Bristol City Centre

4.2.1 As its cultural and economic heart, the city centre plays a critical role in Bristol's prosperity and identity. This section sets out the council's approach to ensuring this role can continue and be enhanced.

4.2.2 The policy contributes to meeting objectives 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 of the Core Strategy and responds to issues 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 10.

Context

4.2.3 The city centre symbolises the city. It forms Bristol's historic core. Its character and setting is enhanced by a distinctive topography and by extensive waterfront areas. The city centre encompasses the distinctive neighbourhoods of Harbourside, West End, Old City, St Michael's, Broadmead, Stokes Croft, Old Market, Temple and Redcliffe. It includes the main shopping area of Broadmead and Cabot Circus and the other diverse city centre retail and service areas of Queen's Road and Park Street, Christmas Steps and St Michael's, Baldwin Street and Victoria Street, Harbourside, Old Market and Stokes Croft.

4.2.4 The opening of the £500m Cabot Circus development in 2008 has significantly strengthened the city centre's retail and tourist offer and created an estimated 5,000 jobs. The diversity and excellence of its arts and cultural facilities are also a significant factor in the city centre's vibrancy and attractiveness to residents and visitors alike. The city centre is also an increasingly important location for urban living. From 1996 to 2007 over 3,500 new homes were completed in the central area.

4.2.5 The city centre provides a sustainable location for future growth, situated at the centre of travel networks, including Temple Meads railway station, the main bus station at Marlborough Street and other key hubs for existing and proposed public transport services.

4.2.6 The centre of Bristol is of particular importance to the city's economy with over 100,000 people employed in a diverse range of occupations. As the region's office capital it is the location for the country's largest employment base in banking, insurance and professional services outside London. The Temple Quay area adjacent to Temple Meads train station is a particularly successful office location containing a number of headquarters buildings. The city centre office market shows signs of continuing strength. The Employment Land Study confirms that there will be a need and demand for new office floorspace over the period of the Core Strategy.

4.2.7 The growing creative and media industries sector are an important feature of the city centre which is a key location for their growth and development. The public sector also makes a strong economic contribution with significant research and development and public administration employment associated with the University of Bristol, government agencies and the nine UHB (University Hospitals Bristol) hospitals.

4.2.8 The city centre contains many built and natural environmental assets. These include key heritage assets: twelve conservation areas, archaeological remains and numerous listed buildings. There is a particularly sensitive relationship between the city centre's unique townscape and topography.

4.2.9 Parts of the city centre are at risk of flooding, a risk which is likely to increase as a result of climate change. This key constraint is likely to play a key role in shaping the future development of the area.

Policy BCS2

Bristol City Centre's role as a regional focus will be promoted and strengthened. Development will include mixed uses for offices, residential, retail, leisure, tourism, entertainment and arts and cultural facilities.

The city centre boundary will expand into:

- **The St. Philip's area, north of the Feeder Canal;**
- **The Newfoundland Street area; and**
- **The former diesel depot site, Bath Road**

Development up to 2026 will include:

- **Around 150,000m² of net additional high quality office floorspace;**
- **The provision of around 7,400 new homes; and**
- **Improved transport systems and connectivity, including new public transport, pedestrian and cycling routes and transport hubs.**

There will be a continuing consolidation and expansion on the University of Bristol and Bristol Royal Infirmary sites.

More efficient use of land and a greater mix of uses will be encouraged particularly within the Broadmead, Nelson Street and St James' Barton areas. Throughout the city centre higher density, mixed use development will be encouraged with active ground floor uses along the busier streets.

Continued improvement will be promoted in regeneration areas including Redcliffe and Harbourside and at city centre gateways including Old Market, Stokes Croft, Cumberland Basin and Temple Meads.

The Floating Harbour will be maintained as a location for maritime industries and water related recreation activities.

Design of development will be expected to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance, function, conservation of heritage assets, sustainability and maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure. Key views will be protected. Street design will give priority to pedestrian access, cycling and public transport. New development should include measures to secure public access and routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including access to waterfront areas.

Major developments should demonstrate measures to enhance social inclusion and community cohesion, especially in respect of those communities close to the city centre. Opportunities will be taken to reduce the severance of parts of the city centre from neighbouring communities caused by major roads and other physical barriers.

Facilities and services, including those of a small scale, which contribute to the diversity and vitality of the city centre will be encouraged and retained.

Explanation

4.2.10 Residential development will continue to be an important feature of the city centre, helping to bring vitality to the area and support its diversity. The new housing development referred to in this policy would be primarily for apartments and town houses with densities appropriate to a city centre location.

4.2.11 However, as residential development is more vulnerable to flooding than other land uses flood risk will need to be taken into account. The greater risk of flooding that could arise from climate change and the need for further work to ensure the delivery of effective mitigation of that risk have, for the time being, limited the residential capacity of the city centre compared to earlier estimates. The present estimate is that there is capacity over the plan period for around 7,400 dwellings in the area, of which just over 6,000 are already completed or committed and the remainder of which could be achieved just using land within Flood Zone 1. Consequently, while the delivery of 9,000 homes in the area remains an aspiration, any additional capacity in the area will have to emerge from further detailed sequential and exception testing work undertaken as part of the Bristol Central Area Action Plan.

4.2.12 The Cabot Circus development has strongly reinforced the role of the city centre as the principal destination for shopping and leisure in the city and in the South West region. The Bristol Citywide Retail Study indicates that there is likely to be capacity for further comparison retail provision after 2012. However, the study recommends that the effects of the new development will need to be assessed before any additional provision is planned. The council proposes to undertake a further retail assessment in 2010 to inform the Bristol Central Area Action Plan and its policies regarding the amount and location of new retail floorspace provision.

4.2.13 The city centre has a large pipeline stock of office development, with around 270,000m² net additional office floorspace identified at the start of the plan period. Policy BCS2 proposes that around a further 150,000m² of net additional floorspace is provided in the period to 2026.

4.2.14 The city centre is a location for large-scale developments of citywide and regional importance. However, its character, vitality and diversity also owe a great deal to the range and diversity of uses, including those of a small scale. Such uses include small shops, workspaces, pubs, cultural and community facilities. The historic Floating Harbour is also important as a location for some maritime industries and water related recreational activities. The Core Strategy therefore proposes that these will continue to be a feature of that part of the city centre.

4.2.15 Continued growth and development in city centre benefits the city and region as a whole. However, it may be difficult for members of more deprived communities, especially those close to the city centre, to benefit directly from change. The Core Strategy therefore expects that major developments will have regard to social inclusion, for example by providing for skills and training and by ensuring that services and jobs are accessible to those whose transport choices are limited.

4.2.16 Diagram 4.2.1 accompanying this policy illustrates the approach to the city centre and broadly indicates the major focal points for development and regeneration.

Policy Delivery

Bristol Central Area Action Plan (AAP)
The proposed AAP will provide the framework for delivering new development and growth in the area, including identifying the new city centre boundary. The AAP will set out a detailed policy framework for the central area and will allocate sites for development and protection. It will be informed by new evidence sources including an urban context analysis, a revised retail study and further work on strategic flood risk and mitigation.

The area covered by the Central Area Action Plan is shown for information on Diagram 4.2.2. The diagram only shows the geographical area to be covered by the area action plan and is not a boundary within which any specific development plan policies apply.

City Centre Supplementary Planning Documents
Existing supplementary planning documents for the city centre such as SPD1 "Tall Buildings" (January 2005), SPD3 "Future of Redcliffe" (July 2006), SPD8 "Nelson Street – Regeneration Framework" (March 2006), SPD10 "Planning a Sustainable Future for St. Paul's" (December 2006) and SPD11 "University of Bristol Strategic Masterplan" (July 2006) will continue to be used to guide development proposals in the city centre.

Transport
Policy BCS10 sets out the transport improvements proposed to improve accessibility to and from the city centre.

Housing
A mix of housing types and tenures will be provided through Policy BCS17 and Policy BCS18. A supplementary planning document addressing housing mix will provide details of how this policy will be implemented in the city centre.

Public Realm
Enhancements will be made to the public realm including those related to the Bristol Legible City initiative. More detail on approaches to the public realm will be included in the proposed Bristol Central Area Action Plan.

Partnership Working
The council will work with a range of partners to secure delivery of this policy and the Area Action Plan including the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the Homes and Communities Agency and the South West Regional Development Agency.

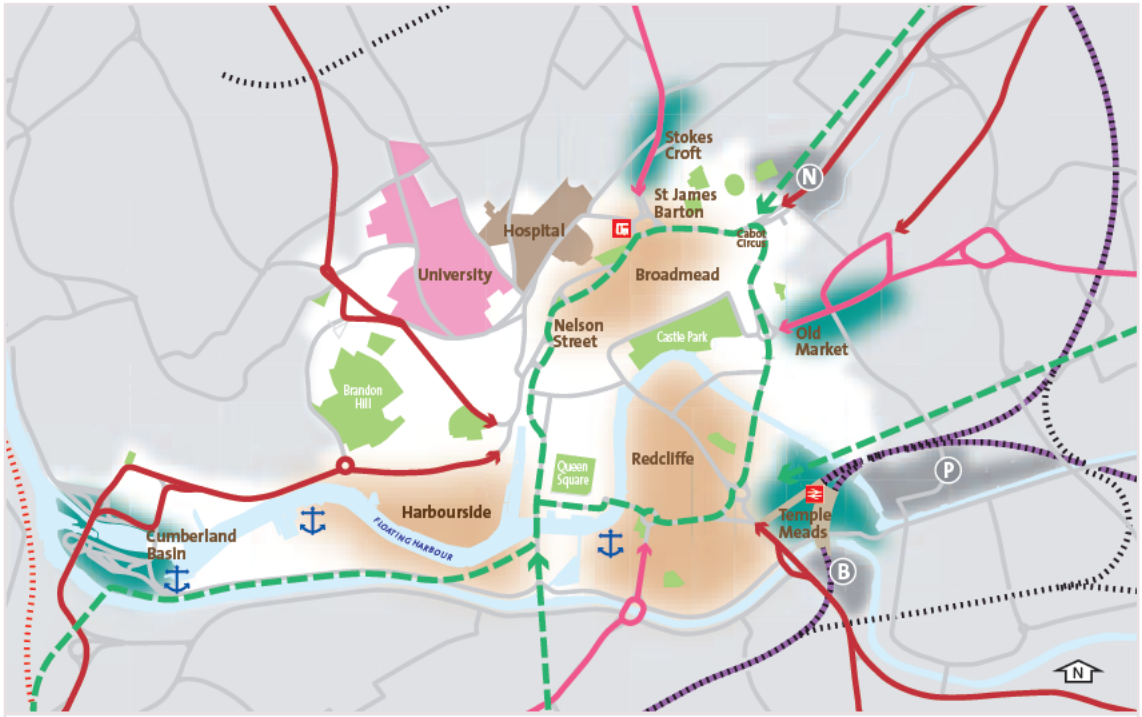
Delivery of major projects
A new Museum of Bristol is under construction and is expected to open in 2011.

A major scheme to improve flood defences on the Floating Harbour for the next 100 years and protect the city from flooding is expected to be completed in 2012.

The Colston Hall is being transformed into a focal point for musical performances, production and education in the region. Phase 1, the construction of a new foyer building, was completed in Autumn 2009.

Targets	Indicators
Secure the delivery of major projects	Progress on the delivery of major projects will be reported in the Annual Monitoring Report
Maintain health of primary shopping areas of the city centre	Centre health checks to be carried out at 2010, 2016 and 2020 and reported in the AMR
	The Targets and Indicators section of Policy BCS8 addresses the economic aspects of this policy
	The Targets and Indicators section of Policy BCS5 addresses the housing aspects of this policy

Diagram 4.2.1: City Centre Key Diagram



- Existing major green spaces
- Areas of focus for development and regeneration
- Improvement of City Centre gateways
- Proposed extensions to City Centre
  - N • Newfoundland Street - Mixed use
  - P • St Philips (Part) - Mixed use
  - B • Bath Road - Mixed use
- University Precinct
- Hospital Precinct
- Locations for maritime industries
- Proposed Showcase Bus Corridor
- Existing Showcase Bus Corridor
- Other existing highway
- Temple Meads station
- Bus and coach station
- Greater Bristol Metro Rail Project
- Existing passenger rail routes
- Reopening of Portishead rail line for passenger use
- Proposed rapid transit (indicative)

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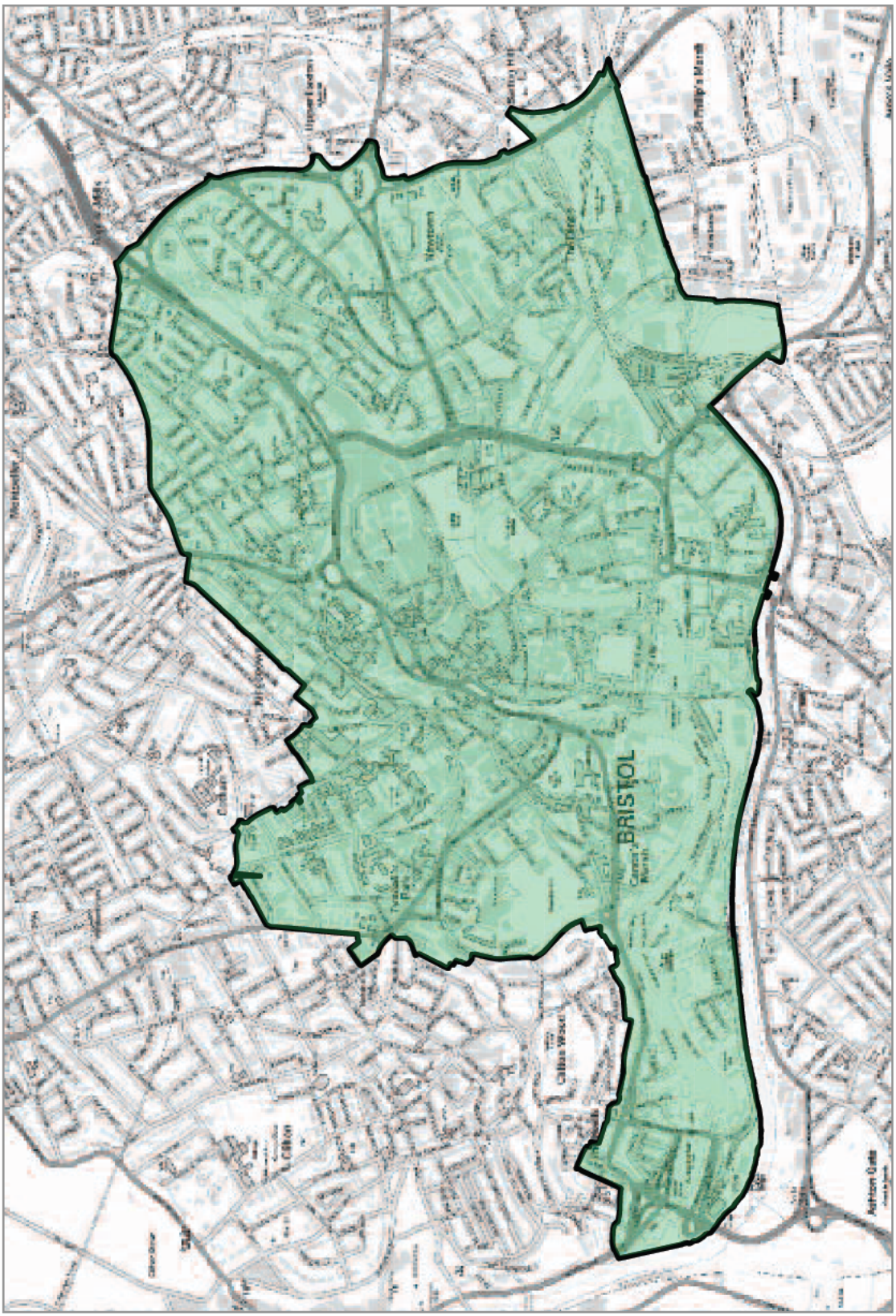
Diagram 4.2.2: Area covered by the Bristol Central Area Action Plan



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