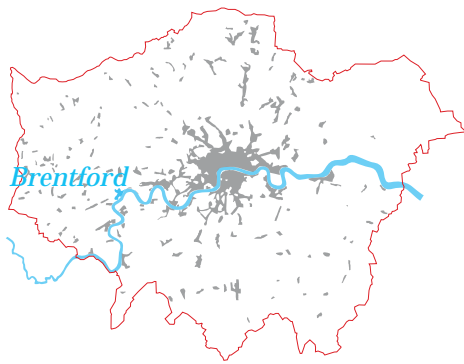




## *2.0 Brentford: A Waterside Town*

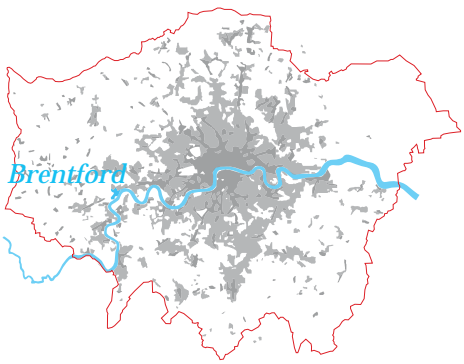
# 2.1 Positioning Brentford

In which we describe the development of the Borough Town of Brentford and its relationship to the growth of London



Development of London - 1813

This plan shows a time when Brentford was one of a number of separate towns that surrounded London.



Development of London - 1897

By the end of the century London has expanded to the point where Brentford became part of the urban area.



Development of London - 1950

By the 1950s London had reached the full extent of its expansion. it was at this point that the Greenbelt stopped further urban sprawl. By this time Brentford ihas been 'engulfed' within the city.



Development of London - 2010

Today the city hasn't grown outwards any further but it has filled out. Many of the gaps have been developed and the city is much denser than it was in the 1950s.



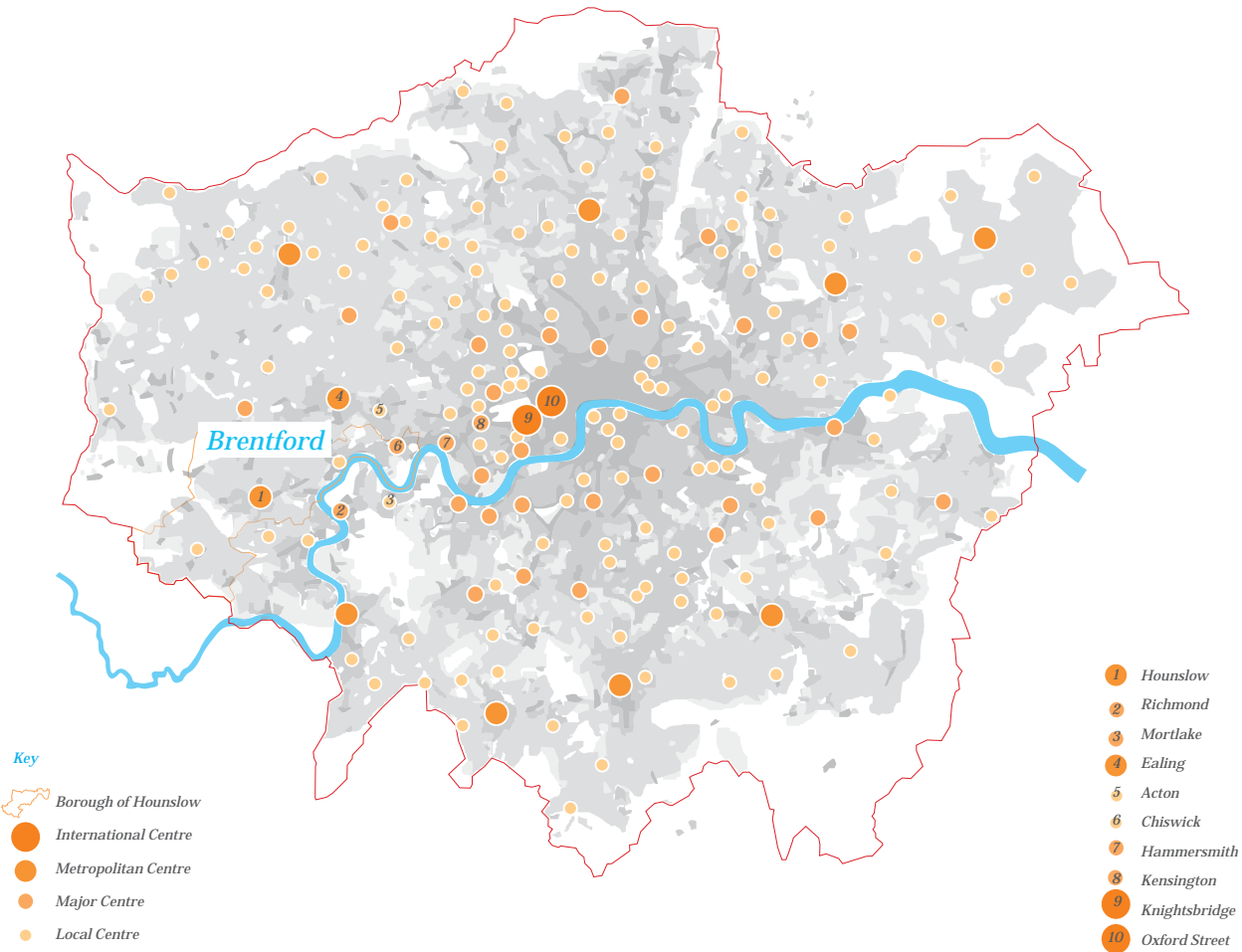
Borough Town of Middlesex

## 2.1.1 Borough Town of Middlesex

There was a time when Brentford was the County Town of Middlesex, the county that includes London and Westminster. The legacy of this is the County Court building. This puts Brentford in the same category as towns like Guildford, Chelmsford and Hertford. Over time Brentford has become consumed into the urban area of London. This process is explained in the series of maps above.

## 2.1.2 Local Centres

Over this time Brenford has been transformed from an independent town into a suburb of London and a minor one at that. The plan to the right shows the hierarchy of district centres from the London Plan - Brentford is classified as a Local Centre where as places like Hownslow, Ealing and Chiswick - historically much less significant, are now more important.





## 2.2 Brentford as it was

In which we describe the changes to the urban structure of Brentford over the past 100 years.



Prior to the sites development the area was historically used to grow Strawberries

### 2.2.1 Historic Development

The changes to the urban structure of Brentford can be seen by comparing this 'Figure Ground' plan of the town today with the 1920s plan. By comparing the two plans you can see how the urban form of the town has become fragmented. The very strong high street on the 1920s plan has become so fragmented that it hardly shows up on the present day plan and you could hardly pick out the centre from the surrounding urban sprawl.

By contrast in 1920 the town was centred on a compact high street with alleyways running down to the river. The sprawl of London can be seen to the right of the plan but to the left it feels very much on the edge of the city. The Brentford Lock site was strawberry fields at this time.

The aim of both the vision for the town centre and the masterplan for Brentford Lock West must be to repair the urban fabric of the town.



Historic Plan 1874



Figure Ground Plan 2010

## 2.2 A Changing Town

In which we describe the history of Brentford and the changing role of the High Street and surrounding areas.



### ***Phases of Development Pre 1700***

Brentford was originally a town on the main road running out of London to the west. Every visitor from Bristol, and other towns to the west would have crossed the Brent Ford on their way in and out of London in the road that eventually becomes Oxford Street.



### ***Phases of Development 1700 -1900***

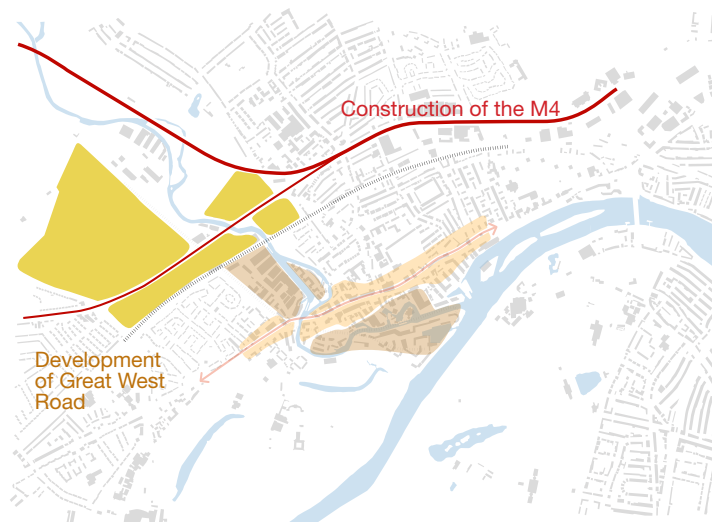
Brentford has always been a river town and historically a port at the point where the Inland Waterway system in the form of the Grand Union Canal meets the Thames. Brentford was the place where the boat people on the Grand Union based themselves and it retains a strong community of boaters. With the arrival of the railways in the 1840s the great technical innovation was Brunell's transhipment port where goods from the Thames could be loaded onto the railways in the area in brown shown on the



### ***Phases of Development 1940's***

Industry was confined to the south of the town until the mid 1900s. In the 1940's the BLW site was developed as a last attempt to save the declining water freight industry.





### ***Phases of Development 1960s -***

However the main development was along the Great West Road where modern factories started to locate from the 1930s onwards. This became an important commercial area - known as the Golden Mile and Brentford became increasingly by passed by both traffic and economic activity.

### ***Conclusion***

Today this process continues and the Great West Road itself is under pressure from employment areas around Heathrow as economic activity continues to move away from Brentford. There remains, however, a concentration of very important offices and headquarters on the Great West Road which are connected to Brentford town centre by the towpath.



Brentford Town Hall 1906



Transhipment Point 1860 (now Brentford dock housing area)



Brentford High Street 1907



# 2.3 Brentford Today

In which we describe the town’s character and relationship to the waterways as it is today



Boatyard South of the High Street

## 2.3.1 A Waterside Town

Located on the junction of the Thames and the Grand Union Canal, Brentford has been shaped by its relationship to water, surrounded by water.

Whilst much of the urban character of Brentford has been lost over the last 40 years due to the decline of the canal system Brentford still retains moments of its distinct character. Boat building yards and storage sheds can still be found integrated into the urban fabric of the area around and along the Grand Union canal as it meanders through the town towards the Thames. The waterways are now



A narrow alleyways leading from the High Street to the waterside



used by leisure users and as accomodation on canal boats and houses but may have an important role to play in the future as a sustainable transport network.

Alongside the boatyards and sheds the town is characterised by a number of narrow paths and routes that connect the High Street to the Grand Union Canal providing exciting moments and surprise as you move through them. Much of these areas sadly sit vacant at the moment.



The Butts



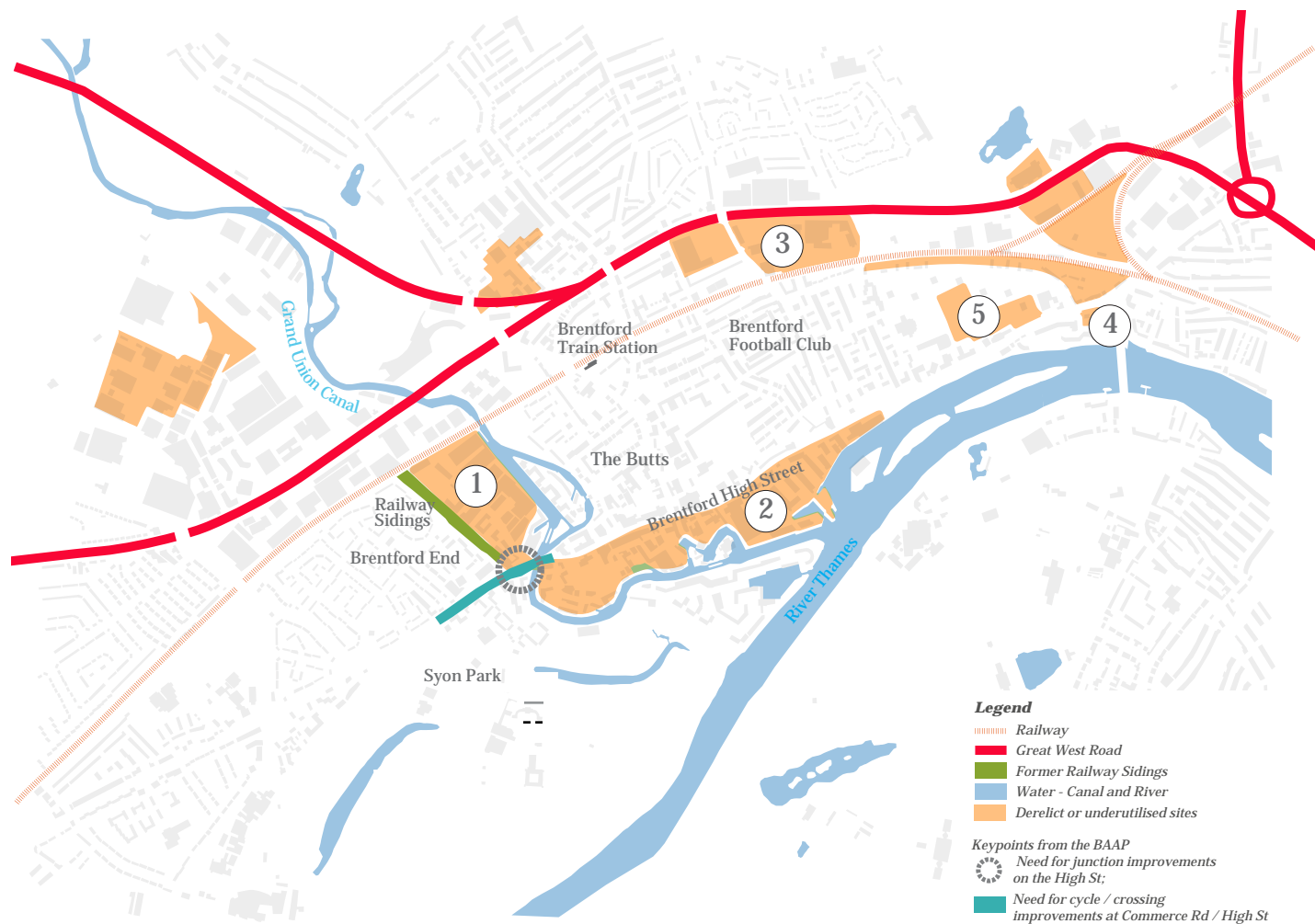
The High Street

## 2.3.2 The High Street

The High Street is currently under used. Many local people choose to travel by car to surrounding High Streets and retail centres for their local weekly shop as they feel the High Street does not offer enough quality facilities such as fresh fruit and veg or a butcher.

The site to the South of the High Street, owned by Ballymore is currently sitting mainly vacant. The area contains working Boatyards and buildings of historical interest.





Existing Physical Constraints

The location of the town centre next to the Thames and the vacant development sites south of the High Street and along Commerce Road means that there is not enough people living within walking distance to support the limited businesses/retailers which are currently on the High Street.

### 2.3.3 Other Developments

There is however an opportunity to change the town. The sites on this plan are under consideration for development, most notably the High Street site being considered by Ballymore and Brentford Lock West by ISIS. These have the potential to transform the town by providing opportunities for more people to live within close proximity to the High Street and to better connect Brentford with its unique waterways.

1. Brentford Lock West, ISIS
2. High Street, Ballymore Property Developers
3. GWQ, Barratt Homes
4. St George PLC
5. Thames Water



Open Spaces around Brentford

### 2.3.4 Existing Physical Constraints

To the North of Brentford runs the Great West Road and M4. While providing good vehicular access into London and out to the West of England they do create a barrier to movement to the north of the town. The railway line also limits connections to the north of Brentford. The BLW site is constrained to the West by the dismantled railway embankment; to the North it is constrained by the live railway line and to the East by the Grand Union Canal. Currently the site is only accessed to the south of the site either along Commerce Road or along the tow path of the canal.

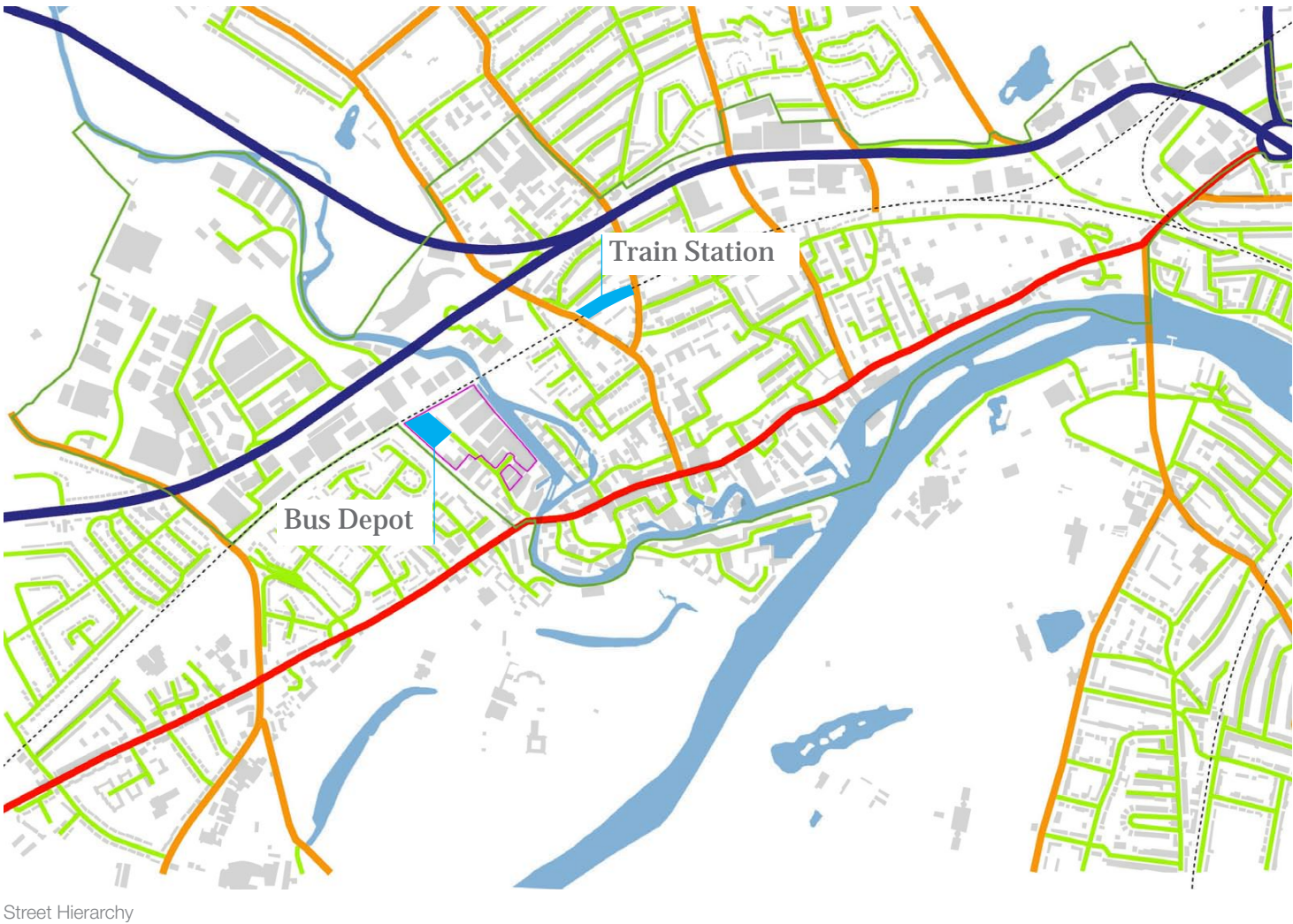
### 2.3.5 Open Space

Brentford's street network is fragmented because it is located close to the Thames. The up side of this is the wealth of open space within easy reach of the town including Syon Park and Kew Gardens.



# 2.4 Streets and Access

In which we describe the street network of Brentford and movement by public transport, cycling and walking



## 2.4.1 Street Hierarchy

One of the exercises that the team did with the community as part of the Design for Change workshop that was held as part of the pre-application consultation process was to plot the street hierarchy of the town. This shows the high street in red - which has now been bypassed by the Great West Road and the M4 (shown in Blue). However what Brentford lacks is secondary streets (orange). Normally there would be a network of these like the main strands of a spider's web around the centre. There are however none to the south of the High Street due to the Thames and a limited number to the north as a result of the railway and the river Brent.

The situation is not improved by adding in the minor roads. The road network for each of the neighbourhoods does not connect to the next neighbourhood creating a very disconnected street grid. This makes it difficult to get around so that people from Brentford End (for example) feel like they are a long way from Brentford town centre.



Bus Depot on Commerce Road



The very long platform at Brentford Train Station

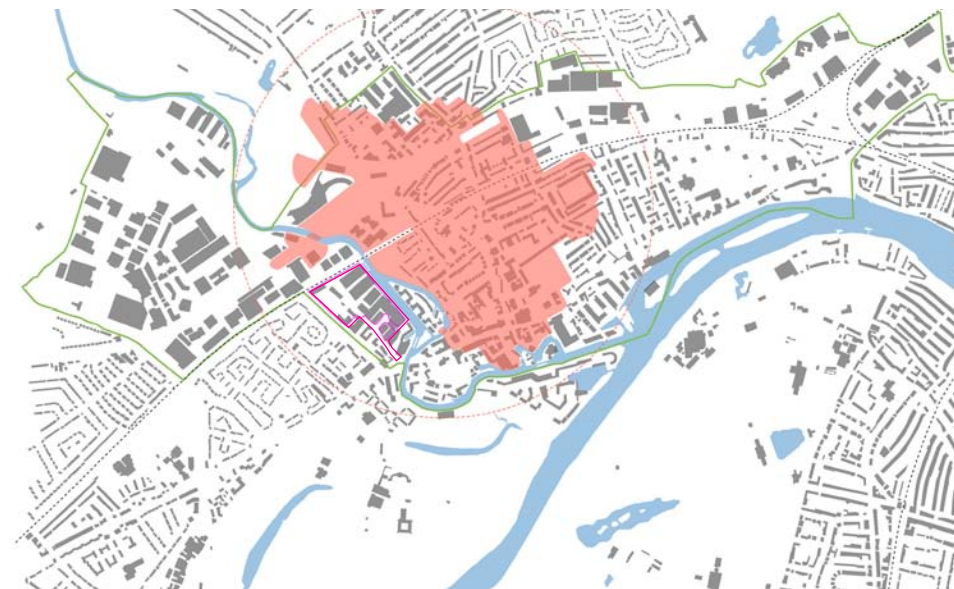
## 2.4.2 Public Transport

Brentford and the BLW site are well served by a public transport network. The train station has 4 trains an hour into London Waterloo. The location of the bus depot on Commerce Road means that the site and town are served by a regular bus network that connects through to Ealing, Hammersmith, Kingston and further afield. (See Transport Assessment [SD8]).





BLW Site PED Shed (Average walking distance in 10 mins)



Train Station PED Shed (Average walking distance in 10 mins)



BLW Site PED Shed with new bridge (Average walking distance in 10 mins)

### 2.4.3 Ped Sheds

Another problem with Brentford is its “Ped Shed”. This is the area immediately around the centre from which it attracts its core customers who can walk there in an average of 10 minutes. Brentford’s Ped Shed is very small because of the barriers created by the rivers and railway. Large parts of it are also unpopulated open space.

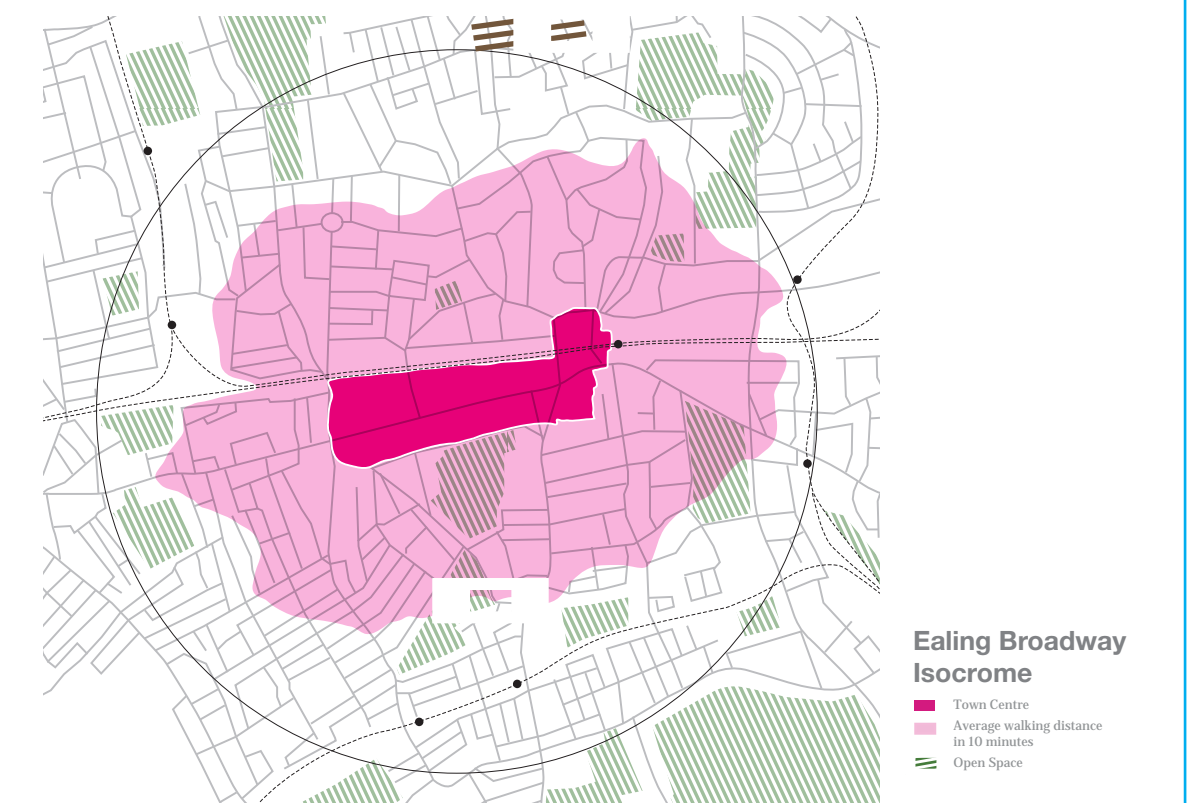
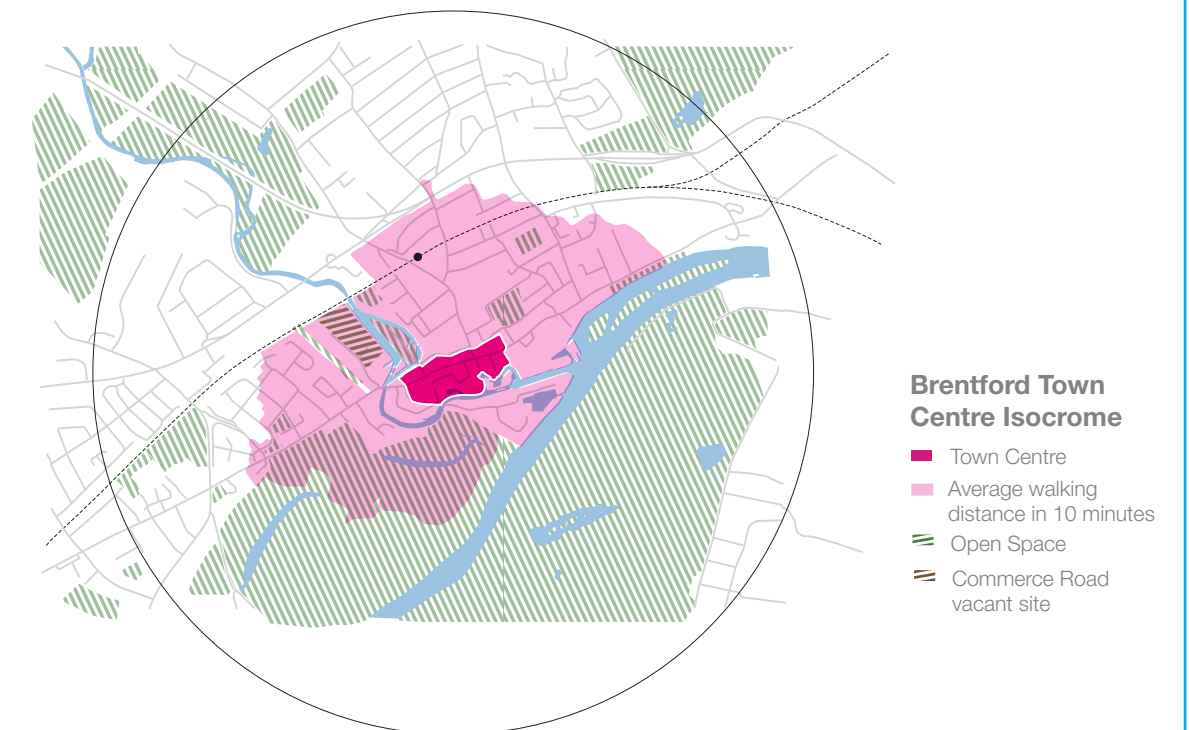
Compare this to Ealing’s Ped Shed drawn at the same scale. (see map to the right)

We have also looked at the ped shed from the centre of the BLW site. From the middle of the site you are currently able to access the High Street, the canal to the South of the High Street and the tow path along the canal means you are able to walk as far as the GSK offices within 10 minutes.

If you do the same exercise from the train you are able to access a large part of Brentford including the High Street, the football stadium and the GSK offices. Due to the canal you are unable to access the BLW site.

By inserting a bridge across the canal you bring the train station within an average 10 minute walk from the centre of the BLW site.

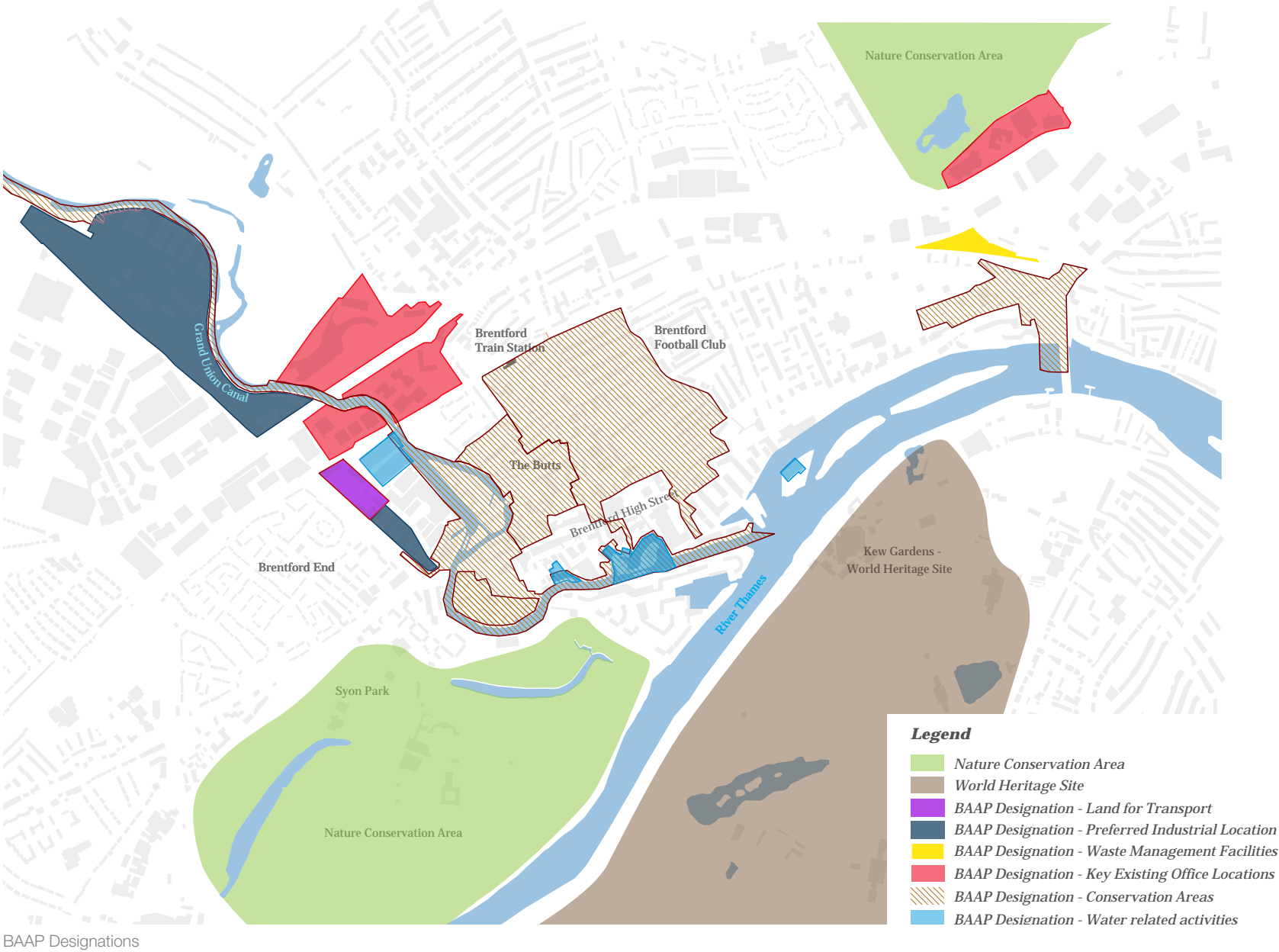
### Isocrome Comparison





# 2.5 Strategies for Brentford

In which we describe the strategic context for Brentford including the Community High Street Vision and the BAAP.



## 2.5.1 BAAP

The Brentford Area Action Plan (BAAP) was adopted in 2009 and will guide development in Brentford over the next 10 years. The plan addresses the key issues facing the Brentford area. In particular the plan focuses on regenerating Brentford town centre in a way that respects its unique waterside location and seeks to enhance the strategic economic role of the Great West Road and its history as an iconic gateway to London.

The plan outlines 9 objectives:

- Objective 1:** To promote the sustainable development and regeneration of Brentford.
- Objective 2:** To promote the re-use and redevelopment of previously developed sites and existing buildings within Brentford.
- Objective 3:** To provide a range of community, education, health, cultural, sport and entertainment facilities that will support Brentford’s growing community, particularly young and old people.

- Objective 4:** To ensure that the design of new developments will protect and enhance Brentford’s local distinctiveness.
- Objective 5:** To support Brentford’s distinctive role for the provision of waterside industries and support facilities, and reconnect the area with its unique waterside location including the river and canal banks and foreshore.
- Objective 6:** To regenerate Brentford town centre as a vibrant District centre that celebrates the town’s heritage and waterside location.





**Objective 9:** To continue to support the relocation of Brentford Football Club.

The BAAP also identifies the need for better improvement to access to the waterways along the canal side of the BLW site.

**Artist: Christian Nold with Designer: Daniela Boraschi**

Instead of taking tissue samples as one would from a human being, this project uses cultural probes to investigate the local social body and its unique ailments. Like eastern medicine, this project takes a holistic view of the body to look at the interconnections between problems to get a sense of the whole.

[illegible][illegible]

The *Swedish Design Map* is the result of a 50-week local residency by the artist Christian Bock with the design studio *Conditio* in Stockholm. Initiated by Museum ACT's Center for the Creative City, the project consisted of a number of participatory meetings and design sessions. During the workshops the gallery acted as a live design and mapping studio for meeting with local people to gather text and images of the information that was used to create this map. We would like to say a very big thank you to everybody who participated and gave their time and energy towards this project, especially the support staff at Museum.

Copyright - Christian Bold, 2008

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A full quality digital version of this map is available for download from the project website:  
[www.publichistory.net](http://www.publichistory.net)

This map uses data from the Open Street Map project, under a Creative Commons license.



The map has been structured into four interconnected sections that suggest a path to a bright, sustainable future. The path towards the future, as well as a progression from the past, is laid out. The first section is titled "The Past" and contains a map of the world showing the locations of the four sections. The second section, "The Present," contains a map of the world showing the locations of the four sections. The third section, "The Future," contains a map of the world showing the locations of the four sections. The fourth section, "The Future," contains a map of the world showing the locations of the four sections.

This activity enabled pairs of people working in a small office to access the project base whilst being mobile and disconnected. One person could move around the office and find their personal copy in their local cache in relation to particular locations. Or, they could, they entered these data via their office computer.

### Issue Networks

Reconnected square shaped with interconnecting lines represent Issue Networks of ideas that the working participants connected together and later edited and reconnected. In the third section for example we can see how the issue of building flats, young people and community are interconnected.

### Drawing Provocations

This is a series of drawing starts with challenging questions such as "You have an unlimited amount of money please and freedom to change London. In what way would you change it?" The drawings made by the participants were then digitized and



The Community High Street vision was developed by the Brentford High Street Steering Group. The report was published in November 2007 but the intention is that the report remains a living document that is updated over time. The High Street Vision sets out 114 recommendations for the development of the High Street which cover heritage, urban design, arts & leisure, health and community safety among others. We have attempted to take many of these recommendations on board when developing the BLW site. There has recently been a workshop hosted by the Princes Foundation which has established a brief for the masterplanning of the land south of the High Street.

Another way of looking at the town is the emotion mapping carried out as part of the Brentford Biopsy. This shows a bias towards the areas to the east of the town suggesting that Brentford Lock has fallen off people's mental (emotional) map of the area.

It is important to ensure a joined up vision for Brentford is delivered and that the BLW proposals complement those for the land south of the High Street and that both contribute to meeting the communities ambitious vision for the town.



# 2.6 The Technical Background

In which we describe the various technical studies and assessments undertaken by the Isis team.

In parallel with the various urban design appraisals and in order to derive a robust and deliverable strategy for the future development of the site the ISIS team commissioned a number of related work streams at the outset of the process. These studies comprised:

- [Planning policy context](#). A key objective of any revised strategy for the site was to ensure that it ‘fits’ within the planning policy context provided by the London Plan, the saved policies of the UDP, the Brentford Area Action Plan and the new emerging LDF documents. In view of this situation a detailed review of the existing planning policy context was undertaken, together with a detailed review of the Inspector’s decision letter in relation to the previous scheme.
- This review identified a number of principles, which together have been used to help guide and inform the future development of the site and identify any potential risk and conflict.
- An [Employment Potential Report](#) to provide an understanding of the potential for viable employment uses on the site.
- [A Waterspace Strategy](#). British Waterways produced a draft waterspace strategy for the area between Brentford Kew Bridge and Osterley. The study considers opportunities for increased traffic, commercial and leisure and how the site fits into the wider context. This is currently the subject of ongoing consultation with local stakeholders.
- [Housing Market report](#) to better understand the housing needs of the area.

- [Highway and transport capacity](#). As part of the preparation of the masterplan we undertook a number of preliminary investigations, including:
- [Testing a series of options](#) for the site using the BAAP assumptions in order to determine the maximum capacity of the local highway network.
- [Testing the viability](#) of introducing a second access point to the north of the site in order to obtain direct access onto the Great West Road.
- Consultation with TfL in relation to the full [transport and access strategy](#).
- Consultations with TfL in relation to the operational requirements of the [bus station](#).
- [Flood Risk and drainage assessment](#) in order to understand the implications of the development in terms of flood risk and drainage requirements.
- [A Heritage and Conservation Report](#) on the historic importance of buildings in the Commerce Road area and how waterside regeneration proposals should respond to the existing conservation area status
- [Energy, water and other utilities](#). We assessed the capacity of existing infrastructure, identified the need for upgrades and looked at the potential of introducing an area wide community heating network.
- [A cultural strategy](#) on how culture will be threaded into the design process

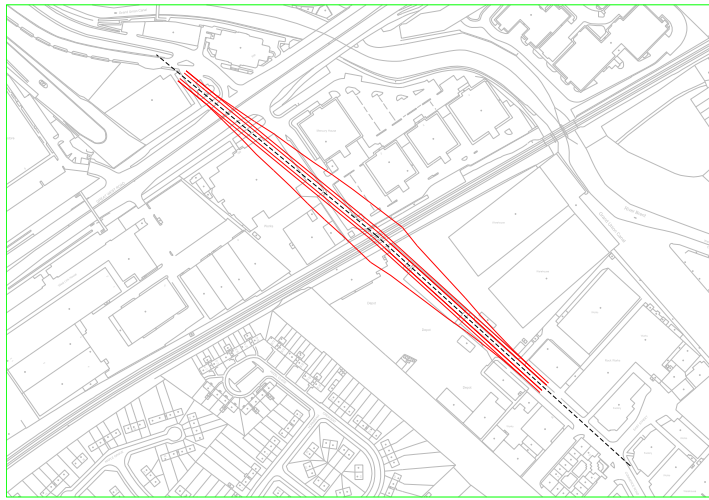
The detailed background reports in relation to each of the above were made available to the Council as part of the pre-planning application process and confirmed the following:

- Land use**
- The business sectors that have the potential for future development in Brentford: media, entertainment and creative industries; information and communications technologies, feeding of those already based on the Great West Road.
- The forms of development that could be appropriate on the site: flexible space for major companies and small to medium industries; services for businesses and staff; space for start up businesses.
  - Explore ways of engaging young people in business and new enterprises.
  - Increase the potential for productive business interaction between the majoe firms and smaller enterprises.
  - Make use of existing premises if they can be viably converted (provision for SME’s is rarely viable in new premises).
  - From an economic standpoint two forms of residential development merit consideration: provision of home-working and homes that are allocated to people working locally.
  - Make best use of the site’s pivotal location between the two Brentford economies.
  - Make best use of the canal towpath.
  - The need to retain the bus station on site.
  - Housing: The opportunity to create a high quality, high density, family-focused but mixed residential development offering:
  - For families: a choice of high quality 2-4 bed homes

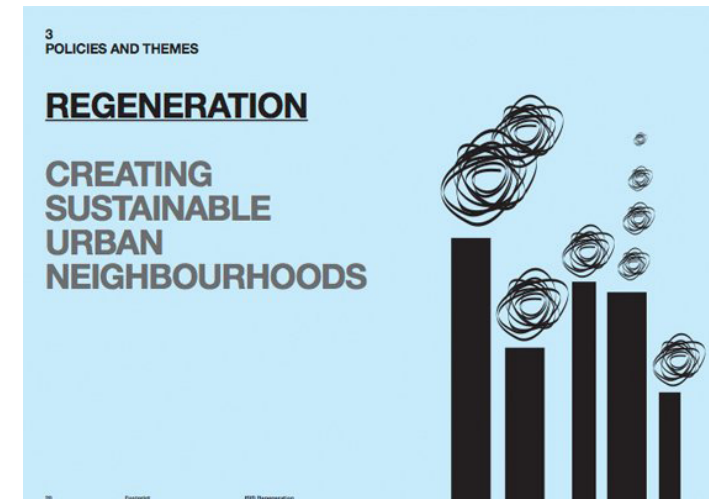
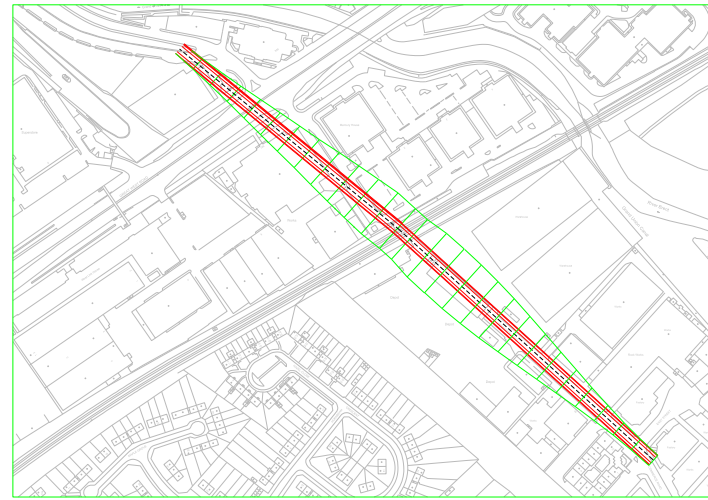
- For ‘down-sizing’ older households and for professional singles/couples: spacious 2 bed houses or their high density equivalent, such as duplex units with generous balconies
- For singles/couples seeking a first home: affordable market and social sector 1-2 bed apartments

- The potential role of the site in terms of the wider waterspace strategy**
- Water should be seen as a unifying factor joining Brentford Town Centre with the Great West Road.
  - Potential facilities include the introduction of a wet dock to provide for the small scale repair and maintenance of light craft i.e. canal boats; a new facility for the canoe club, which will provide a safer launch for boats and an alternative to the Kew Arc facility; additional visitor moorings, a water taxi stop and a possibly a floating classroom linked to the provision already located at Uxbridge. The strategy also confirmed that the site is not suitable for waterborne freight on a large scale and that if this part of the GUC was to become viable then other sites would be more appropriate, for example Transport Avenue.





Testing of a second access to the site and a tunnel through the viaduct. Both options were unviable.



ISIS Sustainability Charter



A community growing project

### Existing buildings

- The initial report on conservation and heritage issues, which accompanied the previous appealed planning application concluded that the two, large warehouses, comprising steel-framed sheds erected in the early 1960s are the only buildings that had any direct association with the canal, and only through the overhead craning facilities they possess. The cantilevering section of the southern-most of the two buildings that extends above the canal side path and the small dock has some constructional interest, and consideration might be given to the retention and the incorporation of this part of the building into the future development of the site.
- The report also claimed that the only buildings on the Commerce Road Site of any intrinsic, external architectural interest are the five, two and three-storey, late-'thirties, frontage buildings on the north-east side of Commerce Road (the two on the north-west side of the junction with the short cul-de-sac, variously annotated on the Ordnance Survey maps as East Street or Commerce Road) and the three on the south-east side of the junction built as offices to serve the industrial sheds behind. The front and return elevations of each of these five office buildings, four of which are located within ISIS Waterside Regeneration's site, possesses various quasi Art Deco architectural features.

### Highways & access

- The identification of Commerce Road as the single point of access to the site.
- The non-viability of introducing a second access to the site and a tunnel through the viaduct.
- There is sufficient capacity within the highway network, with the redevelopment of all BAAP sites to accommodate a redevelopment of the site comprising approximately 700 residential units and 6,000 m2 of B1(a) office space.

### Flood risk

- The site is located on 'developable, previously developed land' with the south east corner being located in flood zone 3b and elements of the site east of Commerce Road being susceptible to only local flooding.
- Less vulnerable land allocations should be situated in the south-east corner of the site and/or minimum finished floor levels be set to a minimum of 300mm above the existing levels (7.00mAOD).
- Soakaways and similar ground infiltration techniques are not viable for the site due to the underlying geology of London Clay. Viable storage solutions include tanks, cellular storage units or oversized pipes.
- Rainwater harvesting would serve to reduce the overall volume of required storage.

### Sustainability

- ISIS's own Sustainability Charter will underpin the environmental sustainability approach in terms of objectives for reducing CO2 emissions, reducing car dependency, waste minimisation, local food production and minimising impact of construction materials.
- As well as the Charter, compliance will be sought with applicable policies of the London Plan, the LBH Sustainability Checklist and the BAAP.
- The outline approach to the energy supply and reducing CO2 emissions should comprise:
    - Reducing energy demand to a minimum through designing buildings with good levels of insulation and daylight as well as reducing solar gain and overheating;
    - Investigating meeting the remaining energy demand as efficiently as possible through technologies such as combined heat and power (CHP); and
    - Investigating the use of other onsite renewable and/or low carbon energy sources to supply a significant proportion of the developments requirements and further reduce CO2 emissions.
  - The approach to waste minimisation should start by incorporating the requirements of LBH's extensive recycling collection scheme and looking at methods to improve behaviour to reduce the amount of residual waste through measures such as easier source separation and storage access.

### Cultural Strategy

- As part of the consultation and engagement programme for BLW, ISIS have undertaken a cultural strategy for the site with the aim of considering how culture is threaded into the process of design and the animation of the site bringing added benefits to residents, business and wider audiences within Brentford. A number of projects have been identified and these could include:
  - [Cultivate London](#) - use of the site as a temporary growing space
  - [Festival of Past times](#) - a project celebrating spare-time
  - [The Brentford Shed](#) - a meeting space on the site
  - [Discrete Lighting Works](#) - light installation
  - [Two Wheels Good](#) - a bicycle focused programme of events
  - [Water and Ariel](#) - Ariel Circus
  - [Community Collaborative film production](#) - Community film production with Desperate Optimists.

This information helped to shape a preferred framework for the site. This is presented in the next section.