

#### 4.4.1 Retained Structures

There has been a great deal of debate as part of the development of the masterplan about the structures on the site; the two large canal warehouses and the art deco frontages to the factories at the southern end of Commerce Road. Our approach to masterplanning it to incorporate where possible existing structures and reminders of the site's history so we have been keen to find ways of incorporating these historic elements into the scheme.

Commerce Road was originally developed as an extension of the Great West Road and the art deco design of the early factories reflects the design of the larger factories of the time. The factories were essentially large sheds with a two storey office on the Commerce Road frontage so that the art deco elements are little more than a façade. This is one of the few situations where a façadist approach is probably valid. The plan therefore retains the three sections of façade along Commerce Road. The retained sections range in quality with the 2 of the blocks fronting onto East street of higher quality. The two storey sections will be incorporated into the new blocks as part of the commercial frontage to the road. The residential blocks above this will be set back to allow the facades to retain their original form. The symmetrical corners to East Street are retained as part of the design of the block.

The warehouses are not listed, are of no architectural interest and indeed are not very old (having been built in the 1960s). They are however one of the few reminders of the former character of the canal when it was a working port. Old photos show warehouses such as this lining the canal and apart from the two on the site there is only one other remaining on the land south of the High Street. As the photographs show the sheds are huge internal spaces with each shed being made up of two bays. It has not been possible to retain them in their entirety, however the plan retains the most of the northern bay of the shed next to the railway. This will either be used for managed workspace on two and a half levels or could be a factory for Brompton Bikes. The latter will be the subject of a separate planning application if it is agreed. To the south of this it is proposed to retain the structure of both of the sheds as they overhang the water. This will retain the form and character of the sheds while letting light into the space that is planned as the commercial hub described above.

The framework could be used as a trellis for plants and some covering may be used for weather protection. The canal inlet will be retained and will be used by a canoe club in the retained section of the northern shed.



The retained art deco frontages along Commerce Road



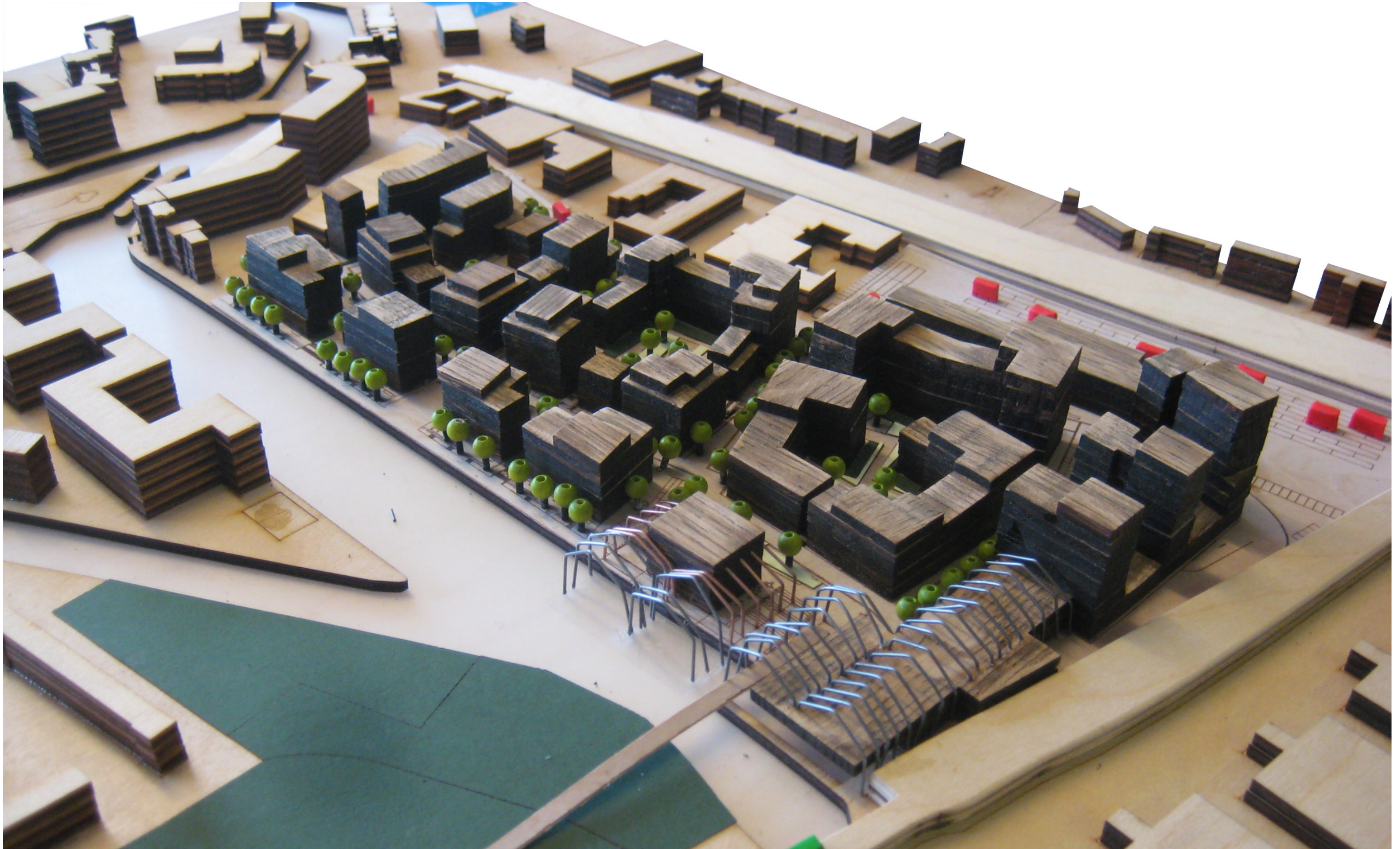
The best example of art deco within the 3 retained frontages



The retained overhanging warehouses

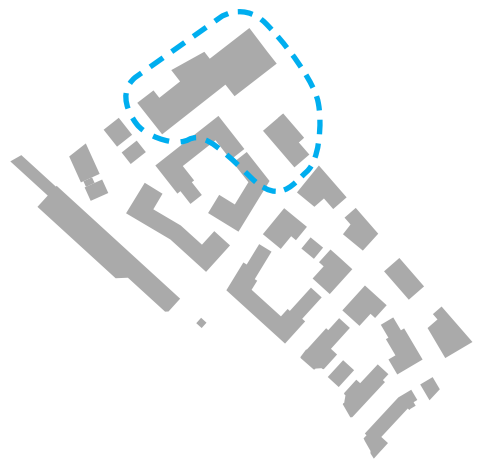






Model of illustrative masterplan





#### 4.4.2 The Commercial Hub

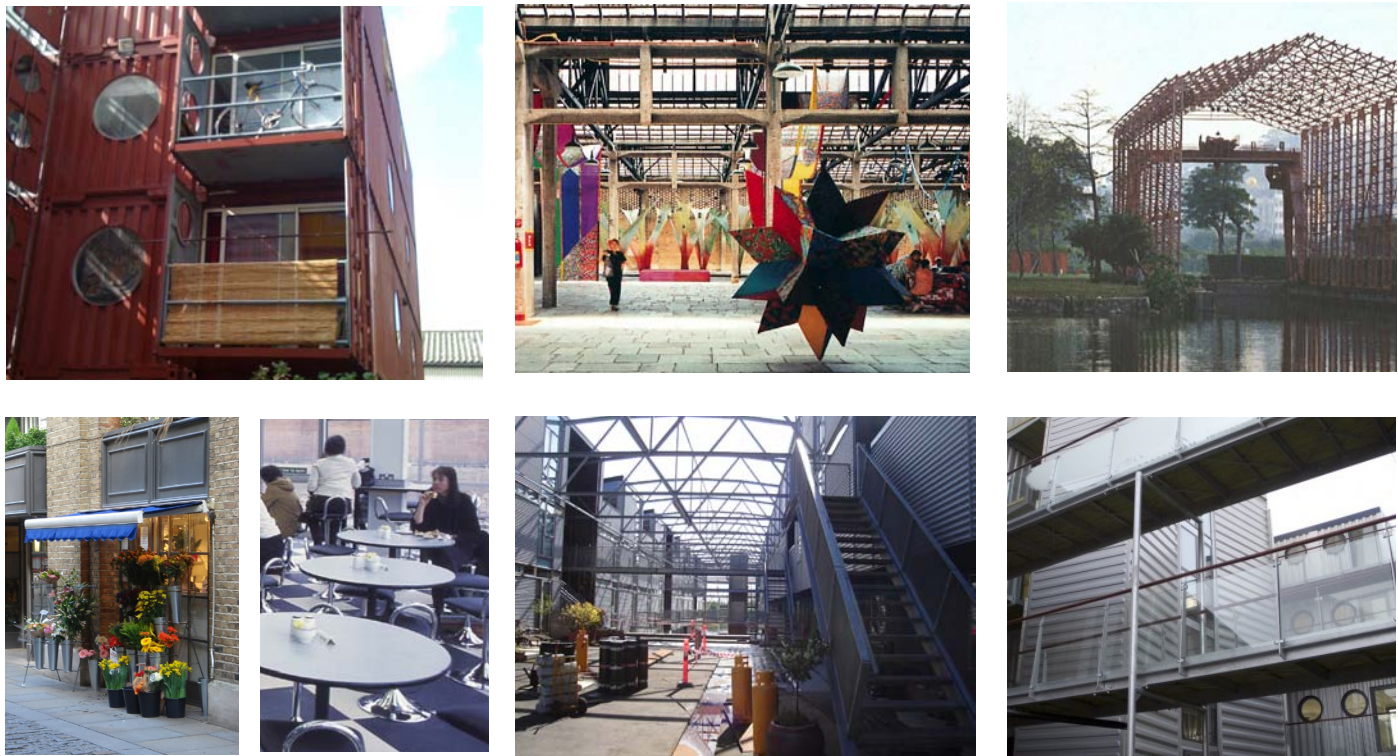
Throughout the development of the scheme the team wanted to ensure a mixed use neighbourhood was developed but at the same time we were aware that planning policy would not support town centre commercial uses on the site and the demand for manufacturing space is limited by demand and access constraints. The limited commercial activities that we are able to use have therefore been grouped into a commercial hub at the northern end of the site.

The position of this hub is designed to be an anchor to draw footfall through the site. This will insure that the public realm of the scheme is truly public with people walking through to go to the commercial uses rather than a semi private residential environment. The choice of the commercial hub was also influenced by the decision to retain the shed structures overhanging the water. The space where they overhang the water is currently a dark forbidding space and it will be necessary to create public uses to enliven the area and make it feel safe.

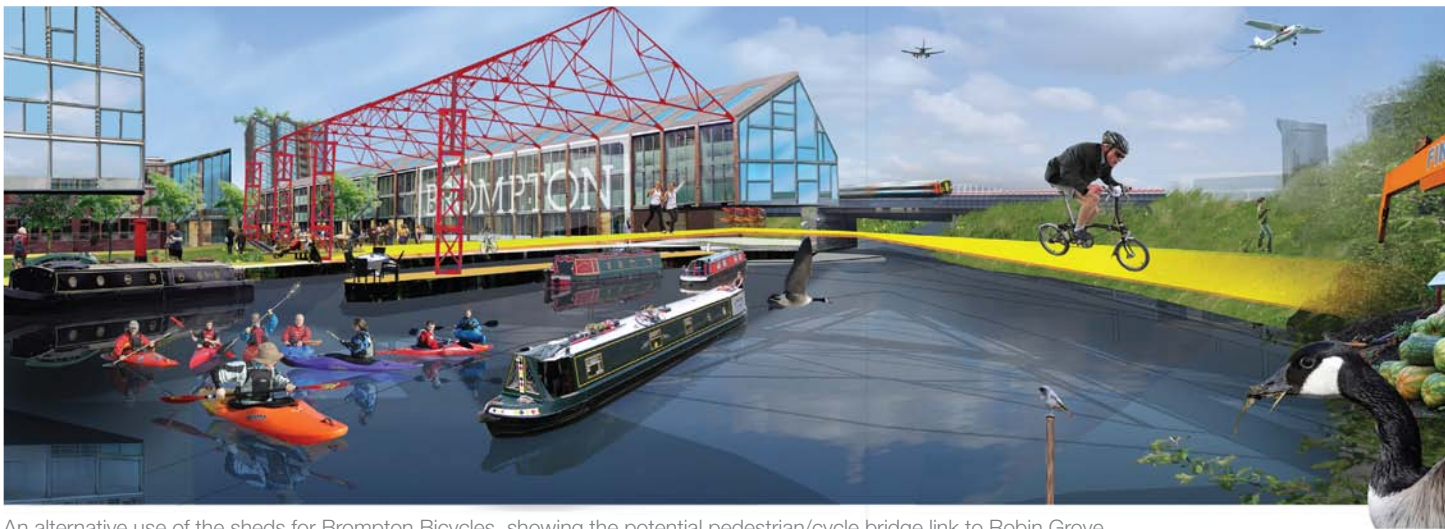
The commercial hub includes the potential for a small amount of A3 space to accommodate a cafe/bar or restaurant. This will be of a relatively small scale so as not to compete with the town centre and will service the occupants of the commercial hub. The hub will also include commercial space in the main shed alongside the railway and could allow for the opportunity for small scale boat repair to be carried out. A permanent base for the Canoe Club on the canal will also be located in the hub

These uses are grouped around a new public square at the point where the new footbridge over the canal links into the site. The aim is to create a lively space, mid way between the town centre and the Great West Road corridor to attract people from the latter into Brentford. The space will be overhung by the retained frame of the canalside sheds that will incorporate planting and glazing to create a unique waterside environment that reflects the historic character of the canal.

The commercial hub will help service the needs of the major businesses on the Great West Road and provide a linkage to Brentford Hight Street



A variety of different re-uses of existing structures



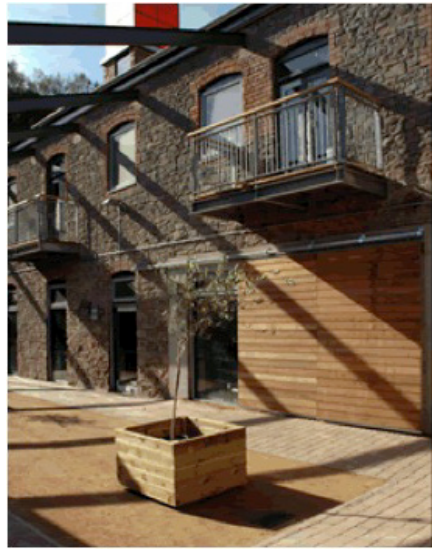
An alternative use of the sheds for Brompton Bicycles, showing the potential pedestrian/cycle bridge link to Robin Grove





View into Canal Square showing new commercial accommodation within the overhanging warehouses.



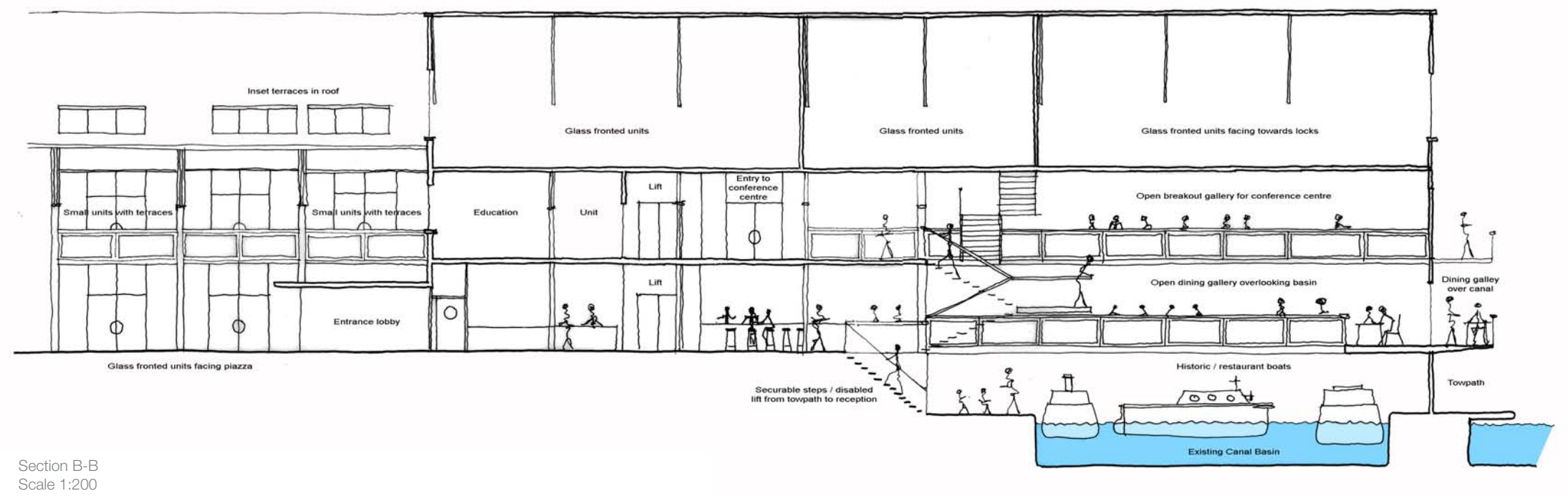
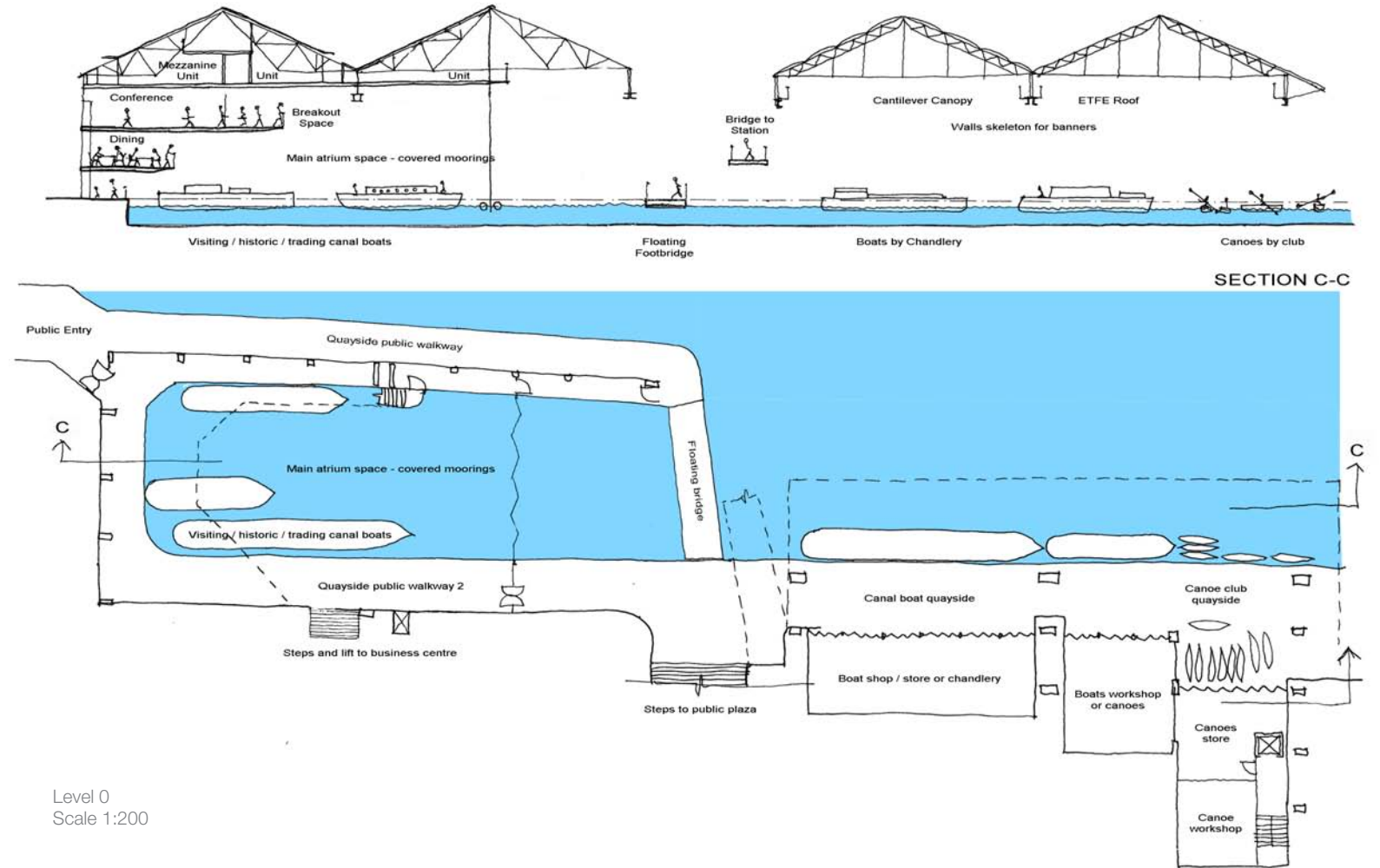


Paintworks, Bristol

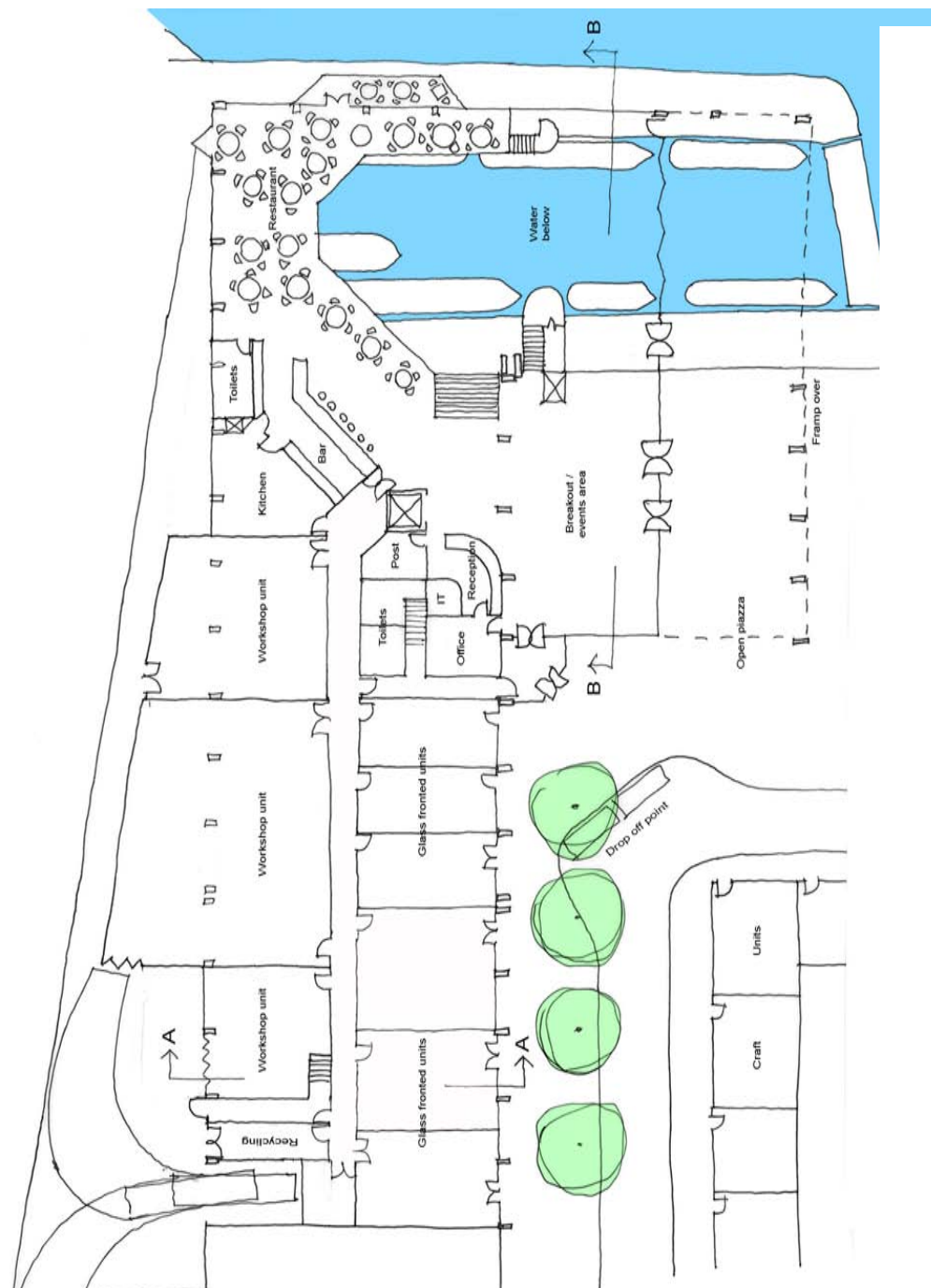
## Illustrative Scheme

The plans and sections to the right are of an illustrative layout of how the commercial hub could be layed out. The scheme could includes:

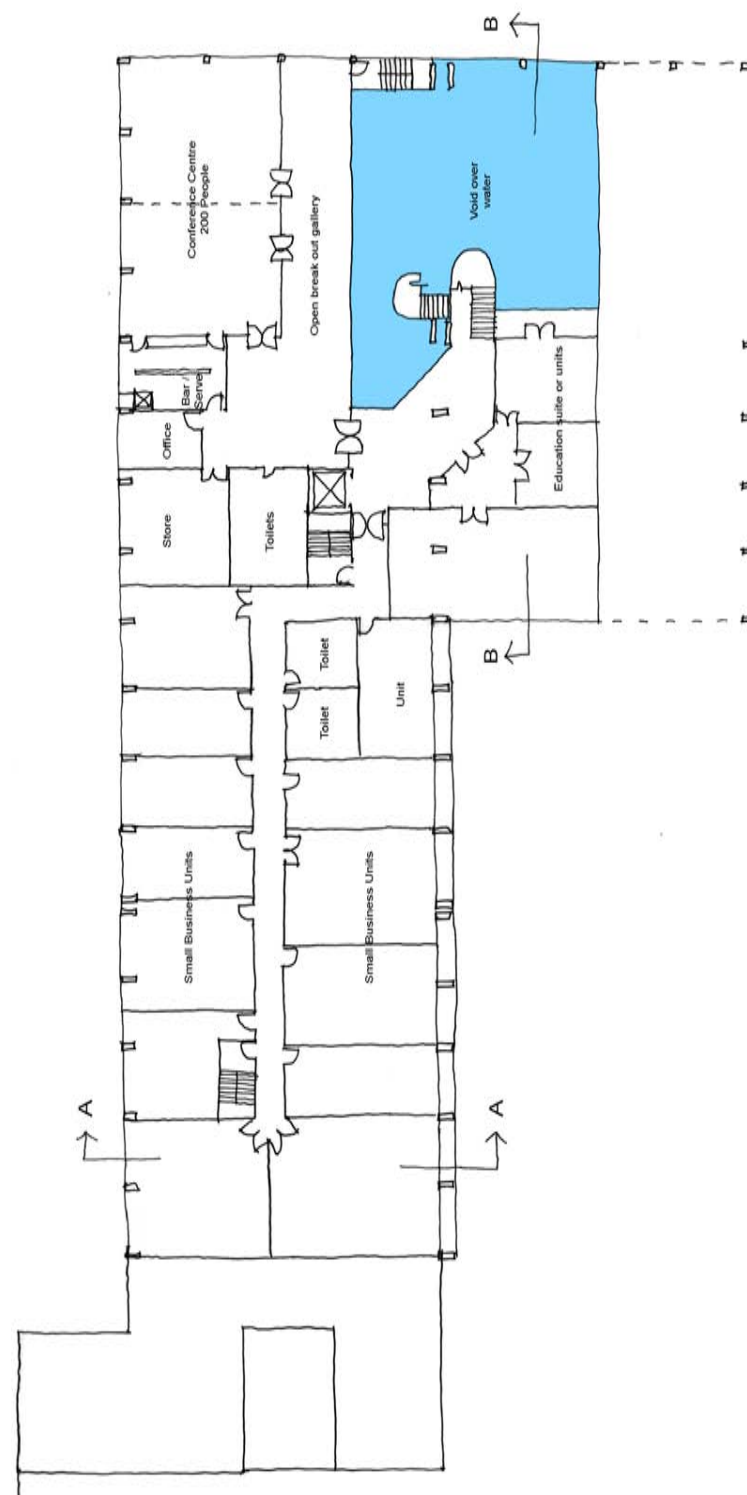
- Canoe Storage
- Covered mooring spaces
- Boat Workshop
- Small business units to support Businesses on the Great West Road
- Conference Centre to support Businesses on the Great West Road
- Restaurant / Bar



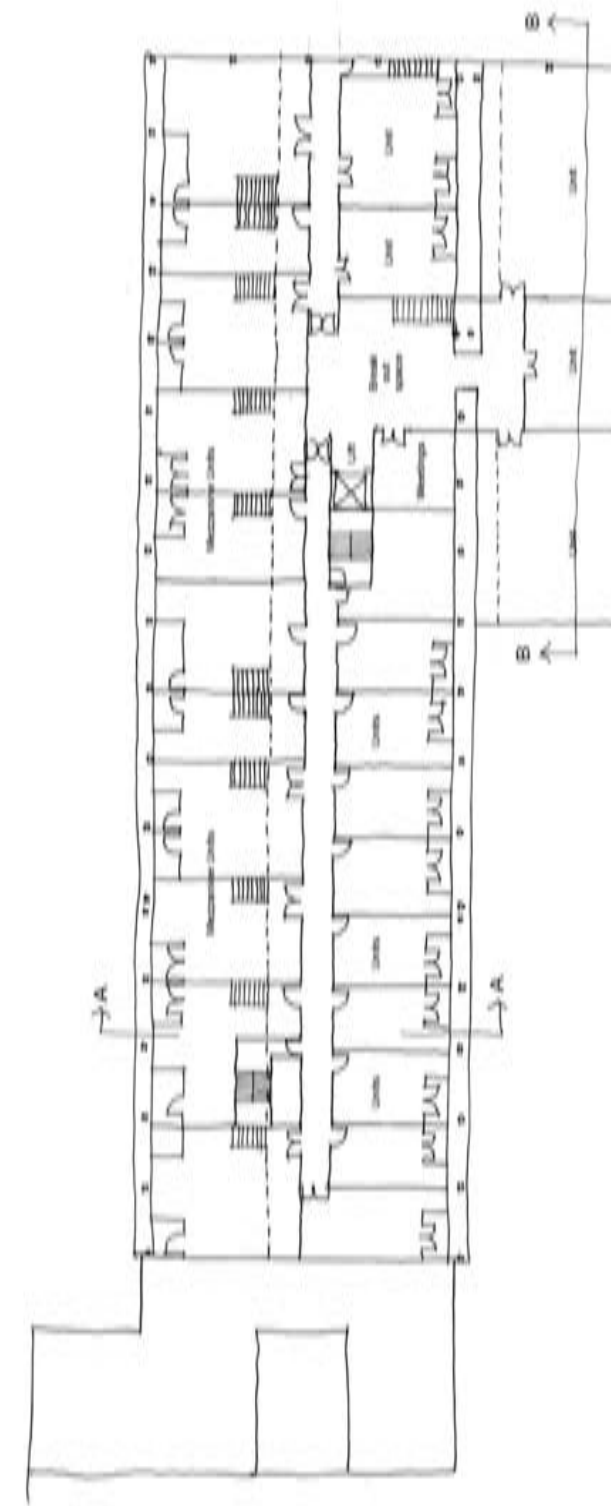




Level 1  
Scale 1:200

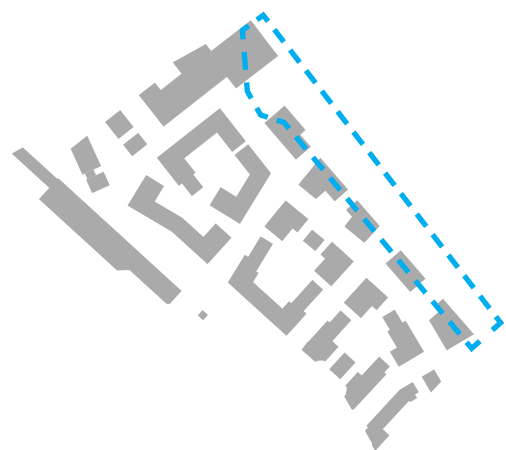


Level 2  
Scale 1:200



Level 3  
Scale 1:200





### 4.4.3 The Waterspace

The canal towpath alongside the BLW scheme is currently very well used despite the fact that it is not a very attractive environment. North of the British Waterways office the path is bounded by a retaining wall and high fence for much of its length. Then at the northern end of the site it passes under the two overhanging sheds which, while part of the character of the site have been described in many of our consultations as dark, oppressive and intimidating.

The masterplan seeks to widen and open up the canal towpath to make it an attractive route that relates well to the accommodation on the site. To this end the building line is set back 6.5m from the back of the towpath. When combined with the towpath this creates a 10m strip along the canal which will be tiered and planted to create an attractive linear space.

The retaining wall will be removed and the site terraced down from the site level of 6.8/6.9 (AOD) to the towpath level of 5.3 (AOD). This will create a terrace and a series of steps with tree planting and seating to create an attractive waterside space.

The housing along the waterfront will be in two pairs of pavilion blocks. Each of these pairs will be on either side of a raised courtyard that provides semi private space for residents raised above the towpath public realm. These courtyards will link to the main courtyard blocks extending this semi-private space to the water. At the end of each of the side streets the towpath level will be brought into the site to create three public spaces that we have called Watergates. These will punctuate the journey along the towpath as described in the public realm section.



Illustration of view from Island site across the canal showing the canalside spaces at towpath level



Examples of waterside treatment / uses





Illustration of view looking north from Brentford Lock - highlighting the contribution the overhanging sheds make to the view, the wide green towpath areas and the potential for a variety of architecture at the canalside.