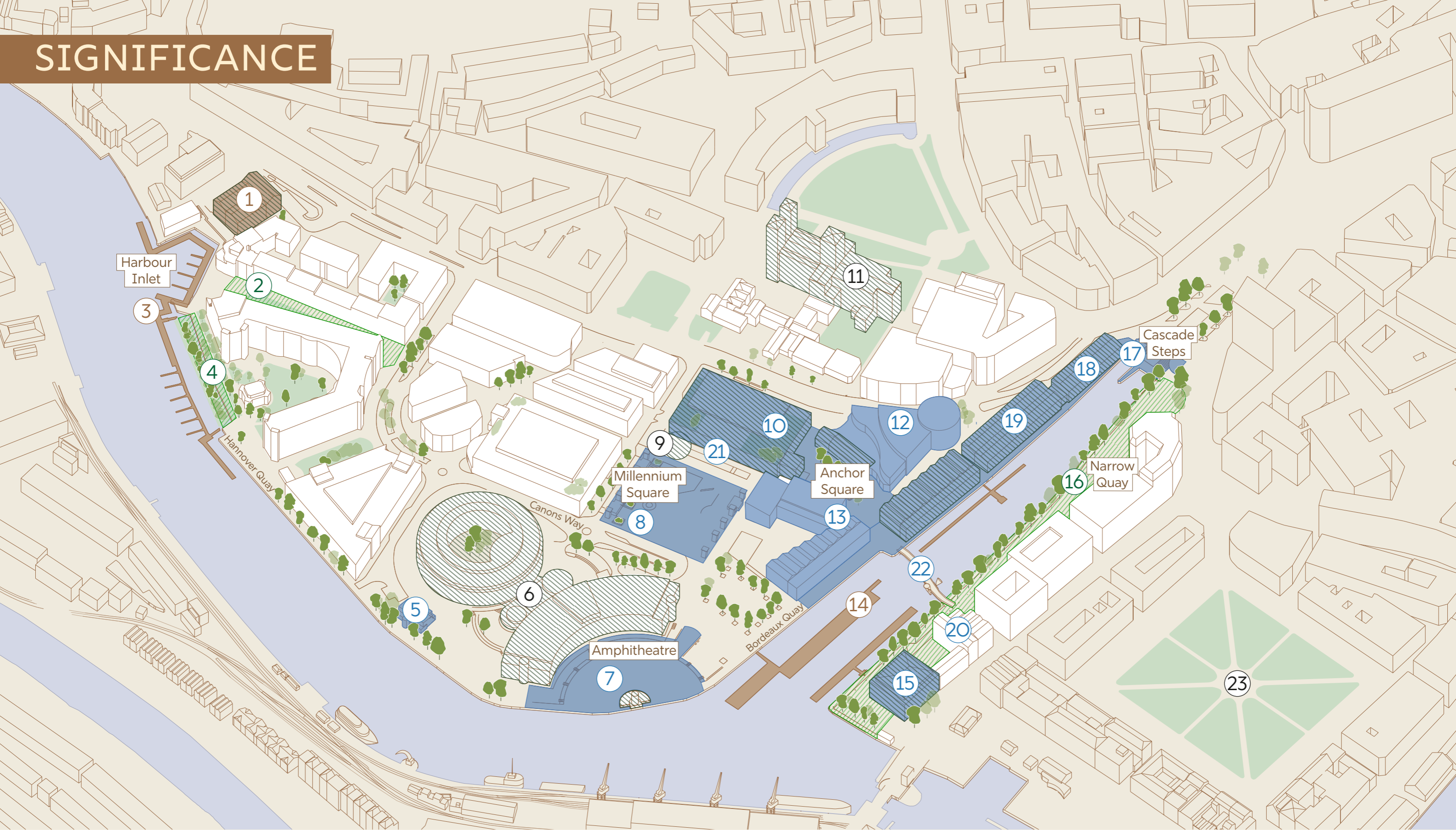
## SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

Canon's Marsh is recognised by locals and visitors as a place to dwell and gather, particularly for special events and major concerts. Narrow Quay and Hannover Quay are highlighted as key walking routes and recognised for their tree-lined water edges and shading. Whilst known as a site of cultural attraction, opportunities to make better use of public space like Millennium Square and the Amphitheatre were repeatedly raised.





People feel the public realm needs an imaginative facelift, increased greening and developed infrastructure to make Canon's Marsh an accessible, activated space of culture and play for all ages. For some, the spaces along St. Augustine's Reach can be alienating when dominated by drinking culture, and the temporary loss of We the Curious was deeply felt during its' closure in 2022-2024.



# SIGNIFICANCE



## Key

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

- ① Purifier House
- ② Millenium Parade
- ③ Harbour Inlet
- ④ Harbour edge biodiversity
- ⑤ The Harbourside Pavilion
- ⑥ Canon's House

- ⑦ Amphitheatre
- ⑧ Millenium Square
- ⑨ The Planetarium
- ⑩ We The Curious
- ⑪ Bristol Cathedral
- ⑫ Bristol Aquarium

- ⑬ V-Shed
- ⑭ Bordeaux Quay
- ⑮ Arnolfini Arts
- ⑯ Tree lined quayside
- ⑰ Cascade Steps
- ⑱ No.1 Harbourside

- ⑲ Watershed
- ⑳ Design West
- ㉑ Big Screen
- ㉒ Pero's Bridge
- ㉓ Queens Square

# CHALLENGES



## Key

||||| Inactive frontages

- ① More frequent ferry services to connect the north and south of the harbour
- ② Stark environment lacking identity and in need of greening and shelter. Low footfall outside of events.
- ③ Public space connecting cultural institutions lacks a cohesive public realm identity
- ④ The facades, surrounding the public realm, are blank and outdated lacking active frontages
- ⑤ Underutilised public realm in need of a curated programme of events
- ⑥ The amphitheatre is underutilised outside of major events and is perceived by many as an unwelcoming and unattractive space
- ⑦ Car parking dominates between V-Shed and Millennium Square
- ⑧ Anti-social behaviour, particularly related to night-time drinking, is focussed in this area creating tensions of unsafety
- ⑨ Pero's Bridge is a bottleneck for cyclists and pedestrians
- ⑩ Cobblestones and tree roots create uneven surfaces restricting public realm accessibility along Narrow Quay

# SIGNIFICANCE

## HERITAGE

Canon's Marsh is a key site in the contemporary imagination of Bristol's wider harbour heritage. Developed partly from millennium funding, Canon's Marsh hosts several significant buildings, some newer and some dating back to its maritime land use. The Arnolfini and 'shed' buildings along St Augustine's Reach reflect this area's past as the centre of the harbour. Canon's House has recently been listed, and neighbours, We The Curious, and the Aquarium which are all centred around the millennium development.

## BIODIVERSITY

The floating ecospace at Hannover Quay is the most significant new area of habitat introduced into the harbour in recent decades and has been repeatedly highlighted for its successful integration of greening, public routes, and harbour infrastructure. The Bristol Docks Estate, Wildlife Survey and Assessment, 2009 (undertaken before Hannover Quay was established) does not identify any other sites of outstanding biodiversity interest in Canon's Marsh, although Narrow Quay is lined with mature trees, providing a rare sheltered space in the otherwise exposed and hard landscapes seen elsewhere in the public realm of Canon's Marsh.

## MARITIME

Canon's Marsh maritime activity is concentrated along the Harbour Inlet, Narrow Quay and Bordeaux Quay. The majority of the boats located at these sites are leisure or commercial moorings. As the harbour reaches into the heart of the city along St. Augustine's Reach, longer pontoons serve as key mooring points for boat users. This creates a lively area at the intersection of maritime activity and hospitality, outdoor events and night-life.

## SOCIAL / CULTURAL

Canon's Marsh is rich with cultural visitor attractions including We The Curious, Watershed, Arnolfini, Bristol Aquarium and Design West. We The Curious are the custodians for 6 acres of the area, holding a 150 lease for Millennium Square and Anchor Square whilst Bristol City Council manage and programme the Ampitheatre. These spaces are commonly utilised for public and charity event programming over the year, like the Bristol Harbour Festival and organised running routes, as well as for urban sports such as parkour and skating. The sheltered walkways along Narrow Quay and Bordeaux Quay also provide for a hub for night-life and social activity with an attractive waterside stretch of food and drink venues. Bristol Cathedral Choir School directly abuts Canon's Marsh, and spaces within Canon's Marsh such as Millennium Square are at times already popular as places to dwell and play for children.

# CHALLENGES

## PUBLIC REALM

The public realm around Canon's Marsh is challenging as it is generous in size but is underutilised, lacks shelter and tree coverage, and is undermined by wide service roads. This is partly due to the prioritisation of large events that require open space and access, but neglects the day to day activation and use of the space. The public realm is often undermined by the buildings that front onto it. For example, many of the buildings that line Millennium Square, Anchor Square and the Amphitheatre are inactive, outdated and in need of refurbishment. In some areas such as Bordeaux Quay and Waterfront, it is a challenge to accommodate the competing needs of outdoor hospitality space for businesses, and maintaining a publicly accessible quayside. There is a need to balance the night time economy which is dominated in these locations by bars / clubs with daytime and family leisure uses.

## ACCESS & TRANSPORT

Despite being located at the heart of the harbour, the Amphitheatre space is relatively inaccessible, and as a result footfall through it and along this stretch of the waterfront is low. Ferry services connecting the north and south of the harbour are infrequent, restricting locals and tourists accessing the heart of the city from the Harbour Inlet drop off. Pero's Bridge has a narrow pinch point which creates a bottleneck for cyclists and pedestrians and the Narrow Quay presents accessibility issues due to an uneven surface of cobblestones and tree roots affecting public movement.

# CANON'S MARSH TOMORROW

## Vision

Canon's Marsh will be refreshed as a contemporary, inclusive and family-friendly focal point for Bristol's civic and public life. Its significant public spaces - among them the Amphitheatre and Millennium Square - will be rejuvenated, making them great spaces to visit both during and outside of formal events. There will be better amenities, more abundant seating, increased greening and enhanced shelter and shade for increasingly unpredictable weather. A new cross harbour ferry will connect the Amphitheatre directly to the M-Shed. Floating commercial activity will be boosted along St. Augustine's Reach whilst the harbour edge beside the Amphitheatre will be a natural home for tall ships and other 'special' visiting craft.



*Photographs of St Augustine's Reach and Harbour Inlet (Source: DK-CM)*

## Key Moves

- **Narrow Quay reimagined as a better place for public life to sit, walk and dwell which is child-friendly with an attractive and sheltered Quayside walkway providing views over the Harbour.**
- **Rationalisation and commercial expansion of moorings in St. Augustine's Reach to create a lively waterspace befitting a city centre 'hub' location.**
- **Diversification and enrichment of spaces within the Canon's Marsh area, particularly Millennium Square and Hannover Quay, to attract more people, especially families, to this city centre location and diversify its offer.**
- **A new cross harbour ferry service catering to visitors wishing to move between M-Shed and the Amphitheatre by water.**

# 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

- CMC1: Narrow Quay
- CMC2: Hannover Quay
- CMC3: Millennium Square Diversification
- CMC4: Amphitheatre
- CMC5: Waterfront Place
- CMC6: Canon's Marsh Energy Centre

## Waterspace Interventions (refer to Waterspace Plan)

- CMW1: Harbour Inlet Floating Market
- CMW2: Amphitheatre Heritage Moorings
- CMW3: St Augustine's Reach Commercial Moorings
- CMW4: Hannover Quay Live / Lesiure Moorings
- CMW5: Amphitheatre Ferry Landing

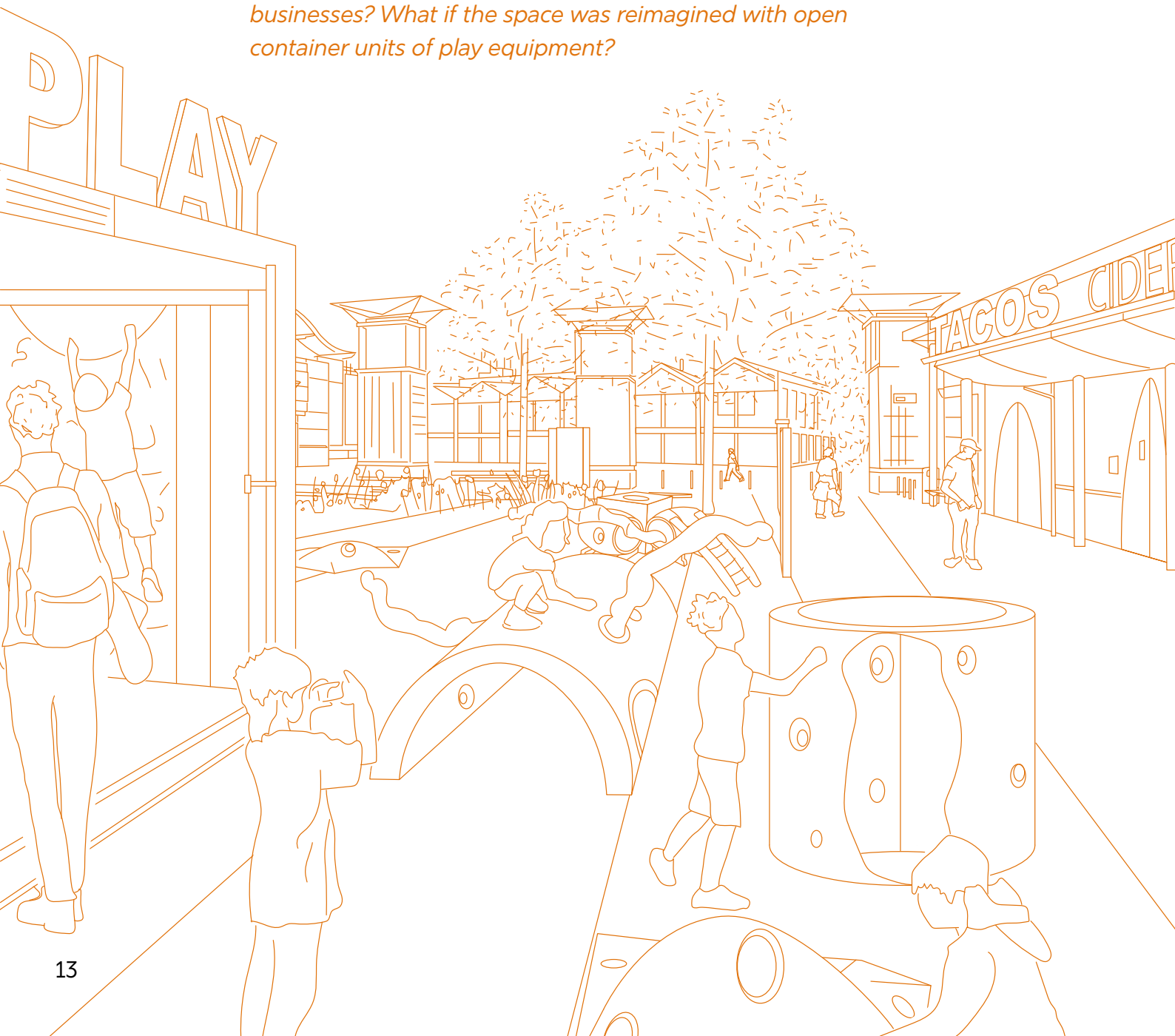
## Related Transport Projects

- GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

# Areas of Change Interventions

There are strong opportunities to 'inject' new uses (temporary and permanent) into the existing spaces of Canon's Marsh. Building on existing strengths and exploiting some current underutilised spaces, this would suit a family-facing offer, and would complement a more diverse commercial offer on the water at St. Augustine's Reach and along Narrow Quay.

*Could Millennium Square be activated as a family-friendly space adjacent to a loggia of independent commercial businesses? What if the space was reimagined with open container units of play equipment?*



### CMC1: Narrow Quay

Improved Quayside Walkway along Narrow Quay which balances commercial activity and accessible public realm with free space to dwell. Improved level and continuous surfacing using sawn cobbles, to make a pedestrian priority zone. Light touch commercialisation to provide expanded and improved outdoor seating areas for ancillary commercial activities (both on land and on water) - especially in areas to the north of Pero's Bridge where access roads currently dominate. The design of such spaces must ensure that substantial space for movement is left such that commercial uses do not restrict pedestrian movement or create bottlenecks.

### CMC2: Hannover Quay

A flexible, family-friendly natural play space, animated with temporary commercial uses, when not being used to accommodate infrastructure to support events in the Ampitheatre.



CMC2: Play/public art installation in the quayside in Bordeaux as part of the 2024 Olympic programming



CMC1: This project by ADHOC in Montreal integrates new seating spaces with existing planting. (Source: ADHOC)



CMC2: This ice cream parlour in Argentina is one example among many of new, joyful architecture placed in existing commercial contexts to diversify and enrich existing provision and provoke activity. (Source: Ferro & Assoc)

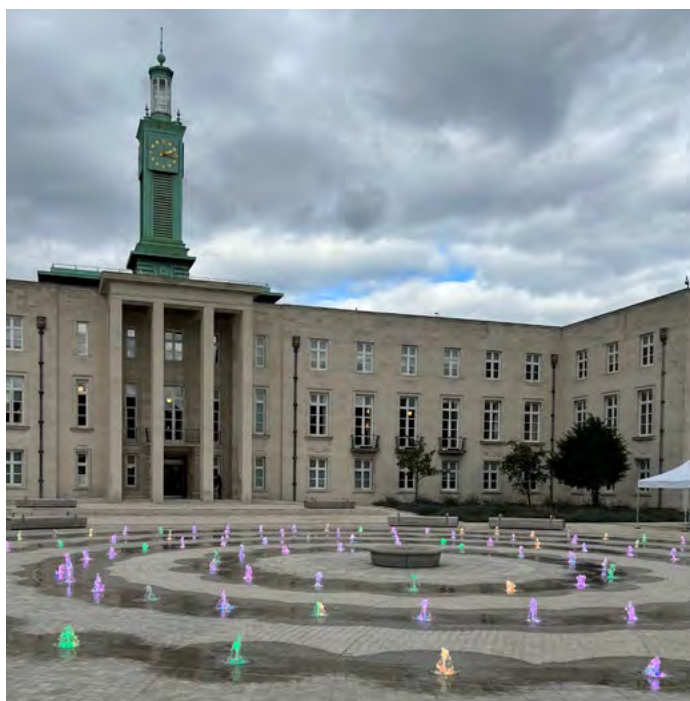
### CMC3: Millennium Square Diversification

There are significant opportunities within Millennium Square to diversify and enrich the visitor offer through the provision of new commercial and social premises, utilising either temporary or permanent interventions or indeed a mix of the two. Whilst the existing commercial spaces of Canon's Marsh lend themselves toward larger chain retail, bars and restaurants, an 'injection' of smaller and more bespoke units, particularly those that support themes of leisure, play and child-friendliness would allow for a wider array of businesses and organisations, especially independents, to have a presence in the centre of the city. We The Curious will be reviewing ideas and further exploring feasibility for Millennium Square as part of their own plans to refresh and renew public spaces that sit within their site.

Some existing structures are also suitable for refurbishment to provide more public-facing uses whilst retaining their existing functions. For example, refurbishment of We The Curious' delivery entrance on Explore Lane could provide secure bin and bike storage, as well as space for renewable energy infrastructure. The square itself would continue to be an important event space as well as a popular informal play area, with children particularly enjoying the water features located here. Opportunities exist to enhance the space making it greener, more accessible and playable. There is a need to improve bike storage, toilets, shade and seating. Programming of the space will continue to be led by We The Curious. Subject to feasibility, commercial operations could be complemented by occasional play infrastructure and by intensified programming for inclusive, diverse and affordable events / activities.



CMC3: Sayer Street is a 'temporary' 'high street' of commercial and sociable uses built in the spaces between development. (Source: Jan Kattein Architects)



CMC3: Water features that optimise children's play, enhance accessibility and reduce water use. Credit: Richard Goldthorpe





*Amphitheatre in use during Bristol Harbour Festival - see weathervane and historic ships in the background (source: BCC)*



*CMC4: Chicago River Walk seating area and greening (Source: Ross Barney Architects , Sasaki Associates)*

#### **CMC4: Amphitheatre**

Establish a tree-lined waterside walkway around the perimeter of the amphitheatre with a structure around the weathervane to provide public access routes, space to sit, recline, shelter and get closer to the heritage moorings. Walkway to provide access during amphitheatre events but with option to temporarily close at each end if required. Integration of new ferry landing adjacent to walkway to connect to Wapping Wharf.

Amphitheatre to provide a diversified programme to include seasonal, affordable and inclusive events and uses. Programming and interventions to allow for movement sports, other recreational activities and daily public life when not in use for events.

#### **CMC5: Waterfront Place**

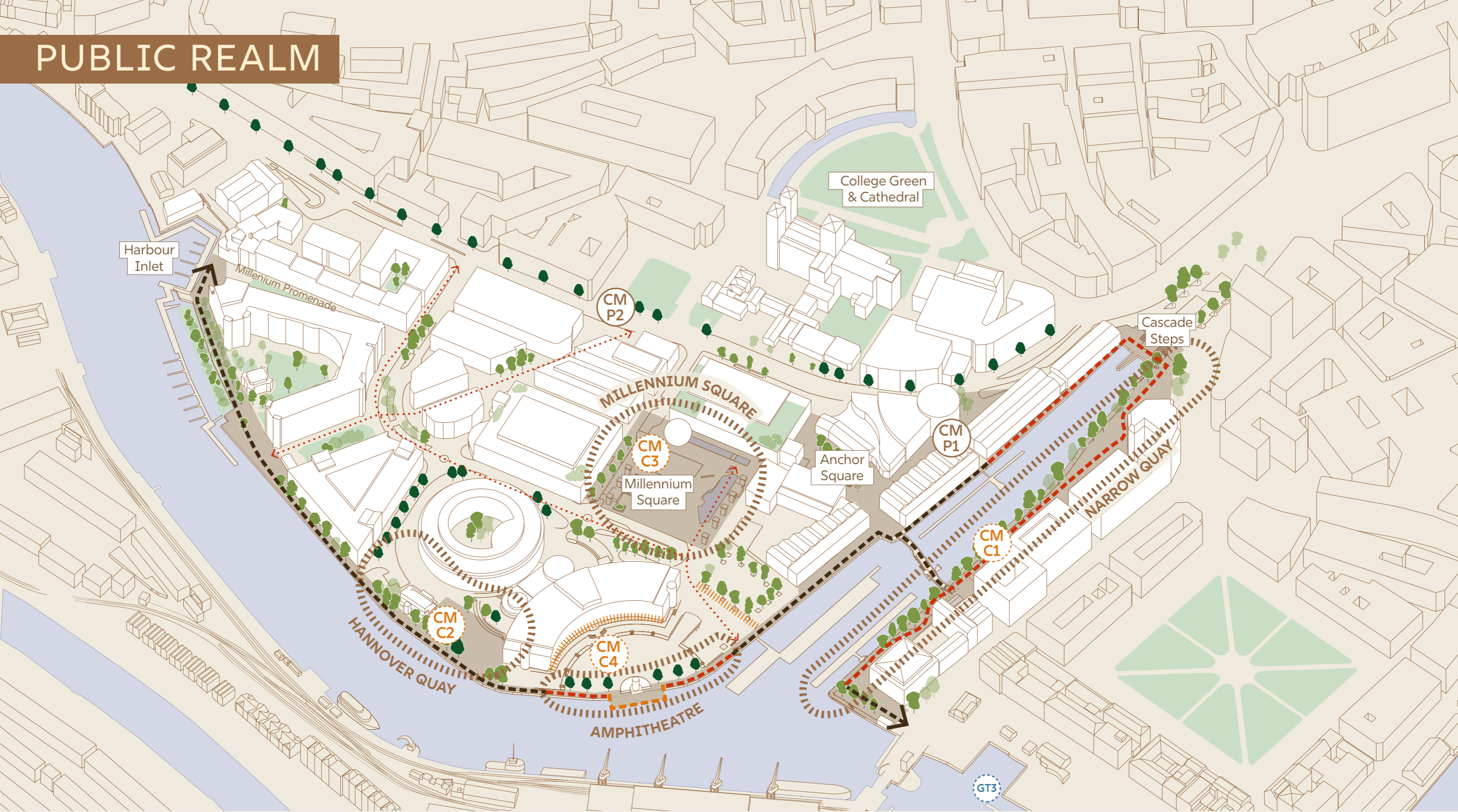
The Waterfront Place site has long been recognised as a key uncompleted component of the Bristol's long term vision for the Canon's Marsh area. It is a highly visible site in one of the most prominent parts of the waterfront and therefore warrants an exceptional building of high quality architecture. Waterfront Place has been allocated in the Local Plan as a development site with potential uses including offices, culture, tourism and leisure. The site offers significant opportunities to generate annual income to the Harbour Authority for it to reinvest in the Dock's Estate.

Any development will need to complement the events space and allow large numbers of people to access the amphitheatre during events. Pending development, the site offers opportunities for temporary meanwhile uses that complement the programming of surrounding public spaces.

#### **CMC6: Canon's Marsh Energy Centre**

Delivery of an energy centre in the vicinity of Canon's Marsh, subject to a suitable site being identified. 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. This will include local-level water source heat pumps in and around Bristol Harbour.

# PUBLIC REALM



## Key

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

## Place Specific Interventions

- CM P1 CMP1: Canon's Road
- CM P2 CMP2: Anchor Road Tree Planting

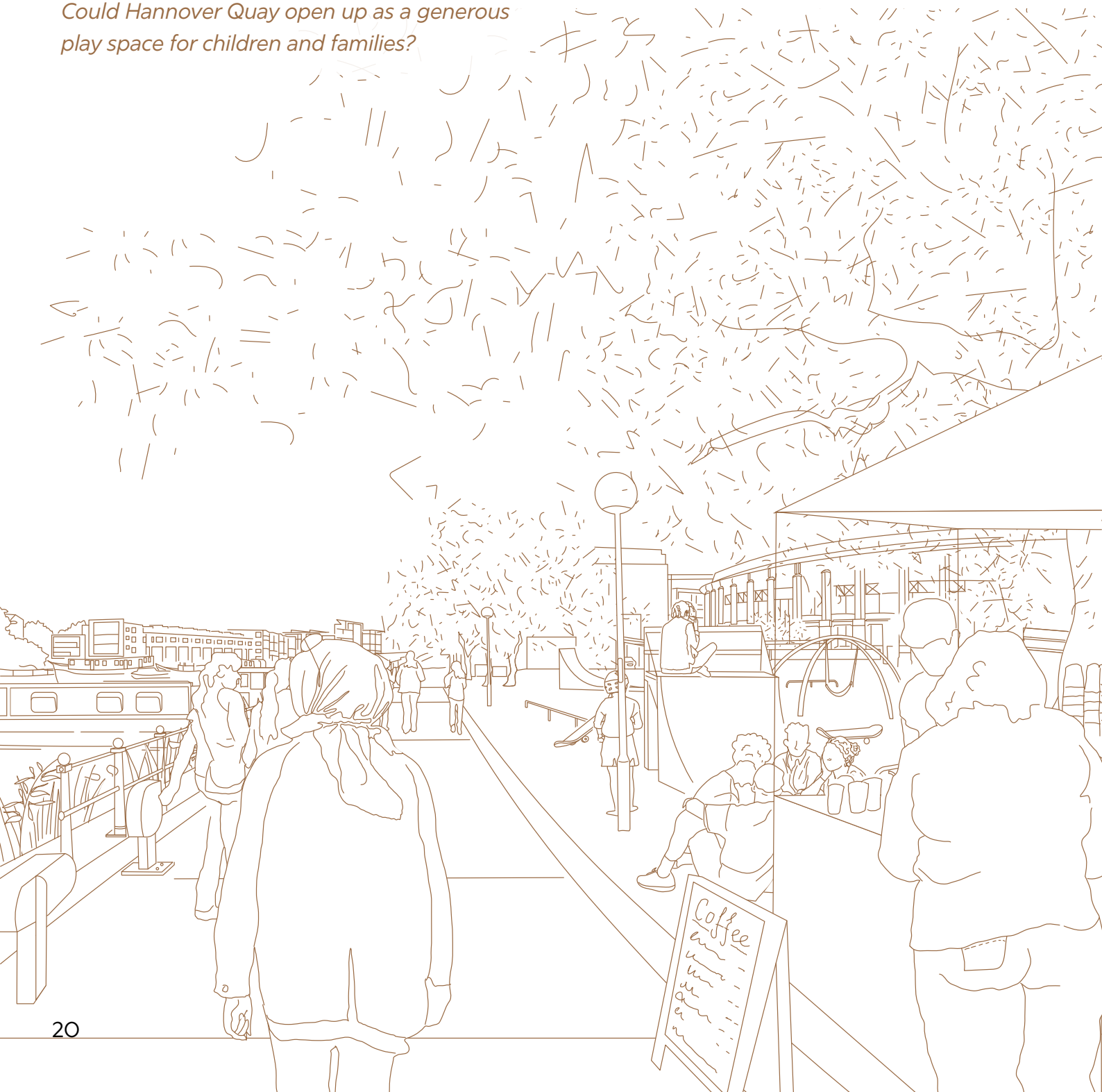
## Related Areas of Change projects

- CM C1 CMC1: Narrow Quay
- CM C2 CMC2: Hannover Quay Commercial
- CM C3 CMC3: Millennium Square Diversification
- CM C4 CMC4: Amphitheatre

# Public Realm Interventions

Canon's Marsh public realm will be improved as an accessible, safe place to dwell, play and engage in local activity. This includes retrofitting and activating the Amphitheatre and Millennium Square to support events and informal urban sports. Increased greening throughout the public realm will increase biodiversity, promote rainwater harvesting/reduce flood risk and create much needed shade.

*Could Hannover Quay open up as a generous play space for children and families?*



**CMP1: Canon's Road**

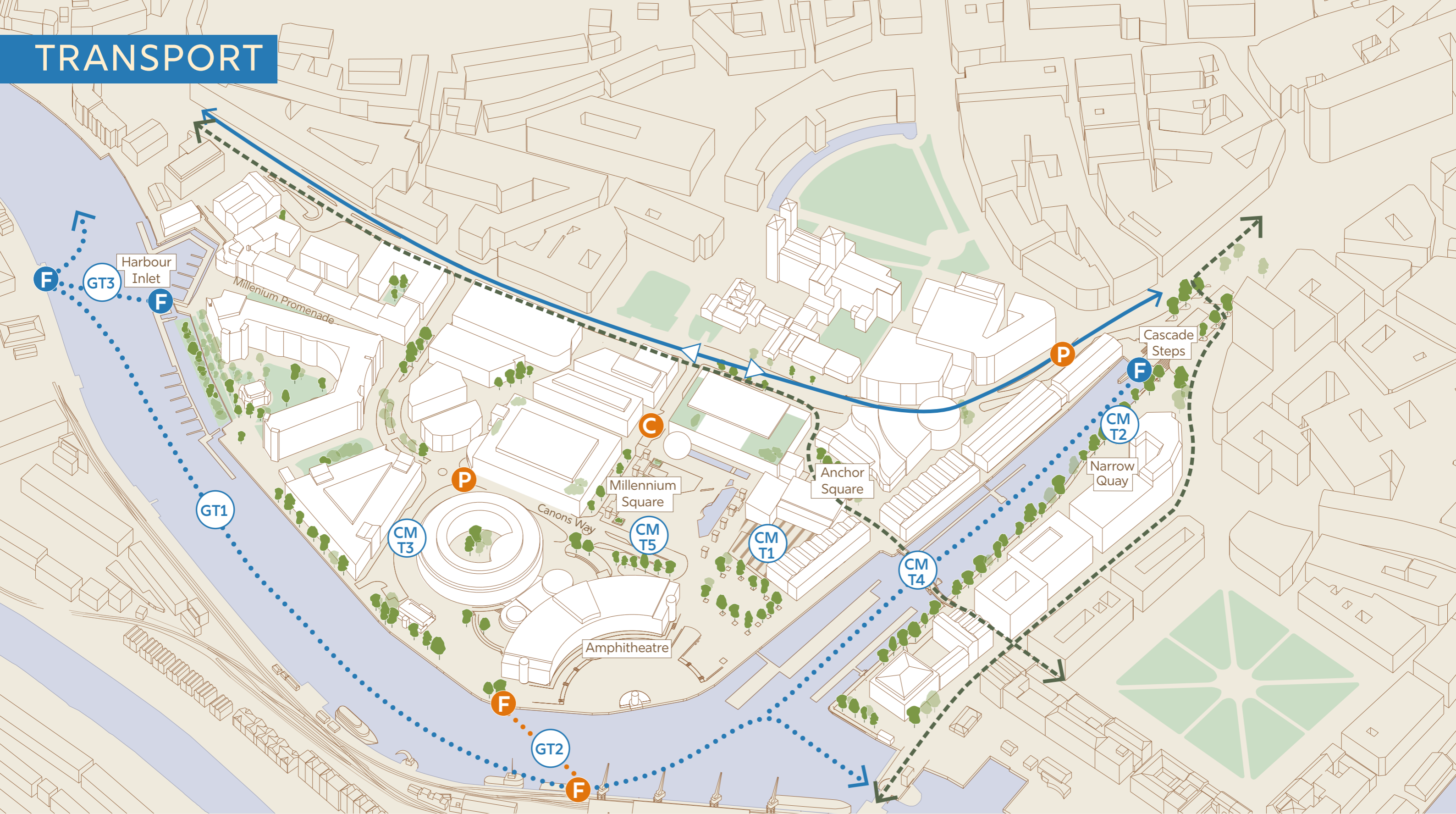
Public realm improvements and activation to back of house service space along Canon's Road, to make this a more welcoming and bustling place with enhanced greening. Opportunity to provide better frontages from surrounding buildings e.g. Watershed. Extend public realm improvements to include the walkway from St. Augustines Parade into Millennium Square.

**CMP2: Anchor Road Tree Planting**

Avenue tree planting along the length of Anchor Road where possible.

Note that Canon's Marsh Areas of Change projects are closely related and in some cases reliant upon public realm changes. Refer to Areas of Change chapter for more information.

# TRANSPORT



## Key

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

- Cycle route
- Opportunity for more efficient land use
- New/Reinstated Ferry landing
- Existing coach drop-off/parking
- Existing coach drop-off/pick up
- New Ferry service

## Place Specific Interventions

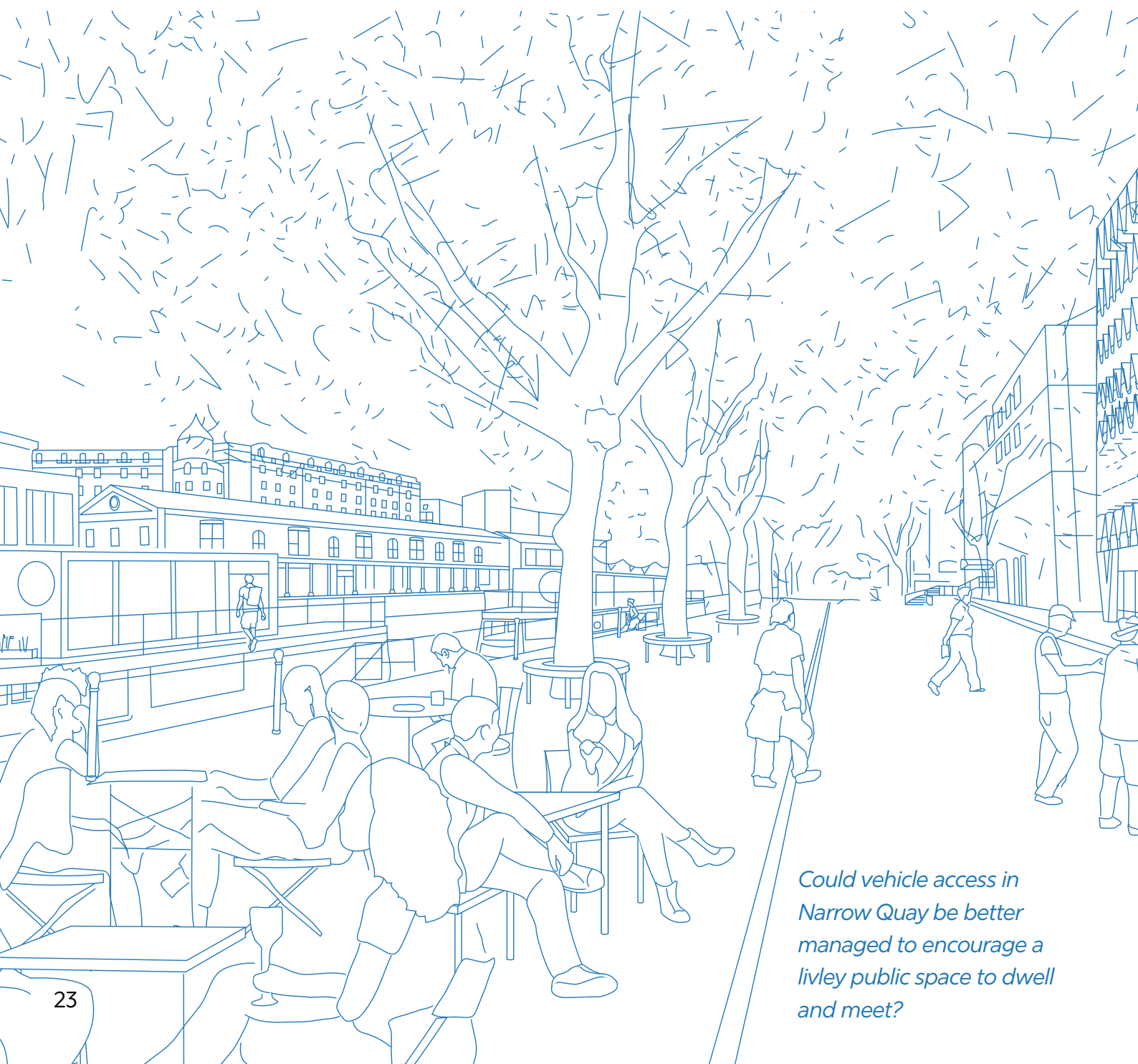
- CMT1: Service Yard (V-Shed)
- CMT2: Access and Parking (Narrow Quay)
- CMT3: Parking (Canon's House)
- CMT4: Pero's Bridge
- CMT5: Millennium Square Cycle Park

## Overarching Interventions

- GT1: Enhanced Ferry Provision
- GT2: Chain Link Crossing
- GT3: Cross Harbour Connection

# Transport Interventions

Pedestrian and cyclist accessibility will be improved around the harbour edge. It will also be improved north-south through the area through the provision of a new cross harbour ferry service, and east-west by improvements to Pero's Bridge. Where possible, cyclists will be separated from pedestrians e.g. Anchor Road and Prince Street, and cycle storage will be significantly increased. Vehicular access and servicing will be managed in ways that reduce its impact on the public realm.



*Could vehicle access in Narrow Quay be better managed to encourage a lively public space to dwell and meet?*

## PLACE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

### **CMT1: Service Yard (V Shed)**

Explore opportunities to partially redevelop service yard to provide a better frontage onto Millennium Square.

### **CMT2: Access and Parking (Narrow Quay)**

Vehicle access better managed to create a pedestrian priority space along the waterfront but with servicing needs to the buildings retained. Extend the approach successfully undertaken on Farris Lane, to public realm design/management, to the quayside north of Pero's Bridge. Cyclists will continue to use Prince Street rather than Narrow Quay.

### **CMT3: Parking (Canon's House)**

Reduce opportunities for parking adjacent to Canon's House (along Harbour Way and Canon's Way) to improve the entrance to this building, as part of a wider project to refurbish and reuse this prominent harbour building (which includes more greening and active ground floor uses).

### **CMT4: Pero's Bridge**

Explore measures to reduce bottlenecking at this critical water crossing through crowd control / congestion measures on either side of the bridge - especially during large events and busy Summer times. Longer term explore the feasibility of creating a new bridge alongside Pero's Bridge to increase capacity along this key thoroughfare and segregate pedestrians and cyclists. Responsibility for the future management and maintenance will need to be agreed between Bristol City Council and the Harbour Authority.

### **CMT5: Millennium Square Cycle Park**

Explore feasibility of providing a secure bike park within the underground car park or elsewhere around Millennium Square, with a modest charge for bike parking to replace car parking income.

## 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 Cascade Steps.

### **GT3: Cross Harbour Ferry**

New ferry connection between Museum Square and the Ampitheatre, primarily serving tourists, with a view to increasing footfall through the area and in particular to the Ampitheatre. The ferry and ferry landing stages would be fully accessible for disabled travellers. 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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