2.8 The Block Structure

Block Resolution

2.8.1 Block resolution, namely shape and size of blocks, has not been defined through the Spatial Masterplan, there is some flexibility for the designer, but the blocks must meet the critical dimensions expressed within the design codes.

2.8.2 The Spatial Masterplan has deliberately not resolved the individual urban blocks that will make up the redevelopment scheme. This will allow a degree of flexibility over time, and is hoped will give individual designers the freedom to explore imaginative solutions that fit within the Spatial Masterplan and the design codes. The accompanying diagrams in this SPD are illustrating development zones and these do not necessarily relate to building frontages.

2.8.3 In common with good urban design principles (eg Urban Design Compendium) and the local contextual language, generally, the built form will be formed by perimeter blocks that surround private space and servicing. Exceptions to this general rule may be acceptable if it can be demonstrated that issues of the use private use of space and servicing do not compromise the public realm.

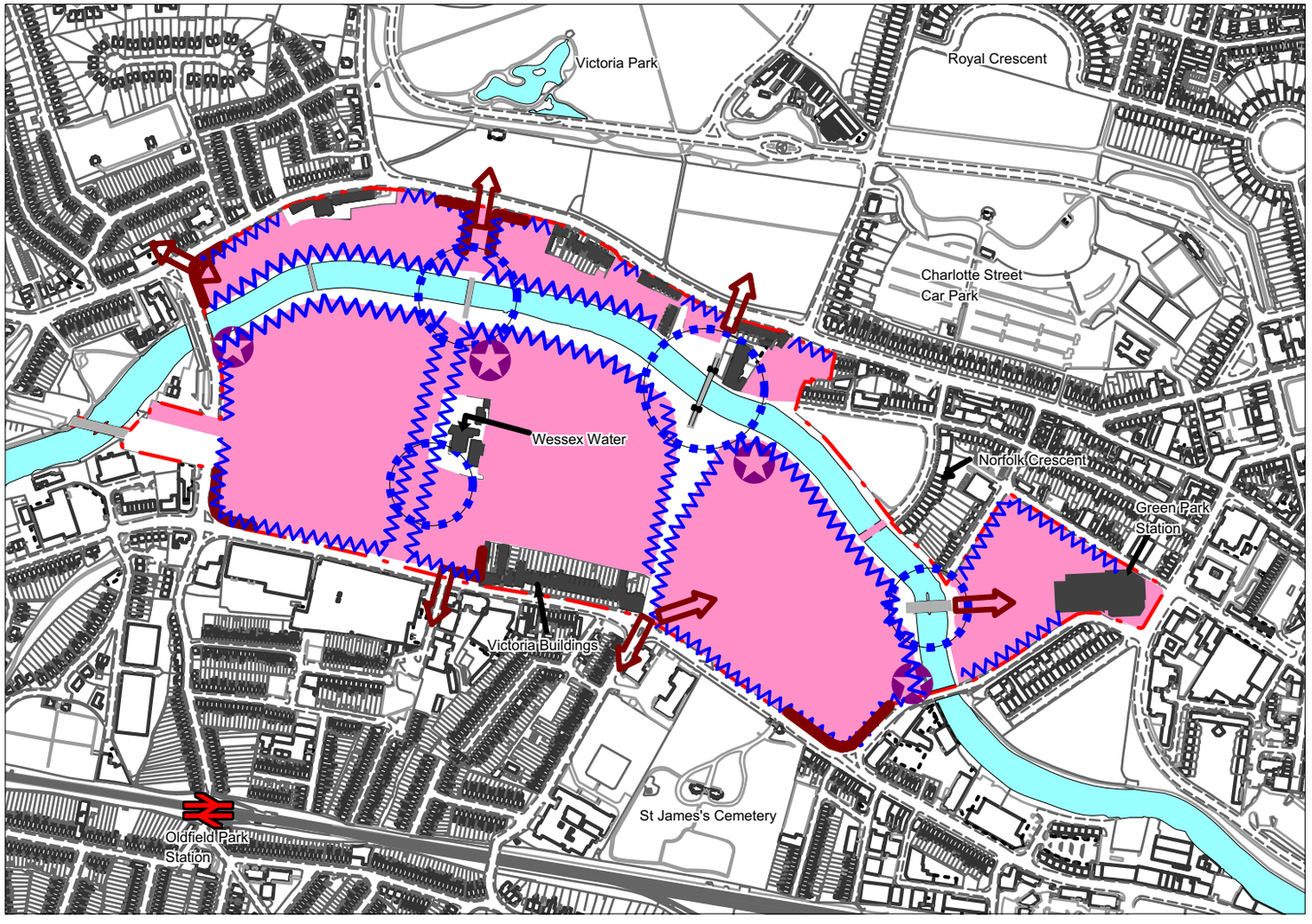
Street Scenes

2.8.4 The examination of context has shown that the area is dominated by terraces which group to form perimeter blocks. Terraces often have continuous frontages along streets. This leads to dominant street scenes that characterize the area. In designing a solution for the site the following street scenes must be considered as complete compositions. These include:

- Lower Bristol Road
- Green Park Station/ James Street West
- Upper Bristol Road
- Windsor Bridge Road
- River – South Bank
- Midland Bridge Road

2.8.5 The Townscape Opportunities diagram (Plan 2.8) demonstrates how these inportant principles should be applied to the BWR area. This is also covered in section 2.10 Townscape Opportunities.

Plan 2.8 Townscape Opportunities



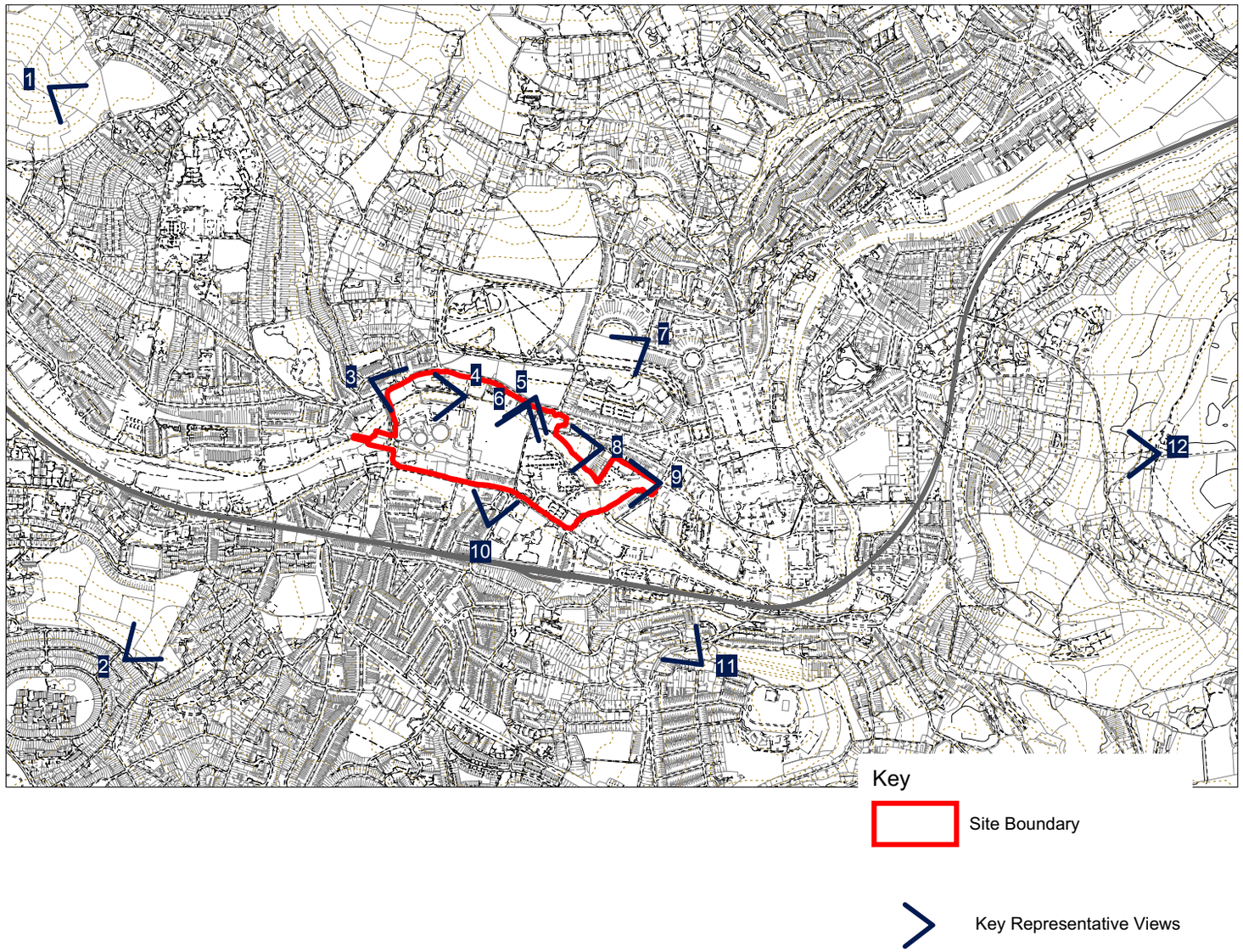
Part 2 Spatial Masterplan

2.9 Scale, Height and Massing

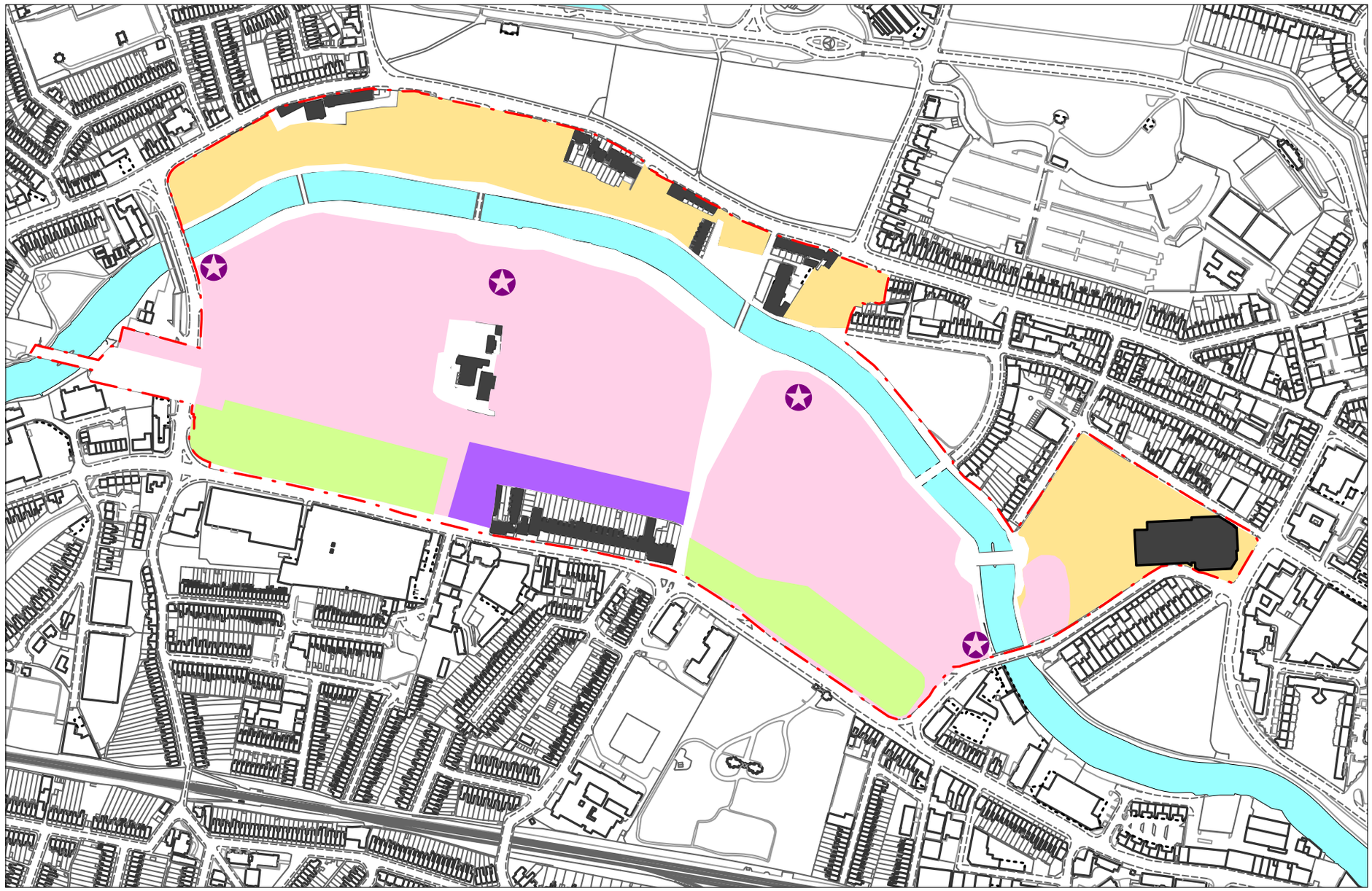
2.9.1 The location of Bath Western Riverside on the valley floor and central to the surrounding urban settlement, which rises above the site, presents both an opportunity and constraint. Its position, surrounded by higher ground, means that it is widely visible from a number of elevated positions around the city. (See Plan 2.9 – Views). The longer views of the development are therefore a significant factor in devising the design solution for the site. It must be recognized that every view across the site at present cannot be protected. The benefit of being at the lowest point within the city means that it is possible to protect the general views to the landscape setting around the city.

2.9.2 To carefully reflect the distinct roofscape of the city it is important that heights are not consistently applied across the site, or across development blocks. In fact the reverse is required. The skyline of the development needs to display variety across the site and within blocks, with a mixture of heights, scales and roof treatments.

Plan 2.9 Significant Views



Plan 2.10 Scale, Height and Massing



Key

- Retained Buildings
- 4 - 6 Floors
- 3 - 6 Floors
- 3 - 5 Floors
- 2 - 4 Floors
- Potential Landmarks

Notes:

1. The height ranges are expressed in terms of residential storey heights (approx. 2.5m floor to ceiling). The assessment of Buildings with commercial uses will, therefore, have to be adjusted to take this into account.
2. See paras. 2.9.13 - 2.9.15 for further guidance on landmarks.
3. This plan shows a broad range of floor heights for each zone, it is not acceptable for all the development within each band to be the highest end of the range. It is essential that variety in heights is introduced in the roofscape to reflect the traditions in the city.

Part 2 Spatial Masterplan

Tall Buildings

2.9.3 Analysis of the site and surrounding townscape has shown that development of 4-6 storeys in height would not have unacceptable townscape or visual impact on the City and, subject to analysis of specific proposals and to detailed design, are likely to be acceptable. Applicants wishing to promote development of a greater height will need to demonstrate, through a justified design case required by 2.1.12 of this SPD, that their proposals will create a design solution that meets the Vision Statement for BWR (paras 2.2.1 to 2.2.13 of this SPD) and the Overarching Design Principles (section 2.3 of the SPD).

2.9.4 The Bath city-wide character study has found that Bath is characterised by a lack of tall buildings, apart from the punctuation by the Abbey and other Church Spires. Generally other tall buildings that have been developed have harmed the integrity and balance of city views.

2.9.5 Against this background it must be recognised that the Western Riverside site contains the three significant gas holder structures. These vary from other tall buildings as they are temporarily tall, and often only the lightweight lattice structure is visible, with the background seen through the structure.

2.9.6 There is no tall buildings policy for the city of Bath. This Spatial Masterplan is not intended to develop a tall buildings policy for the city, rather is a guide for the height, scale and massing of the development expressed as a range. The section on landmarks also refers, but note that the specific guidance on landmarks does not imply that they are tall buildings, they can be expressed as a wider range of landmarks as these are emphasis points within the Spatial Masterplan. The design codes elaborate on the details of this guidance.

2.9.7 A number of significant viewpoints have been agreed these are shown on Plan 2.9. Any development proposal must test these viewpoints and demonstrate the impact of development upon these views.

2.9.8 Although some specific local views would be lost by this approach as stated above, Key views around the site must be tested as part of the appraisal of proposals for the site.

Height Plan

2.9.9 The spatial masterplan includes a zonal plan which illustrates the acceptable ranges of heights across the site (see Plan 2.10). These are not intended as targets, the building heights must vary within these zones to reflect the local context. This zonal height plan does not apply to the potential landmarks (see para 2.9.12 to 2.9.14).

Proportion

2.9.10 The Bath city-wide character study (adopted SPD) found that there was a key balance of building height and space.

2.9.11 There are some particularly sensitive neighbours to this site, for example Victoria Buildings, where, not only height, but scale of adjacent development, is critical to successful integration. In addition the scale of Victoria Bridge is extremely sensitive and must be respected.

2.9.12 Any redevelopment must respect the relative proportions and enclosure ratios found within the city to fully reflect the context. Taller structures will need relatively more space to create the suitable balance. The design codes elaborate on the details of height, scale and massing for each character area.

Landmarks

2.9.13 The Spatial Masterplan has included the possibility for four ‘landmarks’. (refer to Townscape Plan 2.8). These are spatially defined, though should be seen as flexible guides to their location, depending on the detailed layout surrounding the site of the landmark to fix their location. The landmarks are points of emphasis within the built form that assist in reinforcing the activity points within the scheme and provide new townscape signposts within the new built fabric.

2.9.14 The term ‘landmark’ does not infer that this is a tall building or structure. A landmark can be defined in a number of ways. It could include the following:

- Significant public space.
- Public Art.
- A building / structure in contrasting architectural style to the prevailing context.
- A building/ structure in contrasting scale to the prevailing context.
- The use of the landmark building should reflect it status and include a community/ cultural or civic purpose on the ground floor as part of a mixed-use building.

2.9.15 Design Criteria for Landmarks are as follows:

- Landmarks are points of emphasis within the general form of development that provide references within the scheme and the wider setting.
- The point of interest might be created by roofscape, architectural expression or scale.
- A landmark is not intended as a ‘trophy’ piece of architecture.
- It may not be necessary to provide landmark structures on all four points identified in the Spatial Masterplan.
- The landmarks must be in sympathy with the remainder of the development of the site.
- Tower blocks are not an acceptable form within the city.

2.10 Townscape

2.10.1 The contextual and townscape appraisals informing this Masterplan have recognised that there are significant townscape qualities to some of the existing elements within the BWR site.

2.10.2 Bath has a strong tradition of excellent corner buildings, and this must be continued within the BWR area. Key corners are marked on the townscape plan (Plan 2.8).

2.10.3 The townscape plan also marks the opportunity to create or mend the street scenes; these are the outward aspects of the development and are the face of BWR to the existing host community. The recognition of the street scene opportunities extends to both river banks, although there is recognition that these will have a different feel across the river.

2.10.4 The desire lines across the site are noted on the townscape plan, these need to be acknowledged in the development proposals to provide pedestrians the opportunity to access the site and its hinterland.

2.10.5 Plan 2.8 (the townscape plan) shows these opportunities. The plan recognises individual elements that need careful consideration in creating the new urban form including:

- The Belvoir Public House, Lower Bristol Road
- The Bath Press
- The Wessex Water Pumping Station
- The Green Park entrance/ link to city centre

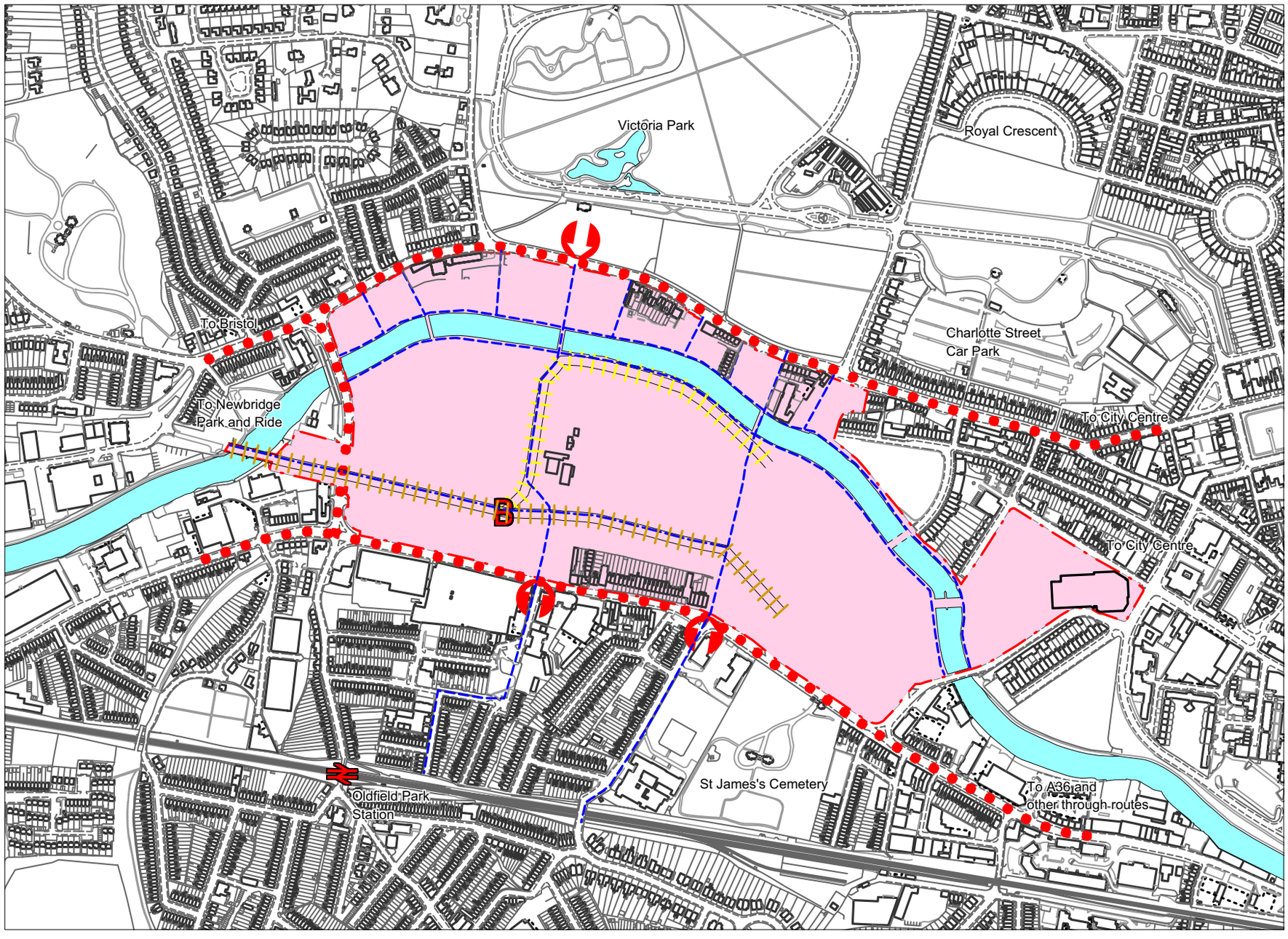
2.11 Movement and Access

2.11.1 Bath Western Riverside occupies an important position in a wider strategic plan to improve the ease of movement, diversity of transport choices and accessibility of the City of Bath and its wider district. The movement network of the Western Riverside area must therefore be considered within this wider context in terms of volumes of traffic and the hierarchy of routes and their connectivity.

2.11.2 Streets should be designed to encourage walking, provide platforms for social interaction and facilitate the safe interaction between pedestrians, cyclists and cars, and service vehicles should be subservient to pedestrians and cyclists.

Part 2 Spatial Masterplan

Plan 2.11 Movement and Access Strategy



2.11.3 It is the principal intent, within the Western Riverside area, to create a pedestrian focused environment in which the usual dominance of the private vehicle is significantly reduced and the free and easy, safe and enjoyable movement of primarily pedestrians and then cyclists is paramount.

2.11.4 General principles for Movement at BWR are as follows:

- All non-essential traffic should be excluded from the road network within the development area.
- All streets should be defined and animated by the buildings and activities of the occupants along them.
- Buildings of all types should show their public face to the street network.
- The primary means of pedestrian access to all buildings should be from the street.
- Whilst the movement of vehicles is a contributory factor to a safe and lively neighbourhood they should not be allowed to undermine the quality of the public realm.
- A coherent palette of street furniture materials should be installed to provide continuity, identity and unity.
- Issues of design, fitness for purpose, sustainability and long term maintenance and management should equally inform the choice of street furniture. (Refer to design codes Appendix D for details).
- Bus priority measures need to be incorporated at all signalised junctions in the vicinity of the site, including bus detection in order to reduce delays to services.
- The redevelopment must ensure good links to Oldfield Park Station, which will require some off-site pedestrian and cycle improvements.
- Bus stops should be carefully designed, with consideration given to their integration into the public realm, with ease of accessibility, safety, relationship with context, and lighting defining the essential elements of a design criteria. Design codes give details of bus stops

Management of vehicle speeds

2.11.5 Vehicle speeds will be managed at BWR as follows:

- Speed limits will be below the current national averages across the area with variations dependent upon the relative hierarchy of the street under consideration.
- Vehicle speeds should be severely restricted by the design of the highway with the application of tight corner radii and limited sight lines.
- Street junctions should be designed as spaces rather than formless traffic interchanges.
- Roundabouts will not be permitted at any point across the development.
- The carriageway design at the points of interface with the external road network should be detailed in such a manner to signal clearly the transition of traffic from a city-wide road network into a pedestrian priority residential quarter.

Public transport

2.11.6 Bus stops should be strategically located in relation to their proximity to local facilities, nodes of community-wide activities and each other as illustrated in the Masterplan.

2.11.7 Proposals must be designed in order to accommodate the proposed bus-based Rapid Transit System for Bath.

Pedestrians & Cyclists

2.11.8 The comprehensive adoption of a shared space strategy within the design of the public realm will provide a positive and inclusive environment for all pedestrians and cyclists.

2.11.9 Careful consideration should be given to the choice and siting of street furniture elements to ensure that a clutter and hazard free environment is provided.

2.11.10 Designated cycle lanes will not be defined within the public realm, cyclists will be able to percolate through the development in the same space as pedestrians and traffic.

Parking

2.11.11 Large areas of surface parking are not acceptable anywhere within the Western Riverside area.

2.11.12 The dimensions for parking bays should be to the standards required by the local authority.

2.11.13 Undercroft and basement parking provision should be carefully integrated, with particular attention given to the creation of safe access points which are positively integrated with the adjacent public realm.

2.11.14 To minimise traffic impacts, car parking standards adopted will be significantly lower than the maximum permitted standard to reflect the location and nature of the development adjacent to the city centre and public transport networks. Effective parking controls will be necessary to manage car parking both on the site and in roads adjacent to the site.

2.11.15 Further details are provided in the design codes Appendix D.

Bridges

2.11.16 There are five river crossings within the Western Riverside boundary, and two crossings that are immediately adjacent to the policy boundary. The historical study of the river corridor by Mike Chapman (see bibliography) includes extensive information on the role of the bridges as they relate to the former uses of the site. The following is a brief description of the expected solution for each crossing. Moving from east to west they are as follows:

Former Railway Bridge immediately west of Windsor Bridge

2.11.17 This bridge has been deliberately included within the policy boundary to secure the crossing of the river for the RTS. The current bridge will be retained for exclusive use of the RTS in two-way flows.

Windsor Bridge

2.11.18 This is just outside the policy boundary for the site; however, it remains important to the scheme as it carries through traffic in the area traveling to the south of the city. Built in 1980 from concrete, it is a busy heavily trafficked route and provides a poor environment for pedestrians. Nearby, the former Windsor Bridge is stopped up but provides a service bridge.

The Accommodation Bridge

2.11.19 This bridge was formerly used for railway wagons which carried coal to the Bath Gas Light and Coke Company. It was a private bridge built in 1869. A replacement bridge will be required in this location to serve pedestrians and cyclists, providing an important non-vehicular route at the western end of the site. The removal of the accommodation bridge requires conservation area consent.

Destructor Bridge (Midland Road)

2.11.20 This bridge was constructed in 1870 originally on the site of the present Midland Bridge as a private road bridge to Green Park, and was moved downstream to its present site. It provided a connection between the refuse incinerator 'The Destructor' and the old scavengers yard opposite. It is a typical Midland Railway wrought iron lattice girder design. It retains its decorative iron scrolls at the girder ends. This bridge will need to be replaced, and will provide for two-way traffic serving both pedestrians and vehicles; it provides the crossing point for the green link to Victoria Park.

2.11.21 The new bridge needs to respect the historic role of the Destructor Bridge, and needs to consider incorporating the decoration from the existing bridge possibly through a modern reinterpretation. Removal of the existing bridge requires conservation area consent.

Potential New Crossing to Norfolk Crescent

2.11.22 It is possible that an additional pedestrian bridge would be required to support the commercial uses in the city extension. The case for an additional crossing would need to be demonstrated, including consideration of the impact on local residents (Local Plan policy D2). Any new crossing falls within the conservation area boundary. Any new crossing, if required, must not compete with the primacy of Victoria Bridge.

Victoria Bridge

2.11.23 This elegant suspension bridge is grade II* listed, built in 1836, must be retained and restored as part of the redevelopment of the site.

2.11.24 It provides an excellent townscape marker with its arched supports in Bath stone. It is the central point within the scheme, and is a well loved and respected established landmark; nothing surrounding this bridge must compete with it in terms of scale or style. The spatial masterplan has identified it for pedestrians and cyclists only.

2.11.25 The environment around the bridge and its setting could benefit from considerable improvements. The Spatial Masterplan has allowed for a considerable open space around the bridge to accommodate these improvements.

2.11.26 There are some technical limitations on the bridge in respect of loading and vibration that will need addressing in a sensitive way, to respect the listed structure.

2.11.27 Victoria Bridge is a key pedestrian bridge on the desire line between Lower Bristol Road and Victoria Park, it will retain and strengthen this role with the development of attractive pedestrian routes to the north and south, and in particular its concurrence with the Victoria Bridge Cascades.

Sainsbury's Bridge – (Ivo Peters Road)

2.11.28 This bridge is the existing rail bridge that served Green Park Station, alongside which is the poor quality pedestrian covered bridge. This crossing point needs to accommodate both the RTS and pedestrians at a key point across to the city centre. Removal of this bridge requires Conservation Area Consent. A detailed design solution for the future of this crossing needs further investigation.

Midland Bridge Road Bridge

2.11.29 This bridge falls outside the site boundary but, as with Windsor Bridge, remains an important part of the highway infrastructure that supports the site.

Part 2 Spatial Masterplan

2.12 Zonal Masterplan: Land use

2.12.1 The strong guiding principle for the distribution of land use across the site is one of a mixed use. The Summary Masterplan Diagram – Plan 2.3 shows the spatial distribution of land use across the site.

2.12.2 The Zonal Masterplan generally allows for a number of different options for the overall land use mix at BWR. The Western zone remains consistent as a residentially dominated mix of uses that will also include community uses, local needs, shopping and small-scale commercial use. The Eastern zone, however, will accommodate City Centre type uses, but the precise make-up of this is more flexible. This will become more certain once the work on the Future for Bath Vision has been completed and brought forward through the Local Development Framework, as this will properly establish the role that the Eastern zone of BWR has to play in the future of Central Bath.

2.12.3 The Zonal Masterplan anticipates the Green Park Station area hosting City Centre retail and associated uses, and a Cultural Facility located near to the river. This would require Sainsbury's moving across the river. The remaining uses will be a mix of retail and business uses (the form and quantum of which will depend on the Future for Bath Vision and the LDF), leisure uses and residential use (on upper floors of every option).

2.13 Landscape Strategy

2.13.1 The Bath city-wide character study describes the landscape character of Bath, and identifies the key characteristics of the landscape of the city. The World Heritage Site includes some of the wider landscape setting of the city, which is part of the unique beauty of Bath. The river is identified as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).

2.13.2 Key principles that flow from the analysis include the following:

- River Avon is marked by mature trees along its length. The relationship of buildings next to the river must allow for trees to reach their maturity within the River Park and the Natural edge. (Details of suitable tree species are included in the design codes.)
- Structure Planting is required along the river corridor. (details in design codes Appendix D)
- Incidental green spaces within the scheme are an additional requirement in addition to the River Park to give a sense of relief to the dense built form and repeat this tradition within the city.
- Space is required in the development for trees both within blocks and between blocks. (Performance criteria are set out within the design codes Appendix D).

2.13.3 A management plan for dealing with the on-site Japanese Knotweed should also be prepared at the earliest opportunity.

2.14 Draining and flooding

2.14.1 The drainage of the site should follow environmentally sound principles including where possible the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage, grey water recycling, run off attenuation and use for landscape irrigation.

2.14.2 Proposals for the development of the area must take into account the provisions of PPS25 Development and Flood Risk and the latest flood level predictions provided by the Environment Agency.

2.15 Building Communities

2.15.1 It is essential that BWR forms part of a Sustainable Community with the surrounding areas of Bath. This means that the redevelopment must be based on the principles of inclusive design, with the uses and public realm areas provided as part of the new development being readily accessible from surrounding areas. The new community at BWR must be fully integrated with existing communities in Bath.

2.15.2 This must be achieved by the provision of safe and direct links between BWR and surrounding areas and also through the provision of a quality environment within BWR. The specific location of uses that will be accessed by existing communities as well as residents of BWR, such as community facilities, employment floorspace, shops and leisure facilities, is also an important factor in meeting these objectives.

2.15.3 The links between BWR and surrounding areas will be provided through individual development proposals in accordance with this Spatial Masterplan. The specific location of individual uses, however, is more flexible due to the zonal nature of the Spatial Masterplan, therefore the location of specific uses must have regard to the need to create an integrated community.

2.16 Heritage enhancement

2.16.1 The City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan provides a framework for understanding how the development site relates to the World Heritage values, and ensuring that the development is appropriate for maintaining and enhancing those values and the character of the World Heritage Site.

2.16.2 The key heritage enhancement is the opportunity to add to the quality of the World Heritage site, not only in physical terms but also in the management of the existing asset. The development allows the opportunity to bring a significant derelict part of the city back in to positive use and can demonstrate how contemporary developments can enhance the World Heritage Site.

2.16.3 The Conservation Area stands to gain from the redevelopment, if the approach is sensitive and respects the contextual cues for the development.

2.16.4 The redevelopment will secure the future for Victoria Bridge, and create a proper setting for it which is currently lacking. It will create opportunities to enhance listed buildings, in particular Green Park Station. Other notable buildings unlisted but worthy of retention are included in the spatial masterplan, notably Bath Press.