

FAIRER WESTMINSTER

NORTH PADDINGTON CANALSIDE CONCEPT DESIGN REPORT NOVEMBER 2024

City of Westminster

Canal & River Trust
Making life better by water

DK-CM

MAYOR OF LONDON



View along towpath with Westbourne Park Bus Garage on the right, looking West towards Great Western Road and Trellick Tower.

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View from the bridge looking south to the towpath and Slip Road off of Great Western Road.

1.1 A NOTE FROM OUR CABINET MEMBER

*"The **North Paddington Canalside Programme** will deliver public space improvements to 2.5km of the **Grand Union Canal between Ladbroke Grove and Little Venice.** The programme is part of our **Fairer Westminster** ambition for a greener, safer City which is easier to get around on foot or by bike.*

*The Council can't do this on its own. We have been speaking with **key stakeholders**, including the Canal & River Trust which owns and manages the canal, as well as **local residents, businesses and community organisations**. We wanted to understand people's concerns about today's canalside environment so that we could draw up an initial list of potential improvements we can make together.*

*We're pleased to present **five considered design proposals** for sites along the canal as part of this report alongside area wide strategies.*

*The concept designs you see in this **Design Report** are based on your feedback, however the designs are not yet fixed and there will be plenty of further opportunities to get involved. As for **next steps,** our team will develop more detailed designs for the priority projects in response to the community feedback gathered to date and future co-design workshops.*

*The separate **Engagement Report** summarises the community feedback we received on these design proposals.*

*As for **next steps**, the Place Shaping team will develop more detailed designs for the priority projects in response to the community feedback gathered to date and future co-design workshops. Alongside this, the necessary business cases will be developed and the funding needed to deliver the priority projects will be sought.*

*Thanks for taking the time to read about the North Paddington Canalside Programme and I hope you share my excitement about making our canalside **greener, safer and more attractive for everyone**."*

— Councillor Geoff Barraclough,
Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

PROGRAMME CONTEXT, 2019-2024

Queen's Park Community Council develop vision for Queen's Park Canalside		Good Growth Programme Commenced	The Council's flagship North Paddington Programme Commences	North Paddington Canalside Programme Scoping	Strategy & Concept designs for five Canalside sites
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	Mayor of London's Good Growth Funding secured for two Canalside sites	including Westbourne Green Canalside & Queen's Park Canalside	Additional funding secured through the Council's capital programme		Construction of Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Canalside commences

PROGRAMME, 2024

Design team appointed	Programme Commonplace website is live	Internal & External Stakeholder Site Walks	x2 Community Assemblies	Open air exhibition in Queen's Park Gardens	Open air exhibition in Westbourne Green Canalside
JANUARY	MARCH	MARCH	APRIL	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
	Interactive map and Online Survey #1 to gather public feedback	Stall at Westbourne Fun Day	Workshop with young people at The Avenues	In person exhibition at Queen's Park Festival	Survey #2 to gather public feedback

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Westminster City Council (the Council), in collaboration with the Canal & River Trust (the Trust), has commissioned the North Paddington Canalside programme to explore improvements along the North Paddington Canalside. The project has a focus on community connection and environmental sustainability, aiming to invest in the canal inline with the Council's climate goals and The Trust's vision for vibrant waterways. Funding from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund is currently supporting upgrades at either end of the canal with Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Canalside.

Following an initial phase of community engagement, the work presented in this report is at concept stage and suggests potential uses or activities at various locations along the North Paddington Canalside.

Of the five projects presented here at the concept stage, three sites have been deemed 'proposed priority projects' to be taken forward to the next stage. They are selected as priority because the sites are owned by the Council or the Canal & River Trust and therefore able to progress faster than sites owned by others.

The next stage will focus on the development of the technical design phase of the priority projects, as well as identifying potential partners to manage new infrastructure such as new trees and lighting alongside new community activities.

The proposed priority projects have secured further design development funding through the Council's North Paddington Programme, allowing them to progress to the next stage. All projects will be subject to securing wider funds to support project development and delivery.

For updates on project progress and to see the boards online please follow the link below:

npcanalsidestrategy.commonplace.is

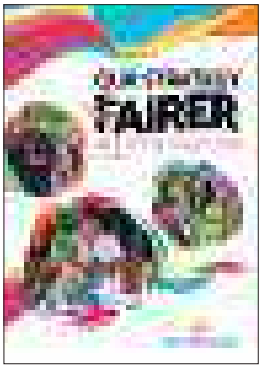
1.3 PROJECT CONTEXT

The North Paddington Canalside programme was initiated by the Council in response to a series of local pledges, plans and policies. These include the council's own projects such as 'Fairer Westminster' and 'The North Paddington Programme'; supported by the Mayor of London's 'Green and Resilient Spaces Fund' and the Trust's charitable objectives; and local policies such as the Queen's Park Community Council Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2040 and the Maida Hill Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2042.

Westminster City Council's plan for a Fairer Westminster was published in 2022. The Fairer Westminster strategy responds to the fact that Westminster is a socially and economically diverse borough. The drawing on the opposite page shows this. The following pledges were included in the 2022 plan:

'Sustainable Transport and Clean Air: Invest Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and capital funding to redesign our city's spaces to be safer, cleaner and more pleasant to walk and cycle in. This will include truly transforming the Grand Union canal into a blue-green spine for the north of the city as we called for in 2018, a walking and cycling corridor, driving forward the work of the Harrow Road Place Plan currently being developed thanks to funding from the Mayor of London and other emerging schemes. This will include transforming the Delamere Terrace Canalside into a shared and accessible space for walking and cycling.' (page 7)

The North Paddington Programme is Westminster City Council's (WCC) first ever cross-council programme. It is being developed with local people, community groups and charities. The three focus areas are 'Neighbourhoods', 'High Streets', and 'Canalside'. By working with communities throughout Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne, WCC is seeking to deliver a healthier, safer and more financially secure North Paddington. Through collaborating with community stakeholders, WCC will address the unjust social, economic, health and environmental imbalances and inequality that exist within Westminster, with a focus initially on the northwest area. The council intends to invest £20 million to support these ambitions over the coming 4 years.





1.4 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY & METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The engagement strategy has been developed to allow local people and visitors to the area to offer their knowledge of North Paddington Canalside, helping to highlight the current constraints and opportunities of the area and support the development of a strategy for its future. This process builds upon the learnings from a number of previous engagement and consultation workstreams, including close collaboration with the Council's engagement officers and strengthening existing connections with community groups, community champions, housing, the boater community, volunteers, and young voices.

It is vital, in this context, to reach wider and more diverse audiences than might have been achieved in the past in order to develop a more holistic and inclusive strategy for the North Paddington Canalside communities. To this end, consultation and engagement methods are proposed to engage new audiences.

The approach to engagement is split into three stages, which align with the development of the overarching programme.

- → Phase 1 was focused on establishing the places, qualities, opportunities, and challenges which currently exist on the sites: a collective portrait of the existing condition. This stage involved focused discussions with key professional stakeholders, as well as community groups, the boating community and the general public.

- → Phase 2 shifted the focus from the present day to the future of the canalside as a whole, testing a series of key overarching strategic objectives framed by a set of principles that will shape the final spatial vision. During this phase, a series of detailed place- and site-specific proposals have been developed.

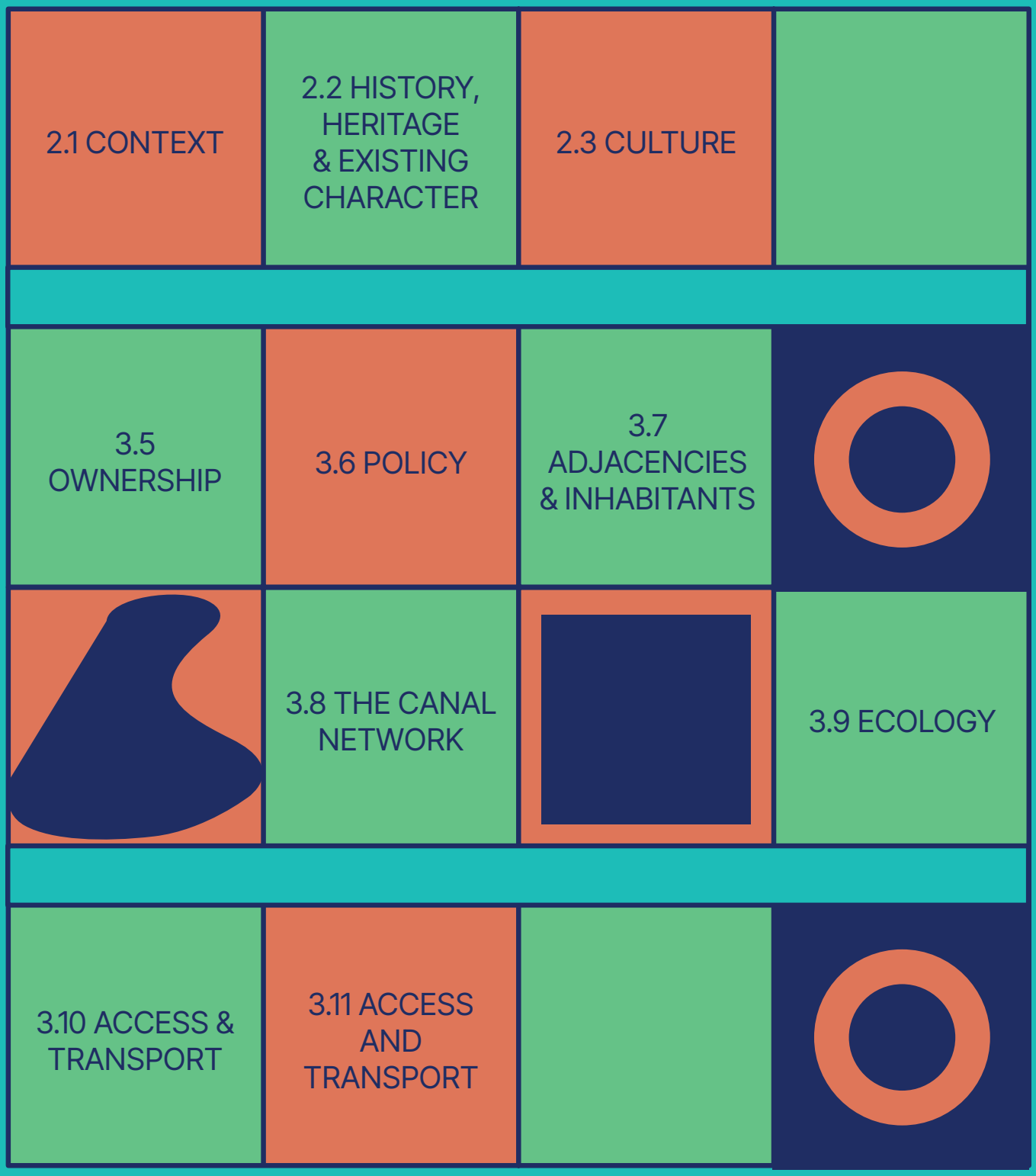
- → Phase 3 involved an exhibition presenting the proposals and providing people with opportunities to feedback.

Project-specific pages on the online engagement platform Commonplace, such as an interactive map and two surveys host bespoke content, providing a consistent, reassuring space for wider public engagement throughout the programme. This engagement has been summarised as part of the engagement reporting.



View along towpath next to Brindley Estate, looking West with Great Western Studios ahead.

Site & Context 2



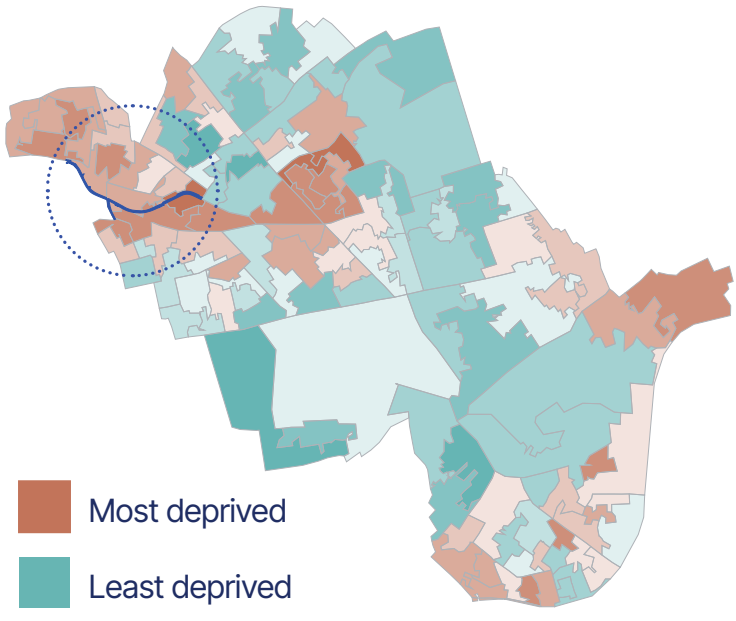
2.1 CONTEXT

#2035 Health inequality in Westminster has been a cause for concern and has mobilised activity to help reduce this. A measured disparity of 17 years in the poorest wards situated in the northern neighbourhoods such as North Paddington. The factors contributing to this disparity are outlined in the 'Future of Westminster Commission', which aims to halve it in the next decade.

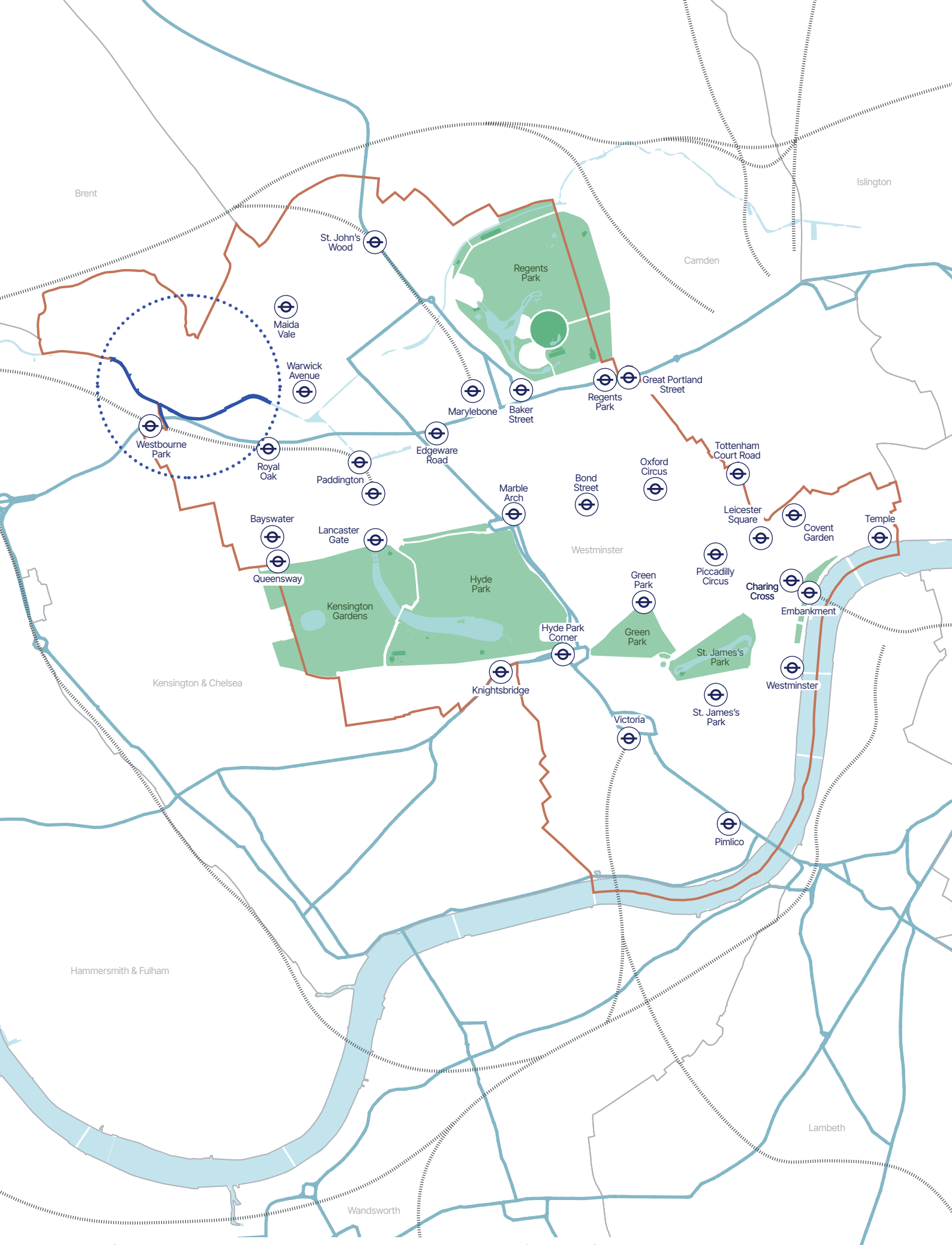
The Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm is 13 miles long, and connects Hayes with Paddington. In the North-West it runs along WCC's southern edge, before cutting in towards Paddington. Westminster is a highly unequal borough, with wealth broadly concentrated to the south and east, and deprivation broadly concentrated to the north-west. The Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm runs across some of the borough's most economically and socially deprived northern wards.

The Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm's immediate context is also highly ethnically and socially diverse, with a strong and complex social, cultural and political history. In Lonely Londoners, Sam Selvon's classic account of life in London for newly arrived migrants from the Caribbean (the 'Windrush Generation'), one of the main characters lives on the Harrow Road. The area continues to be the home to a diverse range of people.

Life and activity on the canal do not currently reflect this complex context. The towpath along the canal has a reputation for being unsafe but also is valued for providing a quiet escape from the surrounding urban fabric. This reflects the canal's shift in the mid-late twentieth century: with the increasing use of road haulage, the Paddington Arm entered a period of becoming a 'back' rather than a front - a somewhat forlorn corridor to which the city and industry turned their backs. The use of canal is home to many itinerant Londoners who operate under continuous cruising licenses.



Map of deprivation within Westminster City Council



Map of the North Paddington Canalside project boundary in the context of the City of Westminster

2.2 HISTORY, HERITAGE & EXISTING CHARACTER

HISTORY

The North Paddington Canalside predominantly lies outside designated WCC Conservation Areas. However, to the west, it borders Queen's Park Conservation Area and to the East Maida Vale Conservation Area. It is worth noting that 'Westbourne' derives from a now-buried river.

The development of this area spans a few centuries, transitioning from rural to densely populated urban. The landscape and setting reflect significant historical shifts, most notably the construction of the Grand Union Canal and later, in the 20th century, the construction of the A40 Westway, which has also impacted the community and setting. The area's history is intertwined with slum clearance initiatives and continued renewal, reflecting the evolving character, both social and physical, of the area.



Still from the *Blue Lamp Film* showing the Grand Union Canal running through North Paddington

The Grand Union Canal, England's longest, was created in 1929 by merging nine distinct canal networks, including the Grand Junction Canal. In London, it includes the Regent's and Hertford Union canals, linking with the Lee Navigation. The Paddington Arm, extending 13 miles, connected Bulls Bridge to Little Venice and Paddington Basin. The Grand Union facilitated efficient transportation of goods between London and Birmingham, playing a crucial role in the industrial revolution. Initially industrialised in 1801, the Paddington Arm transitioned from urban to rural surroundings before industrial development reshaped it in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, with the rise of road haulage in the mid-late 20th century, it became neglected, but this decline allowed wildlife to

thrive. As with canals throughout the UK, the Paddington Arm has always been a place where people live, originally mainly nomadically as industrial boaters but today its residents include mostly continuous cruisers with some permanent, long-term moored communities. In the area, old wharves made way for housing as the canal has shifted away from industry and freight, with a decline in the mid-twentieth century where communities turned their backs to the water, it is now an increasingly valued asset for its leisure setting and wildlife.

The Paddington Arm is notable in its context for its continuous run of lock-free canal. This, whilst allowing for fairly rapid transit, means that the canal is comparatively lacking in moments of explicit heritage character, locks providing much of the visual and heritage interest, for example in the photographic works of Eric de Maré.



Photo taken in front of St Mary Magdalene Church with an architectural model of Grand Junction community building with a cafe facing Westbourne Green Canalside.

Image from *westbourneforum.org.uk*



Previous footbridge over the canal from Formosa Street to Lord Hills Road, subsequently demolished and replaced.The terraces on the far bank were subsequently demolished and replaced by the Warwick Estate.

Image from *https://rbkclocalstudies.wordpress.com/tag/paddington/*

HERITAGE

St. Mary Magdalene's Church, built in 1865, is a significant architectural and social landmark in North Paddington. Designed by George Edmund Street, but with notable additions and modifications made over the years, enriching its historical and architectural significance as well as its community offer, including recent interventions by Dow Jones Architects of Grand Junction, a new community facility including a cafe.

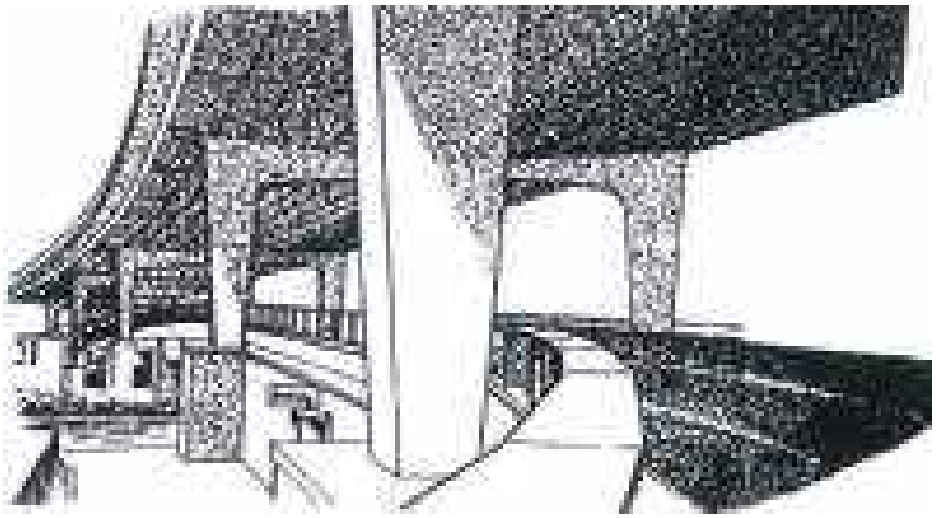
The Warwick Estate, built in 1962 by the London County Council (LCC), replaced a slum with 1127 new dwellings facing the canal. It addressed housing needs and transformed the landscape, extending westward over the former site of Brindley Street. Together with the Westway, it reshaped the area significantly.



Looking North on Goldbourne Road towards Trellick Tower under construction in 1970.
Image from *trellicktower.com/history*

Trellick Tower, one of the most notable architectural legacies from the 70s, is an iconic Brutalist structure in London. Completed in 1972 to the designs of Ernő Goldfinger, it was commissioned by the Greater London Council. Known for its silhouette, controversial history, and social significance, it stands as a symbol of both architectural innovation and the challenges of urban housing in the modern era. It is one of the most significant and tangible buildings facing the North Paddington canalside. This notable estate is within the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

The Westway, a 2.5-mile flyover section of the A40, was commissioned by the Greater London Council (GLC) in response to congestion entering central London. Designed by engineers from the Ministry of Transport and London County Council's Department of Highways, its construction between 1964 and 1970 had significant impacts on the surrounding community, including the clearance of numerous buildings. In response to concerns about the project's effect on local residents, the Westway Trust, a community-led organisation, was formed to advocate for community interests and oversee the development and management of the area surrounding the Westway.



The Westway, Harrow Road, and the Canal. Image from *www.locallocalhistory.co.uk*

Meanwhile Gardens, a vital public green space for the local area that lies along the south side of the Grand Union Canal in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, first began its life as an empty site along the canal, a legacy of so-called 'slum clearance' that took place post-war across London. Local people came together to turn the rubble-filled site into a space for community to come together and spend time in nature. Founded in the late 1970s, the garden continues to be publicly accessible with a range of volunteer opportunities and workshops to engage with each other and the natural world. This site sets the scene for what a truly successful community-run green space can be.



Transforming the land and making a garden at Meanwhile, 1976.
Image from *meanwhile-gardens.org.uk/history*

2.3 CULTURE

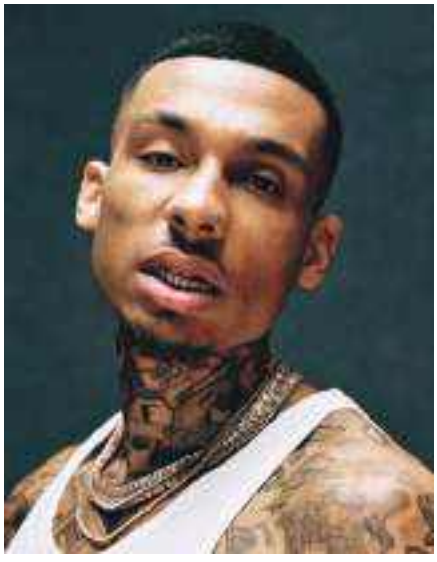
The wider area around the canal has a rich cultural offer and a strong reputation for cultural activity stretching back many decades.

Zadie Smith's 2019 book 'Grand Union' is a collection of stories that are loosely but unmistakably connected to the area, and speak specifically of the strength given to the area by its diversity. Significant immigrant populations - among them the Windrush Generation, Portuguese, Spanish, Bangladeshi and Somali communities - have contributed hugely to the cultural richness and diversity of this place, and this is manifest in social structures, food, literature, art and - perhaps most tangibly - music culture.

West London has produced a seemingly endless number of influential music figures, but a remarkable number emerged from, or were supported by, the Harrow Road itself. Much like the Notting Hill area to the south, North Paddington has played an internationally significant role in the development of music culture - providing places of encounter, performance, rehearsal and festival across demographics and musical styles. Aswad practised at the Gangsterville Record shop at 992 Harrow Road. 841 Harrow Road was the HQ of Lightning Records, which released Janet Kay's iconic 1979 hit Silly Games. 429 Harrow Road (near Half Penny Steps) was the home of Mute Records, who released Depeche Mode, Einstürzende Neubauten, Moby, Fad Gadget, and DAF. The Windsor Castle pub on Harrow Road hosted The Rolling Stones, The Who, U2, Iron Maiden, and The Cure. Further afield is the BBC's Maida Vale Studios, which was the home of the Radiophonic Workshop and pioneering electronic music composer Delia Derbyshire. Finally, the rapper Fredo is perhaps the best known contemporary musician who grew up on the Harrow Road - specifically on the Mozart Estate.



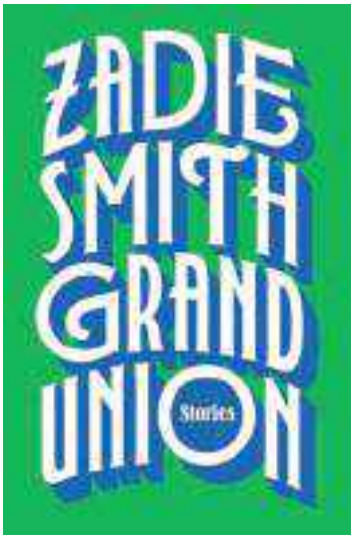
Delia Derbyshire in the BBC Maida Vale Studios



Fredo



Aswad in front of the old footbridge over the Grand Union Canal connecting Half Penny Steps and the Harrow Road with Kensal Road.



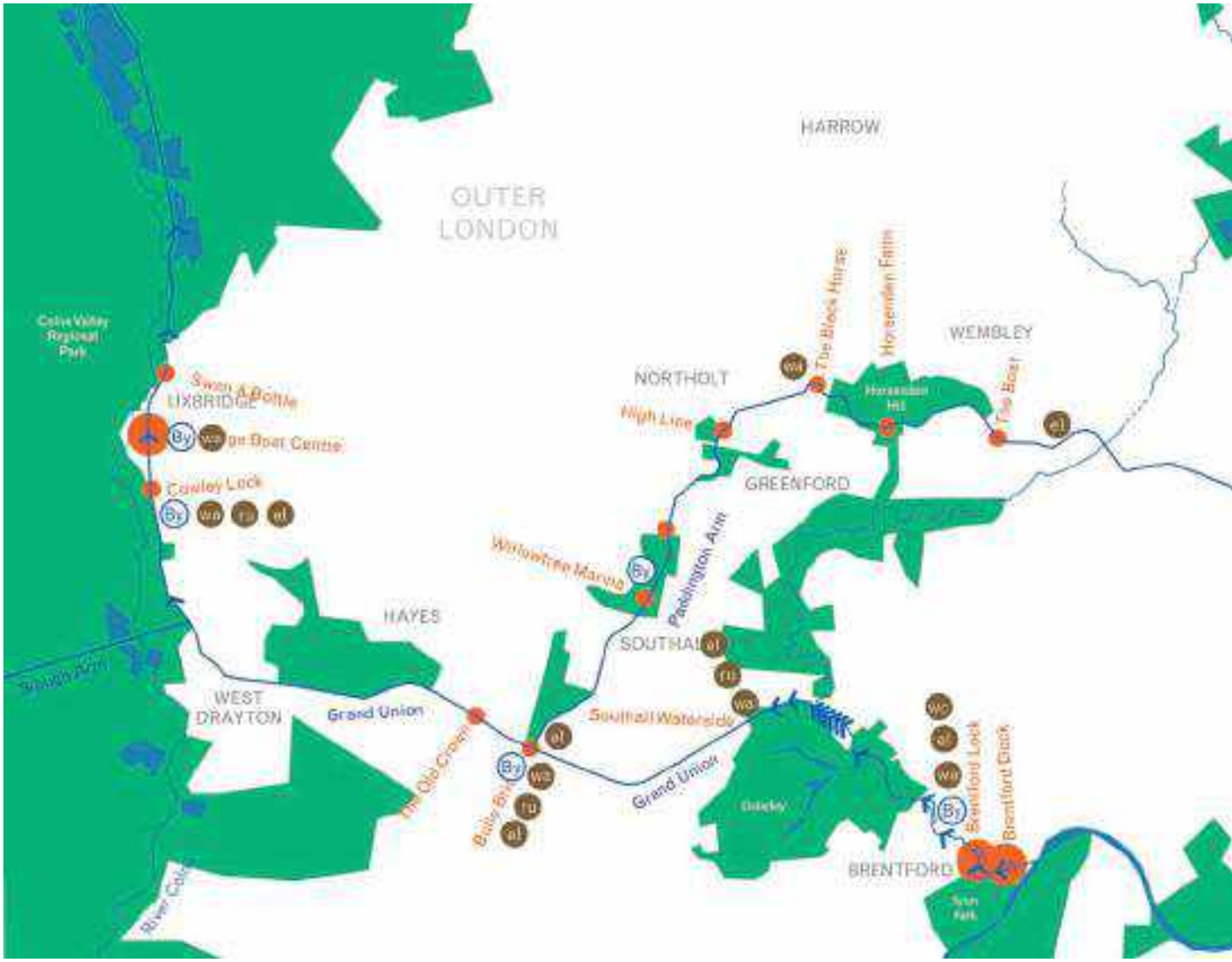
Zadie Smith's Grand Union



Janet Kay - the first black female to achieve a UK Charts Number 1 with a Reggae track

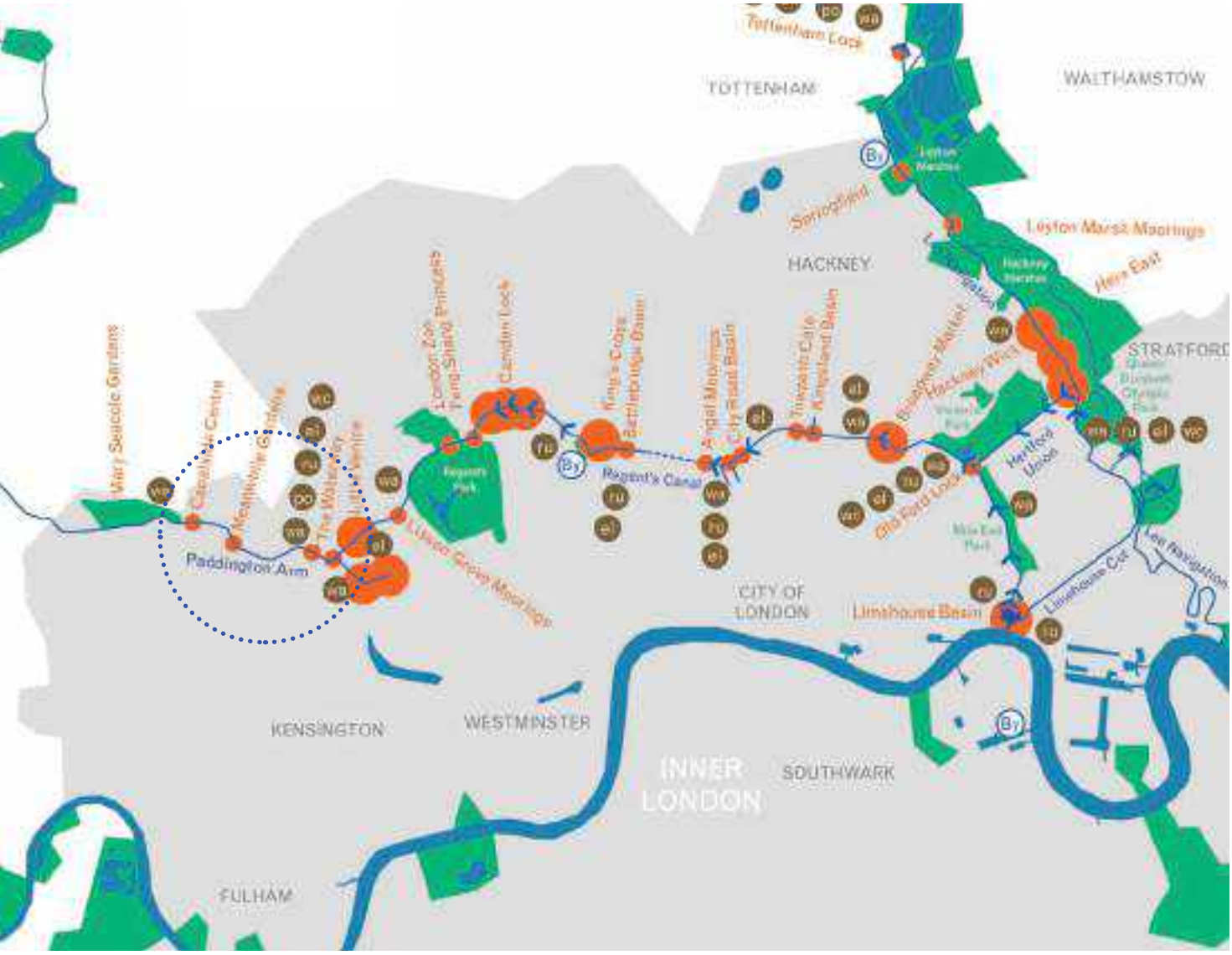
2.4 THE CANAL NETWORK

THE WIDER CANAL NETWORK



The above map shows the site within the wider canal network of London and outer London. It is important to consider how those who are moving via boat along our site are part of a much wider network; the vast majority of the moorings along our site are temporary moorings. This means they must move their boat every 14 days, and as a result they end up moving along the canal network constantly.

The map also shows how this stretch of canal is close to the edge of Inner London. The western edge of the site is really where the canal, and the city around it, begins to change in character and feel less urban.



wa	Water Point
po	Pump Out
ru	Rubbish Disposal
el	Elsan facility
wc	Boater WCs

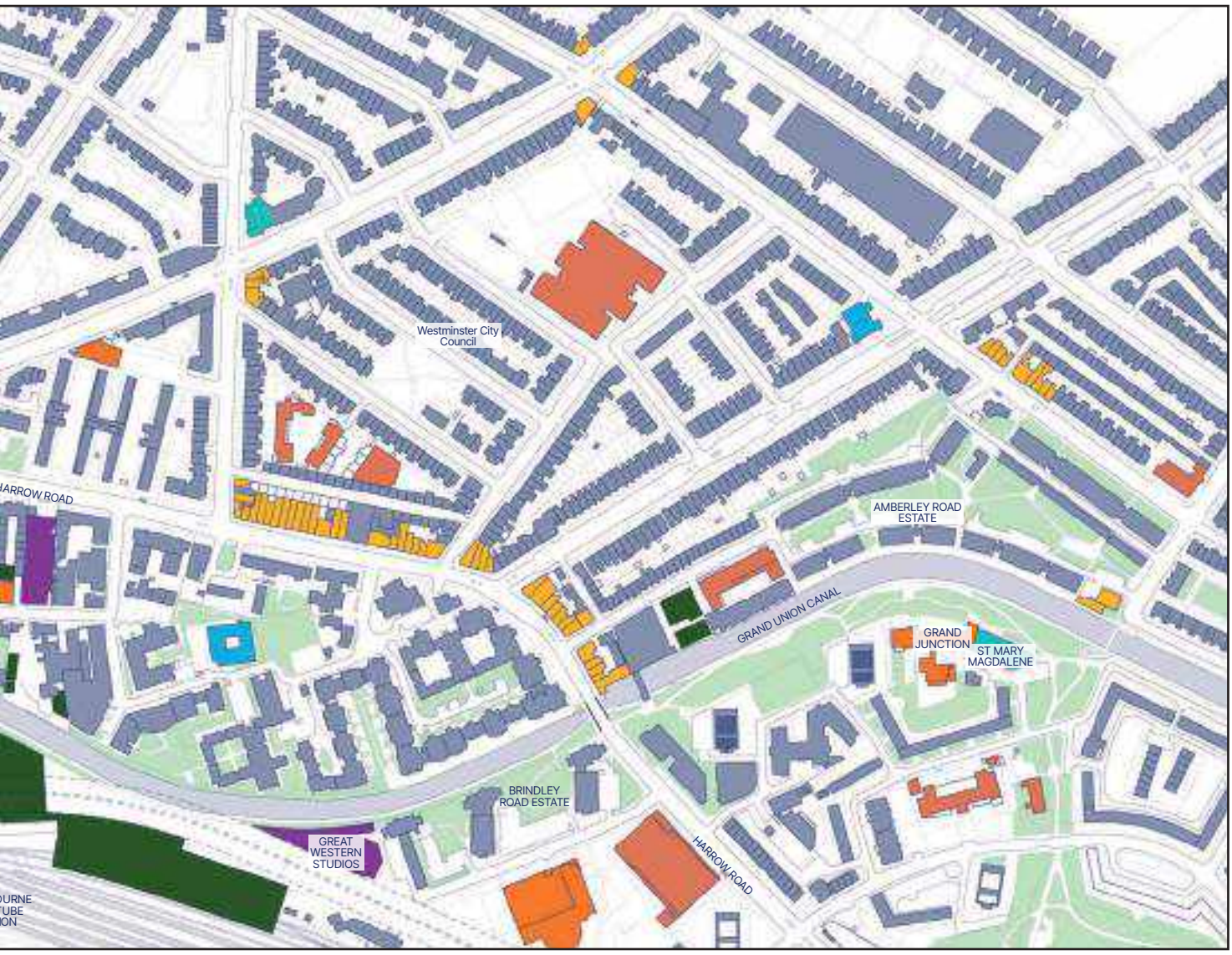
2.5 GROUND FLOOR USES



The above map shows that the canal is surrounded by mostly residential areas. Harrow Road and Golborne Road are the two local high streets and stand out with their strings of residential uses. Harrow Road crosses the canal by the Brindley Estate, and runs parallel to the canal near Half Penny Steps. Between Harrow Road and the canal is a row of terraced housing with ground floor retail units that face Harrow Road to their front at the canal to their rear. In the past at least one of these units has included a hatch that faces the canal which allowed them to directly serve passing boats.

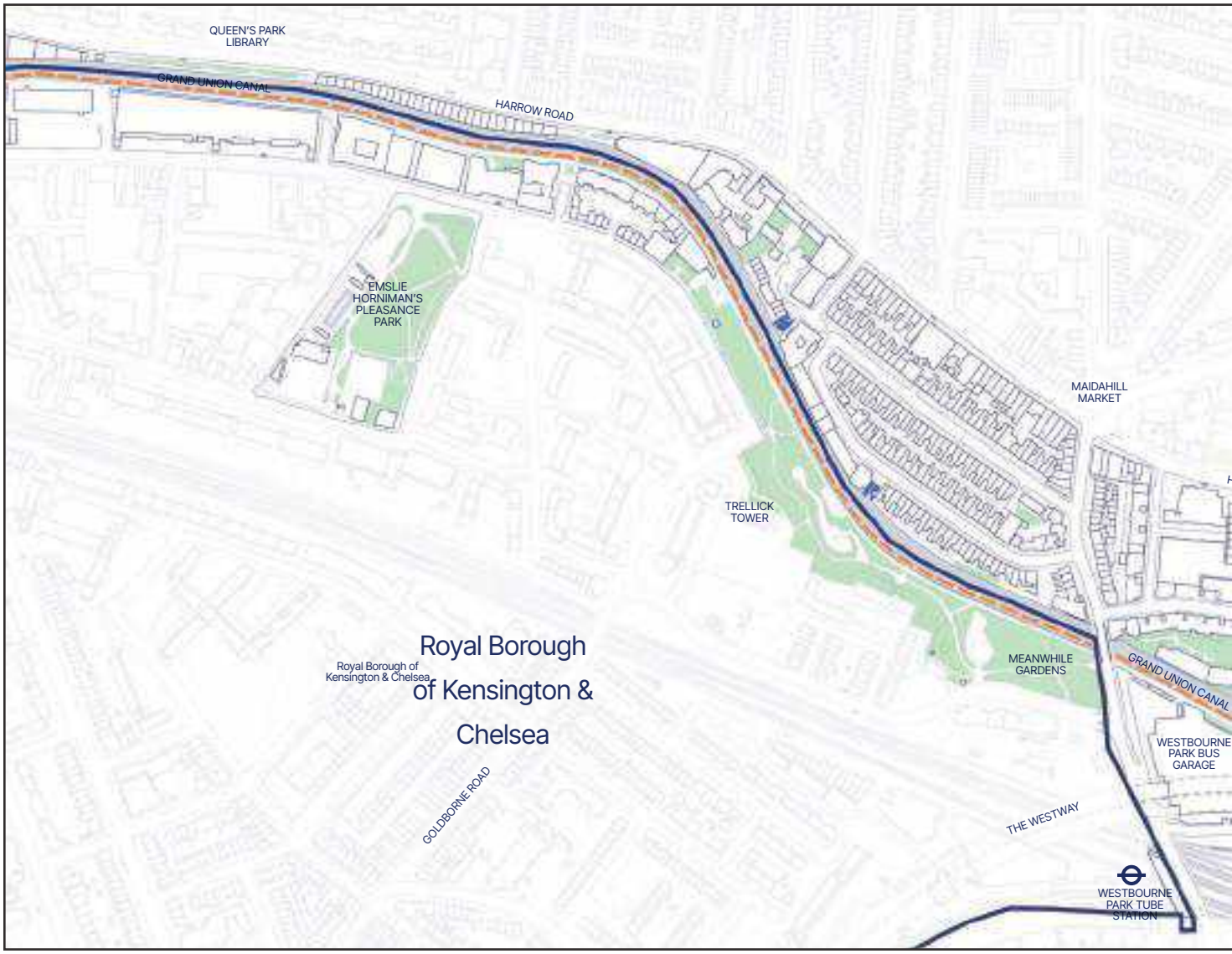
W10 Coffee and Deli, The Union Tavern and The Waterfront are businesses along this stretch of canal which have façades that face the canal.

The map also shows how the canal is surrounded by a series of religious organisations, housing estates and educational institutions. Around Westbourne Park Station there is a slight clustering of light-industrial and office uses.



School
Library
Religious
Vacant
Retail
Light-industrial
Residential
Station
Offices
Arts / Community

2.6 LAND OWNERSHIP & MOORING RIGHTS



The Trust and the Council are the biggest landowners in the programme area. The Trust owns the canal, the towpath, some pockets of land next to the towpath and in some locations the off-side of the canal such as at Gerry's Pompeii.

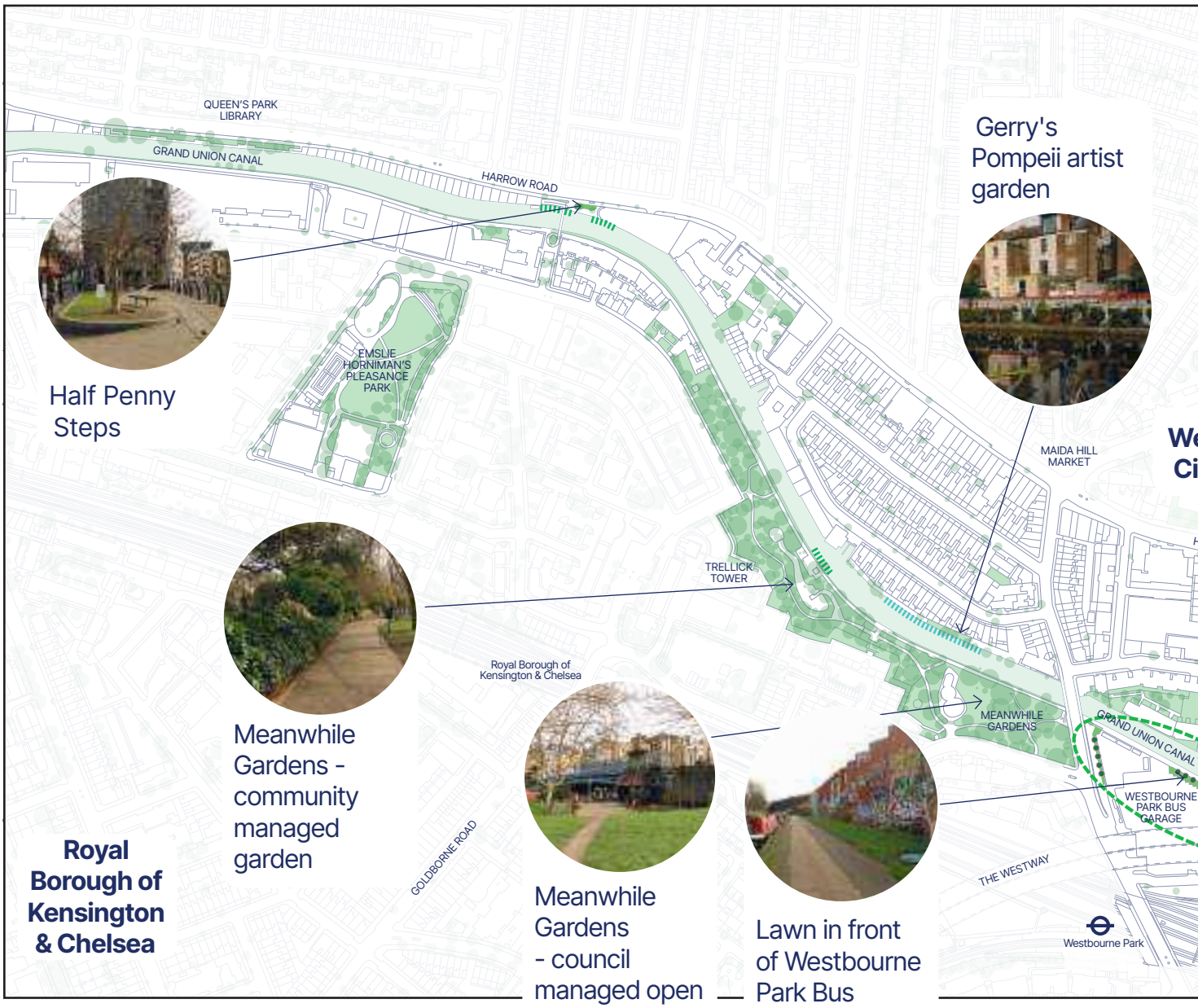
The Council owns some land parcels next to the towpath and canal, including public spaces such as Westbourne Green Canalside and Half Penny Steps, as well as estate grounds and buildings Brindley Estate, Warwick Estate and Amberley Estate.

The majority of moorings along this stretch of the canal are standard 14-day towpath moorings. There are a few permanent mooring locations on the 'off' side of the canal (the opposite side to the towpath) next to Hornmead and Fermoy Road. The closest boating facilities provided by The Trust are either 0.2km to the east at Delamere Terrace, or 6.5km to the west.



- Standard 14-day towpath moorings
- Industrial Moorings
- Permanent Moorings

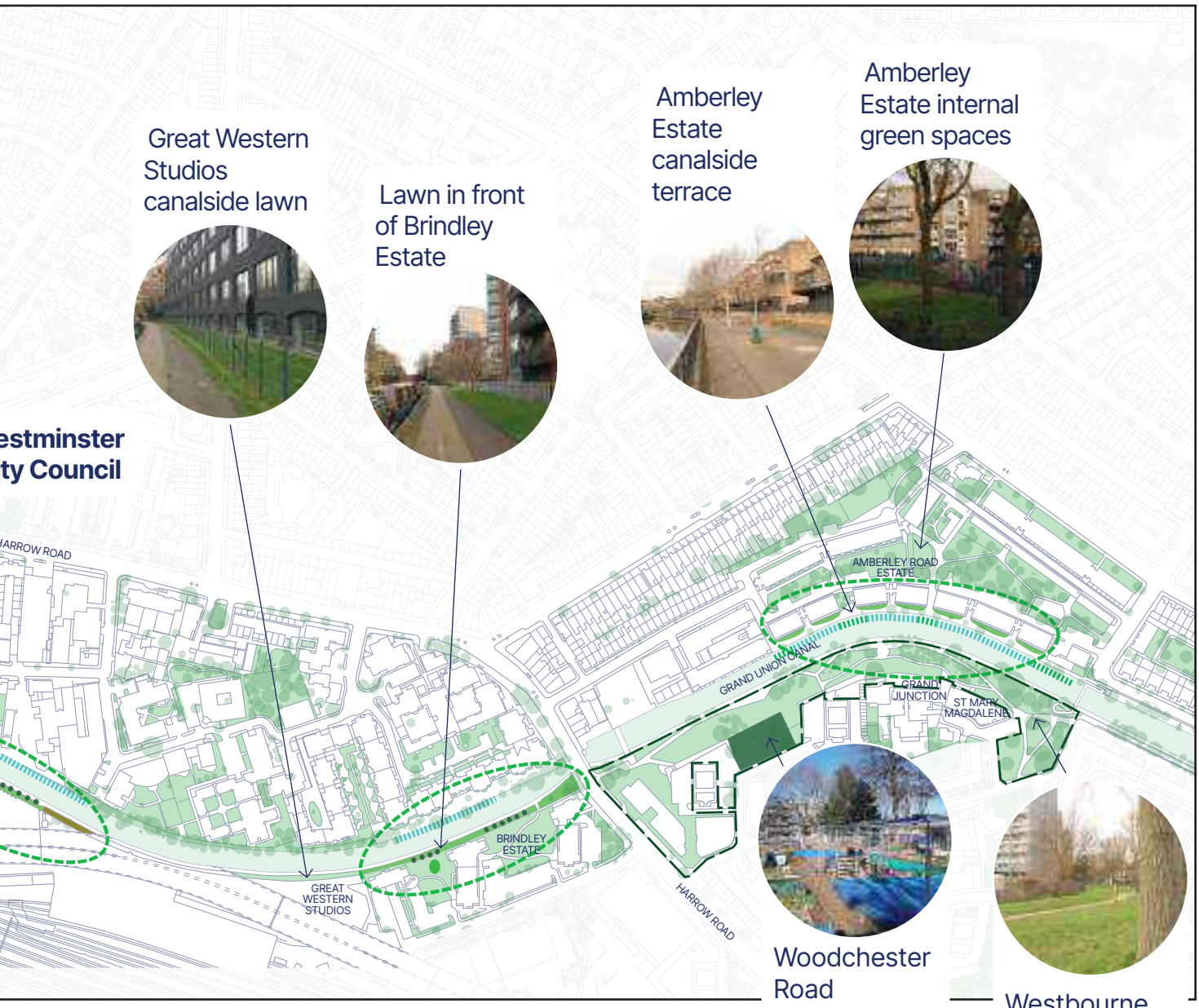
2.7 ECOLOGY



The North Paddington Canalside is a green and blue corridor with several distinct types of natural and open green spaces. These are important from an environmental perspective because they serve as valuable habitats for various species of plants and animals, contributing to biodiversity as well as a human perspective in offering respite from busy urban life and the myriad of benefits that engender a relationship with the natural world.

As shown in the map above, the Canalside is enveloped in a rich ecological corridor, boasting open green spaces that are successful places and play a positive role in counteracting the negative impacts of air pollution and health inequality.

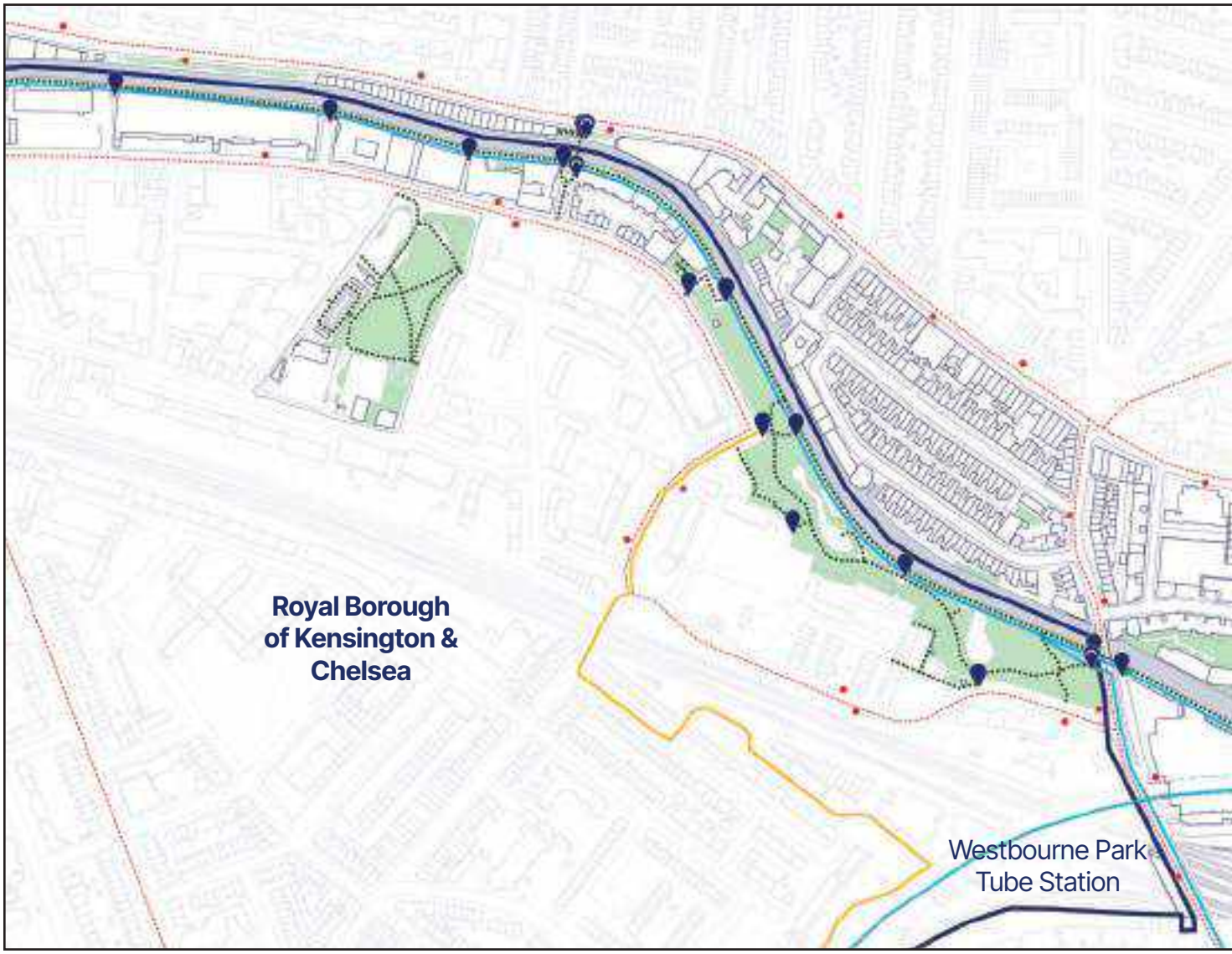
These form a chain of green spaces across the canalside that should be further supported, enhanced, and expanded. They include various sizes of parkland, housing estate open space, green open spaces, playgrounds, informal green spaces, community green spaces and leftover pockets of open space. The canalside is lined with a significant number of trees.



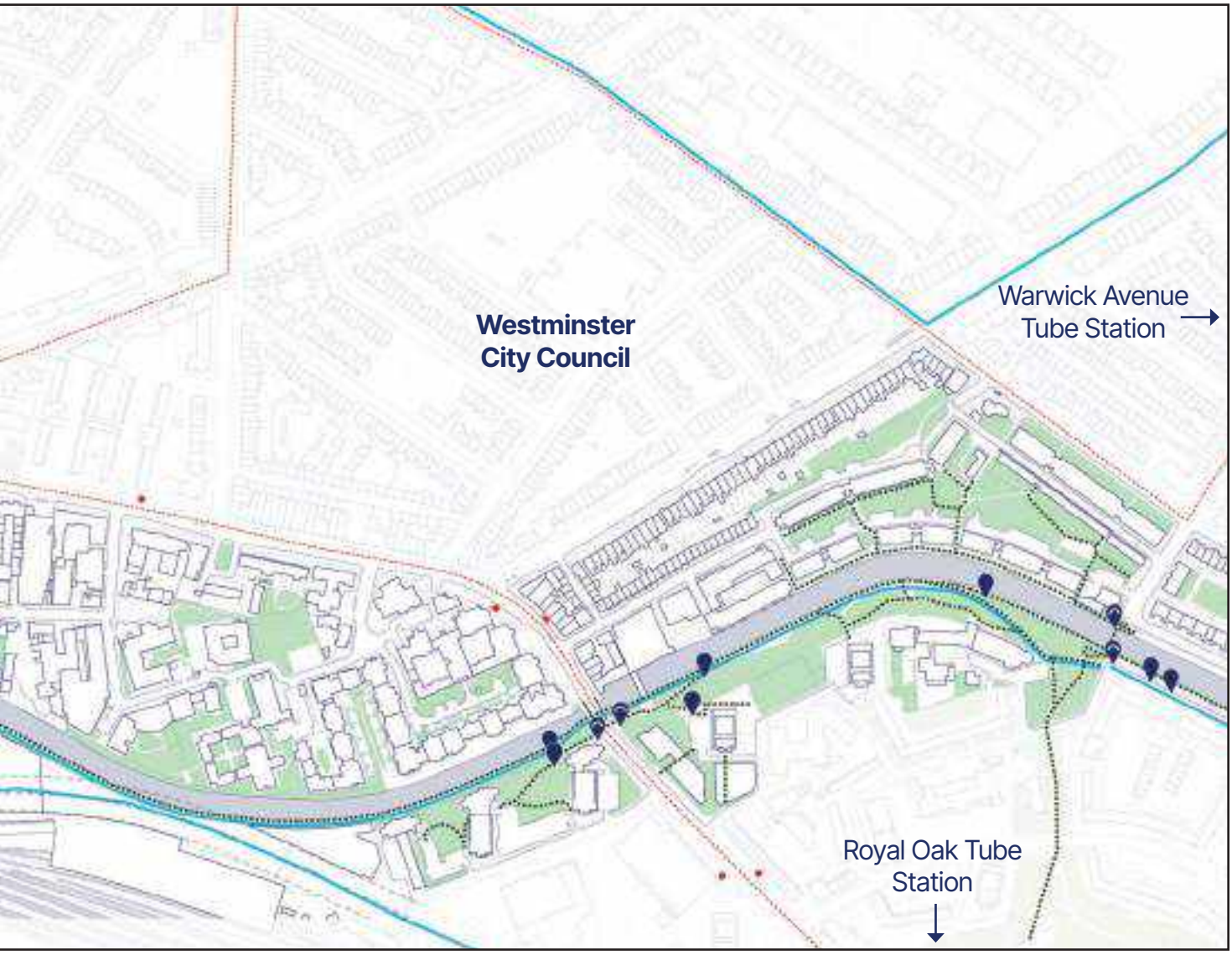
This section of the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal has a series of green spaces which sit along the edge of the canal: Westbourne Green Open Space, the Brindley Estate Gardens, Meanwhile Gardens, and Half Penny Steps. There are also a series of smaller, less formal green spaces: the edge of the bus garage, the green strip adjacent to the towpath, Gerry's Pompeii and the lawn of Great Western Studios. The Amberley Road Estate Gardens and Emslie Horniman's Pleasance Park are two green spaces which sit one block back from the canal.

- Westminster City Council Borough Boundary
- Site of importance for nature conservation - London's Canals
- Green space adjacent to the canalside
- Tree Canopy

2.8 ACCESS & TRANSPORT



Westbourne Park is the closest tube station to the site. The next closest station is Warwick Avenue, which is about 500m from the canal side of Amberley Estate. Bus routes run alongside and across the canal, on Harrow Road, Great Western Road and Kensal Road. Buses are a popular mode of transport with buses 18, 23, 28, 31, 228, 328 and night buses N18, N28, N31 providing essential connections to neighbouring areas. The whole length of the towpath in the site is a proposed TfL Cycleway.



Westminster City Council Borough Boundary

Walking routes not accessible by vehicle

TfL Cycle Route

Potential TfL Cycleway

Bus Routes

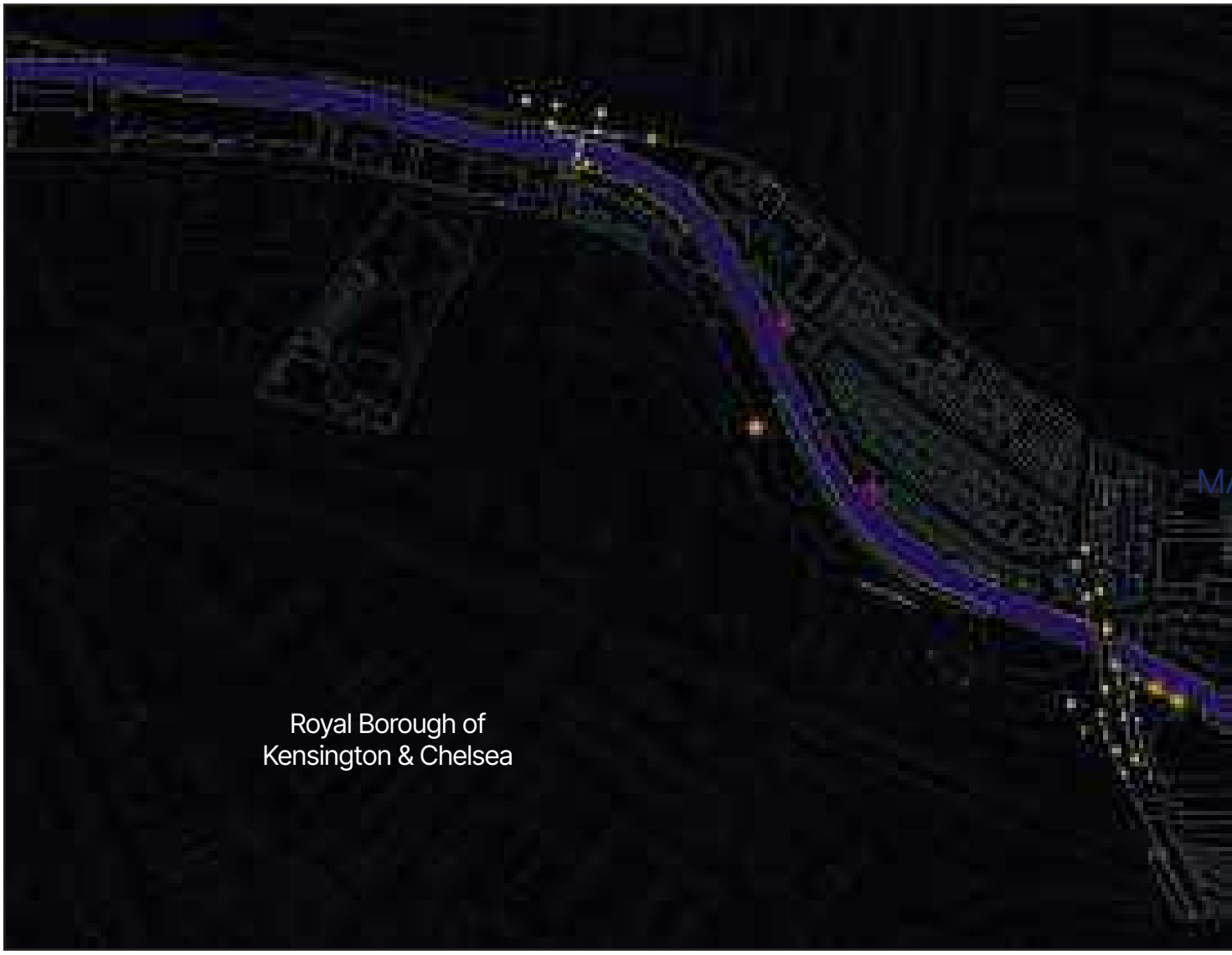
Bus Stop

Access points via road

Access points via bridge

2.9 NIGHT TIME

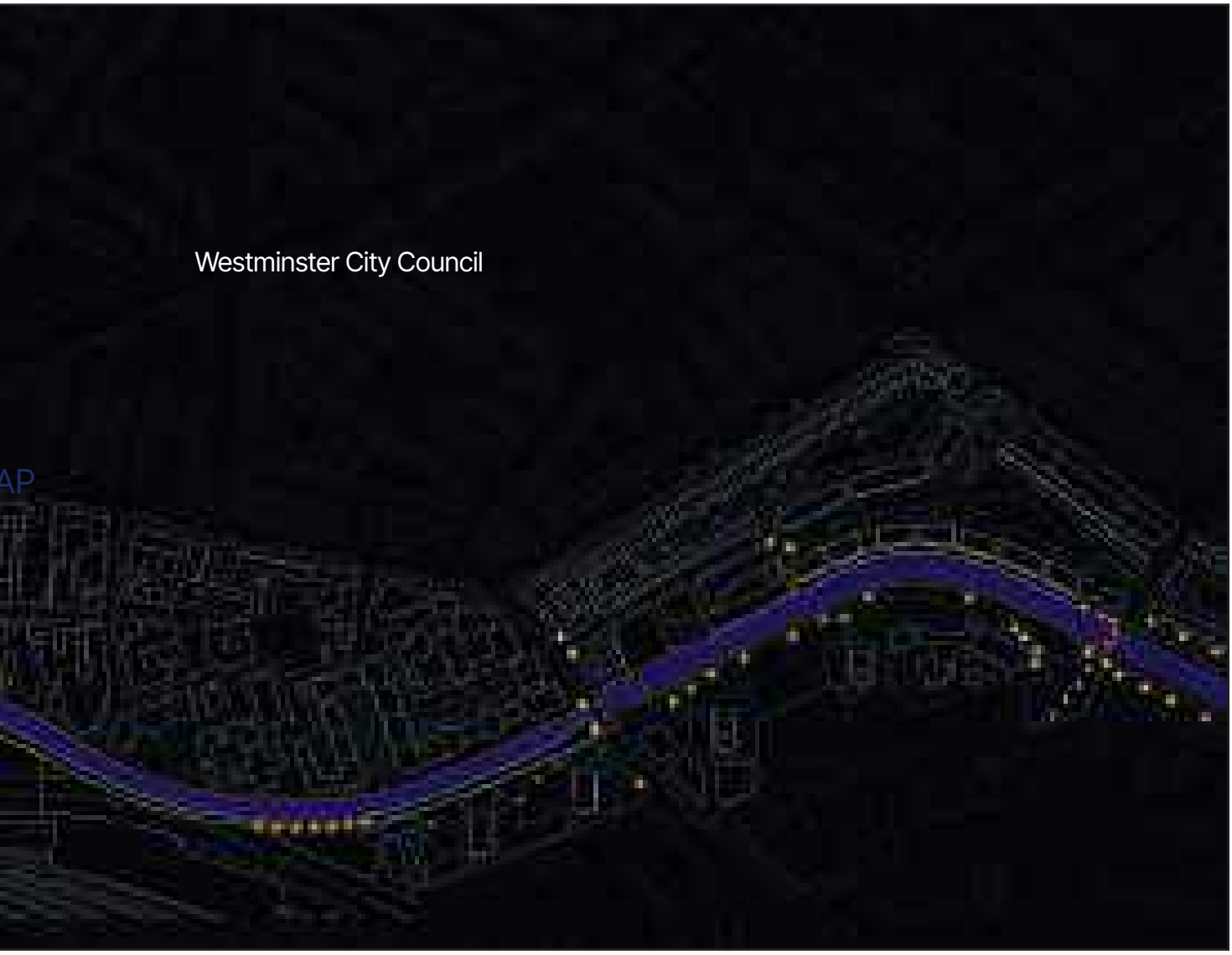
NIGHT-TIME LIGHTING AUDIT



This map shows the current lighting conditions along the canal in North Paddington. It highlights that council owned streets intersecting with the canal are currently relatively well-lit compared to the path along the canal. The stretch of towpath between the Meanwhile Gardens and Half Penny Steps, and the stretch between Westbourne Park Bus Garage and Great Western Studios, are especially dark.

Increasing the level of lighting along the towpath may increase the sense of safety after dark, however this would need to be accompanied by increased use and activation to ensure natural surveillance of the canalside spaces.

The canalside is home to a number of boaters and the introduction of lighting along the towpath could become a disturbance to them or alternatively be an asset to them when navigating the canal in the dark. Biodiversity and wildlife will also be a consideration when thinking about lighting the towpath and canal. Interventions should work to encourage and increase habitats and wildlife, so biodiversity friendly lighting should be considered if new lighting is to be introduced. A delicate balance must be struck across all of these competing and at times contradictory elements.





Street light

Park lights or smaller lampposts

Spotlights mounted to buildings

< Lighting condition on the towpath adjacent to Great Western Slip Road

NIGHT-TIME LIGHTING



Half Penny steps, looking East



Half Penny steps, looking West



Great Western Road Slip Road, looking South



Meanwhile Gardens, looking West



Towpath by the Transit building, looking East



Space beneath the Westway, looking West



Space beneath the Westway, looking East



Brindley estate/Harrow Road West access, looking East



Amberley Estate, looking West



Towpath adjacent to Westbourne Bus Car Park



Meanwhile Garden's edge

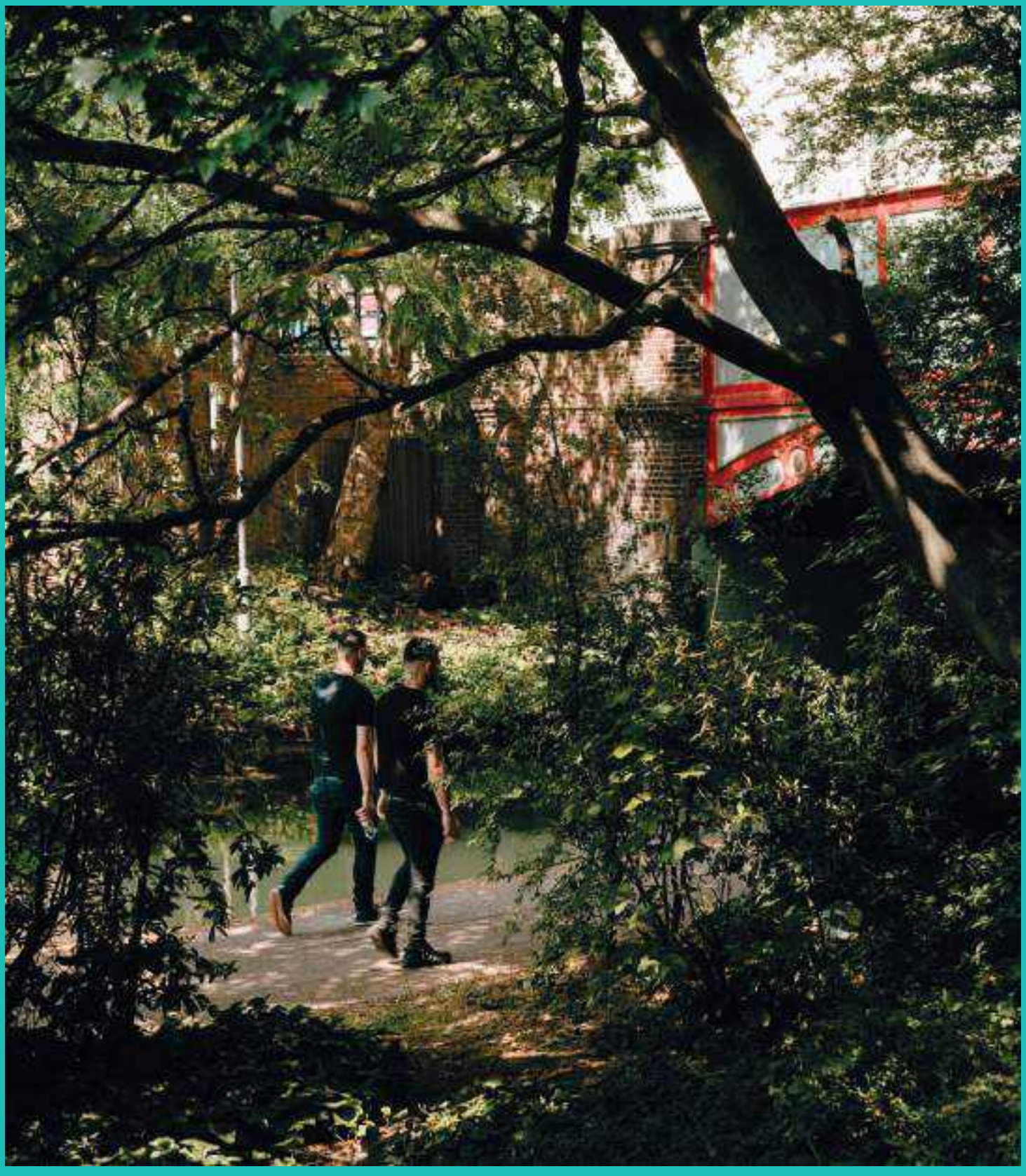


Great Western studios

engagement 3

→

findings & analysis



3.1 APPROACH

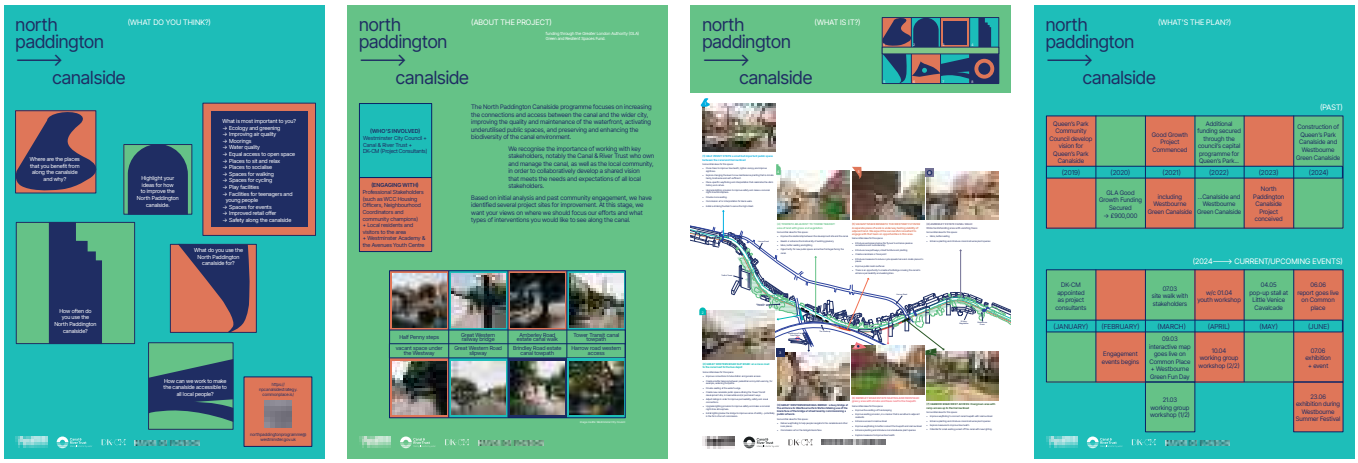
Throughout the North Paddington Canalside project various engagement events were planned to understand how the canalside is currently used, where the points of contention are, and to work with the community to inform and shape the canalside proposals between Ladbroke Grove and Little Venice. Through this method we have aimed to create context specific proposals that directly respond to the needs and wants of local people.

Scoping phase engagement events included:

- → Stakeholder site walk with the Council, Canal & River Trust and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea officers - Thursday 7th March
- → Stakeholder site walk with representatives from local Voluntary Sector Organisations - Thursday 7th March
- → Online Mapping and Survey via Commonplace - Monday 4th March to Wednesday 1st May
- → Westbourne Green Fun Day - Saturday 9th March

Concept phase engagement events included:

- → Community Assembly 1 - Saturday 6th April
- → Community Assembly 2 - Thursday 18th April
- → Youth Workshop, The Avenues Youth Centre - Friday 26th April
- → Summer Exhibition at Queen's Park Gardens, W10 - Saturday 3rd August - Thursday 22nd August
- → Summer Exhibition at Westbourne Green Canalside, W2 - Saturday 24th August - Thursday 30th September



Engagement boards for Westbourne Green Fun Day

3.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - SCOPING PHASE

Scoping phase (RIBA Stage 1) engagement involved three events, two site walks and a drop in session at Westbourne Park Fun Day. Comments were gathered using a map of the local area as a tool to start conversations about the canalside as a whole, as well as about the eight identified sites. A sample of the questions asked are as follows:

- → What should the priorities be along this stretch of the canal?
- → How could we activate the areas adjacent to the towpath more?
- → Where are the places that are most successful along the canalside and why?
- → How can we make the canalside a more cohesive place?
- → What would you like to see happen most along the North Paddington canalside?
- → How do you feel about the current condition of the North Paddington Canalside?

We found that the North Paddington Canalside is a well used place for commuting and leisure alike; many people use the towpath as a route to and from work (both on foot and by bicycle), as a running route for fitness, or for a leisurely walk with buggies / young children during the day at weekends. With an abundance of canal boats along this stretch of the canal the area is also a home to many people. However, the space can feel closed-off and unsafe to many people - especially young people, women, and girls, who either do not know the canal is on their doorstep or feel that the space is 'not for them'.

Cyclists and pedestrians currently both make use of the towpath; there are concerns about the increase of speeding e-bikes and delivery drivers. There is work to be done to ensure that the towpath is safe for everyone to use and efficient alternative routes are provided where necessary. Many respondents suggested looking to the canals of East London for examples of successful traffic calming and organisation.

It is clear that the canalside does have a generous green offer, but to many it feels unkempt and disconnected. There are many uncertainties around who owns which parts of the canal, the towpath and surrounding areas of land. Therefore who or which organisations should be taking responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the canalside is unclear. The Canal & River Trust are under pressure to maintain 2000 miles of canals and rivers across the UK and often have to rely on volunteers to litter pick.

The canalside itself is a transient place with many people and boaters coming and going along the towpath and canal every day. There is an opportunity to embrace this and use the area as a testbed for temporary projects, pop-ups and meanwhile projects. The communities adjacent to the canal are strong and willing to adopt parts of the towpath working to activate spaces and maintain an inviting canalside for all.

STRENGTHS

- → Draw on the history of the estates around the canal and peoples' stories from their years of experience in using the canal.
- → There is a strong community presence along the canalside. Give parts of the canal to community members or organisations to adopt and use as their own - this will activate the canal and reduce maintenance costs. i.e. the Canal & River Trust's 'Adopt a canal' scheme.
- → Nature along the canal is important: this means different things for different people. Some want more flowers, more trees, or reed beds to soften the canal edge and increase exposure to wildlife for children. There is an opportunity to use this to communicate and educate not only children but all canal users, about the natural environment that they are in.
- → The canalside is an ideal space for public art that would be welcomed along the canalside. Gerry's Pompeii and Litter Art are already well loved, could the canal become an art trail with the addition of new pieces?

OPPORTUNITIES

- → In order to draw young people to the canal you need to give them something to do, make it a destination, outdoor gyms, creative spaces etc. There is an opportunity to make use of what could currently be seen as dead spaces, such as the vacant space under the Westway.
- → Use the canal as a place to test ideas, pop-ups and meanwhile uses. There doesn't need to be a permanent solution, the canal itself is a very transient place and it should embrace this quality.
- → Hard-edged fencing along the canal can feel hostile, is there opportunity to add further greening by changing these to hedgerows or to help to widen the towpath?
- → Comfortable places for rest are also required.
- → The canal and its surroundings have a rich and relevant local history with the music industry.
- → Clearer wayfinding is needed along the canal. It is often not clear how to get from the surrounding road networks and bridges down onto the towpath.



Westbourne Fun Day stall at St Mary Magdalene's Church



Internal stakeholders roundtable

WEAKNESSES

- → The public realm feels unsafe especially in areas with few 'eyes on the street', and there is a wide lack of access to good quality green space for many people.
- → Weather can have a big effect on the potential to provide outdoor activities for young people. There is an appetite for canalside activity centres or some form of free covered space for bad weather, such as the vacant space under the Westway.
- → A better, more cohesive maintenance and cleaning schedule is needed for the canal and the towpath. Bins need to be emptied more regularly (ownership needs to be clarified first), and a separate strategy also needs to be developed for fly-tipping / more substantial items of waste. The inevitable private maintenance which boat owners need to carry out should also be provided for.
- → People with moorings are concerned that spaces for moorings should not be lost as a result of increased footfall, i.e. replaced with retail focused boats or built out parts of the towpath. There is a serious deficit of mooring places in Central London.
- → There is a divide between the RBKC side and the WCC side of the canal and Harrow Road, this is especially prevalent amongst young people who may not be aware of services available to them just past their respective borough boundaries.

DIVERGING VIEWS

- → There is significant conflict between cyclists and pedestrians along the towpath, especially e-bikes and delivery bikes who are deemed as too fast or too bulky for the towpath. For example, All Stars Boxing Club no longer carry out their warm up jog along the towpath due to the number and speed of bikes passing.
- → 'The towpath is already a busy place' - while there is a need to ensure everyone has access to the area, there is a risk that the canalside will become overcrowded. This would cause higher levels of noise pollution and disturbance to boaters and local residents.
- → Lighting - while lighting can make an area feel safer, it can also attract anti-social behaviour and be harmful to local ecology and biodiversity.



External stakeholder roundtable



Ste walk with external stakeholders

3.3 PROCESS
- CONCEPT PHASE

The engagement process at the concept phase (RIBA Stage 2) included two community assemblies with key local stakeholders, a youth workshop, and a digital survey. During this phase of engagement we turned the common themes of conversations into overarching design principles for the canalside as a whole, as well as focusing on the unique opportunities for each of the sites.

WORKSHOP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The youth workshop took place at The Avenues Youth Project, a few hundred metres from Half Penny Steps - or as we found out, 'The Blue Bridge'. Our focus was to understand young people's views of the canalside, and to learn about their priorities. Many of the young people who attended go to school at Westminster Academy, this means that the canalside is part of their regular route from school to the Avenues Youth Project (from Harrow Road to Half Penny Steps).

A large printed map was populated with input which provided place-specific details such as where they felt the canal was too dark, too dirty, or too dangerous. It became apparent the young people had a strong sense of care for the natural environment, with some of them proposing specific solutions such as nets in the canal to improve cleanliness.

We used a set of precedent images to showcase more aspirational ideas such as a public outdoor cinema, kayaking and paddle-boarding, bold floor patterns, and streets being turned into public gardens in order to solicit their feedback and encourage them to think big in terms of the opportunities.



Shared notes from Community Assembly #2

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES

Two Community Assemblies took place in April. These were held with a focused group of key stakeholders who represented various local organisations such as Future Men, the Avenues Youth Project, Paddington Development Trust, the Meanwhile Gardens, Westbourne Forum, Maida Hill Neighbourhood Forum, Queen's Park Parish Council, Urban.wise London.

The aim of these assemblies was to collectively translate the wider community feedback gathered from site walks, community events, and the online survey into a set of key principles to underpin the canalside-wide strategy, before delving into more focused site-specific feedback.

Online Survey

The first online survey was on the Commonplace programme website and consisted of the following questions:

- → How often do you use the North Paddington canalside?
- → How do you feel about the current condition of the North Paddington canalside?
- → Which of the following is most important to you? Drag and drop the options to reorder them in order of priority:
  Safety along the canalside, Ecology & greening, Spaces for walking, Places to sit & relax, Spaces for cycling, Places to socialise, Water quality, Improving air quality, Spaces for events, Equal access to open space, Facilities for teenagers & young people, Play facilities, Improved retail offer, Moorings.
- → What would you like to see happen most along the North Paddington canalside?
  Improved pathways and paving, More lighting, Places for rest, Improved public spaces, Intensified greening, New habitats and biodiversity

Feedback from the survery:
83% of people believe that the canalside conditions are 'average' or 'require improvement'. This supported the very premise of the North Paddington Canalside project itself, and strongly supports the idea that these spaces need transforming.

When measuring how people use the canalside, the most popular response was 'as a place to be with nature'. Supporting this idea, when presented with our draft Stage 1 themes, local people supported our proposed association of 'ecology and greening', 'spaces for walking', 'moorings', and 'water quality' with the canalside areas. However, the single most popular theme for the North Paddington Canalside project was 'safety along the canalside'. Above all, then, and not to exclude other important uses, the canalside should be a place where it is safe to engage with nature.

Moving onto interventions from associated themes, the following were the most popular, from most popular to least.

1. Improvements to pathways and paving
2. More lighting
3. Improved public spaces
4. Intensified greening
5. New habitats and biodiversity

PECEDENTS USED DURING ENGAGEMENT



north paddington → canalside improvements



north paddington → canalside improvements



north paddington → canalside improvements



north paddington → canalside improvements

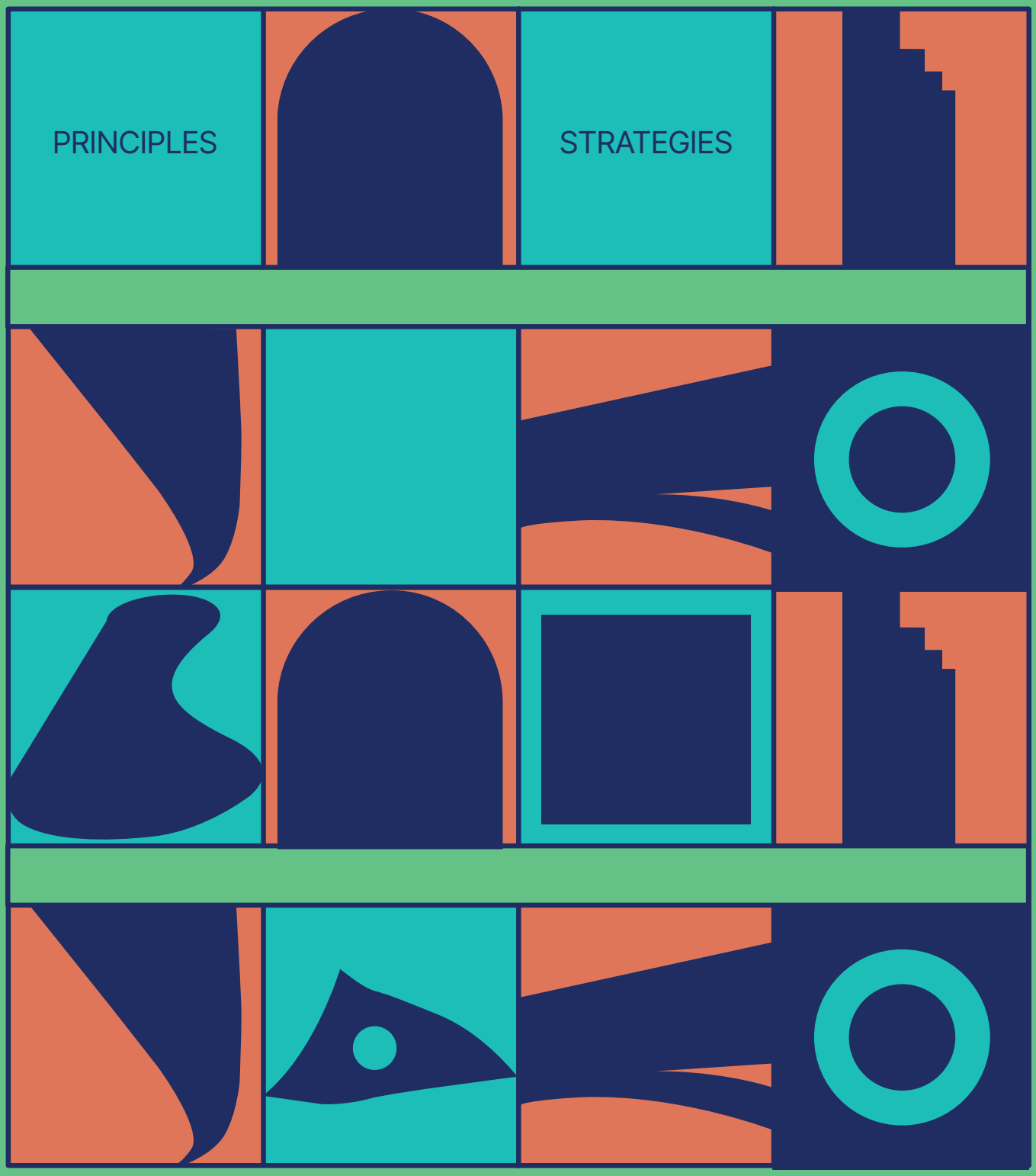


north paddington → canalside improvements

The most popular precedents from the Youth Workshop, clockwise from top-left: Outdoor Cinema in King's Cross, Copacabana pavement by Roberto Burle Marx, A Bug Hotel, Public Recipes by We Paint What We Ate, and Paddleboarding on the River Lea.

principles & strategy

4



4.1 PRINCIPLES

From conversations with the local community the following key principles have been distilled. These principles aim to guide the design process and ensure that future proposals for each site adequately address the concerns and aims raised by the community.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Encourage and support better health outcomes and increased wellbeing for residents and visitors.

ACCESSIBILITY & SAFETY

- **Make the canal more accessible** by improving entrances, access ramps and pathways.
- **Allow people to rest** by introducing more seating.
- **Improve sense of safety** by adding lighting in dark areas.
- **Explore solutions with e-bike and e-scooter hire services** and Transport for London.
- **Reduce conflicts** by creating passing and rest places off the towpath.
- **Work with partners to increase management** such as litter-picking of canalside.

BIODIVERSITY

- **Enhance the ecology of the canal network** by introducing biodiverse planting.
- **Improve the water quality** by supporting better water management.
- **Safeguard the canal as a clean air pathway** through public awareness campaigns and support.

CULTURE & ACTIVATION

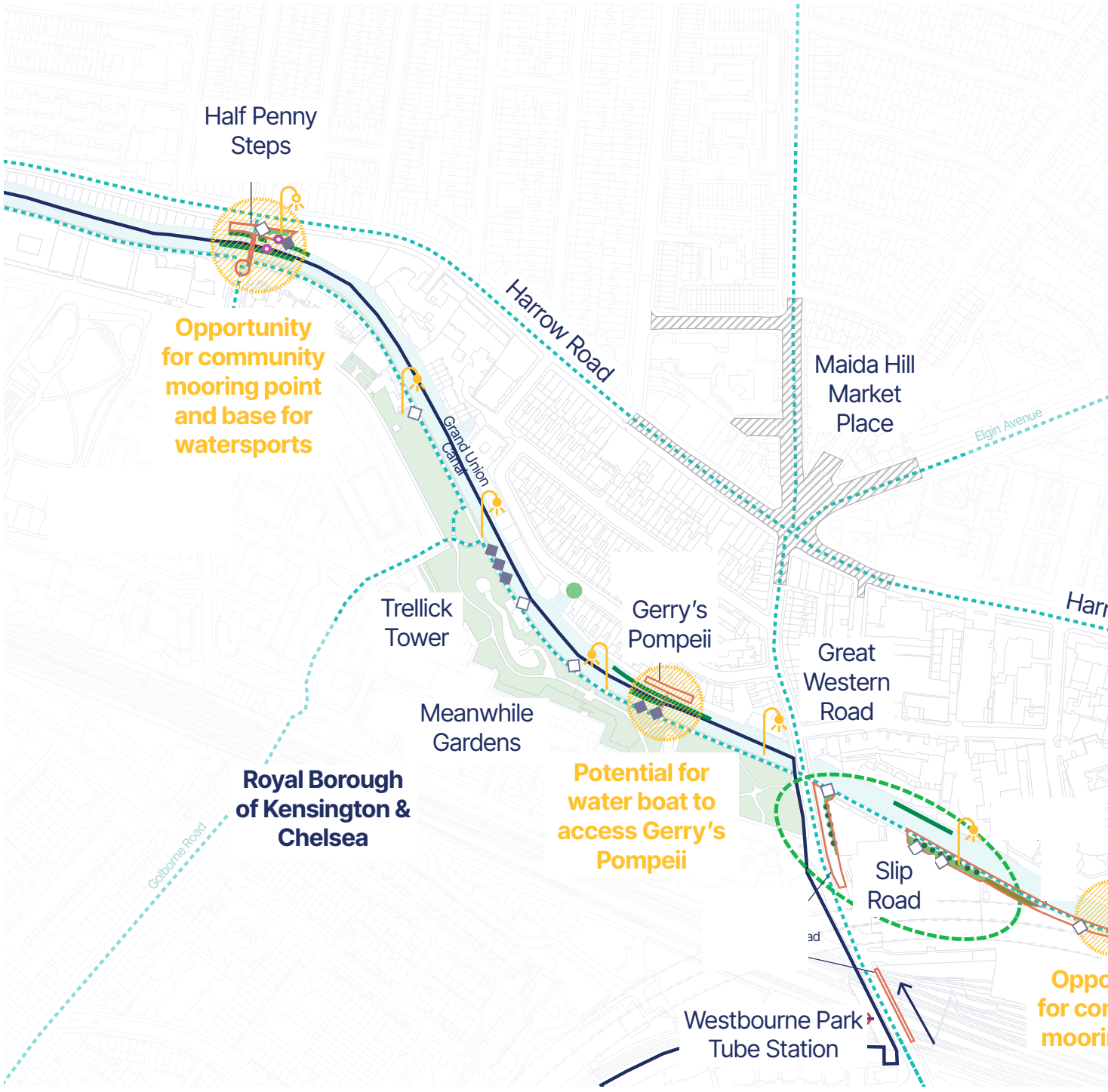
- **Help navigate more people to and along the canal** through improved wayfinding and signage.
- **Celebrate the diverse histories of the locality** through public art and community programming.
- **Encourage more creativity and activation along the canal** through new spaces and facilities.

4.2 STRATEGY OVERVIEW

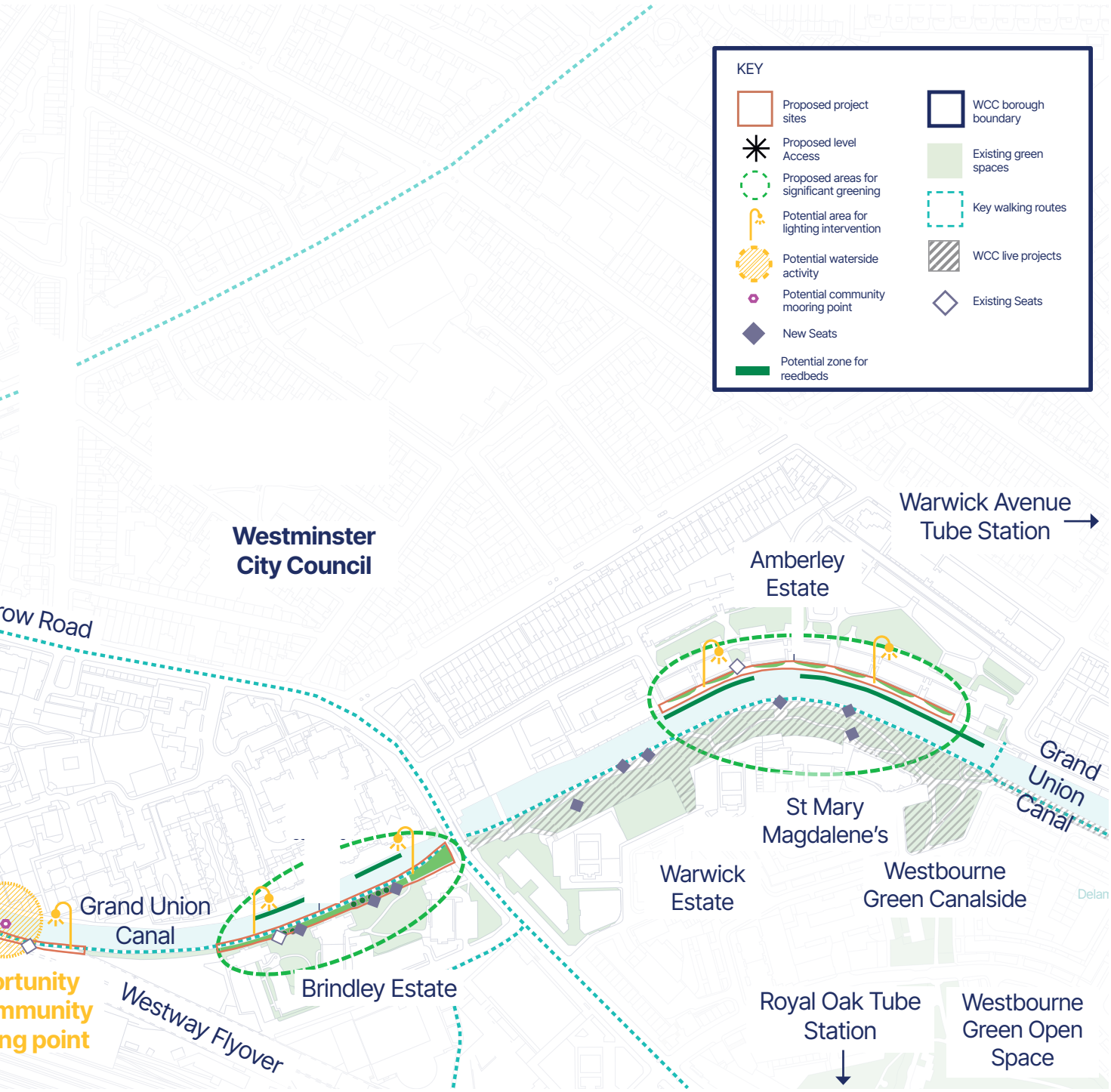
The 2.5km of canal network and adjacent publicly accessible spaces along the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm have been scoped for potential improvements along its length.

Areas that have been considered are where there is significant opportunity for improvement, such as publicly accessible space that has been underutilised and spaces where sense of safety is poor.

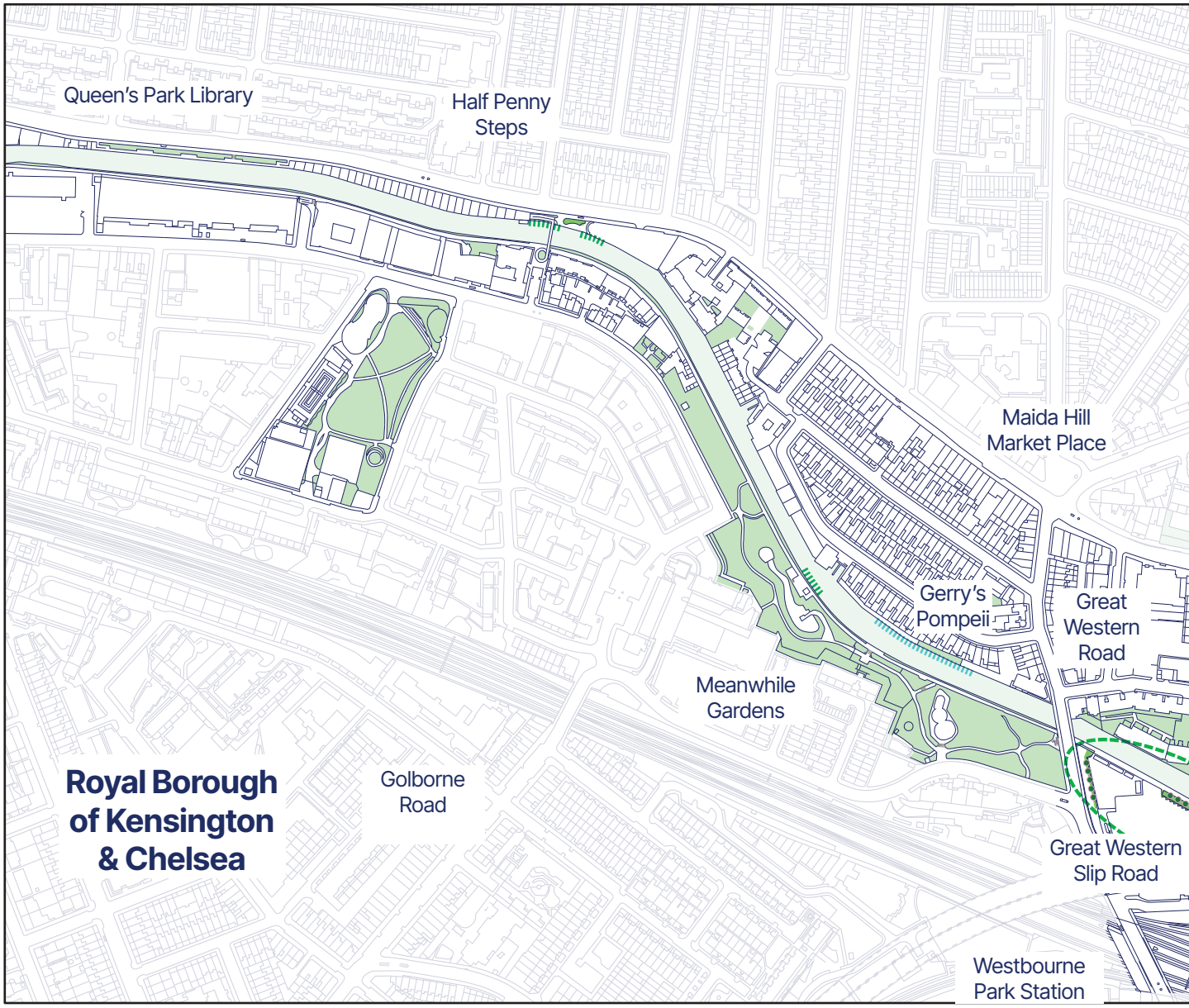
As the largest landowners in the project area, it is within the Canal & River Trust's and the Council's gift to start the transformation of this area.



The below map brings together the suite of proposals across the site area that are presented in more detail on the next pages in this chapter.



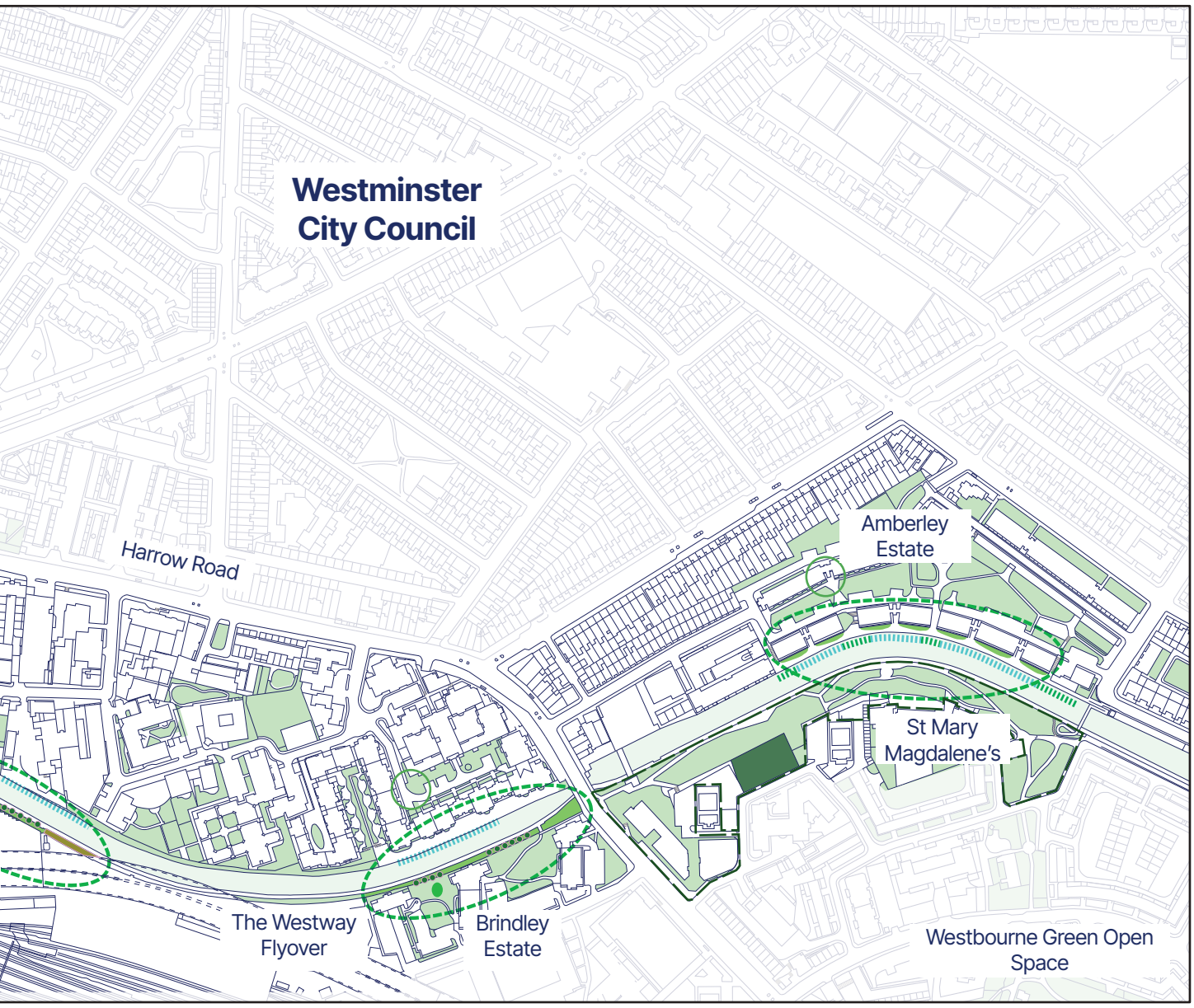
4.3 ECOLOGY STRATEGY



There are a range of environments along and near the canal that positively contribute to the ecology of the area. Within this, there are many spaces that could be augmented in order to perform better, and other areas that could be easily reconfigured too.

Through discussions with stakeholders, a range of interventions has been identified across the site that builds upon existing features and considers impacts on the entire 2.5km network, with potential benefits extending beyond the project boundary.

These insights include: supporting citizen science expeditions; increasing the number of trees, particularly fruiting varieties to provide natural food for birds; exploring the use of lighting covers to reduce light pollution and protect bat habitats; maximizing small green spaces; investigating rainwater harvesting; installing bird boxes and insect hotels; and ensuring maintenance is considered from the outset.



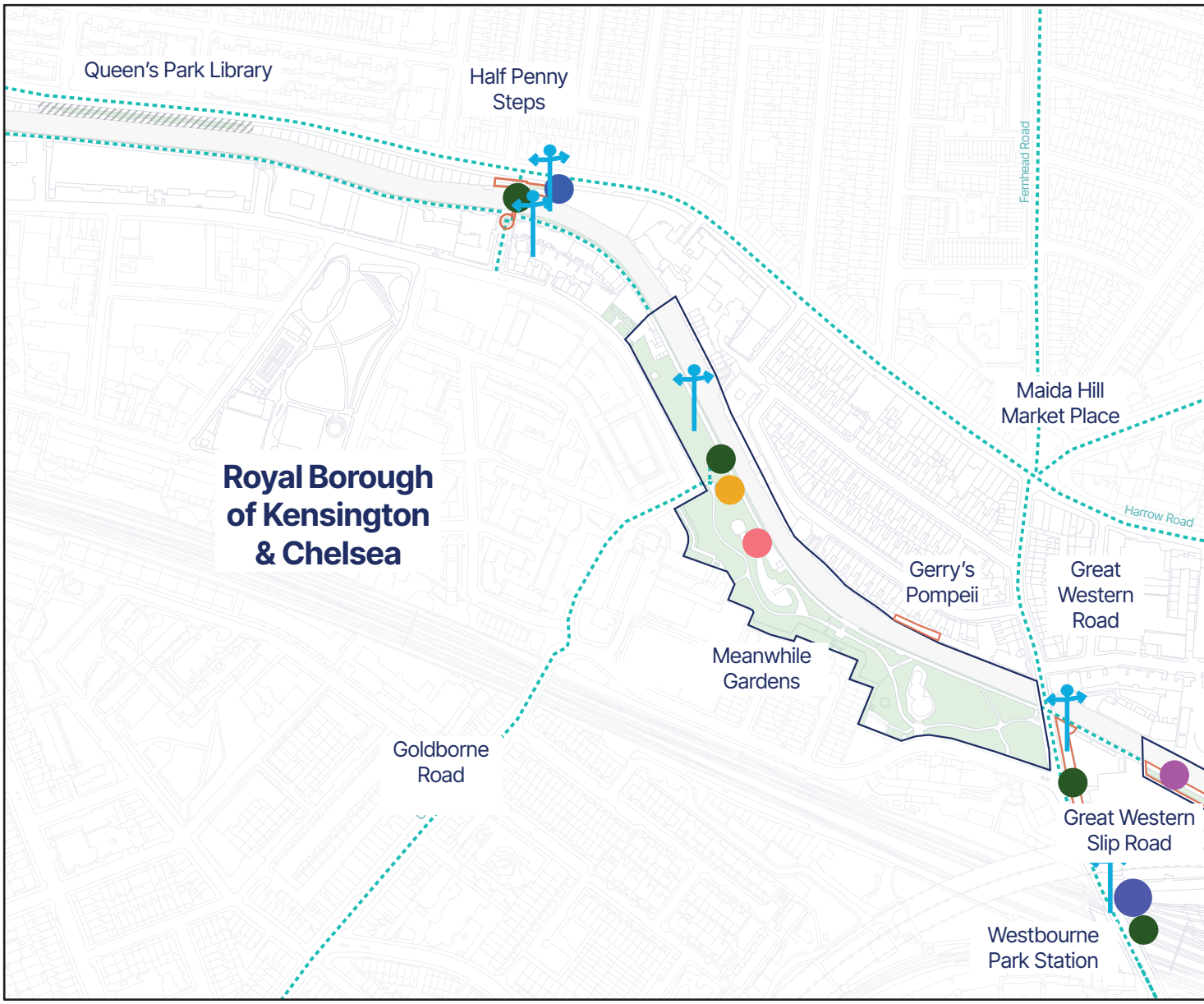
Proposed

- Sights for enhanced ecology
- Priority locations for reedbeds
- Potential future areas for reedbeds
- Proposed trees
- Zones of significant green improvement

Existing

- Publicly accessible green spaces
- Canal
- Westbourne Green Canalside and Queen's Park Canalside improvements underway

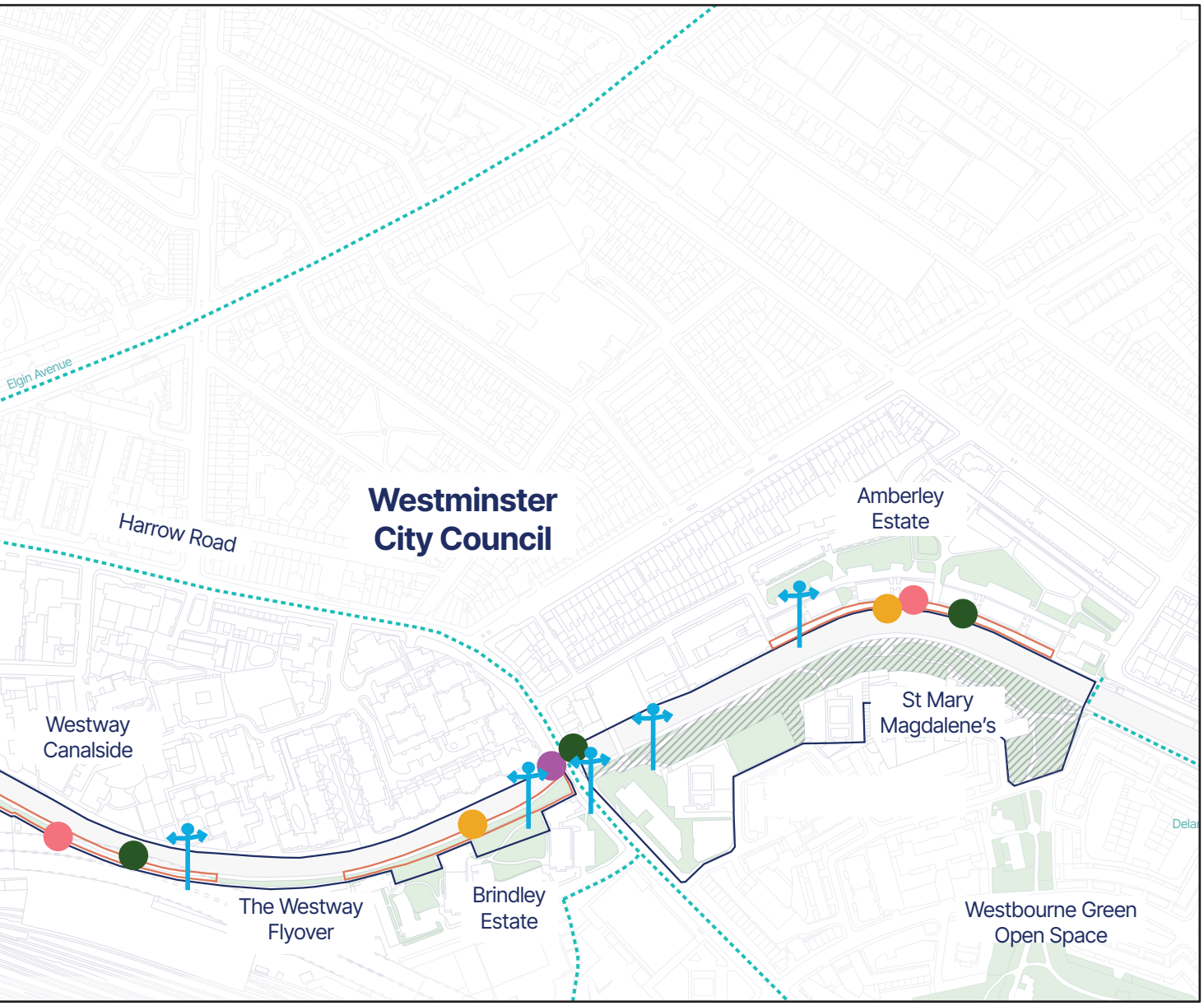
4.4 WAYFINDING & PUBLIC ART STRATEGY



The drawing above outlines a series of locations for various types of wayfinding and public art opportunities. Alongside new directional and functional signs, the site and its neighbouring areas are also ideal for wayfinding and public art commissions to support the identity and place of the area that celebrates local culture.

There is a real appetite for public art commissioning. The North Paddington Public Art Panel will be utilised so that appropriate commissions will be undertaken that align with local aspirations and involve local artists and organisations, all forming part of a wider public art trial, such as 'The Line' along the Lea and The Thames.

Directional signage is to be located around key decision points such as road intersections and entrances and exits to the canal.



Proposed

EDUCATIONAL AND ECOLOGICAL:
Markers with information around local history, culture and nature, encouraging exploration and interaction with elements you might encounter on the canalside.

HISTORY AND CULTURE:
Signage celebrating significant historical events, buildings, figures, landmarks and the industrial and social history of the canal.

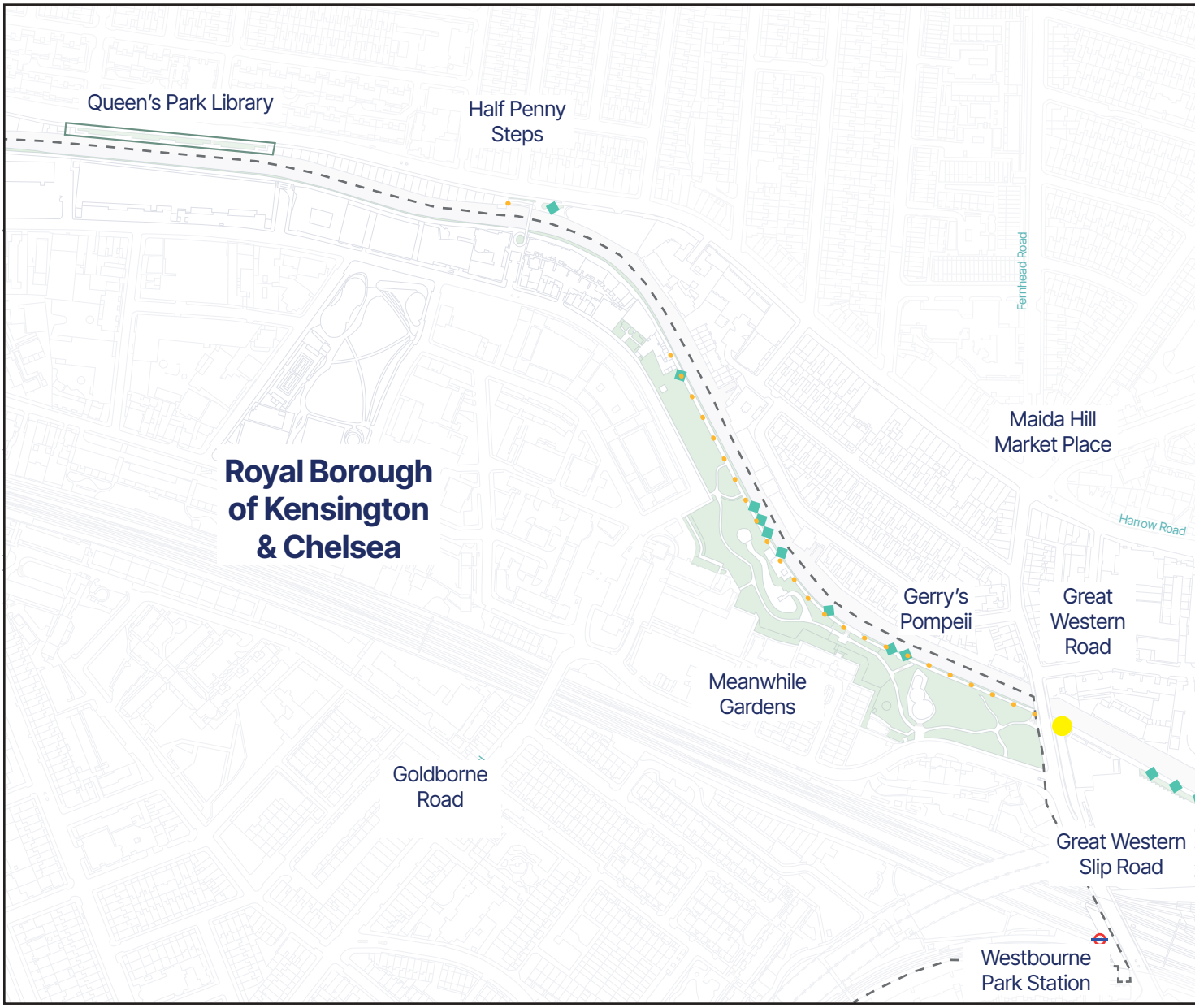
ART INSTALLATIONS:
Permanent art commissions or temporary installations involving local residents and organisations such as schools and youth clubs. Works will form a 'canal art trail'.

SUPER GRAPHICS:
Large-scale painting or murals depicting local themes, culture or history used for wayfinding purposes and supporting an improved sense of place.

LEGIBLE LONDON SIGNS:
Transport for London informational points displaying maps of key landmarks and nearby attractions.

Directional signage at key decision points

4.5 ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY



Generally sighted at a lower level that the street and urban areas, the canalside can be quite disconnected from its surroundings. Currently the canalside is not very accessible, with key connections between the road network and towpath disconnected, compromised and uninviting.

The drawing above shows how accessibility can be improved so that the areas around the canal are welcoming to everyone. This includes improved connections to the towpath, more and improved seating and rest stops and publicly accessible toilets to support more people spending more time in this area.

All strategies positively contribute to accessibility by making the canalside more welcoming, animated and safer place to spend time in.



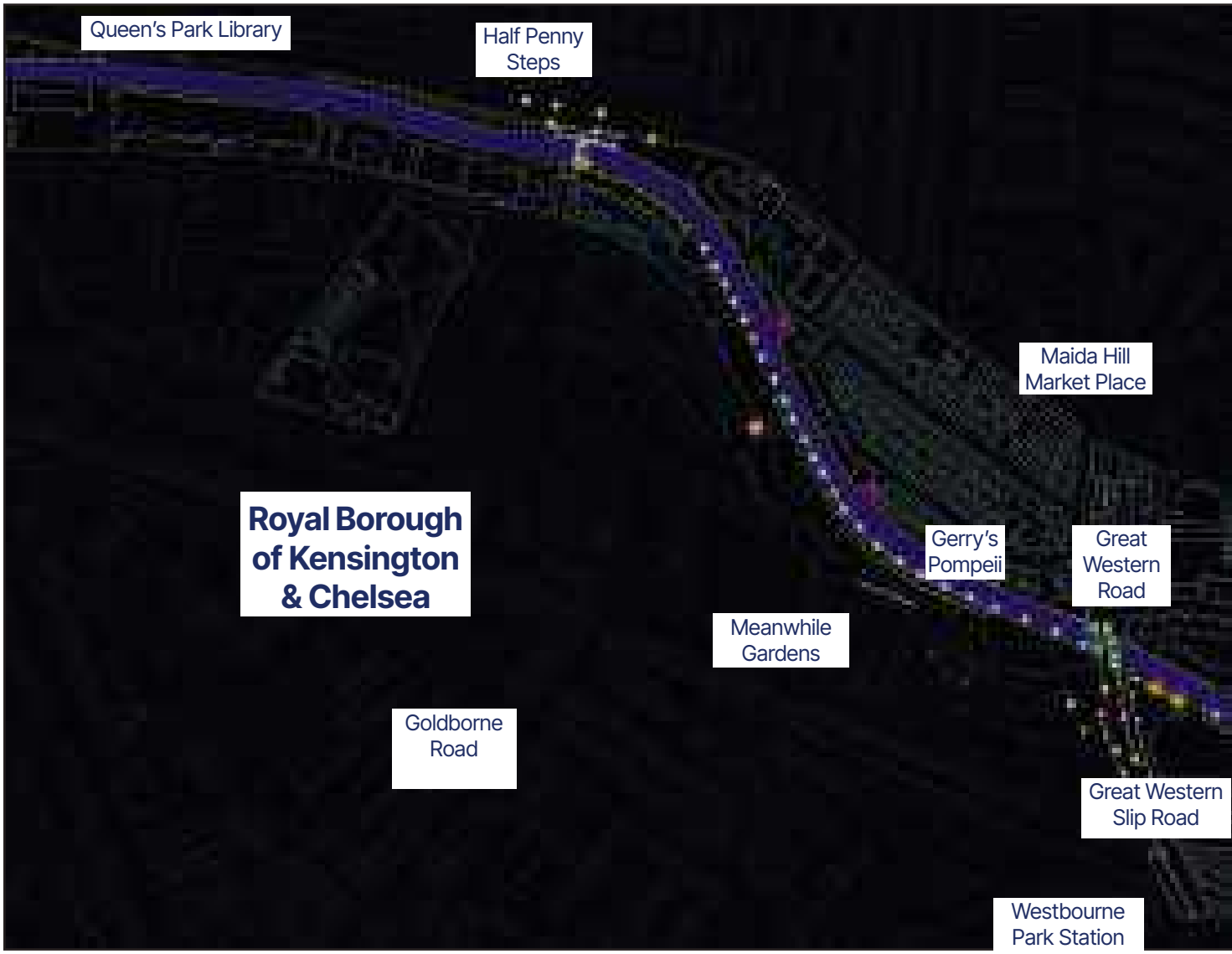
Proposed

- Proposed seating
- Proposed Level Access

Existing

- Ongoing Council Project Sites
- Borough Boundary

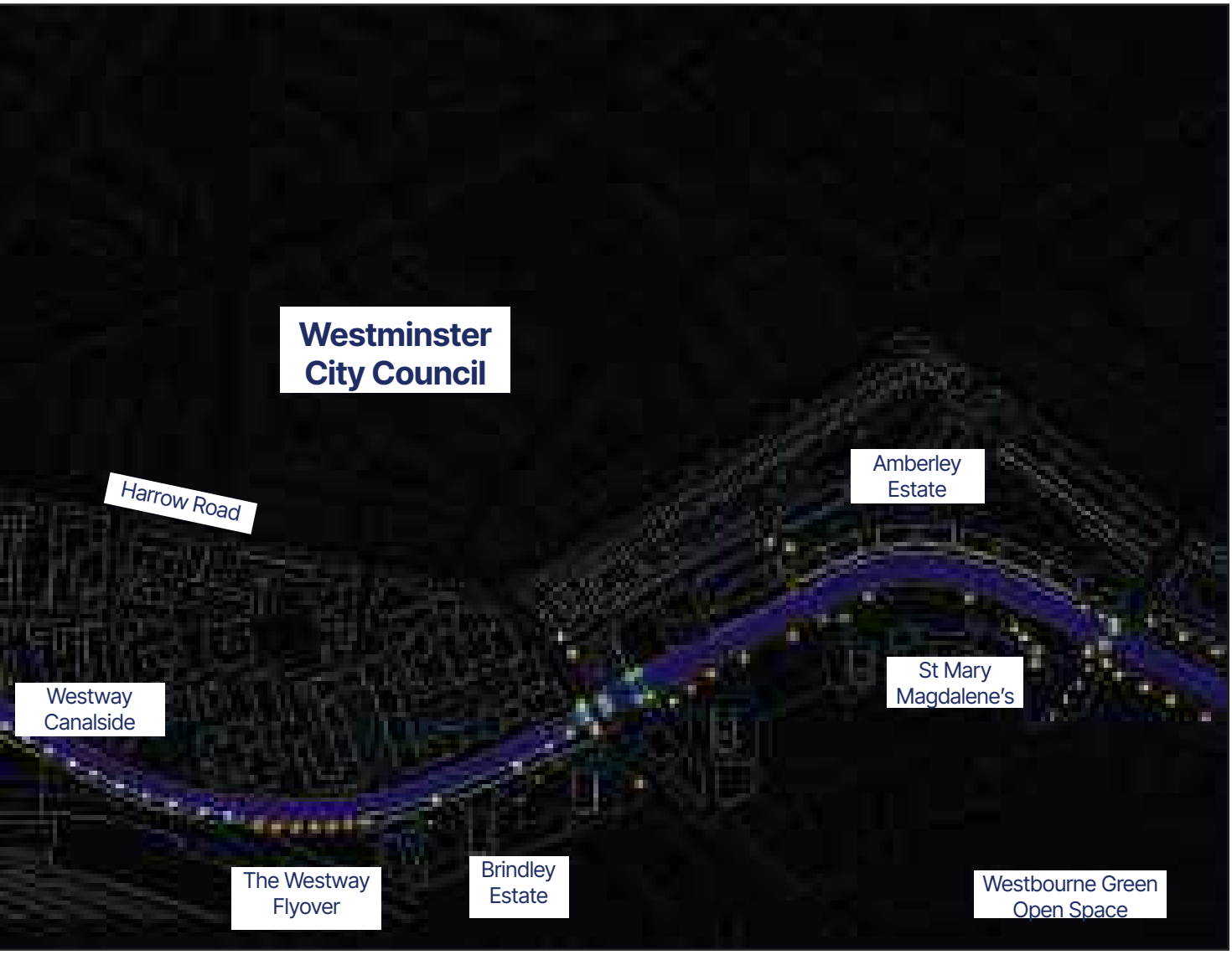
4.6 LIGHTING STRATEGY



The lighting proposals seek to make the canal feel as safe as possible. It is important that all lighting proposals carefully consider their ecological impact as lighting can have a detrimental effect on wildlife, for instance too much lighting will disturb bats flight at night - the canal being a key bat corridor across the City. This will be considered at the next stage of design.

The two darkest stretches of the canal are at The Meanwhile Gardens and Westbourne Park Bus Garage and improvements to lighting in these areas would have a beneficial impact on the whole network.

There is currently no lighting on the underside of the bridges, these spaces offer the opportunity to introduce some bold lighting design. Given the proximity of both neighbours and wildlife, timers should be considered being integrated into the proposed systems.



Proposed

- Practical Lighting
- Art Lighting on Bridges

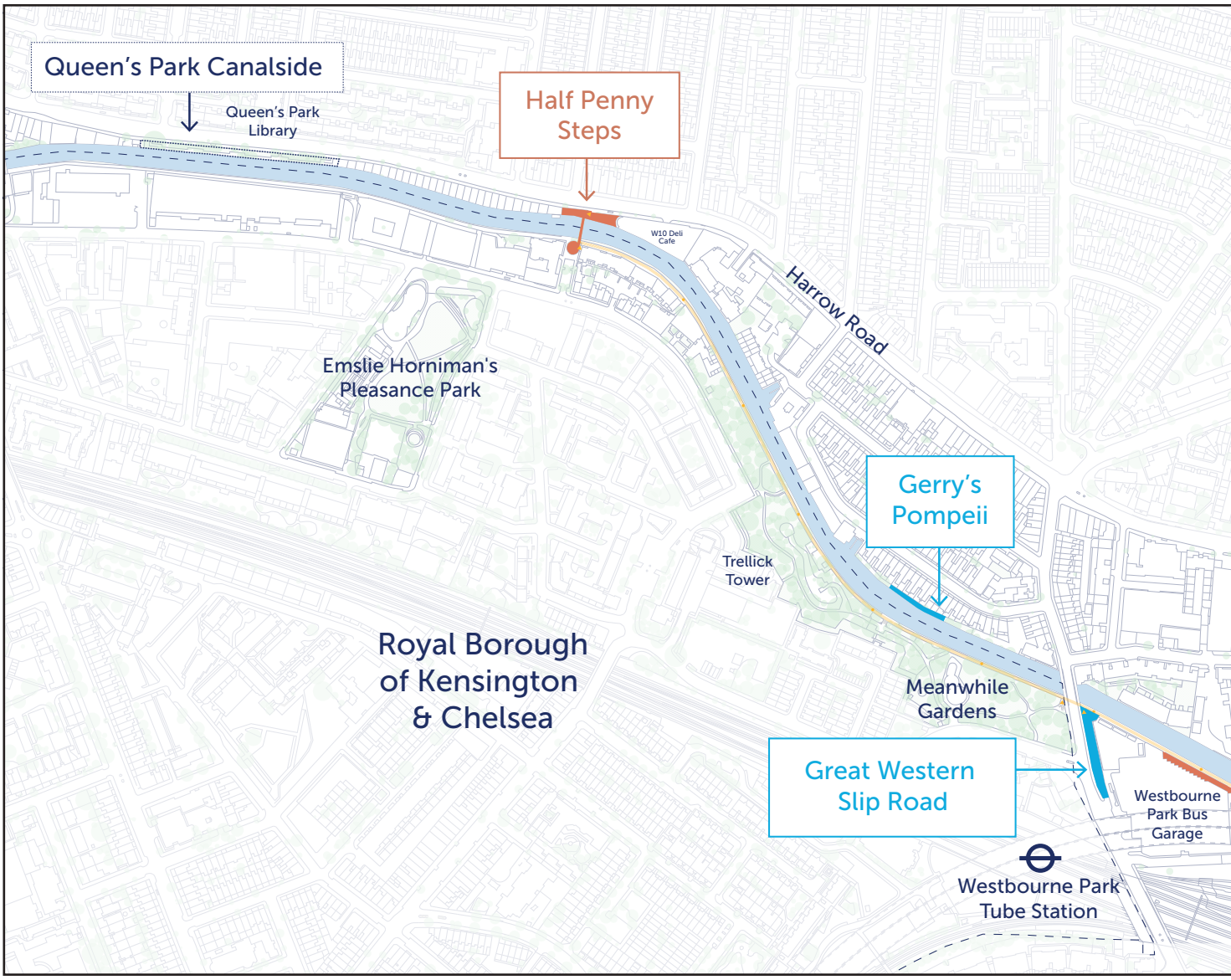
Existing

- Street lights
- Park lights or smaller lampposts
- Spotlights mounted to buildings

*CRT are unable to contribute to the maintenance of any lighting. Lighting should be fixed away from the water to the rear of the towpath.

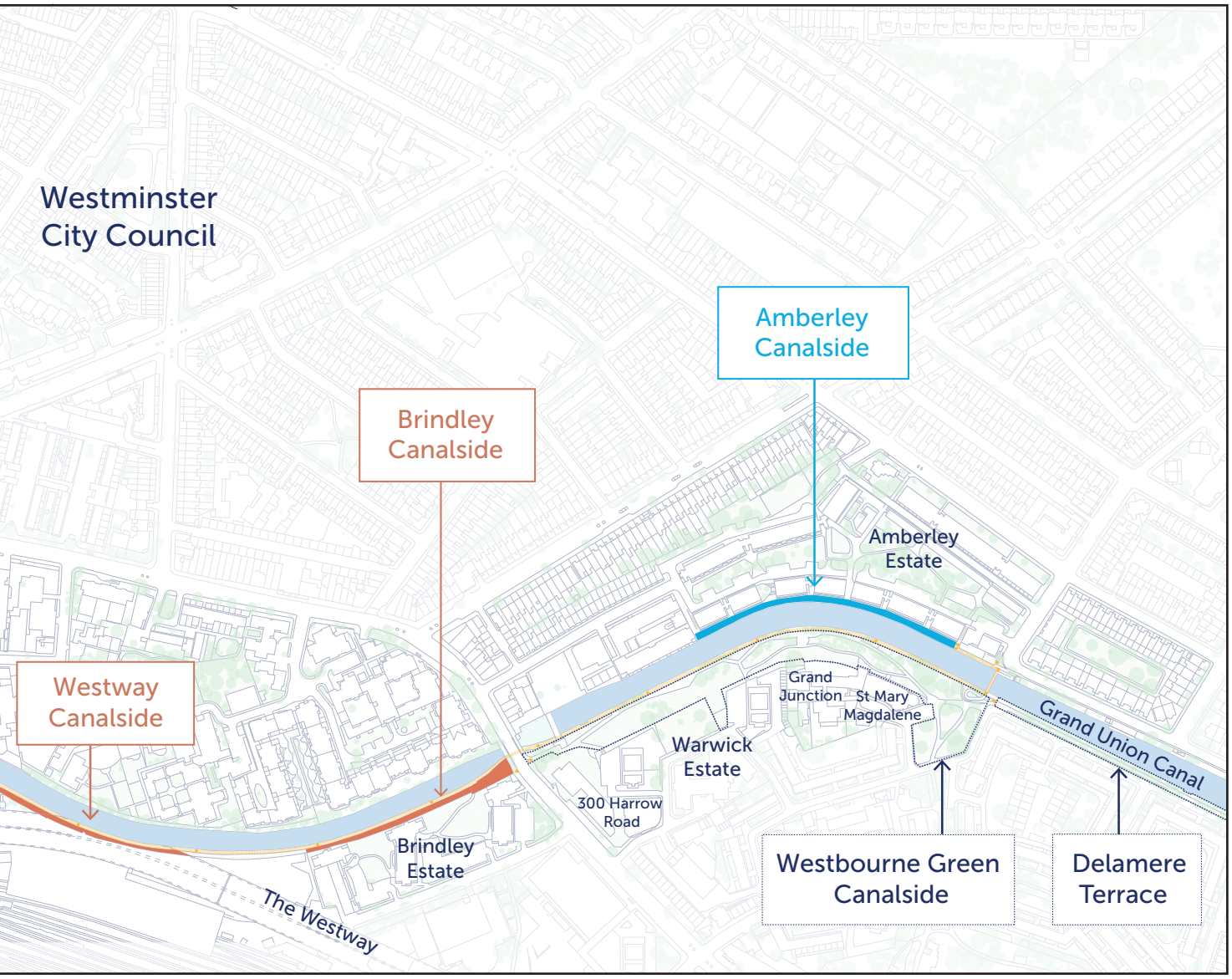
* See Appendix Section 7.1 for a photographic survey of light levels along the canal at night.

4.7 PROJECT PRIORITISATION



This drawing shows the location and prioritisation of the project sites as developed through engagement and assessments around viability and deliverability. It shows the two Mayor of London supported projects which bookend the programme area; Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Canalside.

The proposed priority projects received strong interest and support during engagement, demonstrated urgent need for safety interventions, and presented significant opportunities for transformation. Crucially, all priority project sites are owned by the Council or the Trust, enabling development proposals to build upon existing relationships with key stakeholders established through this programme.



Key:

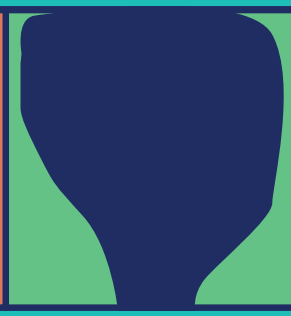
- Proposed priority projects
- Proposed future projects
- Ongoing Council projects
- Borough boundary

proposed sites

5

PROPOSED PRIORITY PROJECTS

5.1 WESTWAY CANALSIDE



5.2 BRINDLEY CANALSIDE

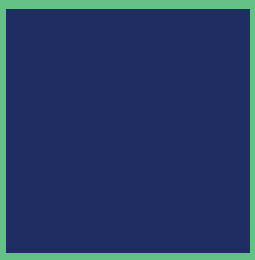


5.3 HALF PENNY STEPS

PROPOSED FUTURE PROJECTS



5.4 GREAT WESTERN SLIP ROAD



5.5 AMBERLEY CANALSIDE





Westway Canalside



Westway Canalside



Brindley Canalside



Brindley Canalside



Half Penny Steps



Gerry's Pompeii



Great Western Slip Road

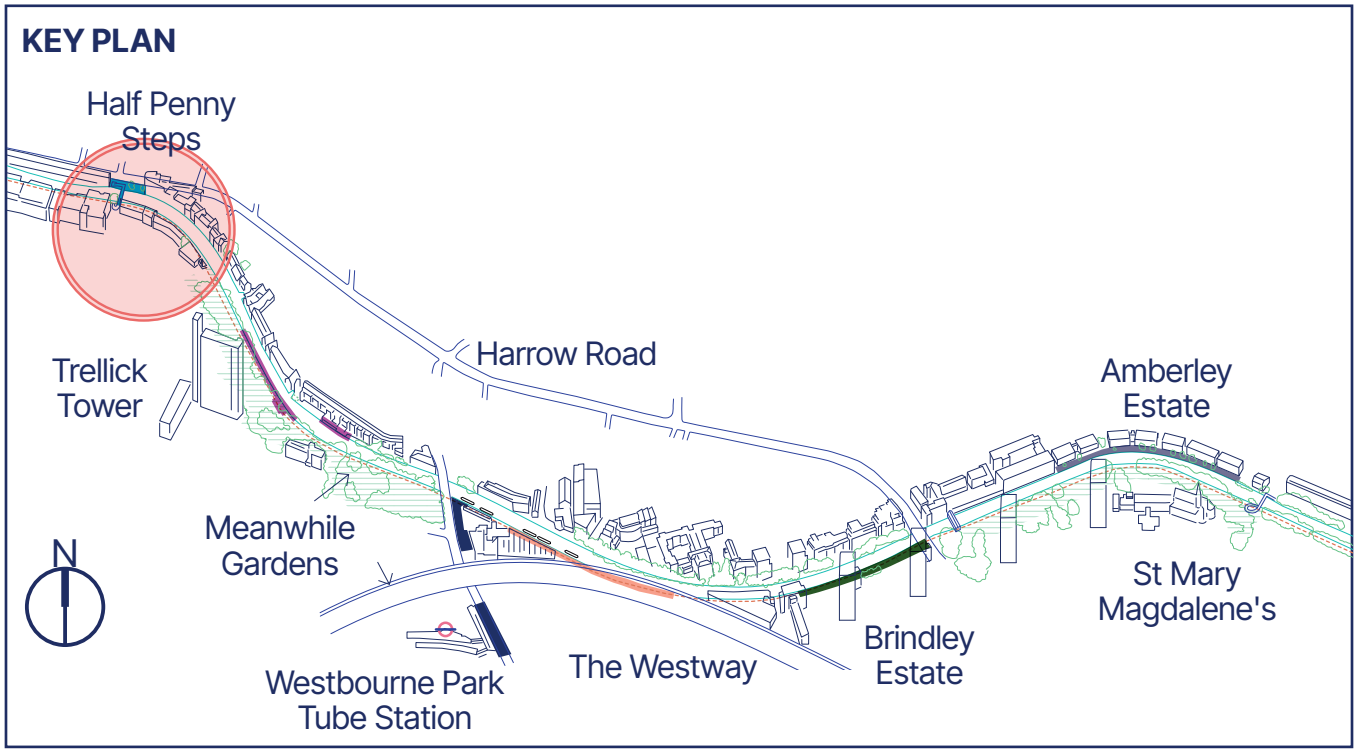


Great Western Slip Road



Amberley Canalside

5.1 PROPOSED PRIORITY PROJECT: HALF PENNY STEPS



EXISTING CONDITION

Half Penny Steps is a busy space with many people moving through it from Harrow Road. It is in a unique location positioned between the high street and the canal. The Council owns and maintains the park and footbridge at Half Penny Steps. Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea maintains the greenery at the centre of the ramp on the south side of the Canal as well as the public space around it.

CONCEPT VISION

The vision is to transform this underutilised space into a vibrant canalside terrace with new amphitheatre-style seating, wild-flower planting, and feature lighting. A new community mooring point alongside the terrace would encourage the boating community to set up a floating shop or events episodically. The bridge – an important meeting point between the two boroughs – can be elevated to a piece of public art with a new colour scheme to be designed in collaboration with local groups. Additionally, there is ambition to convert the unused space next to the bridge into a launch-spot for watersports such as kayaking.

This project is being prioritised for onward design development. As work progresses a key consideration will be looking to identify a suitable operator that could take on the management of the kayak opportunity and engaging with the Canal & River Trust on the mooring permissions associated with a community mooring point.

Key Stakeholders: The Trust, The Council, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, businesses on Harrow Road.

SITE PHOTOS





Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking north west towards Half Penny Steps and Harrow Road high street from the towpath on the opposite bank of the Grand Union Canal.

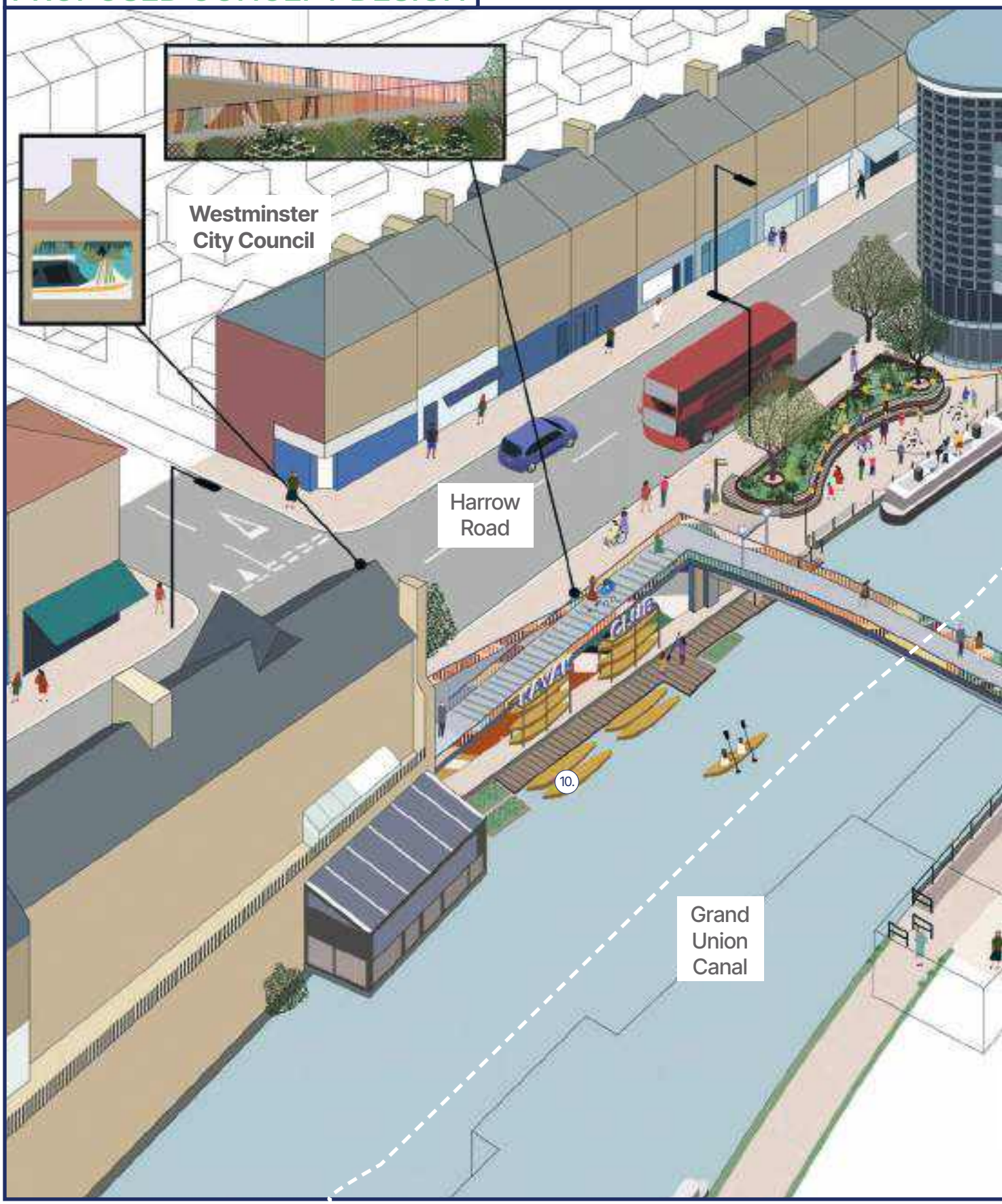
b) Half Penny Steps pedestrian footbridge that connects Westminster City Council and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. The area between the northern side of the ramp and the canal is underutilised.

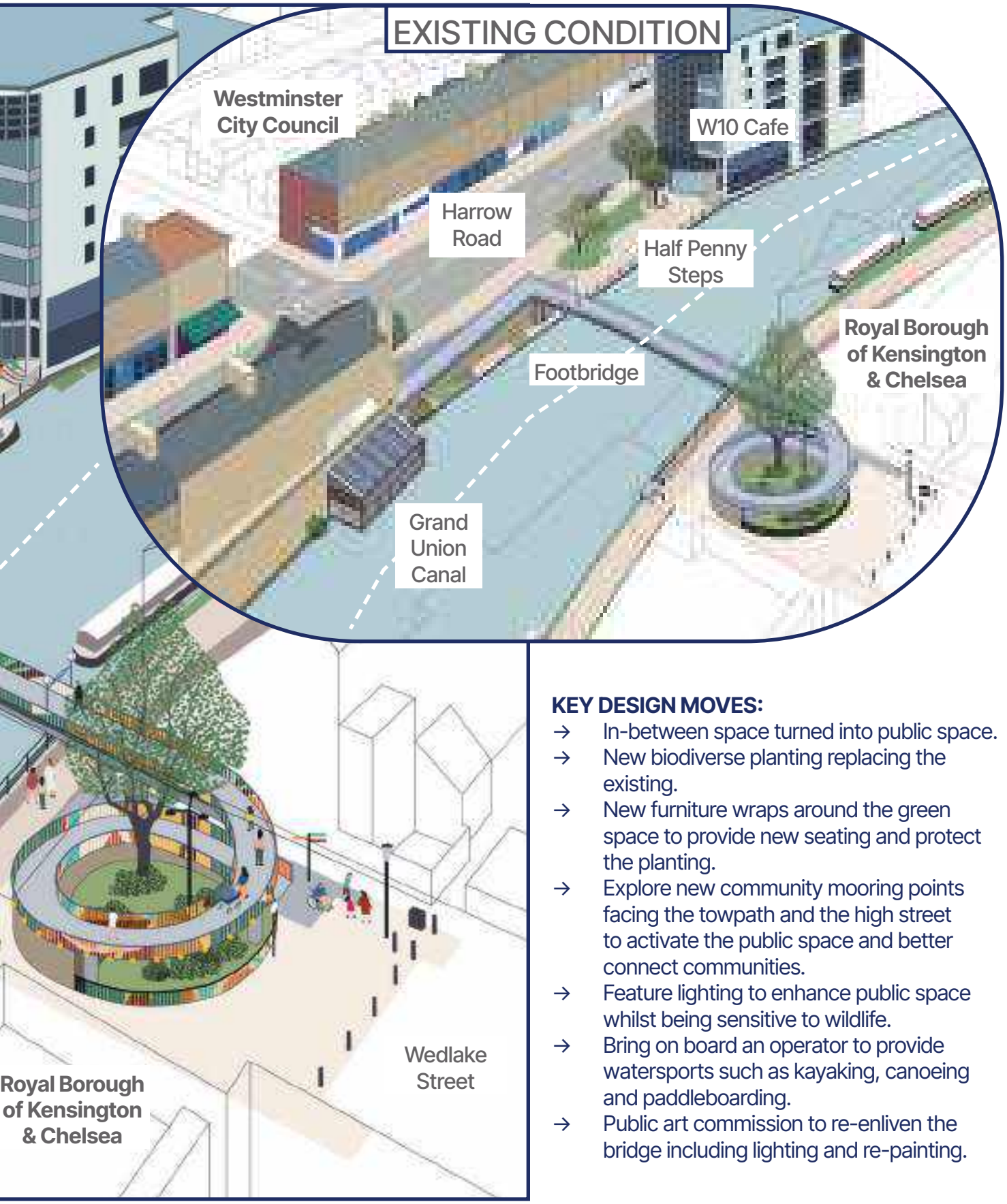
c) Looking from the footbridge down onto Half Penny Steps park. The lawn area, a bench and railings to the canal are in view, as well as people awaiting the westbound bus at the bus stop on Harrow Road.



HALF PENNY STEPS

PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN





KEY DESIGN MOVES:

- → In-between space turned into public space.
- → New biodiverse planting replacing the existing.
- → New furniture wraps around the green space to provide new seating and protect the planting.
- → Explore new community mooring points facing the towpath and the high street to activate the public space and better connect communities.
- → Feature lighting to enhance public space whilst being sensitive to wildlife.
- → Bring on board an operator to provide watersports such as kayaking, canoeing and paddleboarding.
- → Public art commission to re-enliven the bridge including lighting and re-painting.

HALF PENNY STEPS

PROPOSED CONCEPT VIEW



Visual from the opposite bank, standing on the towpath looking across the canal at Half Penny Steps public space and footbridge. New wrap-around seating would protect new biodiverse planting and existing trees. The vision is to appoint an operator to run watersports activities from the west side of the footbridge, in a formerly disused space, where with the help of a pontoon, they can store and launch kayaks, canoes and paddleboards. A range of sessions would be available to a range of ages with income generated by corporate hires would support community use. Specific sessions could invite SEND children from nearby Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School primary, as well as adult classes for those who are less mobile.

A public art commission will be explored to repaint and add feature lighting to the footbridge to celebrate this important connection across the canal. New reed beds could both support biodiversity, help clean the water and add visual attractiveness to the canal edge.

Further engagement with the Trust is needed to ascertain if it will be possible to site a community mooring point facing Half Penny Steps public space. This new mooring point would support the programming of events and could be a stop-off point to other canalside locations as part of educational programmes for instance.

PRECEDENTS



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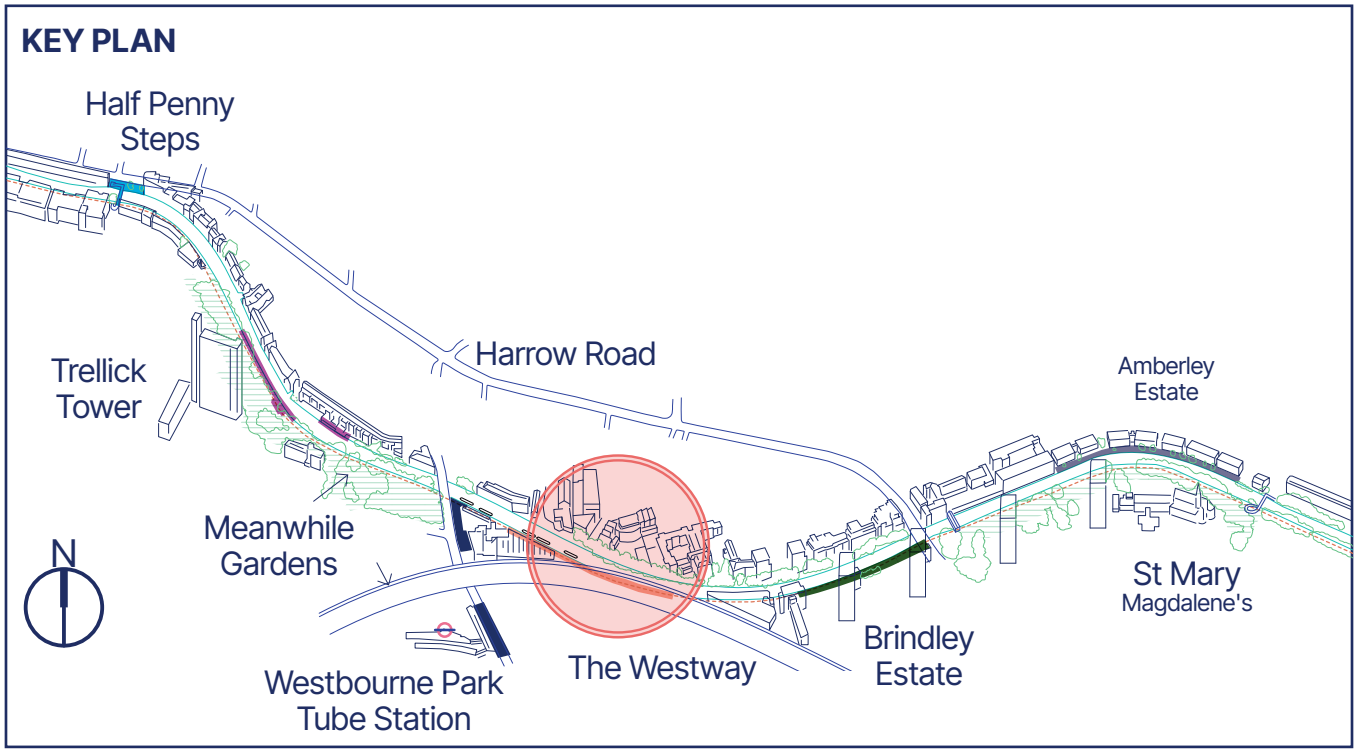
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1. Outdoor Cinema, Kings Cross
2. Chicago Riverwalk
3. Glassfields, Bristol
4. Chiayi Art Museum, Taiwan
5. Wild Mile Chicago

5.2 PROPOSED PRIORITY PROJECT: WESTWAY CANALSIDE



EXISTING CONDITION

The towpath under and adjacent to the Westway currently feels unsafe and unwelcoming to any activity. The Council does not own any land in this project area, the spaces between the towpath and brick walls are owned by the Trust and on a long lease to a private entity.

PROPOSED VISION

The vision is to create a new destination under the Westway Flyover, transforming a dark, unwelcoming space into an inviting place where all are welcome. New structures could host children and families for play and socialising, maker spaces for creative and collaborative projects, or exercise classes – these are just some of the activities that could enliven this space. A new linear park with fruit trees and ground level planting will turn a lawn into a biodiverse green space, with a new art commissioned backdrop.

This project has been prioritised for further design development. As work progresses, a key focus will be on exploring the feasibility of installing lighting at this location, considering technical constraints such as access to power and ongoing management needs. Additionally, we will undertake a process to identify local operators or organisations interested in partnering with us to activate, manage, and maintain facilities under the Westway. This will include bringing forward new public art opportunities in collaboration with local schools.

Key Stakeholders: The Trust, The Council, Great Western Studios, Network Rail, Transport for London, Westbourne Park Bus Garage.

SITE PHOTOS





Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking west towards Great Western Road and Trellick Tower toward in the distance. To the left, monolithic brick building is part of Westbourne Park Bus Garage.

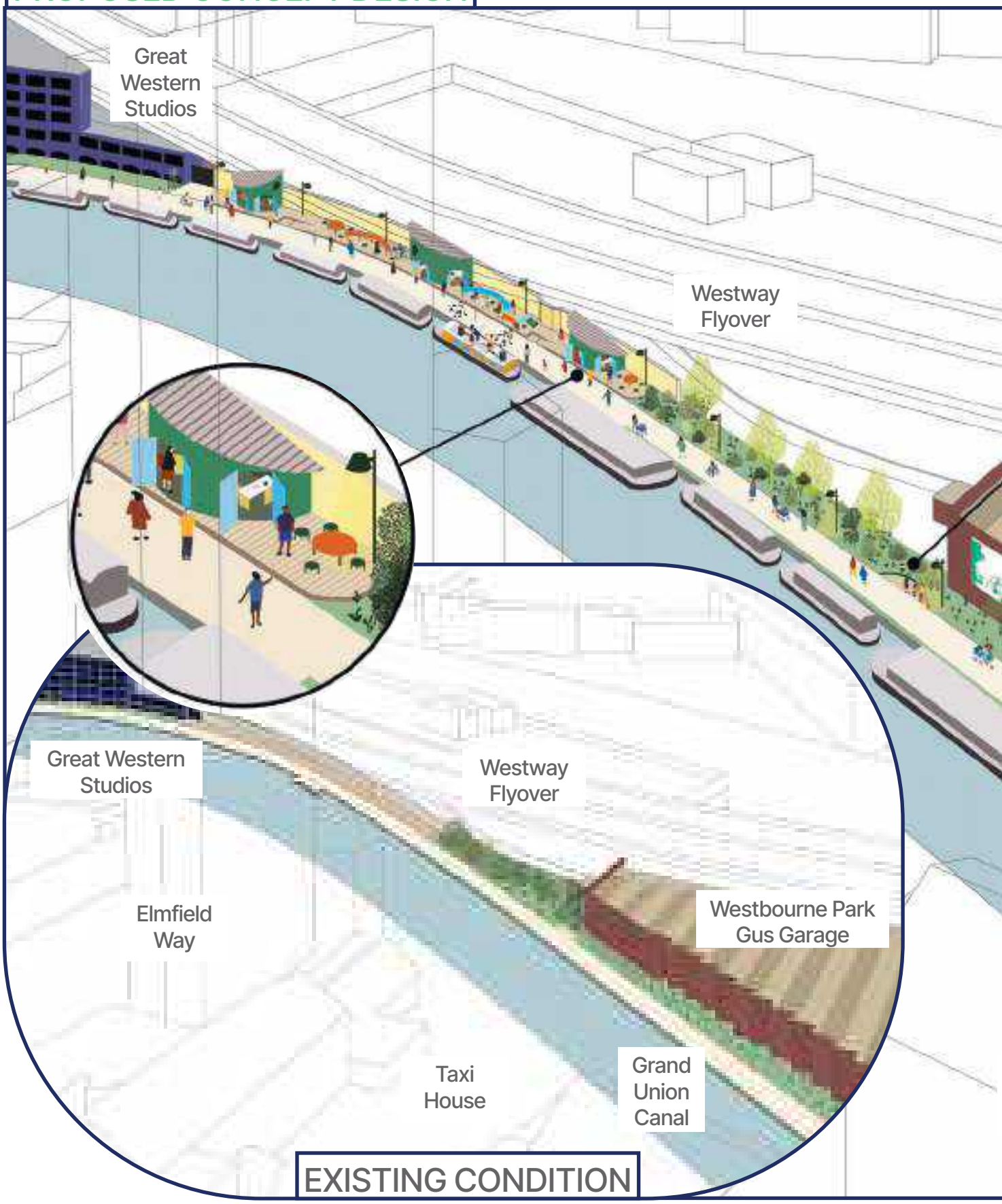
b) Underneath the Westway with publicly accessible gravel area between the towpath and brick wall.

c) Looking east into space under the Westway. In the foreground right is overgrown shrubbery that survives out from under the Westway Flyover. In the distance is Great Western Studios creative and commercial studio rental.



WESTWAY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN



EXISTING CONDITION

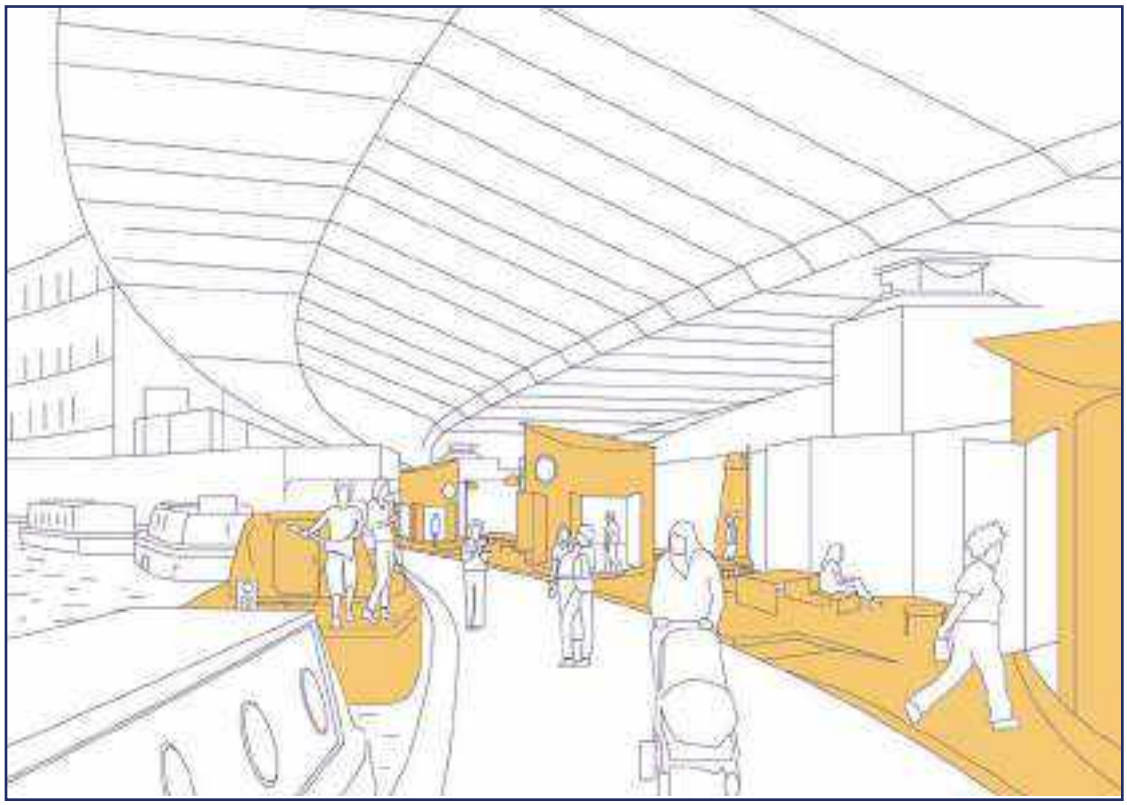


KEY DESIGN MOVES

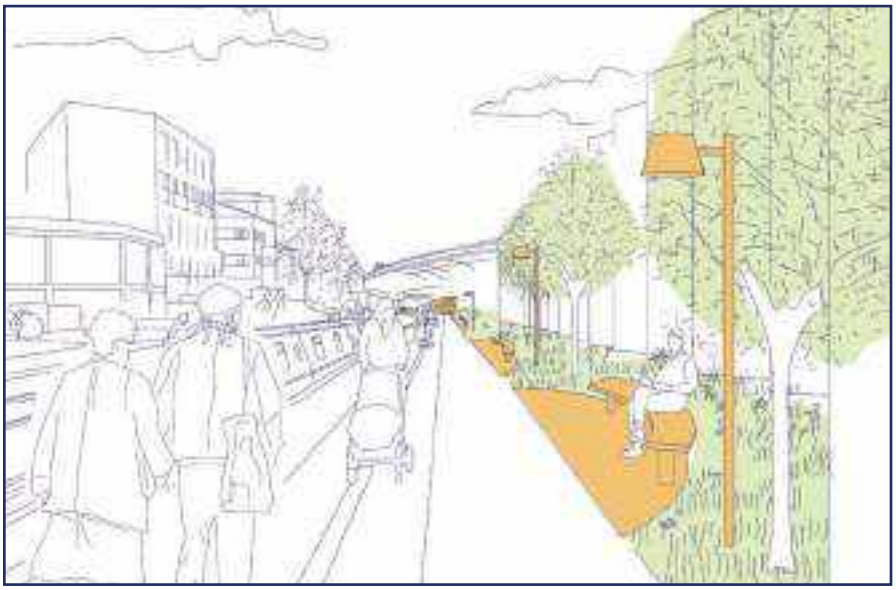
- → Bring on board an operator to introduce new uses and provide guardianship of the space.
- → Pursue co-design and co-build of new community facilities with local people.
- → Public art commission opportunities to showcase new activities and cultural history.
- → Explore introducing lighting to dark spaces whilst being sensitive to wildlife.
- → Explore introducing new community mooring point to activate the space.
- → Remove overgrown shrubbery and introduce park-like planting including new fruiting trees to provide canopy cover and biodiversity.
- → Bring forward new seating and passing places off of the towpath.

WESTWAY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED CONCEPT VIEWS



Visual showing how the space under the Westway could be transformed with a number of outbuildings that would service the site, storing equipment that can be brought out into the public space for events, play and creative activities.



Visual showing the space in front of Westbourne Park Bus Garage proposals to turn the lawn area into a public park with new trees, planting and resting places set back from the towpath.

PRECEDENTS



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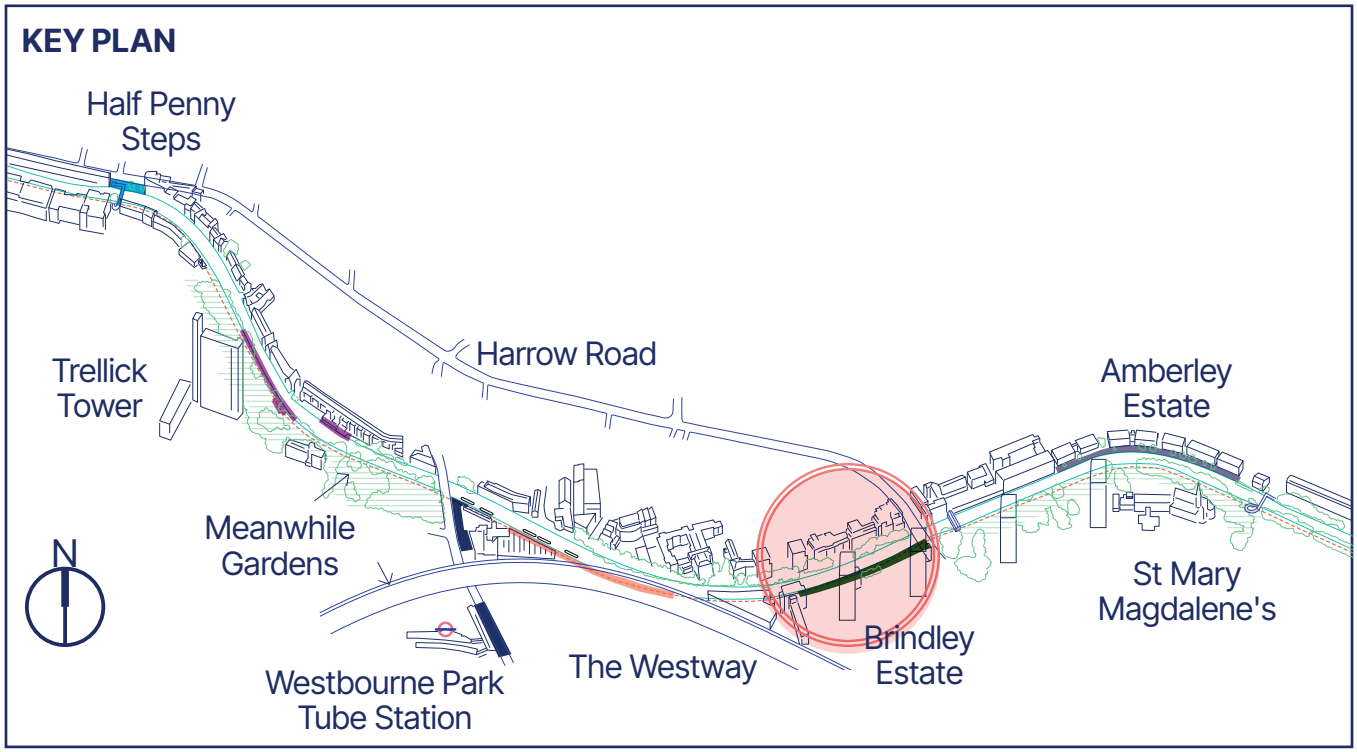
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1. Studio Weave, Ecology of Colour
2. Connecting Colliers Wood, Gort Scott
3. Blue House Yard, Jan Kattein
4. ACAVA's Maxilla Men's Shed
5. Towpath Cafe, Hackney
6. Miyawaki Forest, Danehy Park (USA)
7. Connecting Colliers Wood, Gort Scott

5.3 PROPOSED PRIORITY PROJECT: BRINDLEY CANALSIDE



EXISTING CONDITION
Access to the canal from Harrow Road feels uninviting and the green space here is littered, underused and not accessible. Canal & River Trust own the towpath and grass verge abutting the estate's open green spaces.

PROPOSED VISION
The vision is to transform this narrow and overgrown connection from Harrow Road to the canal by introducing vibrant signage on the bridge and upgrading the ramp and landscaping towards the towpath to create an inviting and inclusive gateway. Once people arrive on the towpath, they will be greeted by a new biodiverse hedgerow, colourful planting and new places to sit, rest and enjoy the views all the while set back from the towpath and under the shade of trees.

This project has been prioritised for further design development. A key focus will be the design and detailing of an improved and extended ramp, new seating and rest areas. We will collaborate with local stakeholders to ensure these amenities meet the needs of the community, shaping their character and functionality. Additionally, we will ensure that any specified furniture is robust enough to withstand misuse and meet maintenance demands. A key component will be the introduction of biodiverse plants, which we will look to partner with local organisations to develop and implement the changes with.

Key Stakeholders: The Council, The Trust, Brindley Estate Residents.

SITE PHOTOS





Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking west along the towpath with Brindley Estate on the left. A lawn, tall hedgerows and a fence separate the towpath from the estate. Great Western Studios is in the distance.

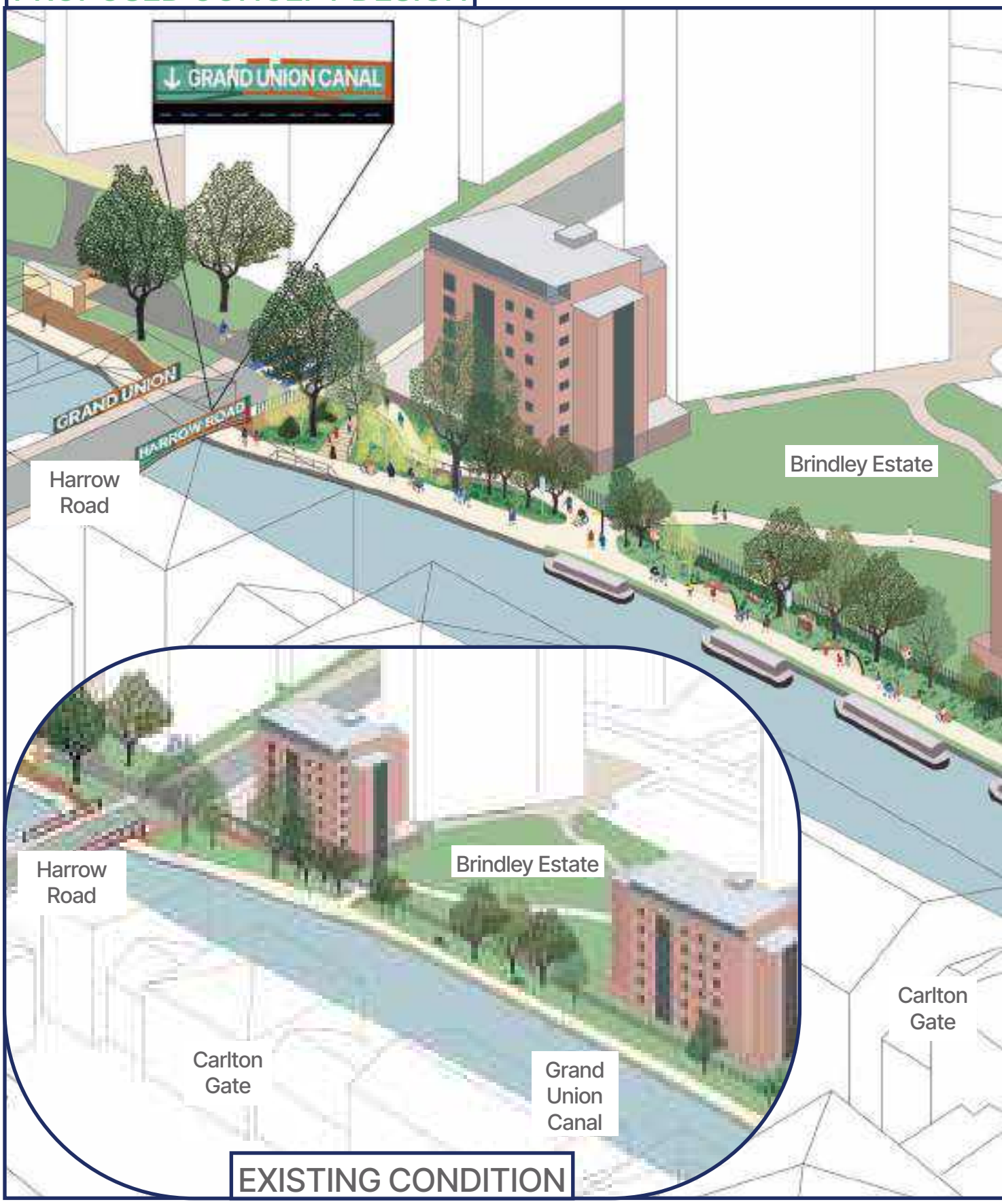
b) Looking east up the existing narrow, steep and uneven ramp that connects the towpath and Harrow Road. Fencing on both sides creates a pinched journey without enough space for wheelchairs and prams to pass. Overgrown shrubbery on the left means there are no sightlines to the canal.

c) Looking through the overgrown foliage from the ramp to the canal, with the bridge in the distance.



BRINDLEY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN



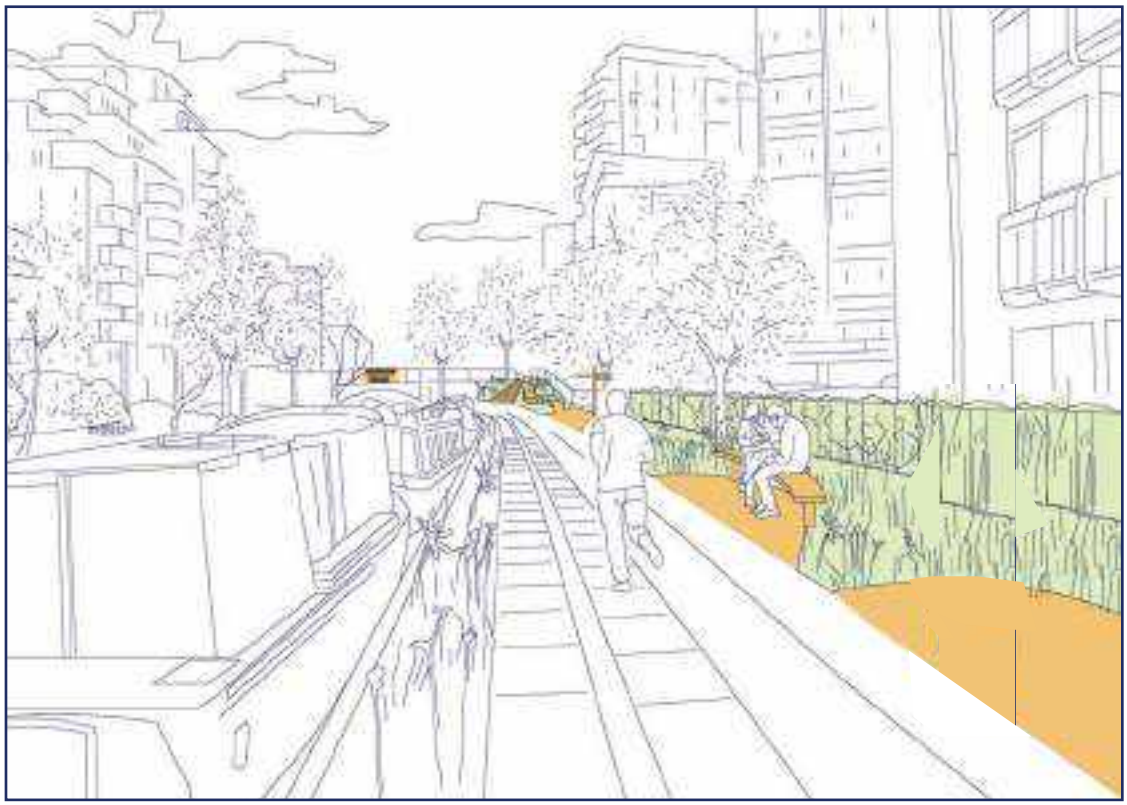


KEY DESIGN MOVES

- → Ramp redesigned, widened and extended so that the link between the towpath and high street is fully accessible.
- → Clearing of bushes to improve sightlines, whilst enhancing biodiversity.
- → New spaces to rest next to the towpath with formal and informal seating.
- → Public art and lighting commissions to Harrow Road bridge.
- → New semi-mature trees and hedgerows.
- → New bird and bat boxes and bug hotels.

BRINDLEY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED



Proposed concept view with new passing places and space to rest off of the towpath to allow safer passage for canalside visitors. Enhancement of existing lawn into biodiverse meadow and low level planting. Seating is placed where appropriate away from residential blocks.



Longer, wider and more gradual ramp so that wheelchairs and buggies can pass easily, creating a fully accessible and welcoming connection between the canal and Harrow Road high street. New signage and wayfinding on the bridge.



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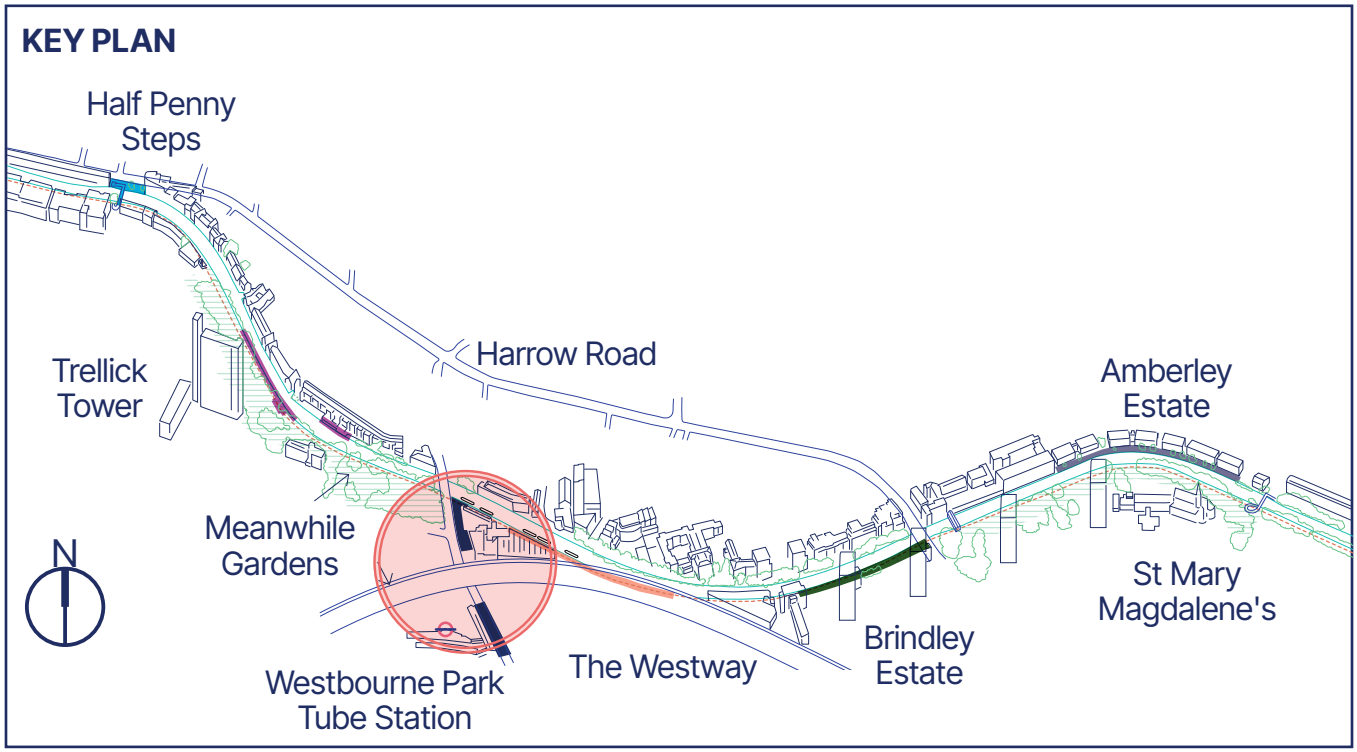
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1. Raised boardwalk, Stockbridge
2. Parish Wood Park, East
3. A bat box
4. Crab Apple Tree
5. 'Come in Love' by Resolve Collective, Brixton
6. Underside of rail bridge, Loughborough Junction
7. A bug hotel
8. Wayfinding in Lea Valley Park, 5th Studio

5.4 PROPOSED FUTURE PROJECT: GREAT WESTERN SLIP ROAD



EXISTING CONDITION
Access to the canal currently feels disconnected from Great Western Road and access to it is unclear.

PROPOSED VISION
The vision is to create a new gateway to the canal, attracting people from the station and main road to discover a peaceful canalside route through the neighbourhood. Care will be taken to safeguard space for the existing businesses, all the while creating a more inviting pedestrian access point with lighting, planters and wayfinding.

The significance of this route in connecting to the canalside is recognised. However, this project must be considered in conjunction with potential highway alterations on Great Western Road and developed in collaboration with stakeholders who use or have rights over this space. Due to its complexity, the technical development of this site is expected to progress in future years.

Key Stakeholders: The Council, Network Rail, Transport for London.

SECTIONS ARE NOT TO SCALE AND BASED ON LIMITED SURVEY INFORMATION

SITE PHOTOS



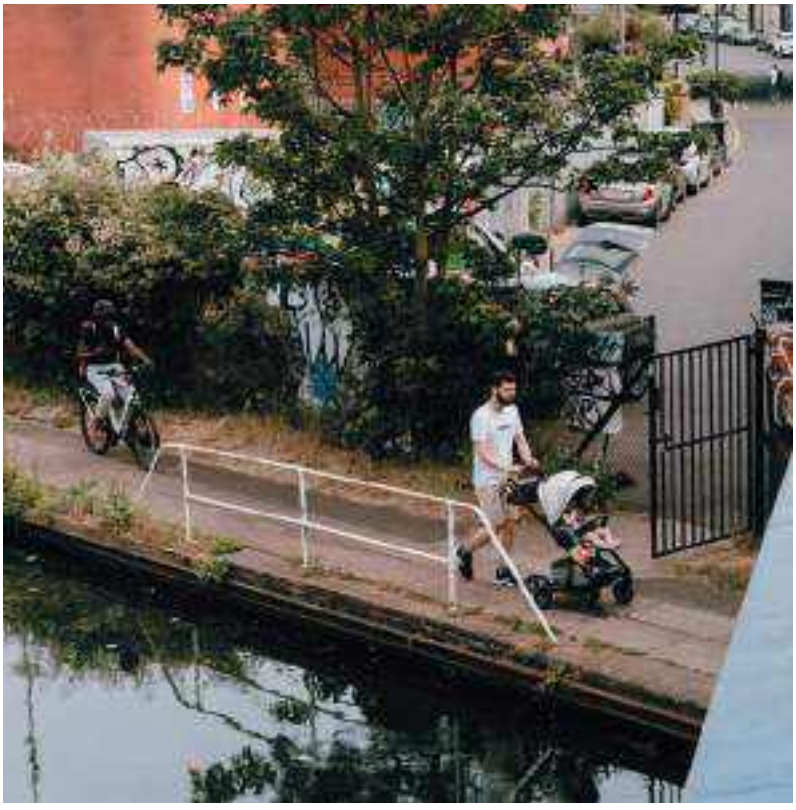


Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking north along the slip road, with parked cars on the left and vehicular access to bus garage staff car park on the right. The view to the canal is unclear and the road is unwelcoming and full of cars.

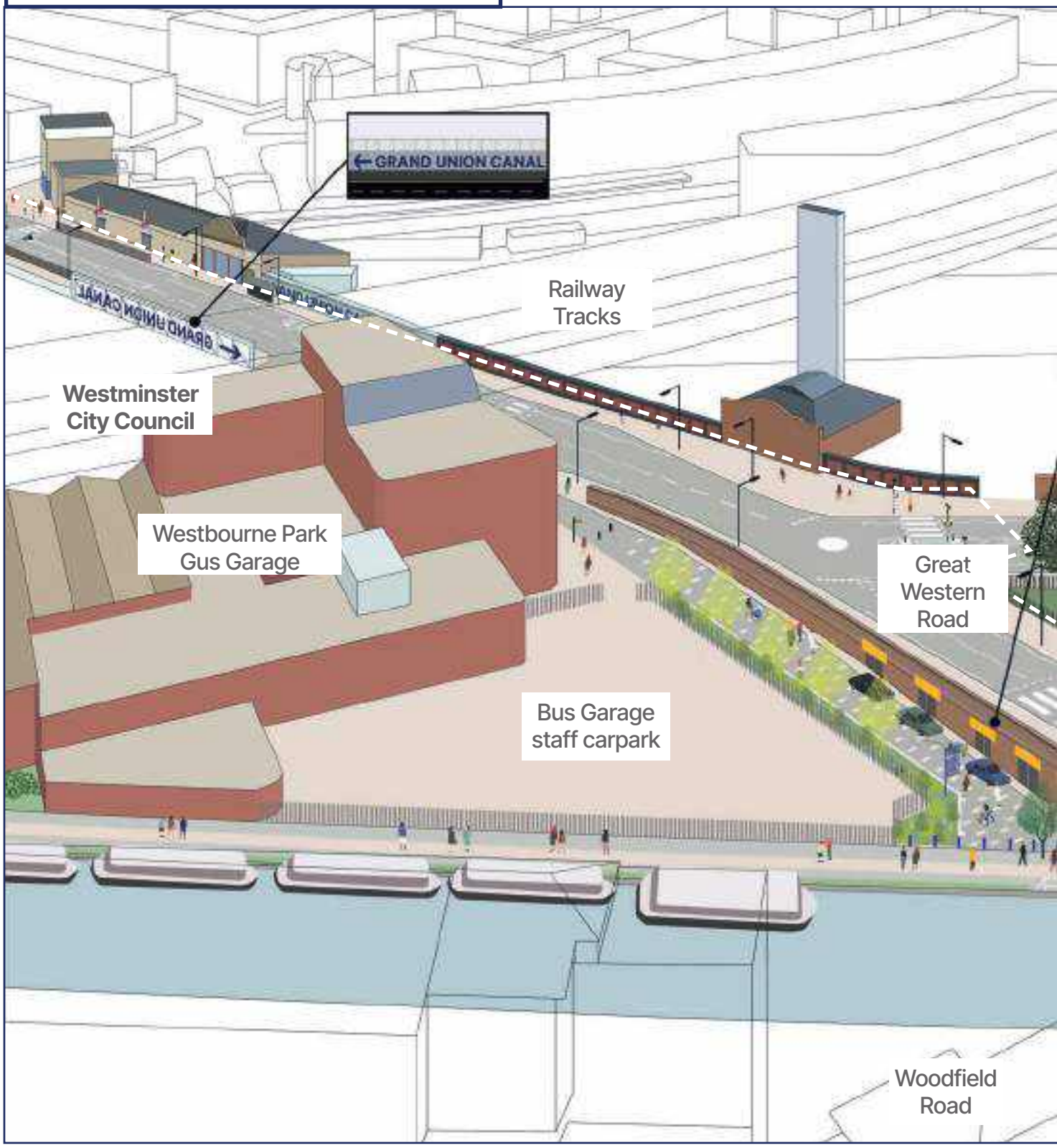
b) Walking on the east side of Great Western Road, with prominent blank metal hoarding giving onto rail tracks.

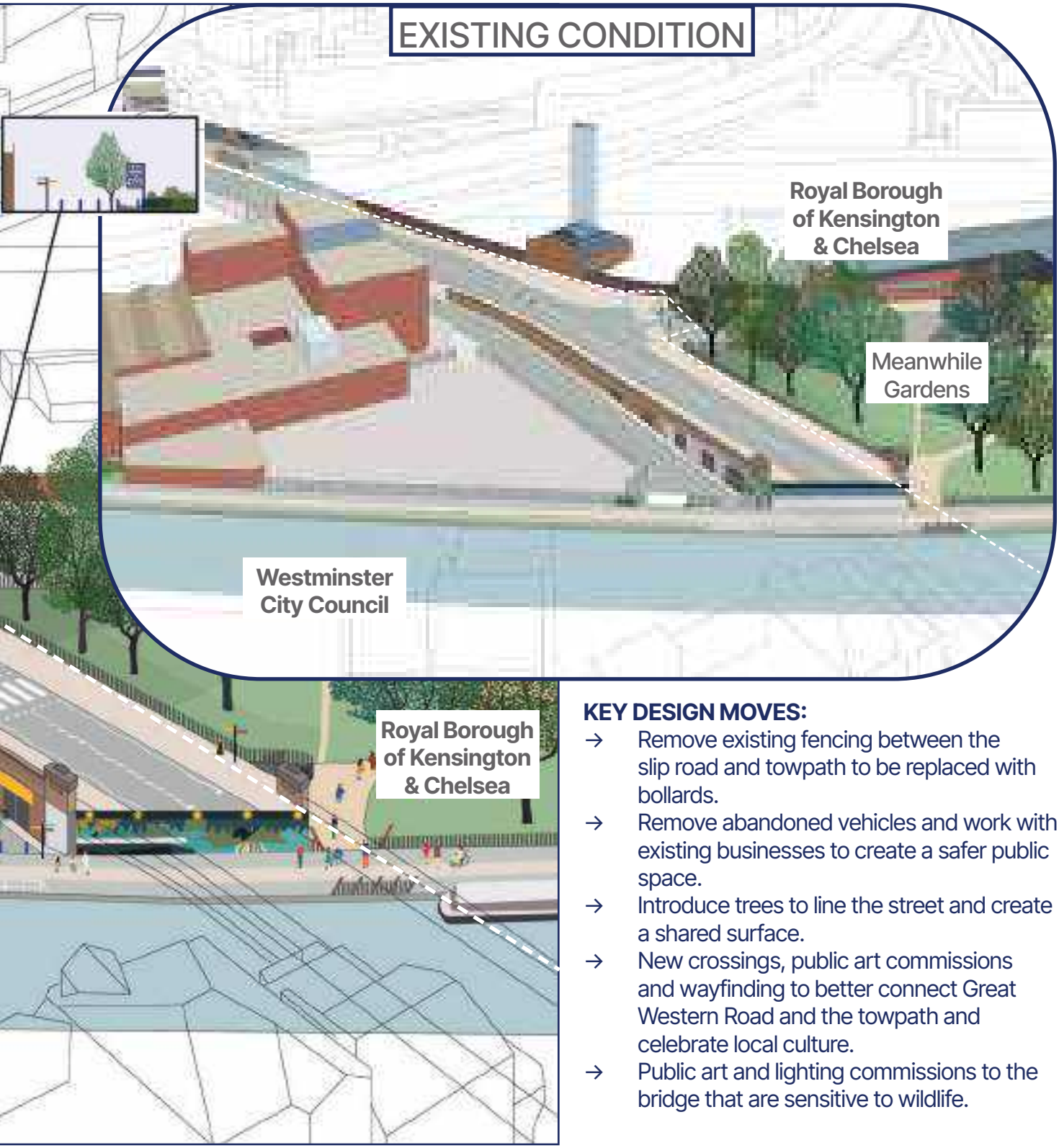
c) Looking from the bridge at Great Western Road back at the junction between the towpath and the slip road which has gated access and overgrown self-seeded planting.



GREAT WESTERN SLIP ROAD

PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN



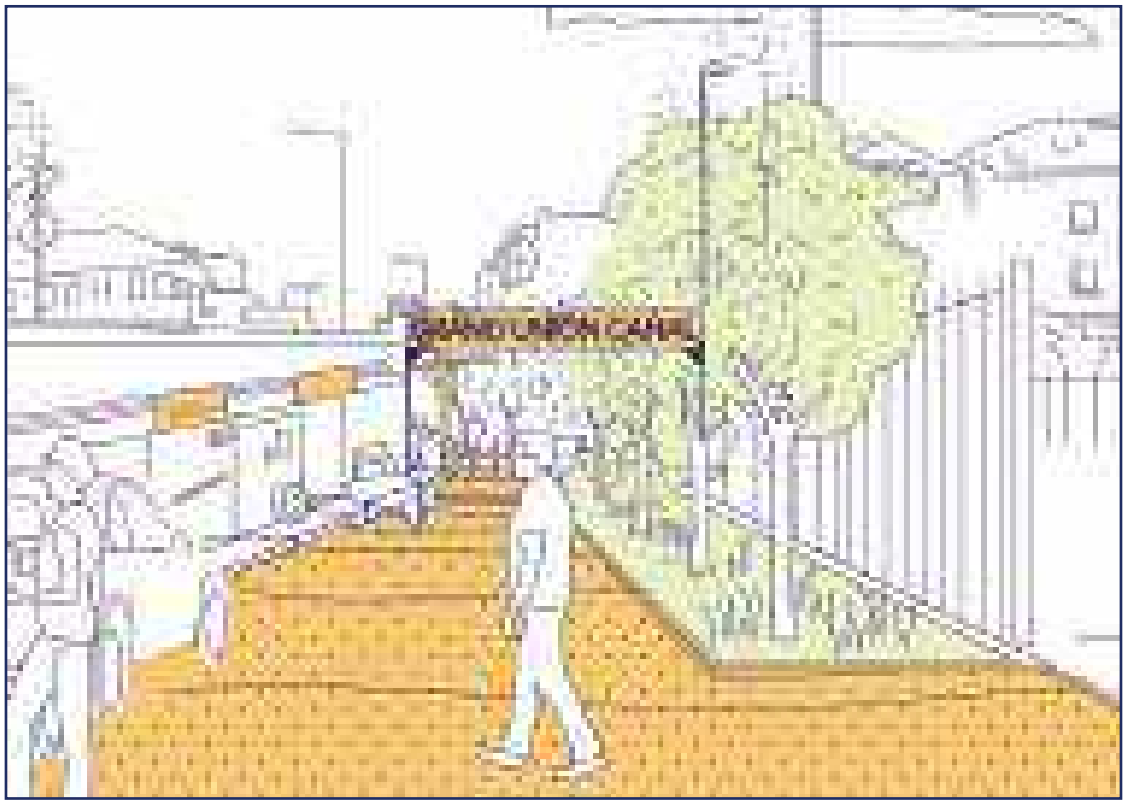


KEY DESIGN MOVES:

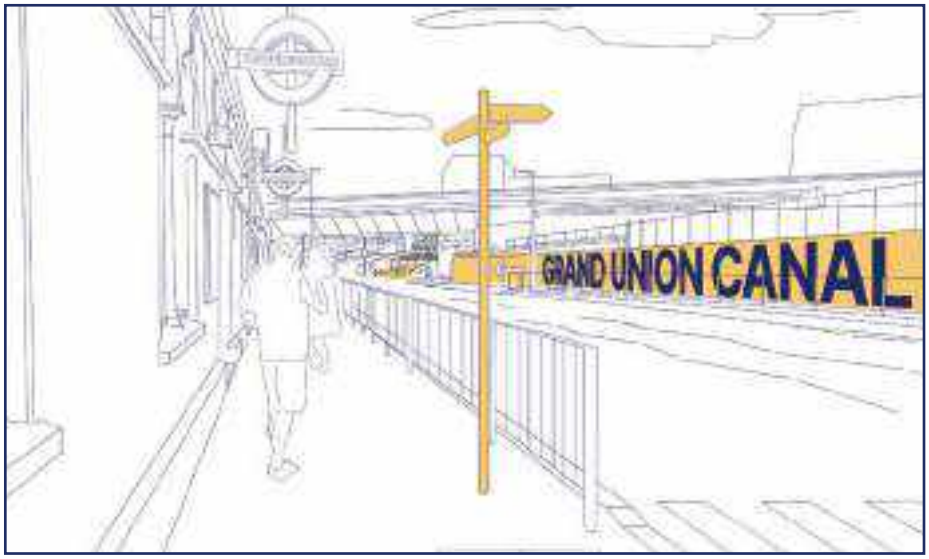
- → Remove existing fencing between the slip road and towpath to be replaced with bollards.
- → Remove abandoned vehicles and work with existing businesses to create a safer public space.
- → Introduce trees to line the street and create a shared surface.
- → New crossings, public art commissions and wayfinding to better connect Great Western Road and the towpath and celebrate local culture.
- → Public art and lighting commissions to the bridge that are sensitive to wildlife.

GREAT WESTERN SLIP ROAD

PROPOSED VIEWS



Proposed concept view looking down slip road with new wayfinding surfacing applied to tarmac to guide people down to the towpath, new trees and planting to de-pave the area as much as possible whilst still retaining passage for pedestrians, cyclists and the occasional car. New wayfinding to celebrate the connection to the Grand Union Canal.



Proposed concept view looking north with new wayfinding on metal hoarding celebrating local culture and the canalside. New road crossings and walkways will improve access and connections.

PRECEDENTS



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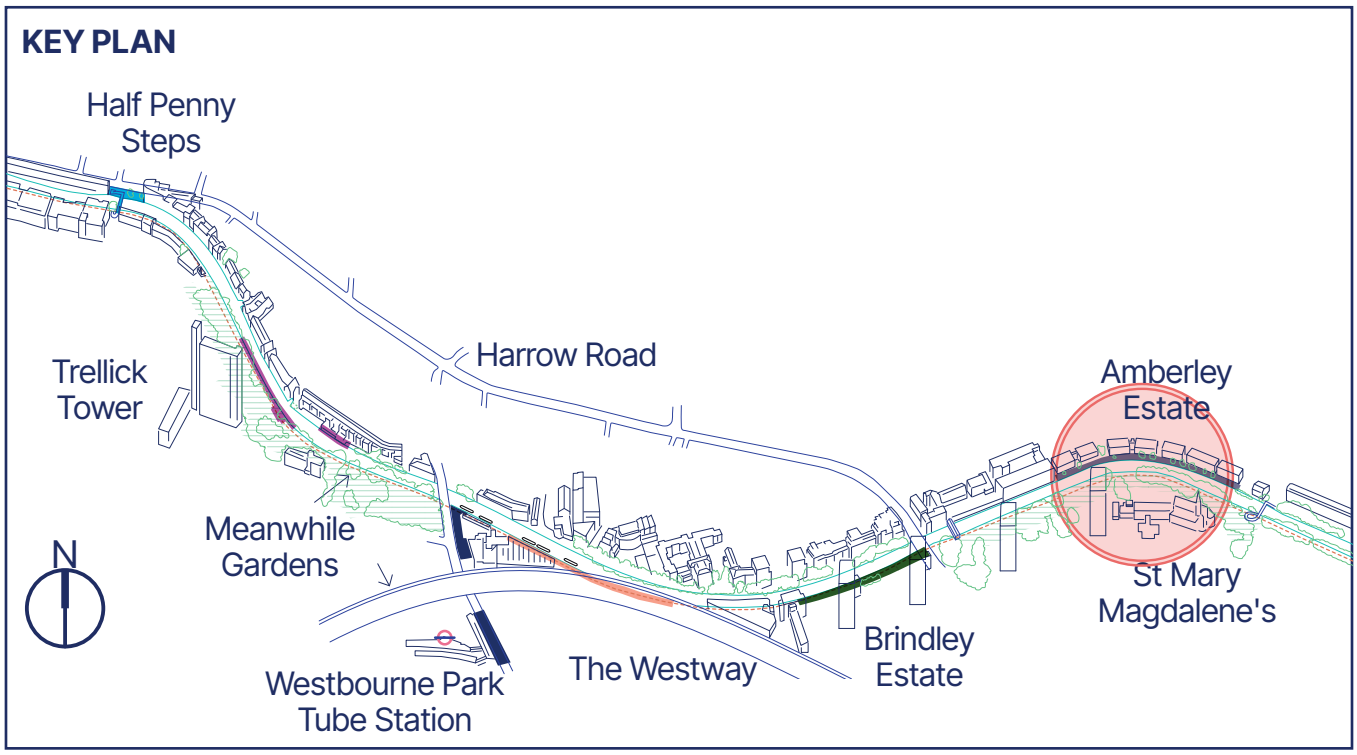
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1. Superblocks' Road Painting, Barcelona
2. Westway Community Street, DK-CM
3. Walsall Gallery approach, Caruso St John
4. 'Just Around The Corner' for The Moorings Sociable Club, Europa
5. Happy Days sign near Maldon, Essex

5.5 PROPOSED FUTURE PROJECT: AMBERLEY CANALSIDE



CURRENT CONDITION
The canalside space along Amberley Estate is currently a hard paved landscape with semi-mature trees and no furniture.

PROPOSED VISION
The vision is to transform this barren public space into a lush canal walk and peaceful setting. By de-paving and greening the space beneath trees to improve their health, adding new planters for community gardening, and reed beds along the bank the Amberley Canal Walk could become a fertile space for nature, rest and relaxation. Additionally, feature lighting and wayfinding will improve safety and legibility.

This project is located on land owned by the Amberley Estate, and requires detailed engagement with residents to ensure that the proposals align with their aspirations. Additionally, agreements must be reached with the Canal & River Trust to determine the placement and extent of any new reed beds. This project is planned for consideration in future years due to landownership and management complexities.

Key Stakeholders: The Council, The Trust, Amberley Road Estate Residents.

SITE PHOTOS





Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking east at hardstanding between Amberley Estate canalside buildings and railings giving onto the canal with a line of semi-mature trees down the centre.

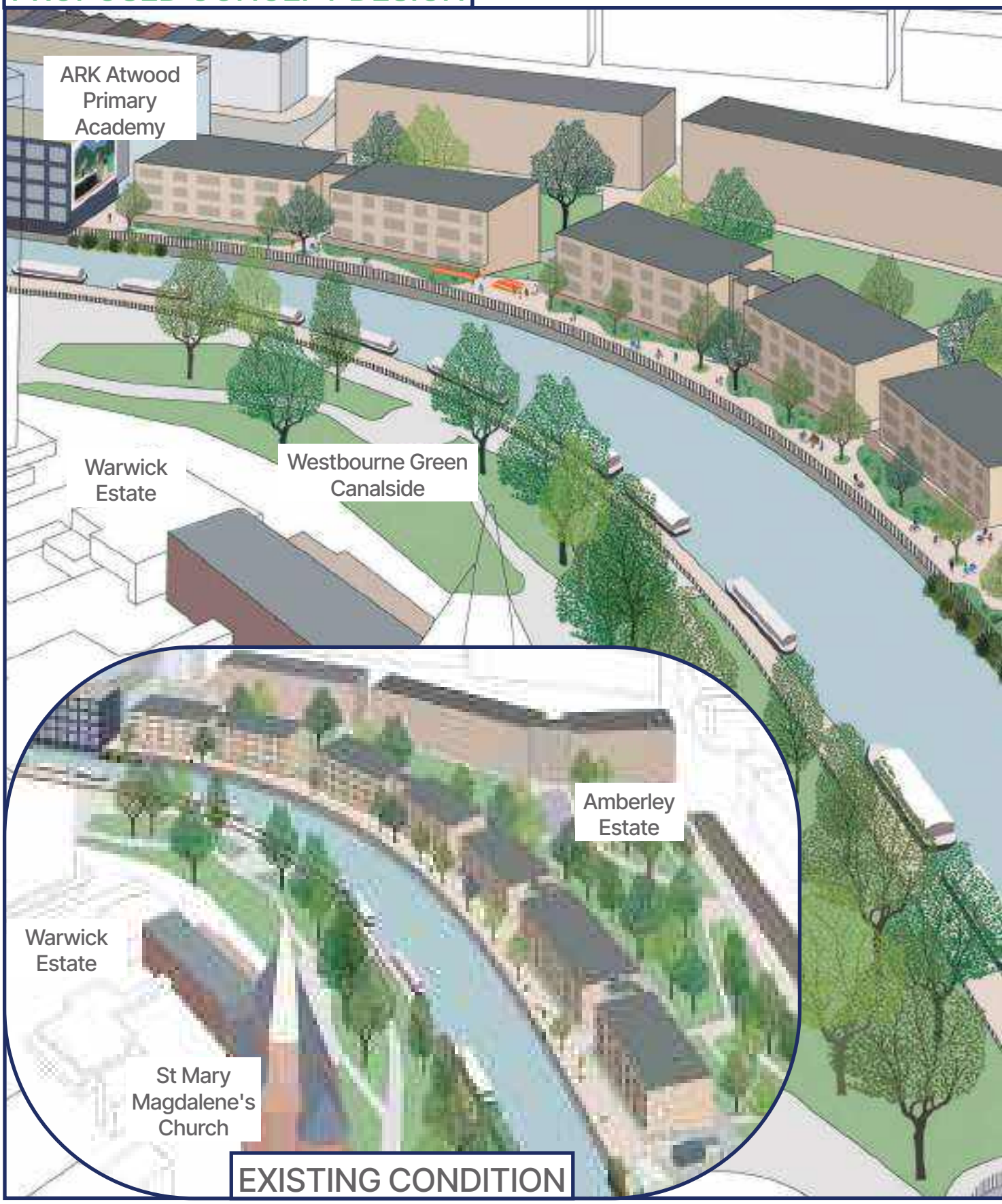
b) Looking west along the pavement with trees recently planted between the hardstanding.

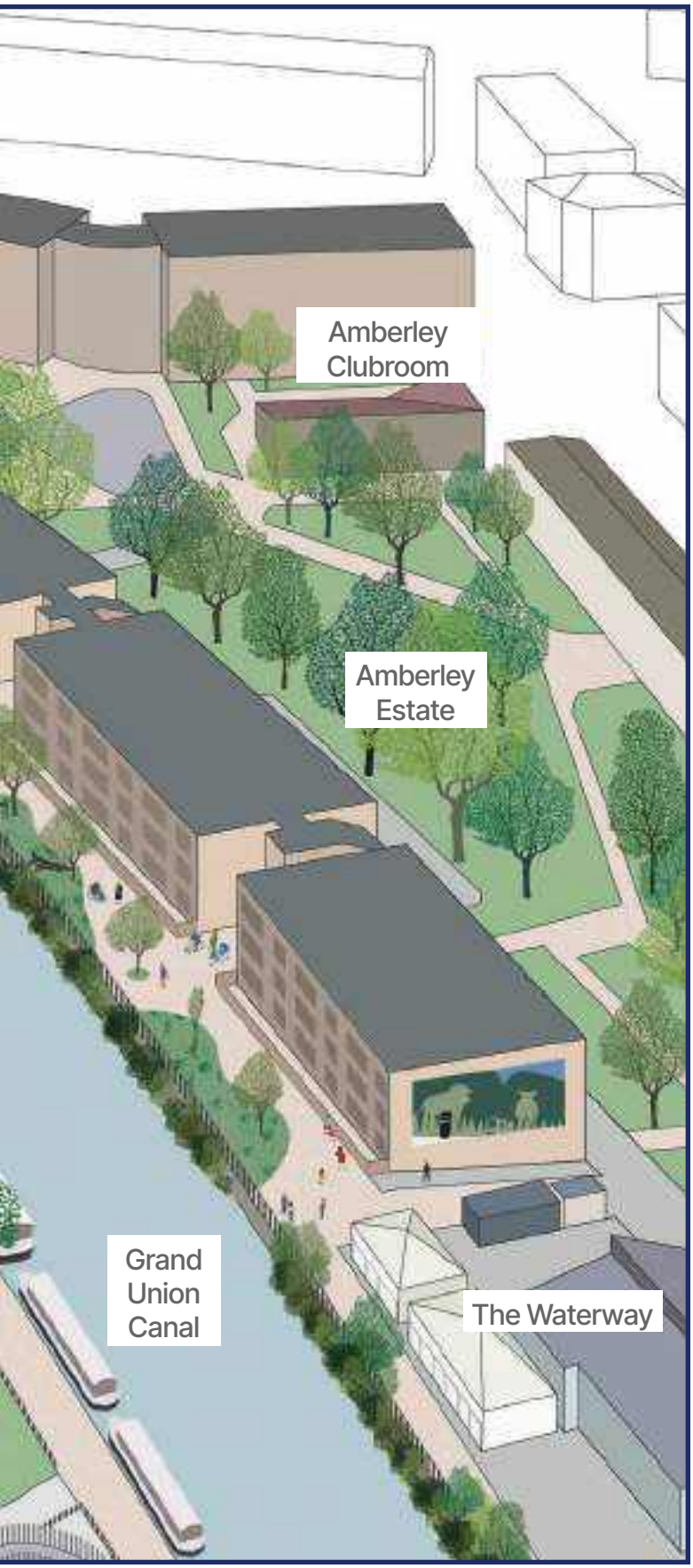
c) Looking north from the towpath on the opposite bank back to Amberley Estate with the canal walk in the foreground.



AMBERLEY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN



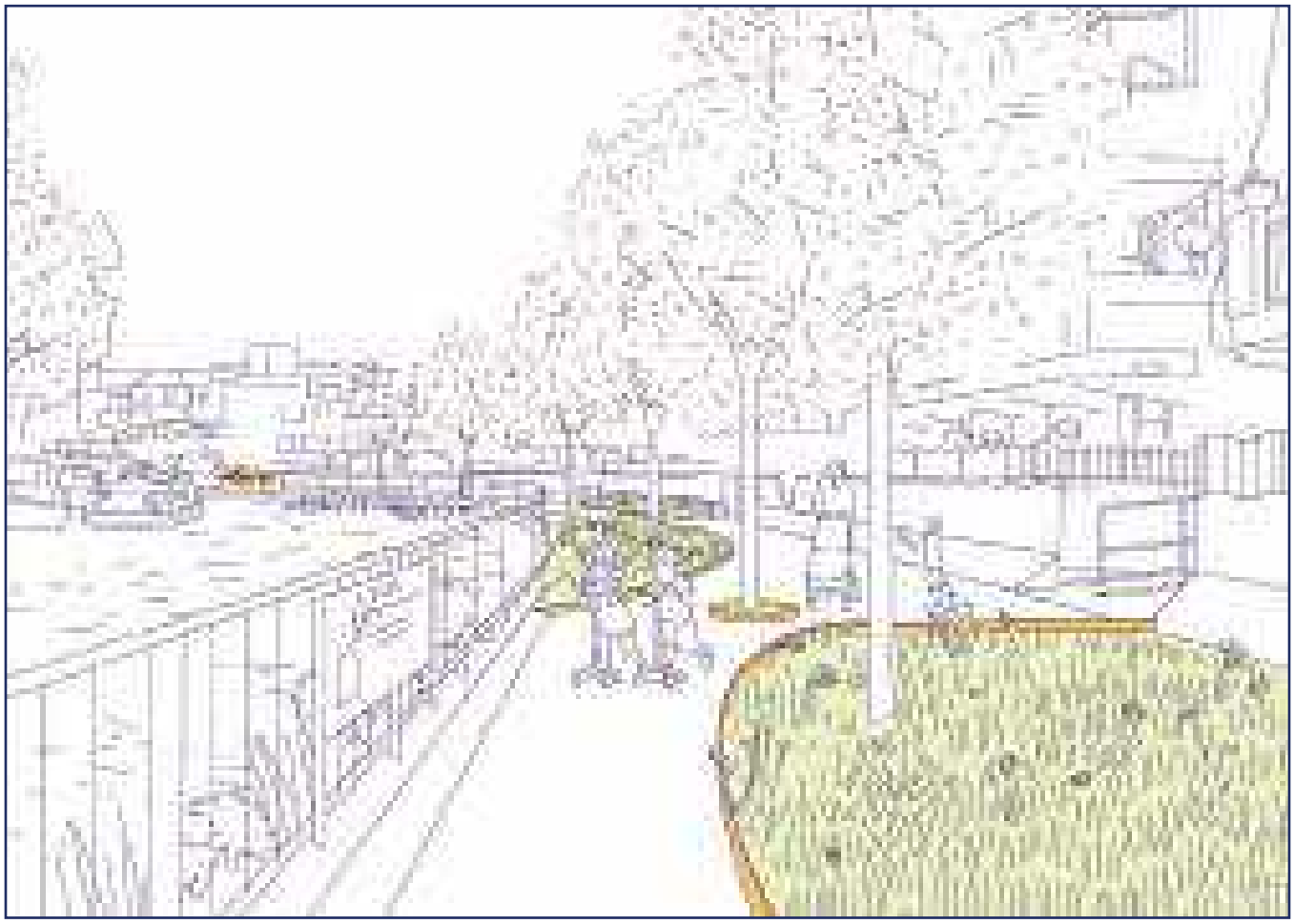


KEY DESIGN MOVES

- → De-paving the hard landscape, in particular to create a better environment around existing trees and create space for planting.
- → Potential soft play and moveable furniture to be stored away when not in use.
- → New in-canal reedbeds.
- → Change lighting to be sensitive to wildlife and provide appropriate atmosphere.

AMBERLEY CANALSIDE

PROPOSED CONCEPT VISUAL



Proposed visual looking east along the renewed canalside walk to take advantage of this wide south-facing canalside space. De-paving where possible to better support the health of the existing trees, add much needed visual amenity and increase biodiversity and soft ground cover helping to mitigate issues such as the Urban Heat Island effect.

Increasing reedbeds in this location is a key ambition and requires further discussion with the Trust to understand the feasibility. New educational signage to be paired to the planted areas and reedbeds so as to inform users of the purpose and benefits such greening initiatives bring.

Further work is needed to explore all of these proposals with the residents of Amberley Estate, especially with those whose homes directly overlook this space.

PRECEDENTS



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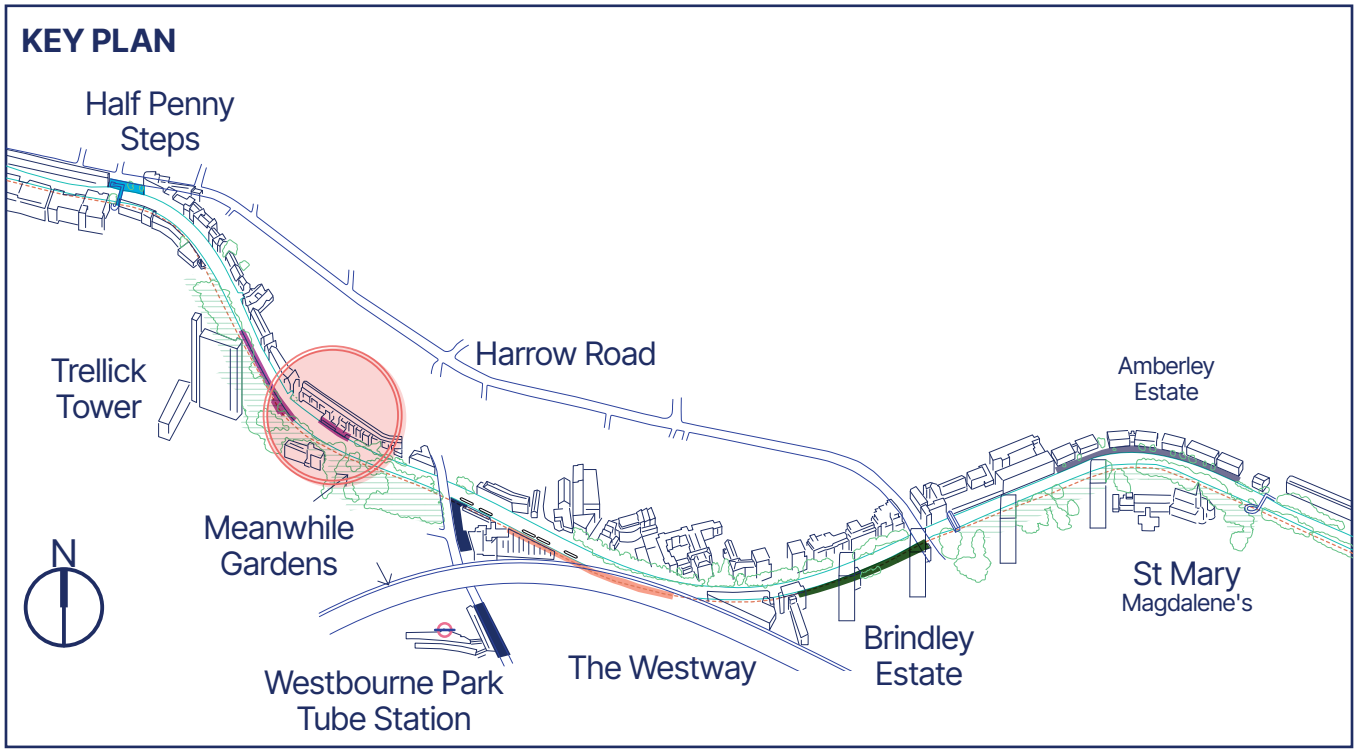
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1. High Line, New York
2. The Spark Lab, Jan Kattein
3. Bridget-Joyce Square, Robert Bray Associates
4. Circle Form, Pawel Grobelny
5. Glassfields, BD Landscape

5.6 PROPOSED FUTURE PROJECT: GERRY'S POMPEII



EXISTING CONDITION

Gerry's Pompeii is a remarkable canalside sculpture garden that was created by Gerry Dalton, a local resident. The garden is on the opposite side of the canal from the Meanwhile Gardens. The land is owned by the Canal & River Trust and is currently on lease to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It makes use of the strip of land which sits between the back gardens of the houses and the canal edge and is much loved in the local area.

PROPOSED VISION

Supporting this special space through increased access and other measures. Currently, access to the garden is provided periodically via a neighbour's house. We would seek alternative ways to access the garden from the canal via a community boat or similar offering more regular visits.

The sculpture garden often goes unnoticed by people passing along the towpath. This could be a brilliant location for a public art commission to highlight and celebrate this wonderful space, using the garden for inspiration. The opposite side of the canal is within the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and therefore the Council has limited influence. Any projects would be led by RBKC.

Key Stakeholders: Gerry's Pompeii Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Meanwhile Gardens Community Association, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, The Trust, The Council.



Images clockwise from top left:

a) Looking north towards Gerry's Pompeii outdoor sculpture garden.

b) The far bank next to Gerry's Pompeii between the terrace's back gardens and the canal is overgrown and inaccessible to the public.



5.7 LIVE PROJECTS

Before we launched the North Paddington Canalside Programme, we had already started work on improving two key sites along the Canal – Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Canalside – and these two projects are now moving toward construction.

Both projects have been supported by the Greater London Authority's Good Growth Fund, and developed in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders who generously gave us their feedback throughout the design development.

QUEEN'S PARK CANALSIDE



The vision for this public park is to create a renewed canalside park for everyone to enjoy. Queen's Park Library is an important community cornerstone, and there will be improvements to its surroundings by creating a peaceful public space that invites people to relax and read whilst enjoying the gardens and the canal.

The canal wall repair works are completed in this location, and the wider public space works have commenced.

The design vision is built on three key objectives:

1. **Create more community space** by adding new seating along the canal and enhancing the library forecourt.
2. **Ensure access for all** by improving pedestrian crossing and adding ramps where possible and creating a level path along the canal.
3. **Improve the landscape** by repairing the canal wall and adding biodiverse planting.

WESTBOURNE GREEN CANALSIDE



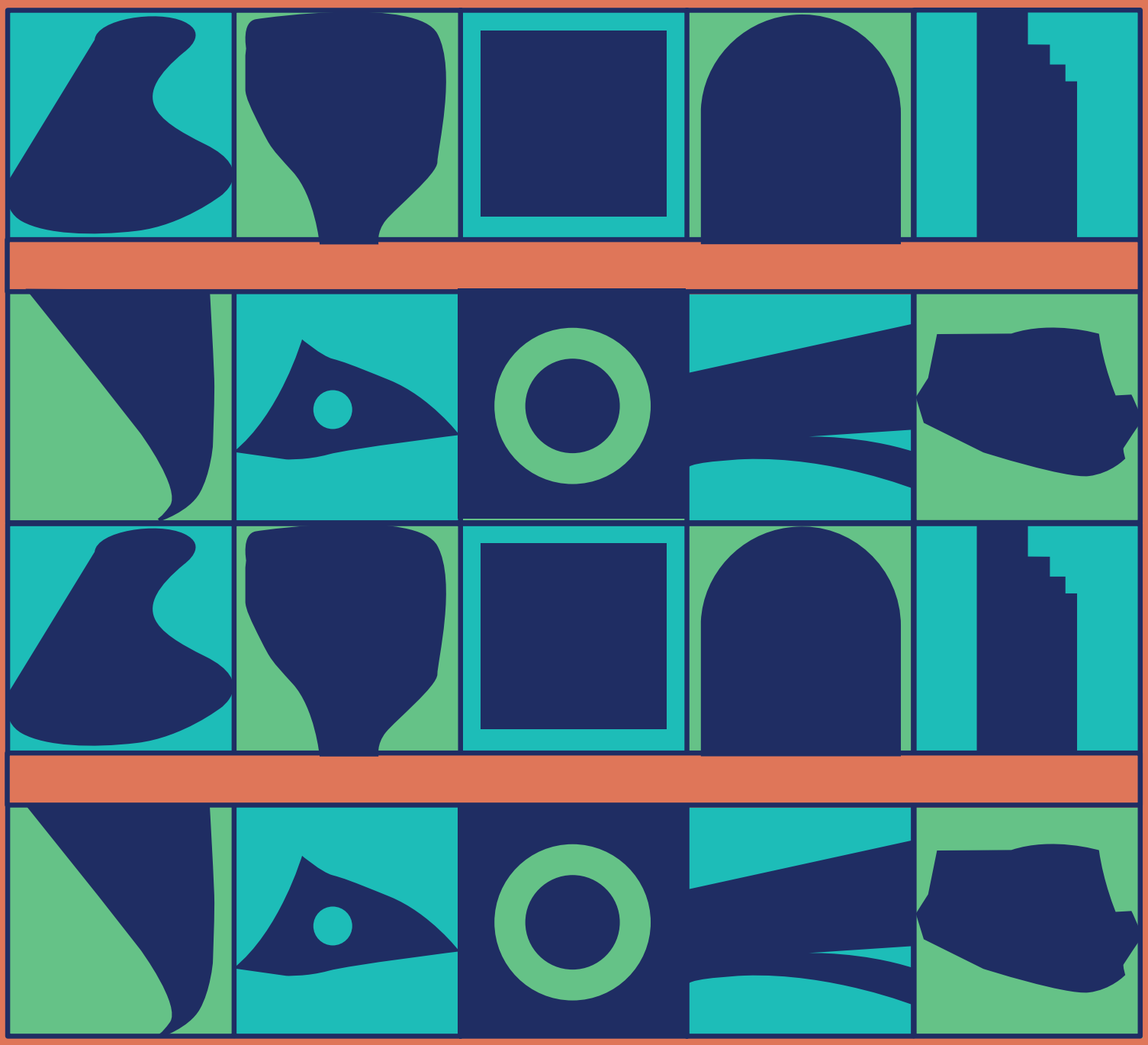
The vision for this public park is to create a vibrant destination for the whole community. St Mary Magdalene's and Grand Junction are already beacons of the community, so the ambition of the public realm improvements is to create a natural extension of this important community hub.

At Westbourne Green Canalside, the public space works have commenced.

The design vision is built on three key objectives:

1. **Enhance the canalside** by opening up the park to the waterfront, removing unnecessary railings and overground shrubbery and creating spaces for rest and relaxation.
2. **Improve the connectivity** by creating well-lit gateways, signage and wayfinding, extending the pedestrian-only slow route, and improving the 'shared surface'.
3. **Upgrade the landscape** by increasing biodiversity and establishing fruit trees, enabling more community greening activities and animating the south facing lawns.

next steps 6



6.1 NEXT STEPS

Now that the site-wide strategies and designs have been developed to concept level, next steps will involve the below in moving forward with designs and assessing feasibilities. This work will include technical work such as undertaking a range of site investigations and surveys, explore which statutory consents are required and what consultants are needed to progress the work.

Next steps include exploring the feasibility in different locations of elements including:

- Lighting
- Signage and wayfinding
- Public art commissions
- Hard landscaping
- Highways works
- Soft landscaping and community gardening

Maintenance

Maintenance needs to be considered upfront in all of the featured proposals so that once built there is the certainty of custodianship and regular maintenance and upkeep of street furniture and site areas. It will be crucial to continue to engage all major stakeholders to bring forward sensible proposals where support for maintenance is identified and agreed upon.

Engagement

The engagement process for the concept stage is detailed in an earlier chapter of this document. During the summer of 2024, the design proposals outlined in this report will undergo a further engagement process, whereby the local people will be invited to have their say on each site via a digital survey.

This report recommends engaging community champions and co-design partners to develop and implement project strands such as art installations, signage, and street furniture. An engagement and co-design plan should thus be devised as part of the next design development phase.

Funding

Funding strategies will be developed for each project site in order to support the development of detailed and technical design, project delivery and ongoing management and maintenance. This will likely come from a range of council and external sources, such as CIL, S106 and the Mayor of London. Sites earmarked as 'proposed priority projects' have all secured initial development funding via the Council's North Paddington Programme so that detailed design can be carried out. Other schemes will require development funding to progress.



This report was prepared by DK-CM in collaboration with Westminster City Council and the Canal & River Trust

Stay up to date with the North Paddington Canalside programme and subscribe to the newsletter on https://npcanalsidestrategy.commonplace.is/

City of Westminster

Canal & River Trust
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