



CITY DESIGN & STRATEGIC TRANSPORT  
GROWTH & REGENERATION

# THE CITY CENTRE FRAMEWORK

## Old City - character statement and place plan



CCF sub-area 1/7 Date : March 2018

CONSULTATION VERSION



## Old City

1. St Johns Church
2. Tailors Court
3. The Guildhall
4. Christ Church
5. The Crown Courts
6. Bank of England
- 7 St Stephens Church
8. St Nicholas Markets
9. St Nicholas Church





# Old City - character statement and place plan

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Old City

The Old City forms the historic core of the extended city of Bristol. Located on an island of higher ground, elevated above the low-lying water course, this natural topography informed the earliest Saxon defence line.

Originally contained and protected by an outer city wall, defined by St Nicholas Street, Leonard Lane, Bell Lane and Tower Lane, the strategic location of gateways established the main routes through the area. Corn Street to Wine Street forms the main east-west route, and Broad Street to High Street forms the main north-south route. The High Cross, formed at the intersection of these main routes was the physical and commercial hub for the area, with a dense network of secondary routes, lanes and passageways linking back to the outer streets.

While the medieval street plan remains, along with the many historic churches punctuating the skyline with their iconic spires and towers, the majority of older buildings are Georgian and Victorian. In the main, these buildings have respected the traditional plot boundaries, and the area is characterised by tight, interconnected, fine grain development with larger scale buildings along Corn Street reflecting the commercial and financial focus of the area during this period.

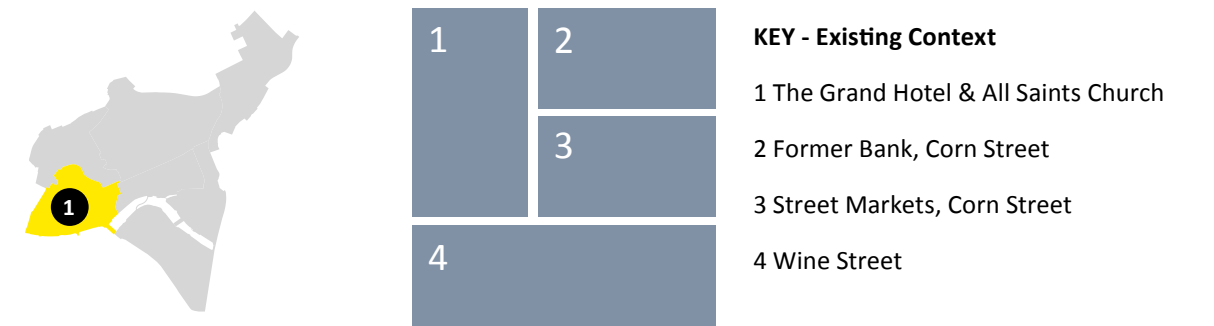
Today the area is characterised by increasing leisure and retail uses, with a mix of shops and independent market stalls contributing to a lively, bustling environment on Corn Street and the adjacent St Nicholas Market. Away from the main thoroughfares a dense mix of offices, law courts, legal chambers and

small businesses reflect the historic commercial focus of the area.

As well as an important visitor destination, evidenced by increasing numbers of hotel developments, the Old City is experiencing a growing residential and student population. This serves to increase activity within the area as well as provide a valuable residential presence outside of the commercial operating hours. Managing and balancing the needs of such a close and intense mix of uses is critical to maintaining the attractiveness of the area.

Recent public realm improvements along Corn Street and dynamic traffic restrictions, such as no vehicle access at weekends, have allowed a growing range of events to take place and thrive.

The area benefits from excellent public transport links on its periphery, and provides a focus for pedestrians given the area's attractive and convenient links to the Bristol Shopping Quarter and the cultural attractions of Harbourside and Bristol's West End. The popularity of the markets, particularly at lunchtimes and weekends, add to the vitality of the area and will continue to be supported and enhanced.

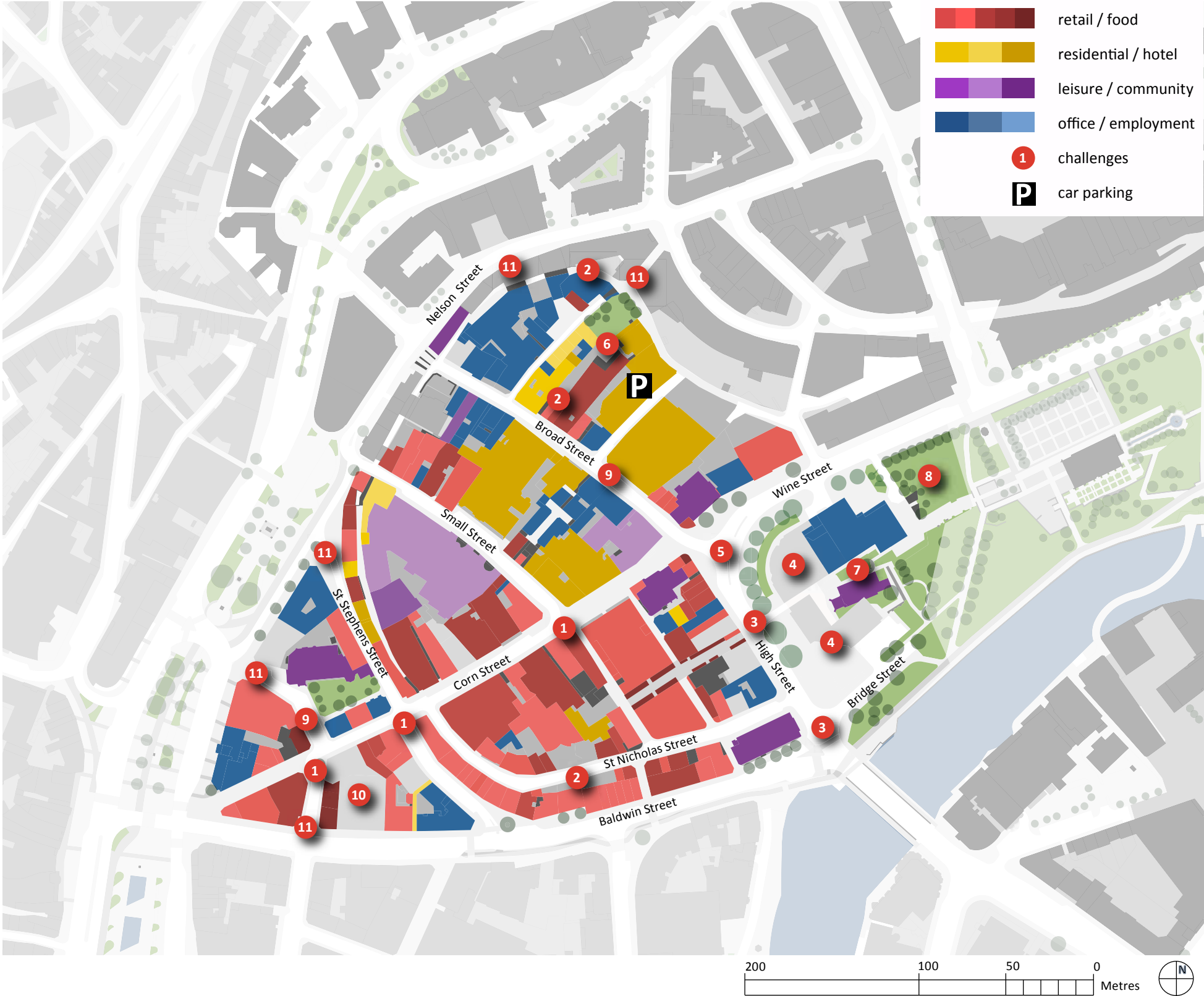




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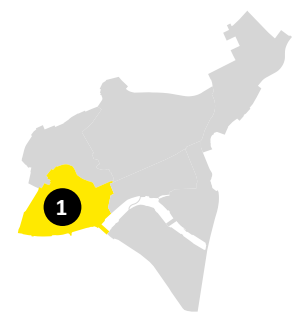
# Old City - Analysis

- Challenges:**
- 1 Conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle through-traffic.
  - 2 Poor public realm and street clutter.
  - 3 Physical separation from the High Street/ Wine Street site and Castle Park.
  - 4 Prominent vacant and deteriorating buildings.
  - 5 Highway dominated junction constraining pedestrian movement.
  - 6 Poor environment and lack of access to Tailors Court.
  - 7 Poor condition and underused heritage assets with a compromised setting and lack of public interpretation.
  - 8 Underused area of Castle Park.
  - 9 Constrained pavement width to allow on-street parking.
  - 10 Prominent vacant units within city blocks have a negative impact on the street and sense of vibrancy.
  - 11 Underplayed entrances to the Old City.





# Old City - character statement and place plan



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- KEY - Exemplars**
- 1 Oxford, UK
  - 2 Covered Markets, Madrid
  - 3 Mission Street, San Francisco
  - 4 Kensington Street, Sydney
  - 5 Plaça de Sant Eudald, Ripoll Spain
  - 6 Royal Mile, Edinburgh
  - 7 Grafton Street, Dublin

## Issues and Opportunities

The medieval core of the Old City is a unique and much loved area and provides a key pedestrian and cycling route across the city centre. With the exception of the recent improvements along Corn Street, the generally poor quality of the public realm does not reflect the high quality of its historic buildings. The environment is dominated by parked cars and clutter, with little space to dwell and enjoy the ambience.

As well as supporting day-to-day city life for residents, the area represents a major tourist attraction as is evident by the growing cluster of hotels. The increased demands on the area's streets and spaces, mean the public realm must be enhanced to ensure the vitality and economic wellbeing of the area.

### Issues:

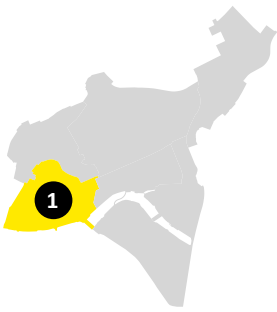
- Accommodating growth and development in a highly sensitive historic environment.
- Supporting the enhancement of the rich historic environment.
- Addressing the growing demand on public realm and services from an increasing residential population.
- Encouraging a diversity of uses and restoring historic links as buildings are redeveloped.
- Balance the requirement for vehicle access and servicing, while enhancing the pedestrian and cyclist movement through the area.
- Raising the profile of the medieval core as a mixed use destination.
- There is a need to further promote markets and events held in the area.

### Opportunities:

1. Continue delivery of initiatives set out in the Old City Public Realm Movement Framework, focusing public realm improvements in pedestrian priority areas.
2. Extend the use of dynamic traffic restrictions to allow spill activity and dwell space.
3. Improve pedestrian priority to allow easy, convenient access.
4. Promote the sensitive restoration and reuse of vacant historic buildings.
5. Promote meanwhile uses to reactivate vacant units.
6. Provide flexible street space to accommodate a varied programme of markets and events.
7. Utilise public realm and development opportunities to focus enhancement and increase legibility of entrances to the Old City.
8. Utilise public art and public realm projects to re-interpret and re-define lost heritage assets, for example the High Cross and St Mary-le-Port.
9. Provide an enhanced edge to Castle Park through development at High Street and Wine Street.







# 1 Old City Place Plan

## Vision

**A distinctive historic quarter and a key ingredient of the wider identity of Bristol. The area contains a vibrant mix of uses set within an attractive and well maintained historic townscape. A focus for visitors and tourism with high quality hotel accommodation and engaging evening economy, street markets and places to visit. Creative reuse of key buildings, such as the medieval churches, add to the areas attractiveness and success.**

## Objectives

1. Enhance the attractiveness of the area for visitors.
2. Improve the legibility and quality of the public realm giving pedestrians confidence to explore the narrow lanes and alleys as well as the main streets.
3. Ensure sensitive reuse, repair and management of historic buildings to maintain the visual quality of the townscape.
4. Redevelop the High Street / Wine Street site to complement the grain and identity of the Old City.
5. Continue to improve St Nicholas Markets and accommodate the extended street markets as a key attraction.
6. Maintain a rich mix of land use including civic and commercial activities, alongside increased residential.
7. Provide a high level of street maintenance and management.
8. Develop opportunities for providing heat and power networks and ultrafast broadband connectivity.

## Supporting transport measures

The strategy for movement has promoted access on the edges of the Old City with upgraded public transport facilities including a major MetroBus hub in the Centre, and strategic segregated cycle access on Baldwin Street and Colston Avenue. Public realm works within the Old City core have been focused on improving the quality of the pedestrian environment with space for occasional street markets and car free events.

## Key public realm and movement projects

**Corn Street** - The environmental improvements programme over recent years has implemented high quality pavements and kerbs, and has helped to transform the street. This has complemented the ongoing shift from banks and institutions to bars and restaurants. This work is not yet complete and the approach needs to be extended in adjacent streets such as Broad Street, Small Street and Marsh Street to give greater cohesion to the area as a focus for pedestrians and better link to the rejuvenated Centre.

**High Street / Wine Street** - The role and character of High Street and Wine Street has the potential to extend the qualities of the Old City and better accommodate increased pedestrian footfall and occasional street markets. The current use and extent of roadspace needs to be reassessed in order to maintain access, public transport movements and incorporate safe and segregated cycling.

## Key development projects

### OC01 High Street / Wine Street

The redevelopment of the Bank of England and Norwich Union sites have proved challenging, but offer perhaps the greatest potential of any site in the city to demonstrate the ambition of Bristol and to realise a connected and coherent historic core. The site planning needs to address a number of constraints and deliver significant outcomes. As such a development package needs to be attractive but balanced with regard to its layout, scale and massing in order to respond to its sensitive historic context and existing green infrastructure.

The reinstatement of St Mary-le-Port street as a primary pedestrian axis linking St Nicholas Markets to St Peter's Church is a priority, along with establishing a grain of buildings that will allow for the proper integration of the Church. Any scheme should seek to create an improved edge to Castle Park with buildings that properly address the open space. The tightening of the junction at High Street and Wine Street offers an opportunity to introduce a focal building and exceptional public space.

### OC02 St Nicholas Markets

There is a need to better manage and invest in the market area in order to more fully realise the potential and upgrade the fabric of historic buildings such as the Corn Exchange. Complementary uses within adjacent

vacant buildings and an improved presence onto High Street connecting with the redevelopment of the Bank of England site will increase the legibility of the markets and improve viability.

### OC03 St John's Court

The 1970's development of St John's Court largely destroyed the grain of buildings on the northern edge of Old City, reducing the legibility and character of Tower Lane along the line of the historic city wall. Its decline in use and severance of direct connection to Lewins Mead has made the area less attractive to pedestrians which in turn has reduced footfall and increased the need for security gates.

Refurbishment or redevelopment of the site should aim to provide a scale and form of development that helps to reinstate the historic grain, providing a mix of uses that help legitimise Tower Lane and Little John Street as public routes with improved links to Lewins Mead, St John's Steep and Tailors Court.

### OC04 former Gaumont Cinema

The former cinema building originally built in 1892 as the 'People's Palace Theatre' has been much altered and little remains of the interior. The facade provides an important feature of Baldwin Street, and should be enhanced and incorporated in to any development proposals. Any additional height behind the facade should not have any adverse visual impact from the surrounding streets.



# 1

## Old City Place Plan Key Diagram

- Proposed development: restore
- Proposed development: reinvent
- New public spaces and improvements to existing public spaces
- Active ground floor uses (cafes, restaurants, shops)
- Active building frontage (regular doors and windows, balconies etc.)
- Existing and potential new focal building
- Significant building in the townscape
- Key public space enhancement
- Public realm improvement corridor
- Pedestrian routes (primary and local)
- Cycle routes
- Enhanced Park Edge
- Taxi rank
- Enhanced existing Bus Stop
- MetroBus Location

