

Bristol City Centre Development & Delivery Plan Consultation Response

October 2023



Marrons



Introducing Marrons

Marrons is a multidisciplinary practice of town planners, architects, urban designers and heritage specialists. We thrive on projects that couple commercial success with genuinely positive design and place making. We are passionate about creating sustainable communities, and we believe great places are created through meaningful collaboration and a real understanding of places and people. As a multi-disciplinary team, we understand the importance of teamwork and communication. Our ability to work together across boundaries allows us the opportunity to approach projects from every angle and knit together various factors to deliver great places to live, work and socialise.

We are passionate about creating places that are not only commercially viable, but also sustainable, dynamic and progressive. It is our goal to ensure that the design and delivery process results in a project which increases the economic, social and place making potential of this site through clear spatial interventions and is coherent within the wider townscape.

Marrons has recently expanded into the South West, operating from our regional office in central Bristol which is served by planning, architecture, urban design and heritage teams that have local knowledge of Bristol and the South West.

Bristol City Council (BCC) recently launched a consultation for the proposed Bristol City Centre Development and Delivery Plan (DDP). It sets out a vision and strategies for the regeneration of Bristol city centre, specifically Broadmead and Castle Park. Using inputs from each of our disciplines Marrons has critically assessed the proposals, what they mean for the future of Bristol and how they complement the emerging development patterns in other areas of the city.



Executive Summary

Marrons is pleased to provide constructive feedback on plans for Bristol. We're privileged to work in the city centre (in beautiful and historic Queen Square, just outside of the study area) and as such are passionate about the success of the visions identified. Our team is formed of planners, architects, heritage and archaeology experts and urban designers who work closely together; as such we're well-placed to give a diverse but cohesive set of responses.

The Development Delivery Plan is comprehensive and thorough in many aspects and we praise its positive vision for change. There are some missed opportunities and key areas, however, where we feel that our potential clients who may wish to implement future city centre development would value further interrogation and clarity.

We have reviewed the Development and Delivery Plan (DDP) and identified certain areas for improvement and clarification. Our aim is to provide a critical but constructive voice; as professionals in the built environment sector with a proven track record of delivering urban projects, we feel we are well-placed to provide practical and thoughtful advice through the lens of our clients' needs and desires.

When appraising the six strategies which make up the overall vision, we explore the following themes: Bristol's complicated and evolving identity; spatial and ideological links between the centre and farther reaches of the city; practical issues around transport conflicts; creating play space for all, not just children; the dangers of 'green washing' through naive interventions; and whether later living and other complementary uses could be introduced into the centre.

A further review of some of the spatial-specific proposals follows, more granular in nature. Some of the key street typologies in Broadmead and Castle Park proposals are reviewed in light of user experience and heritage impact and enhancement.

Finally, ending on a positive and constructive note, we suggest five key themes upon which the plan could expand and successful projects in the city centre might be based.



“Can the creative industry unwrap a hopeful way forward?”

Strategy 1: Destination and Identity

Response to Q8 of Survey 1: *‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Destination and Identity strategy?’*

Marrons supports the key aim of this strategy which moves the city centre away from being a purely transactional destination. The diversification from purely retail is already underway, however restaurant and entertainment spaces are currently tucked away in the wings (in the case of Cabot’s crazy golf) or pinned to the fringes (The Lanes in the old city).

Promoting more of these spaces into the centre is a good first step, with the next step perhaps resilient venues which transform from flexible co-working and coffee spaces, to cultural and play spaces throughout the day.

These spaces are often expensive to many and therefore exclusive. Whilst we support the introduction of essential community services into the centre, this will not spark joy or foster a sense of identity in residents.

A study based on geolocation data in the US recently found that ‘casual restaurants’ brought people of different socio-economic background together better than spaces run by non-profit organisations, such as museums, churches and medical facilities.

Bristol feels uniquely capable of producing an egalitarian facility based on low-cost but nutritious

food, set in a carefully designed space which feels open to all.

We think there is more work to do on openly engaging with Bristolians’ feelings around the city’s history. This part of Bristol is its physical birth-place so it’s seen it all. Could there be a positive thread of hope which underpins every intervention - the DDP makes a good first step in prioritising inclusivity, does the public realm have the opportunity to make a more definitive statement? Can Bristol’s film industry and many creatives be tapped into to ‘tell the story’ of Bristol to unwrap a hopeful way forward?



Strategy 2: Community and Culture

Response to Q13 of Survey 1: *‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Community and Culture strategy?’*

“Could the heritage trail extend beyond the city centre boundary?”

Marrons agrees with the idea to create a city centre cultural strategy and Broadmead public art plan. Bristol comprises an incredible creative and artistic community which should be celebrated at any given opportunity. Working with local artists, local children and the wider community should be central to creating an engaging and unique strategy. This could link with the heritage trail and should extend beyond the boundaries of the city centre. Can street art or murals be integrated into the urban fabric where appropriate, celebrating the history and culture of Bristol (artwork portraying Bristol over time for example)? The unicorn art trail around Bristol is a great idea - we’ve seen lots of parents and children taking photos and scanning the QR code to find out more. Can this idea be incorporated into this part of the

city as an educational tool?

The proposals should engage the population as a whole. How do the proposals aim to attract people across socio economic status and all nationalities, ethnicities etc? Community kitchens, gardens and events organised in tandem with local communities could help. It would be a shame to bring all these great ideas to life but result in many communities feeling excluded.

Community kitchens within shared communal spaces could help bring people together. These could be both within shared courtyards for residents, but also in community spaces where people to come together to cook and eat. Cookery classes should be free or low cost to allow anyone who wants to get involved.

“Could the definition of ‘active travel’ be clearer?”

Strategy 3: Movement and Connectivity

Response to Q19 of Survey 1: ‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Movement and Connections strategy?’



Above: competition proposal for apartments in Bristol city centre focused around social outdoor spaces and connection to the natural world

Left: active travel for all promoted by careful public realm design from concept and beyond



Marrons supports the regeneration of Broadmead into an inclusive, sustainable and re-connected place. We support the overall movement and connectivity strategy and the council’s ambitions to limit vehicular traffic across the Broadmead area. The DDP’s focus on streets, public realm, ground floor uses and the needs of the community is welcomed, notably the emphasis on prioritising people over vehicles.

The objective to introduce new active travel infrastructure is welcome however the definition of ‘Active Travel’ should be

expanded to include wheeling (including within the glossary). Active travel relates to all modes of walking, wheeling and cycling. This is essential in creating a fully accessible and inclusive place.

There is little explanation within the DDP of how accessibility for disabled users, parents with prams and older people will be addressed. Details of ambitions relating to this, beyond provision of blue badge parking, would be useful.

The provision of improved wayfinding and legibility to and from key destinations across

Bristol is welcomed. Legibility alongside improved lighting and a sense of safety is vital in supporting active travel, reducing carbon emissions and bringing a critical mass of people to the Broadmead area. It would, however, be useful to understand how wayfinding and pedestrian crossing points will support disabled people and older people who may struggle to see or hear signals and signage.

“How does the system connect to the wider city?”

Mobility Hub:

The introduction of a mobility hub at the corner of Newgate and Union Street is welcomed and supportive of wider aims to reduce carbon emissions and prioritise pedestrian movement, however clarification and further consideration of the below points should be provided within the DDP:

- Does the proposed mobility hub include a bus stop?
- Could a bike hire scheme be introduced, like those in London or the Velib scheme in Paris, with docking stations in strategic locations around the city, including

within the mobility hub?

- Will there be any provision of electric vehicle charging points for taxis?
- How will vehicles turn around if access along Newgate is closed?

Members of the Marrons team have worked with Derby City Council on the vision and concept plan for Derby city centre, including reconnecting the city with the River Derwent. The proposals included a mobility hub, with EV charging points, e-scooters, bike storage and a bus hub, to support a move

from reliance on the private car to cleaner and more active modes of travel. The mobility hub incorporates sports/fitness facilities too. Could the mobility hub in Bristol be combined with community uses to support and educate the community in more active lifestyle choices?

On a wider scale, does the area connect with wider communities in terms of public transport and active travel routes? Cycle routes across Bristol as a whole need to be safe, convenient and attractive to all for it to work successfully going forward. The same applies to bus routes and affordability of using the bus.



Integration of pedestrian and wheeling routes into street-scene

Pedestrian and cyclist movement through Castle Park:

Marrons agrees that the riverside pedestrian and cycle route through Castle Park needs improving to reduce conflict and create a safe space for all users. Crossing from Bristol Bridge to join footpaths through the park towards Broadmead is currently a chaotic and unpleasant experience. It needs to be clear to users that pedestrians have priority. Clearer delineation between the footpath and cycle path would help, though delineating pedestrian routes is not always successful and needs thoroughly designing.

Has consideration been given to the following:

- The incorporation of a central, slightly raised, rumble strip between pedestrian and cycle lanes.
- Is the cycle lane/footpath an adequate width?
- Could a ‘slow cycling zone’ be introduced, with those wishing to travel faster encouraged to use another route in the area i.e. along Newgate?
- The provision of new cycle

routes within the wider city centre area which may help reduce the number of cyclists along this route, potentially easing conflict between users.

- A park ‘gateway’ with material changes, creating the sense of entering a different space.

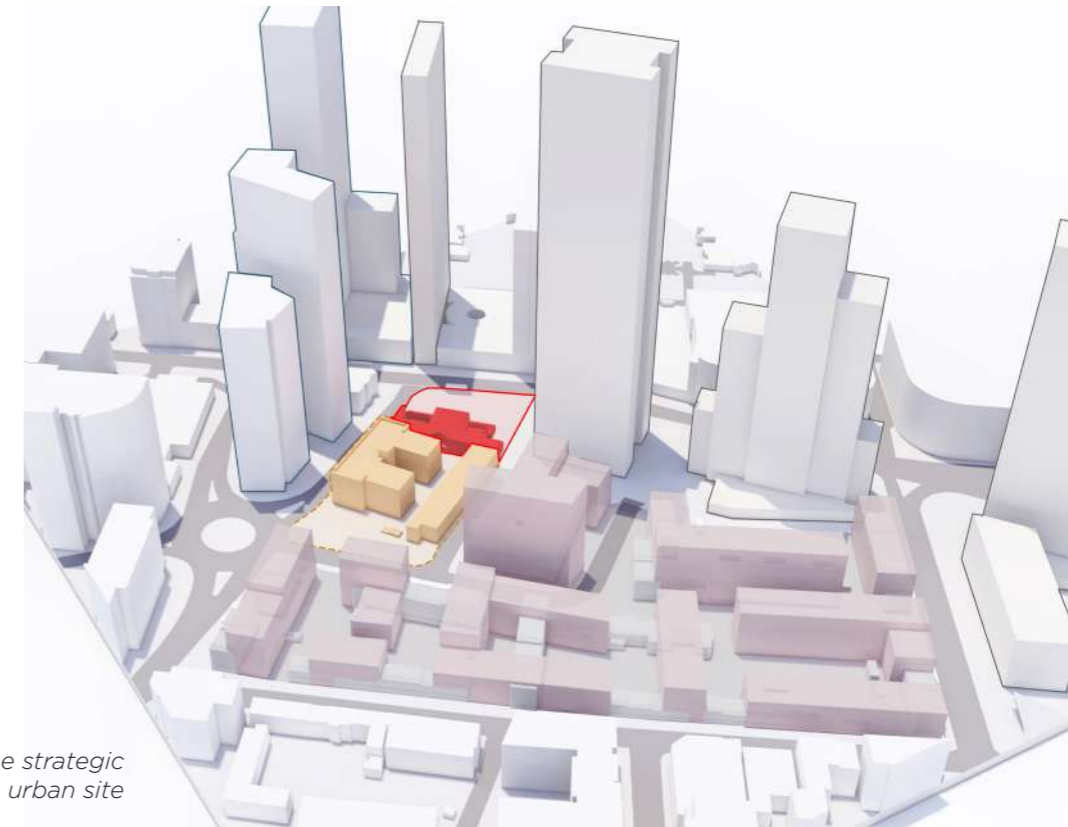
Conflict between e-scooters and pedestrians also needs addressing. Could speed restrictions for e-scooters or designated e-scooter routes be introduced?



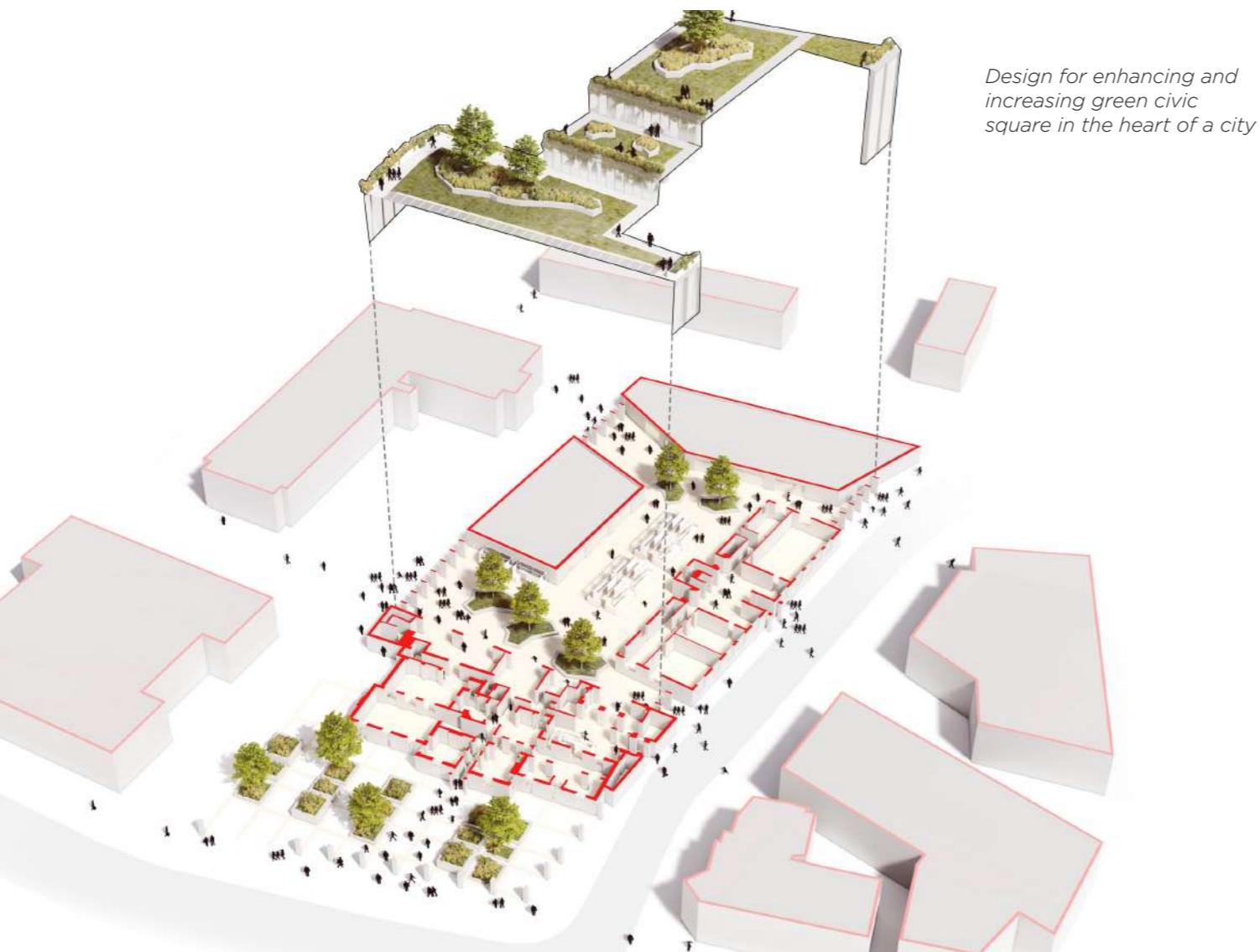
“How can we create play for all?”

Strategy 4: Public Realm and Open Space

Response to Q24 of Survey 1: ‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Public Realm and Open Space strategy?’



Understanding the strategic context of the urban site



Design for enhancing and increasing green civic square in the heart of a city

Marrons supports the overall vision for the public realm and open space strategy, especially the priority for inclusivity and celebration of heritage.

We would like to share a few points for further consideration:

- Planting should be appropriate and suitable for a changing climate; clever soft landscaping design can be robust, productive and biodiverse all at once.
- The DDP strategy identifies important views and landmarks, and we agree that road infrastructure causes severance of desire lines; even those of us who know the city well feel frustrated by broken pedestrian and cycling routes when moving through the city centre - improved wayfinding signage is not enough.

- We welcome the idea of a water feature in Castle Park, connecting the area to the harbourside and providing opportunities for play and helping cool the urban environment on warm days. Can water be used creatively elsewhere in Broadmead perhaps?
- Could water fountains (drinking water) be incorporated into the public realm?
- Play spaces should cater for all ages, genders and abilities. Has a fitness trail been considered? Or play for older people?
- We're pleased to see Make Space for Girls have been consulted and would support their continued input as proposals are developed.
- Vibrant public life through the day and night in the city

centre will be achieved with a better diversity of uses in the city centre, including bars, restaurants and galleries.

Members of the Marrons team previously worked with Derby City Council to improve the relationship of Derby with the River Derwent, including developing new areas of open green space, incorporating species-rich wildlife areas and marginal riverside planting to support biodiversity and habitat creation alongside creating a visually appealing and sensory environment for people.

A similar approach could be taken alongside the waterfront through the floating reedbed and boardwalk proposals. Will these be accessible to all? Is there potential for resting spots along the boardwalk to provide the opportunity to sit and feel immersed in nature?

Strategy 5: Green Infrastructure and Nature

Response to Q29 of Survey 1: *‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Green Infrastructure and Nature strategy’*



“How can we avoid ‘green washing’?”

Overall Marrons supports the aims of the Green Infrastructure and Nature strategy. We would like to interrogate further how ‘green space’ is defined, the reason that parks succeed or fail (and indeed how success is defined) and the potential for ‘green washing’ within these proposals.

We question the definition of St James Barton, also known as the Bearpit, as a park or green space. During the day there is vibrancy here, due to it being a key pedestrian hub and skateboarders make the most of the flat hardstanding, which is a positive. Whilst there is limited opportunity with interaction with vegetation, this allows for huge potential to provide dense swathes of biodiverse planting in the tiered platforms.

St James Park, in contrast to St James Barton, has historic significance as a graveyard and possible location of a medieval chapel. As such, the reconfiguration of existing routes through is inappropriate. The focus must therefore be on light-touch enhancements and adjustments to the contextual buildings and routes which would promote natural surveillance and thereby safety.

Jane Jacobs, theorist and activist, said that *‘only a genuine content of economic and social diversity, resulting in people with different schedules, has*

meaning to the park and the power to confer the boon of life upon it’. Landscape design visions for the parks identified for improvement can only go so far; the key to their success is diversity in use of the buildings around them to provide round the clock activity.

We are also concerned about the promotion of vertical greening in the city centre as a means to improve biodiversity and thermal performance of buildings. Whilst the national implementation of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain policies has been delayed to 2024, we commend Bristol City Council for their early implementation of this in their Ecological Emergency Action Plan. We consider that there are limits to the BNG improvements that vertical greening can offer, whilst being relatively expensive to construct and maintain compared to horizontal greening (including green roofs).

There are some proven benefits of green walls to thermal performance of buildings, however this is dependant on the style and maintenance of the system implemented. We would advocate instead for policy which ensures that the permanent fabric of the building is suitably thermal efficient and that energy performance and comfort in use is managed via the implementation of Passivhaus design principles.

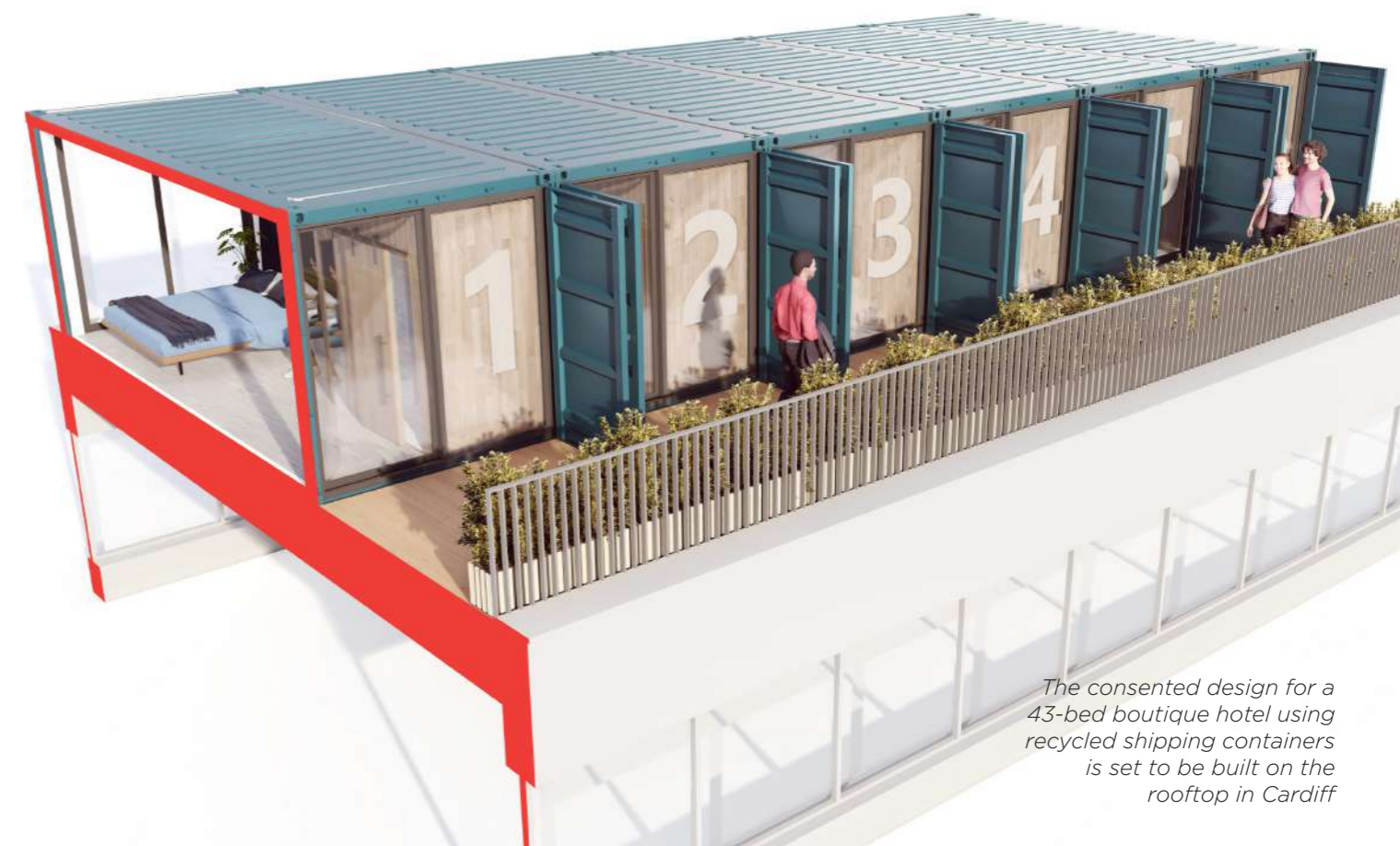
Strategy 6: Land Use & Development

Response to Q35 of Survey 1: ‘Do you have any comments or suggestions on the objective or approaches for the Land Use and Development strategy’

“How do we reach critical mass to encourage development?”

Marrons supports the objectives for Land Use and Development within the DDP. Marrons considers that the Council should adopt a proactive and innovative approach to development within the city centre and be prepared to discuss solutions to mitigate against constraints, rather than allow them to stifle growth. Marrons notes that the Council is also progressing plans and applications for the Enterprise Zone, with densities and specific requirements for each area being discussed separately. Whilst there is merit in doing this to ensure the city develops separate identities, it is also important that the proposed regeneration areas within Bristol are planned so they complement each other.

It is our view that the supporting material for the Enterprise Zone and the DDP consultation could do more in terms of addressing wider masterplanning and wayfinding between these areas, to ensure transition areas do not become lost. For example, spaces between the Enterprise Zone and DDP areas could support a broader Cultural Corridor and Micro Culture Corridor and we therefore suggest that these uses are not simply focused in the city centre, given the layout of Bristol. Fig.53 in the DDP could therefore be expanded to demonstrate how these transition areas have been considered.



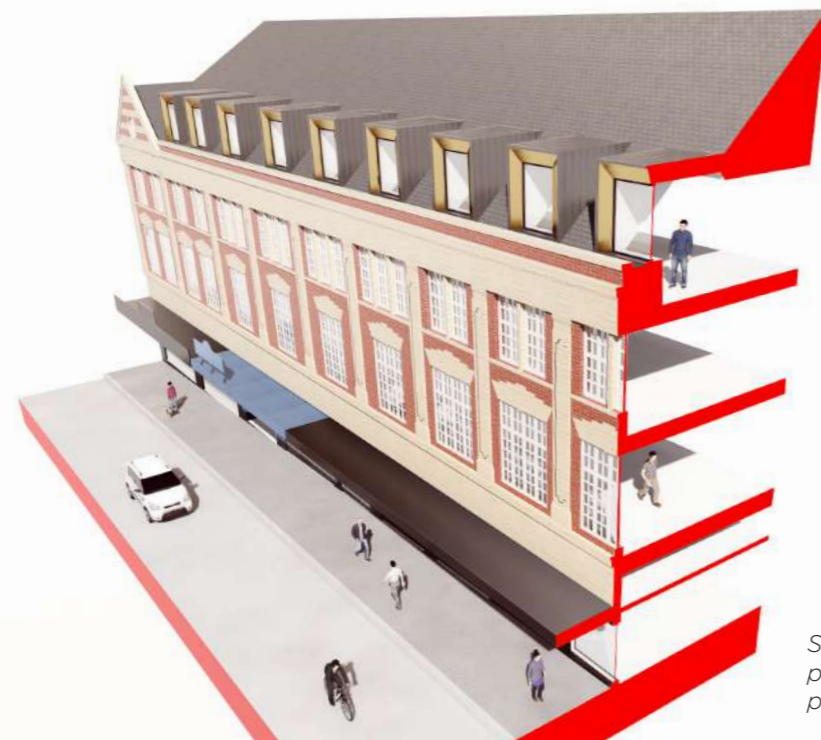
The consented design for a 43-bed boutique hotel using recycled shipping containers is set to be built on the rooftop in Cardiff

Our Further Questions:

- Has thought been given to the provision of live-work units? Ground floor spaces as workshops/studios etc could help enliven the streetscene and provide active frontages as well as support local businesses/artists/makers.
- Have any economic studies been undertaken to determine need?
- How do existing businesses feel the plan impacts upon their resilience going forward?
- Will there be provision of flexible spaces for local community use? Spaces that can be hired cheaply (or free) for communities to come together.
- Who is the residential aimed at, both market and affordable? A variety of tenures and sizes of homes would be desirable to promote diversity and activity.
- What about later living? ONS data suggests that 31% of the total UK population will be in retirement by 2041. Central locations make sites for later living as they are close to important amenities and promote social interaction, helping to stave off social isolation
- Developers will want certainty that they will

benefit from a critical mass of people; how will BCC build confidence?

Members of the Marrons team have worked with local authorities in Huntingdonshire and Derby to regenerate their town and city centres. This has included introducing live-work units into schemes to provide homes that people can work from whilst supporting the local economy and enlivening the streetscene. The same approach could be taken in the Broadmead area, creating variety and providing choice for the local community.



Study of sympathetic design proposal for conversion of part of an existing building

“How about ‘Grey to Green’?”

Marrons considers that Sheffield’s ‘Grey to Green’ scheme supports the design concepts for this street type, offering a colourful, sustainable and calm refuge in the urban environment. A similar approach to proposals for Nelson Street may help with regenerating the area whilst supporting biodiversity and creating an interesting place for people to visit and spend time.

Could the linear street garden incorporate community grow spaces or become an ‘edible

Broadmead Placemaking Plan Street Type 1: Linear Street Garden

Response to Q4 of Survey 2: ‘*Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposals for Street Type 1: Linear Street Garden?*’

street’ that is aimed at the whole community, including young people and all socioeconomic groups. Farmers markets and community kitchens would be welcomed in this area, working with the local community.

We support a focus on texture and colour to enliven the space and create a sensory experience. Will this incorporate soothing and calm spaces as well as bold and bright colours and textures? Calmer spaces would help to support neurodiverse users and offer the opportunity to enjoy

the garden atmosphere without becoming overwhelmed by the array of sensory stimulation.

As has been done in the Grey to Green Sheffield scheme, could mini art installations be used along the garden street as ‘playful elements’?

Broadmead Placemaking Plan Street Type 2: Lanes and Courts

Response to Q6 of Survey 2: ‘*Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposals for Street Type 2: Lanes and Courts?*’

Marrons supports proposals to create a network of lanes and courts. It is unclear if these will be pedestrianised. It would be preferable to have car free streets and lanes with independent businesses, small coffee shops etc., for people to amble along. These could

be vibrant spaces comprising an eclectic mix of independent businesses i.e. vintage clothing, art stores, home wares, florists etc. Engaging local artists to help with public art/art installations/street art/art events would be great. Can local communities from more deprived parts of the

city be involved in the process? The proposed uses may deter some communities from visiting the area due to connotations associated with regeneration or gentrification. Who is the target customer/user? Will these streets and spaces include affordable or free community



Complementary uses within the same urban site ensuring the survival of an interesting existing building in a conservation area

facilities and events aimed at involving and reflecting the diversity of Bristol as a whole?

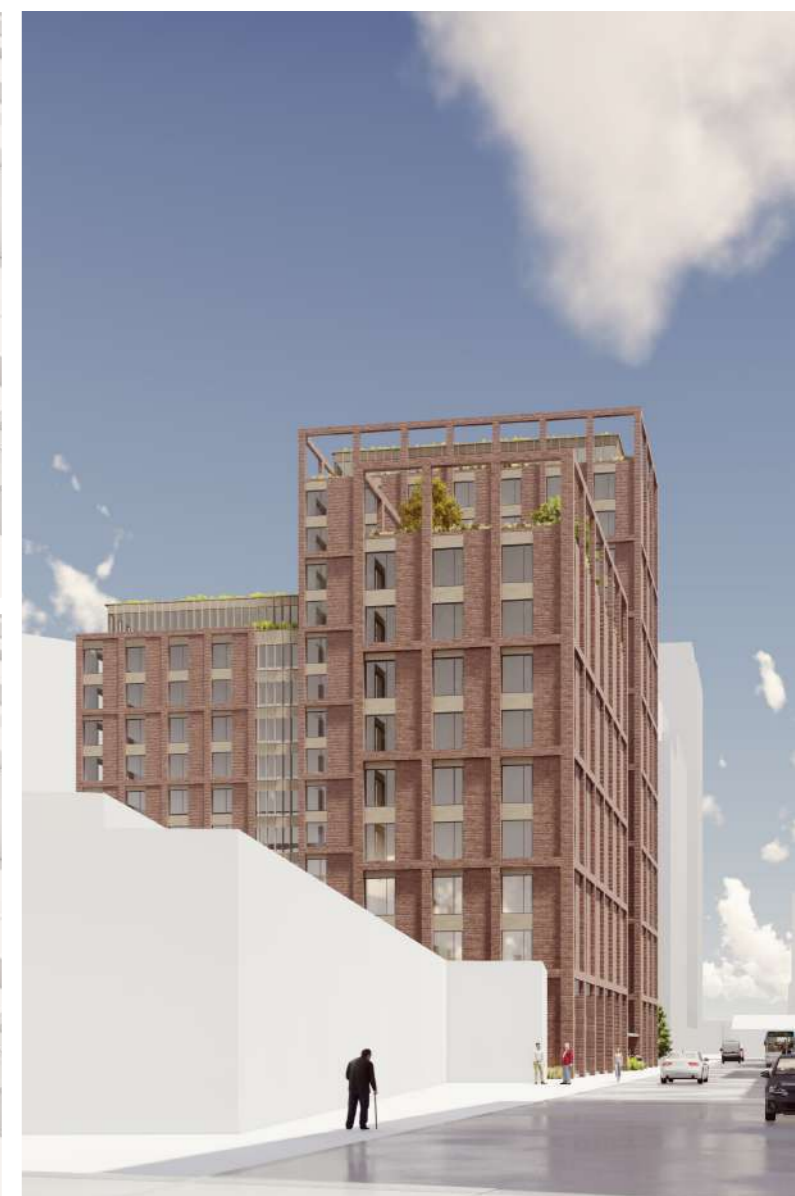
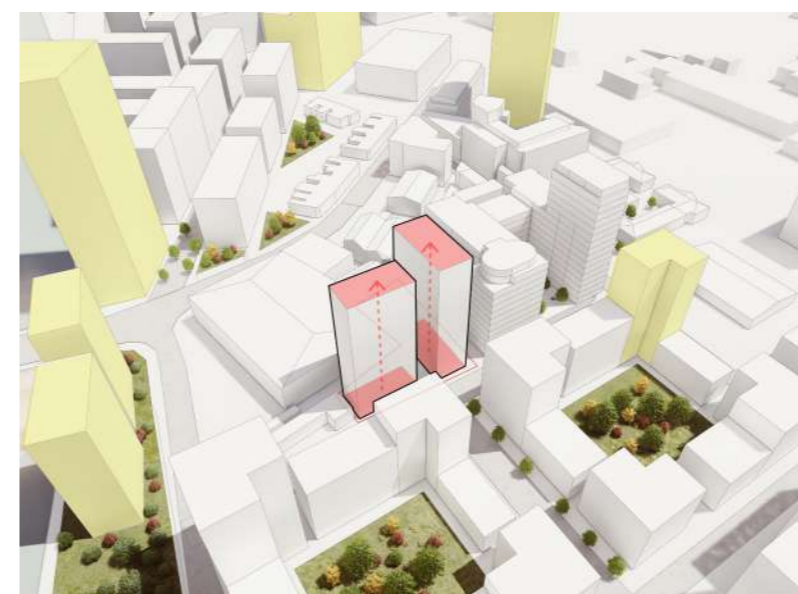
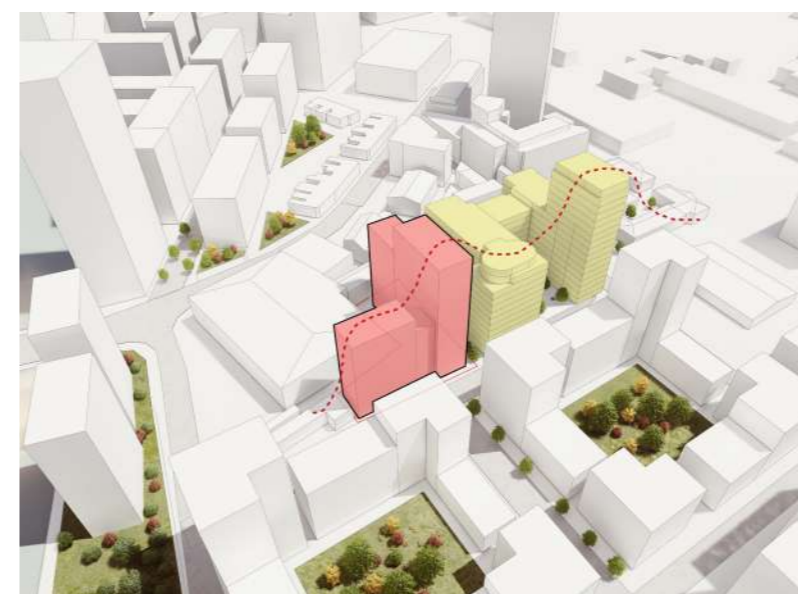
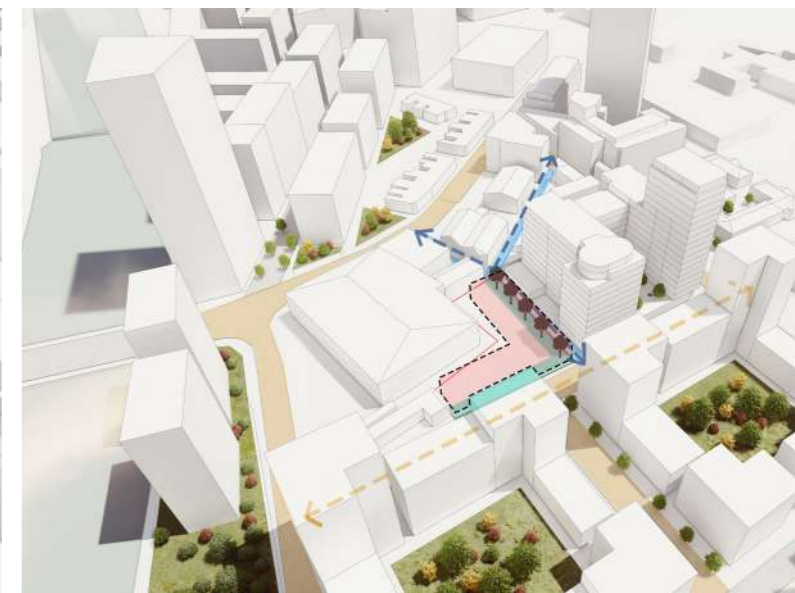
These smaller streets and spaces need to be well connected and visible so that people are attracted to walking down them. They need to draw visitors in, otherwise businesses may suffer and these spaces may become lifeless.

The location of events, spill out spaces and seating in relation to building height/street width

should be carefully considered. Cold and windy spaces are likely to deter people from visiting and spending time. Likewise, greening these spaces and incorporating vertical planting is great in theory as long as plants are well maintained and appropriately located.

It is unclear what the intention is for Philadelphia Street and Quakers Lane. An explanation of how these streets are to be treated would be useful. Are they to remain as they are?

“Who is the target user here?”



Broadmead Placemaking Plan Street Type 3: Civic Avenue, Merchant Street

Response to Q8 of Survey 2: ‘Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposals for Street Type 3: Civic Avenue?’

“How can we protect micro-habitats?”

Marrons supports the establishment of Merchant Street as a cultural through-way, connecting greater parts of the city with Castle Park, and extending the overall sphere of green space centred on Castle Park.

The combination of the change of use of the Almshouse to a community/cultural use,

inclusion of a garden/parklet space, and reduction in scale of surrounding development would enhance the heritage values of the building and be a positive change in the celebration of Bristol’s heritage.

A carefully considered lighting scheme would be welcomed, although a sympathetic approach should be taken to not

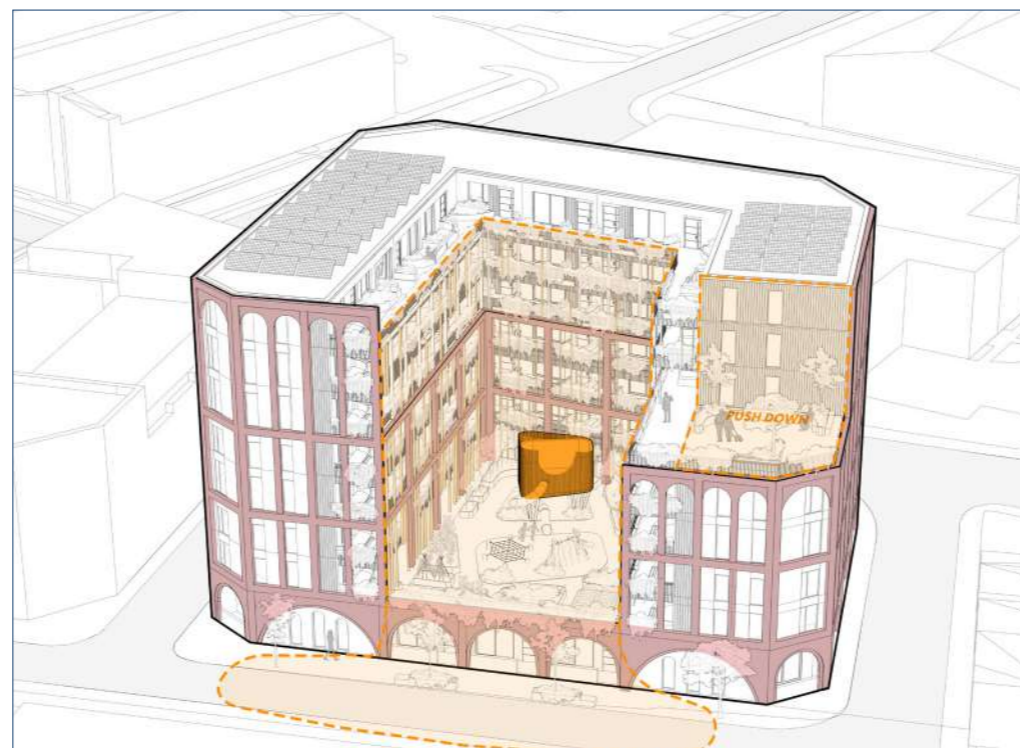
only invite night-time use, but to visually showcase the green space and heritage assets in a warm, welcoming atmosphere which is not overly harsh, as well as not disrupting microhabitats, and directing light where it is needed to reduce unnecessary light pollution. The scheme should be consistent with the lighting scheme envisaged as part of the wider strategy.

“Does ‘bus priority’ work well with active travel?”

Broadmead Placemaking Plan Street Type 5: Active Corridor

Response to Q12 of Survey 2: ‘Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposals for Street Type 5: Active Corridor?’

Competition proposal for apartments in Bristol city centre focused around social outdoor spaces and connection to the natural world



Marrons supports improvements to Union Street however it is unclear whether plans for creating an active corridor along this street tie in with a wider active travel strategy for Bristol, beyond the city centre/ Broadmead area. It would be useful to see a wider active travel strategy plan in the DDP.

We would welcome the introduction of a seamless transition from this active corridor to Castle Park and the network of pedestrian

footpaths. The removal of vehicular traffic along Newgate will help with this, improving the currently unpleasant experience of crossing from Union Street to Castle Park, which is dominated by cars, buses and street clutter.

We would welcome a well-considered landscape strategy for this area. The use of soft and hard landscaping to create a visual and physical continuation of the active corridor through to Castle Park and beyond would be welcomed. Trees and

planting filtering through from the park to Broadmead would support active travel beyond this corridor.

Will the active corridor support active travel holistically, including walking, jogging, cycling, scooting and wheeling?

The DDP does not explain how e-scooters are to be addressed and what infrastructure is to be provided to support this mode of travel. Do they travel up and down alongside cyclists,

or pedestrians? Will the route support disabled people, the elderly, parents with prams and young children? This is a key link to the facilities within Broadmead and it should support the whole population. We acknowledge the width of Union Street limits what the street can provide however downhill cycling alongside buses may deter less confident cyclists from cycling here. Will bus stops be located to make sure buses do not interrupt the downhill movement of cyclists?

Increased cycle parking is welcomed however the Active Travel Strategy plan (Fig 116) within the DDP Part B doesn't identify the location of cycle storage facilities (point 5 from the text is not identified on the plan). We note that cycle storage is proposed within the mobility hub at the top of this street by The Galleries. Will cycle storage be provided at the bottom of Union Street, along the linear garden street and other strategic locations and gateways?

We have concerns around the use of the description 'bus priority corridor' for Union Street. While we support the idea of promoting use of public transport, Union Street is proposed as an Active Street and should prioritise active modes of travel i.e. pedestrian and cyclist movement.



St Peter's Church

Overall, Marrons welcomes the potential for the church to be brought into public use. Its function as a monument has become a focus of its current use, although was not its original intended purpose. Given that it can no longer function as a church, its continuing use as a memorial is not inappropriate. However, care should be taken when considering it being a focus of Castle Park.

The historic focus of the park was, as the centre of historic Bristol, originally dominated by the castle, and there is still a great deal of association with this use. By making the church the focus of the park, as a melancholic reminder of the men and women who lost their life during World War II, may

be at odds with the setting as a whole. By making the church a separated memorial, rather than a primary focus of the park, through landscaping and design, would enhance its current use, without the potentially discordant interaction with the park as a leisure and recreational space.

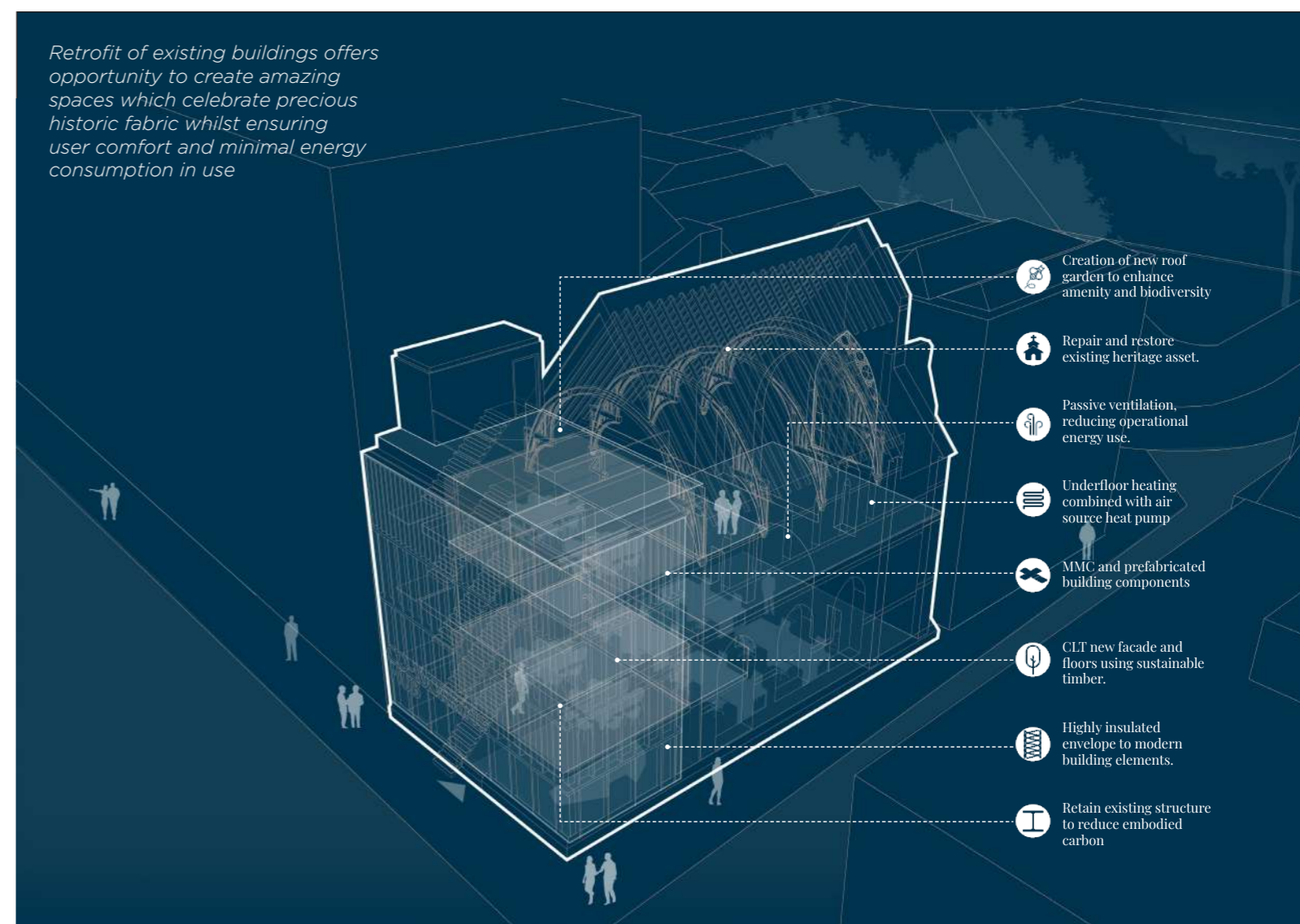
The installation of sombre and thought-provoking art and cultural installations, such as the Touched Echo silent memorial installation in Dresden, would be a highly appropriate use of the church as both a memorial, and as an important piece of Bristol's heritage, culture, and tourism, without the potentially antagonistic interaction of the setting of the church within the active park.

“Can we go further to bring valuable assets into use?”

Castle Park Masterplan Strategy 2: Heritage Re-use

Response to Q6 of Survey 3: *‘Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposals for Strategy 2: Heritage Re-use?’*

Retrofit of existing buildings offers opportunity to create amazing spaces which celebrate precious historic fabric whilst ensuring user comfort and minimal energy consumption in use



Overall, Castle Park has a high potential for the use of unused, or underused heritage assets, and we would appreciate a scheme which drew heavily on those assets through a unified approach to showcase the historic centre of the city.

The Castle Keep

Marrons is in agreement that the Castle Keep needs urgent and sensitive conservation repair, and welcome such works.

Opening this space up to the wider city would increase the overall draw to the scheduled monument. Currently, however, there are limited ways to appreciate the remains of the Keep, and we would appreciate a scheme which included a way to enjoy the Keep as part of the overall design, such as multiple interpretive 'windows' showing the castle and its environs as it once was, such as those at Nottingham Castle.

Heritage Trail

The proposed extension to the Heritage Trail is a welcome inclusion to the heritage re-use strategy and could tie in to a wider re-imagining of the overall trail, with the inclusion of physical demarcations, such as coloured or texturised bricks, to follow and denote heritage assets, as well as the potential for electronic interaction such as a heritage app, or QR codes.

Lighting

The use of lighting as a non-physical alteration has worked well at other heritage sites, particularly in France, in Lyon and Blois as examples, as well as on a cultural level with the Bristol Light Festival. As such, we welcome a scheme that can act to improve upon the interpretation of the past for a general audience. The use of lighting and professional storytellers as part of heritage open days, and other events could act as one of the unique draws to Bristol's heritage tourism.



The Vaulted Chambers

There is potential for works proposed in the BCC DDP to necessitate archaeological investigation and we would welcome an active engagement with the public in terms of the archaeological remains.

The Vaulted Chambers are currently woefully underused, and use of the space as the potentially oldest above ground remains in Bristol as an interactive space to showcase archaeological finds from the park and its environs, such as in the London Mithraeum, would be a draw to the city and a fresh way of public interaction with Bristol's past.

Other underground spaces are also underutilised, and a unified scheme that made use of the underground spaces north of St. Peter's Church, the medieval vaults at the western end of Castle park, and the Sally Port steps, would be a potentially significant enhancement to the heritage value of the park. An adaptive re-use of these spaces, such as in cities with extensive underground space, including Paris, Edinburgh, Nottingham, and others, contributes to heritage tourism, as well as increased local interest.



Bristol city centre has many under-used and vacant historic structures which could better contribute to the functional, cultural and aesthetic character of the city.

“So what’s next?”

Marrons considers that Bristol City Council’s Development & Delivery Plan is thorough and far-reaching and we support its positive vision for the future of the city centre. As such, we have summarised our overall thoughts into five points for further consideration which reflect the type of projects and themes that we’d be excited to be involved with and promote moving forwards.

Prioritise the creative re-use of existing buildings alongside new-build

Marrons supports Bristol City Council’s appraisal of applications which involve demolition through the lens of embodied carbon. The formalisation of planning policy to support the re-use and retrofit of existing buildings requires careful consideration and sufficient flexibility for developers. The carbon and cultural benefits of retaining existing building stock should not be underestimated, however, this should be weighed against providing attractive, efficient and sustainable buildings for future generations.

1.

2.

Provide progressive planning policy to facilitate meanwhile uses

Current planning policy and application timescales makes it difficult to implement meanwhile uses of vacant buildings. We can point to many European cities where policy allows for this kind of positive, creative use is much easier. Marrons agrees that meanwhile use provides a plethora of benefits to the city and would encourage Bristol City Council to review their policies to better facilitate these.

3.

Acknowledge and celebrate Bristol’s student population

Marrons feel that the student population and universities can strengthen a diverse offer of accommodation in the city centre, thereby promoting vibrancy. This should, however, be in conjunction with year-round, permanent and affordable homes for all kinds of households.

The physical connects towards the Temple Quarter developments should be strengthened to better facilitate integration and encourage the flow of Bristolians, students and visitors alike between these two thriving hubs.

4.

Encourage public-private collaboration

The desperate need exists for long term patient capital to undertake meaningful regenerations, where the private sector is capable of financing change in a way that looks beyond short-term returns and thinks instead of the economic benefits of supporting and evolving communities and reinvigorating traditional centres of commerce and industry. Could BCC use ‘Local Incentive Backed Vehicles’ to help drive this change and encourage private sector partners to take a long-term view?

5.

Foster a community for lifetime living

Marrons considers there is a missed opportunity for the DDP to consider later living in the city centre. There are many benefits of integrating later living into the heart of this growing residential community. Right-sizing into town centre later living can also achieve wider societal benefit. For example, it has the potential

to free up larger homes for younger families in suburban locations, helping to alleviate serious and perennial pressures in the UK housing market and give younger people a chance to get onto the property ladder or size up from small flats when having children.



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